

# 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 1.3

February 28, 2014

## Memory and My Friend Elliot

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Citation: Hausman, J. (2014). Memory and My Friend Elliot. *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, 15(SI 1.3). Retrieved from <http://www.ijea.org/v15si1/>.

“Memory is not an instrument for surveying the past but its theater. . . .He who seeks to approach his own buried past must conduct himself like a man digging.”

–Walter Benjamin, *Berlin Childhood Around 1900*

I sometimes wonder about the lasting impact of Google: its capacity to call up a seemingly infinite variety of facts and images. What will it do to our “memory”– the ability to dig up images and experiences that have made up our lives? I so treasure and enjoy the “theater of remembering” as many of my colleagues and friends who I have come to know as an Art Educator: Marion Quinn Dix, Edmund Ziegelf, Viktor Lowenfeld, Manny Barkan, Rudolf Arnheim, Al Hurwitz, June McFee, and Elliot Eisner. Somehow Google falls far short of providing the richness and quality of that experience.

Elliot Eisner’s death has set in motion a kaleidoscope of memories. Oh how fortunate I am to have known and worked with him. It was in the spring of 1960 that Ohio State University’s School of Fine and Applied Arts announced an opening for an assistant professor in Art Education. I was the School’s director and Manual Barkan was the senior professor in Art Education. I recall that it was Jack Getzels of the University of Chicago who wrote telling us

of a bright doctoral student about to complete his dissertation, Elliot Eisner. Barkan and I agreed to meet Eisner at an American Educational Research Association conference in Chicago. We attended a presentation he gave dealing with his research into the thought processes and behavior of creative students. His presentation was impressive – clear, well organized, and persuasive. When he finished Barkan turned to me and asked: “What do you think?” I responded, “I liked it.” He agreed. We hired Elliot. Thus began a friendship and professional association that lasted for more than 50 years.

The record of Elliot’s professional accomplishments and awards is most impressive: President of the National Art Education Association, the International Society for Education through Art, the American Educational Research Association, and the John Dewey Society. I know of no art educator who has published more books and articles in professional journals. He has been generous with his students and given himself fully to professional pursuits. I am ever so proud to have been the recipient of the Eisner Lifetime Achievement Award two years ago. Elliot called me to offer his congratulations. He prefaced his message with the assurance that he had not “weighed in” on that decision. My response was, “Elliot, I know!”

With all his accolades and awards, I continue to think of Elliot as a Chicagoan. Faithfully, he and his wife Ellie returned to Chicago to visit friends and relations. He was proud of his University of Chicago connections. I chuckle in recalling Elliot’s introducing me to Maxwell Street with its different discount shops.

What was always a great joy for me was the opportunity to meet with Elliot, David Ecker, Edmund Feldman, and Irving Kaufman at NAEA meetings. Oh that our Art Education literature might have recorded the conversations we had – a book about what was going on in the contemporary art world; underlying directions and needed developments for Art Education; a kind of manifesto as to “the next revolution” in Art and Art Education. Elliot was always on the “side of the angels.” He strove to do the “right thing!” He worked to have others see and appreciate the wisdom of his views. Come to think of it: he was right, most of the time! Now it remains for others to continue that quest.

Appropriately, much energy will be spent in celebrating the life of Elliot Eisner. Like others, I so admire and appreciate all that he has done. Both of us are of the same generation. We knew of the Great Depression, we experienced the pain and anguish of World War II, we have been participants in the development of a multicultural and global awareness. We have witnessed Art Education’s maturing into a Field!

So much is now happening that promises to dramatically change the context in which we live. Elliot would be the first to welcome the challenge for education in the twenty-first century.

New media and technologies are altering the way we think and act. We are entering a period in human history where John Dewey's *Art as Experience* takes on wider meaning and significance. Oh, that those who follow in education public policy making will be up to the new challenge. Celebrating Elliot Eisner brings us to the realization of new visions and the courage to confront the emerging issues of our time. That's what Elliot would have wanted.

### **About the author**

Jerome Hausman completed his Masters and Doctorate Degrees at New York University. He was an art teacher in Elizabeth, N.J. before accepting a teaching position at Ohio State University in 1953, He was named Director of the School of Art at O.S.U. in 1953. In 1968 he accepted a Professorship at N.Y.U. and also served as a consultant to the J.D. Rockefeller 3rd Fund. He has served as Editor for *Studies in Art Education*, *NAEA Research Yearbooks*, and *Art Education* (the Journal of the NAEA). He accepted the Presidency of the Minneapolis College of Art and Design in 1975. He is living in retirement in Evanston, IL, He continues to teach part time at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago

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