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A Phenomenological Methodology for Art Criticism

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A foundation for critical dialogue is formed as three clusters of propositions: presuppositions for art criticism, proposals for the practice of art criticism, and statements suggesting the significance of art criticism for individuals in society. Based upon these propositions and generally following a phenomenological method of description, a method of art criticism is outlined involving five consecutively ordered yet functionally integrated components: (1) receptiveness, (2) orienting, (3) bracketing, (4) interpretive analysis, and (5) synthesis.

Art educators may place importance upon art criticism for many reasons, among them that art criticism may act as a constructive culminating phase for those involved in art making processes; that art criticism aids in the development of visual literacy, helping individuals to better understand and arrange the visual environment; that art criticism broadens the base of knowledge and experience for those who use it; that art criticism may encourage the exercise of cognitive and affective processes that otherwise might be infrequently stimulated; and that art criticism offers high potential for gaining self-and-other awareness by providing systematic approaches for deriving significance of meaning and feeling from that most revealingly human of enterprises, art.

Art criticism is a procedure for revealing the expressive significance of works of art. The role of the critic, whether played by a classroom teacher or professional connoisseur, is to determine and describe that significance so that others might have enriched experiences with art works. Although the literature available on the subject is expansive, it is easy to become disheartened if searching for a clearly delineated, cohesive methodology outlining both principles and procedures of art criticism.

Among the difficulties that might be ascribed to existing approaches is the lack of an explicit foundation upon which to build critical dialogue. Grounding art criticism upon pertinent fields of inquiry, such as aesthetics and perception, could prepare critics to defend critical decisions and justify positions held, as well as provide a frame of reference for evaluating critical methods or instances

of criticism.

Almost equally troublesome are theories and concepts that constitute the ingredients of a foundation for criticism yet fail to provide any correlative method for teachers or students of criticism to use.

There can be difficulties associated with the use of a method whose initial phase plunges the viewer directly into an analysis of a work of art's visual or symbolic significance. It is important, especially for the novice, that allowances be made for coping with prejudices concerning artistic style or content, that the work of art itself be delimited and the viewer positioned constructively in relation to it, and that the viewer is equipped with some prior understanding of what constitutes relevant critical dialogue.

Some methods would have viewers artificially isolate the properties of works of art by separating form from content, feeling from the perception of form, or visual elements from a total composition. While such exercises afford convenience when doing a detailed study of the constituent parts of a work of art, they may in fact be contrary to the holistic nature of perception, and ultimately lead to an inadequate synthesis of the work's significance.

Propositions for Art Criticism

What follows are eleven propositions that will be used as guidelines for the development of a critical method. The resulting methodology is intended to surmount the difficulties mentioned and provide an alternative approach to existing critical methods. It represents the application to art criticism of certain phenomenological tenets, particularly

those formulated by Merleau-Ponty through the complex of his collected works.

The propositions are divided into three clusters: presuppositions for art criticism, that is, conditions inherent or necessary for critical dialogue; proposals for the practice of art criticism; and statements suggesting the significance of art criticism. None of these propositions is exclusive of function, nor are they hierarchically arranged.

Cluster 1: Presuppositions for Art Criticism

1. *The significance of an aesthetic object is constituted within the dialectic of a subject and that object.* What becomes visible for a viewer is already awaiting the gaze. Individuals approach an object equipped with certain aptitudes and within the context of a given experiential situation. What an object means depends as much upon a viewer's perception as upon the properties of the object.

Fundamental to Merleau-Ponty's (1962a) phenomenology is the notion of perception involving those processes by which people distinguish and understand things within their scope of experience. It is the interaction of external conditions and internal constructions that forms the basis for human creation, response, and apprehension. Objects in the world exist for and with a perceiving body. Merleau-Ponty (1968) identified two kinds of perceptual objects, the visible and the invisible, the visible referring to physical phenomena and the invisible to ideas and constructs of the imagination. Everything visible has its invisible aspect.

In the plastic arts meaning is to be found in the sensuous and symbolic properties of the work of art as perceived. The historical importance of a work of art and biographical data about the artist are generally peripheral to critical concerns. Occasionally, symbols may appear in a work of art whose meanings are unknown to a viewer. In this instance, social and historical information may be useful. For example, the reading of religious symbols often calls for scholarly expertise. Even though a symbol may be significant for its decorative surface qualities, its invisible meaning must be revealed before its full significance is attainable. Care must be taken lest discourse wander away from what is immediately expressed in the work. Any statement made about the significance of a work of art must be supported by evidence within the context of the work itself (Broudy, 1974; Feldman, 1970; Pepper, 1949b).

Any object may be experienced as an aesthetic object. Merleau-Ponty (1962b, p. 167) actually refers to "a mode of esthetic perception" in which an individual has consciously isolated a perceptual object from tangential or practical concerns in order to focus clearly upon its qualities. Some objects are created by people expressly for the purpose of being considered aesthetically, that is, for the inherent value of their expressive qualities, and these objects are what are ordinarily considered works of art. If a person wished, he or she could stroll through the National Gallery of Art contemplating light fixtures and door handles as aesthetic objects. It would be a shame, however, if that person did not also pay attention to the paintings, many of which might provide intensely rewarding experiences, and any of which could be the proper subject for art criticism.

2. *Art criticism is an intentional act.* Probing the world for meaning is an act of consciousness called *intending* (Kaelin, 1962; Merleau-Ponty, 1962a). An intentional object is the object as perceived. When a work of art is intended, a viewer attempts to bring the work into a state of visual clarity by assuming a questioning attitude, and seeks to discover the significance of what is given.

3. *A subject should be comfortably situated before the object of criticism.* Physical conditions affect the body, and will facilitate or interfere with the optimum perception of a work of art. There are exceptions to the comfort requirement; performance pieces, for example, may be designed to agitate the viewer's ordinary perceptual habits, in which case the critical review should include statements about the environment and its generated responses.

Because of the concentrated effort required to fully intend a work of art, it is possible for viewers to fall into a state that Pepper (1949b) calls sensory fatigue, or the inability to attend to works of art in the manner required for just appraisal. This may often occur in large art museums. It is better from a critical standpoint to attend to only one or a few works intently in any museum visit, with intermittent rest periods engaging viewers in some other activity.

While much of this may seem like common sense, its implications for art education are significant. The traditional field trip to a museum, for example, may lack the effect the teacher hoped for simply because physical

conditions did not adequately facilitate art appreciation. Having thirty hungry students hot from a bus ride crowded together before a single small painting affords few of them, if any, stable conditions or an adequate vantage point for intending the work. The same kind of problem may occur within a classroom. Students should be encouraged to move about before a work of art, and allowed ample time to see it in order to form reasonable opinions.

Cluster 2: The Practice of Art Criticism

4. *Feelings associated with the perception of a work of art are integral to the critical experience of that work.* The meaning of a work of art is not restricted to symbolic ideas or representations. A feeling generated through an encounter with a work of art also constitutes part of the total significance of that work. There may be several kinds of feelings experienced: emotional, such as joy or sadness; sensuous, such as soft, hard, heavy, or light; felt tensions, such as those created by the visually vibrating lines of Op art. Kinesthetic sensations may be recognized in the response to kinetic sculptural forms, photographs that capture motion, performances of dance, or even the sweep of bold brush strokes. Pepper (1949b) has made similar observations, concluding that people can possess a kind of empathy for an object of perception.

The appeal of a stimulus is not relegated to one sense, e.g., visual or auditory; an inter-relationship exists. Referring to colors as warm or cool, or to a line as flowing indicates the global function of the senses. People can see the coarseness of sand or the slickness of a gleaming hubcap without ever having to touch them.

Psychological states may also be communicated by a work of art. Munch's *The Scream*, for instance, with its distorted figure and discordant colors, has been said to express anxiety. A "vague feeling of uneasiness" may be experienced when perception fails to reach easy closure (Merleau-Ponty, 1962a, p. 17). This might be felt when looking at figure-ground illusions, or when a work seems to beg for interpretation even though no interpretation seems readily forthcoming. An encounter with a surrealist painting may generate feelings of being in the presence of secretly harbored meaning, rather like confronting ancient hieroglyphs. The challenge of unlocking these mysteries may increase the vividness of the experience.

5. *Any property of a work of art may be perceived as having significance.* Meaningful qualities of a work of art may be sensuous or symbolic or both. Kaelin (1973), whose descriptive categories *sensuous surface* and *experiential depth* correspond to these qualities, insists that any element of a work of art, including any referential or metaphorical element, is relevant to the criticism of that work. This is contrary to formal analysis of art, in which representational images are unimportant when compared with abstract visual relationships. If Van Gogh's painting of a weeping man elicits sympathy from a viewer it is not simply because that viewer reacts to colors, lines and shapes, but precisely because those sensuous elements form a recognizable image that speaks to the deepest experience of most human beings.

The value of a work of art resides in the interaction of its visible and ideational elements as perceived. Form and content together constitute what Kaelin (1973) calls the total expressiveness of a work of art. How an idea is expressed through a medium is equal in importance to the idea itself. For instance, of the many images expressing the horrors of war, few approach the intensity of Picasso's monumental *Guernica*.

6. *Perceptual moments fund to create an interpretation of the total significance of a work of art.* Immediate perceptions of a work of art integrate with reflections on the significance of lived experiences and synthesize, or fund, into a relatively full understanding of the work. Pepper (1949a), who held that several encounters over time with a work of art were necessary to attain a critical appreciation of it, described funding in this way: "Eventually the work is grasped by a sort of intuitive act in which past discriminations fuse with present stimulations in a total integrated experience" (p. 149).

The significance of the visible and invisible world is discovered by reflection, which is an introspective activity that funds experiences gathered in a temporal context into meaningful wholes. Reflective consciousness is a creative operation that participates in perceptual experience (Merleau-Ponty, 1962a). For example, clouds can only provide the illusion of resembling things other than themselves when memories are woven imaginatively into a perceptual moment.

Reflection also involves interpretation and judgment. The reflective consciousness must construct the meaning of a Shakespeare play

from evidence gathered during its performance. Possible interpretations must be judged according to their plausibility in the total context.

7. *No interpretation of significance is absolute.* Four points can be made relative to this proposition. First, any property of a work of art as perceived depends for its significance upon its relation to other properties of the work of art (Kaelin, 1973). An ellipse may represent a plate, halo, or something else depending upon the context in which it is used.

Second, this proposition allows for the variable perspectival and temporal characteristics of a thing. An object appears to an individual from a unique point of view. A person can never see the front and back of a physical object simultaneously, nor see at once its appearance under various lighting conditions, nor witness in an instant all of its structural changes through time. An object reveals itself through an indefinite number of perspectival views. It is a tenet of Merleau-Ponty's (1962a) phenomenology that nothing exists absolutely; knowledge acquired through perception is always subject to revision.

Third, this proposition serves to indicate that there are no guarantees in the contiguity of experience between conscious subjects. Each person is a center of perspectives on the phenomenal field, but more than that, everyone bears his or her own behavioral aptitudes and experiential history. Objects in the world take on a fresh layer of significance: they are no longer simply what an individual can make of them, they are what other individuals with their unique patterns of behavior can make of them. Thus the visible world may be said to be "the surface of an inexhaustible depth;" the potential always exists for new interpretations, new meanings, to be born in and about things in the world (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, p. 143).

Fourth, no funded interpretation of a work of art ever exhausts the possibilities of meaning inherent in the work. A single work of art may speak with fresh significance to different people at different times under differing circumstances.

What is irreplaceable in the work of art? What makes it far more a voice of the spirit, whose analogue is found in all productive philosophic or political thought, than a means to pleasure? The fact that it contains, better than ideas, *matrices of ideas*—the fact that it provides us with symbols whose meaning we never stop developing. (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p. 77).

None of this rules out the fact that an interpretation must be grounded in the structure of the work of art. An art work may, however, bear more than one valid interpretation. Because of this, a teacher of art should never predefine what a student's dialogue concerning a work of art should be. Critical dialogue in the classroom should be open-ended: rigorous in terms of the method used for discovering relevant significance and justifying claims, but flexible in terms of any discussion of meanings discovered.

8. *Phenomenological description can reveal the significance of a work of art.* Phenomenology as a method "can be practiced and identified as a manner or style of thinking" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962a, p. viii). Description being the phenomenological method, it is intended to allow individuals to make sense of things in the world while allowing for the vagaries of both the perceiver and the perceived. What is described is a dialectical perceptual experience. As presented by Spiegelberg (1960), description requires an open-minded attempt to distinguish the object in question. This involves intending the object to discover and interpret its elements and relationships obtaining between those elements, taking care not to atomize its essential structure.

Phenomenological description as it is used here should not be mistaken for description that functions like an inventory of what is visible to the eye. As sensations are global, the eye cannot receive information without a corresponding feeling response, however vague it may be. Through reflection, which operates instantaneously with the perceptual moment, images are identified and their contextual meanings interpreted. Hence, phenomenological description, like the perception on which it is based, is charged with significance. While verbal description is always inadequate to perception in its full primary sense, it still presents a viable avenue for communicating perceived significance.

Most texts on criticism include judgment as the final, if not the decisive, moment of art criticism. A judgment issued as a proclamation of value may prejudice other viewers. This is especially unfortunate in classrooms where a teacher passes judgment upon a work of art instead of leading students to judge its value for themselves. Broudy (1974) suggests that students be engaged in directed looking so that perceptible qualities in a work become apparent. A judgment is appropriate only if it follows rather than precedes description, is

stated in an open-ended context, and is supported by evidence in the work itself.

9. *Interpretations are verifiable within an intersubjective context.* Spiegelberg (1966) has pointed out that, until people compare notes in the face of the same phenomena, no one can really know what is public and what is private. It may even be said, he continued, that “in this sense all objective experience is really intersubjective experience” (p. 142).

A person who is engaged in critical dialogue is using his or her own perceptual abilities to discover meaning, never assuming that any description is definitive but always attempting to improve intentional and reflective possibilities. The validity of a claim about a work of art may be substantiated by rigorous description, and that description substantiated by the experience of others in an intersubjective context. If two or more people engage in critical dialogue centered around a work of art, the perceptual experience of each person may serve to revise the interpretation of the work for others. While no single interpretation can describe the total range of ideas a work of art can support, it is possible that varying interpretations can be combined into an enriched interpretation.

Cluster 3: The Significance of Art Criticism

10. *Through critical experience with works of art a subject may develop aptitudes for art appreciation and criticism.* Each perceptual encounter with a work of art may contribute to ever more sophisticated and rewarding experiences with art. Individuals may transfer their incremental experience through mutable behavior structures (Merleau-Ponty, 1962b), thus acquiring new aptitudes for critical response and appreciation.

Continued practice in consciously deriving significance from works of art will help refine these aptitudes. It must be realized that art criticism is not a simple matter of knowing what one likes, nor is it simply one opinion against another. An experienced art critic is knowledgeable and adept at discovering the significance of works of art; one person's taste is not really as good as the next. Still, no critic is the final arbiter of aesthetic decisions. But in order to support any claim about what a work of art communicates, an individual must be able to make a case.

11. *Practicing art criticism develops constructive aptitudes in individuals and exerts a positive influence on society.* People accustomed to the rigors of art criticism may have

a firmer grasp on their own powers of perception. Through the medium of art, a new way of seeing may present itself for a viewer's consideration, or make visible again the “spectacle” of a perceivable world which, for many, has become simply mundane (Merleau-Ponty, 1969, p. 243). Green (1978) has said, “The individual engaging with a work, enjoying it, moving into it, discovers realities that would otherwise have been inaccessible, new conceptions of man and his possibilities” (p. 181).

In a sense, creative expression is a social act because society is invited through a work of art to share in the perceptions of an artist. A new world, generated by the imagination and experience of an artist, may appear in a work of art. As Kaelin (1962) asserts, art can be “a means of introducing new meanings, new directions in the flow of historical events” (p. 339).

Feldman (1973) suggests that critical aptitudes may be helpful in functioning in the everyday world, since so much information is communicated visually. Works of art themselves provide information about human values, ideas and customs, history, geography, form and design, and so on. While the primary goal of art criticism is to discover the significance of works of art, its practice may allow people to better evaluate and enjoy their encounters with the visual world.

By describing phenomena to oneself and in intersubjective contexts, individuals may be better able to clarify their knowledge of the world. Avenues of interpretation and possibilities of meaning will expand. Varying interpretations among people might be better understood. Individuals might indefinitely broaden and deepen their funded experiences, thereby enriching their aptitudes for grasping the immediate significance of the lived world.

A Critical Method

In this section a method for art criticism will be outlined based upon the information contained in the propositions and generally following a phenomenological method of description. Description affords a reliable entry into a work of art for people with either sophisticated or rudimentary aptitudes in art criticism, and it allows teachers the opportunity of gauging levels of critical ability and guiding students toward improved perception and comprehension.

The following method of art criticism is comprised of five components. While these components are arranged in sequence, they

are not mutually exclusive. Once a component has been initiated, it is integrated into the function of the next. Components one through three should continue to be operative within the functions of component four, for example. Hence these components do not constitute a series so much as form a structure.

1. *Receptiveness.* Individuals who are receptive attempt to divest themselves of any preconceptions or prejudices regarding what a work of art is about or what its value or significance may be. Receptive persons approach a work with curiosity; their perceptions are reasonably unimpaired and accessible.

Assuming a receptive attitude may not be easy. Habits, opinions, and beliefs are firmly embedded within behavior patterns, and a concerted effort may be necessary to free oneself of preconceptions and habitual responses that too often result in hasty judgments. Viewers should ask themselves if they are giving the work of art a chance to offer something positive and meaningful to them before forming closure on an encounter with it. Qualities of the work in question should be allowed to play upon the senses and imagination without pressure to perform insightful feats of critical dialogue.

2. *Orienting.* Having become receptive to qualities inherent in a work of art, individuals should next try to more securely establish and delineate a communicative relationship with it. There are three orienting procedures that should be followed to optimize a critical encounter.

In the first orienting procedure viewers should pay attention to the physical conditions surrounding the work, trying to determine the extent to which these affect perception of it. Is the lighting adequate for a fair reading of the work? Is it distractingly noisy, crowded, hot or cold in the gallery? Does the color of the gallery wall clash with the painting? Is the pedestal too tall to allow a close look at the sculpture? Is the viewer feeling well?

While none of these considerations may be pertinent to the significance of the work itself, they are significant to the viewer's perception of it, and thus to the critical process. If there are circumstances interfering with clear perception, extra effort may be needed in order to properly attend to the art object.

The second orienting procedure is to determine the visual and spatial perimeters of the work of art so that attention may be properly

focused. This may be easy with most drawings and paintings; the work ends where the frame begins. Conceptual pieces may require more involved decisions. A curtain hung across miles of California grassland, for example, may involve an individual's entire visual field before the impact of the work is felt at its most significant.

In some cases not only spatial but temporal perimeters must be determined. A performance piece may have a definite beginning and ending. A kinetic sculpture may need to be observed for several minutes before its general effects can be determined.

The third orienting procedure is to adjust the body in such a way that the work of art is most clearly and completely seen. This means trying to locate an optimum position, not too distant nor too close. An oblique angle of view may need to be adopted to avoid glare. It may be helpful, especially in the case of three-dimensional work, to adopt not one but several points of view during the course of description. Viewing the work from a variety of perspectives can add to a synthesized experience of it.

3. *Bracketing.* Bracketing is a conscious act in which an individual engages to focus upon the qualities of an object, applying to an interpretation of that object only those things from past experience and present context that actually contribute to its meaning (Kaelin, 1970). Primarily, bracketing is a commitment to concentrate upon qualities of a work of art proper, restricting critical dialogue to a context of relevance. Dialogue that serves to reveal the significance of the work of art as perceived is relevant to criticism; any information that cannot in some way be related to a direct experience of the work is tangential to its meaning. A discussion of social upheavals that occurred concurrent with the creation of a work of art, for instance, may or may not be relevant to critical dialogue, depending on whether it throws light upon the meanings communicated by that work.

4. *Interpretive analysis.* Interpretive analysis is a description of a work of art as perceived, including visual elements and their relationships, representational and symbolic meanings, and feelings controlled by these factors. This component is really the crux of this critical method, as it serves to describe lucidly the significance of art works. It is during interpretive analysis that most critical dialogue will occur.

Feelings associated with the bracketed per-

ception of a work of art require, for the purposes of critical dialogue, an interpretation of their source and effect. A phrase such as *this dynamic line* refers not only to the source of a feeling, the perception of a line, but to the effect of that line upon the viewer's perception. That a line is dynamic is subject to intersubjective and experiential verification, and if other perceptions differ, critical dialogue may lapse into critical debate. There need be no winners and losers in such a situation. A work of art is subject to an indefinite number of interpretations, and so long as an interpretation may be clearly matched with evidence in the work of art, it is acceptable.

Things seen, felt, and thought while intending a work of art may be incorporated into the dialogue, just as they occur simultaneously in perception. A passage from a description of a self-portrait painted by Stuart Davis can serve as an illustration:

The head of Davis is formed of paint applied heavily; the brush strokes follow the curves of skin. The choppy hair, large ears and long jaw outline the face of a mature man. Reds, greens, and white highlight his unsmiling facial features, which reflect a mood of sullen introspection. The eyes do not look out of the picture plane at the viewer, but stare into an unknown distance. There is a strange, serene sensitivity in his expression, sketched not only by the lines of the mouth and eyes but also by the use of softened colors in the face, markedly different from the bold colors of the rest of the picture. (Lankford, 1981, p. 139)

It may be helpful in interpretive analysis to use the special vocabulary of the art world. Words such as balance, rhythm and harmony may describe a visual relationship efficiently and direct attention to particular qualities of the work of art. Technical terms, such as *impasto* or *glaze*, are also descriptive. Care must be taken not to rely too heavily upon either purely visual or ideational considerations, but rather to seek a proper relationship between perceived form and content. Johansen (1982) suggests that teachers ask leading questions that direct the attention of students accordingly: Is there anything about the handling of paint and color on the man's face that is different from everything else in the picture? Does that tell us anything about its importance as an aspect of this painting? Do the colors tell us anything about the mood or character of the figure?

As a reminder of the total structure of the method being outlined, let us review the inter-

relationship of its components to this point. A viewer must remain open and receptive to possibilities of meaning in a work of art, and must maintain a constructive orientation in relation to it. The structures of the work of art as perceived must be placed in conscious brackets in order to insure relevant dialogue. The discovery of the significance of a work of art for a viewer requires the discrimination of ideas and feelings that may be derived from an examination of the work through interpretive analysis.

5. *Synthesis*. With the information derived from a work of art through interpretive analysis, viewers should be in a favorable position to synthesize their experiences into a final interpretation of the significance of the work as a whole. This is a natural culmination, since each discovery of meaning clarifies and contributes to that significance for the viewer.

Reflections upon the meaning of a work of art, continuously verified and enriched by immediate perceptions, may extend a viewer's experience of that work beyond what is visibly given or even beyond particular symbolic meanings, but still within a context of relevance. An image of an orchestra conductor may represent the majesty of a full orchestra, or even the whole of classical music. An image of a single emaciated child may represent the tragedy of world hunger. Meanings may grow ever deeper as past experiences, knowledge, and imagination join in a final interpretation of a work of art.

It is during synthesis that the aptitudes of a critic may really shine. Someone with a wealth of experiences with works of art will probably have more possibilities of meaning available for synthesis than someone with less experience, just as an ordinary rock to a layman may be a valuable mesolithic fossil to a geologist. Responsible critics should use their aptitudes to direct the attention of other viewers to qualities of the work of art in order to effect as rich a personal synthesis of significance as possible.

Value is formed within the contexts of an individual's dialectic with the world. No synthesis of significance is absolute; it is always subject to reinterpretation and verification. For these reasons any judgment, especially in a classroom situation, should be pronounced with caution if at all. Perhaps the most appropriate solution to the problem would be a simple preface that would place the valuation in its proper perspective: I think, based upon my experience of the work, that this is a

good painting. The reasons for this valuation should have already been provided through the critical process.

Another passage from the description of Stuart Davis' self-portrait may better illustrate a synthesis ending in judgment:

Stuart Davis' self portrait seems to be the visual embodiment of human nature as lived by one man. The depths and contradictions of thought and feeling are illustrated through the use of contrasting colors, bold lines, and a skilled rendering of expressive facial features. It is a powerful portrait and, to the mind of this critic, a good painting. (Lankford, 1981, p. 139)

A teacher might find it necessary to walk students through all five components of this method until everyone has gained some experience with its use. Responsiveness, orienting, and bracketing are primarily internalized processes intended to prepare the viewer for a relevant and constructive encounter with a work of art. Experienced viewers may have these components ingrained within existing behavior patterns.

The component operations function successively toward a synthesis. While individuals using this method should be mindful of all of the components, no one should be expected to report every experience at every moment. The structure of the method allows actual dialogue to be primarily restricted to meanings derived from the work of art under investigation, while at the same time accommodating individual perceptions.

Art criticism as described in this study can be especially helpful to those persons involved in educational experiences wherein goals that respect open-ended, divergent yet cumulative, constructive learning experiences are deemed highly desirable. Art educators should strive to create, exhibit, and encourage those conditions and behaviors that might foster and enrich a student's experiences with works of art.

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