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Smoke and Mirrors: Beyond a Naturalistic Explanation of Experimentation in Art Education

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Abstract: "Experimentation" in art education in primary and secondary schools has historically been linked to a modernist and psychological view of creativity, informed by the highly influential mid 20th century art educator, Viktor Lowenfeld. His theory of self-expression, with adaptations, left a complex legacy, which is briefly explained. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of the habitus, symbolic capital, gift exchange and misrecognition this paper reconsiders Lowenfeld's belief that experimentation in artmaking occurs naturally. It reveals how experimentation in creative practice in art classrooms is socially and contextually dependent and requires mutual obligation on the part of teachers and students for creative performances and artefacts to be realised. An exemplary case of collaboration between an expert art teacher, novice teachers and their students is highlighted. In the program "Smoke and Mirrors", designed for a Year 9 Photographic and Digital Media class, students and their teachers draw on Surrealist imagery, making adaptations supported by digital technologies and in response to contingencies as they arise. The program incorporates the students' art study, digital stop motion animation, soundtracks, the combining of video sequences and their re-filming in an atmosphere that reverberates with the transitory nature of dreams. This case not only shows that experimentation is far from natural for students but that it requires a history of relations and considerable "strategic know how" from a seductive art teacher expert that, on the one hand, promotes a regressive dependency while on the other a precocious responsibility.

Keywords: Art education, artmaking, experimentation, creative practice, Bourdieu

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**A Brief Synopsis
Of Experimentation In
Art Education Literature**

Historically, in art education in primary and secondary schools, experimentation has been linked to the creativity theories of the mid C20th eminent art educator, Viktor Lowenfeld (1960). An Austrian refugee, Lowenfeld sought refuge in the UK and then in the USA. He proposed that in cognitive functioning, creative intelligence stood apart from general intelligence (p. 22). While radical for its time, and widely debated more recently (see for instance, Amabile, 1996; Csikszentmihalyi, 2004; Briskman, 1981; Wilson, 2004), Lowenfeld proposed that creative intelligence had its own set of traits¹ and was largely a matter of natural unfolding (p. 22). He persuasively argued that the teacher's role in art education was to "kindle the spark" of the child's creativeness while they were prohibited from imparting any adult knowledge of art to the child for fear that their world would become contaminated (Lowenfeld, 1982, pp. 15-16).²

Lowenfeld made the case that it was important for teachers to understand the relation between the selection of materials and associated techniques—the role of experimentation was critical and a child's stage of growth. For Lowenfeld the goal of any experimentation was concerned with how a child would express their own desires that would change with their development.³ Burton (2009) explains that Lowenfeld's proposals provided a means for creative practice to serve the interest of establishing relations between the self and the world. From this perspective an artwork produced by a student was deadened if it were judged as an aesthetic object or if aesthetic regimes were rigidly applied prospectively to creative expression (p. 333).⁴ His vision, Burton proclaims, was "concerned with repairing the world." (p. 333)⁵

Over time, Lowenfeld's theories were put to use in ways that worked with and against the potential of experimentation and creativity. Arthur Efland (1976), for instance, counter intuitively uncovered how self-expression, and by extension experimentation, was widely adopted in art education, ironically because it made few professional demands on teachers. Self-expression and experimentation's popularity escalated as a kind of therapy because there was little expectation of cognitive demand. As a corollary, the critical issue of teacher training competency in art education was repressed (pp. 42-44). Self-expression, as a "school art style", could be viewed in cases where manual activity, albeit untutored, prevailed (p. 42). Artworks could be made in a short time frame, media were easily "experimented with" and manipulated and a wide range of identifiably different objects were produced (p. 42). Michael Youngblood observed that the zeal to "recognise, promote and legitimate individual creative self-expression minimised children's opportunities for art learning" (Youngblood, cited in Weate, 1990, p. 221). As a consequence, a child's access to content was restricted while art education tended to be mistakenly thought about as a less rigorous and sustainable area of study in the curriculum (p. 221).

**A Nsw Art Education
Perspective**

By the late 1980s, writers of the NSW Visual Arts syllabuses (Board of Secondary Education, 1987) adapted a creative problem solving approach to artmaking, underpinned by the belief that the artistic process was largely a natural and an untutored kind of subjective experience, rather than an outcome of artistic understanding. This approach was informed by Dewey (1980), Lowenfeld (1960/1982) and Arnheim's more formalist interests (1974). Subjective experience was enhanced and made objective "through the representational process of reflective thought" (Brown, 1996, p. 2). Under this approach, students were to perceive, respond, organise and manipulate ideas and materials (Board of Secondary Education, 1987, p. 19). Experimentation was viewed as critical to this process, as well as a reflection on its purposes



in the mind of the maker. Despite its popular appeal, Brown (1996) argues that it was “difficult for art teachers to intervene in the student’s creative process as it [was]...always seen as a personal and private kind of imaginative activity” (p. 2). The process account also fell short in providing a framework for negotiating contradictory values in the visual arts (Brown, 1996, p. 3).

Writers of recent syllabuses (Board of Studies, 1995, 1999, 2003) challenged the assumption that meaning in art and art education was primarily a matter of aesthetic and subjective experience. They drew on the radical re-theorisation of artistic understanding within contemporary art practice, conceiving of the visual arts as a nest of practices (Board of Studies, 1995; Brown, 1996). Even so, in the beliefs of students and their teachers, and in the wider popular imagination, it was assumed that the innate psychological resources of students remained largely responsible for their creativity (Thomas, 2008).

Background To This Study

Thomas’s ethnographic studies of creativity as misrecognition in secondary art classrooms provide the background to this current study. These studies are concerned with the ontology of creativity in the day-to-day transactions between teachers and their senior students in the marking of artworks assessed in high stakes assessments including the NSW Higher School Certificate Visual Arts Examination and the Advanced Placement course in the USA (see Thomas, 2008, 2009, 2010).⁶ Contrary to accepted wisdom, these studies reveal that creativity is an “inherently social practice that develops as a product of an embodied, but forgotten, history that is contextually dependent. It accrues in its value in the micro-moments and recursive recapitulations between [the] teachers and students in the genesis of possibilities and in the resolution of the artworks”. (Thomas, 2009, p. 64)

It is against this background that this study seeks empirical evidence of experimentation in creative practice that is transacted between teachers and their students in the social reality of art classrooms.

Bourdieu’s Socio-Cognitive Framework

Thomas’s previous studies, and this study, make use of a socio-cognitive framework underscored by the French sociologist and Realist philosopher, Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of practice and associated concepts of the habitus, symbolic capital, gift exchange and misrecognition. Bourdieu’s concepts foreshadow that there could be more to experimentation in creative practice than that which is caused by the psychology of the student as an originating artist and their reflective mind (see also Briskman, 1981; Brown, 1988; Hausman, 1981; Glickman, 1978). Bourdieu explains the habitus as a socially constituted:

system of cognitive and motivating structures that generate and organise practices and their representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends. (Bourdieu, 1997, p. 52)

The habitus is also referred to as an “embodied history”, which while forgotten as history, functions as an “accumulated capital” (Bourdieu: 1997, p. 56). Bourdieu (1998, pp. 77-78) likens what goes on in a habitus to the actions and thoughts of players who have a “feel for the game”, which is full of “illusion” or “investment.”

Symbolic capital is explained within Bourdieu’s concept of the habitus. Symbolic capital is the currency of exchange in a social economy and is expressed in types of social value underlying the habitus (Brown & Thomas, 1999, p. 2). Bourdieu (1998) takes the case of gift exchange as an example, par excellence, of the exchange of symbolic capital in a social or symbolic economy (p. 94).⁷ He says any kind of gift giving—from the little gifts that bind friendships to the more ritualised and prestigious—creates obligations by indebting people to reciprocate. Nevertheless, this structural truth is repressed *without people knowing it* in acts that appear as unique and unrelated (p. 94). The exchange of a gift presupposes an improvisation and therefore creates a constant uncertainty, which *makes* their charm and social efficacy and/or their magnitude resemble a controlled challenge (Bourdieu, 1997, p. 99). Gift exchange must function within the logic of surprise, or as a spontaneous gesture, and its uncertainty is dependent on timing, with its rhythm, orientation and irreversibility (p.99). It is



based on the fundamental principle of “equality in honour”, which implies the possibility of a continuation, a reply, and a return gift with one who is worthy (p. 100).

Gift exchange demands recognition and reciprocity and it can also fall flat. Bourdieu notes that gifts are often exchanged in escalating stakes as obligations intensify. In gift exchange “economic activity cannot explicitly recognise the economic ends...to which it is objectively oriented” (p. 113). Everything depends on the “taboo of making things explicit” (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 96). It is precisely because the gift’s social value is desired and collectively recognised as legitimate that its economic value is tactfully *misrecognised* in a symbolic economy.

An Application Of Bourdieu’s Theories To The Study Of Experimentation In Creative Practice

Bourdieu’s theories offer a compelling way to revisit teacher-student relations in the habitus of the art classroom. The focus of this study is on how experimentation, within creative practice, functions as a kind of pedagogical gift exchange. Bourdieu’s explanation of gift giving is demonstrably relevant for understanding how transactions between teachers and students could become sites for the exchange of symbolic capital, the efficacy of which is dependent on their being misrecognised as capital in an atmosphere of honour, trust and reciprocity. Thus under certain circumstances, a piece of helpful advice, a suggestion, a warning, a kind gesture, a moment of silence or a laugh that euphemises an action, amongst others, might all be viewed as signs of pedagogical gift exchange.

These transactions achieve their legitimacy because the value of what is exchanged, symbolically, conceptually and materially, is desired and recognised while the “price” is tactfully repressed. Transactions have a potential and actual force to exert powerful effects on the originality of the students’ artworks and the social relations in the classroom.

Design And Methods

The design seeks to capture how experimentation functions in creative practice in the exchange of pedagogical gifts in order that creative ends are realised. Ethnographic methods include data collection from observations of the teachers and their students’ performances (Spradley, 1980); interviews with the key teacher (Spradley, 1979); an examination of the “Smoke and Mirrors” teaching program and previous programs taught in the school; an analysis of the linguistic content of presentations about the project which were augmented by digital records (Pink, 2003); and the use of the grounded narrative (Bruner, 1990). Data collection also involves an analysis of the digital documentation of the artworks produced by the students, at the time of their making and later, when the teachers remade the initial digital animations into a larger digital sequence that was imaginatively interrupted and refilmed and then edited into two short films.

The Sample And The Context

The key teacher, Karen Profilio, Head Teacher Creative Arts at North Sydney Girls’ High School is regarded as an expert performer in art education with a distinguished track record at the local and state level as a head teacher, Supervisor of NSW Higher School Certificate (HSC) Visual Arts marking and HSC examiner, HSC Visual Arts examination committee member, and Co-President of the Visual Arts and Designers Educators’ Association (VADEA, NSW), the state based professional association. The other two teachers include Elspeth Grew (preservice teacher) who was completing the College of Fine Arts’ (COFA) Bachelor of Design/Bachelor of Art Education, administered by COFA’s School of Art History and Art Education (SAHAE), and Amy Yongsiri who had recently completed the same program.

At the time of the study, Elspeth was undertaking a thirteen-week professional experience internship with Karen in the Visual Arts department as part of her program requirements. Amy, while not teaching in the school but brought in for the filming, had undertaken the same placement with Karen two years previously. These young teachers were therefore well attuned to the habitus of the art classrooms and teacher-student relations at North Sydney Girls’ High School under Karen’s leadership. Kerry Thomas had had professional relations with each of these teachers in her role as a Senior Lecturer in the SAHAE and as the Internship Coordinator of the program. Her professional and collegial relationship with Karen had extended over thirty years. Kerry was well versed in how the habitus, while forgotten, could



be embodied in the historical relations between the teachers and students (Bourdieu, 1997, p. 56).

Under the guidance of Karen and her teachers, the Visual Arts Department facilitates a culture that values the production of innovative artworks in diverse media. Conceptual and material challenges are de rigueur.⁸ Photographic and Digital Media (Board of Studies, 2004), the elective subject in which this “Smoke and Mirrors” program was taught, complements the Visual Arts elective. This elective provides specialisation and depth of study in analogue and digital media (still and moving), facilitated by an interdependent framework that focuses on practices, theories, beliefs, values and the agencies of artists, artworks, the world and audiences (Board of Studies, 2003, 2004). Both Visual Arts and Photography and Digital Media are available to students in Years 9 and 10 and act as a springboard for further study in Visual Arts in Years 11 and 12.

The fifteen Year 9 students in the class were highly motivated. They had participated previously in programs that included “Constructing Evidence” where they authored a crime scene story which explored the notion of “truth” in photography and considered how narratives are fabricated using two concurrent aspects: fact and supposition. All students had undertaken the 100-hour mandatory course in Visual Arts in Years 7 and 8. As part of their mandatory course they had participated in a Dada based performance. Thus, the students had some understanding about how art could be informed by chance, the absurd and the subconscious, amongst other things.

Details On The Teaching Program “Smoke And Mirrors”

“Smoke and Mirrors”⁹ was designed as a collaborative project between Karen and Elspeth for the Year 9 class of Photography and Digital Media students. The aim of the project was for students to reveal a secret and to develop a dreamscape animation. Students were encouraged to experiment with digital stop motion animation and projections, in a way that referenced “Post Secret”, the symbolic and graphic effects of the Surrealists, and Tony Oursler’s public projects and after dark smoke installations. Their animations and projections were intended to create a dramatic impact.

The program began with students examining the psychology of dreams and the work of Miro, de Chirico and Dali. They made short experimental animations where imagery from a Surrealist painting of their choice was animated using Photoshop and Premiere Elements. Students kept a dream diary for two weeks where they, drawing on the Surrealist tradition of using the subconscious as a powerful source for making art, graphically documented their dreams and/or daily interpretations of the world. They also investigated contemporary artists who adapted Surrealist concepts and methods, building the contemporary actuality and relevance of what they were taking on.

As the program unfolded, students took on more complex challenges, both conceptually and materially and the teachers scaffolded opportunities to this end.¹⁰ Imagery derived from the early experiments of animating the Surrealist paintings was adapted and transfigured in the dreamscape animations. Students also had a first hand opportunity to understand how adaptations could be made across mediums—from the still to moving image—transforming their own intentions and making these anew. They were expected to include text,¹¹ combine Photoshop altered images and hand drawn/paper animations in their dreamscapes and encouraged to use sound to enhance the atmosphere of their works.

The project had a further incentive as it was to be submitted as Elspeth’s Art Education Curriculum Project, a requirement of COFA’s Professional Experience Internship. It had attracted funding from SAHAE to enhance classroom possibilities. Thus, the stakes were high for the program to be successfully realised for the students, the key teacher, and her preservice teacher.

Findings And Their Interpretation

The findings and interpretation is briefly characterised below. The approach attempts to balance the contradictory demands of providing the reader with a “vicarious experience” of how experimentation in creative practice functions as a kind of gift exchange while respecting the word limit for this paper (Bruner, 1990, p. 50).



Implementation Of The Program

Findings show that there are all kinds of helpful assistance that the teachers offered to the students in making digital stop motion animations while the program was being taught, even though they refused to make too much of it. Assistance included suggestions about different aspects of imagery that might be adapted and experimented with, selected from Surrealist artists with reference to particular artworks. It also included step-by-step instructions about how the students would use the animation programs; graphic direction about effects and storyboarding; and technical recommendations about lighting, incremental movements in a sequence, and adapting to changes in scale. The teachers' suggestions and advice not only built the students' skills base but also scaffolded the elasticity of their thinking, assisting them to make powerful practical and abstract connections while provoking them about what might be possible in the making these digital animations.

Different types of support, suited to contingencies as they arose, made a virtue of the teachers' abilities to improvise in ways that mutually accorded with the interests of the artworld while hedging against uncertainty in what the students' produced. These actions spurred the class on, acting as little gifts that bound the students and their teachers to one another, while fuelling their common purposes. Karen commented "everyone had a stake in it, everyone had a part to play". The actions of the teachers lent authority to the students' intentions and, in turn, built their further commitments to the project and what they took on. Paradoxically, in making these animations students became increasingly reliant on their teachers' suggestions. This resulted in the animations being "unique" and readily identifiable but within a visually and aesthetically rich and recognisable house style.

There was nothing mechanical about the transactions between the teachers and their students, although they formed a regular pattern of exchange, inscribing the future action as if it were already in the present. Reciprocity between the teachers and students was pivotal in what took place. These transactions occurred within the logic of a surprise (e.g., "Have a look at this!"), as spontaneous gestures (e.g., "Here you go, try it with this."), and as disinterested exchanges (e.g., "It might be better if you made that larger."). Few if any, students made unnecessary demands on their teachers, nor did they take the liberty of expecting support, as if it were a watertight guarantee. As with gift exchange, those involved needed to negotiate this duplicated logic, sensing when to ask and when not, nuancing the social order of the classroom.

In return, the students and their teachers recognised and celebrated the achievements of individuals and the group. Karen for instance, publicly acknowledged that she "would be happy if Year 12 students were to produce works as good as these", recognising their achievements while, conceivably, underplaying the collective and structuring agency of the teachers. Everyone was advantaged by this mutual collaboration. Paradoxically, students took the credit for what they produced, while tactfully acknowledging the kindness of their teachers. It was as if the students were responsible for their own creative autonomy.

Post Program

The subsequent combining of the students' animations by the teachers revealed a virtuoso case of building on the students' performances by raising the stakes in what they produced. To begin with Elspeth assembled the students' animations into a larger continuous digital work. This video sequence was to be re-filmed in Karen's darkened art classroom, where a data projector would be used for the projection and the refilming would be spot lit by artificial light.

A smoke machine was to be used, in a way that made an asset of the reference to the contemporary smoke installations of Tony Oursler. The smoke, intended to evoke the fragmentary and temporal nature of dreams, also contributed to the work's eerie and imaginative effects. Amy was called in for the filming and the task appeared quite straightforward. However, problems arose because the light was not concentrated enough and the effects of the smoke were reduced in their impact. Karen reflected: "I was standing there, looking around the room and thinking, we've got this smoke machine and we've got Amy to film. It's not working...What are we going to do?" She went on: "so we had this old suitcase...and I said "let's try this"...so we just tried things. "Let's drop things in front. What about that shadow?"

An old plastic skeleton, from a Science lab, was placed in front of an animation that was concerned with the transitory nature of time, intensifying the symbols and effects. Red feathers were dropped in front of another animation, representing a change in the seasons or perhaps the mercurial power of passion. An old birdcage was suspended and cast haunting shadowy lines over



another animation, hinting at the fear of confinement or the freedom of release. Steel washers were dangled from above in a number of the animations, creating a shadow puppet like effect similar to a Wayang play or an early Boltanski installation. Karen's deliberately collected "junk"—the old suitcase, the birdcage, skeleton and so on—was imported into the experimental and creative possibilities. Karen later commented: "we just wanted to see how far we could go...I don't think we could have managed the same spontaneity if we did it again", underplaying their agency and her control of resources in her classroom but recognising their impact. After one-two hours of filming the teachers stopped. Post production, Amy would edit the work into two films of 3 and 5-minutes duration and include sound to overlay what the students had selected for their own dreamscape animations.

At a later date, Karen thought about the longer-term impact of the project, tacitly inferring how the habitus had become more intentional; and how the students' identities were made—by what they produced and how the works were valued. These students would go on to attend courses in animation at the University of Technology and participated in the Teen Jury for an International Animation Festival. One would win a place in the Quickflicks Film Festival. Karen mused: "They were always doing that little bit more than what was required; making a show reel of all their work, making little films to show on the screen outside the Visual Arts department as a promo for Photographic and Digital Media in the school. I think a lot of this bond was developed through this project and their related success in it. I went that bit further for them so they did for me too."

The teachers' actions were strategic, timely and paid tribute to the students' interests. The students reciprocated in ways that honoured their teachers and showed that they were up to the challenge. The teachers gave back by challenging the students even more in an iterative web of structuring influence in a situation of escalating stakes that built collective expectations. What the teachers produced in reassembling the students' animations, through their experimental efforts, built the overall credit of the collaborative work and captivated the students. This was because the final films were visually and aesthetically "exciting", but it was also because of the recognition the students received. As a consequence, the students and their teachers became more tightly beholden to one another. The students went on in ways that built on this embodied, albeit, largely forgotten history.

What the teachers did was the only thing to do (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 192). They imported all kinds of "creative capital", as material and conceptual innovations that were underscored by "tactical intelligence", "imminent necessity", and their ability to experiment, the results of which accorded with the students' and their own interests (Bourdieu, 1997, p. 113). The teachers could not let each other or the students down. Karen commented with reference to the evening of refilming: "we all sparked off each other".

In turn, the teachers' generosity was greeted by an overwhelming sense of excitement. It propelled the students on to participate, knowing all the while that their efforts would be thought of as their own. This had a function in enhancing their performances in the shorter and longer term. Rather than being offended by the fact that their digital animations were 'touched' or violated in a Lowenfeldian sense by the teachers, the students were delighted. As Karen stated: "They couldn't believe it [the digital sequence] looked so professional, so much was happening, [with] so much going on in the frame when they knew what they started with."

Conclusion

The teachers and students desired the artworks to be successful. Experimentation stirred up new possibilities. It was irreducible to the students' psychological traits or a natural unfolding. What was produced was historically dependent, a kind of "relational art" that was underscored by the interactions and encounters between the teachers and their students in the reality of their social context (Bourriaud, 2002, p. 14; Althusser quoted by Bourriaud, 2002, p. 15).

Dialectical collaboration between the expert teacher, her new teachers, and the students, produced linked artistic practices that formed up into a coherent system, whose sense held good. This collaboration was inherently political and depended upon the dynamics of the group, which was redeemed through success (Brown, 1988, p. 58). While the teachers' actions appeared full of risk, and could be viewed as antithetical, they were a necessary condition in the production of artworks that were not only regarded as highly innovative and experimental but which were also identified for their value in advancing the students' creative interests.



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Endnotes

- ¹ See for instance, Barron 1976; Eisner 1966; Getzels & Jackson 1962; Guilford 1966; and Torrance 1978.
- ² Lowenfeld warned that teachers should “never prefer one child’s creative work over another. Never give the work of one child as an example to another. Never let a child copy anything!” (Lowenfeld, 1970: 55).
- ³ Thus, the intentions of an eight year old who was searching for their own concepts and the emotional significance associated with for instance, a tree or man in a painting, might be interfered with by the technical accident of running paint because the effect could potentially destroy the child’s concept and their expression. This same “accident” for a twelve-year-old might provide the source of stimulation. Lowenfeld said that this was because the student was more integrated with their environment, socially and mentally, and the accident provided for discoveries about dramatic expression relative to the visual environment and the shoring up of effects. He reasoned that by the age of sixteen years, the student was not only critically aware of their environment but also of the work they produced. Thus, the student had for instance, definite intentions to express a response to an emotional experience but also a critical sense of how they wanted the work to look (Lowenfeld, 1949, pp. 1-4).
- ⁴ In Lowenfeld’s view, a student’s sensibilities would be cultivated through experimentation and self-expression. As a consequence their capacities for refinement as a human being in a world of peace would be enhanced, along with their spiritual life and ability to live cooperatively.
- ⁵ In retrospect it not so surprising that Lowenfeld would hold this position given his own lived experience.
- ⁶ The assessment of these artworks is framed within the intentions of the NSW Visual Arts Stage 6 syllabus (Board of Studies, 2003).
- ⁷ Bourdieu’s use of the gift is extended to words, challenges, insults and other retorts (Bourdieu, 1997, p. 100).
- ⁸ For instance, see examples from the North Sydney Girls’ High School’s website: schools.nsw.edu.au/public/Slicesof7/index.html, and <http://web2.northsydgih.schools.nsw.edu.au/public/Visual%20Arts%20Site/Enter/!!START%20HERE!.html>
- ⁹ A range of examples from the program were showcased in the presentation at NIEA’s Experimental Arts conference on August 19, 2011.
- ¹⁰ Students were assessed at various stages of the project, which contributed to keeping up the momentum while facilitating future possibilities.
- ¹¹ The use of text in artworks could be viewed as one of the hallmarks of works produced in this school. This program built on this tradition with text used in aesthetically rich and graphically evocative ways.



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Karen Profilio has a distinguished record as a Visual Arts teacher and teaches at North Sydney Girls High School, where she is Head Teacher, Creative Arts. She has been teaching since 1977 and has had experience in a wide variety of schools. Karen has been involved in many aspects of art teaching practice in and beyond the classroom including serving as HSC Visual Arts Supervisor of Marking, member of the HSC Examination Committee, and Critical Friend at the AGNSW. She has been an ongoing mentor and cooperating teacher for practicum students from COFA, UNSW and other universities over many years. Karen is currently Co-President (Advocacy, Support and Membership), of the Visual Arts and Design Educators' Association, NSW (VADEA). She continues to advocate against the Australian Curriculum and Assessment Authority's (ACARA) current proposals for the Arts, identifying how they diminish expectations for learning and teaching in the Visual Arts and in the other artforms.

