

Education Through Art

Howard Cannatella

Throughout his career Herbert Read worked tirelessly for peace in the world. At the time when he was working with UNESCO during its infancy he was already exploring the idea of art-for-peace. A prolific writer, editor, poet, academic, teacher, curator, activist, and defender of children, Read is one of educations towering figures. In 1943 at the height of his powers, Read shook the educational establishment with his book Education Through Art. This publication marked a turning point, and is still one of those historic benchmarks that actually mean something in the culture of education. I will pursue in this paper, Read's claim that education through art can make a considerable positive difference in the way we connect to the world. I will be suggesting that what children embody through their art, as Read thought, represents part of the filial bond of education. Read's particular insight into this filial bond is a provocative, and aspiring account of the virtues of aesthetic education.

Herbert Read, and his notion of education through art

"Art leads the child out of itself"
(Read, 1966, p.56)

Call me a dinosaur, but I sometimes wonder selfishly, whether anyone recently has taken the trouble to read Read's *Education Through Art*? Yes, this work is not contemporary, and yes, from where we are now educationally, there are outstanding problems with it. However, as an art teacher I am still fascinated by a work that represents a failed unity discourse on the one hand but on the other hand, can still be seen as a generous and scintillating manuscript that dares. Malcolm Ross mentions: "*Education Through Art* is a pot-pourri of theoretical speculations, and propaganda, a bewildering muddle of pseudo-science, sympathetic magic, and mystical transcendentalism" (Ross, 1998, p.209). Finding myself agreeing with Ross's assessment here, I nevertheless also want to escape from it. So much so, that I believe it is still possible to reach other conclusions about this book: namely that it advocates a more earthly sense of measure, and judgement; a yearning towards children.

The most consistent challenge Read attempts to evince is why education should be synonymous with art. It is safe to say that he identifies aesthetic values with life values. Rarely ambivalent but emphasizing what is mostly 'internal' to art, namely creativity, he reasons, in particular, that children's art could be seminal in the education, and life of a culture. Obstructing this perspective was his conviction, like Friedrich Schiller before him, that society had created too many mechanisms whose exactitude was clumsily blind of the natural humanity of life. Similar to Sigmund Freud, Read was concerned that society commonly turned to "false standards of measurement" (Freud, 1995 p.722) in the "true value of life" (Freud, 1995, p.722). We complain, for instance, that there is a lost of substance and intelligibility usually related to the bureaucratic way we solve some difficult problems in education. Unconvinced and unawed we leave out art as a common

aspect to consider in human affairs. Irritatingly, Read believed that this was down to the fact that our retinas needed sand-blasting, imaginative power, deep sleep, sea breezes, bodily contact, vodka, and rapid eye movement. He was forthright about this, and argued that we were gloriously ignorant of art. Children, however, could be deliciously full of this exaltation.

Shunning the feelings of art would only lead, Read felt, to aggressive, and ill-conceived policy decisions in education, an incompetent, and ultimately ineffective outlook on the world. We risk deceiving ourselves by failing to note what art can teach. It was Read's view that our community needed art more than it was prepared to acknowledge. He saw art in education as providing a safety valve whose curved space formed part of the symmetry of education, the bleeding of it; because without it education would idealize itself based "exclusively on one type of human being" (Read, 1947, p.92). Art for him was the antithesis of a pulverized body, an inexpressible life, a shell with nothing inside. Education through art was, Read advocated, a life saver of transmitted remembrances whose spirit could help solve educational problems. Thus in policies geared towards tacking school choice, alcohol, and drug abuse, bullying, citizenship, and standards in education, for example, art education had an irrefutable role to play. Yet the difficulty art experiences face is that they complicate life, tangle it, reform it, make it seem ambiguous, fancy, pleasurable, and exposed. Many art teachers are prepared to accept this and carry on. Not as a sign of defiance but because art could never sanction a world of ready-made imposed shapes; the child as the fugitive of its own body.

Seeing first hand what the world could inflict upon itself during the First and Second World Wars, Read maintained that art came from a different light source whose experiences embodied the rhythms and music of life. A determining factor of what art could transmit of the highest importance, Read knew emerged out of children's art. Children, Read recognised, have uncannily playful dispositions. His response was that children could display more radiantly through art a superfluity of expression because their dreams, their delicacy and charms, their secrets and bodily restlessness possess those formative powers that intoxicate art making. With this touch in mind, it is possible for children's vivid imaginations to pass straight into the art work producing the kind of reality that excites attention and is invocatory and sacrosanct.

Education through art would reinforce what we were in danger of losing; namely an aesthetic culture. In order to bring about a more cooperative, inclusive, and intelligent world, aesthetic experience as an endless infusion of humanity advances other diacritical values that tend to open oneself to the world in other ways. For instance, children are infinitely capable of registering all manner of things, and detaching from these things their 'true' shape so that their way of looking, and experiencing reflects other meanings, and feelings, creative fictions for the 'true' shape of things. "A child was in a circus, and afterwards painted an elephant, and painted it purple. Grey did not seem to him the right colour for so exotic an animal" (Viola, 1936, p.32). In this example, it dawns upon the child that the elephant has a tumultuous spirit; a majestic presence. To symbolize this elephant, purple is chosen to concentrate our thoughts on its magnificence, a gesture that provokes a different representation and with new meaning, causing us to think again and

restore what otherwise may have been blotted out. Unhesitatingly, Read equates this aesthetic integrity, as the child's "affectionate exhortations" of life (Read, 1970, p.217). I draw from Read that beauty, gaiety and pleasure can occupy a negligible and intolerant place in educational thinking, as a place where the child, if they are there at all, may appear as a living corpse.

Read sums up his Education Through Art as: "What I have in my own mind is a complete fusion of the two concepts, so that when I speak of art I mean an educational process, a process of upbringing; and when I speak of education I mean an artistic process, a process of self-creation" (Read, 1966, p.xxiii). Like Read I believe that children through art convey a presence of themselves whose output can appear astonishing because of their uninhibited consciousness, and unabashed sense of themselves. Read implies that children are quite capable of displaying the zenithal nature of their significant life as their bodies express faithfully the acting force of human actions, voice, and feelings. Children's art work expresses their deep affectivity as a harmony that is profoundly modified by constant experiences, and relationships. They greet the world with their eyes open, and in so doing are reluctant to extinguish any of the flame that is the foretaste of their powers.

Art education, Read reports, is the result of those particular gifts that facilitates our psychological need for sense, imagination, feeling, spontaneity, language, intuition, and judgement. Art lives with its senses. It excites the body whose distinctive intentional directedness Read registers as part of the child's touchstone, and base, the circle around themselves. Through art the child learns to develop confirmatory, and superior thinking, and the perception that certain things are inwardly, and outwardly right or wrong in their visual precept, and impulse. Like many, Read judged art education to be an invitation to notice the softness, and hardness about life, its dignity, and grace, and its material truth. Art possess human instinct, the creative practice, and inherent temperament to receive from the world in cooperation with it, all its beauty, happiness, cruelty, and suffering. It was art drawing attention to its human experiences that Read maintains was everything education through art needed to be. In art, the child's own experience, and understanding of themselves is being artistically transformed, the result of their dehiscence, and exact expressions of the world. Children's art work is expressive, and thoughtful rather than untidy; the heavy traffic of experience, emotion, and imagery.

Sensitivity, and independence, self-understanding and sensuality, perception and visionary powers were in the wake of Read some of the mainstays of an aesthetic education which rather than impede educational problems, can help it reconstruct and see differently what is being portrayed, indicating perhaps what can go amiss; bringing the distance between measurement and non-measurement closer together. He attributes to Stone the fact that: "Expression in the arts gives not only a natural approach to academic subjects but also a more confident basis for tackling the difficulties of social relationships" (Read, 1966, p.116). In his own way, he also mentions how: "the child, before it can manage a pencil or a brush can with immense pleasure dab its fingers into paint, and transfer the colours, with some sense of purpose, to a clean sheet of paper. Where there is a sense of purpose, there are already the rudiments of a sense of discipline,

already the co-operation of muscular reflexes” (Read, 1966, p.115). As Read indicates, Stone’s notion of discipline in art further represents the child’s absorption in their art work that beckons, relinquishes and hold onto those greater experiences that overcome obstacles.

Thwarting art, Read insists, were the innumerable and rigorous rectangles of life. How will the child grow if their education significantly lacks in its plan an indefatigable aesthetic culture? Without art experience, Read suggested no one could properly open themselves up to the world, and much of the world, and themselves would remain hidden to them. Through art, as Merleau-Ponty suggests, the child faces the world, the other, and themselves. The child demonstrated to Read why we have nothing to fear necessarily from education through art. Children’s ignorance was something extremely positive for him, expressing genuine “human sympathy” (Read, 1948, p.15). The child’s ignorance was not a burden but a sunset, a body of marching feet, a voice of reconciliation. Read, therefore advances a concept of art education that conveys a vision of art as part of the basis of all teaching.

Too much criticism of Read has resulted in remarks taken out of context that are often patently unaware of the historical characterization that must be a yardstick in understanding Read. I believe that those who have claimed that Read’s *Education Through Art* is notably idealistic, sentimental, lacking basic skills, and discipline, prejudicial, and corrupting, were, to my mind, always going to do so with some justification. Many others appear spuriously to take for granted his feel for art, without stopping to reclaim any of his thoughtful perceptions. There are at least two ways of looking at Read’s work *Education Through Art*: first the text itself is sufficiently full of examples, dated though they may be, relating to how direction, control, freedom, and development can impact at the curriculum level on an educational system. It is patiently easy to find fault with this system, but the second richer point is, which refers to his basic premise, one that I have tried to indicate, that art experience should be seen as an inspiration for life. That educationally, art can deepen our social, administrative, moral, economic, and intellectual world to nourish a more balanced sense of our well-being.

I remain in agreement with one of Read’s central claims which aim to liberate the child from adult perquisites; that adult behaviour should not dominate children’s behaviour. It must be stressed, in ways his critics have failed to take account of, that Read never held the view that the history of art, and its practice were unimportant in the teaching of art, and he never held the view either that when a child takes a stand, and reveals themselves through their art work, they are doing so independent of physical, social, and personal relationships. I see no essential contradiction between a child-centred approach that is about self-realization, and introducing to the child the history, and making of art, and its necessary relations with other human beings. A successful child centred approach through art would arise out of this whole discreet movement. What inhabits me in ‘natural’ ways as sense embodied, the vigour of my thoughts, and character, was how Read conceived of education through art. My educational upbringing does not have to interpose in a manner that defines, and controls me, but may respond rather to the security, challenge, freedom, enticement, and intertwining of the life that rushes through

me, helping me better to self-engage, execute, and question my experiences. Read recognised that art never eliminates the child, and it never covers them up. Experiences in art negate anonymity as the child is not dull, and like all children the child has distinctive features of individuality, an “accents” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p.8) whose communication through art creates meaning.

Above all, what Read was attempting to demonstrate was how art expresses the eloquence that comes from children’s feelings for life, and that through art the child’s image making has a force of its own, undeniably friendly, and perceptive. *Education Through Art* can read as an abolition of self-denial, artificialism, and repression. Because children’s art is pivotal to Read’s notion of education through art the remaining part of this paper discusses this issue.

The Art of Children

“The second, perhaps the more important condition: when we regard the child simply as a future adult, denying him his own personality, and right to exercise a logic of his own (which from the point of view of the child is truer than ours, and therefore from the very nature of things different from that of the adult), then it is impossible to speak of child art”

(Viola, 1936, p.9-10).

Children produce more than art that hangs on walls, that stands in spaces, that is read out aloud during assembly, or is part of a performance or concert piece; for they are, Read perceives, the very manifestation of art. They embody the idea of art itself, one which opens the door on a self sharpened by a life reciprocally related to their environment. One finds children speaking with an open heart whose affective terrain is aesthetic. They are capable through art experiences of feeling, and following the contours of their own strength, the kinesthetic or tactile impulse to create, observe, listen, believe, and encounter. They are everything that correct proportion is not, the illusion of a perfect geometrical model, made up of parts of average size, and shape that can be put together at will. The child’s aesthetic experience assumes the form of the child that signifies their conversations with people, and things, with words, and actions, facial expressions, bodily movement, and sound. Unconsciously, and involuntarily the child approves of many things that reflect their inner life. Unknowingly the child may risk everything in an unrestrained aesthetic experience that more vehemently tastes the world, the free play of its psychic forces to achieve something in the world, to generate itself through the world, and to feel the passion of the world. The child in art experiences stands up, and stretches itself, mirrors its being, discovers, searches, finds, touches, imagines, and thinks. Aesthetic experience is an autotelic activity for the child; one that promotes their immersion, and impressions of the world.

In, and out of school, children are not just expressing themselves; they are expressing themselves in aesthetic ways. Read notes that what constitutes the genesis of appearing in art is important because it represents something in its very act as forged, felt, given, and with “quasi-presence” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p.133). These gestures come from children who in their simplicity, stern liberty, self-presented truth, fearlessness, modesty,

distress, unruliness, fragmentation, surprise, giddiness, unexpectedness, sensitivity, frustration, triumph, and with anxious eyes, deliverance and unblemished minds. Create their art from delights that breathe silently, impatiently, abruptly, and compellingly.

Unknowingly, the child, as Read knew, feeds upon its own personality that happily dances unconsciously and forgetfully. They follow their own hearts blindly. Events, conversations, activities, and stories form the child's aesthetic experience. At this age, the body's texture is predominately aesthetic, and thus has no trouble imagining, and feeling, and of responding to sense-impressions. This aesthetic life of the child as raw, nervous, hungry, and untamed, is full of formidable insight that art exploits. Their frankness, unguardedness, impatience, and quick silvery actions are part of their spontaneity, a response to sounds, and a reflection of their harmony with existence. We are sensual, and difficult beings, and the child understands this well for in their art work, and in their bodies they give vent to these relations. Within themselves the aesthetic flows with ease. Children, through art experience bring out into the open a less restricted sense of what can give in their being, exhibiting qualities of life whose configurations express what they are caught up in as sensitive to themselves. The child's immersion in life, and their particular summation of it can elusively escape what sometimes we cannot feel-see as adults in our conventional lives, and thus fail to appreciate the child's artistic impact on the world. How a child constructs the look of the real in their art work involves the full expressiveness of their psychological capacities.

The child's aestheticism is part of their learning that caresses their life, spurs it on, flirts, examines, and explores, oozing out every drop of flourishing tremor, and seduction in a present that "still touches, and still holds the past in its hand" (Merleau-Ponty, 1973 p.151). While often unable to contain themselves, children discern through art that paper, sound, textiles, paint, rhythm, voice, pattern, and language can astonishingly prize open a vision. A line can provoke a memorable world that lifts an elevated mood, a perception, and an unfolding experience. Each colour, texture, shape, and movement stirs their emotions, and their puzzling curiosity. Each drop of paint sprinkled on their paper, each rhyme made, and each tune played, signals an adventure, a discovery of new potential meaning. By producing a linocut, by reading a story, and by playing as an arrangement the notes b, c, and d, the child learns to explore the phenomenon of identification. The beauty of existence is what art celebrates. "Art makes visible the cognitive life of the senses, and the imagination" (Peter Abbs, 2003, p.56).

The inner life of the child brings to expression in art the human traces of its own historical world, its perceptions of life as its own vision. Without the child's aesthetic needs being acknowledged little in the form of humanity would remain, becoming "nothing more than the imprint of his occupation or of his specialized knowledge" (Friedrich Schiller, 1982, p.35). Just as "my movement, and the movement of my eyes make the world vibrate" (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, p.7), so do the tensions of thought, feelings, and personality that influence my responses. "How can the bird that is born for joy sit in a cage, and sing" (William Blake, 1977, p.132), and how can they weep or play if, the free movement of the child's aesthetic powers are taken away from them?

In Read's mind, an art that is true to its own experiences is the first condition of education through art. This sets up an order for things to follow that manifest some of the capacities of the child by what are being perceived by them. Children experience their own sublimated movement as a reality that impacts on the visual rendering of their art work. An experience embedded in anti-formalistic (Read, 1967, p.24) traits of unconscious conversations, free thinking, and outlines of memories that rock the art work into shape. By working through oneself in this fashion the mindfulness-heart of the child can have a candor, fidelity, and difference that is embracing. The art work ceases to be airless, frozen into a hard contour, a room gone cold. Through a bushel of unusual light, the child transmits remembrances that greet the viewer in a new way to recall things only they can bring to light in their touch. Through open windows children can create almost anything. Read called this the "innocent eye".

Merleau-Ponty in his paper *Expression and the Child's Drawing* pontificates: "We could try not to render our relation to the world, in accordance with what it is under the gaze of an infinite intelligence. Then, at a stroke, the canonical, normal, or 'true' type of expression would then be liberated from the constraints that perspective imposes upon drawing—free, for example, to express a cube by six squares 'disjointed' and juxtaposed on the paper, free to draw in the two faces of a bobbin and join them by a sort of bent store-pipe, to represent death by transparency in its coffin or the look by two eyes separated from the head, free to have to mark the 'objective' contours of the alley or of the face and in contrast to indicate the cheeks by a circle. This is what the child does" (Merleau-Ponty, 1973, p.150). These children drawings that Merleau-Ponty saw, like Read, are positive accomplishments that remind us of "a human view of the world" (Merleau-Ponty, 1973, p.149-50).

When Merleau-Ponty refers to 'infinite intelligence', in the above quote, this is in stark contrast to the human view of the world. That a human view of the world involves my intense feelings, susceptibility, and vision, the very executions in life that can lead to an elaborate personal idiom, artistic self-knowledge, a special kind of curiosity, excitement, forthrightness, radical perspectivism, and unusual ways of presenting the visible as a human view of the world. Human views, remarks Merleau-Ponty, are kindred to the cry of hurt, struggle, crisis, reverie, variety, faith, reverberation, innocence, flesh, passion, dream, affection, intimacy, and exuberance. In the occult operations of these drawings the child inscribes the marks of their finitude, solidarity, promiscuity, and presence with our "touch, our ears, our feeling of risk of destiny or of freedom vibrate" (Merleau-Ponty, 1973, p.150). These kinds of drawings have some advantages over constructions, and information when children leave behind in such work an undisguised self, the poetic testimony of the child, receiving, giving, and recovering more of their own being in the world in contact with their own making, and view of the world. Children's drawings represent inseparably the living life of their surroundings.

Drawings by children hover in uncertainty, and for their own sake, stirred by a creative outlook whose realizing factors are in how they remember, in how they see space, and time, in the pleasure of appearance, in the autonomy of their feelings, in stimuli, and media use, and in a compressed spontaneous history that transcends the simple

manifestation of its own aesthetic appearance. It is not a paradox but children's life. "All we communicate to others is an *orientation* towards what is secret without ever being able to tell the secret objectively", wrote Gaston Bachelard (1994, p.13). R.G. Collingwood contends: "Every utterance and every gesture that each of us makes is a work of art" (Collingwood, 1958, p.285). Art experience aims at an expression of clarity involving the 'activity of speaking" (Collingwood, 1958, p.307); one which involves externalizing and expressing one's awareness and values as an integral part of what makes us human. This speaking notion represents more, I think, what Merleau-Ponty and Read saw as "our mute contact with things when they are not yet said things" (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, p.38). Music, dance, craft, sculpture, poetry, and painting, for instance, can seem particularly good at expressing mute experiences. Bad art arises, argues Collingwood, when we disown our emotions, cease to recognise them, and when we do not take seriously what we are creating. The child possesses all the counterfactual positives of this statement.

In *Education Through Art*, Read makes a number of important references to art teachers like Marion Richardson, Wilhelm Viola, John Ruskin, and Ebenezer Cook. In the final section of this paper I intend to discuss briefly one of the major pioneer art teachers in child-centred thinking: Franz Cizek. Read attributes to Cizek the legitimate stand against children being seen as only 'pupil-material' to be worked upon (1967, p.212). According to the school inspector R.R. Tomlinson, under Cizek, children learnt: "to face their own future with equanimity" (Viola,1936, p.6). There is no firm evidence that Cizek ever achieved this with his pupils, but what he did achieve deserves to be taken seriously. Cizek's method is an effective example of art teaching, and thus a worthy one to explore, but, to be sure, it is not a suitable method of teaching to be employed in all forms of art activity. Read was familiar with the example that I am now about to analyse, and understood its importance by maintaining an awareness of it in his writings.

S.B. Malvern writes of Cizek: "What he rejected was the conventional and academic notion of the teacher as the possessor of some wisdom to be transmitted to the child whose mind was, as it were, a '*tabula rasa*' awaiting the inspiration of prior and predetermined knowledge. In particular his teaching methods emphasized working from imagination and memory. By using verbal descriptions or stories, Cizek promoted the child's imagination and resourced the child's internal image" (Malvern,1995). In this example, Cizek is asking the children to think for themselves using the resources of only their own minds to imagine these stories. To produce, in effect, counter-visuals of their own making that opens up a personal perspective, one which captures a different play of surface, line, light, and or tone perhaps. Cizek is reluctant to tell the children how their drawings should look. He offers advice rather than instruction. He does not produce images so they can be copied, and he shows them no artistic examples of established artists who show how one can interpret a story in visual idolatry ways. Yet, the art studio in which he teacher's was crammed with children's drawings, and maquettes. The space around the children glitters. By handing over autonomy to the children this does not mean that Cizek wants to avoid teaching responsibly. Far from it, as now he has created different accentuating teaching problems for himself.

If the teacher withdraws from pedantry certain other things may appear inviting; a different seizing of one's own visibility that lets the inside of us correct the world. By not looking outside to analyse other art works, the children can draw more from their own involved world, their emotional understanding, and turmoil that gets them closer to what they want to depict. The "child has his own handwriting" (Viola, 1936, p.22) that comes to pass when the eye wonders, when the child feels uninhibited or when they sense a connection to something. To stimulate this handwriting Cizek mentions that the teacher must listen to the child, discuss with them their work, let them explain what they are doing, and value their own method of painting, and achievement in their art work. Cizek knows how media exploration can stimulate the child's personal handwriting, and he also knows why it is important to have on all the walls, and on display tables, children's art work. Art work on display can provoke the visible out of children; suggest how we are to see things, demonstrates our compassion, the horizons we trace in life, and shows to us what the visible can accomplish in depth. The display of children's art work can bring us closer together, keener, and alert. Not to leave it at that, Cizek insists that the children are to have regular on-going discussions about the visual world of image making, and appearances in art. It is an opportunity to hear the children speak about their experiences without trampling on them from a great height. By drawing attention to the organization, direction, intentions, recognition, composition, form, sensitivity, imagination, appreciation, and other developmental issues that arise in such discussions, the children themselves were learning how to articulate the language of art while sharpening their perceptions, emotional attitude, and expressive skills.

We know what Cizek is doing: he is calling for an experimental, and explorative approach which requires a teaching method that ignores the vagaries of certainty, and uniformity. His approach centres on a return to strangeness, errors, cracks, holes, and imperfections. The child may never see errors, cracks, holes, strangeness, and imperfections in their art work as their bodies avoid functioning like a camera. They have not been vaccinated against what not to experience. Cizek is aware that neither he nor the child can anticipate the end product, and here he appears reluctant to immunise them from the vicissitudes of inviolate action. It is an assignment that compacts and commutes tension, stretching, and release. Prepared as he is to let ignorance take effect as a possible criterion of value in the art work, the child learns to take further advantage of their susceptible minds. For Cizek, "Skill can be a hindrance to the creative in art" (Viola, 1936, p.37). With no regulated, ideal, and conformist ways of perceiving, creating through ignorance can be the prestige of a flourishing self. Children's ignorance through art can dig unusual things up; it can become the teeth that bite, it can rustle up new images, flowers and trees one has never seen before, and personify those awkward elbows, and knees that help to dignify the artwork. The slightest thing, however vague, as Cizek mentions, can make way for something magical to appear. What is hidden from view may be the very ground that needs protecting, and watering in order for the child to produce a remarkable work of child art. It is not an *ex nihilo* experience that produces this effect but serious cognitive play involvement. In an exercise like this all kinds of unusual things can happen like chance, accident, and surprise. Cizek like Collingwood thought that "expression is an activity of which there is no technique" (Collingwood, 1958, p111). Techniques, and processes are endowed with, and transformed by the

mettle of a free enquiry. Those odd conversations and oblique images that children have are the transmitting shapes of art, the anchors that, colour the world, and light it up. Cizek in his teaching creates no boundaries, and distances himself from the fanaticism or 'partiality of narrowness' (Merleau-Ponty, 1973, p.147). Emphatically, in Read and Cizek's mind, children could express themselves through art with the intent of recording the sounds that form on their lips, and shudder through their bodies; what is beyond the ordinary mark of vacant expression and inert touching.

Conclusion

As visual metaphors, one reads the children's art work that is reproduced in *Education Through Art* as affirmations of the most humble kind, perpetuating some of the clearest, and closest insights imaginable, the making of a repose, and temper whose superior distinctions are in contrast to some of the volubleness of our adult world. Read understood very clearly that children's art work defies us, provokes us, and demonstrates to us why we must always reject images of ourselves that are not real. In the "hot house of culture" (Viola, 1936, p.13), and in our debates about high, and low art in education our view of children may slip into adult perceptions. Read, as I have tried to show, warns us of the dangers of taking children's art for something it is not. Equally implied by him, is whether in our cleverness we have undermined what children can teach the adult world through their art. Their art work can in appearance explain irreplaceable things about our human condition that one would be foolhardy as an adult not to cherish. He believed as I have tried to indicate, that what education through art could deliver was an education that was tender, and anything other than this was for him not education at all.

In a world of closed minds, one can only guess why Read is no longer popular. If my analysis of him is partly credible then I think there is every reason not to cringe, and cry foul at the suggestion of education through art. Because, for all the deficiencies that *Education Through Art* has, there is also the incorrigible sense in it of the value of art education. Only an expert mind would have written: "Art leads the child out of itself".

The 'natural attitude', and 'child-centeredness' as he supposed these things to be, utilizes, and draws from an acquired social as well as individual inter-human relationship framework, an environment that is not strictly concerned with freedom, but instead is bent on recapturing more of the child's corporal existence in the world. Consequently, aesthetic culture was not some mindless idea in the hands of Read but rather something very precious in children's lives that education could ill afford to undervalue. Fifty six years after *Education Through Art* was published Maxine Greene writes: "The arts will not resolve the fearful social problems facing us today; they will not lessen the evils, and the brutalities afflicting the modern world. But they will provide a sense of alternatives to those of us who can see and hear; they will enhance the consciousness of possibility if we learn how to attend" (Greene, 2002, p.47).

References

- Abbs, P. (2003) *Against the Flow, education, the arts and postmodern culture* (London, RoutledgeFalmer).
- Bachelard, G. (1994) *The Poetics of Space*, trans. M.Jolas (Boston, Beacon Press).
- Blake, W. (1977) *The School Boy* in *William Blake, The Complete Poems*, ed. A. Ostriker (London, Penguin Books).
- Collingwood, R.G. (1958) *The Principles of Art* (Oxford, Oxford University Press).
- Freud, S. (1995) *Civilization and Its Discontents* in *The Freud Reader*, ed. P.Gay (London, Vintage).
- Greene, M. (2001) *Variations on a Blue Guitar* (New York, Columbia University).
- Malvern, S.B. (1995) *Inventing 'Child' Art: Frank Cizek and Modernism* in *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, Vol.35, No.3, July.
- Merleau-Pony, M. (1964) *The Primacy of Perception*, ed. J. Wild (Illinois, Northwestern University Press).
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1968) *The Visible and the Invisible*, ed. J. Wild (Illinois, Northwestern University).
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1973) *Expression and the Child's Drawing* in *The Prose of the World*, ed. J. Wild (Illinois, Northwestern University).
- Read, H. (1947) *The Innocent Eye* (New York, Henry Holt and Company).
- Read, H. (1948) *Culture and Education in World Order* (New York, The Museum of Modern Art).
- Read, H. (1966) *The Redemption Of The Robot, My Encounter with Education through Art* (New York, A Trident Press Book).
- Read, H. (1967) *Education Through Art* (London, Faber and Faber)
- Read, H. (1970) *Art and Society* (New York, Schocken Books).
- Ross, M (1998) *Herbert Read: Art, Education and the Means of Redemption* in *Herbert Read Reassessed*, ed. D. Goodway (Liverpool, Liverpool University Press).
- Schiller, F. (1982) *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, ed. E.M. Wilkinson and L.A. Willoughby (Oxford, Clarendon Press).
- Viola, M. (1936) *Child Art and Franz Cizek* (Vienna, Austrian Junior Red Cross).

Correspondence:

Howard Cannatella
 7720 St. Dennis Place
 Prince George
 British Columbia
 V2N 4K2
 Email: hcannatella@shaw.ca