

**Focus on Administration:**

# The Aesthetics of Summer Session Administration<sup>1</sup>

**David Schejbal**  
*Northwestern University*  
**Russell McIntire**  
*Vanderbilt University*  
**Victor N. Kobayashi**  
*University of Hawai'i at Manoa*  
**& William Murphy**  
*University of Chicago*

As each one of us executes his or her everyday administrative duties, we tend to focus on the pragmatic aspects of our work. We are primarily concerned to get a job done, and we tend to lose sight of the enterprise as a whole. In the following paper we want to examine the *process* of summer session administration, rather than the actual tasks that we perform or the results that we achieve. We examine the process from an aesthetic perspective, not only because it is a relatively uncommon approach, but because the recognition of the aesthetic components of our jobs can help us see more clearly what we do, and thus elevate the mundane to a higher level.

This paper consists of three, interrelated but individual sections. They are interrelated in that the first is in many aspects introductory, the second develops an approach and an outlook, and the third makes the

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approach more concrete and clear. The sections are independent, however, because each forms a separate snapshot or image of the aesthetics of summer session administration. The central theme connecting the tree sections of the paper is the dichotomy between the pragmatic and the aesthetic. The pragmatic aspects of a practice are independent of the aesthetic ones in that they serve different functions, yet they can be the same practices. Just as a painting can serve the pragmatic function of covering spots on a wall, it can also bring the viewer to appreciate the beauty of the work itself. It is this *appreciation* that will be our focus.

Virtually any practice can have aesthetic components. It is not just traditional works of art that can qualify as beautiful. The elements of simplicity, elegance, unity, complexity, and intensity can permeate virtually any practice, and the recognition of those components can help us appreciate the beauty of the enterprise. It is not the end result that generally matters, but the *way of doing*; the *process* as it takes place, and the style in that process.

### Section 1

Consider two theatrical productions: a major Broadway musical and a small, student-run campus play. The former has full orchestra, choreographer, massive advertising campaign, full stage crew, the latest in hydraulic scene changes, elaborate lighting, a cast of thousands, and plays to packed houses in a massive theatre. The latter does not. It is presented in a refurbished, tiny former gymnasium; the actors change in the rest rooms; the seats are eclectic, having been collected from various closed cinemas; the lights are third-hand, the players enthusiastic, and the small audiences appreciative. What could they possibly have in common? The essence of both involves at least these elements: actors, audience, patrons, and a director. Each is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition of the work of art—the evening in the theatre.

Now consider summer session as a play. The actors are the faculty. There are prima donnas, understudies, supporting players, bit players, young, eager upstarts, and old gray-beards well past their prime. They bring different gifts and experiences to their roles. The script sets some parameters; but within those restrictions there is latitude for each to express individual strengths and betray fatal weaknesses. They often must be pampered, cajoled, bribed, stroked. Some even take direction; others eschew even the appearance of listening to post-rehearsal notes—*if* they show up for rehearsals at all. Almost everyone is there when the curtain goes up, and you can count on each one being in place for the curtain call.

The audience is the reason for the production—to see and hear and experience the performances; to be engaged, entertained, inspired, taught, reminded, manipulated, induced by the gifts of the writers, actors, musicians, costumers, make-up artists, scene designers, et al. They either sit receptively absorbing the story and the feast of images and ideas played out before them, or they lean forward expectantly as if to intercept the sounds and sights in mid-flight, shaping and reshaping them for their own purposes, filing them away for future scrutiny, filtering out the trivial, trying to comprehend the serious, demanding the best from the playwright, the performers, the supporting staff. Some sit on the back row making out or reading a newspaper. Some are no-shows. A few demand their money back. But, more often than not, something is learned, some ideas are stimulated, some challenged, some emotions experienced, even some lives changed—somewhat.

The patrons are on the front row—physically if not mentally. They expect these seats because “they” make this possible. These benefactors are the sine qua non of the whole deal and are ignored at one’s own peril. We must admit, even if begrudgingly, that they play a central role. Without them the space would not be available, the up-front backing would not be in place, the “money-begetting-money” factor would be missing; their love of culture, as well as the appearance of the love of culture, would have no visible confirmation were they not listed prominently in the program and in front, on display opening night. The patrons often double as critics.

The director paces. This is the person held accountable. In the large professional venue, there are layers of underlings with various specialized responsibilities, each to be held to the mark for that area—lighting, sound, ticket sales, marketing, casting, entertaining the mug-a-wugs. However, at the first malfunction, the director is ultimately responsible. The muck stops here. The evening is under the director’s care come rain or come shine. The heads of the lieutenants may role in the morning, but the Director put them in their positions and is ultimately the hero or the goat.

But in the smaller setting, the director was up until 2 a.m. helping finish the scenery, was at the theatre early afternoon making last minute adjustments to tickets and seating, even selling tickets at the door, hustling actors into their places, nurturing, supporting, threatening, exploding, flirting with a well-deserved coronary even as the lights are dimmed—by the director’s own tremulous finger. Here, the Director is really the one to blame. When something works, the response is more often than not “Weren’t the actors brilliant?” When it doesn’t work, especially in the eyes of the patrons, “The director’s a real idiot!”

Of course, our summer play is somewhat more improvisational.

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Actors are given considerable leeway to do their own things. The campus is only figuratively in one house and each of the instructor's lecterns is only a part of a merely virtual stage. And the audience can attend to only parts of the production; no one ever sees the whole thing or fully appreciates the work necessary to pull it all off. But, no matter the size of the house or the audience or the budget, the artist responsible for the experience is the director.

R.G. Collingwood has offered an aesthetic theory with intriguing suggestions for classifying an object as a work of art and evaluating it which is closely tied to his theory of the process of creating art.<sup>2</sup> Collingwood's thesis is that art proper is best understood as imaginative expression since there is "an essential connection between art and the expression of emotion."<sup>3</sup> At the heart of his theory is a distinction between craft and art. While they can and certainly do overlap, his contention is that they are importantly distinct and separate enterprises. "A craft is an activity in which some raw material is transformed by a learnable skill into a preconceived product."<sup>4</sup> There are clearly specifiable ends which are achieved by learnable, discernible means. To make a younger actor look old, costumes, wigs, make-up, modified posture, slower, smaller movements are some of the means to achieve that end. We certainly say there is an "art" to this process, but by doing so we are really referring to what he calls "magical" or "amusement."<sup>5</sup> He claims that "most of what generally goes by the name of art nowadays is not art at all, but amusement." Under this category he lists also religious and patriotic "art." He is careful not to belittle it or act as if it has no purpose. Rather, he wants to draw attention to the distinctive character of what Dickie calls for him "serious art"—the work produced when deeply felt emotions are given imaginative expression in an artifact offered as something important, valuable in itself, intended as an artist's deepest feelings for others to appreciate as just that.

Of course, given the core of emotion at the heart of all human experience, it should not surprise that others respond in a variety of ways; but the responses are not manipulated, the experience is not contrived in the sense that the outcome was planned and the procedures all pointed to just that outcome. What emerges is who the artist is and what the artist expresses. The artist's imagination and creativity can be appreciated by different audiences in many different ways. To want to arouse a particular emotion is back at the level of craft. The artist even discovers the emotion being created in the act of creating itself. There is a dialectical interplay between the artist and the work. And there are critical moments in the creative process when the artist stops and lets the work speak. Attending carefully to the work in process requires the

ability to listen and to learn by seeing with fresh eyes. There are times along the way in this creative process where the director might say after giving notes, “I didn’t know I had such strong feelings about this until I started explaining it to the cast.” From this tending and discovering, the art emerges. Impeccable craftsmanship is required. In many important respects the work stands or falls on elements Collingwood might call craft. So crafting well is crucial and is not to be overlooked. But going well beyond filling in the numbers and staying within the lines is required to make art.

Another aesthete, Monroe Beardsley, gives a more canonical theory about what constitutes art.<sup>6</sup> He suggests three criteria that help us identify an artifact as a work of art and also offer general standards for evaluating it. Works of art have in common varying degrees of intensity, unity, and complexity.<sup>7</sup> Not all works necessarily have an abundance of all three. But, all good works of art will have all three to some extent, and great works of art will have an apparent abundance of all three. Intensity heads a cluster of concepts which include vitality, forcefulness, vividness, tenderness, irony, tragedy, gracefulness, delicacy, the richly comic, etc. Unity suggests well-organized, coherent to an unusual degree, perfect (meaning complete), a strong sense of inner logic of structure, style. Complexity suggests rich in contrasts, variety, subtle and not-so-subtle shifts, imaginative shocks and surprises. These elements demand and hold the attention of the audience/observer. They suggest a way of describing the particularly valuable work when trying to comprehend why it is so valuable, so moving, so meaningful. There are certainly sciences of producing thematic unity and surface contrast and tonal variation. But the artist uses those crafts without being restricted by them.

We direct summer session plays. In the busyness of painting scenery and counting ticket sales, we would do well to remember that we are not cranking out sausages. We are expressing who we are and why we are in this endeavor. We are affecting and sometimes even changing lives by what we do and how we do it. When we lose sight of the importance of what we are expressing, when we no longer feel it deeply, when we get sidetracked by how clever our craft is and we lose sight of the art behind and beyond it, we have done more than fail to create good theatre. We have wasted another summer.

## Section 2

It’s important to keep in mind that a university, and its summer session in particular, has a duty similar to that of an artist. As noted by Anne Waldman, who started the exciting summer program in honor of

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Jack Kerouac at Naropa Institute in Boulder Colorado: The artist's duty "...is to keep things lucid and vibrant and going on all sorts of fronts."

Creating art can be the work of an individual artist, but it can also be collaborative—like Mexican murals, where several artists work together, or linked poetry in China and Japan, or a team of people who write music and lyrics and orchestrate, or creating a film—which is often very collaborative. Jazz is a good example of a collaborative art that is also improvisational, as each musician elaborates on a theme, or even takes off from it, creating new variations and surprises, while keeping it, with the help of the other musicians, into some sort of whole. Even individual potters in a village are collaborative in that they inspire each other, work with each other in mining clay, firing kilns, and maintain a common tradition, while also innovating. Since we're dealing with administration and summer sessions, it's important to think in terms of a *collaborative* approach to art. We in the west are prone to think of art in highly individualistic terms: the artist as a lonely and solitary individual, set apart from other artists due to a special genius.

Collaborative approaches are similar to creating a conversation. It takes at least two persons to have a conversation. When we have a conversation with someone, it can become very deep, complex, and evolve into a work of art. As we look back later at the conversation we have an aesthetic response, and can even detect a pattern, a shape. However, we don't know the pattern or the "shape" while it is in the process of becoming. Yet, the result can have a shape or pattern that is aesthetically pleasing and satisfying, elegant, beautiful, and on reflection quite complex in that the pattern may also have within it patterns, and within these sub-patterns, and further layerings of patterns. In brief, the pattern itself may have meta-patterns.

The partners in conversation must have a willingness to dissolve their egos—at least temporarily—in the interest of the conversation or the jazz piece. At the same time, a good collaboration brings out the talents of the partners, and this means that both partners have learned to become skillful in their craft as listeners and speakers.

One of the characteristics of a good conversation (and also of the creative process) is that it is a stochastic process: there is an element of randomness in what happens or is encountered, and there is also an element in which certain random aspects are selected for survival.

We can set up conditions that might result in a good and beautiful conversation—such as ensuring that we don't get interrupted by a phone call or an intrusive waiter in a restaurant. However, there is no assurance that what results, even under the best pre-established conditions, will be aesthetically satisfying. This is partly because the decisions made

are in the process and the result of an ongoing process. It may also be that set-ups in themselves are manipulative, and manipulation (and control) is not conducive to the release of egos—the manipulative mind works against aesthetic quality.

The stochastic process is at work as we converse, and seemingly unrelated elements enter and take us into new areas of discussion. There are an infinity of elements out there in the environment, and there are an infinity of information bits floating about in our consciousness, and a few of these can arise to the surface, without our conscious control, and our ability to accept them and our agreement to select one or more as elements necessary for refreshment, creativity, and vitalization of our conversation, our artwork, is what contributes to the aesthetic value of the collaboration.

If a conversation between two persons is complex in itself, consider what was just said about doing theatrical productions—and then magnify this into multiple productions all going on at the same time. Running a summer session is like running the Metropolitan Opera. We have a busy season to plan and prepare for, and lots of negotiations, as well as divas.

Complexity has to do with multiple variables, and variables that are derivatives and meta-derivatives of variables. What do I mean by the latter? I mean that there are hierarchies of variable—first order, second order, third order, and so forth. For example, take the idea of “skill.” It isn’t a quality of a particular act, but a quality that emerges after multiple acts. A particular act that seems skillful may be attributed to “beginner’s luck” and not to “skill.” Skill thus is something that is a higher order “derivative”—meaning that if we would try to describe it mathematically, it would be like acceleration and its relationship to velocity. Qualities like “beauty,” “elegance” are probably higher order variables. (Something like “grace” is at the highest order, and takes on a quality of sacredness—it is here where aesthetics becomes close to religion.)

Complexity can also be regarded as keeping variables in some sort of balance. Financial viability is an important concern to summer session administrators, but it is only one variable, and the problem is how to optimize that variable rather than to maximize it. For instance, oxygen is one of the important things many organisms need in order to live, but too much oxygen can be lethal: the problem is not to maximize oxygen, but to find the right level required to live a healthy life within a particular context—optimization. An efficient freeway does not have the maximum of cars it can accommodate, but the optimum. Beyond the optimum, a freeway can take more cars, but traffic will slow down to a crawl. Making a summer session merely as profitable as it can be is to maximize profit, even at the expense of other important variables. Maximizing profit is of

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course a fancy way of saying “greed.”

Think therefore of summer session administration as having the executive function of keeping variables in proper balance. When the variables are in proper balance, we have something that approaches “aesthetic” quality.<sup>8</sup>

### **Section 3**

The two notions of “conversation” and “craft” discussed above can be linked through a methodology which focuses on the language used in conversations about the craft of summer session administration. Consider an example from an actual conversation. I once heard a summer session administrator refer to another as “Michaelangelo.” Calling someone the “Michaelangelo” of summer session administration draws attention to qualities of his administrative activity that transcend the utilitarian and functional. The analogy with Michaelangelo communicates that this other dimension is similar to qualities that we associate with art, namely, aesthetic qualities.

From this simple claim of calling an administrator “Michaelangelo” we can develop two interrelated arguments about the aesthetics of summer session administration. The first is a methodological one and can be summarized by a straightforward prescription: pay attention to the way we talk about what we do, and how our usage involves other kinds of language besides the practical language of means and ends. Our administrative culture prides itself on its instrumental rationality and its language of clear goals and effective means. Quite often, however, we use language—or even gestures—which convey a sense of the aesthetic dimension of our administrative activity. It might not be a language we tend to use with our deans, vice-presidents, and provosts when we are presenting our summer session results and reports. But it is a language that we do use in other contexts, often in less formal, less hierarchical contexts.

The second argument concerns the substantive content of aesthetics in university administration. It arises from the following question: how does the structure and function of summer session within a university organization shape the specific aesthetic qualities of summer session administrative activity? Let’s begin with the methodological argument.

Following the methodological prescription of attending to the way we talk about our administrative activity, consider a second example of using words with aesthetic connotations. I once heard another administrator mention learning the “craft” of summer session administration during his first job in a summer session. The word “craft” shares with the metaphor of Michaelangelo the notion of an aesthetic dimension in



human experience. They differ, however, in one important aspect. The name “Michaelangelo” evokes the domain of art, in the sense of objects that are displayed and appreciated solely for their aesthetic qualities. In contrast, the notion of “craft” combines the idea of usefulness with the idea of possessing aesthetic qualities. This combination of functional use and aesthetic value is characteristic of the classical Greek notion of the “arts” (*technai*) which includes all productive activity, whether constructing a building, making a chair, or even training horses (i.e., the art of horse-training)<sup>9</sup>. Any product constructed with excellence and skill—not just the privileged object of modern art museums—can be appreciated for its beauty. In modern usage, the notion of “craft” is closest to this classical Greek notion of “art.”

### 3.1

A craftsman—or craftswoman—exhibits skill and excellence in producing products or performances that combine usefulness with aesthetic value. In the craft of summer session administration, for example, what is produced—i.e., the special summer programs, the arrangements with faculty, the deals with deans, and the creative links with the community, etc.—can be appreciated for their style and design as well as their instrumental effectiveness. Admiring a well crafted summer program is not very different from admiring a well-crafted table by a master furniture maker.

Like all university administrators, however, the normal discourse of our profession emphasizes the means/ends rationality of our enterprise, i.e., whether the ends have been met and whether the means were effective for reaching those ends. We talk a lot about increasing summer enrollments and tuition revenues, recruiting new first-year students through our precollege programs, or augmenting the public image of our university through attractive promotional material, etc. Summer session deans and directors are busy people, running around accomplishing things, setting goals and devising means to realize those goals—and talking in ways that reflect the earnestness of these pursuits.

When the summer is over and all the revenues have been counted, talk focuses especially on the success or failure in reaching goals, and the reasons for this success or failure. Our annual reports illustrate this kind of discourse. They represent the rationality of our past actions as well as the rationality of our future goals.

Since the past is ambiguous, however, there is a lot of room for constructing our own versions of what happened and why. If our enrollments are up, we like to credit our ingenious marketing initiatives.

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If our enrollments are down, we blame the economy. We spend a lot of time making sense and giving concrete meaning to the means/ends rationality of our administrative lives. Some might say that we spend a lot of time making excuses. But excuses too are framed by the utilitarian logic of our activity. Excuses reveal the preoccupation with means/ends rationality in our job, and symbolize our control over summer session affairs by displaying recognition of events beyond rational control.

Despite all the hurly-burly of getting things done in summer session administration and all the earnest talk about these practicalities, we sometimes use a different kind of language. To borrow from T.S. Eliot, we also sip tea and talk of Michaelangelo. We tend to avoid this kind of language in many contexts, however, because it doesn't fit our professional image as rational decision-makers. When our vice-president or provost asks us how the summer session went, we do not say that it was "beautiful," "elegant," "radiant," and "enchanting," or, to use Russell McIntire's word, "tender," or one of Victor Kobayashi's favorite words, "graceful." Try it sometime. Next time central administration inquires how summer session went, say that it was filled with "tenderness" and "grace." The strangeness of using that word in such a context confirms the power of our administrative culture of means/ends rationality. It also confirms that we are not dumb enough to risk losing our job by talking about "tenderness" or "grace" when central administration expects us to talk about cost/revenue ratios.

Nevertheless, there are contexts when we do use such words. Annual conferences for summer session administrators, for example, are special occasions when free-wheeling talk about our profession produces a wide-ranging evaluative vocabulary, including such words as "Michaelangelo" and "craft." Conferences are sites of great volubility. Some conference moments stimulate special revelations and comments about the aesthetics of summer session administration. The Workshop for New Summer Session Administrators at North American Association of Summer Sessions (NAASS) conferences, for example, encourages talk that focuses on practicalities as well as the stylistics of the craft. In one workshop at the 1996 NAASS meeting I heard an administrator speak about the "beauties of summer session administration," a phrase which signaled an appreciation of the nonutilitarian aspects of administrative experience.

The most dramatic instance of this kind of appreciation expressed at conferences takes place during the award ceremonies. The "Creative and Innovative Awards" at NAASS conferences are a good example. The word "creative" itself connotes other dimensions beyond the utilitarian. The summer programs offered for evaluation are characterized by their imaginative response to educational opportunities or needs in the uni-

versity or community. Typically these programs are not “cash cows.” Instead of the criteria of making money, recognition is given to the creativity, style, and innovation in the way summer programs are designed, despite modest net revenues earned. The word “design” points to the special form of creativity involved: namely, sculpting diverse program elements into an imaginative structure—an aesthetics of program design.

One general implication of these different contexts and words of aesthetic appreciation—such as “creativity,” “beauty,” “craft,” and “Michaelangelo”—is that aesthetic appreciation is not limited to the special formal occasions and institutions we associate with aesthetics: namely, the concert halls, theatres, and museums. Aesthetic responses are also expressed on ordinary occasions and in everyday language through words that draw attention to qualities in human experience that transcend the utilitarian. This is a principle of analysis fundamental to the ordinary language philosophy of Wittgenstein. For him aesthetic analysis begins not with special words, like “beauty,” or special occasions like museum shows. Rather, it starts with any of the variety of occasions in which aesthetic appreciation is expressed. Accordingly, it can start with people talking about summer session administration, and using analogies from the art world.

Besides complete utterances like “that is beautiful,” aesthetic appreciation can be expressed through simple interjections or exclamations like “ah” or “wow,” or even without vocal sounds through gestures and body movement.<sup>10</sup> For example, a gesture, such as a shake of the head or a roll of the eyes, can serve to convey approval and appreciation for the artistry of some activity. Responses to the artistry of sport stars, like Michael Jordan, for example, often take the form of gestures and kinetics of appreciation. Likewise, a shake of the head around a conference table while an accomplished summer session dean is explaining one of his creative, intricate projects may convey a similar nonverbal message of appreciation.

All the various ways, verbal and nonverbal, of expressing appreciation for the artistry of summer session administration reveals a paradox of administrative life. On the one hand, summer session administrators pride themselves on the hard-headed practicality of reaching goals effectively and profitably. On the other hand, they probably take their greatest pleasure from the artistry and style sometimes achieved in designing and managing creative summer programs (including, of course, creativity in related program activities, such as marketing and university deal-making). Such artistry, style, and creativity, moreover, bestows on the experience of summer session administration a certain meaning-

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fulness and satisfaction transcending the practical functions of the experience.

### 3.2

Appreciating the design of creative summer programs points to a key aspect of aesthetics in summer session administration. Design involves the organization of disparate elements into a form that serves useful functions. A central aspect of aesthetic satisfaction thus involves the appreciation of the form rather than instrumental function. This form/function distinction provides a helpful starting point for a succinct definition of this aspect of aesthetics: aesthetics as “an appreciation of form.”

The usefulness of this distinction can be illustrated by considering another context in which the metaphor of “Michaelangelo” is used. Michael Jordan of the Chicago Bulls is often compared to Michaelangelo. This metaphor points to the artistry in the manner or form by which he achieves his products or outcomes, namely scoring baskets and winning games. Like summer session administrators, Michael Jordan is, of course, expected to be effective, to fulfill the clear instrumental goals of the organization to which he belongs. He is expected to score baskets and win games. But comparing Michael Jordan with Michaelangelo indicates a recognition of the beautiful form through which these goals are achieved. It is an appreciation of the artistry of the form rather than the mere utility of the end result or product. This form is illustrated by the Michael Jordan logo used by the Nike company. The artistry of his graceful movements is captured in an image of his bodily form leaping through the air at the moment before dunking a basket.

The metaphor of “Michaelangelo” applied to select individuals points to the common use of art metaphors to express appreciation for the form rather than the function of a product or performance, whether the everyday context is basketball or summer session administration. Interestingly, sports metaphors share with art metaphors this meaning of form over function. A good administrator is appreciated not just for points scored—“points” for summer session administration may be interpreted as revenues garnered—but for the form used in the process of scoring “revenues.”

Sports provide a good model for the relationship between form and function. With Michael Jordan, for example, the form of his playing serves the function of scoring baskets. Form follows function in basketball as well as architecture. The meaning of this aesthetic truism in the case of summer session can be understood by introducing a related question: if form follows function, what does function follow? A standard

sociological answer would begin by locating summer session within the institutional structure of the university. In this methodology, function follows institutional structure.

What is a fundamental structural feature of summer session in the university organization? One answer is expressed in the common characterization of summer session as the “invisible” part of the university. Summer session administrators historically have complained that they lead a unit of the university that is not well recognized or even noticed. It is invisible. This complaint is tempered by recognition that there are leadership opportunities provided by this “invisibility.” Invisibility allows summer session deans and directors to “lead from the margins” or to “lead from the periphery,” to use the common geographical metaphors of summer session leadership.

This structural position (and meaning in the organizational culture) of “invisibility” shapes how we go about our job as summer session directors. It shapes one of the main functions in the craft of summer session administration: namely, to make our work visible. This function, in turn, shapes the form of our administrative activities, and the artistry of that form. The way we become visible, our style of visibility, therefore, is an essential ingredient of the aesthetics of summer session administration.

This style of visibility can be exemplified by our summer session brochures. They are designed for functional purposes, namely, to attract students to our campus for the summer, and thereby raise summer tuition revenues. But the brochure has a symbolic purpose of displaying to central administration our competence and marketing know-how. The brochure thus becomes a symbolic statement of who we are and what our reputation should be. There is a degree of gamesmanship because its other symbolic purpose is to parade our glossy wares to other parts of the university that might be taking us for granted. These symbolic ambitions result in two audiences for our brochure: the students and their parents we are trying to attract, and the university administration we are trying to impress.

For these reasons of symbolism and status, summer session administrators are often obsessed with the aesthetic design of the brochure’s cover. Some of these obsessions, of course, have functional value in producing a brochure attractive to prospective students. But often the obsessions exceed any direct relation to the functional purpose of the brochure. In fact, some might argue, as Mel Bernstein did<sup>11</sup> that for the largest universities the glossy brochures have little effect on summer enrollments. Simply packaged information is all most students require. Nevertheless, by producing the prettiest, glossiest, and most creative brochure on campus, we meet the structural need of “visibility” within the university community. The artistry of summer session administra-

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tion is shaped by this task of becoming visible.

In light of our historical role as the invisible summer session, there is a certain irony to our contemporary methods of attempting to become visible, such as producing these “knock your socks off” brochures. In recent years we have become probably one of the most visible arms of the university. We have summer session ads in the local and national newspapers, announcements of our programs on city billboards, ads on subway trains, radio ads, mailings of thousands of glossy brochures, pretty flyers and posters. All this publicity for the university means that the “invisible summer session” has become one of the most visible parts of the university. We not only provide the university with an infusion of cash, we also provide a form of publicity and visibility that is essential to the university’s public relations with the wider community. From being the neglected step-child hidden away in the university basement, summer session has become Cinderella, the one daughter who attracts the most attention.

The above examples illustrate the link between the function of visibility and the form of our artistry. More generally, it shows the close relationship between making something visible and aesthetic appreciation—in sports as well as art. The artistry of sports requires making skill, talent, and excellence public, i.e., in a performance made visible to an audience of spectators. For example, classical Greek athletic competition, like the Olympics, rested on a fundamental belief that only through competition in a public arena did excellence and the essence of one’s skill become manifest. The Greek public sphere was the place for making performances and products available for recognition, scrutiny, appreciation, and judgment. Beauty and its appreciation implies an “open recognition that some things...are made to be seen.”<sup>12</sup>

Within the university organizational structure, summer session administration has historically had a special need for a public sphere of visibility. Fulfilling this need has shaped the artistry of what we do. Even the creation of national summer session organizations serves the function of visibility. Consider the reminiscences about the founding of NAASS from one of its first presidents, William C. Venman: “By establishing a national organization we felt that we were giving ourselves a kind of legitimacy and perhaps visibility at our home institutions.”<sup>13</sup> Visibility is important because it is a symbol of our legitimacy as a major player in the university game.

When one administrator described his membership on important university committees which affect summer session directly or indirectly, he described a strategy of visibility and a symbol of legitimacy. When he explained the intricate political permutations of his presence on

these committees and what it all means for the reputation and respect of summer session, listeners recognized a certain artistry to this strategy. When another talked about the “craft” of summer session administration, he implied that in our workshops we shape “organizational products”—e.g., managerial arrangements, deals, compromises, and publicity—that are meant to be seen and appreciated for their design as well as their function. For some, the best summer session administrators are “deal-makers.” If we could borrow a phrase from Donald Trump, our craft involves the “art of the deal” (and concomitant recognition within the university that we are skillful and collegial deal-makers).

Finally, when we refer to a summer session administrator as “Michaelangelo” we are also recognizing, among other things, the craft of visibility, a way of sculpting programs and projects that become the “public monuments” of summer session on campus. The art of summer session administration is making visible what was historically the “invisible summer session.”<sup>14</sup>

## Notes

1. This article was first presented at the 1996 meeting of the North American Association of University Summer Sessions. The order of authors reflects the order of presenters at the conference, and the individual sections in the article correspond to the authors as they are listed.
2. A helpful summary of, and my introduction to Collingwood’s aesthetic theory can be found in George Dickie’s *Aesthetics: An introduction*, 1971, Bobbs-Merrill, pp. 84-95. The primary text cited throughout Dickie’s discussion is R.G. Collingwood’s *The principles of art*, 1958, Oxford University Press.
3. Dickie, p. 84.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 85.
5. Collingwood, p. 78.
6. Beardsley, Monroe, On the generality of critical reason, *Journal of Philosophy*, 1962, pp. 477-486, and *Aesthetics*, 1958, Harcourt Brace.
7. From Beardsley, *Aesthetics*. Reprinted as Reasons in aesthetic judgements, in John Hospers, *Introductory readings in aesthetics*, 1969, Free Press, pp. 245-253.
8. My comments are greatly influenced by a friend and mentor, the late Gregory Bateson. See his many works, especially *Steps to an ecology of mind*, 1972, Ballantine.
9. Gadamer, Hans-Georg, *The engima of health*, 1996, Stanford University Press, p. 31.
10. Wittgenstein, Ludwig, *Lectures and conversations on aesthetics, psychology, and religious belief*, 1938, University of California Press, pp. 12-13.
11. See Abraham, Nancy, *NAASS: The first thirty years, 1964-93*, 1994, North American Association of Summer Sessions.

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12. Gadamer, Hans-Georg, *The relevance of the beautiful and other essays*, 1986, Cambridge University Press, p.14.
13. Abraham, p. 22.
14. The comments on summer session administration quoted in this paper are taken from persons who are current or retired deans/directors of summer sessions at the following universities: Les Coyne of Indiana University, Victor N. Kobayashi of the University of Hawai'i at Manoa, Gary Penders of the University of California at Berkeley, Russell McIntire of Vanderbilt University, Ronald Wasserstein of Washburn University, Melvin Berstein of the University of Maryland, and William C. Venman of the University of Massachusetts.

*David Schejbal is Associate Dean of Continuing Education and Director of Summer Session and Special Programs at Northwestern University. He may be contacted via e-mail at [schejbal@merle.acns.nwu.edu](mailto:schejbal@merle.acns.nwu.edu), or by post at 2115 North Campus Drive, Evanston, IL 60208. Russell McIntyre is Assistant Dean of the College of Arts and Science at Vanderbilt University. He may be contacted via e-mail at [mcintir@ctrvax.vanderbilt.edu](mailto:mcintir@ctrvax.vanderbilt.edu), or by post at Vanderbilt University, 311 Kirkland Hall, Nashville, TN 37240. Victor Kobayashi is Dean of Summer Sessions at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa. He may be contacted via e-mail at [vkobayashi@mail.summer.hawaii.edu](mailto:vkobayashi@mail.summer.hawaii.edu), or by post at 2500 Dole Street, P.O. box 11450, Honolulu, HI 96828-0450. William Murphy is Director of Summer Session at the University of Chicago. He may be contacted via e-mail at [wmurphy@midway.uchicago.edu](mailto:wmurphy@midway.uchicago.edu), or by post at 5835 S. Kimbark Avenue, Chicago, IL 60637.*