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### Upcoming Events

05/25	<a href="#">Tara Donovan</a>
05/25	<a href="#">On Site at the Gate 2004</a>
05/25	<a href="#">A Minimal Future? Art As Object 1958-1968</a>
05/25	<a href="#">Band and Orchestra Concert</a>
05/25	<a href="#">LA: Light, Motion, Dreams</a>

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### Features

# Does Art Have a Place in Education?

by Carol Bodlander

Your naturally loving, grateful child wants to give something to you! Every time students of mine have made art, their first comment is that they want to "give it to their mother". The only thing children really have to give is something that comes from within them. You can enable your children to fulfill that loving desire in many ways, not least of which is giving them entree to the experiences needed to manifest the creations of their hearts and imaginations!

Visual arts experiences allow your children the means to create, imagine and most of all to give. Classes in any creative venue that you give your children enrich not only their minds and hearts, but your own relationship with your children as you receive and enter into the creations offered you. Your supportive response to what your children are presenting not only conveys importance to the gift your child offers, it also opens a window into your child's thought processes, feelings and interests.

As children learn to use elements of art--line, shape, texture, form, space--they are developing awareness of concepts and vocabulary. Lines are not only thin, straight or light; they can also be thick, dark and jagged. They express feeling. Your children express feelings through the use of these elements. If your children are young, early experiences with the differences and varieties of lines prepare their perceptions so that when letters of the alphabet are introduced, distinctions are noted; mastery of written language is easier.

But, you say, your child is older, a fluent reader; then these very early distinctions, built upon and enhanced by more in-depth enrichment from the arts, lead to further differentiation, to the ability to infer and predict based on sensory impressions. This isn't only art; it's a perceptual process that develops critical thinking and integrates itself into the academic as well as the social sphere, into choices of friends, activities and possible occupations.

Children engaged in making art are generally fully invested in their creation. They experience the process as a time in which they can fully focus and are not easily distracted. For children with Attention Deficit Disorder, this may be one of the very few times they actually have an experience with extended concentration.

In the visual arts, instructors are facilitators and present children open-ended tasks which they explore individually. They develop abilities to focus on and solve problems. Growth in confidence and self-esteem is an intangible benefit of their continuing efforts to express themselves creatively. When your children look at and analyze their products, they are actually becoming conscious of their abilities and a witness to their own minds and thought processes. This perspective into their being is what they are sharing with you when they offer you their artwork as a gift.

Children need the arts on a continuing basis to support their personal, academic and social development. Parents need to advocate that every general educational program include within it sufficient time to experience the arts.

*Carol Bodlander has taught art in the public schools over a twenty-five year period*

