

Chapter 3

Visual Arts Education and the Formation of Literacies: An Exploration of Visuality

Joanna Barbousas

Abstract This chapter will explore theories of visuality that inform conditions and formations of literacy to understand the impact of the image in thinking, practice and communication in visual arts education. The increase of visual artefacts and the accessibility of production and consumption have implications across a range of disciplines, which blurs the boundaries of knowledge formation. Theoretical constraints locate opportunities for the construction of visual artefacts as objects of knowledge that strengthen the formation of literate activities in education. We are often reminded of the proliferation of images in the world in which we live configured by the constraints of ownership and authorship. Theories of the visual are multidisciplinary and therefore mobilise discourses that are accessed by a value structure that adheres with the field itself. This chapter will outline some theoretical approaches of the imperatives within the field of visuality informed by the arts, more specifically the visual arts, and how these theories devise some of the ways literacy is constructed and manufactured in visual arts education. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the discourses of visual literacy and visual culture to situate the provocation of visuality in art education; and to consider the affordances that a conceptual framework offers to better understand ‘literacies’ in visual arts education. An exploration of visuality provides opportunities to understand the significance of the arts in situating literacy in relation to the visual as object and practice. Through an investigation of artists’ practice, audience intentionality, the artwork as artefact, subject matter as purpose and frameworks that shape and construct pedagogical understandings, this chapter considers literacy practices in visual arts education as immersed in discipline content and ontologically constructed in curriculum formations – where visuality is understood as theory as practice and practice as theory.

Keywords Visual art • Visual literacy • Visuality • Artefacts • Artist

J. Barbousas (✉)

Faculty of Education, Australian Catholic University, Melbourne, VIC, Australia

e-mail: joanna.barbousas@acu.edu.au

Theorising the Politics of the Visual and Literacies in Visual Arts Education

Theories of visibility are conceptualised and developed in visual arts education to situate the specificity of the role of the image in art making and art appreciation. These theories are closely linked to conceptual frameworks in understanding the role of the artist, the formation of artistic practice, the intentionality of the art object and the formation of perspectives that impact on differing knowledge of the same object (Greene, 2007, 2013). In this way, visibility as a theorised practice in art education could be positioned as the place in which literacy lives in art education curriculum and pedagogy (Greene, 2007). Literacy as discourse in education has gained momentum with growing statistical data measuring the competency of literate people, nationally and internationally. The consumption of literacy as concept and practice in all school subjects sets up a justification of good practice – we too are dealing with literacy. Similarly, whether in science, music, physical education or visual arts education, to name a few, literacy is embedded as content knowledge, pedagogical practices and curriculum construction. Through an investigation of visual literacy and visual culture as discourse practices in art education, this chapter will situate these debates to better understand the affordances and omission of conceptual frameworks to curriculum formation, which exist in teaching practices, curriculum documents and pedagogical recommendations. A theoretical approach will be the focus of this chapter framing the ways in which visibility can be considered as practice, concept, and political discourse, as object and as audience intentionality.

This chapter will explore literacy formations with direct link to discourses of visual literacy, visual culture, and conceptual developments as discursive practices in visual arts education. Visual literacy has multidisciplinary representation with a clear affiliation with semiotic theory and practice. This chapter will examine how discourses of visual literacy and visual culture shape the discipline configurations in visual arts education. This chapter will also examine how visual literacy and visual culture are situated in visual arts education as literacy practices through conceptual developments. Additionally the chapter will recommend the complexities of visibility that fit within curriculum practices, which mobilise artists' practice, audience intentionality, the artwork as artefact, subject matter as purpose and frameworks that shape and construct pedagogical understandings.

To understand the configurations of 'literacy' in visual arts education it is important to examine the discipline conditions that map the way discourses are configured in curriculum and pedagogy. Disciplines exist by the authorisation of institutions that organise knowledge, driven by language, to constrain and monitor the 'self' (Foucault, 1972, 1977, 2002). Foucault's critical aversion to 'disciplines' is attributed to the 'dangerous' potential of organised knowledge that packages discourse as a familiar promise for betterment (Foucault, 1977, 1994). This promise is confirmed through the validated sources of knowledge as discourse, defended by disciplines (Gutting, 2005; Lotringer, 1989; Rabinow, 1984). Disciplines maintain and

authorise presuppositions through ‘unified categories’ such as the author, the work, and the institution (Foucault, 1972, 1977). Practices in visual arts education are representative of discourses supported and ordered by disciplines to authorise practices in the field. Disciplines are determined and regulated by statements, seized by language produced as knowledge that is counted ‘serious’, depending upon who is authorised to speak through the institutions that endorse the ‘speech acts’ (Foucault, 1972, 1977; Lotringer, 1989; Rabinow, 1984). The issue of discourse endorsement is paramount to understand the practices that are counted in pedagogical and curriculum practices.

Theories of visibility emerge out of an examination of how ‘modes of seeing’ are subject to knowledge constructions regulated through the ‘pictorial turn’ (Jay, 1996, p. 3). Superseding the linguistic turn emphasised in twentieth-century philosophical inquiry, the mobilisation of visual images has brought to the foreground ‘models of spectatorship and visibility, which refuse to be redescribed in entirely linguistic terms’ (Jay, p. 3). Jay contends that ‘the pictorial turn’ has brought to light visual experiences as assembled through technology, reproduced in a rapid rate and accessed regularly as texts. Jay claims that the expeditious shift from the linguistic to the pictorial has concentrated attention on ‘scientifically and technologically generated “techniques of observation”’, which has mediated an intellectual inquiry into visual practices that are culturally reliant.

The complexities of vision, visibility, sight, and ocularcentrism in the structures of modern society determined by and associated with concepts and practices of visual objects are theorised as the ‘literal visual aspects of culture’, and philosophical aspects of ‘visual metaphors’ provide for theoretical frameworks to assist in textual and conceptual understandings of visibility (Dikovitskaya, 2005). Concepts of the visual are bound within discipline systems and, although the visual is promoted as an interdisciplinary concept and practice, the configurations of its authority are bound to discipline structures and history (Jay, 1996). Therefore, how visual literacy functions and situates itself in visual arts education is often at variance to its formation in the subject of English. The interdisciplinary focus of the visual and visual literacy more broadly coexists in the space of disciplinary practice, ratifying the discourse of the visual. In other words, interdisciplinarity does not assume the dismantling of historically formed discipline distinctions that organise knowledge and authorise discourse. Interdisciplinarity has within it a conditional structure of power, and normalising networks that entomb the institutional conditions of discipline knowledge (Foucault, 2002).

It is not by coincidence that literacy shapes the configurations of practice in all school subjects. The political implications situate the practices in visual arts education, for example, to be defended in relation to ‘literacy’. The nomenclature itself and the inclusion of literacies in curriculum documents provides the opportunity to explain and construct practices and theories to build an understanding of the concept and practices of literacies in art making and art appreciation. The formation of visual literacy as a term and subject area takes shape in journal publications after 1990. Previously, the appendage of these two words had little representation in scholarly practices.

Systematic Database Review of Visual Literacy

From the mid-1990s, particularly in North American art education publications, the move towards visual culture and visual literacy arose from the endorsement of technological practices in education more broadly – as technology relocated a space in educational practices and announced a better and newer way to understand learning, the term visual became a political word. To better understand the distribution of the term visual literacy in research a systematic database review utilising Scopus Database (<http://www.scopus.com.ezproxy2.acu.edu.au/home.url>) is explored to investigate the ways in which visual literacy has disciplinary distinction. Scopus is a database search engine with the ‘world’s largest abstract and citation database with peer-reviewed literature with small tools that track, analyze and visualize research’.

The phrase “visual literacy” was inserted in the Scopus search engine. An initial search of literature from 1990 to 2013, in all subject areas including Life Sciences, Health Sciences, Physical Sciences, and Social Sciences and Humanities, resulted in 265 sources. The search was then limited to the Social Sciences and Humanities subject area only, to further examine education and visual arts more broadly, and this resulted in 183 sources. The following figures report on the number of publications in the area of visual literacy published between 1990 and 2013; the country affiliations of most publications in the area of visual literacy; the cluster of subject areas within the database area of Social Sciences and Humanities; and the representation of journals with multiple publications in the area of visual literacy (Figs. 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4).

The figures above provide a snap shot of the discourses of visual literacy as objects of knowledge in scholarly practices. The increase of publications in this area from 1990 to 2013, with excessive increase in the last 5 years, tells a story about the discipline representation and how this is constructed specifically in education, art education and visual arts more broadly. Figure 3.3 identifies the social sciences

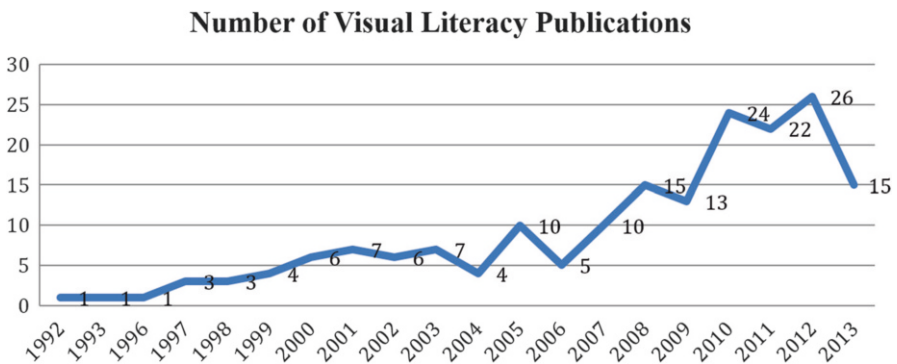


Fig. 3.1 Subject search of ‘visual literacy’ on Scopus Database (Author’s own graph)

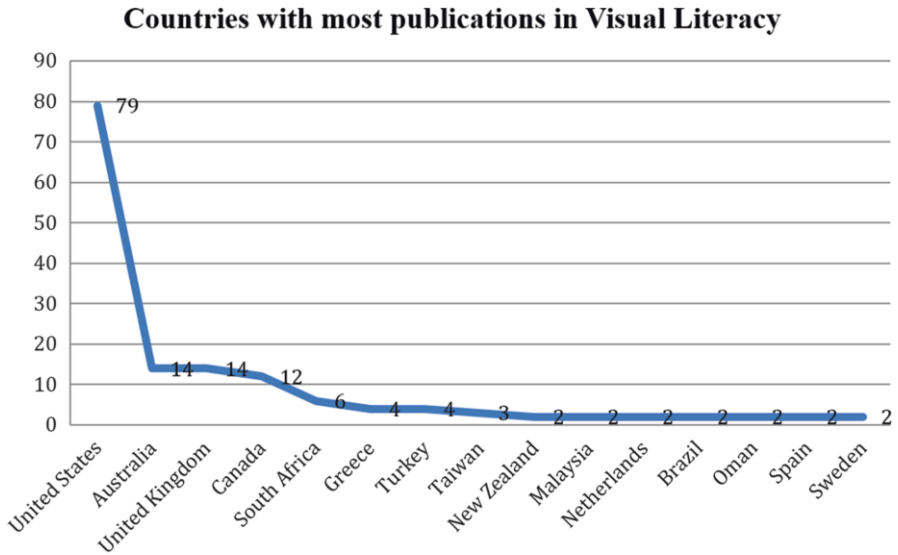


Fig. 3.2 Subject search of ‘visual literacy’ on Scopus Database. Country affiliations (Author’s own graph)

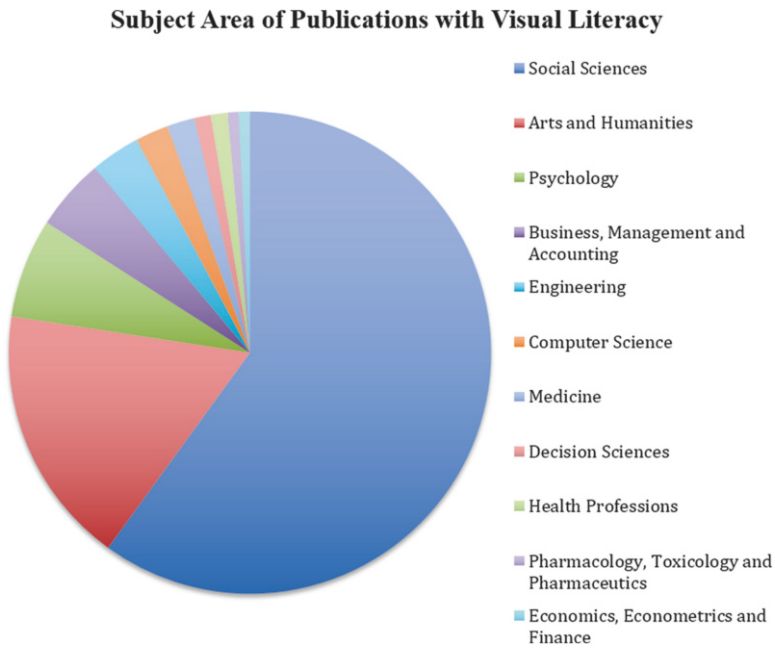
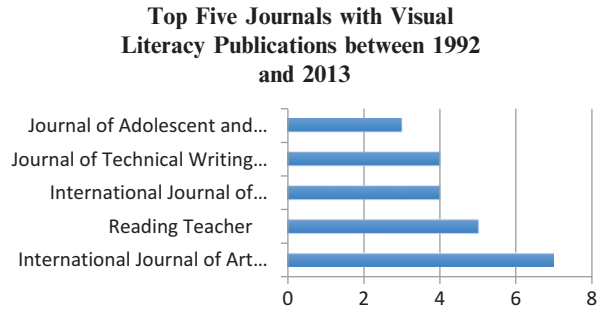


Fig. 3.3 Subject search of ‘visual literacy’ on Scopus Database. Subject area clusters (Author’s own graph)

Fig. 3.4 Subject search of 'visual literacy' on Scopus Database. Journal affiliations (Author's own graph)



and arts and humanities as the two largest areas for publications in visual literacy, with psychology as the third largest area with increased publications in the area of visual literacy. The country affiliations indicate that most publications come from North America, Australia and United Kingdom. This systemic review is a snapshot of the lay of the land in the area of visual literacy publications and the distribution in the scholarly domain in the social sciences.

Visual Literacy and the Discourses of Visual Culture in Visual Arts Education

Similar to visual literacy, visual culture as a field of study is an interdisciplinary domain of knowledge that emerged 'in the late 1980s after the disciplines of art history, anthropology, film studies, linguistics, and comparative literature encountered poststructuralist theory and cultural studies' (Dikovitskaya, 2005, p. 57). Visual culture is a domain of knowledge that arises through research and impacts on curriculum construction to focus on the visual image as the impetus through which meaning is made in a 'cultural context' (Dikovitskaya, p. 1). Visual culture in art education is largely theorised through the *Visual Culture Reader* edited by Nicholas Mirzoeff (2009). Mirzoeff notes that 'Visual culture is concerned with visual events in which information, meaning or pleasure is sought by the consumer in an interface with visual technology' (p. 27). The idea of visual culture as a body of knowledge, along with Mizoeff's condition of 'crisis', suggests that an urgent visual crisis arises as society and education are inundated with an excess of visual artefacts.

Originally restricted to facsimiles of artworks, art education now counts any image/reproduction/simulacrum/spectacle as its own and verified through conceptual practices that are determined as discipline knowledge – artists' practice. The masterpieces of the academy, and the art history that accompanies them, now share the classroom with popular culture, visual culture, postmodernism, and the artworld. Although the role of the image in art education is imperative to an understanding of 'art', the practices in art education are summonsed to respond to excess visuality,

mobilised through visual culture, that changes discourse and practice in the acquisition of knowledge in society. Visual arts education is in the business of matters ‘visual’ through the promotion of vision, seeing, and engaging with produced and reproduced visual artefacts that function as knowledge. Visual determines the practice of the field that is beholden to technologies that have advanced the reproduction of pictures, images, painting, drawings, and sculptures, to two-dimensional accessible artefacts that compose the discourse of the field. Visual technology magnifies an emergence of progress for art education. In other words, visual in art education is championed by advocates of visual culture for its technological focus that heightens an awareness of the ‘contemporary visual world’ (Duncum, 1999, p. 23). The explanations and considerations set out by advocates and practitioners of visual culture is a provocation.

Historically, technological inventions and discoveries have sponsored visual as artefact, practice, and knowledge in art education disciplinarity. Technological considerations are not limited to accelerated electronic progress through computer technology and cyber space innovations (Elkins, 1996, 1998, 1999, 2003, 2010). Technologies that have improved the printing press gave rise to reproduction of artworks; cinematic and projection technologies that provided the moving image access into the classroom have provided opportunities for visual to function in art education as a technologically driven artefact, practice, and knowledge. The production of visual knowledge through technological means is a discourse that has permeated the wider educational field through discursive and non-discursive practices since the invention of the printing press (Luke, 1989, 1997). The effect of visual technology through the construction of the educational film has variably impacted on the field of education, and continues to pose possibilities and limitations (Low 1970). The visual technologies of photography, the cinema and the digital electronic image influence art educational practices. ‘Technologies are not just “add-ons” to a context, but may have an impact on the structure of perception, the organisation of cognition, and therefore our very definitions of consciousness’ (Freedman & Popkewitz, 1984, p. 274).

Visual experiences are determined, measured, and assembled by value systems that characterise human functionality mapped at times by technology. Aesthetic visual experiences are invariably different between fine art and popular art. The value structures that authorise and organise perception in both fine and popular art are socially and culturally legitimated. The examination of perception, aesthetics, and theories of consciousness bound in cultural discourse are regulated by modes of seeing or what Martin Jay describes as ‘the enigmas of visual experience evident in a wide variety of fields [which] may well betoken a paradigm shift in cultural imaginary of our age’ (Jay, 1996, p. 3) In other words, modes of seeing are manufactured by cultural systems that validate visual experiences at any given epoch. The practices in visual arts education are determined by discourses in education, art, and sciences, for instance. To better understand how artists articulate their practices, and in turn how students can develop an understanding of these practices, we need to reject dichotomies such as teaching and learning (Freedman & Popkewitz, 1984).

Technology and the Role of the Visual as Culture in Art Education

The role of technology or, more specifically, visual technology proposes accessibility to representational realities that communicate the social norms and the regulative practice of human behaviour (Sennett, 1994). Often visual technology is interchangeable with visual aesthetics in discourses of visual culture. Kerry Freedman states:

Visual technologies are based on visual aesthetics, the power of which is seductive and didactic. They are sensual; they attract and make people want to look at them. Global visual technologies depend on aesthetic strategies that promote perceptual pleasure and teach us how to get more pleasure from them. Through this aesthetic, visual technologies are used in ways that suggest, as well as represent. Using technology, ideas are easily referenced and presented in forms that audiences are meant to interpret personally, but through culturally influenced eyes. Visual technologies easily and quickly enable us to cross conceptual borders, providing connections between people, places, objects, ideas, and even professional disciplines (2003, p. 128).

The interchangeability of 'visual technologies' and 'visual aesthetics' is proposed by Freedman to authorise similar constructions of knowledge that formulate a position of authority, a shared discourse. Freedman considers this similarity to suggest a natural inclusion to art education practice. Discourses of technology and aesthetics are regulated by institutional systems that function with a varying order of control and power. The discourse complexities that assort and adjust the visual manufactured by discipline structures and discursive practices of technology and aesthetics adopt visual concepts in particular ways. Advocates of visual culture argue that the possibilities of visual technology are limitless; all that is visual is to be accessed in art education. Everything goes, unbounded by traditions that limit discipline knowledge; an application of 'all that is visual' is assigned with the intention to broaden the discipline distinctions of art education. It is argued by Freedman that the social universality of digital visual artefacts and the expediency of access blur the boundaries of institutional and discourse specificities, providing connections between people, places, and objects (Freedman, 2007). These connections are not without regulative practices that institute people, places, and objects, for example, to be authorised and normalised to function distinctly based on the discourse advocated by disciplinarity.

The advocacy of visual technology in the form of computer-generated artefacts, television, and films are proposed by discourses of visual culture to be central to the development of curriculum in art education that relates 'content to student knowledge' (Freedman, 1997, p. 51). The fundamental consideration of visual as constructed through the technologies of film, television, and digital media is predominately sociotextual. Theories of visual culture in art education are linked to postmodern theory, trimmed and simplified to fit the advocacy of visual culture through the deployment of visual artefacts that are produced through contemporary technological means. The constructs of visual proposed by the endorsement of technological exemplars activate the function of visual as predominantly technological

(Abbs, 2003). The visual in visual culture becomes the verb: the doing word of culture. It is connected with perceptual intention and constructed as a neutral function. Therefore, visual is mobilised through the intention of sight and governed with the technological verification of visual as artefact to be seen. Freedman (2001), ascribes contemporaneity to attributes of visual. In other words, for the field of art education to be positioned as current and modern, a contemporary focus on practice is imperative. Visual then becomes a tool for emergence of the present, to show a contemporaneous nature of the discipline, new within the context of the changing and evolving world (Freedman, 2007).

Theories of visual culture in art education situate postmodernism forms as the ‘new’ way to teach art education. The disparities between the intentionalities of postmodern theories and the structural formations of curriculum development are moderated into step-by-step sequences of classroom activities. Rather than situating postmodernism as a theoretical perspective in understanding intentional artifacts as art objects, advocates of visual culture revert postmodern condition to modernist structures in curriculum. However, postmodern theory is more typically articulated through the dismantling of structural norms, such as those that are embedded in Freedman’s (2007) explanation of the postmodern exemplars in art education curriculum design. Terry Eagleton (1996), in his work *The Illusions of Postmodernism*, states that:

Postmodernism is a style of thought which is suspicious of classical notions of truth, reason, identity, and objectivity, of the idea of universal progress or emancipation, of single frameworks, grand narratives or ultimate grounds of explanation. Against these enlightenment norms, it sees the world as contingent, ungrounded, diverse, unstable indeterminate, a set of disunified cultures or interpretations which breed a degree of scepticism about the objectivity of truth, history, and norms, the givenness of natures and the coherence of identities (p. 134).

The postmodern aesthetic is argued by advocates of visual culture to be a key consideration for a new way of knowing in art education. ‘Aesthetic experience has changed through the dynamics of image-making and image-viewing in postmodern culture’ (Freedman, 2001, p. 34). The use of the culture as a way to define a postmodern intention challenges the discontinuous conditions of postmodernism. Freedman suggests that postmodernism is a culture that ‘is rapidly shifting from text-based communications to image saturation and the fragmentation and recycle of visual culture in new combinations’ that impact on society as a whole (2001, p. 34). However, postmodern perspectives are imperative to artistic practice in understanding the intention behind a visual artefact. It has within it frameworks that situate practice as subversive and political. Discourses of visual culture utilise visual as concept and practice to highlight the challenges that confront art education as a field. Visual is explained as objects of technology that are ubiquitous and universal. Discussions centre round the survival of art education as a field in this ever-changing technological world. Freedman’s (2007) paper *Artmaking/Troublemaking: Creativity, Policy and Leadership in Art Education* emphasises the conditions of visual as problematic objects that are in need of engagement. The distinctive knowledge structures are constructed through visual structures and art education domains

are not determined as distinctive. This characteristic view of visual in visual culture, which in turn mobilises the discursive practices of visual outside the discourses of art education, dismantles the discourses of art that pertain to art education practices (Freedman, 2005).

The cultural emphasis in discourses of visual culture politicises the place of literacy in visual arts education. Paul Duncum champions ‘multiliteracy’ and ‘multimodality’ as art education’s answer to discipline practice. He states:

For art education, the concern with multiliteracy and multimodality grows out of the current drive to reconceptualize the focus of art education as visual culture rather than art. The adoption of visual culture is part of a much broader movement within the sciences, social sciences, and humanities to conceptualise the visual as part of a general theory of communications. This movement arises out of a wholly new status given to the visual as a source of knowledge by many and disparate disciplines from astronomy to zoology. It equally arises from an acknowledgement that in a wholly unprecedented way people today derive meaning from all kinds of imagery as part of their everyday experience (Duncum, 2004, p. 254)

Duncum uses the terms multiliteracy and multimodality as a punch line in order to authorise the seriousness of his claims for visual culture in art education. Duncum thus tries to position his proposals of visual culture as power statements, legitimated and made important by replacing the marginal distinction of art education as a field with ‘visual culture’ as a new and progressive means of assessing and examining the visual. He states: ‘What were once minority interests within literacy education have now, like visual culture interests within art education, come to the fore’ (Duncum, 2004, p. 255).

Visual Culture and the Eclipse of Visuality

For Duncum, the nexus between VCAE and the ‘new art education’ is due to visual technological advancements that impact on society. Duncum suggests that visual culture is a ‘description of our times’, a consortium of all that is visual, pronounced through information and communication technologies and all that is culture, current and specific to the effects of information and communication technologies. Consequently, Duncum (2001) proposes that when considered as a field of study with implications for art education, ‘the term visual culture is a reworking in contemporary terms of an earlier art education project described as visual literacy’ (p. 17). Duncum discounts the discourse on visual literacy corresponding with research into literacy and learning, ordered and regulated by curriculum developments in English and literacy research. Duncum’s efforts to disregard the complex consideration of the discourse of visual literacy in education as a whole and to moderate visual literacy as essential to art education is a misjudgement of the complex practices of discourse authority and discipline configurations. With reference to Doug Boughton’s (1986) publication *Visual literacy: Implications for cultural understanding through art education*, Duncum’s partiality for art education writings in the area of visual literacy promotes an exclusive domain. This exclusivity results in

power through a domain of knowledge that is select and permits only a few to enter. Simultaneously this same exclusive practice may interrupt power/knowledge.

Duncum (2007) makes claims for a paradigmatic shift in art education so that the formalistic principles, which have been hardened by history and embedded in discursive practices, must be dispelled and replaced by concepts of visual culture. The resilience of formalism is not considered in Duncum's (1996, 1999, 2004, 2007) and Freedman's (1997, 2001, 2003, 2005, 2007) proposals for visual culture; formalism is rejected as a past practice. The strength of formalism, however, arises from those very same characteristics of formalism that irritate visual culture. It is because teachers perceive formalism as abstract and apolitical that it survives. Therefore the teacher for Duncum and Freedman is the problem or the weakest link. The mobilisation of elements of design brings forth a dedication of visual to assemble methods of constructing visual artefacts, objects, and artworks. Formalism gives students and teachers a simple, easily remembered and portable rule to apply when talking and writing about art. Formalism gives you something to say.

It is beyond the scope of this investigation to suitably explore the complexities of formalism and its impact on art education as a field of practice. However, it is essential to address the constructed duality that exists in Duncum's (1999, 2004, 2007) and Freedman's (2005, 2007) endorsement of visual culture in disallowing the discursive and non-discursive practices of formalism to be represented in art education – as it continues to exist in art classrooms.

Art as a discourse in the past and in the present promotes, challenges and emulates social, political and economic changes. The significant aspect to the Visual Culture debate is around issue of proliferation and accessibility of visual images. The current social climate is inundated with an influx of images, ubiquitous and accessible by all (Mirzoeff, 2009). Terry Smith, a professor of contemporary art, argues that the power of images and the supremacy they command affect all aspects of life by 'promising more and more openness, while at the same time its power to communicate concentrated meaning seems to decline' (Smith, 2001, p. 27). In other words, power is assumed in the accessibility of images however, power is also lost in its abundance due to the multilayered nature of understanding visual images. Advocates of visual culture link all digitised, screen, and photographic images to art education practices. However, the digitised, screen and photographic image as a discursive and non-discursive practice in art education did not follow the technological innovations of visual reproductions. For example, the photographic image was not included in art education practice until the appearance of photography as a distinct practice in the visual arts.

Anne-Marie Willis (1988), in her book *Picturing Australia: A history of photography*, provides a historiography of the photographic image and the activities of photography in the visual arts and art educational institutions. Willis argues that the emergence of the photograph as an artistic form in the 1970s was due to the theoretical disruptions to the dominant theories in art of the 1950s and 1960s. The critical debates of Clement Greenberg's (1966) theories, which emphasise the attributes of a medium were to take a shifting turn in the 1970s. Willis (1988) states:

Clement Greenberg, the influential art critic, argued that each medium should rid itself of what was extraneous and get down to its essential nature: painting should reject all

non-painterly aspects, should not try to appear as three dimensional like sculpture or illusionistic like theatre, that is should reject representation and be concerned with flatness and colour (1988, p. 218).

Mirroring Greenberg's (1966) glorification of the medium, the photographic images as argued by Willis (1988) were promoted for an aesthetic that was 'based on clear visual description and the acceptance of specific photographic qualities, such as random patterns and juxtapositions, flux, fragments and inconsistencies that the camera can record' (p. 218). The widespread acceptance of the photographic image as an art form was a response to the shift towards conceptual art and the dismissal of Greenberg's approach to painting (Willis, 1988).

Simultaneously, educational institutions began to demonstrate acceptance for 'photography as art' (Willis, 1988, p. 219). Although Willis identifies specific art training institutions and art world agencies, the broad role of art education as a distinctive practice was formulated by the spurts of technological advancements. These developments provided for the practices of photography in the emergence of visual as a condition of the field.

Where the amateur movement had stimulated art photography during the pictorialist era, it played virtually no role in the 1970s push for recognition of photography as art (Willis, 1988, p. 219).

The late inclusion of the practice of photography was more than an Australian phenomenon. Willis (1988) indicates that the practice of art photography in America was entrenched in social culture since the 1930s, but not until 'the late 1960s and early 1970s did photography gain widespread acceptance in the avant-garde art world' (p. 219).

With this in mind, discourses of the visual may be considered a 'natural' phenomenon for visual arts education, but these discourse are situated and often omitted from education discourse. Therefore, claims made in light of visual culture in art education mobilise a formation of knowledge that is predominantly designed around cultural attentions, which are formulated through practices of criticism. The emphasis is on the effects of culturally bound images. Although important, it is not the only perspective that authenticates an understanding. In other words, building concepts of visuality through curriculum and pedagogical developments where artists' practice is epistemologically and ontologically understood through frames of meaning – cultural, structural, personal and postmodern – sets the agenda for literate practices to be explored (Barbousas & Maras, 2009).

Building Concepts of Visuality to Situate Literacy Practices in Visual Arts Education

The literacy imperatives that situate curriculum and pedagogical practices in education are mobilised in particular ways to adhere with discipline configurations. To inspect the currency and viability of visual literacy in visual arts education, and link

artistic practice and critical understanding, theories of ‘scopic regimes’, determined by an epoch and regulated by systems that rule a universal concept of visual, can work towards mapping visual practices (Elkins, 2010; Jay, 1996; Smith, 2010).

In Visual Arts Education literacy practices sit within complex relationships between images, intentions, artefacts and discourses that inform particular artefacts and condition its acceptances in art making and art appreciation. Artistic practices are regulated by rules, conventions and intentional dispositions, which are located in artworld relationships. These artworld relationships such as, the role of the artist, the artwork as intentional objects, the audience as a contributor to discursive practices and the world from which intentional objects are represented, disrupted, and culturally and socially constructed. In order to explain an artwork, it is relevant to ‘to consider the function of artworks, artists, audiences and the world represented’ to better understand theories of visibility in curriculum and pedagogy (Brown, 2001, 2003; Maras, 2009). Within these domains of knowledge ‘multimodal’ and ‘visual literacy’ configurations do not adhere with the configurations of the distinctive affordances that these play for the formation of visual literacy in art education. A semiotic ‘reading’ of visual objects can only go so far to explain the specificity of art making and art appreciation.

Visual artefacts are intentional constructions that are socially mediated, and afforded with meaning through time and space (Elkins, 2010). For the purpose of developing visual literacy skills, situating a conceptual framework where artists’ practices are examined as discourses and conditions of the time will better inform students about the subject content and the specificity of literacy in discipline formations – visual arts education. We may take a semiotic view of artefact as text but it may be the suitable theoretical framework to position a structural or postmodern intention. To authentically examine intentional visual artefacts, relevant frames of reference, embedded in discourses, can better assist curriculum and pedagogical developments regarding, cultural, structural, personal and postmodern intentions of visual arts artefacts in art education.

Framing Concepts of Artist, Artwork, Artworld and Subject Matter in the Formation of Literacy

Artworld relationships of artist, artwork, artworld and subject matter are conceptual structures to understand and interrogate practices in the visual arts. These conceptual building blocks develop a literacy in art education that is authorised by the discourse of the field and situates knowledge development through explaining these domains of knowledge.

The role of the viewer and the formation of audience practices are key to the development of critical engagement with visual objects in art education (Barbousas & Maras, 2009). An understanding of audience participation and critical understanding of artworks is fundamental to the development of literate practices. ‘To mobilise the knowledge formation that directly contributes to the field of knowledge

within the visual arts, the artist as content is developed in artmaking and art appreciation activities' (Barbousas & Maras, p. 690). Relational connections, which inform the personal, semiotic and structural constraints, situate artists' practice as social commentary with cultural, social and political intent. In this way, an understanding of the concepts and practices of artists' practice situates literacy as paramount in the epistemological investigation of visuality. Engaging with visual objects that situate theories of the personal/psychological, structural, cultural, and postmodern within art appreciation activities enables a critical understanding of practice in visual arts. These frameworks of understanding mobilised a literacy of visuality that is subject to the formations and constraints of visual arts education. The visual object, the artefact, and the artwork function within historical and contemporary discourses of artistic practice. As such, the semiotic, psychological, cultural/social, and postmodern are used as theoretical frames to better understand intentional objects, which are constrained by practice, in the visual arts.

To understand the formation of visual literacy and to examine the suitability within visual arts education, it is imperative to examine the conceptual formations of artwork relationships (Brown, 2003; Elkins, 2010). An artwork as an intentional object and the formations of visuality as theories of seeing and articulating the image world can be configured as practices in artmaking and art criticism in visual arts education.

The formation of visual literacy in visual arts education is embedded in an epistemological investigation of artworld relationships. These fundamentally situate the ways in which art making and art appreciation can be developed in the curriculum to form authentic links to visuality that is philosophically and practically linked to visual arts education discourses. In this way, the role of the visual image is not one to be read as a systematic text but rather interrogated as an intentional object, which has been constructed and baked through history to situate knowledge in specific ways. The role of the artist, the artwork, subject matter, and the audience are knowledge structures that order the formation of literacies, so that the visual image, as an intentional object is mobilised through practices that adhere with artworld relationships.

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