

# Editor's Letter

What's your fantasy as an art teacher? Go ahead, dream big! I could go for smaller class sizes, an aide with every kindergarten class, a great digital camera, a smart board, grants for educational travel, chair massage, and an unlimited budget to make all this possible!

Seriously, how do we help our students think about and express the idea of fantasy through their artwork? Judging from the articles *School-Arts* receives, many art teachers approach the theme of fantasy primarily through portraiture and self-portraiture. We offer a number of such articles in this issue.

As art teachers, we know that the place where students are most encouraged to use their imaginations is the artroom. Sadly, that isn't always the case in the non-art classroom. So how can we best encourage students to embrace the fantastic and use their imaginations, especially when so many are drawn to the latest computer game or gadget?

We can strive to develop challenging and meaningful visual art problems, no matter what level we teach. We can support and show respect for our students' creative ideas and endeavors. We can provide a safe place for students to express their ideas without fear of judgment.

Brainstorming, working collaboratively, and including aspects of humor and play also help make learning through art more engaging. The rich theme of fantasy invites numerous meaningful and differing responses that are limited only by the imagination. Go for it! 🌀

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Nancy at Balboa Park in San Diego with a fantastic sculpture by Niki de Saint-Phalle, *Le Poète et sa Muse*.

## **PBS's *Art:21* Season 5 episode "Fantasy"**

*Art:21* offers superb assistance for learning in their Season 5 episode "Fantasy" (2009). This episode features contemporary artists "whose works defy convention and transport us to unreal worlds and altered states of consciousness. With works at times hallucinatory, irreverent, and sublime, each of these artists pursues a vision first held in the mind's eye."

The episode explores the work of contemporary artists Jeff Koons, Mary Heilmann, Florian Maier-Aichen, and Cao Fei (our cover artist this month), and includes educator's guides. A blog and an invitation to submit student work based on the *Art:21* materials are also available online at [www.pbs.org/art21/series/seasonfive/fantasy.php](http://www.pbs.org/art21/series/seasonfive/fantasy.php).