

# International Journal of Education & the Arts

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<http://www.ijea.org/>

ISSN: 1529-8094

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Volume 15 Special Issue 1.17

February 28, 2014

### *On the Gift of a Red Wheelbarrow Thank you Elliot*

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Citation: Stout, C. J. (2014). On the gift of a red wheelbarrow: Thank you  
Elliot. *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, 15(SI. 1.17).  
Retrieved [date] from <http://www.ijea.org/v15si1/>.

*“So much depends  
upon  
a red wheel  
barrow....”*

William Carlos Williams, (1923)

Perhaps it is because of my beginnings in the literary arts and my love for poetry that I draw a curious analogy between Elliot Eisner and American poet William Carlos Williams. The truth is, in my own interpretation I have always linked the two. In their fresh, direct observations, their clarity of insight and expression and their habits of coming to the heart and wrestling with formidable complexity, they are alike. They are companions in their insistence on redolent thought. From the time that I entered the discipline of arts education, Elliot’s scholarship—his prolific writings, his modest yet fervent and exhilarating lectures have become the *red wheelbarrow* that sits at my desk, in my classroom, and trundles with a cargo of questions into the field where I do my research.

Redolent in my mind as I teach graduate research courses in qualitative and arts-based inquiry are my first experiences with *The Educational Imagination* (1979) and *The Enlightened Eye* (1991). New and a little daunting at the time, they are now well-worn, heavy with red and green flip-markers, marginalia, “Q’s” for quotations and exclamation points. Other Eisner volumes including my signed copies of *The Kind of Schools We Need* (1998) and *The Arts and the Creation of Mind* (2002) reside on my office shelves in those sparse times when students have not checked them out.

So much of my professional and scholarly life in arts education has depended on the kind of thinking, feeling and acting shared and modeled by Elliot Eisner. So much of my staying power and my dedication to arts education depend on the thoughtfulness and generosity that so surprised me when he sent letters praising certain qualities of my research and writing. And so much pride in my profession, along with the generosity of spirit that I try (most of the time—I really do!) to show to younger scholars, emanate from watching Elliot show up unexpectedly in the audience at my presentations at AERA and NAEA, no matter how good or bad they were or how long I sometimes droned on.

So much does depend on Elliot Eisner and the bright red wheelbarrow packed with insights incalculable, sitting now so prominently beside my desk, waiting to someday travel new grounds with students of my own.

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### About the author

Candace Jesse Stout is Professor of Art Education at The Ohio State University. Her teaching and research interests include the application of narrative research and writing theories to teaching and learning in arts education; alternative forms of re-presentation in arts-based research; and critical inquiry in arts curriculum. Current interests focus on a funded research

project titled: *In-side Out: High School Students' Narratives of Urban Education*. Students' experiences and perspectives of arts-integrated learning are among the primary interests in the study. The project which involves mentoring undergraduate students in narrative research, is carried out in collaboration with researchers in Literacy Studies in the School of Teaching & Learning at OSU. Professor Stout has given keynote lectures nationally and internationally as well as presentations in multiple scholarly forums. She has published in national and international journals and has contributed to numerous anthologies. Her research on the historical, social, and political experiences of visual arts k-12 teachers culminated in the publication of *The Flower Teachers: Stories for a New Generation*. She has served on the editorial board of a variety of journals and as Senior Editor of *Studies in Art Education*. Professor Stout was elected to the University Senate at The Ohio State University and has earned awards for teaching in higher education. She is co-sponsor of OSU's campus-wide Qualitative Inquiry Working Group, sponsored by the Humanities Institute. Recent publications include editorship of a book titled: *Teaching and Learning Newly Emergent Research Methodologies in Art Education* published by the National Art Education Association, 2013. Dr. Stout continues her studio work as photographer, incorporating photography into research and teaching.

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