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“International Education: A Bridge to Intercultural Understanding”

By Mr. Luke Homitsky

Artist-in-Residence, Yew Chung International School of Shanghai

Artist in Residence and the IB : a New Idea

The slides displayed during this presentation consist of IB Art student works, press articles, special events and projects produced throughout the duration of the AIR program (approximately 2 years)

Two and a half years ago, in the spirit of our school motto **the Yew Chung Education Foundation introduced a new program aimed at heightening our schools alignment with Culture and Arts**. The program labeled “AIR” was implemented into our Shanghai Gubei Campus. The basic premise of the **AIR (artist in residence) program** is the creation of a modern art environment on campus and with the IB Art Program. The foundation invited a working artist to interact with our school environment and classroom activities.

This program is based on some of the basic educational philosophies of Yew Chung Education Foundation. The AIR program focuses on encouraging young people to develop their talents and contribute actively to society, combines elements of Eastern and Western cultures to learn the best of both cultures and incorporates a research-based curriculum that is updated regularly to adapt to the changing needs of each discipline, in this case the area of Fine Art. The following describes the implementation of these philosophies with regard to the AIR program at YCIS’s Gubei campus and two general theories used as a blueprint for achieving affective results.

Two Ideas for Focus with the AIR Program

The focus of my AIR plan could be summarized in two branches: 1. An adaption of the Reggio Emilia plan used for early childhood education being applied to the IB art level classroom and 2. A strong focus on the Contemporary in curriculum and classroom discussions.

The **Reggio Emilia program**’s founder Lou Malaguzzi has said, "What children learn does not follow as an automatic result from what is taught. Rather, it is in large part due to the children's own doing as a consequence of their activities and our resources. "¹

¹ For addition information on the Reggio Emilia Program refer to http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reggio_Emilια_approach

Although the Reggio Emilia program is focused on early childhood education, I believe the ideas are still of value when dealing with the higher level students in the Arts. The role of the AIR in our Art Department is to be constantly providing new ideas to the students, both individually and as a group. Quite simply, students today are drastically different than the students of yesterday. One only needs to take a look at the contents of their pockets and backpacks to see this tremendous difference (Ipods, Mp3s, mobile internet access, etc.). Rather than trying to remove these modern objects we focus on competing with them and winning.

Students today are used to more information being introduced at one time. They are involved in a personal selection of what they want to keep and use. While for some subjects this may be labeled as a problem, with the arts this can actually be an advantage by allowing a greater volume of artists and images to be provided to the student. The art department can bend and mold at a certain level by what is going on in the contemporary art world both globally and locally. The role of the AIR with regard to this idea is to constantly introduce and or supplement daily lessons and projects with contemporary information. This information consists of interviews and studio visits with modern artists and their works, special projects and workshops directed at new art making processes, and quite simply, daily brainstorming with students to encourage the development of non-traditional art making methods. The hope is to provide an environment with more than the necessary information for each assignment, thus allowing the student to pursue an individualized direction in their projects and thinking. In connection with the preceding quote, we are heightening 'our resources' available to the student and providing a greater number of 'activities' and interactions to compete with the distractions of our modern student's society.

The second focus consists of a strong use of knowledge on the **contemporary** art world. This is a difficult idea for some due to the usual collective approach to curriculum found in the education environment. Education itself does, and always will have, the need to study the past when educating for the future. The question or problem arises when we attempt to establish what is relevant from art history and appropriate to the education of today. I would argue that we have a tendency of not adapting to this situation of modernization, especially with regards to art education, fast enough. If I was to ask you today, how many of you would like to revert back to a world without innovations such as: the Jet Airliner (1958), Communication Satellites (1962), High-Yield Rice (1966), CPR (1950's), Apple / Macintosh computers (1984), Windows (1985), the CD-Rom (1984), Cell phones (1979), Heart Transplants (1968) and the still being discovered uses of DNA ? I believe most of you would answer no.

Yet most of the art curriculum we use today is from ideas and artworks of the 1960's or older. Artists and art movements such as: Van Gogh (1880-1890), Georgia O-Keefe (1916-1920), Roy Lichtenstein (1960's), Andy Warhol (1970's) and POP ART itself being rooted in the 1950's, are all at least, and in most cases over 50 years outdated. There is of course some value in teaching students about these artists and movements, but to ignore what has happened in the last 50 years is quite similar to answering 'yes' to my prior question concerning a choice to revert back to a time in human history where the inventions listed above are not present. This point, combined with the previously mentioned distractions of the modern student only heighten a need to pay attention to modern artworks and movements that have and are being created by artists with the same distractions. Not to mention modern works comment and refer to modern global happenings (i.e. cultural exchanges, war, capitalism, etc.) which serve as stronger

connections to students who are experiencing these same societal phenomena. If students are able to find a connection to these issues through art, than there is an obviously positive effect with regards to their studies in other disciplines.

The AIR is than used as a vehicle to connect the students with the contemporary art world. This can and has been done through various methods; by using the AIR's connections with modern artists and galleries to provide special class trips and studio visits, an annual Beijing IB Art trip, and personal exhibitions in which the students are introduced to a 'real life' experience with the arts; life as a living, breathing, functioning artist. The following is a brief description of specific AIR projects that encompass these ideas:

- **IB Art Beijing 'Art' Trip** – A four day trip to Beijing during 'Art Beijing 2007'. Included activities such as : DaShanzi 798, studio visits (Cang Xin question and answer session in artist's studio), JiuChang Art Complex, the National Gallery of Beijing, Red Gate Gallery, the Central Academy of Fine Arts Beijing (with Student meetings and Nude Drawing Session) and various other art related activities.
- **Art Theory Lectures / Discussion** –In collaboration with the Theory of Knowledge department, the Artist in Residence has the past two years provided the information and organized the section on Art Theory. Topics ranging from Art as concept vs. aesthetic, issues on the evaluation of art, and theories / ideas behind art movements with a focus on the contemporary.
- **Direct Involvement with the I.B. students**, including: Designing of new and creative projects for I.B. / direct involvement in the creative process of the students / creation of IB projects for the students to complete (*see attached student work*), **Attending year 12 and 13** classes for use as a resource and additional instructor, Organizing of **special class talks with various artists** of the Shanghai Community (No.50 MoGhanshan, Shan Gang, Zhang ZhongMei, visiting international artists, etc.), and an **Extra resource in the Art Room** for students to be able to work on weekends and holidays
- **World Literature Murals with I.G.C.S.E. and Year 12** - murals based on and including a famous quote. objective: To educate the students on the process of planning and creating a public mural. stages: Creating a mural proposal (including: selection of an area on the Gubei campus, photographing the proposed area, written statement of intention, timeline, selected quote and drawing of intended outcome, Submission / meeting of proposal to Administration for approval, Production of mural with documentation of process, Presentation and approval of finished mural and project outline packet. **Project outline packet** consists of all documentation, photos / video, drawings and written materials connected with the entire process (This project has been adapted from year to year, most recently dealing with the theme of Duality)
- **Professional Art Exhibitions in China of the Artist in Residence's work:** Amphibian World M-Forever **Shanghai Art Museum** w/ Shanghai Bienalle Sept. 2008, solo exhibition **DaShanZi 798 Beijing "Blind"** Sept. 2006, **Shanghai International Art Fair** ShanghaiMart Nov. 2006, **Unlimited** exhibition with performance MoGhanshan Lu Shanghai Oct. 2006, and **China Press and TV** coverage: That's Shanghai, China Daily, Shanghai today, Pittsburgh Post Gazette, CCTV, Dragon TV, Young Channel and more on various occasions. **Upcoming Articles: China Visual, Art and Design Magazine, and more to be announced.**

- **Extended-Essay Advisor:** two of our IB students have actually been interacting with over 12 professional artists from around the world, through direct contact, surveys and phone conversations, all made possible through the efforts of the artist in residence. Enabled the production of extended essays which are truly contemporary and relate to the present and future education of our art students.
- **Portfolio Club:** after school program that educates students on preparing for college applications, proper mailing and submitting of their art work, and all other areas of preparing for Art College and professionalism.
- **Attending and involved in organizing Art Department Special Projects:** i.e. IB Graduation Art Show, The Fashion Show and Field Trips and the AIR is an active part of the art department and attend regular meetings with the department.
- **On Campus performances** for the students, **Multiple Public Artworks** donated to the school.
- **Primary Art project** Blind Paintings (Incomplete) to be installed on windows of HongQiao Campus
- Independent classes with younger gifted and troubled students.
- **Design Projects for Yew Chung Education Foundation:** IB Art Graduation Designs, Magazine advertisements, 75th Anniversary Music Designs and Support Division New Upcoming Order Form images, Graduation Ceremony Banners, Art Yearbook pages, Sports Awards and T-shirt Designs, Large Signs for A.I.S. Conference
- **ACAMIS Art Conference 2008:** Portfolio Review Presentations / student interviews, Concordia International School PuDong

In Summary, the AIR program follows the spirit of the philosophies of the Yew Chung Education Foundation by:

Influencing the use of updated techniques, mediums and art forms to the classroom and student projects

- The scope of student projects has widened considerably due to the ability of the art department to teach and support a wider area of art production and techniques; the AIR supplements the art teachers' with modern techniques and or materials outside their educational background
- The AIR is used as another interactive educator in the classroom; allowing the faculty to develop a more personalized interaction with the students by focusing on each educators specific techniques
- an AIR is also an adaptable resource which can be used to quickly prepare for new techniques and needs of individual students in areas otherwise not offered by the art department thus further encouraging *the pursuit of quality through experimentation and purposeful creative work in various expressive media* (IB Art : "Aims")

**Enhancing the Eastern and Western cultural exchange by introducing various aspects of *truly* modern art happenings, movements and artists (specifically with regard to the host country China)
This may be the most influential aspect of our AIR program.**

- the AIR is a practicing artist; this implies a useable connection to the art community at the local level of the host country and their home country
- the AIR network is utilized to establish unique activities for the students; this has included various studio visits, artist interviews and special art student trips giving the students additional and more effective encouragement, motivation and inspiration
- the AIR is continually pushing the students to interact with international cultural phenomenon *providing students with opportunities to make personal, sociocultural and aesthetic experiences meaningful through the production and understanding of art* (IB Art : “Aims”)

Providing the students with a daily and an honest view of professional art making practices

- by working on campus professionally and creating interactive connections daily, the AIR is providing an inspirational connection with Art and Life for every students
- the AIR is involved with students projects aiding in the entire creation process from original brainstorm to being present at all final critiques
- the AIR can provide an honest art voice to the department and environment; providing support to teachers with regards to grading, lessons and special projects (art is subjective and having another educator resource for considering and adapting to this challenge is an advantage)

The AIR program has demonstrated immediate results. Our students are better prepared for further art education; as demonstrated through an overall increase and improvement to our college acceptance levels and awarded scholarships. (currently with 20 students over the last two years gaining over 790,000 USD in awards and scholarships) The AIR program truly enhances the quality of art education at our foundation and is proving to be a tremendous innovation in the methods of art education at the high school level. Students immediately encounter the need for understanding contemporary art upon arriving at the doors of higher education. The AIR program better prepares students for this transition and allows them to arrive at their respective institutions of higher education with greater understanding of what is desired by their professors.

On a final note, it is important to acknowledge the importance of a strong relationship between the AIR and the schools art department. In my case I am truly grateful and honored to work Ms. Daun Yorke (Head of the Art Department and IB coordinator at YCIS Shanghai- Gubei Campus). Her understanding of art education and her willingness to work ‘with’ the artist in residence is a crucial point to the program’s success. There is and must be a mutual respect between the art teachers and AIR in order for the interaction to function at such a high level. Identifying areas for improvement and new possibilities in the department is where ideas are born; it is a gift to have a department head that is regularly looking for ways to improve the experience of the IB art students.