# AESTHETIC EDUCATION: PHILOSOPHY AND TEACHING ARTIST PRACTICE AT LINCOLN CENTER INSTITUTE

by

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Abstract

AESTHETIC EDUCATION: PHILOSOPHY AND TEACHING ARTIST PRACTICE AT LINCOLN CENTER INSTITUTE
by

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Aesthetic education is the term used to describe the work of teaching artists who are employed by Lincoln Center Institute for the Arts in Education (LCI). Developed from the philosophical perspectives of Maxine Greene, aesthetic education at LCI has been practiced since the organization's inception in 1975. To date, there are few thorough scholarly attempts to articulate both the philosophy and practice of aesthetic education at LCI. Within the larger field of arts education, there is also a dearth of material written about the actual classroom practice of teaching artists—professional artists who work in educational sites, and who are often employed by cultural organizations.

This qualitative case study documents the work of three LCI teaching artists (in music, visual arts, and theatre) through classroom observations and interviews. The teaching artists themselves are involved in the analysis of their teaching, and classroom examples are juxtaposed with Greene's philosophy of aesthetic education so as to explore the relationship between teaching artist practice and Greene's philosophical stance. The study also situates LCI historically and includes interviews with Greene and key senior Institute staff.

Greene's ideas about an aesthetic experience, a transactional exchange between perceiver and work of art, are analyzed with respect to the influences of John Dewey, phenomenology, and existentialism, among other views. The study examines how teaching artist practice has been shaped by such philosophical perspectives, and how Lincoln Center Institute came to view nurturing students' opportunities for aesthetic experiences as a central component of arts education.

Finally, the study discusses how educating towards an aesthetic experience actively involves students' capacities for agency, choice-making, multiple interpretations, empathy, meaning-making, and imaginative expression, and furthers the project of a democratic and emancipatory educational approach. The study illuminates actual aesthetic education practice in classrooms, analyzes its transaction with Greene's philosophical ideals, and explores aesthetic education as a vital approach in the wider field of urban education.

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## Chapter 1: Aesthetic Education Philosophy and Teaching Artist Practice

Aesthetic education is the type of arts education that has been practiced at Lincoln Center Institute for the Arts in Education since its founding in 1975. Throughout its existence, Lincoln Center Institute (LCI) has consciously endeavored to center its practice of aesthetic education around a particular philosophical view—that of Maxine Greene. Greene is the current "Philosopher-in-Residence" at LCI and was a central part of the organization's creation from the outset. Today, she and her ideas are still actively articulating and guiding the philosophical purposes and intents of the Institute, as part of its continuing evolution. Teaching artists (TAs)—professional, practicing artists who work with students and teachers in educational sites—are the primary agents who enact the practice of aesthetic education at LCI. The relationship between philosophy and practice explored in this study is an account of the particular philosophical stance articulated by Greene, and how it has affected the teaching of LCI TAs.

Though it is too simplistic to state that philosophy shapes practice, the intent of this study is to explore the relationship between the two as it occurs in one particular educational context. As Freire described his notion of praxis, human activity is both action and reflection, both theory and practice, operating simultaneously towards transformation (Freire, 1970). The philosophy-practice interaction at LCI occurs *between* individual teaching artists and philosophical ideas, but also *within* the larger frame of an arts education organization for which these artists work. Uniquely, both the teaching artists and the Institute have regular contact with Greene; thus the philosophy exists both in idea and in the living presence of a philosopher who, herself, continues to evolve and

develop. Greene is fond of saying, “I am what I am not yet,” indicating the way in which she sees herself as always in the process of becoming.

Just as Greene’s ideas can never be fixed in time, so the teaching artists and the practice of aesthetic education at LCI are in a constant process of developing, growing, and changing. As Scott Noppe-Brandon, the Executive Director at LCI, states in his recent introduction to an LCI publication (Holzer, 2007), “As an organization, LCI prides itself on being in a constant state of change and discovery.” Therefore, it is important to note that as an interpretive case study, this project will consider the work of LCI teaching artists from the perspective of a moment in time; the classroom observations and interviews that make up the qualitative research study all occurred in 2005. While Greene’s philosophical core is still at the heart of individual LCI teaching artist practice today, the Institute continues to shift in its thinking, its emphasis, and in the way it talks about its practice. This study’s attempts to articulate and describe both the philosophy and the practice are offered with the intent of clarifying and sophisticating understandings about aesthetic education at LCI, rather than defining either the philosophy or the practice for all time going forward. For, the organization is constantly moving and shifting its practices and programs in new directions—it is an institution that, like its Philosopher-in-Residence, is ever in the process of becoming.

It should be stated from the outset that this study does not include an exploration of one crucial aspect of the practice of aesthetic education at Lincoln Center Institute—namely, the contributions of classroom educators, whether primary, secondary or college-level. LCI is involved extensively in the field of teacher education through several

pathways: (1) directly with K-12 teachers in the New York City area in whose classrooms teaching artists regularly work; (2) in New York City college and university departments of education where partnerships with professors bring the practice of aesthetic education to pre-service teachers; and (3) through summer workshops and special consultancies where the practice of aesthetic education is shared with educators both nationally and internationally. In short, teachers (many times in direct collaboration with teaching artists in their classrooms) are actively involved in and integral to enacting aesthetic education with students. However, it is beyond the scope of this particular study to thoroughly include teacher understandings, practice, and contributions.

It is worth noting that in each case of teacher education in which the Institute is involved, teaching artists are central in the process; TAs are the individuals who carry out trainings, workshops, and staff development with educators, and they also partner together with teachers in classrooms in the New York City area. Teaching artists collaborate with appropriate Institute staff in carrying out this work (see a full discussion of the interaction between teaching artists and Institute staff in Chapter 2). But a specific choice has been made here to focus exclusively on the interaction of philosophy and practice as it is enacted in the work of teaching artists—the primary individuals who breathe life into Greene's philosophical ideas, with the caveat that educator contributions to the practice of aesthetic education are more than worthy of their own independent study.

***Philosophy versus Mission Statement or Methodology***

It is not unusual for many types of organizations to hold a philosophical perspective at the center of their work, if what is meant by philosophy is a kind of basic theory or viewpoint, or even a system of values out of which an organization operates. Mission statements often articulate these views and values and can serve as grounding for all institutional endeavors. It is a relatively more recent development, however, that *arts education* organizations have begun to think in this direction. The history of artists working with students in schools is rooted in the idea of individual artist residencies and performances, where artists have shared their particular areas of expertise (Remer, 2003). But in recent decades throughout this country, especially in urban centers, as arts *organizations* have begun to partner with schools, and as artists (often called teaching artists) are working *for* those organizations, the question of mission becomes an organizational, rather than a strictly individual, one.

Moreover, thinking about mission and values represents a shift for many arts organizations, given the long history of cultural institutions as "service providers." Arts education itself (whether taught by specialists, classroom teachers or through arts organizations) has historically occupied a peripheral educational position, as has been widely documented (e.g., Eisner, 1998b). For decades, there was a struggle for the arts to simply to have a place at the table where education was discussed. Not until the 1970s were there widespread substantial conversations with the arts taken seriously as a core component of education (Remer, 2003). This was the first significant shift away from a "go in and do a show" mentality that had dominated the efforts of arts organizations and

artists working in schools previously. Now that cultural organizations are unquestionably seated at the education table, many are asking significant and rigorous questions about educational purpose and practice. Certainly this type of purpose and mission statement, as well as the educational conversation that ensues, has a significant impact on the work that teaching artists do in classrooms. In fact, in many organizations the teaching artists themselves are central in the substance of these conversations (Remer, 2003).

However, I mean here to make a distinction between a statement of belief, or mission statement, and a complex body of philosophical thought. At LCI, Greene's philosophy is a deep well of sustained and evolving thinking about the nature of arts education, rather than a short condensed statement of priority. She writes of the possible, of the challenges that we must take seriously, she questions purposes, and guides according to a sophisticated understanding of what it means to have an aesthetic experience with a work of art; she speaks of why every student deserves to have such an experience (or several) as part of his education. Clearly, the philosophical perspective at the root of the Institute is much more than a type of mission statement. The question, then, becomes even more complex for LCI teaching artists. What does it mean for a *body* of philosophical work to be at the center of a teaching practice? Namely, how does aesthetic education philosophy, as articulated by Maxine Greene, transact with the education practice of teaching artists who work at Lincoln Center Institute? How does a philosophical stance both shape and respond to what teaching artists do?

Another distinction is worth making. In a 2005 Dana Foundation publication that showcases the work of ArtsConnection, a long-term arts education organization in New York City, Carol Morgan addresses a point that she calls "philosophy" directly (Morgan, 2005). With a long and distinguished record of arts education in New York City behind it, Morgan describes ArtsConnection's more recent move to adopt an "educational philosophy," rather than be a booking agent for individual artists who wish to work in schools. The articles in the report that follows look deeply at ArtsConnection's endeavors to build a community of artists committed to a reflective practice of inquiry-based learning. Educational ideas such as reflection and inquiry are at the heart of LCI's and many other educational organizations' practices as well. In fact, in 2005 Lincoln Center Institute published a document titled *Aesthetic Education Practice and Traditions: Education Traditions*, which highlights many educational theories and perspectives that have resonance with aesthetic education teaching practice (Holzer, 2005). While ArtsConnection and LCI are certainly tackling important educational thinking and having significant discussions, I still mean to make a distinction between such endeavors and the one undertaken in this study. The distinction here is between philosophy, a body of philosophical work, and other types of educational methodological theory. As at ArtsConnection, to have a faculty of teaching artists who are engaged in thinking together about teaching practice that includes reflection and inquiry, while unquestionably valuable, does not necessarily constitute a philosophically based practice. It should also be said that Greene's work, itself, is not a discussion of educational practice in any concrete form. In fact, her writings do not take up classroom methodology or "how-to"

approaches. Rather, the intention and primary work of teaching artists and staff at Lincoln Center Institute is to create a practice that is consistent with her philosophical ideas.

The arts today, like all areas of education, are currently feeling the pressures of standardization and restricted approaches to curriculum. It is especially easy for cultural and arts organizations to succumb to these pressures without consideration of their own purposes. Indeed, the arts, so long regarded as fringe or ancillary to "mainstream" educational efforts, are especially vulnerable to such pressures and their attendant funding implications (Eisner, 1998b). Amy Gutmann reminds us that without strong theoretical stances and ideas about purpose, education is subject to all manner of political and moral aims, some of which may be decidedly undemocratic (Gutmann, 1987). As she articulates, we need both philosophy and practice in education—one without the other is visionless. The field of arts education is often happy *not* to dwell in the realm of philosophy and theory. Methodology is a more comfortable place to focus, and, even more often, service-providing and justifying existence by way of literacy and numeracy is the modus operandi. This study may serve as an exploration of what it has meant for individual teaching artists from one organization to have maintained a commitment to a practice firmly rooted in a particular philosophical vision—a group who have for over 30 years consistently oriented themselves towards inventing a practice that brings to life complex philosophical ideas.

Aesthetic education practice at LCI has certainly grown, changed, and responded to its educational and political environments. Yet, without a philosophical core, the

importance of the aesthetic experience may have long ago been washed away on the tides of budget cuts, public relations concerns, or other educational trends. It would have been easy for aesthetic education to become a simplified, more "school-friendly" term. "Philosophy" at LCI is not a mission and not a methodology. Instead, manifested in the work of many individual teaching artists and educators, it has remained a complex commitment, a constant intentional creation of a practice centered on uncovering Greene's sense of an aesthetic experience.

### *Overview*

LCI was one of the nation's first arts organizations to begin talking about philosophy overtly. This study is concerned with what it is about the philosophy itself that distinguishes, still, the practice of aesthetic education, and how LCI teaching artists embody this philosophy in their work. The Institute is in the midst of its own ongoing process of articulating aesthetic education history and practice. Recent LCI publications such as *Aesthetic Education Practice and Traditions: Education Traditions* (Holzer, 2005) and *Aesthetic Education, Inquiry, and the Imagination* (Holzer, 2007) reflect such an endeavor. While this study constitutes one more contributing voice in an already ongoing conversation at the Institute, it speaks from the very particular perspective of the teaching artist, while also bringing to bear philosophical, theoretical and historical perspectives outside the main purview of LCI.

Chapter 2 looks at the context of teaching artist work, including historical and situational aspects of the Institute itself. Chapter 3 takes up the term, aesthetic education, including individuals and organizations that have used the words with both similar and

sometimes contradictory intents. Chapter 4 articulates the philosophical perspective that underlies aesthetic education at LCI, with attention closely paid to Greene's work and influences. Greene weaves understandings from the fields of philosophical aesthetics, philosophy of education, and existentialism, bringing them together in a particular vision of aesthetic education centered on the study of works of art. More specifically, she draws from John Dewey's articulations of experience and transaction, and she connects these with existential notions of freedom, self-identification, and incompleteness. Ultimately, she sees aesthetic education as part of a larger framework of democratic practice and social justice. This may be the most urgent issue for our urban schools. Greene herself, as well as many LCI teaching artists, view aesthetic education as a vital approach to countering indifference—as an antidote to hopelessness and passivity. Greene allies herself with other emancipatory educators, and school reformers (Greene, 2001b), as she believes that imaginative, reflective encounters with the arts begin to free individuals and awaken them to their own agency, a necessary aspect of all education that endeavors to nurture wide-awake, participatory individuals. Yet, to understand an argument for aesthetic education's larger connections to social justice and democracy, we must first come to clear understandings about what the actual practice involves—what it looks like in real classrooms with students, teachers, and teaching artists. Without research that illuminates what teaching artists and students are doing in classrooms, the field will never understand, beyond assertions, how Greene's philosophy is embodied in practice and how it might actively link to issues of social justice and individual agency.

Chapter 5 discusses the methodological approach of the study. Within an interpretive case study framework, the research involves several qualitative methods (including surveys, observations, and video-taping of classroom teaching sessions with follow-up interviews) that directly explore teaching artist practice. It also includes historical research, including interviews, which place Lincoln Center Institute and the history of teaching artists in a larger context. The interviewees are individuals (Maxine Greene; Scott Noppe-Brandon, LCI Executive Director; and Cathryn Williams, LCI Director of Strategic Alliances) who are essential to understanding the philosophical perspectives in which the Institute is steeped, as well as the history of the Institute's endeavors to enact a practice rooted in these perspectives.

Chapters 6, 7, and 8 explore actual teaching artist practice, focusing on three experienced LCI teaching artists in theatre, music and the visual arts. The chapters investigate the complexities of the relationship between philosophy and on-the-ground teaching enacted by these teaching artists. They also draw significantly from the experience and expertise of the author, a LCI music teaching artist from 1996-2005. It is at LCI that I first encountered the work of Maxine Greene and began my own long relationship with the idea of educating towards an aesthetic experience. I write very much from my own practice, insights, and musical way of understanding, and very much from my own interpretation of Greene's ideas. In fact, my research with teaching artists as well as my interpretive stance is my own life, to a large extent, as I have spent nearly a decade nurturing music teaching artistry through this particular philosophy. I have also been uniquely fortunate to experience the philosophical ideas of aesthetic education through

constant personal interaction with Greene, as well as through years of reading her works and attending her lectures and salons. Finally, Chapter 9 considers the relevance of the study for teaching artists, the Institute, and the wider field of arts education—particularly in urban contexts.

The discussion that follows illuminates a particular vision of aesthetic education and is written from a specific vantage point, that of a teaching artist who has been steeped in over ten years of endeavoring to give form to its ideas. It brings the aesthetic education philosophy of Maxine Greene into direct conversation with what LCI teaching artists are actually doing in classrooms.

# Chapter 2: Context of the Study

## *Context: Three Layers*

Before looking deeply at aesthetic education practice with teaching artists and students—the actual enactment of Greene's philosophical ideas described in this study—it is important to consider the context of the practice from several perspectives. First, it is crucial to examine the structure of Lincoln Center Institute as the site of enactment. Here, there are at least three discernable layers that interact directly with Greene's philosophical ideas. On a macro-level, there is the large organization that is the Institute itself. On a meso-level, there is a full-time staff of administrators (some of whom were formerly teaching artists) who play major roles in how local practice is shaped. And on the micro-level, there are the teaching artists themselves who interact most directly with students and teachers. O'Connor, Lewis, and Mueller's discussion in *Researching African-American Educational Experiences,* though written to examine other content, is useful in terms of thinking about the three-level context of LCI (O'Connor, Lewis & Mueller, 2003). They write about multi-level ecological research that moves between meta, meso, and micro levels, and speak of examining the interactions and influences of these levels, historically and contextually, as a way to unpack experience and how it is shaped. At LCI, Maxine Greene's ideas move within a constantly interacting three-layered structure in an intricate choreography.

Therefore, an examination of teaching artist practice needs to take account of the complex context in which it exists, as well as the movement of Greene's philosophy among, through, and around these macro, meso and micro layers. The three layers change

and shape each other constantly; they also exist and are affected by larger contexts, such as the New York City Department of Education. Historically, it is also vital to understand something of how Maxine Greene's ideas came to be embedded at Lincoln Center Institute in order to understand current teaching artist practice there. From the micro-perspective in particular, it is also important to understand at least the basic history of the teaching artist role in national education, in order to apprehend the practice of the specific LCI artists whose practice in aesthetic education is being considered here.

### *Macro Layer: Lincoln Center Institute*

Looking first to the macro-layer of organization, Lincoln Center Institute is an educational branch of the renowned Manhattan-based cultural organization, Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. Though many of the Lincoln Center constituents, such as the Metropolitan Opera Guild and the New York Philharmonic, have their own independent education programs, Lincoln Center Institute is the only member of the larger organization that is solely devoted to arts education. LCI teaching artists in dance, music, theatre, the visual arts, film, and architecture collaborate with educators to create experiences for students that focus on the study of a particular work of art—a play, a concert, or a painting, for example. Annually, the LCI aesthetic education programs serve over 200,000 students in K-12 schools throughout New York City’s five boroughs, Nassau and Suffolk Counties on Long Island, Westchester County and New Jersey. The Institute also works with ten under-graduate and graduate level teacher education programs at area colleges and universities. Further, LCI offers summer workshops involving over 1,800 educators from around the world. LCI, through its practice of

aesthetic education, has become a model for more than 26 similar arts education organizations around the nation and the globe, including institutes in Hong Kong and Mexico City. Unique as a cultural organization not only in its philosophical grounding, LCI also wields international influence and promotes pedagogical transformation through its involvement with teacher education programs (Lincoln Center Institute, 2006).

Particularly in urban settings, the last several decades have seen a great rise in cultural organizations working with schools to provide arts education (Remer, 1996). Yet this relationship can often, though certainly not always, be characterized as one of arts organization as "service-provider." If a school needs a music program, either to supplement its own (or instead of its own), it might turn to the local symphony; if it needs an innovative approach to literacy, it might consult one of the city's theatre groups that specializes in teaching literacy skills through acting or play righting; if its social studies curriculum content includes a study of ancient Egypt, the school might collaborate with a nearby museum that houses an Egyptian collection. Cultural organizations often shape their education programs around what they perceive to be the community's educational needs, as much as upon their own cultural or artistic strengths and merits (Hooper-Greenhill, 1999; Remer, 1996). There are numerous excellent arts education programs that have sprung out of such impulses.

However, LCI, in contrast to a service providing approach, has consistently endeavored to hone a practice that enacts philosophical ideas. Centered on the study of particular works of art (primarily in theatre, music, dance and the visual arts), LCI's practice seeks to nurture students' ability to actively engage with those works, with

themselves, and with others as a community of perceivers. While maintaining a focus on this pursuit, and a belief in its profound educational value, the Institute has sought to partner with K-12 schools with either a small group of teachers interested in the approach (*Partnership Schools*) or an entire faculty of teachers where the principal has committed to whole school involvement (*Focus Schools*). Currently, there are nine Focus Schools in New York City, serving 5,000 K-12 students, a great majority of whom represent minority groups and, socioecomomically, are eligible for free lunches in urban schools. There are more than 130 Partnership Schools, serving K-12 students within a 30-mile radius of New York City (Lincoln Center Institute, 2006). Also, LCI works in colleges and universities where faculty members and departments of education have prioritized aesthetic education practice as part of their teacher candidate curriculum (*Teacher Education Collaborative*). That is to say, LCI has sought to create partnerships with institutions and educators who are interested in, and committed to, aesthetic education and its particular philosophical vision. For a cultural organization to say that a philosophical vision (distinct from a mission statement, as has been previously clarified) shapes its practice, is, in fact, extremely rare. The LCI aesthetic education approach is in sharp contrast to sending artists into schools for residencies that either focus exclusively on the individual artist's area of expertise or that gear their programs towards helping schools meet other curricular needs. It also stands in contrast to organizations that espouse a particular teaching methodology.

The word “partnership” has been used consistently since the early 1990s to refer to most collaborations between schools and cultural or community organizations (Remer,

1996). But the word is attached to a variety of working relationships, very few built upon mutual philosophical alignment and understanding. As previously stated, “service-providing,” even when the services are of the highest quality, is the most typical approach. For cultural organizations simply to refer to themselves with the language of “partnership” and “arts partner” is not enough to define a practice, let alone a purpose. Too often it is simply a nice rhetoric that renames the service-providing activities.

Because of its deep philosophical commitment, LCI seeks educational collaborators that value engagement with works of art as a core educational idea. Its partner schools are numerous and various, and within each individual relationship there is deep probing of how the study of works of art might weave into the day-to-day classroom lives of the students at these sites. Far from a standardized approach, it is a highly customized one. This does not mean the partnerships are consistently perfect of with challenges. Never-the-less, the bedrock of the collaboration is a commitment to purpose and philosophy that is held by both the school and the Institute. On this basis, commitment to the notion of “partnership” is constituted at LCI.

Mark Schubart, founder of the Lincoln Center Institute, asked in an interview for advice he might give to other arts-in-education organizations, said:

> The advice I would give to other folks is that the number one priority is philosophy—the concept, the focus . . . . One of the greatest problems that I see with the arts in education today is that people still don't understand that education in the arts is not one thing. It is many things. People seem incapable of sorting that out. . . You don't teach language. You teach spelling, grammar, literature, composition. Yet people talk about the arts as if they were one thing. Any organization has to pick out its task and do that one thing rather than try to do everything and shift constantly with the winds. It takes many kinds of arts organizations to do it (Remer, 1996, p. 160).

True to Schubart's words, since it inception the Institute has endeavored to center its practice on Greene's particular philosophical ideas of aesthetic education, and it collaborates with schools and institutions that share this commitment.

Finally, it should be emphasized that LCI operates under the umbrella of the much larger Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, overseen by its own executive staff to which the Institute reports. This is a complexity at the macro-layer that informs every aspect of work at LCI. It also means that the iconic "Lincoln Center" name is associated with LCI and that the Institute is connected to a common *perception* (whether founded or unfounded is irrelevant) of Lincoln Center as an "authority" in the worlds of opera, ballet, symphonic music and other, some might say, elitist art forms. Chapter 3 will take up more directly some of the elite historical baggage associated with the term "aesthetic education." Yet even the name "Lincoln Center" can be seen to embed LCI in a nest of elite cultural connotation. LCI may seem to contain, at least on the surface, a built-in tension between Greene's philosophy as part of an emancipatory educational project and elitist views of art.

In truth, the works of art studied through LCI are not generally produced or affiliated with other groups at Lincoln Center, unless by special arrangement (for instance, a collaboration exists now between Chamber Music at Lincoln Center and LCI). In fact, LCI commissions its own theatre productions and searches for works of art in all disciplines that represent varied genres of creative endeavor and diverse cultural perspectives. The Institute also collaborates with many of New York City's art museums in the study of visual works of art (including the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the

Guggenheim Museum, among others). Furthermore, as this study will illuminate, it is the *practice* of aesthetic education at LCI, rather than the *content* of the works of art themselves that most strongly speaks to issues of agency and of democracy. None-the-less, the macro-layer of the Institute exists within a perceived history and connection to what some might label cultural elitism.

***Micro Layer: The Teaching Artist***

A recent publication from the Center for Arts Policy at Columbia College, Chicago, *Putting the Arts in the Picture: Reframing Education in the 21st Century* (Rabkin & Redmond, 2004), makes the claim that despite a current policy environment that has eroded arts education in schools nationwide, there have been extraordinary advances in the field over the last decade—many of them involving teaching artists. TAs, the study claims, are involved in a very high proportion of these nationwide efforts in schools across the country and are redefining the roles that arts play in public education in many innovative ways. However, we know very little about teaching artists and their work and there is almost nothing comprehensive written directly about them. For example, in *Framing Education as Art: The Octopus Has a Good Day* (Davis, 2005), Jessica Davis attempts a thorough chronicle of the history of American arts education, yet includes only small mention of the teaching artist. Currently, the Center of Arts Policy is embarking upon the first serious study of TAs and their work. Called the Teaching Artist Research Project (TARP), the study will collect a wide range of data about TAs in multiple cities, beginning with Boston and Chicago. Among other important areas of investigation, the data will include answers to questions such as: Who does this work?

What are their educational and artistic backgrounds? How have they learned the skills of teaching artistry? What are the terms and conditions of their work? It will be the first important examination of its kind, yet it still will not take up teaching artist *practice* in any substantial format.

However, in 2003, recognizing the growing work of TAs across the country, a peer-reviewed scholarly journal was begun, the *Teaching Artist Journal,* as a specific forum to discuss the expanding roles and complex work of the teaching artist. In its inaugural issue, founding editor Eric Booth (one of the early theatre teaching artists at LCI) examined the term "teaching artist" and interviewed colleagues in the field for their personal definitions and comments about what it means to be a TA. As part of his interview research, Booth elicited a response from the former Artistic Director at Lincoln Center Institute, June Dunbar. Booth asked her about the anecdotal history that it was she who coined the term "teaching artist" in the early 1970s. She replied:

> I guess I was the originator of the term "Teaching Artist." I came up with the words as a reaction to the dreadful one used by my predecessor at what was then known as the Education Department at Lincoln Center. The words they used to describe the activities of artists in schools sounded to me like a description for a typewriter repairman, plumber or an irritating educationalese term: Resource Professional. Anyway, my term seemed more direct and specific, and it has stuck (Booth, 2003, p. 6).

Booth points out that "Resource Professional" was a term inherited from the federal government grant that established the Lincoln Center program in 1960, and he goes on to discuss the importance in the new term—"Teaching Artist"—of putting the word artist at the center. Another interviewee in Booth's article states that, "A teaching artist is an artist who considers her art practice and teaching practice to be integrally connected within her

creative process (Booth, 2003, p.10)." In the same article, my own definition appears as one of the nineteen interviewed:

> When I talk to others who call themselves Teaching Artists, the biggest challenge that they cite is trying to balance performance, or art making, with teaching. It is the essential struggle and yet, most of these TAs wouldn't have it any other way. It would be one kind of a choice to be an artist who occasionally teaches a workshop or seminar, or has an occasional "exposure" presence in a classroom. But a TA has made a larger commitment to the endeavor, even though it presents professional challenges in terms of organizing time and energy. I think many of us feel the TA role enables us to share our art form in a unique way—it reveals a different side of our art than a performance or exhibition might—or even just 'showing' students what we do. Serious teaching enables us to share our "art-think," our art-making process (Booth, 2003, p. 10).

Teaching artists have been central to the education process at LCI since its inception. Indeed, the origins of the term are rooted in this organization. Today, however, teaching artistry, and the term TA, has spread throughout the nation.

### *A Brief Historical Perspective: Macro and Micro in a Broader Context*

In order to understand the teaching artist as a particular player in the broader arts education field, it is worthwhile to consider some historical material that helps place such a study in context. The teaching artist is a rather recent phenomenon in K-12 pubic education. It may be said that all American arts education in schools has usually occurred, throughout its history, in one of two ways: (1) through arts specialist teachers within a school, or (2) through partnership between schools and cultural organizations and/or professional artists who come from outside the school system (often these artists work for a cultural organization). The scope, quality, and varying purposes of partnership arts programs are widely varying, as is the quality of arts specialist instruction in the schools. It is not entirely valuable or possible to compare these two approaches, specialist

and partnership, directly to each other, nor is it the intention of this project. But because they both exist together—sometimes in the same school, and certainly simultaneously in our national educational culture—they therefore always exist in relationship to one another. In some cases the relationship is a healthy one and in others, it is more alienating than collegial. However, it is difficult to look exclusively at one of these approaches without at least being aware of the other. Consideration of teaching artists who currently work for Lincoln Center Institute needs to be viewed, at least briefly, in this larger, more comprehensive context of arts education.

Perhaps the more traditional and better known of the two types of arts education is the arts specialist within the school. The specialist first emerged in the 19th century, a formative educational era for America with great changes and reorganization of school structures and purposes (Remer, 1990). It was also the century of industrialization in this country, and schools reflected and reacted to the times in deep, far-reaching ways. There was little broad-based thought or consideration of the arts in education during these years (Tyack, 1974). But there were, never the less, pockets of interest and experimentation in the arts in some areas of the country. Boston, so often the early city of educational leadership, produced America's first music teacher, Lowell Mason, when he volunteered to teach at the Hawes School in 1837-38. The following year the School Committee voted to officially hire and fund music teachers, in effect, beginning this country's tradition of music specialists in the schools (Remer, 1990, p.209). Towards the end of the 19th century there was an interest in visual arts education, especially drawing, albeit for more industrial or vocational purpose—often for training artisans and draftsmen for

industry. Again, Massachusetts led the way and in 1864 was the first state to legislate a requirement for drawing in the school curriculum (Remer, 1990, p. 209). Richard Cary reminds us in his critical survey of art in schools, however, that much of this early arts education in music and the visual arts was weighted in the economic instrumentalism (job training) and moral instrumentalism prevalent in almost all public school education of the times (Cary, 1998, p. 97).

Looking now to cultural organizations, museums and symphony orchestras have often considered part of their purpose as education of the general public. They have also had the longest history of arts partnerships with schools. For example, in New York City, the Metropolitan Museum of Art began collaborative programs with schools, such as the training of public high school teachers, as early as 1880 (Tomkins, 1970, p. 210). Historically, many of the large American museums founded during the 19th century were understood, largely, as educational establishments. In the museums' eyes, they allowed the public to educate themselves by providing the resources with which people might acquire knowledge. Of course, museum administrators, curators, and others in prominent positions of power were deciding which objects—which kinds of knowledge—were appropriate for the public to encounter and "acquire." But the purpose of the institutions, themselves, was in large measure to educate (Hooper-Greenhill, 1999). Certainly these same institutions have grown and evolved to embrace a very different notion of education today, many of them currently sustaining innovative programs for students, schools, teachers, and the general public. However it is worth noting the original impulses around education that were present at the founding of many cultural organizations. While today

may appear different, there are sedimentary layers of historical influence at work even as the large museums and arts organizations move forward with changed ideas of their educational roles.

In the early decades of the 20th Century, there were also many community-based organizations that contributed to a general climate of increased awareness and interest in arts education, even though they may not have been directly partnering with schools. These organizations included the WPA of Roosevelt's New Deal Administration, local arts councils, the American Symphony Orchestra League and the Association of Junior Leagues (Remer, 1990).

The idea of arts education did not take off nationally, however, until the post-war 1940's when parents were seeking a more full education for their children, one that, they thought would allow their offspring to enjoy all the benefits America had to offer. In those days, the professional associations, Music Educators National Conference (MENC), the National Art Education Association (NAEA), and the Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (AHPRED), (which includes the National Dance Association (NDA)), were all divisions of the National Education Association. It was not until 1972 that the NEA split into separate organizations (Remer, 1990). However, although precedents for school specialists had been set and although this national organization for arts educators had been formed, in 1960 most of the visual art and music education in schools was still carried out by the classroom teacher. It was not until after 1963, that the growth of arts specialists in the schools seemed to increase dramatically and somewhat inexplicably (Remer, 1990). Jane Remer, among others, has hypothesized

that this trend could have been due to the rise of teachers' union contracts that gave classroom teachers coverage or preparation time (Remer, 1990). The specialist, in effect, was a way to "relieve" the classroom teacher's duties for these periods. Sadly, this is still a common rationale, reinforcing the marginal or add-on view of the arts that Elliot Eisner, among many others, often reacts against so strongly (e.g., Eisner, 1998b). Even where outstanding arts specialists are working in good schools, the nature and history of this "relief" structure often places the arts outside of the broader curricular aims and content of schooling. The approach can also foster a disconnect between arts specialist and classroom teacher. The arts may occupy a fringe status (whether well-taught with imagination, skill, and integrity, or not) even though they are led by specialists who are part of the school community itself, due simply to the segregated structure in which the arts and arts educators operate. Without discounting the high quality of arts education by specialists that has occurred historically and continues in many schools today, it is important to note that, whatever other philosophical or societal values place the arts in a second-string position in our schools, the actual *structures* of school arts instruction (including the arts specialist) have often not been conceived in a fundamental and purposeful way.

Over time, schools have turned to arts partnerships outside their own walls for many reasons, some of which include: bolstering or supplementing already existing school arts programs, offering alternatives to school arts programs, and filling the gap where no school arts programs exist. Interestingly, while searching outside the school for art opportunities may seem to indicate an even more marginal or "extra-curricular"

approach, these outer organizations and artists have often sought quite consciously to connect in meaningful ways to the core of the school community and curriculum. Cultural organizations have often, especially recently, established a connected and central relationship to classroom teachers, students, and content, while at the same time maintaining the distinctness of an art form. Of course, these goals have varied widely throughout history and according to organization and individual artist. But such arts partnerships can be, and historically have been, a significant means of bringing the arts into close relationship with classroom teachers and other curricular concepts. They have served, in some ways and in some instances, to bring the arts a bit more out of the margins and into the mainstream of school thinking and imagination. In part this may be due to their freedom from the kinds of in-school strictures and structures that can constrain arts specialists. Partnerships can respect, while at the same time reinvent, various school structures, such as arts classes "relieving" classroom teachers. At LCI, for example, teaching artists collaborate *with* classroom teachers rather than work during a teacher's preparation period. As Eisner notes, the cultural resources and organizations (the "palaces" and museums) that engage in arts partnerships are often very highly regarded, and are thus able to occupy a special and honored position in the school culture (Eisner, 1998b). These institutions bring a view of the arts as vital, necessary and vibrant into a school community that might not otherwise embody such a perspective. This perception, however, can conflict with an opposite view: that of elitist, out of touch, high-art Euro-centric culture as reproduced by the "palaces." It is a split personality tension in which organizations such as Lincoln Center Institute often find themselves situateed.

Thus, even today, as LCI teaching artists enter classrooms, they are associated with the name “Lincoln Center” in a complicated, historically layered manner—the Lincoln Center name may both de-marginalize artistic studies, and at the same time, alienate students and teachers. The micro-layer and macro-layer of the organization are in a constant, complicated association, both positively and in a relationship that may evoke tension.

Returning to an historical progression of events, however, the boom in the 1960s saw the greatest rise in partnerships between schools and cultural organizations or individual artists (Remer, 2003). Partnerships have a shorter and significantly more difficult history to trace than that of the school arts specialist, with a dearth of material written about them. By the mid-20th century, two giants in pioneering in-school services and programs had emerged: Young Audiences, Inc., begun in 1952 in Baltimore, and Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, begun in 1960 (Remer, 1990). Both of these organizations concentrated their efforts on bringing high quality performances to school children and teachers, while at the same time piloting programs that placed artists in schools for workshops, lectures, demonstrations, and residencies. The decade of the 1960s saw the first broad national legislation and federal leadership for artists and arts organizations who engaged in educational pursuits (Remer, 1990). Young Audiences chapters opened across the nation, and Lincoln Center was the first of the nation’s performing arts centers to establish an Education Department, with “Resource Professionals,” offering performances, materials, and services (Remer, 2003). By the end of the 1960s, artists who worked in schools began to shift from “one-shot” performances

or demonstrations to more extended residencies. By the 1970s, both the arts and artists who taught in schools were seen as the subjects for comprehensive school change, and organizations who specialized in designing, developing, and offering arts in education programs were now bountiful (Remer, 1990, 2003).

In 1975, following the 1972 publishing of Mark Schubart's study, Lincoln Center Institute entered the scene. LCI, as will be explored in Chapter 4, was created largely as a reaction and response to many of the prevalent "exposure" arts education experiences—including the original Lincoln Center program. It is not difficult to imagine that, like its relatives (organizations such as the big museums and the New York Philharmonic, for example) Lincoln Center entered the educational space in the 1960s with the historical notions that exposing children to "good art" was in and of itself educationally valuable. And while the early days of arts efforts by Lincoln Center and Young Audiences were valuable in putting cultural organizations on the map as participators in public education, it is vital to note that Lincoln Center Institute was created out of a sense of moving beyond, and out of a notion that teaching artists and works of art might do something more vital than "expose." In fact, very quickly, teaching artists become integral to Schubart and Greene's vision, and the term itself came into use at the Institute.

By the 1980s, many cultural organizations, large and small, including museums and the performing arts were hiring (and training) teaching artists to develop and deliver arts programming (Remer, 2003, p. 75). In fact, arguments began to be made that visiting artists should not replace school specialists, and some tensions between specialists and TAs arose. These trends continued into the 1990s as artists who taught became

increasingly professionalized and in demand, even while the national emphasis shifted to standards and standardized testing (Remer, 2003). And during the 2000s, while arts in education programs continue to be threatened by the high stakes testing environment, teaching artists and arts organizations have increased their own professional development and have begun to tackle central issues in education, including assessment and evaluation, in more rigorous ways (Remer, 2003). In 2001, Lincoln Center Institute established the first full-time teaching artist positions, with allotted time off for art making and professional artistic life. The field of teaching artistry continues to thrive and grow and LCI continues to play a leadership role in TA professionalization.

### *Macro-Micro Bridge: The Meso-Layer*

It is evident that LCI teaching artists and the organization itself are in a dynamic relationship, and have been throughout their history together. Moreover, Greene's philosophical ideas were not simply a cornerstone laid at the outset; they continue to influence decision-making within the organization itself, as well as TA practice on the ground. These ideas move back and forth among the macro and micro layers.

For example, in the three years since I have left the Institute as a full-time TA, a shift in thinking and a new emphasis on the imagination and imaginative teaching and learning has occurred. This is clear in the language of all the written materials from the Institute as well as on the website (Holzer, 2005, 2007; Lincoln Center Institute, n.d.). It is Greene who first began writing passionately about the imagination and its role in aesthetic education. So while this shift is being initiated by management staff at the Institute, not originating with the teaching artists themselves, it is a shift that clearly

responds to Greene's philosophical ideas (Greene, 1995). The shift has already affected, and will likely continue to affect TA practice in meaningful ways. Thus, practice is not always a direct interchange between teaching artists and philosophical ideas. Rather, there is often an intermediary level of individuals involved in the connection between philosophy and practice. This level may be seen as the meso-layer.

### *Meso-Layer: Full-Time Administrative Staff at LCI*

Currently, there are seven senior management team members at LCI (including an Executive Director, Director of Educational Development, Director of Strategic Alliances, Director of Resources and Technology, Development Officer, Production General Manager, and Assistant Business Director), as well as 27 other full time staff members (Lincoln Center Institute, 2006). The staff members interact with teaching artists in many different ways, with several of them involved directly in TA practice—the most active of these being Program Managers and Assistant Directors. Several of these staff members used to be teaching artists themselves and gained their understanding of Greene's philosophical ideas through their own teaching practice. Increasingly, however, administrative staff come from outside sites and contexts and learns about the philosophical underpinnings at the Institute through their administrative experience.

For example, in a personal interview, the Director of Strategic Alliances, Cathryn Williams, shared with me her own introduction to the Institute, through her training and audition as a dance TA in the 1980s. She brought many skills as an educator and performer, yet she remembers being "awed" by the LCI approach. Most striking, she says, was the emphasis on perception, which seemed very new to her, and which most

attracted her. Looking back, she says she was “ripe” to encounter this philosophy (personal communication, 2005). She has carried her evolving understandings of the philosophy and practice of aesthetic education through her various roles at the Institute—beginning as a teaching artist and including her current senior position, in which she is in charge of training for all teaching artists, as well as significant projects that share LCI’s practice of aesthetic education with educators both nationally and internationally. Hers is a career-long engagement with both philosophy and practice that influences all aspects of her work. Significantly, she has a strong impact on how new teaching artists and new educators first encounter the ideas of aesthetic education.

Williams is perhaps more steeped in issues of practice than many members of the staff, though many do have interesting and varied stories about how they first encountered and became involved with Greene’s philosophical ideas. While it is beyond the scope of this study to discuss these stories, it is important to mention their significance. Because staff is involved with teaching artists in ways that have direct influence on how practice is enacted, such as assigning work (including indicating focus of work or particular missions in certain contexts), discussing lesson plans, designing courses, workshops and special programs, and collaborating on TA staff development, the meso-layer of staff understanding of aesthetic education philosophy is as significant as the TAs’.

While the ways in which the meso and micro-levels interact are numerous, it is several specific examples can be described. From the earliest days of the Institute, initial TA training has been an immersion experience. That is, TA candidates learn first by

participating as learners in workshops led by other TA colleagues. They gain understanding by immersing in the learning experience themselves, and by analyzing their own learning in order to uncover elements of both practice and philosophy. While it is crucial that new TAs are primarily learning from the peer-to-peer experience of participating in workshops led by experienced TAs, it is also significant that Institute staff have designed a detailed flow, or agenda, of experiences that add to a cumulative understanding, and that they serve as key facilitators in helping TA candidates reflect upon and understand their experiences. After immersion as participants, prospective TAs audition in a teaching situation where they reverse roles to lead an aesthetic education experience for others. Both the roles of TAs and staff in this training process are interdependent, equally valuable and imaginative, and crucial to the process. At its best this is a collaborative team. From the moment of the initial training, a LCI TA's understanding of practice and philosophy is shaped both by other TAs as well as Institute staff. This process will continue in various permutations throughout the staff development opportunities offered at the Institute for all practicing TAs. Sometimes these development experiences are weighted towards being TA-designed and led, and sometimes (more frequently in recent years) staff designed and led. But there is almost always some degree of intricate interaction between the two levels.

Another case might be termed an "institutional shift." In the history of LCI there were several defining moments of direction change or direction initiation. While the shift and change is often collectively grappled with, the shift itself may be instigated from the top layers of management, as revealed in a conversation with Executive Director, Scott

Noppe-Brandon. At a point in his early tenure, he became increasingly uncomfortable with the fact that aesthetic education at LCI did not take contextual information (e.g. historical background, artist information, and cultural context, among other aspects) into account in rigorous, serious ways. This was not an idea that came from the ground of teaching artist practice, but rather from the Executive Director himself. He undertook an institutional shift that involved a community inquiry into the issue (personal communication, 2005). Staff and teaching artists were invited to explore how contextual information could be woven into lessons in ways that enhanced, rather than blocked, the aesthetic experience. The incorporation of contextual material was not received without tension, and at times, rejection, by some teaching artists. But as a community, LCI struggled together to think about how the use of contextual information could change their collective practice. It was also a decision that ultimately supported the underlying philosophical ideas rather than constricted them.

Sometime prior to the focus on contextual information, the idea of reflection was also introduced as an institutional shift; the specifics of this shift will be taken up more thoroughly in Chapters 6 and 7. But both of these cases involve the meso-layer of LCI staff prioritizing an idea that indelibly shaped TA practice. TAs, then, taught themselves *how* to enact reflective practice and use of contextual information, in keeping with aesthetic education philosophical beliefs, while they worked with staff to refine their ideas. This collaborative invention and innovation around ideas represents the evolutionary, non-fixed nature of aesthetic education practice at LCI. It is also important to note that at each step, the Institute (both the individuals within and the collective

organization) returns to Greene's writing and thinking to hold itself accountable to her philosophical ideas.

A final example of TAs and staff working together to shape practice occurred in 2004-2006 with a special project, the Teaching Artist Mentoring Project—TAMP, that sought to find the language to name core ideas of aesthetic education at LCI. Aesthetic education was articulated, in this project, as a process of inquiry that includes:

- Art making
- Asking of questions
- Reflection
- Contextual Information

In other words, aesthetic education learning includes these elements woven together in imaginative ways. These words came about through the TAM Project, which convened teaching artists and staff members from aesthetic education institutes across the country, thinking and working together to articulate common understandings. It was a meso-micro cross-level process that, in some ways, named what was already happening in practice. Yet in other ways, it shaped future practice merely by its articulation. Having been a part of the process, I remember there was a specific choice not to define the words further—and to allow them to give insight into key elements of practice without being prescriptive or pre-defined. Since that time, many TAs, educators, and staff members have worked with the core ideas in meaningful and rigorous ways. As the teaching artist practice is described in the following chapters, the ideas articulated in this core will be at work, as

well as highlighted through analysis. More importantly, the study will also show how the core elements relate to Greene's philosophical ideas.

There are many other examples of macro-meso-micro interaction at LCI that have a direct bearing on TA practice. It is important to say that while these relationships today (most especially the meso-micro interaction) continue to be collaborative and significant, they are not without tension. That is to say, there are TAs who feel they are sometimes asked to fulfill assignments that have built in factors working against central philosophical principles of aesthetic education. As well, there are staff members who, having read TA lesson plans or seen their previous work, may feel that a particular TA has missing links of understanding about the kind of practice that might best fulfill aesthetic education philosophical ideas. It can be a two-way disconnect around understandings of philosophy and practice. And, of course, there are mild bumps along this road, and, at times, major breakdowns.

There are both historical and hierarchical factors that seem to influence such tensions. At the beginnings of the Institute, and throughout much of its history, there was a much smaller meso-level of staff at LCI, and thus, less meso-micro interaction over actual lesson ideas and enacting practice. While staff was always involved in the initial training of TAs and continued staff development, teaching artists had, historically, more autonomy over how they manifested their philosophical understandings in their teaching practice with students and educators in classrooms (teaching artist interviews, 2005). I myself, remember that in most of my early years at the Institute as a part-time teaching artist, there was an environment charged with the excitement of a community engaged in

an adventure together; it felt as though we were all inventing ways to bring Greene's philosophy into a coherent practice, and we were generously sharing these ideas with each other (whether we were staff or TA). Ultimately, however, we were enacting these ideas as individuals in classrooms of students. As the Institute has grown, the general spirit has changed. It feels more suspicious, more full of doubt and stress, less inventive and collaborative, and less charged with the vibe of an exciting adventure (teaching artist interviews, 2005). As well, there is a clear hierarchical arrangement now in place with staff such as Program Managers and Assistant Directors. While there are many reasons why this is necessary for the growth of the Institute and the scope of its ambitions, it is a shift that still sits uncomfortably with both staff and teaching artists, especially those TAs that have been working for the Institute for many years (teaching artist interviews, 2005).

The relationship between the micro and meso level at the Institute is often, though certainly not always, complex and difficult, as well as invigorating and rewarding As the number of meso-level staff increases— many of whom bring deep understandings of philosophy and practice, such as the Director of Strategic Alliances, and some of whom do not (or do not yet) —TAs are working with another layer of complexity in how they design and enact their work. The challenge for the long-term thriving of the Institute is how to engage this tension from Greene's philosophical stance of multiple perspectives and open dialogue about them. How will LCI continue to exist as a community committed to honest, respectful conversation around questions of philosophy and practice? How will aesthetic education practice and philosophy at LCI be enacted institutionally, in relationships among the increasingly complex layers there? And how

does a hierarchical structure lend particular challenges to this process? This is to say, it remains for the members of the Institute, both TAs and administrative staff, to find ways to talk to each other about difference of opinion around issues of practice and philosophy. There is a responsibility from both the meso and micro layers to have this dialogue in a way that is consistent with Greene's philosophy.

As the administrative staff has grown in size and responsibility, many TAs perceive an attitude from the meso-layer of needing to "manage the TAs" and "keep them in their place" (teaching artist interviews, 2005). While at the same time, staff may perceive that TAs are not taking in the full contexts of the imaginative programmatic design under staff purview; a sharply narrow focus from TAs can impede mutual understandings and respect. It seems crucial that a successful hierarchical structure at the Institute must make sure hierarchy does not equal a didactic approach, which is absolutely antithetical to the philosophical ideas that underlie aesthetic education. Staff must understand that TAs are rightfully sensitive to this point, as they expend great energy imagining ways *not* to allow a didactic approach into their own teaching; TAs are acutely aware when program staff take such a stance. At the same time, TAs must understand that the scope and scale of the Institute now requires differentiated roles and responsibilities, and that this entails decision making that will not always be collaborative. As the Institute pursues its ambitious long-range plan, it seems crucial for a level, honest look at these tensions, as well as imaginative thinking around how conversations might be restructured or invited in different ways. As the Executive Director has said to me on multiple occasions (personal communication), "I look at

tension as an opportunity—not something to be avoided." As the Institute shifts, grows, and re-imagines itself, there is surely great opportunity.

It is important to state the complexity of the macro-meso-micro relationships before taking a closer look at teaching artist practice in the classroom. For every example of TA practice that is described in the following chapters, there are multiple levels of interaction that inform it. The journey that philosophical ideas take as they weave through both individual and collective understandings and become practice is like a complex system of nerves and arteries.

# Chapter 3: Aesthetic Education

## *Aesthetic Education: Clarity of Meaning*

Though there are a multiplicity of meanings and centuries of embedded histories loaded into the two words, "aesthetic" and "education," this study will discuss the ideas articulated by contemporary philosopher Maxine Greene and the practice enacted by teaching artists at Lincoln Center Institute. LCI is not the only organization that works with the ideas of Maxine Greene, nor is it the sole practitioner of aesthetic education. But it *is* the location where a particular version of aesthetic education began, and where Greene continues to guide the organization. Its teaching artists have been practicing for many years and are supported in a community of practitioners that continues to think deeply about aesthetic education as an evolutionary process. So as to understand Greene's unique vision of aesthetic education, it makes sense to turn to the experiences of teaching artists at LCI. But before examining the research and actual teaching artist practice, it is also worthwhile to attempt to clarify, if not fully define the term, for the purposes of this discussion.

What is it about LCI teaching artists' practice that makes it different from, for example, inquiry-based learning? Surely, inquiry is a core idea in aesthetic education. LCI teaching artists *do* work intimately with inquiry, as well as with other educational ideas that one might find in the practice of other educational organizations. It must be distinguished from the outset, then, that in this approach to aesthetic education, teaching concepts and strategies such as reflection and inquiry have arisen out of a philosophical

stance. They have evolved in a specific way as an effort to make possible for students a particular type of encounter—an aesthetic experience.

Just exactly what an aesthetic experience is, how one knows if one is having one, or how one guarantees that students will have one, are all, perhaps, unanswerable questions. That is to say, five individuals at LCI may offer five different answers to those questions out of the particularity of their experiences. Thus, it is not difficult to understand a certain frustration that many have expressed in encountering the ideas of aesthetic education at LCI. It is also an admitted difficulty to write about aesthetic education, as it may well be understood fully only by active participation and experience. But it *is* possible and necessary to understand aesthetic education at LCI in a less "fuzzy" way. And there are certainly many commonalities that teaching artists and others who work at LCI *will* say they are striving towards in their educational pursuits.

There is no way to guarantee any kind of experience, let alone an aesthetic one. But there are years of teaching artist practice concerned with how conditions might be created to nurture a student's *capacity* to have a meaningful, participatory engagement with a work of art. At LCI, teaching artists are in constant pursuit of how to make that kind of experience most likely to happen—how to make possible a new way of being and understanding for their students. In order to understand this pursuit, it is important to look deeply at what Greene intends in her sense of aesthetic education and how teaching artists understand it. Thus, a terminological inquiry is a useful place to begin, in the spirit of others who have considered these issues, such as John Dewey in *Knowing and the Known*

(1949), and Louise Rosenblatt in *Transaction versus Interaction: A Terminological Rescue Operation* (1985).

"Aesthetic," for Greene, does not represent a notion of beauty or perfection or of cold objectification. Nor does it refer solely to any one branch or approach in traditional philosophical aesthetics. Rather, it is " . . . an adjective used to describe or single out the mode of experience brought into being by encounters with works of art" (Greene, 2001b, p. 5). I have also heard her describe "aesthetics" as "the questions you ask or the wonder you feel in the presence of a work of art" (personal communication, 2005). She, like Dewey, is concerned with the nature of an aesthetic experience, a personal encounter with a work of art. It is this relationship, or "transactional" exchange (language that will be examined more closely in Chapter 4) between person and work, that aesthetic education endeavors to enable, nurture, and make possible. This approach is distinct from both passive views of art appreciation, and learning the skills of an art form (learning to play the clarinet or oil painting technique, for example). It lies between the two, involving aspects of both, and yet it is also its own third approach. Greene refers to aesthetic education as a kind of "wide-awakeness" (e.g., 1978, p. 42-51). She is fond of reminding us that aesthetic is the opposite of Dewey's description of "anaesthetic" (Greene, 2000, p. 39). She often remarks that Dewey was critical of the fixed, the rigid, the routine, the "crust of conventionalized and routine consciousness," which for him, described anaesthetic (Dewey, 1934, p. 183). Encounters with works of art, and with authentic artistic processes, are one possible way in which we might break free from the crust or the "nondescript cotton wool," another of Greene's favorite analogies from the

writer Virginia Woolf (Woolf, 1976, p. 70), and imagine the world, as she so often says, “as if it might be otherwise” (Greene, 1978, 1995, 2001b). But if works of art do not necessarily reveal themselves automatically, Greene asks how we might learn to see, feel, hear, and move into them in such a way as to “lend our lives” to the works, as she articulates below. She asks what it would take to educate towards the goal of *making possible* a kind of transformative experience:

> Aesthetic education, then, is an intentional undertaking designed to nurture appreciative, reflective, cultural, participatory engagements with the arts by enabling learners to notice what is there to be noticed, and to lend works of art their lives in such a way that they can achieve them as variously meaningful. When this happens, new connections are made in experience: new patterns are formed, new vistas are opened. Persons *see* differently, resonate differently; as Rilke wrote in one of his poems, they are enabled to pay heed when a work of art tells them, “You must change your life” (2001b, p. 6/Rilke, 1940/1974, p. 93).

Or, as one of the LCI TAs whose classroom work I observed shared with me in a personal interview:

> I start from the belief that works of art are inexhaustible resources for learning and that when students are allowed, or the ability has been released for them to respond to works of art, it will prove meaningful. I understand what I do as creating situations where those personal encounters with works of art are more likely to happen. By “situations,” what I mean specifically is that I shape experiential activities. In these experiences or activities, people engage the raw material of the work of art. It also includes discussions, sometimes work in multiple modalities—many things. It is about encouraging learners to value their own engagement with a work of art—to show that the work of art doesn’t belong only to experts or critics or the elite or some other small group. Finally, what is gleaned and experienced with a work of art can resonate out into a person’s life (interview, 2005).

***Aesthetic Education: Excavating the Term***

From the outset it is crucial to distinguish aesthetic education, as conceived by Greene and as practiced at LCI, from other approaches to arts education, as well as from others who use the same term differently. The words "aesthetic education" were certainly not invented by either Greene or LCI, nor are they the sole voices in the field joining them together to signify a particular kind of experience. But confusion can arise if different notions of aesthetic education and arts education are conflated or misunderstood.

For example, Ralph Smith, founder and editor for some 34 years of *The Journal of Aesthetic Education,* writes in his book, *The Sense of Art: A Study in Aesthetic Education,* that he uses the term "aesthetic education" to loosely refer to "whatever goes on in the name of arts education" (1989, p. 3). In his definition, the term "aesthetic education" is interchangeable with "arts education" in the most general sense. However, it becomes clear in reading his most recent collection of essays (Smith, 2006) that he is *most* interested in a kind of arts education that enables students to acquire "the capacity for reflective percipience"—or what he calls, "the aesthetic appreciation of works of art" (2006, p. 5). Smith is quite aware that other positions in arts education stress different aspects, but he says repeatedly that what he is most interested in is the study of excellent quality works of art. In some ways then, despite his conflation of the term with *all* arts education, Smith is in a similar sphere of interest as Maxine Greene. However, there are important distinctions as well. Smith is a self-proclaimed humanist and feels that aesthetic education should be thought of as part of the humanities curriculum (2006),

rather than as a specifically artistic endeavor. He is also interested in aesthetic judgment as an end goal of aesthetic education in a way that Greene is not.

More significantly, Smith rarely mentions the creation of art as important in his sense of aesthetic education. This is part of the larger confusion that arises when the term is used to signify a contemplation of art as a quite separate act from the making of art. Writers such as Jessica Davis (2005) as well as educational publications such as the New York City Department of Education *Blueprint for the Arts* (2004), adopt this simplified understanding of the term. Their descriptions reaffirm a long historical debate that separates making from perceiving, thinking from feeling, doing from reflecting. The educational practice at LCI is steeped both in making and perceiving; it draws on Dewey's notion that the two are never exclusive undertakings (Dewey, 1934); and it refutes dualistic concepts and divisions of the artistic process into separate categories of learning or experiencing.

Somewhat understandably, such blurring of the lines may be related to entrenched historical meanings loaded into the term *aesthetic*, and its relationship to ideas of education. There are well-documented historical precedents for much of the stumbling over the idea of "aesthetic education." It is not just that various individuals now use the term to refer to different practices or ideas, or the fact that what happens at Lincoln Center Institute is often misunderstood. The roots of confusion and complexity with the term are much older.

A long history of Western philosophy centers on a discourse of aesthetics. In fact, Western ideas about the educational power of art go back at least as far as Plato. In *The*

*Republic*, he proposed music as a foundational basis for education (Plato, trans. 2004; Books ii, iii, vii), while he also considered the dangers of emotions aroused and the ethical implications of art for those who listen or contemplate the work. In fact, the origin of the word aesthetic is the Greek term *aisthesis*, which means perception through the senses (Kertz-Welzel, 2005). In Greek philosophy, perceiving the world through the senses (smelling, hearing, tasting, touching, seeing) was set in contrast to *theoria*, or experiencing the world cognitively, with intellectual realization. Plato was the first to associate the power of perception with education in his discussions of music. He emphasized the educational power of music and its effect on character development, thus the "correct" kind of music was very important. Yet he also discussed the dangers of art and music, as imitations of truth. Ultimately, he felt that the senses were not as clear as the intellect (Plato, trans. 2004, ii, iii, vii). Thus the foundation was laid for the great emotional/rational debates that still pervade discussions around art and aesthetics.

Plato's student, Aristotle, continued to explore the aesthetic experience, though he differed from his teacher in several important areas; Aristotle saw art as a possible world or an imagined world, distinct from reality. While the aesthetic experience is still described mainly as an act of contemplation, one knows that one is not responding to raw reality. Faced with a work of art, this allows for a different kind of emotional experience or mode of understanding—which has a set of implications for education quite distinct from Plato's (Aristotle, trans. 1987). However, though Aristotle may understand a more complex perceptual experience, the distinction between making and perceiving still strongly exists.

Also inherited from the ancient Greeks are notions of status around the word "aesthetic." In their society, craftsmen or those who created, were lower status than philosophers, who were the only (male) individuals intellectually equipped to appreciate the aesthetic value of a work of art. Here again, a fundamental split was established. The acts of creation and perception were separated even by class and gender. Many of our Western assumptions about aesthetics are grounded in these Greek philosophical ideas, so little wonder they continue to have a tenacious hold on our contemporary understandings.

Such embedded Western cultural assumptions are compounded by various ways the term aesthetic is used today; there is simply no universal agreement on the word, as Feagin and Maynard point out in the introduction to their anthology of writings on aesthetics (1997). The term is sometimes used as a noun, as in, an individual or group has an aesthetic (e.g., the Japanese aesthetic). It has also, especially historically, been used to refer to the beauty or pleasing properties of an object or art form. During the nineteenth century especially, questions of beauty and the moral in art were prevalent. The notion that "good" art is good for you, and makes you a better, more moral person was widely prevalent, never mind the issues around determining what exactly comprised "good" art. The volume of essays titled *Uncontrollable Beauty: Toward a New Aesthetics* (Beckley, 1998), addresses the idea of beauty in art as a contemporary question. Many of the authors consider how modern and postmodern artists reject the nineteenth-century beauty discourse, often times radically. But the essayists also ask important questions about whether a contemporary theory of beauty and morality still exists in art—what is its language, where are its limitations, and what constitutes its new horizons? Though a

thoroughly contemporary treatment of the issue, the volume serves as an example of the strong association of the idea of *beauty* and *aesthetic.*

There is an extensive body of literature written in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries centering on the philosophy of art. In this tradition, the discussion of aesthetics eventually became a specific philosophical discourse. Philosophy majors today take a core course in aesthetics, which includes systematic inquiries into the nature of art, art encounters, and sometimes, the aesthetic properties of non-art objects. Interestingly, today we are still raising some of the same issues that Plato and Aristotle debated: the relationship of art and emotions, the social dangers of art, the educational value of art, the creative process itself, and, of course, the enjoyment of art. Countless other thinkers and writers have added to the tradition, for these questions have inspired centuries of sophisticated and ongoing debate.

Aesthetic discussions have also become heated around the topic of art itself. Is it only an art object or art experience that calls forth aesthetic perception—or is there an aesthetic dimension in the experience of a sunset or a waterfall, or even an historical event? Even those who consider aesthetic education specifically as an educational pursuit have different views as to whether it is an approach for studying art, or a more general stance for attending to or perceiving other aspects of life (Dewey, 1934; Ziff, 1997).

There are others who use the term “aesthetic education” directly, and are worth mentioning here. German poet Friedrich Schiller, influenced by Kant's ideas on aesthetics, may have been the first to put the two words “aesthetic education” together purposefully in his 1793 series of letters, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man,* in which he

proposes that Man [sic] must pass through an aesthetic dimension in order to reach moral maturity (Schiller, 1793/1965). Schiller equated the aesthetic with a sense of beauty, and he thought that ideal humanity could be achieved only through beauty and art. He saw education through art as a way to humanize mankind, though, for him, the aesthetic attitude was detached from practical or intellectual concerns.

The term “aesthetic education” might also call to mind Harry S. Broudy's work, especially *Enlightened Cherishing: An Essay on Aesthetic Education,* in which he describes the aesthetic dimension as crucial to learning values and virtue (Broudy, 1972/1994). His notion of aesthetic education, though different from Greene's in many respects, is related in its consideration of perception as active and imaginative, as something other than knowing *about* art: “. . .*knowledge about* is no substitute for the *perception of,* as the standard appreciation courses are taken to be” (1972/1994, p. 64). He distinguishes aesthetic education from both skill training and appreciation. Art appreciation courses, he says, run the risk of standardizing or conventionalizing taste—deferring to an expert—whereas aesthetic education involves making one's own interpretations and, for Broudy at least, value judgments. Like Greene, Broudy also believes that aesthetic education has the capacity for deep individual change and transformation—a potential for affecting lives:

> Knowing about art, unless accompanied by a very rich and copious amount of aesthetic perception, may not change the fabric of our life any more than reading about the life of St. Francis of Assisi automatically makes us saintly or reading about the words of Isaac Newton and Albert Einstein makes our thinking more scientific (1972/1994, p. 64).

Scholar Bennett Reimer places music education within the broader project of aesthetic education. His classic text, *A Philosophy of Music Education* (2003), reprinted with new revisions, discusses the nature and value of music education, and music's inherent aesthetic properties. Widely and passionately embraced when it was first published, Reimer's views today draw criticism for, among other ideas, his continued defense of the feeling/reason split; he claims that music does for feeling what writing and reading do for reason (2003). As well, some scholars question the place of philosophy in music education altogether (e.g., Bowman, 2003).

Throughout history, art has provoked, inspired, and asked important questions; in this sense aesthetic education takes its place in a long history of aesthetic inquiry. The list of writers, thinkers and educators who have considered the aesthetic experience and, specifically, its educative implications is long. As only one example, the *Journal for Aesthetic Education* has, for over thirty years, published a multiplicity of views by those interested in the intersection of art, aesthetics and learning. What I mean to distinguish here is the particular view of aesthetic education articulated by Maxine Greene. This view sometimes resonates with others who use the term and sometimes diverges. But its *particular* understanding has significantly impacted the teaching practice of many artists and educators, within and beyond the borders of LCI, who have come into contact with its ideas. Unless otherwise specified in the study, when I use the words "aesthetic education," it is Greene's particular view to which I refer.

### *Aesthetic Education and Other Types of Arts Education*

Aesthetic education, in the Greene-LCI version, is one distinctive approach to arts education rather than a term that is interchangeable with all "arts education." Thus, in order to place aesthetic education as practiced at Lincoln Center Insitute in the context of the larger field, it is useful to note, in general terms, three major foci in arts education approaches.

The first is a focus on *skills development* and *performance*: how to play the piano or read music, how to paint or work in clay, or how to develop modern dance technique, as examples. This approach has been, historically, a main concern of most arts specialists working in schools, as well as of conservatories and fine arts programs (Davis, 2005).

The second approach is often called *arts integration* or *interdisciplinary* work. Here, students are given the opportunity to solve problems and make meaningful connections within the arts and across all disciplines. Methods vary from authentic cross-disciplinary instruction, where two or more subject areas address a common theme, problem or issue, to a more basic incorporation of "arts" activities into the "mainstream" curriculum of literacy, math, science or social studies. Beginning level examples of the second approach might be learning multiplication tables by singing a song, or listening to various traditional styles of African drumming as part of a social studies study of Africa. Theatre techniques are also often used to promote literacy skills (Deasy, 2002). These integration approaches vary widely in their sophistication and authenticity, and are often in the hands of classroom teachers as well as arts specialists and teaching artists. Many integration practices are related to early 20$^{th}$ century ideas of progressive education that

emphasize child-centered and experience-oriented curricula. But they are also, often, rooted in the tendency of the past 20 years to evaluate arts programs based on their contributions to achievement in other areas, such as literacy and numeracy (Catterall,1999; Eisner,1998a; Winner and Hetland, 2000).

The third approach is *aesthetic education,* as articulated by Greene and practiced at LCI. It endeavors, ultimately, to enable a personal, transformative encounter—an aesthetic experience—with a specific work of art. A live work (in dance, theatre, music, visual arts or architecture) becomes the center of study for classrooms of students. Aesthetic education focuses on works that have been created by humans expressly to be encountered by other human beings. That is, the aesthetic experience encompasses the intentionality of both maker and perceiver. For this reason, the aesthetics of the natural world are not studied at LCI. The process involves elements of art making, inquiry and connecting to other curricular areas, while it also consciously builds the skills of perception; aesthetic education is enacted via a collaborative process between teaching artists and educators. An emphasis on perception, however, does not mean that aesthetic education is limited to a cognitive apprehension or a solely mental process. It involves moving, sounding, creating, and feeling; it is rooted in the body and in authentic artistic processes, and includes reflective, verbal, and contextual (historical, cultural) components interwoven as aspects of the total experience (Greene, 2001a, p. 9-11).

Several points must be made. All three approaches, when they are taught well, include aspects of the others (creating, integrating, and perceiving or attending to the aesthetic experience). They do not exist in any kind of hierarchy or in complete isolation.

Nor has Greene or Lincoln Center Institute ever put forth the notion that their approach to aesthetic education is better than or a good alternative to the others. It is *a* particular way to study and engage with works of art, not *the* one way.

### *Psychological/Cognitive Approaches to Arts Education*

Many outstanding practitioners in the field of arts education base their work on a psychological or cognitive body of knowledge. Nelson Goodman, for example, in his influential work *Languages of Art*, maintains that experiencing art is essentially cognitive (Goodman, 1976). For Goodman, art is a symbolic system of understanding and our engagement with it requires making decisions and discriminations, identifying symbols, and interpreting and reorganizing symbol systems. He, like Greene, believes that a person's view of the world may be transformed by an aesthetic encounter, but Goodman stresses the role of cognition and the symbolic function of art works in the process.

Jessica Davis, in her recent arts education overview, *Framing Education as Art*, juxtaposes Leo Tolstoy and Nelson Goodman as, respectively, the feeling versus the cognitive perspective on the arts (Davis, 2005). Where Tolstoy saw the aesthetic experience as a temporal, emotional, felt state (Tolstoy, 1898/1995) Goodman was interested in the languages of art and the various art forms as comprised of particular symbol systems. He saw both artist and perceiver as primarily cognitive beings intellectually dealing with the various symbol systems, rather than as emotive ones (Goodman, 1976, 1978). Goodman's ideas, as a psychological theory of art, influenced psychologists Howard Gardner and David Perkins, among others, through Harvard's Project Zero, begun in 1968 to study children's development in the languages of art

(Davis, 2005). Gardner's seminal work in Multiple Intelligence Theory, as well as the many major practice and research efforts it has inspired, is based primarily on psychological and even biological research (Gardner, 1983, 1993, 1999, 2000). He argues for a pluralistic view of intelligence that includes artistic modes of knowing such as the spatial, the musical, and the bodily-kinesthetic. His views stem largely from a cognitive, developmental psychological perspective.

Similarly, Elliot Eisner, another figure who has informed decades of arts education research and practice, has given an important voice to the intellectual rigor involved in artistic pursuits (Eisner, 1998a, 1998b, 2002). He has been central in the arts education field as a thinker who challenges the “feelings” notions of arts education, as well as the stereotype that the arts are non-intellectual and non-rigorous. Eisner has done much to elevate the field of arts education from being considered trivial and therefore not worthy of a central place in the curriculum. He is an influential advocate for the cognitive values of studying art and engaging arts experiences, as the title of his work, *Arts and the Creation of Mind,* might suggest (2002). Here, he explores many perspectives on how, in his view, learning through the arts develops the mind.

All three of these important thinkers, Goodman, Gardner and Eisner, work from a cognitive, psychological grounding and have done much to influence practice and research in arts education. While there is certainly some resonance between Greene’s ideas and those of Eisner, Gardner, or Goodman, there are important distinctions as well. Greene has, without hesitation, acknowledged the importance of views such as Goodman's, Gardner's, and Eisner's (personal communication, 2005). Yet her work in

aesthetic education is something apart from these. Again like Dewey, she refuses to take a wholly psychological or even *mainly* cognitive approach. She reaches towards an idea of educational experience that is steeped in intellectual, bodily, emotional, and sensual ways of knowing simultaneously, without privileging one over another. Greene's ideas around the study of works of art are centered on experiences in the various art forms, but these experiences are not purposefully designed to enable students to decode a work of art in a *particular* way—not necessarily intellectually or emotionally or formally. Rather, informed by authentic arts experiences, aesthetic education enables participants to reach their own interpretive views and meanings by many routes, and out of their own life experiences.

I once heard Greene comment on the title of Eisner's recent book, *Art and the Creation of Mind* (2002), saying, "I wonder if the mind doesn't evolve rather than get created?" (personal communication, 2005). The comment indicates her concern with growth, with identity and sense of self—with transformative experience—from a particularly philosophical perspective. It forces us to ask ourselves how an arts education practice that arises from the philosophical grounding of aesthetic education is different from a practice rooted in, for example, Multiple Intelligence Theory, or one concerned primarily with art as a complex symbol system.

The purpose of this study, of course, is not to compare philosophical and psychological views of arts education, but rather to begin to articulate *what* a practice embedded in a particular aesthetic education philosophy looks like and how it is enacted.

Only then can the field begin to consider both the philosophy and its practice in a meaningful context.

### *Aesthetic Education: Maxine Greene*

Where, then, does Greene's sense of aesthetic education fall amongst these various histories, uses of the term, and embedded meanings? As a philosopher of education, Greene's ideas are probably most directly related to John Dewey's. Dewey's notion of the aesthetic was, at its core, concerned with an ultimate form of experience. For Dewey, a consummate aesthetic experience could be ethical, intellectual, religious, or political—many categories rather than exclusively artistic. But he felt that the arts were a particularly vivid and powerful way in which aesthetic experiences manifested themselves (Dewey, 1934). Thus he saw art as absolutely central to society and education. Dewey also felt that separating artistic creator from perceiver was an inauthentic fragmentation of the aesthetic experience, that art always encompassed both (1934). Again, looking to the words of a LCI TA is instructive here (excerpted from an anonymous survey where TAs are asked to describe what aesthetic education is): "[Aesthetic education is] experiencing the process of creating a work of art to better understand and appreciate a given work of art." Greene continues in this tradition of thinking about aesthetics. She is adamant that aesthetic education should be central in all education for all students, and she consistently asks questions of how we might teach in order to enable students to have aesthetic experiences. But she maintains that an aesthetic experience might not happen spontaneously (Greene, 2001b, 1995, 1978).

Greene is not directly participating in a purely analytical discourse of beauty or morality. It is possible that these issues may arise for students and teachers out of the exploration of particular works of art. However, depending upon the works under study, aesthetic education is just as likely to provoke encounters with ideas of immorality, prejudice, racism, or the disjointed, the incongruous, and the purely abstract. Greene is fond of quoting Sartre about the necessity of art that provokes a sense of indignation (Sartre, 1949). She also regards herself in a tradition of emancipatory educators, such as Dewey and Freire. In this sense, she may even be philosophically related to the aforementioned Schiller. Kertz-Welzel, in her essay comparing German and American ideas of aesthetic education, aligns Schiller's notion of aesthetic education with a kind of political education that recognizes the transformative power of the arts (Kertz-Welzel, 2005). Greene maintains that one of the central purposes of aesthetic education is to realize art, and the aesthetic experience, as an agent for transforming society. In this respect, her ideas are also related to writers such as Herbert Marcuse (1955) who saw art as ripe with the potential to reveal visions of a better society.

Greene is clear that when considering aesthetic education, she is talking about studying works of art, rather than the natural world, and as a pursuit distinct from looking at other things “aesthetically.” Here, she distinguishes her sense of the term from Dewey and from, to name one example, writers such as Paul Ziff. Ziff argues that anything may be seen in an aesthetic way, based on the quality of attention given (Ziff, 1997). While Greene is unquestionably interested in quality of attention, she remains committed to the unique world of artistic creation—to works that have been created out of the human

imagination in order to be experienced by other human beings. Arthur Danto also speaks about artworks having “aboutness” and demanding interpretation (Danto, 1981). A work of art is an expressive creation made by a person, and therefore, unlike a tree or a waterfall, it is always about something (including, often, abstract “things”). Thus, unlike a tree, a work of art calls for interpretation. It is the process by which perceivers make their own interpretations and meanings in which Greene is most interested, and in which she believes lay the roots of human agency and the capacity to imagine a world beyond present circumstances (Greene, 1978, 1995, 2001b).

For Greene, aesthetic education is always related to the imagination. “Much depends on [students’] imaginations being aroused, on their feelings infusing their thinking, their perceptions grounding what they come to know” (Greene, 2000, p.41). She, like Mary Warnock, believes that “. . . there is more in our experience of the world than can possibly meet the unreflecting eye, that our experience is significant for us, and worth the attempt to understand it” (Warnock, 1978, p.202). Paul Ricoeur, another influential hermeneutic thinker for Greene, speaks of the imagination as the “passion for the possible” (Ricoeur, 1979). Works of art and guided encounters with them may wake us up to both new ways of perceiving the works themselves as well as our own lives, and always, to further possibilities that might be imagined.

Greene's ideas about aesthetic education might also align in important ways with Arnold Berleant, who writes that what we call the study of aesthetics, or artistic practice, can never authentically be purely philosophical. By definition and by experience, art is steeped in experiential, historical, psychological, sociological and anthropological modes

of knowing (Berleant, 1991). He makes the case for all discussions about art growing out of the experiential, rather than the theoretical. He says, in fact, that aesthetic theory (particularly as it is reflected in philosophy texts) has not only often failed to reflect artistic practice and aesthetic experience, but it has also presumed, at times, to decide them. The central theme guiding his view is that actual aesthetic experience of art should lie at the center of how we think about it—rather than abstract theory. He claims that aesthetic theory must be fashioned in its own terms, centered directly in actual aesthetic experience (Berleant, 1991). Greene's views, though she is most often addressing the field of education, echo the importance of actual experience, and all of her writing about aesthetic education is steeped in discussions of particular works of art, rather than in generalities or theory, alone.

Distinguishing between LCI's understanding of "aesthetic education" and other uses of the term necessitates a further exploration of Greene's perspectives. It is her particular view of aesthetic education that has shaped both the practice and the underlying conceptual framework for LCI teaching artists and staff alike.

# Chapter 4: Philosophy—Maxine Greene

## *Two Stories*

There are two stories that might help enter an exploration of Maxine Greene's philosophy of aesthetic education. The first is a recounting of a moment from a 2005 lecture for teaching artists and staff administrators who work in aesthetic education, in which Greene told a story about her early relationship to the ballet. She remarked that she spent most of her life "waiting for Giselle to go mad" or "waiting for Sleeping Beauty to wake up." The story of the ballet was, she said, "like a screen. I didn't know how to attend to a hand, a foot, a gesture." For Greene, it was a "life-saving experience" to pull the screen away (personal notes, 2005). There is something in the human being, she always reminds us, that needs to reach beyond the merely factual—beyond the story-line—and beyond a solely intellectual comprehension. So often, it is works of art that insist that we wonder more, feel more, hear or see more, and enter a kind of fully-present, totally engaged experience (Greene, 2001b). They can open us to what we didn't know was there before, both *there* in the work and *there* in ourselves. The story is significant, for me, in the way it reveals Greene's personal experience of how a single-focused stance (looking for the facts of the story) blocked an aesthetic experience, as well as her realization that careful attending to the art form itself (a hand, a foot, a gesture) was somehow a key to unlocking a further, deeper, more embodied experience with the dance. This experience at the ballet was one that urged Greene to ask the central questions involved in aesthetic education.

How then, might we *educate* towards enabling or nurturing an aesthetic experience? What is required to remove the screens and blocks that stand in the way of a full experience with a work of art? What is needed to allow for careful, artistic attending? How, in an age with an unprecedented emphasis on testing children for their factual comprehension, or an age where many works of art might seem increasingly irrelevant or peripheral, might we dare to invite individuals to engage with these works by means that reach far beyond testable, factual results? These kinds of questions were at the heart of the creation of Lincoln Center Institute over thirty years ago, and remain at its core today.

The second story is that of the founding of Lincoln Center Institute for the Arts in Education in 1975. If there are people who can be said to have "invented" the Institute, the list would surely begin with Mark Schubart, Maxine Greene, and some of the early teaching artists who pioneered the work. Officially, Lincoln Center Institute grew out of a research study funded by the Carnegie Corporation and written by Schubart, then Dean of the Juilliard School (Schubart, 1972). Schubart's study explored the arts programs of cultural organizations around the country, and showed that many did not reach students effectively. Reported on the front page of the New York Times, it called for a new approach, beyond the traditional arts appreciation (exposure) typical of the time—an approach that engaged children and provided them with hands-on arts experiences (1972). In the days before the founding of the Institute, as the story is told, Schubart often expressed his dismay in observing students exit Lincoln Center performances with no sense of meaning or engagement. By the time he finished writing his study, Schubart had definitively decided that "something else" was needed as an approach to educating in the

arts, something that put the focus on helping students attend to and make meaning with the performances they were experiencing (personal communication, 2005, and anecdotal history).

Around 1975, Schubart sought collaboration with Teacher's College. Greene likes to say that Lawrence Cremin, president of Teacher's College at the time, called her into his office one day and said, “go down to Lincoln Center and invent an Institute” (personal communication, June 2005). Together, with a group of early teaching artists, Schubart and Greene set about doing just that. To hear Greene tell the story in person, it was as much the case that they set out *not to* do what other cultural organizations and arts educators were doing at the time, as an attempt *to* enact a specific philosophy. But they clearly wanted to see where a different vision and purpose might lead the field of arts education. “Nobody invents a philosophy,” Greene said to me (personal communication, June, 2005). Yet with a clear philosophical stance that was, and still is, profoundly steeped in Deweyian, existential, and phenomenological traditions, Greene had a range of interest that included Dewey's main artistic preoccupations with literature and the visual arts, but also extended to the performing arts, as did Schubart's main purview at Lincoln Center. Thus she became the articulation—the voice, in many ways—of a view of aesthetic philosophy that Schubart, the first Executive Director of LCI, and the teaching artists who worked at the Institute, endeavored to put into a practice. It was, and still is, centered on experiencing live or authentic works of art, and is enacted via workshops with teaching artists and educators collaborating together in classrooms. From the outset at the Institute, it was called aesthetic education.

Greene describes Schubart as a “dignified, burnished, distant man” (personal communication, June, 2005) who had a gift for inspiring people, including herself, to find and act on their unique skills and talents. Greene is also firm, when talking about the early days of the Institute, about the important influence that the teaching artists themselves had on her ideas. For instance, she recalls listening over and over again with one of the first music teaching artists to the nuances in recordings of the same compositions performed by different conductors and orchestras. This moment of deep listening and attending, and others like it in the various art forms, as much as any existing philosophical idea, left a profound imprint on Greene's ideas of the purposes and possibilities of aesthetic education (personal communication, June, 2005).

In the opening of the study that launched the creation of the Institute, *Performing Arts Institutions and Young People, Lincoln Center's Study: “The Hunting of the Squiggle,”* Schubart wrote:

> Although this Study is about an arts institution [Lincoln Center] and its relationship to young people, it is also, by implication, about a dimension which is undervalued or missing altogether in American education, both institutional and non-institutional. That is the dimension of aesthetic perception (1972, vii).

He had discerned that students needed a kind of education that would allow them to participate in an active aesthetic experience, in order to perceive or to *transact* with a work of art. (Transaction is both a term and a concept that will be more fully discussed later in this chapter.) His insight was that this would not happen, in many or most cases, on its own.

Central to John Dewey's notion of aesthetic experience is the belief that art making and perceiving art are inseparable (Dewey, 1934). One makes—makes a world, makes a sculpture or a sonata, makes an interpretation, makes any artistic study—in order to perceive and understand more, just as the act of perception is thoroughly embedded in the creative, artistic process. However, most education, and certainly traditional education in the arts that tended to focus on performance and skills development, had, in the 1970's, completely ignored the idea of perception as central. Thus Schubart and Greene, as they designed LCI intents and purposes, united the ideas of making and perceiving in their pursuit of an aesthetic education practice. This was enacted through art-filled classroom experiences led by teaching artists, which opened up the possibilities for engaging, perceptually, in actual live arts performances or authentic works in the visual arts. It went a long way past the “exposure” arts education, in which children were bussed into performing arts venues to see a show with no preparation or experience. LCI, under the guidance of Schubart and Greene, began to explore how a pathway for an aesthetic experience might be created through a set of intentional arts activities that predisposed students to engagement with a work of art.

I am discussing the history of LCI in a chapter devoted to Greene’s philosophy because it is central to an understanding of her philosophical work to realize that it developed out of the real-world experience of creating and guiding the Institute. While her writing may not take up the details of how to enact classroom practice, it was (and continues to be) created during the many years that Greene was actively working with teaching artists, giving workshops and lectures at the Lincoln Center Institute summer

sessions for teachers, and guiding the development of LCI. That is to say, her philosophy arises from the ground of educational experiences at the Institute, rather than from a kind of purely abstract thinking about art and aesthetics.

### *An Aesthetic Experience*

In *Art as Experience* (1934), John Dewey sometimes called aesthetic experience, or the transactional moment, a "continuous interaction" between the total organism [human perceiver] and the art object [or performance]. He maintained that art may be looked at or even recognized with correct names attached, but that this does not constitute a full aesthetic engagement, or a fully perceived work of art. Greene often says she has in mind a kind of "entering" into a work, entering with both body and imaginative mind—a particular mode of participation. Our memories and moods and lived lives enter the aesthetic experience with us and the energy created with the work of art involves a back and forth movement.

> Perceiving a dance, a painting, a quartet means taking it in and going out to it. The action required is at the furthest remove from the passive gaze that is the hallmark of our time . . . . Perceiving is an active probing of wholes as they become visible. It involves, as it goes on, a sense of something still to be seen, of thus far undisclosed possibility (Greene, 2001b, p. 13).

For Greene, aesthetic engagement requires contact with an actual live or authentic work, as opposed to either a reproduction or a theoretical concept. She shares this belief with Arnold Berleant, whose central guiding theme is that actual aesthetic experience, rather than abstract theory, should lie at the center of how we think about art. Throughout *Art and Engagement,* he examines the relationship between experience and theory in aesthetics, develops the ideas of artistic engagement in the contexts of particular arts

(landscape painting, architecture, literary experience, music and dance), and claims that aesthetic theory must be fashioned in its own terms, centered directly in actual aesthetic experience (Berleant, 1991). Whenever Greene speaks or writes about aesthetic education, the discourse is steeped in the visceral, emotional, and intellectual experiences of an array of works of art, the paintings of Cezanne, for example, the words of Toni Morrison, the movements of Martha Graham, and a vast array of other works. She, unlike Dewey, writes out of her own considered and eclectic experiences with specific works of art and with teaching artists; the ideas do not come abstractly *about* art, unattached to particular aesthetic experiences and works of art. Her personal life is filled with attending the theatre, museums, and dance performances. Rather than diversions or entertainments, these experiences actively influence her philosophical views. Just as Berleant suggests that the field of philosophical aesthetics should pay more attention to actual works of art, Greene's thinking about aesthetic education rises not from abstract conceptualization, but rather from her own personal engagements with artists and their works.

Similarly, at the heart of aesthetic education that teaching artists enact, there are artistic experiences designed for students. These experiences carry students into a particular performance of a play, a dance, a concert, a painting or a sculpture. There is always the live work, and the bringing of the students' experience into relationship with that work. Greene quotes Louis Reid in *Variations on a Blue Guitar* (2001b) when she says, "we have to somehow initiate [students] into what it feels like to live in music, move over and about in a painting, travel round and between the masses of a sculpture, dwell in a poem"(Greene, 2001b, p. 8/Reid, 1969, p. 302).

### *Influences: A Disclaimer*

One of the unique aspects of encountering Maxine Greene, either in person or in writing, is noting that the vast array of what she has read and experienced throughout a long life lives at the front of her mind. She thinks in reference to a massive store of philosophy and literature read, plays and paintings seen, music heard, and is able to summon quotations from memory from many types of sources. Most remarkable is the process whereby her memory and philosophical ideas seem to be in constant interaction, or in a perpetual "state of becoming," as she might say.

It is, therefore, somewhat absurd to begin a straightforward account of writers or thinkers who have influenced her work. With this disclaimer advanced, I would like to attempt my own admittedly selective discussion of ideas that I find particularly relevant to her articulation of aesthetic education. These associations may reveal as much about my own understandings as about any actual development of ideas in Greene's writings or thinking. Invariably, I will pursue directions, parse ideas, or connect concepts that do not necessarily represent the way her philosophy of aesthetic education was, or is still being, conceived. Yet, I take them up because I know these ideas have either been significant in Greene's own work or, in my understanding of Greene and the philosophy and practice of aesthetic education.

### *The Influence of John Dewey*

Greene and Dewey are alike and somewhat unique, with their twin interests in both aesthetics and philosophy of education. Though they are writing at different times out of very different life circumstances, there are clear and striking affinities among many

of their ideas. Ultimately, they are both concerned with the larger issues of democracy, freedom, and social justice. It is worthwhile to begin a discussion of Dewey's ideas by uncovering a term he ultimately used to describe the kind of aesthetic and educational experiences in which he was most interested: “transaction.” It is useful not only terminologically, but also in revealing part of a longer intellectual history that Maxine Greene continues to take up in her work. It also lies at the heart of aesthetic education practice at LCI; for teaching artists there is the ever-present question of how to make a genuine transaction possible between a person, or communities of diverse people, and a work of art. Indeed, it is the central question.

In the ideas of both John Dewey and Maxine Greene, “transaction” is firmly at the center of two crucial acts, the two acts in which teaching artists at LCI are most deeply involved: (1) in perceiving a work of art, and (2) in meaningful teaching and learning. The term “transaction” was articulated and explicated by John Dewey and Arthur Bentley in *Knowing and the Known* (1949), however the concept *behind* the term is embedded in many of Dewey's earlier writings in both aesthetics and education (Dewey, 1902/1977, 1916, 1934).

In *Knowing and the Known* (1949), Dewey, along with philosopher Arthur Bentley, embarked upon clarifying some of the actual vocabulary used in the “field of knowledge,” as they called it. Their work is a terminological inquiry in which “transaction” is one of several words they explore at length. They juxtapose the term “transaction” to the word “interaction” for clarification (1949, p. 103-118). Interestingly, Dewey himself often used “interaction” in his prior aesthetic writings (1934) when he

was clearly interested in the *concept* he later called transaction. It seems that *Knowing and the Known* is, in no small measure, an attempt to specify particular terms that more precisely indicate earlier, well-developed ideas.

Yet the authors undertook this endeavor as a process of both clarification and inquiry (inquiry into “knowings” and “knowns”), and here they placed themselves firmly in the American pragmatic tradition, with writers such as George H. Mead and Charles Sanders Pierce who were their contemporaries. They are clear from the outset that they regard language (names and namings) “as living behaviors in an evolving world of men and things” (Dewey and Bentley, 1949, xii). Bentley, Mead, Pierce, and especially Dewey's work should be viewed from the context of the larger pragmatist movement, one that viewed the world as consisting of relationships and activities. Pragmatism is a theory of action (behavior) and relations, rather than of metaphysics or individuals. Thus “knowings” and “knowns” and even “namings” are always viewed as processes, as events or behaviors in the making that do not separate subjects from objects.

While Greene sees beyond a purely pragmatist perspective through, among other views, a phenomenological lens of behavior and “knowings” that arise more specifically out of the ground of individuals' lived lives, we can certainly recognize the strong relational impulse and the active mode in her view of the aesthetic experience. Greene writes eloquently about the need for a human consciousness if there is to be a work of art at all. Here, she travels along with Dewey and the countless others who argue against separations and false distinctions:

> There must be a readiness; there must be some realization that an aesthetic object —*Romeo and Juliet*, “Billy Budd,” Cezanne's *The Cardplayers*—is

> something that has to be achieved, brought into being by the one who perceives, who reads, who attends. Many people simply do not understand that mere printed words, musical notes, brushstrokes on canvas cannot be regarded as works of art. They do not realize that works of art only come into existence when a certain kind of heeding, noticing or attending takes place; they do not realize that living persons, through and by means of an encounter with a work, constitute it (if they are wide-awake and attentive enough) as a work of art (Greene, 1978, p. 190-1).

Understanding transaction entails rejecting any separation between subject and object; this belief was a mainstream tenet of the pragmatist approach and is a view embraced and furthered by Greene. The world must be seen in its inter-related wholeness, rather than as dissected. In fact, in Mead's thinking, the self (or individual) emerges only through the process of social interaction with others and the environment. The development of no part of the system can be studied or understood independently of the whole (Mead, 1934). This is a topic Dewey had written passionately about for most of his life, and the subject-object debate certainly has one of the longest intellectual histories in philosophy. As a general philosophical stance, Dewey opposed dualities and fragmentation thoroughly; one need only attend to the titles of his many works (*Experience and Education, Art as Experience*, *The Child and the Curriculum, Democracy and Education,* to name but a few) to note his deep impulse towards bringing ideas into relationships and seeing them as wholes, rather than as disparate or distinct parts.

> The reader will recall that in our general procedure of inquiry no radical separation is made between that which is observed and the observer in the way which is common in the epistemologies and in standard psychologies and psychological constructions. Instead, observer and observed are held in close organization. Nor is there any radical separation between that which is named and the naming. Comparably knowings and knowns, as inclusive of namings and observings, and of much else as well, are themselves taken in a common system of inquiry, and not as if they were

> the precarious products of a struggle between severed realms of "being" (Dewey and Bentley, 1949, p. 104).

These ideas were present in Dewey's earlier notions of the aesthetic experience as well. Throughout *Art as Experience* (1934), he speaks in depth about the need to erase many of the traditional dualities associated with art—form and content, high and low art, creation and perception, emotion and reason, mind and body, to name but a few. He is, in fact, adamant about how the acts of making and perceiving are absolutely entwined in the artist's process:

> In an emphatic artistic-esthetic [sic] experience, the relation is so close that it controls simultaneously both the doing and the perception. . . Hand and eye, when the experience is esthetic [sic], are but instruments through which the entire live creature, moved and active throughout, operates. Hence, the expression is emotional and guided by purpose. . . What is done and what is undergone are thus reciprocally, cumulatively, and continuously instrumental to each other (Dewey, 1934, p. 50).

More radical, however, is his insistence that the perceiver of a work of art is also involved in the *active* processes (perceiving and making) of the artist:

> It is not so easy in the case of the perceiver and appreciator to understand the intimate union of doing and undergoing as it is in the case of the maker. We are given to supposing that the former merely takes in what is there in finished form, instead of realizing that this taking in involves activities that are comparable to those of the creator. But receptivity is not passivity. It, too, is a process consisting of a series of responsive acts that accumulate toward objective fulfillment. Otherwise, there is not perception but recognition. The difference between the two is immense. Recognition is perception arrested before it has a chance to develop freely. In recognition there is a beginning of an act of perception. But this beginning is not allowed to serve the development of a full perception of the thing recognized. It is arrested at the point where it will serve some *other* purpose, as we recognize a man on the street in order to greet or to avoid him, not so as to see him for the sake of seeing what is there. . . . In recognition we fall back, as upon a stereotype, upon some previously formed scheme . . . (1934, p. 52).

Greene often refers to Dewey's claim that without imagination mere facts are "helpless" and "repellent" things (Dewey, 1931, p. 11). What she indicates here is the need to move beyond any obvious fact for an aesthetic experience to occur between perceiver and work. She sometimes calls this "achieving" the work, or reaching out towards it in particular ways that surpass bare recognition, or pinning down a definition. For Greene, this reaching is a necessary part of the transactional experience:

> I have been emphasizing the fact that the work or the performance can only emerge as an aesthetic object or event in encounters with some human consciousness. Works of art do not reveal themselves automatically, you see. I have suggested that they have to be achieved (Greene, 2001b, p. 15).

Greene describes her idea of aesthetic education as a "reaching out for meanings, a learning to learn" (2001b, p. 7). She, like Dewey, rejects any suggestion of passivity. For Greene, perhaps even more so than for Dewey, it is the very active, participatory nature of the aesthetic experience that makes it transactional. Dewey, himself, also says:

> Perception replaces bare recognition. There is an act of reconstructive doing, and consciousness becomes fresh and alive. This act of seeing involves the cooperation of motor elements even though they remain implicit and do not become overt, as well as cooperation of all funded ideas that may serve to complete the new picture that is forming. . . Bare recognition is satisfied when a proper tag or label is attached . . . But an act of perception proceeds by waves that extend serially throughout the entire organism (Dewey, 1934, p. 53).

He, of course, could not have imagined aesthetic education as practiced at Lincoln Center Institute (which does involve a good deal of "overt motor activity"), but one can easily see his larger refusal to separate the knowing of body and mind, sense and emotion in the aesthetic experience.

> The esthetic [sic] or undergoing phase of experience is receptive. It involves surrender. But adequate yielding of the self is possible only through a controlled activity that may well be intense . . . Perception is an act of the going-out of energy in order to receive, not a withholding of energy. To steep ourselves in a subject-matter we have to first plunge into it. When we are only passive to a scene, it overwhelms us and, for lack of answering activity, we do not perceive that which bears us down. We must summon energy and pitch it at a responsive key in order to *take* in (1934, p. 53).

Again, Dewey's relationship to the behaviorist view is evident. He sees the world in terms of actions and relationships—dynamic exchanges of energy. At every moment, he rejects stasis and non-action, as his choice of words, “plunge” and “pitch,” indicate. He summarizes his view as follows:

> For to perceive, a beholder must *create* his own experience. And his creation must include relations comparable to those which the original producer underwent. They are not the same in any literal sense. But with the perceiver, as with the artist, there must be an ordering of the elements of the whole that is in form, although not in details, the same as the process of organization the creator of the work consciously experienced (p. 54).

Like Dewey, Greene has her own particular language of action and agency that she uses to describe the aesthetic experience. For example:

> To find ourselves “in the delight of experiencing” [a work of art] requires a transaction with the world, an ongoing transaction . . .This kind of transaction may be thought of in terms of acts of consciousness, meaning a series of moments in which we *grasp* what is given, in which we thrust into the world. To be aware of such moments is to be sensitive to the ways in which we originate them; it is to be conscious of the fact that we are the motivators of what is happening, that we are subjects responsible to and for ourselves (Greene, 1978, p. 199-200).

In addition to wholes, relationships, and actions, the pragmatist perspective was also very engaged with the scientific method and the processes of inquiry, experimentation, and observation. It is no surprise then, that Dewey and Bentley look to

physics and to Einstein to help them distinguish transaction from interaction (1949). Up to the end of the 19th century, they say, physical science was seen as particles or bodies acting and reacting with each other (i.e., interaction). These views, however, merely prepared the scene for Einstein to do away with particles altogether, radically altering attitudes towards physical reality and transforming the discussion to waves and environments as total quantum systems. Bits interacting with their environments had to be re-imagined as transactions in a mutual process of co-creation and transformation of complete systems. Again, Dewey's ideas should be read within the larger context of biological "systems theories" and their influence on social theory. Talcott Parsons, for example, one of the most influential social theorists of the early 20th century, was comprehensive in his efforts to understand and analyze society in terms of a systemic approach (Parsons, 1951).

Greene, in her own manner, is interested in related ideas, though she would in no way call them a theory of "systems." Nor, it should be clear, is she making a conscious attempt to advance or resurrect a pragmatist project. I draw these connections only in so far as to excavate a kind of intellectual archeology of how ideas connect, overlap, and extend each other. Greene writes often of the ways in which an aesthetic experience involves what Virginia Woolf described as the ability to "put the severed parts together" (Greene, 1978, p. 185; Woolf, 1976). Greene talks of engaging with works of art as "searching for fresh connections" (2001b, p. 42) and relationships. Similar to Dewey's interest in the unity and wholeness of the experience with works of art (Dewey, 1934), Greene is interested in the connective, total-immersion quality of the aesthetic experience

But, above all, she writes time and again about the necessity of connecting the actual lived lives of individuals to works of art. Dewey claimed a similar belief; he thought that his entire theory of experience (most especially the aesthetic experience, as Philip Jackson has noted), should make a difference in people's lives (Jackson, 1998). Greene has in mind a transformation when she quotes William James:

> My point has to do with what William James calls the "sense of our own reality, that sense of our own life which we at every moment posess." He talks about the things that have "intimate and continuous connections" with our lives, things whose reality we do not doubt. And he says that the world of those living realities becomes the "hook from which the rest dangles, the absolute support" (1978, p. 216/James, 1950, p. 297).

Phenomenological influences can be felt in this line of thought, along with a sense of urgency from Greene, that bringing students' lives into meaningful connection with works of art has the possibility not only to open the world of the works, but also to disclose hidden aspects of students' own lives. The work of art must be "hooked" to the students' lived lives—and it must ask them, in return, to *do something*—to change, to transform.

Here, in the aesthetic transaction, Greene finds the seeds of agency and the basis for choosing one's life. She has written about the particular importance of engaging works of art that pose or highlight social issues that are resonant in the perceiver's world (e.g., 1978). One can see clearly how (to take an example from the recent Lincoln Center Institute repertory) it might be particularly important for middle school students to study the theatre work of Anna DeVeare Smith, *Twilight L.A.,* created out of the devastating experiences of racism and riot that surrounded the beating and trial of Rodney King in 1992. Bringing students' lives into relationship with this work of art has clear social as

well as aesthetic implications. Greene sometimes refers to Sartre's idea that literature needs, sometimes, to reveal itself to the “indignation of the reader” (Sartre, 1949, p. 62).

But Greene is also interested in how the *process* of transaction itself, irrespective of particular content, always includes acts of choosing. She is concerned with how the acts of interpreting and making sense are connected to the real experience of freedom—”the complementarity of the hermeneutic and the emancipatory” (1978, p. 106).

To connect Greene’s sense of agency with the notion of transaction, returning to *Knowing and the Known* is useful. Perhaps Dewey and Bentley's central point here is that in questions and concerns of knowledge, it had been, historically, much more common for a separatist approach to stand in place of one that should rightly be unified, or transactional. In other words, in the discourse of cognition and perception of Dewey and Bentley's time, it was not uncommon to encounter knowers (subjects) as separate from knowledge (objects) that had to be “acquired.” They were urging the field of knowledge, of which they considered education a large component, to join the pragmatist views of American sociology and psychology. One final point from *Knowing and the Known* illuminates the concept of transaction. It is presented as an example of the common-sense way in which we are most familiar with the term, and it brings forward the crucial idea that in a transaction, all elements of the system are altered by their participation. Here, Dewey and Bentley describe a trade, or commercial transaction (their italics). Though our current thinking tells us to beware educational concepts couched in economic terms, this is a case in clarity worth making:

> This transaction determines one participant to be a buyer and the other a seller. No one exists as buyer or seller save *in and because of* a transaction

> in which each is engaged. Nor is that all; specific things *become* goods or commodities because they are engaged in the transaction. There is no commercial transaction without things which only are goods, utilities, commodities, in and because of a transaction. Moreover, because of the exchange of transfer, both *parties* (the idiomatic name for *participants*) under-go change; and the goods undergo at the very least a change of *locus* by which they gain and lose certain connective relations or "capacities" previously possessed (Dewey and Bentley, 1949, p. 271).

Teaching artists at LCI actually talk about inventing activities where participants are making choices like those choices the artist under study makes, or has made. Again, this is not to literally reconstruct the work, but to experience or authentically enact parts of the creation process in order to truly transact with the work of art, or have a visceral understanding as part of the aesthetic experience. In *Art as Experience* Dewey puts it this way:

> Without an act of recreation the object is not perceived as a work of art. The artist selected, simplified, clarified, abridged and condensed according to his interest. The beholder must go through these operations according to his point of view and interest. In both, an act of abstraction, that is of extraction of what is significant takes place. In both, there is comprehension in its literal significance—that is, a gathering together of details and particulars physically scattered into an experienced whole. There is work done on the part of the percipient as there is on the part of the artist. The one who is too lazy, idle, or indurated in convention to perform this work will not see or hear. His "appreciation" will be a mixture of scraps of learning with conformity to norms of conventional admiration and with a confused, even if genuine, emotional excitation (Dewey, 1934, p. 54).

Though Dewey is never specific about what he might exactly mean by "recreation," teaching artists have thought deeply about engaging students in authentic arts experiences that are at the core of the works they are studying. The recreation has to do with active, relevant participation in the medium and ideas embedded in the work of art, rather than with any kind of literal mimesis. These artistic acts are intended to enable a full

transaction with the work of art. As well, they are what situate the process of aesthetic education firmly in the realm of agency, choice and active participation.

Because a transaction is a fundamentally participatory process, and one that requires a change to one's lived life, both Greene and Dewey link the idea of aesthetic experience to social transformation. Dewey sees education as fundamentally social, and an essential part of the democratic process (Dewey, 1916, 1910/1977, 1938/1997). For Greene, freedom and democracy are also deeply involved in public and community, communities of people "choosing themselves" and acting together (Greene, 1998). Freedom must be achieved within a dialectic that takes into account the actuality of lived-life and the possibility of "things as if they could be otherwise" (1998). The arts, for Greene, are an immediate and particular way to deal with the grist of lived life and the imaginings of the possible all at once.

> It is a matter of using imagination in order to be able to perceive the alternatives. It is a matter of inventing metaphors in efforts to reorient the consciousness of those who can only think technically of in terms of measurement, who think of education as a process of matching existing skills and talents (still arranged on a bell curve in too many minds) with the changing demands of the changing technologies . . . (Greene, 2001a, p. 10).

She imagines classroom communities participating in aesthetic experiences and she worries that we are not, in the main stream of the educational field, having conversations about this. She worries, in essence, about Dewey's "eclipse of the public" (Dewey, 1927/1988) and about education as bureaucracy rather than as "release of the imagination" (Greene, 1995).

***The Imagination***

Both within and without the boundaries of philosophical aesthetics, writers have engaged the notion of the imagination and its role in perception and interpretation. But Greene, who draws widely from eclectic sources in addition to her own experiences, has significantly and specifically endeavored to offer a language of imagination that links aesthetic experience to the wider educational discourse (Greene, 1995, 2000, 2001b).

For Greene, perhaps uniquely, it is primarily an act of imagination that allows the important sense of agency and freedom to emerge in students. It is imagination that enables them to make sense of their own worlds, as well as to reach towards the meaning of a poem or of a jazz riff. Transformation, change, action—all must begin in the imagination of the possible. The title of her 2001 work, *Releasing the Imagination,* signals her emphasis. Greene believes that artists invite our imaginations to engage:

> We . . . see that the artist tries to oblige the reader or the perceiver to create what the artist discloses, to become an accomplice in freedom with the artist, an accomplice in releasing possibilities. It is this sort of action that is at the core of aesthetic education, this sort of action that may (it seems to me) save our human lives (1995, p. 149).

Imagination is also at the root of empathy for Greene. Not only is imagination the power to form mental images or to create something new, ". . . it is, as well, the power—by means of sympathetic feeling—to put oneself in another's place" (2001b, p. 30). It is imagination, says Greene, that allows us to experience empathy with another's point of view. When a classroom of students listen to each other speak about their differing perspectives on what Jackson Pollock's lines and patterns evoke for them, or when they engage each other in a conversation about how they imagine blues music relates to rap,

they encounter differing, sometimes, disagreeing points of view. But, with the work of art there before them, they may dare to enter into another's perspective, just as they have dared to enter the world of singing or painting with the teaching artist as guide. They may, through imagination, feel a new opinion, a new perspective, or a different way of knowing.

> One of the reasons I have come to concentrate on imagination as a means through which we can assemble a coherent world is that imagination is what, above all, makes empathy possible . . . . That is because, of all our cognitive capacities, imagination is the one that permits us to give credence to alternative realities. It allows us to break with the taken for granted, to set aside familiar distinctions and definitions (Greene, 2001a, p. 3).

Aesthetic education, then, offers several distinct modes of empathic behavior. Students may empathize with the choreographer's process as they create their own movement studies, and they may also empathize with one another as they discuss their individual meanings and interpretations of the dance. The imaginative capacity, Greene reminds us, is what makes both understandings possible.

### *Existentialism and Phenomenology*

It would be incomplete not to mention Greene's alliance with various existential writers and thinkers. Greene said once, “I felt Sartre was my other as soon as I read him” (personal communication, 2005). I have also heard her remark that what existentialists have in common with Dewey is the concern with human choosing and freedom (personal communication, June, 2005). Yet there are important differences as well. Sartre insists on the aesthetic connection to the moral in a direct way that Dewey does not. Greene refers to this in *Variations on a Blue Guitar* (2001b), where she describes Sartre's view of how

we must “animate” the world's injustices with our “indignation,” just as the writer's universe will reveal itself to the reader only under similar, passionate engagement (2001b, p. 29). Sartre says, “. . .although literature is one thing and morality quite a different one, at the heart of the aesthetic imperative we discern the moral imperative” (Sartre, 1949, p. 62-63).

Elsewhere, Greene has noted other important differences between Dewey's and Sartre's views. Though she points out that they both treat the problem of fixity in their work, she feels that Sartre stresses transformation of the present in light of future possibility while Dewey remains in the process of the present (Greene, 1978). Here she aligns herself firmly with Sartre, in that she believes encounters with works of art enable people to break through what surrounds them, whether it be the ordinary, the taken-for-granted, or the unjust, and look towards future possibility (1978).

French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty and his ideas are another influence in Greene's thinking. I will address them, however, via Susan Sontag's essay *Against Interpretation* (1966), which has relevance to Greene's work in a manner similar to Merleau-Ponty's. First, this essay must be seen in a historical light. Sontag is not against all interpretation of literature or art, per se, but certainly against what she felt was a lot of bad literary interpretation rife in the 1960's. She was against the sort of over-intellectualized, over-psychologized readings that were laid on top works, in lieu of careful attention to the works themselves. Though not a strict formalist, Sontag stood up for form and style as worthy of analysis (refuting the stubborn focus on content only),

and she argued, famously, for an “erotic” rather than “hermeneutic” approach to art (Sontag, 1966).

Sontag's idea of the “erotics” needed in art interpretation, leads us into another important area of aesthetic consideration for Greene. Namely, that the aesthetic experience is not just something that occurs *in* the mind or *with* the mind, but is a whole kinesthetic, psychological, emotional—and sometimes erotic—experience. Merleau-Ponty is an important figure in this discussion. He, like Dewey and Greene, sees the mind and the body as deeply embedded within each other, not separate at all. Aesthetic perception is a synthesis that finds unity and wholeness in a kind of bodily, sensory perception, as does the act of creation; it cannot be “decomposed” into separate parts (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p. 14-15). He helps build the philosophical case that we transact with much more than just a mental/logical/rational act. His argument, in fact, is against breaking the transactional experience into those categories at all, and for elevating the sensory world of perception to an equal and integrated status (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1962, 1964). Merleau-Ponty writes eloquently about the relationship between the “intellectual consciousness” and the “perceptual consciousness.” The intellect, he says, provides a means of reflection upon what is otherwise an embedded sensual experience of the world:

> It is the unreflected which is understood and conquered by reflection. Left to itself, perception forgets itself and is ignorant of its own accomplishments. Far from thinking that philosophy is a useless repetition of life I think, on the contrary, that without reflection life would probably dissipate itself in ignorance of itself or chaos. But this does not mean that reflection should be carried away with itself or pretend to be ignorant of its origins (1964, p. 19).

This statement is very significant in terms of Greene's work; she writes often of "reflective encounters with works of art" by which she means the active questioning, probing and discussing of the experiences had. Dewey, as well, said that without reflection, experience is meaningless (Dewey, 1916, 1934, 1964, 1902/1977, 1938/1997). Active, engaged, artistic reflection is, for Greene, a key aspect of aesthetic education. All of these ideas speak to one of the major considerations that teaching artists face in the design and implementation of aesthetic education workshops: achieving the balance between doing and making, inventing opportunities for students to step outside their activity to reflect and notice what is happening. In the hands of a master teaching artist's practice, this process feels seamless and integrated to the student; reflection is embedded in the type of embodied sensual experience Merleau-Ponty indicates.

***Literary Influences***

As a female philosopher in the 1950s, Greene speaks about how she was accused of being "too literary" in certain male-dominated academic circles (personal communication, June 2005). It is clear that literature, and a passionate ongoing life of both writing and reading has indelibly shaped her views of aesthetic education. Literature is her primary art form, the one she thinks and moves through most facilely. Every summer at Lincoln Center Institute, Greene leads aesthetic education workshops that center on the study of a work of literature. One of the central metaphors in her notion of the imagination, the "blue guitar," comes from a poem by Wallace Stevens:

> *They said, "you have a blue guitar*
> *You do not play things as they are."*
> *The man replied, "Things as they are*
> *Are changed upon the blue guitar."* (Stevens, 1982, p. 165)

Throughout her philosophical process, Greene is constantly moved, transformed, and shocked by her encounters with literature. She does not separate these experiences from a philosophical perspective—they join together. She is also thoroughly steeped in many of the traditions of literary theory. Greene, of course, extends her ideas beyond the literary into the various art forms. But it is worthwhile to explore some of the aesthetic approaches to literature that are related, in concept, to the ideas of aesthetic education.

### *Reader-Response Theory*

Louise Rosenblatt, a colleague of Greene, developed the reader-response theory of teaching literature, largely in terms of Dewey's notions of transaction and the aesthetic experience (Rosenblatt, 1978). The same source of philosophical inspiration underlies Greene's ideas about the performing and visual arts and Rosenblatt's practice, which studies literature as art. Throughout the history of literary theory, Rosenblatt points out, there were moments at which the primary emphasis was on the work itself, while at other points, the emphasis shifted to the author. There were also moments where long discussions about the relationship between the author and the work seemed to hold sway. Throughout this history, the reader was sometimes acknowledged, but usually only in a passive role, as recipient, rather than as an active “maker” in a process. In contrast, she says:

> The reading of a text is an event occurring at a particular time in a particular environment at a particular moment in the life history of the reader. The transaction will involve not only the past experience but also the present state and present interests or preoccupations of the reader. This suggests the possibility that printed marks on a page may even become different linguistic symbols by virtue of the transactions with different readers. Just as a knowing is the process linking a knower and a known, so

> a poem should not be thought of as an object, an entity, but rather as an active process lived through during the relationship between a reader and a text. This experience may be the object of thought, like any other experience in life, but it should not be confused with an object in the sense of an entity existing apart from author or reader (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 20-21).

For Rosenblatt, the interesting part of transaction happens in the space between work of art and perceiver; it is this "object of the experience" to which she refers above, as a process. To interpret is to attend both to text and to self simultaneously, to be involved in what happens in between the two. Rosenblatt distinguishes between an "efferent" and an "aesthetic" stance towards literature (1938, 1978). In an efferent stance, one reads for information, for facts to carry away. In an aesthetic stance, one reads for what happens during the reading. These two stances exist on a continuum rather than as two compartments. But most school approaches to literature, she says, operate from the efferent stance, to the exclusion and debilitation of the aesthetic.

> The aesthetic stance, as I have described it, should not be confused with a simple reverie or train of free associations. Perusal of a text merely leading to free fantasy would not be a reading at all in the transactional sense. The concept of transaction emphasizes the relationship with, and continuing awareness of, the text. During the literary experience, concentration on the words of the text is perhaps more keen than in an efferent reading. The reader must pay attention to all that these words, and no others, these words, moreover, in a particular sequence, summon up. When a fire breaks out, the man reading the directions for use of a fire extinguisher will pay no attention to whether the word is "fire" "flame" or "combustion". But the aesthetic stance heightens an awareness of the words as signs with particular visual and auditory characteristics and as symbols. What is lived through is felt constantly to be linked with the words (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 29).

Here, she emphasizes the rigor involved in the aesthetic stance, and the careful attending to the work of art that is necessary in the process; the centrality of "attending," as we have seen, is also at the heart of Greene's beliefs. There are many fascinating

similarities to pursue between aesthetic education practice at LCI and the reader-response approach. However, it is also important to notice a primary difference. For Rosenblatt, as for Greene, it is central that the reader's life experiences are brought to bear upon the transaction with the work of art. The classroom work that goes on in reader-response process (discussions, analysis, and sharings) happens mainly in the midst of reading, or after the work has been read. (Although this would vary, obviously, in how specific teachers enact the process.)

In contrast, in aesthetic education practice, there is conscious, significant investment in creating experiences for students *prior* to the encounter with the work of art. In this way, the student perceiver brings to the transaction both her own lived-life and history, as well as the range of new experiences she has just encountered in a lesson or workshop with a teaching artist, including creating in the art form under study and reflecting upon the process. In other words, the aesthetic education approach at LCI actually builds relevant arts skills and experiences that enable the student to transact with the work of art, whereas the reader-response approach is more involved with helping students notice how their lives and experiences affect the transactional process *in the midst* or *after* the reading is completed. This is due, in no small measure, to the very different *kind* of experiences that are involved in say, reading a novel over many days, and listening to a one hour concert. But it is more than this as well. The point illuminates Greene's belief that while students bring their own wealth of experiences to any work of art, it is also the job of aesthetic education to add specific, meaningful experiences to their life histories (their repertoires of experience) in order to enable them to “notice what

is there to be noticed," —to make meaning with an improvised jazz solo or pedestrian dance movement (Greene, 2001b, p. 6). Greene, in talking specifically about aesthetic education as practiced at LCI, puts it this way:

> "Education," as I view it, is a process of enabling persons to become different, to enter the multiple provinces of meaning that create perspectives on the works. To enter these provinces (be they identified with the arts, the social sciences, the natural sciences), the learner must break with the taken-for-granted, what some call the "natural attitude," and look through the lenses of various ways of knowing, seeing and feeling in a conscious endeavor to impose different orders upon experience. It is important to understand that the concepts and precepts available to the learner stem from the funded meanings or ways of knowing designed over the years by artists, teachers and philosophers. We enter traditions as we engage with such perspectives, becoming members of a culture changing on many levels throughout history. Or, to say it differently, all kinds of sense, but we make the culture's symbol systems our own, including those associated with the arts (2001b, p. 5-6).

This is key to what Mark Schubart noticed while observing students at Lincoln Center in the days before the Institute. He believed, and the Institute was created because he did, that students *needed* a kind of education in order to help them engage, or transact, with rich, complex works of art.

A potential difficulty with Rosenblatt's work is that it leaves the aesthetic experience a bit too embedded in the world of the subjective. Wolfgang Iser offers an alternative view.

### *More on the Aesthetic Act of Reading*

In addition to Rosenblatt's work, there are several others who consider the aesthetic act of reading who are worth elaboration because of their particular resonance with Greene or Dewey. Wolfgang Iser is one of these (Iser, 1978). He sees the act of reading as having two poles: at one end is the reader and at the other is the text.

Somewhere in between the poles the act or event of reading occurs. He sees the reader as traveling through the text with a wandering viewpoint that is constantly being shaped and reconstituted by the experience of the journey itself. But he is very concerned with being more specific, than Rosenblatt or Dewey, about what kinds of determined conditions exist at the text end of the pole. He devotes much energy towards investigating how the determinacy of the text maneuvers the reader on the journey, though he agrees that each reader will ultimately create her own experience. Iser maintains that the reader is going to constantly encounter things that make him dispute or question his pre-formed gestalten, and as he tries to balance or entertain these discrepancies, he gets "involved." This whole process of involvement takes place in the imagination and that is what it means to "get caught up" or entangled in the work:

> Experiences arise only when the familiar is transcended or undermined; they grow out of the alteration or falsification of that which is already ours. Shaw once wrote: "You have learned something. That always feels at first as if you had lost something." Reading has the same structure as experience, to the extent that our entanglement has the effect of pushing our various criteria of orientation back into the past, thus suspending their validity for the new present . . . . But in the course of the reading, these experiences will also change, for the acquisition of experience is not a matter of adding on—it is a restructuring of what we already possess (Iser, 1978, p. 131-2).

He goes on to cite Dewey's notion of an aesthetic experience as a *process* of re-creation. But he moves beyond to offer an extension of Deweyian thought when he says that "the ability to perceive oneself during the process of participation is an essential quality of the aesthetic experience; the observer finds himself in a strange, halfway position: he is involved and he watches himself being involved" (1978, p. 134). Thus, he says, the reader is becoming aware not only of the experience, but also of *how* it

develops. This is directly resonant with both Greene's and Dewey's belief in the centrality of reflection in the educational process (Dewey, 1916, 1964, 1902/1977, 1938/1997) and it is even more directly tied to aesthetic education teaching practice. A very conscious part of what teaching artists do, through various means of reflection and inquiry, is to guide participants in the dual capacities of having an aesthetic experience and observing themselves having it—noticing *how* they are constructing their own meaning.

Greene has expressed admiration for Iser's "pole" explication as an antidote to relativism (personal communication, June, 2005). She seems less convinced about the idea of stances in Rosenblatt's work, and is inclined to think, like Iser, that the text or work of art itself has a stronger say in what kind of transaction takes place than the reader's choice (whether conscious, unconscious or imposed) of stance.

***Community***

Finally, Greene places great emphasis on classroom communities of diverse students coming together around the shared experience of a work of art. The arts, when allowed the space, are singular in their ability to inspire multiple interpretations and multiple ways of making meaning. Greene consistently asks educators to consider how they might nurture such classrooms of multiplicities and create communities of students who are both aware of their differences, and aware that they are sharing a common, passionate experience. *The Dialectic of Freedom* (Greene, 1988) reverberates throughout with a sense that freedom in a democracy might mean more than individual desire or personal consumer power, that it has do with a transaction between individual and

community, that it involves diverse peoples choosing both their independence and their unity together. In *Releasing the Imagination* (1995), she speaks directly about the intersection of these ideas and aesthetic education in classrooms:

> At the heart of what I am asking for in the domains of the teaching of art and aesthetics is a sense of agency, even of power. Painting, literature, theater, film —all can open doors and move persons to transform. We want to enable all sorts of young people to realize that they have the right to find works of art meaningful against their own lived lives. Moreover, because the world that the arts illumine is a shared world, because the realities to which the arts give rise emerge through acts of communication, the encounters we are enabling students to seek are never wholly autonomous or private. Moving from one's own explorations of pictorial space to a conscious encounter with a Braque painting, looking up from one's own poem to read a Robert Frost or a Muriel Rukeyser poem—one can always enter into dialogue with those around. The languages can be explored; the reasons given; the moments of epiphany celebrated; the differing vantage points articulated. Communities of the wide-awake may take shape, even in the corridors of school (p. 150).

Greene's view of aesthetic education is in the tradition of educators interested in freedom and justice such as Dewey, but also, for example, Paulo Freire, who wrote, in *Pedagogy of Hope* (1998) that until people can imagine a “lovelier world,” they will not be moved to action. She belongs in this emancipatory tradition of education, rather than with those interested in cognitive development or the decoding of specific artistic symbol systems, for example. It is through transactions with works of art, Greene believes, that students have opportunities to encounter both themselves and other versions of the world within their classroom communities in ways that might not be otherwise possible in schools. This is the most compelling argument for aesthetic education as a central experience in all education.

# Chapter 5: Methodological Framework of the Study

## *Framing the Research in an Interpretive Stance*

The first consideration for the methodological framework of this study was that it be compatible with a philosophy of aesthetic education. That is to say, the research itself should not run counter to the values central to the ideas of aesthetic education. Quantifiable tests that measure how teaching artists' efforts improve students' test scores, or even qualitative methods that address issues of literacy, would miss the larger point of the significance of an aesthetic experience. A study that measured purely cognitive skills or outcomes, without taking into account the central aesthetic experience, might actually confuse the deeper intents and purposes of aesthetic education.

Secondly, the purpose of this research with teaching artists is not in any way evaluative; rather, it endeavors to paint a rich portrait of their practice and to examine the relationship of Greene's philosophy to this practice. Ultimately, aesthetic education nurtures participants' capacities to make their own interpretive meaning out of experiences in the various art forms with particular works of art. Similarly, these research efforts should enable a kind of meaning making for the readers, for the teaching artists who participated in the research, and for the principal investigator herself. Otherwise, an opportunity for a deeper understanding of aesthetic education philosophy itself has been missed. Thus, the research is based in an interpretive, hermeneutic stance (Schwandt, 2000), conceived as a type of interpretive case study whose research methodologies are influenced by ethnographic approaches. One is always present in one's own texts, and this study is written with the idea that I, as a teaching artist, am telling my own story as well

as the story of other teaching artists. In the past few decades of qualitative research, it has become widely accepted that, as Dorrine Kondo notes, the narrator's account is both "eye" and "I"; that is, there is always a subjective "I" observing and interpreting (Kondo, 1990). Ruth Behar, among many others, has also helped the field understand the intensely personal nature of how the researcher perceives the world (Behar, 1996). Both Kondo's and Behar's ideas are significant here, for not only am I ever present as an interpreting observer, but one who is steeped in over a decade of professional involvement as an aesthetic education teaching artist.

While this study is not an ethnography, the observations, videos, and interviews in it constitute various ethnographic approaches to research methodology. Several writers and researchers in the ethnographic tradition have also been influential in considering the essential interpretive nature of the study. As John Van Maanen notes, all ethnographers are not merely observing objective, neutral behaviors or acts, but are interpreting their meaning and significance as well (Van Maanen, 1988, p. 93). Van Maanen further remarks that the ethnographer's job is partly about "decoding" for one culture while "recording" it for another (1988, p. 4). Thus, this study frames the aesthetic education practice of LCI TAs so that it can be more deeply understood by those who are not practitioners, as well as by those who are. Geertz's notion of "thick description" is also valuable to consider (Geertz, 1973), as this study is a consciously interpretive *descriptive* process. At its root, ethnography is about an constant endeavor to place specific behaviors, encounters or understandings into a larger, more meaningful context for a wider audience of readers. Researcher Laurel Richardson notes that researched

participants or situations are as much created by the writing as they actually determine or guide the writing (Richardson, 1997). Writers such as Richardson, Geertz and Van Maanen emphasize that the depth of the interpretive process in research is significant, and not to be underestimated or left unexamined.

However, I endeavor to avoid some of the more extreme versions of what Van Maanen calls ethnographic "confessional tales" (1988), those that are interested more in self-discovery as a kind of extreme reflexivity than in the subjects under study. I am asserting that my long experience and expertise in the culture of aesthetic education practice as well as my own artistry as a musician be seen as the basis for an interpretive persuasiveness, or an inside understanding about that which I write. As a classically-trained singer, my own art form is largely interpretive; I do not compose music, I interpret it and bring my own sensibilities, skills, experiences, and ideas towards the goal of illuminating the notes that already exist on a page. I am deeply influenced by this lifelong interpretive artistic pursuit, and bring these artistic skills to bear upon the work. But the study is occupied with revealing the practice of aesthetic education, rather than any kind of deeply personal autobiography, self-transformation, or revelation about myself.

Valerie Janesick sees the qualitative research project as a matter of choreography (Janesick, 2000): just as a choreographer arranges bodies in space, so the researcher arranges data and analysis with both individuality and artistic sensibility. In Chapters 6, 7, and 8, examples of teaching artist work in classrooms is juxtaposed with both my own analysis, and with the voices of the teaching artists themselves as revealed through

interviews, speaking about their own work. These two types of analysis, as well as the classroom practice described, engage in a kind of choreography with Greene's philosophical ideas. The multiple perspectives reveal aspects of each other as well as relationships and connections among one another. The notion of researcher as *bricoleur*, one engaged in a collage or quilt-like process of making sense of complex representations, interpretations, theories, and narratives (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Kincheloe, 2005) is another related research approach. In thinking like a bricoleur or collage artist, there are, at times, lengthy descriptions of practice or quotations that I have left in tact. They are thoughtfully arranged in a kind of collage, so as to provoke a conversation amongst themselves, without over-interference on my part.

This study explores a particular case—that of aesthetic education teaching artist practice. Thus, the literature in case study research has been valuable to consider (e.g., Stake, 1995). There are six instances of teaching artist practice that are examined, through the work and thoughts of three artists. But the larger case to be understood is that of a particular kind of practice (aesthetic education at LCI), grounded in a particular philosophy (Maxine Greene's). Again, Stake points out the fundamentally interpretive role of the case study researcher, and the goal of the research as sophisticating an understanding of the case, rather than simplifying it. He also speaks of "empathy" (1995, p. 38); the role of the researcher is, in part, to help the reader experience and understand the case. The art of the case study is about providing clear descriptions so that readers may embark upon their own multiple interpretations (p. 102), not unlike the goals of aesthetic education—enabling participants to notice more, experience more, probe more

deeply, and thus make sense of both themselves and works of art in multi-dimensional, interpretive ways.

### *Situating Myself*

I was a music teaching artist for LCI from 1996 to 2005, and from 2001 to 2005, one of the first full-time TAs at the Institute. Today, though I live in another city, I maintain a significant relationship with LCI and am honored to serve as consultant and facilitator for some of the ongoing work with teacher education—nationally and internationally. My relationship with LCI, both personally and professionally, remains an extremely important one. Thus, I am situated very much inside the organization, and inside the teaching practice and philosophy I examine here. The field research conducted in the fall of 2005 was with my former teaching artist colleagues with whom I have deep, mutually respectful and personal relationships.

The history of ethnographic research, in both the fields of sociology and anthropology, is steeped in the idea of research as a way of understanding “the other.” What this means, culturally, historically, and in terms of race, gender and power, has been widely problematized . The research in this study represents a somewhat unique situation, since there isn't any substantial “othering” involved. However, it may be taken into account that in the act of “doing research” I have located myself in my familiar world of aesthetic education in a new way; I have endeavored to make it visible to those who are, so to speak, “outside” that world. And I have played a new role with my colleagues, which has undoubtedly affected our way of relating to each other. The act of

research has moved us from a strictly collegial relationship to one in which the roles are divided between researcher and research participant.

Many researchers have asked questions of what it means to be both “insider” and “outsider” in terms of the research project. Tuhiwai Smith, though writing specifically from the perspective of indigenous peoples, breaks open the notion of clear borders around who is an insider and who is an outsider. She purports that these distinctions are, in fact, quite blurry, and move around depending upon individual situations (Smith, 1999). I have tried to pay careful attention to these ideas both in the researching and writing processes, for it would be too easy to assume a kind of fixed insider's status or posture. Michelle Fine's piece, *Working the Hyphens*, speaks out against “othering” altogether; it asks researchers to think much more deeply and complexly around notions of self and others and the kinds of conversations that occur between researcher and participants (Fine, 1994). “Hyphens” may always exist in research, and the idea of locating both oneself and who/what one researches in the space around the hyphen is a challenging and exciting prospect; it asks us, in essence, to do away with who is inside or outside what. I prefer, ultimately, to think of this research as existing within such hyphens, or in a kind of “in between” space.

The long tradition of *participant-observer* in qualitative research is also significant to consider. Once again, this study represents a rather unique case. Researchers have often been concerned with immersing themselves within the culture they are studying, directly participating in practices of the culture, and yet, simultaneously detaching as observer or writer. The field is full of tales of ethnographers

who have "lived" their fieldwork or become, in some estimations "bilingual." As well, there are those who have engaged in a kind of auto-ethnography—indigenous people writing about the villages in which they grew up, for example. Their fieldwork was in essence, their own lived lives. This type of research is vital in these instances, for the histories of indigenous peoples are filled with Western Europeans telling, or "mis-telling" their stories.

I am attempting here a project that is related, and yet not identical to either of these types of work. Again, though not a strict ethnography, this study invites thinking about some traditions and histories in ethnography. Aesthetic education practice is a large part of my past and current lived-life; I need make no special attempts to immerse in it. In this way, I am not making conscious efforts towards a participant-observer approach; that is what already exists. Participant-observer describes my stance without my needing to create it in any particular way. When considering the cases of those researching their own cultures in order to understand both themselves and their worlds more fully and to put forth an authentic voice, there is both resonance and difference with this study. Certainly, it must be clear, I do not speak from a colonized or racialized position. But there is a certain marginality of artists who teach (as well as a marginalization of the arts, in many educational circles). That is to say that while teaching artists may occupy quite central places with teachers and students in classrooms, in terms of research, educational writing, and widely held educational values, they often occupy a fringe position. TAs exist outside the parameters of most educators; they are not full-time Department of Education employees, not classroom teachers employed by a school, and not certified arts specialists

working full time. Their work is mostly described or evaluated by outside educational experts, and often held up as exemplars of how the arts help children learn *other* (often understood as *more important*) skills. Teaching artists appear most often as subjects in other people's studies, or their organizations may speak for them, but their own voices and ideas are not widely articulated in the field. A void exists when it comes to teaching artists speaking and writing about their own work. This study speaks from that void and highlights both the work of teaching artists and their own voices in the analysis of the work.

### *Research Questions*

The main research questions guiding the study were: How does aesthetic education philosophy, as articulated by Maxine Greene, transact with the educational practice of teaching artists who work at Lincoln Center Institute? How does a philosophical stance both shape and respond to what teaching artists do? Related questions included: How do TAs articulate aesthetic education philosophy, as related to their practice? How does TA practice reflect philosophical perspectives as articulated by Maxine Greene? Does it reflect other philosophical perspectives? What was the evolutionary process at Lincoln Center Institute whereby a philosophy was embraced consciously as a guide for the evolution of educational practice?

### *Research Methods with Teaching Artists*

In order to obtain data that provided the ground for rich and varied descriptions of TA practice in aesthetic education, and that explored TAs' perspectives on their practice in their own words, the following methods were used:

(1) An anonymous survey completed by e-mail in 2005, sent out to the approximately 100 active TAs on the Lincoln Center Institute roster and returned by 22.

(2) Video taped observation of teaching sessions with three LCI teaching artists (one each in theatre, music and the visual arts).

(3) An additional observation of each of the three teaching artists in a second teaching session with the principal investigator silently observing and taking field notes. [Note: Each TA was observed once in a K-12 setting and once in a college or university classroom—two times total for each of three teaching artists.]

(4) Individual two-hour follow-up meetings with each of the same TAs—organized around joint inquiry based on the video tapes and field notes.

Each of the three principal TA research participants was paid a $100 honorarium by the principal investigator.

Tobin, Wu and Davidson's video observation exploring the preschool cultures of Japan, China and the United States was very influential in designing the video portion of this study (Tobin, Wu, Davidson, 1989). In *Preschool in Three Cultures*, the authors describe the video-taping of preschool classes in the three countries and then showing the videos to cross-cultural groups of educators, parents, administrators, and others for further discussion and analysis. They were able to gain a multi-voiced, multi-level analysis of their data.

More recent research emerging from the Japanese "Lesson Study" approach continued to be significant in this study's thinking about modes of analysis with video

tapes. The Lesson Study method organizes teachers, in small groups, around co-designing lessons and then co-discussing/analyzing what happens in the classroom after watching videos of individual teachers facilitating the lessons (Lewis & Tschuchida, 1998; Fernandez & Chokshi, 2002).

In this study, I observed three teaching artists (two times each, in classroom sessions) teaching aesthetic education lessons that they designed. In one instance with each TA, I took field-notes, and in the other, I videoed the TA's work. Each teaching artist then participated in a conversation with me, and we referred to notes I had taken both in person and from the videos. I introduced significant moments, gleaned from my notes, for discussion and co-analysis with the teaching artist. In this way, I was guiding the research experience by pre-selecting what I choose as the meaningful excerpts of notes and videos. But like the Lesson Study and the preschool approaches, I also made significant attempts to include the voices of the teaching artists themselves in the analysis process. We had the opportunity to jointly reflect on their work, and a multi-voiced analysis was made possible.

The ways in which the accounts of teaching artist practice are written are also influenced by, for example, Laurel Richardson's notion of crystallization (Richardson, 2000). Like a multi-faceted crystal, this study includes different prisms and reflections of the same experience. There is a narrative description of the teaching artist's work, informed by the video account and note-taking (indicated by italics). Each chapter also includes my own analysis throughout, the teaching artist's voiced reflection (these quotations are separated and clearly indicated), and at times, joint insights reached

collaboratively by both myself and the teaching artists. These views are juxtaposed with the words and ideas of Maxine Greene and, at times, other relevant thinkers or ideas. In this respect, Margery Wolf's ethnographic writing about an event in a rural Taiwanese village, told in three different formats, was also influential in thinking about the study (Wolf, 1992).

### *Research Methods with Individuals other than Teaching Artists*

In addition, the study also included interviews with individuals other than teaching artists who were key to understanding, among other ideas, the history of the Institute's endeavors to enact a practice shaped by philosophical perspectives. These individuals included: Dr. Maxine Greene, *Philosopher-in-Residence* of LCI; Mr. Scott Noppe-Brandon, *Executive Director* at LCI; and Ms. Cathryn Williams, *Director of Strategic Alliances* at LCI. All of the interviews with Greene, Noppe-Brandon, and Williams were voluntary.

### *Permissions and Other Considerations*

The focus of this study was not specifically on student behavior, rather, on the practice of the teaching artists under observation. However, students at the sites, both children and adults, did appear on the video tapes and at times their actions are anonymously described for the purposes of understanding teaching practice. Identifying characteristics, including the names of any of the students, teachers, or sites under study are never included. Generic descriptors that indicate approximate location of the site (e.g., “lower Manhattan”), and grade level are used. In some cases, where individual

student behavior is described, the gender of the student involved is indicated. No other names or descriptions appear anywhere in this study.

All required permissions were obtained with the City University of New York IRB and the New York City Department of Education, and are on file with both of these institutions. Additionally, a non-mandatory Letter of Agreement was signed by the executive staff of Lincoln Center Institute.

A general survey was sent out to all active TAs on the LCI roster. A letter of Informed Consent was included. The e-mail was sent from the LCI database, where TAs are listed as employees, so as to respect the confidentiality of their personal information. However, the TAs voluntarily returned the survey to the principal investigator's personal e-mail address to insure confidentiality. All responses were compiled and analyzed anonymously.

### *Disclosure and Benefits*

The three principal TA research participants were shown the Letter of Agreement between LCI and the principal investigator. They clearly understood that LCI knew they had agreed to the research and that LCI management approved observations and video taping at the chosen educational sites. These precautions eliminated any possibility of undue psychological stress or anxiety for the teaching artists or for LCI. Benefits for the TA research participants included a deeper understanding of their own teaching practice and aesthetic education philosophy, as well as small financial remuneration.

### *Confidentiality and Consent Forms*

All data (surveys, videos, audio tapes, interview transcripts) were collected, stored, and are now owned by the principal investigator. No one else, other than the dissertation faculty advisers, had access to it at any time during the research or writing process. In this study, no actual names of TAs are used. Parents and guardians of children at the public school sites, and adult students at the college campuses had the right to refuse permission to be video-taped; none exercised this right. All proper consent forms were obtained and are on file with the principal investigator.

### *Courtesies*

From the outset of research, Lincoln Center Institute was openly informed as to the names of the three TAs chosen for observation and was consulted for permission to access the educational sites of observation. As a professional courtesy, LCI management received a copy of the dissertation. Participating teaching artists were invited to read a pre-submission draft, and engage in further desired conversation with the principal investigator.

### *Selection of the Teaching Artists for Observation*

The three TAs selected by the principal investigator for this study were chosen so as to represent three of the four main art forms included in the Institute's program (visual art, music, and theatre). They were also selected based on the principal investigator's estimation of excellent practice and on their own expressed interest in the philosophical underpinnings of aesthetic education work. “Excellent” was determined by several criteria, including my own subjective views. Also taken into consideration were depth of

experience (both years spent doing the work and experience in many different areas of it), ability and interest in articulating beliefs and experiences in aesthetic education, and widely held impressions throughout the LCI organization—from management to colleagues—that these individuals are "excellent" TAs. These three TAs also showed interest and sophistication in thinking about their practice in terms of its philosophical stance, both in formal LCI meetings and events, and informally, in personal communication with me. In regards to this selection process, the following points should be emphasized:

(1) This study attempts to describe processes at work in particular instances of practice within a specialized context. The results of the research are not meant to be generalizable to other TAs or other organizations. The research constitutes an intrinsic case study; the focus is on communicating the uniqueness of the inter-relations of philosophy and practice in one particular context. However, the final analysis does consider the larger resonance and relevance for the fields of arts education and urban education.

(2) Because this is not an evaluative study, it is of value to examine what is considered excellent practice under good conditions so as to explore the deepest possibilities for the relationship of philosophy and practice.

Chapters 6, 7, and 8 present the data from the classroom studies with teaching artists. Multi-voiced analysis is interspersed within these descriptions of practice, while the final chapter takes up a discussion of the relevance of the study.

# Chapter 6: Theatre—Describing, Noticing, Attending

> Describing I pause, and pausing, attend. Describing requires that I stand back and consider. Describing requires that I not rush to judgment or conclude before I have looked. Describing makes room for something to be fully present. Describing is slow, particular work. I have to set aside familiar categories for classifying or generalizing. I have to stay with the subject of my attention. I have to give it time to speak, to show itself. . . Describing I am *in relation to.* What I am in relation to cannot be easily or lightly dismissed. It stays. It claims me. Describing commits the described to memory. Describing is a learning by heart . . .To describe requires and instills respect. . . . To describe is to value (Carini, 2001, p. 163-164).

## *Preface: Describing, Noticing, Attending*

Following are the first examples of the actual work of an aesthetic education teaching artist. I observed two separate classes led by this theatre TA, one with a group of 6th graders in a Bronx public middle school and one with a class of college students taking a course in the education department at a local institution of higher education. The 6th grade class was videotaped, while I took hand-written notes at the college class. From these notes and tapes, I have reconstructed the sequence of events in the classes (set off in italics). I have also interpolated commentary and points of emphasis throughout the descriptions of classroom work, to indicate the way in which the TA is constantly and consistently guiding her students to reach out and "notice what is there to be noticed," (Greene, 2001b, p. 6), to articulate and to describe what they see and hear.

The activities led by the TA in the 6th grade lesson might be similar to the kinds of activities that theatre artists in other types of arts education would lead if they were working with Shakespeare, as this artist was. However, what makes the class such a clear example of aesthetic education is the way in which the TA carefully nurtures the ability

to describe, to notice, and to attend, thereby building the skills of perception. Detailed, passionate noticing is the first step in helping students build their perceptive skills.

> If we are to point to (for the sake of disclosing) aspects of a painting or a piece of music, if we are to share our perceptions of what we have seen or heard, we must first have noticed what there was to be noticed. We must have *begun*, at least, to impart aesthetic existence to the work, to be present to it, to make it live *for us.* Of course we may consult scholars on occasion (art historians, musicologists, critics, iconographers). We may even take the time to study some theories of art. But whatever studying we do ought to feed into and focus our perceiving, enhance the attentiveness with which we address ourselves to particular works. It is out of that sort of attentiveness, not out of a mediated expertise, that we ought to come to our students. Our aim, after all, is to help them become more wide-awake, more aware (Greene, 2001b, p. 25-6).

Eric Booth, one of the first generation of theatre teaching artists at Lincoln Center Institute, writes that perhaps the most basic life-transforming skill is the ability to notice things—an ability that artists understand well (Booth, 1997). Booth traces the etymology of the word "notice" to the Latin root "noscere," from which we derive other powerful words such as "knowing" and "cognizance." "Attention" also comes from Latin, meaning "to stretch out." "Attending," says Booth, "is the active effort to stretch out of oneself. This effort costs us something, which is why we must 'pay' attention" (1997, p. 63). Author Jeanette Winterson also writes about the need for a particular type of attending. She maintains, as does Greene, that art is often not automatically accessible, that people do not necessarily know how to pay attention without guidance.

> Whilst I do not think art is in competition with anything, including other works of art, I do think that media moronicness makes it impossible for the writer to assume that the reader will be ready to give literature the attention it needs. A poem, a piece of fiction of any value is not instantly accessible. The reader, like the writer, has to work . . . (Winterson, 1995, p. 188).

Aesthetic education teaching artists guide students to notice in ways that are particularly fruitful for the art form under study. "Noticing" in music involves different perceptual abilities in sound and listening than the visual noticing of a painting or a sculpture, for example. In the following classroom examples, a theatre artist guides the noticing around text, gesture, movement, and facial expression—elements particular to the theatrical works the students are studying.

### *6th Grade Aesthetic Education Class in Theatre*

The 6th graders at this public middle school in the Bronx were studying the Aquila Theatre Company's performance of William Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night.* My visit occurred on the fourth of their six teaching artist visits. They had seen the performance once, and the day after this session they were to see it again. Two more sessions with the TA would complete their structured study, though the classroom teacher (Mr. F) would continue to work with themes, ideas, and processes that were raised in the sessions with the TA.

> *When I entered the room, I saw cards hanging on the wall in a designated LCI section. On them the names of the characters from the play were written, as well as the following list of questions.*
>
> *"Questions to Guide Our Observations"*
> - *What did you notice?*
> - *What stood out for you?*
> - *What makes you say that?*
> - *How did the elements you just noticed work together?*
> - *Why might the artists have made that choice?*
> - *If you could ask the artist a question - what might that be?*
> - *What else do you wonder about this piece?*
>
> *The TA was writing on the blackboard the AIM: "To explore the language and world of the play" and the DO NOW: "Hand outs with photos to*

*practice our observation skills." On each desk was placed a set of two photos of characters from the play (Olivia and Cesario) and a sheet of directions. The students were to make a list of things that they noticed about the photos and then list any questions they had. They did this silently without any prompting from the teacher or TA. There seemed to be an established protocal of behavior for the DO NOW portion of class and students followed it seriously. The TA was carefully circulating while the students worked, silently nodding, looking, smiling, and checking around the room. She also took a moment to confer quietly with the teacher, and she gave the students several time check-ins out loud: "Okay—you have about three more minutes."*

*When the students were finished, the TA greeted them and gave a slight preface. She said that if she had one concern, it was that a long time had passed (they had just come back from February break) since their last session, and she wondered how much of "Twelfth Night" had stayed with them. Then she reminded the students that they would be seeing the second performance the next day and that they would need all of their observation skills.*

*"What do I mean by observation skills?" she asked. "Things that we see, that we notice, about how they are moving, what are they doing—like if they are having strong emotion," answered one student. "Yes," said the TA, "noticing all the details of what we can see and hear, and noticing what kinds of choices the actors are making. Excellent." "It's like specifics," another student added. TA—"Yes, thank you. And this is the second time you will be viewing the play, so my question to you is—what MORE will you notice? What is different the second time, aside from the fact that you will see it in a different place?" [The second performance that these students would see was to take place in a different theatre.]*

While noticing and describing are hallmarks of aesthetic education practice, teaching artists do not always make this process explicit with students. It depends upon many factors, including the overall focus of the class, the length of time students will spend with a TA, and the age of the students. When I interviewed this TA after her work, I asked her about the choice to make the concept of observation skills explicit with these 6th graders. She said,

> I want never to prescribe or define anyone's experience. That sits with me all the time. But, as I have looked at my work over the years, I have thought that there are times when I could make things explicit without endangering anyone's experience. I began, several years ago, to experiment with naming things in my actual lessons. It has been an evolution. This creates a way for students to understand the rigor and the structure of the work. I've been playing with this idea, especially in middle school. I think it helps middle school students embrace the experience. At this school in particular, part of the decision [to be explicit] is coming from the teacher and the principal. They have established very specific structures to help students focus and engage, such as the DO NOW and the AIM. The teacher you saw me working with—this was his first LCI experience. I didn't want to just go in and work against his structures (interview, 2005).

My experience in many middle schools is similar to this TA's. Sometimes this age student, when self-consciousness is acute, may be reluctant to participate without understanding the underlying thinking behind why it is important to do so. It does create a dual focus; there is an emphasis on being in the moment of the experience itself, while at the same time, another emphasis on the underlying meta-understanding of *why* one might be learning or experiencing in a certain way. But in most instances, this seems not to stand in the way of students' aesthetic experiences. Here, the TA makes the explicit statements of purpose at the beginning of the class in order to invite students into the experience. But she keeps the emphasis on attending carefully throughout the class, and mostly leaves the explicit conversation after her opening introduction.

> *Next, the TA had several students read from their lists of observations of the two photos. She encouraged them to speak from the front of the room in a voice loud enough for all to hear. As they listed their observations, the TA constantly affirmed with vocal sounds, body language, and compliments such as "excellent noticing." One student noted, as one of his observations, that the character looked a bit sad. The TA stopped him and said, "Okay, but my question to you is—what do you see that makes her look sad?" Student—"Her expression, her face." When he had trouble finding more words to describe the face, the TA asked him to do the face. Then she tried it herself. There was laughter as other students*

> *around the room made the face. Another student noticed that one of the characters looked like she was "missing someone." The TA, with great interest, asked why she thought that. Student: "the way she is looking off." Here, the TA took the opportunity to put the description into theatre language. TA—"Oh, I see what you mean—her focus—where she has her eyes focused."*

Often, in aesthetic education work, teaching artists are careful to help students separate describing from interpreting. An interpretive comment could be any one in which two people might have a different opinion. At the most basic level of describing, we should largely be able to agree upon what we notice. That is to say, you and I might both agree that we have seen an actor raise his arms straight into the air with a certain force, lifting his head at the same time. We can describe that action quite accurately and basically agree that we have noticed the same gesture. However, I may interpret that gesture as "triumphant" while you may associate it with a sense of "hope." As long as we can back up our interpretations with descriptive evidence, we can understand and respect both interpretive views. Here, the TA begins to probe students' interpretive responses of "sad" and "missing someone." She wants to assist students in understanding how they arrived at their interpretations. In the first instance, she attempts to help the student notice more detail about what gave him the impression of "sad." When he is at a loss for more words to describe his interpretation, the TA guides him to find a more particular description in a non-verbal noticing: "Can you do the face?" Not only is the non-verbal noticing important as a change of modality, even more significantly, it is a central aspect of the actor's experience—facial expression. As other students around the room try the face, they are embodying a physical noticing that helps them get at what the character

may be feeling in the moment. They are also involved in the actor's process in the expressive use of facial gesture; they are trying out part of an actor's authentic work.

The moment of trying out an expressive face is also an example of how, as discussed in Chapter 4, physical embodiment and the involvement of the body is a central idea in aesthetic education—for Greene, for Dewey, and for others such as Merleau-Ponty (Dewey, 1934; Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1962, 1964; Greene, 1995, 2001b). The aesthetic experience is not apprehended, understood, or felt as a solely cognitive or mental process, but rather as an embedded, sensual experience. This is true for both the maker and the perceiver.

In their detailed noticing, the students' increasing exactness allows a kind of intimacy. Noticing (visually, aurally, physically) what a character may be feeling, or thinking about how her eyes are focused, allows a student to begin to understand—to live inside—this character in a new, particular way. Describing is often the first step in beginning to *care* about something, to *value* it, as Patricia Carini has observed (Carini, 2001, p. 164). As students become more observant, more aware of detail and nuance, and more aware of the difference between an observation and an interpretation, they are also able to enter into a new kind of community conversation.

> If we sharpened our sensibilities, it is not that we would all agree on everything, or that we would suddenly feel the same things in front of the same pictures (or when reading the same book), but rather that our debates and deliberations would come out of genuine aesthetic considerations and not politics, prejudice and fashion (Winterson, 1995, p. 17).

Jeanette Winterson highlights the importance of individual conviction rooted in genuine aesthetic noticing, rather than an unthinking joining onto popular fashion or

dominant political view. The ways in which aesthetic education teaching artists guide student noticing in a classroom context emphasize and value personal, individual attending, but also take into account some of Maxine Greene's most basic notions about freedom and community (Greene, 1988). While attending and noticing carefully in a community, students are actively awakening and opening to their own powerful ideas, but they are also becoming aware of the fact that others in the community are seeing things they might never have noticed by themselves. They may even find that others in the classroom have completely differing perspectives from their own. Students are recognizing their own blindness, not in a negative way, but in a manner that acknowledges the strength of the community, the community's ability to attend together and even to alter an individual's views and understandings. In the *Dialectic of Freedom*, Greene's John Dewey Lecture essay, she writes of individuals choosing themselves, choosing their actions, in relation to a sense of community rather than in isolated selfishness. She writes of the significance of students negotiating intensely personal responses, yet doing so within a community (1988, p. 1-24). Aesthetic classroom noticing empowers individuals to actively attend in relationship to a community of others engaged in the same activity; individuals are building interpretations that take into account the multiple perspectives of others in the room, while at the same time are personally attentive to the presence of the work at hand.

> *As another student read her list of noticings, she called the first photo a girl and the second one a boy. The TA used this opportunity to elicit the classes' memories about which character dressed up or disguised herself as a boy. The TA said to the girl who shared her observations, "How about that? You noticed that the same person could be a girl and a boy both."*

Not only does the TA continue to help students back up their interpretations with description, she is also using these images to prompt the students' memories about plot and character. It becomes clear through this process that the students remember all the character names, as well as large parts of the very complicated plot. The TA accomplished this memory work and plot review without ever taking the focus off of noticing. This turns a "let me see what you remember" focused passive lesson with an evaluative goal into a much more immediate and active "what are you noticing" lesson with the purpose of discovery .

> *The TA kept repeating the words, "Okay, who else will share what they noticed." While each student shared from the front of the room, she held up the photos so the rest of the class could see and refer to the observations. She also often repeated some of the noticings, perhaps slightly adding or rephrasing. After several responses, so many students still wanted to share that she gave the space and heard from more. She assured everyone that she and Mr. F, their classroom teacher, were going to collect their papers and read each one, and that she would share the papers with her colleagues at Lincoln Center. She thanked the students for their excellent work.*

The TA's efforts in verbally assuring students that their individual responses will be attended to not only by herself and Mr. F, but also by colleagues at LCI, indicate to the students how seriously the TA values their observing, their noticing, and their ideas. This emphasis helps to convey directly to the students the importance of noticing in aesthetic education.

> *Next, the TA reminded the students of their guiding question, which she had written on a large sheet of paper: "How do heightened physical and vocal choices help communicate the dialogue?" She mentioned to them that they had talked about the word "heightened" before, but that she would like to hear them remind her what it meant. Several students did, at*

*length, "It's about how high the emotions are." "It's about what they do with their hands," were some of the various responses.*

*Moving on, she asked the students to work with four lines from the play that she had written on paper. (The lines included "If music be the food of love, play on" as well as others. Each line came from a different character.) The TA asked volunteers to come up and perform the lines—thinking about this idea of heightened physical and vocal choices. When they needed extra help with an odd turn of language, or what the line meant, the TA was there to assist.*

*For each of the four lines, there were many volunteers. After each presentation, which lasted only a matter of seconds, the bulk of the time was spent with the TA guiding the noticing of the viewers. No lines were performed without careful attending afterwards. The TA constantly asked questions such as: "What did you notice? What choice did this actor make?" Over and over she repeated the words "notice" and "choices."*

The large proportion of time spent on noticing and the shorter amount spent on actual performance is significant, as the TA is working to build skills of observation and attending. As Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi notes in his book, *Flow,* "To control attention means to control experience, and therefore the quality of life. Information reaches consciousness only when we attend to it. Attention acts as a filter between outside events and our experiences of them" (1997, p. 128). A central belief in aesthetic education at LCI is that before experiencing a live work of art, students need actual practice in what it means to notice deeply in the art form. Without this kind of learning, chances are much slimmer that students will understand the richness and the possibilities of *how* to attend.

*As the students responded, describing what the first boy did with his hand, she said, "Great—let's call that a gesture." She wrote this word on the board and added, "This hand move is a hand gesture." Another student noticed that the actor's voice was "smooth and bold," and the TA documented this response under a category she called "vocal choices." For another student performance, viewers noticed that she was looking off out the window. Again, the TA added theatrical language to their observations by reiterating the word "focus—where the eyes are looking,"*

*and wrote it on the board. Someone else said the student actor was "like a queen." Another student said her voice was "commanding." The TA quickly complemented the students on their precise vocabulary. Other descriptions and interpretations got added to the ongoing list that the TA was compiling. Everything she wrote came right from the students' own words and observations; there were no predetermined categories or language The only words added by the TA herself were those that expressed particular theatrical language (eg: "gesture" and "focus"), and they were always attached to description in the students' own words.*

*Throughout the noticing, the TA tried carefully to hear from every voice in the class and asked Mr.F to help her make sure she did. She said this out loud so that the students knew it was important to her to find out what each student was noticing. At one point Mr. F asked a student to perform a line because this student hadn't yet said anything. When the TA asked students what they noticed about her performance, they said she looked "confused." Again, the TA dug deeper with this interpretive comment. "But what made her look confused?" Student—"They way she did her head." (The student imitated the head movement physically.) The TA noted that this could also be a gesture—a gesture with the head. "We can have both hand and head gestures," said the TA. The student performer looked a bit surprised (she raised her eyes and eyebrows and opened her mouth) that she had included such a notable gesture; her classmates' noticing seemed as if it may have helped her notice something about her own performance.*

Again, it is important to note the role of the entire class community in the noticing process. The TA and teacher together are making it clear to the class that every voice is important in the endeavor and that everyone has a worthwhile and crucial contribution to make. Keeping the emphasis on noticing is a powerful way to help students realize they have something to say. They are not being asked to come up with a correct answer, but rather, to describe what they see or hear. Similarly, for students to hear their classmates taking the time and care to accurately describe something they have just done (this student's performance, for example) assigns a value and importance to both the act of doing as well as the act of noticing, and it wraps the two in a serious community action.

The process of noticing is also guided expertly by the TA to include specific theatre vocabulary and concepts, such as “gesture” and “focus.” The theatrical language comes out of the ground of the students’ own experience first—out of their own descriptions—rather than imposed by the “expert” teaching artist. Greene is clear that aesthetic noticing becomes most empowering when it involves an awareness of the artistic medium at hand (Green, 2001b, p. 14), and here the TA helps the students place their observations in the realm of theatre. She allows the students to discover elements of theatre through what they notice, rather than playing the role of the expert who knows all and is there to explain to the “un-knowing.” Keeping in mind that one major goal of aesthetic education at LCI is to release students to make their own meaning, to have their own experience with a work of art, this process of guided noticing empowers them to trust and value their ability to attend. As Dewey says,

> It is much easier to “tell” people what they should believe than to discriminate and unify. And an audience that is itself habituated to being told, rather than schooled in thoughtful inquiry, likes to be told (Dewey, 1934, p. 300).

Unfortunately, much of education schools children in “being told.” Additionally, in the cultural world of museums, concerts, and performances—program notes, conductors, wall text, museum docents, critics, journalists, and experts of all kinds are there to tell us what the art is about—what to see and what to hear. Aesthetic education is a conscious interruption of this kind of schooling. Describing is the first step in the process of owning an idea, an opinion or an interpretation, in owning one’s consciousness. Says Greene, “It is only when we begin attending, singling out the details, the particulars, that the space

begins to fill, and we begin charting our way somehow, "reading" what we are watching or listening to, grasping it, making it ours" (Greene, 2001b, p. 92).

John Dewey, throughout his works, makes an important distinction between true observing—true attending—and basic recognition. As he describes in *How We Think* (1910/1997), observation is an active process, an ". . . .inquiry for the sake of discovering something previously hidden and unknown . . . it is to be discriminated from recognition or perception of what is familiar . . . observation is concerned with mastering the unknown" (p. 193). It is palpable in this class of young people that noticing is an exciting process of discovery, through their eagerness to participate (both as performers and observers), the nuance and precision of their descriptions, the length of time for which they sustain discussion and attention, and their verbal expressions of excitement as they participate.

> *The stakes were raised for the last performance when the TA invited one student to play Feste the clown, speaking a long line in which he is trying to get more money from the Duke. First the student performed the line by himself, and the TA guided the noticing that followed. Then, the TA asked Mr. F to play the silent role of the Duke. Mr. F immediately brought out his wallet. The class got very excited and the student actor spontaneously went down on his knees to deliver the line. His performance was so passionate that the Duke handed him a bill and he danced off. The class clapped and exclaimed with great enthusiasm. The student reluctantly gave the bill back and the TA built immediately on the enthusiasm of the class, "What did he do in that performance?" she asked. "Why did we get so excited?" The students described how, "He just went right down on his knees." They noticed how Mr. F was standing and what he did with his wallet. The TA also complimented the choices of both performers, and again she added the theatrical vocabulary of "props." "Sometimes," she said " using props really changes our physical and vocal choices—like we just saw!"*

Here, we find the TA building on a genuinely hot reaction, attaching importance and significance to a moment that generated a passionate response from the students. Art often has a unique ability to excite and stir, and aesthetic education is always interested in delving deeply into these moments; they are central rather than peripheral. However, it is significant that the TA has never used the words, "What did you like (or not like) about that performance?" She consciously chooses, with her language, to keep the emphasis on noticing rather than take the students towards evaluation or judgment. At one point with these students, she even says out loud that she is "not interested in like and not like, I am interested in what you notice." This can be powerful with any age group, but especially with teens who are particularly susceptible to peer-pressure, to valuing one type of art over another, or to judging without experiencing. A snap judgment is almost certainly a barrier to having an aesthetic experience, so the TA chooses at every moment to steer away from expressions of judgment. My experience is that middle and high school students especially, often feel they are finished with the topic at hand once a judgment has been made. Comments such as, "I liked it" or "I hated it" are often conversation enders. Whereas dwelling in the realm of noticing extends the time spent with the work, and allows meanings to emerge. Here, the TA spends her time constantly probing and exploring the world of noticing—even when it might be tempting to say to the students, "What did you love about that? What was your favorite part of that performance?" Those types of questions place a value on opinion without necessarily having a ground on which to base such a view; they do not elicit responses that get at the

richness of what was exciting about the moment. Furthermore, judgment runs the risk of shutting down the conversation. As Nelson Goodman says,

> To say that a work of art is good or even to say how good it is does not after all provide much information, does not tell us whether the work is evocative, robust, vibrant or exquisitely designed, and still less what are its alien specific qualities of color, shape or sound . . . judging the excellence of works of art or the goodness of people is not the best way of understanding them (Goodman, 1976, p. 261).

Judgment can actually be a barrier to attending closely to a work, if it closes off the sense of discovery and exploration. Quite consistently, LCI TAs guide students away from judgmental thinking and towards a continuously unfolding process of noticing, questioning, analyzing, and interpreting.

> *Finally, there was a transition to a third segment of the class, involving small group work. The students had already been working in groups of various sizes, including some duos and others of three to six students. Each group had a short excerpt of the script. They were continuing a process that had begun in a previous class. The TA and Mr. F both helped the students get back into their groups to work on the scenes. They also collected the DO NOW sheets while the students moved. Most of the students knew where to go. There was a lot of sound and movement, but no one seemed to be off task. One larger group, however, was in some confusion. The TA came around immediately and said, "Let me help." She helped clarify the possible meanings of some of the text that the group expressed confusion about, and then they were off and running. As I noticed what was happening around the room, I heard quite a bit of vocal inflection and I saw the occasional hand or body gesture—though this did seem difficult for students while holding the papers. They struggled with some of the language, but it still seemed to sustain their interest.*
>
> *The rehearsal process continued for approximately ten minutes. The TA and Mr. F. circulated and checked in, helping when needed with the language. At the end of this time, the students verbally expressed that they did not want to stop working. The TA reminded them that she would hear each group next time she came, and that Mr. F would give them more rehearsal time. "You may get some ideas from the performance tomorrow as well," said the TA. "I don't mean that you should copy what the performers do, but they might give you some ideas to work with."*

> *She ended the class by having two groups show their work in progress, "just to get us started." Again she assured everyone that they would all have a chance ultimately, if not on this day. Nearly every hand flew up to volunteer. The TA chose a pair and helped them create space in between each other using the whole front area of the classroom. She also removed herself from the stage area and joined the observers. The pair started with coughing and falling before any words were spoken. This provoked a rich discussion afterwards about vocal choices that were not words. The second duo of boys modernized Shakespeare's language somewhat. The TA helped the students describe this choice as well. As she carefully guided the noticing after each performance, she sometimes referred back to the list that they had made from the one-line performances (focus, gesture, etc.), re-emphasizing elements they had previously discussed. She also issued a challenge that for the next class—if anyone wanted to memorize the lines, it would be more interesting since they would be able to use their hands and arms more freely.*

Because the students are noticing in each lesson with the teaching artist, they are building the perceptive skills they will need to notice deeply at the second performance. They are building a habit of behavior around noticing and attending.

But, they are also spending significant time actively engaged in authentic theatre experiences. They are analyzing text, they are up on their feet using voices and bodies, interpreting scenes, and grappling with Shakespeare's script. "Eating words and listening to them rumbling in the gut is how a writer learns the acid and alkali of language," says Winterson (Winterson, 1995, p. 93). The same might be said of the Shakespearean actor's process and these students are certainly undergoing aspects of the way an actor prepares a role. It is also significant that the TA consistently addresses the students as "actors" (see classroom excerpt on p. 112). This signals to students that they are involved in authentic artistic processes and it invites them to take the work both seriously and inventively. No part of aesthetic education with LCI is without extensive experiences in art making,

immersion in the art form, and making artistic choices. Interesting, passionate noticing becomes possible *because* there is authentic artistic work in the room—work worthy of sustaining such careful attention. Greene describes this process as she discusses a dance workshop based on a work by Paul Taylor:

> We believe that the perceiving, the noticing are enhanced if you yourself are provided opportunities for moving in space, exploring gestures and kinetic patterns, discovering dynamic images, finding out what tension and contraction mean—and gliding, thrusting, flicking, the many ways of moving that are accessible to us, once the possibilities are made clear. And so it is with the other arts forms . . . . (Greene, 2001b, 15).

Dewey's point that perception and creation cannot be separated may be understood more deeply in this context (Dewey, 1934). It also becomes obvious that those who categorize aesthetic education as a kind of intellectual pursuit, absent of real arts experiences (Davis, 2005) have likely not been in actual aesthetic education classrooms.

### *Aesthetic Education Class in Theatre at the College Level*

Just as in the 6th grade, a focus on describing, noticing, and attending also occurred in the class of college students who were studying the work of director Ping Chong. The description of this class allows us to see the way in which the teaching artist asks the students to bring their own personal life stories and experiences to bear upon the material in the play—thus exploring and noticing Ping Chong's work in relationship to their own lives, and expanding the worlds of both in the process. Making space for this process of personal connection in aesthetic education is a direct response to Greene's ideas, and is another hallmark of aesthetic education.

At a session held at Lincoln Center Institute, I observed the theatre teaching artist working with a group of undergraduate college students who were studying to become

teachers. They experienced an hour long workshop with the TA, then moved across the hall to a black box theatre and attended a performance of *Secret History: Journeys Abroad, Journeys Within*. *Secret History* is the work of acclaimed director Ping Chong, whose pieces often explore the intersection of race, history, culture, and technology. This particular play features immigrant and refugee stories told by those who actually lived them. That is to say, three members of the cast (a Kosovar, a Liberian, and an Iranian) were not professionally trained actors; rather, they were people telling their own true-life tales,

Before coming to this class, the students had all received a brief paragraph written by Ping Chong that discusses his experience as a first generation American growing up in New York City's Chinatown, which was, during his youth, more of a small village than a major tourist attraction. He describes his interest in what he calls "the issue of culture and the other" and mentions that growing up, he was inculcated with a horrible prejudice against the Japanese. He discusses the way in which he absorbed, through his environment, the idea that Japanese people were devils—extremely cruel people. The students also received some information about aesthetic education, LCI, and a quote from Greene that the TA thought was particularly resonant with the Ping Chong piece under study. It read:

> One of the reasons I have come to concentrate on the imagination as a means through which we can assemble a coherent world is that imagination is what, above all, makes empathy possible. It is what enables us to cross the empty spaces between ourselves and those we teachers have called 'other' over the years. If those others are willing to give us clues, we can look in some manner through strangers' eyes and hear through their ears. That is because, of all our cognitive capacities, imagination is the one that permits us to give credence to alternative

> realities. It allows us to break with the taken for granted, to set aside familiar distinctions and definitions (Greene, 1995, p. 3).

These readings, chosen by the TA and professor together, set the stage for the class I observed. It is important to note that LCI aesthetic education classes offered at area colleges and universities are specifically designed for students studying in departments of education. There is a dual focus on both the aesthetic experience itself, as well as on an analysis of the teaching strategies involved. In each course, the TA and professor determine how best to accomplish these twin goals. The one-hour session described here was purposefully designed to engage the students in the performance itself. At a later class session, the professor, in consultation with the TA, guided the students in a reflection on and an analysis of their learning experience—identifying key teaching and learning moments, ideas, tools, and strategies.

Each time a teaching artist works with a group of students, there is an extensive planning process involved. Each activity and experience that the TA designs for the students comes directly out of the work of art under study. LCI theatre teaching artist Josh Broder describes this process in a book that highlights aesthetic education work in the teacher education programs of colleges and universities, *Community in the Making: LCI, the Arts and Teacher Education:*

> The LCI philosophy demands that teaching artists keep the work of art at the center of the inquiry—no generic explorations of theatre genres or techniques. In my designing an aesthetic education study at a college, the question I must continually raise with myself is, What does this workshop, this exercise, this processing question, have to do with the performance the participants are to see? (Holzer & Noppe-Brandon, 2005, p. 149).

While I acknowledged that the 6th grade class centering on *Twelfth Night* may have appeared to an outside observer to include activities (such as performing excerpts of Shakespeare's text) familiar to others who study Shakespeare's plays, this only describes the surface aspects of the workshop. The detail of the TA's preparation and planning have to do with the how she has focused students' attention on heightened physical and vocal choices. She has chosen this point of focus because these are elements that the Aquila Shakespeare Company brings to the fore of their performance. Her workshops for the 6th graders are unique, one-time creations, in that they serve to illuminate this particular Aquila Company performance of *Twelfth Night,* not all performances of the same play, or all performances of Shakespeare, or all plays generically. As Broder suggests, aesthetic education classes almost never resemble standard theatre games or stock activities, because they are designed as pathways for specific works of art. In the classroom excerpt that now follows, the theatre TA has devised a set of experiences that leads the students towards Ping Chong's piece. The specificity of the TA's planning is difficult to grasp fully without seeing the actual performance. But her attention to vocal choices, to the sizes of groupings, to the content of the students' material—all these aspects stem from the emphases and choices Ping Chong has made in *Secret History.*

> *The professor introduced the TA and there was a brief moment in which the TA and professor asked if any of their students had participated in LCI aesthetic education experiences before (there is a likelihood of this, since the school has a partnership with LCI, and the students may have had an LCI experience in one of their other education courses). In fact, for many of these students, this was not their first LCI experience; two students had already participated in workshops around 'Secret History' this semester in their other education courses. The TA said that this was not a problem and in no way a repeat class, because while the philosophy and certain elements of the practice are similar, each TA practices aesthetic education differently, and has created different experiences for students.*

> *The TA also had three key words written on an easel board in bold letters: "Inquiry, Observation, and Choice-Making." Her introduction let the students know that they would be involved deeply in these three ideas during the evening. She also said that the students would never be judged on their "theatre ability." "It's all about looking at choice making," she said.*
>
> *With these remarks, she invited the students out of their chairs into a standing circle. They were to say their first name and put a gesture with that name, "which could be literal or abstract," said the TA; she modeled some possibilities to get the class started. The TA affirmed each offering the students gave, and as the circle name-gestures came to a close, she asked the students if they noticed anything about these. A few brief comments came forth. Then they did a second round, at the TA's invitation, this time striving to let it move more quickly and flow along like electricity. "What did you notice THIS time?" she asks. The students' responses included, "flow; freedom; not as inhibited as the first time; we were overlapping each other."*

The TA has built the activities in a progressive manner; they start very simply and add layers of complexity. The TA is not asking students to "act" or be theatrical in any way, merely to add a physical movement to the sound of their name. After each experience, there is a pause to notice what happened. Then the experience builds.

> *The TA said that this warm-up in which they created "a little something and then looked at it," was a small snippet of the whole aesthetic education process—"Creating, and then looking." She then asked for a third round in which students were to add much more "umph." "Take it up on the scale to a 7 or an 8," she said. Finally, there was one last time around the circle with no name included—just the biggest gesture possible—"even more umph."*
>
> *The TA said, "let's return to the idea of 'umph'—how did people add umph?" She recorded their responses on a chart with the heading: "What did we notice?" The responses included:*
> - *extended the gesture*
> - *faster tempo for the gesture*
> - *made larger*
> - *moved out of personal space into larger space*
> - *more expression (face, body, sound)*
> - *made fancier, more detailed*

Documenting student responses is another way to honor the deep noticing and attending taking place in the room. The TA will refer many times to this list. As well as a record, it also becomes material to which the students may refer in their further creating and artistic choice making. Also significant is that the TA's documentation records the words that the students themselves are saying, rather than the teacher's language. It reverses one of the dominant practices seen so often in American schooling, where the teacher expert writes on the board and students dutifully copy these words in their notebooks. Here, the TA writes down the students' original thoughts and ideas, phrased as they are spoken.

> *The TA read the list out loud and summarized. "That's fantastic," she said, "we started out with something very personal and we made it bigger—or you could say that we theatricalized it." At this moment the TA also greeted some late-comers and welcomed them into the group, making sure she heard their names. Then she began a new activity. The professor had already asked students to respond in writing to a series of questions and bring the responses to class (she and the TA had arranged this as a part of their prior planning). The TA asked students to take out the questions and responses. The questions included the following:*
>
> *What is your name?*
> *Where were you born?*
> *Does your name have meaning?*
> *What language did you grow up speaking?*

Again, remembering Josh Broder's comments, these questions are not out of a stock, theatre game repertoire. Rather, they are created by the TA as a very particular pathway that will lead students towards Ping Chong's piece. She is not necessarily recreating the piece or any of Ping Chong's methods, but she is inventing experiences that live in the world of the play—in the content and the artistic processes that may have been involved in its creation. The effort is not to mimic, but to design experiences

(appropriate for the age of the students in the class) that involve the *kinds* of choices the artists were working with, rather than the *exact* choices or experiences.

> *The TA placed students in groups of three to share their responses and they were also able to ask each other further questions. The conversations were animated as I looked around the room.*
>
> *When they were finished the TA asked if anyone had any reaction to this sharing. The students verbally shared that they were "amazed" at how much they did not know about each other; just by answering a few simple questions, so much had been revealed to them.*
>
> *The TA then pointed out that the answers to those questions were going to become the raw material for further work. She asked them what their ideas might be to vocally manipulate these answers—how could they make a group presentation that had an interesting use of all their voices? What could they do with their voices to present the material in an interesting way? Together, they generated a list with the following ideas:*
>
> - *use overlapping*
> - *use other languages*
> - *use repetition*
> - *have males and females speaking at the same time*
> - *play with the speed of speech*
> - *play with using high and low pitches*
> - *say just one thing in another language*
>
> *The TA had the students return to their small groups, and based on this list of tools, they were to make choices about how to present the raw material of their group. In just a few minutes they put these short pieces together. The TA rotated around the room, checking in with each group and offering support, encouragement, and when necessary, artistic suggestions. She reminded the students that she was most concerned with process, not necessarily with product. And she added, "Your role as observer, when we share these, is just as important as your role of 'maker'."*
>
> *Each group had a chance to share their choices. The TA guided the noticing around each one. Her conversations with the group were peppered with questions such as, "What choices did you notice this group make? What material did they use? How did they arrange it? How did they arrange their voices?" The students noticed that they had definitely used the list to help them make interesting artistic choices. They probed the different ways they used ideas on the list, and the TA*

*added to it when they described in more detail what they noticed. For example, in one group, they took a series of solo speaking turns, but alternated male and female and emphasized the high and low pitches of the voices. The TA added these nuances to the list. She also added other elements the students discovered:*

- *repeating words and lines*
- *speaking in unison*
- *opening and closing the piece with the same material*
- *laughter*

It is worth noting the various types of questions used by the TA in order to pursue different ways of noticing in the above activity. The TA is using questions that ask for detail, that analyze structure, that deal with content, and that place a lens on specific aspects of the work, such as vocal choices. The different specific questions ask students to attend deeply and variously.

*The TA probed what effect the choices had on the observers. Then she began with new material. The professor had asked students to make a list of personal "transitional moments" or "transitional events." The TA asked the students to speak a bit about what "transitional moments" might be, and the group began to define these as, "significant moments, moments or events that affected our lives, moments that signaled change, moments or events that not everyone may have had, but were personally meaningful." The TA asked each student to share two from their list with their small group. I overheard responses such as, "Recently, I saw a shooting star and I had never seen one." "Two male friends died at two different times." The professor shared, "When I finished my dissertation."*

*Again the TA asked the students what it was like to share those moments and events. A few quiet responses were added. Then she asked students to assign an actual date to their moments.*

*Now she was ready to present the final task. Students were to figure out, as a group, how they would share this very personal material (the stories of their transitional moments). It was to be a group presentation, with attention to the personal stories of each member. "This should be an exploration of personal material, done by a group," said the TA.*

*The TA suggested that the students had already explored many tools that might be useful to them, and that they were free to add others that they might imagine. She*

> *wanted them to add one more element, which was that of time—precise time. Just as she had students mark their transitional moments with an actual date, she wanted them to incorporate the element of time into their pieces. One student offered that they might organize the material presented by chronological date. The TA agreed that this would be one interesting possibility, and that there were many other options to discover. They had a very brief time in which to work, and each group set off on its own direction. Again, the TA was checking in with the groups as they worked.*
>
> *After a few moments, each group shared what they had been working on, and once more, the TA guided the noticing with questions such as:*
>
> *"What tools did they use?"*
> *"How did they present the material?"*
> *"What is coming through content-wise?"*
> *"What are they doing physically?"*
> *"What can you tell me about the way they presented this material?"*
>
> *The groups made mostly simple choices, but the TA guided the students to notice all the rich nuance and detail of what had been shared. Her physical body language was also interesting to note. In each instance, she would clear the space for the performers and physically ally herself with the observers. Even as she asked for observations, she often crouched low and placed herself on the same or a lower level than the students in the class. This struck me not only in the sharing of presentations, but throughout the session; as the students were working, she was constantly roaming, rotating, and checking in.*

When I spoke with the TA in an interview after this class session and asked her about her physical demeanor in the classroom, she offered the following:

> Well, first of all I think I'm a kinesthetic learner so that's partly the way I process. I have to move. Plus, as a theatre artist, I'm hyper aware of "status" and how you can play that or communicate that with your body. I want always to commit to a student-centered experience: I'm with them. I'm on their level. I'm guiding. But I'm not the focus. The part about "allying myself with the noticers" has been another evolution in my work. I've trained myself to do that; I want to show the value of being a keen observer, that this is at least as important or equal to the performing. "Isn't this a cool thing?!" There was a time when the balance tipped the other way, so I have taught myself how to do this. [*Note: She is referring here to a "time" at the Institute as well as in her own work. This shift in practice will be discussed more fully in Chapter 7.*] I believe I can really use my body to help students with the sharing and showing process. I can

> help people who are shy about presenting. I am also telegraphing that we are looking at choices and not dwelling in judgment (interview, 2005).

Just as students are encouraged to embody their noticing and their artistic work in the various arts media in aesthetic education classes, here the TA describes several ways in which she physically embodies aspects of aesthetic education philosophy as a facilitator. She uses her body and physical presence to attach importance to student noticing and to emphasize the centrality of the students' experiences in this learning process.

> *Finally, the TA summarized and recapped the session briefly. Then she gave a brief introduction to the play, "This evening's performance is called 'Secret History' and the three people sharing their stories are not actors. These are true stories experienced by those who are telling them. This is very unique in the theatre world. There are also two trained actors who join, making an ensemble of five cast members. Maybe we can be watching for how these performers use some of the tools that we have just explored? I also want to refer you to the quote by Maxine Greene and invite you to take one moment to re-read that before you enter the theater. See if and how you feel it resonates with the performance."*
>
> *The students were then off to the theatre to experience the piece, where they saw and heard the five cast members work together as a group to tell intense and sometimes harrowing personal stories—making sophisticated vocal and physical choices in their presentations— at times becoming characters in and parts of each other's stories, stepping into the world of another human being.*

When I spoke with this theatre teaching artist in her post-observation interview, I asked her what she thought was unique about working in aesthetic education in theatre. She replied:

> It is text-based. Text is the access point. Text and story. You might say that it is often the least abstract of the art forms. (Often, but not always—I mean it could be some abstract Meredith Monk piece that we are studying in the theatre repertory.) But if teachers are exploring a novel or piece of fiction, they are often asking some of the same kinds of questions that we ask in theatre. So in a sense, the element of "text" is known. But I really feel that just by shining the light on choice-making, I am helping people realize that they didn't know something as

> well as they thought they did. We can make so many different theatrical choices around a simple piece of text. I am drawing attention to these, and helping students practice a kind of mindfulness so that which they think they know, they see in a totally new way. I remember one activity with a different class that involved sitting and standing like an old person, like a young girl, etc. Because of the incredibly detailed noticing, it was just mind-blowing. It was just one small activity, but I felt it could have easily been an entire lesson—it was so rich. However, I'm also very careful to balance looking at art form elements (such as gesture, physicality, voice) with narrative. There is choice making in both. We have to notice both. And I *always* hope that what we do in the lessons allows people to see *more* than we've done, not just recognize what it is we've done. I want it to open the experience for them above and way beyond what has happened in the classroom (interview, 2005).

Here, the TA speaks about the act of mindful noticing as making the familiar unfamiliar. We may suddenly see what we have never seen before. Instead of standing fixed, the object of our attention takes on new dimensions, new meanings. Yet if we hadn't been asked or guided to notice, these new facets might have evaded us. As well, when we attend to art at different moments in our lives, we notice differently. This is an experience many of us have had reading the same novel at different times in life, or hearing a familiar symphony played multiple times. If we have learned to pay attention and bring our own experiences to the attending, the experience is never the same. As Dewey said:

> The conception that objects have fixed and unalterable values is precisely the prejudice from which art emancipates us. The intrinsic qualities of things come out with startling vigor and freshness just because conventional associations are removed (Dewey, 1934, p. 95).

Greene has repeatedly noted in her writings and talks that Dewey was wary of the fixed, the rigid, and the crust of convention. Denis Donoghue (1983), as well, has written of the importance the arts play in helping us to defamiliarize what is taken for granted and shed new light on our own lives.

This sense is also part of the thinking behind students experiencing a performance more than one time, as is common practice with students in the LCI *Focus Schools*, such as the 6th graders in this study. They were to see two performances of *Twelfth Night* so as to be able to track their own perceptive shifts. Or as the TA said to them, "What *more* will you notice the second time? What will you notice in a different way? How might this piece mean something different to you when you see it again?"

The act of noticing and attending keeps the moment alive and never fixed. But it also brings students into an active mode, into the opposite of a passive gaze. Teaching artists are often inventing ways to invite students to reach out towards the art object or performance with an act of observation or description. Then, as attending becomes a mode of being in the classroom, it can take on its own momentum; the TA may be able to gradually back off and let the class take an active lead in guiding its own noticing. Once again, it is important to both Dewey's and Greene's notions of democracy that this first act of aesthetic awareness—noticing— is always active, and that it takes place in a community. When Dewey writes of nurturing participatory citizens, he has in mind a kind of participation that is at once personal, while at the same time is aware of the multiplicity of views in the room (Dewey, 1916). Greene expresses a similar idea:

> Everything depends, of course, on our attending—our being there in person to do our own informed readings of what presents itself to us. Again, the more multiple the perspectives, the more meanings accumulate. There are new connections to be seen, new openings, always new possibilities (Greene, 2001b, p. 89).

Finally, deep noticing, describing and attending are what makes perceiving different from recognizing. Recognition, says Dewey again and again, is not perception (Dewey, 1934, p. 53). He describes recognition as attaching a proper tag or label. But to

truly perceive is to be mindfully, actively present to the work at hand—to notice what is there to be noticed—to notice simultaneously with mind and body. It is not passive. It cannot be accomplished by checking out. Or as Dewey says, ". . . perception is an act of the going-out of energy in order to receive, not a withholding of energy" (1934, p. 53).

The active, participatory nature of perceiving in aesthetic education is a central part of its enactment—of the teaching and learning process. When Greene writes of emancipatory educational practice, it has much to do with the very *process* of aesthetic education. The works of art under study at LCI may have content that provokes thinking directly around issues of social justice, as for instance, Ping Chong's theatre piece. Works such as this one are definitely important for young people to study. But works of art need not have an overtly political content in order for the *process* of aesthetic education itself to nurture the capacities of open mindedness, suspension of judgment, empathy, the ability to entertain multiple perspectives, and the ability to choose one's own views and interpretations in the context of a wider community. It is the *enactment* of aesthetic education, apart from the content of the works of art under study, that reaches most consistently towards Greene's ideals of releasing individuals to their own agency, to their own wide-awakeness—all the while understanding that their individual experiences occur within the framework of a larger community of other diverse individuals. Noticing deeply and attending carefully are the first steps in such an emancipatory process.

# Chapter 7: Music—Reflection

> In my own work, I always demand a certain vibrancy, an inner vitality that communicates through the viscera, not the mind. While the mind is never dormant, it does not hold sway in all areas, and definitely should not in dance. The senses must be reached before the mind. The reflection afterward, which is then basically a process of the mind, should – if the experience has been meaningful – once more awaken this sensory network (McKayle, 1969, p. 55-57).

## *Preface: Reflection and Meaning Making*

As a recent article in the NY Times pointed out (Freedman, 2006), "reflection" has become a trendy word in education, and many educators are a bit weary of reflecting on reflection. Teachers are urged to become reflective practitioners and students, as well, are engaged in a variety of reflective lessons. The author remarks that the term "reflection" can be a tangle of confusion and educational platitudes (2006). However, it is still worth shining a light on how reflection plays out very particularly in aesthetic education—what Greene means when she says, as she often does, that aesthetic education involves "reflective encounters with works of art." While it is certainly a broader educational concept embraced by many different kinds of educators, and while one could fill volumes citing educational thinkers on the importance of reflecting upon what has been learned, what I mean to distinguish here is the way in which aesthetic education reflection is a process that ultimately nurtures a student's ability to make meaning out of his experiences and his own personal encounters with works of art. To "make meaning" is not necessarily to, for example, decode, to recognize, to analyze (though these cognitive skills are often involved in the process), but rather to be able to understand a work, to experience the work actively, in relation to self, to others, and to ideas in the

surrounding world: as Greene puts it, to be in “active perceptual participation” (2001b, p. 117).

Reflection, in terms of artistic processes, takes on its own form and shape. It is not, for example, the same as reflecting upon a historical essay that one has read for class. Each of the art forms involves a kind of in-the-moment reflection. For example, in reflecting upon musical choices that I am making while participating in a quartet, my active listening to colleagues while we play or sing is a reflective process unique to ensemble music making. Painters, choreographers—all artists—have reflective practices unique to their art forms.

Aesthetic education makes conscious space for all of these types of in-the-moment artistic reflection, as well as for a kind of stepping away from the doing in order to make sense of what has occurred. It bears restating that two of the foundational beliefs Mark Schubart and Maxine Greene held at the creation of the Institute were: (1) students do not necessarily have meaningful experiences by being *exposed* to art, and (2) a kind of educational nurturing is required to invite ever deeper meaning making, participating in, and understanding of artistic experience. I would add yet another statement to these, having been through a public education system in Western New York with one of the finest music programs in the state, and having gone on to pursue further artistic studies at college and conservatory, (3) it is very possible to participate at many levels in a kind of arts education with extremely high standards in skill and technique development, and rarely, if ever, consider how a particular piece of music lives in relation to the larger questions of, say, freedom and structure, the tension between the two—and how that

might be metaphorically related to experiences of freedom and structure within one's own lived life. It is very possible to have completed conservatory training without ever having reflected upon the relationship of musical and architectural structures or to have ever wondered or savored the magic, the sense of space, between one note and another. It is possible, in short, to have had a long and highly regarded artistic education without having ever nurtured the capacity for an aesthetic experience, the capacity to ask, discover, taste, wonder about or crawl around inside a work of art, the capacity to follow that work as it radiates out into the world, instead of viewing it as a technical exercise or a certain kind of structure to be named.

The particular aesthetic experience—this "reflective encounter"—is too often squeezed out in various kinds of educational pursuits, as, for instance, when a preoccupation with the technical blots out other aspects of the work. But it can also get short shrift when students are "doing" all the time. Donald Schön, has written extensively about how the lines are blurred when attempting to distinguish doing from reflecting in any kind of rigid or permanent way. There is much reflection-in-action as Schön calls it; making and reflecting are in constant cyclical dialogue, and often occur simultaneously, especially in artistic pursuits (Schön, 1983; 1987). In fact, Schön considers the artist to be one of the highest exemplars of reflection-in-action. As an artist applies color from her palette, she is constantly reflecting on the results. As a musician arranges tones in a melodic sequence, she is also simultaneously reflecting on how they sound together and what is being expressed. Experiencing this reflection-in-action is very much a part of the

art-making process in the particular art forms, and is an integral part of aesthetic education.

However, having acknowledged the importance of this reflective artistic complexity, I contend that in the learning and experiencing process, when students are not given time and space both as individuals and as a community to step away from, wonder about, and reflect upon their experiences—if they are constantly engaged in activity, they will often not have the appropriate space to be able to notice, to question, or to learn from each other's ideas and perceptions. It is this reflective space that is particularly nurtured in myriad creative ways in aesthetic education. Other writers who have influenced Greene, such as Merleau-Ponty and Dewey, add important perspectives here. Merleau-Ponty, as described in Chapter 4, recognizes the bodily way sensory perception unites with processes of the mind. Yet he does maintain that a separate intellectual reflection creates the means for becoming aware of experience. Reflection is vital, in his view, in-so-far as it doesn't ". . . get carried away with itself or pretend to be ignorant of its origins" (1964, p. 19). Dewey speaks specifically of the importance of periods of reflection following periods of activity, noting the necessity for educators to create learning structures that allow for such reflection (1938/1997, p. 63). He says, "We reflect in order that we may get hold of the full and adequate significance of what happens" (Dewey, 1910/1997, p. 119). In *Art as Experience* he also speaks about the continuity of an aesthetic experience as being akin to breathing—a rhythm of intakings and outgivings. He compares it to the alternative flights and perchings of a bird. He adds,

> The flights and perchings are intimately connected with one another; they are not so many unrelated lightings succeeded by a number of equally unrelated

> hoppings. Each resting place in experience is an undergoing in which is absorbed and taken home the consequences of prior doing (1934, p.76)

As TAs design their workshop experiences for students, they are deeply involved in considering how the perching moments of reflection enable and empower students to set off on the next flight more confidently, artistically, and consciously aware. Greene sees this reflective capacity as,

> . . . another phase of imaginative activity: the savoring of what we have seen and heard in inner time, the elaboration of it, the seeping down. If we have attended authentically enough, broken sufficiently with the habitual and the conventional, we will find ourselves discovering dimensions of our own experience never quite suspected before we were present at this dance. We will find ourselves making connections, discerning meanings, or coming on new perspectives because of what we have beheld (2001b, p. 60).

When I first became a teaching artist at LCI in 1993, "reflection" was one of the words in the air at the Institute. Teaching artists were being asked to examine their practice in terms of the questions, the space, and the kinds of activities they had created for students both to process their experiences, relate them to their own lives, and make sense of the work of art they had been studying in personal, relevant ways. Though aesthetic education at LCI was clearly a hands-on, experiential type of arts education, a steady stream of activities—constant doing, doing, doing—seemed as though it didn't allow the kind of space necessary for satisfying thoughtful engagement. This emphasis on reflection came about in an historical evolution, as I learned though an interview with one of the teaching artists involved in my study. She has been at the Institute since 1986 and remembers it as a specific move.

> I remember when "reflection" came in. One of our TA days was actually about nothing but that. Eric Booth [former theatre teaching artist for LCI]

> came and did it—I remember. It was such a dense day. And I think that came out of work they were doing at the Nashville Institute—where they had really turned the lens on reflection. And maybe it came out of a deeper educational concept as well—reflection in other areas of the curriculum . . .
>
> At the beginning, LCI was all about art making. Early on, "experiential" meant activities in the art form. And I mean in the early days, it didn't even begin that specifically with the work of art under study. It would start with a grounding in the art form that the TA then took towards the specificity of the work. But it might start with a general approach to theatre, for example. I remember asking one of the early theatre TAs that I really admired about how much of his work (at Summer Session for teachers) was in the general art form and how much geared to the specific work of art—and he said 50/50! [*This is significantly different from today, where TAs are encouraged to base their workshops very specifically in the work of art under study*.]
>
> So anyway, I'm trying to emphasize that in the early days, making took up just about all the lesson. We TAs had to learn to rebalance and remind ourselves that it was about perception. We had to learn to allow actual time to reflect on the art making we had done and practice the skills of perception—noticing. Somewhere in there the terms "choice-making" and "guiding the noticing" came into play. We became aware that we were helping students notice choice-making, and that we were guiding their noticing (interview, 2005).

The TA is referring here to one of the institutional moments of practice shift. As we saw with the idea of contextual information (in Chapter 2), the emphasis on the importance of reflection grew out of an institutional self-analysis, and a working together of both staff (meso-level) and teaching artists (micro-level) to grapple with principles of philosophy, in order to realize an appropriate kind reflection for aesthetic education practice. Greene, in her writings, certainly emphasizes the need to create the structures and spaces for reflective meaning making to occur. She says,

> We as teachers are obligated to enable our students to attend well, to pay heed, to notice what might not be noticed in a careless reading or inattentive watching. But then we have to open the spaces for their meaning-making, for their interpretations—which are bound to be manifold (Greene, 2001b, p. 144).

I emphasize the reflective impulse in aesthetic education as we now turn our attention to the work of a music teaching artist in two distinct educational settings: in an *Introduction to Elementary Education* course at a Manhattan college, and in a 2nd grade classroom at a Manhattan public elementary school. Again, my notes are compiled from a combination of note taking (in the 2nd grade classroom) and note taking/video (in the college course). An interview with the teaching artist followed as we considered her work at the sites.

However, before discussing the specifics of the classes that I observed, it is important to comment on the extensive planning process that TAs and partner educators embark upon in order to design and implement aesthetic education experiences.

### *Aesthetic Education Planning Process*

As TAs and educators (oftentimes together) plan for aesthetic education work with students, they undergo a thoroughly reflective process that employs many of the same skills used in the classrooms—the ability to notice and attend deeply, the ability to ask probing, rich questions, and the ability to make connections to their own lives and to other aspects of the world, including ongoing themes, topics, and curriculum in schools. Teaching artists and educators go through a personal meaning making with the piece before they design educational experiences. It all begins by spending long, careful time with the work of art under study—watching, listening, looking intensely, asking about, and researching. At the Institute, a large brainstorming about each work of art is the beginning moment of planning. Whether working as a small group or large group

community of TAs and educators, or as an individual TA, this brainstorming is recorded or documented in categories that include the following:

- Aspects that are noticed about the work
- Questions about the work
- Contextual information about the work (or contextual questions)
- Connections to classroom (including, but not limited to curriculum) as well as to other aspects of life
- Activity ideas (These are not necessarily fleshed out ideas and they may or may not get used, but it is a place to record thoughts about experiential activities that may come up while brainstorming.)

Out of this brainstorming process, a key question is identified to guide the design of lessons and workshops, as well to serve as a learning pathway for students. Often (though not always), this question is not shared with students; it acts more as a framework or guide for the TA and educator. The design of the activities or experiences in which students will engage to study of the work of art is informed by this question, which is called a Line of Inquiry. The Line of Inquiry focuses the work with students, yet endeavors not to limit it. In other words—it helps to avoid a smorgasbord approach, or skimming across many aspects of the work without delving deeply into any. It also attempts to look at what is aesthetically specific and significant about *that* work of art. It should not seem like a generic question that could be asked about many other works of art, rather, one that involves something particular about the work under study. At its best, the Line of Inquiry serves to focus deeply on an aspect or aspects of the work that will

then open up multiple possibilities, understandings, and perspectives for students. It should not place limitations, boundaries or borders around the work, or indicate that this aspect (and only this) is what is important about the work. The concept behind the Line of Inquiry is that going deeply down a specific pathway (though clearly not the only pathway—many entry points are possible for any work of art), will enable participants to emerge with a widened perspective. In other words, a specific exploration has the potential to lead to broader or more general rich and interesting understandings. Whereas a broad, general approach in to a work has the danger of feeling scattered and superficial, and runs the risk of not getting to the richest places.

When I began working as a part-time teaching artist at LCI in the early 1990s, using a Line of Inquiry was not yet common practice. We used what was called an "Overarching Theme," an idea that could be articulated as either a statement or a question. Gradually, the idea of using an overarching question began to be encouraged by staff, and in our meetings we had many rich conversations about how a question seemed to fundamentally support a discovery process and lead us towards Greene's ideas of possibility and her notion of "What if?" Though this history is only partial, the use of a Line of Inquiry represents another incidence of institutional shift in practice at LCI, as discussed in Chapter 2.

Another educational planning process that has a similar approach to LCI's is "Teaching for Understanding," which uses a generative topic, question asking, and a brainstorming session as a way in to curricular issues (Blythe, 1998; Wiske, 1997). In the "Teaching for Understanding" process, brainstorming allows educators to see

relationships and connections between ideas and questions. This is one of the very same goals of LCI's aesthetic education brainstorming. As well, the generative topics in "Teaching for Understanding" are built around central issues in the domain that are interesting for both teachers and students. Similarly, Lines of Inquiry endeavor to articulate something central to the specific work of art under study, and are selected so as to represent the genuine curiosity and interest of the educators and TAs, as well as what they believe will be most interesting for their students.

The Line of Inquiry also bears resemblance to the process advocated by Wiggins and McTighe in their backward design approach to curriculum (Wiggins and McTighe, 1998). The authors encourage teachers to organize units of study around engaging and provocative questions (called "unit questions"), which can often lead to the discovery of even larger questions—or "essential questions"—about the topic being studied. Similarly in aesthetic education, the specificity of the Line of Inquiry often leads to what feel like bigger questions of meaning and purpose. Another resonance between aesthetic education and the "Understanding by Design" approach is that rather than beginning with textbooks or tried-and-true activities, the backwards approach asks teachers to begin with the desired results—goals and standards they wish to achieve—and then design backwards (1998). While there is not a literal backwards design process in place at LCI, the idea of suspending the favored activities that have been tried before, and instead finding new ways to explore a question, is very much a part of the teaching artist's lesson planning thinking.

For the purposes of clarification and understanding, we might look back to the theatre work described in Chapter 6. Here the Lines of Inquiry that were developed by the TA and collaborating teachers were the following: For the 6th graders studying Shakespeare: *In Aquila Theater's production of **Twelfth Night,** how do the actors' heightened physical and vocal choices serve to define character, communicate emotion, and embody Shakespeare's text?* For the college students studying Ping Chong's piece: *How does **Secret History** theatricalize* the true stories of three individuals and in so doing offer us new perspectives on the experiences of "ordinary" people?*

**Theatrical Elements*

*Vocal/choral choices*

*Time as an Organizer*

*Transitions/in life and as a theatrical device*

In the theatre aesthetic education classes described in the previous chapter, it becomes evident that the TA was leading students down two specific pathways of exploration. Thinking back, for example, to the college students studying *Secret History,* we can recognize elements of the Line of Inquiry in what we saw happening in the workshops that were described. But it is also important to note that this TA, as a kind of listed addendum to her Line of Inquiry, made specific choices about the theatrical elements she wanted to explore with the students (eg: vocal choices, time, and transitions)—understanding that it is impossible, and perhaps not as fulfilling, to explore every single theatrical element that exists in the work. While the way in to a work of art is often very specific, the pathway does not dictate the students' experience. Rather, it

reveals an unknown destination, a journey of exploration. The TA places focus on certain aspects (articulated in the Line of Inquiry) only in order to open up myriad possibilities for attending to the works and understanding them. The theatre TA did not imply, either with the Lines of Inquiry or at any moment in the classrooms, that the specific aspects they were exploring together were the *only* ones. She trusted that a focus on those particulars would only open up the possibility for students to see more, to wonder more, to engage more fully with all the plays had to offer.

The music TA and I actually spoke about the specificity involved in aesthetic education, and she offered the following insight:

> There is much to be gained from a specific focus. . . We find, often, that the smaller the focus is, the greater the depth of experience and understanding and ability to understand the rest of the piece. A small focus can open up so much (interview, 2005).

Aesthetic education, as the music TA and I spoke about, turns upside down the old notions of traditional music appreciation, for example, where one might survey Western music. In this traditional way of studying music, there are certain main points or themes that one is supposed to understand and then various pieces are chosen to illustrate the points. In aesthetic education, a very specific work is approached with wonder, with an attitude that asks the work what it has to reveal to us. Rather than move from a general point to a specific illustration, aesthetic education begins with a specific work and a specific question about that work. That question then grows tentacles and reaches out to myriads of connections and relationships.

***Aesthetic Education Class in Music at the College Level***

The TA and professor that I observed in the college class used the brainstorming and Line of Inquiry process in their planning. However, working in the Teacher Education Collaborative (TEC) in college and university contexts also has an added layer of planning process. Because aesthetic education experiences occur in classes for teacher candidates (with teachers-to-be) the professor and TA think deeply about the work of art under study, the way it has been studied—and how both of these have relevance for the wider context of teaching and learning in which students are immersed. As we turn to the work of the music TA in the undergraduate classroom, this will become more clear.

The students were studying a musical performance of the Oriente Lopez Jazz Quartet, entitled *"Viajes en un mundo nuevo" (Travels in a New World).* This program featured Cuban-born Lopez's original compositions, which integrated the rhythms and melodies of Europe and the America's with special focus on flamenco (from Spain), contradanza (from Cuba), ragtime (from New Orleans) and chorinho (from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil). Lopez was inspired by the music from these port cities and his journey traces an old trade route that included stops at each of these ports of call. The music teaching artist had facilitated one workshop with students the week prior to my visit, and the students had already attended the performance. The session I observed was the post-performance workshop.

In this particular instance, the TA and professor had jointly been interested in how Lopez was inspired by traditional genres of music from various Latin

countries, and then "played with" [their term] these genres in his own, original compositions. Thus, after careful review of the musical work, they chose the following aesthetic Line of Inquiry to focus their work together: *What is the relationship between traditional genres and Oriente Lopez' original compositions in "Viajes en un mundo nuevo"?* The professor of the class also saw the opportunity that this work provided to help provoke her students' thinking around educational or pedagogical traditions. As young teachers, she wanted them to think for themselves about which components of the "traditions" are necessary? Which could be fused or adapted to create new models? What is the art of teaching that involves "playing with" traditions and models? She was interested in having students make connections between what they discovered musically and their career field of choice.

In order to best understand the workshop that I observed, it is important not only to understand the planning process, but also to know a bit about what the students experienced with the teaching artist in their one pre-performance workshop. As I describe it below (based on my conversations with the teaching artist as well as reading through her lesson plans), it is interesting to keep the Line of Inquiry in mind, and note how it guides the workshop itself.

Beginning with clave sticks (rhythm sticks), the teaching artist played a rhythmic pattern. First the students copied, or replicated that pattern with their own clave sticks. Then, in small groups, the teaching artist invited students to create something that *played with* that pattern—something more or different than an exact replication, a snippet of

rhythmic music that was inspired by the original. The class listened to each group's creation and noticed details carefully. Having obtained the wall notes from this workshop, I know that they documented some of the following observations about how their new pieces related to the original source rhythmic material:

- it was an expansion (things were added—other rhythms and sounds)
- other things were mixed in (this seemed to add drama)
- it was softened
- closure was brought to it
- the relationship became unclear—it got very far from the original
- it was fragmented—different parts of the original became their own piece

Next, the teaching artist had large sheets of paper posted around the room with different musical genres listed as headings: Rock, Classical, Hip-Hop, Rap, Folk. Students rotated, in small groups, to each sheet and wrote in elements that each genre of music would or might contain, based upon their own knowledge and prior experience. As a large group, they stepped back, perused all the wall notes and underlined the most essential elements—what that genre almost *had* to have in order to be known as, for example, rap.

Then, each small group chose a genre to work with. Using simple instruments, their task was to create a short musical piece that was not an exact replica of that genre (or a song they knew from that genre), but rather, was inspired by that genre—something that played with some of the essential elements of the genre—but was new. Again, they listened to each piece that was created and made careful observations about what was happening in the music—what seemed to be new, and what seemed to be key elements of the genre with which they were playing.

There is by now a familiar pattern that we may begin to recognize as a hallmark of LCI's practice of aesthetic education. Art-making experiences or experiments are followed by reflective moments where artistic choices are noticed, and where students have space to stand back and look at or listen to what they have made. There are moments where this reflection is individual, and other moments where it is communal. The reflection that takes place fuels the next process in meaningful ways—whether it is a new idea or a continuation. For example, the reflective list students generated of ways they had played with the clave stick rhythm then served as a list of tools or possible choices for the next more complex activity, where they were playing with elements of a musical genre. The reflective noticing (or perching, in Dewey's language) led to the next flight of music invention.

In this pre-performance workshop, the teaching artist's last section introduced the contextual information from the four places: Cuba, Rio de Janeiro, Spain, and New Orleans. She gathered what students already knew about the cities and countries, and then she played excerpts of traditional music from each location, further steeping students in the contextual world of the specific places. Students took notes about the kinds of rhythms and musical elements they were noticing from each excerpt. She ended with a discussion in which she asked them to imagine how a composer might be inspired by the music of these places. What could they imagine a composer might "play with" based on their experiences in playing with rhythm, with familiar genres, and with the music they had just heard? Students then took these explorations, questions, and reflections with them into the performance.

When I came to observe the post-performance class, the teaching artist and professor were meeting before class and making last minute changes to the plan for the workshop—in some cases quite significant ones. The teaching artist was flexibly taking in the professor's comments about the performance and her perceptions of the students' experience of the performance. Again, it is worth emphasizing the highly responsive and reflective nature of the planning in all aspects of the aesthetic education process. In this instance, the teaching artist integrated the professor's comments in the short fifteen minutes before students arrived, and following is a description of the class she facilitated.

> *As students entered the room, there were photographs of the performers and the performance hanging on the classroom walls. The teaching artist invited students to record anything they remembered about the performance on individual sheets of white paper. Some wrote words, some drew images. She then asked students to hang their papers on the classroom walls, next to the photos that she had already placed. She asked students to rotate and notice what others had written or drawn, and specifically, to notice something that someone else had captured (not one of their own noticings). They observed that many people wrote about a particular instrument: the rainstick. Some noticed the passion of the performers. Other noticings included specific rhythm patterns, transitions between sections, the four genres they had listened to in class, solos, and how the percussionist played multiple instruments. Others recorded certain interpretive or emotional reactions they had to the music, eg: "It was relaxing." They took note of the different memories that they had shared and the variety of responses.*

This first reflective activity takes students back to their own experience at the performance; the images hanging around the room serve to transport them in a specific way. It is important to notice that the first time the TA asks students to remember their experience, it is very open-ended. The task is simply to record anything they remember, anything that stands out for them as significant. She will continue to ask them to reflect on more specific aspects of the music, but the first

invitation is simply to capture whatever comes up in either a verbal mode, or with an image. Then, students notice as both individuals and as a community what has emerged. Both the personal and the collective experience of the work of art begins to take shape in the room.

> *The TA asked the students to choose a partner, and using simple classroom instruments, try to re-create something that they remembered hearing from the performance. Immediately, the classroom became lively and interesting. One girl actually tried to pick out a melodic pattern she thought she remembered on a xylophone. Another pair recreated their version of the percussionist using his array of many instruments. The TA invented a task for a pair that were at the pre-workshop but not able to attend the performance— they were to create something that they might have anticipated seeing/hearing, having taken the pre-performance workshop. The TA did this spontaneously and without hesitation. This pair used four different instruments to capture the feel of four different "genres" (a word they used in their discussions) of music. Another pair put together a short group of sounds, including the rainstick, that they felt represented the entire performance; there was a sense of a beginning, middle, and end, with the rainstick present at transitions between these different parts. I noticed that the musical work with instruments released the students to remember and recreate much more interesting and sophisticated elements of the performance. Their musical reflections contained more nuance and detail than their written and drawn responses. The performance itself became much more vividly present in the room.*

It is significant to note the multiple modalities that are being used for reflective purposes. Already in the workshop students have had the opportunity to write about their experience, to draw or use an image to capture their experience, to converse with colleagues, and now, to capture their experience musically. Significantly, this mode of reflection is in the art form of the work of art itself, so the TA gives more time. As well, it is clear that students are comfortable and facile in speaking this musical language. That is, whether or not (and most have openly said not) they are musicians or have any musical experience, based on

their workshop with the TA before the performance as well as the quality of their attention on the performance itself, they seem to do their most significant, sophisticated work in the musical medium.

> *As each musical snippet was shared, the TA made sure to have students first notice what the pair had done—what was there in the music—and only then, connect that piece to the performance. The noticing stayed immediate and specific before it connected to the past experience of the performance.*
>
> *Next, the TA invited students to divide a paper into three sections. She played three excerpts from the performance on a portable CD player. The professor stepped in to assist with the facilitation here; she asked students to write down any personal associations or thoughts they had about these excerpts. She made the point that associations with other music or other aspects of life were fine to include. For each excerpt, the students recorded their personal connections—their faces seemed to indicate that they remembered these pieces from the performance. After time had been given for personal associations, the TA asked them to think about the word "because." Underneath each personal response, she asked them to record observations actually evident in the music that might have inspired that response. In other words, they had the personal response "because of what" about the music.*
>
> *A chart of some of their noticing follows:*

| ***PERSONAL CONNECTIONS*** | ***OBSERVATIONS THAT SUPPORT*** |
|---|---|
| *"Elevator" or hotel lobby music (this is not a negative comment, the student qualifies)* | *triangles, soft volume, calm, single beat not pulsating* |
| *Theme song from a movie*<br>*Music that would be playing at Starbuck's*<br>*Could be from Sesame Street* | *The beat, it's soft*<br>*Steady beat in background*<br>*Complex piano music in foreground* |
| *"Swing dancing" —Jazz*<br>*20's flappers*<br>*or 50's with the big skirts* | *Upbeat, repetitious*<br>*Catchy tune*<br>*Layered—is this original—is it inspired by jazz?* |
| *Action movie*<br>*Mexican, bull fighting*<br>*Spanish* | *Choppy music—sometimes it stops*<br>*Combination of feelings—complex*<br>*Aggressive—a feeling of suspense* |

| | |
|---|---|
| *Zorro* | *The volume increases, castanets,* |
| *duel—an old Western* | *Instruments shifted around* |

> *The TA pointed out that the first responses were mostly interpretive and individual, while the "because" lists fell more into observations of elements that all could agree were in the music. (There were some exceptions, she pointed out, but in a general way, this seemed to hold true.) For instance, the first excerpt got described variously as: "elevator music, hotel lobby music, cheesy, and music playing at Starbucks"—students had different senses about what it was like and/or the connotations of "elevator music". But they could all agree on things that fell in the "because" section, such as: a steady beat in the percussion, a complicated piano part happening in the foreground, nothing too loud or too soft, too fast or too slow, and the sense that there was a moderation involved. As students shared their final noticings, the TA actually played the excerpts again for the immediacy of the listening.*

A crucial aspect of the TA's process is the rigor with which she is helping students ground their responses in the work of art itself. It resonates very deeply with Iser's notions of the poles involved in aesthetic perception—at one pole exists the work and at the other the perceiver (Iser, 1978). The true experience—or transaction, in Greene and Dewey's language—will happen in between the poles, but a constant attention by the perceiver to the work keeps the understandings and the meaning making from spinning off into total subjectivity or into free association. Students are encouraged to bring forth personal connections, but then always asked to reflect upon them further within the context of what is actually happening (or what happened) in the work of art itself. As Greene says:

> Only if you take the time for faithful perceiving, for careful attending, will the work become significant enough for you to elaborate on what you see and hear within your own experience, make new associations, find new allusions and new openings, come more and more in touch with your own realities (2001b, p. 46).

This type of rigorous attention to the work not only grounds students in their own sense of what is significant, but it also reflects the core of Greene's ideas of multiple perspectives and interpretations existing together within a diverse community. That is, this activity very specifically builds student awareness of the multiplicity of interpretations that can come from a common place of noticing. It is important not to overstate the point that every person will notice the same things; this, of course, is not the case. Diversity and individuality abound in how and what we notice, just as they do in our interpretive capacities. But the space for community examination of why we think what we think—the explication of what makes us say or believe or interpret in a certain way—this breeds an understanding and respect for how multiplicity and diverse views arise. It can also provide meeting points, if not points of agreement. I may not at all agree with your view that this sounds like elevator music. But, in fact, hearing how you have come to your view may make me notice the steady beat in a new way, or hear something about the piano that I had not heard before—finding the common ground in what we can both notice is genuinely before us. This can happen only if a certain kind of reflective space is created.

The progression of the reflective journey that the TA created for students is also very significant. She took the students through a series of activities that enabled them to remember, reflect, and make sense of their aesthetic experience of the music in the performance. They started with rather surface details, but by making their own music and re-visiting the Oriente Lopez music via CD and an

active listening assignment, they deepened their engagement with the details of the work. The TA was also taking into account that listening to music has an extremely temporal quality; it flies by and is gone. Most people would have difficulty recalling exact details of music they had heard several days ago, so the TA used different strategies to bring the experience back into the room. She was also changing the modality of the experience in satisfying ways: writing or drawing into speaking, music making into playing and speaking about the experience, listening into writing, and then finally, more speaking. All of these offered each student multiple opportunities for personal reflection in various modalities, as well as for understanding and meaning making as part of a larger community.

The next section of the class marks an aspect unique to the context of working with educators, or in this case, educators-to-be. Meta-reflection such as the following might occur if a teaching artist were facilitating a workshop for a group of teachers or educators, but it would not, in general, happen in a class of elementary students. While there may be moments (either spontaneous or encouraged) where young students have meta-cognitive reflections about their own learning, creating significant reflective time, as well as specific space and structure for this to happen is more common in LCI aesthetic education work with college students or with educators. It is like an extra layer of reflection, for not only are students asked to make sense of their aesthetic experience with the work

of art, they are also asked to reflect upon their personal learning journey, and use that experience to delve deeper into implications for teaching practice.

> *Next, both TA and professor entered into a new section of the class. The conversation took a calculated and specific turn towards discussing the pedagogical aspects of the students' experience. "How did our in-class activities affect your experience at the performance?" asked the TA. The students were visibly excited and engaged in the discussion that followed. Their responses included:*
>
> - *What we did with the instruments was a simple version of what the performers did; they were doing the same idea but in a more complex way.*
> - *The activities gave us a focus, a lens ("the idea of genre came up a lot")*
> - *They thought the workshop helped them notice more. One said, "you listen and focus based on your prior knowledge. All the experimentation with the instruments helped you understand what was going on."*
> - *One student likened the experience to "white cars" (which then got called the "white car effect"). She said that when you get a white car, you suddenly notice all the other white cars out there in the world; your awareness expands to take in white cars. The TA immediately picked up on the ownership aspect of this comment. She noted that if the students felt the workshop allowed them to OWN the musical experience, then they could notice when concepts, ideas, things from that experience were there in the music performance, as well as in other aspects of the world.*

Several crucial points are emerging in these students' discussion. The first student comment about recognizing their own activities in what the performers were doing is something that we teaching artists often hear from our participants after the experience of the performance. We are never designing mimetic exercises for our students, but rather presenting participants with challenges, problems, or aesthetic issues that the artists are working with. We are creating experiences where students participate in the arts discipline of the work of art in genuine sophisticated ways, without needing to have mastered the technical skills of the art form. This is a wonderful example of what makes

aesthetic education very different from arts learning that proceeds in a sequential skills building progression. One of the main musical ideas this TA has covered—the idea of using instruments to re-interpret or compose by playing with a musical genre—would typically occur only in very advanced musical pursuits, often in a composition class, where mastery over various musical genres as well as mastery of an instrument has already occurred. In this instance, the TA has introduced a very simple set of tools and then thrown the students into the complex problem of solving an artistic question. The music they create actually *is* quite sophisticated, as they rise to the interest level of the challenge. This occurs even though none of the students is a practicing musician and the instruments are quite simple. The student creations are not performed at the level of professional musicians, but the ideas and concepts they are bringing to life take the music far beyond a simple 'tap, tap, tap' on the drum. The students visibly surprise themselves in what they are able to create. The music TA and I spoke specifically about this aspect in our interview. She said:

> [Aesthetic education learning] is really about getting your hands in the middle of the arts discipline—getting your hands dirty with a discipline. I've heard adult students articulate something about recognizing their 'ineptness' in a discipline when confronted by the 'greatness' of the performance. But it's always a moment they pass through quickly. They are always able to move through that and go deeper into what it has meant to embody an art form and how that is what makes the performance so real for them. What could become intimidation, actually becomes this way of entering or way of feeling. It's empathy, I think, but not just that. It's part of the transaction. It's a very beautiful thing that happens (interview, 2005).

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's work in the idea of "flow" is interesting to consider here as well; he maintains that peak flow experience occurs when the level of skill and the level of challenge are calibrated to meet at just the right level (1990, 1997). When skills are high and

challenge low, the risk of boredom is high, while low skills combined with a challenge that is unattainable can end in frustration. TAs must introduce tools and techniques in the art form that will allow students to tackle complex artistic challenges. And yet, there is not time to invest an emphasis on *mastery* of skills, so it requires quite imaginative work on the part of the TA to invent appropriate tools and techniques. Each activity a TA creates is designed to maximize the chances of participants having flow artistic experiences that can then lead them into the work of art.

*The student responses continued:*

- *The students admitted to not knowing what this had to do with anything on the first day. But then one student saw the whole experience as a kind of metaphor for teaching . . .the way that teachers are constantly tweaking, adapting, and changing traditions that have gone before them and re-creating in their own new settings. She saw this as a parallel to what the musicians had done with musical traditions.*

- *Students said that if they had known the "aim" beforehand, it wouldn't have been as much fun. They wouldn't have been as creative or open-minded. "Self discovery promotes independence," said one student.*

- *Another student brought up the fact that the whole experience was like certain movies, where the first scene is actually something from the end. It doesn't make sense to you yet, because you haven't gone through the middle, but when you return to it at the end, it now has a whole other meaning because of everything you have "been through" in the middle of the movie. Many movie examples of this were discussed, as well as books. The TA mentioned it was the first time she had heard a comment with this analogy.*

- *Several students talked about the surprise element—the discovery element—of not knowing why they were doing any of the activities at first, but then the surprise of having it make sense later. The professor added to this comment, and made the point that sometimes a teacher might want to be explicit with students about an objective, and sometimes, she might NOT want to be. She said it's important to have an objective, but that sometimes it is powerful when that objective is discovered by students, rather than given to them. The TA and professor then shared the Line of Inquiry that they had created together. Their objective was to explore that question with students; this was very clearly in their*

> *minds, but they allowed the students to discover their own responses to that question. They used their planning process as an example for the students.*

In this classroom discussion, students are also beginning to articulate what it feels like as a learner not to know the "expected" outcome. It reminds me very much of the way one TA responded to the survey question of "What is aesthetic education?" The TA wrote:

> An invitation to students to bring their genuine selves to learning, to notice, to articulate, and to start down a road without being able to know or imagine where it might lead.

The learning process feels like a discovery, but by design. The Line of Inquiry helps TAs commit to a genuine exploration of its question. But neither students, TAs nor educators don't know *what* will be discovered in their time together. That reveals itself only in the way a meaning is ultimately made with the experience and with the work of art.

Here, the TA and professor have two levels of discovery they are hoping to make possible for their students. One is discovering the musical performance and how they, as individuals and as a community, relate to it. But TA and professor are also provoking students' to reflect about what their experience in aesthetic education has to do with larger questions of teaching and learning. They have sown the seeds for both kinds of discovery, and now they use questions and instigate conversation to bring forward the student discoveries in these areas. As revealed in the comments above, one student immediately sees the performance as a metaphor for teaching. An interesting discussion about the role of discovery ensues out of their genuine experiences as learners.

> *The professor then made a direct connection from the work of art to education, and asked how one's prior experiences at school with teachers affects the kind of teacher one becomes? The students had many*

*fascinating responses, finding their own individual ways to talk about how they are influenced by individuals and concepts. The TA and professor allowed the students to find their own language for this discovery. They were not attaching educational lingo or much in the way of additional commentary. They gave these moments over to the students to make the connections.*

*The final beat of class invited students to interact with some Maxine Greene quotes, as well as one from John Dewey. They were printed in large words and mounted on construction paper; the professor handed them out, and the students circulated the papers and read them. The professor told the students that philosophers of education who were interested in aesthetic education had written these quotations. Then, the students were asked, briefly, to shout out words from the quotes that they felt had been key to their aesthetic education experience. They offered words such as:*
*"active experience"*
*"imagination"*
*"expanded perception"*
*"recreating in order to perceive—to understand"*

*Though this was the final visit from the TA, the professor would continue to follow through the educational ideas embedded in this experience. The students would continue to think about how these learning experiences might inform their own teaching. The professor would also pursue her challenge to the students as to how they would take what they have learned about teaching, and make it their own, original creation. Also, there was a sequence of courses in the education department of this college, so these students would continue to have aesthetic education experiences and study different works of art. This had been their first of several encounters with aesthetic education and Lincoln Center Institute.*

In the interview with the music TA after the class session, we talked more about the dual focus at the Teacher Education sites: making space for both an aesthetic experience with a particular work of art, and then an additional reflective experience around teaching and learning. I asked her how she balanced an aesthetic exploration with looking at pedagogy, and whether she felt it ever gets off-balance or unsettling. She responded:

> Well yes, in TEC [the Teacher Education Collaborative] we definitely have a different agenda and an extra layer that's being added, and it can definitely feel artificial. We often need to encourage students to just enter this experience as a learner [ie: don't need to analyze it from the teaching perspective while going through it]. At the end, I sometimes let them know that we'll pull back and look at what happened. Sometimes this part feels very authentic, and sometimes I've experienced it as content-driven and artificial. That's when it turns into *using* the work of art to illustrate something vs. allowing the work of art to naturally illuminate things. The "using" word is the most dangerous zone. It's like quicksand. If we use a work to meet an agenda, whether it be social or pedagogical or whatever, we're in a territory we don't want to be in. I think that sometimes I feel [from LCI] an institutional desire to be relevant in the education field . . .sometimes I feel that we [at LCI] can over-articulate aesthetic education's value or [get into contortions] trying to figure out how to make it about sociology— or whatever the course happens to be. But the natural point of connection is always to pull back and look at *how* people learn—what was their learner's experience. . . . .fundamentally, it is the difference between using the work of art to get at something instead of just letting the experience be a place to have a conversation about learning (interview, 2005).

I asked the TA how she felt about this class, in particular, in terms of the dual focus on both work of art and pedagogy. Her response:

> For me, this class was one of the best experiences I've had in TEC. I've been partnering with this professor for three years, and when we began she was the first and the loudest to say, "Why are we doing this?" Now, she is the one that asks just the right question to lead the aesthetic part of the exploration. She was really clear that she wanted her students to experience not having an explicit goal or aim. She was clear that she wanted them to have a discovery experience around that idea. It was funny because our pedagogical line of inquiry [the idea of looking at traditions of education in the same way that Oriente Lopez may have dealt with issues of musical traditions] seemed like a very natural metaphor with the work; it didn't seem contrived to us. But then, when we got to the performance, I think that changed a bit. That's what we were hashing through at the meeting before class began—how to handle the conversation by not being too heavy handed in the connection. We decided we didn't need to prove some kind of relevance. We'd just see what the students came up with out of their genuine experience (interview, 2005).

It was fascinating to me, as an observer, that the students themselves, with no prompting from the TA or professor, came to the metaphor idea of their own accord. They saw the

relationship of tradition in both the music and in teaching. Again, this TA's instincts in asking key questions at the right moments and then getting out of the way of the experience, allowed the students the right kind of reflective space to make their own connections and relationships. Such finesse requires great sensitivity to and respect for the authentic experiences students are having. Without the awareness and commitment to the importance of reflective opportunities on the parts of both the TA and the professor, students would not have the time or space to make their own meaning out of their aesthetic education experiences.

### *2nd Grade Aesthetic Education Class in Music*

The second observation of the teaching artist occurred at an Upper West Side, Manhattan public elementary school. Here, a class of 2nd graders was studying the blues music of singer and guitarist, Guy Davis. While a composer of contemporary blues, Davis is also steeped in the great blues traditions and artists of the past, many of whom he was presenting in this program. Interested in both the contemporary and historical aspects of his music, TA and teacher were investigating the following Line of Inquiry, created in their planning process: *What are the significant elements that make Guy Davis' music "the blues"?* They had agreed that the TA would focus more on the musical elements, while the teacher would investigate ideas of story and emotion with the students.

> *The TA began the class by gathering the children on the classroom rug. She reminded them that this was their last class together before Guy Davis' performance at their school, and refocused their busy energy on trying to remember what they already knew about the Delta blues. She sat next to a graphic representation on chart paper that they had created together in a previous class. "Who can tell me something you remember about the Delta blues? You can tell me, or show me . . .," she began, indicating the chart. A girl got up and pointed to the chart—she remembered a rhythm they had been working on,*

> *and sang it to the TA. The TA pointed to the rhythm on the chart and got the whole class to join in—da dum, da dum, da dum. They all slapped their thighs and hands to this pattern. Then the TA pointed to another part of the chart and the class began keeping a heavy, simple main beat together. Finally, she pointed to a curvy line and said, "What's this?" No one really responded so the TA got them immediately involved in an activity. She asked everyone to think of something that had happened to them this week—"It can be anything," she said. Then, she said, "When I count to three, let's all say our thing out loud at the same exact time." 1,2,3—and they all screamed their lines. The TA then said, "Fantastic, now let's all try the same thing again. Except this time in a very quiet voice." The children did. Now she pointed back up to the curvy line. She asked if they remembered that this is the part in the blues that "goes all up and down." She asked the children—on the count of three—to say their line in very curly, curvy kind of way, like the line that was drawn on the paper. They all tried and the interesting modulations of their voices filled the air.*

With these 2nd graders, the TA has begun the class with a reflective moment—thinking back to what they had done before together. Very quickly and seamlessly, however, she moves the students into active participation and experimentation. It brings up again, Donald Schön's notions of reflection-in-action (Schön, 1983; 1987). In this segment of the class, the lines between art making and reflection are blurry, and part of the natural artistic process. It's not important to parse which is a reflective moment and which an act of making, nor would it be the same for every child. But the TA is consciously using moments of doing and noticing that feed each other and launch naturally into the next idea.

> *"Now," said the TA, "we are going to try something else. Let's see if we can take our line and find one word that needs some extra 'umph'" The children tried and they shared some examples: "I paint—ED" and "I . . . . .went scootering." These seemed to me to be two different kinds of "umph" —one was a strong accent and one was a louder and elongated sound. She asked the students to turn knee to knee with the person sitting next to them and try saying their line in a curly, curvy way. The students seemed to be used to this way of sharing with a partner. Voices filled the room and bodies moved along with those voices. The TA clapped a rhythm to get their attention; they seemed squirmy and had picked up the high*

> *energy that she had sustained throughout the class so far. She said, "I love the way you were using your bodies to help you find your curvy voices!"*

Here, the TA offers a way to reflect on created work that can happen quickly and is not mired in words or verbal expression. It is important with learners of all ages to offer a variety of ways in which to both share and reflect upon work. But very young children, in particular, need ways to share that are not always heavily verbal or too long. Here, a quick turn to a partner allows children the opportunity to perform their own ideas, as well as listen to a partner's differing approach. The TA was also expertly reading the energy of the children in the room; she sensed that they all needed to participate in an activity rather than sit quietly and listen.

> *The students were not ready to quiet down, so the TA immediately started clapping the rhythm pattern they had been working on; they all joined in. She brought their volume down and said, "Listen carefully." Then she played a tape of them (from last week) creating the same rhythm pattern they had just done live. Faces lit up at the recognition; this was a tape of their own work.*
>
> *Now, the TA started to add her own voice (no words) to the tape. She was singing a gentle "bom" on the down beats. "What was I adding in?" she asked. A student sang back what she did and then added with words, "but you were doing it soft." Now the TA changed it again. This time, she changed pitch on her "boms" creating the simple I-IV-I-V-VI-I harmonic pattern that occurs in much blues music. She invited the students to walk around to this progression. They began to sing along with her, changing pitches. Next, she asked them to stop walking and only feel it with their heads and other parts of their bodies, but without moving their feet. They were still singing with her "boms." The TA also showed the pitch level when she changed it with her hands in the air. It seemed to me that the students understood the concept of changing the notes, even before using hands.*
>
> *The TA invited the students to take a seat and said, "Let's see if we can sing and hear those 12 bars of blues." This is the first time she used any technical music language with the students, and she slipped it in without explanation. Again, the TA played the tape of the class doing the rhythm pattern from last week; but this time, she helped them sing the "boms" on top of the rhythm. Quickly, she then played a CD of a Guy Davis snippet. They immediately responded with their bodies and they quickly joined in with both the clapping of the rhythm and the*

> *singing of the progression. The TA eventually dropped out and the kids kept singing along right on pitch. They seemed to totally feel this blues progression throughout all of their bodies.*

In this portion of the class, the TA has introduced a very classic element of the blues—a particular harmonic progression—and yet one that might be considered too advanced for 2nd graders by most music educators. Some might wonder how to talk about the 12-bar blues with students who don't have an understanding of what a "bar" is, let alone harmony or chord progressions. And yet, the TA has found a wonderful appropriate way to have the students *experience* the 12-bar blues. She has guided them in different ways to move through it—walking, using heads, bodies, and hands, as well as singing it. It is significant that she dropped in the technical musical language, but did not dwell on it. Her emphasis is on the students having the experience, rather than on being able to identify a musical term. This is also a way of introducing contextual information about the blues by making it into an experience rather than an imparting of information. When the TA spoke about this in an interview, she said:

> It's not that we are not skills based. We explore skills all the time, but in a way that opens them up rather than aims for proficiency. If I were a music specialist I might have a responsibility to my grade book to say that 70 percent of the students knew the I-IV-V chord progressions. But here, some of them aren't getting that. A lot of them are. And others are getting different elements. So there's a sense of us all getting the blues together in our own ways, rather than a focus on who's getting exactly what (interview, 2005).

It is never about students' understanding information in order to answer a test question about that information. Rather it is about experiencing artistic elements, and then being open to hearing or noticing them because of that experience.

> *When the Guy Davis excerpt ended, the TA returned to the chart up front and asked the students how they would add in what they were just doing with their*

> *voices. Several students came up and pointed out how they would chart it. The TA entertained each idea seriously and tried each one. Throughout this process she inadvertently said the words "chord progression." Clearly she hadn't intended to say that—it just popped out. Without missing a beat, a boy asked, "What's a chord progression?" The TA wrote down those words on the chart and said, "Well I wasn't going to talk about that, but now that you've asked . . ."—she spontanteously did an air guitar demonstration for the students, singing the chord progressions and pointing to the different parts of the chart when she "played" them. As she played the sounds they were just making together, she said, "A chord progression is how the guitar player moves the sound around by changing the pitches on these notes . . ." It was not completely clear that this idea had landed for all students, but she quickly moved on, not interested in dwelling on the technical explanation.*

Once again, it is clear that the TA's aim is not to define the term. Even though it is an advanced concept, since it comes out of genuine curiosity, she finds a way to make a developmentally appropriate explanation. However, she's not concerned about hammering home a label or definition. She offers it as just another, not necessarily privileged, part of the total experience. It is a further bit of contextual information added to the children's experiences.

> *The TA pointed again to the chart and mentioned that Guy Davis would be playing all those different parts on his guitar. "But the curly part—let's listen to the CD again and hear how his voice is doing this curly line part. In a minute, when we're done listening, I'm going to ask you to turn to your partner and say what you notice the singer is doing with his voice. What is the singer doing with his voice?" The students listened to the excerpt and the TA repeated the question again. Whenever the music came on, the children moved and grooved instantaneously. It was a short excerpt and she played it twice. Then all students turned to a partner to talk.*

The TA has twice used the idea of reflecting with a partner. This is an especially effective strategy with young children. This way, each child gets a chance to share something, which is important in the early grades. Yet the partner share takes far less time than hearing from every student one-by-one. It also allows the TA time to be sure to include

moments of community noticing as well, which is crucial to the philosophical underpinning of aesthetic education, as we have seen.

> *When the students re-gathered as a large group, different individuals shared what they noticed. Mostly, when they shared they sang back what they heard. The TA then helped them find the words to describe what they noticed. The first student sang something that started loud and got soft. The TA wrote on chart paper, "Changing the volume—going loud and soft" and she said those words out loud. She then asked students to turn to their partners, take the line from the Guy Davis song "I'm goin' up to the country" and try doing part loud and part soft.*

The TA is helping young children with their reflective capacities here. As one child shares a noticing, she understands that it might not be enough for most students to just hear the words about, or even the sounds of, what a child is responding to. The TA understands that the other students need to try out the idea to understand it fully. I, too, have found this to be an important strategy in helping young children reflect. Whereas older children may be able to generate a list of things they have noticed, and grasp the concepts that the list represents, young children often need to try out the ideas that are attached to words on a list before fully understanding them. In these instances, once again, the reflecting and doing are blurry and combined. The music teaching artist and I had a conversation about reflecting with young children in her interview.

> I think of how much I have learned about helping young children find the language to reflect from working at this school where there are many children with special needs. So there are many times when verbal is not an option. I'm interested in this with young children—finding ways to capture the nuances of what they think when they don't have those nuances yet verbally. I do sometimes assist them in finding the language for their idea, or I allow space for a fellow-classmate to help them. I've learned a lot about that from watching teachers do share-backs on books, and seeing them ask for help from other students for a student who is trying to find words. Then the first student can say, "no that's not what I meant" if it isn't quite right (interview, 2005).

She also remarked that creating reflective realms for students with disabilities had greatly influenced her teaching practice.

> *The next student to share sang a version of something she heard with a big high note. The TA asked all the students to try singing that note and showing it with their hands! "Great," she said. "Now we're not changing the volume, but we're changing the pitch; we are taking our voices way up high." She invited them all to try singing their line and putting in a high note.*
>
> *A third student responded in words. He said, "In blues, there's a scrunchy voice." Then he did a gravelly kind of singing. The TA replied with delight,"Let's all try that!" She even checked to make sure she understood his language correctly:"Is it scwunchy or scrunchy?," she asked. "Scrunchy," said the student. So that word went up on the board. The TA then asked the students to try to do BOTH scrunchy voice and sing a high note. They sang to their partners, all at the same time.*
>
> *Finally, the TA said, "I also heard you add in the word 'yeah'. And sometimes in the blues we can add in other words—like 'baby'."*
> *"Or yeah baby," said another student. "Absolutely," said the TA.*
>
> *Then, the TA asked the students to turn to their partner for a final time and decide how they would like to sing the line "I'm goin' up to the country." "How will you use your voices?" she wondered aloud. "Will you use a scrunchy voice or add high notes?" The students began to get a bit unruly and she practiced with them how to be silent when she clapped. She talked a bit about how it is important for musicians to never get out of control.*

Even as the TA stresses some behavior issues, she does so out of artistic integrity (the need for musicians to remain in control) rather than out of punitive classroom management purposes. She keeps the children always immersed in an artistic process.

> *As the students rehearsed their lines, there were many hands and bodies moving along. There didn't seem to be any students who were not engaging in singing with their partner. The TA brought them back to attention and once again, played the class rhythm track. She invited four different pairs to sing their line along with the rhythm. "Just jump in when you feel it," she said—and they did.*
>
> *After four pairs had sung, the TA took the time for noticing. "Let's see how well you were listening," she said. "Who can tell me one thing you heard from these singers?" A first student raised his hand and said, "When they got to the end, they went _____" and she held a long note instead of using a word. The TA*

*added the language "holding a long note" to the chart and said it out loud. Again, she was giving words to sounds the students demonstrated in their noticing.*

*"What was something else you heard," she asked? Another student said, "I heard _____." She sang, and then added," like LOUD at the end." "AND scrunchy," another student added to her description. Now, some of the students seemed to be searching for the words to describe what they noticed. They were beginning to use some of the language that had gone up on the board.*

*Finally the TA asked two very shy-seeming girls to share. She asked the whole class if they could make a very quiet rhythm track for these two girls—" who have chosen a quiet way to sing." (The TA must have noticed this as she circulated around while the pairs were working.) The class created a very soft and sensitive blues beat and the girls sang their line and then beamed at its conclusion. No talking about it was necessary. The TA said simply, "That reminds me of another blues singer I want you to hear. This one is not Guy Davis." She played a very short snippet of a silky woman's voice. The students and TA didn't talk about this, but the TA has made sure the class knows that girls sing the blues too.*

*She decided to end the class by playing one last Guy Davis tune. She told the students, "This is called the 'Walkin' Blues.' A lot of different people walk for different reasons, but this is Guy Davis doing his walking." The kids were, by now, actually breathless to hear him and they moved along with the music. At the end, hands flew up in the air without the TA asking anything. The students were clearly used to talking about what they heard. One girl said, "I heard a strong voice." The TA said, "Very quickly, let's hear some more words from all of you about what else you heard." She received the following responses:*

- *"hummph"*
- *scrunchy*
- *I heard a high pitch*
- *Different words were going up and down*
- *grumpy voice*

The pattern of hearing something or sharing, and then discussing, noticing, and reflecting is now completely internalized by the students, and clearly *exciting* for them. By the end of the class, more and more students are using the verbal vocabulary that they have created together with the TA. Here at the end, she asked specifically for words, and many students were trying out their newly developed vocabulary.

> *She played the same excerpt a final time and told the students they could use their fingers to help them listen. They seemed to relish this idea; some poked out the rhythm and some traced the voice in the air.*

Here the TA employs an immediate and kinesthetic way for students to reflect on what they are hearing. There is not one right way to accomplish the task; the students are free to find multiple ways that hands might help listen, whether it be to respond to the rhythm of the music, or notice something about the way the voice moves through the piece.

> *She ended the class by reminding students that very soon Guy Davis would come to visit them at their school. "Think of all the different things we've learned when you hear him," she says. One student got up and grabbed the chart when the TA said this, and the TA agreed and pointed to the chart—"Yes, all of those things." She asked students to imagine how Guy Davis is only one person, but he is going to be able to do all the things on the chart. She used the words "chord progression" again here, as well as the students' own words, such as "swirly" and "scrunchy." She said, "Can you listen for how he uses his voice and guitar to tell his blues stories? Because when I come back we're going to write our own blues song and tell our own story!"*
>
> *As the TA began to leave, a student called out, "I have a question. Is Guy Davis famous?" The TA said, "Well, that's an interesting question. What does famous mean? I can tell you that he plays his blues music all over the world so I guess you could say that he's famous to a lot of people." The little boy was obviously taking this information in. "When I come back," she said, "I want to hear all about what YOU thought of Guy Davi*s."

It's a subtle comment that ends this class, and yet the TA has deeply internalized the idea that it is her job to empower the students to reach out towards the work of art, rather than have them sit passively in awe of "fame." She completely understands that every one of her comments and questions, no matter how seemingly small or short, has the capacity to encourage this reaching out, or squash it.

It is for this philosophical reason that at the Institute, no artist performing in the work of art under study would be the TA for that same work with a group of students.

That artist would carry the air of authority—as someone who either created the work or is the performance expert—and chances are too strong that students might defer to this expertise, or not feel as free, or as motivated, to express their own thoughts, ideas, and interpretations. Having an artist teach to her or his own work runs the risk of shutting down the meaning making from students. Often, however, the creators and performers are welcomed into the process of study as contextual information about the piece. Sometimes this happens as a live conversation or demo, and sometimes it happens through another media, such as video, audio, or written material. These voices are important to the study of the work, but the Institute takes pains to insure that they are not privileged voices; rather, the artist's voice, when it is available, becomes one of many to consider, rather than a "final truth" about what the work means.

There is a philosophical point to be made here, for throughout the history of the field of philosophical aesthetics, debates over artist intention have been heated and lively. In a now famous essay called "The Intentional Fallacy," Beardsley and Wimsatt (1954) maintain that though an artist may have intentions in making a work, they are not at all important or meaningful to the critic (at this time, Beardsley and Wimsatt were not talking about the perceiver). According to their account, either the intentions will manifest themselves in the work and be observable to scrutiny, or they won't be manifest, in which case it doesn't matter whether we know about them or not. The authors stake out their territory as objectivists, stating that works of art are objective in having properties quite apart from intention and that the critic may objectively consider the work of art itself, without getting into what is not directly available to the ear or eye. This

position is fraught with philosophical difficulties, including but not limited to the objectivist position, and there have been years of counter discourse since the 1950s against such a simplistic account of intention and the artistic process. But it is important to read the work within a historical context, for they were writing at a time of much exaggerated literary criticism that tended to lose the work of art while speculating wildly on the author's psychological or emotional state.

Still, the larger point at LCI is that close attention must be paid to the work itself, and TAs must rigorously guard against being swayed by either an expert opinion, or the lure of an artist's biography. Contemporary writer Jeanette Winterson speaks here about works of literature, but her views hold in all the art forms:

> How each artist learns to translate autobiography into art is a problem that each artist solves for themselves. When solved, unpicking is impossible, we cannot work backwards from the finished test into its raw material. The commonest mistake of critics and biographers is to assume that what holds significance for them necessarily held significance for the writer. Forcing the work back into autobiography is a way of trying to contain it, of making what has become unlike anything else into what is just like everything else. It may be that in the modern world, afraid of feeling, it is more comfortable to turn the critical gaze away from a fully realized piece of work. It is always easier to focus on sex. The sexuality of the writer is a great diversion (1995, p. 106)

Throughout history, there has always been focus on artists' personal lives and psychologies, as well as "intentions." In aesthetic education, these perspectives are taken into account as contextual information. But they are not privileged or even emphasized, for it is easy for such issues to hijack a perceiver's own experience

If teaching artists are true to Greene's ideas of helping release students to engage a work of art through their own powers of meaning making, they want to be careful about positioning voices of authority or getting caught in a web of intentionality that may or

may not have a bearing on the work itself. Greene leads us to understand that an aesthetic experience cannot be had in hearing or reading about a work of art second-hand—even if it means hearing directly from the artist who created it. She, like Arnold Isenberg (1949/1995), believes that the specific meaning or understanding of a work of art is achieved only in the presence of that live work. The perceiver must come into personal contact with the work. At the Institute, this is also why videos, slides, or other respresentations of works are not studied. A representation is not the same specific experience as going to the museum or attending a live performance. The relationship between perceiver and live encounter, as Isenberg suggests, is the essence of the work.

I also asked the music teaching artist what she felt was particular about working in music, where, for example, there is often (though not always) absence of a narrative as there is in theatre. She commented:

> I think that one of the great challenges we face as music TAs is the idea of language—how people talk about music. "What can you feel? What can you see?" and even the question, "What do you notice?"—these almost feel visual to me. Or at the root they don't get at "What are you taking in hearing-wise?" People don't have a ready language for that. They might say something like, "It sounds like a train, like a whistle," and then I say, "What makes you say that?" But that's a scary place, because people are at a loss for what to say, or they are afraid they will name the wrong instrument, or . . . . so many things. One of our particular challenges is to instill confidence in participants that they *can* talk about music and what they hear. And that they *can* hear. I think of it like the work of art going through the air, and then teaching people that they do have the capacity to grab onto what's coming through the air around them. I'm constantly thinking about perception through the realm of hearing (interview, 2005).

Each teaching artist is thinking about the particular perceptual modes that are most necessary in their art form, as the music TA has articulated above. The artistry of their teaching is in creating reflective spaces that allow such perception to occur, as well as

opportunities for students to make various kinds of meaning with the works they are studying. Students need experiences in the various art forms to make perception possible, but they also need reflective space and time for questions, interpretations, and the making of meaning to emerge.

## Chapter 8: Visual Arts—Inquiry

> My suspicion is that the desire to question, to separate the layers of reality into smaller and larger entities, was the beginning of poetic understanding. By poetic understanding, I do not mean our interest in the craft of poetry. I mean, more generally, that understanding which—from curiosity, wonder and our questions—created a bridge to the unknown, to those outer and inner elements of our existence that we cannot and will never be able fully to comprehend. But it is an understanding that, freeing up dogmatic and rigid ways of perceiving and knowing, allows us to experience the endlessly evolving ways we can see and feel the world around us. What the child and our own childhood continually teach is that the answers we assume now have the potential of becoming the questions we ask later on (Lewis, 1998).

### *Preface: Aesthetic Education as Inquiry Process*

Inquiry, like reflection, has become something of a buzzword in education circles. In the continued spirit of distinguishing between other uses and specific meanings associated with aesthetic education and Maxine Greene's ideas, here the term is connected with the spirit of wonder and curiosity that Richard Lewis describes above—with the sense of what is unanswered, what is possible, and with the intent of locating ourselves within such questions. To investigate a work of art is to enter an experience of limitless exploration, where there are no boundaries around what might be discovered. That is an important point to underscore. Every time a LCI teaching artist enters the classroom, it is with the sense of not knowing what students will discover; it is with careful vigilance against prescribing or putting limits around what a student might experience. Because, fundamentally, artworks have the capacity for boundless depth, because we may never be able to have the same aesthetic experience with the same work of art more than once—a work of art is a world that invites, or even demands, an authentic discovery experience each time we engage it. Aesthetic education invites us not

only to discover ourselves, but to do so *within* a classroom community of other explorers, and *in relation to* a work that has been created for us to wonder about—to inquire of. The work of art may ask things of us, just as we ask questions of it. A dialogue of mutual inquiry takes place. As Greene describes:

> We must try to comprehend how each of us, unique persons with unique life histories, can move inside works created by quite different human beings and actually discover ourselves there. We have asked ourselves and must continue asking ourselves what it *is* about the work of art that allows this to happen, what it *is* about a painting or a dance or a piece of music that seems to command attention, that may sometimes change a life (2001b, p. 22).

In its more recent publications (Holzer, 2007) LCI has begun to use the word "inquiry" to describe its overall educational approach as one of exploration and discovery—one that involves the senses and emotions as well as cognition. Whereas, the word "questioning" is used to describe both a skill or teaching strategy seen in the work of teaching artists, and a capacity nurtured in students—for both students and TAs these skills and capacities include the ability to ask rich questions, and to create and participate in an arc of questioning. The basic mode of discourse between TAs and students is one that uses questions throughout, as this study has revealed so far. While there are many other educational practices that focus on the use of questions, some of which will be mentioned presently, I wish to underscore *why* teaching artists are concerned with the art of questioning in their practice, *why* they are interested in the questions students ask, and *why* energy is spent crafting a Line of Inquiry to lead the study. The *why*, of course, leads back to the realm of philosophy and to art itself. Works of art demand that we not fix or predict their meanings, as Dewey remarked in much of his writing (e.g., 1934). Artworks are created to express, not to dictate. They move us out of the predictable into the

possible, as Greene might say. For this reason, aesthetic education has nurtured a practice that does its best to exist in the realm of inquiry; it has endeavored to insist that every time an individual encounters a work of art, this is an event that is new in the history of the world; this event has never occurred before and is worth investigation. This is a difficult position to uphold in the contemporary educational climate. Indeed, much of the current educational discourse screams with the language of answers and testing and accountability. It is not that artists or teaching artists or Greene or anyone at the Institute think that all testing is a bad idea, or that sometimes there aren't right and wrong answers (in life or in education) or that we shouldn't all support the notion of high standards. It's just that those are not the things works of art are asking of us. Works of art are not calling out to be tested or answered or quantified. They are asking, instead, for us to wonder, to pay attention, to think, to feel, to move perhaps, or sing, to be aware of our own perspectives and of the larger world around us; they are calling out to us to inquire, explore, and interpret. Art is large and it enlarges us. This is not inflated rhetoric; it is truly what happens with a work of art when aesthetic experiences are allowed and nurtured. As Winterson describes:

> A work of art is abundant, spills out, gets drunk, sits up with you all night and forgets to close the curtains, dries your tears, is your friend, offers you a disguise, a difference, a pose. Cut it through and through and there is still a diamond at the core. Skim the top and it is rich. The inexhaustible energy of art is transfusion for a worn-out world (1995, p. 65).

It is the "inexhaustible energy" Winterson describes that aesthetic education tries to buoy and to uplift. This is tricky business for a teaching artist, for there are many educational practices that do just the opposite. As Dennie Palmer Wolfe points out in her

article, *The Art of Questioning*, (1987), in which she explores the artistry of classroom questions and categorizes certain types of them, there are plenty of questions that can embarrass as well as empower, or check for information rather than genuinely elicit a point of view. She notes that the very way in which teachers ask questions can undermine, rather than build, a shared spirit of investigation. In fact, the culture of schooling often resists the inquiry impulse in general. It reminds me in many ways of the game of keeping a balloon aloft without letting it touch the floor. This game is often played in a room full of people—endeavoring together to keep the balloon in the air, despite the effects of gravity. The gravitational pull of much of our contemporary educational climate is to answer, to force questions of meaning and discovery into outcomes and evaluative measures. Much of my own teaching artist practice has felt like that game of keeping the balloon in the air. The efforts to keep the balloon up *are* the practice of aesthetic education, and the balloon is both our individual and collective aesthetic experiences with works of art. As a teaching artist, I am constantly tracking the flight of the balloon. Within the classroom, I sometimes check myself inwardly, "If I ask a question that way, I could send the balloon down; I had better ask another question and keep the balloon up." Or I notice the beautiful loft with which a student has just sent the balloon high into the air, and I need to stay out of the way to let it have its arc, its own time in space. I am calculating, "Is it my time to reach for the balloon, or is another student nearer to it to keep it on its way?" Greene puts it this way, as she talks about dwelling in the mystery of the aesthetic experience:

> We are forever hoping that the feelings, indeed the passions so often palpable here can be alive as the reflective and (I trust) ardent teacher works to involve her own

> students (with due allowance for age, level of development, life experience) with works of art. Her capacity to do so, I am convinced, depends in large measure on her capacity to keep her wonder and sense of mystery alive and the questions open (2001b, p. 194).

Questions used in the classroom are not the only way to sustain an inquiry process, but they are important. As the work of the visual arts TA is observed in two sites, it is fascinating to watch her both launch the balloon of inquiry from the start, and keep the game going with these very different groups of students. As her work is explored, I will take up the philosophical idea of inquiry and what it means for aesthetic education practice. Important emphasis will be made on the kinds of questions the TA employs.

### *Aesthetic Education Class in the Visual Arts at the College Level*

I had the opportunity to observe the visual arts teaching artist with a group of undergraduate students in an early childhood education course at a Brooklyn-based college. I was present at their visit to the Museum of Modern Art in Manhattan. Aesthetic education in the visual arts is fundamentally different from the performing arts in that the "live work of art" is a museum visit, actually facilitated or guided by the teaching artist. In-depth conversation occurs *at* the work of art, in the museum itself. In the performing arts, the experience of the work of art is not mediated or guided in the moment; reflection on the experience occurs at some point afterwards, as we saw with the college students studying Oriente Lopez' music in Chapter 7. Before the class visit to MoMA, the students had one session with the TA and professor. Based on notes written by the TA and a conversation with her, a brief summary of their classroom work is included here.

With scissors and construction paper, the TA began by asking students to cut out

a table—a top and four legs—as individual parts. She did not dictate or demonstrate in any way what this table should look like; it could be any kind of table. The students were asked to arrange these pieces as a table. Then the professor asked the students to take several moments to write in their journals about a specific table in their lives, including all that went on around that table. She asked them to recall activities, conversations, arguments, and feelings. Next, the TA asked the students to make a chair to go along with the table—again cut out as individual parts—a seat, four legs, maybe arms. She asked the students to arrange the chair next to the table. Finally, she asked them to cut out a figure or an identifiable body part. Then she led a guided improvisation. She invited the students to explore several arrangements, such as stacking all the shapes on top of each other, leaving white space between parts, making the shapes explode from the center, and making the shapes look contained. After each experiment, the TA guided the students in noticing and describing what they saw around them, looking at their own work as well as that of their colleagues. She continued the "play" with students, asking them to try exaggerating one of their versions even more extremely. After much of this type of guided improvisation and moving of shapes, she asked students to consider everything they had tried, and make some final choices that were particularly interesting or satisfying to them; this time they glued their pieces down on a white sheet of paper. She asked that they arrange all the individual parts to compose one whole piece. Then, she asked the students to cut away as much of the white paper as they could, so that what remained was a group of shapes with as little white background as possible. The last step was for students to add any details they'd like with craypas (an oil based crayon), or to

simply explore adding more color to their piece.

When they finished, the students hung their work in an improvised classroom gallery, and the TA led them through a thorough looking process where they noticed and interpreted what they had created. These activities were created specifically to prepare students for the works under study at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA): four paintings by abstract American artist, Elizabeth Murray. The following paintings were carefully selected by the TA and professor from a retrospective of Murray's work: *More Than You Know (1983), Can You Hear Me? (1984), Euclid (1989)* and *Do the Dance (2005).* The Line of Inquiry, created by the TA and professor was

> *How does Elizabeth Murray take apart and put together chairs, tables and the human figure in these four paintings, in order to make meaning?*

It is important to note that the art-making part of the workshop itself was structured as an inquiry—a process of active exploration and discovery. While it is evident that the Line of Inquiry led a very specific set of activities (students were working with chairs, tables and something human, and were putting them together and taking them apart in different ways), it is also evident that there were plenty of artistic choices to be made: what kind of table, what kind of chair, what kind of human element, after a series of multiple explorations—a final decision about how to put them together (or take them apart), and finally, how to add color. There were no prescriptions about how to accomplish any of these activities, but the TA had certainly designed a specific set of aesthetic problems to explore. Though this workshop in no way mimics any exact process that Elizabeth Murray used (she was a painter, for example), it deals with the *kinds* of aesthetic choices she made in her work—choices around shape and arrangement

and color. It allows students to explore principles of abstraction starting with familiar elements. Again, this is not a standardized activity that the TA would use for any work of art, or even a kind of recipe for studying Elizabeth Murray. This pathway of inquiry was created specifically in order to encounter the four paintings selected from the show at MoMA.

In an interview, this teaching artist talked about a Line of Inquiry as the big, important ideas in the work itself put into the form of a question " . . . to be authentic to our inquiry based study. So that question is sort of a question that we are asking of the works of art and the artist who made them." It is also the question that will lead the TA in the elements that students will investigate as part of their preparation to encounter the artist's world. Because it is a question, the TA genuinely commits to exploring an idea, rather than executing an aim. Often advocated in schools of education, a lesson aim such as, "Students will learn how to use parts of tables, chairs, and humans in various compositional arrangements, incorporating color and collage techniques" will lead a *very* different classroom experience than the Line of Inquiry this TA and professor have designed, which is concerned, quite explicitly, with "making meaning." While some of the same visual arts skills may be involved in both of these lessons, (the hypothetical one led by an aim, and the actual one led by this Line of Inquiry) the aesthetic education workshop exists in order to explore the larger questions of what it *means* to use those artistic skills. The other lesson states only a concern that students show proficiency in what those skills are and how to go about utilizing them. In short, one is an inquiry into meaning, and the other is a demonstration of skill.

Throughout *Art as Experience,* Dewey constantly frames the artistic experience as one of genuine discovery and inquiry:

> One of the essential traits of the artist is that he is born an experimenter. Without this trait he becomes a poor or a good academician. The artist is compelled to be an experimenter because he has to express an intensely individualized experience through means and materials that belong to the common and public work. This problem cannot be solved once and for all. It is met in every new work undertaken (1934, p. 144).

Dewey also recognized that an academic result may come from an artist, or be produced by a perceiver, as well, when an end product is put ahead of the discovery process. He says, "A rigid predetermination of an end-product whether by artist or beholder leads to the turning out of a mechanical or academic product" (p. 138). A teaching artist must keep the balloon of an inquiry process afloat throughout all student experiences in the aesthetic education process, lest it quickly fall into the gravitational pull of predetermined products. Just as in the balloon game, much effort is exerted.

A week after their workshop experience, the students gathered with the TA and professor at MoMA for class. Following are my notes from their museum visit.

> *As the TA gathered the students in the foyer of the museum, she asked them to refresh their memories of the "big ideas" they had been working with in class. "What stuck with you?" she asked. One student immediately offered, "that we created something where they all turned out differently." The TA affirmed this response and asked about the "ideas" they had been working with. Another student said, "chairs, table, people." Other students added in,"We piled them; we exploded them; we were exaggerating an idea." The TA then said, "Great! Let's look for those ideas in the museum and see if they are alive with us."*
>
> *She led the students mid-way into a special exhibit of Elizabeth Murray's work and explained that they were not going to be starting at the beginning, but going*

> *directly to a certain piece. She also asked them to wait and pick up the brochure about Murray at the end. This was the first time students had heard Elizabeth Murray's name spoken. The professor mentioned that this artist had work actually installed on the college's campus, and that the students might want to check it out when they got back.*

It is worth highlighting here how very different this beginning is from most guided museum visits, where a docent may give some information about the works and the artist about to be viewed. Here, the TA is asking students to consciously hold off on finding out that kind of contextual information about the works. Instead, she wants them to bring to mind their classroom experiences and carry those ideas and memories with them into the gallery. She is setting up an investigation where students first and foremost bring their own experiences.

> *The TA seated the students in front of a very large work. She asked them first to just look—to let their eyes take it in, "because," she said, " I'm going to ask you some questions about what you see, what you can describe, and what sort of meaning you make." She paused while students looked in silence for what seemed like a very long time. She then said, "What's the first thing you notice?" A student offered, "A chair. A red chair." Another student—"a table—kind of what you asked us to do. Now I see what you wanted us to do." The TA said, "Do you think I had something in mind for you to make, now that you see this?" Several students said, emphatically, "yes!" She said, "I didn't. But I tried to set up a problem for you that was like what Elizabeth Murray was working on. I really didn't know what YOU would make".*

This is an interesting moment of discovery where the students have recognized that the TA has designed something particular for them. They are expressing a "that's like what we did," recognition when they see Murray's work. However, one student seems to think the TA "wanted her to do" something specific. That is often what teachers are trying to get students to do, after all. But the TA resists. She assures the students she had no intended outcome in mind as to what they would make. Her purpose was simply

to explore the possibilities. The student is recognizing the specific pathway that the Line of Inquiry has created for them into this painting. But the TA is clear in indicating that their art pieces were in no way predetermined. The pathway has been carefully mapped by the TA, but what the students discover as they make their own way along the path is unpredictable and unplanned. Now the rigorous work of careful attending and making meaning at the museum continues.

> *Another student said, "Is that a canvas on top?" The TA says, "Do you mean this?" (She pointed.) Yes! It is. How many canvas sections do you see?" The students counted together and came up with different numbers. They discussed this among themselves until they finally came to agreement on one number. The TA allowed this to happen without interruption. Then she continued, "Great. Now how are they arranged?" A student referred back to the class work they had done together to describe what she saw, and when the TA asked for more description of what Murray had done, it elicited more details, such as "overlapped" and "I feel like maybe she stacked blank canvases and THEN painted on them." The TA asked, "What do you see that makes you say that?" The student gave a long analysis. The TA summarized the student's analysis for the whole group and even added a note or two. Then, she continued with, "What else do you notice?" Another student brought up the idea of exaggerated elements and more discussion followed. Many students were, by now, entering the conversation. "What else?" the TA continued. I felt her keeping the conversation moving and checking in with which students needed extra encouragement to be engaged. Sometimes she called on students who were raising their hands, and other times she called out a student's name, trying to draw him/her in. The conversation turned to color and then to an issue that did not get resolved. Students had differing opinions as to whether the elements in the painting were exploding out or coming together. The TA simply allowed the different opinions to emerge and noted that there was ambiguity about this issue.*

In this group conversation, the TA uses questions to keep the flow moving between describing what is evident in the painting (*What do you notice? What else do you notice? What do you see that makes you say that? How many canvas sections do you see?*) and analyzing what is seen and how the various parts seem to be relating to each other (*How are the canvas sections arranged? Do elements in the painting seem to be exploding*

*out?*). Now the TA is ready to move the students towards interpreting what they have observed.

> *The TA said, "You've told me we have a table, a chair, a room—what else about it?" A student said, "Somehow the table is bigger than the room." TA—"What does that make you think?" Same student—"That it has something to do with importance." Then this same student picked out an element and gave a complicated interpretation for what it might be. The TA asked if there were other interpretations about what that "thing" might be. Other students offered, "an arm, a napkin, a knee, a ticket, a band-aid." "Interesting," said the TA. She then asked other students who were viewing from different angles if they had different interpretations.*

The teaching artist is consciously making space for the multiple interpretations in the room to come forward. She knows that it is essential to hear many of them and does not allow just one interpretation to define the painting. Rather, there is a conscious searching for diverse views. She is also suggesting, by the order in which she has led the viewing, that it is important to have these interpretations emerge from careful description and analysis, from careful attending to the work.

> *Then, the TA guided the students to notice a new area of the painting. Someone pointed out a "green thing" there. She asked,"What could that green thing be?" She received many responses, including, "a shoe, a steak, a chicken leg." "Okay," she laughed, "but the way you see it is very important, because it will really affect the way you finally make something out of this painting."*

Here, the TA gently raises the stakes about what it is that they are doing. As the students catch on to the idea of "multiple" interpretations, they then begin to become glib about suggesting them. Some of the statements from the students seem to me to be a sort of humorous, "We see what you want us to do," declaration. But the TA, with equal good humor, responds by indicating that what they are doing is fundamentally important. "If you say you see a chicken leg, this will definitely affect what you ultimately understand

from the painting," the TA tells the students. Gradually, they are beginning to realize that she has not predetermined what she wants them to see or understand or feel, and that she is sincerely interested in their genuine responses.

> *Another student then referred to particular lines that she felt showed motion. The TA spoke for a moment about how cartoons have such lines that often show movement. Then she asked the students to look around the gallery to the other works of Elizabeth Murray that were hanging. She asked students to take a moment to see if they noticed other references to cartoons. They didn't speak about this—just took in the other work visually.*

Observing the other images Murray has made is a way of absorbing contextual information. In this case, the TA has made the choice not to discuss the information, but rather, to take it in as purely visual experience. It helps place the four paintings these students are studying in the larger context of Murray's career.

> *Then another student spoke about the quality those lines evoked for her. The TA asked if others were interpreting a quality or an emotional feel from the lines. She received a variety of responses: "uneasy, fun, loose, devastation, eerie." Each time, she asked people to talk about why they felt that way. She was often repeating what they said and then asking them to dig deeper, to probe what it was that was beginning to give them an emotional sense of the painting. Another student said, "It is scream-like," and she put her hands to her face. The TA did the same gesture and added language to the student's reference, "Yes, it might remind us of that Edvard Munch painting called 'The Scream'" Other students shared this association once it was made. Finally, the TA said, "Okay, what does this painting mean for you. If art is meant to say something to us, what is Elizabeth Murray saying?"*

Here the TA has made the move towards asking a completely interpretive question, but she has consciously done so only after there has been a long, satisfying experience of noticing and attending to the piece itself.

> *The first student talked about a family—things that have happened around a table. She referred to different elements in the painting as she spoke. Then she said that it was breaking apart. Another student said, "Interesting, because for me it's cozy." She described why. A third student said, "But now I am beginning*

> *to think that this has as much to do with what is going on with us as it does with what Elizabeth Murray is trying to say. It's like a back and forth conversation," she said. The professor joined the conversation here and added, "This tension and dynamic is very real for early childhood teachers—this idea of intention. So often we are trying to ascribe intentions to young children, and we just can't always know. We must approach with humility." The TA remarked that this was a very interesting thing the professor had just done—apply the kind of interpreting we were doing with the painting to what happens with young children. The TA commented that just as both the student noticed and the professor did, we are always bringing our own lives to the looking.*

The student, herself, is able to articulate one of the important hallmarks of aesthetic education, that is it vital to bring one's own life and experience to bear upon interpreting a work of art, to "lend the work your life," as Greene might say. Equally important, however, is the way in which the TA has invited students to do this without losing a rigorous attention to the work itself.

> *After over twenty minutes, the group was finally ready to move on to the second painting. The TA again seated students comfortably and said, "I'm going to tell you the title of this painting and I never do that before we have begun looking! It's called 'Can You Hear Me?'" Immediately the students expressed surprise at hearing the title. "What shocks you about that?" asked the TA. Students told the TA that there is a children's book by the same title that they had recently been discussing amongst themselves. The TA continued, "Well, what do you see here? How is this work the same or different from the other painting we just looked at?" The students offered responses that included some of the following ideas: "The shapes are different. She uses overlap again though—that's the same. The colors and the 'vibe' seem different in this one." Students also analyzed how Murray must have put the pieces together. TA—"What else?" One student said that again, it seemed "cartoony." She also believed she saw a face and made an interpretation based on this face. TA—"What else?" Another student said that though the pieces were fragmented, there still seemed to be a flow. TA—"What creates the flow?" The student went on to analyze the work, and then the TA summarized the student's analysis and added her own observations.*

Several points are worth noticing about the flow of this conversation. Often, when visual arts TAs begin guiding the noticing at the museum, they purposefully cover up wall text or title information. It is usually reserved for later use, the priority being to allow students

the space for their own looking and perceiving first. But here the TA is intentionally disrupting that pattern and demonstrating that knowing a piece of information doesn't always stand in the way of careful looking. Students do have a moment of both surprise and connection with the title, but the TA is able to move the experience into the world of noticing right away. There is no methodology at play here, no hard and fast rules about when or when not to say the title, or about when to offer contextual information into an experience. There is no absolute right or wrong place or way to do it. But there *is* a philosophical emphasis on a transaction between perceiver and work. Every choice the teaching artist makes around how to facilitate this aesthetic transaction is based on what she or he deems as making that transaction more meaningful. In other words, if knowing something about the context of the work will fit into the experience in a way that nurtures understanding of a person or classes' connection to the work, then it's appropriate and welcome. If a piece of context runs the risk of blocking or overshadowing a student's own experience first, then the teaching artist will usually err on the side of avoiding that situation. Dewey understood this and even wrote specifically about the idea of titles of paintings. He wrote about the fallacy of thinking that a title tells us how to perceive the work, or even helps in any significant way (1934). Often, though not always, a title relates generally to theme or subject matter, but this is never a substitute for the actual work, Dewey cautions. Dewey includes an anecdote about a woman who complained to Matisse that she had never seen a woman who looked like the one he painted. "Madam, that is not a woman; that is a picture," was Matisse's reply (1934, p. 113). A painting is not a literal woman, nor is a title a description of the work. A theme, title, label, or

statement of subject doesn't substitute for careful noticing and experiencing. Sometimes, it is even possible that knowing the title will block a person's own discovery of what it is they see. Other times, as this TA has shown, the title can simply be taken into consideration as one of many pieces of information that are being ordered as part of making sense of the work.

The aesthetic education approach at LCI is also a conscious interruption of a formula so often used by museums, concert halls and other performance venues: read or hear information beforehand so you know how to look at or listen to the piece. In aesthetic education, an arts exploration is experienced first (which often, but not always includes some context in an experiential way) and then participants are constantly empowered to come to the artwork with that workshop art experience they have had together, as well as with personal connections from their own lives. More contextual information may enter during and after the experience of the work of art, but throughout the process, aesthetic education empowers individuals to be in charge of their own inquiry and meaning making.

> *Now the TA purposely called on several students who seemed not to be paying attention. One of these students picked out a color to talk about and said it was like an "echo." "Oh, nice," the TA affirmed. She managed to gently pull this student into the conversation. Then more students picked up on the "echo" idea and the conversation traveled from color to how Elizabeth Murray seemed to have created a sense of movement. The two formerly disengaged students were now actively leading the conversation. After the analysis had continued for some time, the TA asked the students, "What IS this painting for you?" The students had many ideas, and they often referred to the title. The TA pointed out how they were using the title to make meaning. Ideas of tubes, body parts and musical instruments came up. One student, who suggested the idea of an instrument, actually made a sound as she described what she saw. The TA asked her to repeat this sound so that it could be experienced by the entire class. The students continued to build on each other's interpretations with genuine enthusiasm. It*

> *seemed to me that some of the cliques I had noticed sitting together were now freely interacting with each other's ideas. Something had happened here to break down the usual classroom dynamic. The students were caught up in the painting and their interpretations. More ideas kept coming—"It's a little kid lost in a crowd; it's a face screaming out; it's a ring." After each offering, the TA probed the students for what they actually saw in the painting that gave them their interpretative ideas. As they pointed out what they saw, others were able to see these things as well. It was a completely collective experience.*

Like a true process of inquiry, this conversation looped and circled and traced a lively pathway through the various observations and interpretive comments. The collective experience actually escalated the excitement; it took on its own life. All the while the TA is guiding this process primarily by using questions. Occasionally, she participates, offering something she notices, or paraphrasing a student idea so that all the class can hear. At this painting, she is also loosening the order in which modes of attending occur. Whereas at the first painting she used questions to consciously guide from noticing to analyzing to interpreting, here, she continues to use questions to allow the conversation to move back and forth among these categories at different times.

> *The group moved on to painting number three. The TA said, "Take a look at this on your own and see if you can figure out what's happening." After allowing time, she called on a student and said, "I'm going to start with you because you've been noticing shapes all night. What's going on with the shapes here?" This student talked in depth about the shapes and how they were put together, and followed this description with a complex interpretation of what that might mean. Now the TA did not need to call on people at all. Everyone seemed genuinely engaged and ready to jump in. Several more interpretations followed, and without prompting from the TA, these were carefully backed up by what the students actually saw in the painting. The TA verbally expressed surprise and interest in students' comments. She sometimes asked further questions, probing their responses, and she kept the flow going with a peppering of "What else?" throughout. But mostly she stayed out of the way. Several times, a comment seemed confusing. When this occurred, the TA would restate and clarify, and then ask the student,"Is that right? Is that what you were reading?" In one case, the student agreed, and in another, it forced the student to say what she meant in a more clear way. Another student offered the interpretation that the painting was*

> *about two people who can't come together, "Maybe it's a scene of divorce—or of children who can't work together." The TA asked her, "Where's the evidence in the work for this interpretation?" The student found it and elaborated on her description.*

The students have begun to take responsibility for their own interpretations, grounding them thoroughly in what is actually present in the work. When this is happening of its own accord, the TA steps back. When she feels a student needs guidance, she enters gently with a question. From the first painting to the third, the TA has handed over the reins of the conversation to the students.

> *The TA said, "Let's think back to the original painting—with tables and chairs? Does that have any bearing here?" Several students offered ideas that incorporated tables and families, but then a long span of lengthy, complex, psychological interpretations followed. The idea of movement in the painting still seemed to be hot—how the energy of the work seemed to move. The TA helped the students zoom in on this idea and find visual evidence in the painting that was creating the sense of movement. The TA then said, "I'm wondering if this in any way could be a table?" No one really picked up that theme, and she never returned to it. But as another student spoke about how she felt a very negative energy, and offered an interpretation that included smoking and umbilical cords, others visitors in the museum had gathered on the outskirts of the group. They were fascinated by the students' conversation and lingered far longer than at the other works.*

The moment when the TA asked if a part of the painting could possibly be seen as a table struck me as the first time she may have been offering one of her own interpretive ideas. However, she did so as a question, rather than as her expert opinion. When no one else seemed interested in taking up that idea, she didn't pursue it. She was not privileging her interpretation, simply offering it to the class conversation.

> *Next, the TA invited the students to have a look around the gallery they were in. She told them they would meet back together at the next work and gave directions to that painting. She said to them, "See what you can pick up about Elizabeth Murray by really careful looking and then bring that back to our conversation." The students mostly clustered in small groups as they looked. As I rotated around,*

> *I noted that they really were all talking about what they saw. One student stood by herself in the middle, looking all around. Another seemed to be checking all the titles. No one had splintered off to have an extraneous conversation or run to the bathroom.*

Although most of this museum visit is carefully planned around looking at four specific pieces, this moment of personal space allows students a chance to be with their own thoughts, if they choose. As well, it provides them with the opportunity to discover more —visually—about Elizabeth Murray's artistry, and the TA has specifically asked them to bring this contextual information to their noticing of the final specific piece.

> *Finally, the group re-gathered at the last painting. The TA said, "We are going to begin by just describing what we see." The students dove in and talked about all the little pieces that seemed to be involved, the colors, the shapes, how the canvas was arranged, and how the pieces were put together. The TA then asked, "Is there anything different about this work than others you have seen?" One student said that she saw a "Keith Haring-type image." The TA said, "Interesting! How else could you describe that?" The student went on to analyze her thought and finally arrived at the idea of layering different kinds of images. The TA summarized these remarks. Another student said that she saw the tracks of a train. Again she commented on the idea of created movement. The conversation continued, while the TA guided through questions. There were many interpretations. Another student said it reminded her of Dr. Seuss. The TA said, "We've heard both Dr. Seuss and Keith Haring referred to here. Is there anything else this reminds you of?" People picked out different elements that reminded them of something. The TA assisted the group in zooming in on and describing these elements. We heard ideas such as: "different roads; something that's breaking apart and I'm not sure why; stomach and intestines; roads; spines; body parts; mazes; figures; faces; dogs." The TA asked the students to weave together some of the references they've noticed from looking at Murray's other work. A student picked out shapes in another painting in the room that were a bit like the ones in this painting, but a bit different too. Other students were looking for similarities. In fact, all the students were really looking—at this painting—and at others in the room. A man had attached himself to our group at the last painting, and was still here, listening to the conversation.*
>
> *The professor asked if anyone was picking up any feelings from the painting. One student said "Happy—from the colors," but another student quickly added,"The shapes are so closed. This seems to be such a complicated mix of emotions." Another student thought it looked like someone getting sick. At this moment, the*

> *TA shared a bit of contextual information about Elizabeth Murray, including her dates and influences. But also, she shared with the group that the artist is someone who has been very ill. "This painting that we are looking at, called 'Do the Dance', is her latest work. You all were saying a lot of things about bodies. How are you thinking about that now that you know this information?" More interpretations followed: about disease, spine, blood and wounds, alcohol or medicine, openings and closings. One student offered, "There is something in this work that says to me that she is having pain, but she's having fun too. There is something that makes it hopeful." The students talked more about messages Elizabeth Murray might have for them, "Live life to the fullest; Do as much as you can." And the TA spoke a bit more about Murray's life. A student asked about intention—about how we know Elizabeth Murray's intention here? The TA said, "Once Murray has put this piece out there in the world, it's our job to make meaning of it." The professor asked the TA why she gave the title first for the earlier piece. "To shake things up a bit," said the TA. The students commented about how knowing the title really changed how they viewed the work. The TA said that this was an important discovery. She also mentioned that, in some ways with some artists (but by no means all artists), a title is the artist presenting the viewer with something to consider. The students also began spontaneously talking about how what had most influenced their own interpretations was hearing other interpretations from their colleagues—about how that had pushed their own thinking.*

Without prompting from the TA or professor, the students have naturally begun to analyze their own learning process in this aesthetic education experience. They notice that any piece of information about the work, such as the title, will definitely impact their experience. They notice how the community was working together to make sense of the work, but how they were having their own individual experiences within the group. Now the TA and professor will direct the conversation where the students have already begun to take it themselves. The professor and TA will ask questions that prompt the students to examine the educational process that has occurred.

> *The TA asked the students to consider how the classroom activities before the museum-visit helped them. "Ideas were planted," said one. Another—"it was like a door was opened to connect us with the paintings—to make meaning with a painting." Another said, "We all got so excited at our first look, because we felt that 'we had done that.'" Another, "It put us in the place of the artist. We were*

> *the artist. I had feelings and thoughts about my table and I'm sure Elizabeth Murray did too." Another,"Doing something abstract myself helped me get into looking at abstract art—working with the idea that you could take something concrete and turn it upside down, inside out, exaggerate it." The TA threaded a bit of conversation among these comments, but mostly let it come from the students. They completely understood that the TA had designed the class for them directly out of Elizabeth Murray's work, and they asked her specific questions about her process. They noticed that she took them through the four works in a careful order, and asked her thinking about that. They understood, in this moment, how much thought and care had gone into the planning process. The professor added that the choice to start with tables and chairs was a specific choice for this group of young educators to be, "because we all have such strong resonance with these items," she said. The TA asked if there were any final questions. One student said, "Do you research the artist? Or interpret the work yourself without knowing anything?" The TA was thoughtful for a moment. She said that, yes, she does both. First, she said, "I just know a lot about Elizabeth Murray from over the years; she lives here in NYC. I also did do some research specifically for this class. But I want to emphasize that research did not necessarily drive the choices that were made for our activity. That comes from really careful looking and observing what is in the works—even from personal connections to that looking. It is supported by contextual information. For instance, I read that Elizabeth Murray wrote about the first painting we looked at, that it was a table she remembers sitting around when her mother was ill." Finally, the TA and professor again reminded the students that Elizabeth Murray had work hanging in their school's library. Many students asked about how to find out more about the artist and TA and professor directed the students to several specific articles about her work. All the students wanted to pick up the museum brochure on their way out.*

Cleary, these students, many of whom were visiting MoMA for the first time, wanted to know more. This is one of the signs that a genuine inquiry has taken place—the learning and discovery are never over, and students are hungry for more information; they are now asking their own questions. The students' analysis of their own learning experience is articulate, filled with nuance, and stands by itself.

In *Learning Together Through Inquiry*, (Short, et al., 1996) a group of teachers who have made a commitment to establish a curriculum based on inquiry, discuss their experiences in carrying-out the back and forth flow of student-teacher ideas and

questions. It resembles very much the kind of conversation these students have had in front of the paintings. And it continues to resemble the way in which the students make sense of their learning experience. No one question ends with one answer or one set of answers, there are only more understandings, more questions, and more possibilities as the experience unfolds.

These students were also very interested in how and when contextual information was introduced to their experience, and to the planning process of the TA. I often found, when I was working on the college level as a teaching artist, that the way context was introduced—both how and when—was very significant for students. It often went against the patterns of what they were learning in their other education classes. It stirred up questions, as it did with these students, about when to provide information to students and how to let that feed into their engagement, discovery, and understanding in exciting ways. Once again, this move to analyze their own learning process is something that happens in a more directed way with adult learners, than with younger students.

### *LCI and MoMA*

It would be remiss not to take up the ways in which the visual arts study at LCI in particular, and aesthetic education practice in general, has been influenced throughout the years by affiliations with various museums and museum educators. Most specifically, a collaboration with the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in the 1990s helped to shape LCI teaching artist practice. The visual artist whose work is observed in this study is a wonderful resource, as she is one of the original LCI TAs who has been with the Institute through much of its history. When we spoke in an interview after the site visits, she

described the affiliation between MoMA and LCI in the 1990s when Philip Yenawine was running the MoMA education department. During this time, the artists who worked at MoMA were using the Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS), developed by Yenawine and developmental psychologist, Abigail Housen, and still popular today with many educators (Visual Understanding in Education, n.d.). VTS is an elementary school curriculum for students studying visual works of art, and has a very structured questioning strategy that encourages students to make interpretations and observations with the works. However, the questioning itself, while valuable, can be slightly formulaic. That is, educators are often urged to start with the question, "What's going on in this picture?" and they are provided with lists of possible follow-up questions. While the guided noticing used by LCI teaching artists has much more variation in both the kinds of questions used, and how and when questions are employed in the process of viewing a work, it should be noted that the VTS process was very influential in the development of LCI visual arts TAs. The careful attention at MoMA on types of questions that elicited description, types that brought forth analysis, and types of questions that led to interpretation were deeply considered. This was a powerful influence on LCI's thinking. The visual arts TA remembers that during the collaborative years between MoMA and LCI, LCI was not yet using the concept of a Line of Inquiry (this was developed later), but, as she says, "We were operating under Maxine's 'what if' philosophy. What if you have four dots—how many ways can you imagine to put this together? This was like a marriage of like-mindedness that was going on between LCI and MoMA" (interview, 2005). In fact, there was a span of several years in the 1990s,

when an exclusive relationship existed between the two organizations. That is, one had to be a TA at MoMA in order to work for LCI. The visual arts TAs shared their strategies and experiences with the teaching artists in all disciplines at LCI. I remember distinctly, in my teaching artist days during the 1990s, how much I learned from the visual arts TAs and the way they used questions to lead discussions around viewing works in the museum.

There were also differences of opinion, however, between LCI and MoMA. The visual arts TA remembers that, "Philip [Yenawine] and others at MoMA didn't really believe in the art-making activities before the museum visit. They just didn't. And there was no contextual information. It was extremely object-oriented (interview, 2005)." After some time, the exclusive relationship between MoMA and LCI was dissolved, largely but not exclusively over some of these fundamental differences. The visual arts TAs then worked specifically for LCI and the Institute has since established friendly relationships with several museums in the city (including the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Guggenheim) who allow use of their collections. Now, visual arts TAs may only use the collections at MoMA and the Whitney if they maintain their own independent relationships with these museums, which this particular TA has done. When I asked her how the work at MoMA has influenced her, she said:

> It really developed a depth between me and the art object. I learned a tremendous amount, through the eyes of others. I learned how much can be learned by looking, by pure observation. It is through asking genuine questions about what people see, hearing them tell me what they see—this is what establishes the relationship with the work of art, and it always deepens my own. That is one of the most exciting things about my job. It may be that I work with the same objects when I am at MoMA, but the conversations are always different. I was just teaching again to "Eye and

> the Village," [for MoMA, not for LCI] and I had a totally new conversation with the participants there. What people bring out and are struck with is constantly changing. These were people who were from a different place and so the things they said were very different. This work reinforces so many things that I truly believe in—like how multiple perspectives make the experience of the work of art so much fuller and richer. I feel like as the instructor, I'm the biggest recipient of what the work has to offer, because I'm constantly standing in other people's shoes (interview, 2005).

To probe the connection between MoMA's and LCI's thinking a bit further, it is useful to turn to Yenawine's book *How to Look at Modern Art* (1991). The first observation to be made, as the title suggests, is that Yenawine's approach was designed particularly for modern art—not for all visual art. Never-the-less, he clearly adheres to the scrutiny view that art objects themselves contain all one needs to know to experience them. As he says, "This book will concentrate on 'directed looking'—seeing what can be learned from examining works of art rather than from acquiring background information . . . this is the time for looking, for thinking, and for trying to make sense out of our world by seeking insight directly from art objects . . ." (1991, p. 7). Like Greene, this approach is deeply concerned with the individual's ability to make meaning and have an experience directly with the live work of art. Both approaches privilege the personal encounter, however, the aesthetic education process seems to have much more variety in how it accomplishes this, and much more emphasis on bringing contextual information carefully and thoughtfully into the process. LCI also believes strongly that art making cannot be separated from perception, whereas VTS emphasizes looking and thinking over other processes.

Still it is important to acknowledge the contributions that Yenawine, MoMA, the Visual Thinking Strategies, and the visual arts TAs made to shaping the way all teaching artists at LCI enact their practice. By working these concepts into Greene's ideas and philosophical framework, while at the same time keeping the emphasis on experiential learning and the importance of context, LCI and its teaching artists were able to learn from and adapt some of the questioning strategies and conversation structures that they encountered through the affiliation with MoMA.

### *3rd Grade Aesthetic Education Class in the Visual Arts*

I observed the same visual arts TA at a public elementary school in the Bronx, working with a group of 3rd graders. Here, I was able to use both video and note taking to document. I met the class near the mid-point of an extended semester of study centered on the work of Alexander Calder. In this special project, the TA was to visit the school ten times, and the classroom teachers would also dedicate ten sessions to the unit. The students would visit the Whitney Museum in Manhattan where they would engage the following works of Alexander Calder: *Hanging Spider, Constellation, Aluminum Leaves, Lady's Hat* and the film, *Calder's Circus.* They would also have a final visit and culminating "Art Day" at the Pepsico Sculpture Garden, where a large Calder sculpture is located. Additionally, the TA and teachers had planned a culminating student-made art project, influenced by a musical performance of Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* played by the Orchestra of St. Luke's that the students were scheduled to attend. This extended curriculum of study was an anomaly, custom-created for the school and arising out of the

impulses and desires of the teachers, who, having worked with aesthetic education for many years, realized the power and value of studying works of art in depth.

I visited these 3rd graders the day of their sixth visit with the teaching artist. By this time, the students had also experienced five lessons with their teacher, a visit to the Whitney Museum, and the Vivaldi concert. They had started their final art project, which involved creating figures out of clothespins and found materials and assembling them in a giant scenario. This work was inspired by Calder's *Circus* piece, where he employed similar techniques. It is important to note that the students had experienced art-making workshops with the TA before their visit to the Whitney, and now their studying was continuing with more art-making. In all of the art forms, the performance or museum visit can fall in various places within the duration of aesthetic education study. The only rule is that there is always *at least* one workshop experience before the viewing or hearing of the work. Students engage in a hands-on experiential embodied learning process prior to their encounter with the work of art. That said, there may be many classes before the performance/museum and a few afterwards, or vice versa. In this extended study, the students experienced Calder's work at the museum at the mid-point of their studies.

The students were also working with Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* as a source of inspiration, in that each class had chosen a different season in which to place their figures. While it is unusual that a second work of art is brought to bear upon the study of another work of art, it is often the case that other ongoing learning in the classroom in various curricular subjects is tapped and connected to the aesthetic education work. It just so happened that this class was connecting their visual arts work to what they were

learning in music. I visited the class that was working on spring. More than a week had passed since their last visit with the TA.

> *She began the class, "I haven't seen you in quite a while, so let's just remember where we left off. We've been studying sculpture together and the work of a certain artist. Who remembers the name of that artist?" Student—"Alexander Calder" TA—"That's exactly right, and we went to a certain museum together. Who remembers the name of that?" Student—"The Whitney Museum." TA—"Fantastic. One of the pieces we saw at the Whitney was made out of little pieces of wire and cork and fabric and things. Do you remember that one?" Student—"The Circus" TA—"Yep, that's the one. So what we're doing here is taking Alexander Calder's way of working and we are merging it with Antonio Vivaldi's "Four Seasons." This class is working on spring and we're already working on our figures. What is our main building material here so far? What did we start with?" Student—"Clothespins." TA—"Fantastic, and we're turning them into people who are dressed for spring! Some of us had ideas about hats, I remember."*

Here we encounter the TA using questions simply to help students remember their experiences so far. This is a very different use of questioning than at the museum; it is basic information gathering. Throughout this 3rd grade class, the TA will use a variety of questions for different purposes.

> *The class quickly moved into a discussion about materials, including glue guns and where they would be plugged in. There were more adults here this day than there usually were for the class. The classroom teacher had not yet been LCI trained (although she always stayed for the project and was soon to be trained at the Institute), so another teacher "adopted" the class and was present for the TA sessions. There was an additional teacher present today, who was the school's LCI coordinator—so, three teachers and the TA. The adults began to hand out all the materials and as this happened, the TA did a short demo, noticing that most students were finishing up the bodies of their figures. Picking up a stick, the TA said, "Now what if we wanted to turn these sticks into arms? What could we do? Who has an idea? What could you imagine? In fact, what if you wanted to make a bent arm?" Student—"You would have to break it." TA—"Okay, you could break it or cut it and then glue it back together so it looked bent. I just happen to have a pair of scissors here, so let's try it." She did a quick demonstration. And then said, "So, even though these sticks are straight, you can make them do anything you want them to!"*

Questions in this part of the lesson help spark new ideas for students and give art-making possibilities. One TA question leads to a mini-experiment that the student directs with his response.

> *"Now let's see what we are going to do for glue. We've got three kinds—Elmer's glue sticks, and then these glue guns. Let's just make one rule about the glue guns. Teachers are going to run them, and let's go up only one at a time to use them."*

It becomes clear, in this complicated art-making project that a discovery process doesn't mean there are no parameters, especially where safety is concerned.

> *Then one of the teachers chimed in, listing all the new materials that were available for use (the kids had been bringing some in from home, and the teachers had been collecting too). The teacher said, "We also have bottle caps if you want to help your figure stand up." TA—"Why would that work? Why would a bottle cap help your figure stand up?" Student—"Because it's flat." A discussion followed about how to use a cap as a base, and how to glue things. Finally, the TA added, "Many of you are finishing your first figure and maybe even starting a second one today."*

Again, questions are being used to inspire the art-making process and uncover possibilities.

> *Now the children were starting to work independently. The TA and one of the teachers circulated amongst the students. Some kids were making animals—a tiger, for example, and the TA said, "Oh yes, I remember that some of us are taking our figures to the zoo. Now I don't know about you, but when I go, there are special things I like to eat there, like ice cream, maybe a hot dog (actually that's really not true about me, but I could imagine it). Maybe I even take a camera around my neck?" She seemed to me to be trying to playfully give students suggestions for interesting details to add.*
>
> *The students were working very intently on the details of their figures. As the TA circulated through the class, she was noticing, asking questions, and sometimes solving materials requests. I could hear some of her comments to the students:*
> *"I'm noticing how you've used pink here!"*
> *"You might want to try the glue gun for that instead of the Elmer's."*

*There was a hub-bub of conversation in the room as the children worked. It was very social. The circulating teacher had more of a tendency to "tell" kids what to do, but the TA balanced this with playful banter that let students know that they were in charge of making the choices. At one moment, she got the attention of the whole class, "I love the way we're using lids! Great. I'm just wondering if we can think of lots of imaginative ways to use the lids. What else could lids be besides a base?" Here, she had noticed a bit of a rut the students were getting into, and she gently tried to stir up the students' thinking around possibilities for their own choice making. TA—"Can I just remind everyone that these markers are permanent, so be careful with your clothes and desks."*

*At another moment, the TA sat down next to a little boy working intently by himself. She watched for a moment, and said, "Now you've discovered a great thing here, that it works better to pull this tight before you cut it." He took in her words. She moved to another table, and said things such as, "Nice work." "I love this idea." "Green hair—what a surprise!" Sometimes she sat down with the students and sometimes she kept moving. The teacher did the same at other tables. There was a lot of affirmation of good ideas, and the students were getting plenty of individual attention from the adults and from each other. When I looked over at the boy with the cutting discovery, he was now showing other kids how to do it: "This is easy to cut—look, look."*

*Many students were playing with their figures while they created; they developed character voices and moved them around. Everyone was totally comfortable with the noise level because all the students were obviously engrossed in the project. It was quite loud.*

*At this point, the TA pulled the teacher over and conferenced with her for a moment as to how much time they had left. She said, "You know, I'd like to just dedicate some time for the students to play with their figures. How about if we give five minutes to finish up with materials?" The teacher agreed and the students received a five-minute signal. This seemed to me a quite brilliant, spontaneous idea— to incorporate play as an important part of the artistic process, to highlight it. Even as clean-up started, the TA was still asking questions of the students. TA— "What do we have here? Tell me about this?" "Who is this person? She's got a fabulous turban; is she an opera singer?" (The TA laughs.) She showed obvious delight in all the work going on, both verbally and with her facial expressions. The kids were reluctant to stop working, but the TA and teachers worked together to get the students settled with their figures on their desks.*

*The TA then said, "Who remembers that Alexander Calder movie we saw at the museum?" Tons of hands went up in the air. Student—"I do: 'The Circus'." TA—"Okay! It has all these little moving parts, remember? What was Calder*

> *doing in that movie? I mean, how did we know that the lion tamer shot the lion?" Student—"We heard the noise of shooting." TA—"And then what happened to the lion?" Student—"It fell over." TA—"Okay, so Alexander Calder was kind of playing with all the parts like action figures. And now I'm wondering about playing with the figures you are making. What would your figure say, for example? What might it do? Who, at your table, would your figure like to get to know? And where might your figure go, all dressed up!? I see pocket books and coats and hats. Where are they going? So, okay, let your figure have a voice and see what happens at your table!"*

As the lesson unfolds, questions continue to be used to prompt imaginative thinking and possibility. As well as circulating and asking questions, the TA is also engaged in careful noticing about what she sees the children doing. Each time she notices something about their process, it validates their efforts and allows other children at the table to notice as well. She also refers freely to the Calder work and invites the students to do so. When we spoke in the post-class interview, she said:

> It [learning] is really about forward, back, forward, back. I'm always looking ahead when we're making and when we're at the WOA I'm looking back at what we did. It's a lot of moving back and forth. And I guess that's one of the real functions of reflective practice; it's in linking the ideas, not in doing the ideas. So it's fine if you've put some clothes on a clothespin and call it a winter guy—it's putting that together with Calder and Vivaldi—that's where the learning happens. It's the putting together of those ideas and other experiences in the world, perhaps something you have seen in the world and want to bring into the work. It's like dropping a pebble in the pond and watching concentric circles come out from it (interview, 2005).

What makes this 3rd grade class an aesthetic education class, rather than a typical art class, is the way in which the TA moves the children back and forth between noticing their own artistic endeavors and recalling Calder's—thereby facilitating an inquiry into both processes; the space for discovery has been opened, both in

what the children can come to understand about themselves, an artistic process, and the work of Alexander Calder.

> *The kids seemed to love this play; the room was filled with character voices and activity. The TA and teacher just watched as the play went on for about five minutes. Finally, the TA got the attention of the whole group and she went to each table. "I'm just curious," she said, "about what was going on at your table over here?" Student—"We were meeting each other and asking each other questions." TA—"Oh really, like what kind of questions?" Student—"How are you doing? Where do you live?" Another student said, "We talked about hair." TA—"Well look at your wonderful hair (she indicated the figure)—that makes sense to me!" She circulated, "What about this group, what kind of a conversation were you having?" Student—"We were going shopping." At another table with many boys, she said, "Now it looked to me like there was some fighting going on over here?" (There is no judgment at all in her voice. It is a sincere question.) Student—"Well actually we were practicing, because we are going to have to save the world." TA—"Wonderful! Life savers!" At the last table she said, "What was going on at this table? I see animals!" Instead of answering her, the kids spontaneously went into their play to show her. The TA said, "Uh oh, I see, snake on the loose! Lion on the loose! They're chasing people. Hey, if we're really at the zoo we might have to make some cages!" The kids laughed. This was the end of the day and the bell rang. The children continued to play with the figures until they were collected by the adults and packed away safely. The TA said a quick good bye to students and conferenced quickly with the teachers about what would happen at the next teacher-led lesson before they would see her again.*

Again, a central idea here is that the class doesn't just end with "put away your glue guns." It is always important to have time for reflection and probing of what was happening. Noticing is a way of learning from each other, and sharing imaginative ideas. This is what marks the lesson as aesthetic education. The play and the noticing of the play is important because it has everything to do with Calder's process in *Circus,* and everything to do with the children making meaning out of their artistic efforts. Both the TA and students were clearly delighted at what was being discovered. The joy of these young children was palpable in their speaking, in their faces, and in the passion with

which they engaged in the activities. It reminds me of one of the responses to the TA survey I received via e-mail. A teaching artist wrote:

> In my own words, the LCI type of teaching does so very many things, it lets the students explore the art creator's process, and create art themselves—it excites students about the art, the artist, the time period, and the tools of the art, therefore exciting students about their own creativity, and also exciting students about the learning—it lets students find joy in learning.

In the interview with the teaching artist after these site visits, I asked what she thought was different about inquiry in aesthetic education, from inquiry in, for example, history or science. She said, "[in aesthetic education] we are genuinely in search of many possible answers. We are not looking for bottom line answers. We are looking for potentialities. We're not looking to sew things up, we just at a certain point have to move on." Because a discovery process has been set in motion, there is a sense that there is no set "ending point." There are a finite numbers of times the TA will visit the students, but their inquiry continues long afterwards, internally, and together as a class with their teacher.

# Chapter 9: Philosophy and Practice

> My point is that the meaning of the work (for me) emerges from a special kind of transaction between my embodied consciousness, my memories, my feelings and what is being enacted on the stage. The meaning does not inhere in what is on the stage, or in Meredith Monk's [the artist's] intention, or in the work's particular history. It emerges as I allow myself to be in a kind of conversation with the work. It comes into existence in some invisible space between myself and the stage—some event that never happened in the world before. The same can be said about the qualities possessed by the work to which we are attending. The qualities that mark the work—the odd serenity, the strangeness, the wintry atmosphere, the unadorned gestures, the air of innocence, the softness against ice: all these might not exist except in relation to my body and mind (Greene, 2001b, p.112).

## *A Transactional Understanding*

If the essence of the aesthetic experience, as conceived by philosophers such as Greene and Dewey, is that meaning is located within a transactional process between perceiver and work of art, it may also be that enacting or teaching in aesthetic education can only occur in a kind of transaction between philosophy and practice. That is, aesthetic education cannot be practiced without the TA's (or educator's) experience of both; it occurs uniquely in the space between what is usually defined as "practice" and "philosophy." The voice of one of the LCI teaching artists who participated in this study indicates that practice and philosophy are not at all separate, discrete notions for her. Rather, they intertwine inseparably:

> The lines between the philosophy and the practice are sort of permeable . . . so how I describe my practice is how I would start to answer what the philosophy is. The two are so deeply connected. I find myself wanting to describe my practice automatically. It's about bringing people to works of art and in doing so, bringing them to themselves and the world around them. Finding ways to help people deeply engage with works that are going to awaken them—through beauty, through difficulty, through everything a work of art can be. [Being a teaching artist is] walking them through a work of art—knowing that you have the capacity to help guide their experience and help them make meaning out of their

> experience. It's so transactional; it's got so much possibility for opening worlds within and worlds without (interview, 2005).

For many teaching artists, to speak about the practice *is* to speak about the philosophy. They begin with an understanding (whether they have gained this understanding from colleagues in the LCI community or from contact with Greene and her ideas) that their task is to make possible for students a particular kind of experience. From here, they invent and experiment with a practice that endeavors to embody this philosophical view within the study of a specific work of art. During the classes that I observed in this study, TAs were not engaged in a moment-to-moment thought process where they analyzed their teaching in relation to Greene's philosophy. Rather, these experienced artists had internalized Greene's ideas so deeply that both their consciously designed lesson plans as well as their in-the-moment decisions about, for example, what to say or how to ask a question, reflected a deep understanding of how to nurture the possibility for an aesthetic experience.

### *Teaching Artist Voice*

Because TAs are immersed in the act of bringing practice into relationship with philosophy, they are uniquely positioned to speak about what aesthetic education is. This study is offered not as a substitute for actual participation in an aesthetic education workshop or class (for there is no substitute for direct experience), but as one way—in the medium of writing—to create a clear depiction of what goes on in classrooms engaged in aesthetic education. While the lessons vary widely both by art form and in response to particular works of art under study, the TAs whose work was documented in this study were consistently clear, philosophically, when they articulated why they made

particular choices in their practice (teaching artist interviews, 2005). Furthermore, it has been important in this study to analyze the practice of aesthetic education *within* the context of its description—within each chapter—rather than undertaking a separate analysis in a final chapter. Description of classroom practice has been immediately juxtaposed to relevant philosophical points, as well as to self-analysis by TAs who participated in the study, and a more complete analysis by the principal investigator, who was a former TA. Methodologically, positioning analysis in a bricolage or choreographic approach has been crucial to explore the question of philosophy and practice by allowing an authentic transaction between the two (showing important intersections and connections) and by positioning the voices of the TAs in direct juxtaposition to the examples of their practice.

Though the history of arts education as practiced by teaching artists through cultural organizations exists in various specific reports and isolated case studies, and is mentioned in several surveys of arts education (e.g., Davis, 2005; Remer, 2003; Remer, 1996), it is rarely teaching artists who tell these histories and articulate the significance of their own practice. Particularly in urban environments, the efforts of teaching artists and cultural organizations have been significant in the last several decades (Remer, 2003), and these contributions deserve much wider and more careful historical consideration. The field of arts education itself has been plagued throughout its existence with speaking from the margins or the periphery of what is considered mainstream education (Eisner, 1998b). Within this field, TA contributions certainly are in need of more and better historical documentation efforts, and the voices of teaching artists, themselves, need to be

brought to the fore of the field's reflection on its practices. Moreover, the perspectives of LCI teaching artists have never been collected specifically around the topic of philosophy and practice, nor does the history of LCI's approach to maintaining a philosophical stance through its many years of practice exist in a single document. Thus, this study is a contribution to the Institute's ongoing conversation about aesthetic education, as well a contribution to the wider arts education field as a study that highlights the voice of the teaching artist.

### *LCI as a Community of Practice*

When twenty-two LCI TAs responded to an anonymous survey asking how they learned about aesthetic education philosophy, nearly all cited both reading Maxine Greene's work and listening to her lectures every summer at the Institute as integral to their understanding. One TA in this study also spoke passionately about understanding aesthetic education philosophy through the personal experience of knowing Greene. She said,

> Like nobody else at the Institute, Dr. Greene has so much trust in what an artist is, who an artist is, what an artist can be—there's a certain brand of genius on basing a life on invention and creative ideas and I don't know many people who truly feel that. That's really what she stands for. [When I] invent things, make things up for no reasons other than my own personal inquiry—she sees that as a wealth of ideas. She sees the intricacy and the particularity of that. She's in awe of that. She values it so highly.
>
> *The Courage to Create* (by Raul) is a book I read in my 20s and that is a title I feel is so profound. To be able to stay with your own imagination and your own creative energy and just drive that forward for as long as you live—with all the obstacles of paying the bills, having a family, surviving in NYC—to be able to say, "I'm going to do that somehow," —Maxine gets that; she honors that. There is something that she stands for that makes me feel proud of what it is that I do. That fact that it has value in the world of education is interesting to me; I'm not quite sure, but I know it has a lot to do with learning, to have found that an

> artist—people that are involved in the arts—can teach life-long learning. We can teach that . . . Think of all the writing teachers you know who don't write at all, who don't practice what they teach. That fact that we practice what we teach is profound, because it suggests that we're not done. So then it really *is* about living a life of possibilities and that's what [Dr. Greene] talks about. I know it's in her writing, but it's much more in her actions, and that is what I'm devoted to—they stand for what she believes. She's out there going to the theatre, to the museum, teaching, lecturing, and she knows it's driving her thinking. She is someone who is devoted to her own personal growth and that's truly a small group of people, I think (interview, 2005).

TAs also consistently responded that the most crucial learning about philosophy occurred through experiencing the practice of fellow TAs at workshops held at the Institute. Every year, LCI TAs attend workshops at the Institute as part of their professional development. They cited their most important insights about both practice and philosophy as coming from the peer-to-peer experiences of TA-led workshops. These workshops are often organized and co-planned by institute staff—another instance of meso-micro collaboration. And staff at the Institute are integrally involved in the way in which TAs reflect upon and analyze their experiences after the workshops. However, the power of experiencing philosophy as embedded in practice is the bedrock of the evolving TA understandings of practice and philosophy at the Institute.

In this way, Lincoln Center Institute may be said to be a community of practice, as articulated by Etienne Wenger (Wenger, 1998). Here, Wenger describes such a learning community as a group of people who share a concern or passion for something they do and who learn how to do it better as they interact regularly. This is a social process of learning, stemming from Lave and Wenger's work in situated learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Lincoln Center Institute staff and teaching artists have been collaborating for over thirty years to share ideas, problem-solve, and innovate together

around aesthetic education philosophy and practice, and they have created a shared identity by engaging in this process together. A central part of this community of practice is the actual *experiencing* of practice together, which is inseparable from experiencing aesthetic education philosophy.

However, as the Institute grows, the community of practice expands, and demands on both TAs and staff escalate. The risk is that these demands (of time, of political urgency, of work load, to name a few) may allow the philosophical underpinnings to become more diffuse, or severed from actual practice. With strain already manifesting in meso-micro relations—between staff and TAs—and among the meso (staff) members of the organization (interviews), the challenge for the macro layer, the Institute itself, is to find forums to explore ongoing questions of practice and philosophy, rather than legislate how to move forward. Though admittedly deeply influenced by Dewey, Greene has critiqued his views as a kind of naïve belief in a relentless move forward to progress, as part of the progressive project of his time (personal communication, 2005). As LCI moves forward with its ambitious, progressive long-range plan, it may need to create space for its own reflective considerations of the organization's philosophical roots and how *philosophy* might inform new directions. These forums might honor the unique voices of TAs, educators and staff members, all of whom participate differently in the LCI community of practice.

### *Relevance for the Larger Arts Education Community*

Historically, within the field of arts education itself, there have been varying understandings of the term, "aesthetic education." It is still, most often referred to as a

type of “appreciation” effort that is separate from the art making process—one that implies learning facts or absorbing cultural or historical information about works of art.

For example, Jessica Davis, in her recent survey of American arts education, lists aesthetic education as one of eight “modes” in which the arts enter schools. She acknowledges that the term is often identified with work at LCI, and she notes the relationship between Maxine Greene and the Institute. However, she goes on to say that some educators challenge aesthetic education because they see it “. . . as a way to avoid the “a” word (art) and to slip the arts into education without attending to what makes them special: the hands on experiential opportunities that arts provide” (Davis, 2005, p. 106). She calls it a “more philosophical approach” (2005, p. 106) that is removed from the creative, artistic process. Here, Davis articulates one of the main misunderstandings about aesthetic education practice that I have personally encountered when conversing with other artists or arts educators. When I tell them I work in aesthetic education, often, their initial assumption is that I don't engage in art making activities. They assume that the bulk of my teaching occurs via lecture and discussion, that aesthetic education involves only learning *about* the history or cultural contexts of works, passively learning to look and listen via discussing and philosophizing, without actual experiences in creating art. Because aesthetic education is associated with philosophy, there is an assumption that it is removed from authentic artistic experience.

As this study has illuminated with six examples of aesthetic education classes, the above assumption is completely contrary to the actual practice at LCI. From its inception, LCI has been experientially steeped in the Deweyian idea of making in order to perceive,

and perceiving through active making. For Dewey, artistic creating and aesthetic perceiving are impossible to separate (Dewey, 1934). Both acts are absolutely integral to the artistic and the aesthetic experience. Similarly, in the current practice of LCI TAs, art making experiences are the core around which perceptive skills are built. Greene is clear when she says

> . . . what we try to do through aesthetic education is to move persons to their own creativity . . . people can be helped to create by means of media: young and old flower when given opportunities to inscribe images, to express their feelings in some significant language, to explore musical instruments and the sounds they make available for singing and saying in their own ways. They find new energies, surely, when they discover modes of making patterns with their own bodies in movement. They find new energies, as well in making a design, in solving the problems of form and color, in trying to make present an imagined end. The capacity to create in these ways has much to do with an ardent, aware being in the world, as it does with opening people of many ages to the creative work of those we call artists, who have refined their craft . . . (Greene, 2001b, p. 96).

There are a few recent examples of how the language of "aesthetics" has picked up momentum in the arts education field since LCI began its program. The Discipline-Based Art Education (DBAE) model for visual arts education that came out of The Getty Center in Los Angeles provides a representative first glimpse. Widely popular in the 1980's, the DBAE approach suggested that art education should be balanced among four components: art production, aesthetics, art history, and art criticism. A central DBAE belief was that traditional practices were predominantly weighted towards art production, and that a more balanced approach should be created, including an emphasis on the study of masterworks (Clark, Day & Greer, 1987). Significant, however, is that those four strands are seen as rather separate endeavors.

A much more recent, local and relevant example is the New York City Department of Education *Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in the Arts* (2004). The music curriculum is, for example, repertoire and art work-centric. But the introduction of the document for music and visual arts speaks explicitly to the need and inclusion of "studio" components (making art and music) and "aesthetic education experiences that include learning about the art form in its context and in the world" (2004, p. 1). Notice how the word "aesthetic" has been embraced, as well as the idea of an artwork at the center of study, and yet, aesthetics is still separated from art making and seen as a distinct activity—as learning *about* art rather than learning *through* and *within* actual art processes.

*The exploration of actual Lincoln Center Institute teaching artist practice in this study shows without question that the aesthetic experience cannot, philosophically, be separated from authentic artistic process, nor does this separation exist in classroom practice. Students are always actively involved in an art-making process, which, when guided by teaching artists who base their practice on an understanding of Greene's philosophical perspectives, has the capacity to release an aesthetic experience. The study serves to sophisticate some of the more rigid, over-simplified, and misunderstood definitions of aesthetic education that exist in the field, such as the separation of perception from creation.*

***Relevance for Urban Education***

Finally, the analysis of practice throughout this study has linked Greene's philosophical ideas about agency, participation, community, and empathy to aesthetic education as it is enacted by teaching artists. Like Dewey (1934), Greene believes in the essential agency and participatory nature of the aesthetic experience itself. But having an aesthetic experience requires a teaching practice that embodies these active qualities. Without a practice that has been honed to empower students to bring their own experiences and lived lives to the interpretive realm of a work of art, students might miss the opportunity. Without a practice that nurtures open-mindedness, wide-awakeness, empathy, and suspension of judgment, students might encounter a work of art and not feel free to choose their own interpretation; they might not notice or understand the differing multiple perspectives of their fellow-students; they might not choose their own interpretive stance in relation to a larger community response.

Today, in a culture of waning belief in the American democratic process, our students need more than ever to practice the skills of being able to say what they think and *why* they think, in front of their peers. They need opportunities to create their own personal meanings and interpretations out of rigorous experience, and to hold those personal meanings accountable to a community of similarly engaged individuals. These are some of the most basic skills a democracy could hope to nurture.

The fact that these learning opportunities occur in transactional exchange with works of art allows students to make imaginative leaps into unexpected, uncalculated places—and to enter an exchange with some of the most profound ideas raised by artists throughout the ages. The arts release students to make such leaps as integrated individuals, involving sound, vision, body, mind and multiple languages, without privileging one mode over another. Cities are rich with art and artists who might be creating such significant experiences in our urban schools. Yet, while cultural resources may be plentiful, the endeavor requires teaching artists and educators who realize the possibility—both the delicious challenge and the social urgency—of ideas such as Greene's. It is actually teaching artists and educators who create, explore, and refine a practice that both embodies and nurtures such ideas, that makes Greene's philosophy a tangible possibility for students to experience. It is the enactment, the practice—not the ideas alone—that makes aesthetic education relevant to discussions of social justice, equity and democracy.

Lincoln Center Institute and its teaching artists stand as one case of both an organization and a collection of individuals, who have taken up the challenge of creating a practice centered on a body of philosophical thought. While the Institute may not be precisely replicable, the practice it has nurtured and cultivated, and the voices of its teaching artists have much to share with the wider fields of arts education and urban education. This study marks a beginning

contribution towards understanding what the practice of LCI teaching artists entails, and how it has developed in relationship to philosophical perspectives.

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