

THE JOURNAL
OF INCLUSIVE SCHOLARSHIP
AND PEDAGOGY

transformations

VOL. XV NO. 2

TEACHING
PEACE

BEAUTY FOR ASHES

When I stood on top of the Morgan Building in downtown Jersey City watching the towers go down, I had a flashback to Picasso's *Guernica*, which depicts the struggle of a village in northern Spain in 1937. This masterpiece became one of the most powerful visual symbols of the last century: war once again; humanity's never-ending struggle to find heaven on earth.

An art viewer cannot walk away from a work the same way he approached it; if that happens, the mission of the artist remains unfulfilled. Independent of the medium, the artist uses painting, drawing, sculpting, or video installation to invite viewers to interrogate their souls; to search within for an honest look at humanity: questioning, challenging, and inspiring transformation.

Beauty for Ashes was born of the affliction we have inherited as a result of globalization. Different worlds coming together: power, money, greed, and the struggle to find a common ground. In this millennium, we have an uncomfortable confluence of languages, cultures, religions, and agendas that humanity finds itself striving against. As people face the Other, they face themselves.

Beauty for Ashes recognizes the potential for change at the crossroads of life, captured in a delicate moment. This painting portrays pain, death, and despair. Why are we always waging wars? Are we deceitful by nature? Are we good or are we just a bit temperamental? Questions are an essential part of the creative process, particularly in the classroom. I use questions to push my students to reflect, search deeply, and mature their message until it becomes a solid piece of art.

Jersey City, where I am director of the Hope Center Arts Academy, is one of the most populated and ethnically diverse cities in New Jersey. We have seen the city cry out; the expression of urban talent strives to find its own identity in a place where too many live in cultural poverty. The inner city feels chaotic; like a volcano waiting to erupt, its energy must be directed to become a wellspring of talent. The Academy provides fine arts training in the disciplines of dance, music, and visual art to impact the lives of young people and their families, many of whom experience some degree of cultural displacement as the city morphs. To that end, the Academy is eager to identify students who have talent but have never been nurtured. Identification is one thing, but nurturing or, more specifically, disciplining God-given talent is the real challenge.

DUDA PENTEADO



Duda Penteado is an international fine artist and director of the Hope Center Arts Academy in Jersey City. In 2003 he received the Key to the City of Jersey City for his work with children and charities. In 2005 his "Beauty for Ashes" installation will be exhibited in New York, Washington, D.C., and at the Venice Biennale.