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Introduction



Every art form appeals to a special sense, a unique instrument of artistic appreciation—music to the ear, visual art to the eye, dance to the kinesthetic sense—or so it seems. Hoping to instil in children an appreciation of the visual arts, adults often direct them to *look*. Yet children have irrepressible energy. Asked to listen to music, they automatically move to its rhythms unless some unsympathetic adult forces them to sit still, “the better to appreciate it.” But the child’s natural movement opens another kind of sense interaction with the music, strengthening the

child’s relationship to the work and deepening the child’s appreciation.

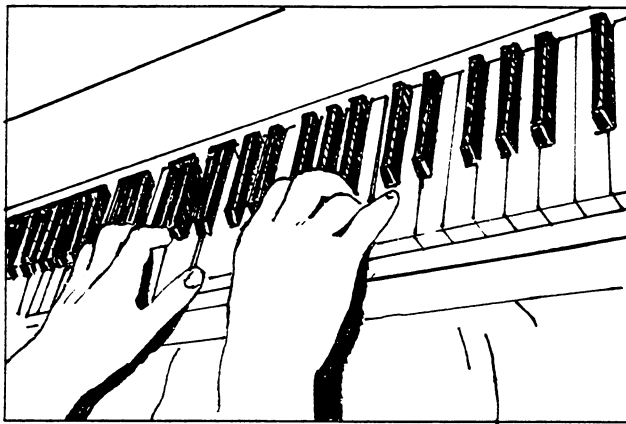
The visual arts may seem to appeal to fewer senses than music. After all, the visual arts—at least most of them—are static. When we look at them they make no noise or movement, and the ubiquitous gallery signs forbid their being touched. The sole source for cultivating appreciation of the visual arts seems to be sight itself and perhaps participation in creating artworks. Many books have been written to help teachers foster appreciation through these means.

Kinetic Kaleidoscope has the same general purpose, but its strategy is different. Our main thesis is that works of art contain within their frozen frames an inner dynamism and energy that an individual’s perceptual apparatus can translate into kinesthetic impressions, movement, and sound. Through this translation a child’s natural energies can interact with the artwork through multiple sensory experiences, enriching and deepening art appreciation.

Definitions

According to the *Random House Dictionary of the English Language*, the word *kinesthetic* comes from two Greek words: *kinein*, meaning “to move or set in motion,” and *aisthesis*, meaning “sensation or feeling.” Kinesthetic means literally sensing or feeling the motion. The sensation of movement or strain in muscles, tendons, or joints can be thought to include feelings deep within the organ muscles of our body. *Webster’s Third New International Dictionary of the English Language* includes in the definition of *kinesthetic* a notion of “motor memory.” We say we can have memories of kinesthetic events that we can manipulate much as we do words and images.

Kinetic Kaleidoscope provides the reader with strategies for helping students experience their own multisensory responsiveness to the visual



arts. Readers learn how to arouse in children a totally different way of interacting with art. Involving the whole body, the kinesthetic “muscular” response engages students not only at the intellectual level of classroom presentation and discussion but also at the physical and emotional levels. Kinesthetic response

opens and extends the pathways for enriched conceptual understanding and aesthetic appreciation.

Reasons to Encourage Kinesthetic Learning

Kinesthetic learning has four main benefits: it strengthens memory, it enriches conceptualization and deepens understanding, it promotes creativity, and it expands the potential for aesthetic communication. Physical learning—such as typing, tying a shoelace, and playing the piano—is not forgotten as quickly as many isolated facts. Many acquired physical skills are, as people say, “just like riding a bicycle.” Twenty years after one’s last carefree, self-assured bike ride, an adult mounts the once-obedient machine, fearful that the old knowledge of self-propulsion is as fleeting as youth. Cautiously, without rehearsal, the cyclist pushes off. The muscles and tendons take over. Neurons fire along the old neural pathways still etched in the nervous system. The