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Meistaranám

**The role of art and art making in adolescents’
everyday life:
A case study**



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Abstract

Making art pictures is an effective way for young people to organize experiences and construct ideas about oneself and the world.

This study concerns adolescents' perception of their art and art production in everyday life. In addition it examines narrative identity and how it is constructed, by twenty Icelandic adolescents through the stories they told of their art pictures. Two groups of students aged thirteen to seventeen years old participated in the study, ten students practise art at an art school, the other ten attend art classes in their regular middle school. In January 2002 in-depth interviews were carried out with the students and with two of their teachers. The interviews provided two types of data, general information of the meaning of students' artistic activities and their account of the pictures they had once produced.

The main results of the study reveal that art making is a multi faceted contributor to adolescents' everyday life with the core of its meaning in the creative processes of their artistry. The students emphasize the intrinsic value of drawing and painting which, is not just related to the pleasure they find in both process and product but provides them with self-motivation to develop their artistic skills. They see their acquired knowledge of the socially accepted language of visual art as key to self-assessment and this in turn leads to self-motivation and goal setting, all meaningful features of art production and indeed important aspects in the making of self. Students further see communication potential in their pictorial representation, to uncover and express feelings and / or to have something to say in a picture.

The stories students told regarding their pictures revealed a world of interpretations referring to their present life situation and their explanations support the thinking behind "narrative identity" being that of building a personal story through oral sharing.

The most noticeable gender differences the results show relate to the conventional gender roles of girls being caring and boys being autonomous. Whereas the difference between schools is reflected in stronger and more positive art related self-image for students in the art school and the importance of creating a micro-culture with fellow students.

In the introduction of this work it is stated that the role of art matters in the everyday life of young people. The study has shown this to be true. Just like a work of art contains many meanings so do the youngsters give diverse, but important significance to their art and artistic activities. First and foremost it is a qualitative or inner value, which brings about an understanding of self and the world.

Ágrip

Myndsköpun er áhrifarík leið fyrir ungt fólk til sjálfsþekkingar þar sem hún veitir tækifæri til að koma skipulagi á og gera áþreifanlega eigin reynslu og upplifanir.

Þessu verki er ætlað að varpa ljósi á hlutverk sjónlista og myndsköpunar í daglegu lífi ungra námsmanna, jafnframt því að skoða hvernig frásögn þeirra af eigin myndverkum kann að hafa áhrif á mótun sjálfsmýndar.

Tveir hópar unglinga á aldrinum þrettán til sautján ára tóku þátt í þessari rannsókn. Annars vegar sex stúlkur og fjórir piltar sem hljóta kennslu í myndlist í sínum grunnskóla, hins vegar fimm stúlkur og fimm piltar sem hafa valið að sækja aukalega nám í myndlist á sérstökum námskeiðum fyrir börn og unglinga (í Myndlistaskólanum á Akureyri). Opin einstaklingsviðtöl við nemendur fóru fram í janúar 2002. Nemendur voru beðnir að koma með eigin myndverk í viðtalið, eitt eða fleiri, sem höfðu sérstaka þýðingu í huga þeirra og var seinni hluti hvers viðtals byggður á frásögn þeirra af þessum verkum.

Megin niðurstöður rannsóknarinnar leiða í ljós að myndsköpun er gefandi í daglegu lífi ungmennanna á margan hátt og kjarna merkingar hennar er að finna í hinu listræna sköpunarferli. Nemendur leggja áherslu á gildi innri ánægju listsköpunar sem er ekki einungis að finna í sköpunarferlinu og / eða sköpunarverkinu heldur er þeim jafnframt hvatning til frekari dáða. Þekking á ‘viðurkenndu’ tungumáli myndlistarinnar opnar leiðir til sjálfsmats sem á móti virkar örvandi og leiðir af sér nýjar markmiðsetningar. Allt eru þetta mikilvægir þættir í listsköpun sem og í mótun sjálfsins. Nemendur eru einnig meðvitaðir um samskiptamöguleika þá sem verk þeirra bjóða uppá til dæmis á túlkun eigin tilfinninga og hugmynda eða að koma skilaboðum áleiðis í mynd.

Frásagnir nemenda af eigin myndverkum opnuðu flóðgáttir útskýringa á daglegu lífi þeirra og skýringar þeirra styðja þá skoðun að frásagnarsjálfi (narrative identity) sé í raun að skapa eigin lífssögu gegnum munnlega frásögn.

Sá kynjamunur sem könnunin sýnir tengist hefðbundnum kynímyndum “umhyggjusamra” stúlkna og “sjálfstæðra” (eða athafnasamra) drengja. Stúlkur sýna þó einnig sterka sjálfsmynd og þær túlka mun oftast tilfinningar í myndum sínum en drengir. En mun á nemendum eftir skólum má finna þegar kemur að sjálfsmynd þeirra. Nemendur myndlistaskólans tengja örugga og jákvæða sjálfsmynd sína beint við listathafnir sínar og hafa tamið sér opin huga og sjálfstæð vinnubrögð. Þeir létu einnig í ljós mikilvægi samskipta við aðra nemendur með sama áhugamál, að samsama sig hópnum í svokölluðum smáeiningu (micro culture).

Í inngangi þessa verks er sett fram sú fullyrðing að hlutverk listsköpunar í daglegu lífi ungmenna skiptir máli. Þetta verk sýnir fram á að svo er. Rétt eins og listaverk ber í sér margar merkingar leggja unglingarnir ólíkar en mikilvægar þýðingar í list sína og listathafnir. Fyrst og fremst er um að ræða eigindleg eða innri gæði sem leiða til skilnings á sjálfum sér og veröldinni.

Contents

List of Pictures	3
List of Tables	3
1. Introduction	4
2. Central theoretical concepts	10
Narrative	10
Narrative identity	10
Self	13
Self-understanding	14
Self-identity	15
Summarizing the theoretical focus	15
3. Research tasks: questions and goals	18
4. Methodological approach	20
5. Research design	24
Sample	24
Data collection	24
Procedures	25
Data Analysis	27
Reliability and validity	28
6. Meaning of art making – art as meaning making	31
Creating categories	31
Results: the multiple meanings of art making	34
Summary of the results	50
7. Quantitative perspective	54
Students' placements in the categories	54
Differences between the two schools	56
Gender differences	59
Summary and tentative interpretation of the quantitative perspective	61
8. Interpreting the results	67
Learning in and through art	68

The dynamic act of creating	70
Mirroring the inner person / reflecting myself	72
Picture as a means of delivering messages	73
Making art pictures / constructing identity	75
Being with others that are doing the same ...	77
Narrating through art – visual and verbal tales	79
Uncovering meanings with words	82
Identity – gender reflected through landscape and nature	84
9. Conclusion: the role of art matters	89
The multiple functions of art pictures	89
Narrative identity as constructed by students’ tales of their art – pictures	92
Suggestions for art teachers	94
Recommendations for further research	96
Appendix I:	98
Appendix II:	102
Appendix III:	106
References	107

List of Pictures

Picture 1	Isabel: After her mother's death.....	6
Picture 2	Kate: A picture of love and security.....	9
Picture 3	Steven: Dinosaur in landscape.....	23
Picture 4	Paul: A rooster.....	23
Picture 5	David: Castle of the winds.....	66
Picture 6	Audrey: Strawberries.....	75
Picture 7	Heather: An angel.....	80
Picture 8	Robert: Sunrise, dawning of the day.....	81
Picture 9	Noah: A beautiful summer evening on the island.....	82
Picture 10	Charlie: In memory of Joan Miró.....	83
Picture 11	Paul: Butterfly, life on another planet.....	84
Picture 12	Kevin: Successful project	86
Picture 13	Lisa: Beautiful sunset on a lake in Denmark.....	87

List of Tables

Table 6.1	Categories and sub categories.....	33
Table 6.2	Number of students inhabiting each category.....	55
Table 6.3	Differences between the two schools.....	57
Table 6.4	Gender differences.....	60

1. Introduction

Art is a mode of communication. It is also a way of organizing experiences, making feelings and thoughts visible. With thoughts in their hands art can make adolescents' life experiences tangible and serve as a means in constructing identity. This study examines the role of art and art making in everyday lives of adolescent students. The meanings they attach to the concepts art and visual culture and to the processes and artifacts of their own art production is of primary concern. In addition, the study examines narrative identity, how it might be constructed by the young students describing or telling stories about their art works and through their artistic activities. In order to do this it must be clarified what artistic narration means, to tell stories through art and how this constructs identity.

Narrative identity here means the concept for describing the never-ending process of building a personal story of biographical unity and coherence (Rantala, 1997: 221). Through stories about their pictures the adolescents gain possibilities to open up a world of interpretations, which will reflect their view of life and / or their life world. "The story of a life continues to be refigured by all the truthful or fictive stories a subject tells about himself or herself" (Ricoeur, 1988:246). What happens to students' art productions in its interpretation, how does it change, how does it work? A drawing in which a student presents her view of the world can become a means to narrative identity. Kati Rantala says: "Making art and describing it is an effective way to sustain a coherent, yet continuously revised biographical narrative" (1997:236). Art offers endless opportunities for the imagination, to create new ways of existence in the present or a new look at the future. Art is for young people an especially valuable means of promoting the reflexive project of creating self (see Giddens, 1991).

Making pictures is a way that young people can use to reflect upon themselves and the world they live in. Since I will also use the concept "art making" in this study it seems in order to clarify it's meaning. Art making has been described as the process of responding to observations, ideas, feelings and other experiences by creating works of art with different tools and techniques and applying those to various media in a skillful, thoughtful and imaginative manner (Dobbs 1998). This may be seen as a way

of exploring the world through and from the point of view of visual arts and to express this in visual language. In this study I call the adolescents' pictures art and / or art pictures and their practices of producing them art making, though, the teenagers are "just" young students studying art.

Young people's visual language can mediate their opinions, feelings and ideas. In light of that their artifacts, which are the results of encounters between them and their intentions, can be looked upon as a mode of communication in which the images deliver messages from one person to another. Apart from another person being the viewer the artist him-herself can also be the one responding to her own work (Rantala, 1998:39). This study seeks to find out what matters most to young people in their picture making, what meanings and value they give to it and how they evaluate their own works. It examines the students' relationship to their works, what are the underlying reasons or motives for producing pictures and for their artistic practices. It further examines the dialogue between students, their ideas and the materials they use while constructing a painting or a drawing (the process) and if and for whom their works carry messages.

Art making, both process and product, is a way to organize and concretize experiences and as such can be seen as means of constructing identity (Rantala, 1997:219). In their artistic activities and products the adolescents whether at the art school, at home or in art classes at regular school, can reflect upon their everyday life and view of the world thus gaining a certain method for creating meanings. Isabel a fourteen-year-old girl at the art school likes painting "almost naturalistic landscapes". "The landscape is so very interesting it is always changing, never the same". Half a year after her mother's death she painted a landscape with an empty house and one person in the foreground. "...because I felt so alone, no one with me I had been left all alone. It is good to express feelings like this in a picture... even if I was unhappy with life when I painted this picture I still use pretty colors... did not just make it dark, I knew it was what my mother would have wanted so in this aspect it reflects how I look at life".

We should look at art as a process by which men extract knowledge about reality (Csikszentmihaly 1978:125). In the process of art production and in the product (artifact) knowledge of human experience can be provided that might not be expressible in other forms. Csikszentmihaly also talks about how the tensions and

conflicts people feel about life and death can be symbolically expressed in and experimented with through artistic media. This in turn may clear conflicts that might otherwise paralyze the cognitive processes of a person (Csikszentmihaly 1978:126). Students can identify and share their experiences through art and especially those that might not be easily analyzed by reason and thus express their knowledge of themselves and the world.



Picture 1. The picture Isabel painted after her mothers' death, "when [she] felt so alone". Reproduced with the kind permission of the artist.

During the last three decades of the twentieth century there has been some re-thinking of child development in art and the role of art education. Process approaches regarding drawings as constructions have urged researchers to look upon the field with fresh eyes (Thomas & Silk 1990, cited Lindström, 2000:11). This along with socio-cultural approaches have laid the empirical foundation for the revival of interest in children's artistic growth, claims Lars Lindström (2000:11) both in the Nordic countries and other parts of the world too.

Art education has also moved toward some changes in Iceland, especially with the new national curriculum that came into use in 1999. Shifts in focus have been suggested in art education curricula based on the fact that in information society

students have access to myriad pieces of knowledge and schools should offer students ways to put the pieces together in a meaningful whole. This includes more balance between creation, interpretation and expression on the one hand and perception, analysis (problem solving) and evaluation on the other (National Curriculum 1999). It is difficult to say how much debate on the subject there has been. It has taken place to some extent among elementary school art teachers and teachers of art education. The role of research however is still at a minimum and it may be argued that it needs to be emphasized more decisively.

Inquiry into the meanings children create out of their encounter with art and art production in everyday life does not appear to have been a big part of art educational research. Although qualitative research is certainly concerned with matters of meaning, motive and the quality of experience undergone by those in the situation studied (Eisner, 1998:35). My interest in this research problem was spurred reading about the *Art and Everyday Life* project being conducted in the department of art education at the University of Art and Design, Helsinki and headed by Doctor Marjatta Saarnivaara. The aim of the project is to investigate what lies behind the heroic, i.e. what are the meanings of art in people's everyday life. The objectives are to investigate: (1) presentations of differentiated worlds of meaning, and (2) the meaning of art in the process of identity construction (Sava, 1998:41 in Lindström 1998). As a part of this multidisciplinary research project Kati Rantala (1998, 1997) has studied narrating self-identity through art - adolescents' art in the context of everyday life, which will be referred to later.

Within the field of research on teaching the interview is gradually being recognized as the most important method that researchers use to gather data. This is especially true in attempts to understand teachers' feelings, attitudes and values and how these relate to teacher knowledge and practice (Sigrún Gudmundsdóttir, 1996:293). Since it ought to be equally important to understand students' feelings and perception about the values and meanings they give to learning artistic skills and their visual expression, this study will attempt to do so. It is also expected to shed light on personal motivations and social impact, gender differences when it comes to choices of subject matter, methods or expressions and how the students view themselves through the process of art production.

As stated above students' art making can be an aid in constructing identity. Kati Rantala (1997, 1998) has studied adolescents and how they construct identity via their artistic activity and production. Her implications have been inspiring to build upon, the connectedness of the Finnish adolescents in Rantala's study to the students at the Akureyri School of Visual Art made it tempting to repeat her study. Yet in doing so the voices I am listening to and the pictures I am looking at are bound to particular individuals, times, place and culture. I shall draw upon the students' interpretations of their works as well as my own in order to find meanings of both makers and viewers. The pictures and the students' narratives will be studied from the viewpoints of different analysis, my own experience and the teenagers' social and cultural reality (or context of making and learning to make pictures).

Research in art education has for the most part been concerned with artistic development, curriculum studies and pedagogical teaching theories and methods. Literature on art education that focuses on meaning making processes and construction of identity is relatively scarce. Another Finnish scholar Marjo Räsänen has examined how a work of art can serve as means of understanding and constructing self. Räsänen (1998) shows how interpreting works of art can be used as the objective in understanding and creating self. She taught and researched 16 Finnish students 15 and 16 years of age for twelve weeks. The teaching was based on interpreting a single artwork, Akseli Gallen-Kallela's *The Aino Myth* a well-known Finnish work painted in 1891. The students reflected their understanding of the artwork through their own art making in drawings, performances and self-portraits. Räsänen (1998:310) concludes that connecting oral sharing and written reflection with art making seems to be the most effective way of promoting transfer between art and self. During the research project Räsänen (1998:313) maintains she took on the roles of artist, teacher and researcher, regularly changing chairs and conducting a dialogue between the three. In this way she has given us insight into a new teaching method as well as research method.

Saarnivaara & Varto (2001) state, that art education can be seen both in and as a trap. In the positive sense of being a trap, art education guides the child and young person to their own experience - and out into the world. Such encounter should bring, according to them, belief in that experience can contain negative aspects on the one hand but on the other hand the beautiful, the new, that which is shared and therefore

relationship with other human beings. If however we look at art education as if it were in a trap, Saarnivaara & Varto point out it may be seen as concealing the fact that school actually structures asymmetric adult-child relationship and in a sense maintains an illusion of freedom and self-expression. In order to develop ways in which art education could become means to improve students understanding of themselves and the world we must listen to their voices telling us about the processes that create meaning in their daily lives.

At the core of this research lies this simple statement - the role of art matters in the everyday life of young people as it plays an important part in the forming of self. The focus of the study is to understand the meanings the adolescents attach to this role and how it contributes to the creating of self-identity.



Picture 2. Kate's picture expresses her feelings of "love and security..." Reproduced with the kind permission of the artist.

2. Central theoretical concepts

Narrative

What constitutes a narrative, according to Bruner (1990:43) is its composition of a unique sequence of events, mental states, and happenings, involving human beings as characters or actors. It is the overall pattern of the sequence as a whole – its plot or fabula that gives it meaning. Bruner (1990) maintains that other scholars addressing narrative (as well as he himself) assume that humans have a certain readiness or predisposition to organize experience into a narrative form (Bruner, 1990: 45-46).

The arts of narrative in whatever form, be it song, drama, fiction, or the visual arts have had a marginal status in school. Yet the accounts of our cultural origins, and our most cherished beliefs are in story form, not to mention that we build museums to house and display works of art (Bruner, 1996; Eisner 1997). We also frame our experiences in stories and represent our lives to ourselves, and others in narratives, or as Rantala (1997:221) says, we live our lives in a storied manner. This suggests as Bruner (1996) states that skill in narrative construction and narrative understanding is crucial to constructing our lives and a “place” for ourselves in the possible world we will encounter (Bruner, 1996: 40).

Narrative identity

These assumptions, stated above, raise questions concerning how adolescents construct narrative self-identity through the tales they tell of their own artistic productions. Students can objectify their experiences through the visual / symbolic language of art. In their paintings and drawings they can bring forth their thoughts, perceptions and feelings of actual lived experience and make them available for new discoveries and further explanation. As concrete objective signs the experience can be reflected upon. Although in their construction paintings, drawings, sculptures or collages can evolve as narratives, telling a visual tale, making inner life more

approachable, it is also in the verbal account of the students that the narrative identity takes place.

Organizing experiences in a way usually called framing or schematizing is a means to “construct” a world, making it more comprehensible to oneself, and others. Narrative is the general way of doing this but art production is also a way of illustrating life, experiences and thoughts (see Rantala, 1997: 219). Since art is a symbol system like language it can give voice to youngsters as they reflect on their experiences. Narrative is also a way of using language (Bruner, 1990), and visual language enables processing of everyday life.

According to Paul Ricoeur (1991, cited in Nielsen 1999:49), life can be seen as “an activity and a passion in search of a narrative”. Constructing a narrative of our life, we highlight, in a textural structure, “the mixture of acting and suffering which constitutes the very fabric of life, it is this mixture which the narrative attempts to imitate in a creative way”. When analyzing a narrative, says Ricoeur, we should thus look for both what the narrative can find in the living experience, as well as that which, in this experience, demands the assistance of a narrative and expresses the need for it. Thus central in the creating of a text is not only to make sense of what goes on around the narrator but also what goes on in the unconscious passions and sufferings within the narrator. Telling stories about our lives can make it more comprehensible, and also more bearable. We can make ourselves heroes of our own story – we cannot, however, become the authors of our own lives. Thus, even though narrative strives toward homogeneity, it will always be a synthesis of the heterogeneous – a structure of “discordant concordance” (Ricoeur, 1991:28,29,31).

In phenomenological research the emphasis is always on the meaning of lived experience (van Manen, 1990). To “borrow” other people’s experiences and their reflections on their experiences in order to better be able to come to an understanding of the deeper meaning or significance of an aspect of human experience. To produce art – pictures is a lived experience. One could say phenomenology aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature of our everyday experiences. In this inquiry of the meaning of art – production, I wish to understand what kind of experience drawing, painting etc., is for my students, the essence of making a picture.

According to Fornäs (1995) the meanings of symbols and texts are made and reconstructed in the meaning making of discourses, through practices of interpretation where subjects encounter and use texts within contexts. Meaning concerns pointing to something in the minds of human beings as they confront material objects understood as symbols and texts. Understanding symbols is an act of interpretation, making out their meanings, to apprehend their significance. Therefore to understand a picture (a piece of text, a tune) by way of interpreting it opens up ways to use it in a significant way, knowing when it is valid (Fornäs 1995: 180-181).

Meanings are therefore not only connected to the symbolic signs but also to the subject and context of interpretation, which implies that symbols are seldom undisputable but have an open variety of meanings. Each text or picture has an indefinite but confined range of potential meanings. Whatever stories we have created in the past it is the situation at present that matters. As the present is always in a flux, so are our narratives, they are open for change - for new interpretation even in creative conflict with the old ones.

Reflexivity can offer symbolic tools for presenting authentic self-images to others and to one-self. The concept of reflexivity as viewed by Fornäs (1995) indicates a phenomenon of pictorial visibility. People often mirror their identities in concrete images (as in front of a mirror or through the media), but reflections can also take on any symbolic form. Adolescents can mirror their own identities in various ways, using physical mirrors or symbolic expressions. What is reflecting itself in this self-reflexivity is basically a subject position. Fornäs names a few of these mirroring contents or genres; one being daily life reflexivity where, everyday interaction within the life-world contains such mirroring acts. In the life phase of adolescence and youth, where childhood is to be reworked into adulthood, reflexivity is intense. It is also intensified among sub- or micro-cultures, cultivating styles and forms of expression (Fornäs, 1995: 211-212). Art students create such micro-culture in the shared-ness of learning the basic skills and values attached to art.

Artistic skills and knowledge can be thought of as one kind of a discourse and therefore the adolescents take part in that discourse or are formed by it. Discourse disciplines subjects into certain ways of thinking and acting, this is not simply repressive; it does not impose rules for thought and behavior on a pre-existing human agent. Instead, human subjects are produced through discourses. Our sense of self is

made through the operation of discourse. So too are objects, relations, places, and scenes: discourse produces the world as, it understands it (Rose, 2001:137). As a result it is possible to say that art education as a discourse disciplines the students.

Self

The concept of self permits us to understand who we are and lays the foundation of our social life, (Räsänen, 1998). She also believes that without certain shared definitions of human selves, social systems like education could scarcely be sustained. Beliefs of self are considered to be crucial to all understanding. Räsänen (1998:52) argues that art could not be comprehended without some understanding of self and its relationship to other people.

If we look at the concept of self-understanding as it is used in its post-modern meaning it refers to the self as a social construction (Räsänen, 1998: 56). Bruner (1990:108) likewise states that self must be treated as a construction that proceeds from the outside in as well as from the inside out – from culture to mind as well as from mind to culture.

Bruner (1996) maintains that education is crucial to the formation of self and should be conducted with that fact in mind. The two aspects of selfhood that are regarded as being universal according to Bruner are: agency and evaluation. People experience themselves as agents that can initiate and carry activities out on their own. Students can deepen their self-understandings by relating their real life situations with the world they have represented in their art productions by describing their artistic narrations and comparing it to their lives and to other works they have made.

Agency involves skill or know-how. Therefore success and failure are some main ingredients in the making of selfhood. These can be judged from the “outside”, according to particular cultural criteria, which children learn quickly to respond to by self-evaluation or Bruner’s second aspect of self: evaluation. In other words children experience the self as agentive and evaluate their success in what they themselves or others expect of them. The self becomes increasingly tinted by these assessments, which Bruner sees as a mix of agentive efficacy and self-evaluation and calls ‘self-esteem’. It is a blend of what we believe and hope we are and what we are afraid of we cannot be or become (Bruner, 1996: 36-37).

Self-esteem is affected greatly by accessibility to support from the outside. The fact is, as controversial as it might seem, school is not always the provider it should be for positive self-esteem building. With agency and self-esteem as possible central constituents in building the concept of self, schools can contribute to these important aspects of personhood. Bruner (1996:38) suggest the granting of more responsibility in setting and achieving goals in all aspects of a school's activities.

In art-production goal setting and achievement, self-motivation and self-evaluation are central ingredients. Ellen Winner (1982:43) refers to Rudolf Arnheims' view that at the heart of the creative process is 'goal-directed visual thinking', which is supported by the assumption that when artists create, they have a final goal in mind. This goal being the artists' vision of what they ultimately want to achieve. Perkins (1981) as well, in his investigation found the creative process to be very much constrained by the artist's goal and engaging the logical faculties of the mind in a problem-solving situation (cited in Winner 1982:47). Adolescent art students can relate setting goals and self-evaluation directly to their art-production (picture-making).

Self-understanding

Damon and Hart (1988) define self-understanding as one's cognitive representation of self, self-interest, and personal identity. In their opinion, self-understanding lies firmly within the realm of social cognition. It is the organizer of one's life experience and provides a sense of continuity across context and time. In late adolescence the tendency can be seen to construct a coherent self-concept system based upon newly emerged beliefs and life plans (Damon and Hart, 1988:14-16, see also Räsänen, 1998:136).

In my data analysis special attention is paid to self-construction as it might be affected by narrative identity. Interaction between the self and others takes place, as the students, through the reflective description of his/her art production, recount their experience to the 'others' in this case the artwork and the interviewer. According to Damon and Hart (1988:61-66) the importance of others begins already in childhood, for instance children making comparisons between themselves and real or imagined others. It is however, in adolescence that the others become essential. This would be

in agreement with Ricoeur (1992) who maintains identity is also constructed in the dialectic of self and others.

Self-identity

There can be no self-identity without the other, according to Giddens (1991:51). Learning the qualities of others is connected in an immediate way with the earliest explorations of the object-world and with the first stirrings of what later become established feelings of self-identity. The ‘identity’ of the self, in contrast to the phenomenon of common self, presupposes reflexive awareness. In other words, self-identity is the self as reflexively understood by the person in terms of her or his biography (ibid:53). Giddens also maintains that a persons’ identity is to be found in the capacity to keep a particular narrative going. The individual’s biography, if she is to maintain regular interaction with others in the day-to-day world cannot be wholly fictive. It must continually integrate events, which occur in the external world, and sort them into the ongoing “story” about the self.

The concept of self in this study must be related to the art production, understanding what the artwork tells about the artist and her/his life view. Art production can be seen here as a tool in understanding the artistic process of meaning making (see Räsänen, 1998). By describing their own art works the students reflect on their own perceptions, ideas, feelings, values and experiences. It enables them to explain what their works of art tell about themselves and their life world. This means conceptualizing both visually and verbally and sharing it with the “other” in this case, the interviewer and the artwork. It also makes it possible to see the adolescents’ artworks as visual data, upon which they reflect verbally.

Summarizing the theoretical focus

In the previous sections some light has been shed on the formation of self and its many features. Different concepts have been discussed, found to be in one way or other relevant to this theoretical focus, though not all are being used directly in this study. Narrative and narrative identity are significant concepts here as I apply the latter to my case study material on ten art students and ten middle school students from Iceland, 13 to 17 years old. The research I am conducting concerns the

relatedness between making art and describing it, what part this plays in constructing narrative identity. As a concept narrative relates to organizing experience and creating meaning, to make sense of our everyday life in a storied manner. Art production is also a way of doing this, illustrating life experiences and thoughts. When drawn on paper experience becomes available in the form of concrete objective signs, for self-reflection as well as to be seen by other people. Artistic narration is to tell stories through art and this in turn may aid in constructing identity.

As a concept narrative identity has been described as the never-ending process of building a personal story of biographical unity and coherence. For the adolescent art student in this study it is the relatedness between the visual narration and the verbal accounting. Telling a visual tale is a means of constructing a world, making inner life more approachable by using largely visual elements, thus making it more understandable to oneself and others. Such narration may not be easy to grasp however, until it reaches another version by verbalization. Meanings are made through interpretation. By interpreting their pictures the adolescents make meanings of symbols as they encounter and use text within context. The stories told, although created in the past, tell about the world inhabited at the moment of the verbal accounting, being reshaped continuously in the process of narrating.

Crucial to understanding who we are is the concept of self, which has also been said to lay the foundation for our social life. It has been analysed and studied from various angles, for example, as in self-understanding, self-esteem, self-motivation and –evaluation. Agency and evaluation have been acknowledged as possible main ingredients in building the concept of self. Art production provides opportunities for goal setting as well as self-motivation and evaluation. Adolescent art students experience themselves as agents, (they initiate and carry out activities on their own) and they evaluate what they have done, based on whether they succeed in what they or others expect of them. This blend of agentive value and self-evaluation; “self-esteem” can be aided by granting of more responsibility to students in, for instance, setting and achieving of goals in school activities. In picture making, the heart of the creative process can be represented as “goal-directed visual thinking”, i.e. when artists create they have a final goal in mind, their vision of what they want to achieve.

Self-identity has been specified as the “self” reflexively understood by the person in her biography and by keeping a particular narrative going. As there can be

no self-identity without the other, the relatedness between narrative identity and self-construction can be seen in the interaction that takes place amid the self and others as the art student recounts her experience through reflective description of her art – picture.

The objective of this research, the role of art in everyday life of adolescent students, has been studied from two viewpoints. What meaning and value do art students give to their artistic activities and art pictures and how is narrative identity constructed through artistic narration, visual and verbal. These will be defined further in the next chapter as it describes the tasks of this research.

3. Research tasks: questions and goals

The general goal of my research is to examine the meaning of art and art production in the everyday life of adolescent students. The aim is to find out if and how this influences their lives and what meaning it gives to the creation of self. The objective of my research is to investigate the young students' reflections, through narrative, of their art productions as related to their self-identity.

The purpose of this study is twofold:

1. To collect data about adolescent students art production, the role it plays in their everyday life.
2. To gain insight and understanding of the adolescents' interpretation of their own art works and how that relates to their identity.

The starting point might be seen in the implication made by Kati Rantala (1997:237), that art educators should take into consideration that the teaching of art should not only concentrate on producing artworks of technical and aesthetic quality. To develop ways in which art could be seen as a means to handle and produce knowledge and experiences about oneself and the world would also benefit their students.

In this research I investigate if and how self can be understood and constructed through artistic activity and productions. This will be approached from two perspectives; the meaning of art / art production in everyday life of adolescents and the perspective of narrative identity. Narrative identity here concerns the process of building a personal story (identity) through verbal accounts in which the adolescents might open up a world of interpretations, which will reflect their view of life and / or their life world.

To understand the role of art and art production in students' everyday life, answers to the following questions were sought:

- 1) How do students perceive the meaning and value of picture making; what are the underlying reasons or motives, as described by the students themselves, for making pictures and their artistic practices?

-What matters most to young people in their picture making; how do they evaluate their own works?

-What meanings do the adolescents attach to the concepts art /visual culture and how do they perceive the processes and artifacts of their own art production?

In my research I examine how the adolescents view themselves through their artistic activities and if and how this promotes self-understanding. I also study how personal motivation, social impact and gender, manifests the different ways the students view the role of art in their lives.

And as stated above, the study is also about narrative identity.

2) How is narrative identity constructed by telling stories through artistic activities?

-What happens to students' art productions in its interpretation; how does it change, how does it work?

This means exploring how a picture in which a student presents her view of the world can become means to narrative identity and in what way art can be seen as a valuable means of promoting the reflexive project of the self. I ask if art offers opportunities for the imagination; to create new ways of existence in the present as well as understanding the past, or open up a new look at the future.

In my research I study how young people communicate their ideas and feelings through their visual artifacts where the images convey messages from one person to another, or perhaps the viewer can also be the artist herself reacting to her own art work.

3) How do the adolescents view the communicative aspect of picture making; reaching others, intentionally or not, what kind of messages do their works carry?

-What are the communicative motives that might underlie their artistic practices?

-With whom do they communicate, what kind of messages do they send and for what purposes (see Rantala, 1998)?

Through the methodological approach adopted in this study, I attempt to explore the above- mentioned questions or themes by drawing upon the students' interpretations of their works as well as the process of meaning making.

4. Methodological approach

This research is a qualitative study that can be placed in an interpretive framework. Change can be seen in the values, beliefs, and techniques that guide scientific inquiry (Räsänen, 1998:151). The paradigm shift that has tinted educational research during the last two decades has been from quantitative to qualitative methods. Qualitative methods often question the orthodox approaches to educational research and allow the researcher to be more creative. Elliot Eisner states (1998) that qualitative considerations must be employed in composing the qualities that constitute works of art and these qualities created in art inform. Eisner also believes that knowledge about the world can be obtained from various sources, for instance as told by artists, writers or dancers. Experiences are the material humans construct knowledge of, including reflection of mind as well as nature. The forms chosen to represent our conception of the world, therefore influence how well we can describe it and what we might experience. This leads to the assumption that by increasing the ways in which we describe, interpret and evaluate the educational world, the richer and more complete educational inquiry will become (Eisner, 1998: 6-8).

According to Janesick (1998) qualitative work recognizes early on the perspective of the researcher, as it evolves through the study, the description of the role of the researcher is a critical component of the written report of the study. As a qualitative researcher I cannot disregard my pre-understanding for the study. The starting points of which could be traced back to the authors' role as an artist and art teacher. The past twenty years at the children's department at the School of Visual Art in Akureyri northern Iceland, five of those years also teaching courses at the Department of painting in the same school, and the Department of teacher training at the University of Akureyri. My position could be seen as sitting on more than one chair in this study, and ten of the adolescents the research examines have been my students for the last eight to twelve years. Although this might place me as an involved member of the phenomena being studied here, it is still the foremost aim of this study to capture the pictures the adolescents themselves have painted of their

lived experience. That their voices be heard and their impressions seen remains the most important goal of this study.

In qualitative research words and actions of people are used to understand what is being investigated. This is a phenomenological study in that it seeks to capture the lived experience of the participants in order to understand their meanings, perspectives, case by case. Van Manen (1990:9) upholds that phenomenology aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday experiences. The study draws on interviews with twenty Icelandic adolescents between the age of thirteen and seventeen. Ten of them go to art school the other ten receive art lessons in their regular middle school. For additional information, two of the young students' art teachers have been interviewed. Although the interviewees are Icelandic I have given them the following pseudonyms in English, the girls: Audrey, Amy, Ashley, Isabel, Holly, Heather, Lauren, Lisa, Nadine, Kate, Susan, and the boys: Andy, David, Charlie, Kevin, Noah, Michael, Paul, Robert and Steven.

The "story told" in an interview is not made by the "teller" alone. Its' meaning is a joint collage made by both the "teller" and the "told". Mishler (1986) describes the research interview as: a site where partners meet and converse, and through their conversations they "jointly construct meaning", (cited in Sigrún Gudmundsdóttir, 1996: 295). In Bruner's opinion (1996:39), meaning making is embedded within story making or narrative and is "the mode of thinking children need to create a version of the world, in which, psychologically, they can picture a place for themselves - a personal world". In other words, narrative can be seen as a mode of thought and a way of making meaning.

The concept of narrative identity is applied to case-study material obtained for this study through interviews. The adolescents brought with them to the interview an artwork or two they themselves had made and held a special meaning for them. They told about their artworks in charming and, at times, captivating stories. This case-study material is used to present my understanding of the relationship between making art and describing it and the part this plays in constructing narrative identity:

- the stories that arise from the contents of the pictures
- the meanings the students give to making art
- the "others" i.e. the artworks and the researcher as the interviewer

To capture lived experience of individuals and their stories is much like the painter who crafts a painting or the seamstress recycling fabric into beautiful quilt. Qualitative research design has many layers like a painting – layers of colors can be scraped off or new ones added, depending on what is to be drawn out. Just like a painting qualitative design can be adapted, changed and redesigned as the study proceeds.

A combination of methodologies was used to pursue the aims of this study: phenomenological and interpretive qualitative methods to examine students' attitudes, values and artistic activities as well as grounded theory to analyze the interpretations which the students themselves give to their art making and art products.

The multi method research plan for this study consists of two section interviews. Their aims related but yet with discreet differences. The plan therefore seems appropriate for this study: in-depth interviews (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; cited in Maykut & Morehouse: 1994:81) to examine students' perceptions of the role of art and art production in their everyday lives. Case- study interviews, based on the students' discourse with their works to provide rich data concerning narrative self-identity, how it might be constructed by the young students through the stories they tell about their own artistic productions. Ricoeur (1992: 147-148) states: The person understood as a character in a story is not an entity distinct from his or her "experiences". Quite the opposite: the person shares the condition of dynamic identity peculiar to the story recounted. The narrative constructs the identity of the character, what can be called his or her narrative identity, in constructing that of the story told. It is the identity of the story that makes the identity of the character.

What Ricoeur means is that by telling a story "the author" becomes the character. But narrative identity is not stable, the subject can build new and different schemes about events in her / his life. The more stories a subject tells, "the story of a life continues to be refigured" (cited in Rantala, 1997:221). Narrative identity cannot be achieved without others, we need outside reference points and witnesses to our narrative, and accordingly identity is constructed in the dialectic of self and the other (Giddens 1991:48,52; Ricoeur 1992). In the case study interviews, the artworks and the interviewer are the 'others' upon whom the students reflect their experiences.

Summary

This chapter has put forth some methodological issues that are considered relevant to the main areas upon which this inquiry draws. To allow for a different view of the central topic it is necessary to discuss it in various ways. The data from the first half of the two part interviews might be contrasted against the students' narratives of their art-productions to check for similarities and differences in the findings, and/or how well they support each other. Thus helping to understand their implications. Studying students with different backgrounds in art education, the interviews may also reveal differences or similarities in students perspectives according to whether they go to the art school or not. This makes it possible to check whether the findings from the art school are the same as from the “regular” middle school or vice versa.



Picture 3. Steven feels this picture of a dinosaur was successful and this pleases him. Reproduced with the kind permission of the artist.



Picture 4. Paul's picture of a rooster was in an exhibition on the 'Net' much to his delight and in his words it was a “sign of success”. Reproduced with the kind permission of the artist.

5. Research design

Sample

The participants in this study were twenty adolescent students aged thirteen to seventeen. For all the students art is a hobby. Ten have practised this at the art school where they have been studying, anywhere from eight to twelve years, for the other ten students art is something they like to do in their spare time at home or with friends. Using a purposeful sampling approach (Patton, 1990), the participants were selected based on these particulars: a) having basic skills to express themselves visually and b) the assumption that art is a satisfying rather than frustrating activity. In order to study what practising art means to adolescents and if and how this affects their identity, these particulars were seen as relevant.

The similarities of the participants, is that they all like art. The ways in which they differ is that half of them have made art a formal extra curricular activity for more than half their lives. The group is made up of eleven girls and nine boys; the boys range in age from thirteen to fifteen and the girls from thirteen to seventeen years old.

Data collection

In-depth semi structured interviews were chosen as means of data gathering. The interviews were in two phases: the first seen as essential to discuss generally the role of art and art production in the students' lives, thus establishing a dialogue, that was hoped would provide understanding of the meaning of art in everyday life, and lay the foundation for further conversation. The second phase was a session on talking about the artwork or artworks the students had been asked to bring with them and they held personally meaningful in some way. This form of interviewing can be likened to a frame around the inter-actions of interviewer and the interviewee, where the informants reflect their experiences upon the researcher and their artworks.

To gain further insight into the meaning of art in everyday life of the young students, two of their teachers were also interviewed. This was considered especially relevant as far as the group of students not attending the art school were concerned,

the researcher, as stated before, having been the other students' teacher at the art school for many years.

In this study it will be the students' perceived meanings of the relationship between making art and describing it and my understanding and interpretation of this that will provide the findings. These in turn will be supported by evidence, extensive quoting from the interviews and cautious assessments. This study can therefore be placed in the interpretive tradition. Validity will be obtained by relating various documents supporting the interpretation and the study's reliability is based on using different methods obtaining data and conducting analysis.

Procedures

The study was conducted in February 2002. The adolescents were chosen from a list of students from the art school, based on their length of study there, the criteria being: to have studied there for at least six years¹, and the other ten students, from a list of names obtained from an art teacher at a middle school, based on students positive experience with art. It was considered relevant, as stated before, that art be a gratifying rather than a trying activity for the students.

All the adolescents were contacted by telephone (by the researcher herself) and asked if they were willing to participate in the study. After a brief description of my wish to enquire about their view (feelings) on art and art production, I asked them to bring along to the interview one or two of their own art productions which, they considered important or special in one way or another. Every one of the young students reacted positively to the request and showed considerable enthusiasm and willingness to partake in the research.

The semi-structured interviews were carried out in a meeting room that had been especially arranged for this purpose at the University of Akureyri where the researcher is studying. This was considered a "neutral" place for all of the students as it was not possible to interview the students in what would be more their "natural" setting. Special effort was made to give the room supportive and familiar atmosphere. Seating in equal settings near the end, on opposite sides of a small conference table, on which well known items such as the researchers' laptop computer and a few art books had been placed along with a small lit candle. A small tape recorder was placed

¹ Six years is the minimum amount of time it takes a student to finish the basic children's courses.

like a “third” participant at a slight distance and great care taken to ask each interviewee’s permission [with assurance of anonymity] to record.

It is thought important that the interviewer, through words and behavior reduce the power differential between her and her informant to make the interviewee feel like a *collaborator* in the research process. Mishler (1986:118) states, this kind of empowerment in the interviewer-interviewee relationship can assist people in ‘their efforts to construct coherent and reasonable worlds of meaning and to make sense of their experiences’. Although the *interview guide* was followed I was open to change the sequence of the questions and encouraged the students to talk in their area of interest.²

The interviews were carried out to gain understanding of the significance of art and art production in the students’ life and to discover the meanings they attach to its role. In addition, the second phase of the interview, concerning narrative identity was intended to reveal the relationship between making art and describing it and how this might contribute to the forming of self.

In connection with the aims of the study the interviews were supposed to give way to the following:

- 1) Information about students’ understanding of the role of art in their lives
- 2) Adolescents understanding of their own artistic activities
- 3) Students’ belief of the social importance of artistic practices
- 4) Implication for art teaching

The central focus was to find out in what way art and art production is meaningful for young people in their everyday life. This includes information about students’ attitudes towards their art and art production as well as other art and visual culture. Also included in this focus was the importance students see in learning skills and gaining artistic knowledge, and in what way, there might be a social aspect related to studying and making art.

No problems occurred during the interviews. The atmosphere can be said to have been pleasant and the participants for the most part energetic and vibrant, although some nervousness was noticeable in the beginning, among a few. The young

² An interview guide is a series of topics or broad interview questions, which the researcher is free to explore and probe with the interviewee (Patton, 1990).

students spoke freely about their point of view and while their responses varied clearly in length, their answers seemed to indicate that they understood the questions. Keeping in mind Bogdan & Biklen's (1998:96 prev.ed.1992 & 1982), statement about treating every word as having the potential to unlock the mystery of the subject's way of viewing the world, it became noticeable that it was not always due to the length of the answers that important clues were found, but the content.

Every adolescent was comfortable (at ease) talking about their pictures and this method gave way to wonderful tales as well as sad ones, going much further than what might be seen in the pictures.

Data Analysis

My aim when analyzing the transcribed interviews was: to find reasonably informative and interpretative categories that could be used to describe the meaning the adolescents themselves attach to art and art-production in their everyday life.

This was accomplished by applying constant comparative analysis of the interviews, until categories, themes and patterns were obtained. This method combines inductive category coding with simultaneous comparison of all units of meaning obtained (Glaser and Strauss, 1967: 101-116). In other words, as units of meaning are selected for analysis, each new unit is compared to all the other units of meaning and then categorized and coded with similar units of meaning. In practice this meant line-by-line reading and going back and forth between the interview texts and the categories that emerged until they seemed to make a reasonable match to my understanding of the interviews.

Coding can be said to be the heart and soul of whole text analysis, to form opinions about the meanings of contiguous blocks of text. In the categorizing and coding process the researcher seeks to develop a set of categories that provide a "reasonable" reconstruction of the data she or he has collected (Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 347).

Coding and sorting the units of meaning, provided various types of information according to the sets of concepts developed. Exploration of relationship and patterns across categories was pursued and the categories were reviewed for overlap and ambiguity and then redefined as needed.

Reliability and validity

Qualitative approaches represent a different way to achieve a different kind of understanding, one that appeals to those who find satisfaction in partial or tentative explanations of what is going on without the hope of ever quite achieving the authority of cause- and -effect studies. Every way of knowing has its place. Science cannot proceed without controlled experimentation, but neither science nor controlled experimentation can reveal all we seek to understand about ourselves, and our fellow humans.

- Harry H. Wolcott
The art of fieldwork, 163

The question about validity and reliability is often seen as a problem in the dialogue between quantitative and qualitative researchers, and how to use these concepts in qualitative research is not entirely agreed upon either by qualitative researchers themselves.

According to Wolcott (1995:168) the question of reliability and validity brings us to the issue of whether we are willing to accept the language of quantitative researchers as the language of all research, or whether different approaches, like different art forms, warrant different criteria for judging them.

In its technical sense, validity looks at whether a researcher has measured what the research claims to measure, and reliability refers to the extent to which a measurement procedure yields the same answer however and whenever it is carried out (ibid pp.167, 169). As such these concepts have been used in quantitative (positivist) methods of research for a good part of the twentieth century.

However, the positivist views have met considerable criticism. Wolcott argues that "... fieldwork does not lend itself to what reliability is all about" and he is not convinced "that reliability necessarily serves quantitative researchers well, either" (Wolcott, 1995: 167).

The concept of validity has taken on a broader meaning; it is no longer limited to measurement but associated more closely with truth-value, the correspondence between research and the real world. Kvale (1996) refers to validity as "quality of craftsmanship" which can be achieved by the researcher during investigation by continually checking, questioning and theoretically interpreting the findings. He points out how validity goes beyond the matter of methods used, to the person of the researcher whose craftsmanship and credibility becomes essential (Kvale, 1996: 241).

In educational criticism, one of the concepts Eisner (1998) uses when advocating qualitative research on education as art (the other being connoisseurship), he names three sources of evidence used as standards of credibility: structural corroboration, consensual validation, and referential adequacy (Eisner, 1998:110). These can be used to promote the trustworthiness of a qualitative methodological approach. Lincoln and Guba (1985:290) use the concept trustworthiness (designed by Guba 1981), to discuss the truth-value of their findings.

These standards seem applicable to this inquiry. Structural corroboration can be gained through relating multiple data with each other, thus supporting or contradicting my interpretation. Consensual validation will be based on “agreement among competent others that the description, interpretation, evaluation, and thematics of an educational situation are right” (Eisner, 1998:112). To share ones’ developing manuscript with informed readers should, according to Wolcott (1990: 353) be a part of the process of analyzing and writing. As accuracy of reported information is a critical dimension, readers close to the setting can provide valuable corrections and add to completeness. Sharing my draft with colleagues I may not seek consensus, but view their perception and take into consideration their criticism. Referential adequacy is according to Eisner (1998), ultimately decided by the reader if he or she can locate in the topic (subject matter) the qualities being addressed and the meanings ascribed to them. As an educational researcher my hope would therefore be that readers are able to see in this research what otherwise could have been left unseen.

My subjectivity as a researcher in what has been stated at the onset of this study (see page 19) should be both admitted and utilized. Eisner (1998) claims that the “connoisseurship” of the researcher increases the reliability of the research. This points out the advantages and possible problems of my role. The fact I knew my own students better than the adolescents from the middle school gave indication in hindsight that a short pre-interview meeting with them would have been in order. Thus putting them on more equal footing with the other students as far as being completely at ease with me.

The many years of being an art teacher have been, I believe, of great value for this study although possibly tinting my understanding of my students and the other adolescents at times. It should be remembered though that the central modes this research is based on were created by the voices of these young people. The

conclusions that are drawn from this study will reflect the meanings of specific youngsters in specific settings.

6. Meaning of art making – art as meaning making

Creating categories

After subjecting the students' responses to line-by-line and constant comparative analysis, the constructs students used to explain their perceived meanings of art and art making in everyday life, could be classified as belonging to the following six categories:

1. Mastering elements and principles of visual art

The constructs here refer to the emphasis and awareness the adolescents have about the importance of mastering the skills and rules of picture making; composition, use of color and different technique. This learning offers them tools for aesthetic evaluation and to assess their own art – pictures whether or not they have succeeded in their efforts. It also relates to being able to use these skills to express their ideas in their works, "...it is very useful when I want to paint what I feel" (Isabel). In addition learning artistic skills confronts them with challenges which many students like; "...I like using charcoal even if it is technically difficult ... I like challenges" (Audrey).

2. Process

In this category the constructs relate specifically to the process of making a picture. They include simple descriptions of the intrinsic feelings the act of drawing or painting provides; "...[it] influences my mood in a positive way, it brings me joy" and about the sensory (corporeal and cerebral) aspects of "working with your hands as well as your head". Students also described the process as allowing you to "see what you think" and further more being the course where "creation takes place". The process is seen as exciting, as well as calming or a relaxing activity where you "... become so involved that you forget your mood" (Kevin).

3. Expression / feelings

References in this category relate specifically to the role of feelings in art and art production. When students refer to the importance of being able to express feelings in

art – pictures, it relates to themselves; they uncover their feelings and thoughts; become conscious of them through their creative process; expression might therefore include a ‘therapeutic’ moment.

Constructs here referred to art production as a mode to express feelings. Students refer to being able to reflect upon their inner emotions and thoughts and to use their own experiences to express personally meaningful matters.

4. Communication /messages to others

Students refer to art as a means of communication. It is a platform where you can put your ideas, social beliefs or visual observations forward. The constructs in this category refer, among other things, to the freedom that communicating through art offers; “... if I cannot put my opinion or feelings in words ... I can draw it” (Heather). Artworks are therefore seen as means for communicating to others, for delivering messages. There were references that related directly to students having something to say with their pictures, issues linked to their immediate personal life as well as to the larger scope of the world.

5. Artistic self-image (self-identity)

Constructs in this category relate to art as possible means of constructing identity. Students refer to the ways in which their artistic activities shape their lives; “...it runs my life”, and about how being good in art gives them added self-esteem, “... you become more self-assured – develop more confidence”. References were made about personal style as well as the importance of individuality, being different, original. Students referred to themselves as “artist” or cited being seen as such by their friends and family as well as having to take on that role in school.

6. Social Significance

Students referred here to the value of sharing their interest in art with others; in school; or with family members; “... I like being with others doing the same”. They cited the enjoyment of seeing what others are doing and the flow of ideas when working in a group. They also referred to how their artistic interest had been socialized by family, friends or even the art school itself as an institution. Further

references were made to issues related to social aspects including: gender, “freedom within the group” and encouraging environment.

Table 6.1 represents the categories and sub categories, which emerged from the interview transcripts as pertinent, meaningful and informative.

1. Mastering elements and principles of visual art

- Artistic skills and knowledge
- Means of self-assessment
- Evaluation of aesthetic quality / visual culture

2. Process

- Satisfaction / intrinsic feelings (exciting, joy, relaxing, enjoyable)
- Facilitating thoughts and ideas
- Influencing (controlling) mood and feelings

3. Expression / feelings

- Uncovering feelings (“therapeutic” meaning)
- Expressing personally meaningful matters (self-reflection)

4. Communication / messages to others

- To have something to say; a picture as a message

5. Artistic self-image (self-identity)

- Art as means to construct self-identity
- The role of ‘artist’ (look upon themselves as ‘artists’)
- Artistic style and artistic values

6. Social significance

- Being with others – doing alone
- Sharing (flow of ideas)
- Social and cultural context

Results: the multiple meanings of art making

As stated above, the students' descriptions of what art making means to them have been constructed into the six categories recognized in the interview text, and the results will be presented here according to these. In the next section I will then examine their occurrence in the data (the key results) quantitatively and make some comparisons, for instance related to gender as well as between the schools, which the students attend.

1. Mastering elements and principles of visual art

The students seem well aware of the socially recognized principles and elements of visual art. They cited the importance of fundamentals of design and rules of composition, as well as the theories of color and variety of techniques, which they try to learn and master. The following statements by a girl in the art school and a boy from the middle school illustrate this:

...it was the first time I could draw a person in profile. Like really doing it right ... it was a good feeling to succeed...a big step forward. It reflects what I was learning ...it shows that (Lauren).

Art classes give you opportunity to create. You learn from it ... that you must draw and you can do assignments in your own way so it trains you to draw what you are thinking. You also learn different methods and techniques (Andy).

By learning these basic skills the students are able to realize their ideas in practice as this fifteen-year old girl in the art school stated:

I am in the art school to learn better how to draw and make art. It is very useful when I want to paint what I feel. It relates to other subjects somewhat ... I would even like to work in the arts (Isabel).

Isabel also refers here to the relationship between art and other subjects. Adolescents seemed to feel that artistic knowledge might help them study other disciplines, as illustrated in this description, by Heather from the art school:

I can express happiness or sadness and love or political ideas, in other words the entire color scale of feelings! It is funny to say “color scale” other kids would not understand this, but like when I do math I see the numbers in rows and each “tugur” (group of ten numbers) has its own color and studying singing I also have similar experiences. Art education has helped me study other subjects... (Heather).

Students from both schools want to learn and develop their artistic skills although their emphasis and / or reasons might differ. A girl from the middle school explained that she had been contemplating the usefulness of art education:

I think it is important to learn composition and color theory, not so much the forms even though they might help someone. I have been thinking a lot about if it is useful at all to study art... I don't know but I think some people might feel the need to draw and that is good, nothing should stop that and then it is better if you have studied. It might definitely help if you have studied some ... (Audrey).

Adolescents in the art school stated that the formal elements are at the core of their aesthetics, and they want to communicate or show what they have learned to master as visual elements of drawing and painting. These quotations below illustrate this well:

I think I am usually thinking of the pictorial effect, how the picture is best ...the composition etc. It has to be a good picture first and foremost ...Even if I wanted to make things with a message in it...it still has to be very stylistically clean cut. My aesthetics is related to the formal qualities of the work (Lisa).

I choose colors also in accordance to the forms and composition. The formal aspects matter to me (Charlie).

For students like Lisa and Charlie it is important to master the recognized principles of visual art and present these in their works. Robert from the middle school voices the same opinion:

I think this work turned out quite well and it is an interesting technique using the brush like that ... I just wanted to try this and I was mostly thinking of how the colors would go together and about the composition (Robert).

Students' references to the importance of art education and learning the basic rules and conventions of visual art varied. Students in the art school expressed openly their desire to study art and to learn more. They explained the need to "become better" and to develop their skills. For them the art school offers a place for this, they praised the instruction and the equipments and found the environment encouraging. These students also mentioned how art learning has helped them develop certain values and attitudes attached to art, as the following examples show:

I am more open to art, know more about design, have stronger opinion on what I think is beautiful or ugly. One learns to form one's own opinion...(Lisa).

I have learned to appreciate other artists ...not just label them crazy like many of my schoolmates do (Heather).

Students in the middle school based their claims for the importance of art education on various reasons. Art learning was seen as the only subject where creativity could blossom and every individual could seize the opportunity to be different and therefore create special work. The subject "art" was also referred to as being everything "the other disciplines are not" (Michael).

Art making presents students with challenging uses of materials and different techniques, plus further presenting them with opportunities to set self-made goals and strive for achievement. Mastering the elements and principles of visual art and improving their artistic skills opens up venues for the adolescents to pursue this:

If things don't turn out the way I want it ...then I try again until I am satisfied. I mostly like to draw what I can be successful in ...I start with one thing and practice until I achieve what I want. I could not do this without receiving some instruction ... art education makes a lot of difference (Lauren).

It is nice to see when you can do something even if you don't succeed you just continue...you just don't make the same mistake next (Andy).

Learning the socially accepted rules of picture making does not only provide the adolescents with means to assess their own art making but allows them to evaluate aesthetic qualities in other art forms or works of art. When asked their opinion of other visual culture than the traditionally acknowledged “fine arts”, students maintained there is art in visual culture and digital media like computers.

Computers and other digital media offer great opportunities and it is very related to art ...it is really just another type of art ... difference in aesthetics... (Andy).

Students from both schools explained that they thought visual culture, can be too standardized or too perfect and that “traditional art” is a better medium for instance, to express feelings or to make more “picturesque” works. The following illustrations echo this:

It is very standardized ...no individuality in digital medium ...only a few people like “Björk”, dare to be different (Heather).

Heather was referring to musical videos in this instance but then she continued ...

... sometimes when pictures have been manipulated too much in the digital media they don't reach my heart. ... friends of mine once drove over a bird and killed it and then took a picture of it and scanned it into the computer and manipulated it a lot. It was a very good picture graphically but it had lost all the beauty of death, all the beauty had been wiped away, the beauty of life and death had gone, not much feeling left (Heather).

Similar sentiments, are seen in an explanation by this boy in the art school:

The computer and other digital media are closely related to art and give opportunity to create. It is an art form but not the same ...more technical ...it is not as picturesque (Noah).

While students claimed that there is art being created in computers and other such media one student said that art could be created with any tool you have “... if you

know how” (Michael). It is worth noting here the reference to artistic knowledge and skills.

Key words: Artistic skills, visual elements, self-assessment, aesthetic evaluation, and visual culture.

2. Process

Students claimed to experience a high level of intrinsic feelings / value (satisfaction) while making art – pictures. They associated a wide range of feelings with the process of making a picture and though it varied, the sentiments they presented appeared to be positive. Students might regard the process of picture making as exciting like illustrated by Kate in the art school:

I find it exciting ...I am not always thinking about what I am doing ... It depends on my mood what comes out ... what I express ...when I sit down to draw it comes out. I think it [the process] is exciting ...I get a kick out of it ...to see what you are creating ...how it turns out. The excitement is most in the beginning then if the work turns out good it is a great feeling (Kate).

The process is also seen as the circumstance or situation where creation takes place and for students it is a good feeling to create, to make something that is “original” or your own:

...I love when I am drawing ... that is when I am creating ...it feels good making pictures ...it matters to me that my pictures are different (Steven).

Adolescents, from both schools, claimed the process of making a picture means more to them than the product though both process and product can also be seen as equally significant:

Both the process of painting and the picture in the end are important to me but I would say the process is more fun ... it is just so nice to paint (Robert).

For Lisa in the art school the “results are the most fun”, as she said referring to making art – pictures in the computer. She also described the process of painting as something that influences her mood:

When I am in a bad mood I do not paint dark or dreary things I just paint like usually and then my mood becomes better. To paint a picture influences my mood in a positive way, it brings me joy (Lisa).

Students referred to the creative process as both physical and cognitive sensory experience. To work both with “your hands and head” seemed to provide a certain reward for this student:

It feels good ... it is fun ...to work with your hands ...and you think while you work with your hands (Charlie).

The process is the ground where the sensory experiences of art making take place. Students maintained that the creative process affects their mood and it can be an outlet for feelings or just provide a pleasant or enjoyable experience. Both the subject matter and the physical act of drawing or painting might alter their mood as expressed by these students:

I have always liked drawing ...like using it as a vent ...an outlet for feelings. It depends on what I am making how it makes me feel ...if I am making a picture of a sunny day it makes me feel very glad, but if I am making a dark picture for example a storm I might actually become sad...(Isabel).

Sometimes it makes my mood better to draw or make pictures ...if I am stressed I must draw and then I feel better (Holly).

The students’ voices reflect the artistic process of making pictures and it can be closely related with a diversity of feelings, often seen as having a calming influence or helping them to relax:

I like to draw because I can see what I think ... it is also just enjoyable ... if one is in a bad mood it feels better. It has a calming influence to draw or paint ...(Ashley).

I really like making pictures ...to sit down and draw ...it is relaxing (Michael).

For Kevin in the art school the involvement in the creative process has the ability to change his mood:

...if I am in a bad mood when I start drawing I become so involved that I forget my mood ...it gives me a good feeling and is important (Kevin).

Interestingly the youngest boy in the group explained that sometimes he uses the process of drawing as play or in his own words:

Sometimes I am just using it [drawing] as play. Just drawing anything and that can be fun too. He explained further...I like drawing knights and things like that ... the idea of an adventure (David).

A fourteen-year old girl from the middle school demonstrated similar feelings:

In art it is not so much learning ... it is more playful ... though you learn something (Amy).

Students mirror the meaning of the process of making art - pictures as a source of pleasure and other intrinsic feelings such as relaxation, enjoyment or relief. It is a mode for gaining access to, as well as, presenting one's thoughts or ideas. Furthermore the course of artistic creation is, as seen by students, a sensory corporeal and cerebral experience that provides an outlet for feelings through working with your hands as well as head.

Key words: Intrinsic feelings; exciting, joy, relaxing, enjoyable – see what you think – mood.

3. Expression / feelings

When students refer to the importance of being able to express feelings or emotion in art – pictures, it relates to themselves; they uncover their feelings and thoughts; become conscious of them through their creation; then expression might include a “therapeutic” moment. To Heather in the art school the creative process means, for instance, coming to grips with her emotions. She gets deeply involved with her feelings through expressing them:

The process of making art is more important than the finished piece ...like when feeling bad, talking is better for me than when I am finished. I feel better while I am doing the talking ...working out my problems... not just afterwards when I am quiet. Yes, it is the process ...when you give it all you got ...even if you are pleased when you are finished (Heather).

The following statement echoes the same sentiments, which could be seen as having your thoughts in your hands:

Drawing gives me a vent for creativity ...I see what I am thinking on paper (Audrey)

The meaning of being able to express themselves through their art is important to students from both schools. For Noah in the art school, making art pictures enables him to uncover feelings unknown to himself and provides an alternative way of “telling” how you feel:

Art making gives me possibilities in expressing myself differently. ...one [talking about himself] can express in a picture what one is thinking to some extent ... like with colors and lines and such elements. In a picture you can even describe feelings you don't know you have. ...it is good to be able to express feelings in a different way because sometimes you cannot tell about them in words (...) sometimes you just don't want to (Noah).

Another student from the same school, Kate, presents the role of expressing feelings and emotions in her picture as follows:

It expresses how I felt during this process ...I mostly thought about how I was feeling while I did it. Not thinking much ...but wanted to express feelings of love and security. The forms are not of something I had in my mind ... it could probably have been done better then ...like the strokes here ... but that was not the goal. The goal was to express feelings (Kate).

Students also illustrated the significance of creating this way and what it means to them: “the most important is to get deeply involved in [creating] with your feelings” (Michael), and “creating art is to put feelings into it ... to be free to express

my feelings” (Heather). The following statements show how adolescents perceive art production as being a “vent” or “outlet” for feelings:

Your pictures reflect your mood and it is a vent for feelings (Andy).

I feel fantastic after I express my feelings in a picture because I don't like to keep things bottled up. Anger for example could just become hatred if kept locked up. The most important in art is to be able to put your feelings forward... (Isabel).

Adolescents from both schools maintained that their art works reflect their mood or the way they feel while making their pictures. The subsequent statements display this:

...you can express feelings in pictures ...like my feeling in this work was a good feeling ...happiness ...it would have shown if I had been in a bad mood. When I decide how my lines are going to be... it expresses my feelings. The colors I choose and the movement of the lines, reflect my feelings (Charlie).

It is from [name of a small town] ...and I was thinking of that place with fondness. The picture shows how I felt ...the warm colors and such ...(Nadine).

Students also explained that their art – pictures reflect their feelings of, or how they look upon, life. They are aware of deliberately mirroring certain feelings in their works, and also by preferring to make certain types of pictures or choosing specific motifs that might reflect their way of life. This is depicted well in the following statements:

I am usually a positive person and this picture shows that ...everyone is happy and the surroundings are pretty. I like that ... it reflects my positive feelings about life (Lauren).

It [the drawing] is about nature ... I love nature, mountains and the lakes. It reflects my way of life ... it is in all my works. Water and high mountains fascinate me. I like sailing and being on boats it is also romantic. I want to reflect my feelings for the land I care so much about (Ashley).

Students' self-expression through their artistic activities consists of uncovering their thoughts and feelings as well as reflecting personally meaningful matters in their art – pictures.

Key words: therapeutic moment – feelings - reflection

4. Communication / messages to others

Art production offers students various ways of communicating through the publicly shared rules of visual expression. Adolescents who claim to use their pictures as means of communication feel they have something to say with their works; they use their pictures to deliver messages. The following statements illustrate this:

...I made this work just before my confirmation and in this work and the others of persons without a face ...maybe I am just showing that beauty is not just in beautiful dresses or the way you look ... it comes from inside. So I am sending an important message to the people who did not appreciate me. I think there are generally messages in my work and art is very useful for this (Heather).

The message in this picture is about the environment being very important for us...also about us, and our technology ...the tractor could stand for the people and this special "tractor culture" that exists here [referring to the island where he lives] ...the sky describes love and happiness and the mountains describe a little resistance ...but they can describe two things: their majesty which shows in the darkness and on the other hand sadness or anger (Noah).

In the latter statement, the student actually seems to be using visual language to draw attention to the environment and what it represents to him. A picture can also function as self- reflection and still communicate a message to others, as this seventeen-year old girl from the art school expressed:

It is about motherly love ...it is what I was thinking. I think it gives a warm feeling. I was thinking of something that matters ...maybe not necessarily mothers' love but just love in general. It expresses how I felt during the process ...wanted to express feelings of love and security. This is what most people want; love and security...certainly what I want ...to care and protect those we love. The message I would send is the importance of love and care (Kate).

Students expressed understanding of how it might be easier to communicate something through a picture "... because it can be difficult to talk about things sometimes ... it might be better to draw it, then people can see it" (Nadine). A boy from the middle school maintained that there might be issues in school "like a lot of bullying" that no one wants to talk about but can be communicated through a picture:

I felt good making this picture ...it was a relief to get it out. It is important for me to communicate through pictures ...I think everybody that has tried it knows this. There is a message in this picture; don't judge people before you get to know them ...stop bullying. I can tell in a picture what I am thinking (Michael).

He further explained the importance of a message to others even if not everyone might understand it:

...if it was someone...just one or two people that would understand this message ... and continue spreading this word then that would be fine of course...(Michael).

There were also students who said they could communicate through their art works but they choose not to do so, at least not deliberately.

If I do express something, or send messages in my works it is not consciously done. I might use colors according to my mood but not being aware of it ... (Lisa).

One does not necessarily have to have a message or want to say something with one's work ... in some pictures it is better ... though in others it does not belong. (Kevin).

Students explained that even if they don't put messages in their works or use their pictures for communicating, they still feel it might be better if works include such things. They claimed that school assignments made this difficult or that they were not actually making enough works for this to happen. But they maintained that professional artists should put messages in their works "... then art is a part of your life and you have to put more of yourself in it" (Susan).

Students' understanding of communication through art – pictures shows that they are cognizant of the communicative possibilities their pictures provide. They expressed a desire that others understand their works (pictures) as well as appreciate them, though the most important factor remains for these youngsters, that they themselves are pleased with their own pictures.

Key words: communicating - messages - others

5. Artistic self-image (self-identity)

Adolescents have various ways of relating their artistic activities and products to their self-image. Relationship between their art production and construction of self-identity might be seen through their success in making good art - pictures. Students maintained that this contributes to their self-esteem or self-confidence both when receiving praise from others and through their self-assessment as to whether they have succeeded in their efforts:

I don't know if it has an effect on me as a person, it is good to have something one likes very much to do - good feeling when it turns out well. This good feeling can affect the image of myself ... one is pleased with oneself when what you do is successful. Positive effect... (Lisa).

...it can affect one's self-image...more self-assured...develop confidence when others praise you...(Noah).

Audrey, a student from the middle school, related her actual art production directly to identity formation:

...I drew a picture of a girl without a face standing in front of three roads she had to decide which one to take. They were all different, one was dark and bent, one was wide and bright and one was thick... the meaning behind it was that it does not matter what a person looks like she has to choose what she wants and she was alone so there was no other influence... the decision has to be hers. ...I was a little wild at the time... and then it helped (Audrey).

Adolescents are aware of the role their artistic activities grant them among their friends or at school. They explained how the title ‘artist’ has been given to them in class and how they are described as “someone who is always drawing or singing”. This was further confirmed by telling that since in school everyone knows they are: ...good in drawing... very bad in spelling (D), whenever there is group work they are asked to be in the group that has to draw or paint. David, a fourteen-year old boy in the art school illustrates this well:

...if there is group work I always get put in the group that has to draw ...so sometimes I guess it has an effect on how I look upon myself (David).

This thirteen-year-old girl relates her enjoyment of art to the praise she gets and also to the role it gives her among her friend:

It may also be because I do it well and get praise for it. This is my way of being ... it makes a difference in the group of friends because there I am the one who draws ...(Lauren).

Adolescents who go to the art school, especially, look upon art as a large part of their life, or as this seventeen year old girl describes it:

It runs my life... I am addicted to art... I cannot live without drawing and painting (Heather).

This sentiment is seen also by students who said, art is linked to their lives in one way or another:

...It [art] is connected to my way of life... drawing...what I like best of everything (Kevin).

Artistic style is a feature through which adolescents might relate their artistic practices to self-identity. Students from both schools claimed they have already developed their own artistic style, although they explained that it is still developing and will continue to do so.

... it is important to have your own style even if it changes as time goes by. I like to have my own style both in colors and by keeping things plain and clean cut (simple) ... very clean. I have developed the basis for my own style already (Lisa).

Although adolescents, like this sixteen-year-old boy, are well aware of developing their own style they might not be making deliberate attempts to do so.

My style just develops naturally...without me noticing... only when people tell me there is always something alike in all my pictures then I notice (Michael).

Nevertheless, students do consider style an important factor of the artist's work, or as this same student illustrates:

It is important that artists have their own style, everyone needs to have some characteristics... not to have everyone melt into the same group... otherwise we are all the same; dressed in suits walking like sheep in and out of work, eating at McDonalds and in a black and white environment (Michael).

Students also see themselves as having developed certain artistic /aesthetic values (skills and knowledge). They link this to their "artistic self-image" or being different from their peers (friends) as well as, what has been mentioned before, being subjected to the role of the artist in school activities or the school environment. This includes when teachers place them in the "art group" during group projects, and when friends seek their advice or opinion about artistic matters.

...I have started making my own style...I look at art differently from others... my friends... I know more about it because I have studied it (Kevin).

...it does matter to have studied art... different perspective and taste...noticeable with my girlfriends and me. It has an effect on my self-image on how I look upon myself. It is a positive effect not negative (Lisa).

Thus, students' understanding seemed to be that their artistic activities might be directly related to how they look upon themselves; tinting their self-image with a positive hue.

Key words: self-identity – role – artist – artistic style - value

6. Social significance

The students make their pictures in a certain social and cultural context, which differ between the two groups. The art school provides the adolescents with a particular type of setting, outside their “regular” school, whereas the teenagers in the middle school attend their art classes in their home school.

Adolescents in the art school, especially, referred to the social aspect of art classes as significant, i.e. the importance of being with others that are drawing and painting. In response to being asked about the difference between making pictures at the art school and drawing at home or in your regular school, these adolescents expressed the benefits it provides to be with others who share the same interest. Students explained the necessity to be with “other kids who need this too”. They expressed the enjoyment of seeing what other students are doing and the fact that many different things were being “created” there:

In the art school it is the social side also ...not just drawing and such but being with others who are doing the same. ...it is enjoyable to see what others are doing ...looking at each other's works. It is also a good hobby ...calm. The atmosphere there is good ...some kind of smell that is characteristic ...also nice that there are many different things being created there (Paul).

Another student said: “even if the project is the same you still get twenty different interpretations of the subject...” (Heather). This same girl also stated “there is more freedom within the group [in the art school]”.

The verbal accounts of adolescents in the middle school showed different reasons for being keen on art classes. They maintained they like it because you get a chance to create or be different and some added; because you get good instruction and the assignments are versatile. Students in this school spoke of the social issue of being with others representing itself in a more flow of ideas when students are working together:

I like art classes in school because there are more materials available there and it is nice to be with others that are doing the same ...then you get more ideas and stuff. It is important that people are positive ...the atmosphere has to be positive and the influence from others can help (Audrey).

It is better to make pictures at school ...you get more ideas there. If you are alone you don't get any ideas. It is important to be with others doing the same thing (Robert).

However, students also claimed they liked better making pictures by themselves at home. They need to be alone or “peaceful” to be able to concentrate while making art - pictures, like this fifteen-year old girl:

I like being peaceful when I draw then my pictures come out better ...I also think more and do better. There is too much noise in school to do good pictures (Holly).

For these students there is more freedom in making pictures at home and they stated that the assignments in school make it more restricted:

I don't draw much at home but it is more free ...if you get an idea you think might come out well you try it...(Susan).

It is worth noting that there are indications that the art school provides this “freedom” for the adolescents who go there.

Students claimed, that the interest or involvement of other family members or friends (social context) might influence the meaning of art in their everyday life. Their interest and participation in the arts developed because their parents or other close family members are artists or in someway connected to the arts.

For Audrey, a girl in the middle school, the need to create might be a family trade:

I have a need to create ...my grandmother was a good draftswoman and others in the family are artistic. My cousin and I also like drawing together ...we harmonize in doing that (Audrey).

Noah, in the art school, shows a similar understanding in the following statement:

Ones surroundings also make a difference ...like my mother is often painting and taking courses and that has an influence on me. ... I have good relations with my mother through art...I only have one friend in art [Asrun] and we talk about art ...that is good (Noah).

The adolescents said they like talking about their art – pictures, although they maintained that they do not get an opportunity to do so very often. Students claimed it helped them understand their works better and “recollect what one did”, though as this fifteen-year old boy from the middle school stated it can also be somewhat ambivalent:

It is fine to talk about your pictures but a little difficult ... a bit hard to describe what one thinks and feels about it” (Robert).

Talking about art and their pictures is an activity students enjoy, though their friends might not always be the suitable audience, as the following statements illustrate:

...I like it although I don't talk much about it with my friends ... I think my thoughts are a bit different from theirs they don't quite understand me (Michael).

I think it is good to talk about my work ... to know someone is interested. I don't do it too often. I like talking about art ... but my friends are not interested in art so I don't talk about it to them (Kevin).

Students described being with others or sharing in their artistic activities as being an important aspect of art – production and / or art education. Their artistic interests and values often socialized by their family background or indeed by the art school itself. Students did explain their need for audience and the enjoyment of talking about their art – pictures though expressing that such opportunities were too rare.

Key words: being with others – sharing - flow of ideas, alone - social context

Summary of the results

The main features by which the students' perception of the meaning of art and art production can be defined are the six categories or modes that have been presented in the previous sections. It is the combination of these, which is meant to provide the answers to the leading questions of this study: what is the role of art and art making in

students' everyday life and in which way the students interpret their art works and how this relates to their identity.

From interviewees' responses and their narratives of their own art – productions, it is quite clear that the meaning they make of their artistic activities is not only related to the pictures they make (the artifact). It is concerned in one way or another with what the different categories stand for and these are not equally exclusive but overlap to some degree, or co-exist. Not unlike in art, where there are multiple meanings packed together into a single image, so the young students attach more than a single meaning to the role of art – production in their everyday life.

Drawing and painting provides students with myriad of intrinsic feelings or in their own words, it simply “feels good” or is “fun”. The good feeling has different meanings for the adolescents according to their motivations and they do make their pictures for various reasons. The teenagers likewise make their art - pictures in a certain social and cultural context and this differs for the two groups. Rantala (1998) argues that art students create a micro culture around the practice by sharing with other pupils the learning of the basic skills and values attached to art (see also Fornäs, 1995). Learning these socially recognized principles and elements of visual art not only allows the adolescents to be able to realize their ideas in practice but also to evaluate their own success as well as assessing the aesthetic qualities in other art and visual culture. In the art school students also develop certain values and attitudes linked to art, for instance, open-mindedness, independence and self-confidence. Adolescents in the middle school appreciate art education for giving them the opportunity to create and develop their individuality. “You can do what you can do ... what each individual wants ... I think it is important to have subjects where everyone can be different ...then your own work is special”, says Susan.

Having acquired the means to work with enables students to put forth their ideas in practice, whether their pictures are meant to express feelings, communicate messages, or concentrate on the formal elements of drawing / painting. The students seem well aware that without these tools their meaning making practices in art would remain limited.

The process of drawing and painting is at least every bit as important to the adolescents as is the content of their pictures or the finished work. Although the subject matter may be very meaningful, it is the actual activity of making pictures that

gives the greatest satisfaction. Students conceptualize the meaning of art making process as a source of intrinsic feelings. It can be understood as both physical and cognitive sensory experience, where working with your hands aids in processing your thoughts. The process can also function in a way that it influences or alters student's mood, be it the activity itself or the involvement with a subject matter.

It is through the creative process that students can become conscious of their feelings and thoughts. For those who choose to express feelings, their issues are closely related to themselves, their everyday life situation or their personal histories. However, there can be different motives for "expression" depending on the coexistence with the other categories (modes). For Heather and Isabel uncovering their feelings through art production by "getting deeply involved – giving it all you got" brings them in turn a pleasant or "fantastic feeling" which seems to include a "therapeutic moment" during the act of expression. Being aware of her talents Kate wants to be able to express the feelings of love and security, for other people to understand. "I think I am always trying to get something across to other people in my work, even if not everyone gets it..." she says and concludes "I would like people to feel warmth and peacefulness when experiencing this work". Others, like Charlie and Nadine are aware of their works reflecting the feelings they possess at the moment of their artistic activities, whereas the pictures of Lauren and Ashley express their peaceful and positive outlook on life and thus reflect their personalities.

The interconnectedness of the categories is well reflected in Kate's wish to express herself through her pictures as well as reaching out to others (category of "communication") "...the message I would like to send is the importance of love and care". For Kate and the other students, who seem to deliberately use their picture as a message, there is an interactive aspect to their picture making i.e. they want to have an effect on people or a wish to connect with others (see Rantala 1998:47). However for the adolescents, who claim not to put messages in their works but are still aware of this communicative potential, connecting with others is not as important as their individual expression and appreciation for their own work.

The findings show different ways in which adolescents' artistic activities and products relate closely to their self-identity. Being successful in their art brings them added self-esteem through praise from others as well as their own self-evaluation. This in turn is made possible by their knowledge and skills, thus interconnecting

categories again. Students' artistic abilities seem to grant them a certain "role" among their friends or in school, which makes them concerned with a self – image of being artistically oriented. Developing one's own artistic style, as well as aesthetic values are added features that relate the adolescents' artistic activities directly to how they reflect upon themselves; art making is a part of their self-image, their life-style.

Adolescents in the art school, especially, emphasized the importance of the social aspect of art classes, i.e. being with others sharing the same interest. This seems to be related to the students' need to share the same social and cultural context or to "create a micro culture" around the practice of making pictures (see Fornäs, 1995). Students from both schools seem to experience enjoyment of seeing what other students are doing, and state it creates more flow of ideas, while working together. Another social issue contributing to students' interest in art and the meaning they attach to it might stem from their parents or other close family members being artists or in some way connected to the arts. Students seem to find talking about their pictures, and art in general, both pleasant and constructive. However opportunities for this are too rare, in their opinion. The need for an audience may account for visual narration reaching its final version in verbal accounting, as well as needing outside reference points and witnesses to our narratives (Rantala 1997; Giddens, 1991).

7. Quantitative perspective

Students' placements in the categories

The following section illustrates a quantitative perspective of the students' responses as they have been placed in the six categories. Placing the students in the different categories shows that these categories are not equally important to the interviewees. They demonstrate possible ways for the adolescents to attach meaning to their artistic activities. Thus indicating different motivation for making pictures, but the categories all reflect upon the meaning students tie to their art and artistic activities.

The tables show the responsiveness of the students to each category, an attempt to map the range of the students' different ways of making meaning of art and art production in their everyday life. In order to do so similar criteria had to be made for each category. Criteria for a category could be described as the way in which the students attribute different meaning to the categories – if they mention expression of feelings, for instance, as being important in their picture making or give it no significance at all. In order to be placed in a category it had to be clear in the interview text that the particular concepts were important to the student.

The chapter will focus on the quantitative comparisons between categories as such, shown in table 6.2, as well as the differences between the schools, which are shown in table 6.3, and gender differences, which are presented in table 6.4. The columns: “imperative” and “not imperative” indicate how significant the category is to the number of students placed there, the latter referring to none or very little significance. The subcategories have been included in these latter two tables to shed light on the variation in the quality of responses, or how the adolescents attribute different qualities to art making. However, as a student's response can belong to more than one subcategory, this affects the total sum in the columns vertically. In the horizontal rows the total number (imperative + not imperative) is twenty, or the sum of all the students together.

All twenty students have been placed in the first category, “mastering elements and principles of visual art”, (see table 6.2). The mode is imperative to every

student, based on the importance they place on learning the rules of form and composition, as well as the theories of color and variety of techniques. They are aware that these “tools” provide them the means to express or communicate what they need or want in their artistic activities and this seems important and meaningful to them. It may be seen as the means to assess whether the vision put forth with intent or goal setting has been achieved.

Table 6.2 Number of students inhabiting each category

Categories	
Mastering elements and principles of visual art	20
Process as satisfaction (intrinsic value)	20
Communication	7
Expression / feelings	11
Artistic self-image	14
Social significance	12

The second category “process” is the other one in which, all the students have been placed. Referring to the activity of drawing and painting, every student shares the sentiment that the artistic process provides a high level of intrinsic feeling, for instance: satisfaction, enjoyment or relief. Although it might be difficult to put the experience of making art into words, a certain excitement could be detected in students’ verbalization. Their expressions indicated both the corporeal and cerebral experience as an important part of the meaning making art has in their everyday life.

“Communication” is not a category that many share, only seven students or about one third of the group. However, it can be reasonably linked to the next category “expression / feelings” in that a student expressing feelings in an artwork may also want to communicate those same feelings as a message to others. Yet, not all

the students who share the category “expression / feelings” by being self-reflective or expressing emotions through their artistic creation seem to use their pictures for delivering messages. Thus making both categories relevant although they may be said to co-exist.

Fourteen students associate their artistic activities with their “self-identity” and have therefore been placed in the category “artistic self-image”. More of the students who seem to be concerned with a self-image of being artistically oriented are in the art school (see table 6.3.). There, as well as learning rules and techniques of picture making, emphasis is put on becoming a self-confident and creative individual.

The social aspect of their artistic activities is imperative to approximately two thirds of the adolescents or twelve students. Showing how important being with others and sharing in your artistic activities seems to be for the students. This relates also to the influence family and friends might have on the teenagers’ interest and attitude in and towards art and artistic value.

Differences between the two schools

As stated above, every adolescent in both groups regards it necessary to gain some knowledge of the elements and principles of visual art. However, while all the students in the art school expressed explicit desire to learn more and to improve their artistic knowledge and skills (see first subcategory in table 6.3.) only one from the middle school mentioned this. Nine students from the art school relate improving their artistic knowledge and skills directly to their picture making (see second subcategory, self-assessment). For these students learning the rules of composition and how to use color, as well as mastering different techniques provides them, among other things, with means to assess whether they succeed in their picture making. Although only one student from the middle school expressed desire to learn more in art, eight students there regarded self-assessment as one important aspect of picture making. Four students in the art school and two from the middle school related artistic knowledge to the ability to be able to evaluate other art or art forms (see third subcategory; evaluation / visual culture).

For all the adolescents from both schools the meaning of the artistic process of drawing or painting is connected to intrinsic feelings or satisfaction. But as can be seen in the subcategories some students also described additional ways in which they

found the process meaningful to them. Three students, one in the art school, two from the middle school, referred to the process as a venue which allows you to see what you think and / or where you develop your ideas (second subcategory; see thoughts & ideas). When students describe the course of artistic creation as a sensory experience (see subcategory; influencing or controlling mood), not much difference can be detected between the two schools. Five adolescents in the art school and four from the middle school claimed the process of drawing and painting does influence and / or can control one's mood or feelings.

Table 6.3. Differences between the two schools

	Art school (n=10)		Middle school (n=10)		
Categories	Number of responses:		Number of responses:		Number of imperative responses A M
	Imperative	not imperative	Imperative	not imperative	
Mastering elements ...					23 11
-Artistic skills & knowledge	10	-	1	9	
-Self-assessment	9	1	8	2	
-Evaluation/visual culture	4	6	2	8	
Process as:					16 16
-Intrinsic value	10		10		
-See thoughts & ideas...	1	9	2	8	
-Influence or control mood	5	5	4	6	
Communication					4 3
-Picture as a message	4	6	3	7	
Expression / feelings					6 5
-Therapeutic meaning	4	6	2	8	
-Self reflection	2	8	3	7	
Artistic self-image					19 9
-To construct self-identity	9	1	3	7	
-Role of "artist"	7	3	1	9	
-Style & values	3	7	5	5	
Social significance					11 8
-Being with others / alone	5	5	2	8	
-Sharing (flow of ideas)	1	9	2	8	
-Social/cultural context	5	5	4	6	

*As students may be placed in more then one subcategory the added number of these may exceed the total number of students placed in the category.

The results show similarities among students from both schools in their understanding of communication through art – pictures. Although all the teenagers are well aware of the communicative potential their pictures have for delivering messages, only seven students (4as, 3ms)³ deliberately use drawing or art making for this purpose. For these students it is important that others understand their art - pictures, what they have to say, but for the remaining students (6as, 7ms) the key factor is that they themselves are pleased with their own pictures.

About half the students from each school have been placed in the category expression / feelings. These eleven students (6as, 5ms) acknowledged the importance of putting emotions forward in their art – pictures. However, more students in the art school (4as, 2ms) than in the middle school state this is the most important aspect of producing art – pictures; to express your innermost feelings (see subcategory one). Similar number in both schools (2as, 3ms) said their pictures reflect the way they look upon life or how they feel at the time they are making their works (see subcategory; self-reflection). It is worth noting that the other nine students said they do not intentionally express feelings in their art works.

The findings show noticeable difference between schools, in students' understanding of how their artistic activities contribute to their self-identity. Almost all the students who attend the art school claimed art has a direct influence on how they look upon themselves, their artistic self-image. In the middle school half of the students linked their art production directly or indirectly⁴ to their self-identity, while the other students in that school did not state any such connection. Seven students in the art school explained how they have been granted the 'role of artist' (second subcategory) or they look upon themselves as artist, while only one student from the middle school claimed this to be the case. It is noteworthy however, when it comes to those who claim to have found their artistic style, more students from the middle school made this claim than in the art school. This seems to be due to the awareness the art school students have of being in the process of practising and developing a style.

³ as=art school, ms=middle school

⁴ The only link three students made with artistic self-image was stating they had developed their own 'artistic style'.

The results show some difference between the two groups of students when it comes to the social significance of art and art making, as can be seen in the placement of students in the sixth category. Seven students in the art school mentioned various social aspects related to the meaning of art or art production in their everyday life. While only five students from the middle school found such aspects important. First of all more students from the art school (5as, 2ms) emphasized the importance of being with others (see first subcategory) during their artistic activities. These two students from the middle school however, also claimed sharing (second subcategory) provided more flow of ideas whereas only one student in the art school mentioned this. There were also more students in the art school (5as, 4ms) who stated that their artistic interest and values (see subcategory; social/cultural context) might have been, socialized by their family background and / or the art school.

Gender differences

When it comes to gender three categories show noticeable differences: communication, expression / feelings and artistic self-image. In some of the subcategories the differences seem to be even more evident.

It is worth noting that girls more often than boys (5g, 2b)⁵ use their pictures deliberately to deliver messages. More girls than boys claimed to be able to put messages meant for others in their works although they do not choose to do so. More often girls than boys also said it easier to communicate your thoughts through drawing than with words.

The category expression / feelings shows that girls more often than boys (7g, 4b) seek to express feelings in their art - pictures. Two of these four boys who maintain this, do so for the 'therapeutic meaning' i.e. 'it is a vent for feelings', or 'it results in feeling good' (see first subcategory). The other two boys stated their works reflect their feelings or mood as it is while they are making the work (see subcategory; self-reflection). Three girls placed in that same subcategory said they want their works to reflect their personalities or outlook on life.

More girls than boys (7g, 5b) seemed to link their artistic activities to their self-identity or image, as can be seen in the mode of artistic self-image (subcategory one). It was also more often the case that girls stated art and art – production played

⁵ g=girl, b=boy

an important part in their everyday life. Six girls seemed to see themselves in the role of “artist” (see second subcategory) while only two boys expressed this sentiment. Equally many girls and boys (4g, 4b) claimed to already have, or to be developing, their own style.

Table 6.4. Gender differences

	Girls (n=11)		Boys (n=9)		
Categories	Number of responses:		Number of responses:		Number of imperative responses
	Imperative	not imperative	Imperative	not imperative	G B
Mastering elements ...					19 15
-Artistic skills & knowledge	6	5	5	4	
-Self-assessment	9	2	8	1	
-Evaluation/visual culture	4	7	2	7	
Process as:					19 13
-Intrinsic value	11		9		
-See thoughts & ideas...	3	8	-	9	
-Influence or control mood	5	6	4	5	
Communication					5 2
-Picture as a message	5	6	2	7	
Expression / feelings					7 4
-Therapeutic meaning	4	7	2	7	
-Self reflection	3	8	2	7	
Artistic self-image					17 11
-To construct self-identity	7	4	5	4	
-Role of “artist”	6	5	2	7	
-Style & values	4	7	4	5	
Social significance					11 8
-Being with others / alone	3	8	4	5	
-Sharing (flow of ideas)	1	10	2	7	
-Social/cultural context	7	4	2	7	

* As students may be placed in more than one subcategory the added number of these may exceed the total number of students placed in the category.

The category social significance shows that similar number of girls and boys (3g, 4b) emphasize the meaning of being with others during their artistic activities and sharing, for instance, ideas (see subcategories one and two). However, looking at the

last subcategory; ‘social and cultural context’ it is evident that more girls than boys (7g, 2b) seem to believe that their artistic interests and values might have been socialized by families or friends.

Summary and tentative interpretation of the quantitative perspective

The quantitative results although only ‘tentative’ enable the use of another perspective on the data. This perspective points out to us the quantitative variation between categories concerning students’ meaning making. It also sheds light on the differences between categories according to school form and gender.

The results show that the students attribute different meanings to the categories, they are not all equally important to them. However the first two categories seem to carry an importance to every student, and are thus different from the other four, which are mentioned by significantly fewer students.

Mastering the technique of art making (mastering elements...) and the artistic process (process) itself are the two categories most often mentioned by the students. In their accounts they refer to these modes as important and meaningful “it [art learning] trains you to draw what you are thinking” remarks Andy and for Heather “the process of making art is more important than the finished piece”. These views echo the voices of the youngsters when they speak about what learning in art and the process of art making means to them. Combined these categories provide the youngsters with the ability to write the visual language needed to achieve the multiple intrinsic feelings the creative process itself provides.

The other four categories do not seem to be of this same significance to all the students. The number of students placed in these categories show that anywhere from less than half (communication) to more than half (artistic self-image) of the students appear to find them meaningful. Rantala (1998:39) argues that the producing of visual artifacts such as making art – pictures is one of the many signifying practices people use in order to reflect upon themselves and the world. Art making can also be seen as providing means to communicate or send messages to others. Yet only about half of the adolescents in my study give the impression to use their art making to express their feelings or to communicate.

It should be noted that the art teacher at the middle school when asked what she emphasizes most in her teaching remarks: “They have to be able to express themselves ... I try to make sure something comes from within them. I feel very good when I see that happen ... if they can express themselves ... if they really get into it and I can get them to open up.” However, it is the basic components of art, such as color and form theory that carry most weight in the curricula along with working with ideas, creativity and visual perception (Jóhanna Þórunn Ingimarsdóttir, 2000). This might account in some way for the stronger importance students seem to put on artistic knowledge and skills rather than that of expression of feelings or communication.

Examining the quantitative perspective also offers a look at the differences between categories according to school form and gender. In the categories that refer to the actual artistic activities (categories 2, 3 and 4) there is no difference between schools. Whereas “mastering elements...” and “artistic self-image” seem to be expressions used more generally among the adolescents in the art school than in the middle school.

Although all of the adolescents maintain that it is important to develop artistic skills and knowledge (mastering elements...) and in that way acquire the fundamental ability in visual arts it is first and foremost the adolescents in the art school who emphasize the wish to learn more and become better. Which is of one of their goals by being in the art school as voiced by Kate: “to become better and train certain skills”. The students in the middle school all seem to enjoy their art classes and appreciate what they learn there although they do not put the same emphasis on learning more in the arts. Their voices tell us they find art education “useful” and when it comes to using this acquired knowledge for self-assessment there is no difference to speak of between the two groups (see table 6.3. subcategory two in “mastering elements...”).

In her research project on art teaching in Icelandic compulsory schooling Jóhanna Þórunn Ingimarsdóttir (2000) argues that teachers are of the opinion that the best way to get their ideas across is for students to learn as many methods as possible to interpret images and to become acquainted with as many types of materials as possible. As well as stating that teachers seem to hold the view that if students are introduced to many methods with which to work then they will each find a medium which suits them and in which they flourish.

While every student claims that artistic knowledge and skills are important to learn and master the quantitative perspective points out the fact that this meaning is different for the students in the art school or those from the middle school. The students from the middle school seem to enjoy and value learning in art without generally expressing desire for further study in the area. Whereas the adolescents in the art school go there specifically to improve their artistic knowledge and skills and master the fundamentals of art. Although the educational objectives there are closely related to the national curriculum, it is seen as an addition to what is taught in the compulsory school system. Furthermore the school aims at enhancing students' artistic independence through emphasis on their creative imagination and self-expression such building up self-confidence in their creativity. When the students reach the youth or adolescents courses the aim can be seen as preparation for future professional studies in visual arts for those who choose to do so.

Kati Rantala (1998:54) argues that art school enables self-realization as the teenagers use art in order to reflect upon themselves and to form a life-style. All but one of my interviewees from the art school agreed that art is a large part of their lives and affects their identity (see artistic self-image subcategory one). Only three students from the middle school expressed the sentiment that their artistic activities i.e. art education affects their self-identity. These differences might easily be said to represent the different level in interest the adolescents have in art education and / or artistic activities as well as the possibility that the added emphasis on self-esteem, creative imagination and independence in the art school could be an influencing factor.

When it comes to the social factor involved in art and art production (social significance) the difference between schools is most noticeable in the importance of being with others (subcategory one) during the artistic activities. Half of the students in the art school emphasize the importance of being with others that share the same interest whereas only two students from the middle school find this important. It should be noted that the number of students per class at the art school does not usually exceed twelve, while an average class in the elementary or middle school counts about 21 students. Perhaps Holly's remark is an indication for this difference: "I like it being peaceful when I draw then my pictures come out better ...I also think more and do better. There is too much noise in school to do good pictures."

One of the demands art teachers in the compulsory school system have voiced is to have fewer students in their classes (Jóhanna Þórunn Ingimarsdóttir, 2000). In some schools this request has been met by dividing the classes in half but unfortunately this results in students getting only half the amount of time allotted to them in the curriculum.

Does the gender difference portrayed in table 6.4 exemplify the typical pictures of gender as often displayed in youth research? The difference in the first (mastering elements...) and last category (social significance) as portrayed in table 6.4 is ever so slight except in subcategory three in both cases where the difference is more noticeable. In other words it seems girls are more likely than boys to use their knowledge in art for aesthetic evaluation (evaluation/visual culture) and besides this girls speak significantly more often of the value social and / or cultural context (social significance subcategory three) add to the meaning art has in their everyday lives. This latter might be said to reflect what Guðný Guðbjörnsdóttir (1994) states is present in much new youth research i.e. relationality is more important to girls than boys. Yet the former might display the change that has been suggested in that girls / women now are more autonomous in spite of relationship and care still being important factors in their self-image (Guðný Guðbjörnsdóttir, 1994:183).

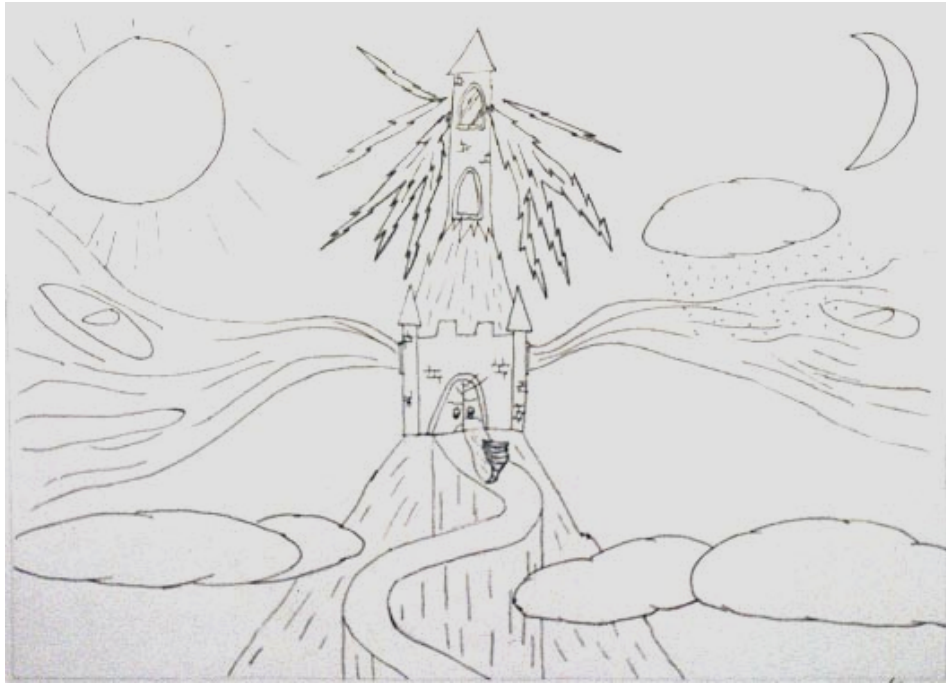
The other four categories show some more divergence between gender groups although not great. As far as “process” goes it is only in subcategory two “see thoughts and ideas” that there is more than a slight difference. There only girls mention the process being a venue where they can visualize their thoughts and ideas, which may be related to Gilmour (1986:38) when he argues that artists’ ideas undergo change and development in the process of creation.

Communication, expression / feelings and artistic self-image are categories that seem to differentiate the girls from the boys in some way although not shared by girls only (see table 6.4). This may again reflect the orientation of girls towards others i.e. through relationship, interdependence and care (see Gilligan, 1982), which coincides with the above-mentioned “social/cultural” context also carrying more significance for the girls. Although many boys do indeed use their art making for differentiation and therefore comply (meet the terms) with the typical picture painted of boys’ identity work as: “striving at independence and autonomy” (see Rantala, 1998: 51), the girls seem no less autonomous. Their “artistic self-image” speaks of

this as they are non-reluctant to look upon themselves in the role of “artist” (see subcategory two), thus not having much trouble uniting two or more roles: the self-independent girl with the one caring for others.

Where gender differentiation is evident in the categories (see cat. 2,3,4 and 5 in table 6.4) it should be noted that hardly any difference exists between schools in these categories (see the same in table 6.3), except in the category “artistic self-image”. This seems to imply that studying art, as a special hobby, does not affect the so-called typical gender identity of boys and girls. This comes somewhat as a surprise as I expected the young art students to be more groundbreaking in their self-expression especially in a country where gender roles are no longer considered to be so clear-cut. Guðný Guðbjörnsdóttir (1994) argues that the changed status of women in society is reflected in the ideas young people have of themselves and their future, especially that the more favorable outcome for girls can be related to the encouragement provided by new role models. Girls’ identity today seems to be characterized by both self-independence and caring for others, which Guðný Guðbjörnsdóttir states (1994:183) reflects the demand modern society places on women i.e. on the one hand autonomy and on the other caring.

There are not many milieus for boys to express insecurities and emotions although contemporary society places this demand upon them (Rantala, 1998:51). The most noticeable difference when it comes to gender is that only a few boys state they wish to use the expressive and communicative aspects art production offers whereas this seems to be more meaningful to the girls. There are indications that fewer adolescent boys than girls use art as a hobby or attend art school (Rapport about social activities and leisure time of Icelandic teenagers, 2000), as well as during adolescence boys more often “drop out” of art schools than girls. One conclusion to draw from this might be that since art is not often a hobby associated with teenage boys the emphasis in their art must be on differentiation, which in the students’ verbal account is only mentioned by boys. This, along with emphasis on the formal elements of visual art to show what they have learned and mastered, may indeed justify their artistic practice (see Rantala 1998).



Picture 5. For David although drawing can be like a play it is also important for him to show what he has learned and mastered in the discipline of drawing. Reproduced with the kind permission of the artist.

8. Interpreting the results

As researchers and teachers we have to reconstruct our notions of what children are in the light of their own evidence.

- Marjatta Saarnivaara

Art education and the place of children, 77-78

In the following chapter I will put forward my interpretations and speculations about the results / findings of this study. Looking both to the qualitative and quantitative analysis allows me to present a more multi-faceted picture of the phenomenon I have studied than if using only one type of analysis.

In the qualitative analysis it is the description of various meanings students attach to their artistic work that will be portrayed, whereas the quantitative analysis describes differences between groups as far as meaning making goes. Combined they are meant to portray the role of art and art production in everyday life of the adolescents studied and how they construct narrative identity.

I will pursue the same order by which the “meaning making” modes were presented in chapter six and discuss the relevance of each one to the overall picture of the “meaning of art making and art as meaning making”.

Artistic learning and the creative process are the main qualities that constitute the meaning of art and art production in adolescents’ everyday life. But there are also other key features closely interwoven into the meanings that young people attach to their artistic activities, such as its social- and personal significance or possible means of constructing identity. Furthermore, two aspects of meaning making rest on the belief, that all pictorial representational activity shares a communication potential (Darras & Kindler, 1998:148) first, to uncover and express feelings and personally meaningful matters, and second to have something to say in a picture.

Learning in and through art

“ I want to study, to learn. In the art school one has a goal ...trying to become better and train certain skills. I like being good at what I do ... I am aware I have a certain capacity, talent. You understand it when you get praise. Then you want to become even better...it is encouraging” (Kate).

There are ways in which young people through their artistry can construct ideas and represent their worlds. In order to do so they need to learn and master the skills needed for this. For the adolescents in this study the importance of building up concrete skills of drawing and painting is quite clear. They are very aware of the means this provides them with, to bring forth in their art works what is most important to them. The knowledge of these basic principles and elements of visual arts is closely related to the other aspects that make art and art making meaningful to the teenage interviewees. Without this knowledge they could not rely on self-evaluation as to whether their works “turn out good” or they have “succeeded” in their attempts. Indeed self-evaluation or using one's own judgment is something the students apply to their own works as well as their artistic abilities. They are also proud of their capabilities. “At least it makes me know I can do something and if someone likes it... well that feels good”, says Audrey. Art education thus provides the students with tangible abilities, which in turn, result in the idea of being good at something: personal worth (Rantala & Lehtonen, 2001:69).

The students expressed a variety of reasons for why they thought knowledge and skills in art was important. All combined it provides them with the ability to put forth in visual language their ideas, thoughts and / or feelings. These concrete images, in turn become obtainable for self-evaluation and the students also become capable of doing new things. “It is a fantastic feeling when you succeed, Kevin remarks, ... and if it does not happen then I just try not to get upset and decide to do better next, and you always do better in the next picture.” So the drive to learn does not only build up concrete skills and provide pleasure, it also offers new challenges, potentiality – even if you do well now, there is much to learn – you can always become better.

Closely related to learning the specific skills that, art education offers is a broader knowledge in one's own culture, more particularly being able to distinguish aesthetic qualities. It was evident in the students' responses that they feel this asset

helps them discuss art in general and to form their own opinions as Lisa remarks: “Studying art has had an effect on me ... in the way that people ask my opinion on different things ... I have knowledge and it matters very much.” This according to Rantala & Lehtonen, (2001:69) is valuable in a culture where capabilities and possibilities have become the highest good, with the highest value. In other words, knowledge and potentiality in the arts is an asset in a society where the need for creativity and initiative, both learned in the arts, has never been greater.

Visual culture is becoming a term often used in the context of art education as perhaps now more than at any other time in history we are living our lives through visual imagery or “a whole new culture of the image” (Duncan, 2002:15; Jameson, 1984). Through the above-mentioned artistic knowledge the adolescents have formed strong individual opinions of the meaning of visual culture which aesthetic they claimed to be different “although related to art”. The students described films, advertisements and many computer created images as closely related to art as well as having possibilities to “reach more people than fine arts in galleries” as Susan explained. However, in their eyes it does not have the same meaning as “traditional art”, which for them is more personal and requires more ‘thinking and feeling’. Although, many voices among art educators are speaking for visual culture becoming a general part of art education, it is still for the most part built on the goals representing modernist art education. This is reflected in that visual culture, although a part of young people’s everyday lives, receives this distinction from their “ordinary” artistic practices.

There are various reasons behind the importance the teenagers put on learning the fundamentals of visual arts as well as building up artistic knowledge and skills. However, they all indicate the students’ awareness of the importance visual language and images play in their everyday life. For it is through means of visual organization that young people can assemble new and complex ideas about themselves and their worlds (Burton, 2000).

The dynamic act of creating

“It feels like playing soccer ...it begins and the other team scores a goal then you score a goal but they do too ...then you are taken off the field and then you want to get back in to finish the game. And making art is like that ...you cannot stop until you have finished” (Michael).

The artistic process is where ideas come to life through the manipulation of material. Gilmour (1986:38) argues that the painter or sculptor’s ideas gain depth and develop during the process of creation. It is here the artist’s perceptions about how to go on developing the work emerge in response to what already has been created. For the twenty students in this study, the creative process lends itself to being something almost magical.

It is through the process that the dialogue between the maker and the material takes place. This dialogue produces what in the students’ own voices are all kinds of wondrous feelings and at the same time can be both cognitive and physical sensory experience. Judith Burton (2000:333) states that “through the agency of a particular material, experience is reflected upon, possibilities entertained, selections and combination constructed and, often, as the work itself comes into being, transformative experiences occur – the world and self are known differently.”

In my study the adolescents describe similar experiences. It is during the process of drawing or painting that their thoughts materialize and become available as possibilities for new explorations and elaborations. And it is through this dialectic, involving active, hands on, bodily manipulation of material, that much important learning takes place, says Burton (2000:334). This goes hand in hand with the adolescents’ description of the process as being “where you work both with your hands and head” or as Charlie remarks: “you think while you work with your hands.”

It is also during this “engagement of the mind with material” that students feel creation takes place. “I love when I am drawing ... that is when one is creating”, remarks Steven. Then as the ongoing dialogue with material allows students to reflect on the outcome they further engage in thinking, feeling and sensing which permits them to ask questions of, and construct narratives about their lives as ordinarily lived (Greene, 2001; Burton, 2001).

There is an agreement among the students that the actual process of artistic creation is a satisfying experience that gives immediate pleasure. It is this intrinsic reward that stands out as making art production meaningful in the everyday life of the young adolescents. “It is fun”, “gives enjoyment and pleasant feelings” it is both “exciting” and “relaxing”. Although this reward does not always come easy as Heather points out when she says “the process does not always give a good feeling ... when difficult ... it can feel bad. It is important too”, she remarks. Thus showing us another side of the intrinsic value found in the process.

When drawing and painting the adolescents are using their trained abilities to put on paper or canvas images that are meaningful to them and in that way they give form to various aspects of their life. Their artistic learning is a necessary factor in making the process meaningful by producing “successful” outcomes i.e. art works. According to Rantala (1997:230) this can be for the students both rewarding and empowering, as is reflected in Noah’s statement. “It is a very pleasant feeling when you have made a picture you are pleased with ... sometimes I find it almost incredible I did that. It makes me feel good.”

The creative process has been described as “goal-directed visual thinking” where artists engage the logical faculties of the mind in a problem-solving situation (Winner, 1982:42; Perkins, 1981). The same thoughts are echoed in the students’ voices, which tell us that they relate setting goals and self-evaluation directly to their picture making. “I wanted the butterfly in my picture to come out perfect ... I wanted to achieve success”, says Paul. In this, their art making, students experience themselves as self-responsible agents in charge of their actions. As Bruner (1996:38) suggests setting and achieving goals should be a part of students’ responsibilities in all aspects of school activities. Art education lends itself especially well to this.

As the adolescents have expressed in their own voices the creative process affects their moods and / or feelings in diverse ways. A dark and dreary picture can make you experience sadness but yet bring relief, and sunny or bright colors might bring joy. It can also be noted in their responses, that regardless of the subject matter the mere act of drawing or painting has the power to alter their moods. “When I am in a bad mood I do not paint dark or dreary things ... I just paint like always and then my mood becomes better. To paint a picture influences my mood in a positive way, it brings me joy”, Lisa explains. It is therefore through this entire “color scale of

feelings” (to use Heather’s remark) the process provokes that the adolescents experience the contentment that is to be found in artistic creation.

Mirroring the inner person / reflecting myself

“So my pictures express happiness and peacefulness, there is never much going on in my pictures. I am rather a calm person ... they probably reflect how I feel” (Nadine).

“I like using art as a vent ... it can be an outlet for feelings” (Isabel).

“There is a way to express feelings through drawing or creating” (Ashley).

“The most important is to express something ... that there are feelings in the work ... I don’t think it is much of a work without feelings. Without feelings it is not my work” (Kate).

Artistic creation allows students to visualize experiences and express their innermost feelings. Rantala (1997:223) maintains that concrete objective signs drawn on to paper become more tangible, enabling profound self-reflection. Through their pictures the adolescents can find ways of reflecting on, organizing and speaking to their experiences of being in the world. For just like art works made by professional artists students’ paintings and drawings are works of the human mind and they contain meaning, feelings, intentions, and expectation. Lowenfeld (1957) refers to the shared purposes that artist and child put into their art, namely expression and self-knowledge. Once put on paper or canvas these become available for self- reflection in addition to providing “outlet for feelings”, which might result in a therapeutic moment. Although only about half the students specify that using their art to express feelings is what makes it important in their lives, every student’s work can be said to express in one way or another aspects of her everyday life.

As we have seen the most common aspect of making art meaningful in the lives of the adolescents in this study is engaging imaginatively with materials and processes combined with acquiring artistic knowledge and skills. These possibilities and abilities open up opportunities to widen knowledge about self and culture and thus make existence meaningful through creativity.

To the students in my study who link their artistic activities and production to expression of feelings it can have more than one meaning. By deliberately choosing to enclose expression in her art pictures the student first depicts her feelings and thoughts to herself, becomes aware of them through what can be likened to “therapeutic moment”. Gilmour (1986:38) argues that feelings form themselves out of relatively vague backgrounds and undergo transformations as they develop. This can mean for the art student as well as the established artist that the feelings gain depth in the process of their expression in the medium, and the artist’s decisions about how to go on developing the work emerge in response to what has already been created. Students’ works can also mirror the feelings contained at the moment of creation as well as their personality or outlook on life.

According to Sava (1993) (cited in Räsänen, 1998:38), perception, cognition, and emotions are intertwined in the process of art learning. Through her senses the learner gradually develops knowledge based on emotions, which is used when building artistic meaning structures. Learners develop conceptual art knowledge by adding their feelings and images to their perceptions. Thus the knowledge based on art concepts and skills can be called *artistic cognition and thinking*. In art learning the student is actively experimenting, choosing, and integrating different forms of knowledge. The results of this process are seen in art production, as Räsänen (1998:38) states, art production being what she considers the core of experiential art learning, in other words learning in and through experience.

It is easy to understand why the process of shaping visual images plays such an important role in the meaning youngsters attach to art in their everyday life. For it is in this process that they explore, inquire, discover, reflect, imagine, develop new skills and synthesize responses in expressive form, according to Burton (1994: 489).

Picture as a means of delivering messages

“I think it might be better to say things through a picture because it can be difficult to talk about things sometimes” (Nadine).

Given the belief that artistic growth is a normative feature of general development, and that at the core of all development resides the need to shape and

communicate meaning, artistic activities take on added significance (Burton, 1994; see also Arnheim, 1989; Dewey, 1934; Gardner, 1990 and Lowenfeld, 1957 on this subject). As young people construct ideas about themselves and their world in visual materials, there is also need to communicate these ideas to others.

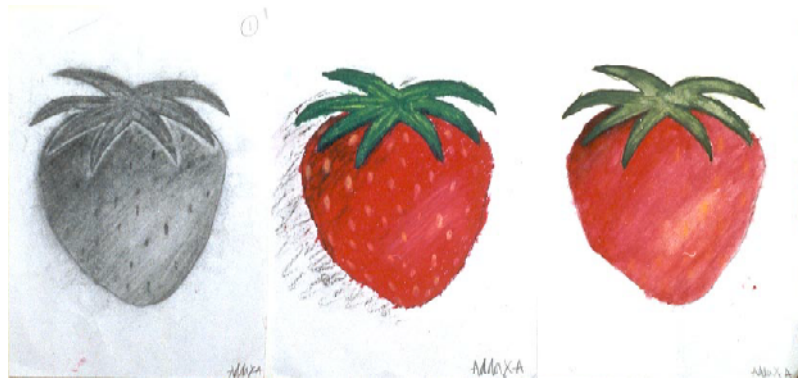
According to Rantala (1998:39) the communicative dimensions of making art – pictures are the same whether the producing agent is a teenager or “institutionalized” artist. The youngsters in my study are not in agreement that transmitting information to others through their art works is of importance to them. However, creating visual symbols that leave material marks to reflect upon makes private experience public and communicable (Ricoeur, 1976:19; see also Fornäs, 1995). It is through the publicly shared rules of visual expression that students acquire various means to communicate their thoughts and ideas, as well as observations, thus interconnecting the categories “mastering elements...” and “communication”.

By organizing experiences, making feelings and thoughts visible, art may be seen as a mode of communication. There are adolescents in my study for whom the most meaningful aspect art and art production has to offer is its communicative power. It may even seem to offer freedom beyond mere speech, “if I cannot put my opinion or feeling in words I can draw it” says Heather. Looking at art as a symbol system like words it can give voice to youngsters to reflect on their private experiences as well as making them available to the outer and shared world.

The development of facilities in the construction and communication of meaning through art has been looked upon as the acquisition of a kind of literacy by Project Zero researchers (Davis, 1997). To communicate through pictures means the adolescents want to consciously reach out to other people and / or they feel they have something to say with their pictures. According to Fornäs (1995) the picture is a means of delivering messages, which can be seen in the teenagers’ wishes to inform people of social injustice like bullying or drawing attention to the environment.

Even those students that do not claim to put messages in their works or feel the need to communicate through their art pictures do have something to say. They are using the “alphabet of visual art”, form, color and lines to realize their intentions, to produce aesthetically pleasing or visually successful works and thus show or communicate to others their capabilities.

“I chose a strawberry because it is my favorite fruit and red is my favorite color. It seems people connect me with strawberries ... red is my color because I can be a little wild ... I am full of feelings” (Audrey).



Picture 6. Audrey relates her picture of strawberries directly to her self-image. Reproduced with the kind permission of the artist.

Adolescents can mirror their own identities in various ways, using physical mirrors or symbolic expressions. Art is a means to construct identity (Rantala, 1997:220). As students make art – pictures they first organize and concretize their thoughts and experiences and in that way make them more comprehensible to themselves and others. Making art enables the adolescents to picture their everyday life and thus possibly gain a sense of reflexive control over their life circumstances. This can be understood in Audrey’s account of a picture she once made of a girl without a face standing at crossroads and having to choose what she wants “... the decision has to be hers ...”. She then admitted to having been a “little wild at he time” and making the picture helped. By relating their real life situations to the world they have represented in their art works adolescents can gain a better understanding of self.

In art making and through their artistic activities the young adolescents in my study seem to maintain and produce a positive self-image with a specific logic. The idea of doing one’s own thing, argue Rantala & Lehtonen (2001:66-67), gives thrust to building up competence as an actor and as a self-responsible agent (see also Bruner, 1996:36-37). Although the adolescents refer to the praise they get when making successful pictures as promoting self esteem and such contributing to their positive

self-image, it is through both success and failure that making of selfhood takes place. Thus the adolescents experience themselves as agents and they also must evaluate their success in what they or others expect of them.

The teenagers' self-image becomes tinted by the participation in cultural practices i.e. the art school and the feedback this offers at various levels. There is cognitive feedback that places them in the "role of artist" as well as emotional feedback in the form of praise. Through these cultural practices the students have also formed a set of cultural /aesthetic values that become a part of their artistic self-image which includes being different as well as a responsible agent. "I know more about it because I have studied it and like it" says Kevin.

Adolescents' self-esteem and their self-concept changes as a reaction to the people they are among (Gergen, 1981 cited in Bruner, 1990:109). Asked to take on a certain public role in a group their self-image often changes in fashion to be congruent with that role. The "role of artist" frequently granted to youngsters in my study, in school or among their peers, seems to facilitate the construction of artistic self-identity. This can be seen in David's response, to whether his artistic activities might tint his self-image, "so sometimes I guess it has an effect on how I look upon myself".

For the youngsters I have studied it is the interconnectedness of various aspects of their artistic activities that contribute to the reflexive process of building up a self-image. It is through the combination of the diverse features of their art making that the adolescents experience themselves as self-responsible agents in charge of their actions. They set their own goals, delight in facing challenges, cope with failure only to try again until success is achieved, as they are fully aware that although good there is always room to become better.

Contributing to youngsters' understanding of self and world is the development of one's own style. According to Gilmour (1986) style is far more than a mere means of expression and both those youngsters who already claim to have their own style and those in the process of developing one are clearly aware of its' importance. As style for the artist constitutes her way of being in the world (Gilmour, 1986:187) so it can form students' answer to the question "who am I?" Lisa's art – pictures show her style is closely related to the way she looks upon herself. "I want everything very organized and plain so in that sense it [her style] reflects my style of

life. I like things clean cut, no frills or confusion. I am like that. I am rather a calm person don't get easily bothered".

Artistic self-image is thus constructed through the intertwining of cognitive ability (artistic skills and knowledge) and physical sensory pleasure, the balancing contrast between success and failure as well as cultural perspective.

Being with others that are doing the same ...

"If you are alone you don't get any ideas. It is important to be with others doing the same thing" (Robert).

"...the atmosphere has to be positive and the influence from others can help" (Audrey).

The practice of art, whether in the art school or in the art room at the middle school, invites the creation of a microculture around the practice by sharing with other students the learning of the basic skills and values attached to art (see Rantala, 1998: 53; Fornäs, 1995). This sentiment is evidently more prominent among the students in the art school for whom the importance of being with others sharing the same artistic interest is a significant part of being in the art school. The art school is a place where self-realization is made possible and this contributes to its social significance (Rantala, 1998:46).

Students are aware that the art school implies a certain cultural orientation to art and a different life-style and they 'need it' as Heather explains, "to feel that the other kids that are there ... that they need this too." Rantala (1998:46) argues that students in the art school need the presence of other similarly oriented pupils, since an awareness of shared interests gives credibility to their own involvement, which is visibly echoed in Heather's statement. Practising art in the art school affects the adolescents relationship with their peers, strengthens their personality and last but not least being a part of "microculture" (Fornäs, 1995) helps adolescents to place themselves in society.

As we have seen the social aspect of art education, i.e. other people sharing the practice of art making, is important to make it socially legitimate. This might also be seen as another feature affecting self-identity if we look at the concept of self-

understanding, which according to Räsänen (1998: 56) used in its post-modern meaning refers to the self as a social construction. However, although sociability at the art school or in art classes is important to many students, it is first and foremost the commitment toward self, the responsibility for one's own actions that is essential.

Making pictures requires a certain atmosphere in the minds of many students. Being with others in a certain social or cultural setting with shared expectations seems to produce this environment where flow of ideas makes creativity blossom. It is also “nice” to be able to share your interest or involvement in art with others for instance a family member or a “friend in the arts” like Noah calls his friend and school mate Isabel. Both Noah and other students explained that the sociability of ones surroundings played an important role in the meaning art might have in their everyday life such as a grandmother that is “sort of an artist” or a family involvement in general.

However, when it comes to talking about one's own art pictures students claimed they do not get an opportunity to do so often enough. Rantala (1997: 237) implicates that art educators might take into consideration that the teaching of art should not only concentrate on producing art works of technical and aesthetic quality. But to develop ways in which art could be seen as a means to handle and produce knowledge and experiences about oneself and the world would also benefit their students. As has been mentioned previously it is the basic components of art that carry most weight in the art curricula in the Icelandic school system, along with working with ideas, creativity and visual perception (Jóhanna Þórunn Ingimarsdóttir, 2000). Thus Rantala's implication seems to be valid in this context too. It is worth noting that although Discipline Based Art Education, with one of its discipline being art criticism, has been the theoretical base for teaching youngsters at the art school, those students in the study voiced the same opinion of not getting enough opportunities to talk about their works.

“I have not contemplated or thought much about my pictures... but when I start talking about them I really understand them” (Audrey).

According to Bruner (1996:39), story making or narrative is the mode of thinking and feeling that helps children create a version of the world in which, psychologically, they can envision a place for themselves – a personal world. Looking at narrative as a mode of thought and a vehicle for meaning making we may assume the same for visual narration. In this section I will portray students’ narrative identity as it is constructed via the stories they told about their art – pictures.

Art presents feeling for our contemplation, making it visible or audible or in some other way perceivable through symbols. It is through visual symbols that youngsters can organize their life-experiences, making them available to reflect upon and at the same time more comprehensive to themselves. This can be seen as especially valuable during the time of adolescence when confused thoughts and feelings emerge about self, about life style choices, about mastery over ones own circumstances.

Talking about their pictures, the adolescents in my study reflected their self-image by connecting what they want to express or communicate in their works to the way they perceive themselves and understand the world. By relating the two they are positioning themselves or finding their place in the world. Their stories tell about the world they live in at the time of telling, not necessarily about the time of the original expression because every interpretation is a new one. Kati Rantala (1997: 224 –225) argues that “when an artwork is completed, the artist is the same as and yet a different person than the one who painted the picture”. This I believe is the same whether the producer of the artwork is a teenager or a professional artist.

Describing or telling about their artworks the students offered interpretations based on the present time. As they have changed with the world around them new and different narratives give way to changed interpretations of the original situation. Heather, for instance, links the past to the present as she interprets the picture of an angel she made for her mother some years ago: “I made this picture for my mother ... actually this is my mother when I think about it ...[now]. ... I remember thinking of

that while I made it. My mother is the best in the world. I don't know about angels or some things ... I do believe they exist ... life is just not finished... I don't want to believe that life is over when we die". Drawing upon the idea of "constructing an image of permanence to a changing self" (Rantala, 1997:22; Ricoeur, 1992), the adolescents make their interpretations conform to the demands of the present situation.



Picture 7. The angel in Heather's picture "... actually it is my [Heather's] mother". Reproduced with the kind permission of the artist.

The adolescents delighted in showing their artworks and telling about their accomplishments. In fact their stories generally began with an account of how the particular picture was a success, in other words, they had reached their self-made goals, and this seemed very important to them. "I love my work when it is a success" says Lauren, and then goes on: "if not so good ... then it only makes me continue until I get it right". The student's trained ability allows her to assess when she has produced desired outcomes, which is rewarding to youngsters and gives them a feeling of inner strength.

As stated above, although the student artist telling about her picture is the same person that created it, she is also different. With time the circumstances that contributed to making of the picture have acquired new meanings and the adolescents' stories are created anew at the present time of telling. Talking about her picture of love and security Kate recounts: "This is what most people want, love and security ... certainly what I want ... to care for and protect those we love. It sort of came when I started ... I did not know exactly what I wanted to do but then the idea was born like of itself and then I knew ... I can feel it [now] what I was doing".

In turn, Robert's interpretation of his picture points out the relationship between the bright colors and his everyday life, he relates the bright colors in the painting to his vision of the world: "I look upon life with very bright eyes and this picture is very bright. It reflects my viewpoint of life ...the environment matters of course ... but I was more thinking of joy in this picture".



Picture 8. Robert usually prefers to do pictures that are "different ... with a lot of light ... and beautiful" and thus reflect his positive and joyful personality. Reproduced with the kind permission of the artist.

Rantala (1997:226) states that the adolescents do not have access to the original intention behind their artworks because the situation of interpretation is new

every time. Therefore, when interpreting their pictures the adolescents reconstruct the past in the light of today, it is the moment of narration that is reflected in their verbal accounts. However, as the pictures are memorable and meaningful to the students they can bring their life stories up to date and thus open up new possibilities for knowing the self even in entirely new ways.

Uncovering meanings with words

In their pictures the adolescents' experiences become more tangible and thus more understandable to themselves and to others. However, without words the meaning in the pictures cannot always be revealed. Noah showed me a picture that “expresses [his] feelings for the island where I have always lived ...”. The picture, he remarks, is special to him because it is the first oil painting he made that was not an assignment and he was pleased with the way it turned out.



Picture 9. Noah's picture represents multitude of feelings for the “island where I have always lived” as well as his “peaceful and quiet” outlook on life. Reproduced with the kind permission of the artist.

But most importantly, Noah explains, the painting reflects his outlook on life in that it is “peaceful and quiet ... people should live like this in a calm way”. Feelings are the topic in his landscape picture and Noah clarifies “it describes pleasure, happiness but also a little sadness mostly by the dull light in it”. He feels “a picture can show feelings in many ways, in the colors like dark colors being rather sad or angry feelings but bright or light colors express more happiness and love”. With this picture Noah wants to inform people about his feelings for the land “the message in this picture is about the environment being very important to us ...”. In Noah’s art – picture self-reflection and expression of feelings are combined with concern for the environment thus mirroring the peaceful self-image that he portrays in the interview.

The stories go on to unveil the adolescents’ dreams of the future as well as making statements to themselves and others. Charlie’s painting represents the sun, the weather and the light in the sky, in the style of his favorite painter Joan Miró.



Picture 10. Charlie chooses his colors in accordance with the forms and composition “...the formal aspects matter to me”. Reproduced with the kind permission of the artist.

The meaning this painting has for him is related to his goal to become an artist. With his bliss signs Charlie remarks: “grown up I”, then further constructing the sentence: “It is a step for me towards becoming an artist. I felt a sense of grown up

while I was making this picture ... a little bit like a grown up artist. I experienced success in this picture and that made me feel very good”.

For Paul on the other hand the pictures he brought to the interview are meaningful to him because of their “success”. One picture was chosen to be a part of an exhibition on the Internet while the other got into the final competition for a postage stamp design. Describing the latter, a picture of a butterfly, Paul remarked “I wanted the butterfly in my picture to come out perfect ... I wanted to achieve success with it”. The content of his pictures was not important but what they stood for in relation to achievement, “I was extremely happy ... it showed me I did well” he explained.



Picture 11. Paul’s picture helps him use self-assessment to evaluate his “success” with his butterfly. Reproduced with the kind permission of the artist.

Identity – gender reflected through landscape and nature

The art – pictures brought to the interviews by the adolescents depicted more than anything else landscape or nature in one way or another, real or imagined. There were

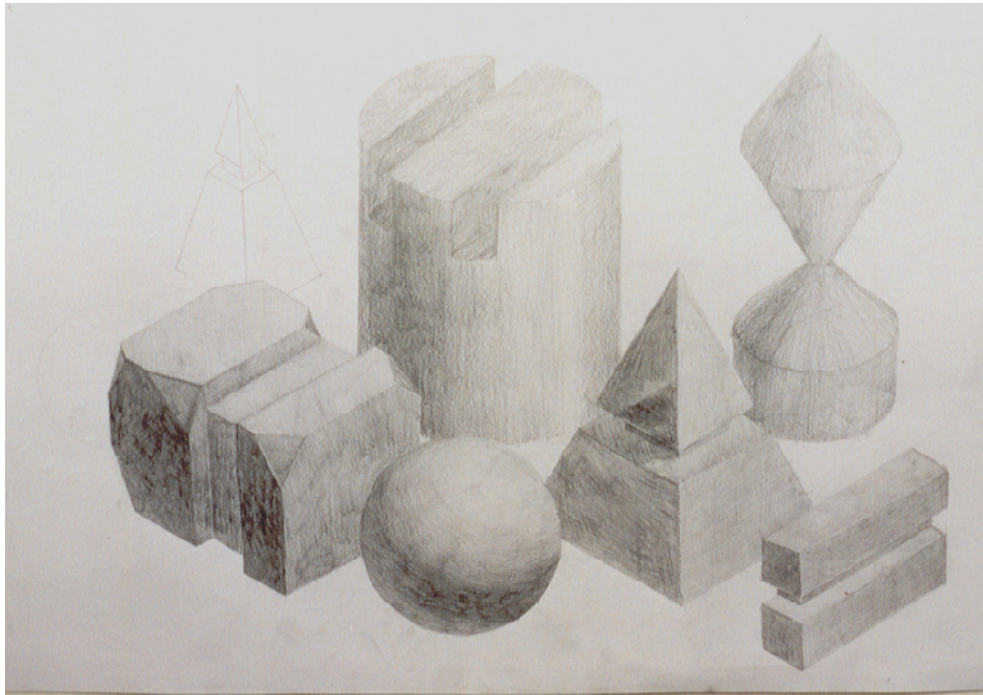
also pictures portraying people, animals, as well as some imaginary or adventuresome motifs. But although the pictures might represent similar themes there was a clear difference behind the adolescent motives for making them.

Thus behind Lisa and Robert's landscapes, lies their motivation to make an aesthetically pleasing picture where, for instance, "the colors and the composition must go well together" or "the beauty of things matter". They are not interested in expressing emotions but rather want to communicate/show what they have learned to master as visual elements of drawing and painting. On the other hand Isabel and Noah see the landscape as perfect for expressing feelings. As the Icelandic culture may be seen as interwoven by history and landscape (Magnusson, 1987:1), so do these two youngsters weave their feelings through "pictures of lava, outlaws and fairies" or "a smooth sea like a mirror..." reflecting everything from their dark mood to romantic views of the world. "It is easy to express how you feel in landscapes", remarks Isabel.

The adolescents' pictures also dealt with sensitive issues like social responsibilities and caring for others. There was, however, visible difference in the girls and boys' pictures concerning these issues. The meanings found in the girls' pictures had its source in some kind of relationships, for instance, to human beings i.e. friends or family, animals or even places that contained emotional ties. According to Gilligan (1982) the topics traditionally connected to girls' development of identity are defined to relationships of intimacy and care. Lauren's picture of a group of youngsters in an amusement park in Norway relates to a trip she took with her parents. But in her reflecting upon the picture she feels it might represent that "everyone should be friends" although she remembers thinking at the time she made the picture "these two are good friends meeting again ... this one is waiting for a boyfriend". This reflects Rantala's findings that youngsters tell stories in their pictures that are about something, but interpreting them later they represent something reconsidered, as the original story is not valid any more (1997:235).

Although there were boys who dealt with sensitive issues in their pictures the boys' situation on the whole was different. Kevin and David's drawings represent their private interests and the importance they place on the visual elements in their pictures. "I like houses and buildings" says Kevin who, drawing basic forms in an assignment, explained: "I tried likening them to buildings ... making it look like a city. So even if it was a project I could give it my personal input". David's picture is

of a castle “ [I] like soldiers and knights and therefore the castle ... the idea of adventure. I like the way it looks” says David. Their works neither carry messages nor express feelings these boys claimed, only reflect what they like best, which is drawing.



Picture 12. A school assignment gets a “personal input” in Kevin’s picture. Reproduced with the kind permission of the artist.

In Michael’s picture that deals with the sensitive issue of bullying, the motif he uses to present his feelings and communicate a message to others is the mythological figure of Medusa. In his account of the picture, he speculates if Medusa “was always this bad” and wonders if “she was a person that no one loved and therefore she turned against people. It happens in modern society you know...” he remarks. In his pictures Michael likes to leave out the noses or even faces of people but give faces to the sun or other non living objects “the sun is just an oversized atom you know ... we travel around it and maybe we can turn it around...this is just a stone and everything else turns around it”. Making art provides Michael with an opportunity to express a different view of reality, but it is through his interpretation that he can present the importance of “getting things off your chest” as well as explaining how his pictures carry a message to others.

Even though there seemed to be differences in the choice of motifs and the content of the pictures of the boys and girls, it is not always noticeable. However it is through listening to their stories or interpretation that these differences come to light. The boys' account of landscape is either concerned with the visual elements of the pictures or the idea of adventure as can be seen in Robert's "Sunrise" and Steven's "Dinosaur in landscape". Except for Noah's landscape that portrays the island where he lives and represents his feelings for the place and its people.

Like Noah the girls related their landscapes to their own feelings for the land or people connected to it. Although Lisa, for whom the strongest emphasis is on the visual aspects (aesthetic qualities) in her works, never the less explained that her picture is of a lake in Denmark where her parents lived before she was born. "It seems like a very beautiful place ... I have always wanted to go there", she remarks thus reflecting emotional ties to her motif.



Picture 13. Lisa's picture of the lake in Denmark reflects her self-image "I am rather a calm person..." as well as emotional ties to the place where her parents once lived. Reproduced with the kind permission of the artist.

Thus both the girls' and boys' accounts of their art - pictures portrayed identities usually attached to conventional gender roles i.e. in accordance with the anticipation of girls being compassionate and boys to become independent and in control of their lives (Gilligan, 1982; also Rantala, 1997). This is in agreement with the students' accounts showing that it is "girls' thing" to communicate messages and express feelings in their works whereas the boys seek to be different. However, although the girls seem more oriented towards others than the boys, which complies with their gender role, they also seem to find in their art a venue to express both strength and independence.

Perhaps the adolescents' autonomy, both girls' and boys', is best portrayed in their manifestation that it is their own opinion, not that of others, that matters when it comes to assessing their pictures. "What other people think of my pictures does not matter ..." remarks Isabel and adds: "although if it was someone close to me like my father I would feel bad if he did not like them ... It matters mostly however what I feel about it". Robert is of the same opinion as he states: "It does not matter to me what others think of my works ... what mostly matters is if I feel they are well executed".

Whether through dialogue with the medium of expression or with the explicit "others" such meeting in a face to face interaction lets you know more about yourself through the other's reactions as well as through the perceived similarities and differences between you (Fornäs, 1995: 215). It is through inter-subjective dialogues that opportunities arise to formulate answers to the "who am I" question and such contribute to the construction of self through narrative.

The stories told by the young students about their art – pictures were reconstructions of statements or stories they had already told visually. In their interpretations however they represent something reconsidered – new possibilities, as narratives are always in a flux they are open for a change.

9. Conclusion: the role of art matters

The multiple functions of art pictures

The statement that lies at the core of this research “the role of art matters in the everyday life of young people as it plays an important part in the forming of self” brought the focus of my study to understand and describe the adolescents’ meaning of this role and how it contributes to creating of self-identity.

The results have been explored and interpreted from three perspectives: a) the qualitative perspective of the students’ meaning making attributes to art making, b) the quantitative perspective demonstrating variety between categories according to school form and gender, and c) a perspective on narrative identity as constructed by students’ tales of their art – pictures.

To summarize in one sentence the role of art in everyday life of the twenty students in this study might sound like this: The meaning of art – production is above all dependent on the intrinsic reward the creative process offers adolescents through dialogue between mind and material, which reflects their need for expressing feelings, ideas and / or observations through the socially recognized language of visual arts. But as in a tapestry the picture is woven from many different colored threads so adolescents relate the role of art in their everyday life to the many meaning- making processes it has to offer.

The essence of making a picture (art making as meaning making)

Picture making as process is where students transform their experiences, thoughts, ideas and / or observations into significant images, using given materials, knowledge and skills. These images give meaningful form to different aspects of the adolescents’ life through the creative process and the creative process in turn provides the students with inner satisfaction or intrinsic value. As they are able to reflect themselves in these images or forms the adolescents’ picture making is like an encounter with

oneself, the process being a dialogue between the “I” and “myself”, a conversation without words.

This research provides strong evidence to suggest that in this case study at least, the core of the meaning of art and art – production is to be found in the creative processes of the students’ artistry. Students’ conversation about the role of art in their everyday life clearly reveals that it is through the actual process of artistic creation that meanings of art are made.

Interviews with students about the meaning they place on their artistic activities and art pictures revealed that art making is a multi faceted contributor to their everyday life. The results showed unanimously the intrinsic enjoyment related to the act of drawing or painting at the top of the hierarchy of the meanings students attach to art and art production. However, this intrinsic value is not only in the form of pleasure adolescents receive from the process and / or products but includes as well self-motivation that inspires them to develop their artistic skills.

Students see artistic knowledge and learning the socially accepted language of visual art as a key to self-assessment, which allows you to use your own judgment. Although other people’s response or opinions about their artworks may matter it is first and foremost their own judgment that is of value and plays a significant role in the meaning given to art making. It is their evaluation that helps adolescents reassess their own art – pictures and is therefore significant in developing creative independence as well as setting new and challenging goals.

The findings showed that visual culture does not have the same meaning in the adolescents’ minds as do what they call “traditional” arts although they might find the two somewhat related. In their description the former is less “personal” and does not require the same “thinking and feeling” as does the latter. This is to be noted especially since visual culture indeed plays a big role in the everyday life of most young people who all the same do not see its’ role more than somewhat related to art.

For the students at the art school its’ social setting including the presence of other art students enables structuring a micro-culture often seen as fundamental to pursuing their artistic activities. This issue however, is clearly not as important for students in the middle school although a few relate the social elements of art classes to the meaning of art – production.

The students' discourse shows that the art product is crucial to self-assessment and therefore motivation, to the availability to try out new and improved ideas, as well as providing ground for encouragement from others. It is however not just to the product or artifact that students relate the meaning of art – production but instead and more so to the artistic process itself during which myriads of wondrous things happen. Unanimously, students described the creative process as being the source of meaning making in art, where ideas are born and developed, contentment and pleasure accumulate and through which relief and reward are harvested.

The results show that students find self-motivation, goal setting and self-assessment indeed meaningful aspects of art production. As the theoretical focus in chapter two showed these are important aspects in the making of selfhood. Students experience themselves as agents carrying out activities on their own. They are fully aware of their need for skill or know-how and use it to evaluate how they succeed, also in what others expect of them.

By experiencing themselves as agentive in initiating and carrying out activities on their own through their art production adolescents deepen their self-understanding and thus contribute to the making of self. This contributes to their self-esteem, as Bruner (1996:37) states and can be seen in the results of this study as students claim their artistic activities having a positive effect on their self-image.

The main conclusions regarding the role of art and art making in adolescents everyday life are:

- Every student emphasizes the intrinsic value found in the creative process of “artistic” activities.
- Most of the students in both schools use their acquired artistic knowledge and skills for self-assessment as to whether they have succeeded in their creative efforts.
- Just over half the students choose to express feelings in their art – pictures while the others are concerned with communicating or showing the aesthetic qualities of their works.

- Most of the students in the art school produce and maintain a positive self-image related to their artistic activities, while this applies only to half of the students in the middle school.
- Social elements such as sharing an interest in art with fellow students or family members contribute to creating a micro-culture, which are seen by the students as supportive in placing oneself in society and making the practice of art legitimate.

Narrative identity as constructed by students' tales of their art – pictures

In this study, there is indication that students' interpretations or tales about their artworks are closely related to the making of self-identity. The findings showed how adolescents relate the visual tale told in their artworks to the way they perceive themselves and their world thus reflecting their self-image. Connecting oral sharing of students' own art works to the interviews related to the "role of art" seems to have been an effective way in promoting narrative identity. It is, however, possible to assume that narrative identity would happen without words, but as Räsänen (1998: 310) says "it is a complex and challenging issue to study how transfer can be promoted and analyzed through visual metaphor".

The thinking behind "narrative identity" is that of building a personal story through oral sharing which allows the adolescents to open up a world of interpretations reflecting their view of life and / or their life world. Räsänen (1998) makes a distinction between verbal and visual storytelling as used by students. She explains that visual storytelling can be a strong vehicle in the process of emancipation as well as verbal sharing and written reflection to art making seems to be the most effective way of promoting transfer between art and self (Räsänen, 1998:310-311).

Indeed the adolescents' stories about experiences that have been visualized in their art works become clarified through verbalization. Therefore one could say that making art and describing it is a valuable tool in making meaning of one's own personal story as well as continuing its' formation. The students' pictures and their artistic activities contend with pleasures as well as apprehensions of everyday life and they consider making art – pictures an ordinary way to tell their own stories.

The results show some gender related findings from the perspective of narrative identity, although it must be noted that on the whole gender differences are not great in this study. It may be slightly detected in the quantitative perspective although due to the small sample size this is hardly significant. Yet, the phenomena I have described from these two perspectives exist, though to what extent cannot be determined without further research.

The differences in the choice of motifs and the content in their pictures become fully noticeable through listening to students' oral interpretation or tales of their art - pictures. Although one might assume that practicing art offered young people ground to deal with unconventional gender roles the findings all the same show identities complying with recognized identities as portrayed for instance by Gilligan (1982). What might however be said to reflect changing gender roles among these Icelandic youth are the girls efforts to combine strength and autonomy with their compassion and sensitivity (see also Guðný Guðbjörnsdóttir, 1994).

Art has been referred to as a symbolic language having a formative impact on human experience and as Goodman (1978) proposes both words and images can be used in cognition. It is evident in the findings that the adolescents find both languages: pictures and words, functional in clarifying their experiences and constructing meaning. There may be meanings produced in art that may not be possible to explain verbally just as there are things that do not seem obvious at first but obtain their meaning through verbal form.

As stated in chapter two on theoretical focus, reflexivity gives way to adolescents for mirroring oneself and opening up new possibilities. Whether an adolescent is explaining her artwork only to her-self or also to the "other" whose presence is considered of great importance in self-understanding such reflection offers symbolic tools for presenting authentic self-images to others and to one-self. In this study most of the students find talking about their art works a welcome opportunity which is, however, too rare, pointing to the need to include this in art education.

Students' artistic activities as well as their art – pictures provide them with opportunities to discuss personal, social, and meaningful matters. The art school is a special place in the eyes of its adolescents where freedom and self-control contribute to self-realization. Although evidently not the same, the art room in the middle school ought to have every possibility to play a similar role in the everyday life of its

adolescent students. It promotes creativity and is a place where you can make something that is your own and therefore contributes to individuality a stated goal in art education.

This study has been carried out to understand the personal meaning of art for certain twenty adolescent students as well as their relationship with the artifacts they have produced themselves. Their pictures deal with the joys and sorrows found in everyday life of young people not yet adults. They have shared with me stories about the pleasures of their artistic activities, the contentment and challenges found through the artistic process and the relation to one-self made possible through art making. The perceived freedom this offers although not without self-imposed restriction.

Looking at what the practice of art making presents to these students it is above all an extraordinarily pleasant activity embodied with intrinsic meaning. Contributing to the personal meaning students find in their artistic activities are challenges that induce self-motivation and potentiality to become better, furthermore the practice of art provides the students with concrete abilities which result in the idea of being good at something – personal merit.

Suggestions for art teachers

As stated in chapter four, the foremost aim of this study has been to capture the pictures the adolescents themselves have painted of their lived experience of art making. The most important goal was listening to their voices, attempting to understand the meaning they attach to art and art production and its role in their everyday life.

To my knowledge studies about the meanings children create out of their encounter with art and art production in everyday life have not often been carried out in art educational research. In Iceland any kind of research in art education has been at a minimum and therefore the field waits wide open.

In order to answer what lessons might be learned from this study we must focus on the value art and art production have for adolescents. Art education has been and still is only marginal in school curricula. This can most probably be related to the different emphasis on “the work of the head” and “the work of the hand” which can be traced back to Plato distinguishing between the two (see Eisner, 1997: 262).

Students in this study characterized making art pictures as “working with your head as well as your hands” and found this rewarding. We must recognize like Eisner (1997, 262) states, that work in the arts develops the qualitative aspects of intelligence – that creativity and experience in the arts, visual or otherwise, requires thought. The students understand this and as teachers we should listen to their voices.

The study reveals how students can use the same subject matter for infinitely different expressive purposes and therefore points out how visual form can express meanings that might not always be possible to replicate in verbal discourse. Yet, to verbally interpret their works students gain possibilities to see their experiences in new light and thus create new meaning. I believe my study indicates that the young adolescents would welcome more time to discuss their pictures, as sharing the reflecting process with others seems to be an important part of identity structure. Art educators ought to take into consideration that the teaching of art can, and should, include different ways where students are able to produce knowledge and experiences about themselves and the world. Telling tales about visual narratives is one of these ways.

Art making enables expression of feelings as well as communication to others and this is to many students its main significance. As it seems to be the girls rather than the boys who choose to treat and encounter sensitive issues or themes in their pictures, the question arises whether we art teachers should encourage and guide boys more in this direction. If sensitivity is not included in the concept of masculinity yet, it should be and practising art is a platform for this process (see Rantala, 1997:233).

One more issue that calls for speculation from art teachers is the distance between art and visual culture, clearly revealed by the youngsters in this study. Contemporary art usually does not find its way into the classroom until after everything else, i.e. older art history that has already been canonized (Saarnivaara & Varto, 2001). I believe art teachers need to ask themselves if they want to keep this “elitist” difference between art and visual culture, which is reflected in the modernist concept of art portrayed by the adolescents in this study. Or do we want to begin with the art of the moment, which is much closer to the visual cultures of young peoples’ everyday lives and thus broadening the domain of art education.

There is a need to combine the intrinsic value students find in creating art pictures as well as promoting development in artistic skills necessary for expression and a broader knowledge in the arts (see Eisner, 1997: 264). The adolescents in this study made it clear that intrinsic rewards are obtained in many and various ways through the artistic process and thus contribute to its meaning making. Intrinsic rewards, which help the student, savor the experience of inquiry rather than aim exclusively at the result of inquiry, like schools tend to do, increase the likelihood that children continue to inquire after they leave school (Eisner, 1997: 279).

This study supports the quality of experience children can have when engaged in artistic work. Attention has been drawn to that experience can be objectified through making art pictures, it can be visually and verbally explored in a journey that can be likened to aesthetic experience and it is this journey not what is at the end of it that adolescents describe as containing the “entire color scale of feelings”. All education should be such a journey and it might be achieved if art education is allotted place in the central text not just at the margins.

Recommendations for further research

As an art educator for many years my observations led me to believe students’ self-construction was a part of her/his picture making. This study has increased my understanding of the phenomena narrative identity, both visual and verbal, yet made clear the need for further study of it. Discussing with students the pictures they have made is important. Ways to include this in art education need to be developed.

This research shows some evidence that sheds light on how the narrative that is constructed visually and presented verbally is a part of the adolescents constructing the story of self through action. To understand benefits of this to art education as well as education in general, action research on experiential art learning might provide insight on how art interpretation can be applied in understanding and constructing self (see Räsänen, 1998).

In this study adolescents in the art school (all except one) clearly articulated understanding of how their artistic activities contribute to their self-identity. Studying the impact of art education on peoples’ lives once they have left school would be

worthwhile. As would be to further examine the meanings and values art school provides children and young people with and how this contributes to their personal growth. By contacting former students for instance with a questionnaire seeking information to elucidate if and how attendance in the art school influenced their choice of studies, benefited in their gaining employment or in other context.

As has been stated previously research in art education is relatively scarce in Iceland and therefore it offers a wide choice. It is my belief however, that such research should not in the least be conducted from the perspective of children, to observe their ways of knowing and their actions. I would like to conclude with these words of Dr. Marjatta Saarnivaara (2000:78,79):

“We should, as researchers and teachers, explore children’s competences and not their incapacities. Together we should create the space for an absent subject, an absent experience that is to be filled with presence and spoken experience of actual children speaking of their everyday worlds”.

Appendix I:

The interview questions

Research on the role of art and art production in the everyday life of adolescent students and how narrative identity might be constructed by telling stories through artistic activities

Questions for the students in the art school and the middle school:

-What meaning do art and art production have in your every day life? Tell me about how this matters to you?

-Why are you interested in art?

-When did your interest in art begin... and why?

-What does it give you to make pictures... but to look at art?

-Tell me how you feel while you are making a picture (art work)...how about when you have finished it?

-What is most important when you make an art work?

-Where do you get your ideas from?

Questions just for the students in the art school:

-Why are you in the art school?

-Is it different to work at making pictures in the art school than at home or in your regular school ... and if so in what way?

Questions just for the students in the middle school:

-Is it different to work at making pictures at school than at home ... and if so in what way?

-How is art different from other school subjects?

Questions for students from both schools:

-What effect does studying art have on how you see yourself ... on your self image?

-Is art important to you and why?

-What does it give you personally to make pictures?

-What kind of pictures do you like most to make.. why?

-What is the best part about studying art?

-Does it affect your daily life ... in what way?

-What is most important about studying art ... why?

-What meanings do other visual media have in your life; computers, video, films and magazines for instance ... and in what way?

-How do you see computer games aesthetically..what about advertisements or music videos?

-Do you see a relationship between these visual media and what we have been talking about?

-How would you describe visual media like these?

-Can you describe the aesthetics in the pictures you encounter there?

Questions about the artwork/s the student brought:

Interpretation of an artwork...

-What does this picture mean to you?

-Tell me about the picture.. what is it about?

-What does it mean in your life?

-Tell me about how you can relate this picture to your view of life, how you look at life.

-Does this picture in any way describe how you felt when you made it..and then in what way?

-Why is this picture special for you?

To have something to say with ones pictures-the work carries a message...

-Is it the process of making a picture or the subject matter that is more important to you?

-What possibilities do you find in making a picture?

-what messages are in this picture?

-Can you tell with the picture what you are thinking?

-What kind of feelings does this picture describe?

-How can a picture describe feelings?

-What do the colors mean ... and the forms?

-Does this color have a special meaning? How about this figure /form?

-Does it matter to you what others think of your works? How about their reaction to your work?

Messages in art works...

-How can you convey messages to others through your work in a way you cannot do in any other way...?

-Is it important that an artist develops her own style..and if so why?

-In what way do you develop your own style?

-Can you describe how you feel when you are making a picture (art work)?

-How does it feel to express feelings in a picture?

-What is most important about creating an artwork?

Appendix II:

The interview text with two teachers

An interview with the art teacher of the students from the middle school:

How important is art education for children and young people?

It is everything...we cannot be without it. You cannot live without art... try to imagine life without music for instance, it is the same with visual art it is very related. It is also very related to science and I have often told my students this thing I read on the Net about how if you don't develop both sides of the brain you don't develop the same in depth understanding... for example in math where you use your left side of the brain supposedly... if you don't develop the right side as well then you won't develop as deep understanding of math. I find this very rational. It is only one body, why should not everything work together, mental aspects and physical ones.

Do you find that other teachers share this understanding with you?

No... I don't think so they say they do but when it comes to doing they don't show much understanding for the importance of art. Like when we are doing clay modeling, they do not understand the importance that I might need extra time or an extra hand. But I do it anyway although it is a lot of strain on me because I cannot think of it that my students don't get this part of art education.

Would you tell me about how you organize your teaching?

Yes, I can tell you about each stage, the first being grades 1 through 4, the second grades 5 through 7, and then the grades 8 through 10, (she then went on to give a good overview of her curriculum).

This teacher talked about the lack of time devoted to art education and also lack of understanding about the meaning and value of art and art education. She expressed the desire to have four more hours per week to teach art, which in her eyes means she could teach art history and use of the computer as well (visual culture).

According to this teacher the aesthetics in visual culture (the computer) is the same as in other art. “It is just another medium...it is not different aesthetics...you have to learn to use this just as well as other things”.

What do you put the most emphasis on in your teaching?

They [the students] have to be able to express themselves, I try to make sure something comes from them selves, from within them ... not just to copy something but to create ... I feel very good when I see this happen that something comes from within themselves. If they can express themselves, if they really get into it and I can get them to open up.

Do you see this subject as possibly influencing the students’ self – image?

Yes, I don’t doubt that at all ... as a matter of fact I am certain of it.

It can have a very positive effect on students’ self-image. Schools should show more understanding of this ... when you get a chance to teach in a way that the student can give something from herself to her works then it really matters to the formation of self...

Does art production or art making contribute to students’ self-understanding do you think?

Without a doubt ... just for instance how you see the world around you ... I cannot see life without the arts.

Even if students say they are not expressing anything with their works I think they are all saying something...

An interview with an art teacher at the art school:

In what way does art education matter in the lives of children and young people?

I think there is quite a difference between how children experience art education on the one hand and adolescents on the other hand. Of course it is a question of what age we are talking about. Adolescents, in late puberty, the ones I am teaching now, are not as open, or it seems harder to ignite their interest.

But in spite of this I believe education in the visual arts, and all education in the arts, is important, because it is a part of making the students become aware of their own environment, or should we say more conscious of the visual world we live in. I also don't doubt it for a minute that education in the visual arts promotes their general development, as this education is about; self expression, working with oneself as a person, to reflect upon things, to criticize, to do better, to use your sight i.e. learn to see. All this makes the young person's life more pleasant, fuller and more interesting. Another aspect that I think is also important; is that art education which is both practical and conceptual, is so special and different that this should be enough reason for it to be seen as important.

Another point I would like to make and that matters, is that the result is very visible and can be totally individual, the different pictures made by the students can all be fantastic, even if there is a difference and one could say that not all are equally good.

What about the digital media or visual culture?

I feel a little dualistic about this. Sometimes I think their negative aspects are more than the positive, they rob you of time and often offer very cheap and poor solutions. Working in programs that all yield the same or similar results. But of course I realize it is a tool that is here to stay and it is an important project to teach students to use this medium, in an artistic way. So in my opinion, the addition of this media brings a new aspect to art education, which makes further demands on teachers to teach skill (manual) and all classical aesthetics.

I see computers, as having their own aesthetic, to make digital pictures is a special process. This can be seen in the design that is overpowering today it has a special look, not always easy to "read".

I notice that my students have a tendency to go straight to the computer and work with form and colors there, without doing a sketch first with a pencil. Or do any planning of the idea first on paper. I believe this is a bad progress or in a nutshell, the tool must not take control.

What do you put the most emphasis on in your teaching?

I am a bit for teaching certain rules / principles and methods, but the main objective is to “open” their eyes and make them curious about their environment, to create within them a feeling for beauty and help them become unafraid to express themselves.

I believe art education is not solely for educating artists, rather that children and adolescents should receive this education to become more skilled individuals in confronting education, work and life itself.

Appendix III:

A letter from the Privacy and Data Protection Authority

Rósa Júlíusdóttir
myndlistarkennari
Birkilundi 9
600 AKUREYRI



Persónuvernd

Rauðarárstíg 10 105 Reykjavík
sími: 510 9600 bréfasími: 510 9606
netfang: postur@personuvernd.is
veffang: personuvernd.is

Reykjavík, 8. október 2002
Tilvísun: 2002090428 EB/-

Persónuvernd hefur borist umsókn yðar, dags. 20. september 2002, um heimild til vinnslu persónuupplýsinga vegna rannsóknar á hlutverki lista og listsköpunar í daglegu lífi 20 ungmenna. Fram kemur að upplýsinganna verði aflað með viðtölum að fengnu munnlegu samþykki þeirra og foreldra/forráðamanna. Engin persónuauðkenni verði skráð. Niðurstöður rannsóknarinnar muni birtast í meistaraþrófsritgerð yðar. Þar muni einungis koma fram fjöldi viðmælenda, fjöldi drengja og stúlkna og hve mörg þeirra stundi myndlistarnám í myndlistarskóla. Nöfnum viðmælenda verði breytt. Persónuvernd hefur jafnframt borist tilkynning um umrædda vinnslu persónuupplýsinga, tilkynning S906.

Skýlt er við framkvæmd ofangreindrar rannsóknar að fara að ákvæðum laga nr. 77/2000, um persónuvernd og meðferð persónuupplýsinga með áorðnum breytingum. Rannsóknin er tilkynningarskyld en ekki háð leyfi Persónuverndar, sbr. reglur 90/2001 um tilkynningarskylda og leyfisskylda vinnslu persónuupplýsinga. Samkvæmt 3. mgr. 4. gr. reglnanna er ábyrgðaraðila heimilt að hefja tilkynningarskylda vinnslu persónuupplýsinga þegar staðfesting berst frá Persónuvernd um móttöku tilkynningarinnar en þó ætíð að liðnum 10 dögum frá því tilkynning var send. Er yður því heimil umrædd vinnsla persónuupplýsinga vegna rannsóknar yðar.

Virðingarfyllt


Elsa S. Þorkelsdóttir
lögfræðingur

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