

Student work from British School of Design, 1840. R. W. Herman, black and white chalk drawing. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Redefining the *Artist-Teacher*

Artist-Teacher or Teaching Artist?

Artist-Teacher is a powerful and frequently used term in the fields of art, museum studies, art history, and art education. Art educators typically use the term to describe their dual practice or to emphasize the importance of art production in relation to their teaching. In this context, artist-teacher can be a more elaborate title for art teacher. Despite this popular practice, I seek to discuss the conceptual underpinnings of *artist-teacher*. As I understand it, the term *artist-teacher* involves a philosophy of teaching based upon artistic practice. A notion seasoned art educators and students should seriously consider when contemplating their teaching methodologies. In the majority of instances, *artist-teacher* describes various possibilities of balancing the roles of making and teaching about art (Anderson, 1981; Beer, 1999; Brown, 1990; Campbell, 2003; Cho, 1993; Day, 1986; Dohm, 2000; Douglass, 2004; Hansel, 2005; Kent, 2001; Lund, 1993; Smith, 1980; Szekeley, 1978; Tucker, 1998; Weiss, 2001; Wolfe, 1995; Zwirn, 2002). Unfortunately, current uses of the term imply that art teachers cannot *do* what they *teach*. Emphasizing the word *artist* in one's title

clarifies the importance of creating art. This assumes art education is best when practicing artists are in charge and disregards the importance of the education field. In fact, the term may be considered elitist, used to describe a select group of individuals capable of practicing a dual career. As a philosophy of teaching, artist-teacher is not considered a dual role but it involves the integration of artistic experiences in the classroom. Several scholars touch upon this interaction (Daichendt, 2009; Hansel, 2005; Hickman, 2005; Horne, 1916), including Chapman (1963) who sees these two activities—teaching and making art—actually supporting one another, despite being difficult to balance.

In this article, I review historical uses of the term *artist-teacher* in an effort to re-contextualize its origins since George Wallis' (1811-1891) first use of the term. Based on this review, I propose that the concept of *artist-teacher* can suggest an approach to art education that celebrates artistic practices and artistic ways of thinking into the classroom. In this manner, *artist-teacher* represents a more inclusive and richer understanding of the multifaceted aspects of teaching art. In conclusion, my goal is to reintroduce the concept of the *artist-teacher* to a 21st-century audience of art educators unfamiliar with its rich history.

BY G. JAMES DAICHENDT

George Wallis, a 19th-century art teacher, combined both artist and teacher in describing his educational philosophy (Wallis, 1845). His actions, and the subsequent use of the term *artist-teacher* by his contemporaries, significantly affect our current understanding of the term in the 21st century. Wallis applied his artistic aptitude to solve practical issues in the classroom. Learning to draw by himself, Wallis used these experiences in his teaching. Utilizing the blackboard to demonstrate the drawing process, students were facilitated through a progression of exercises that increased in difficulty. This was followed by criticism in order for students to learn from their errors and shortcomings (Daichendt, 2009). Applying the practical learning experiences from Wallis' drawing background in the classroom demonstrates one example of artistic enterprises informing the teaching methodology. The increased importance of teaching as a profession and the study of educational methods sets the stage for the invention of *artist-teacher* that designates equal importance to the role of both art production and teaching.

*Artists
recognized the limitations
inherent to the guild traditions
and sought better educational
opportunities. Clubs became
laboratories for thought,
producing a new generation
of artists and teachers.*

Through history, shifting perspectives in art and educational theory allow us to see many different vantage points. From [the times of] ancient craftsmen to current day, influential events include the birth of the modern conception of artist during the Renaissance, arts' acceptance into the liberal arts, and the educational philosophies propagated by the Basic Design Movement in Britain and the Bauhaus in Germany. All these contributed to a view of art education in which studio activities and experiences of artists became experiences in classrooms (Daichendt, 2009).

Western Origins

The earliest art teachers did not see themselves as artists. Ancient Greeks and Romans considered themselves artisans who made their living in industry (Efland, 1990; Macdonald, 1970). The characteristics of creativity, originality, and genius associated with artists during Modernism were not prevalent. Typically, these early creators (potters, sculptors, and painters) acquired their skills apprenticing at a family workshop, rather than in a school. The artistic process was considered a trade with conventions and traditions taught and passed on to younger generations (Kristeller, 1951). Often a father would mentor his sons, or on occasion, someone from outside the family interested in learning the specific trade (Efland, 1990). The craftsmen and sculptors who created objects sought to teach these skills for practical means, ensuring economic stability rather than self-expression. While little is known of the teaching methods used, it is likely that workshops strongly promoted and stimulated learning a desired craft.

During the Middle Ages, the Catholic Church sought to suppress the surviving models of pagan art and culture that prospered in the Greek and Roman periods. Classical sculpture, painting, and education during this time entered a period of decline because of the indifference medieval Christians held toward Greek and Roman education (Efland, 1990; Cordasco, 1987). The graphic and decorative arts survived through the work of monasteries as way to illustrate or illuminate the messages of the Bible to the illiterate (Stalley, 1999). The emergence of craft guilds resulted from specialization of industry and an increased development of trade (Kleiner, Mamiya, &

Tansey, 2001). The apprentice system was used in this context to teach young people specific skills, including the various manifestations of the arts and crafts. Students were called *apprentices* and could spend several years at this level eventually progressing to the status of *journeyman*. The teacher was referred to as a *master* and was the only member of the workshop to train students.

The artist of the Middle Ages was also a craftsman. The goal was to teach a trade, without emphasis on improving the teaching process. It is possible that apprentices remained in that role for a very long time because the guilds sought to limit and control the labor supply (Efland, 1990). Bell (1963) writes that the young painter in a guild regarded himself as an artificer and manual laborer with the goal of becoming a quality craftsman. An apprentice could toil away mixing pigments without learning much of the trade and educational innovation was likely overlooked unless it increased production or income. As with the Greeks and Romans, a workshop may have facilitated artistic growth but poor working conditions may have had a negative impact on the learning process. This detrimental atmosphere is one reason for the emergence of art academies in the Renaissance (Goldstein, 1996).

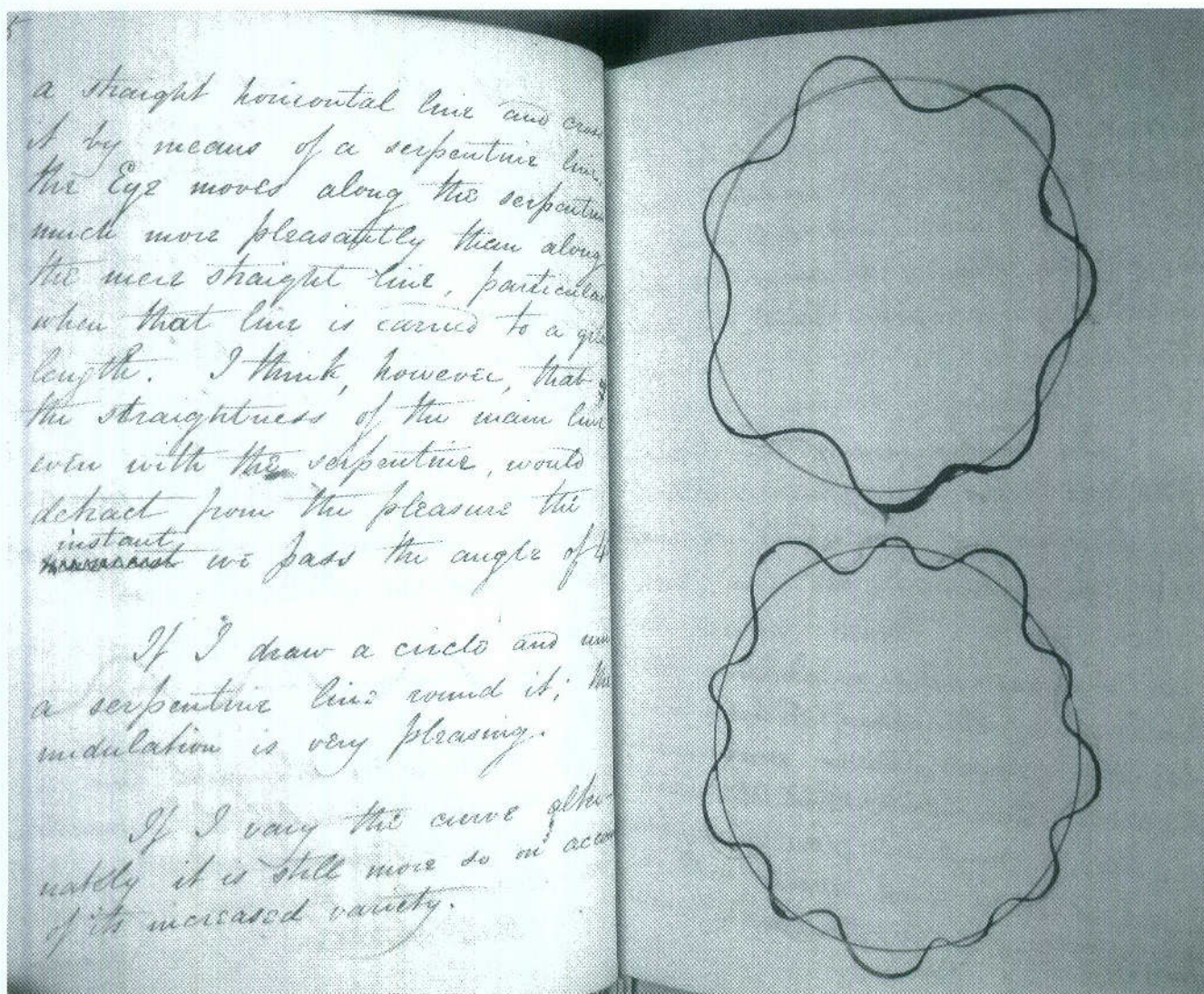
Artistic training during the Renaissance developed over a length of time in the guilds. From the 14th-16th centuries, apprentices of sculpture or painting continued to become professional craftspeople under a master (Kleiner, Mamiya, & Tansey, 2001). However, new opportunities arose to gain artistic skills; artist clubs and academies appeared around this time in Italy. Painters, sculptors, and musicians frequented artist clubs, along with members of the upper class, to discuss issues related to music and poetry (Goldstein, 1996). These alternative contexts for learning were a substitute to the restrictive guilds and represented a significant educational experience. Artists recognized the limitations inherent to the guild traditions and sought better educational opportunities. Clubs became laboratories for thought, producing a new generation of artists and teachers. This progression formed the foundation for artistic thought, allowing George Wallis to see himself as an artist-teacher in the 19th century.

The art academy of 16th-century Florence was more informal than the rigorous and rigid 17th-century Paris academy with a curriculum built on a doctrine of perfection. Historian Thomas Hess (1967) wrote "...the new Renaissance ideas in the arts were controversial and aggressively supported—which inevitably led those who championed them into teaching" (p. 9). These ideas were a strong contrast to guild regulations, apprenticeships, and limited opportunities. Artists sought an education that was not subject to a 5- to 7-year apprenticeship and took refuge in a more personalized education (Macdonald, 1970). Practicing theory and instruction, the art academies of the Italian Renaissance believed the fine arts were foremost an intellectual discipline and the artist was no longer a manual worker. Painting was arguably part of the liberal arts including grammar, rhetoric, dialectics, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music (Staniszewski, 1995). Many private academies were founded in the 16th and 17th centuries espousing similar theories but the Rome academy, reformed by Pope Urban VII, was the most influential until artists began to prefer Paris (Macdonald, 1970).

During the 18th century, art academies became the primary source of art instruction (Goldstein, 1996). Almost every large city in France founded an academy during this period, with Paris as the prime example. Keeping a relationship with Rome, the French Academy of the 18th and 19th centuries sought to organize these theories and doctrines into a set of rules for practicing and teaching (Small, 1999). Students studied classical sculpture and progressed through increasingly difficult compositions and drawing assignments. The art education practiced by the French academy becomes the standard for many students of art around the world, as an academy was present on every continent (Macdonald, 1970).

Portrait of George Wallis (taken 1843-45). Courtesy of Manchester Metropolitan University.





Page from George Wallis' lecture notes illustrating the Extension of Artistic Endeavors (sketching) into the Educational Context (lesson planning).

Contemporary writers refer to art teachers of the Renaissance and European academies as *instructors, teachers, masters, professors, and tutors* (Ackerman, 2003; Elkins, 2001; Efland, 1990; Hess, 1967; Macdonald, 1970; Milner, 1988; Small, 1999). French instructors officially held the title of *membre* or *professeur* at an institute or academy like the *École des Beaux-Arts in Paris* (Ackerman, 2003). The highest position of honor was called an *académicien*, an elected member of the academy comparable to the medieval guild master in status. Additionally, the academicians of *ateliers* were referred to as *master* or *patron/father* (Hess, 1967). It was not until the late 18th century that the first academy of art opened in the United States.

In England, the first class to prepare teachers of design was established in 1841. These teachers were trained to replace older academic drawing masters, as they were unfit to teach the new curriculum advocated by schools of design (Macdonald, 1970). The opening of this course for art teachers is significant because it introduced a different dimension. Instead of training artists or designers, this class sought to prepare teachers to work within the burgeoning schools of design. This teacher preparation course is an early example of two fields (art and education) coming together in an unusual manner during the 19th century.

A graduate of this teacher preparation course, George Wallis was the first head of a

school of design and referred to himself as an *artist-teacher* (Macdonald, 1970). Wallis began his career as both an artist and designer, inventing the Victoria Tea Tray shape and holding an active painting career. Educationally, he was involved in the re-organization of curricula to benefit student learning, development of teaching strategies based on artistic practice, and promotion of creativity amongst his students (Wallis, 1845). By labeling himself as an *artist-teacher*, instead of *artist*, he stressed the growing importance of teaching and the metamorphosis of the art and education fields.

Once the field of art education developed a teacher-training course for prospective educators, it provided an opportunity to focus on the craft of teaching. Wallis explored this new role by embracing his artistic and educational interests.

Significant Artist-Teachers

Contemporary historians commonly use the term *artist-teacher* (Efland, 1990; Elkins, 2001; Logan, 1955; Macdonald, 1970). The term "artist" has been added to teacher in describing many significant individuals. According to Logan (1955), Walter Gropius is referred to as one of the most important artist-teachers in history, and the most influential on contemporary art (Elkins, 2001). Recognized as founder of the Bauhaus, a school that sought to overcome the division between art and craft and the divide between art and industry, Gropius is labeled an artist-teacher for melding disciplines that did not formerly work well together.

Efland (1990) provides a list of artist-teachers from the early 20th century that includes: Victor D'Amico, Natalie Cole, Florence Cane, Peppino Mangravite, and Marion Richardson. According to this specialized group of artist-teachers, artists were the most appropriate persons to foster the creative capacities of the child as opposed to classroom teachers. Developing creative self-expression was the method used to foster the development of the child as an artist. These artist-teachers felt that the educational establishment/methods in effect during the early 20th century stifled the natural expression of students and proposed a new method for the child progress (Efland, 1990). The artists' experience in studio was essential for understanding students' artistic growth and therefore, identifying teachable moments in the classroom.

Debating the Terminology

Lanier (1959) addressed the use in the US of the term *artist-teachers* by art educators. He condemned the new term as not having a place in the field of art education. In his view, an artist was quite different from an art teacher. Lanier was worried that the term would have negative implications because art education did not belong to the field of education and classroom teachers might feel inferior to artists. Two months later, a rebuttal by McCracken (1959) was published suggesting *artist-teacher* was a concept rather than a descriptive term. McCracken felt that the emergence of the *artist-teacher* term was based upon the positive effects of artistic activity and on the educational experience. This debate was based on two different understandings. As a term, *artist-teacher* implied that professional teachers must also

be professional artists. As a concept, it reinforced the importance of creative activity for the profession. The concept advocated by McCracken (1959) aligns with historical arguments. Artist-teacher is an inclusive educational philosophy and not one that emphasizes a particular educational background or professional role.

Going Forward

The interest by researchers (Anderson, 1981; Beer, 1999; Brown, 1990; Campbell, 2003; Cho, 1993; Daichendt, 2009; Day, 1986; Dohm, 2000; Douglas, 2004; Hansel, 2005; Kent, 2001; Lanier, 1959; Lund, 1993; McCracken, 1959; Smith, 1980; Szekely, 1978; Tucker, 1998; Weiss, 2001; Wolfe, 1995; Zwirn, 2002) in the term *artist-teacher* illustrates the significance of the term. The development of the concept artist-teacher traces back to the beginnings of artistic production in history. Artists have always taught their trade, craft, or discipline. However, once the field of art education developed a teacher-training course for prospective educators, it provided an opportunity to focus on the craft of teaching. Wallis explored this new role by embracing his artistic and educational interests.

Wallis' use provides a starting point for understanding characteristics of the artist-teacher. These characteristics are general, including attributes used throughout history yet specific to Wallis' pedagogy. They relate to and draw upon similarities to artist-teachers working through history. The list here could be applied to artist-teachers working in contemporary settings as well as in Wallis' 19th-century context.

- Teaching should be a direct extension of studio life.
- Classrooms should be modeled on the practices of artist and designers.
- Teaching is an aesthetic process: Artists-teachers manipulate classroom techniques, materials, and characteristics similar to the artist's manipulation of the elements and principles of design.
- Artist-teachers apply artistic aptitudes (drawing, painting, performance) in

educational contexts (classrooms, boardrooms, planning sessions, mentorship opportunities, teaching processes, research practices) to enrich the learning experience. Example: exploring lessons in a sketchbook.

The notion of artist-teacher is about bringing together studio practices, problems, and art world discussions to improve learning. The variety of methods practiced by artist-teachers in the classroom reflects the range of artistic approaches artists utilize.

Artist-teachers certainly share characteristics with traditional understandings of art teachers. Teachers who embrace their own artistic aptitudes and value the connections between studio and classroom can create a classroom experience that utilizes individual artmaking interests. In fact, Wallis' reflections on his own artistic triumphs and failures as a working designer allowed him to design curriculum that met the needs of 19th-century students. The concept of artist-teacher can be encompassing of the qualities of an art teacher and also of the unique aspects of being a reflective artist.

As the artist-teacher is positioned between two fields, the genius of the concept is in the middle ground where traditional understandings of education and artmaking fuse. These characteristics are present in the practice of many art teachers who embrace their personal artistic practices. In this manner, contemporary art educators who subscribe to this orientation can constantly reinvent what they do and how they do it in classrooms. Despite this, the term *artist-teacher* will continue to be debated regarding its meaning and usage. However, inspired by George Wallis' earliest uses of the term, I have hoped to allow his understandings provide the lenses for understanding the possibilities of this concept for art education today, and perhaps in the future.

G. James Daichendt is Associate Professor and Exhibition Director at Azusa Pacific University, Azusa, California. E-mail: gdaichendt@apu.edu

REFERENCES

- Ackerman, G. M. (2003). *Charles Bargue with the collaboration of Jean-Léon Gérôme drawing course*. Paris: ACR Edition.
- Anderson, C. H. (1981). The identity crisis of the art educator: Artist? Teacher? Both? *Art Education*, 34(4), 45-46.
- Beer, R. S. (1999). *Landscape and identity: Three artist/teachers in British Columbia*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, The University of British Columbia, Canada.
- Bell, Q. (1963). *The schools of design*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Brown, K. H. (1990). *Lotte Lehmann: Artist teacher*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Missouri, Kansas City, Missouri.
- Campbell, L. H. (2003). *Portraits of visual artist/teachers: Spirituality in art education*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Illinois.
- Chapman, L. (1963). Becoming and being a teacher of art. *Art Education*, 16(7), 18-20.
- Cheung, M. G. (1999). *Pilgrimage of an artist-teacher: Cecile Staub Genhart as remembered by her students*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Arizona State University.
- Cho, J. M. (1993). *Hans Hofmann and Josef Albers: The significance of their examples as artist-teachers*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Columbia University, Teachers College, New York.
- Cordasco, F. (1987). *A brief history of education*. Totowa, NJ: Littlefield, Adams & Co.
- Daichendt, G. J. (2009). *Artist-teacher George Wallis: Redefining the concept through history*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York.
- Day, M. D. (1986). Artist-teacher: A problematic model for art education. *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 20(4), 38-42.
- Dohm, A. M. E. (2000). *Career skills needed to be a successful artist: Finding links between art teachers' practices and artists' beliefs*. Unpublished master's thesis, The University of Arizona.
- Douglass, M. B. (2004). *Professional artists as teachers with at-risk youth: A narrative case study*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, North Carolina State University, North Carolina.
- Efland, A. (1990). *A history of art education: Intellectual and social currents in teaching the visual arts*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Elkins, J. (2001). *Why art cannot be taught*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Erickson, M. (1979). An historical explanation of the schism between research and practice in art education. *Studies in Art Education*, 20(2), 5-13.
- Goldstein, C. (1996). *Teaching art: Academies and schools from Vasari to Albers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hansel, L. B. (2005). *An investigation into the role of the artist in secondary art education*. Unpublished master's thesis, Rhode Island School of Design.
- Hess, T. B. (1967). Some academic questions. In T. B. Hess and J. Ashbery (Eds.), *The academy: Five centuries of grandeur and misery, from the Carracci to Mao Tse-tung* (pp. 8-18). New York: Macmillan.
- Hickman, R. (2005). *Why we make art and why it is taught*. Bristol, UK: Intellect Books.
- Horne, H. H. (1916). *The teacher as artist: An essay in education as an aesthetic process*. New York: Houghton Mifflin.
- Kent, L. A. (2001). *The case of Lucio Pozzi: An artist/teacher's studio critique method*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Columbia University, Teachers College, New York.
- Kleiner, F. S., Mamiya, C. J., & Tansey, R. G. (2001). *Gardner's art through the ages* (11th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing.
- Kristeller, P. O. (1951). The modern system of the arts: A study in the history of aesthetics (I). *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 12(4), 496-527.
- Lanier, V. (1959). Affectation and art education. *Art Education*, 12(7), 10, 21.
- Logan, F. M. (1955). *Growth of art in American schools*. New York: Harper & Brothers.
- Lund, K. A. (1993). *Transition from artist to artist teacher: A case study of graduate student studio teaching*. Unpublished master's thesis, The University of Arizona.
- Macdonald, S. (1970). *The history and philosophy of art education*. London: University of London Press.
- McCracken, W. (1959). Artist-teacher: A symptom of growth in art education. *Art Education*, 12(9), 4-5.
- Milner, J. (1988). *The studios of Paris*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Pujol, E. (2001). The artist as educator: Challenges in museum-based residences. *Art Journal*, 60(3), 4-7.
- Sharman, F. (2007). *George Wallis: A pioneer of art industry. Lives of local people*. Retrieved April 10, 2007, from <http://www.localhistory.scit.wlv.ac.uk/genealogy/wallis/wallis00.htm>
- Small, L. (1999). *Highlights from the Daresh museum of art*. New York: Daresh Museum.
- Smith, R. A. (1980, March). The "deschooling" of art education: How it's happening and what to do about it. *Art Education*, 33(3), 8-10.
- Stalley, R. (1999). *Early medieval architecture*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Staniszewski, M. A. (1995). *Believing is seeing: Creating the culture of art*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Szekely, G. (1978). Uniting the roles of artist and teacher. *Art Education*, 31(1), 17-20.
- Tucker, F. H. (1998). *Janice Harsanyi: Profile of an artist/teacher*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, The Ohio State University.
- Wallis, G. (1845). *A letter to the council of the Manchester school of design on the system of instruction pursued in that school*. London: Published by the Council of The Manchester School of Design.
- Weiss, C. J. (2001). *The evolution of post-baccalaureate students' conception of the artist-teacher role during a teacher certification program*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Minnesota.
- Wolfe, M. S. (1995). *A really good art teacher would be like you, Mrs. C: A qualitative study of an artist-teacher and her gifted middle school students*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Purdue University, Indiana.
- Zwirn, S. G. (2002). *To be or not to be: The teacher-artist conundrum*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Columbia University, Teachers College, New York.



COPYRIGHT INFORMATION

TITLE: Redefining the Artist Teacher
SOURCE: Art Educ 62 no5 S 2009

The magazine publisher is the copyright holder of this article and it is reproduced with permission. Further reproduction of this article in violation of the copyright is prohibited.