

ABSTRACT

Two leading figures in arts and education reflect on their trip to an international arts education conference in Seoul, Korea.

Letter From Seoul:

Correspondence From the International Arts Education Symposium and the Asia-Pacific Regional Conference

Arnold Aprill and Gigi Schroeder-Yu with e-mail and blog responses from Nick Jaffe and Jack Yantis.

Kimchi and DMZ

November 19, 2005—Arnold Aprill, Seoul:

Arts educator Gigi Schroeder-Yu and I arrived in Seoul, Korea today to participate in the International Arts Education Symposium and in the Asia-Pacific Regional Conference that are part of the wind up for the pitch of the UNESCO World Conference on Arts Education to be held in Lisbon in March, 2006. Our hotel is next to a Buddhist neighborhood in this primarily Confucian country. Large numbers of middle-aged couples are making holy offerings today at neighborhood shrines, temples, and meditation halls. Tomorrow many of their sons and daughters will take high-stakes college entrance exams. The square is sweet with the smell of incense.

Two dichotomies struck us immediately upon our arrival in Seoul, just a day after George W. Bush visited the same city on his tour of Asia: 1) the ubiquitous presence of American English and of American businesses (there are more Starbucks' in the neighborhood of our hotel in Seoul than in my neighborhood in Chicago), and 2) the constant juxtaposition of traditional culture and postmodern global culture. Just miles from the demilitarized zone between North and South Korea (which,

Arnold Aprill



Gigi Schroeder-Yu



Correspondence regarding this article should go to:

Arnold Aprill
4250 North Marine Drive
Apt. 710 Chicago, IL 60613
aaprill@capeweb.org
(773) 627-6619

Gigi Schroeder-Yu
630 South Monroe Street
Decatur, IL 62522
gigis1231@yahoo.com
(217) 429-1895

ironically, has emerged as an important accidental wildlife refuge for rare species that don't step on land mines), we found ourselves wondering about what kind of demilitarized zone could be created by arts education between the arts as preservers-of-heritage and the arts as access to postmodern-global-participation.

November 19, 2005—Gigi Schroeder-Yu:

The presence of so much American culture intertwined here with Korean culture makes our experience strangely familiar and exotic at the same time. Walking through the streets of Seoul, we notice tanks of live fish and shellfish prominently displayed in the windows of many restaurants, and the wrapping of tree trunks in little straw “dresses” that attract insect-parasites out of the wood (the straw is burned each spring). It is difficult not to be struck by the wide range of cell phones in use on the street. Cell phones appear to represent individuality, and are seen in many colors and shapes, as well as heard through a wide variety of ring tones. The high-tech, postmodern Samsung building is a block from our hotel, as is the historic Imperial Palace (containing the extraordinary National Folk Art museum). Many people were out and about this evening. Downtown Seoul is clean and bright and feels safe even at night. There is enough neon on the buildings to rival the strip in Las Vegas.

VERY early morning November 20, 2005—Arnold Aprill, Seoul:

Our sleep patterns have been totally disrupted by jet lag. I am up in the middle of the night listening to the sweet sounds of African musician Baaba Maal on my laptop in my hotel room in Seoul. An e-mail arrives from San Antonio, Texas from the playwright Sterling Houston. He says he is listening at that moment to a great musician named Baaba Maal, and asks if I had heard his wonderful sound? Stimulated by this mysterious synchronicity, I decided to e-mail Nick Jaffe (where his active mind is whirring 15 hours behind the space/time continuum inhabited by Gigi and me) to get his thoughts about the heritage/innovation dichotomy.

November 20, 2005—Nick Jaffe, Chicago:

Where to begin? Give me a minute to think. Or two.
And please eat like 63 different types of kimchi for me.

November 20, 2005—Arnold Aprill, Seoul:

The lack of an arts education DMZ—a space for constructive dialogue between conflicting points of view in arts education (the heritage/contemporary conflict, the direct-instruction/arts-integration conflict)—may have something to do with our not understanding the multiple and changing roles of the arts.

Traditionalists want their kids to learn traditional art forms (beauty which has endured beyond the original context of its creation) in order to create cultural continuity. For elders, tradition represents authentic connections and respect across time and across generations, a recognition of identity larger than the self, and collective resistance to shallow, homogenizing commodity culture. Folkloric and classical art forms are seen as embodying these values. Unfortunately, many young people experience traditional forms as artifacts without contemporary meaning.

Young people, on the other hand, are often most interested in remixing commodity culture. They appropriate commercial vocabulary as a way of creating their own language in an overbearing commercial world. Deconstructed/reconstructed contemporary art often becomes their marker of reclaiming overdetermined (and empty) vocabularies in order to make their own new meanings. Unfortunately, elders tend to experience contemporary and popular art as noise, junk, or pornography.

So we end up battling over the expressive symbols while the underlying issues of cultural continuity, identity, respect, connection, and voice get lost. The same thing happens with the “direct instruction in the arts” versus arts-integration dichotomy. The real issues are effective education and vital roles for the arts in learning, not in-fighting between ideological camps about pedagogy.

On a more serious note, regarding the kimchi: assignment accepted. We’ve eaten about 10 kinds of kimchi so far. 53 more to go. Love it. The food is great. One meal included sujeonggwa, a delicious traditional punch made from persimmons, cinnamon, ginger, and pine nuts. Sujeonggwa is marketed in English as “Nostalgia Drink.” I get sentimental just thinking about it.

November 20, 2005—Nick Jaffe, Chicago:

All right then!

I’m not sure if I’m in favor of an artistic DMZ (an ever so slightly tense, 4km wide, 248 km long strip of land that’s got the most extensively mapped and sited fields of fire anywhere and is arguably the touchiest tripwire for WWII there’s ever been).

But I do think I’m in favor of cultural kimchi jars, and I think they’re more common than we sometimes realize. Fermentation is, after all, decay and the byproduct of feeding bacteria and fungi, but it sure tastes and feels good. Paradoxically, it also results in preservation.

All “new” art is just cabbage put in a jar with salt, water, garlic, and chili and left to sit. It’s also buried in the ground. Though now you can get (even in Chicago at the fabulous Chicago Foods Korean grocery store) very cool, digitally controlled kimchi making/storing machines the size of refrigerators.

In two weeks of lively discussion on questions of global developments in arts education (one week in Australia and one week in Korea) I heard not one mention of “test scores.”

Even while our rulers declare “the end of history” and “mission accomplished,” commodity culture is, at the moment, heavily into selling the past, especially where music and art are concerned (more awfully, they’re also into replicating the past, but that’s another topic). Everything’s an instant classic and therefore must be remade immediately. Which might be like trying to make kimchi with kimchi and in any case generally makes for lame-ass kimchi. One nice thing about hip hop is that it chops the cabbage before pickling and generally is explicit about the recipe. But when I meet 7th grade kids who are listening MOSTLY to exactly the same music I was listening to 25 years ago I get a bit worried. After all, at least some kimchi recipes should only appeal to the young and be completely unpalatable to everyone else.

November 21, 2005—Gigi Schroeder-Yu, Seoul:

Funny you should mention kimchi. Today, we had the opportunity to see Seoul outside of our hotel room and the conference. We are walking-distance from Insadong, an old



The streets of Insadong.

Gigi Schroeder-Yu

neighborhood of winding alleys packed with art galleries, traditional teashops, craft stores, and small restaurants. This street is a direct representation of the discussion between preservation of culture and the “new” art world. Spilling out of the shops are displays representing everything from kitsch tourist objects to finely crafted traditional pottery to contemporary clothing designers; all of these worlds existing together as representations of Korean culture. It’s difficult to choose what to buy to bring home: suitcase size needs to be taken into consideration, in addition to how we want to represent Korean culture to our American friends and families. At the end of the street is the most wonderful exhibit of all: mountains of cabbage in a wonderful display of green shades are carefully lined up, just waiting to be transformed into kimchi. Several women surround the large vats of cabbage in a public act of cultural and vegetable preservation.

November 22, 2005—Arnold Aprill, Seoul:

Funny you should mention hip hop. Keidra Chaney from the CAPE staff in Chicago had given me the assignment of tracking down a range of Korean hip hop. I started a whispering campaign about my mission among the participants in the conference and a phalanx of young arts educators magically materialized with deep knowledge of the crucial schools and periods. They convened a serious powwow over dinner last night and discussed which recordings were the most representative; we spread out across the city and negotiated an itinerary of obscure second-hand music stores. I think there’s a good chance that I am now the proud owner of the most extensive American collection of Korean hip hop.

January 8, 2006, Blog Response to the Heritage/Innovation Dichotomy—Jack Yantis, Seattle:

We may need to explore a fractal view of these two perspectives and see them as branches of the same creative stream. These dichotomy-based arguments are based on metaphorically empty notions like “argument is war.” My suggestion is we consider that these two sides dance more—or “argument is a dance;” otherwise, we get stuck in the

dominant paradigm of “winner/loser,” one that is quickly losing its luster and attractiveness. I am reminded of a statement in Brent Davis’ “Inventions of Teaching”: that “versus” in Latin originally has to do with bending, turning or winding towards and away rather than the current use of it in reference to contrasts and conflicts.

New Media, Work in an Information Economy, and the Aesthetics of Education

November 23, 2005—Gigi Schroeder-Yu, Seoul:

We have now listened to two days of presentations at the International Arts Education Symposium and Asia-Pacific Regional Conference, and presented our paper, “Writing in the Margins: Democratized Access to Arts Education”. It is interesting to be the only Americans in the room, and two of the only participants from the Western Hemisphere. We are struck by the politeness and graciousness of the delegates in contrast to the level of competitiveness we sometimes see at American conferences, but maybe we are culturally blind to some of the complexities of the relationships between presenters. Most of the presentations are in English, but when speakers present in other languages, we are constantly amazed at the speed and ease with which simultaneous translation is provided through headphones.

We are heartened by the sense of collegiality we are quickly establishing with presenters from a wide range of nations (Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Cook Islands, Fiji, India, Japan, Korea, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Nepal, New Zealand, Solomon Islands, Tonga, etc). We develop a lively dialogue with a group of preschool educators from Singapore who share our interest in the early childhood education methods of Reggio Emilia, Italy. We feel included in a truly international professional community. It’s a wonderful experience.



Arnold April

Two presenters were especially enlightening for us. Shin Mizukoshi, from the Interfaculty Initiative in Information Studies at the University of Tokyo <http://homepage.mac.com/shin-mizukoshi>, has been leading highly innovative experiments in integrating media studies, arts learning, and new technologies. Shin presented several thrilling examples of how his

Ubiquitous English.

young students examined the relationship between humans and cell phones as a way of creating highly sophisticated visual and conceptual imagery. Children used images collected from cell phone cameras to create maps of geographical regions. Shin brought together children and adult media experts to explore cell cameras as a way of visually representing, on constantly changing computer projections, the complex, shifting human interactions of all the younger and older people in the room as they moved about and met new people. He posed challenging and exciting questions about how we can best address mobile communication and other forms of technology in educational and art-making contexts.

Cheng Kai Ming, Chair of Education at the University of Hong Kong and visiting professor at Harvard, suggests that the rapidly changing field of technology is opening up new opportunities for reconceptualizing education and the role of the arts in learning. New economies create new demands for innovation and creativity. Professor Cheng compared contemporary approaches in arts production to the changing work skills required by manufacturing economies versus information economies. The contemporary nature of work parallels the contemporary nature of art-making: integration of expertise, multiple perspectives, custom design, collaboration, flexibility, and self-reflection. Organizational decisions are now driven as much by aesthetic considerations as by statistical data.

In China, meaningful education embodies five dimensions: moral, intellectual, physical, community, and aesthetic education. Arts education is seen as an essential component of moral education and community education. Professor Cheng proposed several challenges for arts educators that cross international borders and address teacher preparation. He suggests consolidating our understanding of arts education into broad concepts which include learning experiences in all art forms. If we agree that arts education should address creativity and innovation, then principals and teacher educators need consistent opportunities to experience and communicate the holistic nature of arts education.

Professor Cheng also suggested that arts educators should not be seen as separate from the rest of the faculty, but as resource teams who coordinate the aesthetic dimensions throughout whole schools.

Arts educators would then need to be prepared to work with other members of the school, particularly those who have little knowledge of the arts and arts education. The school system should be organized so that creativity, innovation, and aesthetics become an underlying theme of student learning. Learning experiences should be created for students so that they experience arts education not only as the creating of art, but also as an inclusive experience creating collaboration between people.

... we found ourselves wondering about what kind of demilitarized zone could be created by arts education between the arts as preservers-of-heritage and the arts as access to post-modern-global-participation.

November 24, 2005—Arnold Aprill, Seoul:

While talking with Korean colleagues, I was busy idealizing Asian culture when they deftly reminded me that Professor Cheng's attention to moral, intellectual, physical, community, and aesthetic education were not lofty abstractions, but pragmatic values for creating healthy economies. Or as they put it, "More money."

Withstanding the Tests of Time, Withstanding the Time of Tests

November 25, 2005—Arnold Aprill, Seoul:

As our time in Korea is drawing to a close (our ideas have been chopped, seasoned, and fermented) we begin reflecting back on this gathering and also on similar meetings in Australia. In September (Fall in the United States, Spring down under), Andy Finch from Americans for the Arts, Sir Ken Robinson from the J. Paul Getty Trust, and I were U.S. delegates to international and regional arts education policy summits held in Melbourne in preparation for the UNESCO conference in Lisbon. In two weeks of lively discussion on questions of global developments in arts education (one week in Australia and one week in Korea) I heard not one mention of “test scores” (though there were those Korean parents who were worried about their children’s college entrance exams). This absence of a focus on testing was refreshing for me, coming from an educational environment in which a visitor from another planet (or another country—which operationally comes to mean the same thing) might think “testing” is the primary content of our educational agenda.

So, if test scores were not the focus, what did the international arts education community talk about in Melbourne and Seoul? The subjects were rich and wide-ranging:

- Whole school change
- Arts education as a model for curriculum reform in all subjects
- The rights and powers of children
- The preservation of cultural heritage
- New technologies and contemporary art practice
- Collaboration and partnerships
- Democratic access to the arts as a right of ALL learners
- Teachers as lifelong learners
- Policy based on practitioners’ knowledge
- Research and action research
- Students as researchers

If I had to put forward a theory about why there was a wider range of topics in this international discussion than in many of the educational gatherings I attend in the United States, I might guess that national policies in many countries are focused on developing new models of economic and social regeneration, and the arts are considered an important part of that discussion. U.S. policy appears to be about expanding existing markets, to which the arts (with the exception of the film industry) are considered irrelevant. Whatever the reason, the discourse in the global marketplace of arts education ideas revealed in Melbourne and in Seoul was very stimulating and surprisingly consistent across nations at different stages of economic development. We fondly hope that the international arts education policy discussions in Lisbon will look forward and not back, moving us toward richer and more original practice in education and the arts.

November 27, 2005—Gigi Schroeder-Yu and Arnold Aprill, Chicago:

We have returned to Chicago. Here are the recommendations for broad-based national policies that we left behind in Seoul:



Arnold April

Korean pest prevention.

1. **All the Arts in Every School:** All preschools, elementary schools, secondary schools, and institutions of higher education should be structured to include artists and arts teachers from across the arts disciplines as a part of their regular instructional program, including visual arts, music, dance, theater, literary arts, media and electronic arts. School teachers should receive ongoing professional development in the arts throughout their teaching career, and have a leadership voice in designing arts education policy at the school level.
2. **All the Arts in Every Community:** Community development planning should include the creation of high quality community arts centers (both material and virtual), available to all members of the community, presenting and teaching all the arts disciplines.
3. **Public Honoring of Both Traditional and Contemporary Art Forms:** Programs and policies should be intentionally designed to teach and make public both traditional and contemporary art forms, and to encourage dialogue between generations and genres.
4. **Access to Practicing Artists:** Programs and policies should be intentionally designed to provide direct access for young people to sustained relationships with accomplished practitioners in the arts. The work of young people with these cultural treasures should be made visible and publicly honored alongside the work of the accomplished practitioners.
5. **Learner as Colleague:** Programs and policies should be intentionally designed to support young people and adult artists creating work together—work that has a visible and fully professional presence in the community—and respects both the aesthetics of the young people and the aesthetics of the adult artists, who both grow from their mutual collaboration.
6. **Exhibition as Curriculum:** Museums and presentation and performance venues should be spaces for students, teachers, and artists to present to the public, in a fully professional

manner, their documentation of their most innovative arts education processes and products. Learners and community members should see themselves as more than audiences with regards to museums and performance venues, and should have direct access to museum curators, choreographers, theater directors, composers, web and game designers, art historians, and art critics, upon whose knowledge they draw to design their own presentations and exhibitions.

7. New Technologies: Learners of all ages should have access to new technologies in order to create innovative new expressive forms, to provide distance communication for collaborations with others, and to self-publish and disseminate multimedia and print documentation of their work in the arts.

8. Guided Internships: Teachers and artists in training at universities should, as part of their regular coursework, be guided as interns in community-based arts education programming, developing skills in collaborative methods and in documentation of learning processes. These university students also, as part of their regular coursework, should act as ambassadors between universities and communities, organizing access for children, parents, and teachers to the material, intellectual, and aesthetic resources of universities.

9. Practitioner Research Linked With Innovative Professional Development:

Programs and policies should be intentionally designed to bring together academics, artists, arts educators, classroom teachers, community members, and students to collaboratively research promising practices in arts education and in general educational improvement. Research programs should intentionally recruit future researchers from disenfranchised communities. International arts education research projects and centers should meet and communicate regularly across geographies.

10. Global Practice: Programs and policies should be intentionally designed to facilitate ambitious local, national, and international collaborations, and to visibly honor these collaborations with their various publics.

Arnold Aprill is the Executive Director of the Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education (CAPE) and one of the co-editors, with Gail Burnaford and Cynthia Weiss, of *Renaissance in the Classroom: Arts Integration and Meaningful Learning*. Aprill presents nationally and internationally on school improvement through the arts. He is a Chicago Community Trust Community Service Fellow, and received a Leadership for a Changing World Award from the Ford Foundation.

Gigi Schroeder-Yu is an early childhood education and documentation specialist and a member of CAPE's research team. She is a doctoral candidate in Art Education at the University of Illinois. She has lectured at DePaul University in Chicago, has taught the arts in Chicago area elementary schools, and was an instructor in the Early Childhood program at Chicago Commons, a nonprofit social service agency modeled on the practices developed in Reggio Emilia, Italy.