

# The Aesthetics between Us: Lifelong Learning from Learning to Do

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## **Abstract**

*In the contemporary world, art education provides the possibilities for the development of pupils' creativity, critical thinking, and critical attitude towards art and culture. However, "the disenchantment of the world" makes "aesthetics" a need to be continuously defined in the present age. The narrow and one-sided nature of traditional aesthetics has become increasingly apparent, and it is difficult for the ideals of beauty and art to provide reliable support for the development of aesthetics. In the late 1980s, perceptual knowledge became a frequently discussed and meaningful keyword in aesthetics research and education.*

*Creativity comes from perceptual knowledge. Creativity is based on popular art training and aesthetic education. Creative thinking should be achieved through the process of diversification to form an area with multi-faceted and abstract structure. Because art has an essential quality (Timbre), I proposed a visual art and aesthetics project based on the implementation of artistic objectives in the teaching of visual arts and the aesthetic encounter of politics, society, history, culture and the environment. The experimental programme was performed at National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts.*

*The results of the research confirmed that implementation of aesthetic perception education can have a positive impact on students' views of art and on the overall popularity of related learning. Examples of education in aesthetic experience and aesthetic perception can be used as guidelines for the implementation of art and multicultural education. Well-rounded and open-minded education (from politics, society, history, culture and the environment, etc.) has become the door to the continuous development of intelligence and thinking.*

**Key words:** *finding meaning; new sensibility; practice; really seeing; thinking in images.*

## Introduction

In the current era, the narrow and one-sided nature of traditional aesthetics is increasingly obvious, and the ideal of aesthetic art can hardly provide reliable support for the further development of aesthetics. The need to continuously define and confirm aesthetics leads to two consequences in the current era. The first is global aesthetic generalization. Aesthetics is not only about beauty and art but also about a wide range of cultural aspects, including history, society, life, existence, experience, language, transcendence, and freedom. Traditional aesthetics only propagates beauty and ignores other aesthetic values. In other words, this omits that aesthetics is itself a discovery rather than an attribute. At the moment of modification, this defect becomes painfully clear. This trend affects both traditional and contemporary aesthetics. Welsch (1997) analyzed, although traditional aesthetics has endowed the world with beautiful artifacts that engender spiritual loftiness and contemplation, it ends up with pure pleasure and love, leading to indifference and disgust. This is because the old outline of traditional aesthetics is not accurate enough or because the outline itself contains some defects. Therefore, such defects have been revealed by critics (pp. 81-88).

The second consequence, the core of aesthetics, is art. From the traditional perspective, art is considered the core of aesthetics; but feeling, perception, and sense are ignored, so that attention is paid only to art and its conceptual discussion. Most people still believe that aesthetics must be art. Just as Wittgenstein said, we cannot surpass art because it is part of our language, and language seems to be constantly copying it to us (Gao et al., 2019:36). In addition, modern aesthetics has a tendency to belittle the beauty of nature. Adorno indicated that “since F.W.J. Schelling, aesthetics almost only cares about works of art, interrupting the systematic study of natural beauty. Why is natural beauty removed from the aesthetic agenda? The reason is not, as Hegel asked us to believe, what natural beauty has been sublated in a higher field. On the contrary, the concept of natural beauty is completely suppressed” (Wang, 1998, p.109).. The reason for which proponents of modern aesthetics belittle the beauty of nature is that, in their view, the aesthetic value of nature is lower than that of art. This is most obvious in Hegel’s argument. He clearly indicated that only artistic beauty can meet the ideal of beauty, whereas natural beauty is only its “Appendage”. The reason for this is that “artistic beauty is the beauty generated and regenerated by the soul. The beauty of art is much higher than that of nature and its phenomena” (Wang, 1998, p.125). “The mainstream of contemporary aesthetics remains the same, although the concept of contemporary art itself has become uncertain, and the academic classification of disciplines still tends to strictly limit aesthetics to art” (Lu & Jhang, 2006, p.87).

Aesthetics has developed for more than 200 years, starting from Baumgarten’s aesthetic discipline to Kant, Schelling, Hegel, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and other philosophers. All of their concepts of aesthetics are closely related to the history of aesthetic objects in terms of the thinking formed by the perceptual topic, heated debate of art, and the

continuation of experience. However, some scholars still criticize traditional aesthetics on the contempt of sensibility, calling for aesthetics to be beyond the theoretical field of art philosophy. After the author reviewed the relevant works, studies, and papers on German aesthetics in the late 1980s, the connotation of aesthetics was found to have changed in the process of discussion. Many researchers have begun to look beyond the field of beauty and art and try to explore the dynamic role of sensibility in cognitive activities, as presented in Table 1 (Wang, 2010, pp.56-60). Therefore, whether it is an aesthetic reconstruction, aesthetic return, aesthetic turn, or aesthetic Renaissance, “perceptual knowledge” has become an epoch-making term in contemporary German aesthetic research.

The present study explores issues related to the generalization of aesthetics across the world (global aesthetics) and the concept of art as the core of aesthetics, both of which lead to problems in contemporary visual art education. The experiment was conducted at the National Taiwan Art Museum in Taiwan. In 1977, the National Association for Art Education (NAEA) released a powerful statement entitled “what we believe in and why we believe in it”, providing convincing reasons to support the acceptance of art education, including the source of aesthetic experience, the source of human understanding, the means of cultivating creative and flexible thinking, and the means of helping students understand and appreciate art. The importance of visual art is obvious. The new role that visual art education should play in contemporary society is educating people in the use of perceptual thinking and interpretation of visual art to allow them to understand it correctly, analyze its potential value judgment and consciousness pattern, and then make decisions. Therefore, the author thinks that “the distance between us and beauty” advocate returning the definition of aesthetics to its original “Perceptual Science,” which is the same as perceptual knowledge. According to this view, contemporary visual art education should be “lifelong learning from learning and doing”.

Table 1  
*The Perceptual Turn of Contemporary German Aesthetics*

Author	Argument	Title of the book	years
Reclam-Verlag	Aesthetics in the traditional sense should take the posture of destruction. Aesthetic vision should not be confined to the narrow field of art theory, but should turn to “today’s feeling”. In other words, aesthetics should be the domain of perceptual science.	Sensibility and criticism of traditional aesthetics: today’s perception or another aesthetic perspective	1990
Heinz Pätzold	Aesthetics is no longer associated with the study of the concept of beauty, but has become a part of perceptual experience. Moreover, the characteristics of perceptual knowledge should be explored from the perspective of the inseparability of mind and body.	Contemporary aesthetics: sensibility and reflection of contemporary conceptual art.	1990

Author	Argument	Title of the book	years
Heinz Bohrer	Perceptual activities, rather than art, stand at the center of aesthetic thinking.	On the limitation of aesthetic criticism.	1993
Martin Seel	The field of aesthetics should be broader than pure art. To expand the domain of aesthetics, only a broad definition far beyond the philosophy of art can expand the prospect of the development of aesthetics.	Rethinking of aesthetic thinking.	1993
Reinold Schmicker	When interacting with objects or concepts in our daily life, if we change our perspective and discard the elements that are habitual, useful, and certain, then we can begin to grasp the true meaning of beauty. This shows that “all objects, including nature, body, and daily life, can more or less enter the realm of beauty”, and this definition of “beauty” is closely linked with fresh and present perceptual experience.	What is art?	2001
Joachim Küpper and Christoph Menke	Despite the differences in the current definitions of “aesthetics”, they are all fundamentally related to people’s experience.	Dimensions of aesthetic experience	2003
Philipp Soldt	“Philosophy of art” is a concept of alienation. Traditional aesthetics provides many artistic concepts, but it does not teach people how to feel and experience. The practice of only analyzing concepts, manufacturing systems, and separating aesthetics from perceptual practice is no longer in line with the requirements of the times and should be resolutely abandoned.	Aesthetic experience: a new method of psychoanalysis art process.	2007

Source: Wáng J. F.(2010). *Aesthetics going home -- a study of Wolfgang Welch's aesthetic theory* (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis). Shandong University, Shandong, China. (pp. 56-60).

## Aesthetics is Perceptual Recognition

The term “aesthetics” is derived from the Greek *αισθητικός*, which is interpreted as “sense and emotion”. In 1750, the German philosopher Baumgarten officially established the concept of aesthetics as an independent discipline and designated it as the specialized study of beauty and sublimity. The object of study was not only art but also natural things. Baumgarten’s aesthetic theory analyzes aesthetic ability and artistic creativity from the perspective of philosophy. When he uses the term “aesthetician”, he refers more to artistic creators and aesthetic appreciators; Baumgarten also refers to the ability to analyze and condition preparation from the perspective of creative practice and appreciation practice. Aesthetics is a type of sensory perception that is essentially and uniquely embodied—the focus is on perception, including our perceptive ability, perception practice, and perception experience.

Liú (2016) analyzed aesthetics and artistic creation based on an epistemological system and divided the continuity principle of cognition into four levels. The fourth

level is the lowest level is fuzzy, ambiguous knowledge, or dreamlike consciousness. The third level is the recognition of a phenomenon, which is to know its “image” but not its “meaning”—that is, perceptual knowledge. The second level is clear, ambiguous, or dreamlike consciousness; a clear understanding achieves the “definition” of the object, realizes the generality of things, and understanding. The highest level is a combination of rational and intuitive knowledge, based on which one can understand the characteristics, elements, and meaning of a phenomenon—that is, achieve a perfect understanding (p.40). Therefore, Baumgarten’s concept of aesthetic or perceptual truth based on epistemology was foundational. In addition, regarding perceptual-cognitive ability, LIóu (2016) also mentioned that perceptual knowledge is based on artistic creation and appreciation, which summarizes the regularity of art aesthetics and entails appreciation at the level of experience as well as the ability to analyze; thus, Baumgarten’s aesthetics has a strong rhetorical significance (p.40).

In empirical psychology, Baumgarten distinguished low and high cognitive ability. Low-level cognitive ability provides perception, whereas high-level cognitive ability is equivalent to human cognition. LIóu (2016) found that low-level cognitive ability must be studied because it provides perception and representation. Although low-level cognitive ability may be vague and confusing, it can realize comprehensive perception, which can be vivid, clear, and meaningful—this is perfect status. Because low-level cognitive ability yields perfect perfection because of four main types of perception: perception, and imagination (p.41).

During artistic appreciation and improvements in the aesthetic ability of artistic creation; sensibility, intellectuality, rationality, quasirationality, and low- and high-level cognitive abilities all work together in experience and cognition. Baumgarten also indicated that aesthetics is the application of low-level cognitive ability and quasirationality; of course, it also includes the application of meditation and aesthetic feeling. In other words, aesthetics is the study of the various cognitive abilities used in artistic creation and appreciation. In the 1750s, Baumgarten clarified that aesthetics was “a theory of free art, a low-level epistemology, the art of beautiful thinking and the art of rational thinking is the science of perceptual knowledge” and “a common theoretical examination of things that have been thought in the way of beauty” (Jiǎn & Wang, 1987, pp.13-15; LIóu, 2016, p.41). Therefore, the object of aesthetics is free art, its nature is the science of perceptual knowledge, and its purpose is to study the universals that have been thought in the way of beauty. In fact, it is the part of empirical psychology related to artistic creation and aesthetics, and it is the analysis of aesthetic and artistic creation ability and the study of the general state of aesthetic activities (Liu, 2016, p.43).

Creation requires the foundation of cognitive ability. Therefore, Baumgarten considered that for artistic creation, an artist should have the following basic high- and low-level cognitive abilities:

- 1 keen sensibility, which enables not only the appreciation of the external beauty of objects but also the sensory observation of the functions of and changes in the internal spiritual factors of the objects;
- 2 imagination;
- 3 appreciation ability;
- 4 memory;
- 5 creative talent, which is the ability to not only arrange and edit the imaginable images but also coordinate with other abilities;
- 6 elegant taste, which, together with eyesight, constitutes low-level judgment of perception, imagination, and artistic creation;
- 7 foresight, which is useful to deal with difficulties in the vividness and flexibility of cognition;
- 8 the ability to express an appearance or convey the perception of beauty; and the ability to express emotions (Jian et al., 1987, pp.18-25; Llou, 2016, p.44).

However, the understanding of perceptual ability can be trained through education, practice, and theoretical study. Creation and appreciation with the knowledge of art theory are far better than natural talent or ability.

Because of the intervention of artistic knowledge and theory, Baumgarten also points out that appreciation and artistic creation also include high-level awareness. That is:(1) As long as knowledge and reason are often inspired by the domination of the mind, low-level awareness is ability.(2) As long as these abilities work together and have the right proportion with beauty, they can only be achieved through the use of intellectuality and rationality.(3) As long as the great vitality of thinking to the spirit is similar to the ideal, it will inevitably lead to the beauty of reason, and lead to the connection between the extension of clear understanding (Jian et al., 1987, p.26; Llou, 2016, p.44). Therefore, perceptual knowledge has rich connotation, affirming the intellectual factors involved in it, and the distance between sensibility and spirit is narrowed, affirming the relationship between artistic creation, perceptual ability, and even the spirituality of artistic creation behavior. Therefore, Baumgarten introduced a principle that was universally accepted for the subsequent 200 years. Jiǎn et al. (1987) and Llou's (2016) studies found the following:

For those who want to think in a beautiful way, naturally developed lower-level cognitive abilities are more important. Higher-level abilities can not only coexist with the lower-level abilities but are also necessary prerequisites for them. Therefore, believing that the beauty of spirit is bound to conflict with the innate strict rational knowledge and the natural ability to deduce logic. (p.26; p.44)

Considering the sensibility of an event, its actor can only be the perceptual, laborious, and superficial soul and body, and its place of occurrence can only be the world of soul and body. Only when perceptual science returns to the study of the human soul and body, namely the mind and body, can perceptual construction return to its origin.

The superficial understandings of sensibility and its negation in classical times was obviously based on the lack of in-depth analysis and the lack of a definition of sensibility. From the perspective of perceptual practice, Baumgarten's method is more effective in experience and can also explain daily perceptual activities, providing a more accurate and deeper perceptual understanding for the 21st century.

## **Art from the Perspective of Semiotics**

A history not merely of meanings, but of ceaseless conflict between the images as it seeks fullness and autonomy, and the renunciatory impulse which refuses the image of primal plenitude, and seeks its conversion from an end to a means, a means to meaning (Bryson, 1981, p.xvi). In other words, when we appreciate a work of art, what we see is not only history but, through symbols, we see the deeper meaning behind history. The "semiotic transformation" of contemporary culture indicates that symbols are no longer tools or carriers to express an external reality or internal emotion, but rather a way of life of contemporary people—the so-called visual or symbolic existence. With the production of mass media, the symbolic images have spread all over the fields of daily life. That is, in the era of the "symbolic revolution", most of the images are scattered in the magazine's photography, billboards, films, television, and other mass production and reproduction technologies, including personal holiday photos and more common digital cameras. What's more important is that traditional works of art have been copied, adapted and even parodied by the emerging symbolic technology; it has become a "colonial" product of mass media. In a sense, we are now "living in a culture dominated by symbols, visual images, facial makeup, hallucinations, copying, imitation and fantasy".

Semiotics is the science of signs, whether the signs are words or images, in daily life or in visual or artistic world. In a broad sense, semiotics focuses on everything that is regarded as a sign. The forms of symbols include words, images, sounds, postures, and objects. Contemporary semioticians study signs not in isolation, but as part of semiotic 'sign systems' (such as a medium or genre). They study how meanings are made: as such, being concerned not only with communication but also with the construction and maintenance of reality (Chandler, 2002; p.2; Liu, 2006, p.40). As Semali (2002) states, "a human being is by nature a sign-manipulator" (p.7). Therefore, all signs we can see can be decoded and analyzed by semiotics. Smith-Shank (2004) points out that "semiotics is a broad approach to understanding the nature of meaning, cognition, culture, behavior, and life itself" ((Smith-Shank, 2004, p.vii). In addition, semiotics "provide us with a deeper understanding and appreciation of the complexity of human communication with signs, symbols, and images" (Semali, 2002, p.2). In other words, semiotics provides us a new way to know the world from different perspectives. As Chandler (2002) states, semiotics can also help to denaturalize theoretical assumptions in academia just as in everyday life; it can thus raise new theoretical issues (Chandler, 2002, p.214). Semiotics examines the sign systems "as vehicles of meaning in a culture

and looks at how such sign systems are taught to children and adolescents and how they capture societal values about human relationships, myths, belief system, and established norms” (Semali, 2002, p.3). Sturken and Cartwright (2004) also state, “we live in a world of signs, and it is the labor of our interpretation that makes meaning of those signs [...] we use semiotics all the time without labeling it as such or recognizing our interpretative acts” (Sturken & Cartwright, 2004, p.29). To put it another way, semiotics is culturally bound because the meanings of images differ between cultures (Han, 2011, p.55).

Additionally, Danesi (2004) argued that human intellectual and social life is based on the production, use, and exchange of signs. When we gesture, talk, write, read, watch a TV program, listen to music, look at a painting, we are engaged in using and interpreting signs. Human life is characterized by a “perfusion of signs.” The primary task of semiotics is to identify, document, and classify the main types of signs and how they are used in representational activities. Since they vary from culture to culture, signs constitute mental templates that invariably condition the worldview people come to have. Danesi also argued (p.23) that semiotics is the study of the world of reappearance and the creation of information about this world. Anything we do or or anything that carries information is a sign (For example writing or talking). Text, posture, objects, clothing, and traditional art, etc.). Anyone who can represent things can be called a symbol, and anything can be a symbol. In fact, most things are already symbols most of the time. Symbols are not stagnant, and the meaning we assign to them changes with a change in the context or in our understanding (Liu, 2006, p.40). Therefore, symbols in semiotic research include a variety of cultural expressions, they can represent or reproduce things and deliver messages, and its meaning will vary with subjective and objective factors. In terms of objective factors, culture and its related concepts play an important role in the meaning given to symbols. According to Chanda (2004) and Liu (2006), the relationship between “cultural concept” and “semiology” is direct. Because the “cultural concept” is communicated through a coding system, the code system relies on discursive signs, and semiotics deals with the nature of symbols. The formation of the concept of “symbol” or “sign elements” constituting the semiotic system (for example the symbol of iconography) is closely related to the social culture on which it is based (p.86-93; p.40).

Additionally, semiotics can provide a reference framework for the interpretation and interpretation of the symbol system and its cultural concept in fine art or visual culture. Bryson (1981) believes that the meaning of art exists in a constantly changing narrative space (Bryson, 1981, p.xvi). Bryson’s view of visual semiotics regards painting as a system of symbols (Bryson, 1991, pp. 61-73). Therefore, through the materiality of the image-symbol, we can construct a context of discussion from it. The problem of semiotics is that in the scope of works that regard artistic works as symbols, their structure is actually not single, but repetitive. Symbols are obviously repetitive, and

they enter a multi-faceted context (Yao, 2007, p.51). In other words, when the viewer is faced with a work of art, the signifier of visual symbols is no longer corresponding to the signified of a power relationship. The construction right of the context of text viewing is decentralized to the viewer/reader, and the work has its open interpretation space to supply the output of meaning (Yao, 2007, p.51). According to Norman Bryson (2004), adjusted and applied semiotics to art history and semiotics in the history of art explore the basic semiosis or various types of communication. That is, to teach art history or art education through one of the following concepts (Bryson, 2004, acc. to Liu, 2006):

- o The concepts of “signifier” (or sign), and “signified” of the Saussure School;
- 1 Bryson’s so-called “divergent images” for narrating a story and “graphic images,” which are not determined by language;
- 2 Peirce’s “iconic images” (i.e., objects), “indexed images” (i.e., the artist’s style), and “Symbolic images” (i.e., symbols that represent objects and are related to language through tradition). (pp.86-93; p.40)

In the approach of semiotics, art historians pay attention to the patterns of symbols or signs used to communicate meaning, what images tell us, and how signs and signs may change with the times. The exploration of symbolic mode requires the study of a series of related images, which may have the same or similar signs. Therefore, semiotics is diachronic in nature because it emphasizes the diachronic change of “symbol” and “meaning” (Liu, 2006, p.40).

According to the aforementioned, semiotics can help us to understand the world. How to view art from the perspective of Semiotics? This research is going to apply Saussure, Peirce and Barthes’ symbol theories to visual culture, arts, and education to practice. Examining the visual arts and environment from a semiotic point of view helps people to form a deeper understanding of their own culture.

### ***Saussurean model***

Semiotics is concerned with not only the function of signs but also the production of codes. Saussure (1983) state that “a linguistic sign is not a link between a thing and a name, but between a concept (signified) and a sound pattern (signifier)... A sound pattern is the hearer’s psychological impression of a sound, as given to him by the evidence of his senses” (p.66). For Saussure, a sign must have both a signifier (sound pattern) and a signified (concept); we cannot have a totally meaningless signifier or a completely formless signified. However, today, in the Saussurean model, the signifier not only stands for the sound pattern but is commonly interpreted as the material from the sign that can be seen, heard, touched, smelled or tasted (Morgan & Welton, 1992, p.95). As Moriarty (2005) pointed out, “the semiotician unpacks the meaning by looking not only at the relationship of the signs to their signifieds but also at the relationship among the sign in a complex message” (Moriarty, 2005, p.245). Sebeok (2001) states that “Saussure considered the connection between the signifier and the

signified an arbitrary one that human beings and/or societies have established at will” (p.6). In other words, signs carry conventional meanings, and the relationships between the meaning and signs are not fixed, but are arbitrary and relative.

Mirzoeff (1999) brought “signified” and “signifier” into the realm of visual culture. He states: “semiotics... divides the sign into two halves, the signifier—that which is seen—and the signified—that which is meant... Semiotics gained its strength from its denial of any necessary or causal relationship between the two halves of the sign” (p. 13). In visual culture, what can be seen (such as images, paintings, sculptures, photographs, even typography, etc.) are signifiers; and what is not seen (such as viewers’ thoughts or reflections) are signified. For example, the series of African carvings of Chibinda Ilunga, such as a headdress is the symbol of a chieftain. When mixed with peripheral elements such as rifle or horn, staff, and belt, it invokes the memory of the details of the story—how to narrate it, and why Chibinda Ilunga can become a civilized hero respected by the Chokwe tribe. Signifiers in visual culture include not only the written words or sounds of the linguistic realm but also the larger realm of all visual environments. That is as Semali (2002) proposes “all events in human experience are texts waiting to be read” (p.13).

### ***Peirce model***

Peirce categorizes signifiers into three groups: symbol, icon, and index. Peirce and Saussure use the term “symbol” differently and avoided referring to linguistic signs as symbols. Saussure insists that signs are never wholly arbitrary or empty configurations; signs show the natural connection between the signs and meanings ((Han, 2011, p.57). For Peirce (1932), a symbol is “a sign which refers to the object that it denotes by virtue of law, usually an association of general ideas, which operates to cause the symbol to be interpreted as referring to that object” (p.276). In other words, the symbol is a kind of image, which has no direct relationship with the meaning represented by its object, but has a basic and original meaning related to its meaning. We usually interpret symbolic signs through certain norms or a habit, that is to say, symbols represent the basic and original meanings of the objects they indicate. Moreover, “an icon is a sign that is made to resemble, simulate, or reproduce its referent in some way” (Sebeok, 2001, p.10). Moreover, Kindler and Darras (1998) also state that “references to various types of icons in the description of manifestations of pictorial behaviors are a direct result of our conceptualization of the process of the development of pictorial imagery in semiotic terms” (p.148). In short, icons are regional and conventional; they are images that physically resemble or imitate their meaning. Additionally, “an index is a sign that refers to something or someone in terms of its existence of location in time or space, or in relation to something or someone else” (Sebeok, 2001, p.10). Therefore, an index is an image that possesses a direct causative connection to its meaning and gives direct attention to its object by blind compulsion. An index is a more globally conventional type of sign.

## **Barthes model**

Barthes's original semiotic concepts were "essentially canonized and have become part of the movement to analyse many different forms of visual expression" (Burnett, 2002, p.150). The terms that Barthes raised—denotation, connotation, and metaphor—have been broadly used in semiotic, visual culture, and visual communication fields. Denotation is the "direct, specific, or literal meaning we get from a sign (Moriarty, 2005, p.231). In short, it describes the literal meaning of a sign. Connotations are meanings that are "evoked by the object, that is, what it symbolizes on a subjective level" (Moriarty, 2005, p.231). In other words, connotation refers to the social-cultural and personal affiliation of a sign. As Frascara (2004) states, "the connoted message is more culture-dependent, and it is built as a combination of the designer's concept and the target public's experience (p.69). The connotation of signs helps us to understand the meaning behind the images better. Most of the time we notice the denotation of an image, but we may never think about the connotation of the image. If we do not think about the connotation of an image, we will not understand the hidden meaning of the image. "Connotation produces the illusion of denotation, the illusion of the medium as transparent and of the signifier and the signified as being identical" (Chandler, 2004, p.141).

"In semiotic terms, a metaphor involves one signified acting as a signifier referring to a different signified" (Chandler, 2004, p.127). Metaphor is initially unconventional because it apparently disregards "literal" or denotative resemblance. A metaphor is "a type of sign that does not essentially represent something else, but which is used to represent a different meaning" (Chandler, 2004, p.145). Metaphors may vary from different cultures; however, metaphors are not arbitrary, being derived initially from our physical, social, and cultural experience. As Chandler states, "all language is a metaphor [and] even that 'reality' is purely a producer of metaphors" (Chandler, 2004, p.126).

All meanings are relational, and this relation exists not only in a certain image but also in relation with other images, broader dominating codes, reference systems, culture, and mythology. The 'sign' is the most fundamental unit of semiology. The sign is a unit of meaning, and semiologists argue that anything which has meaning – an advert, a painting, a conversation, a poem - can be understood in terms of its signs and the work they do. Signs make meaning in complex ways, and much of the technical vocabulary of semiology describes the precise ways in which signs make sense (Rose, 2001, p.74). In semiology, there is no stable point that can provide an entrance into the meaning-making process; all meanings are relational not only within the image but also in relation to other images and to broader dominant codes, referent systems, and mythologies (Rose, 2001, p.91). Therefore, in the teaching of visual art education, Rose (2001) believes that the steps of semiotic analysis of images can be followed:

- 1 decide what the signs are;
- 2 decide what they signify 'in themselves';
- 3 think about how they relate to other signs both within the image (about the icon, index, symbol, anchorage, relay-function, connotative, metonymic and synecdochal,

- etc. (Rose, 2001:78-83), and making a diagram of the movement of signifieds between the signifiers of an image may also help) and in other images;
- 4 then explore their connections (and the connections of the connections) to wider systems of meaning, from codes to dominant codes, referent systems or mythologies;
  - 5 and then return to the signs via their codes to explore the precise articulation of ideology and mythology (Rose, 2001, pp.91-92).

## **The Lifelong Learning of Visual Art Education: Seeing-In, Reproducible Viewing, and Visual Duality**

Visual experience (also known as perceptual knowledge) is the rapid judgment produced by the long-term accumulation of rational experience (logic). According to evolutionary psychology, human logic originated in our ape ancestors as the three-dimensional visual calculation of the spatial distance and body swing amplitude when jumping between trees. Thus, vision is crucial in the production of logic. Painting in the 19th century is regarded as evidence of human progress. This kind of imitation based visual art history. Although the distance between the “visual experience of painting” obtained by the artist through mastering techniques and the “real visual experience” of real objects has narrowed, it has also resulted in an excessive emphasis on technology, instead of viewing and the importance of thinking. Nowadays, art is constantly changing. The lifelong learning of visual art education must follow Baumgarten’s “perceptual knowledge”, with Wollheim’s theory of “seeing-in”, “reproducible viewing” and “visual duality”, for contemporary visual lifelong learning of the arts lays out a suitable thinking path. When we appreciate a painting, how does it become a “reappearance object”? In his two books, “Art and Objects” and “Painting as an Art”, Wollheim proposed the term “reproducible viewing”. The core of “reproducible viewing” is the theory of “seeing-in”, and “seeing-in” is the main idea of Wollheim’s aesthetics thought.

“Seeing in” is a new concept put forward by Wollheim’s development of Wittgenstein’s visual theory, that is to say, the latter distinguishes “seemingly” from “seeing in”, while the former develops “seeing in” from “seemingly” (Liu, 2019, p.113). Seeing-in refers to the act of “seeing an object in a picture,” which is different from “seeing a picture as an object” (Liu, 2019, p.113). The characteristic of Wollheim’s theory of “seeing in” proves that the self-cultivation experience is separated from the visual consciousness that supports it. On the contrary, this leads to two characteristics assigned to “seeing-in”, namely, the contingency of localization and the possibility of two-fold attention. If we want the contingency of localization, it is tantamount to denying any separation. Therefore, the contingency of localization certainly does not exist. However, the possibility of two-fold attention is to use these separation methods (Liu, 2012, p.188). In Leonardo da Vinci’s famous notes on painting, he told painters to find scenery, fighting scenes, and violent human images on damp walls and colorful stones. This is the reappearance of viewing, which is also a common daily experience (Liu, 2019,

p.113).Based on this, “seeing in” means that when we can see the surface of a painting with traces, we can also see what is art reproducing in the painting. In the portrait of Napoleon, we can not only see the colors, brushstrokes, shapes, and so on, but we can also see Napoleon in the painting at the same time. For example, when we see landscape paintings, not only do we see the combination of shapes and colors but also the character image, especially when we view the scenery.

“Reappearance viewing” is a broader perceptual genus. However, when the viewer is appreciating, how can the viewer see the information beyond the picture when appreciating it? Wollheim believes that the visual experience of “seeing in” actually exists. The reason is that people can “simultaneously” see the objects depicted on the surface of the painting, as well as the marked surface on the painting. In other words, the viewer will “read” the work according to the artist’s intention. What people see in the work and display it, that is to say, discovering “intention” is the key to artistic interpretation. In addition, Wollheim (1987) also mentioned the connotation of “reproducible viewing”:

The first thing to be sure of is that the experience in the painting must be in harmony with the artist’s intention. As I emphasized, the artist’s work includes the artist’s desires, thoughts, beliefs, experience, and emotions, which are all rely on the motives the artist wants to portray...Second, the experience we need has to be realized through the work, that is seeing in, namely, through the way the artist does it. (p.44)

Regarding “visual duality”, Wollheim believes that artists’ pleasure in “reproduction” lies in grasping the increasingly complex correspondence and relationship between the features of things actually in front of them and the features imagined on them (Liu, 2019, p.180). For example, humans practice this basic ability when they look at clouds and see castles or animals. Another example is seeing a landscape or a face on a wall with stains. Similarly, people can see an image outside the picture in the picture. Wollheim (1991) explained that “in order to see what is beyond the picture, we must know something in advance.” This means that when people gain the experience of seeing-in, they must rely on certain conventional “things” formed in the process of “reappearance”, and only by “recalling” such things from past experiences can we realize the act of seeing-in (p.140).

What people see in a painting is exactly what the painter intended. In other words, the painter arranges and manages the surface of the painting so that the viewers can clearly understanding the meaning of the arrangement by the artist. Wollheim explains from the perspective of psychology and philosophy that “there is a universal human nature presupposed in the sharing of artists and audiences”. He proposes that the three elements of understanding and appreciating art—seeing-in, reproducible viewing, and visual duality—are related to the imagination of perceptual knowledge. In other words, Baumgarten’s perceptual perception in “low-level epistemology” includes senses,

imagination, insight, memory, creativity, foresight, and judgment, anticipation, and feature description. This innate ability of human beings is not only artists' creation but also what the viewers of paintings need to rely on.

Finally, how can visual art be appreciated? Objectively speaking, seeing-in is more related to representational content. According to Wollheim, historical knowledge is necessary to understanding images because a visual experience can differ depending on the viewer's historical knowledge. Relevant historical knowledge in art appreciation includes the knowledge of the time when the painting was created, background of the painter, and the painter's personal context. The theories of seeing-in, reappearance watching, and visual duality expand the applicability of visual art theory. These theories are unique in and applicable to the scope of artistic creation, art history, and even contemporary art research, and they have been actively expanded.

"Seeing-in" is a special type of cultivation of visual experience. In the environment of enlightenment, this ability allows the experience of perception of specific objects. As a result, all types of characteristics of seeing-in come into being, especially those that distinguish seeing-in from "seeming". These cultivated experiences, just like common experiences, have two types: one is the experience of a particular thing, and the other is the experience related to the state of things. Even by appreciating a particular thing, the experience can be cultivated. In other words, the state of a thing can be regarded as a special thing. Therefore, the most basic feature of "seeing-in" is that it makes the "reproducible viewing" different from the current sensory experience. That is, it is quite different from the "straight forward perception" (Liu, 2012, p.182). In other words, the experience of "what seems to be" is shared by both human beings and animals, which is only the basic ability to perceive the things in front of them, while "seeing other things from them" is a visual experience with the nature of "human" beyond the stage of "direct perception". From a microcosmic point of view, "seeing in" breaks through the stage of visual curiosity, and gains a higher "self-cultivation experience" in the cultural cultivation of visual experience. It can make people perceive special things and their related situations. This is the most fundamental learning idea for lifelong learning of contemporary visual art.

## **Conclusion**

The progression in the history of thought is not smooth. Sometimes, it is emphasized and valued in one era, but then ignored or even abandoned in another era. If the thinkers who have been abandoned or ignored survive the torrent of time and are of interest in a new era, then they may be "rediscovered". This is the case with Baumgarten's "Sensibility" and Wollheim's "Seeing-In", "Reproducible Viewing", and "Visual Duality".

In the past, in a world in which aesthetics was not abused, art displayed beauty and spiritual fullness. However, in modern society, sensibility is threatened. Art, which cherishes the ancient link with sensibility, has understood itself as a prophet to save sensibility. Today, with the popularity of decoration, art has its own momentum to

turn the tide. Because thinking is involved in visual experience through imagination, the visual experience is constructed. The audience is visually aware of the simultaneity of the picture surface (i.e., the physical and structural aspects) and the recognition of the reproduced objects (i.e., the image and cognitive aspect); the blending of these two aspects forms a single visual experience.

The interest and charm of “seeing-in” lie in the possibility that someone experiences duality in a painting; that is, the viewer is aware of both the painting pattern and the object of the painting. The so-called pattern is called the design method, that is, the reproduction method. The viewer is aware of both the design method and the content (i.e., duality), or the viewer changes back and forth between simultaneous awareness of the design method and the content and awareness of only one of the two. The same content has different styles due to different design methods (reproduction methods), such as Neoclassicism, Impressionism, Postimpressionism, Expressionism, Cubism, pop art, Dadaism, and conceptual art.

In addition, the visual experience represented by “seeing-in” means that the viewer can complete the process of obtaining the information, configuration, and object recognition of the portrait through the act of “seeing-in”. Although the whole process remains under the influence of cultural context, it is acquired through “knowledge” or acquisition.

“Seeing-in” the cognitive aspect of duality requires the imagination to guide. The intervention of imagination leads to the introduction of the concept, though, and proposition into the visual experience. When discussing the different natures of imagination in image description and language description, the visual action of the viewer reading sentences stimulates the imagination. When viewing a painting, our visual experience of “seeing-in” the painting itself is a part of our imagination. The perception of pictures is colored by imagination (perhaps enjoying a series of experiences, each of which is both perceptual and imaginative). Visual experience consists of imagination, thinking, and perception. In this way, the role of imagination in appreciating and reproducing works is close to the concept of imagination in the aesthetics area: imagination lies between perception and thought. It is inclined to perception and through imagination. Therefore, thinking is immersed in perception.

Visual art is an indispensable part of daily life that permeates all levels of human creativity, expression, communication, and understanding. Visual art that ranges from traditional forms embedded in local and broader communities, societies, and cultures to diverse approaches related to new, emerging, and contemporary forms of visual language. It may have sociopolitical influence as well as ritual, spiritual, decorative, and functional value. It is persuasive and subversive in some situations, and instructive and elevating in others. Visual art is not only a medium of creating images and objects but also appreciating, respecting, and responding to the artistic creation practices of others from all over the world. The learning ability developed in contemporary visual art education is an essential skill for all learners. The theory and practice of visual

arts are dynamic and constantly changing. It connects a lot of knowledge and human experience through individual and cooperative exploration, creative production, and critical interpretation.

As a result, the study of the visual age further emphasizes the central position of “visual art education” in the visual age. Based on this, whether gifted or early learning, we undoubtedly have the extraordinary ability to explain the incoming clues from the outside world, and also we can explain work’s consistency according to the possible configuration of external environment’s space and light. Therefore, contemporary visual art education should be based on “art training” and “aesthetic education” to gain a firm foothold. Creative thinking should form a field with a certain multiplicity and abstract structure through a diversified process. In particular, art has its essential quality (Timbre), that is, the characteristics that must be adhered to. Every artwork is a unique experience that expresses some irreducible meaning. Artistic symbols have their own special phenomena and elements. The power of works of art extends even beyond the frame, beyond the threshold of museums, and beyond the moment in which they are viewed. An open mind creates a new world of artworks. The key experience of art is that when leaving the exhibition site, the viewer can observe the world from the perspective of the artist and their works and can reflect on and expand their own vision.

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# Estetika među nama: cjeloživotno učenje iz prakse

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## Sažetak

Umjetničko obrazovanje u suvremenom svijetu pruža mogućnosti za razvoj kreativnosti, kritičkoga mišljenja i kritičkoga stava učenika prema umjetnosti i kulturi. Ipak, razočaranje u svijetu čini estetiku potrebom koju u sadašnje vrijeme treba kontinuirano definirati. Ograničena i jednostrana priroda tradicionalne estetike postaje sve očitija, stoga je otežan razvoj estetike na pouzdanoj osnovi ideala ljepote i umjetnosti. Kasnih 1980-ih godina perceptivno znanje postalo je ključni pojam o kojemu se često raspravlja u sklopu istraživanja i obrazovanja u području estetike.

Kreativnost proizlazi iz perceptivnoga znanja, a zasnovana je na popularnom umjetničkom i estetskom obrazovanju. Kako bi se oblikovalo područje s višestrukim i apstraktnom strukturom, potrebno je razvijati kreativno mišljenje kroz proces diversifikacije. Zbog toga što umjetnost ima esencijalno svojstvo (timbar), predložio sam projekt iz područja likovne umjetnosti i estetike zasnovan na ostvarivanju umjetničkih ciljeva u poučavanju likovne umjetnosti i na estetskom susretu s politikom, društvom, povijesti, kulturom i okolinom. Eksperimentalni program realiziran je u Nacionalnom tajvanskom muzeju likovnih umjetnosti.

Rezultati istraživanja potvrđuju da obrazovanje u području estetske percepcije može imati pozitivne učinke na učeničke poglede na umjetnosti i na cjelokupnu popularnost povezanoga učenja. Primjeri razvijanja estetskoga doživljaja i estetske percepcije mogu se koristiti kao smjernice za ostvarivanje umjetničkoga i multikulturnoga obrazovanja. Dobro zaokruženo i otvoreno obrazovanje (od politike, društva, povijesti, kulture, okoline itd.) postalo je prag za kontinuirani razvoj inteligencije i mišljenja.

**Ključne riječi:** novi senzibilitet; praksa; pronalazak značenja; razmišljanje u slikama; zaista vidjeti.