

Visual Culture Jam: Art, Pedagogy, and Creative Resistance

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In this article, the author argues that visual culture is an essential direction for contemporary art educators who are committed to examining social justice issues and fostering democratic principles through their teaching. The study explores how visual culture education can empower students to perceive and meaningfully engage in the ideological and cultural struggles embedded within the everyday visual experience. The author examines the work of resistance theorists and socially engaged artists, including culture jammers, in an effort to support and inform the teaching and learning of visual culture. The study concludes with an investigation of cultural production as a pedagogical strategy within the visual culture classroom for generating and facilitating student awareness, understanding, and active participation in the sociocultural realm.

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Visual Culture, Politics and the *Invisibility* of the Everyday

Only hours after coalition tanks rumbled into the center of Baghdad during the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, American Marines secured a chain to the large statue of Saddam Hussein in the middle of Firdos Square and proceeded to topple the effigy of the Iraqi leader. Perhaps to reinforce their point, and much to the delight of television news producers from around the world, one of the soldiers draped a U.S. flag over the head of the statue before it fell. It was quickly removed, likely after a call from someone at U.S. Central Command who saw the footage on CNN, but not before some in the viewing audience had time to consider the neo-colonial symbolism of it all. According to many of the media commentators that day, the destruction of Saddam's monument was comparable to the toppling of statues of Lenin or the fall of the Berlin Wall in Eastern Europe a decade earlier. For some of us, however, the event served less as a corollary to the triumph of capitalism over communism, and more as a conspicuous reminder of the ubiquitous connections between art, culture, ideology, and power.

A brief excursion back through history reveals how enduring the ties between art, culture, politics, and power actually are. Rulers and conquerors of states, kingdoms, and empires of both the ancient and modern worlds have strategically employed the arts to venerate their victories, reinforce their power and intimidate and malign their enemies. From imperial Roman medals, coins and statues which commemorated the rule of powerful emperors, to Medieval monumental works of art that, under the façade of Christian themes, were created to support the ideological interests of the church, art has consistently been in the tactical employ of

leaders and politicians (Clark, 1997). One-party states like Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia have unabashedly employed a wide array of artistic means to help achieve their ideological goals, as have most modern day Western democracies. The Chinese students who demonstrated in Tiananmen Square for democracy during the summer of 1989 certainly understood the power of art in relation to politics. They painstakingly built a 30-foot monument, *The Goddess of Democracy*, as part of their attempt to confront the State's own symbols of power. The Chinese government, knowing full well the connections between art and politics, though apparently miscalculating the correlations between international media coverage and future trade relations, ordered their troops to destroy the statue (and open fire on the demonstrators) after only 4 short days. Millions of people from around the world saw these events depicted in newspapers and on television and, not surprisingly, reproductions of the Tiananmen Square monument soon began emerging in public spaces around the globe.

Political Edutainment

As we look backwards then from the first decade of the 21st century, it readily becomes apparent how ubiquitous and pervasive the connections between art, culture, ideology, and power continue to be. It seems almost natural, for instance, that the CIA would have funded many of the international exhibitions of American Abstract Expressionism during the Cold War,¹ that Fleetwood Mac would have been asked to play their hit song "Don't Stop (Thinking About Tomorrow)" at Bill Clinton's inaugural gala (or that Clinton would play his saxophone on MTV in what would turn out to be a defining moment in his 1992 presidential campaign), or that pop cultural icons from Ronald Reagan to Jesse "The Body" Ventura, to Arnold Schwarzenegger would have run and been elected to high public office. It appears that we have become rather comfortable mixing our entertainment with our politics. As postmodern theorists like Jameson (1984, 1991) and Kincheloe (1993, 2003a) have pointed out, the postmodern era of the last 30 to 40 years has witnessed a transformation of the cultural domain into what is now considered to be the most important *political* arena. Kincheloe (2003a) notes that "[a]reas that were once considered trivial venues of entertainment by political analysts are now used for profound political education" (p. 78). This shift in sites of political consciousness from the political to the cultural realm has important implications for teachers generally and for art educators specifically. Teachers who are committed to examining social justice issues and fostering democratic principles through their teaching are obliged to consider how their pedagogical practices attend to the complex connections between culture and politics, and ought to evaluate how effectively their courses prepare their students to engage as thoughtful and informed citizens within the contemporary cultural sphere. Though attending to

¹The American school of Abstract Expressionism was proclaimed by critics like Clement Greenberg in the 1950s to be the epitome of free art. According to Clark (1997), numerous international exhibitions of this work were accompanied by curatorial statements in which nationalist rhetoric compared the freedom expressed in American painting with the strictly controlled "kitsch of Soviet communism" (p. 9). He explains that, "some of these exhibitions had been secretly funded by the CIA, a fact widely known by the mid-1970s" (p. 9).

these questions might ultimately be the responsibility of all teachers, because of the inseparability of the cultural from the aesthetic, art educators are ostensibly the best placed within schools to directly attend to these commitments. In fact, this disciplinary positioning inside schools has been one of the motivations in recent years for some art education theorists to call for the implementation of visual culture forms of art education.

Several proponents of an art education informed by (and imbued with) visual culture have successfully demonstrated that the visual is inextricably linked to ongoing social, political, psychological, and cultural struggles (Duncum, 2001a, 2002; Freedman, 2000, 2003; Tavin, 2000, 2002, 2003). These struggles occur on numerous cultural fronts and through multiple visual media, including: teenagers' bedrooms, shopping malls, theme parks, community celebrations, television programs, advertisements, and digital environments (Freedman & Schuler, 2002; Grauer, 2002; Krug, 2002; Smith-Shank, 2002; Stokrocki, 2002). According to visual culture theorist Nicholas Mirzoeff (1999), the human experience is now more visual and visualized than ever before, and visual culture is not a just part of our everyday lives, it *is* our everyday lives. He explains that "[v]isual culture directs our attention away from structured, formal viewing settings like the cinema and art gallery to the centrality of visual experience in everyday life" (p. 7). Duncum (1999, 2002) meanwhile, has identified the everyday aesthetic experience as an often overlooked but important location where many of our attitudes, knowledge and beliefs are shaped. He characterizes our *everyday aesthetic experiences* as significant sites where ideological struggles occur, often without our conscious knowing, and argues that this imperceptibility makes them difficult to resist.

Ideology works not because it calls particular attention to itself, but because it grounds itself in taken-for-granted, common-sense assumptions. Ideology works through ordinary cultural artifacts, and it can be hard to resist because it so often appears to belong to the realm of the natural. In this way ideology establishes the parameters for thinking and experiencing outside of which it is difficult to think or experience, let alone to act... While culture is always a site of struggle to define how life is to be lived and experienced, the struggle is often rendered invisible. (Duncum, 2002, pp. 5-6)

A significant component of an art education informed by visual culture then, is the uncovering of these ideological struggles within the realm of the everyday. The Russian critic Viktor Shklovsky (1988) described the acute unawareness of the familiar as a state of *habitualisation* and claimed that only through art could we begin to perceive that which had become commonplace (p. 20). And although there is certainly much to embrace, celebrate, and take pleasure in within our everyday visual culture, including

the semiotic possibilities it offers for creating meaning and forging and defining individual and collective identities, Duncum (2001b) reminds us that visual culture education must equally be concerned with “the teasing out of what lies behind imagery—the material conditions of their production, distribution and use; in short, the interests they serve” (p. 31). By illustrating how the *visual event*, expressed by Mirzoeff (1999) as the interaction between viewer and viewed, is consistently embedded within social, political and economic contexts, visual culture educators can begin to awaken their students to the complex forces behind the imagery and aesthetics of the familiar. As students become attuned to the previously unperceived, they can be encouraged to reconsider the commonplace and question the taken-for-granted. If art education is to prepare students to responsibly live within the contemporary sociocultural sphere, educators must be willing to help them resist the ideology of the ordinary, question the unperceived and become awakened to the invisibility of the everyday.

Critical Resistance: Art, Pedagogy, and Opposition

Critical pedagogues have long called for an education that approaches everyday experiences, particularly in relation to popular culture, as sites for ideological struggle and resistance. Although critical pedagogy continues to be interpreted in a multitude of ways and through an array of pedagogical practices, according to Tavin (2003), it is primarily “rooted in a democratic ethos that attends to the practices of teaching and learning and focuses on lived experiences with the intention to disrupt, contest, and transform systems of oppression” (p. 198). Thus, critical art educators are committed to the democratization of society through art education and schooling and seek to reach their emancipatory goals by creating awareness of, revealing, and resisting hidden forms of power (Kincheloe, 1991). Yokley (1999) asserts that critical art educators “combine the power of artistic means with political action as they question ideological formations, and indeed all facets of life, through projects of possibility” (p. 24). Hence, critical art education is seen as a tool for exposing and addressing oppression and encouraging social transformation (Freedman, 1994; Stuhr, 1994). Richard Cary (1998) explains that “[g]aining emancipatory knowledge involves the tasks of identifying hidden sources of oppression in individual lives and distortion of social relations among people. It includes the awareness and motivations that propel resistance” (p. 14). In fact *resistance*, defined by critical pedagogues as oppositional behavior that contests institutional power and dominant cultural norms, is seen as a naturally occurring element of school culture and a fundamental component of emancipatory pedagogy (Giroux, 1981, 1983; McLaren, 1985, 1989).

Resistance theory, a branch of critical pedagogy that emerged in the late 1970s, is based on the egalitarian notion that youth resistance in schools might offer a basis for social transformation by undermining the

production of dominant social structures and power relations (Giroux, 1983; Hall & Jefferson, 1976; Willis, 1981). Resistance theorists have pointed out that schools are not ideologically neutral sites of learning and have challenged their ostensible roles as democratic institutions. By uncovering the existence of school-based opposition and resistance, particularly by rebellious groups of adolescents, resistance theory has proven to be an influential approach in revealing the role that schools play in the reproduction of the social relations of communities, the workplace and society as a whole. Research on teenage subcultural groups conducted at England's Birmingham Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies during the 1980s demonstrated how dominant systems of social and cultural reproduction are consistently met with some degree of resistance and opposition (Trend, 1992). McLaren (1989) has argued that resistance allows students from subordinated groups to incorporate their street corner culture into the classroom in an attempt to make schooling acknowledge their identities and lived experiences.

Resistance theorists have conceded, however, that student resistance in schools is not inherently liberatory in nature and does not necessarily lead to emancipatory goals. Giroux (1983) has noted that some oppositional acts in schools represent true political acts of defiance while others actually embody oppressive forms of racism and sexism. Other resistance researchers, like Paul Willis (1981), have discovered that working class students who engage in acts of resistance often inadvertently implicate themselves in their own domination (McLaren, 1985). David Trend (1992) acknowledges the existence of student resistance in schools but concludes that these forms of opposition often have a limited tactical effect. He explains that:

the agencies of resistance that stymie cultural reproduction often contribute to a process that locks students into an underclass role. The most common resistances to oppressive schooling (nonperformance, truancy, disruptive behavior) generally culminate in academic failure, thus giving the system the last word. (pp. 150-151)

If resistance, therefore, is to be an effective pedagogical tool for exposing oppression and encouraging personal and social transformation, it must be recognized as more than simply a theory to explain the behavior and scholastic failure of subordinated groups of students within schools or an indiscriminate label for all forms of opposition. To be of genuine pedagogical value, resistance must be re-envisioned as a generative site of consciousness-raising, a location where students and teachers together are able to critically reflect upon and effectively challenge repressive practices and dominant structures that reinforce the inequities of the status quo. Resistance thus conceived becomes both disruptive and creative, a site of thoughtful opposition and a place for reflective inquiry

and meaningful engagement. This definition is akin to Giroux's (1983) notion of resistance, which he felt needed to be evaluated against the degree to which it prompted critical thinking and galvanized "collective political struggle around the issues of power and social determination" (p. 111). This conception of resistance is also congruent with the types of thoughtful educational interventions advocated by several visual culture educational theorists, who have called for an art education that actively reveals, and effectively facilitates critical engagement with, the everyday experience of seeing (Duncum, 2001a, 2002; Freedman, 2000, 2003; Mitchell, 1998; Tavin, 2000; 2002, 2003). By situating resistance within the educative realm of daily visual experiences, students and teachers can begin to meaningfully assess, interpret, and attend to the social, political, psychological, and cultural struggles that occur within the multiple sites of the everyday.

Visibly Shaken: The Oppositional Power of Art

Two months prior to the toppling of Saddam's monument in Firdos Square, U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell presented the American case against Iraq to the United Nations Security Council. It seemed like an unlikely coincidence, in the days leading up to the impending invasion, that the tapestry reproduction of Picasso's *Guernica*, which had hung in the hall outside the council chambers since 1985, would be completely obscured by member-state flags, a UN logo and a large baby-blue curtain. Although UN officials claimed that they were simply creating a more appealing backdrop for the television cameras, it was hard not to consider the implications of covering up the anti-war piece. Aside from the general "opposition to war" message, Picasso's painting threatened to evoke historical parallels that the Bush administration and UN officials were clearly determined to keep the media and the public from considering. Anti-war protesters were quick to condemn the concealment of the *Guernica* tapestry and responded by holding up their own reproductions of the painting for the television cameras outside of the UN. Media outlets from around the world carried the story, fueling the international split within the UN Security Council and congealing the growing global movement against the impending war. Sixty-six years after the creation of the original, even reproductions of Picasso's painting still packed a surprisingly potent political punch.

Besides highlighting the persuasive influence that the American administration has over UN officials, this event demonstrated the *oppositional* power of art and visual representation within the milieu of our contemporary visual culture. In fact, the visual arts have been used for decades to reveal tears in the social fabric, thereby exposing the caesuras between fundamental societal values (i.e. justice, democracy, freedom) and the dominant discourses and normative practices of the status quo. Since the early 18th century, oppositional artists have utilized their work to inspire,

offend, and enrage audiences, to awaken the unconscious, and to communicate ideas and emotions otherwise difficult to articulate (Clark, 1997). By calling attention to the social, political, cultural, and religious mechanisms and restrictions that inform our actions and temper our beliefs, artists are able to expose us to ourselves, to each other, and to the world we are attempting to cultivate together. This artistic troubling of our identities, our beliefs, and our actions (and inactions) is often disorienting and almost always discomforting. It frequently trembles the ideological ground on which we are accustomed to standing. From gay activists to Guerilla Girls, Dadaists to Debord, Conceptualists to Culture Jammers, socially engaged² artists have repeatedly addressed and redressed issues of sociopolitical and cultural significance, and in the process, undermined our ability to function within a dysfunctional world.

Art educators who introduce the work of socially engaged artists into their classrooms, open up educative spaces where the layers of socio-cultural, political, aesthetic, historical, and pedagogic complexities surrounding these works can be examined and explored. By exposing their students to this work, art educators can begin to challenge disenfranchised conceptions of the social role and political function of art with their students. This is crucial if students are to understand and meaningfully participate in public conversations around the social and political relations of art to power, culture and democratic citizenship. If art education is to empower students to perceive and meaningfully engage in the ideological and cultural struggles embedded within the visual, art educators will need to first render these struggles visible. W.J.T. Mitchell (1998) has described his aim as a teacher of visual culture in terms of the struggle to "overcome the veil of familiarity and self-evidence that surrounds the experience of seeing ... to make seeing show itself, to put it on display, and make it accessible to analysis" (p. 86). As part of his *Eight Counter-Theses on Visual Culture*, he contends that visual culture involves a "meditation on blindness, the invisible, the unseen, the unseeable, and the overlooked" (p. 90). Greene (1995) explains that the arts can be used as a pedagogical strategy to move students into spaces of awareness and resistance:

Hoping to challenge empty formalism, didacticism, and elitism, many of us teachers believe that the shocks of awareness to which the arts give rise leave us (*should* leave us) less immersed in the everyday and more impelled to wonder and to question. It is not uncommon for the arts to leave us somehow ill at ease or to prod us beyond acquiescence. They may, now and then, move us into spaces where we can envision other ways of being and ponder what it might signify to realize them. But moving into such spaces requires a willingness to resist the forces that press people into passivity and bland acquiescence. (*italics in the original*, p. 135)

²I am using the term *socially engaged artists* to describe all artists who consciously choose to engage with social justice and/or human rights issues through their work.

By introducing students to the work of socially engaged artists, as well as to other forms of visual representation that leave us less immersed in the everyday, art educators can begin to challenge learners to reconsider the complexity of their daily visual experiences. Combined with a concerted pedagogical effort to reveal and deconstruct the persuasive strategies and aesthetic tactics commonly employed by visual artists and producers of popular visual texts, art educators can move their students towards a better understanding of the ideological and social power of visual representation. Freedman (2003) explains that, "[w]hen students develop a deeper understanding of their visual experiences, they can look critically at surface appearances and begin to reflect on the importance of the visual arts in shaping culture, society, and even individual identity" (p. xi). This visual understanding is essential if students are to gain insight into the artistic intentions and social motivations of visual artists and if they are to uncover, interpret, and meaningfully respond to the ideological struggles and cultural forces that exist within the visual.

The Art of Culture Jamming

Although the term "culture jamming" was first used in 1984 by the San Francisco audio-collage band Negativland, the concept itself dates back to the suffrage and avant-garde movements of the early 20th century. These radical artists and self-described social agitators adopted sociopolitical issues as their primary focus and challenged dominant conceptions about art and artists, directly confronting the rigidity and hierarchical superiority of the art institutions. As Clark (1997) explains, groups of avant-garde artists across Europe developed "pictorial procedures which broke away from rules of compositional harmony and conventional ways of creating the illusion of perspectival space" (p. 32). Dada artists, for instance, embraced counter-aesthetic imagery and modern techniques like photomontage, which easily facilitated the creation of satirical forms of visual representation and which, because it didn't require special skills to create, resisted the privileged status of the artist as a trained professional. Marcel Duchamp, the most well known of the Dadaists, has been described as a "shock artist" who used his art to confront and expose the insanity of the post-War world:

From Duchamp's perspective the world that emerged from the horror of World War I was pathological and insane. Duchamp discerned that he had to use his art to call attention to this reality. Like 'shock artists' before and after him, Duchamp railed against the social, cultural, political and religious restrictions that undermine our ability to cope with the derangements that confront us. (Kincheloe, 2003b, p. 14)

The Surrealists adopted this stance of defiance towards the status quo in the 1920s by proclaiming that their aim was to overthrow capitalism through the liberation of the unconscious. They condoned political

actions that were “playfully absurd and purposeless,” and therefore, not “harnessed to the utilitarian demands of the capitalist economy” (Clark, 1997, p. 139). These concepts later influenced Guy Debord and the Situationist International during the 1950s and 1960s. Building on Marx’s theory of ‘commodity fetishism,’ the Situationists declared that our real lives had been co-opted by the spectacular media events and commodity consumption of the modern world. As a response to this ‘society of the spectacle,’ the Situationists advocated the idea of ‘spontaneous living’ as a way of reviving the creativity of everyday life. They developed the concept of *detournement* which, roughly translated, can be defined as a ‘turning around,’ essentially the act of pulling an image out of its original context to create a new meaning. Lasn (2000), the publisher of *Adbusters* magazine and a leading figure within the culture jamming movement since the late 1980s, explains that *detournement* involves “rerouting spectacular images, environments, ambiances and events to reverse or subvert their meaning, thus reclaiming them” (p. 103).

Lasn draws heavily on the theoretical framework laid down by the Situationists and explains that “[c]ulture jamming is, at root, just a metaphor for stopping the flow of spectacle long enough to adjust your set.” (p. 107). He and many of his fellow culture jammers also find inspiration in Alinsky’s (1989) metaphor of “mass political jujitsu,” which Alinsky describes as “utilizing the power of one part of the power structure against another part... the superior strength of the Haves become their own undoing” (p. 152). In practical terms, this may involve attempting to subvert a multi million dollar advertising campaign by altering a carefully crafted company logo or advertisement to radically change the originally intended message—the goal being to draw attention to the unethical labor and marketing practices of the seller and, in the case of products like cigarettes and liquor, to highlight the true health risks to the consumer. This might be accomplished by ‘jamming’ a high profile billboard,³ producing and airing a 30-second video subvertisement,⁴ or creating a spoof of a corporate or political publication or website that borrows the layout, design and photographs of the original, but which carries a message that is counter to the target site.⁵

Klein (2000) has aptly described these and other forms of creative cultural intervention as “semiotic Robin Hoodism” (p. 280). She asserts that, as a result of newly accessible digital technologies and a steady increase in aggressive commercialism, culture jamming has experienced a revival in recent years. Klein explains that culture jammers, who are influenced by media theorists’ calls for less corporate control and more democratic forms of media, are now literally “writing theory on the streets” (p. 284). She describes culture jamming as a challenge to antiquated interpretations of freedom of expression and consumer-driven notions of public space, and provides justification for the creative tactics adopted by culture

³ *Jamming* within this context refers to the practice of altering the text and/or images of a billboard advertisement to produce a message counter to the original. New York artist Ron English’s website has some excellent examples of this form of culture jamming: <http://www.popaganda.com>. As does the website for the San Francisco based Billboard Liberation Front: <http://billboardliberation.com>.

⁴ *Subvertisement* refers to an advertisement with an anti-marketing message. The Detroit Project has produced a series of 30-second video subvertisements which link the inefficient automobiles being produced and consumed by North Americans with terrorism: <http://www.thedetroitproject.com/ads/default.htm>. A number of other examples of video subvertisements can be found on the Media Foundation’s (*Adbusters* magazine) website: <http://adbusters.org>

⁵ Some well publicized examples of this practice have included Greenpeace’s <http://www.stoessp.org>, which attempts to inform consumers of Esso/Exxon Mobil’s poor environmental record and questionable public relations policies, and (r)TMark’s

(continued on p. 322)

<http://gwbush.com>, which, during the 2000 presidential election, highlighted hypocrisies in George W. Bush's campaign, including his refusal to deny having used illicit drugs, despite his severe policies on illegal drug use.

⁶According to Klein (2002), under current U.S. copyright and trademark laws, artists and activists run the very real risk of being sued for incorporating "protected" cultural materials into their work. Klein cites a number of examples of what she describes as "copyright and trademark harassment," in which artists, activists, and community groups have been threatened with legal action and "dragged into court for violating trademark, copyright, libel or 'brand disparagement' laws—easily abused statutes that form an airtight protective seal around the brand, allowing it to brand us, but prohibiting us from so much as scuffing it" (p. 176).

jammers by contextualizing their work within the milieu of contemporary artistic practices:

Artists will always make art by re-configuring our shared cultural languages and references, but as those shared experiences shift from firsthand to mediated, and the most powerful political forces in our society are as likely to be multinational corporations as politicians, a new set of issues emerges that once again raises serious questions about out-of-date definitions of freedom of expression in a branded culture. In this context, telling video artists that they can't use old car commercials, or musicians that they can't sample or distort lyrics, is like banning the guitar or telling a painter he can't use red. The underlying message is that culture is something that happens to you. You buy it at the Virgin Megastore or Toys "R" Us and rent it at Blockbuster Video. It is not something in which you participate, or to which you have the right to respond. (Klein, 2000, p. 178)

In fact, the fundamental *right* to respond to culture through artistic production and creative cultural-critique is one of the primary mantras of the culture jamming movement. Culture jammers contend that DIY (Do-it-yourself) culture, which can be defined essentially as the act of creating art, and thus meaning, out of the cultural materials of the everyday (including images, artifacts and references from popular culture), should be actively encouraged and endorsed⁶ (Duncombe, 2002; Klein, 2000). Like several artists and cultural critics before them, many culture jammers maintain that society has been progressively lulled and mediated into acquiescence by the increasing media spectacle of consumer culture. Lasn (2000), for instance, believes that the commercial mass media are "rearranging our neurons, manipulating our emotions, [and] making powerful new connections between deep immaterial needs and material products" (p. 12). Duncombe (2002), meanwhile, claims that most people living in liberal democracies and consumer economies "are used to politics, products, and entertainment being created and carried out by others" (p. 4). He asserts that, within this context, even the seemingly simple act of citizen-initiated cultural production has become ideologically subversive. He explains that, "[i]n a society built around the principle that we should consume what others have produced for us, throwing an illegal warehouse rave or creating an underground music label—that is creating your own culture—takes on a rebellious resonance" (p. 7). In a commercial-dominated society in which 'culture' is often defined simply as a set of objects, images, and artifacts to be purchased and amassed, participating in individual and community-based forms of cultural production and resistance is seen by culture jammers as an essential component of responsible democratic engagement with the ideology of the everyday.

Creative Resistance: Critical Cultural Production in the Classroom

The creative tactics used by culture jammers to engage with daily life are, in many ways, analogous to the pedagogical approaches promoted by several visual culture educators, who have called for an art education that includes conscious and critical forms of student sociocultural engagement (Duncum, 2001a, 2002; Freedman, 2000, 2003; Freedman & Schuler, 2002; Mitchell, 1998; Stuhr, 2003; Tavin, 2000, 2002, 2003). Each group, for instance, acknowledges the importance of identifying, interrogating, and exposing the ideological forces embedded within our everyday visual experiences. And while there is little question that students are regularly immersed in symbiotic relationships with visual culture, both consuming and constructing meaning from their daily visual encounters (Congdon & Blandy, 2001; Rushkoff, 1999), it is also clear that many of these experiences are absorbed and reproduced without adequate critical examination (Freedman & Schuler, 2002; Goldfarb, 2002; Mitchell, 1998; Morley & Robins, 1995). Some visual culture theorists contend that art educators have a pedagogical responsibility to move students beyond uncritical and superficial aesthetic understandings that fail to recognize the ideological struggles embedded within the everyday visual experience. Freedman and Schuler (2002), for instance, assert that, "students are becoming part of consumer culture and constructing their individual identities with little critical reflection" (p. 19). They claim that art teachers can help students to view and interpret television critically in order to help them "make choices about which influences they are willing to accept" (p. 22). Tavin (2002) explains that, "art educators have an urgent and necessary responsibility to help students develop critical, reflexive, and meaningful approaches to interpreting, critiquing, and producing images, objects, and artifacts from visual culture" (p. 47). Duncum (2002), meanwhile, maintains that, "a war is being waged between the global corporations that seek to define us as consumers and older forms of social organizations like nation states and civil governance that seek to define us as citizens" (p. 6). He claims that educators must work to pass on identities as *citizens* to their students, and explains that "[i]t is to this mighty struggle for a primary identity as citizen versus consumer that there arises the call for educational intervention to develop a critical consciousness of everyday aesthetic sites" (p. 6).

In some ways, these sentiments echo the views of culture jammers like Lasn (2000), who claims that "[c]ulture isn't created from the bottom up by the people anymore—it's fed up to us top-down by corporations" (p. 189). Firmly lodged within the discourses of both groups is the conviction that cultural and educational 'interventions' are required to examine, expose and respond to the pervasive influence of contemporary consumer culture. And both culture jammers and many visual culture educational

theorists agree that, for these types of interventions to be effective, they must include critical forms of creative production. For culture jammers, these acts of creative resistance are a critical response to what they see as the insanity of consumer culture. As such, they are a direct attempt to call attention to, and transform, the way meaning is produced in our society. For visual culture educators, classroom-based cultural production can be an important method for generating and facilitating sociopolitical awareness, understanding, and participation. It is, essentially, the attempt to help students critically form identities and produce and convey meaning from their daily visual experiences. Stuhr (2003) contends that art educators can accomplish this objective through "cultural production and investigation of images and artifacts" (p. 303). Freedman and Schuler (2002), meanwhile, explain that "[t]he making of art has long been valued as a physical manifestation of an artist's social, cultural, and individual identity because it reflects, critiques, and supports the exploration of what it means to be human for viewers" (p. 23).

Consequently, classroom-based cultural production can help to move students from uncritical modes of viewing, what the Situationists described as a passive culture of spectatorship, towards more proactive forms of engagement. Freedman (2003) explains that student artmaking facilitates critical comprehension and plays a vital role in the learning and teaching of visual culture:

Artistic production is a critical path to understanding, partly because the process and the product of artmaking enables students to experience creative and critical connections between form, feeling, and knowing. It empowers students through their expression of ideas and construction of identities as it gives insight into the artistic motivations, intentions, and capabilities of others. (p. 147)

Although it may not, for instance, be desirable to instruct students in the art of jamming billboards, art educators can still meaningfully engage their classes in forms of creative and critical production inspired by culture jamming (Congdon & Blandy, 2001). With the rising availability of new media technologies in the art classroom, including digital cameras and camcorders, image manipulation and design programs, video editing software, and web-based graphical interface applications, students and teachers increasingly have access to a wide array of powerful artistic tools as a means of engaging with and experiencing visual culture. Not that new media technology is a requirement for infusing culture jamming and socially engaged artistic tactics like *detournement* into the art curriculum. Introducing students to counter-cultural modes of artistic production based on art activism, conceptual, performance, and guerrilla art, for instance, can offer multiple opportunities for meaningful forms of student cultural participation.

When combined with creative explorations and artistic projects based around themes of shared social significance, visual culture educators can begin to generate important forms of student engagement with the normative practices and sociopolitical discourses of the everyday. Duncombe (2002) explains that contemporary politics can be described as a "cultural discourse" based on "a shared set of symbols and meanings that we all abide by" (p. 6). He claims that, "rewriting of that discourse—which is essentially what cultural resistance does—is a political act in itself" (p. 6). By encouraging students to interpret, evaluate, and 'rewrite' the shared symbols and meanings of their everyday visual experiences, visual culture educators can begin to move young people beyond modes of passive spectatorship and towards more active and expressive forms of communication with and in the world around them. And, by promoting active participation in the sociopolitical sphere through creative cultural production, art educators can begin to shift their students towards more active and responsible forms of engagement with the inequities and injustices of the status quo.

Ultimately, if art education is to move students beyond modes of passive spectatorship and towards more generative and thoughtful forms of cultural production and resistance, art educators will need to help students make meaning of, and creatively respond to, their everyday visual experiences. By encouraging critical and creative forms of cultural production and actively uncovering the ideological struggles embedded within the visual, visual culture educators can imbue students with a meaningful ability to respond to the increasingly complex visual environment of the everyday. Combined with a determined pedagogical effort to expose and deconstruct the powerful strategies and aesthetic tactics commonly employed by artists, designers, and other producers of visual texts, visual culture educators can begin to provide their students with the required intellectual and creative tools to examine, challenge, and transform themselves, their communities, and the world(s) in which they live.

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