Awakening the aesthetic sense, not ‘teaching’ art

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Reaching out to a diversity of socio-cultural contexts and specificities: 2.1 Global citizenship, cultural identities and arts education
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The biggest concern about the main stream education is that it kills creativity. The frenzy with which ‘art’ is being introduced seems like an attempt to counter these damages. But ‘schooling’ not only kills creativity, it also kills authenticity, cultural diversity and aesthetic sensibility. Probably ‘teaching’ per se could be the cause irrespective of the subject being taught. What has been the impact of teaching art, architecture and design at the graduate levels should also be looked at. The visual experience of modern spaces all over the world is beginning to look alike - Architecture, signage, colour sense. About a century ago we had diverse cultures with distinct way of life and aesthetic sensibilities that created contextually rooted architecture and artifacts. The present education has created total homogenization all over the world. The design and architectural education can be blamed as one of the most destructive agent for destroying diversity. Courses taken from the experience of western culture - Bauhaus, Ulm being the foundation of design education all over the world has homogenized all cultures. This is true of art and architectural education too. The real issue is to understand how to retain the cultural diversity because culture is the direct out come of the authentic aesthetic sensibility. If only art education is used for awakening the aesthetic sensibility by connecting the learner to their real life contexts, instead of becoming top down and information oriented, do have the potential of making children rooted to their cultures. Every generation needs to relive, relearn, recreate and reinvent certain aspects of its cultural sensibilities by engaging with the reality around them. Senses are our doors to the outer the inner world. As it engages with the world outside it draws out the inherent aesthetic sensibility which is natural and biologically wired phenomenon in all human beings. Sensing Nature; Knowing Nature is a workshop we have been conducting from 2003 at Aruvacode, Nilambur (India) during the summer holidays – April and May. The fundamental issues we raise through this event is the 'nature of
learning, biologically embedded aesthetic sense in children, role of the 'teacher' etc. It looks like that we are already born with aesthetic sense. The workshop on sensing nature is for providing space to come together to listen, to see, to taste, to touch, feel, to make etc. There is no teaching. (http://my.opera.com/jinankb/blog/) Development of aesthetic sense which is the basis for all art forms seems to me the most important aspect to be explored as this would equip the student to pursue any art form at any time depending on the individual's interest and opportunities that might prop up. Rather than teaching skills to sing, paint, draw etc this would make a qualitative and an attitudinal change. Teaching is not called for but by providing an environment that would allow the natural in us to come forth. This would require sensitivity, trust and indeed careful planning for the unplanned to happen.

References
The paper is based on my research and the following researchers have also come to similar conclusions regarding the biological foundations of aesthetic sense. Semir Zeki, professor of Neuroesthetics at University College London. Ellen Dissanayake, Affiliate Professor, School of Music, University of Washington Vilayanur Ramachandran Director of the Center for Brain and Cognition, Professor in the Psychology Department and Neurosciences Program at the University of California, San Diego, and Adjunct Professor of Biology at the Salk Institute for Biological Studies.