

It may be considered ironic that, as an art educator, I am interested in art that's made by people who have not had an art education and are not professional artists. I am also drawn to the work of little known (at least in this country) women artists like Charlotte Salomon (1917-1943) and Emily Carr (1871-1945). Salomon, died in Auschwitz and did a series of autobiographical paintings called, *Life or Theater?*, and Carr, a painter who is well known in Canada and associated with their Group of Seven, lived on Vancouver Island, British Columbia, and documented the now lost villages of indigenous peoples in a series of watercolor studies. She also wrote wonderful short novels.



A portrait of Amy Brook Snider and a poster for the conference entitled "Childhood."

My contributions to the field are ephemeral: in the sense that there are few publications documenting my work. There have been, however, numerous conference presentations, panels, committees, a traveling exhibition with a catalogue, now out of print, mini-conferences, and the organization of national conferences—one on *Studio Education* and, more recently, one on *Childhood*.

In my courses at Pratt, I rely on texts by writers, anthropologists, scientists, psychologists, and others; at the moment, my interest lies in story, play, and collecting, as a form of research. As the former Director of *Writing Across the Curriculum*, I am obsessed with developing strategies for teaching a kind of clear and thoughtful writing to all my students. In my 29 years as Chair of the Art and Design Education Department at Pratt Institute, I have found a comfortable leadership style by building consensus through working with a team of faculty and students to guide me in the development and administration of our programs—I definitely lean toward a feminist approach.

Although I have been teaching (for the most part) since 1961, my pedagogy is constantly evolving. It includes:

- A spirit of collaboration that infuses both my teaching and administrative work.
- An interdisciplinary approach that enriches each subject.
- My decision not to give grades to my students for their weekly written responses to the course texts. Now, I write them each a critique and wait to grade until they understand what I am looking for and feel comfortable with writing.
- Learning that the most imaginative artwork comes from a fairly narrow set of limitations during my fifteen years as an art teacher in the NYC public schools. I became a collaborator with my students in the production of innovative projects.
- Beginning to figure out how to mediate between the needs of each individual student and my own values and principles.
- Applying pedagogical ideas and strategies to conference organization in the mini-conferences I designed or collaborated on at the NAEA, *Style: Is it a Question of Gender in Art Education?*, *And the Walls Came Tumblin' Down: A Celebration of Diversity*, and *The Conference as Ritual: The Sacred Journey of the Art Educator*.

I find the question of my identity as a woman and art educator difficult to answer. In some ways, it changes with the individual I am with or the groups I relate to—be it with a friend, colleagues, students, or a researcher, Joanna, like you. Perhaps Walt Whitman said it best:

“Do I contradict myself? Very well then, I contradict myself, I am large, I contain multitudes.”



Another portrait of Amy and students engaging in her pedagogy.

Right now, I'm a mother, grandmother, sister, teacher, chairperson, **home** owner, gardener, collector, and book and movie lover. I enjoy having people for dinner and sitting around for hours, not with multitudes, but with a few good friends.

I have been discriminated against in my work as an art educator and a woman but cannot discuss the details in a public forum. As for my thinking about the field, I heard a talk by Dennis Fehr, the Executive Director of the National Education Taskforce, on September 25th and he suggested that the four groups who dominate our field at the moment—the followers of Lowenfeld, Social Theory, DBAE, and Visual Culture,

should get together to shape Federal education policy. I like that idea. I am also proud that it was at my suggestion that the Women's Caucus developed awards for art teachers as well as college professors.

I majored in Art (painting) at Queens College, with coursework in Comparative Literature and Anthropology and after a short break, got my masters in painting at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. After many years of struggling with five research topics, I was awarded my PhD from New York University in 1995.