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Community Arts History Series

(See also: Community Arts Councils: Historical Perspective, by Maryo Ewell. CW, September 2000. Vol. 5, No. 1)

Community arts are associated with people coming together in local arts centers, museums, schools, homes, places of worship, social clubs, recreation facilities, and civic associations among other settings, both formal and informal.

   Community arts settings are among those informal and formal enclaves in which people assemble, work, and act together for a variety of political, cultural, economic, and educational purposes. The arts produced in such settings function, in part, as catalysts for dialogue about individual and group identity as well as local, national, and international concerns. In this regard, community arts have the capacity to foster the discourse required by democracy and that nourishes civil society. In many instances this discourse has been directed towards debating and creating what is considered to be the "common good" and helping to define "good" citizenship.It is important that those of us associated with community arts commit to creating a shared history that informs and stimulates our endeavors. Readers are encouraged to consult the manuscript submission guidelines. I will be pleased to communicate with any person who wishes to write on our shared history for CultureWork. I can be reached at <dblandy@darkwing.uoregon.edu>. Doug Blandy, Director, Institute for Community Arts Studies

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Intangible Legacy: Oregon's Federal Art Centers

Margaret Bullock

THE WPA Art Project in Oregon resulted in a rich and varied body of work, but though many are familiar with the school murals or with large-scale projects such as Timberline Lodge, few now know the history of the Oregon Federal Art Centers. The Federal Art Centers were the result of a unique community-based program sponsored under the WPA's Federal Art Project. They offer an interesting model for bringing the arts into public life through partnerships between government and local communities, a topic particularly relevant today when the arts are vanishing from schools and federal support for the arts remains a controversial concept.

Curry County Art Center, Gold Beach.

   In May of 1935 President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued an executive order establishing the Works Progress Administration (WPA) to provide employment during the Depression through a variety of federally-sponsored projects. Five arts projects, collectively known as Federal One, were included under the WPA: the Federal Theater Project, Federal Writers' Project, Federal Music Project, Historical Records Survey and the Federal Art Project. Though many WPA administrators saw economic relief, rather than artistic achievement, as the primary function of the Federal One projects, supporters

hoped that these programs would give the general public a taste for the arts as a regular part of their daily lives which, in turn, would lead them to support the arts themselves without government help.

The Federal Art Project (FAP) was administered from Washington, D.C. by the director, Holger Cahill, and his staff but there were also multi-layered regional and state bureaucracies. The head of the Oregon branch of the WPA was Emerson J. Griffith, a newspaperman, shipping manager, and former director of the Oregon Federal Housing Administration. He shared oversight of the Oregon Art Project (OAP) with lawyer and judge, Gladys Everett, who was Oregon's State Director of the Women's and Professional Division (later the Division of Community Service Projects), the division of the WPA which included the Federal Art Project. Technically, day-to-day administration of the OAP was the job of the director, Burt Brown Barker, but anecdotal and other evidence suggests that Everett, and particularly Griffith, were deeply involved in the daily operations of the OAP. Barker's ongoing frustration with this arrangement, evident in his correspondence with Holger Cahill, suggests it ultimately may have been the reason he withdrew from his role as Director.

Barker was a lawyer by trade and Vice President of the University of Oregon by occupation, but he was also a committed advocate for the arts and historic preservation. His first government arts assignment was as administrator of the Northwest region of the short-lived federal Public Works of Art Project (PWAP) from December 1933 to April 1934. When the FAP was launched in the fall of 1935, Barker was once again asked to participate on behalf of the Northwest overseeing Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Montana's Art Projects—he later became director of just the Oregon Art Project. Barker essentially volunteered his time with the OAP receiving a token annual salary of $1. In August 1936, Margery Hoffman Smith, an interior director and prominent member of the Portland art community, was hired as his Assistant State Director. She quickly assumed a great deal of responsibility within the OAP, particularly the organization and oversight of the furnishings and artwork for Timberline Lodge; she eventually replaced Barker as State Director in 1939.

Artwork sponsored by the FAP ranged from easel painting and mural projects to sculpture, printmaking, furniture design, ironwork and other crafts. The artists of the OAP actively practiced all of these techniques and others such as wood marquetry and stained glass. In addition, through the weaving, woodcarving and ironwork projects developed for the furnishing and decoration of Timberline Lodge, the OAP became a model for craft programs in other states and was responsible for the revival of a number of hand-craft techniques. To date, more than 1500 individual works of art have been documented as the work of OAP artists and artisans created between 1935 and 1942 when the OAP ended.

One of the more unique programs sponsored by the FAP was the creation of community art centers, unusual because they required a combination of federal and community support in order to operate. Federal Art Centers were either developed by offering existing community art centers FAP funds to support or expand their programs (ex. the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, and the Harlem Community Art Center in New York), or they were newly created by interested communities. The art centers were primarily targeted at rural or remote areas where art opportunities were scarce; response to the program was enthusiastic nationwide. By December 1937, 50 community art centers were in operation across the United States and by 1940, 84 were in operation.

Art centers were organized as a joint project with each community. The FAP provided funds for staff salaries, equipment and some art supplies and other materials. In return, the local community provided a building and created a fund for center operating costs such as utilities and supplies. Most centers had a staff of 8 to 10; teachers were either artists from each state's art project or artists on temporary loan from FAP branches around the country.

The centers offered a variety of arts programming from free art classes for children and adults to exhibitions of artwork, art libraries, studio facilities, musical, theater and dance performances, and meeting rooms for various community groups. The art exhibitions were organized locally or circulated by the FAP exhibition section in Washington. Subjects included children's artwork, work by FAP artists, work by students at the art centers and even included loan shows of Old Master paintings and other art from museum collections.

In Oregon, the first discussions about opening an art center began in April 1937 and Salem was chosen as the target community. Holger Cahill authorized $12,000 a year in

FAP assistance if the community would raise an additional $2000. Burt Brown Barker and Joseph Danysh, FAP administrator for the western region, traveled to Salem in November 1937 to make a pitch for the art center to prominent citizens and newspapermen.

Local response was enthusiastic. Republican Senator Douglas McKay was appointed co-chairman of an exploratory committee with Charles Sprague, editor and owner of Salem's Daily Statesman. McKay in turn appointed Dr. Pound who had led a number of civic improvement projects in Salem including construction of the new High School. Pound's assistant was Mr. R. R. Boardman of the State Educational Department. The committee launched a public relations campaign in January 1938 then began a series of meetings with citizens to initiate a fundraising effort.

Despite the depressed economy and a recently completed Community Chest fund drive, response from Salem's citizens was immediate. Every school in Salem put on a benefit for the center raising $419.37 and school children also donated their pennies toward the campaign. In February, supporters of the Salem Art Center held a Beaux Arts Ball as a fundraiser and clubs and other organizations also held benefits. The list of individual donors to the campaign included such leading citizens as the Governor and Secretary of State. In only three months the committee raised $2600, exceeding their target by $600.

With the required community funds in hand, Salem chose a Sponsoring Committee for the Art Center of prominent Salem citizens from a variety of backgrounds. The president was Mrs. Vernon Douglas, wife of the County Health Physician, the Vice President was attorney Otto K. Paulus, the Secretary was Mr. Edward Acklin, a shoe dealer, the Treasurer was Mr. Tinkham Gilbert, a leading official of the Ladd & Bush Bank, and the second Vice President was Mrs. Devers, whose husband was attorney for the State Highway Commission. For their building, the committee chose to refit the old high school at 460 North High Street to house the new art center and its three studio rooms, three galleries, office and workroom.

The committee then turned its attention to hiring a director for the Salem Art Center. With the help of Holger Cahill they settled on Charles Val Clear. Val Clear had trained as an artist then went on to work in art education at the Museum of the John Herron Art Institute in Indianapolis and at the Phillips Gallery in Washington, D.C. He was serving as Director of the Art League of Washington (D.C.) when he was hired by the committee in Salem. He arrived in Salem in April 1938.

The Salem Federal Art Center opened on June 5, 1938 and the Mayor declared June 4-11 Art Week to celebrate its opening. 1000 people attended the opening and 328 of them signed up for the center's first round of free art classes forcing them to close registration. The first two teachers were Portland artist, Louis Bunce and Charles Lemery, a painter. The sculptor, Erich Lamade, joined the staff in July. In October, Val Clear began supplementing his staff with temporary artist/teachers from art projects in other states, particularly New York and Chicago. Instructors were paid $94 a month for 100 hours of work.

Sculpture class for blind and visually impaired children, Salem Art Center.

The Salem Art Center offered classes for all ages in easel painting, sculpture, mural painting, and graphics. Sculpture and painting were also taught to children from the School for the Blind. Later offerings included music, theater, and crafts such as weaving. There was no charge for instruction but students purchased their own materials and contributed toward incidental expenses. For the most part classes were tailored toward the amateur artist, but studio spaces were available for more advanced

students.

The Art Center also offered a changing schedule of exhibitions designed to present a balanced schedule of artwork of national significance with work done locally, work done by Art Center students, and both traditional and avant-garde artworks. To increase exposure for these exhibitions, a number of branch galleries were established in Salem public schools. By March 1939 they included the McKinley Branch Art Gallery, McKinley Public School, Washington Branch Art Gallery, Washington Public School, and Bush Branch Art Gallery, Bush Elementary School. These "galleries" consisted of a small room, a cul-de-sac at the end of a corridor or a large stretch of wall space designated for the exclusive exhibition of art exhibits circulated by the Salem Art Center. Plans to open similar facilities in other Salem schools were discussed but never carried out.

The enthusiastic community support for the Salem Art Center encouraged OAP administrators to consider another art center in Oregon, this time in Gold Beach, the county seat of Curry County on the southern coast. Charles Val Clear traveled to Gold Beach in June 1939 to visit the community and talk with community leaders about establishing an art center there. Despite its small population of only 400 people, the residents of Gold Beach were excited by the prospect of an art center in their town. Val Clear was surprised by the level of response from a town located in what he characterized as "the most isolated and primitive section of the state." Apparently, a long-standing rivalry with a neighboring town that had recently received WPA largesse in other forms also helped spur on community leaders.

Plans for the Curry County Art Center were in process by August 1939. A community fund drive raised $1500 toward the cost of the center and those citizens who couldn't give money donated their labor toward refitting an old high school building into classrooms and offices. The center opened in September under the directorship of Arthur Wasser (and later Walter Pritchard). Attendance at the opening outnumbered the population of the town and again, class enrollments exceeded the OAP administrators' wildest expectations. Within a month of opening, the Curry County Art Center also became an attraction on the Portland/San Francisco coast highway making it a stop for travelers as well as a gathering place for Gold Beach citizens and surrounding communities.

Thrilled with this level of response to the Salem and Curry County Art Centers, the administrators of the Oregon Art Project, as well as Holger Cahill back in Washington, proceeded with plans to expand the network of centers in Oregon. They began by creating a new position, Director of Oregon Art Centers, to oversee the organization and administration of all of Oregon's art centers. Charles Val Clear was transferred from the directorship of the Salem Art Center to this post; Marian Field became director of the Salem Art Center in his place. Under Val Clear, each art center retained its own manager and board of directors responsible for raising money, securing quarters and meeting subsequent operational needs.

In March 1940, the OAP submitted a proposal for a third art center in Oregon, this time in La Grande, an eastern Oregon town with a population of just under 8000. Again, there was a huge groundswell of community support for the idea in the form of both money and volunteer help. The La Grande Art Center opened in May, 1940 with Jane Robinson as director. She was replaced in September by the photographer, Minor White, who served as director until October, 1941 when he was replaced by Mrs. Marjorie Ebert.

Though the OAP began discussing creating art centers in Klamath Falls and Medford in the early 1940s, by the spring of 1942 the nation's focus had shifted toward the war effort and funding for the FAP was running out. Many FAP programs were turned toward military tasks such as decorating military quarters and creating recruiting posters but eventually all money was diverted from the FAP. By June 1942, all art centers had lost federal support. Oregon's three centers continued to run for some months after with private support but all were eventually forced to close.

Though their physical presence was relatively short-lived, federal art centers in Oregon and around the nation left their imprint on the communities in which they were organized. Thousands of adults and children experienced their first art exhibitions and classes as well as music, theater and dance programs at these centers and art lovers were given a chance to indulge and expand those interests. In some areas, the spirit of the art centers lived on in various community or school programs and associations. The organization and running of the centers also brought communities together to support a single effort—a skill that proved valuable during the war years.

However, the FAP administrators' fondest hope that the art centers would create a new art loving American public who would support, collect, and buy American art was not immediately met. Certainly in Oregon when FAP money dried up, the Oregon art community returned to its hand-to-mouth existence, a situation that did not improve until decades later. However, it is interesting to note that the American art scene began its greatest period of florescence and expansion into public life at the time when the children of the 1930s had become adults and it is tempting to wonder if the WPA art which surrounded them as children eventually did have the long-term effects the FAP's supporters had hoped. Though the long-term impacts of the Federal Art Centers may be hard to quantify, they are worth further investigation as we explore new ways to bring art into public life and build an art loving public.

Author's endnote

A large number of books and articles have been written on the Federal Art Projects. Some of the key texts include:

Francis V. O'Connor, Federal Support for the Visual Arts: The New Deal and Now (Greenwich, Conn.: New York Graphic Society, Ltd., 1969)

William F. McDonald, Federal Relief Administration and the Arts, (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1969)

Jonathan Harris, Federal Art and National Culture: The Politics of Identity in New Deal America (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1995)

Bruce I. Bustard, A New Deal for the Arts (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, in association with the University of Washington Press, 1997)

For this article, the main references consulted were the FAP's "Prospectus for the Establishment of Art Centers", R. R. Boardman's undated narrative report on the history of the Salem Art Center, an article on the Salem Art Center by Charles Val Clear in Oregon Magazine, John Franklin White (editor), Art in Action: American Art Centers and the New Deal (The Scarecrow Press Inc., 1987) and documents on file at the National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. and the archives of Friends of Timberline, Portland, Oregon.

Research on the Oregon Art Projects is a work in progress; any errors or omissions are the responsibility of the author. The author would greatly enjoy discussing and sharing information about this topic with other interested scholars.

Focus on Student Research – Part 2

Linda Ettinger

(See also: January 2003. Vol. 7, No. 1. Three Festivals Seen Through the Getz Model of the Event Management System by Emily WIndle)

Since 1985 I have worked half time in each of two graduate programs at the University of Oregon – one a campus-based program in arts management and the other an off-campus, distance program in information management. Although the curriculum and students in these two programs has been very different, the one area of overlap is my work with students to complete the final research component.

Designing Web-Based Instruction: A Research Review On Color, Typography, Layout, and Screen Density

Michael G. Geraci

Introduction

THE visual design of Web-based instruction has been positively correlated to enhanced student performance. This excerpt from a capstone paper written in the Applied Information Management Master's Degree Program presents recommendations to improve the visual design of online instructional materials, gathered from 30 selected references published between 1992 and 2002. An annotated bibliography of 12 key resources for use by instructors to guide the effective design of Web-based instruction is available in the complete document.

Lee and Boling (1996, 1999) cite numerous sources that support the notion that visual design is an essential element to increasing student motivation to engage with the content. Increased motivation and engagement, they say, facilitates deeper processing of the information (p. 402). The literature in

the field of screen design for instruction generally agrees that when attention is given to the visual presentation of information, there is an increase in the level to which learners understand and retain the content, and the rate at which they complete instructional units is accelerated (Aspillaga, 1996; Bradshaw, 1998; Chen, et al., 1996; Costello, et al., 1995; Lohr, 2000; Schaeffer and Bateman, 1996; Stoney and Wild, 1998; and Szabo and Kanuka, 1999).

According to Brahler, Peterson, and Johnson (1999) and the International Data Corporation (1998) there is increasing motivation and pressure for instructors to provide instruction via the World Wide Web. Similarly, Parker (1997) and industry trade journals such as Workforce and Business 2.0 point to the Web as an important medium for communication and business strategy in organizations. Regardless of the purposes of a particular Web site, the way in which information is presented can have serious impact on how the audience understands, retains, and makes decisions based upon that information.

Recommendations To Improve Design Of Online Instructional Materials

COLOR: Color is a tool used to convey a deeper meaning on the Web. Many authors point out that color is "free" on the Web and page authors can pull from a broad and complex palette of hues when designing for this medium. Sources differed in their recommendations for which colors to use, how many colors to use, and whether color should be used at all in Web-based instruction. The most agreement was found in areas that some might consider common sense. There was wide agreement that color should be used to provide maximum contrast between foreground items, like text, and the background of the page. It was also recommended that designers take psychological and cultural associations into account when applying color. Consistent use of color in computer-based instruction was deemed critical. Remaining consistent provides a reliable context for information that eases the learning process, allowing the user to focus on information and not the interface construct.

The work of Schaeffer and Bateman (1996) provided a valuable frame to the discussions of color, dividing the use of color in computer-based instruction into three categories: (1) affective, (2) structural, and (3) cognitive. These categories address color as: an emotional /aesthetic component; a means for separating information from other page elements; and as a way to reduce the memory load experienced by the user, respectively. This division is a useful way to think about the recommendations from the literature and to derive a strategy for implementing them.

The work of Misanchuk and Schwier (1995) addressed the divergence of viewpoints about color by showing that theory is based on the opinions and traditions of professionals or empirical research performed under the context of technology that is now obsolete. They suggested that the best use of color is that which the instructor, informed by both the artistic and scientific guidelines, determines is the most relevant and supportive of the goals for the instruction.

TYPOGRAPHY: There was disagreement in the selected literature about how best to format type on the screen. This researcher concludes that the biggest source of the divergent findings is the tendency to generalize guidelines from the field of print publishing to that of screen design. As many authors note, the computer display is a low-resolution, projected medium that simply is not the same as print environments. Among the recommendations that appear to be extrapolated from the print world are those that call for serifed typefaces at sizes smaller than 12-point. Such diminutive and finely designed type does not seem like the best choice in the low-resolution environment provided by computer displays. Recommendations that appear to be more sensitive to the limitations of the screen call for larger point-sizes (14-point and higher), sans-serif typefaces, especially those designed with screen readability in mind, and shorter lines with greater spacing between them.

There was agreement with regards to the left-justification of text, the use of both upper- and lowercase letters, and the use of a limited number of typefaces. Most authors stated that two or three different typefaces should be used throughout the presentation and that different sizes and/or styles of a typeface should be used to provide emphasis and structure to the content.

The presentation of type is notoriously hard to control using standard HTML conventions. Horton (2000) makes a strong case for the use of Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) by those who want to maintain better control over text on their Web pages. CSS is a standard for establishing rules for the display of type within a single Web page or across multiple pages. CSS is not hard to learn and resources are freely available online, but using it adds an additional layer of complexity to the design of Web-based instruction.

CultureWork

SPATIAL LAYOUT: For the spatial layout of screen elements, some common themes emerged in the selected literature: unity, harmony, balance, simplicity, and above all, consistency. The conclusions about each are uniform: information should be placed on the screen in a way that places related elements together in logical groups, creates a visual hierarchy of information where the user can perceive the order and importance of information via its placement and presentation, elements form a coherent whole and appear to fit together; and screens have a comfortable sense of equilibrium.

Spatial layout creates a visual gestalt, or underlying pattern to the information that allows the learner to build a mental scheme for grouping and processing the lesson's content. According to Szabo and Kanuka (1999) "A critical consideration of visual unity is that the whole must dominate over the parts. The viewer must first perceive the entire design prior to observing the individual elements." (p. 28)

Like typography, spatial layout is easier said than done with HTML. Horton (2000) and Skaalid (2001) both indicate the need to use HTML's table features to create an invisible underlying grid with which to establish areas on the screen for the consistent placement of content and to create the appropriate amount of white space around and between the content elements.

Where spatial layout is concerned with the arrangement of objects within the frame of the screen, the concept of screen density addresses just how much content there should be in a single page of information. With Web pages that can, and usually do, extend beyond the boundaries of the visible screen, this area of research has just one question to answer: should the users scroll through the content or page through? Paging refers to the creation of multiple pages worth of content that the user has to navigate by clicking on a hyperlink.

Here too, the selected literature was nearly unanimous: paging is preferred to scrolling. Schwier and Misanchuk (1993) presented findings that favored high-density screens, but they preface their findings with "The research is conflicting." (p. 213). Eleven other sources specifically stated that the information should be divided up and that, when possible, no single Web page should require the user to scroll through more than three screens-worth of information.

SCREEN DENSITY: Most of the research into screen density is founded upon the notion that users can become overwhelmed with long, continuous presentations of information. Research on "memory load" generally holds that students need to receive information in smaller, more digestible chunks, which promote the formation of concept building and associations in the learners' minds.

Rather than rely upon a somewhat arbitrary number to dictate how information should be divided up among screens, Horton (2000) recommends that instructors let the content guide them to a logical approach for breaking up the content among screens. "Keep like-content together in single chunks where each chunk is a piece of information that can be accessed individually." (p. 45)

A number of resources used in this study made recommendations that indicated the various elements of screen design should be considered as a single element. Keyes' article focuses on the integration of color, typography, and page structure as an approach to better design and communication. In it she states "while both typography and color can be effective information structure signals, they have different strengths and weaknesses. They are best used as complementary rather than interchangeable tools." (p. 639)

INTEGRATED APPROACH: A few references went so far as to state that improvements to a single element, such as typography, were a waste of time. By and large, when such integrated approaches to design were indicated, there were two dominant themes in nearly all the selected literature: consistency and simplicity. Torgerson's (2000) literature review made an identical conclusion with regard to integrated guidelines citing that consistency and simplicity allow learners to focus more on the instruction than the interface. "As viewers go through the screens of a program, they will start to form a set of rules about where things will and how things will function. When these rules are broken, the user has to spend cognitive resources to decide if the change is an exception to the rule, if the rule needs to be revised, or if another rule should be created." (Heinich, Molenda, Russell, and Smaldino, 1996, cited in Torgerson, 2000, p. 7)

Conclusion

A number of conclusions can be made regarding the visual design of Web-based instruction in light of the findings of this study. First is the need for further research. It is clear that studies in this field are often based upon previous studies, which, in turn, may go back to earlier research. As such, there is little relevant data that is based upon research under modern technological conditions or with today's more techno-savvy student populations.

Second is the recommendation that instructors who are anxious to improve the educational potential of their Web-based instruction should arm themselves with resources from which to find on-going guidance. Journals and online publications provide findings from current research, including The Journal of Educational Multimedia and Hypermedia, The Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks, Educational Technology, and The Journal of Interactive Instruction Development. There are also free online resources that track the moving target of Web-based instruction, such as the e-Journal of Instructional Science and Technology, on the web at http://www.usq.edu.au/electpub/e-jist/ and Interactive Educational Multimedia, at http://www.ub.es /multimedia/iem/ Resources such as these provide instructors with important information that can be used to continuously refine and adapt their online instruction to current standards.

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