LOOKING FOR BEAUTY:
A CALL TO EDUCATORS TO ADDRESS THE NEED FOR AESTHETIC EDUCATION IN OUR CLASSROOMS

by

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THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

In the Department of Education

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Spring 2005

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Abstract:

Looking For Beauty: A Call for Educators to Address the Need for Aesthetic Education in our Classrooms

In recent decades, beauty has been set aside by the art world and schools have decreased funding and classroom time for the arts. Beauty, however, remains vitally important to us as individuals and as a society. My intention is to clarify what we mean by beauty and aesthetics and why they are important to us through an examination of Kant, Croce and modern writers on aesthetics, and to build a case for increased aesthetic education in our school system.

The purpose of this document is also to serve as a guide to implementing aesthetic education cross-curriculurally. Various strategies will be provided that will assist teachers from disparate disciplines to integrate aesthetic ideas into their classroom teaching in order to increase the efficacy of their practice, and to enhance their students aesthetic intelligence.
Acknowledgments:

I would like to thank my family, Darlene and Chloë, for their patience and support through the long process of writing this work. I would also like to thank Dr. Stuart Richmond for his advice and direction, and for his excellent teaching.
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Introduction

My intention through this work is to examine beauty in the 21st Century. My feeling was that beauty had been cast aside by the art world and yet we in our society seemed to be seeking beauty more than ever. With that in mind, I decided to investigate what had befallen beauty in the last third of the 20th Century.

I have chosen to examine where our notion of the aesthetic comes from and how it relates to the arts and education. It is clear that to attempt to define beauty is extremely difficult and as my reading of Kant’s Aesthetic progressed, I realized that an examination of beauty and how it affects us, how we recognize it, and how we express our feelings about it would be difficult indeed. However, I am concerned that our understanding of what we mean by beauty and the aesthetic has been changing and diminishing. It seems that as we are bombarded more and more by media images about glamour and consumerism, our notion of what beauty is is becoming unclear. Therefore, I have undertaken to clarify what we mean by beauty and aesthetics. I wish to examine what we mean by the aesthetic through an investigation of Kant’s “Analytic of the Beautiful”. (Kant, 1790) Though Kant’s work is not entirely appropriate to our world now, it is Kant’s seminal work that has presented us with the concept of the aesthetic that we have been discussing since the 18th Century.

One hundred and eleven years later, Benedetto Croce published his great work on aesthetics, “The Aesthetic as the Science of Expression and of the Linguistic
in General.” (Croce, 1901) I will research Croce’s ideas on aesthetics and use his work as a bridge between Kant’s aesthetic and the work of modern writers. I will examine how our views about beauty have changed through postmodernism, and how modern writers have addressed beauty through the postmodern era. I will also discuss how beauty is being applied to a New Aesthetic that appears to be rising out of the end days of postmodernism.

The purpose of this work, however, is not merely to be an attempt to understand what we mean by aesthetics from the time of Kant to our most recent writings on the subject, but to provide an overview of the seminal and recent works that might give us the necessary background to begin to address the need for greater aesthetic education in our schools. Funding of and support for arts programmes is diminishing in the public school system and I fear that our young people are not receiving ample opportunity to acquire aesthetic skills and develop their aesthetic intelligence. To make a case for increased aesthetic education, we must be able to communicate what we mean by beauty and aesthetic education and why these things are important to us. A definition of beauty will not be provided necessarily, but a number of guidelines will be presented. With these guidelines in mind and an understanding of where we have come from in the field of aesthetics, it is my hope that the last portion of this work will be useful as a guide to applying these principles in the classroom.
Chapter One

Our Aesthetic Sensibility

Our species has the good fortune to possess the ability to develop and use aesthetic judgment. We have the capacity to absorb stimuli and to judge them on their ability to render unto us a pleasurable or otherwise significant experience. We can, through our ability to judge aesthetically, wade through the daily bombardment of sensory experience, and decide what we want to attend to. Benedetto Croce (Croce, 1901) suggests that all our experiences and subsequent expressions are aesthetic in nature and it is at that point when we aesthetically judge that we decide to put form to our expression or not. He argues that all of our experiences are filtered through the senses which are aesthetic senses. As we receive information from the senses, we order the stimuli and attend to the information we receive, categorizing it, recognizing it and eventually judging it. If we receive stimuli through aesthetic senses, then we would be judging the eventual expression through those aesthetic filters. Croce suggests that as we intuit each experience, we absorb the particular stimulus and then express our judgment of that experience. It is that expression, manifested as form or not, which is aesthetic in nature through the satisfaction that the expression brings. In so doing, we either engage in thought about a particular thing and create memories of that thought or perhaps create a physical embodiment of that form. But how do we get to it? Does it just come naturally or do we develop this ability through learning?
As educators it behoves us to examine the state of aesthetics in our culture and in our education system. It is important that we understand how we are responding to beauty at the beginning of the 21st century, and if we are cognizant of its benefits to humankind. If we have in some way lost touch with beauty or have changed our reaction to it, what does this mean? Are we appreciating the value of beauty in our schools? Are we ignoring beauty in the classroom? If we are, what are the ramifications of that? Stuart Richmond (Richmond, 2004) writes that the aim of aesthetic education is to enable students to create and appreciate art and beauty. If this is true, the benefits to education are far reaching. How beauty affects and benefits us will be addressed and investigated at greater length in the section on beauty in the upcoming pages.

However, let us here state that there is an intrinsic value to the recognition, and appreciation of the beautiful. Our experiences of the beautiful help us to expand our quality of life. Beauty brings pleasure and satisfaction to the mind. The uniqueness of the beautiful, the sense of purpose to the form of the beautiful satisfies. Beauty makes us more aware as we contemplate an object or experience. As we slow down to attend to beauty, it is in that moment when our awareness is heightened. It is in beauty that we momentarily know the 'unknowable'. It is through our attending to or our creation of beauty that we have the experience known to athletes as 'the zone'. When an athlete is 'in the zone' they seem to transcend their normal abilities, the world seems to slow down and they experience great clarity. While in 'the zone' athletes experience a more fluid connection between cognition and their bodies. Time appears to stand still and the athlete attends to their particular task in a way that takes them beyond the self. The best athletes are able to get into 'the zone' more often. This experience is what artists have while creating, when everything seems to come together
perfectly and the world slips away. It is what we experience when attending to beauty, that moment when time stands still and we are taken beyond ourselves. We recognize a ‘truth’ in beauty. Through our attention to beauty, we experience the object without a need for it to have particular purpose, or for it to exist for any other reason than for existence itself. Beauty makes no pretence, it *is* only for itself. This represents a simplicity in being that is a truth, a truth that is akin to a religious experience.

Scruton (1987) argues that beauty and aesthetics, after Kant introduced his writings on aesthetics, have inhabited a place at the centre of our philosophy and culture much as religion did at one time. Beauty resides at the centre of who we are culturally, it provides us with meaning. How we perceive beauty is an extension of our culture, and therefore, helps to place us as who we are as individuals in the cosmos. How we experience and express beauty is an extension of who we are both culturally and individually. Our reaction to beauty then, is part of our identity. If beauty provides us with the above benefits, it would seem logical that it be part of our education. It is easy, in light of the obvious benefits that beauty provides us with, to see how a firm grounding in aesthetic education should be a cornerstone of our curriculum. Shouldn’t education help us to develop as contributing citizens of the world, with well-developed identity and skills with which to enrich our global culture? Here in British Columbia I see little evidence that aesthetic education is being promoted in our school system. In fact, in light of recent initiatives, the arts and consequently aesthetics are being given less of an important role in the current curriculum. A Ministry of Education document will be cited in the upcoming pages which discusses the place of the arts in the current curriculum.
There is a widely held position that we cannot teach aesthetic sensitivity as a skill and that we cannot really teach art. While the ability to experience these things is not truly teachable I believe that we can teach about the issues, and that we can certainly promote growth, greater understanding and the ability to communicate in these areas. Richmond suggests that art making and art appreciation cannot be taught directly, but that the rules and skills necessary for the development of these abilities can be taught. Discussing photography, Richmond, argues that, "Learning about the styles, histories, and critical views of photography helps the students to appreciate the aesthetic possibilities of the medium, to see where the spaces are for personal interpretation and creativity." (Pg. 8) A firm foundation of skills provides the student with greater opportunity to successfully respond to the world at large through the arts. Greater exposure to the rules and skills of the arts should promote a greater aesthetic sensitivity through the recognition of the presence of beauty in the formal creation of art works.

As educators then, let us establish what place beauty and aesthetics hold for us at the beginning of this century; and in so doing let us try to develop an understanding of the importance beauty plays in our development as people, and how we might ensure that aesthetics plays a larger part in the education of our children.

**Beauty in the 21st Century**

There are those who believe that we can no longer look upon the world aesthetically in the manner in which we have in light of the many great tragedies perpetrated on the world and its inhabitants in the last century. Arthur Danto suggests that some do not see it as morally permissible to find beauty in
suffering, yet great works of beauty come out of tragedy. Danto further writes that pleasure can mute pain and beauty prompts pleasure. (Danto, 1998) We create great works of art from tragedy. Picasso's “Guernica” is perhaps one of the most famous examples in the western canon. We may not find a Kantian 'pleasure' from the work, but we are moved. It has been suggested that we cannot make beautiful things after the horrors of the Holocaust. Andrew Bowie argues that only art that does not share the consensus of beauty, that is not universally held as having beauty "Is true to the historical situation after Auschwitz." (Bowie, 2003) How is that so? How can we not? Our aesthetic sensibilities demand that we express our emotions, good and bad, in ways that communicate them. And may we not be moved by nature because the world has seen a great horror? To make a demand of humanity that we no longer appreciate beauty after Auschwitz is a political demand, a sociological call to remember a great tragedy in order that it not be perpetrated on humanity again. It is a call made from anguish, but it is not a demand that can or should be met.

Aesthetics and Beauty have fallen on hard times in recent decades. The Western tradition has been attacked ideologically and through it, beliefs about aesthetics, beauty, and art. There is certainly reason enough to ask hard questions of the western tradition, but we must ask the questions and find ways to maintain a link to these traditions. So where do we go? We cannot just simply abandon an entire tradition and way of functioning in response to new theories which cast negative aspersions on our arts and humanities. The issue is that the Western canon is said to illustrate the negative traits of western culture. It has been suggested through postmodernism that the elements of sexism, racism, class, and colonialism are exhibited in our great works. Cindy Sherman's work addresses the problematic history of the male gaze. Her images present the subject, usually
Sherman herself in costume, in provocative poses that initially appear titillating but upon greater scrutiny suggest to us that these types of images and poses are objectifying. Sherman takes issue with the tradition of the female nude in the western canon. Berger discusses the nude in *Ways of Seeing* (Berger, 1972) and states plainly that the nude, and the female nude in particular was about the male gaze and male pleasure. By far, the largest number of nudes in the western tradition are women, if they are and were created for the male gaze, it is not difficult then to understand the claims of female objectification. Mailol, Matisse, and Ingres all portray the female nude in appreciative presentation, they are painted lovingly and with great care, but the nudes are still *objects* of beauty offered up to the viewer as items from which to gain pleasure. Suggestions that the female nude is purely about creating a beautiful image through the depiction of the human form may be belied by the relative absence of the male and aged form.

Our aesthetic experiences, however, come from a variety of places. Our aesthetic experiences may not all be derived from the Western canon, though we see them through a cultural lens. As mentioned above, Croce would suggest that our aesthetic experiences happen all of the time. We receive stimuli, we order them, judge them and express thoughts about them. Are we then merely dealing with a clarity issue? Should we qualify our critique of the western aesthetic tradition to include only that which is clearly impinged upon by the negative aspects of western culture? For, one would assume we are criticizing the *negative* aspects of our culture, surely not the entire culture. I am not convinced that, regardless of the difficulties with the western canon and aesthetic tradition, we should completely discredit the past, only looking to the future. We can learn from our past through more astute readings of these works. We can apply a more
culturally sensitive ideology to the readings and use our critique to improve our performance morally. It would behove us not just to complain that we made many mistakes through our cultural history and that perhaps our art and aesthetic theory actually assisted in creating the problem, but also to use our developing understanding of our mistakes to avoid similar pitfalls. Bowie argues that if we are applying a ‘new reading’ to a particular art work and find that it does present aspects of colonialism or racism and so on, that we should use that finding positively and recognize that the reading has value in assisting us to know about a culture. To dismiss the item in question would be to rob ourselves of an opportunity to understand a culture and to enter into a dialogue with it. If we do away with our past because it contains ugliness, then in our haste to champion a new aesthetic and ideology, we may forget where we have been and easily find ourselves making new mistakes in the void left from our dissension of the old ways.

**Where do we go from here?**

Clearly, from an educational perspective we must tailor ideas about western aesthetics to meet our needs as we move into the new century. But how to do that? We need to recognize our difficulties as a culture, learn from them and plot a new course that embraces our traditions and develop a new direction. Postmodernism has been working towards developing a new direction but has, in so doing, suggested that traditional art skills and our art traditions have little place in this new direction. Tracy Emin’s “My Bed” has been displayed in well known art galleries and was short listed for the Turner Prize in 1999, suggesting that it is considered a major art work. The piece is about ideas, not beauty. Emin’s “My Bed” is simply that, it is a bed with items presumably meant to suggest her day-
to-day existence strewn across and around it. It is not made with what we think of as traditional art making skills. With postmodernism, it is no longer necessary to concentrate over much on formal principles. In postmodern theory, the idea is of primary importance. Aesthetics becomes less important to an art that is based primarily on concepts and ideology. Intellectually this position has merit, but visually what are we left with? Bruce Nauman’s “Mapping the Studio II (Fat Chance John Cage)” (Nauman, 2001) is a video work. Nauman taped his studio at night while it was empty to ‘map’ the events that would occur each night, occasionally his cat chasing mice or moths moving through the darkened space. Clearly this piece is not about beauty in the traditional sense, and does not use what we believe to be traditional art making skills. Due to postmodernism’s initial position concerning the need for greater multiplicity in the art tradition, any idea can be presented as art. But what happens when the ideology becomes old and tired and part of the canon itself?

Postmodernism will be discussed at various times throughout this work. It is therefore appropriate at this point to outline, briefly, what postmodernism is and how it relates to the discussion of aesthetics.

According to Christopher Butler, (Butler, 2002) postmodernism is more concerned with the processes of our understanding than the pleasures of artistic finish or unity. (p. 5) Postmodernism resists grand narratives, suggesting that grand narratives often promote the gulf between the established, privileged West and the “Other”. Postmodernism does not believe in the humanizing effect of art for example, and would suggest that humanism promotes colonialism. Postmodernism is relativist, believing that our interpretation of everything is
relative to our position, our history and our language. This relativism prevents us from accepting 'truths'. Butler writes, “The result was that the basic attitude of postmodernism was a scepticism about the claims of any kind of overall, totalising explanation.” (p.15) With relativism as a guiding principle, postmodernism deconstructs, leading us to believe that we must always suspect that what we are seeing is an interpretation filtered through our culture, language and so on. Our world is constructed by us through language and so cannot be trusted.

Because postmodernism has many stances against differing positions, it seems to take no stance of its own. Postmodernism is anti-patriarchy, anti-hierarchy, suspicious of power, does not believe in truths and seeks to circumnavigate, if not deconstruct, the status quo. The difficulty is, while postmodernism leads us to a great many questions, it provides us with few answers. Postmodernism criticizes without providing positives with which to build a new approach. Butler further writes, “Much deconstructive criticism now seems to be self-indulgent and self-absorbed, and ultimately uncommitted to anything that matters.” (p.28) We should, however, apply the lessons learned from postmodernism to a new aesthetic.

We need a new aesthetic approach, for reasons argued above, and education is the key. It is our responsibility as artists and as educators to find appropriate ways to address aesthetics and beauty in our culture. If we want to avoid making the same mistakes, we must be aware and teach our young people to be aware of the issues. They must know where they have come from, and be led to the acquisition of the skills and understanding necessary to formulate a rich artistic future. If aesthetics and beauty have undergone criticism, we must be clear about
why that has happened and what it looks like. It is then our responsibility as educators to clarify this for our students. Then, with an understanding of how our new aesthetic world is fashioned, we can begin to demonstrate and promote new ways to function in a new aesthetic world. We can begin to teach about beauty and aesthetics and how to appreciate and create art in this updated environment.

If we are to educate our young about aesthetics and art, it is necessary to focus on a variety of areas. It is important that we once again promote skills development, but we must also take into account all that postmodernism has been trying to teach us. We need to find a way to lead our students to a place where they can acquire skills, formulate ideas, respond to the world at large and express themselves intelligently and skilfully. In our culture and educational system, due to a constant barrage of information, sound aesthetic judgment is more necessary than ever. We, however, are focusing on aesthetics in schools less than before. Our young people receive enormous amounts of information, but are often ill prepared to sift through that information skilfully and appropriately to find what is important to them aesthetically, culturally, and intellectually. Our young people have a greater variety of arts and media-driven options than ever before available to them but are woefully short in the knowledge necessary to make mature, educated choices about what is healthy, interesting, safe, helpful, and humane. The global marketing forces know that titillation sells and that the more exciting a 'product' looks the more likely it is that it will be consumed. The information age is about consumerism, and our youth should be savvy consumers for their own health and safety. Our youth should be able to judge what is of value to them and to their culture, and not have their preferences shaped for them by the media.
I intend to outline and underscore the importance of these issues, and to suggest ways in which arts educators can develop ways to bring aesthetics and beauty back to school.

In the pages ahead, we will consider beauty, how it has been conceived through Kant and other more modern sources. Beauty has been devalued and has taken serious criticism in recent decades. It has been suggested that beauty is a distraction to serious art making. Marjorie Welish writes that beauty is not tolerated if it diminishes ideas. (Welish, 1998) A discussion of what place has been left for the beautiful in our culture in the aftermath of modernism and postmodernism will be presented as well as whether or not beauty ever really left us. Briefly we will take a look at how we might deal with these issues in the classroom.

From beauty, we will move to a look at aesthetics severally through Benedetto Croce and modern writers, critics, and thinkers. If beauty and aesthetics have been separated, how has that happened? Is there a rift between the two? How have we looked at aesthetics and where did we get to? And what are we thinking now? What is the impact in the art world and in the culture at large that a changing aesthetic has? How does this impact our teaching practice? It seems critical that we understand aesthetics, and how it grows and develops as culture changes, in order to deliver a more complete arts programme. Somehow, however, we rarely get to aesthetics in the classroom.

From our investigation of aesthetics past and present, we will move to education. How have we dealt with aesthetic education in the past? Have we taught about and to beauty and aesthetics? What did that look like and what has happened to
that model? We will look at why things have changed. And we will look at what we may have lost. We will also discuss how aesthetics and beauty could be reintroduced into the classroom.

More than ever it seems to me we need aesthetics education. It is important that we develop a new aesthetic model and introduce it to our students, but not just because the art world has been changing, but also because the whole world is changing. Our students receive little or no education dealing with beauty and aesthetics. Most art educators are product driven, teaching students the skills to make the work that the educator can then assess for the appropriate growth potential and realization. My intention here is not to belittle their contribution, nor to suggest that arts educators are not aware of their responsibilities, but there is so little time and teaching aesthetics to young people perhaps seems a little daunting. Our culture is very product driven and art students are supposed to make art. The students expect to make art and the parents and administrators want to see evidence of learning. Still, it is our responsibility to provide students with the opportunity to acquire skills in aesthetic judgment. The world delivers so much information to our young people and it is our responsibility to give them the tools to judge for themselves what is of quality and appropriate to them. The subsequent pages and chapters will address this problem and hope to make a case for more arts educators, and educators at large, to challenge themselves and their students to bring back the beautiful.
Chapter Two

The Experience of Beauty

We need beauty. It is what breathes life into us, and that which we can least likely afford to do without beyond our basic human functionary needs. Peter Schjeldahl cites a quotation from Baudelaire in his essay “Notes on Beauty”, (Scheldahl, 1994. p.56) “You can live three days without food, without poetry, never.” It seems that the harshest punishment would be that which robs us of beauty. How many prisons are built with any intent to build a structure that is beautiful? They incarcerate the body behind the walls and barbed wire. They lock up the senses by denying beauty. It is that denying that perhaps has the greatest punitive value. We see, in the film “The Shawshank Redemption”, (Darabont, 1994) the protagonist, played by Tim Robbins, locking himself in the office and playing “The Marriage of Figaro” over the public address system and for a few brief moments the inmates are graced with glorious music for perhaps the first time in that grey and beauty-less place. The warden and guards break in and stop the music, perhaps knowing that this experience of beauty will reawaken the inmates’ humanity and, in a sense, set them free. Robbins’ character Andy Dufresne proceeds to develop a library that through its books brings beauty inside. In so doing he undermines the severity of Shawshank Prison and reintroduces humanity. Dufresne knows and tells his fellow inmates that they can lock up the body but if the mind is free to explore and contemplate beauty, then your incarceration is not complete. He knows that when we stop seeking beauty we lose our humanity, dignity and freedom.
As humans we require beauty. We seek it, and we create it. We adorn our bodies with beads, tattoos, scars, and decorative clothing. We express our desire to live in beautiful circumstances through our consistent beautification of ourselves and our surroundings. Body beautification in humans is not purely motivated by the biological imperative of attracting a mate. Many animals display themselves to attract attention and find a mate. The peacock is impressive, but one would be hard pressed to imagine two peacocks comparing notes or looking for ways to improve and alter their display for aesthetic purposes. Our self-adornment is not merely to illustrate our genetic suitability to a potential mate, but to illustrate our desire to see beauty even in our own reflection. We go to great lengths to beautify ourselves, manufacturing and purchasing a wide variety of products to improve our appearance. The fashion industry, historically and its current incarnation, has been and is presently an enormously influential and powerful body. We, through our relationship with the fashion industry, develop ideals of human beauty and try to adhere to them regardless of how harmful they may be. We are largely driven by our biological imperative, but to suggest that all our self-beautification is only about the proliferation of the species is perhaps a little short sighted. It is in beauty that we revel in our being alive.

We decorate our homes. If paint was only to help protect the surface of our dwellings and to keep the elements out, we would not bother choosing colours. We hand knot incredibly complex rugs, spending huge amounts of time manufacturing dye and a variety of materials with which to create something of great beauty to walk on. Beauty, as attended to by disparate cultures, comes in multifarious forms. Art and aesthetics exists in all of the world's cultures but is manifested through different traditions and skills. The pervasiveness of aesthetics
and art in a culture’s social fabric varies from one culture to another. The
observance of art differs, but all cultures practice art and the expression of their
aesthetic sensibility. Anderson (1990) quotes Witherspoon in his discussion of
the pervasiveness of art and aesthetics in Navajo life as follows, “One is
admonished to walk in beauty, speak in beauty, act in beauty, sing in beauty and
live in beauty.” (Witherspoon, 1977 p.153) Anderson suggests that we in the
West set time aside to attend to beauty. We are often busy and must make a
point of stopping to attend to the beautiful. We tend to think of art as what we see
existing in the gallery, in the theatre and in the concert halls. To the Japanese,
aesthetics has been at the heart of their culture, the simple act of writing turned
into art and archery as a thing of beauty. To the Australian Aboriginal People
aesthetics and art are firmly rooted in religion and ritual. Anderson writes that
Inuit aesthetics, “Reveals a system of thought in which art is believed to enhance
a person’s life today, improve one’s prospects for tomorrow, and accomplish this
through its’ unique capacity to transform reality.” (p.43)

Our joy in experiencing beauty prompts us to create things of beauty in turn.
Often these objects of beauty have little utilitarian purpose, yet they are
manufactured just the same. Even objects with clear purpose are often decorated
and created though our aesthetic filters. The Northwest Coast First Nations
Peoples crafted incomparable bent wood boxes that surely demanded great skill
and a large time commitment to store goods in. We carve friezes and totem
poles, develop flying buttresses, design and craft stained glass, make
monumental Moai, and hang ornamental shutters. The most elemental of
dwellings makes use of some from of decoration. If we do not decorate the
physical surface of our homes, then we display decoration and art. These articles
of beauty do not always have a practical function, and in fact could often be
described as “useless”. If an object has no direct use to enhance our physical well being then what good is it? We create these ‘things’ for what they bring to us in relationship to our community and our natural world. There is an intrinsic value to experiences of beauty.

Beauty is sought and created in the most unlikely of places. The cellist of Sarajevo serves as example of beauty made in the most difficult of circumstances. During the bloody conflict for the control of Sarajevo, Vedran Smailovic braved the shelling and sniper fire to play beautiful music amid the madness each day for 22 days to mourn the 22 people killed in a make shift bread line. Smailovic played in the open, as if to say that beauty must exist even in the harshest of realities. Anguish and privation do not stop us from revelling in and creating beauty. We have composed music, written plays, and created art in prisoner of war and concentration camps. It is the beautiful that gives us solace, and makes harsh realities bearable. Arthur Danto writes that beauty is a fitting way to mark sorrow. (Danto, 1994)

We seek and create beauty because it is inspiring and gives a moment of celebration. It is the moment when we stop and have a brief wash of pleasure. The brief intake of breath as James Hillman explains it, that moment when our breath is momentarily snatched from us in a brief feeling of recognition and pleasure. (Hillman, 1991) There are probably few other creatures on this planet that are moved by a sunset, or who weep at an aria. No other species is so moved by an encounter with a Mark Rothko painting. Beauty gives us pleasure, as Kant would tell us. Kant tells us that beauty elicits this experience of pleasure through the free play of our cognitive powers. (Kant, 1790) As our faculties experience a particular event aesthetically, we allow them free reign to form a
disinterested impression of a particular thing. If we have no ulterior motives, no prior interest in a ‘thing’ then we can experience this free play that Kant writes about. After allowing our faculties to absorb the event or object, we would then experience the feeling of pleasure in the form of a thing itself. The work of Immanuel Kant will be examined more thoroughly in the ensuing pages, here let us simply state that as the new century wears on, it seems we need to experience this free play more often, we need to have more experiences of pleasure in the beauty that is around us. We need beauty, particularly now.

In a world moving ever faster, with myriad of images and experiences happening simultaneously, how do we have time to stop and revel in that sudden intake of breath? Charles Taylor writes of the malaises that are gripping society, malaises that see increasing isolation of the individual, through lack of community, and lack of connection to the aesthetic. (Taylor, 1993) We see isolation through the search for selfish individualism and lose our grasp on what has traditionally connected us. As we attempt to develop and promote our ‘selves’ we lose sight of the totality, the ‘whole’. When we focus so completely on ourselves we lose the opportunity to connect and communicate with the world. Our instrumental thinking must be offset by our attention to beauty. It is in our attending to beauty that we have the opportunity to step outside of our selves and our basic needs to attend to something special. This opportunity provides us with freedom, freedom to judge, revel and cherish.

We lose sight of beauty through our distancing ourselves from culture and community. As our culture becomes more fractured and our community less connected, we have less reason, it seems, to respect and honour each other. Hillman sees this as a growing narcissism, a searching within for that which we
traditionally received from the greater whole. If we do not attend to beauty at large, then we are not in touch with the world, the 'cosmos' and are therefore diminished. If we lose sight of beauty, we lose sight of that which connects us as humans. If we lose that connection we lose our humanity. We as a species have perpetrated great ill and some might suggest have little to commend us, except for that one special gift, our need for beauty. There is a moral value to the recognition of beauty. Iris Murdoch (Murdoch, 1970) writes, “Anything which alters consciousness in the direction of the unselfishness, objectivity and realism is to be connected with virtue.” (p.84) When we attend to beauty, we alter our consciousness and in so doing, we become connected to virtue. Murdoch further argues, that we might in fact seek out art and aesthetic experiences specifically to alter our conscious states to clear our minds.

Beauty gives a reprieve from our daily grind; it motivates us to seek new pleasures, and new experiences. We do not just seek to maintain the status quo. As humans we seek pleasurable experiences. We want our food to be delicious, our homes to be attractive, our mates to be comely, our vistas to be impressive and our sex to be sublime. If we seek this pleasure, this delight in experiences, then we seek beauty. In Kantian terms, pleasure in form, or that which pleases us, is tied to beauty. We do not always find it, but when we do, regardless of how many experiences of beauty we have had, we continue to experience that little intake of breath. There is always a freshness and a recognition to every experience of the beautiful. Each experience of the beautiful has its own individual and special character, not merely interesting or attractive, but resplendent. In its presence, we are pleased. The danger here is in confusing that which is pleasant and that which pleases us, again in Kantian terms. There is a difference between that which pleases us and what is merely attractive. As
Kant suggests both a dog and a human can find a good back rub pleasant. A thing that pleases us suggests more than a simple feeling, more than what feels good. It is something altogether deeper. Pleasure suggests a connection, one that is emotional, psychological, and visceral. Pleasure makes us think and make judgments.

There is more to these experiences than simple hedonism, however. Our experiences of beauty are deeper. We feel, through these experiences, satisfaction in the presence of an object. We know a harmony in an object or experience that we recognize as beautiful. We become connected to the beautiful by our recognition of the 'thing in itself'. There is a 'worthwhileness' to beauty that is difficult to explain. Beauty, as suggested in the introduction to this work, gives us a wholeness, we experience ‘truth’ in its presence. Scruton argues that beauty is our religion, or it at least resides in the place we once held for religion. Beauty is the form of our expressions; it is part of the vocabulary of our cultural language. It gives us meaning and identity. Through an experience and expression of beauty we are more completely aware of our senses as they are given free play to completely absorb a thing while time seems to stand still. Richmond quotes Plato in his article, as follows: “Beauty is the only visible quality that inspires love.” (pg. 1)

If beauty brings us pleasure, satisfaction, identity, brings us to virtue and we seem to seek it all the time, why is the issue of beauty contentious? Why do we hear that beauty has been under siege in academe and in the art world? If we are so intent on finding beauty in our lives, why is there such a fuss being made over beauty in the art world? Of all places, one would assume, the art world would embrace the beautiful. To the layperson, the issue of beauty’s place in art is
simple. Art and beauty go hand in hand. If we seek pleasure and truth from art then it should be beautiful. Even if art is addressing more controversial issues it is believed that art should be impressive and a purveyor of beauty. The general public has embraced Impressionism, but is still having difficulty with much that occurred after that. The lay public has yet to accept Jackson Pollock and will not readily accept ‘la Merda d’Artista’ any time soon. (Manzoni, 1961)

The art establishment sees beauty in a very different way. (More of which will be covered in the ensuing pages) Briefly here, the art establishment has abandoned beauty for acceptance. Since Marcel Duchamp, there has been a distancing from the perceived frivolousness and inconsistency of beauty. To be an equal of science, of thought and reason, art had to prove that it should be taken seriously. The beautiful was not seen as offering much to the intellect and was a distraction from more important social issues. Marjorie Welish (Welish, 1998: 66) argues Duchamp, ‘worked through and against aesthetics.’ Suggesting that Duchamp’s goal was to change our opinion of art. She further writes, “It is well known that modernity does not tolerate beauty at the expense of theories of the art object construed in dialogue with the culture.” (pg.71) However, as Louise Bourgeois has suggested, beauty is an intellectual pursuit, it is not merely visual. (Bourgeois, 1998) We decide on the beautiful. We make judgments concerning the beautiful and therefore, use our intellect. We make decisions about the object or experience based on our prior experiences in the same vein or in comparison to other experiences. We call upon our memory and skills to classify, to compare, to criticize and to place in context regarding cultural information.

It is clear that we want beauty in our lives. Few of us would want to see a world devoid of beauty, and as Elaine Scarry suggests, few would want to see a future
that would not contain beauty. (Scarry, 1999) But what is beauty? A direct question perhaps, but a difficult question to answer directly. The question is not what do we find beautiful, who is beautiful or did we see something beautiful today, but what prompts us to recognize beauty in a thing? Asking this question of a variety of people would get a variety of responses, immediate responses. Most would have little difficulty relating beautiful experiences, or describing beautiful things. Their response to the question of what is beauty and what prompts us to recognize beauty, however, would of necessity, be much more considered.

The influence of Immanuel Kant on the field of aesthetics and the question of beauty is far reaching. Though we look upon his work with more of a critical eye with the passing of time, it is his investigation into aesthetics which, in one way or another, has prompted centuries of discussion. It is appropriate at this point to investigate Kant’s work in greater depth.

Immanuel Kant

A common axiom is that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Kant, however, would tell us that beauty is a “subjective universality”. According to Kant, if I find something to be beautiful then I should expect that recognition of the beauty in an object to be shared by others. Kant argues that the cognitive abilities (Imagination and understanding) employed in the aesthetic judgment of a thing are universal, and therefore, we can expect that others would experience beauty in a thing in a similar manner. We have individual tastes in some things, foods and favourite colours for example, but we assert an object’s beauty to all. But what do we mean by beauty?
I do not believe it is possible to provide an absolute definition of beauty. Kant avoids giving us examples, only principles to follow in attending to beauty. While avoiding stating a definition of beauty, I will attempt to outline the principles by which we might attend to beauty.

Beauty is what we recognize in that special moment when the unity of form and imagination come together in a harmonious way, bringing satisfaction and pleasure to the mind. "The experience of beauty provides a taste of freedom from the human condition." (Steiner, 2001 p.2) Beauty removes us from our instrumental thinking and provides us with a moment of joy in the consideration of an object. Beauty is thought to possess, symmetry, balance, orderliness, unity and perfection. It is these properties which, when brought together in an object, provide us with cognitive and sensual satisfaction. Kant suggests that while our senses consider an object, our imagination and understanding work together in free play providing us with a harmonious sensation. That free play is made possible by our disinterestedness.

We should here, perhaps, discuss Kant's notion of disinterestedness as mentioned above as it is an area of Kant's work, which causes some difficulty. Kant argues that we should attend to the beautiful in a disinterested manner. Being disinterested should carry with it no other motivation than the desire to have the experience in itself. That is if we stand to profit somehow or gain in some way any more than an experience we are not disinterested. Lyas argues, that if we make a global declaration of a thing's beauty, we are not taking ownership of the object as something to our taste, but are suggesting it is beautiful universally and therefore, have no stake in the object's success. (Lyas,
1997) Lyas further elucidates the theory of disinterestedness applied to our acceptance of an object's perceived usefulness. Our delight in the object of beauty resides in its capacity to delight us rather than in its utilitarian nature.

And if, as Kant argues, beauty is disinterested due to our assertion that a thing is beautiful to everyone and is not an individually held position; then it is a shared experience, a universally held experience. He would tell us that for one person only to recognize beauty in a thing is not beauty, but an experience that is pleasant to them. When we declare something to be beautiful we are assuming certain qualities that everyone would agree with, and consequently suggest a universally held judgment. Further, Kant tells us that taste is bound up with beauty and works much in the same way. When we suggest that an individual has 'taste', we assume that they have the ability to recognize the beautiful. Because taste, according to Kant, is a subjective universality, for only one person to recognize a thing as being tasteful would negate that thing as being an item that is more than just pleasant or tasteful to them. In fact Kant writes, that it would negate taste all together.

I wish also to discuss Kant's notion of the purposiveness of beauty. An object of beauty should have a purposiveness to it, meaning that the object, due to its' perfection or harmony of form, suggests to us initially to have been made for a purpose though its raison d'être is for existence itself. An object of beauty then attracts us by its perfection of form and we attend to it finding that its' apparent purpose is really for its' own sake. Upon realizing this, our delight in the object in fact increases. Kant's philosophy of beauty suggests that beauty is recognized when an object is being considered for its own sake.
Kant then, begins to answer some of the questions that we have about beauty. He does, however, do so in a mono-cultural fashion. He suggests that we all will see beauty in the same cultural context. This is where some of the difficulty with Kant's work lies. Kant argues that we intellectually construct the world around us. Through our mind's intellect, we order the stimuli we receive from the world and create a structure for our world. Through the structuring of our world we give form to objects and create them so that they appear beautiful, threatening, inert and so on. Kant assumed that we would all construct the world in similar ways as we all have the same mental capacity for this structuring and that we would do so in much the same way as our neighbour. Lyas posits that if we structure our world through our minds, would not minds from different cultures create different worlds? There are definite problems in Kant's subjective universality. Following Lyas's thinking, the actual structure of our worlds may be very different. And what are the ramifications of that on our recognition of the beautiful? At this point, if I do accept that we do to some extent structure our world, it is perhaps important to recognize that education has an important part to play. We should accept that different cultures would have somewhat different perspectives and different 'worlds' being created. With that in mind, what kind of intellectually structured world is created in our culture? If educators don't promote the appropriate skills to recognize and appreciate beauty, how can they expect future generations to continue to create a world in keeping with our traditions of beauty and aesthetics? If in fact we want them maintained. Arts education is of enormous importance in enabling our young to structure their world. It is through the arts that we so readily access aesthetic experiences, aesthetic experiences which can free our minds to revel in the free play that Kant proposed.
If we set aside the difficulty of different worlds being created and simply examine the problems in conveying beauty in a multi-lingual global community, the stumbling blocks to a common aesthetic continue. In today’s complex world of intersecting cultures and rapid information exchange Kant’s view is too narrow. For all humankind to recognize a particular item as beautiful would suggest that we can all understand all information equally. A poem read in Farsi would be unintelligible to me even though it might be the most beautiful writing ever created in that language. There are perhaps natural phenomena that can provide universally held moments of beauty, but certainly human made or influenced items and circumstances demand a common language for understanding and beauty recognition. Art, and particularly modern art or culturally specific art communicates in a specific language. How can we recognize beauty without the appropriate language to understand and see the beautiful?

Peter Schjeldahl suggests, that new art languages can prevent us from accessing an art work at first but upon acquiring the language skills we can enter into the work and see its beauty. He further suggests that taste is much the same. Individual held or culturally influenced taste in art can prevent us from recognizing the beauty of an unfamiliar thing until we acquire new language to overcome the specificity of our taste. In the end, though, Schjeldahl agrees with Kant that beauty appears to us all. Schjeldahl even writes that if an experience of beauty were held specifically by one person, that would probably mean that person is insane. If Kant had suggested as Schjeldahl appears to be that the issue is not that everyone must recognize a beautiful thing universally but that we all have the potential to recognize it if we acquire the appropriate language, then his view would have been more complete.
Beauty then, is not perhaps in the eye of the beholder, but culturally influenced and the recognition of beauty in art is constrained by a specific artistic language. One might even suggest, individual languages. So that, if one were to say that a particular thing is beautiful but no one else recognizes it, one might not be mad or devoid of taste, but yet to be understood.

Beauty may or may not be in the eye of the beholder depending on one’s position in light of Kant and Schjeldahl’s words. But we are still wondering what it is. Schjeldahl’s dictionary records beauty as being “the quality present in a thing or person that gives intense pleasure or deep satisfaction to the mind.” Here of course we can go back to Kant and discuss pleasure versus pleasant. (In that pleasant is a feeling that we have that can give pleasure but is not deep enough to suggest beauty, and is an individual experience. Pleasure on the other hand is what we experience upon witnessing beauty, an altogether more universal and grand thing.) However, there is more to beauty than an experience of pleasure. Perhaps an understanding of beauty should be developed, one that suggests more of the intensity that beauty can engender. One that addresses the culturally specific nature of beauty. An understanding should be developed that attempts to more closely illustrate the totality of beauty, if that is indeed possible. Beauty then is a thing that gives pleasure and satisfaction to the mind, but it is more. If it is a made thing it should be culturally representative, even to a micro-cultural level, while having room to grow and evolve to meet the ever-changing nature of cultural evolution. It should leave one with the understanding that this thing is special, and precious in its own way, that it is timeless and grand unto itself. Perhaps, however, one of its defining features is and always will be its relatively indefinable nature.
The Pursuit of Beauty

We continue to pursue beautiful experiences, as we travel to a wide variety of locations seeking beautiful sunsets, ocean breezes, stunning vistas. We visit cathedrals and mosques to stand in awe of inspiring examples of architecture and iconography. We continue to adorn ourselves and our surroundings and if the numbers of visitors to art galleries and museums is any indication, then we are seeking beauty in all the traditional ways in even greater numbers. Art galleries are recording unprecedented visitation. According to one study commissioned for The Canada Council for the Arts, attendance at Art galleries rose by more than 5% in all demographic groups throughout the 1990's (Hill Strategies Research Inc. 2003) Beauty is still awaiting our notice. But are we noticing? Are we looking for a different kind of beauty? Is it possible that we are not recognizing beauty through all the 21st century noise? Perhaps we are confused by what we mean by beauty. Marjorie Welish suggests that we have trivialized the word beauty. If we refer to anything pleasurable as beauty are we trivializing beauty itself? If everything is truly beautiful in its own way, (Stevens) then are we relegating beauty to the ordinary? Welish further tells us that we are confusing “I like it” with “it is beautiful.” and writes; “Beauty is conferred on a conception well done.” (Welish, 1998) If we continue to bandy the word beautiful about, what will it eventually come to mean? Will we confer on anything we find to be interesting the status of beauty, or will we simply refer to everything that attracts us as beautiful? Welish's argument is a particularly meaningful one in light of the global nature of the English language. English is truly a global language, but is also culturally idiosyncratic. If the use of the word ‘like’ on the lips of the young is any indication, beauty might well be misrepresented for some time.
Beauty has not really left us, but perhaps we have stopped seeing it in the same way. How much do the media and the market forces have to do with shaping our perception of the beautiful? The media presents its’ current imagery in slick ways that use all of the right triggers for us to see their subjects as beautiful. The music is specifically chosen to appeal to the appropriate demographic group, in the right way for the right product. The colours are inviting, exciting, bold, luscious, and chosen to please. The people, if there are any, are young, flawless and overjoyed to be there for you. This is not only true of advertising, but also of television and film, especially in North America. We are presented with a product to consume and it is packaged to appear beautiful. If we purchase the products, depending on their function, that are advertised because of their appearance, are we trying to emulate this packaged ‘beauty’? And is it beauty, or are we being misled? Packaged up to look like art, to appear to be beautiful, are we seeing something else? Is it possible for a commercial, or products presented with commerce as their primary goal, to be beautiful?

Robert C. Morgan in his essay, “A Sign Of Beauty” (Morgan, 1998) discusses the role of commercially driven work and the place of glamour. He suggests that a work designed for commercial media cannot be beautiful and cannot be art. Morgan suggests that beauty is indeterminate. Therefore, if we are setting out to make a product designed to appear beautiful we remove the indeterminacy from the product and remove its beauty, producing commerce. The creation of art is seen in much the same way. Art like beauty seems to create its own destiny. If we try to ‘force’ a work to be art or beauty, it rarely is, and it is these times that are the most frustrating and unrewarding. When art, and through it, beauty ‘find their own way’ we often have much greater success. Of course this is not to
suggest that art and beauty are analogous, as it is quite evident that there is a
great deal of art that is not beautiful, and a great many beautiful things in this
world are not art works.

Perhaps what we have been attending to is glamour, and not beauty. Glamour
often appears beautiful, but glamour is commercially driven. Glamour is pretty; it
is shiny and exciting. Glamour attracts, but does it satisfy? If glamour is designed
purely for commerce is it art and beauty? Can something glamorous be beautiful?
It seems that would be difficult if we accept that a thing designed and crafted form
the outset to be commercial cannot be beautiful. Automobiles are designed to
catch our eye. When an automobile is designed, it is designed to attract. The
designers apply design principles that they know will affect our aesthetic
sensibilities in particular ways. When we choose a vehicle, we do so with more
than fuel economy in mind.

The difficulty of course is in agreeing on what we mean by beauty. Does the
object of our gaze give an intense pleasure or satisfaction to the mind? Kant
writes of an object's purposiveness or purposelessness. Does the object appear
to have a sense of purpose without having been specifically made? That is, does
it seem to have a purpose somehow in the world without having been crafted to
meet an end? If a glamourous thing meets the preceding criterion and this
criterion is the working definition, then we would be hard pressed to argue along
with Morgan. He suggests that beauty is not absolute; it is relative. If this is so,
then glamour can be accepted as beauty. We might, however, ask if glamour has
educational value? If beauty takes us beyond ourselves, enriching us cognitively
and morally, then beauty has educational value, certainly. But how do we assess
glamour's educational value? To emphatically state that something is not beauty
or art due to its commercial nature is perhaps just a little hasty. It is true, that we must take care in our assessment of a thing, but we must be wary in our pronouncements. It is often more difficult, perhaps, to create something for commerce that is beautiful due to beauty's indeterminate nature. But that is also precisely what makes it possible. If an object of commerce can be and is found to be beautiful, then it could therefore have educational value. As has been discussed, languages change, we learn new vocabulary and what was once unimportant becomes meaningful, what was worthless becomes precious and what was once ugly becomes beautiful. Van Gogh traded paintings for food and did not sell any of his work in his lifetime as people did not understand his work. The Fauves were so named 'the wild beasts' due to the critical establishments' inability to understand or appreciate the artists' vision. As always, we return to the argument of; is there individual taste and assessment of the beautiful? Must we all see beauty in the same way? Or can we all be brought to beauty by a similar route but entertain it privately?

Perhaps we are having difficulty with volume. There is a great deal of information spinning around us. We are inundated with items designed to be beautiful. Even if we accept the above argument that items designed to be beautiful often do not succeed, and that commercially minded products are not beautiful, we are surrounded by so many of such products, that perhaps we have become desensitised. When we seek beauty now, we do not have to look very far. Perhaps we have sanitized our world in such a way that we no longer stop and notice what is not attractive. Here in the first world we do not see real ugliness very often. Our houses are comfortable, our cars are shiny, our clothes are designed. Is it possible that we are so used to 'nice' things, that we are just not impressed anymore? Schjeldahl writes "The beautiful meant more before indoor
plumbing.” (p.57) Have we ‘supersized’ even beauty? Are we only satisfied with ‘really’ beautiful things? Are we, revisiting Welish’s discussion on trivializing language, perhaps mistaking beauty for expensive? Price for value? We seem to have a need to impress with our ‘good taste’, which usually suggests expense. Inevitably the price of an item or experience surfaces when discussing the ‘beautiful’ thing, as if to say ‘this must be beautiful if it cost me this much.’ With this in mind, we are perhaps seeking out beauty more than ever but are having some difficulty recognizing it.

Our understanding of beauty seems to be changing. How we see beauty is influenced by the media, and in particular, we see beauty in humans in stereotypes. In the west, we are told that thin, young and tall is beautiful and all of our fashion is based on these principles of beauty. Young men and women desperately hope to achieve this starved, pallid look. In a world where starvation threatens the majority, it is absurd that young people have eating disorders often prompted by a misguided ideal of beauty. Yet millions of people are willing to threaten their health to attempt to achieve the unattainable, to possess the stereotypical beauty of the fashion model. Our vision of beauty is often tied to thirty second commercials that use the trappings of beauty to sell a product. In the end, if it is on television then it must therefore be beautiful. And so, we base our understanding of the beautiful on the images of commerce. The hectic pace of the 21st century gives us little time to seek what we want. If television or commerce in general can supply us with the appropriate information, then we can and will accept its vision as correct. Sadly, too few among us know the difference between glamour and beauty and too few are willing to differentiate between the two. If we are looking for beauty in what might be construed as the wrong places, it simply suggests that beauty is important enough to us that we will seek it
wherever we can find it. Perhaps this underscores the need for guidance, for education. We all are entitled to seek beauty in our own way. We do, however, often take the path of least resistance. We all want beauty, and are looking for someone to guide us through the morass. The logical place to look is in the arts. There are, however, difficulties.
Chapter Three

Art and Beauty

Where does beauty fit in an art context? I noted earlier that the layperson expects that beauty for the most part, is analogous with art. The art community and the layperson, as usual, do not see eye to eye. Art and beauty have enjoyed a very close relationship throughout art history. Art used beauty to illustrate culture, myths and history. For the glory of God and the church patrons, art was beautiful. For the rising middle class who brought art to the home, art was expected to be beautiful. The beautiful was expected in art. The relationship, however, has changed. When art was freed, largely by photography, of its role as recorder and illustrator, art and beauty were absolved of their joint responsibility. Works of art were soon free to expand beyond the confines of tradition and expectations. Eventually the marriage between art and beauty, on rocky ground since photography allowed them to separate, dissolved. Marcel Duchamp is largely responsible for the split as he cited their irreconcilable differences as grounds for the ‘divorce’. Welish argues that Duchamp’s art was made as an intellectual pursuit primarily, challenging the art world to accept a different aesthetic. Welish suggests that Duchamp adopted a paradigm of aesthetics that would put the mental construct first (p.66) and writes, “If his readymades seize and hold our attention, it is precisely because the objects so designated evince a compelling argument through and against aesthetics, not because they give pleasure as lovely collectibles.” (p.67)
We should be able to establish art's value without rejecting beauty. Distancing itself from beauty was seen as necessary for art to be taken seriously. In order to be accepted as being as important and academically valid as the sciences, art stepped away from beauty which was seen as frivolous. Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe writes: “Beauty, in being frivolous, and in that being trivial and irrelevant, is always subversive because it's always a distraction from the worthwhile, which let’s us know it is worthwhile by not being beautiful” (Gilbert-Rolfe, 1997. pg.47) He goes on to say that beauty is in opposition to productive thought and production itself. As art moved more into the realm of the idea and away from the visual, beauty not only was seen as unnecessary, but in opposition to making meaningful work. Beauty was eventually suppressed in art in favour of the rigorous, the critically acceptable. Beauty was marginalized as an acceptable art pursuit. It could be suggested that art has long suffered from an inferiority complex.

Beauty was banished in the 20th Century. It was banished because it was seen as a distraction. Wendy Steiner (Steiner, 2001) argues that the Avant-Garde had to set beauty aside to 'get to form'. (p.94) Steiner writes that beauty, as a central theme for art, was problematic for 20th Century artists. Beauty was regarded as an unstable theme as it was not consistent, and that it was an interaction and an interpretation. Steiner also argues that in the end for women to achieve personal freedom and self-realization, beauty had to be set aside until our understanding of beauty was not centred on and analogous with the female form. The Avant-Garde, according to Steiner, had to banish beauty as it was thought to have too much control over us. Beauty, prompting pleasure, was too much of a distraction. Steiner writes, “Many people, fearing a pleasure they cannot control, have vilified beauty as a siren or a whore.” (p.xxi)
The Avant-Garde, however, was misguided. It was not necessary to banish beauty to get to form, we can get to form through beauty. It may have been necessary to reassess our notion of the beautiful in order for feminism to realize its goals, but it was not necessary to vilify beauty. We are seeing the return of beauty. Steiner further writes, “It is the task of contemporary art and criticism to imagine beauty as an experience of empathy and equality.” If we do not accept the return of beauty, or block it as the Avant-Garde did, we do a great disservice to our cultural development.

If beauty is no longer worthy of serious critique, how many artists and their work are dismissed? If we suspend beauty from the art lexicon, are we dooming art itself to a limited existence as the ugly brother of intellectual discourse? Has art so puffed itself up with self-importance that it has forgotten that it is all right to look good or be compelling? Art is about more than beauty certainly, but is also about more than ideas as well. To suggest that art has moved beyond, and no longer needs beauty may be premature. Art is a language and one of the ways in which art’s language is expressed is through beauty.

Perhaps it is just the intellectual discussion of art that eschews beauty. The position that beauty prevents us from creating intelligent, meaningful work may be misguided. Beauty in an art work need not be the sole purpose of a work, it need not be but can be a part of the larger whole. Beauty need not be the focus, however, neither should it be seen as unnecessary. Beauty is not superfluous, it helps us form, order, and illustrate the ideas we wish to express. It is part of our vocabulary and assists us in communicating intelligently. The beautiful, as Gilbert-Rolfe tells us, has been seen as a thing, which removes us from
meaningful pursuit. That to give oneself over to beauty is to lose oneself. How can this be so? Schjeldahl suggests otherwise. “The self you lose to beauty is not gone. It returns refreshed. It does not make you less intelligent. It gives you something to be intelligent about.” (pg.58) If art has taken it upon itself to be a social conscience, to be in the political arena, to be known for its' thinking, then perhaps it must be cautious in its use of imagery. It is clear of course that to use inappropriate imagery to a particular type of work does little to further the efficacy of the work. It does not, however, mean that the beautiful has no place in our expression. Arthur Danto writes of Robert Motherwell’s work in relationship to this particular problem. Motherwell’s ‘Elegies to the Spanish Republic’ were born from tragedy but to say that they are not beautiful is foolish and to say that their beauty makes them ineffectual also appears flawed. It is quite possible to use beauty as socio-political tool to advance a cause. Dave Hickey writes of Mapplethorpe’s court case and how the courts were forced to see Mapplethorpe’s work as art and beauty lest they seem uninformed as to what art was and possessing of bad taste. (Hickey, 1994) In the end because Mapplethorpe’s images were presented in an art context using obviously beautiful presentation, they were seen as art and not pornography.

Where does this all come from? Why the discussion? Is it not really possible for some artists to work with the beautiful today and for others to work mainly with ideas? We should be able to combine the two. I do not believe it to be true that art and beauty cannot be reconciled. The ‘institution’ of the art world, critics and educators from post secondary institutions that build programmes around postmodernism, appear to have taken a position and is loathe to give it up. There is a great deal invested in current theories that have little room for the beautiful. The art world as a community has accepted that this issue of beauty is a
contentious one. The lay community, however, accepts beauty as a part of their lives. They come to expect it and actively seek it. If the art community rejects beauty, then it is perhaps dysfunctional. If the ‘institution’ continues to reject the beautiful in art then perhaps they should not be asked. In the end, artists themselves will answer the question. Beauty is working its way back into the art world. As has been stated, our humanity demands beauty. We have a great deal to say in the arts and these are difficult times but for too long we have existed on a bland diet of words and have craved poetry.

Having taken a long look at Beauty and what has become of it, it is perhaps now time to shift and to take a look at aesthetics. Aesthetics has been about beauty for a long time. Perhaps that has changed. Perhaps with the changing times, there is a demand for a separation between simple beauty and a new aesthetic. What’s new in aesthetics?

**A Changing Aesthetic**

Our study of aesthetics has changed. Aesthetics, as the area of philosophy that dealt with beauty, has become larger. It is insufficient to state that aesthetics is solely about the capacity to recognize and appreciate beauty. As the 20th century wore on, we needed a new look for aesthetics. The arts have come to demand a wider working definition. Art is no longer reproductions of nature beautifully rendered through the filter of realism, impressionism, iconography and so on, but about ideas. Art is film, sound studies, computer imagery, street theatre, graffiti and myriad other forms that surely would have been unacceptable to a 19th century aesthetic. Much of what we see in the arts does not hold a traditional beauty. The work of Egon Schiele and Leon Golub filled with nervous energy and
illustration of our baser nature, are perhaps not traditionally beautiful. We are however, moved by the ‘beauty’ of the expression produced by these two artists. The work may not be pretty, but it is so skilfully handled and expressive, that we share in the energy and are in awe of their skills in prompting like emotions in the viewer. Their work is tense, anguished. We need to either accept a wider definition of beauty or accept more responses as part of our aesthetic experience.

As modernism and postmodernism pushed the envelope of what was acceptable, art expressed horror, joy, racism, colonialism, sexism and a host of ideology that demanded a place in the aesthetic. Aesthetics, if it is to continue to be associated with the arts, has had to expand its’ scope. Aesthetics must also be about reason, the intellect, grandeur, awe, and diminishment. Aesthetics, to maintain its relevance, has begun to include the sublime. Kant tells us that the sublime is formless, it is about concepts and reason, satisfaction in the earnestness of a thing. (pg.82) If we accept that we recognize beauty through the free play of our senses over a thing or experience, then we accept play as important. The sublime is serious, it is not play. We know that many, including Plato, have looked upon the arts and beauty as subversive and frivolous. As has been mentioned in the section on beauty, art in the 20th century began associating itself less with the beauty of the object and more with reason and the idea. Kant tells us that satisfaction in the sublime is in admiration and respect. The art of the 20th century wanted admiration and respect a great deal; enough to sacrifice beauty.

In recent decades there has been much criticism of our aesthetic, deconstructing the old and building a new aesthetic in its place. I see this as perhaps too hasty.
There is much of value in the old aesthetic. I would suggest that it would be easier to build on an existing model and make appropriate changes as the new structure is developed. Many artists, writers, and theorists have delivered their manifestos to a public unaware of the need for change and most often the call was not completely understood. These great ideologues believed that we had been wrong in our traditions and in order to push towards a new world we must cast aside the bonds of capitalism, realism, hedonism and a whole host of other equally important isms. The difficulty, is that too often the new ideology becomes the status quo rather quickly and there arise new calls for the tearing down of the house. We cannot simply throw away hundreds of years because there are cracks in the foundation.

This section will deal with the above issues and discuss a new aesthetic through the examination of the work of a variety of modern artists, writers, thinkers and critics. First, however, it is important to have an understanding of where we are coming from ‘aesthetically speaking’.
Chapter Four

Benedetto Croce

Through a look at Benedetto Croce's The Aesthetic as the Science of Expression and of the Linguistic in General, (Croce, 1901) we will gain insight into where we have come from in our aesthetic tradition and perhaps have a greater understanding of where our new writers would like us to end up. Croce serves us well as a bridge between Kant and his contemporaries and what writers are saying now. Croce deals with many of the issues that Kant dealt with, expands and clarifies them, and applies a more modern approach to answering questions about beauty and aesthetics. Also, Croce’s work is far reaching. He of course discusses beauty, but also intuition, art, criticism and taste and linguistics and their relationship to each other and to aesthetics as a whole.

Croce begins his aesthetic with a discussion of intuition. One might read Croce’s intuition as our impressions or immediately absorbed stimuli. Intuition to Croce is an aesthetic experience. Intuition is not logical but can be intellectual. It is our intellect that gives form to our intuition. This form is manifested through our free play of an intuited experience as an intellectual exercise or as a physical embodiment of that experience through the creation of art, craft and so on. Through this activity we have an aesthetic experience. We judge the intuition as we absorb it and express its value either intellectually or physically. Our judgments must be aesthetic in nature. Croce tells us that aesthetic activity is the
act of giving form to our intuition or perception, always. (pg.16) Croce discusses content and form as follows: content is the impressions we receive from the world, our stimuli. Our form is the manifestation of the expression of that stimuli as mentioned above. Content can only be aesthetic once it has been transformed into expression by our intellect or artifice. Croce does go on, however, to say that all of our impression senses are aesthetic in nature. So that all content, having been assembled through our senses, can be aesthetic once it has been given expression.

The issue of expression as seen by Croce is a difficult one as there is a contradiction to be suggested. (Though Croce seemed comfortable enough with that contradiction.) That art is an expression of our aesthetic sensibility is an easy position to accept but to some, accepting all of our expression as aesthetic in nature is contentious. For, if all of our expression is aesthetic, and all artistic expression is aesthetic, what is the difference? How do we differentiate between art and simple expression. To Croce the answer is simply that art, the expression of the artists, is a manifestation of a different order. Artists order their impressions differently and in a more complete fashion and form their expressions in a more successful manner. Croce writes; “The highest manifestations, the shining peaks of intuitive knowledge, are called, as we already know, art and science.” (pg.27) Croce does see art and science as different orders of expression, however. Art is of the first order, it is expression directly, it is a manifestation of our aesthetic experience. Science is of the second order. It is impressions, then classification and manifestation. Science is logical, conceptual. Here of course is where some of the difficulty with Croce’s aesthetic may lie. To a new generation of artists and students of aesthetics, to suggest that conceptual art is science, not aesthetic and of a different order than ‘standard visual art’ is at best vexing.
It should also be noted, that to Croce art is never a reproduction. Art does not imitate nature. We as artists do not reproduce nature even if we intend to do so in a photorealistic way. To Croce our work must always be an impression of a thing, not a reproduction. This is of course where Croce differs from Plato who believed that all art was a copy. Plato may have also believed that all art was an expression of our impressions as does Croce, however, he sees the product as a copy of our reception of stimuli. Since our art must then always be a copy, it is of less importance, it has less truth. To Plato the truth of the intellect is primary, to Croce the aesthetic must always come first. Croce also suggests that the aesthetic can stand on its own but that the intellectual cannot. That is to suggest that the aesthetic is a sensual experience, which may or may not need the intellectual to give form to it. The intellectual on the other hand, cannot be expressed without form given to it and form is given through aesthetic activity.

Here is where there is some difficulty for those who wish to change our aesthetic, or see it as unimportant. All of our conceptual ideas, are meaningless without aesthetic form according to Croce. So, if we wish to develop conceptual ideas which heed no aesthetic, then we are in a dilemma. How can we give form to something without aesthetics? Perhaps if we limit our understanding of aesthetics to only apply to things that are clearly accepted as beautiful, then we can begin to accept a conceptual thinking that is only about intellectual ideas. However, if we follow Croce, the intellect cannot stand on its own. Further, Croce suggests that due to the unified nature of art. Art is always unified as an expression. We synthesize our intuition into an expression, art. Any intellectual concept put into practice loses its individuation as a conceptual device, and becomes part of the whole. Croce also believes that you cannot separate the subjective from the
objective. Much work produced in the arts in the past few decades has concentrated on the subjective and put less emphasis on the object. According to Croce this cannot really be. Of course this is all debatable and a question of semantics and degrees of acceptance, but if we buy into the original Croce argument that all of our expressions are aesthetic then a great deal of postmodern theory is questionable.

The difficulty of course is that much recent work about this issue suggests that the aesthetic as we have known it is too limited. In light of many art works of the 20th century, aesthetics being about beauty is too limited. As has been mentioned above, aesthetics needs to be about more. Our aesthetic must be more than pleasure. The power in an Anselm Kiefer painting is in more than beauty and pleasure, we are overwhelmed. The sheer scale of colour field painting promotes a spiritual experience. We do not feel pleasure in an horrific image, but we are engaged. Perhaps our total engagement is part of the new requirements for our new aesthetic. Perhaps we need to be moved emotionally. Or perhaps we must at least alter our understanding of what beauty is. Perhaps, if we define beauty as bringing pleasure and a satisfaction to the mind, it is best to place more value on the 'satisfying to the mind' part of beauty's definition. Our new definition of aesthetics would be more complex than it once was. Croce's aesthetic is not simple. It is about our every expression, it is about beauty, yes, but a different look at beauty.

**Croce on Beauty and Ugliness**

Croce discusses beauty and ugliness simply as successful and unsuccessful expression. This success/beauty can be attached to any pursuit if it is an
expression and it has achieved success. So that ugliness is merely an expression not fully and successfully realized, flawed and not unified. A fractured expression displaying multiplicity then is not beautiful. In the end, however, Croce softens his stance somewhat and seems to suggest that there is really no ugliness in this context, just inexpressiveness which is the opposite of aesthetic, not of beauty. Croce also, in the end, suggests that our physical manifestations of our expression can never truly be beautiful. Art, science, any product of our aesthetic undertaking cannot be beautiful as only the activity or expression itself is truly beautiful. We attach beauty as a judgment to these things because they are memory aids to our aesthetic experience. We give form to our impressions/expressions as an aid to remember the experience. Similarly, our impressions and subsequent expressions bestow the term beauty upon nature. It is through our imagination and memory of similar experiences that we see a thing as beautiful. We must have a frame of reference to determine if a thing has beauty. So, according to Croce, without our aesthetic process, nature isn't beautiful, it just is.

**Criticism and Taste**

To Croce art and expression is the same thing. Not all expressions are art but all art must be an expression, and therefore part of the aesthetic. Our products must, by their very nature, be aesthetic, though some achieve success and some do not. (Beauty and Ugliness/Expressive and Inexpressive) The product must come from the expression, never the other way around. The product, according to Croce, can be the work itself or the criticism of the same work. He tells us that it takes the same level of aesthetic awareness and ‘skill’ to criticize a work as it does to create it. It is merely a different skill. He does, however, write that taste is
the ability to judge and enjoy, genius is the ability to produce. Again here is a ‘flagged’ idea. In today’s art world where the idea has become as important as the product, the ability to make a beautiful product is not a necessary skill. Therefore, this ‘genius’ is no longer necessary. It would also be looked upon as an elitist concept. If Croce had not gone back to the product as having greater significance (by way of the supposed genius of the artist) he might receive less criticism on this particular issue. Croce’s stance that the judgment becomes as important as the product would be a popular position without the reference to genius. Postmodern, conceptual art has told us that the idea is more important than the product, so that the difference between judgment and production becomes blurred.

Croce also discusses the universality of beauty in art but not in quite the same way as Kant. While Kant believes there is a universality to the beauty of a thing if it can be called beautiful at all, Croce seems to suggest it is more simple than that. He suggests that if consensus is not found then someone is wrong. If the artist completes a work and sees it as beautiful (a complete, unified and successful expression) and the critic sees it as ugly (incomplete and fractured as an expression) then someone is wrong. It does not take both parties to truly make a thing beautiful. Assumedly if one person determines a works’ lack of success, either the critic or the artist does not have the skill or insight in their judgment to recognize that other position. And as Croce writes, the ability to judge if a thing is good is as worthy an ability as the creation of that same item. Here, though, is another kind of contradiction. On the one hand Croce allows that the skill to judge is equal to the skill to produce. But, he sees one as genius. If genius is an exalted thing, then both parties are not equal, and he is placing more value on the
producer of the object. And as we know, the object has been of less value recently.

While some of Croce’s thinking is in opposition to some newer ideas on aesthetics, there is much to his writings that is useful. To refuse to use his work, to cast it aside because it is from a ‘certain time period’ would be wasteful. Not to look at Croce’s work as important to aesthetics and the arts because he is part of the Western Tradition would suggest that we have blinders on. His thinking is flexible on a variety of ideas. Considering all of our work to be expressions allows for an interpretation, which makes room for a wide range of production. The apparent contradiction in value discussed above notwithstanding, this kind of thinking makes possible the work of the conceptual artists who are less concerned with traditional beauty because of the flexibility Croce writes of in the role of criticism. Also, Croce has a more flexible stance on free art and non-free art. Non-free art being the functional arts; architecture, industrial design, graphics and so on. We know that the lines have been blurred considerably as to what is and is not art, and that many of the skills of these disciplines are used in the current art making processes. Croce disagreed with the concept of free and non-free art, arguing that the process is an aesthetic one as it is an activity. And to Croce all activities must be aesthetic in nature firstly. This kind of thinking can enhance newer ideas and should be considered as part of the building blocks to a sound philosophy and not passed over merely because it is part of a much-maligned tradition.

With Croce’s aesthetics in mind let us now take a look at the thinking in the ‘new aesthetic’.
The 1960’s Through The 1990’s

The 1960’s through the 1990’s were particularly difficult years for aesthetics. Beauty was deemed unimportant and aesthetics was a moribund issue. Many viewed Claes Oldenburg’s conceptual drawings for his sculptures to be superior to the actual sculptures. The concepts and ideas are part of the new art. The sculptures themselves are less important. Earth works and environmental art took the work out of the gallery and often made it relatively inaccessible without photography as a documentation device. Few of us had the opportunity to see ‘Spiral Jetty’ in person. (Smithson, 1970) Art that was based on self-mutilation moved away from the beautiful and towards a statement of physicality and political protest. The lines between art and statement disappeared. How could we talk of art as aesthetic in nature? The idea was what counted, the appearance of a thing was only necessary in how it assisted in getting the message across. However, regardless of whether or not we view Christo’s work as conceptual in nature, it is still quite arresting to look at. Oldenburg’s sculptures are well put together and a pleasure to behold.

The most successful works with the potential to continue to have impact are those, which make use of a strong visual or aesthetic sense. One might argue of course that our impression years later is not important to much of the work completed in this period. But that I believe is too simple. The reality is, success is counted by how the audience is reached, or how well you succeeded in attaining your goal. We judge accomplishments by whether or not they have staying power. If the intention is to affect the viewing public in a particular way, then it is important to capture their attention. The physical product was always important.
regardless of what the art world wanted to believe. Although if we go back to Croce, if the artist or viewing public disagree, someone is invariably wrong.

In light of our continuing desire for beauty, it is difficult to believe that appearance does not matter. An intellectual position has been adopted and is being defended vigorously by the established art ‘intelligentsia’ who hold too tightly to the tenets of postmodernism which denigrate beauty and our pursuit of it. Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe discusses our postmodern position on beauty, suggesting that beauty is seen as, “That which is attractive but irresponsible and that which, however negative its formulation may be, is always apprehended as the voice of responsibility because it’s always attached to a serious idea” (Gilbert-Rolfe, 1998) Gilbert-Rolfe tells us that ‘attractive’ art is viewed as irresponsible, that the idea is what matters. What often seems to be forgotten is that art and aesthetics affect all of our society and communities, it should not be just a select few who are suggesting what the rest of us should accept. The expertise and experience necessary to formulate opinions in this area should not be discounted, however, we should also be aware that experts are not always right. We hope to offer an educated position and to give the opportunity for our students to make an educated choice. The possibility exists, however, that even once given opportunity to acquire the necessary skills the student or public may still disagree. It is entirely possible that after extended exposure and education in the arts and aesthetics, a young man from a major urban area may still believe more in the efficacy of graffiti art over conceptual art, or still hold out that Fifty Cent is more appropriate to their particular demographic than Puccini. Again, as Croce argues, in a disagreement over the value or success of an artwork, someone is always wrong. It is no less intolerant to deny that a work has value if it is from the modernist era, is an example of urban art, is kitschy or ‘low brow’ or is from
another culture altogether. If we accept an idea of cultural multilingualism, that includes languages from different cultures within and without the West, then we accept our traditional voice as well as all of the potential voices to come.

The value graffiti holds for the young is vastly different than it is to ‘the man’. Graffiti, for all its reality as vandalism, does often find itself considered art. When graffiti transcends the adolescent need for writing one’s name on a wall and begins to employ graphic skills does it then become art? Is it art when it takes up an issue and expresses itself? The language of graffiti demands that, at the very least, we look at it and try to understand it. We were told many decades ago that an object, according to the institutional theory becomes art when it is considered art by the established experts. Jean Michel Basquiat, one of the biggest art stories of the 1980’s, began his art ‘career’ as a graffiti artist and continued to employ graffiti ideas in his work after he had become established. The art community seemed happy to accept Basquiat’s work. However, in its haste to accept a wider variety of conceptual ideas, and in its haste to distance itself from the established western canon, post modernism committed exactly the ‘sin’ it argued against in seeking pluralism and inclusivity. If the art world were to accept a new conceptual artist due to his or her genre expanding ideas but devalue the work of an Andrew Wyeth due to his traditional subject matter and manner of working, then they in turn would be guilty of exclusivity. Painting was said to be dead, and Picasso no longer important. In Picasso’s last years, his work was seen as ineffectual and lacking in vigour as it dealt with ‘smaller’ issues that included the figure, the family, artist and model and the self.

Postmodern theory argued that working for the sake of beauty was wrong, that it was selfish to do so. Art was about more than beauty, it was about statements, it
was about addressing issues. How could one not wish to address the issues of feminism, racism, capitalism, globalism and so on? An artist interested in creating art because it produced a beautiful or arresting visual image was not considered important and not worthy of consideration. There is a certain arrogance and self-congratulatory nature to this criticism, as I suppose all new movements and criticism are guilty of possessing. Statements made about the changing face of art and aesthetics, and calls for the deconstruction of the edifice were most vociferous during this time. Times change, and change is sometimes good. It is interesting to note, however, that to promote change, the art world seems to require the death of the old tradition each time. In order to appear more important, more ‘right’ an eradication of the old is so often required. In fact it might be refreshing to pay a little more attention to tradition and at least recognize its influence on our work. The modernists were ready to accept and work from their tradition, and in fact reworked old ideas. Manet's ‘Olympia’ is directly referenced to Ingres, and Picasso painted a version of ‘Dejeuner sur l’Herbe’.

Art and criticism from the 1960’s to the 1990’s made demands for a severing of the ties to our sordid past. Oddly, there is an elitist position in the work and criticism from this period. An element of this work is to take art off its pedestal to familiarize it, and to make it more accessible. The everyday was to be a part of this work. One of the great criticisms of the western canon of course is its alleged elitism. Yet through this period, an elitism and exclusivity developed as postmodernism became the status quo. If you were not working in the genre, then your work was not worthwhile. The great multiculturalist was really quite exclusive and elitist in its inaccessibility to the public.
Again, times are changing. Postmodernism has become the status quo. It is now the tradition that is having questions asked of it. Aesthetics does not seem to have forgotten the important questions asked during the above period, but is beginning to insist on a certain attention paid to the object. There are those who are looking for beauty in art to judge by the large audiences for exhibitions of more traditional art at museums and galleries worldwide. There are those who, while they subscribe to the tenets of postmodernism are unwilling to accept that beauty is unnecessary and that we cannot build a new aesthetic from the old one. We have learned from our deconstruction of the past, and are beginning to build a new aesthetic, one that asks important questions of our tradition but does not insist on throwing away history.
Chapter Five

The New Aesthetic

The new aesthetic is one that includes questions. We make art and recognize beauty and aesthetic experience through a filter of concerns. To create this new aesthetic we have to be aware of the issues that postmodernism raised. We must hold ourselves accountable for our transgressions but accept them and move forward.

Andrew Bowie in his essay “What Comes After Art?” discusses this point. He writes that we need a new aesthetic but one that still takes us somewhere special. Bowie suggests that we need to employ our new aesthetic in such a way as to gain a new reading of our art works. If we uncover the issues of racism, feminism, colonialism in the work we should not discard them for their transgressions, but take value from them. Though we may find less than savoury aspects of a culture through these readings, we must not discard them as they illustrate and help us to understand our culture. He does suggest, however, that we must take care when applying this kind of pluralistic reading to art as we may find that it too loses its value. He suggests that if we are too intent on discounting the work due to its patriarchal, western canon attachments, then we may lose the ability to see a works’ value socially, or politically. Bowie writes, “The spread of theories in recent times which seem to depend on cultural amnesia and on the narcissism of seeking confirmation of prejudices rather than openness to the way that great works can take one beyond one’s prejudices may be a sign of a deeper
cultural problem.” (p.76) Bowie tells us that we have much to learn from our tradition regardless of whether or not it is flawed. (Here Croce would tell us if it is flawed and incomplete then it is not beautiful, and not a successful aesthetic expression) Bowie suggests that Kant's idea of consensus over things of beauty is not really achievable but is certainly a good place to start.

Marjorie Welish in “Contratemplates” (Welish, 1998) discusses aesthetics from a different viewpoint. She writes of the difference between aesthetics as the part of philosophy that deals with beauty, and aesthetics as the study of theories of art. Things of beauty are aesthetic in nature, and art is aesthetic in nature though not all beauty is art and not all art is beautiful as we have also learned form Croce. So that in aesthetics as the theory of art, “beauty has a cameo appearance.” (p.62) Welish also writes that aesthetics is about concepts and theory. “Aesthetics defines, interprets, and evaluates certain concepts that are intrinsic to art: Indeed aesthetics is concept driven.” (p.63) So, if we assume that aesthetics is about art theory, we can assume that beauty is either present or not and that its existence in a work of art is merely a part of the whole. If we, on the other hand, believe that aesthetics is about beauty then we have to, in light of the changing needs of the art world, alter our vision of what beauty is somewhat. Welish discusses Matisse and Picasso as examples of aesthetics being about theories of art more than beauty and their work certainly deviated from a classical norm of beauty. Also, using Duchamp as an example, Welish discusses Duchamps ‘non-retinal’ art. Duchamps created work that was not meant as a feast for the eyes, but rather a work out for the mind. His work is about an aesthetic, but not one that is about traditional beauty. He asks questions of and discusses beauty through his work. It is therefore about beauty, but is not meant to be beautiful. Welish suggests that beauty as a sensual appeal is too narrow for
modernity. Meaning that with all of the varying goals achieved in modern and postmodern art, beauty only occasionally shows up in a traditional sense. So, aesthetics as beauty alone cannot work with much of the art of the 20th century. As the 21st century unfolds, we will need an aesthetic that is flexible. As Welish suggests, an aesthetic that is strictly based in beauty as we have traditionally accepted it will be too narrow to be useful. We will need an aesthetic that accepts beauty but that understands that beauty as we have known it changes. The new aesthetic will recognize that our significant expressions will come in a variety of forms and that because they are significant they must be a part of our aesthetic. For a number of decades, we have had difficulty accepting that beauty and aesthetics can be tied together but not exclusive. Instead, we pushed aesthetics aside.

Roger Scruton as early as 1987 criticized the direction we had been going in art and aesthetics in his essay, "Modern Philosophy and the Neglect of Aesthetics" (Scruton, 1987) In his decidedly bombastic way, Scruton made a number of salient points. Though Scruton is often argumentative he takes clear aim at a number of issues in postmodern theory and aesthetics/philosophy that we have come to ask questions of seventeen years later. Scruton has an issue with deconstruction. He suggests, through an example of Derrida's writing, that deconstruction in literature can too easily become devoid of humanity leaving little but text with no soul. After deconstruction Scruton suggests we are left in a 'post cultural world' and describes it as a desert. (p.22) Scruton believes that by removing aesthetics from our philosophy we leave a vacuum where anything can fill the void. According to Scruton, science, logic and postmodernism have taken the place of aesthetics. Scruton argues in his essay that aesthetics replaced religion at the centre of what made us moral beings. If postmodernist philosophy
with its concentration on deconstruction becomes our moral centre, where will be? If philosophy loses touch with the aesthetic and if the literary world were to eschew the aesthetic, what is left is language and discourse concerned only with itself. Scruton sees this as an ‘intellectual masquerade.’ (p.25) Scruton argues that aesthetic experience is what gives us our sense of the world. Scruton, unfortunately at the time of his writing, had not the opportunity to witness the effects of postmodernism from our present perspective. He had decided that postmodernism and in particular deconstructivism was wrong and seemed unlikely to accept any other argument. There is clearly much value in postmodernism that we must carry with us into the 21st century.

Postmodernism has altered our perspective. We have a much more critical eye than we did forty odd years ago. We have learned to apply a variety of readings to our arts and culture. Postmodernism argued that our culture was rotten at the core and needed to be replaced. Perhaps postmodernism was a little impetuous in its pronouncements; it has been important to take a hard look at our culture but there is much of value in it. Art and aesthetics is about much more than theory and criticism, but we have learned that it is important to ask questions of our culture and our cultural expression. Postmodernism argued that there was a need for greater intellectual rigour in our theory and practice and positive change has occurred. Postmodernism argued for multiplicity, and though in the end this demand for multiplicity was its undoing, multiplicity, or at least a greater acceptance of a wider variety of cultural expressions, is necessary for us to move forward in our cultural language. Given the nature of the global demands of communication today, we must have a greater fluency in a wider variety of cultural languages. The demand for this greater fluency in cultural languages
would not have occurred had postmodernism not applied its’ criticism. And this is where the new aesthetics should be applied.

If we have learned from postmodernism to question and to accept different voices, if we have learned to value different perspectives, then we have gained immeasurably. If we are to move forward, we must build a new aesthetic that accepts our past, addresses issues and looks forward to a future that includes theory and criticism while recognizing, at times, the need for beauty and expression. The new aesthetic accepts, as postmodernism argued, that art comes in a variety of forms and is not only the province of the elite. But at the same time, we must also accept that the recognition and creation of beauty is an integral part of our humanity. We cannot do away with the aesthetic as we have known it because it is part of our cultural language and our cultural language was found wanting. Our new aesthetic will have to recognize that art has an intellectual voice as well as a formal expression of grace. The new aesthetic will recognize that beauty in art as we have known it has changed. The final minutes of the film “Fight Club” illustrates this point nicely. (Fincher, 1999) There is a strange and terrible beauty in witnessing the city crumbling as the buildings start to collapse. We know intellectually that the destruction of property is wrong and that terrorist actions of this magnitude carry with it an appalling cost, however, the scene is oddly beautiful due to the way it is presented. As Duchamp made clear, art can be about beauty but not necessarily be beautiful. The new aesthetic will have room for beauty and the sublime.
What about the sublime?

The sublime has been mentioned in the above pages as having become more important in the field of aesthetics. Gilbert-Rolfe argues that avant garde art resists the beautiful in favour of the critique and attempts to elevate itself beyond beauty to the sublime. (Gilbert-Rolfe, 1998) The sublime is seen as that which encompasses reason, earnestness, awe, admiration, nature and the exalted. Steiner (Steiner, 2001) posits that the sublime in its' enormity ‘crushes’ us under its' weight initially and then elevates us. The sublime has supplanted beauty's importance in art and art criticism. The sublime is serious and beauty is not counted as intellectual. The art world has had many important things to say and needed the sublime far more than it needed beauty. Barnett Newman’s large-scale colour field paintings fill us with awe as we view their grandeur. It evokes a limitlessness. Simply designed, Newman’s work makes no reference to representational beauty. Though many find Newman’s work to be beautiful, as I do, the work seems initially to be about the sublime. Barbara Kruger uses text in her installation work to provide the viewer with very clear information. Her message is delivered aggressively, without beauty. Her installation work shocks us and overwhelms us in its scale and in its delivery of harsh pronouncements.

All of the adjectives used to describe the sublime above point to its necessary attachment to postmodern (and some modernist) art. The sublime is serious, it is about reason and intellect, it is male, it is exalted and deified, it promotes awe and gets to the point. The sublime seems to have something important to say. The sublime works hard to be special. Beauty has not been seen as having to work particularly hard. Beauty has a purposiveness, in that an object of beauty appears to have an internal purpose regardless of whether or not we know what
that purpose is. And perhaps that has been the problem. The sublime does not necessarily need a defined purpose nor does it need to appear to have one. Like awe and the exalted, the sublime is seen to rise above purpose and beauty by comparison is considered to be commonplace. If beauty is considered to be common, then it follows that art, in its drive to be taken seriously, would be better served by linking itself with the sublime.

As has been written about at greater length in the chapter on beauty, the art world needed to distance itself from beauty and associate itself with the sublime. Beauty would not be a player in the art and criticism of the 1960's through the 1990's. As Jeremy Gilbert Rolfe writes, "Beauty is not critical nor is it a product of criticism." (p.49) Gilbert-Rolfe further discusses the relationship between avant garde and the sublime suggesting that art resists the beautiful in favour of the critique, it is more about meaning and elevating itself beyond the beautiful to exist in the sublime world of meaning, and critique. In fact the trend became suppressing beauty, and using a language that didn’t promote beauty.

The difficulty lies in that art should unify the beautiful and the sublime. This division between the two seems artificial. Criticism is the jealous lover keeping the two apart. Criticism and theory have discredited beauty as not having academic rigour. Our aesthetic judgment is important and Croce would have us believe that the skills involved are just as important as the ability to make art objects. However, criticism should not be bound to intellectual positions so easily and so stubbornly. The beautiful elicits in us feelings of pleasure and satisfaction, the sublime promotes feelings of awe. To look at a large Anselm Kiefer painting is to experience both the sublime and the beautiful in one place. The most successful colour field painting has this effect on us. Though Barnett Newman's
work may be about the sublime, its enduring success lies in its’ union of the sublime and the beautiful. (The scandal surrounding the purchase of “the Voice of Fire” notwithstanding.) The electrified pulse of a Mark Rothko painting involves our pleasure in beauty and our recognition of the sublime. Of course colour field painting fell out of vogue.

The insistence on beauty’s banishment made way for art that required less technical skill. Artwork was presented that was theoretically sound, challenging, moving and sometimes intelligent. But artwork that required traditional technical skills with which to create beauty was set aside. Abramovic and Ulay, conceptual artists, staged a ‘performance’ work called Light/Dark in which they knelt facing each other and slapped each other in turn until one stopped. (Abramovic and Ulay, 1977) Powerful work, but not work that intended to exhibit beauty. If beauty carries with it an expectancy of symmetry, proportion, visual recognition of perfection, then it becomes much easier to produce art objects and performances that do not require these properties if we associate with the sublime. Because we were no longer expected to produce objects of beauty we could live without certain skills. We now have graduates of art programs who have never attended a drawing class or learned colour theory. It seems that if the idea is all that really matters, we can be bereft of skill in productivity so long as we are making our art for a worthy ideal. If we are addressing the difficulties in our culture, we can do so without artifice so long as our ideology is expressed. Everyman can now be an artist, if he or she has the ideas.

It is possible to teach skills, but it is extremely difficult to teach how to use them effectively in regards to producing successful art. Art making skills are the toolset of the trade much like the skills required for carpentry or other manipulative
trades. We can acquire a basic skill set but the question remains how to use them effectively and creatively to produce art, which causes that moment of recognition that we are in the presence of something beautiful. This fly in the ointment became a moot point when skills became an after thought. Of course in the early days, the artists who were championing the shift to a more rigorous oeuvre had skills that they had been taught and could rely on them to create an intellectually sound piece that was and could be visually arresting. Today, however, much of these skills are lost to a new generation of artists obsessed with appearing clever. If art identifies itself with the sublime instead of the beautiful, it can be an intellectual exercise and be art. It becomes important because it is art, and because it is associated with the sublime, regardless of whether or not it is skilfully realized. This is where the difficulty lies. We have for too long assumed that beauty was frivolous and without real power. Beauty has had the power to move us to a sublime state all along. Moreover, the viewing public has never understood the shift from beauty to the sublime in art, and is largely ignorant of it. We still look for beauty in our art and in our day-to-day lives. Art brought beauty and the sublime together, the way a spectacular sunset does. We were wrong to separate the two.

It is in the best interest of the art community to embrace a new aesthetic, which reunites beauty and the sublime. If we expect the viewing public to be part of the art making process, in that they are the audience, then we must communicate in a way that is accessible to them. If art is a language, to whom are we communicating with if we alienate the viewer? If art was expected to break away from a perceived elitism, denying the public access to art by eschewing beauty seems counterproductive. It is not being suggested here that art must always be produced solely with the viewer in mind, however, if art is part of our cultural
communication, I suggest that the artist should appreciate, value and be aware of that relationship. Let us return once more to Croce’s argument that in a disagreement over the success or failure of an expression, either the viewer/critic or the artist is wrong.

For the art world to live up to its’ own prescription for inclusion, its’ own demand for tolerance, it must make way for work that appeals to an audience that is not primarily made up of artists and academicians. In order to achieve the ‘goals’ that were set for the arts in the last third of the twentieth century, art must continue to evolve. The hard lessons learned about our Western canon, and the work inspired by the difficulties found in our tradition should be carried into a new era. We must embrace the criticism of our tradition and build on our cultural heritage through new work that respects our distant and recent past and looks to a more complete future. A new aesthetic includes art work from a variety of cultural traditions, continues to build on the intellectual and academic rigour promoted through modernism and postmodernism, and recognizes that beauty is a human requirement and that beauty not only has a place in our arts, but has a place at its’ centre.
Aesthetic Education

Peter Abbs in his essay “Aesthetic Education: An Opening Manifesto”, writes “It is high time to make the aesthetic cause not esoteric, but open and clear; open and clear to ourselves, to our pupils and students, to our parents, school-governors, politicians and the society at large.” (Abbs, 1989) It is indeed high time. Our aesthetic sensibility is our most basic sensibility. We perceive the world through our aesthetic filters. We begin responding to our world through our aesthetic sensibility from our earliest days and, if we accept Kant’s assertion that we create our world, that our world is formed through the senses: taste, touch smell and sight. Abbs claims that we are aesthetic beings before we are rational beings. If this were so, it would suggest that our sense of the aesthetic should be and remain central to who we are for our entire lives. It is curious, therefore, that we pay little heed to our aesthetic development in our culture today. We allow our culture to be dictated to us by the media and accept what we see as examples of what our culture has to offer.

Our own Canadian culture, and the myriad of cultures past and present worldwide, offer endless possibilities for study yet we devote so little time to the arts and aesthetics in our schools. Our schools should have a balanced curriculum, one that pursues the so-called academic subject areas (it would be difficult to convince Benedetto Croce that the aesthetic is not and does not have academic value) and the aesthetic areas in equal measure at the very least. Our
young people need to be aware that aesthetics has value. Few in our culture seem to know what the study of aesthetics is; yet our world is constructed by us through our aesthetic sensibility. Our art making is a physical extension of that sensibility, and is important to who we are and how we develop as individuals and as a culture, yet we rarely discuss art’s importance. Too often we accept that art simply is. We rarely see it as central to culture but just a small part of the whole. Too often art is seen as a 'frill' added to education as a play time activity, one that will relax the students and allow them to unwind but one that is not seen to have enough to offer to one’s future to be given increased classroom time. It is this attitude of trivializing the arts and aesthetics which needs to be addressed. Abbs further writes that our acts of aesthetic and artistic expression are more than personal acts of unwinding, release and self-expression, that they are in fact adding to our cultural lexicon, that, "When we talk about meaning in art, we are talking about transpersonal acts of aesthetic intelligence, and it is in the nature of such acts that they belong to an open and public realm." (p.6) When we add to the cultural lexicon, we add to our whole history. This act should not be ignored. In fact, in order to continue to build a viable, literate culture, we must educate our young to learn how to 'read' their culture and how to add to it. It is through an increased exposure to the arts, and through the arts a greater understanding of our aesthetics, that our students might develop a greater understanding of their place in the world and how to appropriately respond to what their society and what the cultures of the world have to offer.

Through the preceding chapters, Beauty and Aesthetics have been discussed. We have explored Kant and Croce, and have explored more current ideas and writings on Aesthetics. I have tried to clarify what we mean by aesthetics, where the study of Aesthetics began and where it has taken us. I have tried to illustrate
a model to create a new aesthetic from the extant tradition without completely doing away with the past. It has been my intention to develop a clear notion of how the field of aesthetics has developed, and in which direction it might be headed in order to find a clear place in which to develop an educational model. I hope that it has been made clear through the preceding pages and chapters, that the study of aesthetics, and the understanding of our aesthetic sensibility and our desire for beauty has been central to the development of our culture, to our societies and to our humanity.

It is not my contention that everyone need to study aesthetics and have a thorough understanding of Kant, Croce, the deconstructivists and so on, but that we understand, through a greater exposure to the arts, artists and a greater development of a cultural multilingualism, the importance of our aesthetic selves and our artistic heritage. This section then, will attempt to underscore the importance of a more thorough education in the arts and aesthetics, and will attempt to provide a convincing argument for, and the development of a model upon which to build a curriculum that could increase the classroom instructional hours of the arts and aesthetics.

**What is our Motivation for Pursuing Aesthetic Education?**

In the West, we may not consciously realize that we seek aesthetically meaningful experiences. Yet, it is clear that we do seek beauty, in both its naturally occurring and artificial forms. We attempt to surround ourselves with objects and orchestrate experiences that are beautiful and meaningful to us. The question is, however, are we succeeding? What are these objects and what are the experiences that we are seeking? Have we developed our aesthetic
sensibility so that we are literate enough to make educated choices? In a world where the media provides us with such a large portion of our visual and auditory aesthetic experiences, are we seeking out art or are we surviving on a junk food diet of glamour provided for us and not sampling enough quality ‘foods’? (Leaving aside for a moment that one person’s glamour could be another’s beauty) Have we lost sight of the beautiful in this world of glamour and attractive marketing? Are we surrounding ourselves with beauty that we do not even understand? Do we know the difference between glamour and beauty? Does it matter? Should we consider kitsch? If we seek the beautiful, perhaps we should have a better understanding of what we mean by beauty. Perhaps we should know the difference between entertainment and discussions of the human condition. If the media is any example of the diet we are being fed, we need to be able to separate ‘reality’ television from Merchant-Ivory films, and judge, from an educated perspective, which one is meeting our ‘dietary’ needs.

In light of where conceptual art and popular culture has taken us, it is difficult and perhaps presumptuous to assume what is and should be beauty for everyone, therefore it would be problematic to suggest that one can educate ‘good taste’ as it was once called. With all the cultural languages extant, we must be cautious suggesting that we all can judge anything in exactly the same way. That said, I do believe it is necessary to discuss education’s role in the understanding, judgment, acceptance, and importance of aesthetics. One of the motivations then for a curriculum which allots more time for art and aesthetic experiences, is to develop a group of young people who can choose for themselves what is meaningful to them from a position of knowledge. It is important that we develop our society around an understanding of its culture. Let us attempt to outline education’s role
and responsibilities, and examine how we might approach such an esoteric problem as the education of the beautiful.

How do we Teach Beauty?

Can we teach aesthetic appreciation? How do we educate for beauty? We can assume that many natural phenomena perceived as beautiful to one person will most likely be seen as beautiful to another. A sunset is beautiful in any language. But what about objects and experiences, art, music, poetry. We cannot simply show what we feel to be beautiful things to any particular individual, tell them the items are beautiful and expect acceptance and understanding. If we accept that there is a plethora of cultural languages, from traditional linguistic differences to stylistic and demographic variations, we must then keep in mind our student’s facility within any given cultural language. It is important then to approach the education of the beautiful in a multi-lingual way. We must then promote the acquisition of new cultural languages with which to recognize beauty. In works or items that represent a completely different culture in an anthropological sense, an overview of the cultural traditions of the individual societies in question would be beneficial. In circumstances of disparate demographic positions, it is important to clarify what factors play a part in different behaviours and motivations. Is there a disparity in wealth, class or status position? A lack of understanding of these disparate vocabularies would prevent us from understanding how someone else may find something beautiful and consequently, we are diminished by the loss of one more beautiful experience.

Within all of this, is the reality of conflict and peace. If we recognize beauty in kind, in common, then we are becoming closer to community. The closer we
come to developing community and mutual understanding, the closer we come to
the sharing of culture, the closer we are to respect and peace. There is not
enough space here to present a discussion of the value of aesthetic education for
greater communication and cultural respect leading to better ethnic relations, but
it certainly presents us with more motivation and is worthy of more complete in
depth study.

If we view different objects, and experiences as representations of different
cultural languages, (As in learning the language of the Expressionists, or the Beat
Poets) then we can begin to educate for beauty and develop our aesthetic
intelligence. We can begin to expose our students to a wider variety of
experiences, which would lead to greater fluency in different cultural languages. It
is then that we can step outside of the traditional approach of exposure to the
Western European canon and truly offer possibilities. Our students would then be
in a position to judge for themselves the beauty of Indonesian Gamalan music, or
if Mozart is better than Bob Dylan. It is then that our students would be able to
judge if graffiti artists are creating beauty or if they are merely vandals. At one
time, we were exposed to the ‘classics’ in western education. We memorized
poetry, and were made aware of ‘what mattered’ to developing ‘good taste’. Even
that, sadly, is being left behind. The act of memorizing passages of poetry does
not necessarily guarantee a culturally literate society but at least the assumption
is that the work is of value and is worthy of adding to one’s ‘language’. Now we
are inundated with information and too few of us really know what we are getting
ourselves into and what our options are. We know little of our own culture and
less of anyone else’s. It is clear then that we must promote a cultural
multilingualism if we wish to give our students the opportunity to learn about and
to recognize a variety of beautiful experiences and objects.
It is in the knowing of our broad cultural heritage that we find meaning to our own existence. We gain an understanding of what is possible through the achievements of our collective past. If we educate our young about what we have achieved, then we further a sense of belonging and possibility. Elliot Eisner writes, “The arts represent the highest of human achievements to which students should have access.” (Eisner, 1985) In his essay “Why Art in Education and Why Art Education” Eisner underscores the importance of making art education available to students so that they can understand their cultural history. We must be versed in our own cultural languages to be literate members of our society. If we wish to contribute to the further development of our society we must have the skills to add to our complex and ever growing lexicon. Eisner uses the Social Studies as an example. We expect that our students have a working knowledge of history to be able to understand concepts like democracy and it is this knowledge, which allows them to take part and to contribute to the democratic process. The arts should expect no less. It is crucial that our students have an understanding of the cultural history and language to which they belong in order to contribute and communicate successfully.

One of the major roles of the arts then, is to help to develop our cultural fluency. And we should be sure to promote fluency in a variety of cultural languages. Good communication is a vital skill. In order to interact with and be part of a community and the global community at large, we must be able to speak languages in kind. But what about the basic need of expressing? It is clear that communication is required to interact and that it is crucial that we have the skills in order to add to our cultural vocabulary. But what about the basic intrinsic value of ordering the stimuli around us and expressing our response through our
aesthetic senses? Croce wrote that all of our responses had to first be aesthetic in nature. If this is so, then perhaps we must also stop long enough to assess the value of developing our aesthetic senses in order to more clearly understand our own responses to the world and all that we experience. As we mature, our understanding of the world increases as we gain the skills to adequately interpret and respond to the world at large. It follows then that we would want to acquire all of the necessary skills to enhance our understanding of the world we live in and our joy in the experiencing of that world. Also, simply put, if our cognition is to develop we must feed it, and feed it what it most naturally requires - experience. And if Croce and Abbs are to be believed, the most adequate way to experience is through the aesthetic senses.

It is clear then that we should pursue the goal of further developing our aesthetic intelligence. We should educate more often with beauty in mind. It is necessary to our basic selves to be aware aesthetically and to have aesthetic experiences. It is necessary to our communities that we promote aesthetic awareness in order to better communicate with each other and with other communities at large. And it is necessary that our youth have the appropriate skills to take them into the 21st Century, a 21st Century clearly focused on global markets and consumerism. Our young people should be capable of making educated choices about what they see, how they wish to communicate and what and how they will consume. But how do we begin? Can we develop a specific curriculum to educate for Beauty? I believe the answer is to use the existing curriculum, but to bend and stretch it to allow for greater creativity in its application.
Toward an Argument to Integrate Aesthetics Into the Core Subject Areas

Cultural multilingualism can be taught in a variety of study areas. Our understanding of the aesthetic too can be promoted outside of the arts. It need not be the sole responsibility of the arts to teach our students about our cultural heritage, nor should it be left to the arts to provide the only opportunity to develop our sensitivity to beauty. If we provide our students with the opportunity to increase their aesthetic intelligence through different disciplines, we ensure a broader base from which to draw experiences. As has been suggested throughout this work, our experiences are aesthetic in nature and therefore, with each new experience, we have the opportunity to grow and mature as aesthetic beings. At this point, I would like to illustrate how we might approach integrating the idea of aesthetic education into three subject areas usually deemed the most important.

The Language Arts

A wider variety of culturally specific literature can be covered in the language arts. It behoves us to broaden the catalogue of accepted and suggested curriculum materials to include works which deal with the arts, and nature and with different writing styles and traditions. The work of Gabriel Garcia Marquez and other Latin and Central American writers for example, would be useful to introduce our students to, not only different ethnic and historical perspectives, but also different stylistic possibilities. The ‘magic realist’ style prevalent in the region’s writers offers students a new way of ‘reading’ literature. Marquez et al
write in a language quite different from the writers our students are usually exposed to. The Latin and Central American literary 'language' is lush and descriptive, often surreal and filled with images of fancy and beauty. It is a literary language that borrows form different traditions that are in contrast to the traditions which we are accustomed to, and therefore offers a new experience. We are accustomed to the clipped works of Hemingway (A curriculum favourite) or the dark and sombre work of the Canadian 'Gothic' writers like Margaret Atwood. We continue to read Joseph Conrad and William Golding. George Orwell still informs our politics through Animal Farm. (Orwell, 1945) We should not undervalue the work that is most often covered in our curriculum, but nor should we cut our students off from the enormous wealth of material available to enhance their growing cultural multilingualism.

One of our most powerful vehicles for information, the arts and aesthetic development is also one of the most popular, film. Film has become, if not the most important, one of the major art forms of both the 20th and our new 21st Century. All of our students watch films and are quite up to date on what is available at their local theatres. They may not, however, have the level of sophistication required to wade the reams of bad film and find the films that represent the 'pinnacle of achievement' as Eisner would put it. The Language Arts can make use of this media in a variety of ways. I am not advocating that film replace literature, or that we should necessarily use film merely to be better able to visualize what a particular written work might look like, though it is a powerful tool to enhance the 'reading' of a novel if used wisely. What I am suggesting is that film be used as a new part of the English Programme. The movies are an important part of our new cultural direction but are not just the property of the visual arts. Film is a language unto itself that should be studied for itself, but is
also a part of the Language Arts. It would be scandalous to suggest that Shakespeare's plays not be studied because they are intended to be dramatic, audiovisual productions. Film may of course be used much the way we have traditionally used the dramatic works of our most celebrated playwrights. The movies are literate works. If we ignore them we ignore too large a part of our arts.

With the above suggestions in mind, the benefits to including visiting Drama professionals to enhance the English Programme when covering Film, and more traditional dramatic works is immeasurable. It is safe to assume that drama professionals have a keen, inside understanding of dramatic material. Rarely, however, do we take advantage of the relevant professionals in our community, among the parents of our children and among our fellow teaching staff. How often do we find that our colleagues are actors, musicians, writers and artists? And what would be the value of visiting writers reading aloud from their works? As George Whalley advocates, poems should be read aloud and experienced. He also makes a case for the reading of the works by the students, and suggests that we should experience poetry through the speech apparatus as well as through the auditory/visual pathways. (Whalley, 1979) An understanding of the lyric content to popular music is of great value to the English teacher as well. The work is of course relevant to the child but also is an example of a growing language which includes new art all the time. Much of popular music lyrics are not particularly artistically mature and some may have dubious merit. We must not, however, assume that because the authors of these lyrics and songs are young, urban, perhaps not holders of post secondary degrees, that they can not and do not write work of great artistry and power. Adventurous and informed teachers have used the work of Bob Dylan for years. Bob Dylan however, is not particularly current. It is time to take a good look at current lyrics to popular music.
as an extension to a growing poetic language and as a tool to enhance the English curriculum to more adequately represent a contemporary cultural language.

Finally, how might we use the Visual Arts in our English curriculum? We make mental pictures in our heads, giving form to the descriptive written passages in the novels and written works we enjoy. This imaginative process, this giving form, is what the visual artist does. He or she then gives their imaginative construct a physical form. The simplest way to use the visual art skill set, one that middle school teachers certainly use, is to illustrate passages of novels or poems graphically. This practice is a good start. There are of course a great many other media options available. If our students interpret a written work in graphic, dramatic, musical, or performance art format, they have the opportunity to truly synthesize a particular work and respond and express their 'take' on the work in their own way, ensuring that they will understand and value the work in a different, more complete way. The English teacher might use art historical references and examples of art works to illustrate time periods and mood. The Language Arts teacher might also use visual art examples as starting points for descriptive written works, creating stories from paintings, poems from the dynamics of sculpture and narratives from photographs. Students might write reviews of art shows, plays, recent recordings and films.

The Language Arts can access all of the arts and use them to their advantage in delivering a more successful programme. The benefits are many. The Language Arts themselves become more flexible and deliver a more relevant programme, but also the arts themselves benefit. If we integrate all of the arts more
completely the aesthetic sensibilities of our youth continue to develop and the cultural multilingualism of our students will certainly be enhanced.

The Social Studies

In a more integrated curriculum, the social studies might address the issues of multiculturalism and tolerance, promoting a wider understanding of the diverse languages of beauty through the use of texts and resources that specifically target cultural areas. Perhaps we should include more intensive study into the art, music and religion of the worlds' societies into our curriculum and not concentrate on the usual topics of weather, population, industry, and gross national product. It is surely more useful, if our intention is to truly learn about a particular society, to understand how a country functions culturally rather than if they have resources that we might exploit or if they are more or less mechanized than we are.

In British Columbia we offer Comparative Civilization as a non-examinable, locally developed course with no particular curriculum, leaving the teacher to decide what is most important to cover. As the course is not an examinable course, the teacher can concentrate on the cultural areas they believe to be most beneficial to a greater understanding of the cultures being covered. This should make for an interesting course that truly offers an opportunity to work towards greater cultural multilingualism. Sadly, the ‘important’ examinable courses (History and Geography) continue to ignore or spend too little time on the value of a cultural understanding of the world’s human geography and history. These courses are expected to cover huge amounts of material and teachers are expected to ‘get their students through the exams’. There is little time to concentrate on the more cultural aspects of particular countries, societies and
historical time periods. I am, of course, not advocating that courses like Comparative Civilization become examinable necessarily as there is no guarantee that an exam would make a course any better or more complete. In fact if an exam were attached to the course it would no doubt become too prescriptive, forcing teachers to teach more to an eventual exam than to the possibilities of cultural study. I am suggesting that Comparative Civilization, with its obvious value as a vehicle to increase our young people's cultural multilingualism, be seen as a more important course with the necessary credit value to prompt more students to take the course. And perhaps the other Social Sciences might look to Comparative Civilizations as a model to curricular development.

A good many Social Studies teachers prompt their students to create a variety of sculptures, maquettes and dioramas as projects in the primary and middle school years. The students construct models of Iroquois Long Houses, craft Lacrosse sticks, sculpt pyramids and develop mediaeval family crests. The value of these activities to the learning process cannot be overstated. Yet, though we know these activities enhance the educational experience, we eventually discontinue the practice. As the secondary school years wear on, the student has less time to create in the Social Studies and is expected to acquire knowledge and facility without the use of their aesthetic sensibilities. There is little time in the upper secondary school years for the construction of pyramids and longhouses, but it behoves the Social Studies teacher to find ways to incorporate the aesthetic skills of their students into the learning of the Social Studies curriculum. Perhaps at the senior school level, the Social Studies teacher could use more art historical references. The teacher might use particular imagery to illustrate a variety of concepts. He or she could certainly use film as a powerful purveyor of
information. The film The Black Robe (Beresford, 1991) illustrates well the socio-political setting of New France, but it is the mood set by the cinematography, the bleakness of the storytelling, which captivates, moves and through its’ powerful imagery, teaches us about what New France might really have been like.

The Sciences

The sciences understand the role that creativity plays in scientific discovery, and could do well to appreciate the contribution the arts and beauty have to give. If, as Agnes Martin suggests in her essay “Beauty is the Mystery of Life”, (Martin, 1993) beauty is perfection then the sciences, concerned with ‘right’ answers, should be able to see beauty as a part of their discipline. Let us turn back to a working definition of beauty: A particular object or event that brings extreme pleasure or satisfaction to the mind. Surely this satisfaction is something the science practitioner experiences upon a new discovery, or upon a task well executed. Integration of disparate disciplines in the sciences would also be beneficial to both the sciences and to the growth of an aesthetic fluency. Again, as in the other academic areas, we can use physical art making skills developed in the arts, drawing, sculpting, graphics and so on. To create physical and graphic models enhances the learning experience through the hands-on experience of putting the lessons into practice. To use dance to illustrate kinetics and physics is surely beneficial. One should use music to demonstrate a variety of sound experiments. The use of photography as both a recording tool and an opportunity to explore light, chemistry and machinery seems obvious. The possibilities for integration are many and only waiting for better communication between the science and art professionals in our schools.
We can use the art making skills to enhance the physical science programme, but we can also make use of the cognitive skills that we attain through art making. Using our aesthetic intelligence to create objects and to give form to our imaginative fancies develops our problem solving abilities, promotes holistic thinking, and prompts us to use judgment. Too often students are expected to work towards a 'right' answer. The arts often give us many possible answers. Eisner contends that the arts and the skills they develop more appropriately prepare our youth for the tasks of adulthood. He writes that the arts promote the ability to judge, to assess, and to experience a variety of meanings. In our adult lives we are expected to be flexible in our problem solving and are expected to use good judgment when encountering a variety of difficulties. We are expected to be able to work with a variety of solutions to our problems. Eisner has also suggested that too often our curriculum is too rule governed. In the sciences, where we are often expected to end up with the right answers, we see perhaps the most rule governed of our major disciplines. The arts and our aesthetic judgment, gives us possible answers that may or may not work according to 'the rules'.

Our aesthetic intelligence is our most basic intelligence. It is perhaps the most flexible and the intelligence, which most completely uses all of the senses, and other intelligences. It seems quite obvious then that to utilize this particular group of skills in any other discipline would enhance the existing programme or curriculum.
With That in Mind...

It is not my intention to suggest a model for integrating the arts and aesthetics with other disciplines merely to enhance the other subject areas, which would no doubt be the case, but rather to suggest greater integration for the sake of our aesthetic development. I am suggesting we promote greater arts integration for selfish reasons. We have downplayed the importance of a sound aesthetic sensibility and the need for more comprehensive art programmes for too long. We need to integrate with the other subject areas because, through a broader experience base, it is not only the ‘academic’ disciplines that will benefit, but also the arts themselves.

If we expand our curriculum and integrate the disciplines, our students have a greater opportunity to develop a working cultural multilingualism. By teaching from a variety of subject areas, we can present materials and experiences that promote aesthetic development to our students in a more effective way. We can expose them to a variety of images, sounds, and experiences that they would then begin to understand and appreciate and, exposure is perhaps the most important part of educating about the beautiful. By promoting an understanding of Beauty from a variety of angles we ensure that we teach to all of our senses, we ensure that we ‘leave no stone unturned’ in our attempt to promote a more aesthetically fluent community. A more aesthetically astute population can make educated choices. A more aesthetically conversant people can recognize what dignifies us as humans. As Maxine Greene writes, we need education in aesthetics and in the arts so that people develop the skills to “notice what is there to be noticed.” (Greene, 1987)
How Might We Enhance The Arts?

I have outlined the need to integrate the arts into a number of the ‘core’ subject areas in order to more fully take advantage of all the possibilities in which we might further our aesthetic development. It must not be assumed, however, that the arts courses themselves cannot do a great deal more to deliver programmes that address the issues that we have been discussing. As well, the arts courses themselves could benefit from integrating with the other programmes traditionally seen as existing beneath the arts umbrella. Over the next few pages I would like to present a number of ways that we might enhance the existing Arts curricula through integrating ideas from different arts areas and also ways in which we might rededicate ourselves to providing a current, contemporary arts programme, an arts programme that through its continued growth and development will reflect our changing aesthetic sensibilities.

The Music Programme

There are a host of ways in which we might enhance the music programme through integrating ideas and activities from the other arts disciplines, however, let us first establish what a music programme might offer.

A music programme, presented to secondary students in particular, should have some relevance to who they are. It is important that they develop an appreciation for music in general, but it is advisable for the music teacher to have at least a working knowledge of current music. If we ignore the music that is popular with
our students, then we are devaluing what they believe to be relevant, and in so doing are not modelling a broad minded musical appreciation. Appreciation of music should be the basic goal of music programmes. We cannot expect that all or even a majority of our music students will become working musicians when they move on to post-secondary life. In fact few will be musicians and few will make a life for themselves within music at all. The raison d’être of arts programmes is not to create artists, nor is it to allow our students to dabble in playtime activities, but to develop aesthetically literate people.

Our arts programmes must have a purpose. Keith Swanwick and Dorothy Taylor in their essay “Purpose in Music Education” (Swanwick and Taylor, 1982) discuss the need to be clear with our students in our purpose for music programmes. They suggest that a music programme must not seem arbitrary otherwise our student will see no reason to be truly involved in their experience. Too often students see little reason for particular lessons and courses and would of course have little motivation to apply themselves to curricula that has nothing to do with them, and, is seemingly purposeless. It is important to present the students with reasons why we perform certain tasks and follow particular curriculum. Swanwick and Taylor contend that the role of the music programme is to, “Develop the ability to respond to music in the fullest possible way across the widest range of experiences.” (p.238) Often our students enrol in arts programmes hoping for little more than a decent grade and a limited amount of homework. If we involve them from the beginning of their experience by discussing with them the reasons for what we do they become involved in the process, and develop ownership for how the class turns out. We should discuss with them that our music classes should be about developing an appreciation for music. As Swanwick and Taylor argue, not an appreciation merely built on listening to recordings of a variety of
musics, but building an appreciation for the concept of music, the value for music in itself and what it brings to our communities aesthetically. They further argue for the development of a 'knowing' about music. We should be learning not just how, but about music, why we make music and what happens when we do 'x' or 'y' to music.

Our music programmes are too often an exercise in teaching a large group of relatively uninterested students how to play an instrument that they will probably never play again after their time in the class is completed, and present them with a type of music that is often uninteresting to them. I am not suggesting that we can easily offer popular music classes. Much of popular music is created to be played in small groups, something that logistically is just not possible in most public school environments. However, we can begin to explore the possibilities. It is important for our students to understand, through the practice of playing instruments, how and through what processes our musical traditions have been developed, therefore, the practice of teaching orchestral/band programmes has value but, we must be sensitive to the changing face of music. We can begin to explore different rhythmic ideas, different musical options. We can explore current themes, urban and ethnic music for example. We can begin to develop our programs around composition. Too often our students play the music of long dead composers that they cannot relate to. Our young people should be part of the creation process in our music programmes.

After a discussion of ways in which we might enhance the relevance of our music programmes, I would like to turn, briefly now, to the benefits of and ways in which we might begin integrating the music curriculum with the other arts disciplines.
Dramatic, operatic/musical, visual art (through stage craft) and ballet productions have long integrated their disciplines. This of course is an area that should continue and one that arts programmes in schools should take greater advantage of. Stagecraft, music production and dramatic direction and performance all may combine to create hugely valuable educational experiences. However, we might use all of these skills to enhance the different programmes without the necessary performance night. Too often in our music programmes, our focus must be the semester or year ending concerts and performances. It is important to play and perform music for its own sake and not just to (however politically necessary) justify to parents and the community at large the value of a music programme through a highly visible production. If we have dance classes, how might we employ the music classes? How might we produce multimedia art presentations integrating the music and visual art departments? In its contributions to the other arts disciplines in their production of art works the music programme is put into practice in a relevant and ‘multilingual’ way. If we develop a music curriculum that is not just about playing music, but about ‘knowing’ music and how it relates to our culture, how might we use our growing understanding of music to enhance other programmes in the school environment? The act of integrating the music programme with other disciplines allows us to more easily attain our goals of achieving a greater cultural and aesthetic literacy through using a broader range of our senses and sensibilities.

My suggestions for an updated music curriculum are not meant as an indictment of the existing programmes necessarily, but it is important to continue to develop and stay current. Our music teachers work hard to deliver a programme that they feel their students will benefit from; to create new programmes and develop a new curriculum is a large undertaking. It behoves our education ministry and our
administrators to assist in the development of an expanded music curriculum through the allotment of more time and the necessary funds to make this possible.

The Dramatic Arts

The Dramatic Arts have long been integrated with other disciplines. They have a close association with the Language Arts. The Dramatic Arts are often kinesthetic and therefore, have a relationship with the Physical Education curriculum. They often make use of a variety of music and musical sound-scapes, and have made much use of the visual arts in the development of environments in which to practice their arts. I believe that many of the arts and ‘core’ subject areas could look to the dramatic arts programmes as good examples of how integration can work. As in the other disciplines, however, I believe there is always room for expansion of the principle of integration, and ways in which we might more clearly address the development of our students’ aesthetic skills. I believe it is essential that we inform our students of why their work in the dramatic arts is important, and how it is beneficial to, not only themselves, but to their cultural community. Our students should know that their activities in the dramatic arts are not play time, but opportunities to express themselves aesthetically through their artifice and they should be made mindful of what that means. Our students should be informed of different areas in the dramatic arts that one might express one’s art, from traditional plays and performances to comedy, film, multimedia presentation and performance art. As in all of the arts and other subject areas in their school experience, the dramatic arts are constantly changing and our students should be given the opportunity to explore these changes.
The Dramatic Arts, while often the foremost practitioner of integration might still look to the areas of the visual arts that are blurring the lines between the two disciplines. Film of course is an area that has had blurred lines for some time. Film is a dramatic art, is also visual art form, but is also an art form unto itself. With that in mind, one might ask the question: when is a movie a dramatic production, and when is a movie an art film? Film is perhaps the most important area for the dramatic arts to be aware of as it is perhaps the most logical extension to the Dramatic Arts programme.

On a smaller scale, the Dramatic Arts specialist should inform their students of the possibilities of Performance Art and the possibilities for cross-disciplinary collaboration therein. The sensibilities of Performance Art seem to borrow from the dramatic artists’ skill set, but the works seem intended to be viewed as visual art examples. By exploring Performance Art, the Dramatic Arts specialist provides the opportunity to their students to work in a cross disciplinary manner, one which will increase their aesthetic vocabulary and further their ability to communicate effectively.

There are of course many areas for music and drama to meet. Long have dramatic productions been closely tied to music and vice versa. Keeping that tradition and success in mind it is in the dramatic arts’ best interest to stay current. The success of the “Stomp” productions is testimony of the power of musical and dramatic performances meeting to create an urban, current kind of experience. (Kresswell, McNicholas) But how might we use new music and pop culture in our dramatic arts classes? And what about new technology? Pop culture, music and technology are also having their lines blurred. The Drama specialist should not ignore the possibility for multimedia exploration. The end
product of our students' exploration of the arts programmes and all of the integrated possibilities, need not take a traditional form. The end product does not have to be a play or a series of skits. It need not be a film short. The end product can be something altogether new. Through the integration of the Dramatic Arts, technology and all of the other available arts and academic disciplines, the student might be creating a multimedia work that is more indicative of the aesthetic place we have come to at the beginning of the 21st Century.

It is essential that our parents, administrators and the community at large understand that with these changes, the dramatic arts are not purely for the development of dramatic performances that take the form of large plays presented for public display. In light of the new areas for study through integration and technology some of the work produced may require a different kind of audience, an audience capable of accepting new technologically produced work that appears quite different to the viewer. As well, this new work might demand a more technologically capable viewer just to access the work.

**The Visual Arts**

In the Visual Arts, lines between traditional media and ideas and a newer postmodern concept have blurred considerably as well. In fact, as has been outlined in the earlier chapters, ideas have become central to many artists' work and the image and the accompanying aesthetic have taken a back seat. This has precipitated a widening gulf between artist and viewer. Increasingly the layperson has been left puzzled about the direction art has been taking and often has not had the appropriate skills to attend to the work they have been seeing. I have
posited that a new aesthetic is necessary and is underway, one that will see a renewed interest in Beauty. However, the imagery that we will see is still confusing to the layperson and therefore, to our students. It is important then that we expose our students to as many opportunities as we can that might better prepare them to enter into communication with the artwork in the art community. It is also crucial that our students develop an art vocabulary that enables them to produce work of their own that clearly represents their aesthetic responses to the world.

For our art students to acquire an appropriate vocabulary, they must be exposed to the artwork of a wide variety of artists, they must see art en situe, and gain the skills to discuss what they see. Our students must be exposed to a wide variety of art possibilities. They should learn about art, not just to try making it. As Swanwick and Taylor suggest for the teaching of music, so I argue our students in the Visual Arts should be learning an appreciation for the Visual Arts not only for the making of art but also for what art gives to humanity. Our students, through the production of visual arts objects and the acquisition of critical judgment skills picked up through exposure to a wide range of arts and artists, will gain greater aesthetic skills, skills that enhance our existence. As we develop our aesthetic sensitivity and learn to appreciate beauty we become more informed, we become more sensitive and capable of new insights, we develop a greater appreciation for a wider variety of languages, artifacts and experiences.

In the end, what we are striving for in the Visual Arts curriculum is to promote aesthetic sensitivity and cultural literacy. Most often in the art programme, we spend all of our time making art, which of course is central to a good art programme, but we must occasionally stop and assess whether or not our
students are really developing all of the appropriate skills. It is valuable to discuss art and artists. It is helpful to explain ‘why’ occasionally. It is through the delivery of sound aesthetic education to our young people that we can ensure that we maintain a culturally literate society. David Aspin writes: “Art and artists necessarily have to have an informed, an educated audience: that is an indispensable precondition of the language in which they express themselves and try to communicate, for these are necessarily ‘public’ in character.” (Aspin, 1980 p.255)

In both the section on music and the section on the Dramatic Arts, I have argued for greater integration of those disciplines with the ‘core’ subjects and with the other arts subjects. The Visual Arts too must make use of integration to further its ends to a more aesthetically able student body. The visual arts can certainly use its’ skills to enhance drama productions, illustrate student council and leadership initiatives, provide visual support for a variety of academic ‘problems’, but these are all support roles. Support roles are important as we benefit from using our skills in a variety of situations, but we should also integrate with other disciplines purely for the creation of an artwork. I have discussed the value of integration in drama vis a vis the possibilities for multimedia works. The Visual Arts too is an area perfectly suited for the integration of technology, critical thinking and aesthetic response. In our world today all of the arts are integrating. It is therefore, in our students’ best interests to provide them with the opportunity to explore the integration of traditional art media, photographic and computer technology, performance and a whole host of other possible materials and disciplines to create their art works.
The practice of integrating an arts lesson/unit or programme with other arts programmes and ‘core’ subject area disciplines is of course of value to the ‘receiving’ programme, but also of enormous value to the students performing the ‘integration’. The action of putting one’s growing skills into practice is a significant moment. It is through these moments that we learn what it is to contribute to the cultural lexicon. We learn through these moments how to use our aesthetic intelligence to give form to our imagination. Putting our aesthetic skills into practice helps us to understand what it is that artists do. It gives our students the experience of being an artist in their own right. This activity helps us to see what is important. Maxine Green writes, “Artists are for disclosing the extraordinary in the ordinary.” (p.215) We should give our students the opportunity to disclose the extraordinary.

I have attempted to illustrate ways in which we might bring a variety of subject areas together to enhance our students’ educational experience. Through these last few pages I have outlined ways in which we might improve our delivery of our arts programmes. Educators from all disciplines must become aware of the value of the beautiful. We should all know that aesthetics is important as an integral part of who we are as individuals and as a community. Teachers in all subject areas can enhance the aesthetic skills of their students, and should be aware that to do so further develops the over-all skills of their charges. The difficulty here lies in that few teachers even among the arts specialists spend class time consciously working with the beautiful in mind. Given that most teachers in all subject areas have such limited class time, it is hard to imagine adding yet another component to one’s course outline. Perhaps teachers as a whole need to become more aware of the benefits of a sound aesthetic skill set, and then,
regardless of the time constraints, educators will find the time to teach with Beauty in mind.

It is not only in the delivery of our programmes that we must address Beauty, but also in the environment from which we try to offer an education. We must be aware of the physical and emotional environment and how it helps or hinders our efforts. At this time I would like to discuss the physical environment and what it might look like.

The Physical Environment

If we develop an environment that is beautiful, that makes use of art, colour, design and music in its physical space then we can help to build an understanding and a familiarity with the beautiful. As illustrated by the setting of "The Shawshank Redemption." discussed in the above pages, an environment devoid of beauty is a difficult one to exist in. Yet, if we create an environment that displays art from different styles and cultures, and displays student and faculty work, then we create an environment conducive to the creation and appreciation of the beautiful. It is important that we see art, and know that it is a part of our environment. Too often, schools put aside a few display boards and cabinets and place a small number of student artworks on display assuming that a half a dozen 32 square foot display spaces throughout an entire school is appropriate. Unfortunately it is not enough. We should ensure that there is plenty of space to show a wide variety of works. Our students should see their work proudly and prominently displayed. But they should also see work from working artists from their communities and from the world at large. If the school environment is expected to be a creative place then it should visually and sonically inspire.
Our schools should promote art shows regularly in the school environment. Our entire student body should share in the experience of not only producing the work and displaying it, but also being responsible for promoting the work itself. Students not enrolled in the art programme should still be a part of the process so that the entire school population has ownership in the process. Art shows of this kind should not be just for the art students but for the entire school. If the students all have a sense of ownership in the beautification of their environment, they all enjoy the benefits of greater aesthetic development. We often tell our students that it is their school and that they are also responsible for how it operates. Hopefully we are willing to share the responsibility and not just platitudes. Our students can give much to how our environment appears, and they are the majority. Why not include them in the aesthetic direction of the school?

If we design a space that leaves room for musical experience not only in the music classroom, but also in the whole school environment, we have made use of yet another opportunity to expose our students to beauty. If we make space available for our students to perform musically and dramatically we are furthering our ‘cause’. Our students should have the opportunity to perform at a variety of times, at lunch and after school in less formal settings, to work out their ideas to improvise and explore their art together in non-classroom settings. Central performance areas can be places to gather, watch, listen and learn.

We must create a space that is connected to, and influenced by, the natural surroundings. Here on the northwest coast of North America, the possibilities for integrating nature into our learning environments are myriad and inspiring. When
deciding on a school location and design, the decisions should be made considering the aesthetic needs of the children, and not only the logistical ones. The architectural design of the school buildings should never be taken lightly. Our students spend an enormous amount of time in their schools, and they should be inspired. Schools should not be strictly utilitarian places. Environmental design of this type of course takes commitment and funds. This kind of expenditure, oddly, is too often seen as frivolous and a misuse of taxpayer dollars. If the learning environment can be more effective through better environmental design, it should follow that we would desire a more sensitively designed school.

The Issue of Funds and Implementation: Who is Paying?

I suppose that funding beauty is a matter of philosophy and priorities. There are a great many people who believe that beauty is not important. It is a thing to enjoy, surely, but is not really worth spending too much time or money on. Funding for the arts is dwindling, as governments play a ‘fiscally responsible’ game and the public accepts this political direction, it becomes more and more difficult to convince society to spend the energy and finances on the production and promotion of beauty. It is difficult to convince our provincial government here in British Columbia that nature conservation is important to our present and crucial to our future simply from a sustainability standpoint. With that in mind, how difficult will it be to convince them that a fine motivation for this course of action is about something so intangible as beauty? Our present provincial government has a very clear pro business orientation and apparently does not see spending money on what they see as ‘frills’ as a wise use of funds. A Chinese proverb states: “When you have only two pennies left in the world, buy a loaf of bread.
with one, and a lily with the other.” This kind of philosophy and expenditure would raise eyebrows in the provincial legislature and in the corporate boardrooms.

Spending public money on beauty is a controversial issue, largely due to cultural 'illiteracy', and convincing fiscally conservative governments to allocate funds for beauty in education would be difficult at best. I have made mention in an earlier paper of the position of the present government of British Columbia on art, and through it beauty and aesthetics, in education. (Eccles, 2003) The curriculum to be delivered to our students and dictated by our government, suggests that pursuits in the arts are less meaningful and demanding of less attention. We have seen that the required Grade Eleven art credit has been removed from graduation requirements. In the recently released document “Graduation Requirements-2004” (Ministry of Education, 2003) Fine Arts and Applied Arts are now grouped together. Further, this document suggests that Fine Art skills, “foster creativity and self-expression, supporting students to develop talents in the visual arts, dance, drama or music.” All true, but this says little of art’s value beyond self-expression while suggesting that the Applied Arts are those that, “Involve the practical, hands-on application of skills that are useful in students’ daily lives and support their achievement in areas such as problem-solving, communication and the use of technologies.”

If we expect that one of the best ways to educate our young in beauty is through the arts, how then can we expect to do so when even our government suggests that it is a marginal area of study. As Carter Ratcliff writes, beauty has never existed well in the margins. Ratcliff writes of beauty and its’ place in society as follows, suggesting that beauty must be central to our senses in order to flourish: “Refusing at the birth of time to be the least bit marginal, you occupied the centre
of existence.” (Ratcliff, 1997) ‘Fiscally responsible’ governments and an art ‘intelligentsia’ with a narrow view, have marginalized the beautiful. Still, it is our responsibility as educators to promote beauty and do our best to increase cultural multilingualism and advocate for change.

There are certainly a number of difficulties to deal with in promoting a curriculum, which is concerned with the education of beauty beyond the efforts to convince Ministry representatives and school administrators that funds are necessary. If our school culture is so performance oriented and we are always concerned with test and exam performance and numerical letter grades, it will be problematic to assess learning in the subject area. If beauty is so difficult to define and is constantly evolving, how do we quantify it? Agnes Martin says that beauty is in the mind. How do we quantify the mind’s constantly shifting perceptions? Carter-Ratcliff states emphatically that we cannot grade beauty and that we should not try lest we devalue beauty. It seems we would need to re-evaluate our assessment practices to more accurately and appropriately represent our students understanding and application of the subject. We would need to assess the growth of literacy in different cultural languages. It would be necessary to assess the development of critical judgment skills. As the student acquires greater literacy in a variety of ‘beauty languages’, their ability to discuss, critically, what they see and experience would be enhanced.

It is important to teach beauty not because we have forgotten it or no longer require it, but because perhaps we have ceased to make educated choices. With the bombardment of information we are all subjected to each day, it is easy to get lost in the white noise. It is for each person to decide how he or she will revel in beauty and how he or she will experience it. But by ensuring that our students are
'literate' in the languages of the beautiful, we enable them to make decisions based on their own critical skills, and not based on media pressure. With their knowledge of beauty, they can continue to seek it more efficiently. "Discriminating taste does not decrease the amount of beauty you perceive, but adds to it.” (Kenneth Koch, 1985 p.367)

There are a number of difficulties in attempting to increase our awareness and promotion of aesthetic skills. We are educating in a culture of ignorance. We are working in times where the appreciation of Beauty is not believed to be a responsible educational goal. As I have outlined earlier, we still require beauty but live in times in which beauty is believed to be an ‘extra’ or a ‘frill’. Our education system seems to be promoting career paths that promote a technological society. We seem to want a work force more than a culture. The Ministry of Education document cited earlier seems to suggest that certain subject areas are considered to be more worthwhile for their eventual contribution to the work force and economy. Clearly the Ministry is unaware of the value of the arts and aesthetics to not only the province’s economy, but to its’ cultural well-being. Maxine Greene, in her essay “Art Worlds in Schools” suggests that we too easily might think of our students and the people of our community as resources for the building of a technological society.

Finally, we must also address the need for training or at least a working knowledge of the issues among our teachers. It should not be just for the arts programmes teachers to ensure the aesthetic health of our students. The entire school community must be responsible for the growth of our students in all areas of their development, including aesthetic development. As educators, our own family and personal responsibilities often prevent us from maintaining our efficacy
through research, workshops and a variety of other professional development pursuits. It is, however, our responsibility to remain current. We must continue to strive to find ways in which to enrich ourselves our craft and our students. It is incumbent upon us to ensure that we are offering our students as rich an educational experience as we can. I believe that a greater awareness of aesthetics and a greater willingness to include a sense of the beautiful in our work is perhaps the easiest and most effective way for us to enrich our practice. We should all have more art experiences. We should model good aesthetic literacy through our own attendance to the arts.

And what about our Primary Educators? Few schools have art specialists at the primary level. There are certainly primary educators who have an art background or who have made it their responsibility to acquire skills, which allow them to present sound aesthetic experiences to their children. However, the system itself does not require that primary educators have training in the arts. Primary educators are expected to have fluency in all of the major academic areas yet are not expected to have attended any courses in the fine arts. At this time, it is not my intention to draft a proposal to alter all of the existing primary education and professional development programmes immediately and completely, but I believe it is important that we begin to introduce more courses and requirements into the programmes which prepare new teachers for the profession that address this discrepancy. Too many students have had little or no exposure to appropriate arts teaching by the time they reach Secondary School. If we accept that the arts and aesthetics are an integral part to a complete education and accept that the arts and beauty enrich our lives and enhance our humanity, it seems curious that we would have so few qualified professionals teaching an area that is of such importance to the development of our young people. Our primary teachers need
not be arts specialists, but they should be more prepared to meet the aesthetic needs of their students. Until such time as the Primary school system chooses to place arts specialists in all of the public school communities, the least that we should insist upon is that we begin to require more experience and training among Primary generalists in the aesthetic areas.

Through these last pages, I have attempted to outline a direction we might pursue in order to increase the classroom time allocated for aesthetic education. I have suggested a variety of ways in which we might introduce aesthetics into the 'core' subject areas, and I have made a case for broader integration across all of the disciplines. I have briefly introduced a few of the difficulties we might encounter in trying to implement a more aesthetically centred curriculum. It has not been my intent to outline all of the roadblocks we might encounter, as this work has been written with the hope that it may prompt educators to begin to address the lack of aesthetic direction in our schools, not be put off by what appears to be a particularly onerous task. It may be difficult to persuade teachers to alter their course. If it isn't broken, why fix it? If we feel that we are meeting our obligations and are confident that our students are learning what they are required to and maybe a little more, why would we want to undertake yet another responsibility? It is time consuming and tiring to develop new programmes and enhance curricula. If we intend to introduce an aesthetic element to our 'core' subject areas, it would require extra work and commitment. If we intend to integrate different disciplines we are obliged to plan more and work closely with other professionals. With shrinking budgets, limited time to deliver more and more information, and an expectation to graduate students with an ever-increasing technological literacy, suggesting that we add yet another component to the curriculum is a difficult bill of goods to sell.
Regardless of the above problems, as educators we must be flexible and be willing to address ‘holes’ in our system. Our attention to the need for well-realized arts programmes and more aesthetic sensibility needs to be focused and increased. We must build on our arts programmes and promote an appreciation of beauty in all of our subject areas in order to continue to give our students access to their culture. We must promote aesthetic growth in order for our children to have an opportunity to maximize their “Artistic and intellectual capital.” as Eisner argues. It is not a question, then, of if we should increase our time and energy expenditure to promoting a sound aesthetic skill set, but how to ensure that it happens. I believe the argument for increased attention to beauty is sound. It is up to the teachers and administrators to embrace the need and to implement strategies that will place aesthetics back in the curriculum.
Chapter Seven

Conclusion

In the end, is beauty still important to us? Do we still recognize it? We worship beauty as we always have, and perhaps to a greater degree. We might, however, have lost sight of what we understand about beauty and are perhaps confused about what we are to do with it. Our global interconnectedness gives us so many options, many that we know nothing about, that we do not always make educated choices, but rather make choices based on the media’s guidance and on expediency. (Not perhaps the best formula for experiencing beauty) North America’s fascination and obsession with body image seems to be a clear example of an unclear understanding of Beauty. Our notions of human beauty are clearly unhealthy and are prescribed by the fashion industry and by the television and film industry. Perhaps, given a better understanding of beauty and a more educated aesthetic sensibility, we could make choices for ourselves. There is certainly the possibility that even with a more developed aesthetic understanding our culture would continue to make unhealthy choices, though I fervently hope not, but in the end they would be informed choices. The difficulty here, is that if we are being led to making our decisions about beauty by the media, we must ask questions about the media’s motivation. We must be sure we are making the choices and that the media is not indoctrinating our youth. The market economy exists to make profit. If we accept that commerce driven objects and experiences of beauty should be looked upon with some trepidation and

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scepticism, then we should look in different places for our experiences of beauty. Our worship of beauty should be for the thing in itself, not for its dollar value.

Has beauty really gone anywhere? No, we have perhaps only mislaid it. We need appropriate critical skills to appreciate beauty in its non-stereotyped forms and not merely in the forms presented to us on MTV. In the end, after critically assessing what is available, if we continue to desire MTV over the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation then we have made a choice for ourselves from a position of knowledge and taste. Far be it from me to suggest that Eminem is not worthy of consideration to someone who has facility in a variety of cultural languages and is making a choice after reviewing all of the options. Though Kant argued that we designate things as beautiful, that we make this world as we see it, it is quite possible that beauty is still all around us, waiting for our admiring glance.

Our understanding of the beautiful continues to evolve, and we will continue to seek it. We may have experienced a period in the arts, where beauty was deemed unimportant, but we truly cannot live without it. We will continue to be required to wade through the white noise of the Internet driven global culture, but if we as educators continue to help our students to make educated choices and to be critical in their judgments, beauty can perhaps retake its place at the centre.

I have argued that Beauty is still all around us and that we seek it as we always have. The difficulty of course has been that due to a lack of education concerning things of beauty, we do not necessarily always make informed or healthy choices. Through an investigation of Kant, Croce and a series of more modern writers and philosophers, I have attempted to illustrate where many of our theories and ideas
about aesthetics come from and how they have evolved. Through this investigation I hope that I have clarified somewhat what we mean by aesthetics, how we perceive beauty, and what part our aesthetic sensibility plays in our daily lives. Through the investigation of Kant and Croce, I hope to have not only analyzed what their key points were, but also to have pointed out where the difficulties in their ideas might be in application to a changing, contemporary society.

I have discussed the need for and the development of a new aesthetic that has been developing; a new aesthetic that recognizes its past but also employs the lessons of postmodernism. I have argued for a new aesthetic that recognizes the multifarious possibilities of the idea but one that also appreciates beauty. At the beginning of a new century, with globalism as our biggest challenge and asset, we need to have an aesthetic that is both pluralistic, as the postmodernists hoped for, and one that also recognizes the need for clear connections to our individual and community traditions. Pluralism is an idea that we must take care with. Pluralism has been co-opted by the global marketeers, and a new aesthetic that values individuals and smaller cultures as sovereign but connected in clear open communication can help to mitigate that feeling of homogenization driven by the market force and culture of McDonald’s, Nike, and Wal-Mart. It is this that Jonathan Dollimore argues against in his discussion of multiculturalism. He suggests that we are becoming homogenized and multiculturalism is becoming one western culture given to the rest of the world, and it is this co-opted multiculturalism, which in fact may be giving rise to greater protectionism. (Dollimore, 2003) It is in response to this trend that we must have a new aesthetic that pays respect to individual histories, honours diverse cultures (Both in an anthropological sense and in a arts/cultural language sense), and is pluralistic in
its acceptance of multicultural communication and not in the expectation that multicultures will be absorbed by one market culture. A new aesthetic is rising and should be embraced, embraced for its’ welcoming of the beautiful, its’ respect for pluralism as a means to communication and not necessarily commerce and for its’ willingness to build on extant traditions through examination and respect.

I have argued for the inclusion of greater aesthetic sensitivity in the whole school system. I have suggested that to leave out aesthetics from the educational experience is to do a disservice to our students educationally and to our community at large. Through the chapter on education, I have outlined a number of ways in which we might enhance the ‘core’ curricula by bringing arts skills and aesthetic sensibilities into the different classes. I have discussed the need for and the benefits of integrating ideas and activities from the disparate disciplines in order to, not only make better use of all of the intelligences, but also to further the development of our aesthetic skill set. I have argued that to ignore the aesthetic development of our young people and to thereby deny them aesthetic fluency, is to deny them access to their cultural language, and access to other cultural languages. Students denied this access, as Eisner claims, “Simply are unable to read our most profound forms of human achievement.” Students must know who we are and where we have come from, they must know what we have accomplished in order to imagine what is possible.

It is accepted that we must have appropriately trained educators with experience and training in the specific areas in which they teach. But we should also expect to be receptive to skills and ideas from other disciplines in order to be able to offer more cross-curricular experiences. We should also begin to address the
lack of arts specialists in the Primary grades, and in the short term promote the acquisition of arts and aesthetic skills among our Primary generalists. In the formative years of Primary school our children should receive appropriate exposure to all of the disciplines if we hope to promote cultural fluency.

I have also argued for the cultivation of educational environments that are sensitive to our innate need for beauty. If we hope to raise children with a sound aesthetic sensitivity, we must provide them with an environment that enriches and inspires. If we provide our students with environments which celebrate the arts, culture and natural beauty then we are providing an opportunity to be part of a creative environment, one in which they can take ownership. If we wish to avoid our students being trained for and seen as resources for a technological society, as cautioned by Maxine Greene and cited earlier, we should teach them in schools that are beautiful and that do not look like factories, devoid of beauty and concerned only with function. Our schools should be designed and constructed as schools, not as government buildings. Our schools should be designed by people attuned to the needs of an environment who's purpose is to inspire, and I believe our schools should be designed with input from the people who will be inhabiting the spaces for up to forty hours a week.

And what should happen in our schools? What we do in our schools is carried as an experiential memory by our students for their whole lives. What they learn in school shapes how they will fit in society. We must never underestimate the influence that the Primary and Secondary school years have on our students. What our students learn aesthetically in their school years will help to form their aesthetic judgments throughout their lives. David Aspin in his essay “The Arts, Education and the Community” writes, “The model of aesthetic judgment to which
we adhere and we employ as adults will also be, as crucially, a function of those preconceptions in accordance with which we will have been educated.” (Aspin, 1980 p.254) If we desire an educated, culturally fluent community, then we must ensure that our young people have the opportunity to have the appropriate experiences and training. If it is our intention to further communication skills and promote cultural multilingualism, then we must address the lack of time spent on and exposure to arts and aesthetic experiences. If our appreciation and recognition of Beauty is perhaps the best of human traits, we must be sure that it is not ignored. Aspin claims that our schools have the responsibility to impart everything our cultures have ever attained, our values, traditions, our ‘languages’ from generation to generation so that our community can continue. Of all of our languages, the arts, our aesthetic language, is the most complex and crucial to our continuation. (p.257) G.H.Bantock argues for the value of the arts programmes as well, suggesting that the educative process creates human beings and that much of that development comes through artistic creativity. (Bantock, 1981)

If we argue that aesthetic experiences are our most basic and also our most complex experiences, it follows that we would want to allot adequate time in our schools for the exploration and development of our aesthetic sensibilities. If we agree that a sound aesthetic skill set is important in order for us to communicate well and for us to be able to access our cultural capitol, then we should advocate for a curriculum that is truly inclusive and integrated. Abbs argues that our, “Innate aesthetic intelligence can be nurtured through an initiation into the forms of symbolic discipline.” (Abbs, 1989 p.8) Here he suggests that our aesthetic intelligence is best developed through an education in our cultural language, our arts traditions and therefore, through sound arts programmes. It is critical that we
promote the acquisition of these aesthetic skills among our youth as they enter into the world as contributing adults in the world at the beginning of the 21st Century. The global market, media influence and multiculturalism/pluralism demand that they be culturally literate. If we wish our young to have the skills to choose for themselves what kind of citizen they will be then we must develop programmes that will prepare them to make educated choices. If we want our children to contribute to our cultural traditions, (and if we expect our cultures to continue then we should!) then we most provide them with the knowledge and skills to do so in a learned and informed manner.

We as educators are responsible for delivering the best educational experience possible, one that develops the skills to meet adult life, and one that fulfils the innate need for learning. I believe that our aesthetic development should be addressed across all of the disciplines. If we agree that an appreciation for beauty and a sound aesthetic skill set promoted through the arts is important to a complete education then we must strive to offer an educational experience that clearly values these ideals. As Eisner argues, if we do not offer good programmes and appear to value the arts and beauty, our students are unlikely to develop an appreciation for them for themselves.

Our aesthetic sensibility, our desire for and appreciation of Beauty is central to who we are as humans. This sensibility is largely responsible for the development of the worlds' diverse cultures. Though we continue to seek and appreciate beauty, we have allowed beauty to be come an addendum to our lives. Beauty is critical to our well-being and yet it is too often ignored in schools. It is curious that we must advocate including aesthetics in our schools, given that beauty is so
important to us. As Peter Schjeldahl writes, "There's something crazy about a culture in which the value of Beauty becomes controversial." (p.55)
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