

Mentor's Introduction

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"The arts are a way of internalizing experience," wrote poet and essayist Guy Davenport, "allowing us to look with wonder at a past that is not ours, but enough of ours so that all stories are, as Joyce says, always 'the same anew'" (1987, p. 83). Steve McGuire began his doctoral study in Art Education at The University of Iowa as a sculptor and a storyteller. He was also a runner and a bicycle rider, activities often significant in his sculpture, storytelling, and teaching. His styrofoam and plaster bike sculpture and the artist's books he evolved from two of his bicycle trips are objects that invite others to share his internalized experiences.

Early in his doctoral study, during a graduate research seminar, Steve reflected on his own past in a personal cultural history. In this paper he told a kind of mega-story, an account of his growing realization of the interrelationships that constituted his life. "Up to this time I believed that what I was making was an expression of myself – that is, the art work was a subjective release. Yet, I had never really considered the daily activities I performed as essential elements for my art. I got up every day and ran and then made sculpture, but never realized the connection. At that time my sculpture was made to be looked at and not lived. I began to realize how often I described things in terms of my perceptions of running, and that the physical construction of my work was a metaphor for the actions I performed while running. Even if this idea was not absolutely accurate, I did embrace it. This was not a forced thought or intellectualization, but simply my recognition of how Steve McGuire went about doing things. I enjoyed this idea of identifying myself.

In it I found possibilities for unifications I had not yet known between what I made and what I did. From this point on, the walls between making sculpture and living broke down."

Now, as he writes his dissertation, teaches art to elementary children, teaches University students about teaching art, constructs his sculptures, and, not incidentally, runs and rides his bike, Steve continues the unified life he described. From this vantage teaching and research are established as more connections in an expanding narrative that, like all stories, is an interpretive act for both teller and hearers. Steve's storytelling informs his understanding of art in the lives of three elementary students, Zac, Megan, and Joey, in the following account. The affinities he finds are not based on their sharing the same pasts. Rather, it is the experience of witnessing one another's pasts that they share and, so, affirm the importance of those pasts in their art while they confirm their existence. What we read, and they heard, is "enough of ours" to conclude with Davenport: "So there we are. Where else could we be?" (1987, p. 83)

Reference

Davenport, G. (1987). Every force evolves a form. San Francisco: North Point Press.