

## **Aesthetic Inquiry - A Practice Informed by Philosophy**

McCallum Theatre Institute's practice draws on the philosophy of aesthetic education. Based on the writings of such innovative educators as John Dewey, Maxine Greene, and Howard Gardner, aesthetic education extends the tradition of progressive education into the world of the arts. It is the Institute's belief that perceiving and understanding the aesthetic dimension in art and in life is as basic to enlightened citizenship as understanding the working of numbers, of words, of history, and social traditions and that achieving that kind of understanding should be part of the learning experiences of all students. As practiced by McCallum Theatre Institute, aesthetic education refers to helping students of all ages develop two interrelated capacities: a receptivity to experiencing any given artwork, and the ability to reflect on that experience. By cultivating these capacities, students gain practical insights and capabilities that can be applied to other studies and other areas of life. Abstract thinking and problem-solving ability, for example, which are improved through this practice, are equally important in studying a modern dance performance, conducting a biology experiment, or solving a mathematical equation. In the aesthetic education process, these skills are developed as educators and their students become involved in carefully planned encounters with works of art. Participants are actively engaged in observing, listening to, researching and discussing the works, and exploring them through participatory activities. At the same time, the aesthetic education process helps students develop an understanding of the artistic choices that contribute to any given work of art.