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Dedication: A Festschrift

VICTOR D'AMICO: HIS SOURCES AND INFLUENCES is written as a Festschrift in celebration of a life-long dedication to the creative education of teachers and "children of all ages" on the part of Victor and Mabel D'Amico, two of my most favorite people. I have written it, I must confess, mostly for my own pleasure--the pleasure of discovery and rememberance, but also, and equally, as a gift of celebration for the lives of Victor and Mabel. I hope they will enjoy reading this Master's thesis as much as I have enjoyed writing it.

Lois A. Berggren
Spring, 1984

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Victor E'Amico: His Sources and Influences

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Victor D'Amico ; His Sources and Influences.

Introduction.

My interest in writing about Victor D'Amico grows mainly out of the course in the History of Art Education which I took at Mass College of Art. That course awakened in me a sense of my own connectedness to the history of American Art Education; it led me to value the incredible luck which made me a high school art student of Mabel ~~Brikhead~~ BIECKHEAD D'Amico, the lifelong wife and helpmate extraordinaire of Victor E. D'Amico. I remember that as a teen-ager in Mabel's classes I was vaguely aware that Mrs. D'Amico's husband was "connected with the Museum of Modern Art in New York City in some way" and that "something happened at the Museum on Saturdays involving kids and art", but I had absolutely no notion of the impact of these early Saturday art lessons on Art Education in America. But then, how could I have known or even guessed how lucky I was? My home town, Rye, New York, was an affluent upper-middle-class suburb of New York City. The cultural events of New York were within easy access to all of us, and we mostly took it for granted that such marvellous opportunities as the Metropolitan Opera, first-run Broadway Shows, Major-League baseball teams, abundant and exquisite museums, foreign consulates, outstanding restaurants, elegant shops, and all kinds of concerts, both classical and jazz, the U. N., foreign movie theatres, important universities and schools, and well-known artists, actors and writers were virtually "our next-door neighbors". We enjoyed these privileges from the comfortable distance of quiet homes, green lawns, the swimming and boating opportunities which (an as yet unpolluted) Long Island Sound provided. Even though my own family was one of modest means, I was raised in the illusion of cushioned abundance, tempered with New England Protestant discipline, and a family tradition of community involvement.

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So, the easy knowledge and sweet memories of Mabel's classes followed me, half-forgotten for the next thirty-five years or so, in my travels through Eastern and Western Europe, North Africa and the Middle East to Cape Cod. Occasionally I would bump into D'Amico's ideas in unexpected ways. When I looked for a book to use to teach art to my own children, I went to the local bookstore and purchased D'Amico's Creative Teaching Through Art. The ideas seemed comfortable, sensible, and vaguely familiar. As I flipped through the pages, memories of Rye High School, and Mabel's gentle persuasions percolated up through the sediments of many travels and varied experiences of married life and child rearing in other cultures. I suppose that it was at this point that I made the connection between Victor's ideas and the remembered feelings of Mabel's teaching.

At the basis of even the most apparently sophisticated research, my advisor, Dr. Korzenik, has taught me, often lie the most highly personal motives. My thesis is no exception. The curiosity which has driven me to an almost compulsive thoroughness in this endeavor, and which sustains the fascination of the task, can most surely be traced to that high school art room, and Mabel D'Amico's warm smile, the comfortable and generous atmosphere she created for her students. Mabel is an extremely gifted teacher, a sunny, wonderful and cheerful person, a teacher who forces you, in the best D'Amico fashion to confront your own stereotypes, but in the most supportive climate. The art room, which surely personified herself, was, in my memory, clean, well-organized, spacious, and filled with fresh air and light! I loved art! The art lessons were a very pleasant experience, and the Art Room a haven for myself and many others from the academic rigidity of the other classrooms where more formal disciplines were seriously and competatively pursued.

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Mabel's presence was a joy and comfort to me. At age 13, I had just lost my mother to a long and arduous bout with cancer. Mabel always encouraged me to study art seriously (as a major subject), but, somehow, after the first year or so, I could never manage to sandwich an art course into my overpacked schedule, filled with courses intended for college-bound students. In fact, during the 1940's there was an enormous prejudice against going to art school among my middle-class peers. People joked: "If you can't pass chemistry, you take art". Going to art school was, somehow, comparable to attending finishing school, in lieu of college, an occupation suited to the super-rich or poor idiots, but not a proper bourgeois pursuit! Being susceptible, I fell victim to this irrational prejudice. Art School, for me, came after my contribution to my husband's advanced education and to the development and the establishment of his career (in which I had made a hefty investment in terms of both time, energy, and money), and with the entry of my last child into ~~public school~~ Kindergarten.

In spite of the generally prevailing bland and ultra-conservative tastes and preferences of the upper-middle class townsfolk of Rye, N. Y. (mid 1940's to mid 1950's), a handful of "strange", "individualistic" and"strong-willed" students from Rye High were incontrovertably and deeply involved in studying art with Mabel, and at MOMA's Saturday sessions in New York. Two of them,whose names I remember, were Rachel Fernandes, who went on to dance with Martha Graham, and Judy Wood, who ultimately married Michael Spock. Mike is the present Director of the Boston Children's Museum, and he formerly studied with D'Amico at the Fieldston School. Later Judy went on to administer the Magnet History Program in Boston. The D'Amico approach to education seized the imagination of the more avant-garde, intelligent and risk-taking individuals of the era. The D'Amico influence continues to abound in many manifestations.

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A second, important encounter with D'Amico's ideas took place via my friendship with Dr. Sava Morgan, a long-time summer resident of Woods Hole, Ma., a friend of a good friend of mine. I have spent many a happy hour discussing art and art education with Sava over the past twelve years. She has taught children of all ages, including me and my children. One summer I apprenticed to Dr. Morgan in her summer art school in Woods Hole, participating in the teaching of children and documenting her teaching of adults. During the course of this long friendship, I came to realize that she had worked with Jane Cooper Bland in Victor's Institute for Teacher Training through The Museum of Modern Art in New York. (Sava's youngest daughter, Lizzie, also took classes there).[1] As I took up the study of art education as a profession, I began to realize the importance of this event. Sava has a great love and affinity for Victor's work. Her own philosophy of art education is very close to his in many ways. Her early scientific training has led her to extend the D'Amico theories and interweave them into her own ecology of education and human development.

Another recent and significant meeting with Victor D'Amico's theories (before my meeting with the originator of the theories in person), took place through my involvement with the Arts and Human Services Project, founded and directed by Elaine Ostroff, when I entered Mass College of Art as a graduate student. Her library displayed D'Amico's Art for the Family. Again, there was the same comfort of familiar ideas, values, and goals, the humanizing of

1. Lizzie is now a highly creative and gifted singer and actress in bilingual drama and television in New York City.

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Victor D'Amico: His Sources and Influence

people, and the mainstreaming of handicapped individuals via the arts, being one of the main focuses of the concentration.

But it was in Dr. Korzenik's class on the History of Art Education that the real excitement of discovery took place for me. My passive understanding and acceptance of these early influences on my own teaching and parenting style and on my life philosophy changed to an active embrace, and a conscious search for other ways in which I could meet up with D'Amico's unique and remarkable theories. Needless to say, I was flabberghasted when Dr. Korzenik suggested that I go to interview D'Amico in person.

The trick was to discover where he was. For this I called a lifelong friend of my father's, Alice Bird Eriksson. (Alice's late sister, Doris, the local children's librarian, had been a close, personal friend of Mabel's, when she lived in Rye). Alice was able to locate the D'Amicos in Long Island. I phoned, spoke with Mabel, who, surprisingly, remembered me, got Victor on the phone, and made the appointment for December 9, 1979. This was to prove the first of many delightful visits and conversations, which have somehow connected me with the mainstream of contemporary American Art Education.

In this process of meeting with, researching, interviewing and writing about Dr. D'Amico, I have discovered an immense amount about the unique and special quality of my own cultural history which I, for lack of having had the opportunity to distance myself from it, had always taken for granted.

D'AMICO: A BRIDGE BETWEEN THE 19th AND 20th CENTURIES

Victor D'Amico's traditional values and sensibilities are firmly rooted in those of the 19th century élite, with which I felt a closeness and familiarity due to my grandparents, with whom I lived, essentially from birth to marriage.

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But, D'Amico's life is, in many ways, a metaphor of our modern times--the 20th century. He is both a product of his time and a moving force in its formative process. D'Amico is, at once pragmatic and intellectual, humanistic, but believing in progress as well as in God. He is, at the same time a complete artist, by nature as well as by profession, responsive to everyone and everything, intuitive and eager to learn, to teach, and share his enormous talents, knowledge, vision and energy; to lend his genius and warm support to the work of others. Although he is alive with and vibrates in the excitement of his own time/space column, many of his progressive educational theories and practices are so far-reaching in their scope as to not have been thoroughly understood when they were first introduced or even, I believe, is their fine and profound complexity sufficiently appreciated today.

Essentially, however, I am fascinated by the way in which D'Amico seems to have gathered the varied threads of our time into his life's work--the teaching of art, and the extolling of the humanizing force of the arts and man's basic need to actively participate in the creative process--threads which D'Amico aligns and arranges into a richly vibrant tapestry of the theory of creative education through art. It is this process that I find the most fascinating. It is the origins of this process, in D'Amico's childhood, which I have chosen to explore and document.

In addition to all the above-mentioned attractions to D'Amico, there was one more thing which led me to undertake this research: Victor D'Amico was born precisely the same year that my father had been born (1904). They were both about the same height and had similar coloring,

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and both had many similarities of personality. Born in the same year, both had been subjected to very similar educational attitudes, expectations, and experiences. Both were very much products of the turn-of-the-century pragmatic and "self-made success" mentality. Both had a similar genius for conjuring up inventions, creating things with their hands, and both were mechanically and artistically gifted. (My father sketched and drew amazingly well). Both Victor D'Amico and my father "thought" well three-dimensionally, and "thought" well in materials too. Both were prolific writers and lecturers, my father on local history, foreign travel, and D'Amico on education and art, creativity and humanism. Both were predominantly kinesthetic learners, and hard-working, self-disciplined individualists. These remarkable similarities were things which I discovered only after I decided to undertake the research. Perhaps a final motivating factor in my making ~~this~~ my directed study decision was the fact of my father's death in October, 1978, just one year before I took Dr. Korzenik's class.

At the same time I discovered many differences between the two men, some of which seem a bit paradoxical. For instance, my father was the only child of well-educated and upper-middle class parents. And, although he was talented, creative, and bright enough, my father apparently experienced extreme difficulty in trying to learn in a typical structured classroom situation. He was left handed, which was inadmissable in his day, and he quite possibly suffered, as I do, from other "learning disabilities", which gave him a unique and creative approach to problem solving. Because of these things he either could or would not finish high school. As a result, for the rest of his life, my father

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deeply regretted the college education which he had refused.(1) None of his many successes, impressive achievements, and varied accomplishments could assuage the pain of this missed opportunity. D'Amico, on the other hand, was the son of immigrant Italian parents, and one of 11 children. Although his family was not really poor, neither were they "affluent". This remarkable man managed, through his own brilliance, unbelievable self-discipline and focused hard work, to rise to the very top of his profession, receiving an honorary doctorate degree, as well as international renoun and acclaim for his achievements. D'Amico designed, brought to fruition and introduced many truly innovative educational

(1) Family tradition has it that my grandmother's brother, George Allison, for whom my father was named, had offered to arrange a tuition free education for my father at Cooper Union. It was this gentleman's desire that my father become an engineer. D'Amico, at one point, attended Cooper Union!

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practices and theories--contributions which have helped alter in his own lifetime, the course of the American Philosophy of Education--contributions which have been felt all around the world, and which are vital even today.

METHOD AND APPROACH:

A lifelong fascination of mine (among many) is people watching. I am intensely curious as to how and from where people get their ideas, habits, customs, beliefs, and how they transmit these to others. Within this general area, I am specifically interested in the problems and circumstances surrounding the lives of gifted individuals and how they eventually achieve success, and make important contributions in their chosen fields. As an Artist-Teacher, and mother of four extremely bright and gifted children, I am also interested in trying to discover and understand what kind of an education elicits genius. (Like Buckminster Fuller, I believe that all children are born gifted, and creative.) I feel and believe profoundly that it is our task as educators to discover ways to cultivate the natural genius in each child. To this end I hope that my exploration of D'Amico's childhood will perhaps make a small contribution. Coupled with the foregoing, I have developed a great love for trying to trace the life of significant ideas from their inception, throughout their progress and apogee to their transformations and myriad expressions in art, literature, music, languages, philosophy and educational practices.

My approach, therefore, to the study of D'Amico's life, and particularly its early influences, has been that of the modern-day detective. I have formed my theories intuitively, after making a general survey of the facts, and only then, have I sought specific proof and corroboration of what I felt to be "the truth" in the books on art, art history, history, philosophy, science, education of the era, as well as in the works of D'Amico, himself, and in

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Personal interviews with Victor and others who are close to him. It is a very exciting way to proceed, as each "clue" leads one to the discovery of yet another piece of information, the whole forming a mosaic of "facts" which gives an overall picture of the "culprit"--I mean, subject. Certainly, my preferred approach is more actively involving a method, and this is surely well-suited to the subject himself--the man whose entire body of work is predicated on the "action-oriented" approach to teaching and educational research. You might even feel that my approach is that of a constructivist, again, quite

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suitable to a study of the man whose most recent book is entitled Assemblage. But, enough of these oblique puns! (Again, the humor and playfulness of the subject of this research inspires and even lends himself to a lighthearted approach).

The profusion of material available by, and about Victor D'Amico, as well as the vastness of the subject of his work and achievements, necessitates my limiting this research to his earlier years, from birth through around 1935, the year in which he completed the writing of his Survey of Art Education in the U. S., a report which he prepared at the request of the Rockefeller Foundation. By this time, D'Amico's philosophy of education had been more or less completely formed; his life's work had been cut out for him. He had only to do it! The most fascinating aspect of these early years is the development of his approach to education. It is this formation that I intend to trace in my paper.

It is mainly for these reasons--the strange confluence of backgrounds, circumstances, time, place, and the common network of friends and acquaintences, ideas and values, that I initially chose to write about Victor D'Amico. The choice has proven to be a most fruitful and enjoyable one for me, and I feel extremely lucky and grateful to have made it! I am especially thankful to Dr. Diana Korzenik, and to Victor and Mabel D'Amico, as well as Chris Kohen, and Prof. Sara Morgan for providing me with the opportunity, the help, and the encouragement to undertake this work.

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~~PRELUDE TO~~ CHAPTER I

D'AMICO: A PIONEER AND INNOVATOR IN AMERICAN ART EDUCATION

I hear and I forget;
I see and I remember;
I do and I understand.

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CHAPTER I

D'AMICO : A PIONEER AND INNOVATOR IN AMERICAN ART EDUCATION

~~Outline for introductory section (prelude to Chapter I)~~

OUTLINE FOR CHAPTER I

1. FAME VS. LASTING CONTRIBUTIONS

2. D'AMICO'S CAMPAIGN TO HUMANIZE ART EDUCATION

   A Democratization

   B Individuation and Creativity

3. D'AMICO'S NEW APPROACH TO ART EDUCATION: HIS LEGACY TO US ALL

   A A New Era Demands New Art Forms; New Materials

   B ANew Kind of Teaching --Creative Teaching

   C A New Definition of Goals for Art Education

   D A Challenge to the Old Definition of Intelligence

4. D'AMICO: AHEAD OF HIS TIME

   A Discovery: A New Kind of Intelligence

   B The Use of Recycled Materials, a Prefiguration of Ecological Thinking

   C Art Education to cultivate Creative Thinking & Problem-Solving

5. ART EDUCATION AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

   A Adapting the Environment

   B Accessibility

   C Programmatic Accessibility--Task Analysis

   D Allowing a Time-Space in Which Creativity Can Develop

   E Artmaking as a Social Activity

   F Teacher Training

   G Social Awareness; D'Amico as a Member of a Group; a Different Kind of Leadership

   H The Time and Place

6. SPREADING THE WORD

   A Art Carnivals

   B Books

   C Lectures and Newspaper Articles

   D Television

   E National Committee on Art Education

7. D'AMICO's RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS IN HIS FIELD

   A D'Amico and Albers

   B D'Amico and Lowenfeld

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Victor D'Amico: His Sources and Influences

D'AMICO: A PIONEER AND INNOVATOR IN AMERICAN ART EDUCATION

~~PREFACE~~ CHAPTER I.

1. FAME VS. LASTING CONTRIBUTIONS

Victor D'Amico's fame has literally spread all over the world. His books on Art Education have been used by many Art Schools; his Art Carnivals have appeared in Belgium, Spain, Italy, Japan and India. He founded, and Directed, for over 20 years the Art Education Department of the Museum of Modern Art in New York. He has lectured in every state of the Union, and has been on the faculty of Columbia University, N. Y. U., and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. He has created what seems to be the first Art Therapy Program in this country (1945. The Veterans War Memorial program, through MOMA), and he has created his own television show, Through the Magic Gate, bringing Art Education into the homes (and hopefully the lives) of millions of American viewers. He founded a national art education association, The National Committee on Art Education, (to oppose what he felt to be the rigid and outworn practices advocated by the National Art Education Association.)D'Amico's ideas are still fresh and relevent and are still being used today by such people as Betty Blayton Taylor in the Children's Art Carnival, a New York City public school, which Victor helped to found. It is a school devoted to education through the arts. Victor D'Amico has received a Presidential Medal and innumerable awards from more groups than he, himself, can remember, in gratitute for his important contributions to American Education. Recently, the Napeague Institute of Art in Amaganset, L. I., N. Y., was renamed for him. Victor D'Amico is, within his lifetime, a truly famous man. (1)

However, fame and success are not always accurate or adequate indicators of a person's real contributions. Many people achieve both, even within their lifetime, but their contributions have little long-range impact on the course or development of their fields of endeavor. I do not believe this to be true of D'Amico's work. D'Amico came to the field of Art Education at a

(1) See ~~D'Amico: A Pioneer and Innovator in American Art Education~~ Appendix p. 91

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time when the values it embodied (at least in the public sector) were encrusted with outworn professional rituals, dysfunctional strategies and antiquated methodologies.

To fully appreciate the complex, broad and far-reaching accomplishments of this man, it will be necessary to consider here his individual contributions in the light of his own avowed goals and value system.

2. D'AMICO'S CAMPAIGN TO HUMANIZE ART EDUCATION

D'Amico, through MOMA, was the first leader to humanize art education. D'Amico himself has told me that if his life's work could be identified with one thing only, he would like to be remembered for having humanized art education. It has been, in fact, the basic objective of his whole life's work to show how creative expression through art provides a humanizing counter-balance and alternative to the dehumanizing worlds of humdrum work, of technology, automation, war, crime and other negative forces that lead to the degradation or waste of human life or effort. Artmaking not only "adds zest" to life, the process of artmaking can cultivate the essential love of life itself, teaching a way of thinking about things, of solving problems, and developing an esthetic and respectful approach or point of view to objects, events, and relationships and to one's self. D'Amico views artmaking as a positive, constructive, and healing force which should be available to all.

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Victor D'Amico: His Sources and Influences

A Democratization

D'Amico has been, for more than a generation, the "People's Champion" of Art Education. He founded, under the auspices of the Modern Art Museum in New York, The People's Art Center, open to everyone, where, for a modest fee, virtually anyone could take lessons in art. As long as the potential student was sufficiently motivated, he or she was permitted to attend classes. No one was turned away for lack of funds, or "talent". (The very concept that some individuals are artistically talented and that others are not is abhorrent to D'Amico). In The People's Art Center, D'Amico and his teachers sought new ways to motivate students; they tried to discover the latent creativity inside each person, and to put the person in touch with that force. They helped to cultivate and nurture this essence, and to teach students to effectively express themselves through art. D'Amico feels, even today, that art and artmaking should be a part of everyone's life. That art education should be accessible to everyone. D'Amico says this succinctly,

> "Democracy is meaningless, if it does not give all the people the same opportunity for growth, for happiness and success, and a school in inadequate if it does not consider all the rights of the child--specially the creative child." (p. 25)

D'Amico, Victor: "What Can Administrators Do to Promote Art Education"--in: Bhavan, Bal, (ed.), Report: The Children's Art Carnival in India, 1963-64. New Delhi, National Children's Museum, (n. d.).)p. 25

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b Individuation and Creativity

The object of D'Amico's teaching is not to educate individuals "to become professional artists", although he did, in fact, through his school, produce some very fine "real" artists. D'Amico seeks to release the "creative potential" inside of each one of us, to teach us to think and act creatively in our daily lives. D'Amico seeks to liberate us from the stereotypes and prejudices we may have about art, and about life. D'Amico inspires us to look at the world with fresh eyes. D'Amico educates us to incorporate the harmonies of natural form, line, mass, volume, color, value and texture into our vision He leads us to seek rhythm, harmony, balance and flow in our lives as well as in our work, and in our artmaking. D'Amico does not educate through the use of formulae or doctrine. D'Amico leads us to deduce the "rules" via

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creative looking. D'Amico teaches us to look inward as well as outward. D'Amico educates us through our own experiences. It is an education of discovery and of active doing and participation, of self awareness.

> What does being creative mean? One dictionary says: 'create-- to make something new out of existing materials'. Another says: 'to invest with a new rank'. I think that is closer to the aim of art teaching. To create, then, is to invest a moment, a place, or a thing with the new rank of one's uniqueness, to say it in your own ways. Being creative means to discover or invent something new, a new organization of things, a new basis for thinking, a new insight into art or a way of living, even only a new expectatic It doesn't have to be new to the work, but new to the person... The word 'uniqueness', is not my word, it's Earl Kelley's (Earl C. Kelley, Professor, Wayne University, author of 'Education for what is Real', co-author of 'Education and the Nature of Man.'). But I think it describes the most important quality of the creati e act. It is the character in art that distinguishes one child's work from another's. You can easily recognize it if it's there. It is a kind of signature or personal identity. Everyone is potentially unique, but uniqueness is often buried deeply in the person overlaid by cliches or technical tricks and fears. You may have to dig for it. It doesn't depend on I. Q. or talent. It is the one thing God gave us which makes us different from everybody else. Like your fingerprints it has it's own configuration. To be unique is not just being different. It is the expression of the self and, once recognized, is the basis for all creative growth, good art and creative experience.(2)

3, D'AMICO'S NEW APPROACH TO ART EDUCATION: HIS LEGACY TO US ALL

A A New Era Demands New Art Forms; New Materials.

In the course of his work D'Amico has redefined the essence of art education and our tasks as art educators. D'Amico has invented for us a new vocabulary of behaviors; one which has altered our way, as art educators, of thinking and being-in-the-world (1) Through the People's Art Center, collage, assemblage, construction, abstract art, mobiles, stabiles, mural-making, "thinking with your fingers" and "action-oriented" research entered the field of American Art Education. The museum played a pivotal role in this proces

1.D'Amico, Victor : "What is Creative Teaching", from School Arts, January, 1955 page 3.
2. Ibid, p. 4

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D'Amico took the art forms from MOMA's walls and galleries and made them a part of student's everyday lives. The richness of the museum's unique collections and exhibits became an outstanding resource to DAmico's program. These new art forms (new to children's art education) demanded the use of "new" materials, and a new way of teaching.(1) These new practices were carefully observed and documented. It is through this very action-oriented research that D'Amico has given us back the great philosophical and pragmatic theories of the 19th century, and integrated them with the dynamic forces of the 20th century. He has artfully fused the two into a down-to-earth contemporary approach or methodology, a model by which teaching/learning can take place.

B A New Kind of Teaching -- Creative Teaching

> In a sense, creative teaching is both an art and a science. It is an art because it deals with the development of individuals who are distinct and changing and who produce different creative manifestations. It deals with individuals who have different emotions, drives, and aptitudes and who perceive and mature each at his own pace...Therefore, teaching situations are never exactly the same and it is the constant fluctuation of interest, attitude, and response which makes the teaching art a constant challenge and stimulating experience.
>
> Creative teaching is a science too, because there are specific characteristics and behavior patterns of the maturing individual at each age level....

At the same time D'Amico cautions us:

> There is a growing resentment on the part of educators toward the emphasis on age-level characteristics. This is highly justified when educators use the acquired knowledge to classify or pigeonhole individuals rather than to gain insight into their creative make up..... (2)

(1) See section "Victor D'Amico: Ahead of His Time".

(2) ~~Ibid., page 4.~~ D'Amico, Victor; "What is Creative Teaching" ~~in~~ loc. cit. p. 4.

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Through these statements it is obvious that D'Amico's teaching is based on the assumption that the teacher(him)herself must be a keen observer, sensitive and responsive at all times to the student's needs, moods, desires. The main role of the teacher is that of a co-operant with the student, one who helps to discover, cultivate and develop the natural creative ability in his (her) students., Teaching is a dialogue not the ~~role~~ monologue of a "superior being" who imposes outworn ideas, methods or traditions on the ignorant.

A New Definition of Goals for Art Education

D'Amico's contribution is not so much that of a philosophy of art education, as it is a whole new approach to the subject of teaching art. He forces us as art educators to confront such questions as: Who are we to teach art? Why do we teach art? To whom?, and What are we teaching in the name of art? as well as; How should we teach anything to best enhance personal and social growth and the integration of personality? The questions demand totally truthful answers if we have any hope of teaching effectively. D'Amico has redefined our potential role as art educators.

> It is quite possible to have 'good' art products and to deny creative experience. By good art products I mean art work that follows the laws of design and that is aesthetically satisfying... An experience or exercize which dictates the process and the result and which does not allow or stimulate personal interpretation, discovery and invention is not a creative experience, regardless of the aesthetic excellence of the product...Collages are often made as interesting designs, mobiles as complicated decorations. Unless the collage project stimulates the child's sensitivity to tactile sensations and opens new horizons for creative experience, it has little value in creative growth.

And finally:

> One of the particular aims of art education should be making the art experience more than a trial and error process, and more than spontaneous expression or a casual manipulation of materials. Deepening experience comes from a chain of successive activities, each becoming a little more revealing, challenging and demanding for the individual....A group or class can play a feeling game where they identify the quality of the material with their eyes shut.In this way they learn the responses of others in regard to taste and preference.Later they may go on to an adventure...through a multiplicity of experiences focused on a specific aesthetic objective, they gain a profound consciousness toward tactile and visual experience.(1)

(1) Ibid., page 5.

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15B

D'Amico: His Sources and Influences

D'Amico removed art and artmaking from the "hands" of the elite and privileged few and made it accessible to a much wider range of the general public. At the same time, he redefined the scope, intentions and strategies of the field of art education. D'Amico sees in the artmaking process, the opportunity to teach self-determination. In all aspects of his teaching he shows his connectedness to and understanding of the child's development. D'Amico uses art to educate the child to lifemanship. D'Amico uses art as a tool to further the child's development. D'Amico's art education addresses the social, emotional, moral, physical, intellectual, intuitive sides of the student. D'Amico's education nurtures the decision-making processes. D'Amico's approach demands a total, and creative immersion in the art-making process.

> A major problem in the creative process is the need to integrate two seemingly opposite qualities--freedom and discipline. We want the child to be free, but freedom can only come from self-discipline.... We must build the child's confidence in himself by leading him to things which he can do but which provoke him to search for and to make decisions. We motivate him toward the things he knows, so that he will not undertake problems which are too difficult. If we put new materials before him, but we require that he use them in a unique way, we increase the complexity of each problem and we guide him in following through. We don't give him the answer, but we point out a direction. In that way he becomes master of himself through a self-acquired discipline.
>
> The feeling that leaving the child completely on his own to make choices is freedom, is a mistaken notion. What we do is to leave him open to outside indoctrinary influences...to exploiters....

And finally:

> The most vital part of the creative experience is the integrative process--the means by which the aesthetic concept becomes part of the child. If the exercize or experiment in color or texture or perspective is obvious in the child's work, it has not been integrated...the teaching has resulted in mere imitation. But when a child manipulates the concept in his own way or recognizes it in the work of another, or in things about , then it is fairly certain that some form of integration has taken place and is functioning. (1)

~~(1) D'Amico, Victor: What is creative teaching, loc. cit., p. 6.~~

(1) Ibid, p. 6

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This process actually produces a change in the individual by extendin his expressive power, enriching his awareness, increasing his sensitivity or altering his attitude. It is principally a change brought about by an aesthetic experience and is unique to it... 'Integration'in educational practice has often been associated with the correlation of subject matter with a rational order of learning or with a coincidence of activity in a group or mass approach to teaching as in the core curriculum or planned unit. Now these may provide the source or the climate for integration, but they do not guarantee it. In fact, they may stand in the way.

The interpretation of the individual is a very personal affair, different for each person and dependent on his uniqueness, his rhythm, his interest, his emotional drives and perceptual patterns of learning. It is a process that results from the interaction between the child and his work in a creative situation.....(1)

(1) Idem.

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D A Challenge to the Old Definition of Intelligence

The ultimate effect on education of his approach to curricula has been to challenge the traditional and narrow definition of intelligence so long cherished by the "official educational establishment", thereby laying the groundwork for a truly "democratic" system of public education. Intelligence has for too long a time been considered to be a measure of one's capacity to function in a purely linear way within a world created of verbal, mathematical and abstract symbols; to assimilate and regurgitate the old; to define, describe and measure what exists; to collect facts, and to sort them into traditional categories.

D'Amico's contribution to the concept of intelligence (were it to be culled, collected and spelled out) would probably be analagous to the great inventions of his own era, Einstein's unified field theory, or Watson's construct for the DNA mollecule. Theories such as these have a vibrant dynamism which reflects the exciting transition which led us from the era of the industrial-mechanical revolution to the age of the technological revolution.

4. D'AMICO, AHEAD OF HIS TIME

A Discovery: A New Kind of Intelligence

Victor D'Amico was ahead of his time in many ways, especially in his thinking about intelligence. Early on D'Amico discovered that the "language" of the child is movement. It is basic to all children to perceive, apprehend, think and integrate knowledge via moving through activities. D'Amico sees in artmaking a perfect opportunity to extend this early kinesthetic-thought process. By linking a child's spontaneous movements to his own expressive vocabulary of visual symbols, he helps the student to integrate mind and body/ feeling and intuition. The latest research has shown what D'Amico intuitively realized long ago, that in order to become a fully functioning human being, a person needs to educate the intellect, the eye, and the hand, to integrate all of them with the emotions and the intuition.(1) D'Amico's educational

(1) Cf. with the work of C. G. Jung.

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approach parallels in its address, what is today regarded as the experimental right hemisphere of the brain, and integrates it with the orderliness of the left hemisphere. In this D'Amico has been "years ahead of his time". D'Amico's educational approach demonstrates that thought and intelligence are not purely linear, and verbal, nor are they mathmatical and sequential events, but often like a painting, are simultaneous-heuristic-presentational and intuitive events. Thought frequently takes place in remembered or conjectured visual or sensory images, superimposed upon one another, allowing the mind to "see" by analogy, the similarities and differences of situations, thus judging or apprehending discrepencies, in form as well as in content. In creative thinking, logical or sequential steps are frequently skipped or circumvented. D'Amico has made us acknowledge that we "think" in materials and movement, images, sensations and metaphore. This forms the basis for D'Amico's action-oriented research in art education.D'Amico's approach to learning, paved the way for such work as Phillip Morrison's later studies with the E. D. C. on Elementary Science Education (The Elementary Science Study of the 1960's) .

B The Use of Recycled Materials, a Prefiguration of Ecological Thinking

D'Amico was also in advance in his appreciation of unusual materials--often cast off, brightly-colored tissue wrappers from fruit stores, popsicycle sticks, wire coat-hangers, pipe cleaners, etc. These, for D'Amico, often have a latent, associative-emotive quality. In D'Amico's very first art-teaching assignment, when he travelled the subways to give lessons in the Settlement Houses on the Lower East Side, as a very young man,(1) he carried with him two suitcases full of what would today be labelled "recycle material".(These were mostly cloth scraps from his father's atelier).

(1) This took place during the 1920's, long before D'Amico came to MOMA and long before he had any knowledge of the work of Schwitters or the concep of "automatic art".

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It is no wonder, given the fact that Mike Spock was a former student of D'Amico's, and is currently the Director of the Boston Children's Museum, that this institution has one of the largest centers for recycle art materia in the area. In times of cutbacks in school budgets, the establishment of such a center has been a saving grace for many programs. The original idea, however, grew from'Amico's 19th century frugality.

Art Education to Cultivate Creative Thinking and Problem-Solving

A third way in which D'Amico seems to have been ahead of his time was in the popularization of the concept that the teaching of art could be integrate into the teaching of any or all subject areas. Although this idea may not have originated with D'Amico, he was certainly one of its greatest developers and exponents. D'Amico welcomed teachers of all subject areas int his teacher training programs. He recognized that a thouough grounding in the knowledge and skills of artmaking, enhanced and developed the basic ability to think creatively, and to solve problems in all subject areas. Thus, D'Amico advocated art education for all teachers.

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5. ART EDUCATION AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

A Adapting the Environment

For D'Amico, spontaneous creativity does not omit the orderly process, expressed in the organization of the space surrounding the work, and in the work itself. As a teacher, D'Amico is constantly aware of the importance of organizing the space in which art can happen. For him, this comprised the creation of a proper physical setting, including furniture, lighting, etc. D'Amico personally designed, for his school at MOMA, a children's artmaking and exhibition studio, perfect in every detail, even down to the furniture, which was flexible and adapted to the special needs and intentions of the place and the scale of the children. His attention to the artmaking setting also addressed the emotional "tone" or "atmosphere", which was created by the teacher, reflected in the teacher's open attitude, specifically through the use of various kinds of motivations[1] of an emotional and/or sensory nature. These encouraged quiet focusing and concentration of energies. A wide variety of materials were set out in a well-organized and orderly fashion. To be a good artist, D'Amico realized, it is important to have the right tools and materials, and to respect, use and care for them properly. For him this is but one embodiment of his belief in creativity as a form of social responsibility.

B Accessibility

In his "Democratization" of art education (making his People's Art Center open to individuals of all walks of life), D'Amico was a pioneer in making art education accessible to the general public. Moreover, he designed his program as a model for teaching all age levels, from the very young to the very old. Inbuilt into this design was a great measure of self-

(1) See Appendix, pp. 123-131

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DEDICATION: A Festschrift

VICTOR D'AMICO: HIS SOURCES AND INFLUENCES is written as a Festschrift in celebration for a life-long dedication to the creative education of teachers and "children of all ages" on the part of Victor and Mabel D'Amico, two of my most favorite people. I have written it, I must confess, mostly for my own pleasure--the pleasure of discovery and rememberance, but also, and equally, as a gift of celebration for the lives of Victor and Mabel. I hope they will enjoy reading this Master's Thesis as much as I have enjoyed writing it.

Lois A. Berggren
Autumn 1983

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determination and self evaluation (self-criticism).

C Programmatic Accessibility - Task Analysis

One of D'Amico's greatest contributions to the field of U. S. art education is the clarity with which his ideas ~~were~~ are presented both orally and in writing. He has an outstanding ability to break tasks down into their simplest components, and to present them in an orderly and logical sequence, in words and pictures, easily understood by practically anyone. This is a gift which he shares with the teachers of the renouned Bauhaus, many of whom were his collegues. This particular gift is abundantly apparent in his teaching, as well as in the textbooks which he has authored. This insistence on orderly sequencing dows not, however, interefere with his students' personal self-expression. If anything, through discipline (training), it enhances it.

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D Allowing a Time-Space in Which Creativity Can Develop

D'Amico's teaching is not geared toward the production of "art works". Although D'Amico encouraged purposefulness in the work of art, he recognizes that creative production is a process-oriented task, which requires a long period of incubation. D'Amico's students have adequate opportunities to explore and experiment with different media. In his school, at MCMA skilled master teachers were available to remotivate and guide students through the completion of the creative tasks which they had set themselves. Students were encouraged, but not forced to achieve closure. It is a system which leads to the mastery of skills in the management of materials, tasks, and overall composition. But, more important, according to D'Amico, is the total involvement (mental, physical, emotional, moral) of the child in the artmaking process, and the enrichment that this gives to his or her life.

E Artmaking as a Social Activity

In addition to being committed to making art education available to everyone, and to championing and furthering the humanizing influence of art education at every possible opportunity, D'Amico advocated for (in his teaching of people of all ages), the concept of art as a social activity. Group murals were part of the program at The People's Art Center. In his teaching at the Fieldston School, stage settings for plays were worked on by groups of students, and students were encouraged to work in pairs or in groups on art projects, learning to share time, space, materials, and the teacher's attention; learning the fine art of distancing, self-criticism, and cooperation. In D'Amico's own words:

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I want the child to be aware of what is around him, of where he lives, his home and his country. I want him to react to it both with approval and disapproval and try to change what he thinks is ugly. In other words, I think that only we as a society can change the world in which we live, provided we are interested enough. We can improve our society if we feel strongly enough that our responsibility is not only that we must dress ourselves and look either acceptable or better, but also that we are responsible for the community in which we live.

Then I want Art to help the child to become sensitive to people and to people's needs, because people are the most important factor of life...Sensitivity means reaction to another person's feelings and dealings...Art should help the child realize and respect the fact that everyman has a certain individuality. (1)

D'Amico, Victor: An Address: "How to get going in the Right Direction in the Field of Art Education in Bahran, Bal (ed.): Report: The Children's Art Carnival in India, 1963-64. New Delhi. National Children's Museum, (n. d.).

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Teacher Training

Another important aspect of D'Amico's consciousness of the social responsibility of art educators was manifested in his Teacher Training Institute, also attached to MOMA's Art Education Department. The spirit of this Institute continued after D'Amico left MOMA, in his work with the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, N. Y. U., and the Napeague Institute of Art (currently the Victor E. D'Amico Institute of Art) in Amaganset, L. I., N. Y. It made excellent training opportunities in art education available not only to artists and art educators, but also to public school teachers of all academic disciplines. D'Amico recognizes teaching as a Fine Art. He understands that one teaches individuals, not facts. D'Amico knows that in order to draw the best from each individual, given to his care, the process of education must be a slow one, demanding much personal and individual support, attention, involvement and committment. Through his Teacher Training Institute at MOMA, master teachers, thoroughly grounded in the D'Amico approach, trained other teachers through a lengthy apprenticeship program. The course of study began with a period of careful observation of "master classes". Next, the potential teacher would participate as a student, getting a "feel" for the material and approach, from a subjective point of view. More observations would follow, and then a period of carefully supervised teaching would ensue. Evaluations with a master teacher would be ongoing. The method is time and energy and money consuming, but it does produce superior teachers. A problem with this apprenticeship-type teacher-training program is that it is difficult and complex to evaluate. This, in my opinion, is why the D'Amico approach is not more widely used nowadays. This "method" with all of its subtle and non-discursive aspects, almost demands a person- to-person interpretation for its transmission.

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G Social Awareness; D'Amico as a Member of a Group: A Different Kind of Leadership.

D'Amico is a sensitive and careing human and a gifted artist, who is erudite, sensitive to the social currents & issues of his time responsible and dedicated as a teacher, D'Amico imparts his great wisdom through a unique form of personal leadership. D'Amico's natural modesty and simplicity give his leadership style a sort of non-leadership quality. One might even observe that he leads mostly by example., and serves basically as a catalyst, sparking leadership ability in others. He, by his own admission, has had an outstanding ability to pick remarkable people to work with him. What is even more remarkable, in my opinion, given the often dire political nature of many organizational structrues, is to realize how he has managed to focus his people on sharing the same kind of dedication to human development that he felt, and how he has managed to avoid the pitfalls of the usual in-fighting, back-stabbing, and unhealthy competition which often is pervasive in educational institutions. He seems to have managed to manoeuvre his program into a "protected place" for a very long time. This might have been, in part, responsible for the academic freedom, the excellent quality of his production, and the overall spirit of mutual cooperation which was manifest in his programs at MOMA.

H The Time and Place

In addition to this, D'Amico developed his program, of course, in one of the most exciting times and places possible, the newly formed Museum of Modern Art in New York. This place became a mecca for artists, philosophers, writers, conoisseurs, collectors, etc., set in the richest of all political-cultural-social milieus, New York of the 1930's-40's-50's- 60's!

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It is not surprising that D'Amico is a forerunner; he has been able to avail himself of the very best, the newest, latest, most famous, etc.

But, D'Amico has had the wisdom to choose wisely, and always to make choices that are consonant with his basic goals, from which he never wavers, the goal of humanizing man via art: of encouraging creative thought and action, of fostering democratic values, and developing in his students an awareness of human need, together with a sense of purposefullness, and social awareness, a sense of responsibility.

DAmico is a sharing person, one who has played his role as a gatherer of energies. He has openly used contemporary ideas and resources to shape and transmit his own traditional democratic philosophy of life. This seems to be predicated on the idea that a strong and democratic society can only be composed of strong and disciplined individuals, working in concert toward a common goal for the best possible sort of life for everyone.

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6 SPREADING THE WORD

A. The Art Carnivals.

The orderly and sequential process of artmaking was best demonstrated through D'Amico's Art Carnivals. These were first presented as annual events at the Museum of Modern Art. Later, they became international in their scope and dimensions. One was produced in The U. S. Pavillion at The International World's Fair in Brussels, in the late 1950's. Art Carnivals also appeared in Milan (as a part of an international trade fair); in Barcelona, in Tokyo, and, of course, in India, where an International Art Carnival was symbolically presented, at the request of Mrs. Indira Ghandi, to the Indian Government and The People of India on behalf of the U.S.A. by Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy. In addition to this, a permanent art school, The Children's Art Carnival in Harlem, exists today in New York City.

The original "Carnivals" were teaching-observing events and exhibits. D'Amico took great care to establish motivational areas, which were filled with delightful"toys"to challenge the child's imagination, stimulate his or her senses and emotions, and to encourage the art-making process. These "motivational" areas were complemented by well-equipped artmaking and exhibition areas. Parents were excluded, but were encouraged to observe the entire process. The whole of the Art Carnival at Brussels was surrounded by ~~peep-holes~~ plexiglass windows, through which adults could watch their own children at work. The only adults present inside with the children were well-trained professional teachers, who guided children through the process.

These art carnivals were the manifestation of D'Amico's "action oriented" research in art education. They enabled both parents and teachers to

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observe children actively creating. The entire creative process from motivation through fabrication of art objects unfolds before the eye of the beholder. From the book which was written at the time of the presentation of the Art Carnival in India I have culled the following quotations which are more or less self-explanatory.

"It can be safely asserted that we have successfully planted the seeds of a silent revolution in art education. A beginning has been made towards understanding the meaning and method of creative education." (1)

The Carnival is a unique play and art centre for children between the ages of four and twelve." ...(It) is a dramatic demonstration of Art Education. It shows by simple means, how children respond to art experiences under ideal teaching in a stimulating environment. ... a "world meant and designed for children. The shape of the gate represents a 12 year old and a 4 year old--the age limit of those admitted inside the Carnival. "

" The Carnival consists of two sections--one for motivation and the other for participation. The first holds many ingenious toys that appeal to the child's feeling for colour, texture, form and rhythmic motion. Playing with them, his aesthetic sensibility is awakened and he becomes eager to express his artistic concepts in his own creations." (2)

(1) Bhavan, A. Bal: The Children's Art Carnival in India 1963-64--A Report. New Delhi, The National Children's Museum, (n. d.) Introductory Statement

(2) Ibid, pp 1-3.

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"Materials enabling him to do so await him in the next area where he may work alone or with a group. Adults stay out and watch through the square plexiglass windows provided in the walls of the structure. They can see how natural it is for children to work in this way. How freely their creative powers flourish when imagination is allowed free rein."

"(This) "child's world stimulates the child's creative thinking, furnishes the tools with which he can give shape to this thinking and demonstrates to the public the importance of the creative experience for the child and the pleasure he derives out of this experience."

The philosophy behind the carnival is "that children can be developed creatively regardless of their previous background, provided freedom and dynamic atmosphere are present. This indicates that given a stimulating environment sensitive guidance and freedom to express, inherent creativity in children can be developed the world over...Freedom from adult intereference is the key note of the Carnival.The particular kind of art activity in the Carnival enables the child to recognize himself as a unique being. It seeks to give the child faith and respect for the discovery of his individual self and helps him to realise that he has no double. The Carnival philosophy believes in helping the child to recognize the fact that others possess individuality of character too. It believes firmly in the development of art appreciation in children.

The carnival regards imagination as the most important aspect of art. To build up and promote the imagination of children is one of the chief functions of the Carnival.

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The Carnival is a concrete example of the philosophy that a child needs constant friendly encouragement. It believes in giving the child the kind of encouragement that would help him realise that he has tried and succeeded, and not the kind of encouragement which would make him vain.

For parents, the Carnival is a private window looking into a child's creative life, though which to watch the art process evolve. For the teachers, it is a demonstration of creative methods in teaching and shows new and varied materials for art teaching.

In short , the Carnival amply demonstrates that creative children are the result of an education that develops creativeness and uncreative children are the victims of indoctrinary teaching. (1)

B. Books

Through the Museum of Modern Art, a number of books were produced on various aspects of the visual arts, and crafts. D'Amico co-authored books on woodworking, ceramics, jewelry-making, etc. They are outstanding in their orderly and methodical approach to the teaching of these subjects. D'Amico's later books, Art for the Family, Creative Teaching in Art, and Assemblage are classics in the field of art education. The body of D'Amico's writing all bears this same clarity, honesty, and simplicity, coupled with a scholarly thoroughness and directness of approach.

(1) Ibid. pp. 3-8.

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In his book, Assemblage: A New Dimension in Creative Teaching in Action which D'Amico has written together with Arlette Buchman (New York, The Museum of Modern Art, (c1972), we have an outstanding example of this orderliness and clarity of expression. Every part of this work, including the format and overall design, has been well-thought-out in advance, in order to insure its greatest usefulness to teachers, art-teachers, parents, etc. It is small enough to be quite portable, and lightweight, but yet contains large pages, printed with text and wonderfully illustrative photos of children and their art work. (The format is, oblong 8 x 10 x 1 inches, small enoug to fit easily into a shopping bag, briefcase, or large hand-bag.)

The photos in black and white, give hints of the space use, which is often described in the text. The lessons are grouped according to age and materials, with suggestions as to how to accommodate them to other age groups.The lessons become successively more challenging, as the book progresses, and some lessons could be spread out over several sessions, being, also progressive in nature. . Beside each lesson, its purpose is briefly and clearly set out, together with a list of materials.. The lessons themselves are described, as it were, from observation of real classes taught. Specific quotations from the teachers are given, together with fragments and extracts from the children's verbal and behavioral responses.. This approach gives you the immediacy of the "living art lesson". The connection between the motivational portions and the artmaking process are clearly visible. Always, the model of the creative child, creativly taught and guided are set forth.

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In the first part of this book the subject of assemblage is described in historical detail. D'Amico's own egalitarian attitudes towards art education ~~and~~ are deftly interwoven into this overall historical-cultural approach. A separate chapter addresses the materials suitable for child art education. This is followed by ~~a suitable~~ an elaborate description of tools. Two further chapters set the stage for the lesson presentations, one is on "The Art Teacher" and anothe is entitled: "The Art Heritage and the Daily Environment." These all include advice on attitudes, expectations, and ~~suitable~~ appropriate enrichment sources. Assemblage is an extremely thorough and well-planned approach to the subject of Art Education.

C) Lectures and Newspaper Articles, etc.

D'Amico has been a prolific traveller and lecturer. He claims to have spoken in every state of the union (in some on several occasions), and in numerous foreign countries. His articles have appeared in newspapers and magazines, accross the nation for years on end. These indefatiguable efforts were a bulwark in his ~~desire~~ mission to advocate for creative teaching, and the progressive education of the creative child. D'Amico's name has become identified with creative teaching.

D) Television

D'Amico "got in on the ground floor of television" His video series, Through the Magic Gate, (filmed in kinescope), included art classes for parents and children (perhaps the first of their kind in the country). The

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children worked at low tables on projects similar to those of their parents. At the same time, parents were able to work in a parallel manner and to observe their children at work. The children, while enjoying the security of their parents' non-intrusive presence, were able to work in peace and freedom, unintimidated by their parents' work, which was placed on tables too high for them to see. Parents were able to learn from their children's teachers, who demonstrated, by their attitudes and interactions with the children, excellent role models.

I had the pleasure of viewing one of these kinescopes on "The Art Barge" I was stuck with the way parents were encouraged to emulate the naievete of their children's approach to materials. One parent had chosen a small block of wood, of irregular shape, from a bin of assorted pieces , all cut into different sizes and shapes, with curved planes for surfaces, etc. From another bin the mother in question chose pieces of different textured materials, sandpaper, cloth, carpet, etc., arrangeing them in a sequence along the curved surfaces. D'Amico took the object, smiling appreciativly while the woman described her intent to him. "It is just like a little feeling symphony for the fingers", he said. The woman smiled, in response. The presence of the children and its effect on releasing the creative energies of the parents was obvious throughout the film.The choice of materials released the parents from the sterotypical, and reactive artistic concepts and, the mythological belief in talent.

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B) The National Committee on Art Education

This was an organization founded by D'Amico, together with others, to counter act the influence of the National Art Education Association, which D'Amico considered to be too conservative, and too little progressive in its scope. It became a verhicle for disseminating his ideas, and drawing to himself people of like persuasions. He raised consciousness and standards of what art education could become.

The following quotation from the Catalogue from the Exhibition: 50 Years of Humanizing the Arts, gives us a sense of what this organization was all about.

> In 1942, under Museum sponsorship, he founded the National Committee on Art Education. "which could study art education at its highest level. that would be concerned only with the philosophy of teaching, free from personal ambition and vested interests...We sought an opportunity to pursue our educational ideas without reference to the commercial interests and without the hawkers of coloring books and other harmful devices and cheap wares outside our door."
>
> The Committee, composed of teachers, artists and students, held conferences and exhibitions, issued publications, and gained recognition as an avant garde group, distinguished in quality and excellence. Its annual meetings featured many renowned in the arts and public life: Viktor Lowenfeld, Sir Herbert Read, Walter Gropius, Margaret Mead, Meyer Schapiro and Nelson A. Rockefeller.
>
> Many of the ideas born and fostered found their way into Museum programs, and were further disseminated by the membership. (1)

(1)Guild Hall, East Hampton, New York. Catalogue of the exhibition: Victor D'Amico/50 Years of Humanizing the Arts. September 1-October 21, 1979, p.1.

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7. D'AMICO'S RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS IN HIS FIELD

In the process of artmaking, D'Amico sees the potential to help students establish logical (visual and qualitative) categories; to make visual and qualitative comparisons, and thus to establish visual and qualitative sets and sequences. Thereby students were encouraged to use deductive reasoning in order to extrapolate principles of color theory, perspective, value, c composition, etc. Tanglible experience preceeded theory.

A D'Amico and Albers

D'Amico was invited by Joseph Albers to attend Black Mountain College. Albers, a color theorist and painter,was a former member of the famous Bauhaus D'Amico describes the Bauhaus in his book Assemblage, using the following words.

> The Bauhaus was the world-famous art school where many of the great artists and innovators of our century developed new teaching methods and put their ideas and techniques into practice. Founded by Walter Gropius in Weimar, Germany, in 1919, the Bauhaus was transplanted as a greatly enlarged institution to Dessau, where it remained until 1928, and then moved to Berlin where, in 1933, its doors were closed by the Nazis.
>
> The Bauhaus was intended for the education of professionals--artists, architects, designers, photographers, weavers, typographers, and those in the theatre arts. Besides its director, Gropius, its masters included such distinguished men as Laszlo Molholy-Nagy, Josef Albers, Oskar Schlemmer, and Paul Klee. It had tremendous impact on all the art but its effect on art education--particularly at the college and art-school levels--was truly revolutionary. The foundation courses at the Bauhaus introduced new concepts of design and technique based on tactile, visual, and kinesthetic exercises, studies of space and motion, and experiments with new materials. The closing of the

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> Bauhaus by no means put an end to its influence, which in fact became widely disseminated as its masters emigrated elsewhere-- many of them to the United States. Their ideas revolutionized American art education, from preschool through the college levels, as well as in schools of art, architecture, and design. (1)

D'Amico, in reminiscing to me about the time period, voiced his complete opposition to Albers' teaching of color theory to his students. D'Amico generally eschewed what he considered to be the "over-analytical Germanic" (to D'Amico's Italian mentality) approach to teaching color. D'Amico's method was to give children at first, only the primary colors-- clear yellow, brilliant red, and true blue, telling them that these colors were "like magic", and that they could make "all the colors in the world" from these three, simple, primary colors. In this way, D'Amico felt that he could not only stimulate excitement, but also lay the groundwork for the children to discover, name, invent and "own" their own colors. He carefully resists the impulse to "teach" color. In this lesson and in his approach, many others are contained. Careful observation of nature is encouraged; consciousness of one's own actions and the consequences or effect thereof is encouraged; patience and perseverence are encouraged; visual order-making is encouraged, and a general attitude of risk-taking, discovery and invention is established.

The high level of excitement, and the children's natural curiosity, the allure of the irresistable colors supplies the motivation which carries this lesson along. A child's sense of competence, independence and self-worth

(1) D'Amico, Victor and Arlette Buchman: Assemblage. New York, The Museum of Modern Art (c1972). pp. 3-4.

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is built up through such an educational approach. The role of the teacher is to guide, to encourage, to set the tone or atmosphere, to design the space, to limit dissention, competition or conflict among the students, through positive interaction to create a safe and stimulating place, in which the process of artmaking can happen.

D'Amico feels that Albers' approach toaward the teaching of color intimidated his students, and robbed their work of freshness, by eliminating the excitement of discovery and making the students dependent upon the teacher and his "expertise". D'Amico found this method of education stiffling, and unsuited to his own personality. He felt that it was not a very good way to promote personal growth in either the teacher or the students.

B D'Amico and Lowenfeld

D'Amico claims to be the first person to have introduced Viktor Lowenfeld into the field of art education in the United States. Lowenfeld, as the author of the much celebrated book, Creative and Mental Growth became, perhaps one of the best-known of all U. S. art educators. At D'Amico's request Lowenfeld came to lecture to his classes at Columbia University Teacher's College. For a long period of time D'Amico and Lowenfeld were close friends and associates. They apparently worked together harmoniously. D'Amico, however, found himself in opposition to Lowenfeld's separating students into the two learning categories of "haptic" or "visual". Lowenfeld's theory was, basically that people 's predominant learning-perceptual modalities fell into two categories: haptic learners who learned predominantly via touch and intuition, and visual learners who learned and perceived everything mainly through sight, visual images and sequences.

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D'Amico jokingly remarked to me that he, personally, could qualify as either haptic or visual or both, depending on his mood or inclination. He saw no sense in the dichotomy. He felt that Lowenfeld's critera for these artificial categories were insufficiently grounded in the reality of child development, that they were ill thought out and not precisely enough defined.

D'Amico is, in gerenal, opposed to verbal over-definitions or the labelling of any human being's characteristic, capacities or qualities. D'Amico seems to believe that to define is to limit, and so he avoided definition. In this way, D'Amico shows his sensitivity to his students and demonstrates his astute awareness of the effect of teacher attitude on student productivity and student self-evaluation. D'Amico's approach to education has something in it which, in a way, reminds me of the Asian concept of emtiness, symbolized by the hole in the center of old Chinese coins. It is a quiet dimension that provides space in which growth, fate, and opportunity can happen.

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"The Child is Father of the Man"-Wordsworth

Given the richness of this man's productivity, it seems fruitful to explore the sources of his own creativity in his youth. Freud has stated that a person's later career choices often stem from unresolved conflicts which occurred before the age of six. If there is any truth to this statement a partial proof must lie in D'Amico's life. I do not fully understand or agree with the part of the statement about "unresolved conflicts", but I do feel that a lack of closure to situations can serve as a powerful motivator or initiator to the development of later analagous situations. It seems that whatever a child or person does not do to his satisfaction (or do sufficiently) at an early age, he often feels compelled to repeat at a later stage of his development. The process can continue repeatedly until the person in question achieves satisfaction or mastery--until he "gets it out of his system".

Another possible explanation of why people choose their life's work might be simple attraction. If a person has gained success or recognition from a specific activity early on, he might be led to choose this area of successful operations as his life's work. It is, sometimes, really that simple. In D'Amico's case, that is what I beleive happened. His career choices stemmed directly from his early family and cultural experiences.

In this sense Victor D'Amico, Child, has certainly given birth to Victor D'Amico, Man. It has been D'Amico's great good fortune and art, to keep the Child Within alive and fully functional. He has had the good taste and sense to stay in touch with this wise and disciplined Italian-American Child of the early 20th century.

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D'Amico has managed to preserve this child person, imaginative and playful [illegible] intact within himself, to serve as a model and inspiration for his work with"children of all ages".

There is a metaphore in the gate to D'Amico's Art Carnivals--a piece of white metal, formed like a double-humped croquet wicket which outlines the shape of a four year old and a twelve year old. Children entering the Carnivals were obliged to pass through this "Magic Gate". The obvious message ~~implied~~ was that the Carnivals were created for children; adults were meant to stay out. The ~~metaphore~~ implied is Biblical: "Unless you become as a little child, you cannot enter the gates of paradise." The child-art paradise created by the Art Carnivals, was a protected, safe place in which children were free to grow and create without interference.

In a way, D'Amico is also making a statement to the effect that we should all approach artmaking and creativity with the attitude of awe and humility that little children have. By shutting adults out of his children's paradise, and allowing them only to look in on this children's world, through silent windows, he forces them to observe, without involvement. He helps adults to see what is going on and makes them value the process.

D'Amico,admits that children have been his best teachers. Through his Art Carnivals, he shows us how we can all learn from children. We must allow ourselves to re-discover the world through the play of artmaking. We must approach life with a sense of pleasureful anticipation. We must be willing to transcend failures; to try anew each day.

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I feel that a very real benefit can accrue from the study of the early lives and training of men of genius. In many cases,where sufficient information is available, valueable information can be extracted about the care, feeding and cultivation of this most rare species. Of course, I am partially joking when I make these statements--but only partially. As a mother and an artist-teacher, I really do believe that it is a part of my task to support the natural unfolding creative genius in the lives of all of those whom I touch. What better way to learn how to do this, than to study how it has already been done by other successful mothers and teachers.

In an age that seems to concentrate on destruction, and at a time when many young people are graduating from high school, not only functionally illiterate, but depressed and ill-equipped to join the work force, I feel it is our duty and privilege as teachers to seek out new and innovative was to inspire our students to tap into their own natural genius. The very best lessons which I have learned have been taught me by students. Perhaps we should all study the lives or better still the childhood lives and early educations of successful people, and attempt, thereby, to formulate some basic groundrules for our future professional operations.

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(now 45 pp ± to here)

Victor D'Amico: His Sources and Influences

Chapter I. In Nomen ist Omen .

Victor D'Amico's full name, Victor Edmond D'Amico, which he prefers to shorten to Victor E. D'Amico has an important overtone for the aficinado of Italian history. It was not too many years prior to D'Amico's birth that the renouned Sardinian king, Vittore Emannuele, had succeeded in uniting all of Italy's states into a single republic for the first time (1868). This early struggle and birth of democracy in Italy was accompanied by an overwhelming fever, the love of freedom and the King who had managed, if only for a moment, to make it manifest. Many children were named after Victor Emmanuel. Guiseppi Verdi's name was, in fact, an acronym for Vittore Emanuele Rei De Italia (VERDI). (1)

Verdi was a staunch Italian patriot. His music inspired riots and revolts against the Austrian rulers of Italy. D'Amico's father had an intense love for opera. Thus, it is not surprising that he named his son Victor E. D'Amico, a name which echos that of the Sardinian King as well as that of Verdi. (2)

The concomitant rise of nationalism and the attendant ascendance of a new sense of dignity and identity gave the Italians an inestimable pride. Of course this did not exist without a good measure of naive idealism and a hope that the "good things" which democracy had to offer (enlightenment, more equitable wages, and a better standard of living for all, as well as

(1) Brancolli, Louis, ed. The Opera Reader, New York. McGraw Hill, (c1953)

(2) See Appendix, p. 96-99

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a greater measure of humanism in the administration of social and political justice, and a long-lasting national unity, uninterrupted by further political upheavals, etc.)--that all these things would be forever secured to the Italian people.

Unfortunately, the dream, all too short-lived, proved to be accessible to only selected portions of the population, and only partially accessible at that. The disillusionment which set in did not, however, dull the appetite of those who had not received their just measure of these new freedoms. The more fortunate or perhaps adventuresome (foolhardy) of the part of the population who felt themselves unaffected by the new political reforms emigrated to the United States, where they hoped to realize their yet unfulfilled dreams. Victor D'Amico's parents were among this wave of immigrants.

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Chapter II. D'Amico's family origins--what ~~the~~ meant to him

Both of Victor D'Amico's parents were born near Naples. (1) They were country people from the small mountaneous villages to the north of the city, raised in the closed, stable and fixed society of almost tribal nature, typical of the peasantry of that time and place. Life consisted of an almost endless flow of rituals, routines, duties and obligations, usual and unusual happenings, giving it the order and predictability of traditions unbroken for generations which went before and which were yet to come. Both of his parents-to-be were intelligent, independent, proud, disciplined, extremely hardworking and strong. They emmigrated to the United States when they were still in their late teens during the 1890's. Victor was one of a family of ~~what was to grow to be~~ eleven children. (And, all the children survived into adulthood!)

Being born into such a tribe and to parents of such strong, courageous, and adventuresome stock, and being given a name like "Victor" already set D'Amico on the path to success at a young age. Living in a new culture gave the family room to grow and to explore, to expand. The structural basis of the old traditions, rules, and beliefs, provided the necessary support and stability for Victor's early operations. The air of the climate into which D'Amico was born was one of naive faith and hope and trust in the gifts which democracy had to offer mankind. (2)

(1) D'Amico's mother came from Chiarmonte; his father from Basrigard (From Personal Interview Dec 1979)

(2) Emphasized, no doubt, by the constant "sound surround" of heroic Italian opera.

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One can imagine or surmise the ecological balance in which the rural peasantry in Southern Italy must have lived at the turn of the century and the two decades which preceeded it. The shrewd observation of natural forces that enabled these people to wrest a living from the soil, comprised an understanding of the weather, the skies, the plants, the animals, the medicinal herbs, the soil, the seasons, the local material with which to build, erect fences, manufacture the necessary farm equipment, carry out irrigation, etc. Essentially, it was an ability to produce all that one needed to survive. This required patience, courage, stamina, endurance, wit, intelligence, vision, determination, imagination, humor, dreams, hope, and much physical and psychological strength. It also involved much self discipline and effort. These qualities were coupled with a high degree of personal independence and resourcefulness. These Italian immigrants were a people who had the wisdom to know how and where to push, and when and where to give up. These qualities seem to grow out of the earth, the sky and the mountains themselves, to infuse all forms of life. (Or, such was my observation during my stay in Pau in rural, mountainous, Southern France.) It was from such rugged stock that D'Amico came. The traditions of his family, bear all this past history of attitudes and attributes with them.

The family values echoed the past. Discipline, self-restraint, hard-work, independence, intelligence, imagination, cleverness, adaptablility, endurance, economical and appropriate use of materials and time, competition, cooperation, mutual help and support, all these were the lingua franca of the D'Amico tribe. These traits made the couple's emmigration to America a success. This same successful quality extended to the lives of their children.

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Chapter III. The Italian Temperament and How it Influenced D'Amico's Approach to Life. (1)

"Even though I do not know a word of your language, I can sense that there is what we Italians call a "sympathetique" amongst the people, there is a warmth in common, a sense of belonging and susceptibility to each other's feelings amongst your people. (2)

D'Amico's work shows, for better or for worse, the recognizable stamp of the Italian (national) genius. It is at one and the same time a work which is floridly passionate in its inspiration and productivity, but ← it is also focused, purposeful, economically disciplined in approach and methodology. D'Amico's later work at MOMA bears many traces of his early life in an Italian-American surround.

(1) This material is from a variety of sources: Luigi Barzini's The Italian London, The Reader's Union, 1966), as well as from my own personal observations, from having lived in a former Italian colony, L b a, and my extensive travels in Italy. These impressions have been combined with my teaching in the North End of Boston, and work in Sommerville, both sections having a large Italian population. Moreover, I worked as an art-therapist in a group home run by an Italian woman, a mother of eight. All these experiences plus others, gained from Italian friends and relatives by marriage, were given a focus by the reading of Barzini. Of course, the basic point of reference lies in my personal interviews with D'Amico, himself. To understand the Italian mentality, I found my studies in Latin and Italian useful [illegible]

(2) D'Amico, Victor:"What can Administrators do to Promote Art Education" from Bhavan, A Bal:The Children's Art Carnival in India, 1963-64--A Report. New Delhi, The National Children's Museum (n. d.)

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The Italian Love of Spectacle.

" THE DRAMATIC BACKGROUND:
THE CURTAIN RISES ON THE PAST

All the world's a stage
And all the men and women merely players.
--SHAKESPEARE.

These lines contain a good deal of poetry, but they also contain much truth, for every man is an actor, and his life is the play, and the background against which he moves is the stage. You are an actor, I am an actor. What we do is our play; we make it up as we go on living each day. Our little sorrows, joys, and tears furnish the pathos of the play. Our friends and relatives are the major and minor characters of this drama. Our home, our school, our place of business are the scenery of the play, each new scene making a new set. Some of us are conscious of the play we are creating, many are not; yet, conscious or not the play goes on.

These are the opening words of the first chapter of Victor's D'Amico's very first published professional book, THEATER ART (Peoria, Ill, The Manual Arts Press, (1931.)

The Italian character is one which adores "spectacles." All Life is a stage for the Italian. The street scenes in any Italian neighborhood are a medly of sights, smells, textures, forms, colors, and sounds. Particularly and especially the latter. The Italians love to "fa rumore" They make noise purely for its own sake; not only noise but commotion as well. Itali will do anything to be noticed. Italian cities, since the times of ancient Rome, are supplied with copious open or public spaces, ranging in size from the smallest of squares to the most gigantic and grandiose of forums. Ever

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culture invents an architecture which goes hand in hand its linguistic ~~chor-~~ rhythms, its national "character" ~~esthetics~~, it philosophic concepts, its ethical and economic values. Italy is no exception. The Italians love their open spaces, with benches (even present in the ruins at Leptis Magna and Sabbratha in Lybia) to enable one to watch the passing scene, the "theatrical happenings", to "gossip" about human behavior, or to be seen. The Italians have a love of being looked at; they literally "play to their audiences", and mostly overact, at that. This is especially true of Neapolitans. The Italian language is mainly a visual one. Its verbal accompaniment providing a sound accompaniment which is either in harmony with the visual message, or perhaps a bit dischordant, for emphasis. Italian abounds in facial expressions, gestures, signs and movements. Even posture has its importance. Physical closeness can signify either a friendly or inimical intimacy, as pointed out by Hall.(1) This being true, the Italian child learns early on to track at least two or more events simultaneously. D'Amico was no exception. Perception, for the Italian child is less linear, less verbal, than it might be for, say the average "American" child (pre-television). In the Italian language, itself, much is implied through words, and not stated openly. Many events, moreover, are suggested by opposite verbal statements, (protestations of denial, etc.)

Italians seem more intuitive ~~or left-handed ("right-brained"?)~~ in their approach to life. Even small children learn, early on, the art of verbal dissimulation. Italian reasoning seems more heuristic. D'Amico is an outstanding example of this. Italians (and here too, D'Amico is no exception) are especially talented at seeing things from a systemic (over-view) vantage point. They tend to grasp situations as wholes. They adore playing with the balances within systems, like composers conducting their own music.

(1) Hall, Edmund T.: The Hidden Dimension. 1965.

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Because of these things, Italians develop the ability to observe keenly, especially the subtle variations in posture, gesture, inflection, intonation, and meaning.

All of these things are true, in the main, of most Italians, and, more specifically of the particular Italian we are considereing here, in this paper. These characteristics laid the groundwork for D'Amico's early attraction to the theater. He was, as a child, thoroughly involved in writing and acting in plays for the local parish church. He served as an acolyte, observing the spectacle and ritual of the Church. He witnessed the street fairs in the Italian section of New York where he grew up, the pomp, festivities, and processions, the funerals, the games, and the displays of food, the people, the architecture, the squares, the animals, sometimes from the windows of the ground-floor room which he shared with his brother, Paris, at other times from the center of the action--the street itself.

Whatever his viewpoint, D'Amico was, early on, caught up in this love of spectacle, of which he viewed himself a part, a principal actor, and, sometimes a director, as well as a spectator.

The Baroque Aspects of the Italian Temperament

Barzini states in his brilliantly amusing book that "Italian reality is generally still a Baroque reality."(1) Barzini goes on to define the baroque:

(1) Barzini, Luigi: op. cit, p 299

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> Baroque is a mysterious term. Some scholars (Benedetto Croce among them) believe that it derived from an artificial word (b-a-r-o-c-o) invented by medieval scholars to teach dull pupils a particularly intricate from of logical reasoning, the fourth mode of the second figure of the syllogism, to be exact. Others think it is the old trade name for the oddly-shaped monstrous pearls still known as perle barocche in Italy. The two hypotheses are not in contradiction. Somehow the term came to be used metaphorically to describe anything pointlessly complicated, otiose, capricious and eccentric, similar to rarely used syllogisms or irregularly bulging pearls: twisted theories, elliptical and over-ornate poetry, elaborate and gaudy architecture. (1)

To label the Italian mentality "Baroque" as a grand generalization would be to render that culture a disservice. In the case of Barzini, the term baroque, used as a metaphore, however, not only delights, but also instructively amuses me. It has a certain merit in that it enables us to structure or focus our thoughts, allowing us to follow or trace certain lines of development in the Italian character. And, if the term "baroque" is not adequately definitive of the whole of Italian character in all situations, it does bear a certain verisimiltude to some aspects of the Italian temperament during the time period in question (1880-1930).

Barzini goes on to define the character of the original Baroque epoc.

> "Absolute monarche flattened out all rivals and ruled practically without opposition...The minor principalities and republics were left without real responsibility and autonomy....Centralized power developed the instruments for efficient rule: laws were codified and enforced, bureaucracy became powerful and quickly proliferated...Man was practically alone before the will of his soverign....
>
> The king held monopolies of the main indispensable products, which he alone could export or import.... Stable and pyramidal hierarchies were established in all fields. The armies, acquired organizational charts, uniforms, an iron discipline and a well-defined chain of command.,.. Cities were no longer the spontaneous and untidy products of man's needs, passions and tastes: they were designed by the king's architects.... (2)

(1) Idem.
(2) Idem.

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> Religious life was strictly regimented... Morality was imposed, dogmas and principles were defined, rites standardized. In both (Protestant and Catholic) camps orthodoxy was sternly defended...
>
> Society appeared formed of two main layers. At the top there were a few grands seigneurs. At the bottom the vast ragged, picturesque and powerless crowds.....Most of the time, they were kept happy in their misery by the distribution of alms, the sale of cheap flour, the splendid performance of public spectacles and the clubs of policemen. The show was all important...Historical events were, whenever possible, staged like sumptuous theatrical productions. (1)

Barzini goes on to describe the foreign expeditions, the general futility and tedium of everyday life which was punctuated by the large spectacles and the diversions of public events. He describes the invention of theatricl forms:

> "The age was one of display, make-believe and emotions; the only reality was that of the imaginations. Ingenious artists designed stage-sets of miraculous splendour and built stage-machinery to produce incredible effects, storms at sea, floods of real water, flying birds or angels, instantaneous changes of decor, fantastic panoramas stretching apparently to infinity. The
>
> ...The Teatro dell'arte influenced all European theatres. Words percolated from the Teatro to all common languages. ...The word trovarobe used in Russian to define "fake" objects made of papier mache, comes from this source. Trovarobe was the man employed to 'find things', to be sure that all the props needed were on the stage at the right time' later he became the stage-manager, responsible for the scenery and the illusions. (2)

Barzini also correctly attributes to this era the invention of opera, stemming from the Music of Monteverdi.

(1) Ibid., pp. 300-301.
(2) Ibid., pp. 306-307.

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Barzini points out the parallels between Baroque Italy and the United States of our days. Then, as now, people lived in the fear of large and all-consuming destructive wars. "Behind it all, however, behind the splendour and the ingeniousness of everything, was a tragic feeling of dispair, a spiritual frustration so intense as to be embarrassing." (1)

The Baroque, Barzini concludes, was a time in which everything was done "not for itself alone but principally for the effect it would produce". The Baroque, as Barzini describes it was "a frenzied search for consolation and revenge against the crude and overbearing foreign devils."

> **As Croce says, 'Italians lost whatever reputation they had for earnestness of their intellectual production; their talents gave them the name of excellent actors, singers, composers, decorators, versifiers. They were praised as a"popàlo d'artisti", or "a people of artists", at times despised as "charlatans" and"clowns". (2)**

From the preceding paragraphs, which describe Barzini's insights into the Baroque aspects of the Italian mentality, we are presented with a description of a rich array of qualities or characteristics, similar to those which served as forces in the formation of D'Amico's character and work.

The love of efficiency, of the systematization of problems, the single-mindedness of purpose, the invention of a highly structured methodology in his approach to problem solving, the understanding of heirarchies, the use of intricate planning, down to the last, minute detail, all are characteristics of D'Amico, which he shares with the Barzini interpretations of the Baroque characteristics of Italians. I am sure, however, in this context, that

(1) Ibid. , p. 308. This parallels our "Age of Anxiety."
(2) Ibid., p. 309.

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it is by no mere accident that D'Amico's first great artistic love was the theatre. The theatre is an art form which, like opera, incorporates all other art forms. D'Amico's early love of the theatre flourished in his studies with Norman Bel Geddes,(1) a master stage set designer during the 1920's. It culminated in D'Amico's publication of a book, Theatre Art , in 1931. (The Manual Arts Press, Peoria, Illinois). In this book I was particularly struck by D'Amico's attention to the description of stage effects and how to produce them. There was also a marvellous chapter on lighting and it's effect on the emotional tone of the play.(2)

The love of the theatre, grounded in the Baroque traditions of D'Amico'a culture, was, then, "fanned" and cultivated by the Italian street carnivals, his early involvement with the church, and the educational opportunities afforded by his work at Fieldston, as well as by his geographic situation (New York City.)

In D'Amico's character I see something of the Trovarobe. This is especially marked in his playful and humorous approach to sculpture, and the creation of his assemblage-like light boxes. His way of creating a place in which art could happen, shows marked traces of this early interest in and love for the theatre. In his Art Carnivals D'Amico uses the totality of approach of an Opera Director. He is truly one of the most outstanding contemporary descendants of the Italian Baroque popolo d'artisti.

(1) He was the creator of the Futurama at the New York World's Fair, 1939. (He is also the father of Barbara Bel Geddes, of Television fame.)
(2) Lighting in D'Amico's Children's Art Gallery at MOMA was extremely important. Also, a later manifestation of D'Amico's love of stage effects could be seen in the motivational areas of his Art Carnivals, e.g. the mechanical cat that "arched" its back when petted; the "color organ", etc.

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The early introduction of Modern Art into the United States from Europe took place via two American photographers, Steichen and Steiglitz. Steichen, who was also a painter, had studied in France where he photographed both Rodin and Matisse in their studios, together with their works. Steichen also viewed the works of Van Gogh and Monet, with which he was very impressed. Steichen, Steiglitz, et. al, owned a gallery in New York City, called the Gallery of the Photo-Seccessionists, or later Gallery 291. In this place Picasso, Matisse, Rodin and others exhibited their works, prior to the Armory show in 1911.

In Steichen's last book he speaks about Gordon Craig's book on the art of theatre, with the implication that modern theatre design and stage setting were accepted in the United States long before modern art was. This may have served as the "bridge" to D'Amico's later attraction to "Modern Art." It is also interesting that both Steichen and Steiglitz were Modern Artists in their own right, producing many outstanding abstracts in their chosen medium, photography. The parallels between the development of Modern Art and the discovery and development of photography are fascinating and irresistable. At more than one point I see a great interdependence in the histories of the two.(1)

(1) Steichen, Edward. A Life in Photography, New York, Doubleday, 1963. (Published in collaboration with The Museum of Modern Art.).

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Chapter IV. The Italian Immigrants to the U. S. in the 1890's (1)

The Italians who emmigrated from their homeland to the new world and other parts of the globe left in various stages. The people from the North of Italy left, starting about the mid-19th century. They were primarily shop-keepers, and small business men, who left, armed with a fair sum of cash, and once arrived in their new home, set about establishing businesses, and rather successfully so. The Italians from the South of the country, from Sicily and the area of Naples, were poorer, and primarily they were peasants. It was from this latter group that D'Amico's family came. Their reasons for leaving were as much political as they were economic (the two are usually inseparable).

Italy had been sequentially divided into smaller and smaller estates. The land had been progressively deforested, and this, in turn, had a severe and adverse, although gradual effect on the climate, and subsequently the demography of the area. The lands were poor and the rains were too heavy in the autumn and winter, and fell in great torrents, leaching nutriments from the soil and causing floods in low-lying areas, as well as landslides. The course of streams changed; the roots of the trees which grew in great forests and held moisture in the soil were no longer available to stay the relentless erosions. In the spring and the summer there was not enough rain to

(1) The history of the people who emmigrated to this country from the southernmost parts of Italy during the latter part of the 19th century is unbelieveably poignant. My sources for this section are:

Luciano Iorizzo: The Italian Americans, New York, Twayne Publishers, Inc. (c1971)
Broughton Brandenburg: Imported Americans: the story of the experiences of a disguised American and his wife studying the immigration question. New York, Frederic A. Stokes Co (1904)
Bruno Rosselli: Our Italian Immigrants; their racial backgrounds. New York, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Publishers, c 1927
Robert F. Foerster: The Italian Emmigration of our Times. Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1924.
Francesco Cardasco & Eugene Bacchioni: The Italians; social backgrounds of an American group. Clifton, N. J. Augustus M. Kelley, Publishers, 1974.

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adequately grow crops. Coupled with primitive forestry management, were the primitive farming methods, and an almost feudal system of land ownership and tenancy (with absentee landlords). Many farm families were barely able to eke out a living from the poor soil.

In addition to these difficulties, the deforestation led to the creation of many stagnant pools. (These were created by the spring floods). They provided ideal breeding grounds for the anopholes mosquito, which brought malaria to epidemic proportions.

Add to this a poor or non-existent public health system, and a dysfunctional public educational system (the majority of peasants were illiterate), and one begins to appreciate the nature of the Italian peasant immigrant of the 1890's. He was both shrewd and conservative, extremely hard-working (even the children worked full time from an early age), and not overly trusting. Life was, in fact, so hard that only fully productive members of the community could afford to be fed and cared for. The sick, the aged and the lame were, for the most part neglected and disrespected. It was a very real struggle to survive.

Most peasants were versed in herbal medicine, and many held magical or superstitious beliefs, mixed with an earthy peasant-like almost deistic form of Christianity. Their diet was predominantly vegetarian; bread was the main staple. Wine was enjoyed only or mainly by working men , and, at best, chiefly during festivals.

The government was highly ineffectual. There was an enormous amount of bureaucracy, and this was compounded with a monolithic, almost feudal and dishonest political system. The illiteracy of the peasants rendered them politically impotent.

The south of Italy was lacking in industry, and when, during the Risorgimento the tarrifs were removed, and goods could move more freely throughout Italy, the unindustrialized south became even poorer.

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Adult males grew to be strong, but not very tall. A successive genetic weakening took place through poor nutrition. There was, however, little T. B., due to the dryness of the climate.

The causes of emmigration from Sicily were similar, and even more extreme. The influence of the mafia, and the high rate of crime, the tradition of omerta, only added to the desire of the peasant to seek to fulfill the promises of the Risorgimento in the U. S. A.

The southern Italians, once arrived in this country were very much discriminated against by the already-established northern Italians. The illiteracy, their customs and beliefs, did not help them to absorb easily into the American culture. The Irish and Germans who had immigrated earlier on, viewed them with hatred and suspicion as competators in the work market. Their physical state made them particularly susceptible to T. B., especially those who settled in the damp and dark ghettos of large cities. These newly-arrived Italians found, perhaps, the best acceptance in California, where almost everyone else was also "newly arrived."

The bulk of the Southern Italians who arrived here from the 1870's onward were exploited not only by Americans but also by the padrone system, established within their own ranks. The Italian women, who joined the work force were perhaps, the most discriminated against of all the new immigrants, as were the children.

D'Amico's family, by contrast, provided for their children. Their mother was not only not illiterate, she was highly intelligent and accomplished. Their father provided them with two apartments in which to dwell. Also, their father had a profession, a viable and dignified means of providing for his large family. That both D'Amico's parents were strict and over-protective is understandable, given the conditions which they had left behind, and given the state of existence of many of their fellow compatriots in the U. S. A.

Another way in which D'Amico's family found itself at variance with the majority of Italian immigrant families, was in its openness. D'Amico's mother appears to have had more freedom than the majority of Italian immigrant

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women of the time. There is an almost Oriental tradition which surrounds women of the south of Italy, dating back to the time of the Saracens. The traditions of silence, endurance, and deep wisdom, which I have observed in the southern Italian culture stem, I believe, from this same source. It is almost something which you have to live or experience to understand. The culture, as well as the landscape in southern Spain and in southern Italy are very similar to that which exists in North Africa and the Middle East in general.

It is this quality of silence, and the intuitive wisdom which D'Amico shows in his work which are, perhaps, the most illusive or non-discursive of this qualities to describe in words. It is, I beleive, these same qualities of character which appealed to Adler, his mentor and guide, from the Ethical Cultural School, whom D'Amico himself described in the following way: "In his old age he grew to look more and more like a Chinese Mandarin, with a soft shuffle in his walk....."

These Italian immigrant traditions contributed to D'Amico's character a tenacity, a respect for hard work, and a desire to excell which have enabled him to achieve as much as he has, in spite of overwhelming odds. (1).

(1) See Appendix, pages, 104-108.

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Chapter V. The Structure of the Italian Family.

The Italian family is characterized by Barzini as being a closed and tightly-knit unit, a strong refuge for its members in times of trouble, crisis or distress, and a haven for bringing up the large quantites of children which it produces to preserve itself. The Italian family is an orderly, limit-setting structure which demands a loyalty and faithfulness, exceeding those demanded by an any other political entity external to itself. The Italian family is the conservator of the ideals and traditions of the Italian culture at large. It provid its members with a well-defined point of reference. The integrity of the family must be preserved at all costs.

It is axiomatic that the Italian family spoils its children, especially its sons, with love, attention, material objects, and as good an education as the family can afford. The place of women within this structure has been much publicized. Women, in traditional Italian families, are placed firmly within the family circle; at its center is, of course, the mother. Her position is as protected as a jeweled fountain in an enclosed Arabian Palace Garden. She rules the family by subtle, "passive" and persistent means. Barzini asserts that the Italian family is a crypto-matriarchy. That the woman's role is often imperceptible, but that her power is irrefutable. The man's role, on the other hand, is one which forms an interface with the external culture. The father is free enter and leave the circle, but his duty is to protect and support and defend his wife and children, parents, sisters and brothers.

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Chapter VI The Role of D'Amico's Family and "Significant Others."

The D'Amico family (tribe, might be a better word) consisted of Mama, Papa, and eleven children, as well as diverse and sundry Aunts, Uncles, and cousins. I do not recall D'Amico mentioning his grandmother, but she must have figured in the picture somehow, as well.

D'Amico, himself, was the first to acknowledge the profound and extensive influence this strong group exerted on his development. As a graduate student at Columbia University he wrote a book about his unusual family for a Master's Thesis. It is entitled: My Mother Had Eleven. Although D'Amico never produced any children of his own, his loyalty to the D'Amico family children is apparent even to the present day. Not only is he loyal to the children, but he entirely supports his older sister, and he was the sole support of his widowed mother in her later years.

The classic Italian family pattern found expression in the D'Amico household. D'Amico's father, a "ladies' clothing suit designer," was industrious, inventive and hard-working, but distant. He loved opera, had a volatile Mediterranean temper, and above all wished to see his children progress beyond his own financial and social success.. He wished them good educations and fine, professional jobs. D'Amico describes his father in the following way:

> In some way he was a step apart from the integrated confusion and excitement that characterized our family. He was a very serious and stern person with clear-cut, chisseled features...grey eyes but dark hair and a mustache like Kaiser Wilhelm's. In fact he bore a strong resenblance to the Kaiser and his stern nature made him seem more Teutonic than Italian. He came to America when he was eighteen years old and died at the age of eighty-four but he never lost his slight accent. We seldom

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> spoke to my father except when he spoke to us. He would start in English but suddenly break into Italian. Since I didn't understand Italian, I had to guess what he wanted. But, that wasn't difficult because the tenor of his voice revealed his purpose. Father had a quick and violent temper which flared up often and easily. He always spoke Italian when he was angry and it began in a low rumble, gathering force until it became a real thunder. On such occasions we would all take cover until it was over. Papa's anger was like a summer storm. It would start suddenly, reach a high crescendo of noise and then die out with occasional claps of noise. After these outbursts my father would put on his hat and go out, slamming the front door after him with such force that it shook the entire house. There was a period of calm and then doors all over the house would open. Whoever happened to be the lookout would shout "the coast is clear" and we would all gravitate to the kitchen and resume our activities.(1)

D'Amico's mother was also hardworking and ambitious for her children. She was, although lacking in a formal education, highly intelligent, and well informed. She read medical books, and had a great store of knowledge about herbal medicine. It was due to this talent that her entire family survived the great influenza epidemic of 1917. In D'Amico's recollection, coffin bearing the bodies of neighbors' dead children, were daily brought down the stairs from the adjacent apartments.

In no specific part of D'Amico's autobiography(2) is there a concisely drawn portrait of his mother. Descriptions of this strong and enduring woman, however, are interspersed throughout the work. Her presence gives a form of underlying continuity to the whole work. D'Amico begins his autobiography with the following vignette:

> It seems as if there were always eleven children in our family even though I clearly remember when Elinor and Armand were born. I was sent out to get the midwife just before Elinor arrived and the house was in a turmoil for a long time afterward. It took weeks before things got back to normal and we reclaimed our personalities and returned to our individual duties without deference to the baby's comfort or needs. The day before Armand, the last of us, was born I was in the kitchen helping Mama. We always called her "Mama" and still do. To change the word to Mother would set up some kind of estrangement in my mind so that I would feel I was talking about some one else or a kind of generalization of mothers, instead of

(1) D'Amico, Victor: My Mother Had Eleven, unpublished autobiography, written as a Master's Thesis for Columbia University, New York, 1929. First Vignette, "My Mother Had 11", p. 10

(2) The parts that I have seen, at any rate!

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my Mother, so it will be Mama from now on.

Mama was at the sink washing some lettuce, when she suddenly dropped what she was doing and almost ran into the bedrooom and shut her door. In fact the door didn't quite shut and I could see through the open slit that she was sitting on the bed, her body rigid, her face turned up in agony with her eyes closed. The veins stood out on her forehead and she dug her hands into the bed covers. I was alarmed. Without waiting a second, I dashed out of the front door and ran the four blocks to Dr. Salino's. We had graduated from a midwife to a doctor. Fortunately he was in and since he had paid many visits to our house, we had a friendly association. I told him about Mama and said I thought that she was dying or something extreme of that kind. He only smiled and sat down and told me that it was normal and went on to describe in a simple way the rudiments of labor and childbirth that left me speechless, but he promised to come to see Mama that night if it would make me feel better. I walked back home bitter and chagrined. Why did a woman have to suffer to bring a child into the world? What kind of a plan was that? And eleven of us--we all brought the same kind of suffering. It didn't seem right and I began to question God's ways when I suddenly realized that I was probably committing some kind of sacrilege or at least a venal sin. I would have to confess this on Saturday to Father McKenny and he would be displeased. So I crossed myself and directed my thoughts in another direction.

When I got back Mama was in the kitchen draining the spaghetti. She turned to look at me but a cloud of steam enveloped her face and I was relieved not to meet her gaze. I hoped that Dr. Salino would not mention my visit. Armand was born the next day and the house went through the same disruption as Elinor has caused.(1)

The D'Amico dwelling consisted of two apartments. During the flu epidemic Concetta D'Amico kept the well children on one side and the sick children in the other apartment. Her husband sewed small white cotton vests for each sick child, and a poultice of herbal clay was applied to the chest of each child, and then covered over with hot towels, topped with the thick quilted jackets. Herbal tinctures and decoctions were doubtlessly administered orally, and it is highly probably that copious quantities of herbal teas were consumed. Concetta D'Amico's understanding of anatomy, physiology, and homeopathic medicine served Victor and his brothers and sisters in good stead on more than one occasion.

(1) D'Amico, Victor: My Mother Had Eleven, "First Vignette, My Mother Had 11", p. 2

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D'Amico's mother was, in many other ways, a formal and very precise, disciplined person. Victor describes her as "A wonderful mother! She had to be, she had 11 children!"

D'Amico's Father's Studio

The two apartments were adequate to the number of children. Victor's father worked in the home. Victor's early memories are of a place littered with small pieces of cloth, left over from his father's fine tailoring work. His father's studio was a wonderful soft world of textures and colors, a material-rich environment which surely fired the imagination of young Victor. It layed the groundwork for his later love of collage, and the introduction of collage into the field of art education. D'Amico finds it a marvellous medium for children's art, as there are many choices and many decisions to make. In fact, long before D'Amico had had direct exposure to the collages of Braque and Picasso via MOMA, he used these very scraps, left over from his father's work, in his work with children. This was his father's gift to him, and ultimate acknowledgement his. He would set out on the subway, carrying two suitcases full of such material, dressed in a summer business suit, replete with straw hat, to work with children from the ghettos.

The practice of using small bits of material to make a new picture had its antecedent in European "folk art" (quilting, inlay of straw, etc.) and artisanry--(inlayed chests, mosaic, etc.)

D'Amico's father listened to opera almost constantly. The influence of the tempo, music, voices, pauses, and the intimacy with brothers and sisters, all were a part of D'Amico's early background. When I once asked D'Amico: "When did you decide to become an artist?" , he replied: "I have always known that I was an artist." As a child he used to compete with friends, arriving at school extra early in order to be able to cover the sidewalks with drawings.

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Early Adversities.

As with most Italian immigrant fathers, D'Amico's father was dead set against his son becoming an artist. D'Amico senior had but one thought: "What will I tell my friends when they ask me where you will be going to school?" My friends will expect me to answer, 'My son will study to become a lawyer or a doctor!' "How will I tell them that my son wants to become an artist?" His father threw him out of the house. D'Amico, undaunted, took a janitorial job in order to pay rent to his mother, for the privilege of staying at home, while studying art, at school. During the whole time of his studies, his father never spoke to him--not even one word. This punishment of silence lasted until one day when the local newspaper carried an article on D'Amico on the front page, announcing an award that Victor had won. From that moment on, Victor's father, pleased and delighted with his son's first steps to success, supported and praised his work.

D'Amico's own unwavering devotion to the goal which he has achieved through unrelenting hard and purposeful work forms the basis of his success. His desire to achieve and succeed within his chosen field was only heightened by the examples of struggle, distress, and failure which he saw close at hand, in his neighborhood as well as in his own family. The high expectations held for him by both his parents were only exceeded by the high expectations he held for himself.

D'Amico grew up in a time and place when analgesics and "wonder drugs" had not, as yet, been developed. He both witnessed and participated in a large amount of human suffering. One of his early experiences of death occurred when Victor and his older brother, Louis, discovered the dead body of his aunt (his mother's sister), a victim of suicide.

His first, great love, a young woman who tutored him in chemistry, had to be renounced because she was a victim of T. B., at the time a dreaded illness without any known medical cure.(1)

(1) D'Amico's own mother had been suspected of having T. B., and had lived for a while in a room apart from her family (from personal interview, June, 1981)

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As a portion of his growing up years were spent in the "Little Italy" section of the Bronx, he was able to witness a large slice of life, right in the streets of his neighborhood.

being aware of the seriousness of human existence, the importance of the few chances at success and happiness which are offered to us all, gave D'Amico, early on, a sense of purposefullness. He was a good and serious student, an obedient and respectful son. If D'Amico witnessed the cruelly incontrovertable caprices of an indifferent fate, he also experienced the abundance with which heaven can crown her favorite sons. These youthful experiences made him grow in resignation, resolution, wisdom, and compassion. He learned how to transcend the difficulties of the "givens" of his situation.

Security within a complex structure

D'Amico says that he always knew he was a teacher, because in a large family, you grow up being one. His earliest recollections are of reading to his younger brothers and sisters, and teaching them how to cope with life. He knew his place within the scheme of things. And always there were many people of all sorts, ages and persuasions in his world. So, in spite of his early limitations, or perhaps because of them, D'Amico's young life had a security, manifested in an orderliness and predictability, coupled with a sense of fate. He always had a definite identity and a definite role to play within the scheme of things. There were very real and specific expectations and demands made of him. His contributions were correspondingly real and important.

D'Amico had many aunts, uncles, cousins, etc. There were special customs, rituals, hollidays, food, and always Sundays. Special times demanded special clothing (1) There were demarcated and specific sets of time sequences. Life afforded him a sense of mastery and closure. D'Amico was secure in his childhood explorations. He was not afraid to take risks. All his brothers and sisters took care of each other. There was a definite separation

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between the child and the adult worlds. There was a great security in being a child. There was a good balance between freedom and limitation. In his large family, he discovered the realities of life, death and suffering joy and pain, early on. These early experiences helped him to accept without fear the struggle and tumult of life from the outset. It is this fearlessness which makes it possible for his imagination to soar.

(1) See Appendix, page 60,

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VICTOR D'AMICO: HIS SOURCES AND INFLUENCES

Chapter VII

Victor D'Amico's Temperament. Victor D'Amico was, as a child, as he now is, very small of stature, physically small, that is.(I have always been struck by the fact that many of the world's most renouned leaders were scarcely more than five feet in height, eg. Napoleon, Maximillian, Gogol, Louis XIV, etc.) All of these people became giants in their own right, in spite of their small size. (Or perhaps because of it?) There is an evolutionary principle that the smaller, more adaptive forms of life always survive, while the larger, more specialized groups are doomed to failure; for example. shrews vs dinosaurs. There is a corellative artistic principle which states that monumentality has nothing to do with size, but rather with vision in execution.

Both these principles evoke rememberances of how D'Amico was as a child. Even from his earliest years D'Amico was gifted with extraordinary qualities of leadership. He has had, from his earliest recollections, a sense of seriousness and purposefullness, coupled with a goodnatured optimism, and an unswerving determination to reach his goals. His manner is gracious, patient, forbearant.

The child that was (and, partially, still is) D'Amico, although physically quite small, was mentally and physically quick, bright, loving, adaptable and nurturing. And still today D'Amico has an attractive and comfortable manner about him. He is a person one simply enjoys being with. In spite of (or because of) his many impressive accomplishments, D'Amico is an extremely modest man, always willing to let others shine, but at the same time he is capable of a totally disciplined analysis of any situation in which he finds himself. This quality alone would enable him to be a good teacher. Coupled with the ability to translate his needs assessments into viable teaching strategies which will empower the student to exceed even his own expectations, these analytical qualities make D'Amico an outstanding teacher.

His cultural heritage, combined with his own temperamental inclinations, a traditional love of poetry, music and art, only serve to enhance his own self-presentation. These qualities further his professional and personal reputation. His membership in a large and industrous family provided him with the self-assurance, the emotional support, and the ability to survive in the professional world.

His outstanding talent both for art, for words, and dealing with people has attracted the attention of many important and well-placed persons who were in a position to help him succeed.

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A world renouned Science Historian, Stephen J. Gould, once hypothesized that the major genetic mutations ~~took~~ like place first in small but isolated populations. By analogy, I should like to hypothesize that the same thing is true of social and educational "mutations". Without the protection of a small but safe place, and the assiduous efforts of a small but devoted band of helpers, few really important social or cultural changes have a chance of succeeding. D'Amico found both of these in the Museum of Modern Art, where he founded his own education department. Innate in D'Amico's own temperament was the intuition (or you might call it instinct) and the good luck to know when and where to place his efforts. And his efforts were considerable. D'Amico has always been a "workaholic". When he began his career with the Museum of Modern Art he held a full-time position as the Head of the Art Department at the Fieldston School. In the evening, after a quick supper, he would go on to the Museum, where he would begin his work, planning travelling exhibits for the New York City Board of Education, for the school students, and gradually, over a period of years, developing the entire complex structure of his Education Department.

Included in the above was a natural ability to pick good people, and to know how to manage them, as well as how to administrate/and develop his total program. This, I attribute to his early years, helping to care for his younger brothers and sisters. These early experiences developed not only his patience and modesty, but also his sense of humor, balance, self-discipline, and intense love of people--his humanism.

D'Amico's clean-cut and pleasant appearance, his modesty and impeccable manners and dress, have won him the admiration of many people along the way, ever since his early days. But these qualities which gave him a charming manner and pleasant appearance were only one side of the picture; they only partly masked his sincere dedication and the intensity of his desire to achieve, to make a real contribution to society and to "become someone".

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Fortunately, D'Amico was also blessed with the extraordinary talent, the vision, the intelligence and energy to fulfill his dreams. Early on in his professional life, he developed a diplomatic approach to communication. As a young child he was both poetic and intrepid in his behavior. The intensity of his temperament was moderated by the pressures of life in a large and demanding European immigrant family. A low point in that young life occurred when he was little more than 8 years of age. A struggle with a younger brother took place in the alley beside his home, over a piece of board, which D'Amico was intending to use in a construction of some sort. The younger brother ~~struggled~~ fought to wrest the piece of wood from Victor, and as a result, fell over backwards, impaleing himself on a large and rusty spike, attached to a discarded home-made merry-go-round, which had been fabricated by his older brother. The white stillness of the younger sibling, immediately following the accident, accompanied by the hysterical screams of his older sister, who had viewed the accident from the window, convinced [redacted] Victor that his younger brother had died, and that he was to blame. While the other family members rushed the bleeding and unconscious child to the hospital, D'Amico disappeared and hid himself inside an old, unused flour bin in the pantry of his home. There he remained for a full day and one-half, his own arm injured and throbbing with pain. (He had hurt it in his attempt to close the bin after himself.) He stayed, cramped up in this small, musty place while mice crawled over his feet, at night In this tiny, dark [redacted] tin box D'Amico was at times unconscious, or awake trembling and without food or water or the chance to go to the bathroom. He remained in total silence. ~~His~~ guilt, ~~and~~ fears, and nightmarish visual memories ~~were exclusively on his mind~~ obsessed him, together with an immense remorse and sadness. He wanted to die, and imagined that the rest of his family wished him dead also. It was a night of terror and hell. Fortunately, his brother survived, apparently

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without disability. The incident only served to increase D'Amico's sensitivity, making him understand even more deeply how precious human life is.

As extraordinary in his energy level as he was ingenious, D'Amico spent many spare hours constructing and inventing objects with his older brother, Paris. Even at that time D'Amico was amazingly perserverant in the tasks he set himself. He worked at night as a janitor, even during junior high school. He attended Cooper Union (nights) at the same time that he attended Evander Childs High School (days). He had to lie about his age in order to get accepted into Cooper Union, where he studied design and tayloring, to appease his father.

The art books which D'Amico ~~put together~~ wrote, during his adolesence, are amazingly neat and well put together. He also managed to write a book of poetry, which he had privately published at his own expense, during these years. D'Amico has enjoyed a rare and extraordinary combination of gifts, education, training, support and luck from the outset.

Finally, the ability to endure, to survive, the extraordinary energy, and capacity to bear up under stress, the ability to let go, to live exactly in the moment, these are all personal characteristics or traits which D'Amico has apparently possessed from his very earliest years.

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Strong material here. Autobiog seems amazing

VICTOR D'AMICO: HIS SOURCES AND INFLUENCES

Chapter VIII

Early childhood play, dreams, fantasies, traumas, visions, images.

My Mother had Eleven +

In his as yet unpublished autobiography, D'Amico speaks of his relationship with his brothers and sisters, and frequently addresses his childhood play, and images. This work, together with the personal interviews, are my sources for this section. I shall begin with D'Amico's description of his eldest brother.

> Louis was the eldest of the seven boys. He was called "Louis the tough guy" and was the leader of a gang. He also had girls. These both fascinated me, especially the girls, although I never saw any of them. I had a respect that amounted almost to a reverence for Louis, because he could do what he wanted. He had no household chores to do; he could go out and play right after school. In fact he didn't have to report from school but came home whenever he chose. Louis was favored not because he was the first boy but he had had Bright's disease when he was eleven years old and almost died. He was in bed eleven months and it was only because of Mama's medical genius and constant care that he pulled through. When he recovered he was given his own way to make up for the months in bed. None of us envied him, but this autonomy that he enjoyed only added to his prestige. (1)

Louis was the older, envied and revered brother. The powerful one, the one to be imitated, emulated, but of course, not-to-admit-to-having-copied. He was gifted with his hands, and made his own suits, recutting them from his father's discarded garments. He also made other things.

> Louis was good at other things besides tailoring. Once he made a merry-go-round in the alley alongside the house. This was a crude affair consisting of two two-by-fours nailed at right angles and a huge spike driven in the middle where they crossed. It was set in a hole drilled into the stump of a tree and two or four of us would sit at the ends of a two-by-four and make the contraption go around by kicking our feet along the ground. At first it was fun, but it was monotonous when it went slowly and made us dizzy when it went fast. Louis would take the merry-go-round out of the hole and set it up against the house so that we couldn't use it when he was away. (2)

If Louis was the pacesetter, Paris, his second oldest brother, was the closest, emotionally, to Victor. They often roomed together, and young Victor had a boundless admiration for him. This is what D'Amico writes about Paris.

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1. D'Amico, Victor: unpublished autobiography: My Mother Had Eleven, First Vignette: "My Mother Had Eleven" pp. 4-5

2. Ibid. , pp. 5-6

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> Paris came next. He was called the good boy because he did everything right. He was really good. He excelled in school; he did all his chores without complaint. He never lost his temper or used bad language. He was slated for a direct trip to heaven on the express route. Paris was slight; he had a fixed smile like a new moon lying at an angle on its back. Mama always said that he was a seven-months child and that he was so small when he was born that he had to be wrapped in cotton. The doctors didn't expect him to live but Mama pulled him through with the same genius she applied to Louis' Bright's disease years later. He was sickly most of his life. We were good friends and spent a great deal of time together on current projects or planning the future. He was four years older than I but I studied all of his subjects with him especially history and literature. I could recite the battle of Quebec between Montcalm and Wolfe by heart. And I still remember verses from "O Captain, My Captain", "Sohrab and Rustum", "Horatius at the Bridge", and "The Ancient Mariner." (1)

The other brother closest to him, younger by two years, was Ulysses. ("He was not named after the Union General, Ulysses S. Grant, but after the ancient Ulysses. We called him Uly for short.") (2) Young Victor hated this younger sibling. "We quarreled most of the time but he stuck to me like a barnacle. I couldn't shake him off except when I was in school or when Paris and I went shopping together." Uly looked like Paris, but was extremely robust, and loved a good fight, apparently. "When he was five and I was seven, I punched him in the eye. I had a pencil in my hand at the time and the lead broke off in his cheek. The doctor got the lead out but to this day Ulysses has a small round blue mark about and inch under his left eye." (2) Thus, Victor has had three different kinds of sibling experience: a brother to admire, emulate and look up to, a brother to love and share close secrets with, and a younger brother to beat up on, one who both idolized and hated him.

↑ Why underline?

1. Ibid., pp. 6-7
2. Ibid., pp. 7-8

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This alone gives us some insight into the rich and multi-facted life which the D'Amico children experienced. Early on D'Amico had the opportunity to play many roles. The inter-relationships between him and the other members of his family were complex and varied. This, I believe, was a large factor in the nourishment of his creativity. It is a well-established fact that children who learn to speak two languages before the age of five are more creative than mono-lingual children. My feeling is that children who have the great good luck to be born into large, close, well-regulated families, have a similar advantage, in that they become more flexible, fluid and open-minded than children from smaller families. The choices and opportunities to experience, oppose or confront and appreciate many viewpoints are greater in a family like D'Amico's. One learns early on to accept diversity.

D'Amico's very earliest years were spent in Cleveland, Ohio, where he had the chance to experience fully, and totally fall in love with, the out-of doors. He later moved to New York with his family, and added to his early childhood explorations, the fascination with the city-scape. Other relatives lived at the seashore, and this, then, became a third, and perhaps the most beloved environment of Victor D'Amico.

The following are a few quotations from his autobiography. These contain, in my opinion, the essential early romantic images which filled D'Amico's childish imagination They are, I believe, extremely important. To a gifted artist-teacher these sorts of images, and the remembered feelings attached to them, form the basis of a whole life's work.

One of Victor's earliest memories was of his mother's garden.

> Mama had made the front yard into a formal garden with a huge circle in the middle which was divided into wedge shapes with alternating colored flowers. There were cannas just in front of the porch and a wide flower bed made a border inside the picket fence. Mama gardened in the early morning and in the evenings before supper. Only about three hours of the day remain in my memory: from about four to seven. The rest has faded out completely.(1)

The garden beomes a symbol for his mother, and his closesness to her. Both the garden and his love for his mother, fuse with his love of nature,

(1) Ibid., Vignette Number Two: "First Romance", page. 12.

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his love and appreciation of the earth, and all that it nurtures, the orderliness of the world of nature.

Another of D'Amico's especially cherished images from that house is the following:

> On the other side (of the D'Amico abode) was the street and two poplars just outside our dining-room windows made moving patterns of leaves on the floor when the sun shone through them (1)

This is an image which D'Amico never tired of observing, and which gives him much pleasure in rememberance even today. As an image, it has always reminded me of some portions of the 9th hexagram from the I Ching. I dare to quote this here because it seems to suit the epoc we are considering. There was a great affection for Asian stories, decorative arts, and Oriental philosophy during this time period (the early 1900's). The I Ching had been recently translated into English, and was avidly being read. There is a logical consistency to bringing, into this context. The title of the 9th hexagram is Hsiao Ch'u/The Taming Power of the Small. The particular phrase which comes to mind when I contemplate this D'Amico image of moving tree-shadows is "the power of the shadowy--that restrains, tames, impedes." The primary image linked with this is that of the "wind blowing accross the sky. The wind restrains the clouds, the rising breath of the Creative, and makes them grow dense, but as yet is not strong enough to turn them to rain."

This, for me, aptly describes the position of a young child of great genius. Such children, only dimply aware, in many cases, of their own talents, are filled with a restlessness and passion for experience, which, at times, like wind driven rain clouds, can scarcely be contained. And yet, children such as these are able to acknowledge their position of dependence, and, somehow come to terms with it. The I Ching continues with this further advice: "To carry out our purpose we need firm determination within and gentleness and adaptability in external relations." This seems to be one of the great talents that D'Amico has developed.(3) I feel that this hexagram, both as image and metaphor, suits D'Amico ~~to a "T"~~.

(1) Idem.

(2) Wilhelm, Richard, tr. The I Ching, Princeton, N. J., Princeton University Press (c 1950) p. 40.

(3) Ibid., p. 41.

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Another, similar early image is that of a window on the landing of the stairway which led up to the second floor. Of an early, especially warm morning, the 10th of May, he remembers the open window with "starched white curtains blowing gently in the May breeze" The window led to an alley where the children used to play. In this particular context the window-curtain symbol was one of great calm, which preceeded an exceptionally stormy incident in young Victor's life. These images, which constantly reappear in his autobiography, form a background or counterpoint to life's vicissitudes for D'Amico. They are symbols of balance, stability. They comprise a comfortable matrix in which the action take place; they lend reassurance and a gentle continuity to the narrative.

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Another pleasant memory was that of two neighboring girls, the Uline sisters.

> Myrtle and Hazel Uline lived next door. Their house backed on ours. Myrtle was twenty. She had dark hair and white skin. She was slender and beautiful and moved in a graceful rhythm. Hazel was two years younger and as different from Myrtle as any one of the same family could be. The only thing in common was beauty but I thought Hazel was more beautiful. She had long yellow hair that hung in curls down her back and bright blue eyes with violet glints in them. She had a radient smile but even when she wasn't smiling, her face beamed with friendliness. (1)

The comings and goings of these two beautiful sisters formed the object of young Victor's rapt attention..

> They always stopped at the gate and talked to me. Myrtle would pat my curl or smooth my collar but Hazel always kissed my forehead when she left. It was a regular ritual each evening.
>
> I don't remember what they talked about or if I ever said a word. I do remember that it was wonderful. I lived each day and that whole summer for those evening trysts. It was my secret or at least I thought it was. It didn't occur to me that they were young ladies and I just a child. (2)

Hazel was the first girl who ever kissed Victor. The impression which this left on him was one of ectasy and loneliness. The Uline family left for an extended visit to Europe, and, in the interim, the D'Amico family moved away from Cleveland. Victor was never to see the girls again. Like so many situations which occur when one is a child, the child has little say in the matter, and is given little or no explanation or forewarning of events. The sense of powerlessness and poignancy of such occurrances as these, in the life of a sensitive person, the lack of closure, often forms nodal memories, which later serve as an unconscious dynamic or driving force in subsequent adult situations. In a healthy and balanced family situation, frustrations of this sort can lead to redoubled efforts towards success in achievement in other areas of one's life. In this way one gains power over one's own destiny.

Another quotation from D'Amico's autobiography shows how insightful he was of child development. This is remarkable for so young a person. (He was in his very early 20's when it was written).

> A child has two lives that go on side by side. One is the independent life when the child confronts the world by himself, the other is the

(1) D'Amico: My Mother Had 11 Vignette No. 2, First Romance, p. 14
(2) Ibid., pp. 14-15

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> life he shares with people which is the friendly or social self. The very young child spends more time with his lonely self--at least I did from three to five or six years. During these years, my family and friends if I had any, were on the periphery of my living. Sometimes they seemed like offstage presences whose voices were heard in the distance and if they intruded into my chain of living, they had only minor roles or walk on parts.(1)

In this same passage D'Amico recalls his stay at Rockaway on the edge of Jamaica Bay (New York). His intense love of the seashore is most evident here. This has been one of his great lifelong attractions. Over twenty years ago, D'Amico purchased an old Navy barge, and had it towed to the Napeague bay (in Amaganset, L. I., N. Y) He had the barge hauled up on the beach, close by the bay, where it has remained ever since. It was opened originally as The Napeague Institute of Art, but has always been affectionately referred to as "D'Amico's Art Barge". It has served at least two generations of art students and art teachers as a place of inspiration, in which to create art. The setting is truly breathtaking. The sky is broad and open and the light seems to come from everywhere. The setting of this building bears testimony to this great love of the sea. Even the art which D'Amico has created, the light-box sculptures, the photographs of the ever changing sky, and the forms of art taught there, the setting itself can all be traced, without doubt, to these early experiences.

> I loved the world of little things for that tiny fingers picked up when curiosity and discovery were greater values than gold or the other ephemeral standards of adulthood, a conch shell that immediately closed its door as you turned it over and sealed its secret inside, a smooth round stone that felt warm and good in your hand and that was black with silver glints. Here and there, the circular designs that dune grasses made on the sand, the many things washed up on the shore that seemed to have a function but no identity and that probably traveled thousands of miles from Rio or Zanzibar for me to find and inspect and wonder about.(2)

(1) Ibid, Vignette No. Three; "The Wonderful World of Childhood," pp. 18-19

(2) Ibid., pp. 19-20 , See Appendix, pages 110, 111.

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How much this reminds me of one of my favorite phrases from D'Amico's book, Creative Teaching Through Art--"think with your fingers". Contained in that phrase, for me, is the compression of all the unselfconscious and magical world of childhood. The foregoing passage merely expands and, for me, evokes the entire marvellous time of life when one feels oneself the center of a benevolent and rich universe. To reconstruct this rich, calm environment, and to focus attention, D'Amico created the motivational areas of his Art Carnivals. If he could not bring each and every child to the seashore, or the mountains, he could at least create a surround which extracted some of the best elements of these places, and made them available to each and every child who would experience that special and magical place which he had conjured up, based on his own memories.

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Another image which turned into a vision was the following:

> I was three, no older, perhaps only two, that I recall standing before a window at night with my face pressed against the glass staring into the darkness. A road went off into the distance, and along one side was a row of lampposts with lights festooned from pole to pole. The road disappeared into a black hill silhouetted against a blue black sky. There were lights in the houses on the hill and as I watched each light spread into a radiant glow until the hill became the inverted spangled bowl of heaven. It is so clear that I could paint it but it would only make a bad painting because the wonder and beauty of the young child would be missing. (1)

The reverence for one's own childhood memories, forms a basis for a deep respect for the experiences of all children, and lays a groundwork for the sound and sympathetic training of young minds. D'Amico says even today, that he knows he has been successful when he sees that same (long ago experienced) sense of wonder on a child's face. It is the ability to constantly call up this sort of recollection, and through it to be in touch with one's child-self, that gives a freshness and spontaneity to D'Amico's teaching.

Groceria? spelling?

The pre-Christmas visits to the neighborhood Italian Groceria were a source of endless fascination. D'Amico describes the visually rich and odoriferous environment.

> You entered the store through an opening in a mountain of olive oil cans piled to the ceiling. The shelves were so crammed with goods that not an inch of wall showed. Italian hams called prosciutto, cheeses of all sizes and description, salami hung from the ceiling so that we had the feeling of entering a grotto with a roof of stalactites bearing down upon us. Tables with various foods filled the floor permitting only an aisle for passing. The pungent odor of black olives, oil and smoked ham struck my nostrils and set the mood for Christmas. (2)

marvellous comment re Italian sense of theatre

you do it

To recreate this experience, one has only to visit one of the many grocery stores in the North End of Boston. Such places are guaranteed to excite the imagination. Stored memories of this sort were bound to leak into the love of display, and the theatrical flourish with which D'Amico designed his Art Carnivals, and all his art-making spaces.

(1) Ibid., page 18 (D'Amico likes to quote R. L. Stevenson's "The Lamplighter" when recounting this incident.) See Appendix p. 96

(2) Ibid., page 22.

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The book Assemblage had its antecedent, I beleive, in the following experience: D'Amico and his brother had been sent to purchase vegetables at the "farm" in Little Italy in the Bronx. As the entire area was built up with stores and apartments, D'Amico was mystified as to where they were expected to come upon a farm. Here is the scene which he describes:

> ...we came upon a lot about two hundred feet square nestled among the apartments. It was sunken about ten feet and enclosed by the most curious and ingenious fence. Instead of the usual picket or wire fence to which I was accustomed, this fence was made out of bed springs and bed steads. First a flat bed spring was wired to a coil bed spring, and this in turn was wired to an iron bed stead, or two, with its rococco volutes and modled angels, and then a magnificent brass bed spring. This motley array continued on around the miniature farm. Nature had added to its decor by weaving woodbine, honeysuckle and morning-glory in and out of it.(1)

These kinds of inventions within one's visual field, condition what Julian Jaynes, much later, might term the "aptic structures" (2) in a fertile young mind. The bedspring fence memory in this case would later be remembered to serve as a linkage with the works of the Dadaists, on whose sculptural traditions D'Amico has based his well-known book.

Jaynes' theory of "Aptic Structures". (These) "are the neurological bases of aptitudes that are composed of an innate evolved aptic paradigm, plus the results of experience in development. The term is...Meant to replace such problematic words as instincts. They are organizations of the brain, always partially innate, that make the organism apt to behave in a certain way under certain conditions.". This implies Jaynes' belief in a genetic, somatic predisposition to certain types of behavior. I believe this theor to be true. Jaynes' belief and theory is based upon B. F. Skinner's concept of operant conditioning.

As I conclude ~~At the same time that I write~~ this section, drawing heavily on D'Amico's autobiography to supply the anecdotes and sources of my observations, I am struck by the way in which D'Amico's writings on his early childhood remind me of those of Gorky, or Roman Rolland , or even, James Joyce.

(1) Ibid, Vignette No. 5: "Aunt Lucy Begun", p 38.

(2) Jaynes, Julian: The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind. Boston. Houghton-Mifflin (c1976)

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Decidedly, childhood for all of these gentlemen, had a reality that is qualitatively very different from the childhood which youngsters experience nowadays. If the pace was slower, the events were, somehow, more intensely personal or individual. A certain originality and uniqueness, a thoroughness or sense of continuity seems to have been lost to our contemporary children, or , at best, seems only available to them in small and irregular quantities, and at unreliable intervals. The experience of today's inner-city children seems episodic, i. e., composed of a random series of intense and often traumatic, but un-related events. These may have little direct realtionship to the child's basic needs of nurturance, care, love, food, shelter, intellectual and socialstimulation. Nor do they especially relate to the child's basic right to orderly, predictable and sequential guidance. These random episodes lend little to a child's positive sense of being-in-the world. As a consequence, I feel that most contemporary inner city children seem diffuse in their focus, and that they seem to have difficulty attending to tasks and listening to information, with even a normal degree of comprehension. Often today's children seem to exhibit symptoms of stress which they express in increased motoric activity and defensiveness, accompanied by an unwillingness to undertake and complete cooperative or group activities with their peers. Many children seem to have lost the ability to play, or to initiate original activities.

The time in which D'Amico grew up fostered independence, self reliance, ingenuity. It was a time that valued individuality, hard work and stick-to-it-iveness as well as common sense. All of these qualities D'Amico possesses in great measure. They have been the spark to his initiative, giving him a strength to conquer and endure.

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I have thought and thought about why this could be so. I have allowed my thoughts to be colored by the many memories of the childhood tales of my father, and my grandparents. The clearest understanding which I can grasp is that life in the 19th century and the early part of the twentieth century was, somehow or other, more real, that is, less abstract, less removed from personal, tangible, experiences and individual perceptions. If the infant mortality rate was greater, if life expectancy was shorter, and if human labor was, at one end of the socio-economic scale, expendable, and if universal sufferage had not been achieved, if "good" education was the province of the privileged few, if many fearful diseases had not yet been conquered, it stands to reason that life was held to be very, very precious. Each moment was to be savored and appreciated, respected for what it was. A cheerful and religious optimism was the best defense against the aweful realities of everyday life. Man did not conceive of himself as being all-powerful. There were many worlds left to conquor; there was much to be discovered. It was not a time in which one felt oneself lost in a computerized statistical reality; it was not a time in which one was able to witness death, war and disasters as they happened, in the flat, black and white, focused, screen of T. V., which renders people and events as so many small, flickering manageable shadows. The world of T. V., I believe, confuses young minds with its strange appocaped mixtures of truth and fiction, all available at the flick of a button, the twist of a dial. No, the world of D'Amico, the world of my father, and my grandparents, was "real and earnest", "technicolor," three-dimensional, live, urgent, and infinitely safer and more conservative.(1) It was a world in which one could clearly experience the consequences of one's own actions, but, at the same time, a world in which there were many factors which remained beyond the control of any one individual. It was also a world in which individuals felt that they had a chance to achieve, succeed, to progress. Being born of such a time, when the belief in the worth of individual achievement and a love of excellence ran high, D'Amico has been able to bring to us the fresh air and unspoiled enthusiasm of this era. This is one of the forces which has animated his teaching and formed the basis for his life's work.

(1) See Appendix, page 110.

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The final images which I should like to present to you are quite divergent: One would fall in the catagory of dreams; the other in the world of harsh reality. In order to finish the section on a note of optimism, I shall relate the less "beautiful" of the two experiences first.

D'Amico's mother, Concetta, had a sister, referred to in his autobiography as "Aunt Lucy."

> She was my mother's younger and only sister but she bore not the slightest resemblance to Mama. Aunt Lucy was very small and dark with crinkly black hair. She had black eyes that wore a continuous hurt expression. Her breastbone stuck out like a bird's, her legs were slightly bowed. She tended to overdress and wore garish colors and a lot of cheap jewelry which caused people to turn and look at her as she passed. This delighted her. She always wore a hat and white gloves which she seldom removed even in the house.(1)

This unfortunate aunt, was abandoned by her daughter and her husband. Left with few resources, she took to doing piecework for a clothing factory, living in a tiny squalid apartment on the lower East side. "Aunt Lucy" had always been somewhat depressed, her moods of depression, punctuated with periods of almost manic hysteria. She frequently overdramatized and occasionally had threatened suicide. As she was an avid amateur of theatrical melodrama, her family never took these threats seriously. One cold January day in 1910, Victor's mother sent him down to visit her sister, whom she had not heard from in over a week. Victor went to see her in the company of his brother, Louis. Upon arriving at her flat, they knocked, and, receiving no answer, they managed to force the door open (the lock was, anyway, non-functional.) D'Amico describes the scene which they saw:

> We entered the living room. It was quite dark and in greater chaos than the last time I saw it. Not only was the bed unmade, and articles of clothing dropped here and there over the furniture, but paper cartons were piled in the middle of the floor. Some were tied with string, while others were lying open with their flaps out, like gaping jaws exposing their emptiness. There was a peculiar odor in the air. We called "Aunt Lucy" and Louis went toward the kitchen. He stopped in the doorway and gasped, "My God!" I stuck my head in from under his arm and found no words.

(1) D'Amico: My Mother Had a ..., Vignette Number Six, "My Aunt Lucy, Ended," pp. 52-3,

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Aunt Lucy was sprawled across the kitchen table. Her head was down, resting on her left arm. Her dishevelled hair was all gray and white. In her right hand was clenched the stub of a pencil about three inches long. She sat at the table as if she had been writing, and fallen asleep in the middle of it. One foot was drawn back under her chair and the other was forward with the shoe off, and just hanging from her toes. She had indeed been writing, but apparently having no writing paper left, she had used a roll of toilet paper. A long stream of it, with writing on it, hung over the front edge of the table. It disappeared under her body, and continued from her lap on to the floor, where the roll had travelled a few feet and stopped in a tangle of paper. Aunt Lucy lay framed in a square of cold sun light, that filtered through the window. Newspaper had been stuffed into the edges of the window. The room was cold and damp. The oven door was open and the jets on the stove were all on. The meter above the table registered zero - the quarter's worth of gas had run out.

Louis and I gently lifted Aunt Lucy's body and slipped the paper from it. The message was addressed to Mama:

"Dear Jennie", it began in large neat writing, "I hope that God will forgive me for what I am doing, but there seems to be no reason for me to go on living. I know that Charlie is never coming back. They have laid me off at the factory, and my money is all gone. I just put my last quarter in the meter.

Life seems precious, only when you have something or someone to live for. I have neither, and there is little purpose in just hanging on, to wait until the end. I know that it is against our religion to take your own life, and that one is punished for it later on. I doubt, however, that our God, who is supposed to be a compassionate and forgiving God, would punish me more in the next world when I have had so much unhappiness in this one."(1)

This passage, eloquent in its restraint speaks for itself. I hardly need remind the reader of the courageous struggles of the female workers before the founding of the Ladies' Garment Workers Union. That this union , and the industry which it served, was (wo)manned predominantly by immigrants, is a well-established, if dark, chapter in American history. In telling the extremely moving story of his Aunt, D'Amico is telling us about ourselves, our attitudes towards the poor, the foreign born, towards minorities in general.

This is one of the very real and moving forces in which D'Amico's humanism is deeply rooted. It is a humanism which is thoroughly

(1) Ibid., p. 53

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and unselfishly democratic. It is a humanism born of his deep compassion for human suffering and struggle. It is a humanism that never looses sight of the vision of the beauty of man's potential for goodness, for moral strength, for positive achievement, and most of all, for love, for sharing, for living in equality and peace with others.

It was, perhaps this experience which gave him the determination, lent the energy to D'Amico's many achievements.

But shock and sufferning alone are not sufficient motivation for a lifetime of achievement, education and encouragement of others. When events like this befall persons of more frail spirit, the result can be crushing. It was due to D'Amico's inherent resilience that he was able to turn this tragedy to good. But in order for this to happen D'Amico had to have had a dream of his own potential, such a dream as few people have, but which happens early on in life never to be forgotten. Such are the dreams from which the achievements of our greatest visionaries spring. After many sessions of interviewing D'Amico, I was able to discover and identify this important and pivotal dream, which, in closing this section, I shall attempt to relate to you.

During the early years, when the D'Amico family lived in Cleveland, Ohio, Victor had to have a tooth extracted. A piece of it broke off in his gum, and the dentist merely left it there, allowing the hole to heal over it. Victor's face always had a bulge, and people would tease him about it. "Take that tobacco out of your cheek", they would tell him. His mother, who was concerned, eventually took him to the hospital where he was examined by a surgeon. The surgeon put a probe up through the place where the tooth had been, and discovered that decay and infection had mounted almost to his eye, and would eventually have progressed to his brain causing certain death.(1) His mother made an appointment for an operation.

(1) This took place, of course, in the days before the "discovery" of penicillin and the sulfa drugs, when children frequently died of pneumonia following operations. (even tonsillectomies were dangerous.)

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As it took place in a Catholic Hospital, Victor's room was filled with paintings of saints, and other sorts of religious icons. In those days it was necessary that ether be administered. Ether has a very ugly effect, giving the sensation of suffocation to the patient. As he went under, Victor still held the images of all the icons from his room in his mind. He became conscious of the pounding of his heart. Victor kept repeating, "I'm asleep, I'm asleep!" The booming grew louder, more insistent, like a terrible doomsday machine. Gradually it turned into the tolling of a bell, heard at first, as from a long distance. As the sound of the bell drew nearer, D'Amico recognized it as being the bell of a locomotive. He envisioned himself lying on the tracks, frozen, unable to move, helpless as the train approached, faster and faster, nearer, and nearer! A high stone wall blocked any possible exit. Escape was out of the question; death was close at hand. However, Victor made a great surge and jumped off the operating table. The doctor caught him, just in time. In his dream the wall simultaneously broke, and all the angels and saints reached towards him, to grab him.

He whom God himself had chosen to rescue, through the direct intervention of His Holy Saints and Angels, must surely have been earmarked for an illustrious and blessed destiny! Victor carried the memory of this second angel vision, engraved deeply within his heart, like a miraculous talisman.

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VICTOR D'AMICO--HIS SOURCES AND INFLUENCES

Chapter IX
9. D'Amico's early play spaces, and others.

D'Amico's earliest childhood memories were of the house and the yard, the neighborhood in Cleveland, Ohio. It was a spacious house, furnished in the traditional manner of Italian-American families of the day, with heavy overstuffed furniture, but having an adequate number of rooms inside, and enough light. The yard was filled with grass and formal flower beds tended by his mother; the whole being enclosed by a white picket fence. (I had such a garden, and have vivid memories of walking along the top beam of the fence). There were small grassy alleys that lead between the houses. The street was a quiet one, a place of peace, sun and air, a very safe place for a young child. (1) Many pairs of eyes watched each child. Everything one did was known to all.

D'Amico's grandfather, Gianbattista Vitale was a popular artist. Without the benefit on a formal education or training he carved wood with imagination and skill. His occupation was that of a railroad gatekeeper at a crossroads. He would carve heads on the posts. He also carved many bas-reliefs, with either religious or animal motifs. He made masks as well; some were scarey some were humorous. These he fashioned on a base structure of wire or bamboo, covered over with cloth--stuffed and then painted. Feathers were sometimes added. His grandfather's house was a favorite place to visit.

When the D'Amico family moved to New York, the landscape changed from one of bucolic serenity to one of big city noises, rapidity, indifference and dirt. But New York's "Little Italy" did provide D'Amico with a never ending source of visual and movement oriented stimuli.

(1) See appendix, pp. 109-111

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The transition, however, was a difficult one, truly a"Fall from Paradise". D'Amico recalls the way their ornate, Italian furniture looked in it's new surroundings on upper Beaumont Ave., Bronx, N. Y. "Like disinherited noblemen," stuffed into two light-less apartments. D'Amico mourned this move with the sad realization of its finality. Children rarely have a choice in such matters!

However, in life, nothing is ever taken away, but that something new quickly appears to take its place. Imperceptibly, the life of the city streets and the new-found neighborhood began to take over young D'Amico's days. His new room, shared with his brother, Paris, had two large windows facing the street, and it was at ground level. In an alley beside the apartments, he and his brothers were free to experiment,create and construct to their hearts' delight! These primitive "Assemblages" took the form of marvellous kinesthetic inventions: a roll-top desk; a device, modelled after those in penny arcades of the era, in which one threw a ball at a figure, mounted on a miniature proscenium, and, if the ball hit, the figure fell backwards, only to spring up again. In this case it was a figure of the Kaiser D'Amico recalls how, at the war's end he and his brother were elated, running around chanting " We beat him,we beat him, the Hun, the Hun. We beat the Hun, we beat the Hun, we beat him , we beat him the Hun, the Hun". (First and second generation Americans were often much more patriotic than those from families which had been in this country longer.) (1)

Saturdays, Victor and his brother,Paris,would attend the movies. It became a regular ritual The films were Chaplin originals or those of Billy West, one of

(1) See Appendix p. 113.

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Chaplin's greatest imitators. Paris was gifted with a very fine voice; and the two brothers, on the way home from the movie theatre would stop at a bakery where coffee and cakes were served. They would buy an entire cake which they would devour on the way home. Walking this 1/2 mile they would whistle and sing the war songs, gathering applause from the houses they passed. Their "routine" came to be expected their"audience"grew.

The church which the family attended was the famous Lady of Mount Carmel in the Bronx, on the corner of Arthus Avenue and 70th Street. The interior was embellished with colorful mosiacs, carved Stations of the Cross, and stained glass windows. His mother and sister belonged to the choir. D'Amico, of course, served as an altar boy, becoming an observer--participant in the weekly pomp and festival.

D'Amico recalls with much pleasure the local religious festivals, especially that of San Gennaro, when large puppets, and religious icons were taken out into the streets, the life of the church spilling into all the corners of the community. Images of demons, saints, and angels dwelt in peaceful co-existence for a few brief days! There was a Renaissance of street booths, song, musicians in open spaces, costumed figures of devils and angels, masks and mimes, all the necessary components of an Italian carnival

The age in which D'Amico grew up, abounded in marvellous mechanical inventions. Many of these were on display in the contemporary movie theatres. The theatres themselves, were magnificent examples of Hollywood set architecture, running the gamut from Italian Palazzo, to Alhambra-type Harem.

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Victor recalls viewing a presentation of the film: The Titanic's Fatal Voyage at the RKO Keith's Orpheum. He was six years old, and has a vivid recollection of the special effects that emminated from the orchestra pit--steam, loud crashing noises, lights, flashes, etc. Movies were somehow, more than just film: they were an entire audio-visual sensory event. At the Tremont Theatre there was an organist who made the sound effects entirely on the organ. Theatre organs of the day, were, in themselves, a marvellous event. Large, and equipped with a myriad of magnificently turned pipes, ranging from the smallest of guilt tubing to the large coffin-shaped wooden dyaxaphons, they contained entire drum and percussion sets, piccolos, hurdi-gurdis, bells, chimes, and even instruments which could emulate violins or the human voice (vox humana). All of these were played from a single 4-rank console, complete with foot pedals, by a human operator, seated in a swivel chair or bench, dwarfed by the magnificent array of equipment at his command, and the overwhelming sound which it was capable of producing. The modern day counterpart would, of course, be the computer-run synthesizers. But synthesizers are not, in my opinion, so visually interesting as the traditional "moovie theatre" pipe organs of the 1920's. The console, with its rows of keys and dazzling buttons, formed a sort of semi-circular altar around its player--akin, visually, perhaps to the console of a modern jumbo-jet airliner. What a stimulus to any young imagination! The instrument, itself, was like a giant toy, a Rube Goldberg invention comprises yards of wires, nails, leather stops, wooden and metal constructed parts, all moving in gigantic harmony and juxtaposition, and giving the feedback of marvellous, loud, musical noise! Small wonder that one of the instruments in D'Amico's later motivational areas of the Art Carnivals was entitled the "Color Organ."

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Another widespread device which was part of D'Amico's early spatial experience was the Nicolodeon Piano. These were often nearly as elaborate at the theatre organs. In the early movies, particularly before the invention of sound, the marvellous insturments, and their players translated the visual scene into auditory metaphore and sequence. The live piano player became as important as the projected celluloid images of the actors. The film performance depended upon a felicitious interaction of the two. Movies were, thus, literally "within the reach" of the spectator. The Nicolodeon players were the pace and beat setters of the era.

D'Amico's family was so large, that even he did not know all its members. His mother's relatives owned a hotel in Far Rockaway Beach. The family went their for some weeks during the summers, thus giving the children a respite from the dirt, heat and grime of the city. This is where D'Amico's long-term love affair with the sea and its shore originated, no doubt. Even today he lives, in retirement, close by the sea. In the winter, he and Mabel comb the beaches, after a good storm, for the gifts which the tides cast up. Mabel uses oars, bottle pieces, corks, seisel rope bits, etc., to fashion her magnificent whimsical sculptures, which preside over her house and garden, like benevolent household gods.

In this family hotel Victor's child-imagination was stimulated by the moire patterns on the walls and ceilings. In them he saw all kinds of images. The bedsteads were carved with gargoyle faces. Even today the "art barge", is set by the bay of the Napeague, where the ripple marks made in the water

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by the combined effects of the wind and sun, are projected on to the whitewashed walls and ceiling of this beach-bound art-school-boat, giving them a living moire pattern, together with a soothing, gently rocking visual movement. The effect is somewhat hypnotic and places the participant in a relaxed mood, ready to receive the images which well up from the unconscious. (1)

Another aspect of the visual-spatial experience at Far Rockaway was the Penny Arcades which were a part of the Amusement Park. The best things of all were roller-coaster and the merry-go-round which had 100 rings! At one point young Victor was employed as a sign painter for this park.

Great detail

But it was, perhaps the local church which really gave him his first start. He wrote plays for the religeous festivals, plays which were performed and which met with a good measure of admiration and approval. The parish priest took D'Amico under his wing. Plans were tentatively made to have Victor study for the priesthood. He would be sent to Rome on full scholarship, to develop his talents and receive a proper priestly education. Victor was deeply moved and flattered by this opportunity, until, as an adolescent, he realized that it would mean total abstinence from women, alcohol, etc. At that point he declined the offer. But the same sense of devotion to human service, the same compassion and sympathy for the human state which motivated his attraction to the priesthood as a career possibility, animates his love of teaching, and was undoubtedly a motivating force or dynamic behind his ultimate career choice.

good

ice

(1) See Appendix p. 114.

in index

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(1) See Appendix p. 114.

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Victor D'Amico, his sources and influence

Chapter X

D'Amico's early schooling: his first interface with external societal demands

D'Amico's first exposure to the more "formal" academic subjects (reading writing and basic math) took place at home where his mother and his older brothers taught him. He learned, in fact, to read at an early age. He skipped kindergarten first and second grade, and finally entered school in the third grade. Every day he followed his older brothers and sister to school. Sometimes he would sneak inside and hide behind one of the large marble statues, set on great pedestals, which stood in the lobby of his brothers' school. At other times he would walk up and down in front of the school, parading like a small soldier. He was labelled "the little policemen". Many days he would dawdle in the local shops on the way home. He seems to have little, if any, recollection of his elementary school art lessons. But it is certain that if he were exposed to any of the prevailing art teaching methods of the day he doubtlessly would have disliked them (at least at any early age). His parading up and down was probably more a function of missing his older brothers and sisters: of feeling excluded from their world. D'Amico was free to live out his 5's, 6's and 7's in a three-dimensional world of real objects, sights, smells, sounds, etc. of nature.(1) When he finally did enter school, he apparently excelled in everything. He was given privileges and scholarships and encouragement along the way in all his fields of endeavor, not solely in art.

(1) Rockefeller Park was across the street from the school. D'Amico loved to play there, for hours upon hours, each day. See Appendix, page [illegible].

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Apparently, by the time D'Amico was in the 4th grade, his family had returned from Cleveland, Ohio, to his place of birth, New York. In New York, D'Amico entered public school. When it came time for him to pass on to junior high school, he was lucky enough to be able to attend the school in which Angelo Patri was Principal. Patri, a great humanitarian, and outstanding educator, firmly believed in "education through the arts". In his school, D'Amico blossomed. When Victor's art teacher took ill, Victor was invited to sub-teach in his place, which he apparently did, with a high degree of success. He could not have been more than fourteen years of age at the time!
In Patri's school there were all kinds of shops--printshops, studios, etc. even a nursery for plants, as a teaching place for kids. Victor recalled that one of the students was a "bad boy" (he had a bad reputation). He went to the nursery to join the group. He had a temper tantrum. He destroyed all the plants one night. Patri admonished him: "You know what you did was not only a bad thing for you and your classmates, but how do you know that the plants did not suffer?" This "bad kid" eventually grew up to become an outstanding actor who attributed his success to Angelo Patri.

Patri's system was based on the Gary System of education--a program developed in Gary, Indiana. This system also involved many art forms in the educational process. It had come into existence before 1922(1)

From Patri's tuteledge, Victor went on to the Evander Child's High School, from which he was graduated in 1924 with honors. (See Appendix, page).(2)At the same time , apparently, D'Amico attended Cooper Union. He lied about his age to get in to study fashion design, in order to please his father. Victor never completed this course, but won a scholarship to the Pratt Institute. On completion of Pratt's two-year course of study, Victor enrolled in Columbia University

(1) This information came from a personal interview with Victor D'Amico, June, 1981. (Angelo Patri also translated Pinocchio into English.)
(2) His art teacher then was Rosabelle MacDonald, a leader in the Progressive Education Movement.

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where in three years he received both his B. A. and M. A. in journalism.

Throughout his educational career, D'Amico's intelligence and accomplishments impressed teachers. He had then, as now, an easy and pleasant manner. Teachers helped him on the way to success! Because he had learne the social graces at an early age in his large family, he was already equipped with the basic survival skills to ensure his success in school.

The early 20th century was not an easy time for a child to be in a public school system in a large city. Classes were overcrowded, then as now. The discipline was severe. But it was a time and a system that was eager to advance bright kids. It was also an era when middle class kids could b "kids". Acting out behaviours, especially on the part of pre-adolescent boys were, however, in the world outside the classroom, tolerated as "boyish pranks". Although the city abounded in gangs of rough, homeless boys, D'Amico, and his crowd, were not among them. Children were not, at that time, exploited as a "potential market", for the commercial interests, or social service agencies. While it is true that child labor laws were not finally passed until 1938, the unjust employment of children in hazardous jobs was on the decline.

There existed in the U. S. A. at that time a sort of "cultural collusion" about how to bring up children. Expectations within, at least, the middle class were fairly standard, as were the punishments for transgressions. Parents within a certain block of land set the tone for the area. They usually came to some sort of unspoken agreement as to what was, deemed acceptable, behavior and what was not. Any parent could enforce the rules over anyone else's kids, or they would, as an alternative, go and tell the parents of a transgressing kid. Parents mutally supported and helped one another, as did the teachers in any given school. There was a greater distance and differentiation between the world of adults and children. Because there were fewer sure cures for common diseases, and because less was known about nutrition, and because certain vaccinations which are now on the market, were non-existent, it was correctly assumed that children were fragile, and needed to be cared for. The extra limits gave

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of being cared for.
children a sense of greater safety and belongingness,^ With fewer things to decide for themselves, and independently, children had, somehow a safer
more manageable.

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Victor D'Amico: His Sources and Influences

Chapter XI : Early Role Models; people from whom D'Amico derived a sense of self-worth and direction. (1)

We have already spoken of D'Amico's maternal Grandfather, a flagman on the railroad, who carved wooden figures, created face-masks, etc, to the delight of grandchildren. D'Amico's mother, of course, was ever-present in his thoughts, values and behavior. Her simple Christian faith and ethos formed the basis of much of his own value and belief system. D'Amico's high school art teacher was Norine O'Rourke. She was one of Victor's first great fantasy loves. Her clear-headed insights, and sensible, no-nonsense approach to art-education must have impressed Victor immensely. She died young, and apparently Victor was heartbroken. He published privately, a small book of poetry entitled Tears, a tender-hearted tribute to this outstanding art teacher. She had studied at N. Y. U. with Paul Hayney. I am fortunate to have a xerox copy of her classroom notes on his course, the original of which she, apparently, gave to D'Amico, before her death. Hayney was the Art Supervisor for all of New York City's public schools. He was considered to be an outstanding teacher in his own right. His approach is methodical and analytical, based on careful observation of children's developmental levels and needs. At the same time it is responsive to their creativity and fluidity. It exhorts the teacher to impart her knowledge via creating first and foremost a supportive atmosphere; a place of free inquiry in which children will be safe to explore, It shows the teacher how to guide her students through an educational experience, to lead them to trust their own reasoning. It leaves a child free to explore, discover and invent in peace and confidence.

(1) Information in this section came from personal interviews with D'Amicc as well as an article in The Fieldston News, April 12, 1940, Vol. 12, No. p 1; also from Hayney's classrom notes, taken by O'Rourke.

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Patri was probably the second professional role model, from whom D'Amico absorbed values and techniques which influenced his own teaching, as was Rosabelle MacDonald. D'Amico was, indeed, fortunate to have had such outstanding teachers. The latter trimvurate of persons who were influential in Victor's early career were Adler, the founder of the Ethica Culture School, John Dewey and Howard Conant, of the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Adler, who had trained to become a Rabbi, and who was the founder of the Ethical Cultur Schools (especially Fieldston) was, in D'Amico's words: "Like a Chinese Mandarin". He shuffled along barely gliding over the floor, In the latter part of his life, his skin became translucent and shining, like parchment. He was a fine scholar who recognized D'Amico's genius, although he may not always have been in agreement with his philosophy. I feel that D'Amico took seriously Adler's challenge regarding the ability of the individual to create. D'Amico recalled the following incident:

> Adler called me into his office one day. With a stern voice he said, "D'Amico, I have an article you wrote which says that you believe all children are creative. Don't you know?" he thundered, "that to create means to make something out of nothing, and that only God is creative?" This was my first article. I have lived to prove Dr. Adler wrong, because to create is symbolically to make something out of nothing. An idea may seem like nothing until it is realized concretely and 'found out'. It is making something out of material which is regarded as waste or nothing until the artist recreates it. Also, God may be the original source of creativity, but He has endowed man with the power to create and that is the heritage of all humanity, and the bit of Godliness in each of us. (1)

(1) Quotation from a personal interview with Victor D'Amico, June 1981.

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VICTOR E. D'AMICO: His Sources and Influences.

Part I: The Early Years.

"The Child IS Father of The Man" Wordsworth.

Dr. Diana Korzenik, Thesis advisor

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a MSc in Art Education. Mass College of Art, Boston, Mass, Spring 1983

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Then, Victor remarked to me: "It is not always the people who make things easy for you who help you the most." However, even if Adler challenged Victor, he, nevertheless gave him his first important job. Also, when the Fieldston School was under construction D'Amico was instrumental in designing many of the studio spaces, as well as the theatre.

Dewey, naturally, was one of the greatest influences on the career of Victor D'Amico, as he was influential on the whole American educational profession, and remains so today. D'Amico heard his lectures at Teacher's College, Columbia University, New York City. Victor was also a member of the Progressive Education Commission of the State of New York. Victor translated Dewey's theories into his own apprenticeship-approach to teacher training, and the championing of the idea of educating the individual, and educating him creatively and according to his personal development, in order to release the maximum potential of his/her ability to create as a free, strong and responsible individual with a free, strong and responsible society. He was also theoretically at one with Dewey in his desire to educate the whole individual. Both Dewey and D'Amico viewed artmaking as an integrative experience. Both stressed the importance of process over product (1)

This is in error

Howard Conant directed Victor's professional career, from the moment he set foot in the museum. He was Victor's advice giver, par excellence. Conant was an intensely intellectual individual, with an encyclopaedic knowledge of art. He had been on the very frontier of understanding and interpreting Modern Art in this country. He had run to greet the "new Wave" in Europe, and brought tidings of its awesome beauty and strength back to the United States. He had been involved in the creation of MOMA. D'Amico says of him: "He gave me goals for my whole professional life" (2) Mrs. Bliss Parkinson was also his guardian Angel" throughout his early years at the Museum. She later became a trustee and President of the Board. Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, who was very fond of

(1) See Appendix, Pages, 119-122
(2) D'Amico in personal interview, June, 1981.

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Howard Conant began his career at Cornell University. As a very young man he found himself teaching art at Wellesley College. He was a brilliant teacher, from all accounts. His was apparently the very first course offered on "Modern Art" in the United States.Conant's eye for "objects of art" led him to cultivate a sina-qua-non reputation as as collector. He had an undeniable knowledge of, talent and taste for the delicate art of negotiation. He spent several important seasons in Europe with his new wife, learning to love and understand modern art, prior to accepting the leadership of MOMA. He taught D'Amico much about understanding and exhibiting works of Modern Art. In addition to this, he brought many remarkable exhibitions to MOMA's galleries during his directorship.

Mrs. Bliss Parkinson was also D'Amico's"guardian Angel" throughout his early years at the Museum. She later became a trustee and President of the Board. Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, who was very fond of

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Victor, financed his Veterans War Memorial Art School. Mrs. John D. and Nelson Rockefeller, solidly backed his school programs for children. While at MOMA, D'Amico was blessed with one other outstanding talent in the form of Renee D'Harnouncourt. This gentleman contributed in large measure to the growth and development of D'Amico's work. D'Harnouncourt was an immense man, large in many ways other than his towering size. He was gifted in the area of programmatic development and administration. He had an almost encyclopaedic knowledge of the history of "Primitive" as well as "Western" Art. He was a man of great wealth, aristocracy, vision and immense talent. Prior to serving as Director of MOMA he had taught at Sarah Lawrence College in New York. He was a man of impeccable taste, a perfectionist in all that he did. He was responsible for setting the high standards for MOMA's exhibits, collections and achievements. He was also a man of exquisite manners and breeding, a diplomat to the core. It was D'Harnouncourt, who assured Victor D'Amico of a "safe place" within the structure of the museum organization. He was D'Amico's benevolent protector during some of the developing years of MOMA's Art Education Department. He helped Victor to formulate his goals, and he showed him how to attain them. Victor remembers D'Harnouncourt's most valueable advice to him: to learn to transcend anger; to assume a more "objective" stance vis-a-vis the events in his professional life.

At the same time, D'Amico's personal vision, and his own wealth of knowledge coupled with imagination and flair, served as a vehicle to attract the energies and efforts of the many competant persons who helped him build and support his program. Through the force of his character, D'Amico was able to cultivate these relationships to mutual advantage. He was able allow his professional relationships to pass from reciprocity to mutuality. This demands an extraordinary astuteness and diplomacy, qualities he was also able to assimilate from his cultural context at an early age, but qualities which are equally a part of his innate disposition, in my opinion.

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Victor D'Amico—His sources and influences

Chapter XII

The Role of fate, chance or Acts of God.

The title of this last chapter may seem to belie a certain magical belief or approach to the interpretation of historical facts, on my part. Perhaps it does. But, for me, historical truths become more interesting or at least fascinating, when one thinks about all the things that "could have gone wrong" or happened differently. Much of life is what one makes of it, but a certain part of the outcome of any situation depends on what one has to deal with, at the times especially/when the facts of one's life, are actually incontrovertible. (And, sometimes, they truly are).

I am reminded of the cartoon by the French humorist, André François entitled: "What if a dog stole Adam's rib". The sequence goes on to lament that Weddings would be dismal, Affairs of state would lose their sparkle, etc. etc., carrying the original thought to its ultimate (il)logical and conclusion absurd in words and in pictures. Perhaps that is my motivation behind writing this section. To give the reader a humorous end to this paper. Or perhaps, it is just a gimmick to make the reader pause, for one moment, to reflect on the good fortune (perhaps omit for emphasis) which holds much of life together. The same factor which has been operant in D'Amico's life is operating in all our lives. each day. Only the specific frequency, details, or the intensity/of this luck may vary from day to day. person to person.

The first given in D'Amico's life was his particular genetic combination, the potential or pre-disposition to become what he did. This, naturally, was nurtured and encouraged by his family, with just the right balance of caring/ not caring, help and ignorance or refusal of help, to motivate him to achieve on his own,

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Victor D'Amico—His sources and Influence—part one—the early years: Specific Influences.

So far, you will say, there is nothing remarkable about this Perhaps you are right. Genes combine each day. Each day, people are born or die. However, for me the most truly marvellous thing about friends is that they are. That of all the billions and billions of permutations and combinations available to us through the genetic pool, that this specific and unique person should be just as he is! and that I should have come to know him! This for me, doubles the miracle.

Life plays many games of chance with all of us. D'Amico is a lucky player! in my opinion. His life has had so many miraculous happenings. Here, I would like to highlight only a few of the salient points at which fate stepped in to tip the scales in D'Amico's balance.

D'Amico's rescue from the 1917 flu epidemic seems nothing short of miraculous. given the mortality rate of that event. His survival depended upon the skill energy and talents and devotion of his parents, especially his mother. The second time he was dramatically snatched from the hands of death occurred when he got his operation for the infected piece of tooth which a careless dentist had left in his mouth. Once again, D'Amico's perspicacious mother intervened in the nick of time!

The next miracle for me, was the rescue of his own mother from TB. Children, even if they come from large families, do not seem to fare so well, when the families are broken, by death or divorce. Even remarriage of the parent doesn't seem to help. After all, no one is truly replaceable Another "rescue" happened when the life of his younger brother, whom Victor had inadvertantly injured, while playing in

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the alley beside his house, was spared. Think of what the outcome would have been if Victor's brother had died as a result of the accident! Imagine the trauma and guilt he would have felt, being as young and as sensitive as he was! The shock might have proven overwhelming!

The nurturance given D'Amico by his grade school art teacher was a most fortuitous occurrence. Even a robust talent and personality such as D'Amico's might have been crushed, if, early on, he had fallen into the hands of the "wrong" teacher, (one with whom he would have been unable to communicate, etc.) Norine O'Rourke seems to have had just the right combination of attraction/independence to be able to teach Victor. Her early death, leaving a lack of closure to their relationship, perhaps, was a motivating, if sad, experience which helped to spur Victor on to his ultimate success.
The next miraculous happening in D'Amico's life took the form of a decisio It was'Amico's choosing not to join the priesthood. This event alone changed the entire focus of D'Amico's life.

That D' Amico had the good fortune to attend Angelo Patri's High School was also a geographic and temporal miracle. These are things we often take for granted, until we really think of them.

Now, all of the above, or most of it, has been a narrativae about the miracles of misfortunes that did not happen. Think, then, about how fortunate it was (and we all were) that D'Amico made the decisions to have done the following:

D'Amico took the job with the Ethical Culture School. This set him on a trajectory of meeting the "right" people to help him on the long climb to success. The resistence which Adler offered to his methods, was just sufficient to cause D'Amico to sharpen his own viewpoint, to redouble his efforts and energies and to focus his work. (D'Amico often asked his student teachers what adverse conditions had affected their careers positively.)

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The acceptance of the Award of the Rockefeller Fellowship to travel all around the country to view the "top" programs in his chosen field of endeavor--Art was a crucial one. His publication of the report put his name and work into the public eye. It led to his landing a job at MOMA.

Once at the Museum, D'Amico had the good fortune to connect himself with the "right" people within that setting, people who could virtually assist him in doing everything he had always wanted to do, and to pay for all his enterprises. As a result of his position at MOMA, D'Amico received all the publicity he needed to enable his career to flourish. He also had the backing of MOMA's trustees. He had, ultimately his own art school (summers) on The Barge, with infinite access, year-round to the MOMA collections, the chance to meet famous artists first hand, etc. He made the "right" and the intelligent choices all along the way, which enabled him to maintain his position.

D'Amico has definitely been a moving force, of the first rank, in U. S. Art Education. He has had the good fortune to sense the meaning and the opportunities inherent in each and every time and place, and he has had the wit to have figured out how to make each situation work for his own and our greatest good.

Sometimes, I believe that events have a synchronicity. That is to say that they appear in multiple manifestations in may different places. Or, sometimes I believe that a tide of happenings arises, and seems to move like a groundswell of inter-connected phenomenon or inter-related apparently similar or analagous events, all taking place within a brief span of time. At other times, in retrospect, history seems a bit like an over-directed, over-staged play. But then, the world will turn again, and things will fall out of phase once more--or seemingly shake loose into what appears to be a random order, or disorder--having no apparent configuration. But, then, who can say how a given picture will appear to another?

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Victor D'Amico: His Sources and Influence
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This paper may hopefully provide a basis for a longer work. For now, I have chosen to concentrate my study on the early sources and influences on Victor D'Amico's career, because the initial part of a person's life contains, in my opinion, the seeds of everything that is to follow. My own belief is that a famous person (like any other person) does not function alone, but that his fame is, at least in part, due to a collective of able individuals and ideas, present and past whom the famous person gathers about himself. Of course, it is the famous person's outstanding skill, vision and artistry which lead him to carefully select, guide, nurture and motivate the potential of these helpers to carry out or actualize his special theories and practices. In this sense a famous person is really an architect of ideational structures. His services fulfill the basic need of furnishing a "theoretical gathering point" for the intellectual, emotional and spiritual energies of the population he serves. From there the flow of his theories can be bourne along by the collective energies of his disciples in the direction in which he has led them, towards his ultimate goals.

Congruent with this, I feel, is the notion that famous people have a special listening and interpretive skill--a sensitivity or openness to the murmurings of the past, and the needs of the present, which they can then translate, by the use of their special gifts, imagination, and vision, into action which will affect or transform the future.

The famous person must also have the chance, place or opportunity to succeed and the wit to recognize and seize this opportunity when it is offered.

There must, above all, be a close and supportive fit between the person

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and the situation which he creates or finds for himself, as well as a suitable fit between the ideas and the vehicles which he constructs or employs to translate his theories into action.

Through this study, I hope that I have been able to demonstrate the truth of these hypotheses at least in part. I feel that one of D'Amico's greatest arts lies in the reciprocal interaction between himself and his environmnet (the art schools where he has taught--MOMA, in particular and the American and International art education arena in general). It is basically a question of the suitability of form to content. D'Amico's form was: action oriented art education and research (for children, at first, and eventually for everyone). The specific content was: the development and enrichment of the human spirit through the humanizing influence of the artmaking experience.

The broader content of his remarkable contributions has encompassed peacemaking on an international scale, in that he has challenged us all with an ethos which assumes the equal dignity of all persons, and the right of each and every individual to experience his potential in creative thought, education and self-expression. It is in the securing of equality for everyone that bases for peace may be found.(1)

That D'Amico's specific philosophy of education was extremely carefully planned out and implimented in working modules, and easily replicable models (although not easily understood or always correctly interpreted), confronts us today with an even greater challenge; the challenge of deciding whether we are willing to make the effort, sacrifices and necessary committment to assure the equality of opportunity for everyone.

(1) To paraphrase an earlier science-philosopher, Julian Huxley.

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His educational theories and practices are based on the soundest of understandings of human social and developmental principles.

a) They are grounded in the individual's need to form a positive self-concept. D'Amico accomplishes this through raising his students' personal, sensory, emotional, intellectual, cultural and social consciousness.

b) They point to the need for a balance between spontaneity and discipline between expression of the senses and the spirit, between experimentation and mastery, all rooted in purposeful behavior, in goal-seeking or meaningful work, in integrity.

c) They encompass outstanding teacher selection and training processes. His teacher training took place in an individualized apprenticeship which included lengthy observation of a master-teacher at work with students, numerous practical sessions of studio work in the teacher's individual areas of expertise and enjoyment, and the use of effective needs assessments, and evaluative techniques in lesson planning, and always a period of careful supervision by an extremely qualified individual.

d) They are based on a recognition of the important effect of place or setting in the educational experience--place which includes the human and physical atmosphere as well as the design of the built environment. D'Amico creates a "safe-place" for people to work in.

e) At the core of D'Amico's educational theories and practices is a respect for and recognition of individual differences in developmental

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and skill levels, as well as a recognition of and respect for the individual's unique cognative style in the educational experience, and his or her developmental rate.

f) Also included is a serious recognition of the therapeutic and educative potential of the creative or artmaking process.

g) D'Amico's philsosphy is solidly grounded in Dewey's theories of progressive education, the more profound implications of which seem to have been lost to the majority of contemporary educators, in the humble opinion of this writer. These theories treat mainly of the need for education to proceed in an all-encompassing and orderly progression from simpler to more complex subjects and systems; to take the student from concrete subjects and learning modalities and lead him to mastery of the more abstract subjects and learning approaches; to approach learning as a total (holistic) social and growing experience to be assimilated at a person's own rate with respect for the individual's readiness, capacities, interests, natural rhythms, starting point and goals, within a group setting.

D'Amico's singular ability to transmit his theories to the remarkable extent that they have been transmitted has been due to the incredible exposure that he was able to give them. His ideas were spread via a network of books, magazine articles, lectures, the making and viewing of films, video programs, the founding of a national art education associati establishing art schools, a teacher training institute, the many Art Carnivals which travelled all over the globe, and last, but by no means least, through his own teaching and the example of the Herculean tasks which he has accomplished through his own broad vision, devotion, hard work and skilled leadership.

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Last of all, the formation of D'Amico's own special educational theories and practices was the result of the peculiar confluence of a constellation of personal factors, supportive environments, ideational and practical influences which this paper has sought to identify and explain.

ENVOI: **********

(indent →) "The world today is confronted with the dilemma of having to live together as a family or perish separately as enemies. Art Education is dedicated to the development of the nobler qualities of man--to learn to build, to oppose destruction and prejudice. Creativity is next to Godliness and the development of the creative faculties of children is an investment in the future of mankind." (1)

Carl Sagan in his most recent book, Cosmos, speaks of the brilliance, vision, and effort of Champollion in decypherinz the Rosetta Stone. (2) Sagan follows this facinatinz story with the followinz comments on one of our forms of present-day communication.

"As the Earth rotates, our more powerful radio transmitters slowly sweep the sky. A radio astronomer on a planet of another star would be able to calculate the lenzth of the day on Earth from the times of appearance and disappearance of our signals. Some of our most powerful sources are radar transmitters; a few are used for radar astronomy, to probe with radio fingers the surfaces of the nearby planets. The size of the radar beam projected against the sky is much larzer than the size of the planets, and much of the signal wafts on, out of the solar system into the depth of interstellar space to any sensitive receivers that may be listenin. Most radar transmissions are for

(1) D'Amico, Victor: "Inaugural Speech", (New Delhi, Oct. 30, 1963). from Bhavan Bal, (ed.): Report: The Children's Art Carnival in India, 1963-64. New Delhi. National Children's Museum, (n.d.). p 12

(2) The breakinz of this "code" zave us access to the interpretation and understanding of Egypt's complex and beautiful civilization.

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televised inquisitions by Senator Joseph McCarthy. Because these transmissions were broadcast a few decades ago, they are only a few tens of light-years away from the Earth. If the nearest civilization is farther away than that, then we can continue to breathe easy for a while. In any case, we can hope that they will find these programs incomprehensible." (1)

What Sagan has so eloquently said in this marvellous book, Victor D'Amico has said with his whole life. When I asked him what, of all his many, many marvellous accomplishments he would like to be remembered for, he answered that he would like to be identified with having championed the teaching of art as a humanizing force in the history of mankind.

> "It is my belief that the arts are a humanizing force and that their major function is to vitalize living; to make each child and man the richer for having taken part in them. I believe that people are more precious than products and that the effectiveness of the arts can be measured by the zest that they impart to society. Even though an artist may give his life to art, he gives it in behalf of those who will live to enjoy it. The effectiveness of art is also measured by the way it serves the most urgent needs of its time and our greatest need today, I believe, is to rediscover the dignity of man, to help man find his self-respect and to enjoy this greatest natural endowment, the power to create. In an era that has been brain-washed by science and in which the computer is idolized, man needs a new and respectable image." (2)

"We live in an age which has split the atom, and shrunk the globe in terms of the time it takes to span great distances, and the time/space it takes to transmit the most detailed and intricate kinds of information. We live in an age in which our knowledge seems to proffer the hope that

(1) Sagan, Carl: Cosmos, New York, Random House (c.1980) p.289.

(2) D'Amico, Victor: Exhibition Catalogue: 50 Years of Humanizing the Arts September 1-October 21, 1979. Museum Section, Guild Hall, East Hampton, New York.

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we may one day (in the not too distant future) shrink the universe in similar ways. Will these awesome forms of our technological understanding be commensurate with the ethical, moral and spiritual safety of human development?

D'Amico, as one of the great luminaries of our modern times, seems to intuitively understand this problem, which, incidentally has not qualitatively changed throughout the ages. D'Amico seems, however, to understand that our modern expression of the form/function problem as applied to global (and interstellar) politics is also a qualitative and quantitative problem, as well as a problem of balance and proportion. D'Amico understood, long before the splitting of the atom, that art is a dynamic force for healing and wholeness, an unparalleled essence in the balance of human history and development, powerful and available to each one of us on our own level. D'Amico knows better than any of us that art-making is a language for information-gathering, and thinking, as well as for communication and socialization; that the record of art is the record of human history. D'Amico was one of the primary proponents of the belief that visual training and kinesthetic thinking is the quickest, most suitable and most effective way of educating young minds, and that these forms render education accessible to virtually everyone, regardless of mental or physical age or handicapping condition, regardless of race, color, creed, language or country of origin.

D'Amico has shown us that art lives as a unifying and dynamic force between nations, a vehicle by which man can spread his messages and intentions of peace, love and good-will to the ends of the earth (and the universe). We can all learn from the example set forth in his

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series of international art carnivals.

We can only hope that the destructive consequences of our monstrous, unbridled, scientific and technological imaginations (radiation, pollution, harmful food additives, atomic and chemical warfare, the depletion of natural and mineral resources, economic and political imbalances among nations and peoples) will not have passed "the point of no return". We can only hope and pray that we will find the wisdom and the way to control the awesome forces which we have now released--to control them and shape them to the benefit of the creative needs of all individual and collective human and living beings. We must all hope and pray and work together to see to it that the form of the powerful technological vessel which now encloses our planet is worthy of its fragile contents.

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Victor D'Amico: His Sources and Influences - Appendix

~~Denouement~~

"Lead us not into ritual classifications"

In this section, I am almost tempted to amplify and extend the thought put forth in the beginning of this paper, based upon the notion attributed to Winston Churchill, that great men "make the times, and are "made by the My revision of this well-known insight would begin by calling into questio the idea of the existence of "great or famous men" in the first place. This statement would not, in any way, intend to deny that certain of our species seem destined, almost from birth, to become famous (or infamous). My intuition only intends to question the nature or essence of fame and the concept of "famous people".

It seems to me, important to include here a section dealing with the reality of words, and the power of verbal concepts. It is all the more appropriate, I feel, to include such a section in a paper about D'Amico, as it is relevent to his life-work, the object of which was to constantly challenge the narrowness of our verbally based and abstractly constructed realities, together with our wordy techniques of classifying and ever-defining almost everything, and ~~thereby limiting~~ ourselves, our worlds, and each other.

So, pursuiant to the concept of fame, I have sought the definition and root of the word "fame" in my favorite word-source book, Eric Partridge's: Origins of Words, and I have discovered the following information:

> fame (n hence v, usu as pa famed), famous--infamy, infamous; defame, defamation, defamatory; sep FABLE, FABULOUS, with AFFABLE, AFFABILITY, and INEFFABLE, INEFFABILITY; sep INFANT, INFANCY (whence enfant terrible); sep INFANTRY;--nefarious; preface, prefatory; sep FATE (FATAL, etc.; where fairy).
>
> 1. Fame, adopted from OF-EF, comes from L fama (s fam-) itself from L fari, to speak; akin to Gr. pheme (s phem-) a saying, report, rumour, (hence) public reputation, Doric phama (s pham-) I speak, and phemis (s phem-) conversation, renown; IE r, prob bha-, to speak; etymon bhami-, I speak.

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Victor D'Amico: His Sources and Influences

Clearly the original Indo-European root word denotation included in it the concept of speech, word, voice, command or imperative, as well as the ability to speak and interpret meaning (and hence the ability to listen is invoked or at least implied.) It is curious to me and not, I am sure, a coincidence that the ancient root for "word" (standing for language) is closely associated with the concept of the designate for truth. We often take words as truths, especially when they are spoken by experts, or authority figures(1)The fabric of language and linguistic development is tightly woven, but flexible! It seems to bear multiple concepts along with it as it flows and unfolds.

There is a legend that I have constructed in my imagination. It goes like this: When language was young and new to the mouth of man, words were few and very precious--spoken with great care, and learned with much effort. Some words were perhaps based on animal sounds and maybe some grew out of man's breathing, or simple explicative noises made during the intensity of travail, fright or stress. Or, alternatively, others might have imitated the sound of natural things as they happened or the movement of the body. But, whether constructed or inspired, one thing seems most probable; that individual words were originally both flexible and ambiguous. A single word might mean many, many things at the same time. It might appear in many different disguises, and it might even have been able to mean the opposite of itself. This is the magic of words.(2)

(1) cf. with Julian Jaynes: Origins of Consciousness, esp. the chapter, "The Quest for Authorization."
(2) See Paolo Friere's: Pedagogy of the Oppressed, and Jaynes, op. cit., "The Evolution of Language", pp. 129-135.

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Victor D'Amico: His Sources and Influences

Now to extend this rather lengthy metaphore one further measure:

If, in reality, language and thought have a reciprocal relationship, and if, in terms of human development, completely evolved concepts take a long time to establish themselves in our minds, it stands to reason that there must have been a time, perhaps towards the beginning of the evolution of this process in human history, when concepts, as well as the words used to designate them, must have been highly undifferentiated and global or generalized, conceived in individual contexts, barely communicated to others, fusing causes and effects, beginnings and endings. If this is so, somewhere inside us, perhaps, this event is stored as a half-forgotten memory or echo. And it is this that forms the basis for the fluidity of imagination, the earliest juncture of thought and memory and experience with words. It is this base that D'Amico hopes to tap into.

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Victor D'Amico: His Sources and Influences

This, as far as I can discern, is what words are about. Many root words have two opposite (and often mutually exclusive) denotations. I think that this is very important, because in some atavistic part of ourselves we seem to keep alive the notion that to have an object, quality or condition evokes the opposing thought, that is, to not have the said object, quality or condition. (In fact, a scientific hypothesis has been based on this belief.)

As regards the family of words associated with fame--all of them have distinct but interrelated meanings. And negative or opposing meanings seem to cluster about the positive associations. However, all of them are necessary concomitants of, or fellow-travellers-with, the concept which the root word for fame designates (i, e., to speak). All are, in a way, contained in it. Fables are often spun about famous people or events. They arise from gossip; the affable person (literally the one who is easy to speak to, in its root word significance) is most likely to succeed; the famous person is often considered to have ineffable qualities (unknown and hence unknowable--unspeakable or God-like), and the infant (as opposed to the famous person) cannot "speak" for himself. Naturally, the infantry (made up of mostly young men, by tradition) by extention, cannot speak for itself, but follows the orders of its famous (or infamous) leaders. Fate is THAT WHICH HAS BEEN SPOKEN OR DECREED (by the Divine Originator), and it is very important (and kind) to famous people. To preface is to to speak before. Fame is also akin to fari (Latin word), meaning to speak (fas.) This latter word has the meaning "divine law" or that which has been spoken by the Gods. It's negative is nefas meaning wrong, sin or crime.

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Victor D'Amico: His Sources and Influences

In a sense then,a famous person becomes a vox populi, a voice of the people, around whom human energies,hopes, dreams, and imagination focus. And, a famous person, through his words and deeds, will often catalyze and paraphrase the intentions of the "masses", perhaps as a compensation for their own lack of accomplishment.(1) Our hero will, at the same time lay himself generally bare to attack, opprobrium (from jealousy) or frequent mis-interpretation.

D'Amico, through his work has spoken to us and for us. He has given us new values, and he guides us towards a new goal. He has given us a model which points the way to the future. D'Amico's vision is one of a future of peace, or harmony through true democracy. It is a shining vision of One World in which all human and spiritual needs will be met, and all individual human rights will be respected, to the greatest good and the survival of each and every one of us.

(1) or, as a result of their inability to have a "voice" or say in their own government.

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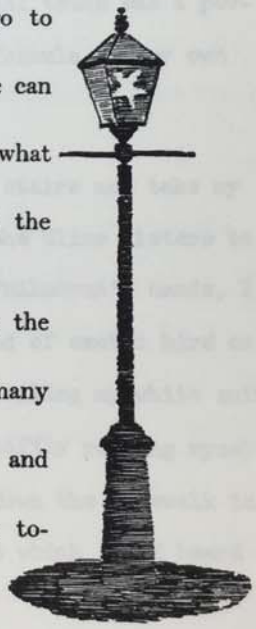
p. 96.

XXX

THE LAMPLIGHTER

MY tea is nearly ready and the sun has left the sky.
It's time to take the window to see Leerie going by;
For every night at teatime and before you take your seat,
With lantern and with ladder he comes posting up the street.

Now Tom would be a driver and Maria go to sea,
And my papa's a banker and as rich as he can be;
But I, when I am stronger and can choose what I'm to do,
O Leerie, I'll go round at night and light the lamps with you!



For we are very lucky, with a lamp before the door,
And Leerie stops to light it as he lights so many more;
And oh! before you hurry by with ladder and with light;
O Leerie, see a little child and nod to him to-night!

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APPENDIX

From: D'Amico, Victor: My Mother Had Eleven, unpublished autobiography; written as a Master's Thesis for Columbia University, N.Y., - 13 - 1924. First Vignette, "My Mother Had 11", p. 13 P. 100

Philomena, my eldest sister, would dress me and my brother Uley. I was five and he was three. We were her charges. She would iron our sweet suits. Mine was white and had a sailor collar with gold stars on the corners and a vest with a gold anchor. I wore Buster Brown socks and shoes. It took Philomena an interminable time to dress us for she was as fastidious especially with me as she was with her own dressing. After I was scrubbed and dressed, Philomena would comb my hair and curl my forelock around her index finger so that the curl ran across my forehead. When she was through, she would stand off two or three feet, giving me the once-over, then she spit on her fingers and patted down a rebellious hair here and there. Her final touch was a powdering of my chin and forehead with a special formula of her own making.

Released at last, I would pound down the stairs and take my place in the rocker on the porch to watch for the Uline sisters to pass by. In spite of the ordeal I endured at Philomena's hands, I enjoyed being dressed up. I felt like some kind of exotic bird on display. There was little I could do without soiling my white suit or scuffing my patent-leather shoes so I sat stiffly rocking myself on the porch. Sometimes I would march up and down the sidewalk in front of my house, singing a song of the 1890's which I had heard my mother sing. It ran:

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"I'm a dandy, that's what the people say.
With the ladies I'm never rude.
My style is all my own,
I carry on -
I'm a dandy but not a dude."

Myrtle and Hazel Uline lived next door. Their house backed on ours. Myrtle was twenty. She had dark hair and white skin. She was slender and beautiful and moved in a graceful rhythm. Hazel was two years younger and as different from Myrtle as any one of the same family could be. The only thing in common was beauty but I thought Hazel was more beautiful. She had long yellow hair that hung in curls down her back and bright blue eyes with violet glints in them. She had a radiant smile but even when she wasn't smiling, her face beamed with friendliness.

The Uline sisters passed by every evening about six o'clock. Myrtle came by first and then Hazel would pass a half-hour later. They would come by in front of the house and turn the corner and follow along the side where the poplars were and pass by the back gate. They stopped to talk to Mama in the front yard and I watched from the porch; when they continued along the side I would slip off my chair and run through the house, skipping over the patterns on the floor made by the sun filtering through the poplars, and out the back door where I would sit on the step and wait till they reached the gate. They always (1)

(1) Ibid, p. 14

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APPENDIX

The D'Amico children were (in order of their appearance):

Philomena
Louis
Lisetta
Paris
Irene
Victor
Ulysses
Dionysios (Danny)
Elinor
Armand
Ermete (Tippy)

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APPENDIX

The pictures on the following pages do not represent the conditions under which D'Amico lived, but they do represent the life-styles of many other Italian immigrants, and as such would have formed a portion of the visual surround of D'amico's childhood.

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APPENDIX

From: Von Hartz, John: New York Street Kids: 136 Photographs selected by The Children's Aid Society . New York, Dover Publications, Inc. (c1978) , p.6.

Children Making a Christmas Tree [opposite]. The spirit of city children is unquenchable, even under the most depressing conditions. These two kids use an old broom wedged into a bucket and a few old toys to fashion an impromptu Christmas tree that costs nothing. Ingenious as the broom-tree is, it does have an historical precedent. A decorated broom often served as a substitute or second tree in the homes of working-class Europe. *(c.a.s.).* **What**

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Ibid., p. 16

Hurdy-gurdy. The hand organ, or hurdy-gurdy, always provided one of the day's highlights for street kids. Sometimes they formed a circle on the sidewalk next to the street musician, as shown here. More often, they jumped or danced informally to the strains of the strings that played European folk songs. In the 90s the hurdy-gurdy was the domain of the Italian immigrant who arrived in the city with no other means of making a living. To collect the coins for his music and entrance the gangs of kids, the street musician often kept a monkey on a long leash. The monkey wore an embroidered coat and tipped a tiny bellcap's hat in thanks for the pennies offered by the delighted audience. *(Museum of the City of New York)*

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Ibid., p. 50

Playground in Tenement Alley [above]. No area was too cramped for a game of baseball. At the time, the local New York Giants were being led to pennants by John McGraw. Elsewhere, Ty Cobb was burning up the American League in Detroit and a young pitcher was making his name known around Boston—Babe Ruth. The excitement of baseball soon permeated the young immigrant's life. Through a child's imagination the cluttered yard or busy street became Ebbet's Field. Even Abraham Cahan responded to the national craze with articles on baseball in the Yiddish paper the *Forward. (Lewis Hine. The International Museum of Photography, Rochester, New York)* **Brooklyn Pier** [opposite, top]. The street kid's private swimming pools were the city's rivers and bays. Using an old pier as his diving board, the urchin discovered in the waters a welcome break from the blistering streets and a chance to display his diving or jumping form. Swimming from the piers was illegal, but unpreventable. Not only was the water polluted by sewage; the currents were so treacherous that drownings were frequent. *(Brown Brothers)* **Garbage Cleaners** [opposite, bottom]. Going through the garbage was not the work of eccentric old folk during this era but part of a kid's struggle for survival. Kids were dispatched to bring home whatever leavings they could scrounge, including unburned coal for the fire. Those without homes had to subsist on whatever they could rummage from the garbage pails. Nor were the children without competition from adults. Many unskilled immigrants became the city's ragpickers who sorted through the trash for bits of cloth which were later sold to rag dealers. *(Lewis Hine. The International Museum of Photography, Rochester, New York)*

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Ibid., p. 2

Denizens of Mullen's Alley. Since parks and playgrounds in the slums were rare, children and mothers turned to back alleys for breathing room. As this photograph indicates, these alleys were not without an ominous air. Some were notorious, so clogged with packs of feral kids and gangs of older cutthroats that the police were afraid to enter them even at high noon. *(The Jacob A. Riis Collection, Museum of the City of New York)*

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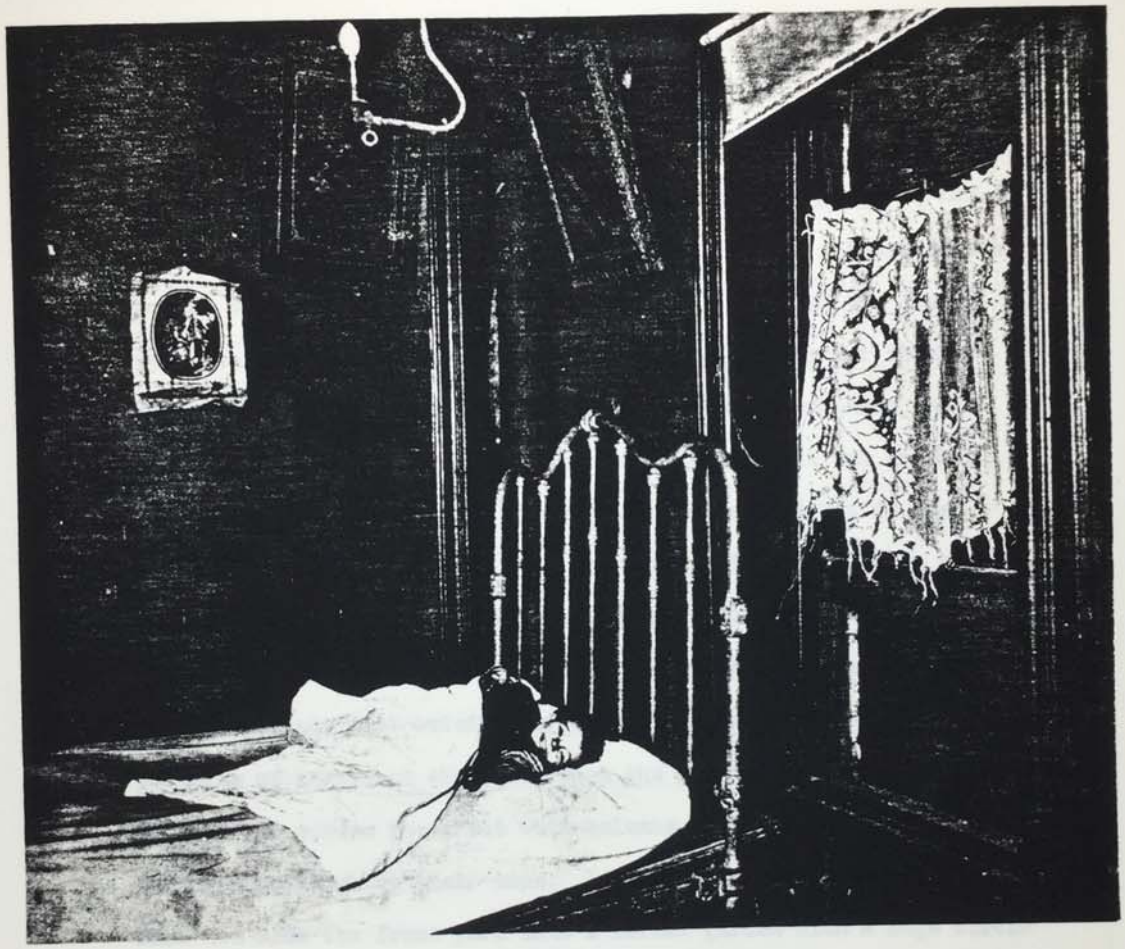
Ibid., p. 46.



Tenement Interior [above]. Such scenes of contentment—a baby luxuriating in a full-size bed—were rare in tenement apartments. Children were usually tucked together three and four to a bed like so many dolls with their parents sharing a mattress in the same room. Privacy was for the rich. Despite the poverty, the accoutrements of better classes are there—a lace curtain, decorative brass bed and the reproduction of a work of art. *(c.a.s.)*. **Small Newspaper Boy** [left]. The cry of "Wuxtry, Wuxtry," from kids hawking the latest lurid headlines was as much a part of the city's atmosphere as the squeal of trolley-car wheels or the rattle of the el. However, shy old-world kids patiently standing on corners to earn an occasional penny were also part of the newspapers' large distributional network. *(Lewis Hine. The Edward L. Bafford Photography Collection, University of Maryland, Baltimore County)*

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APPENDIX

Vignette Number Two

First Romance

I shall always remember our first summer in Cleveland, Ohio. It seems like a dream but an indelible one. We had a house on the corner with a large yard in front and back. Mama had the front yard planted with flowers and shrubs. Gardening was her special art. Mrs. Brown, our next-door neighbor, used to say Mama had a green thumb but that seemed strange to me because it was brown or blackish at times when Mama was digging in the dirt but it was never green. The house was long and narrow with an alley on one side that was where Louis made the merry-go-round. The alley divided our house from Mrs. Brown's. On the other side was the street and two poplars just outside our dining-room windows made moving patterns of leaves on the floor when the sun shone through them. A porch ran across the front with columns that had gingerbread wooden scrollwork at their tops. I thought they were beautiful. Mama had made the front yard into a formal garden with a huge circle in the middle which was divided into wedge shapes with alternating colored flowers. There were cannas just in front of the porch and a wide flower bed made a border inside the picket fence. Mama gardened in the early morning and in the evenings before supper. Only about three hours of the day remain in my memory: from about four to seven. The rest has faded out completely.

(1) D'Amico, Victor, My Mother Had 11, Vignette No. 2, "First Romance", p. 12

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APPENDIX

Vignette Number Three

The Wonderful World of Childhood

I would ask you to transport yourself to the wonderful world of childhood. Not a nostalgic view of looking back - down the corridor of time and seeing at the end of its heart-sick journey a blurred vision of the past. No! I suggest that we just go back as if we had a wishing ring or could be dropped right into the middle of it by some magic time machine.

It should be like Alice going through the glass or down a rabbit hole and at once finding yourself in the world of childhood. Very few writers can go back and live in a real world of childhood fantasy and imagination. Lewis Carrol did it and Robert Louis Stevenson did it in his "A Child's Garden of Verses" and Mark Twain did it for older children. Most adults who try to revisit their childhood go back with the weight of all the adult trappings dragging behind them like the chains of Marley's ghost and like Marley's ghost they haven't the past, they do not relive it.

How far back can you recall in your childhood? What is the earliest moment or image you remember? (1)

(1) Ibid, Vignette No 3, "The Wonderful world of childhood", p 17.

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I was three, no older, perhaps only two, that I recall standing before a window at night with my face pressed against the glass staring into the darkness. A road went off into the distance, and along one side was a row of lampposts with lights festooned from pole to pole. The road disappeared into a black hill silhouetted against a blue black sky. There were lights in the houses on the hill and as I watched each light spread into a radiant glow until the hill became the inverted spangled bowl of heaven. It is so clear that I could paint it but it would only make a bad painting because the wonder and beauty of the young child would be missing.

In childhood a day is endless. Tomorrow is not twelve or twenty-four hours long but an eternity, and yesterday is all the time that went before as far back as you can remember. Only today is real and positive, with a beginning when you got up and with an ending when you must go to bed.

A child has two lives that go on side by side. One is the independent life when the child confronts the world by himself, the other is the life he shares with people which is the friendly or social self. The very young child spends more time with his lonely self - at least I did from three to five or six years. During these years, my family and friends if I had any, were on the periphery of my living. Sometimes they seemed like offstage presences whose voices were heard in the distance and if they in- (!)

(1) Ibid p. 18.

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Appendix,

D'Amico's mother raised him on Mother Goose, and the poems of R. L.Stevenson. Other than this, and the reading lessons from the elder siblings, D'Amico's first teacher was nature itself, especially the seashore. (1)

(1) From personal interview with Victor D'Amico, June, 1981

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Appendix

Other inventions which D'Amico created as a child were:

A Creche, fashioned from a Model Box in the manner of a minature cyclorama. It had a North Star made from jewelry, and was adorned with lights. A clock-work mechanism made the Star light up at a certain point. (cf. the film: Calder's Circus.

Stained-glass windows were made on translucent paper, the "leading" done with ink-pens, and then the flat areas of color filled in with colored (translucent) inks. The whole was then painted with a heavy varnish to render it more translucent, and make it shiney. (The reader must bear in mind that plastics, magic markers, etc., had not been invented at that time.) (1)

(1) From Personal Interview w Victor D'Amico, June, 1981

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Appendix

1. D'Amico's everlasting love of the sea is reflected in his book, Assemblage. (1) In his chapter "The new world of materials" he writes about "Gifts from the Sea" (p. 10)

> There is first of all the variety and richness of treasures to be found on the beach or in the shallow waters offshore. Today, with the growing popular interest in scuba diving, these can be amplified by less familiar and even more fascinating treasures to be found in the deeper waters. The assemblage artist of any age is confronted with a wealth of materials from the sea in widely varying shapes, colors, and textures. Purposeful searching and experience will reward the seeker and satisfy his most optimistic espectations.
>
> Sand is the most common and available of the materials, but there are many kinds of sand—fine, white and powdery, or granular and grayish, as well as the thin layers of red, gray, and black sand found at the high-tide mark, which must be scooped up gently. Shells too are bountiful, differing according to climate and location. Clam, mussel, slipper, scallop, razor, oyster, and conch shells vary in shape and color; they can be used whole, in fragments, or crushed to make textured surfaces. Pebbles at the water's edge range from pure white to black, and vary in color, shape, and size. It is advisable to carry a number of bottles or boxes when collecting these materials, to facilitate sorting and storing them.
>
> The dried skeletons of fish and birds form excellent bases for original constructions. Feathers may be dispersed over a wide area along the shore, but with patience one can acquire a considerable number. Driftwood almost constitutes an art unto itself. From the smallest chip only a few inches long to the large gnarled root or branch, there is an extensive choice of sizes, shapes, textures.
>
> Just by taking walks along the beach, one can acquire quite a collection of such materials; with the aid of a "beach buggy", exploration can reach the dunes and areas beyond the shoreline, where storms and high tides often deposit their rarest gifts. Collecting and examining these found materials can afford much pleasure and information: but still greater satisfaction comes from converting them into collages, constructions, and mobiles of one's own design.

(1) D'Amico, Victor, and Buchman, Arlette. Assemblage. New York: Mema (c. 1972) p. 10.

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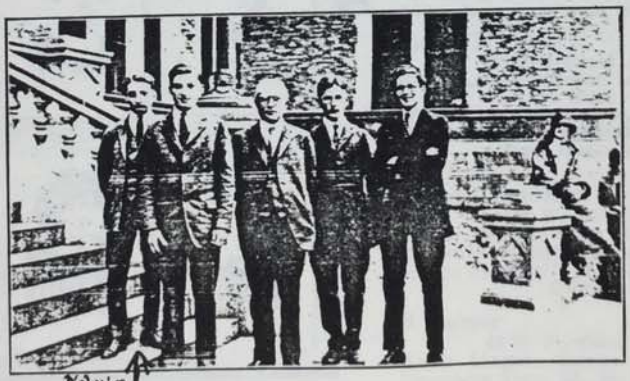
DEBATING TEAM

CHESS TEAM

These "heavy" thinkers receive expert coaching from Dr. Greditzer and were managed by Orans who later became president of the Interborough Chess Club and president of our Chess Club.

The city championship is theirs. They beat Stuyvesant, Commerce, and Textile, tying Clinton, Townsend Harris, Erasmus and Morris. In the playoff Evander beat Morris 2½—1½. In the final round Evander beat Commercial, Townsend and Boys High.

The team consisted of Captain Orans, Stetson, Honig and Stein.



(Victor D'Amico's High School Yearbook)

1.

From the Evander Childs High School Yearbook, 1925
New York, N.Y.
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Appendix

Michael Comparato "Comp"
612 E. 180th St.
Floor Mgr. Handbook; News; Service and Honor Leagues.
"Character is a perfectly educated will."
N. Y. U.

Eleanor Cook "Cookie"
2295 Grand Concourse
Honor League; Service League, Capt. Library Squad; Lieut. Traffic Squad, Swimming Team; Senior Pin Committee.
"Cookie and Ev the inseparable pair,
Always together to do or to dare."
Hunter

Frank Cooper "Frankie"
1694 Clay Ave.
Pinafore; Glee Club; Service Club.
"Come out of your shell."
N. Y. U.

Stevenson Corey "Steve"
3062 Albany Crescent
Vice-President Evander Club; Service League; Asst. Circulation Mgr. "News" '23; Mgr. '24; Track 22, '23, '24; Cross-country '23, Capt. '24.
"Like the babbling brook our Mercury runs forever."
Columbia

Pauline Crouse
1786 Sedgwick Ave.
Glee Club; Service League; Dramatics.
"A voice as sweet as roses
And a disposition to go with it."

Victor D'Amico "Vic"
2319 Beamont Ave.
Honor League; Service League; Bridge Art Staff.
"With Mr. Ruskin I agree,
The old-fashioned gal is the gal for me."
Pratt Institute

Mildred Davidson "Mid"
712 W. 180th St.
Service League; Class Day Committee.
"Sweet little girl! Smiles all day.
Spoiled little girl! Must have her way."
College

B. Palmer "B. V. D."
42 W. Fordham Road
Honor League; Service League; Mgr. Swimming Team '23, '24; Football Team '23; News Staff '23, 24; Dramatics '23, 24
"We turn him out a man of wit
Agreed that few the crown will fit."
Dartmouth

(1)

(1) Ibid, p. ?

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Appendix,

Following is from School Arts. January 1955, (1) an article by Victor D'Amico entitled "What is Creative Teaching?"

"The idea of creativity is, on the whole vague and nebulous, a bright and glowing hope rather than a definite and articulate philosophy and method. While we shall never reduce creative teaching to an exact science with perfect formulas there are basic aims, characteristics, attitudes, and procedures which are necessary to promote creative behavior.

An Art and a Science

In a sense, creative teaching is both an art and a science. It is an art because it deals with the development of individuals who are distinct and changing and who produce different creative manifestations. It deals with individuals who have different emotions, drives, and aptitudes and who perceive and mature each at his own pace. Therefore, teaching situations are never exactly the same and it is the constant fluctuation of interest, attitude, and response which makes the teaching art a constant challenge and stimulating experience. (page 3)

Creative teaching is a science too, because there are specific characteristics and behavior patterns of the maturing individual at each age level.....There is a growing resentment on the part of educators toward the emphasis on age-level characteristics. This is highly justified when educators use the acquired knowledge to classify or pigeonhole individuals rather than to gain insight into their creative make-up"...."Knowledge can be the means towards blazing new trails or become merely a dead-end street."....

(1) School Arts, "What is Creative Teaching" — A January 1955, pp 3-

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Appendix,

Definition of creativity.

What does being creative mean? One dictionary says: "create--to make something new out of existing materials'. Another says: 'to invest with a new rank'. I think that is closer to the aim of art teaching. To create, then, is to invest a moment, a place, or a thing with the new rank of one's uniqueness, to say it in your own ways. Being creative means to discover or invent something new, a new organization of things, a new basis for thinking, a new insight into art or a way of living, even only a new expectation. It doesn't have to be new to the work, but new to the person.

It is not the thing made, but the way one perceives, feels, and behaves, especially toward other people,which is vital in the creative process. For example, making a well-designed collage is not a creative act, you can do that by the rules. But if the collage has the child's unique character and if it changes his attitude toward materials as potentially creative stuff, then I call that creative.

The word "uniqueness", is not my word, it's Earl Kelley's (Earl C. Kelley, Professor, Wayne University· author of "Education for what is Real", co-author of "Education and the Nature of Man."). But I think it describes the most important quality of the creative act. It is the character in art that distinguishes one child's work from another's You can easily recognize it if it's there. It is a kind of signature or personal identity. Everyone is potentially unique, but uniqueness is often buried deeply in the person overlaid (1)

(1) Ibid, pp -4-

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by cliches or technical tricks and fears. You may have to dig for it. It doesn't depend on I. Q. or talent· it is the one thing God gave us which makes us different from everybody else. Like your fingerprints it has it's own configuration. To be unique is not just being different. It is the expression of the self and, once recognized, is the basis for all creative growth, good art and creative experiece.

It is quite possible to have"good" art products and to deny creative experience. By good art products I mean art work that follows the laws of designs and that is aesthetically satisfying. For example, many methods succeed in producing examples of faultless design but lack creative experience. An experience or exercize which dictates the process and the result and which does not allow or stimulate personal interpretation, discovery and invention is not a creative experience, regardless of the aesthetic excellence of the product. I would question even the aesthetic validity of an art product if it lacks personal identification and interpretation. To me, the vitality of a work of art is in the extent to which it reflects the uniqueness or personal vision of its creator. The trend toward abstract design in our schools is fast developing a new academy of art that is soulless and without personality and which threatens to atrophy creativeness.in education. Collages are often made as interesting designs, mobiles as complicated decorations. Unless the collage project stimulates the child's sensitivity to tactile sensations and opens new horizons for creative experience, it has little value in creative growth."

<u>Deepening of Creative Experience.</u>

Oneeof the particular aims of art education should be making the art experience (1)

(1) Ibid pp. 5

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more than a trial and error process, and more than spontaneous expression or a casual manipulation of materials. Deepening experience comes from a chain of successive activities, each becoming a little more revealing, challenging and demanding for the individual. For example, in the development of tactile and visual sensations, the child may discover a variety of tactile experiences such as qualities and degrees of smoothness, roughness, coldness, hardness: or in visual sensations he may become more acutely aware of brightness, dullness, color, pattern. In a number of ways these values may be brought to his consciousness· at one time finding materials that complement each other because they are very different. Then he can try putting these together in pleasing or displeasing organizations. A group or class can play a feeling game where they identify the qualities of materials with their eyes shut. In this way they learn the responses of others in reagrd to tast and preference. Later they may go on to an adventure.....through a multiplicity of experiences focused on a specific aesthetic objective, they gain a profound consciousness toward tactile and visual experiences.?.....

"Freedom and Discipline

A major problem in the creative process is the need to integrate two seemingly opposite qualities—freedom and discipline. We want the child to be free, but freedom can only come from self-discipline. When a child persistently asks "What shall I make?", he reveals a need for using his inner resources and making his own decisions. If we tell him what to make, he is deprived of solving his own problems and using his creative prwers. If we say "Do what you like" we are evading the problem. We must build the child's confidence in himself by leading him to things which he can do but which provoke him to search for and to 2

(1) Ibid p.-5
(2) underlining mine.

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make decisions. We motivate him toward the things he knows, so that he will not undertake problems which are too difficult. If we put new materials before him, but we require that he use them in a unique way, we increase the complexity of each problem and we guide him in following through We don't give him the answer, but we point out a direction. In that way he becomes master of himself through a self-acquired discipline.

The feeling that leaving the child completely on his own to make choices is freedom, is a mistaken notion. What we do is to leave him open to outside indoctrinary influences such as the cartoon strip or the coloring book, or, perhaps worse still, to exploiters—the contest makers and the talent-hunters.

Creative Process is Integrative Process.

The most vital part of the creative experience is the integrative process—the means by which the aesthetic concept becomes part of the child. If the exercise or experiment in color or texture or perspective is obvious in the child's work, it has not been integrated.....the teaching has resulted in mere imitation. But when a child manipulates the concept in his own way or recognizes it in the work of another, or in things about him, then it is fairly certain that some form of integration has taken place and is functioning.

This process actually produces a change in the individual by extending his expressive power, enriching his awareness, increasing his sensitivity or altering his attitude. It is principally a change brought about by an aesthetic experience and is unique to it...."Integration" in educational practice has often been associated with the (1)

(1) Ibid, p. 5

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correlation of subject matter with a rational order of learning or with a coincidence of activity in a group or mass approach to teaching as in the core curriculum or planned unit. Now these may provide the source or the climate for integration, but they do not guarantee it. In fact, they may stand in its way.

The interpretation of the individual is a very personal affair, different for each person and dependent on his uniqueness, his rhythm, his interest, his emotional drives and perceptual patterns of learning. It is a process that results from the interaction between the child and his work in a creative situation..... (1)

(The following is from a personal interview, June, 1981, with D'Amico.)
"Today my creative work is focused on kinetic constructions, light models, and assemblages, although I sometimes paint and do monoprints. I never wanted to be just one thing, a painter, or a sculptor. I wanted to be one or all things at one time if it were possible. Labelling oneself is too limiting. If I ever accepted a label, it would be something like "The Modern Renaissance Man."

(1) Ibid, p. 5

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Appendix

from a collection of Motivational Materials by Victor E. D'Amico, for his Art School at MOMA. These were used mainly with Adults.

I WATCHED IT ALL FROM MY ROOM IN THE GOLDEN BASKET
THAT LOOKED UPON THE SQUARE IN THE CENTER BRUGES
WHICH THEY PROUDLY CALL....THE VENICE OF THE NORTH

NIGHT HAS COME

AND THERE IS A BLUE MIST
IN THE AIR
WHICH MAKES THE LIGHTS BLUR

THE MARKET WAGONS
WITH THEIR CANVAS AWNINGS
ARE CROWDED TOGETHER IN THE MIDDLE

AND THEIR WARES GLITTER UNDER THE HARSH GAS LAMPS

A CROWD OF PEOPLE
FORMS AN IRREGULAR FRINGE ALL AROUNG THE EDGE

I CAN SEE
DOWN THE STREETS
THAT
RADIATE FROM THE SQUARE THERE IS A HUSHED
FEELING
ABOUT IT ALL

EVEN THOUGH
MUFFLED SOUNDS
COME THROUGH MY CLOSED WINDOW . . . . .

(1) This was based on an actual experience which D'Amico had. He described it exactly as he saw it. (from personal interview June, 1951)

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THE VENICE OF THE NORTH

A SUDDEN CLANG OF A BELL RINGS OUT.....AND
A PROCESSION EMERGES FROM THE STREET TO THE RIGHT

IN ROWS OF SIX
ALL WHITE
IN HOODS AND GOWNS
EACH CARRYING
A SINGLE
LONG
WHITE CANDLE
ROW AFTER ROW
UNTIL
A HUNDRED OR MORE PASS INTO THE SQUARE

THEN
ANOTHER PROCESSION
OF MONKS
IN BLACK AND BLACK HOODED
IN ROWS OF TEN
AT LEAST TEN FEET
APART
CARRYING
BLACK CANDLES
WITH THEIR YELLOW
FLAME
ROW UPON ROW
TWO HUNDRED OR MORE
THEY ARE ALL CHANTING
AND THEIR SONGS FILL THE SQUARE AND FLOW INTO MY WINDOW.....

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THE VENICE OF THE NORTH 3

NOW
COME THE BEARERS
IN BLACK
CARRYING
A GREAT WOODEN CROSS
AT LEAST
THIRTY FEET LONG
THEY
CARRY IT
ON THEIR SHOULDERS
IN
A HORIZONTAL POSITION

THE CHILDREN FOLLOW
HOLDING
BOUQUETS OF ROSES
ALL DRESSED IN RED
SINGING
IN HIGH PITCHED VOICES
FORTY ROWS
OR MORE
EVENLY SPACED
AND

JUST BEHIND
COMES
THE CARDINAL
SWINGING HIS INCENSE BURNER
AND
INTONING A PRAYER

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Typescript

THE VENICE OF THE NORTH 4

NOW
THERE ARE
THE BROTHERS
ALL IN RED
TOO
CARRYING SPEARS
WITH GOLD TIPS
ROW UPON ROW THEY COME

THE SQUARE IS FILLED
EVERY INCH
WITH
A SWAYING
MASS OF PEOPLE

THERE
IS
A HUSH
AND
THE CARDINAL
INTONES
A PRAYER
THE MASS
RESPONDS
AND
BREAKS
INTO A HYMN
THAT FILLS THE SQUARE
WITH MUSIC TO THE BRIM

AND
THE STARS
LOOK DOWN
IT IS GOOD FRIDAY.....

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Appendix

THE FEATHER

THIS SINGLE FEATHER

IS ALL THAT I HAVE TO PROVE TO ME THAT IT HAPPENED
THAT THERE WAS SUCH A BIRD
AND SUCH A PLACE

OTHERWISE
IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN
JUST A DREAM
OR
THE HALLUCINATION OF A MADMAN

I WAS HUNTING IN THE EVERGLADES
WHEN
I
SAW
THIS BIRD
A STRANGE
BEAUTIFUL CREATURE
ALL GOLD AND WHITE
FEATHERS WITH
A COMB OF
RED PLUMES

I FOLLOWED . . . . . AS IF MESMERIZED

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Pages

THE FEATHER

IT SEEMED TO BE URGING ME ON
FLYING
LOW
FROM
BRANCH TO BRANCH

AND THEN SWOOPING HIGH
MAKING GREAT CIRCLES

I
CAME
TO A THICKET WHICH MADE A SOLID IMPREGNABLE WALL

THE FLEW ABOVE IT
BIRD

AND

VANISHED

BUT AS I APPROACHED THE WALL THE THICKET PARTED

AND WHEN I STEPPED THROUGH I
BEHELD A SCENE THAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN
HEAVEN ITSELF

YOU SUPPLY THE SCENE

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Appendix

THE HUMAN HAND

THIS WAS A DREAM EXCEPT
FOR A STARTLING TURN OF
EVENTS IT WAS
NOT VERY DIFFERENT FROM

MOST STRANGE DREAMS WHICH
HAVE A SURREALISTIC
CHARACTER

(PSYCHIATRISTS AND ANALYSTS MIGHT HAVE A GREAT DEAL OF INTEREST OR FUN WITH THIS DREAM BUT I AM INTERESTED IN WHAT YOU WILL DO WITH IT)

A FRIEND TOLD ME OF THIS DREAM WHICH HE HAD ONLY RECENTLY HIS DREAM WAS REMINISCENT OF HIS YOUTH

HE DREAMED . . . . . .

THAT HE WAS ON HIS FIRST DATE
WALKING WITH HIS GIRL ALONG A PATH
WHICH RAN BY A STREAM
TREES AND SHRUBS SHADED THE PATH
WHICH COOLED IT
AND GAVE IT A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF PRIVACY

THEY WERE BOTH IN THEIR TEENS
THEY WALKED ALONG ARM IN ARM

AS HE LOOKED DOWN AT HER HAND
HE ADMIRED ITS WHITENESS

"ALMOST LIKE ALABASTER"
HE THOUGHT

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Appendix.

THE HUMAN HAND 2

"NOT ONLY ALABASTER
BUT SHAPED BY THE SENSITIVITY
AND SKILL OF A GREAT SCULPTOR"

HE BROUGHT HIS HAND OVER
AND GRASPED THE DELICATE HAND GENTLY

IT SUDDENLY CAME LOOSE
AND
WITH HORROR HE HELD
THE OBJECT PENDULOUSLY

HE LOOKED TO SEE HIS
GIRL'S REACTION BUT SHE HAD DISAPPEARED

THERE
WAS NO TRACE OF HER

IN ALARM
HE THOUGHT
HE MUST DISPOSE OF THE HAND SOMEHOW HE COULD NOT

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THE HUMAN HAND 3

HE
THREW IT IN THE WATER AND IT FLOATED

HE
PUSHED IT UNDER THE BRUSH AND IT GLOWED

THE
FARTHER HE RAN FROM IT THE BRIGHTER IT GLOWED

HE
TRIED TO BURY IT
DIGGING THE SOIL WITH HIS HANDS

THE BLOOD RAN DOWN HIS FINGERS

BUT AT THAT MOMENT HE
AWOKE .....

THE MATTER WOULD END AS A BAD DREAM EXCEPT FOR THE FACT
THAT WHEN HE AWOKE

THE HAND WAS LYING ON HIS PILLOW

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Biography

VICTOR D'AMICO

Personal History

BORN: New York City, 1904

RESIDES: Amagansett, N.Y.

TRAINING: Cooper Union, New York, N.Y., 1920-22, Fine Arts, Illustration, Costume Designer

Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, N.Y., 1924-26, Art Education

Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, N.Y. 1926-30, B.S. & M.A. in Fine Arts and Art Education

Studied and worked professionally with Norman Bel Geddes in Theater Design, 1922-24

CAREER ACHIEVEMENTS: Head, Art Department of the Fieldston Schools, Riverdale, N.Y., 1926-48

General Education Board, Survey of Art in American Schools (for Rockefeller Foundation), 1934

Director, Department of Education, Museum of Modern Art, New York, N.Y., 1937-69

Director, Napeague Institute of Art, Amagansett, N.Y., 1970 to present

PROFESSORSHIPS INSTRUCTORSHIPS

Art Education, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, 1932, 1934-42

Art & Art Education, New York University, New York, 1965-72

Art Education, Southampton College, Southampton, N.Y. 1969

Classes for N.Y.C. Grade Teachers, Metropolitan Museum of Art, N.Y., 1970 to present

HONORS AND AWARDS

Distinguished Alumnus Award-Evander Childs High School, N.Y., 1952

Citation of Merit-State University of New York at Buffalo, N.Y., 1964

Honorary Doctorate of Fine Arts, Philadelphia Museum College of Art, Phila., Pa., 1964

Medal-National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1966

Achievement Award-Miami University, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1974

Citation of Merit-World Gratitude Day Organization, N.Y., 1978

Medal-Children's Art Carnival, N.Y., 1979

Citation of Merit-Board of Education, City of New York, 1979

Citation of Merit-Long Island Teachers Association, 1979

PUBLICATIONS

The Art of Assemblage (with Arlette Buchman), The Museum of Modern Art, publication 1970

Collage Kit (with Margaret Johnson), The Museum of Modern Art, 1967

Found Objects (exhibition catalogue), The University of New York (Buffalo), 1965

Experiments in Creative Art Teaching The Museum of Modern Art, 1960

Art for the Family (with Moreen Maser & Frances Wilson), The Museum of Modern Art, 1954

How to Make Objects of Wood (with Kendall T. Basset & Arthur B. Thurman), The Museum of Modern Art, 1951

How to Make Modern Jewelry, (with Charles J. Martin), The Museum of Modern Art, 1949

How to Make Pottery and Ceramic Sculpture (with Julia Hamlin Duncan), The Museum of Modern Art, 1947

Creative Teaching in Art, International Text Book Co., Scranton, Pa., 1942, (revised in 1953)

Visual Arts in General Education, Appleton Century, New York 1940

Theatre Arts, Manual Press, Peoria, Ill. 1931

Victor D'Amico is the author of various magazine articles, has lectured widely in the U.S. and abroad and serves as consultant to numerous art organizations.

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Catalogue from the Exhibition 50 years of Humanizing the Arts.

Museum Of Modern Art Programs

Young People's Gallery
(1937-1948)

The Gallery offered a multi-dimensional experience for high school students. Art classes were conducted in a studio, designed in its entirety by Victor D'Amico. The studio could quickly be converted into a gallery. The students planned and installed exhibitions not only of their own work, but exhibitions that reflected their attitudes about many aspects of art. It was the first time high school students had a gallery of their own in a prominent museum.

New York City High School Program
(1937-1970)

This program offered visual materials to the New York City Public Schools, to enrich their often inadequate art facilities and curriculums.

Some exhibitions were mounted in "teaching models", or cabinets with wheels, which might include panels of photographs and text, three-dimensional units for the study of architecture, painting, sculpture, theater, graphics and other topics of interest to the adolescent.

National Committee on Art Education
(1942-1963)

As the various programs at the Museum grew and flourished, Victor D'Amico felt the need to give them exposure beyond the museum's regular scope.

In 1942, under Museum sponsorship, he founded the National Committee on Art Education

which could study art education at the highest level...that would be concerned only with the philosophy of teaching, free from personal ambition and vested interests...We sought an opportunity to pursue our educational ideas without reference to the commercial interests and without the hawkers of coloring books and other harmful devices and cheap wares outside our door." [4]

The Committee, composed of teachers, artists and students, held conferences and exhibitions, issued publications, and gained recognition as an avant garde group, distinguished in quality and excellence. Its annual meetings featured many renowned in the arts and public life: Viktor Lowenfeld, Sir Herbert Read, Walter Gropius, Margaret Mead, Meyer Schapiro and Nelson A. Rockefeller.

Many of the ideas born and fostered found their way into Museum programs, and were further disseminated by the membership.

War Veterans' Art Center
(1942-1948)

"This experience is as good as a good night's sleep." [5]

The War Veterans' Art Center was established in 1942 at the request of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and Steven A. Clark, to provide art activities for veterans returning from World War II.

The Center's aim was to guide the veterans' abilities so that they might feel a sense of fulfillment, whether they intended to use art as a profession or an avocation. For many veterans the experience was therapeutic, as they expressed the need to be free of destructive acts and to dedicate themselves to creative endeavors.

By 1948, the sponsors felt it had accomplished its goals and the Center closed.

The People's Art Center
(1949-1969)

"The Museum grew...the demand became greater than the facilities, with many exciting programs. One of these...was developed by Victor D'Amico in the field of art education. Victor really reached the young people...the old people...all people - and his program was so popular first with the New York City Public Schools and then with the school at the Museum, we had to build a building next door for his educational program that grew on its own." [6]

The People's Art Center was a natural outgrowth of the Veterans' Art Center. The very name was chosen to reflect its aim: that art education should contribute to the living needs and interest of all parts of the population.

The classes followed an experimental rather than an academic approach.

Children's classes

Children were grouped according to age rather than ability (2½-3, 4-6, 6-9, etc.), affording them the comfort of association with their peers. They worked at painting, clay work, collage and construction, using materials of visual and tactile interest, flexible and easy to work with, with a variety that allowed the children the choices that would define their individuality.

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The Children's Art Carnivals (1942-1969)

2

An exciting and dramatic educational experiment was conceived and designed by Victor D'Amico in 1942...a Children's Art Carnival.

Children were led through a "contour-gate" shaped and scaled to the ages of those who would be admitted (ages four through twelve) into a semi-darkened room filled with art teaching toys, designed to involve the children in aesthetic concepts of color, rhythm and texture.

After a time they entered a brilliantly lit and gayly painted studio-workshop area with adjustable cantilevered easels mounted on the walls for painting and drawing, and tables with lazy susans filled with tempting materials for making collages, constructions and mobiles. Viewing windows permitted visitors to watch the children at work.

The carnival was an annual event at the museum from 1942-1969. In 1957 it went abroad sponsored by the U.S. Department of Commerce as a feature of the International Trade Fairs in Milan, Italy and Barcelona, Spain. In 1958, the carnival was installed as a feature of the U.S. Pavilion in the Brussels World's Fair. But its odyssey did not end there. Upon seeing the carnival in Brussels, Mrs. Indira Gandhi (former Prime Minister of India) invited Victor D'Amico to design a carnival for India.

"Everyone knows that thousands of our people are in desperate need of food, but we also need spiritual food which you supply in your Art Carnival, Mr. D'Amico, we want a carnival of our own." [9]

In 1963, on her visit to India as the First Lady, Mrs. John F. Kennedy presented the carnival as a gift from the International Council of the Museum of Modern Art and the Asia Society, to the children of India

The carnivals caught the imagination of the population everywhere they went: thousands of children participated and comprehended their meaning, thousands of adults watched their absorbtion in the creative experience with fascination. They had appeal for all.

"One American triumph which will rock no headlines is a play hall that is heaven for children of all nations and, except you become as a little child, you may no wise enter in. This is a place where any child may find new uses for a length of string, where he may indulge very simple sensations, like the movement of a caterpillar, like the feel of a cat..." [10]

Photo by Suzanne Szasz

Children Entering "Contour Gate"

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5 Summer Classes In East Hampton: The Art Barge

Napeague Institute Of Art

(1955 to present)

"Artists In the Cowyard

We had a telephone call Monday morning from Floyd Lester who lives not far from the Sherrill Dairy Farm, telling us that about 20 artists complete with easels were sketching out in the back lot over there and in the barn itself. 'Looks like old times,' Mr. Lester said. 'I remember when I was young carrying out the easels for Ruger Donoho and C.Y. Turner and some of the other artists. Some of the students,' Mr. Lester said, 'are grey-haired men.'

It was the summer class of the Museum of Modern Art, which has its headquarters at The Springs..." [13]

In 1955, summer classes were instituted by the Museum of Modern Art in East Hampton, using Ashawagh Hall as a home base.

But Victor D'Amico had greater aspirations..."some place more dramatic and reflecting the character of the environment - sky, sea and salt air, either a boat or resembling one." The vision of the boat materialized in the form of an old Navy barge, towed from Jersey City, and beached on the shore of Napeague Bay. An upper deck was added to the original structure, which was renovated to accommodate studio and workshop space. It became familiarly known as the "art barge".

Situated as it was (and still is), almost isolated at the edge of the water, and commanding a view of the Atlantic

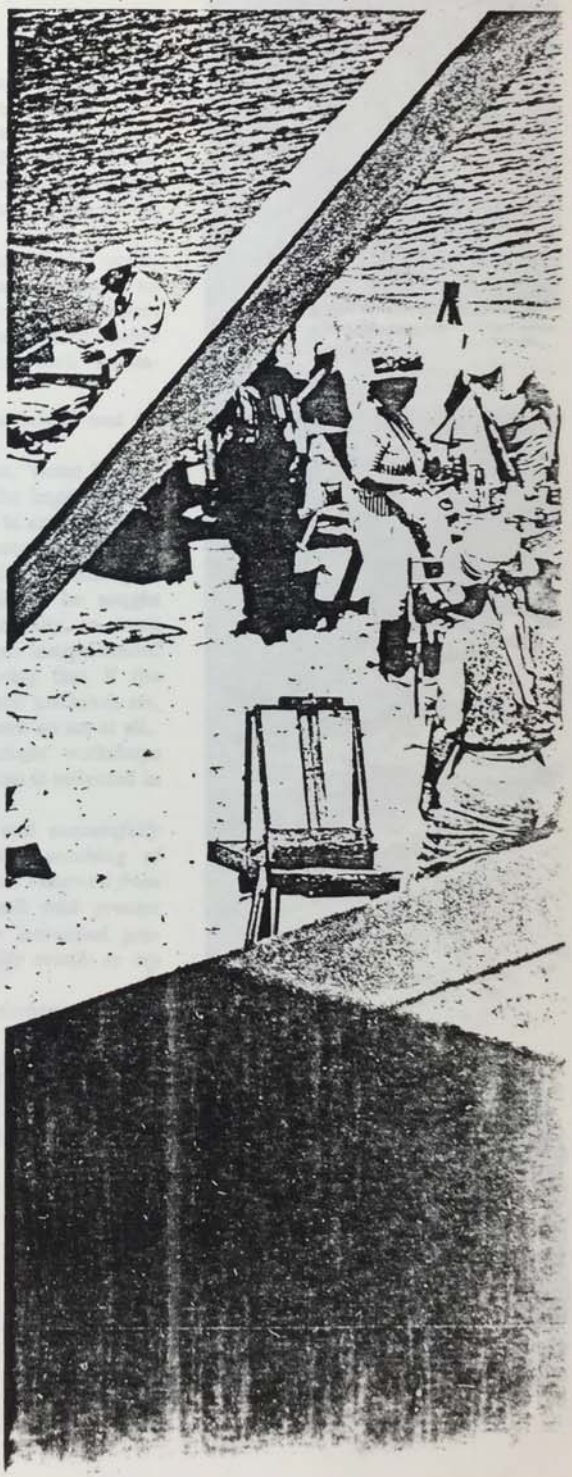

Photo by Kathryn Abbe

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and Napeague Bay, it provides a "separate" world inhabited by people devoted to and involved in art. Many have returned summer after summer nourished by the uncommon combination of group dynamics and physical serenity.

The barge has also served the community with scholarship workshops for grade school and art teachers and for senior citizens.

Old Navy Barge

Barge, in Renovation

Studio - Art Barge

Senior Citizens' classes

In the workshop at the barge, senior citizens have been encouraged to look beyond the familiar and to see things freshly.

In their re-examination of the world, the senior citizens have produced an art with its own style and character, and in the process, have gained pride and self respect from their accomplishments.

Art classes for grade school and art teachers

Throughout his career, Victor D'Amico has underscored the importance of the qualified teacher in art education. As many schools considered art a "frill" and relegated the teaching to whomever was available, he sought ways, at every opportunity, to reach the teachers who were inexperienced and untrained, knowing that if the classroom teacher could not teach art, the children would have no art at all. How directly the teachers' workshops are felt in the classroom is reflected in the following:

"I have repeatedly and successfully made use in my own teaching of attitudes and ideas that I learned from you. My children work with greater zest and joy. Their increased productivity and creativity testify to my growth as a teacher."

Member, teachers workshop

14

In 1972, after the Museum closed its Art Center, some of the group who had worked with the D'Amico concept over the years, formed and chartered the Napeague Institute of Art. Under its auspices, Victor D'Amico continues to teach with the philosophy that has inspired so many over the years.

Working on the Beach - Art Barge
Photo by Kathryn Abbe

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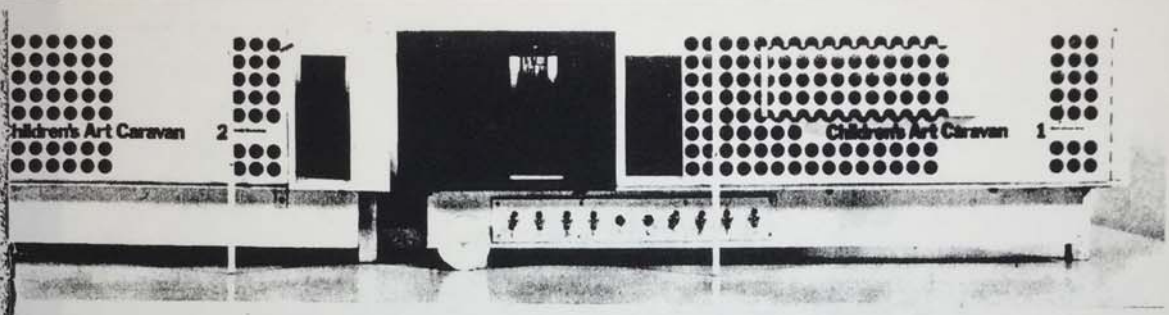
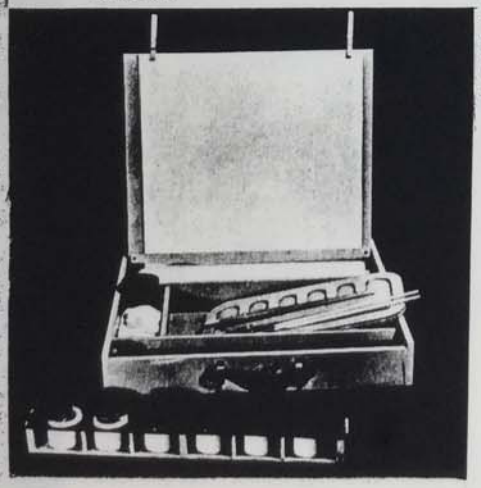


4

Children's Art Caravan

"I was convinced that the Carnival in Harlem would be my last stationary carnival. The action had changed from the established school and conventional institution to the street, park or other open places. A traveling caravan could not only go where the action is, but could go to lonely and neglected places and create its own action, or to teeming places like the ghettos, where children are overlooked..." [12]



In 1965, Victor D'Amico designed an "art caravan", a mobile version of the carnivals, to be housed in two fully equipped trailers that could move quickly and easily from place to place and reach a greater number of children. One trailer was to house the motivational area, the other, the workshop.

Although a grant from the John D. Rockefeller 3rd Fund enabled the caravan to reach the drawing board stage, escalating construction costs and depleting funding sources caused the project to be abandoned.

It remains a dream, unrealized.

Motivational Materials

In all phases of art education, Victor D'Amico has emphasized environment as an aid to creativity. He designed for classroom use equipment that was functional, flexible and aesthetic; the visual materials that circulated through the schools were handsomely packaged as well as inventive; the motivational materials whether supplies or toys, were planned to stir the senses.

The Art Teaching Toys each have their own purpose. With the "Color Player", the child can project color patterns freely over a screen by moving pedals and keys; the "Velcro Picture Maker" allows for designs to be easily rearranged; moving colored plexiglas shapes against a lighted background in the "Stained Glass Window Design" produces new colors and designs; the "Tactile Creature" provides all kinds of touching experiences. Each thus provokes an art response in an unconventional and imaginative way.

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Haynes classroom was fun.

Rockville MC

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