The Value Of An Art Course

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In the approach to art in its tangible, concrete aspect let us say that art is man's truest and deepest outward expression of all that is within himself. It is his profound emotion, his slightest fancy, his mode of thought, his way of revealing himself to the outside world.

It follows that he must have some way of knowing how to put this self-expression into such a form that his fellowmen may see it, become acquainted with it, and judge it upon its real merits. This is not an easy task; hence we have devised a set of tools called the art principles whereby man is not only able to carry out his ideas in recognition of these truths, but whereby we are able to judge the finished product in light of them.

The significance of art is its natural tie-up with a great many fields of endeavor. As we begin to recognize art in all of its phases, we gradually see its relation to religion, science, philosophy, history, and numerous other branches of learning. Art, like religion, involves all the good which dwells within man's soul. Art, like science, entails a knowledge of a given series of causes resulting in logical effects. Art, like philosophy, demands a sensitivity to all of the deeper meanings and real values of life. Art, like history, gives us a clear, concise picture of all that has gone before in the saga of the human race.

As we look upon this historic panorama, we cannot help becoming increasingly aware of the effects of art upon mankind. It is a pictorial review of man's hopes, desires, and accomplishments through the ages. We see the effect of self-expression in all of the great literature, music, painting, drama, and architecture which has been so carefully preserved. We perceive that it has been a process of growing and developing. We notice that the beauty of this progress is that as it produced an effect upon one individual, so it overpowered many people, even many nations. Through this opportunity for self-expression, man was able to formulate principles for forms of government, educational procedures, international relations, and business laws.

It is difficult to leave this picture without searching ourselves for the answer to a question. If I am to experience life in its deepest sense, would not a knowledge of these principles be of great advantage to me? In a world where success or failure is measured by the yardstick of materialism and its artificial luxuries, what an asset a sincere appreciation of the aesthetic would be! To seek after, to acquire such a sense would be not only to round out the individual's character but to lead the thoughts and actions of others, as well, in the direction of a deep-rooted love of truth and beauty.

This must be the primary aim of our institutions of learning if we are, as students, to leave the college campus equipped to meet and to cope with the problems which beset humanity. We must be capable of an appreciation of that which is fine, that which is beautiful, and that which possesses merit.

Here, then, in art, is an opportunity unleashed for us to grasp and hold in the struggle for the development of man's unlimited resources in the field of humanitarianism.