

A Cross-Listed Course of Art and Childhood Education

Even though art education and childhood education both serve child development. These two fields usually belong to separate colleges and have little to do with each other in terms of their students' professional development. We realize there is a gap in our students' knowledge base that prevents them from working with children in a more efficient way.

Art Educator Ken Marantz (1997) observes that the past twenty years have seen the booming of children's picture books and that the quality and variety are so good that they are valuable art repositories more readily available than the resources housed in museums and galleries. The art style and elements in picture books are appropriate materials for teaching art appreciation, art making, and even art history. Unfortunately, our art education majors know very little about children's literature, so they are not well trained to use this handy resource in their teaching of art. Moreover, they are not consciously aware of one of the major attributes of picture books, the visual context for children's learning. Picture books provide important opportunities to stimulate children's oral language, strengthen their knowledge of story structure, and enrich their vocabulary and detailed description in speaking and writing. On the other hand, childhood education majors have not learned enough from their professional programs about art to analyze and interpret artwork of illustrations satisfactorily. Therefore, they have difficulty in guiding children to understand the visual narration or appreciate the aesthetic nuances of the picture books. Based on this concern, we are planning, together with our colleagues in art education, design a cross-listed graduate course for students of both majors. The course will integrate art and children's literature and focuses on using picture books as materials for teaching literacy as well as art appreciation.

In the course we are designing, there are three component parts. The first part introduces how children respond to picture books, the relationship of children's cognitive, social/emotional, and aesthetic development with picture books, and the important role picture books play in children's reading and writing. The second part focuses on the evaluation of artwork of picture books. This part mainly deals with book design, technical choices, and cultural/historical conventions. Book design

includes elements of design (line, shape, color value, texture, etc) and principles of design (balance, rhythm, repetition, unity, eye movement, etc.). Technical choices deal with original media, endpapers, typography, point of view, and techniques such as transfiguration, transposition, exaggeration, subplot, etc. The third part is an introduction of representative picture book artists and analysis of the artistic merits of their styles. This paper illustrates only the content of the third part by analyzing some picture book artists' styles.

An artist's style is never truly spontaneous; it is the embodiment of years of contextual experience and of the building of patterns in his/her life that eventually grow to dominate his/her artistic behavior. Whatever an artist has experienced, be it aesthetic, personal, or emotional, could possibly contribute to the formation of his/her style. For example, Renoir's experience with porcelain painting left evident marks on his style. No matter how their style changes over their art career, most artists of visual art demonstrate a relatively stable personal style. There is an obvious consistency in their artistic approach to nature or humanity. The idiosyncratic features of an artist are nothing but the artistic keynotes he/she feels accustomed to using and the aesthetic idioms that dominate his/her artistic interpretation of a subject. However, picture book illustrators do not have that privilege because the text or idea of the book is always the anchor to which his/her artistic recreation is tied. Even wordless picture books may have a storyline to consider. Therefore, when an artist makes a picture book, the first thing he/she has to decide is the style of the book. Style determines his/her artistic approach to the content and represents his/her aesthetic interpretation of the story/text. For that reason, an artist's personal innate style is not "one size for all". They often have to make adaptations to their personal style to fit the content of a particular book. There are some artists who are very flexible in changing their styles. Among them are Leo and Diane Dillon, a legend in the history of book illustrations. They personify the eclecticism of illustrators' visual imagination and are acclaimed for their unbelievable multiplicity of style. They approach each project with a new lofty sensibility and create a totally new visual accompaniment which constantly amaze the reader. It is hard to believe that *Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears*, an African batik style, *Ashanti to Zulu*, watercolor and pastel, *The Wizard of Oz* and many other children's and adults' books are illustrated by the same Dillons. Of course, their

achievement of eclecticism involves painstaking research. They often spend more time doing research for a picture than making the illustration itself. (Preiss 1981).

Take a look at the illustrations of *When I Was Young in the Mountains*. The illustrator's brownish monochromatic color scheme and simple folk-art-style images suit perfectly Cynthia Rylant's poetic sweet memories of her peaceful childhood. The style is authentic because it is appropriate for the literary interpretation of her nostalgic mood in the book. Could you imagine what the book would look like if it is illustrated in a style with Dr. Seuss' cartoon figures and Eric Carle's bright colors?

Misconceptions About Picture Book Illustrations

In consideration of how illustrations are related to the text, some critics propose five different types of relationship. They believe that illustrations of picture books fall into one of the five categories: complementing, extending, or highlighting the meanings of the text, or providing crucial information to the text, or going beyond the information given by the text (Kiefer 1995). It is questionable that the suggested categorization has any practical meaning. First of all, these concepts are hard to define and are largely overlapped. Secondly, good picture book illustrations should have all those features. Finally, and more importantly, the categorization represents an erroneous perspective which views illustration as a second rendition of the text instead of artistic recreation, thus dwarfing the important aesthetic value of illustrations. In fact, the kaleidoscopic variety of styles used in recently-published picture books convinces us that we are right in the middle of a picture book golden age.

Illustration artists not only make visual what the text only generally suggests but also express special qualities that the text fails to express. They have to consider at the beginning of their recreation the moods and actions of characters and the best way to depict them. They have to decide on the medium and stylistic conventions, consciously select details to be included, pack pictures with clues that readers/viewers will unpack logically, design a visual entendre to hint a subplot... In conclusion, all those devices constitute a symbolic voice which is of and by itself an important visual art narrative. When Harlan Ellison comments the Dillons' illustrations, the independent nature of artistic recreation is eloquently stated:

[T]hey take the words of writers and filter them down through intellects and imaginations as rich and wise as those of the best authors whose works they have illustrated. They don't build soaring philosophical structures to explain how and why they transmogrified a mediocre novel or simplistic children's book into stunning visual interpretations that made the lesser original source seem richer and wiser than it was when it came to them. Blessed is the author whose scribblings are entrusted to the Dillons for illustration (Preiss 1981, unpage-numbered).

Unfortunately, our children haven't fully benefitted from the art work of picture books. They need to be taught how to interpret artistic techniques to discover the aesthetic values implied in the style. Primarily, it is a challenge to parents and classroom teachers who need to substantiate their knowledge about the aesthetic impact style of picture books could have on the reader's literary interpretation.

The Aesthetic Logic of Picture Book Styles

It is true that to certain extent, style of visual art is a matter of taste which, sometimes, is based on the viewer's cultural experience. That does not mean, however, there is no logic to follow in art criticism of picture books. A style could be appraised based on the emotional resonance it arouses in the viewer. According to Marantz (1980), there are two questions we may ask ourselves when illustrations are studied: "What feelings do they [illustrations] produce in our guts?" and "What thoughts do they generate to deepen the visual experience?" In short, how do they stimulate our aesthetic sensibilities?

The term *style* is referred to the visual devices an artist uses to get viewers involved. There are two important areas through which style functions: craftsmanship and composition. Craftsmanship includes the use of all artistic elements such as line, shape, color value and intensity, texture and so on. Of course, their practical use is strongly influenced by the artist's selected medium. Composition consists of picture layout, size, shape, point of view, etc.. An artist also has to consider, when he/she is planning the style, other book features such as covers, endpapers, title page etc. Artistic authenticity of

picture books requires an artist to create a logical aesthetic frame of reference for viewers to interpret his/her symbolic voice. In the make-believe world created by the artist the viewer tries to decode the artistic implications the artist suggests with his/her style. Illustration artists should make aesthetic allusions which are only inherent in the frame of reference he/she has created. Viewers feel entertained only when they successfully decode and appreciate the symbolic motifs the artist designs. The artist's success depends on how creatively the artist develops the frame of reference which enables him/her to reveal the aesthetic qualities that underlie the story/text.

The formation of an artist innate personal style is an imperceptible complex process in which different influences in his/her life subtly interact and mix in a unique way. Tomie dePaolo explains best how an artist's aesthetic experiences contribute to his/her style:

I do what the Sieneese painters did but not in the same way. I almost reduce figures to a symbol. And yet I think of my own faces as good and warm. I try to show expression in the very few lines. If you look at Fra Angelio and Giotto, they are able to do that with a very stylized (I don't want to say formulaic) convention. I really like design, simplicity and tranquility of their character. And of course they all use line very simple (Hepler 1979, 298).

What he calls "formulaic convention" represents an artist's innate personal style. In spite of its strong influence, it is absurd to say that his images of Strega Nona and Big Anthony are molded in the style of Gothic frescoes. His comic exaggeration of those characters discloses another much more powerful influence from folk art than Renaissance tableaux. However, the Italian art heritage which he was exposed to when he was a child has, consciously or unconsciously, channeled into his aesthetic approach. He internalizes the qualities of tranquility and simplicity of the art tradition and shows them naturally in his depiction of characters' expressions and poses.

Also, it is not unusual that artists imitate some stylistic or cultural conventions to suggest the setting of a story. Their style strongly reminds us of a school of art in history or a specific culture. However, more often than not, it is difficult to trace their style back to its "origin" or to pin down the strongest art influence on their style because an artist has to manipulate some elements in craftsmanship and/or composition to adapt his/her innate style to the story/idea or, like the Dillons, develop a new style all over again. By so doing, the artist creates

aesthetic illusions which would herd viewers' emotions into his/her own aesthetic corral. Trina Schart Hyman has a distinguishable personal style, but she also made adaptations to her style for different books. In *Saint George and the Dragon*, she designs picture frames which provide uniformity to the book and maintain the narrative momentum. The device also suggests the cultural setting and simultaneous happenings.

In conclusion, the rationale of style in picture books or its artistic authenticity can be determined by examining how the artist perceives the aesthetic implications of the story/text and how he/she develops the aesthetic frame of reference which logically guides viewers' emotions to his/her personal vision. In this article, a number of commendable picture books are analyzed which represent a wide variety of stylistic approaches.

Paul O. Zelinsky's Renaissance Conventions

Rapunzel and some other Zelinsky's books have the advantage of conceiving both verbal and visual imagery by the same mind. His style represents the ingenious combination of his sense of narrative enchantment and remarkable ability to reveal the beauty of visual images. At the end of the book, *Rapunzel*, Zelinsky tells how he painstakingly traced the story all the way back to its Neapolitan origin and compared it with the Grimm's version, German folktales, and French literary fairy tales. It is not difficult to see the careful thinking he did before he decided on its artistic style:

My retelling of *Rapunzel* takes its shape from both the Grimms and earlier versions of the tale. I have tried to combine the most moving aspects of the story with the most satisfying structure, and to bring out its mysterious internal echoes. In selecting a setting, too, I considered the story's three countries of origin. The formal beauty of Italian Renaissance art seemed to fit well with a tale centered on the beauty of a young girl... Also, for me, the very image of a tower evokes the Italian landscape, where the campanile, or bell tower, plays a prominent role in architectural tradition. (The closeness of this word to *Campanula*, the name of the bellflower genus to which rapunzel belongs, helped to believe I was setting on the right track.) (1997, unpage-numbered)

What Zelinsky calls "mysterious internal echoes" is exactly the emotions he tries to stir up in viewers. In

order to illuminate his logical perception about the style, it is necessary to make a comparison between the techniques he uses in *Rapunzel* and those used by Renaissance artists. The selected medium of oil painting provides the best opportunity to extricate the Renaissance spirit. Zelinsky sets the tone at the very beginning with the book jacket/cover. The front cover shows Rapunzel is trapped in the tower. Like many Renaissance paintings, the tower is elaborately and massively embellished. Similar to the imaginary edifices in those paintings, the tower is more symbolic than realistic. He writes the book title vertically on a piece of ornament of Renaissance style which he paints with minute precision. The ornament wraps around the book spine all the way to the back cover which shows the back side of the tower. The front and the back covers are perfectly matched except the sky surrounding the tower in the back cover is dark and dusky, leaving much room for viewers' symbolic thinking. Even his name and ISBN label are printed on two pieces of folded paper painted as part of the picture--a typical way many Renaissance painters did. It reminds us of Jan van Eyck who signed on the wall of the room in his painting.

The endpapers maintain the momentum of the style. The artist carefully create a tranquil mood of countryside with Renaissance paintings' poetic quality. The peacock and everything else are carefully selected to add to the atmosphere. Everything in his landscapes--small towns in distance, castles and dark forests, and oddly shaped rocks covered with exotic vegetation--embodies the idyllic flavor of Renaissance landscapist scenes. The title page is designed with several panels of different shapes. With the colorful decorative patterns of the marble tiles, gilded frames, cathedral structural ornament, and the artistic motif of peacock, it gives one the feeling of looking up at the ceiling of Sistine Chapel.

In both composition and craftsmanship, Zelinsky borrows quite a few techniques from other Renaissance masters. When his picture design is compared with Dirk Bouts and Rogier van der Weyden's, their close-up point of views are very much alike. Moreover, the notable rendering of the figures clad in sumptuous costumes with a wealth of rich brocades and ornaments and sensuously graceful postures of the female are vividly resembled. Zelinsky also simulates the human correspondences of the static tableaux of the Flemish painters. Unlike the sculpturesque figures of later artists, they present the frozen actions of figures caught in a split moment of hushed repose. Also, it is

amazing to see in a small mirror Zelinsky paints the whole reflection of the upside-down figures and the ceiling seen in a magnifying glass which, again, reminds us of the mirror in Jan van Eyck's *Giovanni Arnolfini and His Wife*. Zelinsky also creatively uses the Flemish technique of truncating the walls of the building for viewers to see both the interior and the exterior with several incidents occurring simultaneously. In one double-page spread, he shows the husband on the outside who, driven by his wife's craving for rapunzel, is stealing the plant in the sorceress' garden; inside the house the wife is overwhelmed by the intensely delicious rapunzel. The two pictures are viewed in the same perspective with one side of the room truncated. That composition we also find in the 15th-century Flemalle masterpiece *The Miracle of the Rod and the Betrothal of the Virgin* with two related topics juxtaposed in one painting. One of the scenes is viewed because the wall is truncated. The lighting and its function on colors are also borrowed from Renaissance style to extract the beauty of the heroine. In a nutshell, *Rapunzel* is a perfect example of how the text and the illustrations can be organically integrated into a holistic aesthetic enterprise with its style successfully extricating the aesthetic essence of the story.

Barbara Cooney and American Folk Art

“Like a pastoral symphony translated into picture book format, the stunning combination of text and illustration recreates the mood of nineteenth-century rural New England.” (Hall 1979). That is Horn Book's comment on Caldecott winner *Ox-Cart Man* illustrated by Barbara Cooney. The text is a narrative lyric in which the author celebrates, in a simple homey way, a farmer and his family's accomplishments. The poetic writing itself is an honest and straightforward genre painting of the tranquil spirit of ordinary people. It is also a down-to-earth paean of the triumph of human over nature and of civilization over wilderness. The nostalgic mood, like *When I Was Young in the Mountains*, rings with a strong emotional appeal to readers. On top of it, *Ox-Cart Man* has a layer of profound love for life. With such a poem, what other styles could be more appropriate for its illustration than American folk art?

It is difficult to discuss how authentic her style is without first talking about American folk art. Holger Cahill notes that folk art is “the expression of common people, made by them and intended for

their use and enjoyment.” (Lipman and Winchester 1987). Most folk artists are like the farmer in the poem and have not been professionally trained. However, their ineptitudes and distortions do not limit their ability to express ideas. On the contrary, the so-called “stock figures” add such a special charm to their paintings that they provide a patriotic affinity. Barbara Cooney makes full use of the inherent appeal of American folk art and develops images and scenes that look as if they were directly adopted from saw paintings or cornices at a country fair. The calm expressions, the flat colors, and the traditional objects included in the illustrations-- altogether they provide a hook for viewers to drag into consciousness such qualities as independence, work ethic, and patriotism which are typically incarnated in American folk art.

Most folk artists do not use a consistent perspective in their paintings. Basically they treat picture composition as they would do to a quilt design. A picture could be a composite scene made up of separate units seen from different perspectives. In *Ox-Cart Man* Cooney’s style follows the exact composition rules. In the double-page spread in which the farmer is on his way home, the whole scene is like a panorama which the farmer sees as he walks along. When her pictures are compared with Paul A. Seifert’s *Wisconsin Farm*, one would understand why viewers find in her pictures a kind of closeness. Her style reflects such qualities inherent in folk art as vigor, honesty, and originality and successfully brings forth the pioneer feelings of America implied in Donald Hall’s poem. Of course, Cooney doesn’t rigidly imitate folk art. She stylizes the traditional artistic expressive form with her innate tranquility and sublimates the crude form into a sophisticated stylish expression.

Lloyd Bloom and Pierre-Auguste Renoir

Mavis Jukes’ *Like Jake and Me* is a book about subtle human loving relationships. The plot is a quiet and humorous one. At the beginning, Alex and his stepfather Jake don’t know each other well. Neither of their good-will initiatives meets with enthusiastic responses from one another. The author uses symbolic description to suggest their unsettled relationship: the sun is setting but still in the air; Alex’s tooth is loose but still hanging there; the two pears in the bottle are crowding each other; the eagle in the tattoo on Jake’s chest looks neither like taking off nor like landing, etc.. During their hunt for the spider,

such humorous anecdotes happen as the boot knocking out Alex's tooth and Jake getting out of his clothes in fear of the spider. Those interactions evoke their finest feelings for each other. Through the incident of the spider, they both feel they should open their hearts to each other.

Lloyd Bloom's pastel paintings provide an appropriate rendering of the story. There is a little comic exaggeration of the characters' actions but it fits well the humorous nature of the plot and does not invite the sense of slapstick. The images of the three characters are sensitive and personable. Bloom relies heavily on the warm colors to suggest the humanitarian atmosphere. The dusky sky and the glowing fireplace are both used in favor of the warm mood. The medium of pastel makes colors blur into each other, further softening the pictures. Bloom makes use of the glowing lighting to dissolve the sharpness of the contours. This approach reminds us of Impressionist painter Renoir's style. A look at his *Le Jardin du Luxembourg* and *By the Lake* will further convince us of the magic power of the technique. One of the unique features which sets him apart from other Impressionists is the touch of humanity he brought to Impressionist landscapes. His critics comment that hardly anybody has ever been able to capture the smile of blissful joy and a luxurious easy-going enjoyment of life (Feist 1993). Although the style he uses only bears a resemblance of Renoir's, considering the aesthetic philosophy implied in Renoir's style, Bloom's illustrations of *Like Jake and Me* could be rationalized by the aesthetic impact it brings forth. His style authentically collaborates with its verbal narrative.

Ed Young's *Yeh Shen* and Chinese Paintings

Ai-Ling Louie's English rendition of *Yeh Shen* adds one more brilliant version to the diversity of Cinderella treasure-house. The author claims that since the *Yeh Shen* story is at least 1,000 years older than the earliest known Western version, "Cinderella seems to have made her way to Europe from Asia." (Louie 1982). It might not be very true. More likely, how to deal with a family member to whom one was not tied by blood was a universal problem human beings had to learn to solve at dawn of civilization. Ed Young spent two years on careful research into the culture of the story setting-- a minority in China. Quite a few critics have mentioned the panel frames he uses in the book. It is true in China that large paintings are often divided into panels for wall decoration (Mo and Shen 1997). Its use

in the picture book is an innovative approach to composition and is effective in suggesting the cultural setting. Even though pastel and watercolor are not traditional Chinese media, the shimmering effect of the merged watercolors and little care about lighting are very typical of Chinese paintings. There are some other subtle cultural influences implied in his artistic devices. One may be surprised by the simplest page design that has ever been used in illustration and the symbolic motif of fish in various shapes. The bareness in composition could be compared to old-fashioned Peking opera with very little setting on the stage and viewers have to fill in the context with their imagination. Young's use of the fish is very original. The fish is not only an important character in the story and represents the literary motif of magic power, but also a cultural symbol of good luck and prosperity. Fish is one of the major sources of protein in China. What Western culture will define as "a land of honey and milk" is equivalent to the Chinese expression of "a country of fish and rice".

Like American folk artists, traditional Chinese painters seldom set up their easel on a hilltop to paint the scene. Instead, they sat at home and reconstruct their mental picture from memory. Oftentimes, their paintings reflect what they know than what they see. What is important in a painting is the spirit beyond physical likeness (Fong 1992). That coincides with some modern Western artists' emphasis on expression of subjective feelings. This kind of focus leads to two long-lasting features of Chinese paintings: symbolic representation of objects and massive use of blank space. The 12th-century artist Emperor Hsiao-tsung's *Awakening Under a Thatched Awning* may well exemplify the same philosophy. All those subtle cultural schemata are creatively blended in Young's style which compliments the poetic literary style of Ai-Ling Louie.

The Dillons' Distillation of Cultural Beauty

Leo and Diane Dillons' illustrations for *Ashanti to Zulu* is an awesome piece of art work. It is a rare specimen of the innovative distillation an artist undertakes to sift out the authentic internal beauty from a culture. There is no mechanical imitation of so-called "primitive art". In *Ashanti to Zulu* the viewer is overwhelmingly submerged in a rich colorful ocean of aesthetic enjoyment. The book is an ABC of facts about twenty-six different ethnic groups in Africa. The artists' original use of artistic

elements ingeniously presents all pictures in a stunning harmonic way. All the pictures including the front and back covers are framed with modified African mud wall relief pattern design which is usually found in northern Nigeria. It provides uniformity to the whole book.

Every picture is framed in an identical and almost regular square with words set in an identical rectangle below. The front and back covers are details masked out of the original book poster which is a panoramic scene of tremendous magnitude. The poster features a procession of people from different parts of Africa and is most appropriate to set the tone and display the diversity of the rich African culture. The images are more of a mural-like decorative nature than of real-life figures and match well the simple verbal narrative. The title page is also a double-page panoramic scene which depicts the natural characteristics of Africa. With its intense tropical colors, various shapes of vegetation, and different geographical features, the artists try to prepare the viewer for a land which is vast in territory and rich in culture.

All the pictures use close-up point of view which adds to the book's uniformity and, at the same time, lends itself to detailed depiction. The Dillons lavishly use myriad of shapes, curves, lines and dots to enrich the composition while there is always recurrence of something in each picture to maintain the rhythm--it could be a pattern design in clothes, a common object in life, a human movement, or simply a facial expression which provides cadence in viewers' senses. The images in this book are not conceptualized at all. Each picture is filled with vigorous human activities and nature's vitality. The viewer feels as if they were surrounded by sounds and colors of life. All the artistic devices are incorporated into creating a harmonic symphony of lines, colors, and shapes: the activities in which people are involved, the dresses they wear, the animals included in the pictures, the physical environment depicted... All in all, the visual narrative of the book provides information way beyond the verbal one, which naturally plays the second fiddle to the illustrations in children's reading.

Barbara Lavalley's Inuit Perception

Barbara M. Joosse's lyrical story *Mama, Do you Love Me?* reflects the universal theme of parents' unconditional love for children. The Arctic setting with its authentic cultural flavor makes the

usually common theme very special. Barbara Lavalée's artistic style is a perfect match for the verbal narrative. Viewers could not but feel impressed by the audacity with which she delineates those voluminous shapes and the evocative aesthetic power which her artistic deforming and superficial clumsiness possess. Her picture composition generally accentuates the presence of the main subjects. Their synthesis and transition are very natural to the composition. Every picture is filled with a mixture of lyricism and fantasy. Her style is permeated with an Inuit aesthetic perception which is nurtured only by their close bond with nature. And only with such a deep understanding of the native culture would an artist be able to reveal the beauty that underlies the superficial toughness.

The term "primitive art" is not considered appropriate to use in art criticism because, to us, Inuit art is just another kind of non-Caucasian folk art. If there is anything positive about this term, we believe it represents, in artistic expression, the spontaneity and self-affirmation which artists of western "civilized" society could never regain. Lavalée was not born to that culture. When her style is compared with some Inuit artists', we are assured that the source of her original recreation is totally based on her careful studies of Inuit life and culture.

Inuit artists may not have heard of Renaissance or Impressionism, therefore, their hands are not tied by canons of any art theories. Their own imagination is the catalyst for inspiration and drive for innovation. When we look at Oopik Pitsiulak's sculpture *Oopik Thinking*, her audacious reduction and stylization of form reminds us of the voluminous figures in Lavalée's illustration. Again, a glance at Napachie Pootoogook's *Majualajut* would convince us that Lavalée's deforming and layout stands on the solid ground of authentic interpretation of the culture. Unlike American folk artists who try very hard to reconstruct nature realistically in their pictures, Inuit artists never hesitate to pursue art-abstraction in their stylization of subjects. They either superimpose body forms or deconstruct motifs in design (Leroux et al 1994). That amazingly coincides with approaches of some masters of this century. Pitaloosie Saila's *Woman and Snow Bird* and *Wolf Spirit* attest her natural identification with Picasso's style and Lavalée blends this aesthetic idioms well into her own style. It is admirable to see her innovation in digesting and implementing these qualities in her own style.

Conclusion

Unlike artists of other visual arts who could stay with their personal style for as long as they wish, picture book illustrators have to, for each book they illustrate, decide and develop a special style which is not only compatible with the literary content of the book, but also appropriate for revealing the aesthetic beauty which underlies the content/story. The artist either makes adaptations to his/her innate style or create a new style all over again. No matter which way the artist is heading, his/her success relies on interactions of many a factor: the book he/she selects to illustrate, his/her artistic training, cultural and life experiences, personality, and research. It requires the artist to interpret accurately its artistic implications and depict those implications authentically. In other words, the rationale of an illustrator's style exists only in its artistic authenticity. In order to acquire an authentic artistic style for a picture book, the artist needs to first determine, consciously or subconsciously, the feelings and emotions he/she plans to arouse with his/her visual narrative. Then, based on his/her understanding, the artist designs an aesthetic frame of reference or a make-believe world so that viewers could consistently recall the aesthetic images in their own experiences to match the artist's allusions. In the final analysis, it is the artist's creativity and training that enable him/her to invent fascinating artistic devices that strike in viewers their aesthetic chord and give them emotional gratification.

As part of the cross-listed course, the use of children picture books as resource materials and the analysis of picture book artists' aesthetic merits not only fill up the gap in the knowledge base of students of both art education and childhood education, but also sensitize them of the importance of integrated curriculum and enable them to teach in a more efficient way.

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