



Welcome to our twelfth edition of "The Academic Journal," a bimonthly bulletin in which you can read about MCA's educational philosophy, instructional methodology, and the various viewpoints and positions of our faculty, staff, students, and families.

Teaching and Reclaiming the Arts

At a time when the world of fine arts has segregated itself, setting itself up above the general population, when it subtly declares that one has to be of a certain ilk in order to understand art, we are teaching our children that all can create and enjoy art, whether it be visual or auditory. In fact, our regular classroom teachers are doing the same as they teach our students to write expressively, creatively, and passionately. As the art world promotes the idea that the process is the focal point, when paint randomly dripped on canvas (Think Jackson Pollack.) is touted as high-class art, we, in contrast, are teaching that the process is a means to an end, *not* an end in itself. Our students, furthermore, engage their very souls in the work of creating, leaving little, if anything, to happenstance.

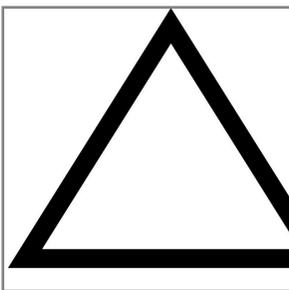
Our students begin by learning the grammar, the fundamentals, of art and music. In the primary grades, they explore mediums from pastels to paper. They learn that the side of the crayon offers its own texture and use. They move forward through a seamless looping process, embracing the elements of design and history. When they get older, they design and build wooden and rock and robot sculptures that stand four feet high. And, they learn to value aesthetics inasmuch as it reveals beauty and truth.

In music the youngest ones begin early to absorb the feel of rhythm; then, they fashion their own songs, using the traditional African style of call and response. They learn the composers and their countries, their sounds and their styles. They learn world instruments. After a few years the students learn to write music as if it were sentences that formed paragraphs and paragraphs that formed essays. They compose and perform music that excites and saddens, that honors and eulogizes, that entertains and inspires.

Our students' art has purpose. It has meaning, unlike that of much of the current postmodern art world that eschews any universal truth, and sometimes meaning of any kind. Our students create to bring beauty to us, to challenge our first impressions, to celebrate, to move us toward goodness, to bring something noble to our eyes and ears.



Who is to say what is good art? Well, I dare say, we can. Our students can. Mrs. McCormick and Mr. Money teach our students to address both form and content. They help our students merge technique and meaning, so that they are learning to distinguish between liking or disliking something and recognizing whether it is good art or not. Good art can be symbolic, abstract, realistic, impressionistic, expressionistic, surrealist. It can be secular or sacred. It can be emotional or not. What all good art has in common is form, content, craftsmanship, intelligence, and humanness. We believe in standards, in universal meaning, in the aesthetic.



A few years ago, I visited the Guggenheim Museum in New York, a very prestigious building displaying very prestigious art. Given at least fifteen feet of empty space on either side, this painting (to the left) hung in a visually prominent location. Although I've never had a copy of it, I certainly had no difficulty in reproducing it. On the other hand, I would have to photograph the work of MCA students to show you because those pieces are not so easily duplicated.

“Aristotle defined art as the capacity to make. For the ancients, any exercise of human creativity—building ships, making shoes, healing the sick, governing a state—is described as art. In this sense, whenever we exercise our minds or our hands to make something that was not there before, we are functioning as artists.”¹ There are functional arts, like the sleek but beefy look of a new 2012 Chevrolet Camaro. There are decorative arts, like the arrangement of furniture, photos, and paintings that Tammy, my wife, so artfully uses to help make our house a beautiful home. And, there are fine arts, those pieces that are made purely for their aesthetic meaning alone.

Art, even fine art, is for everyone; so, let's enjoy the art and music around us. Maybe we can even try it out for ourselves, participating in or creating a piece of art or music that reveals truth, goodness, or beauty. Let's certainly be sure to rejoice in our students' ability to make things.

Kirby R. McCrary, Headmaster



ACT VII Best in Show, Joey McCormick

¹from *The State of the Arts* by Gene Edward Veith, Jr.

