

Alice A. D. Baumgarner

## Materials and Insight



*Samson and Delilah—relief in clay.*

THE arts and their place in education are receiving much attention now. Those working in art education have long been aware of the needs of children and youth for expression through art, but this awareness has been intensified by the recent emphasis on technology and demands for scientific development. The art teacher is looking more critically at his teaching and seeking to refine his methods and enlarge his influence. He is recognizing that he must interpret to his students and to the public values of art in education.

Evidence of this increasing attention is both positive and negative. Teachers close to pupils and students as they study art believe that "The arts are a vital part of human experience." They appreciate

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that the members of the President's Commission on National Goals made this declaration and followed it with the promise-threat: "In the eyes of posterity, the success of the United States as a civilized society will be largely judged by the creative activities of its citizens in art, architecture, literature, music and the sciences."

An observable part of this advance of the arts is the provision being made in physical facilities. New school buildings are planning adequate space for the art room or rooms, where there can be a diversified program with work, display, storage and study areas. Art rooms are planned to house a program rather than as a cube of space which will limit and curtail when a capable teacher attempts to promote a comprehensive program in depth.

The art program will provide for the



*The teacher and students discuss design, form and function.*

child or young person to work with many materials so that, through participation and study, stimulated by teachers and peers, he may deepen his understanding of art and develop his concept of esthetic values, acquire skills and vocabulary. The old premise that art is drawing and painting for a select few is being replaced. No longer are weaving, graphics and ceramics the sole province of the shop and available only to a few. In some cases, art rooms are grouped with rooms for home making and shops so that teachers may work closely together to emphasize the design quality in the work of these areas, and tools and equipment may be readily shared among the groups. Planning with purpose, sketching phases of the plan, then constructing, modeling, carving, or painting, challenge the students, demand ingenuity, spur imagina-

tion, foster creativity and require self-imposed discipline.

Adult interest is one of the factors which is influencing the changing emphasis on art. This interest has tended to alter the appearance of the rooms. No longer do these rooms consist of costly desks lined up in precise rows; rather, they contain well organized work centers for clay, metal and textiles as well as for drawing and painting, and for designing in many materials. In some localities, adult education classes meet in the high school, frequently as students of the art teacher. Here is a sensitized audience whose members will understand the need for a larger kiln or a bigger budget for supplies or an additional teacher.

The art teacher today is not the sole proponent of art. Organizations of artists

and craftsmen do much to further community interest and understanding of the arts.

Members of these groups share their artistry and skill in the classrooms. This extends the learning opportunities for all students.

### Effective Programs

Such extension should not be left to chance. All school personnel may be involved in making a survey of art resources: people, places and things, capable of enhancing the program. Arrangements may be made for a craftsman to demonstrate his procedure with the material of his craft for student or teacher groups. Regional work sessions for art teachers are sometimes organized in a craftsman's studio. Teachers enjoy and

profit from opportunities to work in materials with craftsmen.

Some areas are using television so that large groups may receive art instruction. Regional meetings are arranged so that art teachers may meet, discuss their work, exhibit it and receive suggestions from instructors and peers. Through such organization a teacher may acquire new skills or continuously refine others. Each person can feel the satisfaction of achievement.

Because of revitalized interest in the humanities and foundation funds to make summer study available for teachers in these fields, there is some experimentation at the high school level in planning to present man's story with unity. This goes beyond playing some music by Debussy and asking students to use water colors to paint their impression, or with

*After many study sketches and color experiments, students paint.*





***A new use for sticks—a study in line and form with texture achieved by an imaginative high school student.***

pastels to make a visual statement of the mood each feels when hearing "Rhapsody in Blue."

Effective programs, for example, may involve putting art expressions into an historical setting. The staff usually is composed of art, music, literature and history teachers, or any three of these. This is sometimes scheduled as a new course and limited to election by students in high academic standing. In other schools one regularly scheduled period per week of English or history is being used for joint presentation by these teachers or for student seminars. A few experiments are being conducted as a club activity with after school meetings.

With more administrative encouragement, this kind of experiment as well as others might with wisdom be tried. Though we may pride ourselves on being unbound by tradition, on being innova-

tors and keeping up with the avant-garde, regrettably, "The things we know impede us from seeing things we do not know."

The purpose of art education can be stated briefly as: That the creativity and imagination of children and youth may be stimulated; that the understanding and skills of children and youth may be developed. To move toward these aims, students must have opportunities to work with problems involving both two and three dimensional design. During high school years, the teacher will present drawing, painting, weaving, stitchery, printing, modeling, constructing and carving. Students will be guided in work with form, color, line, texture. Materials will include paper, paint, clay, wood, stone, glass, plastic, metal, plaster, wire, as well as any other substance that an active imagination, a sensitized awareness, an esthetic sense, skill and scavenging may find to use. Many skills are brought into application, for example, through such projects as designing and constructing stage sets and costumes.

The teacher must bring the students into contact with good design whether in beautiful objects for daily use or classical examples in museums, fine folk art, handsome buildings, well designed books or posters. Environment can be infectious and much incidental learning may be provided the student in this way. There must be carefully planned opportunities for students to explore, to experiment, to evaluate and subsequently to concentrate on a favorite material.

Carrying forward and refining our art heritage is of concern to every intelligent person.

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**Photographs used with this article and on page 426 were made by the author in various New Hampshire High Schools.**

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