

ART EDUCATION IN THE AGE OF SCREENS: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

by:

RUTH ANN M. VERDERA

Mariveles National High School- Cabcaben

In a world with technology at the forefront of everything, technology has transformed just about everything we do - including art education. For kids that have grown up with a screen in front of their noses, how we teach art needs to change to stay engaging, relevant and insightful. However, while traditional art forms (i.e., painting, drawing, sculpture) are still relevant and valued, educators are now caught in a dilemma trying to blend the skill of "timeless" art making with the ever-changing subjectivity and contemporary digital environment. The challenge for students is that they spend so much time passively engaging with screens, often in a less than healthy capacity. Watching and staring at screens does not leave much opportunity for genuine and active creative expression.

There are many thousands of kids able to scroll through a social media feed that changes every second of the day, but likely they do not have a mere couple of minutes to hypothetically smear paint on themselves, or create something exploratory out of clay! Artists are required to excite students to want to create with their hands again and hopefully motivate them to disengage from their electronic gadget for some time and enjoy the process of creating something in the tactile world.

On the other side of the argument, technology can provide students with exciting new ways to learn, grow and develop within and across their art lessons. Digital drawing tablets and image-engineering applications, online galleries, etc., provide students with a new way of developing new skills, limitless access to an audience and limitless opportunities to develop creative expression. And not to cave preference to one approach,

but as I mentioned earlier, teachers could give assignments that ask students to embrace the medium of digital painting, 3D animation or multimedia art - while preserving certain aspects of conventional art creation methods. . Creating opportunities to combine traditional art-making qualities with technology can provide students with meaningful experiences to use their skills in a future creative career, and often in careers that require knowledge of technology.

For this to succeed, educators need to continually learn as well. They need opportunities to become comfortable with new tech and to find balance between screen-based projects and tangible art-making practices. Getting together with other educators and artists will inspire new possibilities for virtual exhibits, collaborative art making, and creative experiences beyond the classroom.

Ultimately, art education in this moment must merge tradition and innovation. Through combining physical and digital modes of artistic practice, educators are helping students evolve into imaginative, flexible, and discerning makers - able to realize their ideas with thoughtful aesthetic in a variety of mediums regardless of their surface, whether that be a piece of paper, canvas, or screen.

References:

Hetland, L., Winner, E., Veenema, S., & Sheridan, K. (2013). Studio Thinking 2: The Real Benefits of Visual Arts Education. Teachers College Press.