

Mentor's Introduction for Barbara Bergstrom

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It is with great pleasure that I write this introduction to Barbara Bergstrom's paper based on her doctoral dissertation. In a wonderful way, Barbara lives and breathes her dissertation research as it genuinely reflects what she wishes to teach and research as a future faculty member and emerging scholar. I had the privilege of chairing her doctoral dissertation committee and learning from her as she studied and taught within the Division of Art and Visual Culture Education at the University of Arizona.

As a researcher and teacher, Barbara is exploring an important, yet somewhat neglected area of scholarship within the field. Her dissertation research and scholarly passion have focused on exploring the beliefs, concerns, and experiences of visual arts graduate students who are pursuing the M.F.A degree. In her research, literature review, and reflections on her own experiences as a former M.F.A student, Barbara found that many visual arts graduate students do not feel fully connected to their programs. They certainly want to create art and view themselves as artists, but they are unsure about what motivates them, personally and professionally. In order to examine these issues more fully, Barbara designed a colloquium course that allowed her and a small group of graduate student participants to collaboratively and reciprocally consider and model what it means to be a graduate art student, and how one can become more mindful of one's own self and identity as an artist and teacher.

What is exciting about Barbara's study are not only her findings about graduate students and faculty members in the visual arts, but also the documentation of the very curricular and pedagogical practices she utilized and modeled within her course. An accomplished and outstanding k-12 and university teacher and mentor, Barbara's dissertation is interwoven with descriptions of superb pedagogical skills and course assignments that allowed her participants to genuinely examine, voice, visualize, and share their graduate experiences. Barbara's action research documentation of her practice, as a higher education teacher, is impressive and much needed within our field.

As a graduate student, Barbara was the recipient of many awards at the University of Arizona, including the College of Fine Arts Creative Achievement Award. This award recognizes *the* outstanding graduate student within the College, which includes the disciplines of dance, music, theatre, film, and television. In many ways, Barbara's dissertation reflects her desire that art educators must become more mindful of the (creative) achievements, beliefs, and curricular and pedagogical practices of students and faculty members within the visual arts as a whole, and beyond.

I sincerely anticipate that Barbara's exciting and groundbreaking dissertation research and future scholarship will contribute significantly to many publications within the field. I urge you to look out for them in the years ahead. Thank you.