W. Reid Hastie: A Visionary for Research in Art Education

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W. Reid Hastie, the fifth president (1957-1959) of the National Art Education Association, promoted the need for a scholarly venue devoted entirely to issues and research in art education and a place where related research results could be presented on a regular basis to the field of art education, as well as the larger field of education. His vision led to the initiation of *Studies in Art Education*, a journal of issues and research in art education. The first issue was published in the Fall of 1959. Hastie’s vision, practice, and support of research are examined within the context of the history of research in art education and the rapidly changing world of higher education following World War II.

When *Studies in Art Education* was introduced to the field of art education in 1959 as a journal for professional and critical dialogue about issues and research related to art and art education, it was a landmark. For the first time ever, there was a scholarly venue devoted entirely to issues and research related to art education. The fact that it has survived and flourished is a testament to the vision of W. Reid Hastie, the National Art Education Association (NAEA) president (1957-1959) under whose leadership *Studies in Art Education* was established. It is also a testament to the need for a forum where art education researchers could share the results of their work and engage in a dialogue with professional colleagues throughout the world (Beelke, 1972).

**Research Trends in Art Education**

While there is an established history of research in art education predating the beginning of *Studies*, most related research prior to 1940 was conducted by individuals outside the discipline. Those few individuals, both art educators and non-art educators, who published their work did so in a variety of educational, psychological, and sociological journals (Davis, 1967). The earliest known piece of published research with a relationship to art education was a study conducted by the legendary leader of the child study movement, G. Stanley Hall. In May of 1883, he published a report on a study of the contents of children’s minds on entering schools in the *Princeton Review* (Hall, 1883).

In her thesis, *A Summary of Scientific Investigations Relating to Art*, Mary Strange (1940) presented a systematic look at scientific research in art and art education...
prior to that time, identifying all published research that she could locate. She reported that during the 57-year period between 1883 and 1939, 162 studies were published in books and in a wide variety of educational and psychological journals such as *Pedagogical Seminary*, *American Journal of Psychology*, and the *British Journal of Psychology*. These publications grouped themselves into four general categories: (a) color and color vision, (b) drawing and/or graphic ability, (c) picture preference and appreciation, and (d) tests and measurements. An examination of this work reveals that most of it was conducted by individuals outside the field of art education, primarily by psychologists and sociologists. In many cases, it appears that art was being used as a means to an end, without any foundational basis in aesthetics, creativity, or artistic processes (Davis, 1967). For example, the focus of many of the studies was not on art but on other topics such as mental development, intelligence, special talents and defects, differences in males and females on various traits, and school success. Art was simply used as a vehicle to examine the phenomenon being investigated.

Following World War II, the United States experienced unprecedented growth in higher education with the returning veterans and support of their education by the G.I. Bill. Art education was not excluded, and educational opportunities in the field were characterized by phenomenal growth, especially at the graduate level. More researchers who were art educators emerged, bringing about more research in art education. The field of art education was developing to a point that more research was necessary if continued growth were to occur. Art educators wanted evidence to support the generalities and beliefs that were so prevalent in the literature (Davis, 1971, 1977, 1990; Efland, 1990).

The volume of published research related to art education between 1940 and 1960 exceeded the volume of published research in the previous 57-year period by 30% (Davis, 1967). Two hundred ten (210) investigations were published in this 20-year period, approximately one-third the amount of time. Work in the same four categories identified by Strange (1940) continued, but research activity between 1940 and 1960 included four additional categories, expanding the research concerns of the field: (a) the study and teaching of art, (b) art and the personality, (c) creativity and the arts, and (d) therapeutic values of art (Davis, 1967). This all happened in the absence of a venue devoted exclusively to publishing research in art education.

**Initiation of Studies in Art Education**

It was within this environment that W. Reid Hastie recognized and promoted the need for a journal dedicated to issues and research in art education. NAEA, only a decade old, was guided through his leadership to initiate such a journal for the profession. Prior to that time, the regional associations—Eastern, Western, Southeastern, and Pacific Arts—which were combined to form the NAEA had recognized the importance of and need for research in art education. They had occasionally published research yearbooks (Michael, 1997). This provided the basis for the new national organization to continue the tradition of publishing yearbooks on issues and research in art education. The first NAEA Yearbook, *Art Education Organizes*, was published in 1949 and continued yearly through
1959. Three of those yearbooks (the 5th, the 7th, and the 9th) were research yearbooks. Hastie was a member of the first Research Committee of the newly created NAEA, along with Manuel Barkan (chair), Jerome Hausman, Edith Henry, and Vincent Lanier (Barkan, 1954). Hastie remained a member of the Research Committee until he became president of the organization in 1957 (Barkan, 1956). This Committee was responsible for producing two NAEA Research Yearbooks in 1954 and 1956. When Hastie became president, he reconfigured and expanded the Research Committee from 5 to 7 members: Jerome Hausman (chair), Kenneth Beittel, Edith Henry, Edward Mattil, Helen C. Rose, George K. Ross, and Stanley G. Wold. Ralph G. Beelke, the newly appointed and first Executive Director of NAEA, served as a consultant (Hausman, 1959, p. ii). A third yearbook was published under the guidance of this new committee in 1959, and *Studies in Art Education* was launched in the fall of that same year. Jerome Hausman and Manuel Barkan prepared the proposal for *Studies* (personal conversation with Jerome Hausman, January 21, 2009), and under Hastie’s leadership as president, the organization made a commitment to initiate the publication.

The proposal was well accepted by the NAEA Council and was approved providing that the publication ‘did not cost the Association any money.’ Jerry Hausman was the first editor…. The first issue was published at the University of Georgia under the eye of Alex Pickens. It is full of typographical errors, but proofs, copy corrections, etc., cost time and money, and at that moment there was little of either. But with advertising income, subscriptions, and very low printing costs, the publication supported itself. (Beelke, 1972, p. 16)

The pressing need for a dedicated research journal for art education was clearly evident, and under Hastie’s visionary leadership, the organization seized the moment and made a paradigm shift for the field of art education. Without a strong tradition in applied or basic research and without a systematic venue for reporting the research that was being done, *Studies* became the research journal for NAEA and an authoritative voice for the field of art education.

**Hastie’s Background**

Hastie, who was a graduate of the State Teachers College in Edinboro, Pennsylvania, held a master’s degree from the University of West Virginia and a Ph.D. from the University of Pittsburgh. He taught in the Monongalia County Schools in Morgantown, West Virginia and at the University of Pittsburgh (1941-1949) prior to going to the University of Minnesota where he taught for 21 years (1949-1970). Hastie completed his career as Professor of Art at Texas Tech University (Department of Art, Texas Tech University, 1981).

When elected the fifth president of the newly formed NAEA, Hastie was still in his formative years as a college faculty member and was a relative newcomer to the field at the national level. Walter Cook, dean of the College of Education at the University of Minnesota, was a strong advocate for art education and encouraged Hastie to become involved in the field at the national level (Conversations with Stanley S. Madeja and D. Jack Davis, 1960s). Cook’s
interest built upon a legacy of strong support for art education. The College had initiated the Owatonna Art Education Project under the leadership of Dean Melvin Haggerty in the 1930s. This project became a landmark in school-based research and curriculum in art education (Chapman, 1978; Efland, 1990).

Along with strong support from his home institution, Hastie brought to the presidency a broad vision of the field of art education and a commitment to move the organization forward. During his presidency, Hastie accomplished a number of things that positioned the NAEA to become a stronger voice for art education nationally. A national headquarters for the organization was established in Washington, DC, moving the records and property of the NAEA from Kutztown, Pennsylvania, where they had resided since the beginning of the national organization. The first Executive Director for the organization, Dr. Ralph Beelke, was employed. Hastie and Beelke, along with the other leaders of the NAEA, were aware of the changes that were occurring, especially in relation to teacher education where a power shift from teachers colleges and normal schools to comprehensive universities was taking place (Dorn, 1997).

Hastie recognized that this shift meant changes in the way that business was conducted in regard to teacher education. With major comprehensive universities becoming players in the teacher education field, more emphasis would be placed upon research. Without a venue for the publication of research related to art and art education, the field of art education would struggle to establish itself strongly among other disciplines that had such mechanisms in place. Hastie also believed that professional organizations have an important role to play in research, even though most research is done by an individual or a team of individuals. He believed that committees in national and regional organizations could identify major issues and provide the raw material for more specific and detailed studies that would be conducted by individuals. He also thought that professional organizations should serve as a clearing house for research and that their seminars and conferences could provide a forum for evaluation, discussion, and debate about research (Hastie, 1959). It was within this context and under Hastie’s leadership that the NAEA initiated Studies in Art Education: A Journal of Issues and Research in Art Education. The first volume appeared in the Fall of 1959.

Hastie’s Beliefs About Research and Art Education

Hastie embraced a broad definition of research consistent with the one written by the Committee of Research in the College of Education at the University of Minnesota in May 1958. It stated that research includes “all forms of scholarly work” that was “aimed at discovering new knowledge or at making creative interpretations, organizations or applications of this knowledge” (Hastie, 1959, p. vii). He believed that such a definition could provide a base for “integrating all of the diverse types of studies and investigation into a single research program” and emphasized that debates about whether one type of research was better than the other were pointless (Hastie, 1959, p. vii).

Hastie held strong views on the need for research in art education. These views are expressed clearly in his introduction to the 1959 NAEA Yearbook which he
penned in the last year of his NAEA presidency. Reflecting on Lester Dix’s introduction to the fifth NAEA Yearbook on research, Hastie (1959) stated:

There is every reason to believe that the state of mind of art educators with respect to research has become even more uncomfortable because they are not keeping pace with the accelerated drive to discover new knowledge that is characteristic of our world today. (p. vi)

This statement was made within the context of his understanding of the rapid expansion of knowledge in many areas and its applications to new uses that resulted in events like the launching of Sputnik by the Russians. He noted that such events represent a severe blow to the pride of the American people, and when that pride is injured, the citizens of the United States had to have someone or something on which to place the blame. Hastie (1959) noted:

The nature and characteristics of this period of criticism is best exemplified by the actions of scholars and scientists as educational reformers. Here we have an interesting phenomena (sic). These men are highly disciplined within the confines of their own field and draw conclusions objectively after careful analysis of the data from controlled observations. Now, in this new role, they are quite willing to make very broad generalizations emotionally and subjectively and without either data or observations (p. vi)

Writing specifically about art education, Hastie (1959) noted that:

Talk in terms of vague generalizations and unsupported claims about the benefits that all individuals derive from art experience will not give adequate support for a program of art education for children and adults. Clear, concise conclusions and recommendations tested by carefully controlled investigations will be required. (p vi)

Hastie recognized that one of the most important issues facing art educators attempting to do research was assessment and the resistance to measurement of any kind by a large percentage of art educators. He believed, as did Thorndike (1914, p. 141), that “if a thing exists, it exists in quantity; if it exists in quantity, it can be measured” (Hastie, 1959, p. vii). He thought that “Measurement is not in itself wrong. It is rather that the available tools and methods may not give an accurate account of what is going on inside a human being when he engages in an art experience” (p. vii). He believed that art educators had to create the “instruments that will open the door to research possibilities in the arts and art education” (p. vii). In his thinking, the choice was not about whether to do research or not to do research. Rather, he believed that art educators would “be required to clarify and promote those characteristics of personal development that can be promoted more effectively and efficiently through art experience than by another means available in our system of education” (p. vi). Additionally, he thought that when this was accomplished that it was necessary to share the results in an easily understandable language that could be understood by those who were not researchers.

The initiation of Studies was but one of many visionary actions that Hastie took in his long and distinguished career as an art educator. Following his
presidency of NAEA, Hastie continued to be actively involved in research. As a faculty member in one of the small number of institutions that offered doctoral degrees in art education, he guided the work of students as well as pursuing his own interests. He engaged in a variety of professional activities which also became landmarks for art education. Additionally, he remained an active artist.

**Additional Contributions to Art Education**

Hastie was selected as the editor of the National Society for the Study of Education's 64th yearbook. The Society issued annual yearbooks on various topics concerning American education. The 64th yearbook was only the second the Society had done on the topic of art education; the first one was published in 1941 (Whipple, 1941). *Art Education: The Sixty-fourth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education*, published in 1965, was well received. It broadened the base of art education by formally introducing the discipline to the larger field of education by a respected professional society. The Yearbook was also unique in that it included work by authors outside the field of art education such as Robert Beck, a professor of educational philosophy at the University of Minnesota, and younger members of the profession such as Elliot Eisner at the University of Chicago, Stanley Wold at Illinois State University, and John S. Keel at San Francisco State University. It is important to note that Walter Cook, Dean of the College of Education at the University of Minnesota, was also a prominent member in the Society and served on the Society’s Art Education Committee, along with Hastie, Eisner, and Wold.

In 1969, Hastie co-authored a book, *Encounter with Art* with Christian Schmidt. In this book, Hastie did pioneering work in researching the nature of artistry and the artistic process. The book explores the artistic process and the importance of thinking and behaving like an artist as part of an art educator’s persona. He contended that one can generalize about the artistic process and that it can be compared to the scientific method which is primal to most thinking in and about the sciences. His visionary thinking was reinforced some 7 years later at the Aspen Conference, “Arts and Aesthetics: an Agenda for the Future,” co-sponsored by the Central Midwestern Regional Educational Laboratory, Incorporated (CEMREL) and the Education Program of the Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies and supported by the National Institute of Education. In setting a research agenda for arts and aesthetics, the conference participants identified the roles of the artist and the artistic process as research priorities. In summarizing the conference discussions, Madeja (1977) stated:

Should the artist be the researcher, or should the artist be the subject of research? Some of the arguments over these questions evolved from differing perceptions of what constitutes research in the arts. The term “researcher” is used in many discussions to mean “an individual possessing a particular scholarly background and special training.” The artist was rarely considered a “researcher.” Traditionally, the artist, the arts object, and the arts experience are the phenomena to be investigated. The researcher investigates the way artists work, the objects...
and performances they create, the effects of the arts on the society, and the audience's response to arts objects and events. The researcher, once removed from the creative act and the created object, studies its properties, makes generalizations, and determines theoretical and pedagogical applications. This conception of research as a strictly academic or professional pursuit does not allow for what many conference participants saw as a major part of the role of the artist—the investigation of problems within their area of interest. (p. 17)

The topic provided a very engaging issue for conference deliberations. Reflecting upon what is currently referred to as arts-based research (Sullivan, 2005), it is clear that the ideas for this approach are embedded in this type of thinking. The artist as researcher investigates a process, a technique, and a creative problem, probing all the elements and components of that problem in order to solve it.

Hastie also played an influential role in the implementation phase of the Aesthetic Education Program (AEP) which was launched in the late 1960s at CEMREL. He served as a content specialist for the program, helping to shape the visual strand in the AEP curriculum and setting the stage for art engagement in the larger domains of visual culture as a part of art education programs. His articulation of ideas regarding how the artistic process would affect the basic art curriculum was a critical piece of the content outline of the AEP curriculum. It related to the larger content domain of aesthetics and the artist and dealt with questions such as: Why do people make works of art? Where do artists get their ideas? What is the process that the artist uses to organize those ideas into objects? What role does the art form play in dictating the process, methods, and techniques used by the artist? What does the individual artist bring to the creative and inventive and imaginative ways of working within that process? He also emphasized that the individual artist is the variable that makes each work of art unique and encourages inventiveness and creativeness. Hastie projected the idea that the artist—in addition to exposing his or her work to critical judgment by a larger audience in terms of aesthetics, cultural, and artistic values—was a critic in the process of creating his or her own work.

Hastie was committed to basic research studies that focused on improving instruction in the visual arts. He recognized the need for applied and practical studies relating to the teaching of the visual arts at every level. These studies would expand the knowledge base by providing practitioners with exemplars and best practices for the teaching of art. These methodologies would also foster the inventive, creative, and artistic development of the student. His thinking was in concert with the creativity movement of the 1950s and 1960s (Baron, 1972; Getzels & Jackson, 1962; Guilford, 1956). Hastie also encouraged research which optimized the learning experience in classroom environments as exemplified by the work of his graduate students (Davis, 1966; Jensen, 1971; Madeja, 1965; Templeton, 1963).
Conclusion

*Studies in Art Education* has continued to grow and thrive for 50 years. It has moved from a semi-annual journal to a quarterly journal, and the volume of research reported has increased exponentially. Without a doubt, it is the premiere research journal in art education in this country and beyond. Four times a year, it reports on the best thinking and work that is occurring in the field. While the focus of the research and the methodologies used to explore probing questions in art education have changed, they fit into the comprehensive thinking that W. Reid Hastie embraced as the first volume was launched in 1959. Thanks to his vision, his leadership, and his energy, the field of art education today stands tall with its peers in other areas of education by providing a respected venue for reporting the research that is so vital to exploring issues and shaping practice in the art classroom.

The high standards maintained by the editorial staff of *Studies* provide a benchmark for future research in art education. Quality research is essential to the future of art education; it will provide the “clear, concise conclusions and recommendations tested by carefully controlled investigations” that W. Reid Hastie (1959, p. vi) called for in 1959 when *Studies in Art Education* was initiated.

References


D. Jack Davis and Stanley S. Madeja


