

# Editorial

## The Discipline of Art Education

To the best of my knowledge, only rarely has the Canadian community of art education practitioners questioned where Art Education stands in terms of its own ongoing development as a discipline. Is Canadian Art Education still in its infancy or has it emerged from adolescence to finally reach adulthood? What signs are out there to suggest that our discipline may have reached a certain level of maturity?

It is my contention that there might be several overt signs that point to a certain level of maturity in any discipline. For example, is a discipline able to define itself mainly by referencing its own strengths, specificities and spheres of activity? Can it do so without resorting to the petty denigration of sister disciplines? Does the discipline have clearly defined boundaries? In terms of its theoretical foundations, does a discipline rigidly adhere to some kind of dogma or is it able to critically reflect on even its longest-held beliefs? Likewise, is the discipline able to accept criticism and reflect upon it, especially when the intention of critical commentary is to contribute to the growth of the field? Furthermore, how does a discipline deal with the need for change? Does a discipline seriously and carefully consider changes that can positively contribute to its ongoing development as a field? Or, conversely, does a discipline simply embrace each new emerging trend without due consideration to the implications of certain fads for the health of the discipline? Finally, does a discipline engage in an ongoing, critical examination of its research methodologies? Disciplinary bodies of knowledge cannot be dissociated from the research methods used to construct them and, therefore, in any mature discipline, research methodologies are also carefully and critically scrutinized.

For the time being, I am unable to provide absolute answers to the above questions as they pertain to Art Education. Perhaps as a fortuitous and partial answer to some of the above concerns, the first of the six peer-reviewed articles featured in Volume 36 of the *Canadian Review of Art Education* focuses on a critique of arts-based research. In this carefully written article, David Pariser (Concordia University) retraces the origins of the concept of *arts-based research* in order to formulate a critique that calls for caution on the part of those wishing to embrace this approach in their research. David Pariser's article is based on the paper presentation that he made last November at the Montreal 2008 CSEA Conference. The session in which he delivered this paper also included a paper on arts-based research by Donal O'Donoghue<sup>1</sup> (University of British Columbia). Together, these papers generated considerable excitement among conference participants and fostered an ongoing discussion that lasted for several weeks thereafter.

The five articles that follow David Pariser's also touch upon questions of importance for our discipline. CRAE 36 continues with an article by Jill Smith (University of Auckland) in which the author demonstrates how the development of art education in New Zealand has been influenced by its long colonial history. Readers will no doubt notice that a parallel can be drawn between the historical developments in the visual art curricula of Canada and New Zealand. Third, an article by Christina Halliday (Ontario College of Art and Design) continues an ongoing dialogue, among our readership, in which post-secondary visual art instructors engage in a critical discussion about their practice as educators. To pursue and further this discussion, as CRAE Editor, I welcome future submissions of this nature. In a fourth article, Jennifer Eiserman (University of Calgary) reflects on multiculturalism and the Alberta Art Curriculum and proposes "dialogic multiculturalism" as a means for ensuring more inclusiveness in Art Education. In turn, in the fifth article, Elizabeth Auger Ashworth (Nippising University) and Daniel Jarvis (Nippising University) examine the role of community-based art exhibitions as a vital learning component in student-teachers' undergraduate train-

ing. Finally, in the sixth peer-reviewed article, Joanna Black (University of Manitoba) examines how power dynamics and limited resources have impacted the digital art curricula in two different Canadian secondary schools. Volume 36 concludes with book reviews by Natasha Reid (Concordia University) and Manuelle Freire (Concordia University). As always, I welcome readers' comments and suggestions.

Richard Lachapelle

---

<sup>1</sup>As a complement to David Pariser's article, readers may also wish to read the article by Donal O'Donoghue (2009) published recently in *Studies in Art Education* 50(4), 352-368.