

**Web-enhanced Art Education:  
Constructing Critical Interpretations of Visual Culture in Preservice Art Education**  
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Abstract (Summary)

This dissertation explores critical interpretation of visual culture in Web-enhanced preservice art education. Its aim is to investigate how preservice art teachers at a large east coast university critique visual culture in a Web-enhanced learning environment that I designed with Dr. Karen Keifer-Boyd. The curriculum unit that I study involves dialogues among professor and preservice teachers, critical analysis of visual culture in course Web sites to foster critical and reflective interpretation, and other learning activities both in the physical and virtual classroom. I use Karen Keifer-Boyd's (1996) Multivocal Art Criticism approach from her adaptation of critical theories from the disciplines of anthropology, sociology, feminism, art, and ecology for interpreting images in my study.

My study reveals how a Web-enhanced art class can facilitate multiple perspectives and interactive dialogic learning with technology and broaden understanding of social contexts for the critical interpretation of visual culture. Preservice teachers valued multiple perspectives on the same artwork in the online discussions. Preservice teachers recognized contemporary artworks as a visual metaphor that conveys abstract concepts in a connotative mode. Interpretation with metaphor promotes multiple interpretations of the same artwork. The threaded discussion in the online forums supported interaction through reflection among preservice teachers and provided opportunities to share different thoughts. Preservice teachers critiqued visual culture issues that they encountered everyday but differed from their own beliefs. This enabled preservice teachers to relate critiques of visual culture to broader social issues and themselves.

This study suggests that critical interpretation informed from critical pedagogy engaged preservice teachers in reflecting on socio-cultural forms of knowledge, ideas, and social values of race, gender, and beauty in visual culture. In this study, the participants valued and synthesized multiple theoretical stances in a Multivocal Art Criticism approach for interpretation. This study suggests that interaction through critical reflection can help preservice teachers to become conscious of connections that they develop as part of their knowledge and judgments. Cross-cultural critiques in online discussion with participants from different cultures promoted richness of both shared and diverse views. This study illustrates the significance of contextual interpretation with intertextual links to broad societal contexts. Connecting different viewpoints from intertextual links with popular culture, histories, and social contexts become significant in constructing preservice teachers' identity. This study suggests that preservice teachers benefit from a critical examination of visual culture that shaped their identity as art teachers and from cross-cultural online pedagogy.

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