

Kathy Connors Teaching Award **NAEA Women's Caucus**

Craig Roland Acceptance Speech
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It's an honor to receive the *Kathy Connors Teaching Award* and to have the opportunity to share with you all some of the influences and experiences that led me to being here today. I'll start with a brief glimpse at my present world in Gainesville.

Since 1988, I've taught art education classes at the University of Florida in Gainesville. It's been my pleasure over the years to work with the *best* undergraduate and graduate art education students on the planet—bar none! Go Gators!

Computers have also been an important part of my world. I've spent much of my professional life trying to make sense of new technology by exploring ways we can use it to support, enhance and even transform art education practices.

I've written extensively about the use of technology in art education plus given numerous conference presentations and teacher workshops on the topic over the years. I guess you could say that I am an "art geek." But, that's not what I set out to be when I was young.

According to my mother, my original ambition in life as a five-year-old was to move to Tennessee and join up with Davy Crockett's men. But, I was crushed to find out that the man I thought was Davy Crockett was actually an actor named Fess Parker who worked in Hollywood. My mom informed me that if I wanted to go to Hollywood I would first need to complete school.

Speaking of school, one of my earliest memories of school is Mrs. White's 4th grade class at Northwood Elementary in Royal Oak MI. If I were to make a movie of what it was like to be in Miss White's classroom, it would be in black-and-white and directed by Tim Burton. Things changed to color though every Thursday afternoon when the classroom door would open and in walked Mrs. Ebel, the art teacher pushing her cart.

Mrs. Ebel light up the classroom just by her presence. The thing I remember most about her is she made each of us feel that we mattered. Me, a kid who was usually chosen last on the playground and who wasn't the brightest light bulb when it came to math or science, I mattered when I was in Mrs. Ebel's art class.

My high school years pretty much followed the same pattern. While I was a marginal student in academic subjects like math and science, I excelled in art class, where ironically my teacher was Mr. Larry Ebel (Mrs. Ebel's husband). I've long recognized that I became an art teacher because my path crossed with Mr. and Mrs. Ebel in my earlier years.

Mr. Ebel introduced me to the world of art. I recall going on two school field trips to New York City with the Art Club and Mr. Ebel as our sponsor. We went to the Museum of Modern Art where we saw a Picasso's *Guernica*, Van Gogh's *Starry Night*, and a retrospective of Andrew Wyeth's work (where I first saw *Christina's World*).

Mr. Ebel taught me was that there were people in the world who made art, who felt passionate about doing so and who made a living at it. I knew I wanted to be a part of this world.

Not all my memories of high school were as positive or up-lifting as those I've described thus far. Miss Fox, my speech teacher, told me one

day, after a 'less than memorable' speech I gave in class that I should avoid going into any profession that involves public speaking.

After graduating from high school, I moved to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan along with my high school sweetheart Sue where we both studied art at Northern Michigan University. I studied drawing and painting, plus art education. Sue was a ceramics major. We were married in our junior year.

After graduating from Northern Michigan, we picked up and moved to Mexico where I took an art teaching position at the American School of Monterrey.

Living in Mexico was an incredible adventure, eye opening to say the least for two kids who grew up in the suburbs of Detroit. It was while in Mexico that I developed my teaching chops. It didn't take long for me to exhaust what I had learned about art and teaching while at Northern and I quickly discovered that I needed to expand my repertoire of art skills and tricks while on the job. Indeed, most of what I taught after my first year I learned right ahead or along side with my students.

I took up silk screen printing and black and white photography (both largely self-taught) and watercolor painting at the invitation of Manuel de la Garza, a grandfather of some of my students at the American School and who turned out to be quite an exceptional watercolor teacher. I spent many a Sunday afternoon driving around Northwest Mexico with Mr. de la Garza stopping to paint and photograph scenes like what you see here.

All of my creative explorations with various media made their way into my classroom in the form of art lessons and projects, including movie-making and animation with a Super-8 movie camera that I bought my second year of

teaching. As I mentioned earlier, I was constantly experimenting with different media and learning along with my students—something that I still do and encourage my students to do today.

After teaching at the American School for 3 years, I decided to return to the States to attend graduate school for my Masters at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. While at Miami, I was a graduate assistant for Sandra Packard (while she was President of the Woman's Caucus in the 70s). I also feel fortunate to have studied with John Michael who instilled in me a love and respect for the history of art education, something I hope I do for my students today.

After getting my Masters at Miami, I taught art for another 3 years including a year at a middle school in Ohio and 2 more years at my old job at the American School of Monterrey. Then, missing the *cushy life of academia*, I returned to graduate school in the early 80s to pursue my doctorate at Illinois State University (ISU) in Bloomington-Normal.

It was at ISU that I had my first encounter with a computer. I was assigned as a GTA to a new College of Fine Arts computer lab where I was expected to learn how to use the technology and then to teach others in the college how to use it—something I continue doing to this day.

I cut my teeth on an Apple II—which was just a box with a bunch of electronics and chips in it. You had to program the machine at first to get it to do anything worthwhile. So I learned to program in BASIC and CEEMAC (a motion graphics language), and produced programs that allowed the user to create patterns and tessellations like the one you see here called "Which came first?"

Later on different input devices (like the graphics tablet, video camera and mouse)

came along, all of which I learned how to use to make images. The images below are part of a series I produced with the Apple IIe called "Saving Face." Output was a big issue back then. Using a device I made from a styrofoam cooler with a hole cut out of the bottom, I was able to capture images from the screen using a 35mm camera.

After graduating from ISU Sue and I hung around the Midwest for a while where I taught art education at Purdue and Eastern Illinois University. Then, we picked up and moved again, in 1989, this time to Florida.

I'd like to wrap up by touching on a few key experiences from the last decade, where my thinking and teaching evolved or took an unexpected turn.

One watershed moment occurred while reading these words "the digital revolution is over" in an article by Nicholas Negroponte in *Wired* magazine. Negroponte is founder and chairman of the *One Laptop per Child* non-profit association. He was also co-founder and director of the MIT Media Lab. So, what did he mean by saying, "the digital revolution is over?"

I came to understand that Negroponte was speaking about a cultural and technological shift occurring in which computers and digital devices were becoming so ubiquitous that our attention needed to focus more on what technology enabled us to imagine and do—rather than on the tools themselves.

Alan November and other presenters at the *Building Learning Communities (BLC)* Conference, which I attended in 2006 and again in 2007, echoed this post-digital theme. The BLC conference introduced me to Web 2.0 and technologies like blogs, wikis, social networks and so on.

Two big takeaways from this conference for me were: (1) the importance of shifting control in the classroom from the teacher to the students; and that (2) teachers and students need to be having authentic conversations across the curriculum with other people around the world over the Internet.

This last point has occupied a lot of my attention in recent years. It's predicted by 2015, that more people in the world will have access to a mobile Internet connection than to electricity at home. The question that intrigues me is – How can we harness the power of this global connectivity to open up new avenues for art education? (I'm going for world domination.)

One place where I'm exploring this question is on Art Education 2.0: What happens when you connect art teachers and students with their counterparts around the globe? That's the goal behind Art Education 2.0, a social network I set up for art educators in 2007.

Here is a snapshot of visitors to the site in February alone. Over 18,000 photos have been uploaded to the site thus far, along with nearly 1500 videos. There are over 150 special interest groups and 16 collaborative art projects currently running on the site with many more projects and exchanges from past years archived.

Art Education 2.0 isn't the only place where art teachers can connect with other art teachers online. I believe that we're only skimming the surface here and that we need more art teachers imagining and exploring these possibilities.

Here is another example of what happens when you connect art educators online. We recently moved our graduate MA program in art education online at UF. In doing so, we went from one of the smallest programs in the

College of Fine Arts to the largest in a little over a year. I'd like to recognize Michelle Tillander, Elizabeth Delacruz and Jodi Kushins, my co-conspirators in this endeavor.

I'd also like to highlight here the work of 3 of our recent graduates.

For her capstone project, Karissa Ferrell, a California high school art teacher studied contemporary art and social media. She created a multi-platform online resource for high school art teachers interested in incorporating contemporary art into their curriculums.

Hilary Frambes, describes herself on her Twitter profile as a Mother, Artist, Teacher, Zumba Instructor, Feminist, Activist and the 2011 Ohio Delegate for Parenting Magazine's Mom Congress. She did her capstone project on art advocacy and produced two great art advocacy videos that are posted on youTube along with a companion website and paper.

Lastly, in an action research project, Melinda Turnbull, an Iowa elementary art teacher, took her students on regular outdoor excursions to a nearby nature area where they sketched and looked for inspiration for art making back in the classroom. She documented all this with 3 wonderful videos, a curriculum resource and website, plus a supporting paper.

I'll end by sharing something I once told my students while teaching at the American School in Monterrey. Many would ask when I gave an assignment "What do you want me to do here?" They always got the same answer "I want you to AMAZE me." I'm happy to say that after all these years, I still have students, now from around the globe, who amaze me everyday.

That's my story, so far. Thanks for listening.