

Chapter 7

Popular Visual Culture in Art Education: A Group Creativity Perspective

Chung Yim Lau

Creativity has always been one of the most discussed topics in Western art education. Although there is no consensus on its meaning (Sternberg 2007), we can find a variety of theories on creativity by reviewing the history of art education. In art education, the main discussion related to the shift in the mainstream paradigm and the change in the philosophical underpinning of art education. One significant example is the paradigm shift from discipline-based art education to a visual culture emphasizing culture, which reflects the everyday cultural experiences of young people. One of the assumptions behind this paradigm shift is that it will give young people another means of communicating with their peers in their everyday lives, moving the emphasis from modern art to contemporary art and the media of popular culture. Undoubtedly, this tremendous change will reshape our understanding of creativity in the contemporary context.

Today, young people are surrounded by a wide variety of new technology that they are familiar and comfortable with. They are able to use various types of visual media to demonstrate and express their creative ideas. Through popular cultural organizations such as cosplay and dōjinshi, they share and communicate their creative ideas through global networking and a variety of media such as YouTube, Facebook and MSN. Nevertheless, does this type of creativity precisely reflect the situation in the contemporary visual culture among Asian ethnic groups? Furthermore, can our existing theories of creativity explicate the cultural phenomena emerging in Asia today? In order to answer these questions, in this article I will discuss various theories and definitions of creativity and highlight some significant

The major content of this manuscript reflects the idea abstracted from my recent paper published in Australian Art Education (2011) and The International Journal of Arts Education (2012).

C.Y. Lau (✉)

Department of Cultural and Creative Arts,

The Hong Kong Institute of Education, Hong Kong, China

e-mail: chungyim@ied.edu.hk

related issues. I will also present some findings from my recent study on Asian ethnic group creativity as examples of the creative phenomena currently emerging in the region.

7.1 Overview of Current Issues in Creativity

Early discussions on creativity were enormously influenced by the modernist perspective on artistic expression. In this perspective, the main approach is to view creativity as a mode of creative individual self-expression (Lowenfeld and Brittain 1987) and to regard artists as ‘lonely geniuses’ (Parsons 2010). Another approach suggests that creativity is a thinking process used for problem solving (Torrance 1977; Wallas 1926). However, since the late twentieth century, however, the direction of the discussion has changed, and creativity is now considered a form of group dynamics in which people collaborate effectively to solve problems (Sawyer 2007). Most recent studies draw attention to the possible influence of the rise and fall of the middle classes on creativity. Efland (2010) borrows Florida’s (2005a) socio-economic concept of the rise of creative cultures along with that of the creative middle class to highlight this issue further and to propose a new direction for art education. Another theory of creativity discusses its relevance in media education. For instance, Duncum (2009) refers to the use of communications media in education as an effective means of facilitating learning. He agrees with Buckingham (2003) that teachers should adopt a playful strategy and set education in the context of popular culture.

Significantly, most of the relevant literature mentioned above, from the modernist view to current accounts of creativity, discusses creativity from the perspective of Western contemporary art education, but few researchers have discussed it from the perspective of Asian ethnic groups. Therefore, it is of doubtful use to apply these accounts in interpreting the creativity in Asian ethnic group culture. In order to distinguish between Western views on creativity and the real world of creativity currently emerging in Asia, in this article I use the term “micro perspective on creativity” to describe the creativity of Asian ethnic groups. , I consider that this use of two distinct terms will help to create an essential framework for discussion, make it possible to emphasize the issues raised in the article and de-emphasize the discussion of macro views on creativity.

7.2 Problems with the Macro View of Creativity

Early theories of creativity emphasized a close relationship between problem and solution in the real world context. Most of these theories were concerned with finding a practical solution to a problem. Thus, both the new way of thinking and the thinking process became the focus of previous study (e.g., Torrance 1977, 2002; Wallas 1926). Torrance’s (1977) framework for creative thinking processes, which is called the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking (TTCT), is one of the influential frameworks

designed to identify creativity and to assess the types of behavior associated with creative abilities. It has been widely used and accepted in psychology and other disciplines such as art and education. In the test, Torrance adopts a macro view to examine four major components of the process of creative problem solving. These are: (1) fluency (the ability to generate various ideas or alternative solutions to a problem); (2) flexibility (the production of ideas indicating various possibilities from different perspectives and the ability to adopt various strategies); (3) elaboration (the process of enhancing and transforming ideas), and (4) originality (the production of unique and new ideas). By combining the accepted definition of creativity with the components identified by Torrance, it is hypothetically possible to distinguish a creative individual from a non-creative individual through a systematic measurement process from a macro perspective. Surprisingly, however, both the accepted definition and Torrance's components neglect the potential effect of the different backgrounds individuals have. Therefore, I suggest that the question of whether the definition and identified components of creativity are sufficiently wide-ranging to include the contemporary meaning of the term in today's rapidly changing popular visual cultural context, where young people from different socio-cultural backgrounds use new technology and a wide variety of media to express their creative ideas and communicate with each other in their everyday life experiences, remains open to debate.

Following these early theories of creativity, later, scholars like Sternberg and Lubart (1993) elaborated on the link between intelligence and the thinking process in creativity. The studies by Gardner (2006) and Runco et al. (2006) provide further evidence that a thinking map and an intelligent pattern are associated with the thinking process during problem solving. These researchers all agree that a creative person is one who regularly solves problems and defines new questions. Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, an increasing number of empirical studies have reassessed the scientific relationship between creativity and intelligence by examining the former as a brain activity. Farley (2001) developed a genetic model to explain creative activities and the implications for future education, and Winston (2003) investigated the functions of the human brain to demonstrate how we can use our minds better. These studies have expanded our understanding of creativity from the cognitive and neuropsychological perspective. However, from the earlier to the more recent studies, researchers have been attempting to understand how we might activate creativity in the most effective way, regarding creativity as a thinking process that serves as a tool to achieve practical goals. This interpretation of creativity is similar to the instrumentalist view, in which creative self-expression is encouraged. In the instrumentalist view, creative outputs considered to result from the maximum use of the brain during the thinking process.

Another view that accords with the macro perspective regards creativity as a socio-cultural product, as it has a close relationship with culture. The socio-cultural approach to creativity broadens our perception of creativity in contemporary culture. Sturken and Cartwright (2001) opine today's world as being full of various encoded images that shape our perceptions. As daily experiences, constructed mainly in visual and cultural contexts, reflect the nature of visual culture (Duncum 2002), images need to be decoded obtain their hidden meanings. In this world of expanding images and consumption, the essence of visual culture comprises coded information,

meaning, and the pleasure that consumers derive from visual technology (Mirzoeff 1999). As mentioned above, the socio-cultural approach to understanding creativity widens the horizon for creativity in contemporary culture. It shapes our understanding of creativity, and sets it as a cultural issue that we experience daily. Indeed, today's world is full of various encoded images that shape our perceptions and construction of meaning (Duncum 2002; Sturken and Cartwright 2001). Thus, visual culture comprises coded information, meaning and pleasure; people are accustomed to obtaining these through visual technology (Mirzoeff 1999). Visual technology also provides platforms such as YouTube for young people to demonstrate their creativity.

Scholars like Csikszentmihalyi (1999) and Sawyer (2007) consider creativity to have a socio-cultural foundation and that this influences creative development. Csikszentmihalyi (1999) also defines creativity as a combination of three essential elements: individual perspective, domain and field. He conducted a study in which he interviewed 91 internationally recognized creative individuals from many different fields, such as the scientist Jonas Salk and Senator Eugene McCarthy, in an attempt to identify the elements which combined to produce creativity in these individuals. Although in his findings he addresses the importance of the intimate relationship between creativity and socio-cultural context in the formulation of a creative individual, the focus of his study is on eminent individuals who have produced outstanding achievements, rather than on ordinary creative individuals from different socio-cultural backgrounds. I would dispute the idea that it is possible to draw conclusions about the general nature of creativity from a study which in effect involved only a very narrow section of creative people, and suggest that Csikszentmihalyi's (1999) findings pertaining to a definition of creativity can be applied only to individuals who are members of the particular group he studied. Thus, this macro socio-cultural perspective is incapable of explicating the creativity of Asian ethnic groups.

It is thus necessary to consider the influences of the socio-cultural context when interpreting creativity from a macro perspective. Florida (2002) analyzed the socio-cultural, geographical and economic aspects of creativity (Florida 2005a, b). Ray and Anderson (2000) used the term "cultural creatives" to describe creative late twentieth century individuals who showed respect and concern for ecology, human living conditions and quality. Although these philosophical claims view creativity from a socioeconomic perspective, they tend to seek a more universal interpretation and thus the perspective of groups like the Asian ethnic groups is overlooked. Within this socio-economic framework, Sawyer (2007) and Paulus and Nijstad (2003) investigated group creativity to explain the rise of innovation through collaboration. Their studies employ the theory of group genius to destroy the myths surrounding creativity; its socio-cultural dimensions were explored in an attempt to understand creativity better. Sawyer appreciates the creative power of collaboration, stating that innovative ideas can be generated through collaborative effort. Nevertheless, his group genius theory overlooks any relationship between group creativity and popular visual culture.

Indeed, scholars acknowledge the influential relationship between popular visual culture and creativity. In art education, the issue of popular culture and creativity has been addressed by academics from various perspectives: namely, Wilson and

Litgvoet's (1992) study of the stylistic drawing of children, Lackey et al. (2007) examination of the gendered pictures emerged from popular culture, Toku's (2001) research into the use of manga to stimulate students' motivation to learn, and Stearn's (2005) investigation of the use of visual narrative strategy in art teaching. Several researchers outside the field of art education have also studied these issues. For example, Levy (1996) adopted a sociological viewpoint to discuss the popular culture of animation and manga, whereas Price (2001) examined it from the perspective of cross-cultural communication.

Creativity in Asia can be observed through the images seen in various forms of popular media. The images of popular visual culture reflect the influence of that particular culture on creativity. They also denote a particular, common aesthetic notion shared by young adolescents. An example of this is the *dōjinshi* circles, a phenomenon that started in the late 1990s, with over 50,000 groups in Japan, and that quickly spread to other countries (Schodt 2002). Unlike the professional image-making industry of popular visual culture, the *dōjinshi* groups are comprised of many small, self-funded independent amateur organizations established in Hong Kong and Taiwan. According to a popular Hong Kong *dōjinshi* website, Douiin Hin (2001), 21 registered *dōjinshi* groups regularly publish work. Since 2005, over 39 big comic and animation party events have been organized across Taiwan in Comic World Taiwan (CWT 2007). At these events, various *dōjinshi* groups exhibit and sell their products to young adolescents. The growing number of these groups highlights the need to understand group creativity in popular visual culture in the Chinese context (Douiin Hin 2001). Notably, a few micro-perspective studies on this type of creativity have been undertaken. However, the literature on group creativity in popular visual culture fails to account for this kind of creativity.

Over the last few decades, creativity in art education has become a subject of controversy. I argue that ideas concerning creativity in art education have thus far been dominated and formulated by Western notions. Central to this issue is the problem caused by the tendency to adopt adopting a macro perspective to seek a universal explanation of creativity in the art educational context. This approach makes it impossible to interpret the micro view of group creativity. I suggest that it is erroneous to assume that the micro perspective on creativity can also be interpreted based on a universal standard. Therefore, group creativity should admit of two interpretations and I suggest that it is unlikely that the narrow view afforded by the macro perspective could shed much light on creativity in art education in the context of Asian ethnic groups.

7.3 Issues Related to Creativity in Asian Ethnic Groups

In this section I will relate some of the findings from my recent study on Asian *dōjinshi* groups to highlight the various aspects of this type of creativity that are overlooked in the macro perspective. *Dōjinshi* are groups of amateur manga creators and enthusiasts known as *dōjinshi* fans. Brenner (2007) defines manga as

comics and print cartoons. In manga, the creators use an exaggerated stylistic method to depict their thoughts, feelings, suggestions and criticisms; to portray characters or objects, and to rewrite stories based on Japanese manga stories. Although *dōjinshi* groups sell their self-funded work (mainly at manga book fairs), their higher priority remains publishing and selling *dōjinshi* for the sake of artistic expression and recognition rather than in order to make a profit (Shufflealliance 2005).

Although *dōjinshi* first emerged in Japan, it is now becoming increasingly popular in other countries, even outside Asia. However, it is important to note that artistic expression and appreciation in Asia are different from those United States of America, for example. For instance, Taiwanese manga creators and readers do not like Superman, unlike those in the West (Xiao 2002). Since one of the aims in this article is to demonstrate the paucity of existing literature on the subject in question, I have only used examples from Hong Kong and Taiwan in my discussion and examination of group creativity; non-Asian groups have not been included.

In 2008–2010, I conducted a qualitative study that focused on how these groups express the creativity of popular visual culture (Lau 2011). The study involved 32 individuals from two *dōjinshi* groups from Hong Kong and five from Taiwan. In relation to the findings of my study, three issues will be addressed.

The first issue is that of the aesthetic values and creativity of the Asian ethnic group. In the study, it was found that both creators and enthusiasts shared particular aesthetic values and social backgrounds, leading to a sense of common identity among them, which in turn fosters creativity in the micro popular visual culture. According to the group members, the groups tended to be loosely structured. Thus, creativity is “affected by uncontrollable and controllable internal and external factors such as balance of cost and revenue”, which in turn creativity in the groups “predictable and at the same time unpredictable, because works are created in an atmosphere of uncertainty, where adaptations and changes are constantly being made”. The internal driving forces of creativity include “the invisible unifying force, recognition of the members’ identity, praise from peers, and values derived from popular culture”. Conversely, the external driving forces of creativity include “visible achievements like participating in exhibitions, being published and production marketing plans”. Moreover, “recognition of one’s identity and receiving praise from others (buyers) make us think everything’s worth it. These activities enable us to understand ourselves better”. All the Asian groups interviewed signified a vague, moral and spiritual consensus. They did not measure value in material terms. The meaning behind the groups’ economic activities is the recognition of particular popular aesthetics and the practice of particular collective values.

The study also revealed that group creativity in the *dōjinshi* groups is short-lived. Although the *dōjinshi* groups face unpredictable factors, “this does not affect their willingness to create...because the creation process is completed in a tight and unstable schedule.” Creativity is “a result of goals set under unstable conditions”. Such creativity is “simple by principle” and involves “considerations in economic and non-economic terms”, with economic consideration referring to “balancing the cost and revenue” and non-economic consideration referring to “nonmonetary

values, such as fulfilment and pride [derived] from others' [buyers'] appreciation". One member emphasised that the fact "the act of creation is a fine process. For instance, will the works be finished in time for comic exhibition? Will they be popular? After an exhibition, creativity seems to decline considerably. Nevertheless, another force of creativity will quietly rise because of new publications and marketing plans". Dōjinshi groups rely on collaboration, with the "division of labour done according to each individual's ability". Moreover, "production and marketing are decentralized and done according to a system of job responsibility". Once the division of labour has been accomplished, each individual "finishes the work on his own according to plan, like a cell division, and then goes back to his own place". The division of labour is not restrictive, and there are overlapping duties. One member explained, "One person draws the lines and passes the work on to another member for colouring, but the member responsible for colouring feels that the lines are not refined enough. In the end, the work is returned, and drawing begins again. Then, the originally set work process must be altered owing to problems in quality". Although a member's work may be replaced, autonomy in the creative process remains unaffected, as "autonomy is enhanced after the division of labour". A review of members' transcripts suggests that creativity is closely related to group organisation. The following procedures illustrate how the organization functions as a creative process.

The independent and flexible management of the groups is a natural adaptive reaction to outside changes. Group creativity demonstrated the split-combine-split phenomenon found in individual/organizational interactions. The individual enthusiasts, with particular aesthetic interests, continuously supported the groups and come together because of their common appreciation of creativity. Once the groups have established a shared sense of identity and a particular set of aesthetic values, the members return to society and wait for the next round of combination and separation. The energy produced by that process of combination and separation comes from creativity itself. Guided by ethical principles, the influence of creativity forms a ripple within the core of society, spreading particular aesthetics to the groups.

The second issue is that of 'autonomously creative creativity'. In my study, this term referred to any form of creativity that is of an autonomous nature. The demonstration of particular aesthetics through the ideology of autonomously creative creativity is a requirement in the quest for shared values and a common identity. In the study, the groups were found to have clearly defined ideas of how such creativity was constructed and of the quality they want their products to have. Creativity has to be approved by the group. Group organization and creativity within the whole popular visual culture image-production process results in a kind of micro cultural product with a specific ideology – produced by the groups' self-disciplined, autonomous and loosely structured production process – with specific aesthetic standards and particular styles of expression. This product brings meaning and life to the particular small groups.

Moreover, autonomously creative creativity relies on invisible organizations and an ethical spirit. As one group member declared, "A particular aesthetics responds to a shared sense of identity among [the] creators and appreciators and the

formation of values and the ethical spirit of specific groups". Sustainable creativity linked the whole body of creators and enthusiasts in the pursuit of self-fulfillment and a common identity. Creativity is maintained by shared values and identities, not by economics. Creativity is autonomous by nature and without it, concepts are unlikely to be formed, and the meaning of popular culture will collapse. Therefore, the type of creativity found in the micro popular visual culture is a significant concept of a social practice. This concept also explains the formulation of autonomously creative creativity. Group creativity does not develop along a linear production-management-feedback route but in a relatively non-linear way that integrates stability and change. Creativity continues to develop as a result of its autonomy.

As the *dōjinshi* groups have "clear ideas of how such creativity is built, how it is expressed, and what its quality should be", creativity represents "the groups' collective intent to some extent". However, the autonomy is not complete. Interactions between organisations, the market and enthusiasts result in a balanced system with mutual restraints, which binds autonomously creative creativity. Creativity has to be "approved by the group and expressed under specific conditions of relative openness and containment within specific areas". A spirit of complete independence and self-determination exists in autonomously creative creativity whether it encourages unification or separation. This spirit leads to specific groups' identity recognition and values that are built by micro popular visual culture. Autonomously creative creativity relies on invisible organizations and an ethical spirit. The aesthetics of the groups respond to the groups' identity recognition and formation of values as well as to their ethical spirit. Group image production is a process of recreation under the management of micro organizations. The formulation of sustainable creativity also explains the formation process of autonomously creative creativity.. To be successful, the groups must rely on their sensitive aesthetic sense when dealing with popular culture, accurately estimate the market, and determine whether their images are up to the standards of particular aesthetics (the aesthetics of popular visual culture).

The third issue concerns the groups' creativity and identity. In the study, both group organizations and enthusiasts established a common sense of identity and shared values through the production and sale of images. Creativity is interpreted as the realization of specific aesthetic ideas. As one group commented, "In our group, the sense of a shared identity is especially important because it represents the purpose and value of our existence". If creativity left the groups, then self-identity and values would consequently be lost, making it impossible to comprehend micro popular visual culture.

The groups promised to provide enthusiasts with high-quality image products; in turn, the enthusiasts had expectations of the groups' creativity. As one group member stated, creativity in the group was "fuses with creators' and appreciators' consensus and common purpose in particular aesthetics". It is true that the groups' creativity is somewhat limited by their persistent ideas of popular culture. However, behind this persistence lies an ideology of shared identity and values, which group creativity nourishes. Creators and enthusiasts manifested specific ideologies through

particular aesthetics. Between them they established an anticipation of the creation: the enthusiasts gave the creators freedom in the creative process, and the creators paid them back with work. Thus, the groups proved the existence of creativity at the micro level, opening the door to autonomously creative creativity.

Dōjinshi groups have the medium of communication between creators and enthusiasts; that is, they spread a particular aesthetic notion belonging to particular groups, enable creators and enthusiasts to recognize their identities, and form a space for conversation. A new interpretation of micro popular visual culture is formed, and an informal organisational network is established which forms the basis for a value system for a common aesthetics. The groups not only have a visible microeconomic production and design element but also a sense of responsibility to social practice and a common goal to build aesthetic values. Image production in micro popular visual culture is a mission shared by the organisational groups and completed through their collective wisdom. The groups transform Japanese manga and anime images, “appropriating the group image in an artistic expression through localisation” and “building characteristics that are exclusive to their own groups.” Furthermore, “creators and enthusiasts connect based on their common interest in anime and manga. They do not normally know one another, but they connect through dōjinshi conventions and activities.”

Communication between different dōjinshi groups is limited to the usual forms of contact and does not involve criticism of one another’s work. Each group has its own style, character and supporters, and there is no competition among groups. Although the groups have different styles, their particular aesthetic notions of dōjinshi, which are adapted from popular Japanese manga, have never been called into question. The micro popular visual culture continues to connect creators and enthusiasts because it establishes common aesthetic values. Within this culture, identity recognition is triggered by the enjoyment and appreciation of particular popular aesthetics. Identity affirmation and recognition was found to be especially important in dōjinshi groups, as the groups interviewed expressed the view that it “represents the purpose and value of our existence”.

Dōjinshi groups have a definite intention to create. When it comes to creating images, they demand a high level of persistence and quality. While the creative atmosphere within the groups is vague and loose, they have a clear goal of image production, and creativity is maintained through a non-binding form of self-discipline. The groups “provide vast space for imagination, a sense of excitement, and a creative atmosphere, which gives rise to a sense of fulfilment”. From a marketing perspective, creativity involving particular aesthetics cannot be explained by the traditional economic principles of supply and demand. The groups “will not consider doing a second print because of good sales. Instead, the sale ends when the books are sold out. The principle relies on quality to share their creative output with others.” The value of the organisations’ existence is not determined by monetary rewards or the number of sales but by recognising the common aesthetic values created during creator/appreciator interactions, the process and rewards of which breed creativity. As one member emphasized, “Monetary profits do not represent recognition, but a happy look on appreciators’ faces does. It is a compliment to a

masterpiece we've spent several months on". Apart from that, "we are after invisible recognition, an approval for our quest for beauty. All these become valuable."

Group creativity does not necessarily follow the principle of economic rewards. The groups choose to use a particular communications network for both production and reward. In this system, "appreciators give approval, support and feedback to the groups and somehow become their spokesmen. They support popular culture and advocate our formation and content." Creativity in the group is "fused with creators' and appreciators' consensus and common purpose in particular aesthetics. The message spreads to particular group organizations, and is also a feature of the recognition of identity and values." In terms of artistic style, the groups "insist on following the specific characters and expression styles in popular Japanese manga and anime as the blueprint...and then combine those with stories about the daily life of youngsters in a local setting, rewritten with the help of their experience and imagination." This process exemplifies the characteristic of micro popular visual culture, in which the groups "use images of original manga and anime series as the basis to rewriting the plots of the stories." This creative process involves a process of destruction and reconstruction. Particular aesthetic values and preferences form common values and a visual epistemic logic within the particular groups. Creativity in micro popular visual culture is an action influenced by common societal values. It is also a process of social practice which values are presented through specific visual formats. Therefore, the essence of creativity in micro popular visual culture is signified by the sense of fulfilment gained by seeking the value of and recognizing identity in the socialization and localization of images.

7.4 Concluding Remarks

There are many theories regarding the nature of creativity. Most of these examine creativity from a macro level, and the perspective of ethnic Asian individuals seems to be neglected in the literature. Significantly, the micro perspective on creativity does not reject aspects of the macro perspective on creativity such as the cultural dimensions proposed by Efland, the problem-solving process identified by Torrance, and Duncum's concept of social identity. However, the two ideas are mutually incompatible. The micro perspective on creativity exhibits a different nature and reveals aspects in addition to those already covered by the existing literature. It highlights a strong and close relationship between organizations, identity and group creativity. In light of this relationship, important issues involving group ethnicity and autonomously creative creativity should be considered. Particularly, group organization plays an essential role in creative process, creating freedom of creation and concentrating on peer identity.

Nevertheless, it is not possible to generalize regarding how creativity functions in the contemporary visual culture of Asian ethnic groups based on the findings obtained from my previous study, and this is not the focus of discussion in the current article. However, this issue obviously raises the concern that the existing

perspective has limitations in terms of explaining the creativity of the Asian ethnic groups and that it has in fact overlooked the subject entirely. In the context of popular visual culture, group creativity enables the image creators and enthusiasts to establish common values and a sense of shared identity for specific groups with particular aesthetics. This autonomously creative creativity gives a profound meaning to the future development of both visual culture and art education. Therefore, there is a need for further research on the micro perspective of the creativity of Asian ethnic groups to expand our understanding of creativity. The scope of creativity in the contemporary context should be extended to include the micro aspect.

7.5 Implications

In popular visual culture, group creativity enables image creators and enthusiasts alike to establish identity and value recognition for specific groups having the same aesthetics. This micro autonomously creative creativity not only gives meaning to the development of visual culture and art education, as mentioned above, but also to the quest for local identity-recognition that has begun under the influence of globalization. Therefore, the micro perspectives on group creativity are here proposed as a model for art education. This model has three components, namely, group creativity, identity, and the popular visual cultural context, and thus provides many advantages for art education in schools. It challenges the original interpretation of creativity and contributes to art education. The interpretation of creativity by micro popular visual cultural groups involves a re-conceptualization of creativity and art education.

In art education, teachers should consider using the three components and adopting a collective approach when design lesson plans and teaching strategies. Artwork creation and inquiry into identity should not be kept separate from art activities. For example, Stearn (2005) suggests that teachers should combine popular culture media such as manga and visual narrative with their lessons to engage students more deeply in the visual arts. Toku (2001) suggests that when adolescents appear to lose interest in art-making, manga can be used to revive this interest. Chen (2007) asserts that the popular visual culture may enrich the main stream school curricula. She uses Taiwanese students as examples in her argument that the animé/manga fan culture can be used to fill the gap between the mainstream school culture and adolescent subcultures. The findings presented in the current study support these proposed educational advantages related to the adoption manga in teaching art. Moreover, they indicate the potential value of popular visual culture and offer a different way of thinking in art teaching.

Furthermore, group tasks and creativity should be set as assessment criteria. Teachers should create a conducive atmosphere and provide students with opportunities for group work and collaborative creativity. They can also encourage students to exhibit their artwork by participating in manga fairs, collect feedback from their peers for improvement and submit their work for self- and peer-evaluation.

Developing a portfolio based on group work is an effective to learn. Art activities and assessment criteria should emphasize group dynamics, as group organizations and popular visual culture creativity in art education contribute to the development of identity recognition, and micro popular visual culture creativity plays an essential role in enhancing particular values. Most importantly, teachers should not draw a line between elite and popular culture, but should instead recognize the potential of popular visual culture as a powerful learning tool, which can facilitate students' art education and help establish their identity.

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