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Laying Down the Line Work

Joy Manesiotis, an art college graduate, studied the art of line; its winding, curvaceous path, its fluid strokes that make up a masterpiece. No matter what form the line takes, it remains the foundation for all creative works. Following suit, art college mimics the line's nature: taking many forms but serving as many artists' starting point. Artists, and the society they inhabit, must analyze their foundation's importance.

Society benefits from art college. Without art college, art, for which society so desperately lives, drops in quality and quantity. From lavish botanical gardens bursting with greenery to museums filled with magna opera from present and past, to impassioned scribbles hung on refrigerator doors, society craves and enjoys art. Art fuels imagination and allows breathing room. Dennis Atkinson, a professor at Goldsmiths University of London, states, “[Art] provoke[s] and challenge[s] our understanding of skill and technique, [it] [queries] the idea of the artist and the art object, the object and the spectator; [it] encourage[s] us to think about who we are.” Art colleges house and produce skilled, eager artists ready to contribute their creations. Demonstrating this view’s authenticity, Kate Oakley, a creative professor at the University of Glasgow, claims, “Among the attitudes [found in art students] were the importance of freedom and experimentation in one’s work, the status of an artist as an outsider, and the superiority of art over forms of activity” (281). The outsiders watch from afar, spectate opportunities, and act when they deem necessary.

Artists play a vital role in society. They act as the quiet and the vivacious, the dreamers and the doers, the eccentrics, and the embellishers. No artists, no art. Susan M. Rostan, a visual artist and

educational researcher, notes that whether artists, particularly art students, direct their focus on aesthetics or the cognitive structures, they remain “characterized by a natural talent” (268). She describes artists as “productive paradoxes,” always itching to hatch a new idea (262). Karen Moltenbrey, senior technical editor of *Computer Graphics World*, wholeheartedly agrees, stating that “...young, developing artists are full of potential, they just need a foundation.” When artists receive no starting ground or lessons, their art never evolves. Their line work lays down an irregular, unorganized path.

Artists benefit from art college. Wide-eyed and filled to the brim with ambition, budding artists need a positive, constructive outlet for their creative energy; a strong, fluid line. Art college, a known safe haven for creative types, gives artists an opportunity to absorb themselves in a creative environment they otherwise cannot take part in. Shane Hulbert, an associate professor of photography at RMIT University, further details, “Fine art education provides students with opportunities to acquire knowledge and skills to respond creatively to their experience of society and culture.” Donal O’Donoghue, assistant professor and chair of art education at the University of British Columbia, agrees that a proper art education “gives flight to a young artist’s aspirations” (83). Art college teaches artists necessary skills they must employ if they want their art to evoke emotional, mental, and physical depth or significance. A paint’s vibrant hue holds almost no meaning when thoughtlessly used. According to Vicky Gunn, head of learning and teaching at The Glasgow School of Art, the three ingredients of learning within art and design present themselves as key: “reason, aesthetics, and making” (317). **Because art college fuels creativity and provides a space for artists to hone their craft, it benefits society.**

Applying to an art college successfully necessitates a well-rounded portfolio. According to O’Donoghue, an entry-level portfolio accounted for 15.5 percent of variance in first year marks. While attending art college, Manesiots found that her portfolio shaped a large portion of her first

year, stating that “perhaps the most important aspect of being immersed in a culture of visual art training was that it gave permission; permission to see with new eyes. Art school helped me recognize the importance of my portfolio, my fledgling work, but with new eyes” (112). Her line, lucid and graceful, took on a new meaning.

Art students dedicate themselves to their learning. Crumpled papers tossed in an ever-growing heap, charcoal and chalk littering the desks, and blue jeans spattered with paint; all common sights Oakley found while engaging with art students at the Maryland Institute College of Art in 2012 (281). While interviewing Nicole Fleming, a sophomore Graphic Design student, she questioned how art students spend their time. She replied, “An art school student works until the sun goes down, and then some. You work until you feel like you’ve come to a place where you say, this is okay but I can do better, and then you do better” (qtd. in Oakley 287). Oakley inquired further, wondering if students attribute their academic success to the college they attend or if they fulfill their goals. Fleming answered:

“I had so many people telling me I should go to university, and I had people around me saying, ‘Oh, I know this person who went to art school, and they’re still working in a restaurant and living with their parents.’...I want to be around like-minded people...when I came to visit here (MICA)....Art wouldn’t just be a side thing. I mean, if I went to a university I’d be taking all these core classes, and art wouldn’t be my focus. But this really felt like committing to it, and I wanted to commit to it” (qtd. in Oakley 290).

Commit to the line, commit to the foundation.

For some, art college seems like a waste of time and resources. Contrarily, if a student wishes to pursue a professional animation career, they must receive proper training. Gunn concludes, “It is

absolutely vital to have mastered the craft skills of animation work, to be familiar with tools and techniques, and to make industry-relevant connections” (318). But what if society holds no need for the animator? For her education? For art itself? This notion strays far from truth; without art education, art ceases to advance or evolve. If art never evolves, society never evolves, giving the artist no room to grow. If artists never grow, their art never grows—it wilts. Like the famed Rorschach test, art should take on a form unique to the viewer; one man’s mangled corpse appears as another man’s butterfly. Atkinson concurs, stating, “[Art] and [its] attendant discourses provide new encounters for learning and how learning can be understood, and through such encounters, new subjectivities emerge.” A solid art education gives flight to the artist’s multi-faceted imagination.

Whether or not the general public agrees, artists use their foundation to build an entirely new one for the world around them. The lines, sweeping high above the towering cities they uphold, find themselves flowing back down to a child’s crayon. Cathedral ceilings and skyscrapers must start somewhere, even if their foundation humbly begins with a line.

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