



Planting the artistic seeds

Awardee

Ms. TSE Siu-wah, Florie
(Years of Teaching: 16 years)

School

Jockey Club Ti-I College

Teaching Targets

Secondary 1 to Secondary 7
(Visual Arts)

Beliefs of Teaching

"I am striving, by all means, to encourage students to realize and express their true selves through the art medium, while helping them to better communicate with others and contribute to the society."



Interview^{with the Teacher}

Effective visual arts teaching would depend on how well the the principles of arts teaching are carried out. Meanwhile, a dedicated art teacher like Ms. TSE, takes on a variety of roles, and uses many different instructional techniques to inspire her students, as she believes teachers can be instructors, mentors, directors, coaches, artists, performers, collaborators, facilitators, critics, or audience.

With her conversance in drawing and instruction grounded upon strong theoretical basis, Ms. TSE helps students develop knowledge and fundamental skills in visual arts while weaving in opportunities for creativity and independence. Ms. TSE is often keen to share her passionate insights about arts teaching, for she aims at helping her students realize their potentials. "I firmly believe that education weighs far more crucial than mere talents in developing an all-round and healthy self-image." She stressed.

Painting a mind

Influenced and inspired by psychologist Rudolf Arnheim, Ms. TSE came up with an experimental painting module "Non-mimetic Drawing in Self-exploration", in which students are asked to depict any lines and shapes while avoiding

narrative elements such as nameable objects and symbols to reflect their emotions. It's a process to go through non-verbal thinking, followed by discovering significant structural patterns to shape a psychological self-portrait.

"I am glad to have introduced the Non-mimetic drawing, since my mission is to rediscover and foster my students' artistic talent. With 'Non-mimetic Drawing in Self-exploration' I've been able to observe the salient features and the latent messages in students' works compared with their classmates'. In

other words, they allowed me to step in their inner worlds to understand their aptitude." Ms. TSE explained. "And it's interesting to locate the commonalities and differences in their respective forms of expression."

Undoubtedly promising results were produced in a series of regular lessons filled with passionate attempts.

Like the way they are

Ms. TSE believes in acceptance and recognition, as they often act as wonders to students "In 1999, I doubted if I should submit what I considered a 'good-enough' piece of work from one of my students for the 'China '99 Youth and Children Outstanding Visual Arts Achievement Exhibition' but fortunately I did," she recalled, "and, it turned out to be selected to represent Hong Kong."

Another case was two Physical Education students applied for studying Visual Arts in Secondary 6 — many teachers regarded it difficult to admit them. Yet, nothing is impossible. Ms. TSE acted as a facilitator to recognize their capabilities and guided them through. Consequently, they received grade 'B' and 'C' respectively in Visual Arts in the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination. "One of them was even admitted to the Fine Arts Department of The Chinese University of Hong Kong." It is, therefore, shown that Ms. TSE is aware of and responsive to many individual differences she finds among her students.



Kathleen Kei, "How Many Can Get Rid of the Mask World?", Mural, 2005



Jockey Club Ti-I College HeART Club Exhibition - Visual Arts Decoding, Non-mimetic Self-portrait Exhibition was held at Ti-I Gallery in 2005.

Art comes from our lives and thus true arts education relies on our sensitivity toward our world through different ways of observation. According to this belief, Ms. TSE encouraged her students to keep their personal visual diaries. "It's a life-orientated pedagogy as a way to integrate creation into life." Ms. TSE said.

On the other hand, Ms. TSE praises versatility in studying visual arts and by believing so, she included Hong Kong Artist and Designer presentations as part of the Art Appreciation syllabus, leading her students to conceptualize their ideas and analyze information.

Guiding through while creating

Visual Arts teachers create a safe environment where students feel free to express their thoughts and feelings and take creative risks. "We are fortunate enough to have our school's full support in mural paintings," Ms. TSE said, "we've recently done them on the hoarding

fence and pillars of the flyover in the school car park, it took us a whole semester to finish the latter but the outcome has truly been spectacular. I'm very happy about it." Thus, Ms. TSE's perseverance is seen in her search for creative opportunities for her students.

Other mural paintings Ms. TSE was invited to do together with her students include Tuen Mun Hospital and Kwan Fong Nim Chee Home for the Elderly. Hence, in a way, Ms. TSE brought together art students and others with disabilities or of old age, so they can learn from each other through these creative works.

"I often stress upon community involvement as part of the responsibilities for the students using art as a channel." Ms. TSE explained. "In 2003, Hong Kong was terrified with SARS, we participated in the Arts Unlimited - Creative Train Design Competition co-organised by RTHK and Hong Kong Arts Development Council. We painted



During the depressing year of SARS, Ms. TSE and her students participated in the Arts Unlimited - Creative Train Design Competition co-organised by the RTHK and the Hong Kong Arts Development Council.

in the compartments of the 'Creative Train' where a message of optimism was carried out." Consequently, they received a "My Favourite Train Design" award which brought them a strong sense of achievement.

Ms. TSE said she often encourages her students to undertake a positive attitude of sharing. Furthermore, by being the coordinator of the Visual Arts Department of the college, Ms. TSE has successfully helped the school in establishing its fundamental Visual Arts curriculum. Yet, she never ceased her ambition in boosting art education further. For instance, she is now putting forward several plans for development that are considered effective in bringing the school forward, including collaborating with all visual arts teachers to improve and consolidate the current visual arts assessment mechanism in the school, adding elements of Chinese Art in the curriculum and preparing for the implementation of the new Senior Secondary Visual Arts curriculum in the school

As a result, Ms. TSE's thorough vision has earned her tremendous support from the school and colleagues and thus she is commended for her constant innovation, strong passion, willingness to adapt changes, and the ability to overcome challenges and difficulties, which she considered to create few difficulties since seeing the promising results achieved by her students made her forget all the hardships.



Teacher's Sharing

There are different means and media of self-expression and communication. Written and spoken language is the commonest medium among people of the same nationalities. There are languages that are used for the same purpose by people of certain categories – the Braille, the sign language and other coded languages. There are still other universal media which all of us are capable but not necessarily aware of and may not have adequately developed ability in, namely music and visual arts.

I am glad to introduce an art form called the “Non-mimetic” drawing. It is drawing not of visible objects or common conventional symbols but just lines or shapes that come to find expression on paper with the person unthinking and acting as a medium. For example, anger is often expressed as thick, heavy, dense, dark lines that go off in all directions. In contrast, happiness is often shown by soft, light, gentle, curvy lines of light colours. According to the American philosopher, Susanne Langer, the symbolic character in pure visual forms logically imitate the tensions and subjective experience in life. It is an objectification of subjective life.

Rudolf Arnheim, an American perceptual psychologist, pointed out the abstractness of Non-mimetic drawing, which interprets directly what it portrays. Its pure shape is analogous to the qualities of feelings, without the filtering of nameable objects. And it holds true even to small children.

Art is thus a universal gift that demonstrates itself at an early age.



A series of students' interpretations of "anger" in Ms. TSE's "Non-mimetic Drawing in Self-exploration"

Our mission is to rediscover and foster this inborn talent. As a visual art educator, I am committed to promoting art education as a process of better understanding ourselves, a vehicle of expressing ourselves and a medium offering empathy, guidance and counselling to students. There are some crucial factors that are worth considering among which are: positive reinforcement, training and a friendly environment.

A wet blanket discourages a person. On the contrary acceptance or recognition sometimes by just one single word of praise can do wonders. In 1999, I intended not to submit what I considered a “second-rate” piece of work by a student for the “China '99 Youth

and Children Outstanding Visual Arts Achievement Exhibition”. Luckily, I thought better of it and this work turned out to represent Hong Kong. I still remember vividly the broad grins on my student’s face at the celebration party. It is most rewarding to see how students build up their positive self-image and become highly motivated when their efforts have been properly recognised and accepted.

Two students of the Physical Education stream applied for studying Visual Arts in Secondary 6. It was a difficult decision. However, I am a firm believer in the possibilities of art education. By accepting them into the art stream and recognising their capabilities, we developed a congenial teacher-student relationship and worked together to develop their personal styles and they were encouraged to boldly express their inner selves. Finally they obtained grade “B” and “C” respectively in Visual Arts in the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination. One of them was even admitted to the Fine Arts Department of The Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Another student, Miss A, felt bad, convinced that she was inferior to her elder sister in all respects, including appearance, academic achievement, musical and artistic talents. I expressed my deep appreciation of her talents. In the year she repeated Secondary 7, I encouraged her to reflect on her works and to give them some objective evaluation. She gradually managed to build up a positive self-image through her passion in



Ms. TSE and her students painted with the elderly at Kwan Fong Nim Chee Home for the Elderly in 2004.

striving for excellence in art. She gained confidence and attained exceptional visual arts achievements, including being selected the Student Artist of the Year by the South China Morning Post, given the award of eminence by the CO1 School of Visual Arts, and was offered a place in the Fine Arts Department of The Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Art education is based in the classroom but it should not end there. Art originates from life and true art education relies on our sensitivity towards the world through observation. One way to achieve this is to require students to keep their personal visual diary. One student, for example, kept two visual diaries, one for happiness and one for sorrows. She blended her life with art, with two becoming one. In class, I often discuss daily events including movies, advertisements, fashion design, people and community activities with my students as they are excellent learning materials in art education.

To further widen the horizons of the students, Hong Kong artist and designer presentations are included as part of the art appreciation syllabus. Trendy multi-faceted art education makes art learning versatile. Students learn how to learn during the processes of conducting interviews, analyses of information and compilation of reports. For example, an

interdisciplinary self-initiated project was implemented. Students were asked to create trendy and cross-media artwork.

Several tailor-made courses conducted by tertiary education institutes were implemented in our curriculum in the past few years. Two of them are “Conceptual Art and Media Installation” and “Creative Writing Workshop” conducted by the students of the School of Creative Media, The City University of Hong Kong.

Students love to draw in public places and the school has been providing numerous opportunities for them over the years. Mural paintings on the hoarding fence and pillars of the flyover in the school car park are recent examples. They were also invited by several organizations to do mural painting including the Regal Airport Hotel, the Tuen Mun Hospital and the Kwan Fong Nim Chee Home for the Elderly.

Last year our students were invited by the International Council of Graphic Design Association to participate in the international students exchange workshop. We were very delighted and we valued the opportunity to be the only secondary school participating in the event.

During the depressing year of SARS, we participated in the Arts Unlimited - Creative Train Design Competition co-organised by the RTHK and the Hong Kong Arts Development Council. Participating units were united in bringing a sense of hope and optimism through the use of form and colour in train

compartments of the “Creative Train”. Our students did very well and their compartment was rated as the most popular one by the commuter-viewers. Furthermore, art can create a healthy attitude of sharing. I once took my class, considered to be the less able ones, to work on a volunteer craft and design programme in a special school, Hong Kong Christian Pui Oi School. Our students taught the children there to do artwork. In spite of the limitations to their body movements, sparked by love and with the help of our students, these children exhibited great perseverance in the process and were observed to have their confidence boosted. Our students came to understand that happiness should not be taken for granted. They then began to realize that “it is more blessed to give than to receive.” It turned out to be a win-win experience.

Students are taught to be learners and in order to lead our students better we should also be avid learners ourselves. As the saying goes, “The man who graduates today and stops learning tomorrow is uneducated the day after.” We teachers have to establish ourselves to be a life-long learning model to our students. We must keep abreast of our time and the current trend in education. I would like to conclude by quoting St. Paul’s teaching, “I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead.” (Philippians 3:14)



Way of Access to Information of the above Teaching Practice

- Summary of Teaching Practice in school website: www.tic.edu.hk
- Interested teachers may contact Ms. TSE Siu-wah, Florie for further information.

Preferred Way of Dissemination

Workshop for teachers (kindergarten, primary, secondary) and school social workers.

Contact

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LEE Shek-wing, FAN Kin-hui, KWOK Yao-kein, "The Journey of Awakening", 2005

Summary of Assessment

"Non-mimetic Self-portrait Drawing" : Enhancing self-expression and cultivating holistic development

Ms. TSE's teaching has a strong theoretical basis. She has conducted an action research project on "The Role of Non-mimetic Drawing in Self-exploration" in the school, in which she guided her students to transcend the traditional constraints of using objects as the media of interpretation in drawing, and then to create non-mimetic self-portrait drawings as an avenue to explore their own inner worlds. In the lesson observed, Ms. TSE taught Secondary 5 students to create "Non-mimetic Self-portrait Drawings". Adopting a progressive pedagogical strategy, she started with the basic elements and techniques of drawing and sequentially guided her students to learn how to create self-portrait drawings. Students explored the relationship of the fluctuating human emotion with lines and colours, thereby getting to know how lines and colours displayed the unique or



Ms. TSE shares the joy and honour of Miss A. (right), her student who was selected the Student Artist of the Year by the South China Morning Post.

shared characteristics of the human "intuition" and whether such intuition had been influenced by life experience and culture. Students demonstrated a good grasp of the artistic techniques of drawing and were able to complete the learning process according to the teacher's instructions.

Ms. TSE advocates life-orientated pedagogy by helping her students to make their personal visual diaries as a way to integrate creation into life. Students are also encouraged to create and share outside the classroom. She is persevering in her search for creative opportunities for her students. Her effort and performance can be illustrated by her insistence on creating a wall painting on a column of the footbridge next to the school. The process was filled with difficulties, but she solved them and eventually accomplished the task.

Ms. TSE strongly believes in serving the community through art and dedicates herself to arranging arts service activities in the community for her students. She considers that the arts possess the charm in nurturing students and Arts Education can help raising students' self-esteem. Her performance is professional and thorough and she shows a genuine concern for her students. She is always making herself available and getting herself prepared to assist her students with what they need at all times.

The teaching experience Ms. TSE possesses and the curriculum of "Non-mimetic Self-portrait Drawing" she advocates can be adapted for use by fellow visual arts teachers.