

## Tools for Teaching College-Level Writing to Artists

Little scholarship and few writing texts explore how visual artists at the college level expand and improve their written and verbal skills. Although a number of guides to writing about art have been available for a long time, such as Sylvan Barnet's *A Short Guide to Writing About Art* (Prentice Hall; 9th ed., 2007) and Henry Sayre's *Writing About Art* (Prentice Hall; 6th ed., 2008), these guides treat the arts as a subject matter, not as a factor in the writer's development of skills. They are useful, however, in that they help connect a student's experiences learning composition skills to the subject matter of the student's greatest interest.

Also available are texts that explore the long history of artists' use of writing in artmaking, such as Johanna Drucker's *A Century of Artists' Books* (Granary Books, 2004) and Simon Morley's *Writing on the Wall: Word and Image in Modern Art* (University of California Press, 2005). Here the focus is on exploring words and writing as tools of the artist. By exploring these examples, art students can break down the self-defeating belief that artists are inarticulate in the domain of the verbal.

A recent eBook, *Writing for Visual Thinkers: A Guide for Artists and Designers*, by Andrea Marks (Peachpit Press 2008; part of the AIGA Design Press series; more information and a sample chapter at <http://www.peachpit.com/store/product.aspx?isbn=0321502892>), directly addresses the role of visuality in approaching writing tasks. In addition to encouraging the use of visual skills to develop ideas and structures for writing, Marks also reproduces extensive visual examples of the role that writing has played in the lives of such artists as Leonardo DaVinci, and the role that the visual has played in the lives of such writers as Jack Kerouac.