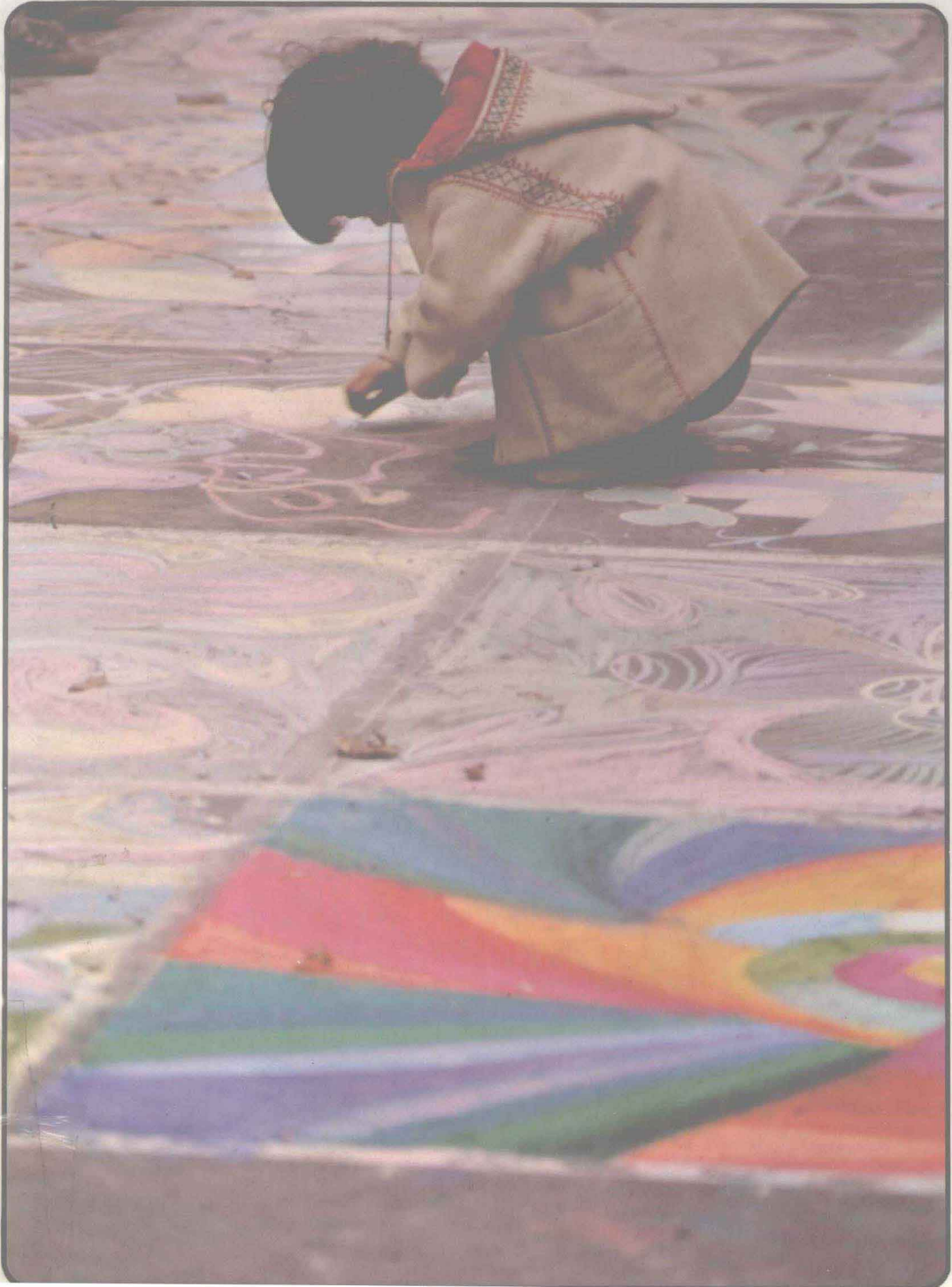


Approaches to Art

in Education



LAURA H. CHAPMAN

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Preface

Approaches to Art in Education deals with art instruction in the preschool through the junior high. It is intended as a text for classroom and art instructors, but it is also recommended for principals, members of school boards, parents, and other interested citizens whose vision and support are vital for lively and successful school art programs.

A total rethinking of the purposes of art education is necessary to develop such art programs. Art education must be recognized as an essential subject within the total school curriculum—not an educational frill. Art education must foster a more comprehensive understanding of the importance of art in the lives of children. Simply providing art materials to children so that they may occupy themselves on a rainy day or discovering and training those few children who show artistic promise does not constitute art education.

One of the main themes in this volume is that no single approach to art can adequately represent to children the diversity inherent in art. For this reason, art programs should be eclectic; they should reflect major traditions of artistic thought and practice in Western culture as well as cross-cultural insights drawn from anthropology.

Children should experience art by both creating it and responding to it. These modes of encounter are interdependent. Creative work can enhance children's ability to respond sensi-

tively to two- and three-dimensional forms. And a well-developed sense of perception is necessary for creating expressive works of art.

Children's art experiences must extend beyond the traditional confines of "school" art. Art is a dynamic, multifaceted enterprise. Above all else, it is a means of giving form to feelings and ideas, and of enriching our vision of the world. The world of art encompasses the traditional fine and studio arts as well as the fields of architecture; film, television, and photography; graphic and product design. It includes those masterworks treasured by critics and connoisseurs, but it also spans the wide range of cultural symbols and artifacts essential to everyday life. Art education should reveal to children the relationship between these forms of art and the children's own artistic endeavors.

Finally, a methodology of art education cannot be discovered simply by reading a book. Instructors *develop* methods best suited to their own personalities and to the dynamics operating in a particular classroom at a given moment. Because the process of learning how to teach requires on-the-job experience, this book concentrates on *what* to teach and *why* it is worth teaching.

Among those persons who have been most instrumental in shaping my views on the practice of art education, I wish to acknowledge the early and profound role played by Helen Donnell;

Al Hurwitz, Coordinator of Visual and Related Arts, Newton Public Schools; Jean Johnson, Kean College of New Jersey; Betty Kowalchuk; Jo Kowalchuk; Sara Maddox; and Patricia A. Renick, University of Cincinnati.

Without holding them responsible for the use I have made of their contributions, I wish to acknowledge my professional debts to Marylou Kuhn, The Florida State University; Marion J. Hay; Frederick M. Logan, University of Wisconsin; June King McFee, University of Oregon; Vincent Lanier, University of Oregon; Edmund B. Feldman, The University of Georgia; and the late Manuel Barkan for showing me the importance of attending to philosophy as a tool for thinking, the history of art education, cultural anthropology, the sociology of art, art criticism, and the virtues and hazards of eclecticism.

I wish to thank all the instructors and supervisors who provided many of the illustrations and thus offer evidence that both the quality and variety of art experiences presented in this text are within reach of instructors and children. Special thanks are given to Evan, Lucy, and Sarah Kern for permission to use Sarah's drawings of horses. Created over a span of fifteen years, these drawings are of special interest in light of Sarah's desire to become a veterinarian specializing in equine medicine. Eleese V. Brown kindly provided the photographs of children's clay figures, which illustrate untutored growth in using a three-dimensional medium. I

am pleased that Georgie Ann Grosse permitted the use of her photographs of the superb teaching materials she has developed.

Patterson B. Williams of the Philadelphia Museum of Art and Bonnie Baskin of the University Art Museum, University of California, Berkeley, provided many of the photographs illustrating the vitality of educational programs in museums.

Valuable manuscript criticism was provided by Al Hurwitz; Hilda P. Lewis, San Francisco State University; Jerry Tollifson, State Supervisor of Art Education, Ohio Department of Education; Gene Mittler, Indiana University; D. Jack Davis, North Texas State University; and Ivan E. Johnson, The Florida State University.

Among those who have contributed to the production of the book, I wish to thank Nina Gunzenhauser for persistent and patient editorial support; Irene Pavitt and Betty Gerstein for detailed yet judicious editing; Kay Ellen Ziff for pictorial searches; Lucile Jenss for deciphering my handwriting, discreetly correcting spelling errors, and efficiently typing several drafts of the manuscript; Judith A. Wittlin for multipurpose dependability; and Patricia A. Renick, who, better than anyone, comprehends the ironic circumstances under which this book has been written.

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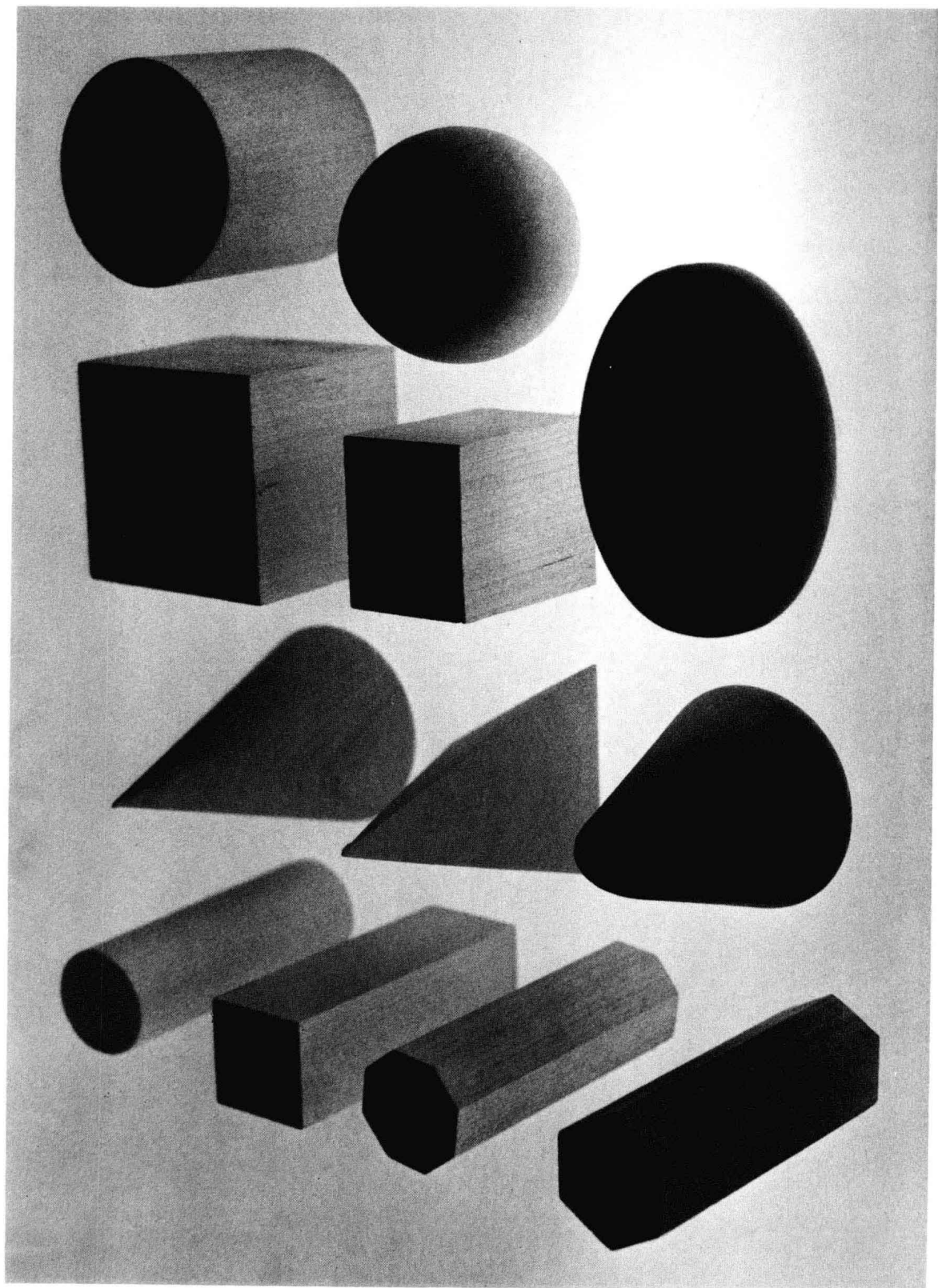
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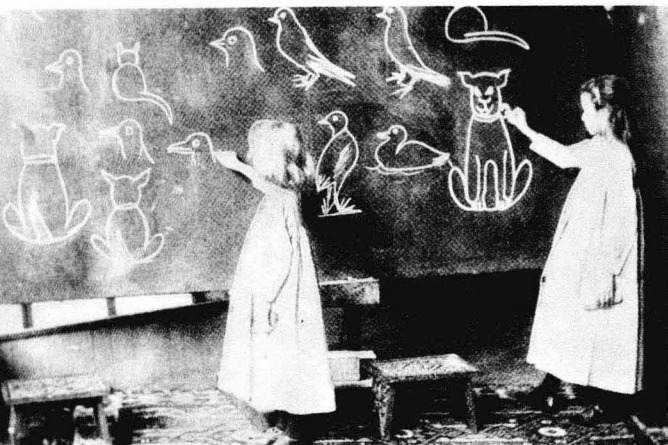
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Approaches
to Art
in Education





foundations
for art
education



A perspective on art education



It has been estimated that 85 percent of the nation's youth receive no instruction in art beyond the age of thirteen or fourteen.¹ Thus it is essential that we achieve excellence in the quality of art education available to youngsters during the elementary and junior high years. In their preadolescent years, children form basic attitudes toward a number of experiences, including those in art. The quality of art education available in schools can determine whether children will cherish art as a vital part of their lives.

It is important to note that in our society the school is the only institution officially responsible for educating children in art. Teachers

are thus in a key position to influence the way this generation feels about art and how it perceives its nature.² The challenge is to provide art experiences that are intellectually sound, personally rewarding to children, and relevant to their lives. Your role as a teacher will be to mediate the child's education in and through art.

The need for art education

Problems arise because the art teacher is not the only mediator of the child's experiences in art. The dominant values in our culture are still

reflected in the quest for wealth, success, and upward social mobility. Within this scheme of values, art is often treated as little more than a leisure-time pursuit, a decorative addition to life, or a symbol of wealth and social sophistication. The deeper satisfactions of art are poorly understood and largely unrealized.³

Values operating in the larger society influence children. From the earliest years of their lives, they are educated through visual forms at home, in stores, and in the neighborhood. Far more of the children we teach are familiar with plaster figurines made in Hong Kong than with bronze sculptures made by skilled artists. Far more will live in tract housing, sterile apartments, or squalid tenements than in homes designed by architects. For better or worse, we cannot ignore the child's experience outside of school. It is, in itself, an educational force to be reckoned with.

As children grow older they are attracted to products that superficially resemble art—craft kits, coloring books, numbered painting sets, and plastic models. From products such as these, children acquire concepts of art that are quite different from those they encounter in school or in museums and galleries. Television, comic books, and movies also influence the child's understanding of what is worth doing, having, and seeking (Figure 1-1).

In making these observations it would be unfair to imply that everyone in our society is

indifferent to art. A substantial number of people go to museums and galleries. Many people are interested in collecting original works of art because they enjoy owning objects that are visually stimulating. The popularity of art as a hobby reflects a widespread desire to “have a hand” in making things. There is a growing awareness that the quality of life is influenced by the way we shape our everyday environment.

Nevertheless, the child in today's world is bombarded—by the mass media, advertising, consumer products, and the environment—with countless ready-made self-images and values. In contrast, there are relatively few opportunities for the child to express *how* his or her particular life feels, to discover *what* its special meanings are, or to comprehend *why* it is like no other person's life. Art education can acquaint children with more subtle forms of feeling and more precise images of the human spirit than they are likely to discover on their own. Through instruction in art, the child can acquire the know-how to explore the deeper meanings of visual forms.

Historical concerns and contemporary practice

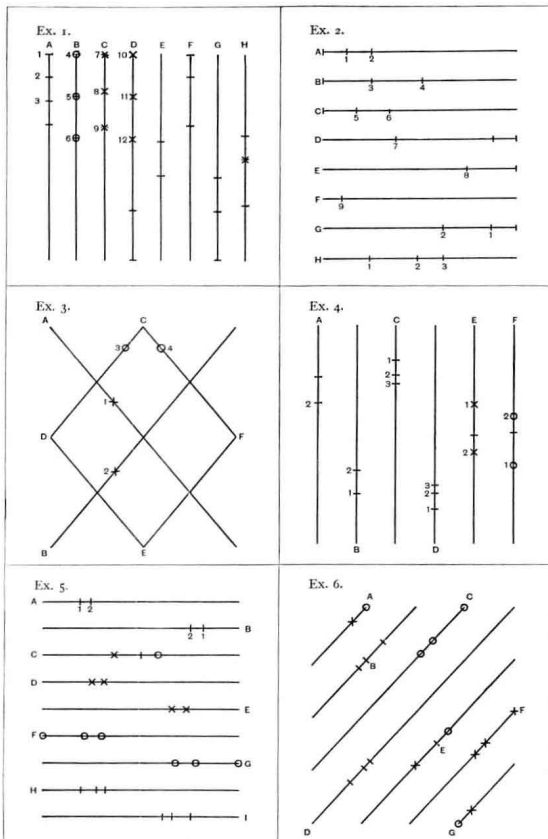
If children could discover the power of visual forms by unguided experience alone, there would be little need for art instruction in school.



1-1 (left) Children's tastes and sensitivities are influenced by visual forms in the everyday environment.

1-2 (below) Walter Smith, *Teacher's Manual of Freehand Drawing and Designing* (1876). Children once were asked to copy images like these.

The kind of influence the school *should* have is the central problem in art education. We can gain a perspective on this problem through a brief review of the history of art education in this country and of the practices that have left a mark on the contemporary teaching of art.⁴

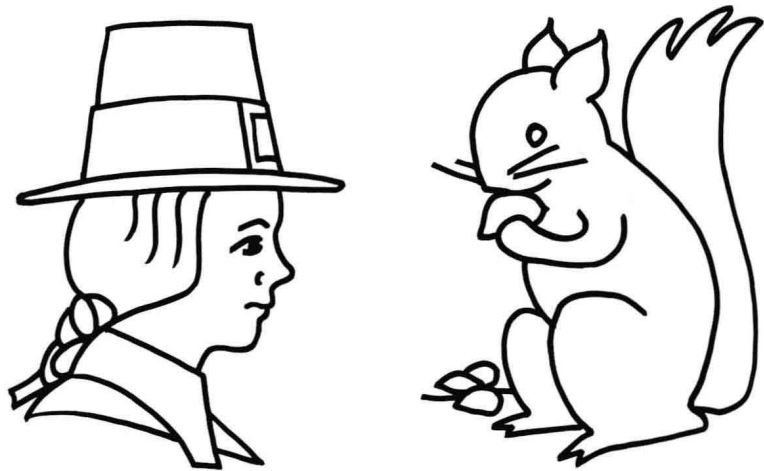


1870-1920:

The beginning of art education

ART AS SKILL IN DRAWING. In the early 1870s, a group of industrialists in Massachusetts pressured the state legislature to make drawing a required subject in school. The manufacturers recognized that skilled draftsmen and designers would be needed if American products were to compete favorably in an expanding world market. Walter Smith, an Englishman, was brought to this country to develop the first required course in art and to train teachers in its use.⁵ Smith's course, like others of this period, was offered as a prescribed series of exercises in copy work. It reflected a belief that skill in drawing and design could be mastered through imitation, drill, and practice.

In Smith's program of drawing, the first task to be mastered was drawing a straight line without a ruler (Figure 1-2). Later tasks required a mastery of line and shadow to represent objects and space. The familiar expression "I can't draw a straight line with a ruler" illustrates that skill



in making accurate drawings is still a popular adult standard for judging artistic ability. Indeed, children acquire this concept early because it is so pervasive among adults. Accuracy in drawing is certainly a narrow view of art. When we equate art with representation, we deny any value to works that have exaggerated forms, omitted or simplified parts, imaginative shapes, or idealized subjects. One of the major problems that art educators still face is the popular acceptance of the representational concept of art to the exclusion of all others.

By today's standards for art education, the materials from Walter Smith's program seem very restrictive. Copy work is generally discouraged now because we value originality more highly than imitation in children's art. Nevertheless, the legacy of Smith's era may be found in step-by-step books and exact how-to-do-it instructions that severely restrict children's opportunities to make artistic decisions on their own. Coloring books and worksheets to trace or copy also prevent children from expressing their own feelings and ideas. Materials of the kind shown in Figure 1-3 often add insult to injury by presenting stereotyped and poorly drawn images for children to copy, fabricate, or study.

1-3 Images for children to copy or color are often stereotyped, and their use restricts opportunities for children to make artistic decisions.

1-4 At the turn of the century, picture-study programs emphasized moral lessons and introduced children to European high culture (Sir Henry Raeburn, *A Boy and Rabbit*).



ART FOR CULTURAL REFINEMENT. Around the turn of the century, art appreciation was introduced into school programs (Figure 1-4).