Holding Aesthetics and Ideology in Tension

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Studying imagery, irrespective of the kind, must focus equally upon its aesthetic attractiveness, its sensory lures, and its oftentimes dubious social ideology. The terms *aesthetic* and *ideology* are addressed as problematic and are defined in current, ordinary language terms: aesthetics as visual appearances and their effects and ideology as a style of thinking. Aesthetics, viewed as inherently ideological because it is a primary means by which ideology is inculcated, has become increasingly important to address in art education as the aestheticization of economics, politics, and everyday life has become increasingly pronounced. The Build-a-Bear Workshop® is offered as an example of aesthetic and ideology working together. Finally, a comparison is drawn between Schiller's view of aesthetics as a means of social control and the current use of aesthetics to inculcate the late capitalist ideology of continual consumption and thus ensure socio-economic stability.

Art educators who embrace popular visual culture, as many now do (Duncum, 2006a; Freedman, 2003; Tavin, 2003), confront an issue that has often bedeviled consideration of fine art, namely the contradictions that often exist between aesthetics and ideology. Disney animated movies are wonderfully seductive yet are notorious for their sexist and racist stereotypes (Tavin & Anderson, 2003). Extreme makeover programs like *The Swan* draw in adolescent girls by their interest in physical appearance yet work to undermine their self-confidence (Herrmann, 2006). Bratz™ dolls are regarded as "so cute" by the preteens to whom they are marketed, but they can appear to offer a vision of empowerment solely through consumerism (Carey, 2006). Numerous paintings of Christian martyrs impaled on spikes or struck by arrows render moments of pain and death as ecstatic (Mulvihill, 1999). Medieval images of a horrendously violent hell simultaneously horrify and delight (Hughes, 1968). And many contemporary artists use the visceral to shock and horrify yet find their work described as beautiful (Brand, 2000). Of art that represents human suffering, Marcuse (1978) writes, "Art cannot represent this suffering without subjecting it to aesthetic form, and thereby … to enjoyment. Art is inexorably infested with this guilt" (p. 55).

I contend that in considering visual images, no matter of what kind, art educators need to deal with both the sensory reasons audiences are drawn to them, to understand their sensate appeal, their lure, and, at the same time, to confront the sometimes dubious ideas they impart. Both fine and popular art frequently share a moral compromise with pleasure. In any consideration of visual imagery, both aesthetics and ideology need to be in play. The significance of this point is that historically aesthetics and ideology have been often separated (Gablick, 2004)

and tendencies within some contemporary analyses continue to separate them (Regan, 1991).

I employ *aesthetics* in what I take to be an ordinary language use of the term as "visual appearances and effect" (Williams, 1976, p. 28), "a short hand term for distinguishing one set of stylistic and structural principles from another" (Regan, 1991, p. 1), a term for dealing with "sensuous perception in nature and everyday life" (Mitchell, 2005, p. 1) or even just a synonym for "appearances" (Barnard, 1998, p. 15). This is a site-specific definition of aesthetics, which I will show is used widely outside the specialized areas of art, art education, and literature. I employ *ideology* in the sense of a characteristic way of thinking, a style of thought, an interpretive scheme employed by people to make the world intelligible to themselves (Decker, 2004).

In these senses not only are both aesthetics and ideology always present with visual imagery, they also often appear in strong opposition to one another. Visual images are often highly attractive yet offer repugnant ideology, and this can set up strong internal conflict within a viewer. Such dissonance needs to be teased out and understood for the conflict it is so that one can more clearly see what ideas, values, and beliefs to accept or reject irrespective of the pleasure afforded by the form in which they are wrapped. Postrel (2003) notes of aesthetics, "We have a love hate relationship with the whole idea. As consumers, we enjoy sensory appeals but fear manipulation" (p. 7). Walker and Chaplin (1997) make a similar point: "pleasure is a crucial ingredient of the subjective experience of visual culture but … it is never innocent" (p. 122-123).

Aesthetics

Both terms—aesthetics and ideology—have a past, which makes their use problematic. Many modernists (e.g., Greene, 1940; Osborne, 1952), including many art educators (e.g., Read, 1956; Smith, 1987) equated aesthetic experience with high moral purpose, though ironically—and tragically—this sometimes led to a deep dislocation between aesthetics and ethics, which resulted in highly unethical judgments. Thus, in Gombrich's classic historical survey text, *The Story of Art* (1972), he writes of Gothic cathedrals in terms of innovative engineering in which we experience "the complex interplay of thrust and pull that holds the lofty vault in its place" (p. 140) without ever mentioning the oppressive toil exacted by an authoritarian church upon poor laborers. Or consider Gaudelius and Moore's (1995/1996) demonstration that other survey texts of art widely used by art educators, refer to images of rape wholly in term of lines, shapes, and, most deplorably, elevated sensibility. For example, they cite Hartt's description of Ruben's *Rape of the Daughters of Leucippus*: "since the picture is a triumph of divine love; the very

landscape heaves and flows in response to the excitement of the event" (p. 129).

These studies are informed by a view of aesthetics that O'Neil (2002) calls "amoral hedonism, which has no social purpose other than to give a higher form of pleasure" (p. 32). Aesthetics here is placed above social valuation, set apart from ordinary affairs, and—as explored later—in denial over its own ideological nature.[1] Jameson's (1998) use of a quote from Marx from another context to comment on modernist aesthetics bares repeating: "[I]t weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living" (p. 7).

By contrast, *aesthetics* is used here to refer to the surfaces of images, which can be both attractive and life enhancing but also repugnant and life damaging. This is to use the term in the original, ancient Greek sense of *aesthesis,* from which our word *aesthetics* is derived, to mean sense perception (Eagleton, 1990). Aesthesis is an inclusive concept that incorporates all visual perception and effects, not just the beautiful and the sublime and their appreciation, but also the unpleasant, the crude and rude and their effects upon us. This is to consider the effects on the gut as much as on the mind, of both the vulgar *and* the spiritually uplifting (Williams, 1977). One can be pleasantly seduced as well as hit over the head, and sucked in, as it were, by rhetorical brilliance as well as lulled to sleep. Visual images can heighten sensory awareness but also dull them. All the sense perceptions that were deliberately excluded from consideration by Baumgarten, Kant, and the modernist tradition that followed them, are hereby reintroduced into consideration as aesthetic (Eagleton, 1990). The modernist tradition, founded as it was on the deliberate suppression of the body and the privileging of mindful activity, is hereby abandoned in favor of integrating mind and body. Mitchell (2005) observes this shift, writing that Kantian good taste was "grounded in bourgeois disgust and horror at 'vulgar' pleasures," but that today such "pleasures of the senses may have a new role to play in an age when both art and mass culture are exploring these sensations under the name of aesthetics" (p. 3).

Evidence for the use of such an ordinary language use of *aesthetics* is easy to illustrate. At random: Cartwell, Kaye, Whelehen, and Hunter (1997) refer to "trash aesthetics;" Schmitt and Simonson (1997) describe "an aesthetics of marketing;" and Harris (2000) characterizes "the aesthetics of consumerism" in terms, among others, of cuteness, quaintness, zaniness, and glamour. Aesthetics is used to describe things as specific as hair (Byrd & Tharps, 2001) and as general as power (Duncan, 1993). Corner and Pels (2003) address an "aestheticization of politics" (p. 47) that includes the ubiquity of the photo op orchestrated by political operatives and colluded in by the press, which create an "aesthetics of the political self" fashioned "through political style and

[1]Apart from the two uses of aesthetics here, Tavin (2007) describes three others commonly found in contemporary art education.

political performances, settings and the response they receive" (p. 6). This is politics as theatre, consisting of spectacle, emotion, and a cult of personality that relies upon celebrity status; it's a "style conscious politics" (p. 52). Postrel (2003) uses aesthetics as a synonym for product design, declaring, when everything else is equal between competing products, it is aesthetic marketing and styling that makes the difference to the bottom line. Far from a marginal consideration, among marketers and industrial designers there is now what Postrel (2003) calls "an aesthetic imperative" (p. 1). She writes, "Aesthetics has become too important to be left to the aesthetes. To succeed, hard-nosed engineers, real estate developers, and MBAs must take aesthetic communication, and aesthetic pleasure seriously. We, their consumers, demand it" (pp. 4-5). Spotts (2003) refers to Nazi aesthetics, Cleto (1999) to queer aesthetics, and Henry (1979) lists six characteristics of aesthetic kitsch. In considering household items, Hebey (2003) refers to a domestic aesthetic, and Pateman (2006) explores the aesthetics of *Buffy the Vampire*. Furthermore, the aesthetics of the everyday have, for example, been described in specific terms as the aesthetics of shopping malls, department stores (Featherstone, 1991), violent media (Kupfer, 1983), food, weather, and sport (Light & Smith, 2005). The *Journal of Plastic Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgery* illustrates the now frequent use of aesthetics in medicine and dentistry. It is in this inclusive, ordinary-language, site-specific sense of "visual appearance and effect" that aesthetics is used here.

Ideology

Ideology also has associations not intended here. As unchallenged rationalizations of deeply suspect political regimes, ideology was often seen as inimical to art (Decker, 2004). Lenin cast the dye for the Soviet Union as early as 1905 when he demanded that art "must become part of the common cause of the proletariat" (as cited in Laing, 1978, p. 22). All art was to respond to what he and later Soviets called the *social command,* the representation of those aspects of reality that would serve the future development of socialism; namely, to represent then current realities wrapped in a dream of a better future. It was the same in Communist China. On assuming power in 1949, Mao Tse Tung proclaimed that the purpose of art was to "help the masses propel history forward" (Laing, 1978, p. 74), a view later articulated as the use of "all kinds of artistic means to make the proletarian heroes stand out. Reveal the hero's inherent communist spirit" (p. 79). This is an older Marxist idea of ideology as a more or less coherent set of ideas and ideals associated with a particular class consciousness (Decker, 2004).

Ideology is used here in the now common, general sense of characterizing ideas, ideals, beliefs and values (Davis, 2005). Accordingly, though ideology is characteristic of particular social groups, it is neither

necessarily systematic nor necessarily held by everyone in a social group. Among other means, ideology is expressed through cultural sign systems that are constitutive of social practice; ideology informs the way people act in the world and the way people act in turn tends to justify and reinforce ideology. In this sense, all practice is ideological because all our daily activities are informed by some sense of their purpose. Employing this use of ideology, we see visual culture saturated with symbolic meanings that reveal the hopes, fears, expectations, certainties, uncertainties, and ambiguities of our lives. By means of images we engage with widely shared social assumptions about the way the world is, should be or should not be; in short, images offer models of the world that are either descriptive, prescriptive, or proscriptive.

Another way of putting this is to say that visual imagery is rhetorical, first in the classical sense of employing skills to move, persuade, and humor an audience, and, secondly, in the more recent sense that views all visual images as rhetorical and as part of asymmetrical structures of power and influence (Rampley, 2005). Because visual imagery as a sign system is constitutive of society, both mirror to and active contributor to social dynamics, a fully-fledged participant (Williams, 1977), all visual imagery is a carrier of ideology. Further, since those who own the principle means of cultural production operate within and benefit from a hierarchically structured society, dominant forms of cultural production typically carry ideologies consistent with the interests of those in power (Barnard, 1998).

Aesthetics and Ideology as Inseparable

The point that aesthetics and ideology, though distinct, are inseparable is cogently made by Williams (1977) in his distinction between aesthetic effects and aesthetic intentions, and his argument that both require attention: One should ask not only how am I affected by a cultural form, but who has attempted to affect me in this way and for what reason? The inseparability of aesthetics and ideology is equally reflected in Rampley's (2005) discussion of the changed meaning of the term *style*. Once denoting a relatively neutral analysis concerned with appearances, studies of style now focus on how visual culture is enmeshed with strategies of social power and ideology. Where style was once seen as merely a form of embellishment, it is now seen as essential to "rhetorical ploys to promote consumption" (Rampley, 2005, p. 146). Whether it is the marketing of products, policies or politics, aesthetics is no longer considered external to an enterprise and an afterthought, but to be integral and considered from the outset.

Making a case for the inseparability of aesthetics and ideology is important; first, to the extent to which the legacy of their separate consideration remains active, and secondly, to the extent to which

thinking about cultural forms continues to be conducted as if they were unrelated. In the past, they were often considered separately, even to be opposed.

During the years of high modernism aesthetic theory was dominated in the democratic West by a view of art as beauty or aesthetic pleasure, while during the same period in socialist regimes art was primarily valued in terms of ideology (Laing, 1978; Williams, 1977). Western aesthetic theorists viewed ideology as a tool of socialist demagogy and inimical to art, while in socialist regimes a self-sufficient aesthetics was dismissed as mere affectation. In the democratic West, artworks were primarily ends unto themselves; by serving individual freedom, art was self-justifying. In totalitarian regimes, art was a means to a collective ideological end, and aesthetic policies were developed (and legislated) only to ensure such an end.

This division between aesthetics and ideology has often persisted beyond modernism. Influential intellectual approaches continued the divide, with both structuralism and deconstruction, for example, sidelining sensory pleasure in favor of representation and signification (Regan, 1991). Thus, for some, aesthetics is a "bloodless formalism, a rarefied academic discussion of minimal social relevance and application" (p. 1). Cultural forms are reduced to a reading of their ideological content, to what they signify at the exclusion of their sensuous attractions (Felski, 2005). Signification trumps sensuality; representation trumps aesthetics.[2] The languages of representation, by which we construct the world around us and make meaning from it, are emphasized. Typically, what counts is to identify how the genders, races, classes, or other social categories are represented, or, alternatively, to note the absence of their representation. A young woman's tilted head is not considered in terms of the beauty of the lines thus created, or her coloring, not even her general beauty; the tilt is considered as a sign of submissiveness to the male gaze and by extension her position regarding patriarchy. What makes the head tilt attractive is ignored in favor of its social connotations. This approach has the enormous benefit of directing attention to the social beliefs and values that a once dominant sense of aesthetics clearly avoids, and as such is a necessary correction, but equally it fails to acknowledge why people might be drawn to a particular cultural site in the first place (Williams, 1977).

The avoidance of aesthetic form and its effects upon viewers is taken further with the deconstruction maneuver of noting the absence of representations of, typically, minority groups. As necessary as this tactic is to focus on what is not present in an image, it also has the effect of ignoring altogether the aesthetic means by which people are drawn to what *is* represented. The stress on the language of representation is an

[2]See Rose (2001) for several other approaches that focus primarily on representation at the exclusion of a consideration of lure.

understandable reaction against the universalism of modernist aesthetics, but in itself it is inadequate, and further correction is necessary.

Such a correction has been undertaken by many cultural observers working out of disciplines other than philosophical aesthetics, and who rarely use the term *aesthetics*. They consider some of the traditional concerns of philosophical aesthetics—desire (Langman, 2003), pleasure (Zizek, 1991), beauty (Brand, 2000), the sublime (Mirzoeff, 1999), ecstasy (Baudrillard, 1987)—but they reconfigure these concerns so that they relate to more than the specifically visual characteristics of images.

Increasingly such scholars are drawing upon post-Freudian psychoanalytical theory (Rose, 2001), not surprisingly since the centrality of pleasure as a human motivator was Freud's central idea. Lacan and his followers (Deuber-Mankowsky, 2005; Mulvey, 1975/1989; Zizek, 1991), which today include art educators (jagodzinksi, 2004; Walker, Daiello, Hathaway, & Rhoades, 2006), look to lures that involve lacks or gaps within the psyche. They look to what jagodzinksi (2004) calls "psychic investment" (p. 3). Film, for example, involves narratives they consider the unconscious writ large, the desires of the psyche externalized (Zizek, 1991). The satisfaction extracted from watching mirrors and projections of ourselves, the *jouissance*, like aesthesis, can be painful as well as pleasurable, and perverse as well as healthy. It includes "being cruel, inflicting punishment," and so on (Fink in jagodzinski, 2004, p. 7).

The value of psychoanalytic interpretations is their consideration of unconscious lures in conflict with conscious ones, so that they offer to better understand the range of attractions to imagery. This is especially critical if we accept the psychoanalytic view that the social reality of which we are conscious is but a "fragile symbolic cobweb" (Zizek, 1991, p. 17) obscuring irrational, unconscious desires and drives. Lacan argues that the unconscious is not hidden but rather is externalized for all to see in cultural forms (Zizek, 1991). Here, the truth is expressed, fiction being the truth of our unconscious desires. Thus, some of the lures of visual imagery lie very deep and are often at odds with conscious awareness.

However, psychoanalytic theory also supports a focus on aesthetic qualities as lure. The sheer love of looking, of what Freud called *fetishistic scopophilia*, remains at the very heart of why images work to lure us (Rose, 2001). As Zizek (1991) says of film, "We devour it with our eyes" (p. 89). Mulvey (1975/1989) argues that Hollywood films regularly interrupt narrative flow with images designed to feed the pleasure of looking; "from its skilled and satisfying manipulation of visual pleasure," Hollywood film satisfies "a primordial wish for pleasurable looking" (p. 16-17). Has there ever been a banal looking Hollywood star?

Again, like both aesthesis and jouissance, there is both an upside and a downside to scopophilia; it can be a matter of pure delight, but it can also be perverse, even sadistic (Mulvey, 1975/1989). However, whether pleasant or painful, heightening or dulling, uplifting or degrading, and whether using the language of aesthetics or not, the sensory affects of visual imagery are completely inseparable from the work they do. No matter their nature in any given cultural site, the goal of aesthetic lures is always to achieve consent.

A Cautious Aesthetic Attitude

Having said this, the aesthetic needs to be treated cautiously, not because it eschews political and ethical issues, but because it often effectively conceals and disguises them. Instead of seeing the aesthetic and the ideological as adversaries, aesthetics is the very embodiment of ideology (Eagleton, 1990). Ideology works partly because it is ground in day after day and absorbed through osmosis and partly because it is offered in highly seductive, aesthetic forms. To paraphrase Freud (1905/1960) on the pleasure of jokes, ideas come wrapped in aesthetic pleasure in such a way that the ideas recommend themselves to our attention. This wrapping can bribe our powers of criticism and confuse them. We are inclined to give the ideas the benefit of what has pleased us in the form in which the ideas were offered; and, thus, we are no longer inclined to find anything wrong in what has given us enjoyment because that would be to spoil the source of our pleasure.[3] For example, in seeking to have college level students come to a critical understanding of the Eurocentricism and gender stereotypes embodied in Disney films, Sun (2004) found a level of resistance I too often find in my art education classes. Sun explains this resistance as arising from the fact that her students had, like mine, grown up with Disney and accepted its assumptions—some of her female students believed it was a woman's role to rely on male partners—and to sustain such beliefs they saw the movies as innocent, harmless entertainment, not as a form of pedagogy. Ideologies are interwoven with such naturalness and with such aesthetic features that most viewers most of the time are unaware of them. It is worth remembering that it is not for nothing that Plato's warning against the seduction of imagery has been highly influential throughout Western philosophy informing everyone from the Reformation iconoclasts to present-day literary critics like Baudrillard (1987) for whom imagery is an "evil demon" (p. 1).

An Example

Alluring, celebratory scenes of violence and suffering in both fine art (Gaudelius & Moore, 1995/1996) and popular, mass art (Duncum, 2006b; jagodzinski, 2004), has caused great consternation, as has erotic imagery (Kipnis, 1996), but other kinds of aesthetics are equally as

[3]I am indebted to Walker and Chaplin (1997, p. 151) for this use of Freud.

morally compromised. For example, Lee's (2006) study of the Build-a-Bear Workshop® shows how an "aesthetic of sentimentality" (p. 1) is employed in the service of the late capitalist ideology of continual consumption. It is a cultural site of particular interest to art education, for it is targeted at K-6 children. Build-a-Bear is a global franchise store that instead of selling ready-made stuffed toys, allows a child to choose unstuffed animals, have them stuffed to the child's preferred level of "hugability," chose clothes for the toys—there is a vast selection—and perform a birth ritual by dressing and fluffing up the toys. The stores are laid out to facilitate this process with seven successive individual booths named Choose Me, Hear Me, Stuff Me/Stitch Me, Fluff Me, Dress Me, Name Me, and Take Me Home. Children are encouraged to commit to their stuffed animal with the promise to make their toy "their #1 pal," which can be demonstrated by buying clothes—otherwise the bear would be naked—and accessories (all of which have stratified price tickets). The stores are brightly colored and children dance about play-fully as they proceed through the purchasing process. Lee comments that the tender emotions of caring, compassion and empathy, of nurturance, are activated to ensure financial reward, and children are taught that love and materialism go hand in hand. A store sign reads, "Clothes make a bear feel really special" thus encouraging children to believe that if they buy clothes for their bear they demonstrate love; and, further, the truly pernicious, general message that it is through the buying and gifting of material goods that love is shown.

Lee shows how sentimentality is used to create consumer demand. She cogently illustrates the connection between aesthetics and social cohesion, for without aesthetic seduction contemporary capitalism would be seri-ously disabled.

Aesthetics as an Agent of Social Cohesion and Control

The role of aesthetics in stimulating desire and thereby maintaining the capitalist cycle of production, distribution, and consumption is both quite different and very similar to the original role aesthetics was intended to play in society. Modernist aesthetics was originally proposed as a radical alternative to capitalism, but from the start it was a deeply conflicted concept (Eagleton, 1990). It was a rallying cry against rampant materialism and industrialization, but it was also proposed as a deeply conservative force. As a proposal to consider art from a disin-terested, wholly mindful activity, aesthetics played its part in the arena of culture that otherwise was played by legislation, Victorian morality, and bureaucratic minutiae, all of which suppressed the body to produce a compliant, disciplined workforce, and, in turn, enabled the implemen-tation of the Industrial Revolution and the greatly accelerated devel-opment of capitalism.

Equally important, modernist aesthetics was offered as a new, quasi-religious kind of social adhesive. This agenda is explicit in the writings of Kant's close follower Friedrich Schiller (Eagleton, 1990). In his 1803 text *The Education of Man,* Schiller lays out the original socio-political agenda of modernist aesthetics as a means of social control. For Schiller, aesthetics was to contribute to the emerging middle class's assertion of socio-political legitimacy. It was to reconcile the disparate and opposed forces within the industrial, capitalist society just then emerging; a society tearing itself apart with internal conflicts and contradictions would be united so long as the aesthetic could intertwine itself into the deepest recesses of humanity. With the aesthetic, Schiller writes, "All that is matter ceases to be" and our "degrading kinship matter" is transformed (as cited in Eagleton, 1990, p. 117). It is through "the aesthetic moderation of the psyche" that "physical man is refined to the point where spiritual man can develop" (p. 104). Where the aesthetic grounds itself in the hearts of all classes of people common ground will exist such that society will be able to converse with itself. The aesthetic will play a crucial role in establishing social cohesion; indeed, it is to be the very basis of the emerging society. Influential, modernist art educator Read (1958) claimed that his proposal for education through art was no more than a reworking of Schiller's proposal.

Although it is clear that Schiller's quasi-spiritual and collectivist vision of the aesthetic was swept aside by the driving impetus of a materialist and evangelically individualistic 19th-century society, (and outside art education, Read's revival of Schiller fell on deaf ears), today, perhaps more than at any time in history, the economy, politics, and major social realities rely upon aesthetic management of one kind or another. Schiller's belief in the power of aesthetics as social control was not naïve; it simply has been realized in ways quite different from what he imagined. Although differently configured from Schiller's time, aesthetics today is just as important as he envisaged in delivering social cohesion.

Whereas Kant and Schiller's view of aesthetics as disinterested contributed to the early phase of capitalism, today aesthetic manipulation plays its role in an economy dependent upon constant consumption. Where early capitalism focused on production, which required the virtues of sobriety, thrift, and hard work, late capitalism requires rapid turnover not only through the satisfaction of desire but the production of images that activate desire. Dreamworlds now compete with one another so that "capitalism itself becomes aestheticized as the manufacture of desire becomes indispensable in the making and selling of things" (Brown, 2003, p. 213). In what Langman (2003) calls "the amusement society of global capitalism," the pursuit of happiness "is the realization of a self defined through consumption" (pp. 171, 183). Similarly, in what jagodzinksi (2004) calls "designer capitalism," where

traditional sources of authority and identity construction have eroded, pleasure is sought compulsively and obsessively (p. 2). What Schiller and others sought did not come to pass. But now business and politics have taken up aesthetics as core to their enterprises, and we art educators must play catch up.

Conclusion

Now more than ever, consumer goods are styled and packaged so that where price and quality cannot be differentiated, style and packaging make the difference between products that are purchased and those that stay on the shelves; politicians win or lose elections on the basis of affective, mediated relationships; and public policies are widely accepted or rejected on the basis of affective associations. The Build-a-Bear Workshop illustrates just how early the basic lesson of contemporary capitalism—to consume—is taught through aesthetic experience. If children are to learn that love, joy, compassion, empathy, and so on can be expressed by many means, they need exposure to more than the cultural sites of corporate capitalism; they need loving parents and teachers, including teachers who will take head-on the tension that so often exists between pleasure and ideas, beliefs, and values.

As art educators, we need to move beyond an innocent view of aesthetics as magical experience to understand how aesthetics is used to draw us into and make acceptable the arguments that visual imagery offers about the way societies are structured and lived. Aesthetics, as it is commonly used outside our specialist area, avoids the idealist, transcendental baggage of modernism, and is rather understood to arise from the contexts of people's everyday contact with visual images. When this ordinary language sense of aesthetics is already widely used, employing it helps art education to connect to much broader discourses than itself, including economics, politics, and social and cultural experience in general.

In the end, we may accept the arguments offered by imagery, but we need to be able to do so consciously, and not merely to be seduced, lulled, or overborne. A major role of art education should be to examine how the aesthetic features of visual imagery offer up ideology as natural and seductive and how they work to achieve assent.

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