

Art at the Mall: A Look at the Aesthetics of Popular Mall Art Culture

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Abstract

Currently there is a scarcity of information in the art education literature about purchasing art. This article examines how art acquires economic and social value, as well as how consumers make decisions when purchasing a piece of art. Where does an art student, or the general public learn about buying art? How much, if any, of this process is happening in the art class? There is an assumption art educators make, that raising some invisible standards of taste leads to greater awareness of art consumption. In this article, the author visits four mall stores to study the aesthetics of art purchase to discuss a number of implications for art teaching. Elitist views of the contemporary art world regarding popular culture and the purchase of art frame the debate. As art educators we ask art students to look at the world as critical consumers; this article then, offers practical approaches for classroom discussions surrounding the purchase of art.

When invited to a recent house warming party, I was asked by the host to view her latest art purchases. As I strained to find praise for her selection of paintings, she boasted about the good art sale at the local mall. I was amazed to be having this conversation with the same friend who went with me gallery hopping on Friday nights. Standing before reproductions of oil paintings done by 'famous artists', I was expected to show approval. My friend, an educated lawyer, was someone who I thought would make thoughtful selections and not purchase her art at the local shopping mall. As other guests praised her choices and compared anecdotes about purchasing art in other mall stores, I could not believe what I was hearing. If educated people who attend galleries and museum were buying art at the mall, what future was there for the art world I knew?

As art students, the issues of purchasing art were never discussed. We were too busy creating our own 'masterpieces' and appreciating what we were taught as great art, flashed to us via slides by experts. Our studio walls and most of our apartments carried our art views, displaying our own artworks in progress, as well as our completed works. The art we were shown in museums we could not dream of owning. We had plenty of our own art, so we felt no need to buy more.

In fact as Johnson (2006, 296) indicates, 'For those who make and admire artistic works, there is no question of their value. However, for others interested in economic development, the value of the arts is often more tangential, contested and questionable.' During our days as students the notion of exhibiting art was on our minds, but buying art was not a topic of discussion, either in school art classes or later in art school.

So where does an art student, an art teacher, or the general public who takes some art classes learn about buying art? There is an assumption made in art education that by raising some invisible standards of taste in everyone's heart and soul, they will become more aware art buyers. If buying a work of art is one of our most important purchases, perhaps this process should receive more attention. This article examines the shortage

of information in art education about purchasing art. Since many consumer art purchases are made at the mall I will look at four mall stores to try to define the aesthetics of what people purchase the consumers, and the implications for art education. This absence of information about purchasing art is also reflected in the way in which contemporary art responds to the art of the mall.

The world of contemporary art comments on the art of the mall without daring to participate in it. The scarcity of formal attention to art purchases in the field of art education stands in sharp relief to the attention given art at the cultural thoroughfare of the shopping mall. In order to look critically at the art of the shopping mall, one needs to understand the vacuum in which contemporary art purchases are made. Many contemporary artists can be described as 'outsider' critics of contemporary society. Andy Warhol, and more recently Barbara Kruger, used printmaking, more specifically the mass production media of screenprinting, in their art. Warhol and Kruger reflect on mass production symbolised by material goods and their display. Being outsiders allows artists to comment on consumerism and the consumer showcase of the mall, while keeping their art in elite galleries.

For example, in 1969, sculptor Claes Oldenburg originally set up an art store in New York's Greenwich Village, but as his prominence grew it moved to elite galleries. Oldenburg placed his object-based art of hamburgers and ice cream pops in a district of local storefronts instead of in an uptown gallery. The choice of the storefront underscored the theme of Oldenburg's art, consisting of objects and displays accessible to the public. Like other stores in the area, Oldenburg did not relocate to a mall, yet as his prominence became established in the art world, his store, with its contents, was moved inside galleries and museums.

Into this void of assumptions about defining art stepped artists like Oldenburg and Christo, both of whom comment on the institutions of consumer culture. Oldenburg opened up a store in 1969 and Cristo covered storefronts. While both artists took to the street hoping to bring art closer to its public, their works were toasted in

elite art magazines, sold in exclusive galleries and glorified in museum exhibits such as the Tate, which in 2003 held a major exhibit entitled 'Shopping: A Century of Art and Consumer Culture'. Consumer culture, shopping, and the mall experience have come to be celebrated only from above, from a bird's-eye view of the art world. The mall artists and 'real artist's' have been moving further apart.

Art education recently has taken note of the art that students are purchasing, with a new emphasis on popular culture. It is asking students to look at their world critically as visual consumers. Unlike artists living in a gallery world, students are close to the mall culture. Being a part of the consumer-mall culture, our students as artists and critics can perhaps provide a more personal and accurate view of the mall experience as art and shed new insight onto the art at the mall. Looking at consumer art is not a new idea, in 1944, 'After the Great Depression in the United States, Edwin Ziegfeld and Paul Smith encouraged high school students to explore and make community art, such as storefront designs, flower arrangements, and interior decorations' (as cited in Stockrocki, 2001, 19). Not so much a part of many art curricula today, the idea of embracing the art within the context of our lives is a valuable message. More recently, art educator Fredrick Duncan argues that, 'Art education should adopt a wider framework for aesthetic education to include the study of everyday cultural and commercial sites' (as cited in Stockrocki, 2001, 19). Popular culturists in art education voice the opinion that students need to be aware of their surroundings and feel free to comment on the mall experience in which they take part. Students need to be able to filter through the art and images that surround them and become critical consumers of culture.

In this discussion the question points to how high artworks acquire economic value, how art is exchanged and the effect that has on critical social values. In order to sift through images students need to also be aware of the images of the high art world, and gain knowledge about the value that is placed on high art. High artworks are exchanged by an elite group, moving through the refined market of galleries and museums. On the

other hand, art at the mall is bought and sold like other consumer goods. The mall in a sense perpetuates the need for 'high-end' fashion, and the 'high-end' art world is much like the Porsche, in a class of its own. Art galleries that have recently opened at many major malls challenge the traditional notion that the two worlds should have their own space and even dare to suggest that there be a merger of the two. According to Bourdieu (1984), 'works of art have long been luxury commodities, valued for their rarity, association with nobility, foreign cachet, and romantic genius ...'. Having contact through ownership or appreciation provides symbolic legitimation for high social status. Are the mall consumers even interested in being a part of the elite social structure that makes up the art world? What would happen if the art world came to the mall in force, if powerhouse New York galleries such as Pace located themselves in shopping centres? How would such a daring move change the mall and the gallery culture?

In reflecting on the meaning and values in the mall gallery experience as an art teacher, my thoughts and concerns are about how I could approach the topic of buying art with students in sensitive and meaningful ways. Though an emphasis on the production and consumerism of visual culture, art education is essentially wrapped up in the debate. Are we teaching students to be part of an artistic elite, or are we teaching students to open their eyes to their own world of the mall and become critical artistic consumers of all cultures?

Where art is bought: a look at mall art stores

My thinking and intent as an art educator was to look at the places people buy art and consider how, in art classes, consumer awareness could be addressed. After the dinner party described above, I took a trip to the mall to experience mall galleries, which I had avoided in the past. According to Krug (2000, 260), 'in our culture one particular way of living manifests itself in the specific kinds of art found in mall settings'. I will report on four mall galleries: Deck the Walls (frame/poster shop), Thomas Kinkade Gallery, the Museum Store and Starbucks.

Deck the Walls

This popular chain of art poster and frame shops can be found in most every mall. This store is where my journey in popular art began. At Deck the Walls I found mostly young customers, selecting from a plethora of visual art and frames. All works were reproductions that could be purchased at a moderate price. Framing added considerably to each art purchase, often being far more expensive than the art itself. The menu consisted of a selection of recent and vintage advertisements, photographs of sights one may have visited, or would like to see, and reproductions – selections of ‘famous’ works of art (many randomly cropped). Famous artworks could be purchased with titles under the print, or on the art itself so as to let the viewer identify them with ease. Prices started at \$29.00 and escalated to several thousand. The store philosophy was to provide art in every price range, serving all types of budgets and class of buyers. The atmosphere was similar to any other mall store complete with sale signs, commercial carpeting and fluorescent lights. Pictures were both stacked and hung in haphazard ways, as in other mall establishments, to get the most display area out of a relatively modest space. The impression was that of a display space, combination warehouse. There was nothing formal about the presentation or the sales staff. Customers felt at ease to touch merchandise and to serve themselves.

The day of my visit, people were both browsing and buying. There was complete freedom to come in contact with the store stock and to look through stacks of prints. People freely shared art opinions, not hampered by lacking the ‘proper’ or sophisticated art language. Strong opinions flowed freely with statements like, ‘This one is pretty’; ‘Would this match the colors in our curtains?’ ‘I would not be caught dead with this one in my house!’ I found Deck the Walls not to be the quiet, self-reflective space of a traditional gallery. It was refreshing to hear people speak loudly and freely about what they liked, what they hated, and why.

The Thomas Kinkade Gallery

According to his web site, and restated in a framed store sign, ‘Thomas Kinkade is America’s most collected living artist. Coming from a modest background, Kinkade emphasises simple pleasures and inspirational messages through his paintings. As a devout Christian, Kinkade uses his gift as a vehicle to communicate and spread inherent life-affirming values’ (Kinkade 2006).

Kinkade’s ‘collectable art’ features paintings of homes in unspoiled settings. Buyers can choose from a variety of ‘pretty scenes’ with a large price tag. Unlike Deck the Walls, works in a Kinkade Gallery are all originals, with some limited edition prints (of course there is a limit to all printed editions, but upon close inspection, Kinkade’s prints were large runs). In the Kinkade Gallery advertising there is great emphasis on the paintings being originals. While it is true that Kinkade paintings were not reproductions, there was nothing particularly original about them. According to Elkins, who teaches art criticism at the Art Institute of Chicago, ‘Art should be difficult. As for mass market pieces, it’s kitsch with a historically short shelf life’ (as cited in Johnson 2006, 302). In an art class, then, showing a slide of a Kinkade landscape next to one by Monet could highlight the differences in degree of difficulty, technique – as well as originality. Additionally, the Kinkade Gallery was relying on print run, not reproductions. The selling point being that for Kinkade customers having ownership was something of collector’s value. For those who could not afford an original Kinkade painting, the store stocked ‘facsimiles’ on mugs and other souvenirs, so that everyone could share in Kinkade’s art.

An unusual, yet popular, feature in shopping at the Kinkade Gallery was the ability to have your painting customised. If you did not care for a detail in a painting, or the colours just did not match the sofa, a Kinkade-trained artist, not Kinkade himself, would alter the painting to customer specifications. Asking about a typical ‘special’ request, I was offered the following example, ‘Too many flowers? We will take some out.’ Just as a makeover show can supply you a costume nose, in a Kinkade one can conveniently change their own image. Speaking with the sales

help felt like buying a car – discussing accessories, looking to customise, viewing a list of options and negotiating a deal. The Kinkade Gallery seemed like a perfect fit for the mall's consumer culture, where you get what you want, no matter what the artist intended.

Colossal gold frames were a common option in a Kinkade sale, giving each painting a high-class touch, and making buyers feel they had purchased a good investment. Each 'official' Kinkade Gallery is identical in appearance. A warm mood is achieved by dimmed chandelier lighting washed over dark wood paneling. Each franchise has a fireplace, plush carpeting and classical music playing in the background. The store ambiance resembles the imagined interior of a high-class home depicted in a Thomas Kinkade painting. The Kinkade Gallery feel was intended to transport the buyer somewhere beyond the mall. What is offered is a comfortable home-like setting both in the art and in the store. In art teaching perhaps we need to engage more in discussions about what it means to experience art on an intellectual and emotional level, instead of what makes us comfortable. For a Kinkade customer there is no need to participate in the culture of high art to seriously engage with the art, or an art world.

Kinkade's mission is about the consumer, promoting a general sense of well-being, which could be translated as living in a comfortable home decorated with Kinkade's art. This is not the traditional mission of the artist. Contemporary artists create imaginative art to engage and challenge viewers and not to set up soothing environments or, to match home décors.

When teaching art one needs to consider ways to discuss meaning in art, as defined by the artist, the media, and the public in contemporary society. Perhaps Kinkade's real art is the ability to create an art phenomenon. And Kinkade's real creativity is in the ability to successfully present art on web sites, brochures and spots on QVC. Kinkade works from a fundamental theme of Christian 'life-affirming values', lending meaning to the art from web sites, outside of what is presented in the art itself.

The Museum Store

Since our students will spend more time at the mall than in museums, our art classes need to address idiomatic issues of art selection and making a considered art purchase. The third mall store was staged as an upscale gift shop museum. You enter the store through a set of columns, simulating the sense of entering a renowned museum. On view are the world's famous works of art that you can wear on your tie, have made into an earring or own on a postcard. You can buy the latest poster or souvenir without having to visit a museum or have any personal connection with the art. In the store's pristine wood setting you can buy a tee shirt with the *Mona Lisa* or a replica of a Greek statue. There is no need to go to the museum and visit great art, if you can head straight for the gift shop at the mall. Berger states in his book *Ways of Seeing* (1972, 20), 'that one might argue that all reproductions more or less distort, and that therefore the original painting is still in a sense unique'. The Museum Store simulates gift shops in a museum, but they are neither located in museums, nor are they connected to actual museum gift shops dedicated to enhancing the knowledge of art displayed in other museum wings.

So what are people really experiencing and learning by purchasing souvenir shirts and reproductions of great paintings? How much of what we buy as art is a form of pop culture disguised as art? Are Museum Store buyers really thinking of art when they make a purchase? Are they looking at the art, or are they simply looking for decorative objects to own? Looking at how and why students select the items they do needs to be addressed as part of the art curriculum.

Starbucks

The newest cultural trendsetter in purchasing art is Starbucks, venturing into the world of the arts – music, books and now films. How far behind can the visual arts be? As I sat at Starbucks contemplating my mall art research, I envisioned the art Starbucks may one day carry, defining all forms of culture we consume. In a recent article in the *New York Times*, a woman stated when asked about Starbucks' latest venture into

movies, 'After all I like the company's coffee; I had already bought and liked several of the CDs, why wouldn't I like a Starbucks' movie?' (Dominus 2006, 5). Only in America can a coffee company feel so sure that they can determine what we consume in all the arts. When asked about the new venture, a Starbucks executive added 'that we are eager to offer customers products that are out of the mainstream' and that Starbucks is 'undergoing a cultural extension of products' (Dominus 2006, 5).

In the same article, Anne Sanders, Starbucks senior vice president of global brand strategy and communications stated that, 'Customers say one of the reasons they come is because they can discover new things—a new coffee from Rwanda, a new food item. So, extending that sense of discovery into entertainment is very natural for us. That's all part of the Starbucks experience' (Dominus, 2006, p. 6).

It may not be long therefore before we can get the latest art poster at our local Starbucks? Featured in the article is a Starbucks in Ardsley, New York, where one can take note that prominently displayed on the wall is a 'poster of an elephant lumbering comfortably along in the burnt-sienna rays of the sun. Below the image is printed in typewriter like letters, a message from Starbucks, "Move with the herd" ' (Dominus 2006, 10).

How to dress to buy art?

Today's lack of information concerning art – and art purchases – is historically linked to an exclusive view of art that has even limited access to art based on how people are dressed. As far back as 1897 for example, it was reported that the staff of the Metropolitan Museum of Art refused 'to allow a plumber in overalls to enter the museum' (Levine 1988). This act generated headlines such as 'Somber workman has to leave art galleries, art for the well dressed' (Levine 1988). The director of the museum responded by 'reminding the city that the museum was a closed corporation that had the right and obligation to monitor behavior' (Levine 1988). Historically, art has been part of an elitist culture produced for the church or the monarchy of its time. Not until the innovation of

the printing press and the camera did the masses have the opportunity to participate in the art world. This led to the influx of cheaply reproduced art and bad reproductions of famous artworks.

Yet at the world of discount stores and malls, no matter how visitors are dressed, or how they can converse about art, people feel comfortable viewing or purchasing art. The mall houses all of our needs. It is the home of our visual culture and defines our aesthetics through choices we make in clothes and furnishings. Why would we go any place else to purchase art? How much of what we have in our homes is purchased at the mall? So why would the art that sits behind the sofa be bought elsewhere?

When compared to buying art at the mall, where people may feel comfortable, there is a discomfort in entering the world of the contemporary art gallery. Even entering a gallery there is a feeling one has to be educated in the traditions and language of art. Perhaps galleries are partly designed to be intimidating. Gallery owners are not interested in marketing to small collectors or the average person. To walk into a gallery to buy art one has to have serious money and speak the language of a high-priced culture. As Bourdieu (1984) states:

A work of art has meaning and interest only for someone who possesses the cultural competence, that is, the code, into which it is encoded. The conscious or unconscious implementation of explicit or implicit schemes of perception and appreciation which constitutes pictorial or musical culture is the hidden condition for recognising the styles characteristic of a period, a school or an author, and, more generally, for the familiarity with the internal logic of works that aesthetic enjoyment presupposes. A beholder who lacks the specific code feels lost in a chaos of sounds and rhythms, colours and lines, without rhyme or reason.

Fortunately, we can educate students to enter most galleries; I can teach about artist-run galleries, art school galleries and similar places that welcome everyone, making art buying a comfortable reality. Teaching students to look for art beyond a mall needs to become part of art education.

Would you go to a dentist at the mall?

The decision a person makes about what they purchase is related to where it's purchased. The first time I saw a dentist office at the mall, I was struck by how unprofessional it felt. Looking for a healthcare professional seemed to me a more serious consideration than selecting a blue skirt. The exchange between doctor and patient, I thought, requires a protected space. In making decisions about my well-being, I expected my doctor not to be rushed or distracted by the surroundings. But the mall setting is a carnival, and buying art is an experience requiring concentration, not distractions.

The purchasing power of a mall makes it a high pressure environment to select works of art. The mall means fast-paced shopping inside high-priced real estate. Malls make fast-food businesses out of every store; each store is designed for fast paced shopping – fast decisions, fast sales and the quick routing of customers. According to the impact of shopping centers (ICSC) *Research Review Quarterly*, 'The average mall visit lasts 82.2 minutes' (Wilson 2003). While this may seem like a long time, the amount of time spent can be divided between numerous activities. The mall is different from places art has traditionally been set up for viewing. But buying art is not a common purchase, and an art gallery is not a common store.

Most people go to a gallery to experience art and not necessarily to take art home. One visits a gallery or museum with the intent of discovery and learning, to be challenged or emotionally moved. The commitment to participate in such a mind-provoking experience is not the same decision, and does not require the same emotional preparation, as spending an afternoon shopping at the mall.

How art is bought and sold

Conducting meaningful classroom discussion about how art is bought and sold in the art world can become part of the art class experience. In my discussions with students I talk about places and buying experiences that students are familiar with, such as shopping for fashion at the mall.

We begin looking at the mall experience by discussing questions such as, 'What if Jackson

Pollock's art was sold at the mall? How would it be priced and how would the establishment it was sold in affect the work's value?' During the discussion, students asked, 'If Pollock was unknown and started showing at the mall in the 1950s, would he have been discovered?' In a follow up question a student inquired, 'If Pollock had his work reproduced on shirts, plates, and bags, would it make more money at the Museum Store than the cost of the original art?'

Analyzing how the gallery scene works, I talked to students about living in New York City and observing aesthetic choices of the fashion art market. To maintain artistic standings alongside top art galleries, Michael Kors and Dolce & Gabbana had their gallery stores on Madison Avenue. Top designers maintained exclusive shops as galleries for their top lines, while selling their more traditional, mass-market clothes at the mall. In other words, to make a mark on the art world, you show your wares in New York, Paris or Milan, but to make money you sell clothes at the mall. Visual artists are aware that art easily floats from the galleries on Madison Avenue, to Fifth Avenue, to be exhibited at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. My students wanted to know if the flow ever moves from the mall to the museum? Students wondered if famed mall artists they knew, like Kinkade and Leroy Neimann (Neimann achieved fame in *Playboy* and financial wealth through mall shows), find it difficult to be accepted by the art world as serious artists? I read to the class a piece from the *Wall Street Journal* in which a group of artists were highlighted as top sellers for bargain hunters. The author calls them a group, 'long snubbed by art critics and museums' (Crow 2006, W.1). Among the list of artists was Kinkade, ranging in price from '\$19.95 for a Kinkade screen saver, to \$4 million for a Kinkade-inspired house' (Crow 2006, W.1).

Included in our class discussion about their mall art purchases was something students were familiar. In the art of fashion, a high price tag and exclusivity is valued, in a similar way that high prices and limited editions are watched at art auctions. A garment that sells for four thousand dollars in the designers' 'gallery' may sell for forty-nine dollars at the mall. My student responded

with interesting observations. One stated: in the work of fashion artists, when copies come to the mall in large numbers, they become popular, but it does not make the original dress less expensive.

We also discussed how famous fashion designers did not make their reputation in the mall, but on Paris runways and in high fashion shows in museums. Being known as a mall fashion designer, or a mall artist, is not a compliment. There is an interesting dichotomy here in those artists who paint or design clothing in quantity exclusively for mall consumption, who may profit financially, but who will have difficulty achieving critical acclaim.

My students were interested to learn about how art was bought and sold by major galleries. I explained that, in my experience, major galleries and artists are concerned with the standing of the buyer as a collector, whose ownership can promote the art. I showed students art magazines rating collectors. In major art galleries, not everyone can walk in and buy the art on display. Works in important galleries are sold before a show opens to the public. Artworks have already been placed in the hands and homes of collectors who can do something for the work – enhancing the artist's reputation, providing further opportunities for showing and the promise of higher prices. While the art is not able to leave the gallery until the show is over, many items may have been made in the artist's studio, or in gallery previews for career-building buyers. Of course, for the artist, a choice gallery and prominent buyer ensures that the work will not be lost; it will be well cared for and always be available for important shows in the future. This discussion allowed students to gain a greater understanding of the consumerism of the art world.

In order to give students hands-on experience, they spent time exploring what it was like to buy and sell their own artwork. They set up an art gallery and used this art gallery training to gain a better understanding and comfort level of the inner workings of the art world.

Jhally (1989, 77) underscores the importance of classroom discussions pertaining to contemporary art issues:

Because we live inside the consumer culture, and most of us have done so for most of our lives, it is sometimes difficult to locate the origins of our most cherished values and assumptions. They simply appear to be part of our natural world. It is a useful exercise, therefore, to examine how our culture has come to be defined and shaped in specific ways – to excavate the origins of our most celebrated rituals.

By having students take part in the consumer aspects of the art world they gain ownership of not only how an art gallery works, but their own purchasing decisions.

The mall in a new art curriculum

Art teachers need to re-examine how they present art purchases to students. Art teachers participate in the popularisation of high art images when they use poor quality prints in teaching, wear famous art tee shirt, or keep mugs with art reproductions on their desks. Art teachers can't disregard mall art, or art in places such as restaurants, hotels and doctors' offices. It has to be addressed by art teaching. In our consumer, mall-driven society, educators need to teach about the differences between mall art and the high art used as classroom examples.

As art educators it is important to not ignore, but to educate about the mass marketing of our product. When so many people purchase their art at malls, and view it in the doctor's office, it is hard to understand art as anything but an interior design purchase. The role of art teachers is crucial in educating the next generation in their perception and consumption of images. According to Vygotsky, 'learning is situational and directly related to the learner's physical and cultural environment' (as cited in Efland 2002, 32). In the future it will be increasingly difficult to ignore the mass marketing of art and the blurring of borders between high art and popular art. Art teachers will have to embrace more classroom discussion, leading to intelligent conclusions about consumerism and purchasing of art.

In a world overwhelmed by visual images, for art teachers, the fact of mall stores selling popular art raises important concerns about the message

sent to students. Most art teachers spend entire careers educating students about 'high art,' while students experience far more popular art in the everyday. Artifacts from contemporary visual culture inform us about society, telling us who we are and what we value. When young people spend far more time exploring the mall than making visual choices and engaging in visual explorations in art museums, it is difficult for art teachers to talk about which art we want young audiences to value. (Rosenblum 1981, 8) writes:

In a world of forceful public images, are the old ways of teaching art from within—derived from the personal imagination of children still valid? Intensely personal experience is perhaps absent in the arts because it is absent in the society. Yet popular culture does communicate and amplify (figuratively even) the subculture of which it is a part.

When the job of artist has become the questioning of what is art, it becomes hard to validate what we teach in art classes. Contemporary art teaching has to be based on insightful questions and class discussions.

If the art images we consume contain a set of values and establish our identity, then the mall becomes a prominent visual space for artistic immersion and study. Kellner (1995, 5) writes:

Radio, television, film and other products of media culture provide materials out of which we forge our very identities, our sense of selfhood; our notion of what it means to be male, or female; our sense of class, of ethnicity, and race, of nationality, of sexuality of 'us' and 'them'. Media images help us shape our view of the world and our deepest values; what we consider good or bad, positive or negative, moral or evil.

If we accept Kellner's argument, we need to take trips to the mall with students the way we used to take museum trips.

Some art educators have already taken the path of mall study, through looking at popular culture, in addition to the traditional art of the past. The traditional world of 'High art used to refer to primarily Western forms and images, while low

art referred to forms and images of folk. Like the Pop artists of the 1960s, contemporary feminist and critical theorists, educators, and multiculturalists are on the forefront of challenging the master narrative' (Taylor & Ballengee-Morris 2003, 21). In the 1960s many accepted norms of the art world were challenged and discussions about the changes were known as the study of 'visual culture'. Visual culture allowed for a broader view of the definition of art, and the inclusion in art education of the world around us. Szekely (1991) advocated starting children's art appreciation studies with the objects that children appreciate, the art history of American pull toys, dolls and baseball cards. Vincent Lanier wrote about, 'the inclusion of such art forms as posters, album covers, billboards, and particularly cinema, and television in the classroom' (Rosenblum 1981, 8). A visual culture orientation to art teaching allows for a 'student-initiated approach to incorporating popular forms of visual culture into the curriculum. They may both encourage student ownership of their education experiences as well as avoid the appearance of misguided interpretations' (Taylor & Ballengee-Morris 2003, 23).

The Guggenheim at the Ballagio

And what's next in art shopping? A branch of the prestigious Guggenheim Museum is now located in the Ballagio Hotel-Casino in Las Vegas. And why not? High rollers in Las Vegas can afford investing in great art. Beyond the mall perhaps is the concept of mega entertainment palaces like the Ballagio selling art. And if it's a question of attracting more buyers, I suggest selling art at football games at all major dome stadiums.

Under future discussion for art viewing and art buying, one would have to include mall builders who are moving away from the concept of vast indoor malls to creating shopping centres with separate buildings for individual stores. In the future an art shopper can have the exclusivity of shopping for art not in a theme park mall – all under one roof – but in individual buildings set up for art viewing and sale. Since shopping centres have outpaced and, in many towns, replaced downtowns, placing museums and galleries in the mall would be akin to the placement of other

civic buildings in the new downtown – the mall. Where museums and galleries of the future will be located is still uncertain. But one thing is certain, and it is implicit in the nature of contemporary art – it will be necessary to break new boundaries for defining art, as well as opening new and diverse places to view and buy art. All the boundary breaking will require a new art education for viewers and buyers.

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