

You may be reading this book for any of the following reasons: 1) your breast heaves with a love of art, 2) you harbor a death wish expressed in your desire to fight prejudice, 3) you are part of my circle of friends and you both know I will be hurt if you don't read it, or 4) it is required by some dust-covered professor (students of mine who choose reason four are required to take the final). In any case, you may encounter ideas that challenge comfortable assumptions. For instance, in this book I link the brutality that has haunted Western civilization—toward its women, its marginalized ethnic groups, its under-classes, and its environment—to the three great Western religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Because the largest oppressed group is women, I give them the most space. Further, while acknowledging the strengths of capitalism, I suggest that it is erroneously regarded as democracy's conjoined twin and that it can be one of the mechanisms by which this brutality is implemented. Some suggest that our salvation lies within these very entities—and they make their suggestions with varying degrees of violence. I disagree.

My argument is limited to the West, wherein lies my expertise. The same themes as they occur in the East, while equally important, are someone else's book. Challenges such as those in *Dogs Playing Cards* appropriately come from a university professor. A university's first mission is to test its students' most sacred beliefs by exposing them to a diversity of views. Any institution of higher education, so called, that arrogates a monocular view, an 'immaculate conception', of truth is an affront to the free marketplace of ideas. Universities bankrolled by religious organizations are often guilty of this. These moral gatekeepers rob their students in the worst way universities can—they not only deny their students the opportunity to test their prejudices, but they seek to entrench them. Such lack of faith speaks ill of philosophies thus sheltered. It dictates that professors who espouse views contrary to those philosophies—no matter how brilliant those scholars might be, no matter how respected—will not be heard within those institutions. Such fear of free speech emerges from the suspicion that one's philosophy cannot withstand critical examination, that followers will 'fall away', seduced by the Pied Piper of Paralogisms. The result is a body of alumni who may know the 'how' within their fields of study, but precious little 'why'. They are the worse for it.

While the university itself must strive to be ideology-free, professors within the university should openly express their biases—so long as their students feel safe to rebut them. If the university has done its job, it has obtained a thoughtful faculty who represent an ideological cross section. Such a faculty will expose students to a variety of views. When the students then construct their own ideologies, those ideologies will be informed.

In this course oppression is gauged from an art historical database and viewed through the lens of art education. Art education encompasses both the visual and verbal records of Western civilization from prehistory to this afternoon. Humans made art for tens of thousands of years before they wrote and, following the advent of writing, the visual image continued to function as a societal mirror revealing truths that defy the printed word. At the same time, the power of the printed word is self-evident. The lens of art education covers both.

The culturally created line separating art from art education meanders at will across the cultural landscape. Where the art education record is scant (this is particularly true of prehistory), I examine oppression as it appears in the history of visual art *per se*. Often I discuss oppression in its many guises without mentioning art or art education directly. The imposed messiness of this approach reflects the nature of our topic—art education has no borders. My research starts and ends with art education but I found that, to make my inquiry meaningful, it was necessary to paint an extensive backdrop. By thus contextualizing art education, instead of studying it in a cultural vacuum, we can understand what it means. One might say the pieces of this story form a sprawling cultural quilt that is sewn with the thread of art education.

In recent years a heartening number of works have been published which analyze the contributions of oppressed groups to the West's visual art heritage. This is not the case in art education (under which label I include training programs for adults as well as programs for students in the schools). We are only now beginning to see literature—still in articles more than books—in which art education's potential as a cultural force in general is linked with the dismantling of oppression in particular. The two most important periods of the human story to study, if one wishes to remediate societal oppression, are the dawn of history and the present. It is at the dawn of history that oppression began, and its undergirding has changed remarkably little from then to now. Our task is the perennial one—to dismantle this undergirding as it exists in our time. Consequently, most of this book is devoted to the present.

If one chooses to remediate oppression through art education, one must redefine art education. Immured for too long in a cultural closet, art education must break free of the bonds of banality. Until it defines itself as more than a vehicle for aesthetic experience, or for a Westernized study of disciplines, in the closet is where it belongs. Art education programs must resonate to the lived experiences of *all* students by providing them a visual language through which they can express themselves with images that demand rather than request society's attention. If our artists and teachers join to change the world, the world will change.

The institutionalizing of oppression occurs mainly along the following dimensions: gender, class, race, and religion. Our prejudices run deep. We pay lip service to theories of equality and democracy, but when we apply them uncompromisingly, we are considered radical. Note the American Civil Liberties Union's unpopularity, to give an example. One anticipates the efforts of critics to neutralize this book by categorizing me as, oh, an agnostic, anti-family-values, morally bankrupt, bleeding-heart-liberal, sexually obsessed, book-reading, devil-worshipping, nigger-loving, violence-hating, pro-thought, pro-gay, anti-lynching, femi-nazi, sickie perv-boy. This description is awfully close, but I also am a White, middle-class, middle-aged, middle-income male of European ethnicity and Protestant background—a member of today's least fashionable, not to mention most boring demographic group. I am not even gay, although I have often wished I were so at least I would be *something*.

During the writing of *Dogs Playing Cards*, I was asked if such a book should be written by a White male. After all, Giroux (1988) cautions, "When freedom is defined by the privileged, the oppressed are victimized not only by labor exploitation, racism, and patriarchy, but by liberal arrogance." Lather (1991) adds, ". . . too often [liberatory] pedagogies fail to probe the degree to which 'empowerment' becomes something done 'by' liberated pedagogues 'to' or 'for' the as-yet-unliberated, the 'other.'"

My readers' views on this question will be the most valid, but mine begins with the observation that I do not anoint myself a spokescreature for women or people of Color. Then what business have I writing this book? Kincheloe (1991) points out that we walk a tightrope between declaring our analyses and refraining from speaking for the oppressed. Is it enough to be aware of what Foucault labels the indignity of speaking for the oppressed? First, I maintain that demonizing the heretofore-deified White male is not the answer; it tilts the ship of culture too far the other way. Lather continues, ". . . to write 'postmodern' is to write paradoxically aware of one's complicity in that which one critiques. . . . [J]ust getting on with it may be the most radical action one can make." I observe that we all have the same three choices. We can speak favorably of oppression. We can be silent, which in a culture of prejudice is a vote for prejudice. Or we can speak out against oppression. I opt to speak out. My thesis is that the oppression of one group by another is bad for both. I am tired not only of the oppression to which women are subjected; I am tired of my fellow men dropping dead eight years earlier than women from the stress of oppressing them.

The need for this book came to me one day when I was presenting a paper to an ethnically mixed audience of about 150 classroom teachers (three of whom were men). I discussed themes of oppression, empowerment, and emancipation. The handful who walked out when I linked oppression to

religion indicated that I was striking a nerve. More importantly I was struck in mid-presentation by the awareness that some of my audience were hearing these ideas for the first time. Their responses when I finished confirmed this. A number of Latin and African American women, one White woman, one woman who identified herself as Native American, and one of the three men approached the podium to thank me. As I later assembled the content of this book, testing and retesting my motives, including this thought and rejecting that one, I realized that I was writing to this audience. I realized that I, a White male, could contribute to the dialectics of emancipation.

I choose this subjective voice because I believe the objective voice is a Rationalist myth. This myth, heralded for so long as the only appropriate academic voice, is no voice at all. It ill serves the radical emancipatory axis. The objective voice is simply another means by which H. L. Mencken's "booboisie" have made us shut up. I do not wish to assume the role of spokesperson for demographic groups, either marginalized or mainstream, but rather to contribute to the emancipation of us all.

Riding shotgun with my anger, careening on the bouncing buckboard of civilization, is my hope. If hominids emerged three million years ago, and fully developed humans 100,000 years ago, then civilization, at only 6000 years old, is an infant. One could argue that we have done well in such short time. So my anger is contextualized to the present. We're going to make it.