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mentor's introduction

Exhibitions of Children's Art and Unexamined Beliefs:

The Research of Dianne Turner

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In the extremely complex and multifaceted field of art education there are long standing practices toward which relatively little inquiry has been directed. Exhibitions of children's art pervade the field and yet the values, assumptions, expectations and purposes associated with them remain unexamined. Think of the issues that might be raised about these exhibitions. There are the historical questions - where did exhibitions of the art works of children begin; what are the antecedents; how have exhibition practices changed over time? There are the ideological questions - what is a sponsor's stated purpose for holding an exhibition of children's art and what are the implicit motivations of the organizers - is it to promote an understanding of child art and art education; to give children recognition for their creative effort; to sell a brand of art supplies; to advance world brotherhood; to raise money to support a political position; to protest an injustice; to finance a social program? There are questions of policy, of practice, of participation - what policies govern school, school district, state, regional, national and international exhibitions; what is the

basis for the selection of works for exhibition; what educational functions are attributed to exhibitions of children's art; where are exhibitions held; do teachers see differences between exhibitions sponsored by the manufacturers of art materials and those sponsored by educational, social, and political organizations? These are some of the questions that presented themselves as Dianne Turner began her research into teachers' and prospective teachers' beliefs about exhibitions of children's art.

Ms. Turner came to Penn State with a strong interest in exhibitions of children's art. As an elementary art teacher she had promoted the art program in her school by placing enormous children's paintings on billboards and she had entered her students' creations in regional exhibitions. Her inquiry is an extension of her teaching practices. And although she had touched upon the history and the ideologies that underlie exhibitions of child art, in the end she decided to examine teachers beliefs regarding the location, scope, and sponsorship of contemporary exhibitions. Part of her inquiry has involved the construction of a set of variables through which to examine exhibitions of children's art. And through her inquiry she has sensitized us to a topic in art education that merits a great deal of study.