

Editor's Letter

I believe in Michelangelo, Velásquez, and Rembrandt; in the might of design, the mystery of color, the redemption of all things by Beauty everlasting, and the message of Art that has made these hands blessed.

—George Bernard Shaw

George Bernard Shaw's words are somewhat extravagant, but I think you must share his passion to be an effective art teacher. I was reminded of this most recently at the Colorado Art Education Association (CAEA) conference where I was a keynote speaker, along with Olivia Gude, art educator extraordinaire from the University of Illinois at Chicago.

The message I received from the many teachers attending was how dedicated, positive, fully engaged, and eager to learn they were. I had always heard good things about the Colorado conference, but it was great to experience it firsthand. All of the teachers I met had the qualities I want my university students to develop to become successful art teachers.

I also want my university students to consider the messages—both verbal and unspoken—they will convey as they become teachers. From their reports on their classroom observations, it is evident that their mentor teachers, for the most part, have much freedom to develop their own lessons, as long as they are based on objectives and concepts determined by their districts.

A concern I have with this approach is that some teachers may teach only artists, art, and media that personally appeal to them. I would like my university students to adopt a broader approach as they become teachers by including more contemporary art and a wider variety of media. Contemporary art reflects the times in which we live, and the PBS series *Art:21* offers readily available online resources for teaching about it, including videos and lesson plans (www.pbs.org/art21). Providing experiences in



Nancy and CAEA president Joyce Centofanti at the Techno Night Costume Bash at the Colorado Art Education Association Conference in Breckenridge, Colorado.

many media allows students more opportunities to find media with which they feel comfortable and successful.

But perhaps the most important message an art teacher can impart is that the artroom is a welcoming and encouraging place for students to feel free to express themselves, experiment, explore, and take risks in art-making. We all know too well how a negative or thoughtless comment can remain with someone forever. This is a message I definitely want to communicate to my university students.

As Stephanie Jones, one of my students wrote in her teaching philosophy, "Being an art teacher is more than just discovering my place in society or choosing a career, it is a fulfilling way for me to give back to my community. Investing in something other than myself allows me to impact my students, their parents, and the community stakeholders around me. It is important that my classroom is a safe place for my students and that it is an environment that encourages the exploration of artistic concepts and individual growth." Can there be a better message?