

A Critical Pedagogy of Visual Culture as Art Education:
Toward a Performative Inter/hypertextual Practice
by Tavin, Kevin Michael, Ph.D., The Pennsylvania State University, 2003, 223 pages;
AAT 3097054

Abstract (Summary)

This thesis explores and reveals the benefits for pre-service elementary educators when they are instructed in art education utilizing a critical pedagogical approach where visual culture provides the content and issues and hypertextuality provides the means. The research study critically examines the experience and production of two former pre-service elementary education students enrolled in a required art education course I taught in 1997. Both students created a hypertext that explored popular culture as part of the final assignment for the class. Using critical social theories, I identify, interpret, and respond to the elements and discourse of the student produced hypertexts. Through my analysis, I interpret the relationship between popular cultural texts, the process in which the students constructed meaning from those texts, and how the students re-inscribed their own meaning through hypertextuality.

My research reveals that critical pedagogy, visual culture, and hypertextuality enabled both students in the study to change their perceptions about art, art education, and the pedagogical power of popular culture. Through critical pedagogy, visual culture, and hypertextuality, both students were able to make intertextual connections between subject matter, their lives, and the lives of others, and, consequently, challenged the way subjectivities, including their own, are constituted through images and imagining.

This thesis suggests that art education practice, including pre-service elementary education, can be informed by critical pedagogy and visual culture in response to an ever changing postmodern world where visual images help to construct reality, shape consciousness, and inform identities. This thesis suggests that if art education focuses on the analysis, interpretation, and critique of visual culture, students may be able to better understand how networks of power are imbricated within visual culture and how particular forms of visual culture can provide tools and resources for resistance and struggle.

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