

Singithi Kandage  
Professor Pam Patterson  
INTR 3B05  
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It's becoming increasingly obvious to me how through all levels of the education system, from elementary school and even to prestigious post-secondary institutions, all rationalize art education's value as to be in the service of interests unrelated to art itself. I believe that this sort of thinking has become dogma among educators to the point that it has seeped into general culture, and thus a possible reason why "the development of cognitive, verbal, and visual spatial skills" is Art's contribution to society.

There's a similar argument I keep finding here at OCAD, especially when President Sara Diamond when she describes creativity and the imagination as a crucial quality as we move into a "new paradigm", whatever that may hold. While I do agree to a certain extent, and I understand how it can be easy to be swept along by the kind of heady passion that "creativity, innovation," and "the future" conjures, it still strikes me as reasoning which puts art in its purest sense on the backburner. I know that I never decided to become an artist because I wanted to improve my hand-eye coordination, I just wanted to make things. To make good things. To make things better than other people could make things, to make things as only I could make them.

In this sense I don't truly believe that when capital-A "Artist" was born in 18th century with the creation of academies and museums was it truly elevated beyond the work of the "craftsman." Artists as they are known in the modern sense, starting with Renaissance men from Da Vinci to Durer displayed raw intellectual firepower which gave their artwork credence. As we have been taught in our standard first-year Art History courses, virtually all the works in the Western canon, particularly in the Modern Period, are concerned with increasing intellectualization.

Likewise, I would really love to see a return to recognition of "the making of things," as a deeply meaningful activity and crucial activity in the postmodern era, in the same sense that the fields of math, science, and languages do not need to justify themselves with their relevance to other fields.

EDIT: Since writing these personal notes in February, I've also noticed how often my peers OCAD have expressed the belief that "meaning can be made from anything, and everyone will bring their own definitions to a work of art or design." I've met a number of student collectives who have started platforms for serious artistic discussion while reducing or eliminating academicism and an emphasis on the written word, in favour of simple craftsmanship. We've even seen David Wistow describe that over-verbalizing of visual art in museums as "the weak link". I'm willing to predict that if the next wave of artists, curators, and enthusiasts are bound to build the artistic environment that they live and work in, the future of art (at least in Toronto) will have a far more ephemeral (even inconsequential) conceptual nature - greatly reducing the need for advanced written and oral skills in visual artists. If this is so, art educators may adapt with the times, for better or worse.