

INTRODUCTION FOR MARILYN ZURMUEHLEN,
RECIPIENT OF THE 1990 JUNE KING MCFEE AWARD
Enid Zimmerman
Indiana University

Sometime during the course of their development, they (artists) have to forge a character subtle enough to nourish and protect and foster the growth part of themselves that makes art, and at the same time practical enough to deal with the world pragmatically. They have to maintain a position between care of themselves and care of their work in the world, just as they have to sustain the delicate tension between intuition and sensory information. ~Anne Truitt, *The Daybook: The Journal of An Artist*, Penguin Books, 1982, p. 24)

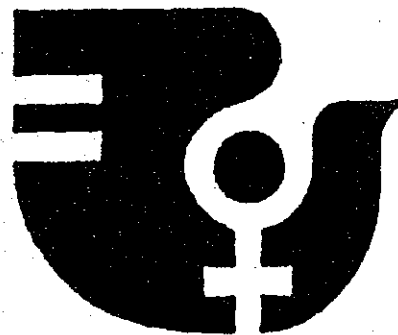
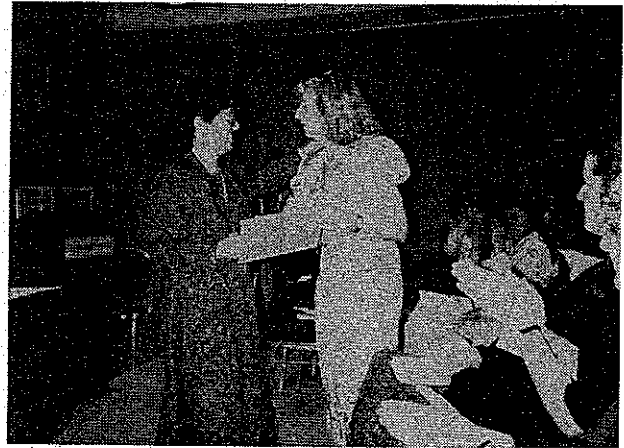
This is a quote from one of Marilyn Zurmuehlen's favorite author, artist, Anne Truitt. Marilyn is one of the few people I know who is able to maintain a balance between "care of themselves and care of their work in the world" and to "sustain the delicate tension between intuition and sensory information." We in the field of art education know of Marilyn's scholarly discourses in which personal, private thoughts elegantly and eloquently become public affirmation. In her art work, she displays the same merging of the autobiographical that is personal and the fictional that becomes public.

Although I had admired Marilyn's writings for a number of years, I came to know her personally when Gil Clark contacted her to see if she could help him discover whether Norman C. Meier's archival materials could be found in the University of Iowa libraries. On April 15, 1983, Gil received a reply to this quest from Earl M. Rogers, curator of Archives at the University of Iowa: "You and your colleagues are most welcome to use the Norman C. Meier Papers... The Meier Papers are open, although they are not fully processed and lack an inventory."

A letter came a few days later from Marilyn who had made arrangements for Gil and I to stay on the campus of the University of Iowa and to peruse the Meier Papers. The rest is history. The Meier Papers were uncharted territory that Marilyn, Gil, and I rummaged through, often losing our way amid the myriad details and tomes of paper. We laughed, we empathized, and we took a sober look at Meier's "growth part" that tried to create art and how he "dealt with the world pragmatically." Through his life we three became great friends and together eventually authored a book, *Understanding Art Testing*, (NAEA, 1987). What is unique about writing with Marilyn is that Zurmuehlen comes after Zimmerman and for once my name is not the last to appear on the cover of a co-authored book.

Anyone who knows Marilyn knows that when she is not arting and writing she loves to shop. When I was in Chicago last month I noticed a shopping bag, with Florida colors I associate with Marilyn, on the arm of a woman leaving Marshall Fields. I had to get one of those shopping bags for Marilyn. Here it is. What is inside? Two cards with art work by Marilyn sent to Mary Stokrocki who also nominated Marilyn for this award. Two photo copies, one of Norman C. Meier's painting

and another of him lecturing about painting. Two advertisements, one for *Understanding Art Testing* and another for Marilyn's new book, just off the press, *Studio Art: Praxis, Symbol, Presence*, (NAEA, 1990-). Lastly, a letter from Marilyn to Gil Clark, on a *Working Papers in Art Education* memo, lamenting that "It seems strange not to be communicating about Norman." Marilyn, I present this shopping bag and its contents to you with fond memories. I am pleased to present the June McFee Award to you and know that you will have a colorful means of carting it away. You surely deserve this award for your service to the profession of art education, for your outstanding contribution as a teacher not only to your students but to all graduate students who have presented at the NAEA graduate sessions, and for your insightful research and focus on humanistic issues in our field. You have made outstanding contributions and are a most worthy recipient of the June King McFee Award.





LIVING BY NARRATIVES IN ART AND ART EDUCATION
JUNE KING McFEE AWARD ACCEPTANCE
SPEECH,
KANSAS CITY

Dr. Marilyn Zurmuehlen
The University of Iowa

In this room are many people who have contributed to my professional life, and I hope I have contributed to theirs, many people with whom I share friendship. I acknowledge all of you, but not by name. There are many such people outside this room and I acknowledge them, but perhaps not by name.

I'll begin with two stories. First, a ceramics story. I did not know it was a ceramics story until I was grown. When I was in the fifth grade I was confined at home with a childhood disease that left me free to be outside, that left me free to be bored and restless, but that did not leave me free to leave the confines of our home. In desperation, my parents permitted me to dig a hole in the backyard, behind a shrub, and from that hole to extract earth that I combined with water to make mud. I did not make mud pies, but I found every object I could—I found toys, I searched the kitchen, I scrounged the garage. Anything I found into which I could press that moist earth, I did so. I pressed it in those objects and I tapped it out. I tapped it out along the edges of the sidewalk in the backyard, along the edges of the banister on the porch, along the edges of the steps. As the weeks went by the spaces became narrower and narrower in which family and friends were able to walk. I discovered, of course, that those objects would dry in the sun. They became hard, and, once they dried, I could take my paints and, in a very beau-

tiful way, those wet paints would be absorbed into that dried, baked mud. What was I doing? I was not making ceramics. I did not have a notion that I would become a ceramicist. I was simply involved with what was at hand in my life—the time, the possibilities, and, I suppose, the imagination. I was making things. I did not know that story would be apocalyptic until much later when I found myself, as some of you know, also pressing clay into molds, into other found objects, and, again, painting on that clay.

A second story. Until the last semester of fourth grade I attended a private school which in many respects was a wonderful privilege, intellectually; there were only five to six students in each grade level. There came into that school, in our room, an easel which was a source of delight and frustration. It was a delight when I could work at it; it was a frustration because I was not permitted to paint at that easel as often as I thought I should be. That frustration is related to the second part of this story. We had art at that school, when we had it, only on Friday afternoons. Increasingly restive over the years, I complained that art was not taken seriously in those classrooms. One Friday afternoon I reached an apex of frustration, went home and announced to my parents that I wanted to go to the public school where I knew there was an art classroom, there was an art teacher, and students had art in that classroom three days a week. My parents took my request seriously, and the following Monday I embarked on the public school curriculum with art three days a week. Unfortunately, an accompaniment was physical education which I had not foreseen.

Both stories I think are apocalyptic in light of my adult profession. I tell them now because they embody what I sought for in a graduate school and what I think I found at Penn State. When I looked for a graduate program I wanted a situation where both art and research flourished and, for me, that is what I found in the late 1960s at The Pennsylvania State University. I remember visiting it, along with some other schools, driving in through the surrounding mountains, saying, "This is a beautiful spot, maybe this is the place that will be home for the next few years." It turned out to be a home for a few years. It turned out, also, to be what I looked for with Martin Buber's notion: "Because this human being exists, meaningless, however hard pressed you are by it, cannot be the real truth." I found such people at Penn State. I cannot name all of them because this is a short story; these are not my memoirs. The memoirs would require longer than the time allotted for this talk, and I am not ready to write them yet. The short story, necessarily, will lose some characterizations that may be included in those memoirs.

I should certainly acknowledge the faculty at Penn State who embodied that concept of both art and research. I should certainly acknowledge my fellow graduate students who were excited about inquiry, who were excited about making art, and who were excited about the inquiry and the art that all of us made. Finally, I acknowledge my mentor, Kenneth Beittel whose intellectual integrity, scholarly leadership, and commitment to making art have nurtured nearly

two hundred doctoral students.

I especially acknowledge a couple of other people from Penn State, one of whom is sitting in this room, Larry Kantner. I recall Larry at work every night in the Computer Center during my first semester in State College. George Hardiman was a mentor to many graduate students at Penn State. He was a mentor in the sense of advising us about classes to take, he was a mentor in talking with us about issues in higher education. He has been a mentor to his own students, he continues to mentor people in the field, and he is a mentor to one of my students who now is on his faculty, Tina Thompson. One of the stories I can tell about George Hardiman is from a time when Dr. Beittel was about to leave on his important sabbatical that some of you know about, studying in Japan for the first time. He returned to me a term paper in which I had invested considerable time and ego involvement; in it I had researched potters' statements about their art. I learned much from writing that paper, but I was a bit disappointed when I received it back with no comments on it. I mentioned that to George who, in his typical mentoring style, said to me, "Marilyn, you're approaching the stage in your life where you don't need that kind of external reinforcement." Some of you who know George recognize the language.

I discovered at Penn State a community of inquiry. That community was affirmed in our questions. It was gratified in our searching, it was enlivened by our art making, and it was confirmed by the good will that permeated the differences in our days and the differences in our dreams. When I think of my days in graduate school I am reminded of Kay Weldon's epistolary novel in which she attempted to explain Jane Austin's work through the vehicle of fictional letters to a fictional niece. She talked in that work about first audiences. It seems to me that the first audience we have for our professional work profoundly influences the research that we do and the art that we make. I think the first audience I had for research taught me that we can learn to question one another and that sometimes questioning and the doubts that we raise are the most caring ways we show our concern as a community of scholars. They are the responsible ways we enact that concern. Yeats said, "In dreams begin responsibility." We came to graduate school with individual dreams; collectively we found ourselves, as we do now, in seminars seeking for the apt word, looking for the clarifying concepts, being responsible. In other words, conceiving of education as a communal, collective, and supportive endeavor in which we all were engaged.

From this brief description I hope you can see that I found more than a home in the mountains at Penn State; I found a kind of intellectual home and an aesthetic home. From there I went to Columbia, Missouri, to the University of Missouri as a faculty member. That was another kind of home. At the time I was reading Willie Morris' North Toward Home. There is a sense in which I went south toward home, having lived all my life previously in the northeast or the near midwest. There Larry came as a colleague. It was interesting to

experience someone as a graduate school colleague and then as a faculty colleague. It was an opportunity to continue the intellectual and educational milieu established at Penn State. We attempted at the University of Missouri to extend our own experiences in graduate study which I suspect is typical of many of the people in this room. Eventually, as I moved to The University of Iowa, one of the inspirations for beginning Working Papers in Art Education and a source for the doctoral research session at NAEA was to expand the concept of an intellectual home. When I left home for Penn State, I wondered, "Will Penn State be home?" When I left Penn State for Missouri, I wondered, "Can Missouri be home?" When I left Missouri for Iowa, I wondered, "Can Iowa ever be home?" Like most people in academia, I found that home is not a specific place, although a senior faculty member at The University of Iowa once said to me, "Home is where you have tenure." Perhaps that is too limited a definition. Home came to be a much larger place than I had envisioned it to be at a younger age. Because it is a so much larger place it seemed to me that an intellectual home can extend beyond a particular institution in which any one of us studies at the moment or in which any one of us teaches as a faculty member at the moment. It extends to include a vast range of people, scattered now throughout the United States and to some extent throughout the world.

I should mention, because this is the Women's Caucus, that I stand here as a woman, among other aspects of my career, a woman who entered this profession in the early 1970s. Many of you know this was a time when the acknowledgement of women and the need for women to be represented on all kinds of faculty committees and faculty involvements was first becoming important. Along with that need, unfortunately, there was a severe shortage of women to fulfill those functions. As a result, at a very early stage in my career, I received a valuable education in university life that extended far beyond art and art education. It extended into legal matters, it extended into routines that keep the university running, such as registration and admission procedures. From this obligation and opportunity, I learned a great deal about other disciplines and the people in those disciplines, eventually about people in other colleges and how they search for their own meanings in those disciplines. I suppose there is a sense in which we, the women of that era, could speak of being burdened by those obligations, but there is another sense in which it was a rich opportunity because few of the young men who were our colleagues at that time have received nearly as valuable an education about the entire university. One outcome, of course, is that I continue to have the obligation to represent the arts as I become more knowledgeable in my particular institution. So that continues to be both an obligation and a privilege that I think probably is historically bound, that may not be quite such an obligation for women who are beginning to be assistant professors today.

I alluded to my ceramics career earlier. Ceramics in academic life possibly tends to make all of us phenomenologists. Some of you may think that I already was a

phenomenologist and so I see that in my ceramics life. But, having studied at the Cleveland Institute of Art, at Haystack Mt. School of Crafts in Deer Isle, Maine, of course, at Penn State, and at Osaka University of Arts in Osaka, Japan, I realize that people in ceramics are very conscious when we change locations, we change kilns, we change clay, we change studios; these environmental changes have a tremendous impact on our work. I think it is impossible to work in many different locations in ceramics without developing many points of view, and realizing that to make ceramics has myriad meanings. Perhaps, however, those multiple perspectives that I found in ceramics only affirmed the phenomenological possibilities I already had discovered in reading and in research.

I'll talk, briefly, about my research. I do not propose to review all of the papers I have written, lest you nod off to sleep, but I will refer to my dissertation because it embodies the two modes or approaches that have interested me all of my career—ceramics and research. Some people in this room know that my dissertation involved the different responses people have to ceramic objects and to colored slides of those ceramic objects. I like to think of such a large empirical study, which at one point resulted in foot high stacks of data that covered my entire desk at Penn State and required the assistance of a couple friends to carry up to the second floor of Chambers Building, as pilot studies for the qualitative research that follows. Such qualitative research supplies genuine interpretations that have authentic meanings for our field. Sometimes I am asked why I did not write a philosophical study for my dissertation. It was because I thought of it as a pilot study for the career that I would have afterward, and because it seemed an opportunity to make use of computer facilities that I did not know for certain would be available to me later in my career. Enid referred to the collaboration among Enid Zimmerman, Gil Clark, and me on Understanding Art Testing. I would be remiss if I did not say something about what a rich experience that was. It was, also, truly phenomenological. We had three points of view and those three points of view were clarified by our differences and, I hope, clarified for the field by those differences and by the commonalities that emerged from those differences when we talked about Norman C. Meier's life and when we talked, finally, about its implications and applications to art testing.

Before I close I will add, for the benefit of some people, that I have no stories about either my one niece or four nephews. I will save those for the reception afterward and any of you who are curious may read about them in Studio Art. They have supplied wonderful research opportunities to me as well as enriching my life, and I am grateful to both sisters who made them possible. Finally, I conclude with a question that I have wondered about, and perhaps you wonder about as well. Is it possible to lead a phenomenological life? I share with you a final story which is really an experience. When I was considering accepting a position at The University of Iowa, I

wrote to a friend from undergraduate school who lives in New York City and who has remained a close friend all of our lives. I told him I was trying to decide whether or not to accept the appointment and discussed the advantages and disadvantages, not expecting that he would give me an answer but hoping that he would share my dilemma, which he did. He wrote back immediately and said, "I hope you're not thinking of going to The University of Iowa simply because of the river!" Those of you who have not visited our campus, there is a wonderful, winding Iowa River that separates what are sometimes referred to as "the two sides of the campus." I guess I talked a good deal to him about the river, and the river has become a part of my life there. The river is a wonderful indicator of the seasons: it ices over, people walk on it, people are delighted when the ice thaws, eventually it flows, rapidly, off to its larger destination and then it begins to ice over again. We take it as a sign of life itself and I take it in some sense as a sign of the phenomenological life. When I look at it from one side, the side on which North Hall is located, where my office in art education and the art education classrooms are situated, I find myself looking toward the art side of the river. What I see, on the art side, is the Museum of Art, a bit of the ceramics building where I teach, and some other emblems of studio art. When I cross to the art side of the river to teach ceramics, I can look back to the other side. I am standing in the midst of sculpture, sometimes I have just emerged from the ceramics building with smudges of clay dust on me; perhaps I have walked through the foundry in sculpture. What I see on the other side is a glimpse of North Hall, North Hall that is filled with what Tina Thompson referred to as "art education green." "Art education green" is especially on a wall in my office that Kim Spradling helped me build. In between these two points of view is the Iowa Memorial Union which houses our Gallery Space that contains the Iowa High School Art Exhibition Program. From either side of the river on which I stand I can look in the direction from which the river flows, never seeing its beginning, but conscious of its source. On either side of the river, the art education side or the art side, I can turn to see whence that energy carries it; I can see its direction, but not its destination. For that I must follow it, join its journey, make my choice to become a part of it. It seems to me that river may not have been the reason that I chose to go to The University of Iowa but it has enriched my life there as an emblem of the art and art education that I think is possible for us as professionals, and as an emblem of entire generations of art educators and artists—those that precede us, those who come after us, and the unending stream which we all join. I think of Annie Dillard, who put that best when she said, "And I go my way and my left foot says, 'Glory' and my right foot says, 'Amen.'"





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