

# Dewey on Institutions of Democratic Art

*Emma Fieser*

University of Illinois at Chicago



In this paper I investigate Dewey's view of how institutions might use fine art to contribute to democracy. I first show that Dewey's pragmatic conception of democracy is a collaborative problem-solving effort to enhance human experience. I then establish two Deweyan criteria of what I call an "institution of democratic art". The first involves the curation of artworks with a democratic message, and the second involves the democratic process by which the institution selects those works. I then explain Dewey's pragmatic conception of aesthetics, where art emerges as a solution to social needs and problems, and, contrary to what traditional museums do, how art should not be isolated from its original social context. I then analyze the success of two examples Dewey gives of institutions of democratic art: the Barnes Foundation and The Section of Fine Arts. I argue that they both succeeded with their art's democratic content, although their art selection process could have been more democratic. Finally, I show how a Deweyan notion of an institution of democratic art is relevant to recent discussions of controversial public art.



*Volume 7 · Number 2 · 2023 · Pages 51 - 76*

## INTRODUCTION

It is difficult to think about the French Revolution without conjuring up images of Delacroix's painting "Liberty Leading the People". It depicts a powerful female figure representing Liberty charging forward with the French flag, which symbolizes the collective will of the people to overthrow tyranny and establish a democratic government. Few would doubt the important role that art plays in democracy. It serves as a communicative platform where political engagement can take place, particularly when participation in traditional political arenas is difficult or ineffective. It offers opportunities for political expression and empowers marginalized individuals who may face exclusion from mainstream political systems. Through the distinctive voices of their creators, artworks strengthen democratic discourse. In this way, art can become a vital tool for challenging the status quo.

John Dewey made important contributions to both democratic theory and aesthetics. In the realm of democratic theory, Dewey emphasized the essential role of active citizen participation, promoting the idea that democracy thrives when individuals engage in informed and collaborative decision-making. In the field of aesthetics, he challenged traditional views by advocating for an experiential approach, emphasizing the importance of art as a means of connecting people together within a community and ultimately enhancing the democratic fabric of society. While Dewey develops the connection between art and democracy, he does not directly discuss how social institutions might take advantage of the public character of art as a means of promoting democracy. On the contrary, he argues that traditional art institutions like museums have entirely failed in this aim since they remove art from their original purpose and context of creation, and literally place art on a pedestal where it becomes a commodity for the wealthy.

How, then, might institutions use fine art to contribute to democracy? Here I will offer a Deweyan answer to this question. First, I show that Dewey's pragmatic conception of democracy is a collaborative problem-solving effort to enhance human experience. This can be done by either individuals or by institutions. I establish two Deweyan criteria of what I shall call an "institution of democratic art". One pertains to the curation of artworks with a democratic message, and the other involves the democratic process by which the institution selects those works. Second, I explain Dewey's pragmatic conception of aesthetics, where art emerges as a solution to social

needs and problems, and, contrary to what traditional museums do, how art should not be isolated from its original social context. Third, I analyze the success of two examples Dewey gives of institutions of democratic art, namely, the Barnes Foundation and The Section of Fine Arts. I argue that they both succeeded with their art's democratic content, although their art selection process could have been more democratic. Finally, I show how a Deweyan notion of an institution of democratic art is relevant to recent discussions of controversial public art. I argue that, to support democratic public art, institutions need to make three important commitments. First is to use art as a tool for both social cohesion and positive change. Second is to be open to controversial artworks that challenge the current state of society. Third is to seek out public spaces for art with wide visibility.

### **PRAGMATISM AND DEMOCRACY**

There are three main aspects of Dewey's theory of democracy that are relevant to our discussion. First is his distinction between (a) democracy as a social ideal and (b) political democracy as a system of government. *Democracy as a social ideal* is the broader concept that extends beyond the confines of political governance. It offers a vision of society that is founded on principles such as equality, participation, and the recognition of individual rights and freedoms. As he states, democracy as a social ideal seeks to create a just and inclusive social order that permeates all realms of human association, including "the family, the school, industry, religion" (PP 142). It emphasizes the importance of democratic values and practices in shaping the overall fabric of society.

On the other hand, *political democracy* refers specifically to the system of government that embodies democratic principles and structures. It focuses on the mechanisms and institutions through which political power is exercised, decisions are made, and public affairs are managed. Political democracy involves processes such as elections, representative bodies, and the rule of law, which aim to ensure the participation, representation, and accountability of the citizens in governing the state. While political democracy is a crucial component of the broader social ideal of democracy, it is important to recognize that democracy as a social ideal surpasses the limited domain of political governance. It envisions a society where democratic values and practices are ingrained in all spheres of human life, creating a culture of equality,

freedom, and active participation.<sup>1</sup>

Further, Dewey argues, democracy, when considered as an ideal, is not merely an alternative among various principles of social association. Rather, “It is the idea of community life itself” (PP 148). However, he says, reality falls short of fulfilling democracy in this idealistic sense, and it may never fully materialize. Indeed, he suggests, throughout history there has never been a community that embodies the ideal of democracy in its purest form, untainted by conflicting influences. For our purposes, then, we want to look at how art can further democracy as a social ideal, and not necessarily enhance democracy as a political structure.

The second aspect of Dewey’s account of democracy is his pragmatist approach, which he also calls “experimentalism” and “instrumentalism”, a methodology that typifies his middle and later philosophical writings as a whole. The pragmatist/experimentalist role of democracy involves active participation, open inquiry, and collaborative problem-solving, which aim to enhance the quality of human experience.<sup>2</sup> In this way, democracy is a means to achieve the desired ends of human flourishing, social progress, and individual fulfillment. As such, democracy is not a static form of government, but an ongoing and dynamic process that must adapt to the changing needs and circumstances of society. Dewey argues that “the political set-up for such experimentation requires a democratic state”, that is, “freedom of inquiry” (PP p. 354). For, political freedom of inquiry allows individuals to engage in open dialogue, express dissenting opinions, and challenge established norms. This, then, creates a culture of intellectual exploration and growth. In this sense, as society engages in problem-solving, democracy as a social ideal is symbiotic with political democracy. As we shall see, this democratic problem-solving is a creative effort that

---

<sup>1</sup> Commentators stress the importance of free inquiry in Dewey’s notion of democracy. Thomas Alexander states, “Democracy for Dewey is not a name for a special political institution so much as one for such a creative-critical culture. Political freedom is more the result of a free culture than the other way, Dewey insists. Only a democratic culture can be the safeguard of democratic government” (1987, p. 272). Raymond Geiger states “It seems unnecessary to add that the political set-up for such [democratic] experimentation requires a democratic state—using “democratic” in the sense . . . as coterminous with freedom of inquiry” (1939, p. 354).

<sup>2</sup> Geiger describes Dewey’s pragmatist approach as follows: “Dewey has insisted again and again that knowing is a form of doing, that it cannot exist apart from that which is known, that the objects of knowledge are the consequences of operations performed and are not mysterious entities existing sufficiently before the act of knowing, waiting, as it were, to be illuminated” (1939, p. 341).

Dewey also associates with aesthetics.<sup>3</sup>

The third and less prominent aspect of Dewey's vision of democracy is its reliance on social institutions. The pursuit of democracy encompasses both individual involvement and the establishment of supportive institutions. While individual involvement includes active citizen participation, social institutions play a crucial role by sustaining and advancing democratic principles on a larger scale. Pursuing democracy through social institutions is important for providing a framework for establishing collective decision-making, equal access to resources, and individual rights. Institutions, then, serve as the pillars of democracy by creating stable mechanisms for realizing the democratic ideals within society.

Dewey uses the terms "institution" and "organization" in both a governmental and non-governmental sense. But in either case, the value of institutions hinges on how they lead to cultural improvement. He states, "While it may be said, without exaggeration, that the measure of the worth of any social institution, economic, domestic, political, legal, religious, is its effect in enlarging and improving experience; yet this effect is not a part of its original motive, which is limited and more immediately practical" (DE 7). Accordingly, the value of an institution is not determined by its initial purpose or immediate practicality, but rather by its capacity to contribute to the broader growth and development of individuals and society. Elizabeth Anderson has introduced the term "institutional epistemology" which seeks to clarify questions, such as, "do institutions of a particular type have the ability to gather and make effective use of the information they need to solve a particular problem?" (Anderson 2006, p. 8). She argues that Dewey's pragmatist/experimentalist approach is uniquely capable of addressing three constitutive features of democracy: (1) diversity of participants, (2) discussion, and (3) a dynamic feedback mechanism such as through periodic elections, a free press, public opinion polling, protests (Ibid. p. 14). These three features, she maintains, "need to be embodied and facilitated in the institutions and customs of civil society" (Ibid.) Dewey's account of democracy, she argues, satisfies these three features better than rival theories that she considers. For our purposes, we may use this list as a kind of Deweyan benchmark for whether an

---

<sup>3</sup> Kalle Puolakka states, "what holds democratic societies together and guarantees their well-being has more to do with how people interact and communicate with one another, as well as with the sense of community reigning between them. Dewey, thereby, promotes an experientialist notion of democracy, and the interactions of societies and communities that live up to Deweyan democratic ideals involve features that Dewey sees as aesthetic" (2016, p. 371).

institution is democratic in its structure and procedures.

For Dewey, art plays a critical role in the advancement of democracy through both individuals and institutions. Individual artists can decide on their own to create and display works of art that carry a democratic message. However, wider dissemination of an artwork's social message hinges on support from institutions with broader reach, such as through a government commission or a museum display. It is this institutional role that concerns us here. For an institution to advance democracy through art, then, there are two conditions it must fulfill, which I will hereafter refer to as "the criteria of an institution of democratic art". They are, (a) the institution must curate works with some democratic social message, and (b) the institution's art selection process must be democratically structured, such as by containing Anderson's three constitutive features of democracy noted above. The purpose behind (b) is that the democratic structure of the selection process itself will help assure that the curated artworks are democratic in their social message, rather than partisan propaganda.

Here is an example of partisanship within the art curation process of an institution. The Discovery Park museum in Union City, Tennessee, has a sprawling outdoor garden which displays life-size bronze statues of Ayn Rand and Ronald Reagan. The two pieces were commissioned by the museum's primary donor to reflect his personal philosophy of economic libertarianism. The statues are in a portion of the park titled "Liberty Square", where they stand alongside statues of Prometheus, Jefferson, and Lincoln. The implication is that the Park's founder has placed Reagan and Rand on a level with these other symbols of liberty, thereby giving the whole collection a libertarian twist. Many visitors of the museum might see these as symbols of policies and philosophies that have historically been associated with the erosion of social safety nets and the concentration of wealth and power among the privileged. I am not suggesting that the museum's choice of these statues was necessarily wrong or that they should change them. Rather, the choice was just the result of a museum curating system that was not institutionally democratic in the Deweyan sense. Had the museum's art committee been more structurally democratic as Anderson describes, the choice and social message of the statues would likely have been less idiosyncratic. That is, a more democratic art selection process would have resulted in a more democratically cohesive message of their art. For Dewey, art can serve as a means of communication that helps people learn about each other and develop a sense of community. For, as art reflects the experiences and perspectives of differing artists,

those insights are to some extent transferred to the viewer.<sup>4</sup>

## PRAGMATISM AND AESTHETICS

If we think about the most important institutions for promoting art, the first that comes to mind would certainly be the art museum. But Dewey rejects this, and what he calls the “museum conception of art”, because of a series of critical failures that art museums commit. He explains this in his 1934 work *Art as Experience*, which was hailed as a monumental achievement when first published.<sup>5</sup> Its popularity declined after his death,<sup>6</sup> but it has again generated much interest within the past few decades. Dewey’s theory is that art is not just something you see in a museum, but rather is found in ordinary life through our daily activities and events. Aesthetics involves the whole process of creating and experiencing art, not just the final product of the art object. For Dewey, the social character of art clearly stands out, and he uses ancient Greek art as an example. Everyone considers the Parthenon to be a great work of art, but it only has aesthetic value when someone experiences it. To understand its value, we need to think about the people who built it and why they built it. The Athenian citizens constructed the Parthenon as a way to celebrate their city and their religion. Thus, to understand the beauty of the Parthenon, we need to understand the people who created it and how it was important to their lives (AE 4). As time passes, art such

---

<sup>4</sup> Mark Mattern similarly argues that the centerpiece of Dewey’s position is that “art, if closely tied to people’s everyday lives, is a form of communication through which people learn about each other’s similarities and differences, break through some of the barriers to understanding and awareness, and develop some of the commonalities that define community” (1999, p. 55).

<sup>5</sup> D.W. Prall states in his 1935 review of *Art and Experience* that “it verges on impertinence to remark that Mr. Dewey’s book is an important philosophical achievement; but the extent of actual accomplishment in these pages is extraordinary” (1939, p. 390). Stephen Pepper states “I am personally convinced that *Art as Experience* is one of the four or five great books on esthetics, and is a classic though but five years old” (1939, p. 389).

<sup>6</sup> See Richard Shusterman 1989 and John Fisher 1989 on the decline of interest in Dewey’s *Art and Experience* after his death. A vivid example of this is the following well-meaning assessment *Art and Experience* by Arnold Isenberg, “This book is a hodgepodge of conflicting methods and undisciplined speculations. Yet it is full of profound and stimulating suggestions. One cannot help being grateful that it was written; but one may also see the need for something else” (1987, p. 128).

as that of the Athenians becomes a record of the life of the community in which it emerged, and it provides a channel for modern viewers to understand that culture (AE 326). Again we see pragmatism/experimentalism at play in Dewey's account of art insofar as art emerges as a solution to social needs and problems. The aesthetic experience we have of art, then, is about how we feel and connect with the world around us. Although this pragmatic approach to aesthetics is unique to Dewey, one of his lasting achievements is his coining of the very term "aesthetic experience" which is central to contemporary aesthetics, even though it no longer carries Dewey's precise meaning.<sup>7</sup>

The failure of the museum conception of art becomes more evident when considering the common approaches to aesthetics that he rejects. We will look at four of these. First is his critique of the metaphysical nature of aesthetics. Plato, he says, introduced the problem by treating form as "something intrinsic, as the very essence of a thing in virtue of the metaphysical structure of the universe" (AE 115). In one manner or other, he says, aestheticians ever since have held onto this "ghostly metaphysics" in a way that is "irrelevant to actual esthetic experience" (AE 293). Thomas Musial suggests how this happened: systematic philosophers "first developed a metaphysics, and then, in their attempt to have their system embrace the whole of reality, have turned to esthetics" (1968, p. 7). The metaphysical reverence that we have towards art, then, is carried over to how we view the famed pieces that we see in museums.

Second, Dewey rejects the notion of aesthetic disinterestedness associated with Kant and Bullough. On their view, when we look at a work of art in a museum, we should focus on the artwork itself and find satisfaction in the way it looks for what it is, and not for how it relates to or benefits us. Dewey objects that "disinterestedness, detachment, psychical distance, all express ideas that apply to raw primitive desire and impulse, but that are irrelevant to the matter of experience artistically organized" (AE 258). As John Fisher states, Dewey's conception of "aesthetic experience is not the passive contemplation of art, not the disinterested witnessing of events" (1989, p. 57). Rather, for Dewey there is "fullness of participation" (AE 258). The participatory

---

<sup>7</sup> Monroe Beardsley states, "Whatever its origin, this concept [of aesthetic experience] undoubtedly achieved its fullest development and its richest application in the aesthetic theory of John Dewey. I think it is largely to his work that we owe the extensive adoption of the term by contemporary aestheticians, even though not all of us, of course, accept everything that Dewey said about aesthetic experience" (1969, p. 5).



nature of the aesthetic experience is again a feature of Dewey's pragmatism/experimentalism, where the artist is actively involved in creative problem solving.<sup>8</sup> This is completely absent from the museum conception of art as Dewey describes it.

Third, Dewey rejects the notion of "art for art's sake", the view that art needs no justification and does not need to serve any social aim. Rather, for Dewey, art arises out of its original social function and cannot be separated from it. All the great works of art in ancient Athens, including poetry, theater, architecture, and sculpture, served such social roles and were "an integral part of the ethos and the institutions of the community" (AE 8). For the Athenians, he says, "the idea of 'art for art's sake' would not have been even understood" (Ibid., cf. AE 328). As Donald Kuspit states, Dewey's *Art as Experience* "is essentially an attack on 'the idea of art for art's sake'" and aims to "break down the wall built by a purely passive, intellectual attitude to art" (1968, p. 93). The museum conception of art, then, fails because it detaches art pieces from their social settings, which leads directly to the view that art exists purely for its own sake.

Fourth, Dewey rejects "compartmentalized psychology" which attempts to identify aesthetic experience with some particular mental faculty, such as intuition or emotion. For Dewey, there are no such "intrinsic psychological divisions" within human nature (AE 247). It is true, he says, that "in a badly ordered society such divisions as these are exaggerated", but "it is the office of art to be unifying, to break through conventional distinctions to the underlying common elements of the experienced world" (AE 248). Hence, he says, we see "the extraordinary ineptitude of a compartmentalized psychology to serve as an instrument for a theory of art" (Ibid.).<sup>9</sup> Accordingly, the museum conception of art fails since it does not involve the whole person, but rather only a very compartmentalized mental experience of intuition or emotion.

---

<sup>8</sup> Richard Shusterman states, "By making experience the key to his philosophy of art, Dewey could deftly show how his empirical pragmatism was not narrowly scientific but instead richly well-rounded and unified and, moreover, capable of healing the schisms between the divided and dueling cultures of art and science. Art, as much as science, is the product of intelligent experience" (2010, p. 30).

<sup>9</sup> Martin Jay argues that, on Dewey's view, "aesthetic, or rather artistic, experience involved the whole body and not just the mind and imagination or even the senses as receptors of stimuli from without" (2002, p. 56).

The underlying failure of the museum conception of art, then, is that it extracts artworks from their original social settings and limits our direct involvement with those works. Not only do museums sterilize such works from the cultural conditions in which they arose, but they are then often reimagined as emblems of a country's pride. He states, "most European museums are, among other things, memorials of the rise of nationalism and imperialism" (AE 8). Further, he argues, money helps define the character of museum art. He states, "the growth of capitalism has been a powerful influence in the development of the museum as the proper home for works of art" and has promoted the idea that art is separate from everyday life (Ibid.). Those who have made their money through capitalism, often buy expensive works of art to show off their wealth. Through their art collections, they broadcast their "good standing" in the world of culture, just as they collect stocks and bonds to show their good standing in the world of money (Ibid.). Dewey thus explicitly rejects the sort of institutional theory of art defended in more recent times by George Dickie, which is that art is defined by what art institutions such as museums and galleries designate as such. Contrary to the museum conception of art, then, Dewey argues that art is connected to our normal experiences and that we can understand how art develops from these experiences (AE 11). The pragmatist approach, then, prioritizes the significance of everyday life experiences over the experiences of a select few individuals.<sup>10</sup> In a nutshell, the central democratic problem with the museum conception of art is this. If, as Dewey suggests, democracy is everywhere as a way of life, and art is integrated into everyday life, then art should not be confined to special institutions like museums.

In the course of Dewey's *Art as Experience*, it becomes clear that he understands the notion of aesthetics in two different senses: first, as pertaining to fine arts such as

---

<sup>10</sup> Scott Stroud states that, for Dewey, "What is problematic about starting with the modern [museum] way of viewing art is that it leads us to wonder how we are ever to connect the rarified practices of art with practical, everyday life. And if pragmatists value anything, it will be the everyday experience of life, and not simply the achieved experiences of a small cadre of individuals." (2014 p. 33). Thomas Alexander similarly states, "'Art' arises in the way human beings express what gives meaning and value to their lives, even where the culture does not have either the idea or a word for 'art.' To lose this root, as is likely when one begins with art objects abstracted from their living contexts in a museum and offered as candidates for "aesthetic" contemplation, is to lose the insight that art springs from the intensification of experienced meaning" (2016, p. 63).

painting and sculpture, and, second, as pertaining to any and all human creativity as we problem-solve our way through our environment. Several Dewey commentators have seen this as a problem that needs fixing, such as Patrick Romanell,<sup>11</sup> Joe Burnett,<sup>12</sup> and Casey Haskins.<sup>13</sup> However, near the end of his life, Dewey published a short paper stating that his dual usage of “aesthetics” in *Art as Experience* was intentional, and no additional explanation is needed for how to make the two consistent. He states,

Since the backbone and indeed the life-blood of my aesthetic theory (such as it is) is that every normally complete experience, every one that runs its own full course, is aesthetic in its consummatory phase; and since my theory holds also that the [fine] arts and their aesthetic experience are intentionally cultivated developments of this primary aesthetic phase, it demands presentation of evidence to accuse the main, the indispensable, intention of the theory with internal inconsistency. (Dewey 1950, p. 56)

That is, the primary phase of aesthetics is the creative problem-solving we engage in during the normal course of our experience. Here, the word “art” is like a metaphor for our experimental engagement in all of life. A secondary phase of aesthetics, then,

---

<sup>11</sup> Patrick Romanell states, “The development of each of these *whats* of aesthetics would eventuate in two opposite philosophies of experience. The first leads to a pluralistic conception of experience, where “aesthetic experience” is viewed as a special kind marked off from other kinds with which it is loosely connected. In contrast, the second phrase leads to a monistic view of experience, in which the aesthetic is one of its aspects interacting with the rest. On the first hypothesis, the aesthetic is in experience; on the second, it is a phase of experience” (1949, p. 125).

<sup>12</sup> Joe Burnett states that there are “at least three distinctive vantage points” in Dewey’s account of aesthetics: (1) refined culture, (2) “cultural subjects and functions such as science, religion, technology” (3) “Dewey’s general philosophy of experience” (1989, pp. 51-52).

<sup>13</sup> Casey Haskins states that Dewey has “two broadly different uses of ‘art.’ In some places he uses it, conventionally enough, to refer to the products and processes of the fine arts specifically. Yet in others he uses it, more broadly, to refer to a dimension of action in general, whether in the fine arts or elsewhere, in which experience attains its full developmental potential, becoming in Dewey’s idiom ‘consummatory’” (1992, p. 218). Casey argues that Dewey’s notion of “culture” resolves the tension between the two notions of art.

would be the application of this creativity to the fine arts specifically. But fine arts are not the only secondary phases of primary aesthetics. We've already seen that democracy for Dewey is aesthetic in character. Accordingly, the creative problem-solving involved in democracy is yet another secondary phase that arises from the primary aesthetic phase of creative problem solving in general human experience. Thus, Dewey's theories of epistemology, democracy, education, religion, and art in the narrow sense, all converge on the art of life as their ultimate aim. Embracing life artistically involves using imagination and reflection to explore the possibilities of our present experiences.<sup>14</sup>

There are three ways that democracy is "aesthetic" in its primary sense, and accordingly, parallels the underlying primary aesthetics of the fine arts. First, central to Dewey's democratic theory is the idea that all members of society should have a voice and contribute to decision-making. Similarly, in art, Dewey advocated for the inclusion of different creative expressions. He believed that art should reflect the variety of human experiences, just as democracy should encompass the differing viewpoints of its citizens. Art and democracy both thrive when there is a free exchange of ideas. Second, Dewey saw both art and democracy as vehicles for problem solving. In a democracy, citizens engage in deliberative discussions to make informed decisions. Similarly, experiencing art encourages individuals to question and interpret new ideas. The act of artistic interpretation parallels the democratic value of active participation. Third, Dewey believed that the public sphere was crucial for the functioning of a democratic society. This sphere is where citizens come together to discuss, debate, and share their ideas, ultimately shaping the collective will. In the realm of art, Dewey saw the creation and appreciation of art as a public endeavor. Artworks are open to interpretation and discussion, and their meanings can evolve within different cultural and social contexts. This dynamic quality of art parallels the ever-evolving nature of democratic discourse.

In brief, Dewey rejected the museum conception of art for removing artworks from their original social settings and thereby limiting our direct involvement with them as tools for solving social problems. In this way, museums have stripped fine art of its democratic character.

---

<sup>14</sup> Thomas Alexander similarly states, "The art of life is the goal behind Dewey's ethics, his philosophy of democracy, and his theory of education. To treat life artistically is to exercise both imagination and reflection toward the exploration of the possibilities of the present" (1987, p. 269).

## TWO INSTITUTIONS OF ART AND THEIR DEMOCRATIC SUCCESS

Since Dewey thinks that traditional museums have failed as institutions that further democracy through art, what institutions does he think succeed? We will look at two examples that he gives, namely, art education institutions, and government sponsorship of art. We will also evaluate their success according to the two criteria of institutions of democratic art noted earlier, that is, whether (a) the institution curates works with some democratic social message, and (b) the institution itself is democratically organized. The answers I will provide to this inquiry are not simple pass-fail pronouncements, but are more like observations about areas of success and areas for improvement. For, both institutions under consideration are multifaceted with long histories, and a simple pass-fail appraisal would trivialize their complexities.

### *Art Education Institutions: The Barnes Foundation*

First are institutions of art education. Dewey's general view of education is that it must go beyond memorization and testing, and involve experiential learning through hands-on projects and exploration. Art, he argues, helps accomplish this by having students creatively engage with their environment, and exercise critical thinking and expression. Further, art education can help students develop a sense of democracy by opening them to different perspectives, and giving them opportunities to collaborate with others through their projects. The model institution for teaching art, Dewey believed, was the Barnes Foundation.

Dewey was a personal friend and advisor to Albert Barnes, and he helped shape the educational philosophy of Barnes's Foundation in Merion, Pennsylvania. Together, they shared a commitment to experiential learning and the belief that art should be integrated into everyday life and education. This gave shape to the "Barnes Method", which emphasizes the study of art in relation to other disciplines such as music, literature, and philosophy. In 1935 Dewey was asked to write a foreword to a book titled *The Art of Renoir*, published by the Barnes Foundation, and in this he praises the Foundation for its method of art education. Education in general, he argues, involves continually engaging with one's environment, which typical schools fail to accomplish with their efforts at instilling mechanical habits within their students. This, he says, imposes on the student "a conformity that restricts then takes

the place of what otherwise could have been a never ending voyage of discovery” (Dewey 1935, p. 502). The experimental approach of art education, by contrast, explores the environmental context of artworks. That is, it begins with “the objectively perceived elements and relationships progressively discovered in the object itself — whether a painting, a poem, a symphony or a so-called scientific object” (Ibid). For Dewey, then, “the Barnes Foundation is so adequate an exemplification of what that theory means in practice” (Ibid.)

Much has been written on Dewey’s relation to Barnes and the Barnes Foundation, and a common assessment is that, while Dewey gained knowledge of the arts through that association, the disconnect between their personalities made their friendship an unlikely one.<sup>15</sup> Further, as David Granger argues, “the official policies and educational programs of the Foundation were in many ways unDeweyan” particularly insofar as admission to the Barnes collection was largely restricted to those who participated in its educational programs (Granger 2023, Introduction). Robert Glass has studied the extent to which the Barnes Foundation reflects Dewey’s views on art. He concludes that, “While the Barnes Foundation's aesthetic theory and policies can be understood in terms of Dewey's thought, its educational methods bear no resemblance whatsoever to Dewey's theories” (Glass, 1997, p. 102-103).

Despite the success or failures of the Barnes Foundation as a Deweyan ideal of art education, our concern here is whether it fulfills the two criteria of institutions of democratic art noted earlier. As to the democratic content of the works of art presented, the answer is that it does. Its art collection contains over 4,000 objects, and, while much of it is impressionist and modernist, it covers all periods of history and locations around the globe. Its fundamental message is multiculturalism.<sup>16</sup> Barnes

---

<sup>15</sup> John Fisher describes this incongruity: “Dewey's knowledge of the arts and, it would seem from his dedicatory confessions, his aesthetic theory itself, came totally from his associations with Albert Barnes and the Barnes Foundation, which even today houses what hazard to call the finest collection of Post-impressionistic paintings in the world. The incongruity of the relationship between the obsessively undemocratic Barnes, whose collection is still harder for the public to get into than anything this side of Fort Knox, and the passionately democratic Dewey, who felt that aesthetic experience is a model for all experience, defies explanation” (1989, p. 56-57).

<sup>16</sup> Patricia Goldblatt discusses the multicultural nature of the collection, indicating that Barnes “brought together diverse art from Asian, African and European milieus, as well as various materials – paint, wood, and metal – combining multiple perspectives from disparate traditions and cultures” (2006, p. 31).

went further and curated works by self-taught African American artist Horace Pippin, and displayed those alongside those of the European greats. Barnes organized his collection into “ensembles” by combining objects from various cultures and eras in unique mixed-media groupings. The aim of this unusual method was to challenge traditional hierarchies and highlight visual similarities that are essential to human expression across time and location. For example, next to paintings by Modigliani and Picasso whose subjects had elongated faces and almond-shaped eyes, Barnes had a shelf of African carved wooden faces that influenced those design elements. The purpose of this juxtaposition was to force the viewer to immediately see that art is an experimental process that often involves drawing on literally foreign experiences. Traditional museums were not set up this way in Dewey’s time, and indeed isolated works from their contexts and inspirations. Barnes also placed common objects on the walls next to famous paintings, such as hinges and door knockers. These shared similarities with design elements of the painting, and were accordingly works of art in their own right. They also reflect Dewey’s aesthetic view that artworks emerge from and should be understood within the context of ordinary life, in the way that the ancient Athenians would have interacted with the black-figure pottery of their time, now on display in museums. The juxtaposition and ordinary life elements of Barnes’s displays reflect both Dewey’s aesthetics and his democratic cosmopolitanism.

Access to the Barnes museum collection was done through the Foundation’s educational program, which included reading materials, such as Santayana’s *The Sense of Beauty* (1896), which advances democratic ideas. Bertrand Russell, a staunch defender of democracy, taught philosophy classes there for three years. In recent times, the Barnes Foundation indicates that it “has expanded its commitment to diversity, inclusion, and social justice” (Barnes Foundation, 2023).

As to whether the Barnes Foundation had a democratically-structured selection process, during Dewey’s lifetime the results were mixed. There were democratic elements to the Foundation which may have had some impact on what it taught and displayed. The Foundation’s courses were open to students, teachers, artists, and museum officials, but his preference was for what he called “plain people”, and Barnes waived course fees for financially disadvantaged students. He supported black organizations including the NAACP and developed a close relationship with the historically black Lincoln University. The association was so close that Lincoln’s trustees could nominate four of the five members to the Barnes Foundation’s board. The Foundation had other influential voices through its various directors of

education, including Dewey himself. In an “Indenture of Trust” (1922),<sup>17</sup> Barnes stipulated conditions indicating how the Foundation should operate during his life and after his death. He states there that “The purpose of this gift is democratic and educational in the true meaning of those words, and special privileges are forbidden” (Barnes Foundation, 1922).

However, on the undemocratic side, Barnes was autocratic with the most important aspects of the Foundation, including its displays and access to them. According to the Trust, nothing from the collection should be loaned, sold, or moved on the walls and that it should remain exactly as it was in its original location. Barnes also prohibited any social events such as receptions, tea parties, dinners, banquets, dances, or musicals where the art would be displayed. His Trust stated that the Barnes Foundation should remain educational and that the collection should only be open to the public a few days a week (Barnes Foundation, 1922). Nevertheless, it appears that the strong democratic content of the Barnes museum occurred, not simply in spite of Barnes’s autocratic governance of the institution, but rather because of it. His personal democratic convictions drove his curation and display choices. While the Barnes Foundation was not a democratically organized institution in the Deweyan sense, it cannot be faulted for its democratic vision.

#### *Government Sponsorship: The Section of Fine Arts*

A second institution of democratic art that Dewey endorses is government sponsorship of the fine arts. In 1940, Dewey gave a short speech paying tribute to a depression-era project of the New Deal called “The Section of Fine Arts” which operated from 1934-1943. During this time, “The Section”, as it was called, commissioned thousands of art projects, including 1,116 murals and 301 sculptures for federal buildings across the country, mostly post offices and courthouses. The design of the Jefferson nickel, still in use today, came from this project. In his speech, Dewey made special reference to the murals produced by the program, and argued for The Section’s continued funding by the government. He states that its service to democracy was so important that “to starve it or allow it to lapse would be a defeat for democracy as genuine as one taking place on a physical battlefield” (Dewey 1940, p. 257). The key asset of the program, he argues, is that it brings art out from “museums

---

<sup>17</sup> The “Indenture of Trust” is contained in Article 9 of the “Barnes Foundation Bylaws” (Barnes Foundation, 1922).



to which they have retired” and makes them “a living part of the walk and conversation of the average man, and thereby parts of the legitimate heritage of a democratic people” (Ibid.). European countries, he says, advanced art through patronage of the nobility and the wealthy, whereas its development in the U.S. “will depend upon the active response of the civic consciousness of the common people” (Ibid.).

Regarding the democratic content of the art produced by The Section, the mural program in particular was devised precisely to that end. The artists were encouraged to create paintings that showed real situations that people could recognize, and to focus on topics specific to their region. Subjects included activities of laborers, such as farmers, miners and mill workers, and the individuals depicted were sometimes diverse, including blacks and native Americans. Paintings were done in a social realism style modeled after Mexican murals of the time that dealt with social issues. They typically did not depict scenes of social oppression, as did their Mexican counterparts, but rather presented the working figures heroically. But some works did stir controversy, such as Anton Refregier’s Rincon Center murals in San Francisco, which presents key events in California’s history. One of these pertains to the “The Sand Lot Riots of 1870” which portrays a Chinese man on the ground with a white man grabbing his hair and preparing to beat him with a stick. The historical context was a clash during a labor dispute between Irish and immigrant Chinese laborers. One democratic component to the mural consists of the simple fact that it openly acknowledges a historical event involving bigotry and brutality towards an ethnic group. Even today the mural can be seen as a call for open dialogue, empathy, and reconciliation among different groups in society.

Regarding the democratic process of selection, The Section made efforts to do this. The Section would appoint a regional competition chairman for a federal building that was to receive artwork. This chairman would then put together a jury and make announcements to local artists. The Section’s Bulletin, which had over 8,500 artist readers by 1941, also promoted the competitions. Artists would anonymously submit their sketches for evaluation at the regional level before being presented to the Section for final selection. Under this system, even runners-up could be eligible for commissions. This system allowed for new artists, yet maintained quality control (Smith, 1999, p. 7). However, many skilled artists decided not to take part in the competition because they felt that the time it took to submit their work was not worth the small chance of winning the commission. Ultimately, only around 200 of the 1,300

commissions were awarded through such competition, and the majority were chosen directly by the official staff of the Section (Kalfatovic, 1994, p. xxvii). It seems that the ideal of democratic participation was subordinated by the practical realities of getting the job done. The original process of selection, though, remains a valid democratic model for other art commissions, especially those done on a national scale.

In short, both of Dewey's examples of institutions of democratic art are successful ones. Whatever democratic weaknesses they had were largely at the second level of their organizational structure and policies, which in some sense serve as case studies. The democratic challenge of the Barnes Foundation resulted from the uncompromising drive of its charismatic founder. On a smaller scale, we can also see this in the case of the Discovery Park discussed earlier, where its controversial bronze statues were commissioned exclusively by its founder. The democratic challenge of The Section was largely a practical or logistical one, and occurred when a selection process through fair competition alone became impractical.

## **INSTITUTIONS OF DEMOCRATIC PUBLIC ART**

In recent decades the notion of "public art" has come to prominence. If we are to expand beyond Dewey's two examples of institutions of democratic art, we must do so in the context of public art, as several Dewey scholars have already done. Public art is sometimes contrasted with the concept of "art in public places." While there is no uniform definition of "public art", for our purposes the important element is that it emphasizes the social character of the art object beyond its solely aesthetic nature. Public art often aims to engage the community by provoking thought or creating dialogue. Sometimes the subject involves the cultural identity of the site-specific location of the art object, such as a monument on a battlefield. Other times it may be about a broader social issue that would be relevant in any location. An example of this would be Stanley Watts's statue of George Floyd in Newark, New Jersey, located over 1,000 miles away from where Floyd died. The statue symbolizes the values of social justice and equality under the law, which are pertinent everywhere. Public art, then, carries a social message. By contrast, art in public places is a much broader concept and means exactly what it says: an artwork is on display in a manner that is visible and physically accessible to the general public. This includes public art, but it also includes art objects that do not necessarily carry a social message, at least in the eye of the

average spectator. Examples might be abstract sculptures such as the Cloud Gate in Chicago, or Urban Light in Los Angeles. Our concern here is with public art and its democratic character, rather than mere art in public places.

Our previous evaluation of the Barnes Foundation and The Section was based on two criteria of institutions of democratic art, that is, whether, first, the institution curates works with some democratic social message, and, second, the institution itself is democratically organized. Recent philosophical discussions of public art focus more on the social content of the artwork than on the democratic manner of commissioning the piece. The following Deweyan analysis of institutions of democratic public art similarly focuses on just the democratic content, not on its democratic institutional structure.<sup>18</sup>

Much public art is institutional, but it does not need to be. If I place a statue of the Buddha in my front yard, it both carries a social message and is visible to the public. So too with a small business that has a mural of regional landmarks in its lobby. But since so much public art is commissioned by public institutions, it makes it an appropriate subject of our inquiry. Our focus here is on a subset of public art that we may call “democratic public art”, which carries a uniquely democratic social message, emphasizing values such as diversity, tolerance, freedom, oppression, and equality before the law. The most Deweyan aspect of much democratic public art is that we confront it in our ordinary lives. A mural in a post office becomes part of the experience of dropping off packages to mail. We functionally view the post office mural in much the way that the Athenians viewed the Parthenon’s friezes of the gods.

An important question about democratic public art discussed by scholars is how disruptive it must be to bring about change. Diana Boros suggests that it does not need to be too abrasive. She calls this “visionary public art”, which is in contrast to “mainstream” public art. Visionary art, she argues, aims to be socially transformative and “is needed to seek out and materialize alternate possibilities for our individual lives, for our societies, and for the political systems by which they abide” (Boros, 2012 p. 7). On her account, visionary public art has the potential to bring about change in a non-threatening way by capturing our imagination. By

---

<sup>18</sup> It is noteworthy that non-philosophical discussions of public art might emphasize the public nature of the commissioning process. An example is the non-profit organization Project for Public Spaces. Their conception of “public art” consists of these three features: (1) It is commissioned by a very public process, (2) Public money funds the creation of the art piece, and (3) It is associated with a sense of longevity (Project for Public Spaces, 2010).

presenting alternative perspectives, it encourages us to reflect on our own beliefs without feeling attacked or challenged directly. This, she says, can lead to dialogue and a gradual shift in attitudes.

Kalle Puolakka also takes a comparatively gentle approach to social change through public art. Drawing specifically on Dewey, he develops a pragmatist conception of public art where “the best cases of public art turn out to have high social significance, for they are means of promoting the sense of community, which Dewey saw as foundational for well-functioning democracies” (Puolakka, 2016, p. 371). According to Puolakka, the role that pragmatism assigns to democratic public art involves creating cohesion, resolving conflicts, and untangling opposing viewpoints. The example he gives is John Adams's *On the Transmigration of Souls* for orchestra and choir, composed to honor the victims of 9/11. This piece, he argues, generates the kind of “communal experiences that have a fundamental role in Dewey's theory of democracy” (Ibid). He concedes, though, that the pragmatic aim of social cohesion may not be the best way of addressing some social objectives. There are instances where deliberately evoking public reactions is necessary, and the pragmatic framework alone does not achieve this (Ibid. p. 380). Refregier's mural “The Sand Lot Riots of 1870” is a disturbing example of this. A less disturbing but equally poignant example of a confrontational public art piece is “The Fearless Girl”, a bronze statue on Wall Street of a defiant young girl with her hands on her hips staring down the iconic Wall Street bull across the street. The social message here is the need for greater gender diversity in leadership roles. The Deweyan component is that the public location of the work transforms the pedestrian's experience of Wall Street, with a reminder of the need for greater gender representation in corporate America. Again, the pedestrian experiences this artwork much like the Athenians did the Parthenon.

Also drawing on Dewey, Mark Mattern offers a more radical approach to democratic public art that may be disruptive to the viewer. He argues that Dewey's emphasis on the socially cohesive aspects of public art essentially “erased conflict, negotiation, and contestation from art” (Mattern, 1999 p. 54). However, he says, “if we broaden the meaning of art to include these [more confrontational] forms of popular art, then art is potentially better able to play the communicative roles that Dewey envisioned” (Ibid. p. 55). Protest music, guerrilla theater, and billboard art are examples of how art can be used as a form of political action. Through these mediums, artists often criticize the injustices faced by certain individuals and groups, while highlighting alternative visions of a better society. They express their opposition to

the exploitation and oppression carried out by those in power, emphasizing the distinction between what they perceive as right and wrong. These confrontational actions aim to gain support and sympathy for the cause they advocate, rather than create dialogue or collaboration. Success in these endeavors relies on mobilizing community resources, exerting pressure on government and corporate officials, and leveraging media and public sentiment. (Ibid. p. 71).

Boros, Puolakka, and Mattern present different perspectives on the level of social confrontation that public art can engage in. But their viewpoints are not mutually exclusive, and they all are consistent with Dewey's vision of democracy and the role of public art in advancing it. I suggest that, to integrate these points in a Deweyan way, institutions seeking to promote democratic public art require three key commitments. First is a commitment to utilizing art as a means to bring about social transformation and cohesion, recognizing its potential to provoke new ideas and promote a sense of community. For example, an art institution dedicated to democratic art might actively seek out artworks that address pressing social issues, such as racial inequality or environmental degradation, aiming to spark conversations and encourage reflection. Second is the courage to embrace controversial works that challenge the status quo, acknowledging the importance of dissent and critical dialogue in a democratic society. Thus, an art institution might support artists who push boundaries and challenge established norms, even if their works generate controversy or discomfort. Third is the establishment of platforms and spaces that ensure the visibility of public art to the general public, enabling broader engagement and dissemination of multiple perspectives. To accomplish this, an art institution might make public art accessible through outdoor exhibitions, community installations, or digital platforms, ensuring that a wide spectrum of viewers have the opportunity to encounter the artwork.

The integration of art in society can be achieved through both governmental and non-governmental organizations that have a public interface suitable for art exhibitions. Traditional venues include architecture, murals, concerts, and galleries, which have long served as platforms for artistic expression. For instance, a government agency responsible for cultural matters can collaborate with local artists and architects to incorporate public art into urban spaces, enhancing aesthetic experiences and creating a sense of community. Non-governmental organizations focused on social issues may use art installations and murals to raise awareness and stimulate dialogue around especially popular topics such as human rights or

environmental conservation. One such non-governmental art institution is the Los Angeles-based organization Billboard Creative which leases unused billboards at busy intersections to display works by both established and up and coming artists.

Beyond these traditional art venues, the internet has created an unprecedented opportunity for the widespread dissemination of different artistic ideas and perspectives, reaching audiences on a global scale. The internet enables artists to share their works through online galleries, social media platforms, and virtual exhibitions, ensuring exposure to a broad audience regardless of geographical boundaries. Through either traditional or digital public spaces, institutions can create an environment where democratic art thrives, creating social transformation, facilitating dialogue, and promoting a more inclusive and engaged democracy. Dewey argued that the fine arts have had significantly more impact on society than all philosophical books on morals combined (AE 345). By harnessing different platforms and engaging both traditional and digital avenues, institutions can use the power of art to engage communities and advance democratic ideals.

### Sources

- Alexander, Thomas M. *John Dewey's Theory of Art, Experience and Nature: The Horizons of Feeling*. (State University of New York Press, 1987).
- Alexander, Thomas M. "Dewey's Philosophy of Art and Aesthetic Experience." *Artizein: Arts and Teaching Journal*. 2016, Vol. 2, Iss. 1, Art. 9. Pp. 59-67.
- Ames, Van Meter. "John Dewey as Aesthetician." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*. December 1953, Vol. 12, No. 2, pp. 145-168.
- Anderson, Elizabeth. "The Epistemology of Democracy." *Episteme: A Journal of Social Epistemology*. Volume 3, Issue 1-2, 2006, pp. 8-22.
- Barnes Foundation. "By-laws of the Barnes Foundation," 1922.  
[web.archive.org/web/20031215144820/http://www.barneswatch.org/main\\_bylaws.html](http://www.barneswatch.org/main_bylaws.html)
- Barnes Foundation. "About the Barnes Foundation". 2023 retrieved.  
<https://www.barnesfoundation.org/press/press-releases/about-the-barnes-foundation>
- Beardsley, Monroe. "Aesthetic Experience Regained." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Autumn 1969, Vol. 28, No. 1, pp. 3-11.
- Boros, Diana. *Creative Rebellion for the Twenty-First Century: The Importance of Public and Interactive Art to Political Life in America*. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).
- Burnett, Joe R. "The Relation of Dewey's Aesthetics to His Overall Philosophy." *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*. Autumn 1989, Vol. 23, No. 3, pp. 51-54.
- Dewey, John. *Democracy and Education*. Macmillan, 1916. In *The Middle Works of John Dewey*, vol. 9, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University

Press, 1980). Abbreviated DE.

Dewey, John. *The Public and its Problems* 1927. Holt. In *The Later Works of John Dewey*, vol. 2, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1984). Abbreviated PP.

Dewey, John. *Art as Experience*. Capricorn Books. 1934. In *The Later Works of John Dewey*, vol. 10, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1989).

Abbreviated AE.

Dewey, John. "Foreword" to *The Art of Renoir*. Barnes Foundation, 1935. In *The Later Works of John Dewey*, vol. 11, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987).

Dewey, John. "Art as Our Heritage," 1940. In *The Later Works of John Dewey*, vol. 14, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988).

Dewey, John. "Aesthetic Experience as a Primary Phase and as an Artistic Development." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*. Sep., 1950, Vol. 9, No. 1 (Sep., 1950), pp. 56-58. In *The Later Works of John Dewey*, vol. 16, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988).

Dewey, John. "Revised Introduction Draft to Experience and Nature", 1951. In *The Later Works of John Dewey*, vol. 1, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008). 361-364.

Fisher, John. "Some Remarks on What Happened to John Dewey." *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*. Autumn, 1989, Vol. 23, No. 3, pp. 54-60.

Geiger, Raymond George. "Dewey's Social and Political Philosophy." *The Philosophy of John Dewey*. Edited by Paul Arthur Schilpp. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1939).

Glass, Newman Robert. "Theory and Practice in the Experience of Art: John Dewey



and the Barnes Foundation." *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*. Autumn, 1997, Vol. 31, No. 3, pp. 91-105.

Goldblatt, Patricia. "How John Dewey's Theories Underpin Art and Art Education." *Education and Culture*. 2006, Vol. 22, No. 1, pp. 17-34.

Granger, David A. *John Dewey, Albert Barnes, and the Continuity of Art and Life: Revisioning the Arts and Education*. (New York City: Peter Lang, 2023).

Haskins, Casey. "Dewey's Art as Experience: The Tension between Aesthetics and Aestheticism." *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*. Spring, 1992, Vol. 28, No. 2, pp. 217-259.

Isenberg, Arnold. "Analytical Philosophy and the Study of Art." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 1987, Vol. 46.

Jay, Martin. "Somaesthetics and Democracy: Dewey and Contemporary Body Art." *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*. Winter 2002, Vol. 36, No. 4, pp. 55-69.

Kalfatovic, Martin R. *The New Deal Fine Arts Projects: A Bibliography, 1933-1992*. (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, Inc. 1994).

Kuspit, Donald B. "Dewey's Critique of Art for Art's Sake." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*. Autumn 1968, Vol. 27, No. 1, pp. 93-98.

Mattern, Mark. "John Dewey, Art and Public Life." *The Journal of Politics*. February 1999, Vol. 61, No. 1, pp. 54-75.

Musial, Thomas J. "Aesthetics and Pragmatism: John Dewey's Art as Experience." *Notre Dame English Journal*. Winter 1967/1968, Vol. 3, No. 1, pp. 7-13.

Peppers, Stephen C. "Questions on Dewey's Esthetics." *The Philosophy of John Dewey*. Edited by Paul Arthur Schilpp. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1939).

- Prall, D. W. "Review Art as Experience by John Dewey." *The Philosophical Review*. Vol. 44, No. 4 (Jul., 1935), pp. 388-390.
- Project for Public Spaces. "Public Art: An Introduction." 2010.  
<https://www.pps.org/article/pubart-intro>
- Puolakka, Kalle. 2016. "Public Art and Dewey's Democratic Experience: The Case of John Adams's On the Transmigration of Souls." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*. Fall 2016, Vol. 74, No. 4, pp. 371-381.
- Romanell, Patrick. "A Comment on Croce's and Dewey's Aesthetics." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*. December 1949, Vol. 8, No. 2, pp. 125-128.
- Shusterman, Richard. "Dewey's Art as Experience: The Psychological Background." *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*. Spring 2010, Vol. 44, No. 1, pp. 26-43.
- Shusterman, Richard. "Why Dewey Now?" *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*. Autumn, 1989, Vol. 23, No. 3, 1989, pp. 60-67.
- Smith, Sandra Taylor; Christ, Mark K. *Arkansas Post Offices and the Treasury Department's Section Art Program, 1938-1942*. (Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, 1999).
- Stroud, Scott R. "The Art of Experience: Dewey on the Aesthetic," *Practicing Pragmatist Aesthetics: Critical Perspectives on the Arts*. Wojciech Malecki (ed.). (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2014. 33-46).
- Westbrook, Robert B. *John Dewey and American Democracy*. (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1991).