

mentor's introduction

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These papers reflecting dissertation studies are very different in their apparent focus; yet, they are similar in philosophy and methodology. Rather than discuss each in particular, I will comment briefly on the context out of which they arise.

Most doctoral students at the beginning of their programs are very keen to bravely tackle immense problems that confront art education in contemporary life. This idealism is soon tempered by the realities of doing a defensible study. The pressures of time, economics and other limitations on resources often lead to the advice, "Just do something that you can defend; you can always do what you want once you have the union card." Fortunately for art education, many keep their vision and faith in making a difference. The working papers of Ed Check and Don Krug indicate that they are, indeed, committed to issues of lived experience impinging on contemporary art education.

It is this focus on real educational issues in everyday experience that, it seems to me, will produce boundary breaking contributions to how we view and create art education practice and theory. We do need critical literature studies that deconstruct long held practices and assumptions of art education, but we also need the production and reconstruction of knowledge that develops from a base of everyday experience. I see the studies of Check and Krug as contributing new information based on empirical study in leading to changed theory and practice.

Both of these studies recognize the reality of social and political context within art and education is set. The recognition of these realities has become a given whether researching gays' experience in art and education when Ed Check asks, "What are our responsibilities to gay and lesbian students who find little information about themselves or their histories?" or in Don Krug's study of the dynamics of aesthetic discourse regarding those who make things, the "outsiders," whom critics, collectors, and gallery owners are commodifying in their image of art and aesthetics. I like to think that these doctoral studies are reflective of a growing trend to examine experience in the context of social, political, and economic realities -- a post-Modernism, and a post-postmodernism, that builds an art education on lived experience.