

USSEA - 2016 International Ziegfeld Award

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Good afternoon colleagues and thank you Angela for the introduction. I am honoured to receive this award and I want to thank, in particular, Professor Mary Stokrocki for nominating me, the colleagues who supported the nomination, Marjan Prevodnik, Teresa Eça, Margi Manifold, and Olcay Kirisgoglu. In addition, I'd like to thank everyone else who supported me. I am really sorry that I can't be with you at this event because I do love Chicago! I am deeply grateful to the United States Society for Education through Art (USSEA) for selecting me as a recipient for this year's International Ziegfeld Award. I was a little surprised to get such recognition from the United States!

I consider myself fortunate to work in art education with such dedicated, creative students and colleagues. I am doubly fortunate in my current role as professor of Applied Visual Arts at the University of Lapland: an truly innovative and inspirational place to work.

In the background

Talking to you today, I want to start with a story from my childhood. One of my most powerful memories is from primary (elementary) school, in the east end of Glasgow. 'Art' was taught once a week for 30 minutes on a Friday afternoon and it was the highlight of my week. I was about 9 years old. On one of those afternoons Ms MacDonald, our teacher, asked the class - why do we need art? Where do you see art in your life outside of school? What do artists do? I was puzzled, what silly questions. Of course we need art, how could you live without it? She was challenging us to make connections between 'school learning' and the real world. In Glasgow at that time, a post-industrial city with high unemployment, art was not to the fore in most people's thinking. I have never forgotten Ms Macdonald, she was not an artist or even an art teacher, but she was an extremely skilful educator.

Thank you Ms MacDonald.

This notion of 'learning for the real world' has become increasingly important to me over the many years since Ms MacDonald's class.

Professional Background

I studied at Glasgow School of Art (design) and, after working as a community artist in England, I trained as a secondary (high) school teacher of art and design. After spending around 10 years in secondary schools, I then worked at the University of Strathclyde, training teachers and community artists. During that period my interests turned to research and praxis in arts education in the broadest sense. I became interested in the interface between formal and informal education. I directed and was closely involved in many research studies, too many to list here. However, towards the end of the 1990s, one project focused on a critical survey of public art and urban design in Glasgow provided a turning point. A key feature of that study was a series of 'urban trails' or walks. That project really fired my interest in the educational potential of place-specific art work.

One of USSEA's core aims really resonates with me, it seeks *'to promote greater understanding and respect for learners from all backgrounds through research, art curricula, instruction, and practices that are inclusive and sensitive'*. I believe that some of the work that has been going on in parts of Europe, specifically Scotland and Finland, where I spend most of my time, meets that aim.

Teaching and research at the University of Lapland

Applied Visual Arts

In Finnish Lapland, a unique masters level programme has been developed that combines new ways of working in communities with theoretical and practice-based experience, it is called *Applied Visual Arts*. The programme is based on a context-driven model of art practice that promotes participation, collaboration and inclusion.

Traditionally, training in art schools has focused on developing new ways of looking at the world, problem solving, craft skills, independent learning and creativity. Art schools have been great at nurturing these skills. However, as art educators, we need to consider whether the programmes on offer are most appropriate to developing the skills-base required to deal with the complexities of the world of work in the 21st century.

To many people, the term 'applied arts' conjures up images of glass, ceramics, furniture, graphic design, architecture and so on, but that is not what is meant when considering applied visual arts as it is taught in Lapland. The key word is 'applied'; it implies usefulness, relevance and suitability for a particular context, visual art that is produced following careful investigation, almost always in collaboration with others, for example community groups, business partners or both.

In essence, AVA practice is multi-disciplinary, trafficking back and forth across the traditional boundaries of fine art and design. The artists who work in this field require skills that are not often taught in art schools; skills in research, documentation, analysis, community engagement, interpretive innovation (Lester & Piore, 2004) and design thinking (MacDonald, 2013). Now I want to turn to two other areas of professional activity that I think help connect art education with the 'real world', first a professional network and second the international journal.

The Arctic Sustainable Arts & Design network

In an increasingly interconnected world, the importance of networking can't be overestimated. I am working in a part of the world that is literally 'on the edge' of most people's consciousness, the Arctic. A relatively new network of art and design educators has been established with the title *Arctic Sustainable Arts and Design* or ASAD. The University of Lapland is the lead partner. Inaugurated in 2011 as a thematic network of the University of the Arctic, the group now has 26 members across the Circumpolar North. Now more than

ever, it is important for art educators to work together.

The International Journal of Education through Art

For many years I have been an active member of the International Society of Education through Art. This has brought me into contact with some outstanding art educators in almost every part of the world. In 2010, I was appointed principal editor of IJEtA. It has been a real pleasure to work with such a great editorial team and I want to thank them all for their outstanding commitment over the past six years. The Journal promotes and explores relationships between art and education and strives to publish the best in research and praxis in art education. It truly is an international Journal as every issue contains articles and visual essays from several countries. Now in its 12th volume, it is well established and I am happy to hand over to the new editor Professor Rita Irwin and wish her and the new team every success.

So, as we gather to celebrate the achievements of so many art educators, we must think about the future of art education. I'd like to ask you to take a moment to think about the importance of art education for our young people, the children of this generation.

Tomorrow's problems will demand intelligent, creative and hard-working individuals to solve them. To nurture such individuals, we need to work together and support our schools, our communities, and our universities to promote education through art: truly an education for the real world.

Thank you very much for this award.

References

Lester, R. & Piore, M. (2004). *Innovation: the Missing Dimension*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.

MacDonald, S.W., (2013). Designing Engagement: The New Edge. In T. Jokela, G. Coutts, M. Huhmarniemi & E. Harkonen (Eds.). *COOL: Applied Visual Arts in the North*. (pp.54-65). Retrieved from URL:
https://lauda.ulapland.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/62112/COOL_Applied%20Visual%20Arts%20in%20the%20North_verkkoon.pdf?sequence=4

Notes

For more information about the ASAD network, Applied Visual and the Faculty of Art and Design at the University of Lapland please see:

- www.asadnetwork.org
- <http://www.ulapland.fi/InEnglish/Units/Faculty-of-Art-and-Design>