

How making art, and exploring its related thinking arts,  
makes us a more intelligent society.

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Without the engagement-activity of making art while studying art, or the engagement of the learner in the “making” of *something* while studying a particular discipline, the relationship of data and concepts to which the student is exposed to real-world activities is lost. Worse, the likelihood is that most data and concepts taught in a completely didactic mode will soon be lost to the learner while the opportunity for transfer of said data and concepts to a *new* experience is just about nil.

Therefore, the entire exercise of making art, and thinking as an artist thinks, is a comprehensive exercise in problem finding, problem solving, and ultimately in developing the necessary skills to realize the execution of a solution. Isn't this the ultimate goal of all education, rather than the recitation of disconnected facts that so often passes as proof of an education, or worse yet, of intelligence? Do we learn arithmetic for the sole purpose of being able to repeat certain algorithms on command? No. We learn it to be able to use it as a tool to serve some purpose. If we are to be an *intelligent* society then we must accept what educator Howard Gardner once said, “Intelligence is the flexible use of knowledge in service to the society.” Or put in another way, an intelligent society is not defined by its SAT scores.

The making of art promotes flexible thinking in service of a worthy societal goal, to develop a culture as well as a society, and therefore promotes intelligence. But beyond that, it opens us up to the sensory world that all other disciplines are designed to identify, explain, or record. The senses beget the disciplines. The senses give us first-hand knowledge of the world and connect us most deeply and directly with all things animate and inanimate. Therefore making art sharpens our senses and makes us alert to the context in which we find ourselves at any given moment in time. From knowing where we are, and what it *feels* like to be where we are, we may be better equipped to know not only where to go next, but also the best, and perhaps most beautiful way to get there.