

Teaching International Students/ Teaching Abroad Kimberly Asbury (Botswana 1998)

Biography

Kimberly Kersey Asbury is a painter who works in mixed media and is Assistant Professor of Fine Arts at Saint Anselm College where she teaches Visual Communication, Drawing, Painting, Mixed Media as well as the 1st Year Humanities Seminar. Past teaching experience has included Boston University, University of Missouri-Columbia, and the New Hampshire Institute of Politics Civic Leadership Academy.

Asbury received her BFA in Painting from the Kansas City Art Institute, attended the Graduate Program at Saint John's College Great Books Program, and graduated with an MFA in Painting from Boston University having studied with Alfred Leslie, John Moore and John Walker. Artist residencies have included the Vermont Studio Center with Bernard Chaet and a Fulbright Fellowship to Botswana. She has exhibited in the U.S., Morocco and Botswana.

Background

This past summer I was asked to teach a seminar entitled *Art as Civic Leadership* for high school students at the New Hampshire Institute of Politics and to participate in a faculty seminar entitled *Liberty & Education*. In preparation for these seminars I was introduced to the works of Freire, Dewey, de Tocqueville, thus bringing into question assumptions about the roles of *Art, Education, Leadership* and *Liberty* I had taken for granted.

I took a second look at the art and writing of Ben Shahn, Ed & Nancy Keinholz and other socially-conscious artists I had been told to shy away from as a young art student. With beginnings as an AP high school student, passionate about politics and changing the world, I lost that drive as I failed to connect the solemn activities of the studio with the act of someone capable of making a significant difference in society. By the time I made it to graduate school my art embodied this frustration and loss of efficacy.

It was later a Fulbright grant that would unexpectedly provide me a way out. The independent research project evolved from painting in isolation in Makgadikgadi Salt Pans to transferring my energies to a group of eager senior secondary school students. Their hard work culminated in an exhibit at the National Museum of Botswana where several of the students sold their work and started their careers as artists and are still working now. I am amazed that I nearly chose to paint alone for 9 months rather than share my skills with these kids.

Discussions Questions

- 1) Is "art for art sake" is a political position? Is it possible to create work that is detached from social values and political concern or - are social and political necessity inherent in all art?
- 2) Can artists help society visualize new ways of resolving conflict?
- 3) What are our roles and responsibilities as artists and educators?*
- 4) Can art or art education be a vehicle of social change?*
- 5) How can we model and teach social responsibility?* (and should we?) *

*questions of preference/priority