

## A few reasons why the arts are more important now than ever...



Given the current educational climate that places a priority on left-brain functions reflected in the absolutes of standardized testing, students of all ages are in need of classroom experiences in the arts more than ever.

What is it that the arts have to offer that should guarantee them a place in the everyday school experiences of our students? Books, research papers and doctoral theses are piled high on the topic.

Among the most eloquent and respected responders is Elliott Eisner, Emeritus Professor of Art at Stanford University.

In 2008, Eisner delivered the Viktor Lowenfeld Lecture at the National Convention of the National Art Education Association held in New Orleans. The title of the lecture was “What Education Can Learn from the Arts.” In the lecture, Eisner identified eight features of the arts that are relevant to the improvement of our schools. One of those features is described as follows:

*Education can learn from the arts that open-ended tasks permit the exercise of imagination, and the exercise of imagination is one of the most important of human aptitudes. It is imagination, not necessity, that is the mother of invention.*

*Imagination is the source of new possibilities. In the arts, imagination is a primary virtue. So it should be in the teaching of mathematics, in all of the sciences, in history, and indeed, in virtually all that humans create. This achievement would require for its realization a culture of schooling in which the imaginative aspects of the human condition were made possible. We ought to be helping our students to discover new seas upon which to sail rather than old ports at which to dock.*

The following excerpt is from a letter written by Dr. Eisner to then President-Elect Barack Obama in January, 2009. In it, Eisner refers to “three contributions the arts can make when well taught in . . . our schools”:

*First, the arts provide symbol systems that enable individuals to express what they have experienced in forms that will make their experience sharable with ... others. The arts enable people to say the unsayable, to speak the unspeakable, and to convey what words can never say.*

*Second, the arts provide a powerful avenue for cognitive development. The ability to make judgments in the absence of rule, the capacity to think about relationships that have no name, the willingness to engage in hard work in order to achieve what is worth making are just some of the cognitive benefits of the arts.*

*Finally, aesthetic experience is often a visceral one that flows from engagement in artistic activity. It provides opportunities for students to discover the range of their own affective life. That is not a trivial realization.*



Arif Khan, left, and Tom Richardson juried the Silver Prints category of the 2009 Focus on Youth Photography Exhibit. Khan is the Gallery Director at the Tamarind Institute and Richardson teaches photography at UNM.

### Albuquerque Museum hosts the Focus on Youth Photography Exhibit

The Albuquerque Museum will once again host the APS Focus on Youth Photography Exhibit, providing a rare opportunity for high school students to have their work featured in a Museum exhibit.

This professionally juried exhibit features photography and digital arts media created by high school students from APS as well as Albuquerque Academy and Sandia Preparatory School. Only 100 pieces were selected for display from over 1400 pieces submitted this year for the jurors to review.

A new “first” this year as part of the Focus exhibit will be the continuous display of student-made digital films submitted to the 505 Youth Film Festival.

The Focus Exhibit opened Sunday, May 3 with an awards reception hosted by the Albuquerque Museum Foundation. Ribbons were given for place awards and honorable mentions in each of five categories as well as Merit Awards of either cash or gift certificates.

“Choosing such a small number of pieces from such a broad array of talent has been extremely difficult,” said Khan.

The exhibit will be on display at the Albuquerque Museum, 2000 Mountain Rd. NW through Sunday, June 28. Gallery hours are Tuesday through