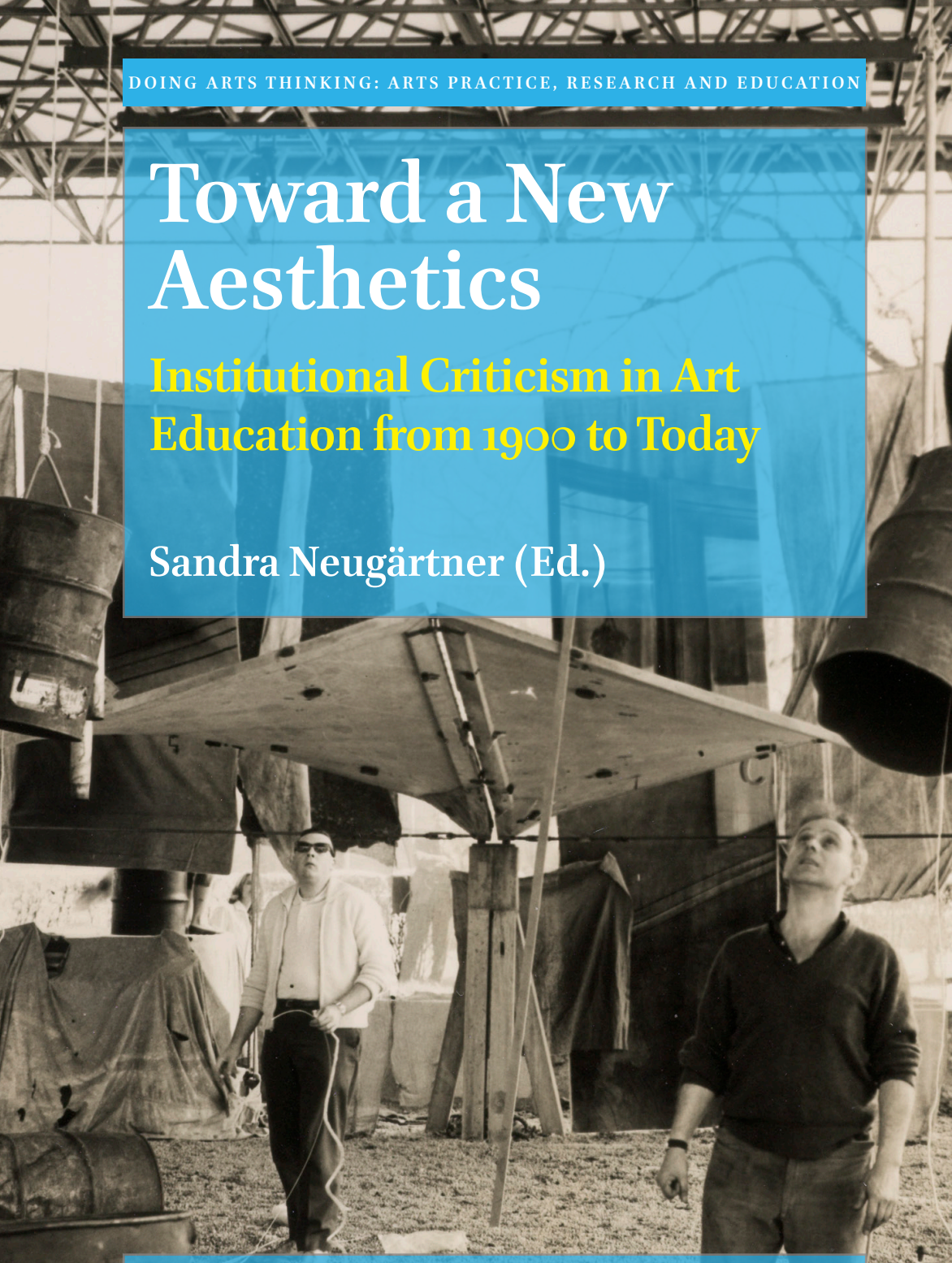
DOING ARTS THINKING: ARTS PRACTICE, RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

Toward a New Aesthetics

Institutional Criticism in Art Education from 1900 to Today

Sandra Neugärtner (Ed.)



BRILL

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VOLUME 17

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Cover illustration: "Allan Kaprow, Night, 1961. University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Irving Kaufman and students assemble the environment." Artwork © Allan Kaprow Estate

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Contents

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INTRODUCTION

The Fate of Critique in Art Education

Sandra Neugärtner

Abstract

As the first comprehensive examination of institutional critique within art schools, this volume investigates why art education's critical edge has been blunted and asks if art is becoming just another form of intellectual labor. It argues that the increasing 'scientification' of creative practice, driven by the global expansion of the neoliberal knowledge economy, has systematically transformed institutional critique from a transgressive, anti-establishment force into an affirmative one. To dissect this paradigm, the book deliberately de-centers the dominant Euro-American model, employing a global methodology that presents international case studies—from pre-communist China and post-dictatorship Portugal to contemporary South Korea and Ghana—not as exceptions, but as the primary lens through which the model's universalist claims are refracted and dismantled. Structured in four parts, the volume traces the historical foundations of this crisis, examines key instances of pedagogical resistance, and stages a direct confrontation with the model's epistemic limits through decolonial critiques. Ultimately, this volume interrogates what forms of critique remain transformative today, championing a pedagogy that responds to systemic conditions and reclaims education as a practice of freedom.

Keywords

art education – institutional critique – art pedagogy – critique – artistic autonomy – Modernism – post-studio practice – culture industry – global art history

1 The Art School at a Crossroads

In the past several decades, art education has arrived at a critical juncture, shaped by a series of seismic shifts that have destabilized its purpose and function. The explosive growth of Master of Fine Arts (MFA) programs, coupled with soaring tuition costs, has created a generation of artists burdened by debt, forced to navigate a precarious creative economy. This professionalization has transformed the very definition of artistic labor, shifting the artist's role from that of a solitary

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maker into what scholars have termed the "art worker" or the "artist as manager" (Bryan-Wilson, 2009; Molesworth, 2004). This new figure is compelled to manage their own circulation within what Pierre Bourdieu (1993) defined as the "field of cultural production"—a field controlled by established positions of power. Artistic practice thus becomes defined less by its critical autonomy and more by its subordination to institutional and market demands. This pressure towards professionalization is further intensified by the rise of "artistic research" and the scientization of creative practice—trends whose latest and most extreme manifestation is the practice-based PhD—which have introduced new pressures for measurable outcomes under neoliberal frameworks like the Bologna Process.[1] It is within this contested landscape—caught between market demands, academic institutionalization, and its own historical claim to autonomy—that the question of critique in art education has become more urgent than ever.[2]

Historically, this dilemma is rooted in the complex legacy of artistic autonomy. A defining conquest of the modernist era, autonomy granted art an unprecedented freedom from external purposes. Yet, as John Dewey warned, this very segregation from social contexts threatened to "rob it of its educative potential" (2005, p. 298). The result is the "current impasse that places arts education in the

FIGURE 1.1 Arthur Siol, A scene from the international symposium *art thinking doing art: Artistic Practices in Educational Contexts from 1900 to Today*, held at the Berlin University of the Arts in June 2023. With contributions from scholars from eleven countries, the gathering provided the foundational dialogue for this volume, exploring the interrelationships between art education, production, and institutional contexts from a broad historical and geopolitical perspectives. © 2023 Arthur Siol

FIGURE I.2 Rosalie Schweiker, *Teaching*, 2023. © 2023 Rosalie Schweiker

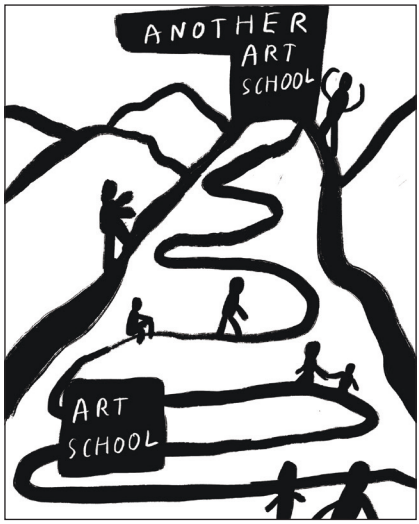

FIGURE I.3 Rosalie Schweiker, *Another Art School*, 2023. © 2023 Rosalie Schweiker

service of upmarket commodity culture" (Schnapp & Shanks, 2010, p. 143). The faculty of criticism, once seen as a corrective to the isolating effects of autonomy, has itself been thrown into crisis. As Benjamin Buchloh notes, the critic's claim to serve as a privileged mediator has acquired a "newly manifest problematic status" (2023) within today's cultural and political landscape.

This diagnosed paralysis of established critical forms makes the search for new forums and formats of critique all the more urgent. The critical dialogues that gave rise to this volume, initiated at the *art thinking doing art* symposium in Berlin in 2023 (Figure I.1), resonate with a wider, urgent conversation about the material consequences of this impasse. Tellingly, at a symposium at the Art Students League of New York, for instance, this urgency was articulated with stark clarity when artist Doug Ashford stated:

> The context of what art can do socially is dependent on its ability to be outside of the constraints of the precarity. [...] The social responsibility that we have on the institutional level is to change the economic conditions of those places. (Art Students League, 2024, 1:17:18)

The precarity Ashford describes is the lived reality of art students and the starting point of this inquiry. Significantly, the question that prompted his response

came from an audience member who identified as an "adjunct who tries to make art in the time outside of this work," thus framing the central conflict for most artists today. Only a fraction of those with an MFA still work as artists after ten years, as most derive little income from their art. Why, then, has the MFA become such a sought-after, almost obligatory degree? The mfa, once a qualification for secondary-level teaching, has become a critical stepping stone for an artist's career. This professionalization is now essential not only for the art market but also to secure limited professorships or positions in the cultural sector.

2 The Scientization of Art and the Erosion of the Aesthetic

The driving force behind this is a fundamental shift in the art world's demands: the valorization of artistic thinking over artistic doing, accompanied by the necessity of research in production and curatorial work.[3] This scientization of art, inextricably linked to the "Bologna Process" in Europe, is an expression of neoliberal pressure affecting the entire institution. This is not a purely Western

FIGURE 1.4 Unidentified photographer, *A life class for adults at the Brooklyn Museum, under the auspices of the New York City WPA Art Project*, ca. 1935. The scene captures the dual nature of the New Deal program: providing systematic art instruction while fulfilling a social mission of public enrichment and work relief. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Public Domain

FIGURE 1.5 Lygia Clark, *Baba Antropofágica* (Anthropophagic Slobber), 1973. The photograph documents an intimate, therapeutic "proposition" in which one participant pulls threads from their mouth to envelop another. This act was designed to dissolve the subject/object dichotomy, modeling a form of embodied, non-institutional critique that stands as a radical counterpoint to formal art education. © 1973 The World of Lygia Clark Cultural Association

phenomenon; it reflects a hegemonic educational model whose structures and values have been exported globally, shaping artists regardless of their origin.[4] While a few decades ago, artists chose a "day job" to protect their voice, these same market-driven constraints have now infiltrated art education itself. As critic Deborah Solomon noted presciently during the 1990s MFA boom, "the proverbial romantic artist [...] has given way to an alternate model: the university artist, who treats art as a homework assignment" (Solomon, 1999).

This shift towards a pedagogy of prescribed tasks has deep historical roots, yet its contemporary form represents a crucial departure from its precedents. A 1930s photograph from a Works Progress Administration (WPA) life-drawing class at the Brooklyn Museum captures this tension vividly (Figure 1.4). On the one hand, we see the seeds of a systematic, almost scientific approach to art instruction, evident in the anatomical charts and studies of geometric forms in the background. On the other hand, this scene is embedded in a New Deal ethos of art as meaningful social labor and public enrichment. The diverse group of adult learners is engaged not in accumulating credentials for a market, but in a practice afforded to them as a form of social relief and cultural

participation. This stands in stark contrast to the neoliberal framework that governs the contemporary "university artist."

This transformation from social project to academic requirement, captured in Solomon's "homework assignment" metaphor, is symptomatic of a profound epistemological crisis. The scientization of art—termed *knowledgization* by Tom Holert (2020)—does not merely add a new layer; it actively invalidates older models of aesthetic experience. Universalist theories like Lessing's, which sought to ground aesthetics in reception, appear obsolete in an era where, as Sven-Olov Wallenstein (2010) argues, any "contemporary Laocoon" must acknowledge that perception itself is a linguistic and causal construct. The traditional triangulation of knowledge, affect, and experience is thus dismantled in favor of quantifiable outputs. At its core lies an irreconcilable conflict: the unruly nature of genuine aesthetic experience, which for Christoph Menke is the "failing and infinite attempt to understand" (2014, p. 244), is fundamentally incompatible with an academic system demanding standardized models of competence.[5]

With this shift, aesthetic experience has been reduced to a form of "aesthetic alphabetization" (Mollenhauer, 1991, p. 2)—the acquisition of a learnable code. This process systematically purges the very elements that defy easy categorization: the affective, the phenomenological, and the sudden. It overlooks that which can liberate us from predefined cultural boundaries (Weiß, 2013, p. 115) and transform our sense of possibility (Seel, 2004, p. 76). The result is an instrumentalized aesthetic, one that replaces the critical "insincerity" and risk-taking of modernism—the artist "infected with exteriority"—with the "sincere" repetition of a learned script (Groys, 2010, p. 30).

3 A Call for a New Aesthetics

The erosion of the aesthetic leads directly to the central question of this volume. As Thierry de Duve asks, reflecting on art's historical promise to "accompany or even anticipate the project of emancipation": "Is artistic creation capable of maintaining a critical function?" (Duve, 2006, p. 21). This volume argues that the gradual scientization of art education has blunted this very capacity. This does not imply that critique has vanished entirely; rather, a specific form of it—one not rooted in institutional logic or reducible to linguistic frameworks—has been lost. Aesthetic experience, unburdened by pragmatic objectives, defies what Klaus Mollenhauer terms the "pedagogical box" (1990, p. 484). While institutional critique in the 20th century facilitated socially relevant art, its methods ultimately became absorbed by the system it sought to analyze.

The epistemological framework underlying Western aesthetic theory is neither universal nor exhaustive. A growing body of anthropological and art-historical

research has shown that in other cultural contexts—particularly in Indigenous and non-Western knowledge systems—aesthetic understanding is not primarily grounded in visual cognition or linguistic articulation, but in embodied, relational, and performative forms of knowledge. In such contexts, artistic practice is inseparable from bodily experience, collective ritual, and alternative conceptions of subjectivity and gender. While these epistemologies cannot be subsumed under Western aesthetic theory without distortion, their very existence exposes the historical contingency and cultural specificity of the model critiqued in this volume. They thus function less as alternative "examples" than as a structural challenge to the assumption that critique must operate within the parameters of Western logocentric thought.

This volume therefore investigates the diverse ways of questioning, resisting, and transcending the academy's normative constraints. It offers a comprehensive, multi-perspectival approach, uniting art historians, critics, artists, and educators to explore how various forms of critique have spurred artistic evolution—and to interrogate where such critique may have been systematically undermined from the outset.

4 Structure of the Volume

To dissect this paradigm, the volume proceeds in a four-part methodological arc. It begins by identifying the foundational frameworks—historical, infrastructural, and economic—that shaped this hegemonic model from its inception (Part I). From there, it examines key instances of artistic and pedagogical resistance from within this system during its mid-century consolidation, revealing the inherent tensions and contradictions in its application (Part II). Subsequently, the book turns to specific pedagogical methods, contrasting a seminal Western model like CalArts with grassroots alternatives that challenge its premises (Part III). Finally, the volume stages a direct confrontation with the model's epistemic limits through decolonial critiques and case studies of alternative epistemologies that operate outside its dominant logic (Part IV).

Part I: Frameworks of Institutional Critique

Part I establishes the historical and theoretical frameworks of institutional critique by tracing a clear trajectory—from foundational questions of exclusion and commercialization to the crisis of its key figures and, finally, to the complex systemic analysis required today. The part opens with Nicola Foster's intervention, which poses a foundational question: is institutional critique even possible from outside art's own confines? By centering her analysis on the

Nüshu (Chinese 女書/女书, Pinyin *nǚshū*) women in pre-communist China—a community that created a unique cultural practice by and for an excluded group—she reveals how the defining parameters of critique are often imposed retrospectively by the very institutions that first excluded such groups. Tracing these dynamics into the early 20th century, my own study of the Reimann Schule in Berlin examines how the institutionalization of art education was inextricably linked to the emergence of the cultural industry from its inception. In contrast to state-funded reform schools, the private and commercially driven Reimann Schule pioneered a pedagogical model that aligned artistic training directly with the demands of mass culture and the market, thereby revealing the commercial logic that has become a foundational, yet often unacknowledged, infrastructure of modern art education. From the institutionalization of the school, Benjamin Buchloh shifts the focus to the post-war crisis of a key institutional figure: the art critic. In a sweeping historical testimony, he charts the evolving function of the critic from that of a privileged ideological mediator to a mere functionary of communication. Buchloh shows how artists from Duchamp to Johns actively worked to dismantle the critic's authority, thereby challenging the very discursive hierarchies that governed the post-war art world. Tom Holert concludes this part by introducing the concept of "infrastructural critique." Deepening the analysis of the Thatcher-era restructuring of British art education through the work of the Art & Language associates David Rushton and Paul Wood, he argues that effective critique must target the underlying systems—bureaucratic policies, financial reforms, and administrative language—that predetermine the conditions of artistic practice and neutralize critical potential. Holert thus provides the systemic framework for understanding the conditions against which the practices in the following chapter resist.

***Part II: Practices of Resistance* (*1960s–1980s*)**

The second part shifts from theoretical frameworks to concrete historical instances of resistance, exploring how artists and educators challenged institutional norms. The part opens with Jeffrey Saletnik's essay on John Cage's *Musicircus* (1967), which analyzes a non-hierarchical pedagogy of total refusal. Saletnik reveals how Cage, through a logic of 'equalizing abundance,' created performative situations that sought not merely to challenge the institution, but to bypass its logic of assessment and value entirely, offering a model of critique predicated on radical non-participation. Where Holert provides the macro-level system critique, Jake Watts shifts the focus to the micro-level of practice. His study of the *Mask* project (1972) at St. Martin's School of Art analyzes the performative act of critique within the classroom itself. Watts reveals how tutors resisted bureaucratic functionalism not through policy analysis, but

by exposing its absurdity in the immediate, tensed power dynamic between tutor and student. Isabel Nogueira's study of Coimbra's Plastic Arts Circle (CAPC) reveals the ambivalent nature of resistance in the political vacuum of post-dictatorship Portugal. She shows how a new, experimental art education emerged, born of revolutionary freedom, yet simultaneously shaped by an inevitable opening to established Western cultural industries. The part culminates in Marie-Christine Schoel's critical analysis of Judy Chicago's Feminist Art Program. Schoel examines the radical act of creating a feminist space by physically withdrawing from the patriarchal institution. However, she complicates this narrative of liberation by questioning the politics of this separatism, highlighting missed opportunities for solidarity with the Black and Chicano civil rights movements then active on campus.

Part III: Methodological Critiques and Pedagogical Legacies

Subsequently, Part III delves into the core of pedagogical practice itself, examining the methods, legacies, and internal contradictions of specific educational models. The section contrasts a seminal Western institution, CalArts, with grassroots alternatives, culminating in a performative challenge to academic form itself. The section is anchored by Rebecca Sprowl's two-part investigation of CalArts's influential Post-Studio program. Her first essay explores the founding moment, revealing the "cross-pollination" between John Baldessari's own conceptual art practice and his non-authoritative, anti-didactic pedagogy. Sprowl's second essay traces the program's complex legacy through its next generation of artist-teachers. Drawing on extensive interviews, she reveals how these artists both adopted and critically re-evaluated the CalArts model, particularly its rejection of skill-based learning and its pioneering methods of group critique. In stark contrast to this hegemonic Western model, Sooyoung Leam's study of South Korea's Citizens Art School (Korean 시민미술학교, Romanization *simin misul hakgyo*) demonstrates how a grassroots art education can emerge directly from social upheaval. Leam shows how the school, rooted in the pro-democracy movement and the principles of people's art (Korean 민중미술, Romanization *minjung misul*), used the collective practice of woodcut printmaking to forge a unique pedagogy of self-learning and political agency. The section takes a performative turn with Bernard Akoi-Jackson's contribution, which is itself an intervention. Radically departing from the traditional academic essay form, his text embodies the very "disturbed methodologies" it advocates. Drawing on his teaching experiences, Akoi-Jackson presents a pedagogy rooted in disruption, spontaneity, and a profound critique of the colonialist canon. The essay thus functions less as a description of a method and more as a direct, performative demonstration of what a decolonized, critical art pedagogy can feel like in practice.

Part IV: Decolonial Challenges and Alternative Epistemologies

The final part stages a direct confrontation with the epistemic limits of Western art education. It moves from non-Western epistemologies to a searing critique of the ethical and political failures of Western pedagogy in contexts of conflict, culminating in a self-reflexive analysis of the Western avant-garde itself. Katherine Bruhn's study of the Indonesian *sanggar* system provides a foundational alternative. She examines a pedagogy rooted not in institutional critique but in the Minangkabau philosophy of *ʿālam takambang jadi guru* (nature as teacher). This model of collective, experiential learning presents an epistemology entirely outside the Western logocentric tradition. From this external vantage point, the section turns to a critique from within the Western sphere, yet at its margins. Erika Kindsfather's research on Canadian artist Evelyn Roth's recycling workshops explores a pedagogy of material practice and environmental activism. By centering her analysis on traditionally devalued materials—discarded textiles, videotape—and feminized "craft" techniques like crochet, Kindsfather shows how Roth's practice fundamentally subverts the distinction between "high art" and "low craft", grounding pedagogy not in theoretical critique, but in the tangible, collective transformation of the everyday world. The critique intensifies and becomes explicitly political in Noa Sadka's raw and immediate study of photography education at the Bezalel Academy in Jerusalem. Written during the 2023–2025 Israeli assault on Gaza, her essay interrogates the profound epistemic violence of imposing a disembodied Western pedagogical model onto a site of perpetual conflict. Sadka reveals how an art education that ignores its surrounding reality—including the Palestinian neighborhoods of Sheikh Jarrah (Arabic الشيخ جراح, Romanization *ash-Shaykh Jarrāḥ*) and Issawiya (Arabic العيساوية, Romanization *al-ʿĪsāwiyya*) right at its doorstep—becomes an act of ethical and political failure. Finally, the volume concludes by turning the critical lens back onto the celebrated Western avant-garde. Emily Ruth Capper's incisive analysis of Allan Kaprow's 1961 happening, *Night*, reveals the internal contradictions of supposedly radical pedagogy. She demonstrates how Kaprow's use of primitivism, while intended to be a critique of mainstream culture, ultimately reinscribed the very racialized fantasies and colonial logic it sought to escape. By ending with this act of self-interrogation, the section argues that even the most radical forms of Western critique remain incomplete without a decolonial awareness of their own inherent complicity.

5 Scope and Limitations

It is crucial to define this volume's precise scope and methodological approach. The anthology deliberately narrows its focus to a critical interrogation of a single, hegemonic model of critique: the one that emerged and was subsequently institutionalized within the dominant academic and artistic frameworks of

North America and Western Europe. To dissect this paradigm, however, the volume deliberately adopts a global methodology. The inclusion of case studies from South Korea (Leam), pre-communist China (Foster), Indonesia (Bruhn), and a powerful critique from a Ghanaian perspective (Akoi-Jackson) is therefore methodologically crucial. These are not included as token exceptions, but as the very lens through which the Western paradigm's claims to universality are refracted and ultimately dismantled.

This methodological approach extends to the volume's use of language and transliteration. To honor the linguistic origins of key concepts, this book employs scientific transliteration for terms derived from non-Latin scripts, even where simplified modern spellings exist in common usage. This inclusion of original scripts and rigorous transliterations is not a stylistic flourish but a core editorial commitment, intended to resist the epistemic erasure inherent in Western academic discourse. This practice becomes an overtly political act in Noa Sadka's essay, where the presence of the Arabic script for Palestinian neighborhoods—such as Sheikh Jarrah (Arabic الشيخ جراح, Romanization *ash-Shaykh Jarrāḥ*)—visually enacts the challenge to the institutional "cultural blindness" she critiques. This principle is, however, applied with critical awareness. A script is deliberately omitted where it would falsely equate a Western institutional category like 'artist association' with a culturally specific formation like the Indonesian *sanggar*. Similarly, terms from languages like modern Indonesian (Bahasa Indonesia), such as *mengajar* or *berguru*, are natively written in the Latin alphabet and thus require no additional characters. This editorial approach is best illustrated by its treatment of a single, pivotal loanword, guided by the principle of scholarly clarity and precision. For a term like alam, which is of Arabic origin (*ʿālam*, عالم) but now integral to Indonesian languages, this volume resists imposing a single, uniform spelling. Instead, it adopts a context-specific solution. At the key juncture where the term's etymological roots are discussed, the scientific transliteration and original script are employed to transparently acknowledge the word's deep history and its connection to a broader intellectual tradition. In all other contexts, where the term functions purely within an Indonesian framework, the established local spelling (*alam*) is retained. This ensures vernacular accuracy and respects the term's modern, embedded usage. This decision is thus a practical application of scholarly rigor, intended to serve the reader by balancing etymological depth with contextual precision.

This methodological precision, however, necessitates acknowledging its own boundaries. The decision to concentrate on the internal logic and global radiation of this specific Western model means that other vital histories of critique are not centered. This is a deliberate choice, rooted not in disregard, but in recognition of the depth and specificity of these other genealogies. For instance, the foundational contributions of African American and Indigenous artists to institutional analysis constitute histories so profound that they demand their own

comprehensive study. The legacies of the Black Arts Movement, the long tradition of community-based art education as a form of resistance, and the principles of land-based pedagogy developed by Indigenous thinkers offer critiques that operate from distinct epistemological foundations. Extensive scholarship already exists in these fields, and to reduce these complex histories to a single chapter would be a disservice to their importance.[6] That being said, this does not mean the volume avoids the critical issue of race. Rather, it approaches it from *within* the hegemonic framework by examining its racialized blind spots. This is evident in the contributions of Emily Ruth Capper and Marie-Christine Schoel. Capper's analysis of Allan Kaprow's engagement with racialized student rituals and Schoel's examination of the politics of feminist separatism in relation to broader civil rights movements both offer crucial critiques of whiteness and racial exclusion. Their work anchors the book's argument that critique must also address the internal contradictions of the dominant institutions, rather than focusing solely on alternative pedagogical models from *outside* of them.

The same principle of acknowledging established, complex histories applies to cornerstones of modernist pedagogy like the Bauhaus and Black Mountain College. While their pedagogical models have been the subject of extensive scholarship and monographs, this volume refrains from adding another chapter to that literature. Instead, their legacies are intentionally addressed only at the margins where their influence was refracted and transformed—the Bauhaus, for example, in my own study of the Reimann Schule, and Black Mountain College in Jeffrey Saletnik's analysis of John Cage.

Similarly, while the volume's intellectual debt to Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is clear, readers will not find dedicated case studies from key sites of radical pedagogy in South America. This is because these practices often represent a profound model of critique that operates almost entirely outside the academic-institutional frameworks this volume dissects. The work of Lygia Clark, whose later therapeutic-pedagogical practice of 'structuring the self' has been extensively analyzed by scholars like Suely Rolnik, provides a model of embodied, non-institutional learning. This paradigm of intimate, process-based interaction (Figure 1.5) stands in stark contrast to even the socially-minded institutionalism of the WPA classroom seen earlier (cf. Figure 1.4), representing a model of critique so distinct that it warrants its own separate analysis. Likewise, collective actions such as Argentina's *Tucumán Arde*, whose legacy of art as direct political intervention has been deeply chronicled by leading scholars such as Luis Camnitzer and Andrea Giunta, represent a paradigm of critique rooted in social action rather than academic discourse. Given the robust and essential body of literature that already covers these movements, this volume chooses to focus on deconstructing the dominant Western paradigm in the hope that its findings may serve as a precise tool for others working within these vital fields.[7]

Acknowledging the importance of these other vital histories allows the volume to sharpen its focus. The rationale for concentrating on a later institution, CalArts, thus becomes clear. CalArts is not merely another case study; it marks the very historical juncture where the pedagogical impulses of the earlier European and American avant-gardes were institutionalized and systematized into the "post-studio" paradigm that is the central subject of this book's critique. It is the crucible for the contemporary "university artist," and thus serves as an indispensable case for dissecting the hegemonic model whose historical development and present-day consequences this volume seeks to understand.

Therefore, rather than claiming to be exhaustive, this volume hones in on its specific object of critique, using a global perspective to do so. The question persists: what forms of critique can we meaningfully articulate, and how can they maintain their transformative potential? Recognizing teaching as a performative act, as bell hooks does, offers a space for change, drawing on Paulo Freire's insistence that education be "the practice of freedom" (hooks, 1994, pp. 10–14). It is this insistence on practice, on responding to systemic conditions—a practice embodied by students at the Berlin University of the Arts (Figure 1.6)—that this volume ultimately seeks to champion.

FIGURE 1.6 Collective performance by Klasse Ursula Neugebauer, *I wouldn't get out of bed for less than $10.000 a day* at the Berlin University of the Arts, November 5, 2024. Forming a 40-meter-long sculptural barrier of mattresses, the piece provocatively bisected the university's public foyer, transforming it into a temporary habitat. This act of radical spatial intervention served as a direct response to systemic conditions of precarity while reversing the norms of intimacy and privacy to explore new forms of interpersonal action. Photograph: Finja Sander. © 2024 Klasse Neugebauer

Notes

1 The Bologna Process, initiated in 1999, is a series of agreements among European countries to ensure comparability in the standards and quality of higher-education qualifications. Its main innovation was the introduction of a three-cycle system (Bachelor, Master, Doctorate). For art schools, this meant adapting to a university model, which spurred the formalization of "artistic research" and the establishment of PhD programs in studio art, thus contributing directly to the "scientization" this volume examines.

2 For recent research into the wider question of the state and future of arts education, see, for example, the discussions on radical pedagogy and institutional frameworks in Colomina et al. (2022) and Nollert et al. (2007); the economic and professional realities of an MFA in Davis (2016) and Singerman (1999); and critiques of the art school curriculum in Tilley and Davis (2016).

3 The discourses on research in both artistic practice and curating are extensive. On the debate surrounding "artistic research," see, for instance, Assis and D'Errico (2019), Balkema and Slager (2004), Bishop (2023), Borgdorff (2006), Dombois et al. (2012), Macleod and Holdridge (2006), and Schwab (2018). On the parallel turn in curatorial practice, see Lind (2012), O'Neill and Wilson (2014), Rugg and Sedgwick (2012), and Smith (2012). For key texts specifically connecting these debates to the context of art education, see Borgdorff (2012), Elkins (2014), and Slager (2021).

4 This hegemonic model spreads globally through two primary channels: artists from non-Western countries often attend art schools in Europe or North America, and institutions in their home countries frequently adopt these same Western pedagogical frameworks. For a critical perspective on this phenomenon, particularly focusing on design histories and pedagogies, see Mareis et al. (2021).

5 This volume's approach, following Menke, is distinct from two other relevant fields. On the one hand, the field of 'Artistic Research' investigates knowledge production *through* art, a tradition exemplified by initiatives like the DFG Research Training Group *Das Wissen der Künste* (Berlin, 2012–2021). On the other hand, the German discourse on pedagogical mediation, or *Ästhetische Bildung*, approaches the topic from faculties of education, focusing on the successful mediation of aesthetic experience (see foundational work by Pazzini, 2018). Distinct from both, this volume interrogates the very conditions and inherent contradictions of aesthetic experience itself, rather than its successful application or mediation.

6 The extensive and distinct nature of these critical traditions is well-documented. The Black Arts Movement established a paradigm of critique rooted in community empowerment (cf. Neal, 1968), a legacy analyzed in comprehensive studies (Farrington, 2005) and powerfully enacted in direct institutional interventions like Fred Wilson's "Mining the Museum" (1992). The critique from Indigenous perspectives is equally profound, grounded in land-based epistemologies that challenge the colonial foundations of the museum. Smith's (1999) *Decolonizing Methodologies* provides the foundational framework, with direct applications to artistic practice explored in recent works (e.g., Igloliorte, 2024). Both traditions operate from epistemological foundations distinct from the post-structuralist lineage this volume examines.

7 The robust scholarship on radical pedagogy and political art in South America, which often positions critique outside of formal institutions, is a field unto itself. The foundational text for liberation pedagogy remains Freire (1970). The specific case of Lygia Clark's later work has been extensively theorized by Rolnik as a paradigm of critique operating beyond the institution; for her definitive analyses of Clark's therapeutic, embodied, and non-institutional practice of 'structuring the self', see her foundational essays in the MoMA exhibition catalogue on Clark (Butler & Pérez-Oramas, 2014). Similarly, the model of art as direct political intervention, exemplified by Argentina's Tucumán Arde, has been deeply chronicled by leading scholars such as Giunta (2007) and Camnitzer (2007).

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PART 1

Frameworks of Institutional Critique

CHAPTER 1

The Women of Nüshu

Art Education as Institutional Critique?

Nicola Foster

Abstract

Can institutional critique become a pedagogical methodology in art education? And if so, how might it work and under what circumstances? Andrea Fraser notes that there is no 'outside' of the institutions governing us, 'we are the institution.' And yet, to the extent that some voices within the institution are unheard the community is excluded. How might an institutional critique operate within the institution from those who are not given a voice, what might be the pedagogical strategies to be adopted in art education to establish institutional critique as a form of pedagogy. The chapter looks at the case study of the Nüshu women in pre-communist patriarchal China who were given the space and time to creatively educate young women, albeit to a life of subservience and obedience. It argues that under the concept of institutional critique, their creativity achieved retrospective institutional recognition in the West. Institutional critique was not a criterion of value in China, nevertheless Western recognition of a forgotten practice allowed China to reclaim Nüshu as Chinese heritage.

Keywords

institutional critique – Nüshu – Nüge – feminist discourse – art education – art in China

1 Introduction

Artistic practices that in the late 1960s and 1970s came to be referred to as institutional critique, Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson argue, were revisiting the radical promise of the European enlightenment (2009, p. 3). Alberro and Stimson's reference is to Immanuel Kant's essay *An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?* (1784), where Kant articulates the enlightenment as "man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity" (Kant, 1991, p. 54). For

Kant, the pre-modern period is characterized by the acceptance of values authorized by others, such as the church, where values were justified on the basis of authority. The enlightenment, Kant argues, is the recognition that reason—shared by all men—creates a common space for rational debate over values. Critique, for Kant, is questioning values on the basis of reason and not authority. While for Kant, the institution of authority over values was the church, the argument can easily be transported to other institutions in modernity as institutional critique.

Alberro and Stimson interpret the public space of reason articulated by Kant, as an autonomous space, akin to what Kant elsewhere in the context of aesthetic judgements articulated as the space of "disinterested aesthetic" (Kant, 2007). For Kant, "disinterested" state is specific to man since it requires the overcoming of what might otherwise be seen as "natural causes,"[1] it is why man has the capacity for freedom. Man, for Kant, "is the only natural being [... capable of freedom]." Hence, man, as "a moral being," is an end in-itself, his existence is "the highest purpose" (Kant, 2007, pp. 435–436). Thus, man can operate in a "disinterested" space where rational debate can take place over ethical considerations debating values.

Alberro & Stimpson note that historically aesthetic discourse took place in the salons and museums, and they want to suggest that by the late 20th century artists took upon themselves to produce works which produced such spaces for discourse over values. Alberro and Stimson suggest that such spaces are specific to modernity, however, forms of aesthetic discourse and some forms of questioning values can be traced back to at least Greece and Rome, if not also Egypt, the Middle East and China. Where differences lie, in Kant's articulation, is that such discourse was historically based on accepted authoritative values, and only in modernity it took on the form of a critique on the basis of reason.

The public space of rational discourse over values in the format of Kant's articulation of "disinterested aesthetic" as an autonomous space where "free speech" can take place was supported by social, political, economic and technological (printing) changes which took place at the time. These changes were made possible by colonialism, industrialization, urbanization, and the printing press. All of which encouraged greater literacy and an ever-growing public who was literate and keen to participate in discourse questioning what seemed like *old* values. By the 20th century the avant-garde and its public included wider social groups who repeatedly called for the destruction of the *old* in favor of the *new* (Bürger, 1984; Groys, 1992).

However, the space arising from "disinterested aesthetic" discourse as Kant articulated it, did not expect social and/or political change to be a direct outcome of the art works themselves, but did expect slow changes taking place in response to the debates it generated. Alberro and Stimson argue that by the

1960's and 1970's it was expected that art works as such could lead to change. For example, Hito Steyerl suggests that Kant's argument of critique is only "the first step," she expects institutional critique to go beyond "disinterested aesthetic" and deliver actual social, economic and political change (Steyerl, cited in Alberro & Stimson, 2009, p. 487).

And yet, as Andrea Fraser points out, the concept of institutional critique is problematic because it assumes an *outside* to institutions governing everyday life. Fraser insists that there is no *outside* to the institution, "every time we speak of the 'institution' as other than 'us' we disavow our role in the creation and perpetuation of its own conditions. [...] It's not a question of being against the institution: we are the institution" (cited in Alberro & Stimson, 2009, p. 416). At issue, as Steyerl notes, is who counts under 'we,' for some voices are heard while others remain inaudible and invisible. If the expectation is that institutional critique is an activity of the privileged, as it was historically, it probably informed some of the actions members of the elite who at the same time also held public office, were able to raise. However, if it is opened beyond the small elite group, other platforms are sought in order to be heard. The plurality of newspapers and other formats of publications which developed during the 18th and 19th centuries, and more recently the internet and social media, are addressing the desire to be heard and be visible. In modernity, the number of platforms available has grown to accommodate the growing diversity of multiple voices looking for opportunities to question values and institutions. The problem faced by the multiplicity of platforms is: can they be heard by other platforms? Or do they remain inaudible and invisible outside their platform?

The Hong Kong based artist Yuen-yi Lo has tried to illustrate it in a drawing in which the artist's hands are physically forming the Chinese radical indicating 'female' and in so doing also forming herself as a female artist at the same time. Since the radical is normally used in Mandarin as part of the meaning of a range of a large group of words, it is almost invisible to readers. Yuen-yi Lo's drawing seeks to bring it into focus and at the same time constructs herself as a Chinese artist who is female (Foster, 2016, pp. 131–152).

For example, prior to the 1970's women artists were not fully represented in the space of art exhibitions and museums, in China it took much longer and only happened once artists from China were acknowledged by major museums elsewhere. By the 1960's women were given the vote, at least in most European countries. However, they were mostly excluded from the field of art and culture. The debates circulating at the time articulated women under "nature" and men under "culture," while these debates dominated the latter half of the 19th century, they circulated long before and continued to circulate much later (Eller, 2011). The argument is but a later interpretation of the

FIGURE 1.1 Yuen-yi Lo, *Attempt 12* (part), 1998. From a series of seven drawings, graphite on printed canvas. © 1998 Yuen-yi Lo

ancient Greek distinction between body and mind, most famously articulated in Plato's account of love in the *Symposium* where embodied love is but a primitive form of love, the aspiration should be towards an intellectual love: philosophia (φιλοσοφία).

In modernity, the discussion was often articulated in terms of nature and culture. While Aristotle's articulation of man was translated into rational animal, Kant articulates woman as "a domestic animal" (Kant, 2006, p. 304). Woman as domestic animal implies that she is an animal domesticated into civilized society, man's world. She is a tool for nature and civilized society. For Kant, "what *nature's end* was in establishing womankind; [...] nature entrusted to woman's womb its dearest pledge, namely the species, in the fetus by which the race is to propagate and perpetuate itself," (Kant, 2006, p. 306). Women's value was in their capacity to host new life. Hence, women are a tool for nature and civilized society, not an *end in itself*. The production of art and culture depended on the articulation of man as an *end in itself* that is a value as such. Only to the extent that man was understood as an *end in itself* did man hold the power to create art and culture, even to be the generator of new life.

The public space promised by Kant in his articulation of modernity, ignored women. Interestingly, when Alberro and Stimson list the names of artists who were frequently mentioned during the second half of the 20th century in the context of institutional critique, they are all men: Daniel Buren, Hans Haacke, Michael Asher, and Marcel Broodthaers. Women artists were rarely mentioned in this context, for example the work of Mierle Laderman Ukeles, Judy Chicago, Mary Kelly, Louise Lawler, and many others, all of whom could be interpreted as working in institutional critique.

For the above reasons and more, women artists found it difficult to be acknowledged as artists. Education, however, was acknowledged as part of women's role of nurturing the young. As an art historian Linda Nochlin (1975) could publish and make her voice heard with her influential essay "Why have there been no great women artists?" Nochlin argued that the problem lies in our historical and current institutions, not in women's inability to produce what could be deemed as major works of art. Nochlin's argument in the context of Kant's above articulation opened up institutional critique which pointed to existing institutions governed by concepts of who is perceived as a *person*, a *human*, an *end in itself*, and thus who is eligible to be acknowledged as contributor to art and culture. Women, she argues, if given a voice "can reveal institutional and intellectual weaknesses ... [leading to institutional change] open to anyone, man or woman" (Nochlin, 1989, p. 58). The distinction which leaves half the population outside reason, art and cultural production, Nochlin and many others implied, should be questioned and debated. For Nochlin, there is ample evidence of art and cultural production by women, if only their voice was heard.

In what follows, I argue that on the one hand women were mostly excluded from art and cultural institutions (as well as social, economic and political). It meant that women's voice was mostly unheard and remained invisible. At

the same time, this exclusion also allowed women to develop art and cultural communities, albeit on a different platform, which were not fully subjected to the restrictions and expectations of established institutions. As such, women could develop alternative structures of art practices and art education. At times it was part of an attempt to be recognized by other platforms. At other times, in an attempt to address social, economic and political situations in which they found themselves and in an attempt to navigate and improve their situation within it. The above two are not mutually exclusive and could be seen to be taking place simultaneously.

I mentioned earlier that the work of Mierle Laderman Ukeles (b. 1939), for example, was rarely included in the lists of artists whose work was acknowledged as institutional critique. Escaping from a middle-class neighborhood near Denver, where she grew up, Ukeles attended Pratt Institute in New York, where she was profoundly inspired by ideas of personal and artistic freedom. Reflecting on that period, she recalled being captivated by the notion that "art is about freedom, and each person has to follow their own path. I just flipped, that's what I wanted" (Laderman Ukeles, 2016). However, this progressive spirit faced backlash as Pratt's administration dismissed its forward-thinking faculty. Disillusioned, Ukeles left Pratt. The constraints of societal norms, including gender roles, deeply embedded in institutions of art industry further hindered her recognition as an artist. Her famous "Maintenance Art Manifesto" (Ukeles, 2009, p. 144), intended as a proposal for an exhibition, was neglected by the Whitney Museum, which was unwilling to hold a proposal for a performance in which her mothering practice at the museum will be the topic of the exhibition. The Manifesto clearly questioned the institution as such. For Laderman Ukeles highlighted several institutional practices which impacted on gender and class through the wider implications of the distinction between creative work (production) and maintenance as unproductive labor. In 1971, she sent it to Jack Burnham who published it in *Artforum*. The publication led to an invitation by Lucy Lippard to participate in her traveling exhibition and eventually in 1973 the Atheneum in Hartford accepted her proposal for a series of performances in the museum which highlighted the distinction between work and maintenance.

Judy Chicago exemplifies how institutional critique can drive change in art education. In 1970, as a visiting instructor at California State College, Fresno—a rural school for agricultural workers—she initiated an off-campus program, possibly following Virginia Woolf's 1929 book *A room of my own*. This environment provided women artists a "safe place" to develop a "female voice" (Mayer, 2009, p. 6). While many of the individual artists involved did not go on to receive public recognition outside their communal work at the center, some

such as Suzanne Lacy, Vanalyne Green, Karen LeCocq, Nancy Youdelman, Faith Wilding, as well as Judy Chicago and Miriam Shapiro, are today established artists with works in major museums. In the case of the Fresno art class, the pedagogical approach received institutional recognition, Chicago and Shapiro were invited to re-establish the Feminist Art Program (FAP) at the prestigious California Institute of the Arts (CalArts).[2] Chicago was making use of working outside the institutions on the one hand in order to develop creative art works with the women and at the same time in order to achieve recognition of the art works produced and the art educational success on her part, by the very institutions that in acknowledging her educational role as an art educator will also be forced to bring about changes and acknowledge the women as artists and cultural producers.

The case study introduced below is an example of communal art produced by women and for women without gaining recognition during their lifetime, but only retrospectively and from a very different sets of interpretations in different contexts. After 1982, once the practice was almost forgotten, it was interpreted and developed as institutional critique mostly in the USA, but also globally, though the case study itself took place in pre-communist China.

2 Media Dissemination of Nüshu (Women's Script) as a Secret Script in Defiance of Patriarchy

In 1982 a junior anthropologist, Gong Zhebing, researching local minorities and their practices in the rural and remote county of Jiangyong (Hunan province in south China), came across a small piece of blue cloth with an unknown script later identified as Nüshu (literally, women's writing/script, Chinese 女書/女书, Pinyin nǚshū or 江永女書/江永女书, Jiāngyǒng nǚshū).[3] Some of the elderly local women still had a living memory of a set of artistic practices using the Nüshu script and the art practices it once generated. The Communist Revolution of 1949 imposed a universal curriculum for the education of both men and women in order to unite China under a single culture and an ideology which required both men and women to be employed by the government. To facilitate the above, the authorities imposed Mandarin as the only official language in China. Nǚshū is a phonetic script of the local dialect and it was practiced by women who were not expected to work outside the home. From the perspective of the communist authorities it thus belongs to feudal practices which are contrary to the ideology of the Communist Revolution. Hence, it was discouraged and at times explicitly forbidden and punished by the authorities. Since Nüshu could no longer be practiced, nor were these practices relevant under

communist rule, they slowly stopped. By the 1980's the practice was almost forgotten.

Not surprisingly, during the 1980's when news began to circulate in the global media about a "women's script," which was developed and practiced by women for women in a remote region in China, it raised a huge interest especially among feminist readers. For here was an example where it was not easy to argue that the women simply made use of existing works by men and thus owed the creative (innovative) aspect of their art to men.[4]

The women of Nüshu were not of the urban elite where a very small proportion of women were given opportunities to study—under their scholar father and/or brother—during the Ming (1368–1644) and Qing (1644–1912) dynasties and since. Dorothy Ko suggests that some elite families hoped it will improve their daughter's potential to secure a scholar elite husband who might welcome a wife with whom he could discuss art and culture as well as a wife able to educate their future young children, (Ko, 1994, p. 128). Women's literate education was generally justified by the promise to instill moral codes of behavior in the young and in other women, (Ko, 1994, pp. 143–145). Under this justification some were even encouraged to publish their works mostly in the forms of stories and poetry addressing specifically women readers. Since there was a demand for women's stories and poems, some were able to achieve a successful publishing career that brought prestige and financial reward to their families, alongside fulfilling their domestic duties, (Ko, 1994).

The women of Nüshu had limited access to publish their work and gain commercial, if not also some cultural, recognition. They lacked the network of elite literati families who could see the potential gain in terms of both prestige and financial reward by facilitating the publication of literary works by a woman in the family. Moreover, Nüshu was a complex syllabic script "in which each sign stood for distinctive unit of sound in the local Chinese dialect" (Idema, 2009, p. 3). It was a script in the local dialect, mostly dealing with the lives of peasant women in the region, as such it was unlikely to gain commercial success, or prestige. And yet, the script, literary works and art practices were surprisingly rich and sophisticated. Since these practices were communal, the women also developed a system of education without which the practice could not have been developed. While not all women achieved full mastery of writing Nüshu, they could participate in the wide range of art practices including the composition of literally works with the help of those who mastered writing in Nüshu.

From the perspective of the late 20th century, here was a cultural product which the media presented as created by the women for the women and it was presented as a secret script which men could not read. As such, the script and the literary tradition it developed, alongside a wide range of art and cultural

practice and a systematic form of education established by the women for the women, could not be interpreted as produced under the tutelage of either father, husband or sons. During the 1980's feminists and others were keen to find examples to *prove* women are capable of art and culture, what was required, as Nochlin argued for, was a global institutional critique which would allow for the recognition of women as *creators* of art and cultural and in so doing would give women a voice in the current cultural institutions.

Global media, addressing Western urban communities, interpreted the discovery of the women's script and their art practices as a secret. For example, the BBC webpage to Nüshu titled *China's secret female-only language* (Lofthouse, 2020). It was publicized as a secret script, a curious phenomenon, to a wide public and of particular interest to feminists looking for evidence to argue for institutional critique. Global media presented the practice not only as secret but also as an act of defiance against the dominant Confucian patriarchal institution, which advocated foot binding restricting the possibility of young girls' mobility for life and thus physically confining them to domestic responsibilities in the inner quarters of the home. As more ballads were discovered and translated this approach was used to interpret the many ballads written in Nüshu, which often laments the difficult situations the women found themselves in. Together, the above evidence was used to support media representation of the practice as an act of defiance which thus could be read retrospectively as a form of institutional critique in the face of Confucian patriarchy.

The focus on both the secrecy of the script, and the script as an act of defiance in the face of Confucian patriarchy circulating in the media, fired the imagination of many artists, writers, film makers, choreographers, and musicians, some of whom sought to use it as a form of institutional critique of patriarchy. An example can be seen in the work of Yuenyi Lo in the late 1990's, produced in response to some of the surviving women she met on a research field trip to the region, (Foster, 2016).

Lisa See's novel *Snow flower and the secret fan* (2005) became highly influential, especially in the USA, in publicizing Nüshu beyond media reports. The novel was later adapted into a film under the same title and released in 2011. The film further publicized Nüshu as a secret script and set of art practices by women for women to a much wider public, still. Both the novel and the film focus on the *secrecy* of the practices as practices by women for women and at the same time show these practices as acts of defiance, for the women are not portrayed as passive recipients, but as active actors in control of their decisions, albeit under very difficult and restrictive circumstances.

Since then, many more novels, films, performances in different formats including dance music and theatre, as well as visual art, poems and other

literary works were produced, a discussion of visual arts and dance can be found in 'Translating Nüshu: Drawing Nüshu, Dancing Nüshu' (Foster, 2019). These works were produced by a wide variety of artists and writers and with a wide range of interests and thus with a different focus. For example, the internationally renowned Chinese born composer Tan Dun composed a symphony entitled *Nu Shu: The secret songs of women* (2013). Tan Dun's symphony is a multi-media orchestral performance with a solo harp, accompanied by videos which recreate scenes of how he imagined the practices of the Nüshu women and their songs. Tan Dun spent time researching and gathering many songs. The videos accompanying the symphony provided a platform which made them heard in a very different context on the international concert halls circuit.

However, rather than introduce singers to perform Nüge (literally, women's song) as part of the concert, Tan Dun chose to present the songs as video accompaniment where the enacting local women are filmed in an idyllic colorful environment in specially designed colorful costumes, emphasizing their strong bonds of friendships while performing Nüge songs. Interestingly, the symphony won him the honorary status of "UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador" to Nüshu. And thus, awarding him the international role of speaking on behalf of the historical women of Nüshu who remained silent in his symphony. While the symphony is highly innovative in the use of its musical instruments (which included instruments relevant to the region) as well as by accompanying the symphony with visual material and songs through videos, it is not a work of institutional critique. The orchestra is the performer of the composed music, the video's performing Nüge songs composed by the women, are left "outside" the symphony.

Since the 1980's, research has recovered many more fragments of tangible and intangible Nüshu items. Surviving fragments show evidence of communal practices which included needlework, reading, reciting, singing, composing music, and composing and writing poetry, ballads, laments, biographical accounts, and other forms of literary writing, drawing and performances which were practiced by the women for the women (Foster, 2016). All of which helped to fire the imagination of other artists, writers, film producers, dancers and visual artists (Foster, 2019).

My point here is that if we interpret institutional critique for its capacity for change, the value of the artwork will ultimately lie in the values allocated to the ethics which supports the change, not to the artwork itself. As such, the relationship between art, knowledge and ethics—which plagued Kant's work—and continues to prove problematic for us today, is key to the challenges art education still faces today globally, especially in diverse societies. Essentially, should *art* be valued as an autonomous sphere, or should it be

valued only as holding relative autonomy which is ultimately dependent on the values of *ethics*? Moreover, should the same be said for *knowledge*? Should all three be connected, and if so how might they be connected?

3 The Value of Knowledge and Art in Europe and China in the Context of Education

China and Europe have long histories of change. Nevertheless, there are some broad similarities between pre-modern European approaches to the concepts of *knowledge* and *art* and those dominant in pre-modern China. In both pre-modern Europe and China *art* and *knowledge* were perceived as values, though not quite as values in themselves. In both, *knowledge* was understood to be found in a set of canonical texts attributed to men, and given the status of *classic*, albeit with a history of their interpretations over time. In Europe it included the Bible and surviving fragments of Greek and Roman texts (the classics) and their interpretations, while in China it included different ancient texts, the classics, and their interpretations, most were categorized under *Confucianism*.

As Liu points out, in Imperial China,

> literacy has long been regarded as a fundamental step on the ladder of success and a facilitator of social mobility. This has been especially true since the Tang-Song [618–1279] period when the civil service examination was established and institutionalized. (Liu, 2004, pp. 211–212)

While Imperial Rome did not develop a formalized system of examination as in China, the schools which prepared candidates for public office provided tuition in literacy, numeracy and a set of canonical texts and their interpretations. In both Europe and China literacy became a form of cultural capital for producing wealth, power, and social status.

However, educational systems were not limited to the study of *knowledge* in Imperial China or Imperial Rome and pre-Imperial Greece. The Chinese examination linked knowledge and ethical conduct. Written text (Chinese calligraphy) was believed to reveals character and moral strength (Clunas, 1997, p. 135). The relationship between writing poetry, drawing and ethical conduct, in imperial China can be traced back to the *Book of changes* (*I Ching* or *Yijing*, Chinese 易經, Pinyin Yìjīng) and other early Chinese classics. It was believed in China, that in copying the work of masters one's own character and ethical conduct will equally follow that of the master. Chinese calligraphy was considered the highest art form and was visible mostly in scholarly writing,

but its most prestigious form was that of poetry accompanying a stylized painting of landscape (‚mountain-water‘ *shanshui* (山水; Pinyin: *shānshuǐ*)).[5] Art, in China held high value, but it was the value of ethical conduct which allowed both knowledge and art to be held in high esteem and thus also highly valued practices. The values allocated to both knowledge and art, are reflected in the Chinese education system developed at the time.

Equally, in imperial Rome, ever since pre-Imperial Greece, it was not just knowledge which was highly valued. The expectations of the educated were not limited to scholarly knowledge. Scholarly knowledge was required in order to write and deliver political speeches in the Senate (in Greece, the Forum), it was the knowledge necessary to fulfill the duties of public office, the business side (negotium). However, the expectation was that the elite holding public office would use their leisure time for private, intellectual cultivation. In the Roman context, this was the domain of *otium*. For the purpose of this comparative analysis, this concept of productive leisure can be understood as functionally analogous to what is described in modern Chinese by terms such as leisure time (*yúxiá*; 余暇) and free time (*yúxián*; 余闲). The elite were expected to use this time to engage in poetry and various forms of writing and drawing, as well as build up a collection of artifacts: earlier manuscripts, paintings, sculptures, historical relics, etc., in short, the canonical works holding the status of classics. (A similar expectation was placed on Athenians, and the elite of ancient Egypt and Persia). The connection between art and ethics was not as explicit as in China, but it was here—in the autonomous space of art discourse, often in their country villas—that individuals could prove and improve their ethical conduct. In both cultures, this was often performed under autocratic and temperamental rule, which might exile, even sanction an end to the life, of an elite member who lost their favor.

These leisure activities were not performed in solitude, while writing was often performed in solitude in a specially dedicated spaces away from everyday life (often explicitly in the countryside away from the court or urban environment of business), sharing their artworks was a social activity. An example can be seen as early as Plato's *Symposium* where the protagonists meet over dinner to discuss the theatrical performances they attended earlier in the day, but the after dinner discussion focused on ethical debate over values in the context of art.[6] Such *leisure activities* provided opportunities to share scholarly/literary/art activities by reading, listening, exhibiting their works and their collections of artifacts which included manuscripts, drawings, and antiquities. While not always explicitly articulated as 'gifts' the practice was that of 'cultural gifts' repaying 'cultural debt' by producing works and arguments in response to other works and arguments. Such exchanges acknowledged and recognized some works as 'demanding' response and as such imposing a 'cultural debt.'

As such, the works were motivated by 'repaying' a 'cultural debt,' as an ethical demand. While such gatherings were not seen as a form of education, it could be viewed retrospectively as a precursor of what later would take place in the academies (and later still, in universities, museums, even the media, where an ever growing proportions of the population partake in similar practices today).

Elite communities' gathering provided a platform for discourse in the context of art (leisure), not business, and it is in this context that values were developed, reaffirmed and/or critiqued, within the context of cultural gift giving. A similar practice was also performed by the Chinese elite, the literati, which Craig Clunas notes, often those who fell out of favor in the Imperial Court and retired to the country, (Clunas, 2004). For those holding public office 'gift' and 'debt' might be perceived under 'business,' rather than leisure. Clunas' book *Elegant Debts*, focuses on the practice in Imperial China where the literati elite explicitly presented some of their works as repaying a debt. Clunas argues that such debts could be explained as social, I am suggesting that ultimately these works were cultural debts even if presented and operated also as social debts. In so doing, the production of artworks by the literati were distinguished from commercial production, which also took place at the time, but interpreted differently.

While there were many differences between practices in Europe and in China, no doubt the contexts were very different. However, there were also many similarities between the ways in which the literate elite operated. At the same time, in both cultures public office was closed to women whose space was the domestic sphere, and as such, women (especially in China) were mostly illiterate and outside art and culture. A strange exception were the courtesans or nuns, who were expected to serve men and/or god/s. Prior to modernity in China, Japan and Europe their place was that of an 'outsider,' dedicated not towards hosting and nurturing the next generation, but towards entertaining (inspiring, muse like) elite men. And yet, to fulfill the role of entertaining elite men, they were often highly educated (see, for example, Plato, 1999; for a discussion of China, see Ko, 1994).

As I showed above, this meant that women could not participate in what was perceived as cultural and ethical activities. Women were also outside the circle of 'cultural gifts' and 'cultural debts,' supporting the argument that women required a male guardian. Women were expected to fulfill a very different set of ethical behavior mostly characterized by passive submission and limited to the domestic space as daughter, wife and/or mother. The above excluded women from the possibility of recognition in art and culture.

And yet, at the same time it did open the possibility of doing so in their role of educating the young as well as other women. This allowed some exceptional cases to be acknowledged as women's contribution to art and culture, in some cases, even during their lifetime. However, as educators, their works were

perceived to be firmly under the tutelage of men who set the moral codes for them to follow and through which to educate women of their roles, (Ko, 1994).

4 The System of Education Developed by the Nüshu Women for the Women of the Region (and Beyond?)

The region of upper Jiangyong, where Nüshu was once practiced, is surrounded by high mountain ranges (some over 2,000 meters high) which makes travel long and difficult. However, the land is relatively fertile due to the availability of water, and as such more prosperous than some rural areas in China. Hence, the women in the region were not expected to work in the fields which left them with time to engage in social and cultural activities as part of, and alongside, their domestic duties. This remote region, as Liu notes, while dominated by Confucian Han practices which expected women to be confined to the domestic sphere, was once dominated by Yao practices. While Confucianism supports a patriarchal set of practices, Yao practices did not. For example, girls were not confined to domestic duties and had the freedom to choose their own partners. Liu suggests that Nüshu practices and the script itself may well be explained by the fact that the region was (still is) ethnically diverse, with both Han and Yao ethnicities and practices.

Under the Confucian Han tradition, as Liu explains, "gender relations were regulated according to the 'thrice following' doctrine," in which a woman has no autonomy "because her social identity, legal status, and economic entitlements are all derived from men—namely, her father, husband, and sons" (Liu, 2015, p. 4). In practice, this meant that the expectations of a girl were to serve her father, husband, and when widowed, her sons. Women, as Ko notes, had to follow the four virtues, the first mentioned in the *Book of Rites*: *womanly virtue*, encouraged submission obedience to her male guardian, as did the second virtue of *womanly speech* requiring modest, passive response, always accepting rather than leading. The other two, were also governed by submission, but *womanly deportment* related more to her bodily comportment, here well bound feet and modest, restrained comportment which bound feet were likely to produce, were highly valued. As for the fourth *womanly work,* implied she was expected to perform all her domestic duties in the domestic space and accept the distinction between women's work and that of men (Ko, 1994, pp. 143–145).

Modesty and passive submission were key under Han Confucianism, but there were two areas where women were expected to perform a slightly more active approach, even take control of. The first was foot binding and the second was moral education to ensure modest and passive comportment in young girls. Well bound feet were socially desirable partially because they were a

visible sign of the virtues a woman should display. A perfect lotus shaped feet was perceived as a girl's capital in arranged marriages practiced in the region. Foot binding "prepared a girl physically and psychologically for her future role as wife and a dependent family member," (Ko, 1994, p. 149). Moreover, it was a procedure perceived as one in which the girl could take an active role, it was up to her whether her feet were well bound, it required submission but also courage and the overcoming of pain and discomfort. Well bound feet were not only perceived as erotic but also demonstrated character in overcoming pain and thus the ability to bear future children.

At the age of six years, for those who could afford it, sons were sent to study outside the home, it was also the age when foot binding can start for girls. Poorer families could not afford either and both boys and girls were sent to work in the fields. Both practices—sending sons to study and girl's foot binding, required preparation. Long before the binding process could start mother and daughter were expected to prepare for the event. The necessary materials needed to be gathered and produced; the binding materials were the product of *womanly work*. It required weaving, sewing, and needlework. The skills required as part of the preparation involved the young girl to participate in the preparation. However, it required more than manual skills, it required moral education in which the girl will submit to pain and bodily deformity for the rest of her life. Effectively, the young girl was expected to take *control* over shaping her own deformity under considerable pain and discomfort for life. The son sent away to study, will also be expected to develop their character, but through reading and writing using calligraphy and eventually writing poetry and paintings, often combined as painting/poetry (the highest form) discussed above.

The educational structure developed by the women of Nüshu combined the Confucian ethical code alongside some adapted Yao practices, such as "participating in ritual sisterhood (sworn sisterhood), weaving cotton straps, and engaging in singing traditions" (Liu, 2015, p. 5). Woven cotton straps were used in foot binding. The Yao tradition of sworn sisterhood was adapted to facilitate the system of education in which all girls had to learn how to prepare towards foot binding and their future arranged marriage, which meant moving away (often far away) from their natal home. The tradition of "sworn sisterhood" allowed girls to do so in company where they could also lament their fears and hopes prior to foot binding, arranged marriage, child bearing, and beyond. Sworn sisters could maintain a bond throughout life, and Nüshu could be one of the means through which such bonds could be kept alive. Sworn sisters often worked together in each other's inner quarters home and their writing, composing and needle work were often prepared as a form of gift giving, not unlike practices of the literati elite. Often the gift addressed an individual event in the sisterhood relation, but at the same time it was a form of cultural, not only

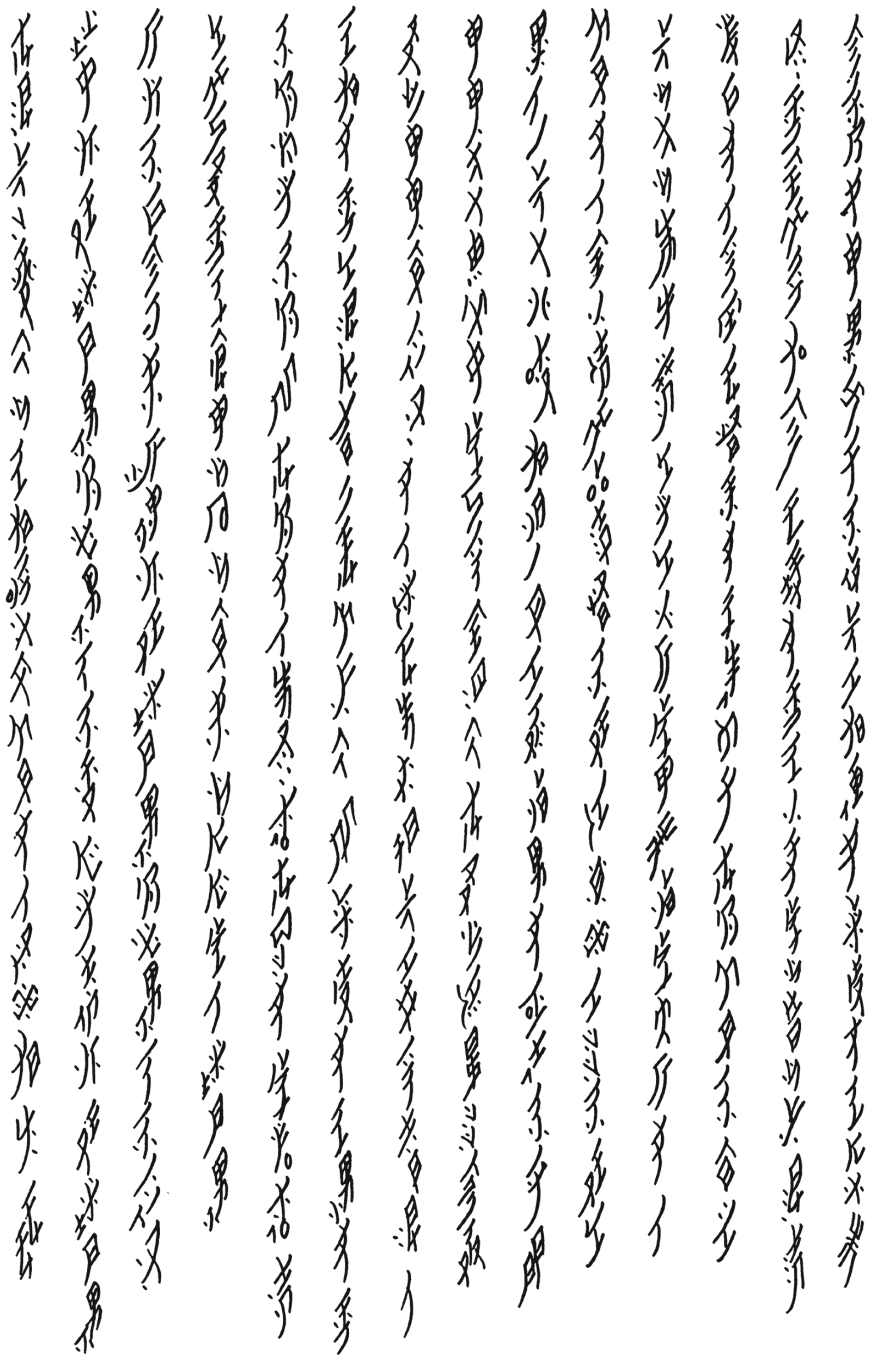

FIGURE 1.2 Yuen-yi Lo, *Song of Nushu*, 1998. © 1998 Yuen-yi Lo

social gift. In both practices it was valued for the development of character, the act of giving acknowledged and recognized the cultural work it responded to. The practice of gift giving and receiving gifts encouraged the production of further works in response to other works: in short, it developed a culture of artworks.

The practice of sworn sisters also facilitated communal education beyond that of the nuclear or even extended family: beyond mother and daughter relationships. Together with the practice of gift giving, it led to a developed sophisticated system of education which at the same time further developed the range and quality of their literary, visual, performative, and musical practices.

The Yao people, Liu notes, are well known for "singing 'mountain songs,' through which young people flirt with the opposite sex or find partners" (Liu, 2015, p. 5). Under patriarchal Confucian Han tradition women were expected to act in a modest, submissive and passive way. This tradition was rejected and arranged marriage replaced it to become the norm. However, the practice of singing Nüshu and Nüge was adopted and incorporated in the education system. It became an educational method to help the girls to gain some literacy skills. It also helped them recite a wide range of ballads and other literary narratives such as laments, biographies, autobiographies, prayer, and folk songs. Knowledge of other Nüshu works in a sense operated as parallel to men's education where studying the classics was required before composition could take place. Equally, the Nüshu works were recited and copied and in so doing the girls acquired the skills to correspond with their sworn sister(s), compose wedding missives, songs, and possibly even write ballads, their own biography, and more. It meant that even when they were not proficient in actual writing (Nüshu is a complex set of several thousand characters), they could compose similar works in any of the above genres and with help, also write it down.

Singing songs and performing in costume was an important aspect of celebrating a wide variety of events from marriage to other communal events. During such celebrations, the women will use Nüshu songs and texts as well as embroidery with Nüshu writing. The celebrations were communal and public, men and women were involved. Women were expected to display their competence in all aspects of the celebrations, from singing Nüshu songs, reading Nüshu texts and exhibiting all relevant aspects of their work. Nüshu was not secret, all men and women took part in such public events. However, since Nüshu practices belonged to women's sphere, men were not interested in it, beyond the performances during celebrations and or mourning. It was relegated to the sphere of women. Hence, most Nüshu artifacts were either burnt

or buried with the women, to guide them in the afterlife. As such, relatively few examples survived, as they did not receive acknowledgement or recognition in the public sphere, beyond their use in communal rituals, celebrations and mournings.

The perspective in most of the Nüshu texts was that of the women as daughters, wives and mothers. Wilt Idema notes, that literary texts often articulated examples of either good womanly behavior, or inappropriate conduct. The former was generally rewarded while the latter incorporated some form of punishment. Idema also suggests that the narratives are generally of the difficulties faced by the women and the sufferings, both physical and psychological, they endure. And yet, at the same time, the texts also articulate "the courage, wisdom, and initiative of the heroines form an interesting contrast with the relative timidity and incompetence of the male characters" (Idema, 2009, p. 8). Hence, the texts are portraying the women as active and resourceful and the men as needy. In so doing, the models they present, are not always in line with Confucian expectations. Subversions are evidenced in more than one way, despite the overall moral tone. In composing, reading, writing and singing such literary narratives communally, the women are on the one hand performing women's role as moral educators, but at the same time providing examples of courage and endurance, even examples of initiative, and active acts to achieve a desired end, not merely be subject to events of hardship.

Literary texts and arts forms in general may well be designed and delivered within the acceptable sphere of moral instruction as part of the ethical conduct of women, and yet, they also construct and present alternative worlds, at the same time. Education in general, and art education in particular, may well be designed to support a set of accepted codes of behavior, but this does not bar them from offering much more, or being interpreted to offer more. While the women of Nüshu may well have been constrained in what they could and could not do throughout their lives, that is not to say that they could not dream beyond and that their overall art works did not go well beyond the restricted world they lived in, to offer other examples of active courage and endurance. Moreover, despite the fact that generally the works of Nüshu were perceived as holding personal, not public value, and were thus either buried or burned with their owner at death, a vast array of fragments has survived. This in itself is a sign that others felt they should be kept safely and did so because they valued it. Whether this was personal or communal value, may remain a mystery the sheer fact that they were kept, even throughout the Cultural Revolution when Nüshu texts and works were actively forbidden, any found were burnt and their owner punished.

There is no evidence to suggest that the women of Nüshu received any form of positive public recognition outside of their own community during their lifetime, nor do we have any evidence that they expected wider recognition. For them it was simply the set of practices they lived through. It is likely that all they aimed at was to fulfill their duties under Confucianism as good daughters, wives, and mothers. But the duties of remaining passive are difficult to enact, any action is by definition not passive. In this sense, their works could be perceived, as they have been received in the West: institutional critique.

And yet, as I tried to show, their practices shared much with the practices performed by the male elite scholars. They developed a form of education for girls, where all girls could participate as it was free. They became literate, they spent time reading, writing, drawing, and producing works. These practices were shared, they included gift giving of art works and poems, and they spent many hours performing these practices. The content of their respective works was different, but the practices similar. In this sense, they were within the institution. However, they belonged to an excluded group and in this sense, they could be perceived as performing institutional critique.

If art education is expected to educate art students to become the critical voice of the future, is it not acting within a double bind: the institution presenting itself as *other* in order to critique itself. Art institutions are institutions, there is no *outside* to the institution. There are communities with a voice and communities without a voice within the institution, but no outside of the institution: "We are the institution." And yet, even when we enact and follow the values promoted by the institution, there are still diverse ways in which subversive critique can take place and change will follow, often the changes that take place are unexpected. The Fresno FAP showed a way in which short term self-imposed exclusion led to eventual recognition and slowly some institutional change.

In China, the Communist Revolution put a stop to Nüshu practices, it also changed the narrative from Confucianism to Marxism. The latter insisted on the women working outside the domestic space, and it tried to give women some public visibility and voice. It did not resolve the domestic duties of women, but it allowed them to enter education. Nüshu is no longer practiced, but it is far from being forgotten. It lives in the many works of contemporary artists. And yet, it has also been incorporated into the official Chinese local government to encourage tourism to the area. It thus turned the living practice into a regional heritage. It even opened a museum of Nüshu where children and adults can learn Nüshu. As such it has incorporated Nüshu into the local public Chinese institution, while the 'subversive' aspect of Nüshu practices seems to have disappeared for the moment, it may well re-appear in some future guise.

Notes

1 For Kant, "the final purpose [cause] is unconditioned" (Kant, 2007, p. 435). Kant is re-interpreting Aristotle's account of the four causes and man as 'final cause' (Aristotle, 1999). See also, Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics, Book 1, where he argues that the Good is a final cause, an end in-itself.

2 For an in-depth analysis of the spatial dimensions of Judy Chicago's feminist art program at Fresno State College, see the chapter by Marie-Christine Schoel in this volume, "'(…) radical change was in the air': Judy Chicago's pedagogical work at Fresno State College in 1970."

3 For detailed information from the perspective of anthropology, see Liu (2015). Refer also to other published articles by the same author who spent time in the region and formed friendship relationships with some of the women, as part of her research.

4 The main argument supporting the claim that there are 'no great women artists' was based on the assumption that all great artists were men and thus each work by a woman was attributed to a male creator. Most famously in modernity: Méret Oppenheim's *Fur Cup* (1936) (*Object, Le Déjeuner en fourrure*), where the idea was attributed to Picasso and the form to Man Ray's photograph, not to mention the French title's reference to Manet.

5 I refer to this practice as 'painting/poetry' below, in order to emphasize what is often presented as two separate practices in the European tradition were explicitly perceived as one in China, and actually in the European academies, albeit practiced by different practitioners in different historical times. Painting was often illustrating classical poetry.

6 Similar accounts go as far back as Egypt and Persia as well as China, though the fragmented evidence we have is mostly of narratives taking place in the court, it is likely that such narratives were written away from the court and shared by their authors away from the court. Placing them in the court gave the narratives a social and political status.

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CHAPTER 2

Between Liberal Art Education and Mass Culture

Schule Reimann

Sandra Neugärtner

Abstract

In the landscape of early 20th-century German art school reform, the Reimann Schule stands apart. As a private institution immersed in the cosmopolitan milieu of Berlin, it charted a unique and commercially-driven course, diverging significantly from its public counterparts. While influenced by the Arts and Crafts Movement and the Werkbund's mission to integrate the fine and applied arts, the school's alignment of art with profit-driven objectives reveals it as a key forerunner of the culture industry. By rejecting a socially grounded conception of quality as its guiding principle, the school's approach resonates with critical perspectives on the culture industry—from the Frankfurt School to Guy Debord's "spectacle" and Jean Baudrillard's theory of sign-value. This article interrogates the pedagogical model of the Reimann Schule, particularly its emphasis on display education, to reveal its programmatic entanglement with mass culture. Ultimately, this analysis situates the school within broader debates on the strategies that both applied and fine arts employed to engage with the rise of mass culture.

Keywords

Reimann Schule – Arts and Crafts Movement – applied and fine arts – Werkbund – Bauhaus – Constructivism – Dada – mass culture – culture industry – liberalism – democracy – shop window design

1 Applied Arts Geared towards Mass Consumption

Art education faces perpetual calls for reform, as each societal shift prompts a reevaluation of art's practice and function, which remain inseparable from its institutional frameworks. The transformation of art education in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, particularly through the influence

of the Arts and Crafts Movement originating in England and spreading across Europe, was of fundamental importance for this evolution. This movement not only inspired innovative pedagogical approaches but also fostered the emergence of a novel educational model: the "Werkstattschule" (workshop school). Positioned against the prevailing dualism between fine and applied arts, these schools explicitly challenged the dominance of traditional academic artist training (Wingler, 1977, pp. 9–11).

In Germany, the "Lehr- und Versuchsateliers für Angewandte und Freie Kunst" (Teaching and Experimental Studios for Applied and Fine Arts), established in Munich in 1902 by Hermann Obrist and Wilhelm von Debschitz and widely known as the "Debschitz Schule," was among the pioneering art schools to incorporate practical workshop training into its curriculum.[1] Other notable examples of this integration of craft training into art education include the Frankfurt School of Art, formed through the merger of the autonomous "Städel Schule" with the practical elements of the municipal School of Arts and Crafts; the reorganized teaching studios on the Mathildenhöhe in Darmstadt, which evolved from the artists' workshops; and the Burg Giebichenstein Art Academy in Halle, founded in 1915, which transformed the "Gewerbliche Zeichen- und Handwerkerschule" in alignment with the ideals of the Deutsche Werkbund and the "Bauhütten" ideal.[2] The early Bauhaus, with its rallying cry, "Architects, sculptors, painters—we all must return to craftsmanship!," epitomized this movement as a synthesis of a school of arts and crafts and an art academy. Emerging during an era when mass production driven by industrialization signaled the decline of traditional craftsmanship, the Bauhaus of this time represented a continuation and culmination of these reformist ideals.

William Morris (1834–1896) and John Ruskin (1819–1900), pioneers of the Arts and Crafts Movement, staunchly opposed machine production, which they deemed deficient in design integrity. By the mid-19th century, they were already critiquing industrial production for stripping craftsmanship of its essential skills. They argued that the serial, machine-based production system, reliant on the division of labor, inherently precluded the conditions necessary for quality workmanship.

At the same time, Morris's assertion, "I don't want art for a few, any more than education for a few, or freedom for a few" (Pevsner, 1975, p. 22), exemplifies the liberal and socially inclusive ethos underpinning their philosophy. The Deutscher Werkbund, established in 1907 by Hermann Muthesius (1861–1927) and Henry van de Velde (1863–1957), echoed this commitment to socially grounded quality but diverged from the Arts and Crafts Movement by embracing mechanical production as an opportunity for innovative design for the broad

masses. The Werkbund sought to harmonize art, craft, and industry, aspiring to elevate both handcrafted and industrial goods to the level of high-quality products through artistic, material, and functional excellence. Its ultimate aim was to refine industrial work itself. However, the well-known Werkbund dispute revealed deep-seated tensions over the compatibility of cultural values and capitalist imperatives, highlighting divergent views on the relationship between industrial production and the preservation of artistic integrity.

The issue of typification emerged as a focal point of heated debate within the Deutscher Werkbund. Muthesius championed typification as a pragmatic alignment with the economic realities of mass production, advocating for a compromise with capitalist imperatives. In stark opposition, van de Velde vehemently rejected this approach, declaring: "As long as there are artists in the Werkbund, and as long as they have influence on its fate, they will protest against any suggestion of a canon or typification" (Velde, 1962, p. 365). Van de Velde's resistance underscored the enduring tension between artistic autonomy and the pressures of industrial standardization driven by capitalized efficiency and consumerism.[3] This debate reflected the broader dilemma of the economic *dispositif*—a core issue that had also driven the Arts and Crafts Movement to rebel against the negative impact of industry on artistic creativity, the cultural alienation of modern society, urban neglect, and the commercialization of public life.

The Reimann Schule occupies a distinct position in this landscape, particularly in its display practices and pedagogical methods, which embraced a fundamentally commercial orientation. Unlike other institutions and initiatives that adopted more ambivalent or critical stances toward commerce, the Reimann Schule anticipated and internalized the socio-critical dimensions of consumer culture. Established in 1902 by the Jewish sculptor Albert Reimann (1874–1976) as a student workshop for small sculptures, the school expanded to offer specialized classes, including fashion illustration (1910), poster art (1911), and window design (1912). The introduction of window design, while influenced by the Werkbund, also contravened some of its principles—a tension this article explores. The school's innovative doctrine on window display and its tailored training programs significantly shaped the discipline's foundations. As Kerry Meakin notes,

> From the mid-1920s the Reimann's teaching, adapted to post-war economics, profoundly influenced not only the call for a modern style in Britain, but from 1928 display education. (2024, p. 133)

The Reimann Schule thus emerged as a pivotal force in aligning art education with the dynamics of commercial and consumer culture. In 1913, the Reimann

Schule achieved official recognition by the Prussian state as a privately operated "Kunst- und Kunstgewerbeschule" (Art School and School of Applied Arts). Its status as a commercially significant enterprise is particularly evident in its sale and subsequent reestablishment in London in 1937. The school, which was then run by the son Heinz Reimann, was registered as "Reimann Company Ltd." and involved numerous Jewish businessmen based in London (Kuhfuss-Wickenheiser, 2019, p. 88). Meanwhile, the Berlin school continued operations until 1943 but changed ownership in 1935 when Albert Reimann, under Nazi coercion, was forced to sell it to the German architect Hugo Häring for 250,000 Reichsmarks. For years, the Reimann schools in Berlin and London remained the only commercially focused art schools in their respective cities (Breakell, 2021, p. 239).

Albert Reimann consistently emphasized that his schools provided "workshop rather than art school training" (Reimann, 1936, p. 20). This approach echoed the emerging workshop schools of the Arts and Crafts reform movement, which prioritized a synthesis of craft and utility. However, unlike many contemporaries, Reimann—a member of the Deutsche Werkbund—readily embraced the use of machines. His pragmatism was evident in his belief in the equal value of aesthetic function in both artworks and everyday objects, and was further demonstrated by the school's active participation in applied and industrial arts exhibitions. Yet, despite sharing certain objectives with broader reform efforts, the Reimann Schule's profit-driven ethos set it apart.[4] As Prussia's first private "Kunst- und Kunstgewerbeschule," it operated on explicitly commercial principles, consistently aligning itself with the trends of the cosmopolitan metropolis. This strategic market alignment fostered what the school termed a "modern formal idiom" (neuzeitliche Formensprache) (Schule Reimann, 1912, p. 4), underscoring its innovative contribution to art and design education within a capitalist framework.

Thus, only at first glance did the modern orientation of the Reimann Schule correspond to that of the Bauhaus. While the Bauhaus was primarily interested in developing new material and functional solutions, this was hardly the driving force for the Reimann Schule. As former student Natasha Kroll observed, "The Bauhaus gave a hard-working and experimental impression, while the Reimann, an expensive school, was a bit like a finishing school with many female students."[5] Under Walter Gropius, the Bauhaus's labor-intensive, experimental approach often resulted in costly products accessible mainly to an elite clientele, a model not built for economic viability.[6]

Even during the brief, socially-minded tenure of Hannes Meyer as director (1928–1930), whose slogan was "People's Needs Instead of Luxury Needs,"[7] the overlap with the Reimann Schule remained minimal. This was largely due

to Meyer's time-consuming scientific methods, which produced designs that fundamentally rejected capitalist imperatives, contrasting sharply with the profit-oriented ethos of the private Reimann Schule. Although both institutions entered partnerships with industry, the Reimann Schule financed primarily through tuition fees and embedded principles of economic efficiency throughout its curriculum. It incorporated the "Reimannhaus," a school-owned commercial outlet for handicraft products (Schule Reimann, 1927, p. 9). Students' works were explicitly intended for direct sale, classifying the school's workshops as "production workshops" rather than experimental laboratories (Kuhfuss-Wickenheiser, 2009, p. 36). Rather than positioning itself as an initiator of avant-garde innovation, the Reimann Schule functioned as a multiplier of avant-garde ideas. It appropriated and adapted progressive concepts without significant investment in pioneering solutions. This pragmatic, profit-driven approach underscores the fundamental ideological and operational distinctions between the Reimann Schule and the Bauhaus.[8]

The entrepreneurial ethos of the Reimann Schule is evident in its strategic targeting of economically affluent demographics as prospective enrollees. Albert Reimann explicitly criticized educational models overly focused on trades, arguing that "the lack of social prestige of the trades prevented many parents from higher social classes from sending their children to a trade school" (Kuhfuss-Wickenheiser, 2009, p. 35). By continuously expanding and differentiating its curriculum, the school successfully positioned itself as an attractive option for the middle class. This differentiation included specialized courses in fashion design, fashion illustration, fashion drawing, garment drawing, and fashion studies, all supported by the expertise of renowned fashion designers such as Annie Offterdinger, Rolf Nitzky, and Kenan. These figures were prominently featured in leading German fashion publications, including *STYL* and *Die deutsche Elite*, thereby reinforcing the school's reputation and appeal. The Reimann Schule also provided career counseling services, further enhancing its attractiveness to prospective students.

In the school's magazine, *Farbe und Form*, published under various titles since 1916, Ernst Growald, a prominent advertising specialist at the Berlin-based art institute and poster printing company Hollerbaum & Schmidt, emphasized the career advantages for Reimann Schule graduates in terms of career opportunities:

> There is a great need—not only in Germany—for tasteful and technically trained advertising aids; department stores and specialty shops, manufacturers and workshops, in short, companies of all kinds need artistically trained people who can also meet practical requirements. So it is not "artists"

FIGURE 2.1 Max Hertwig, *Reimann Schule poster for the recruitment of new students*, c. mid-1920s. Poster print. The slogan "Der Weg zum Beruf" (The Path to a Career) encapsulates the school's market-oriented pedagogy. Source: *Farbe und Form: Ein Bildprospekt der Schule Reimann* (1934)

> who are needed, but tasteful practitioners who can adapt themselves and their work to the needs of the business. […] Experience has shown that only a small percentage of art students succeed in the purely artistic field. […] It is important, therefore, to give all art enthusiasts the opportunity to use their work to the full extent of their abilities, for their own benefit and for the benefit of the economy. (Growald, 1914, pp. 137–138)[9]

This integration of professional opportunities and market-oriented education underscored the school's commitment to cultivating a commercially viable and socially prestigious academic environment. By subordinating their artistic activities to the interests of the business world, the "practitioners" trained at the Reimann Schule would be financially successful. When recruiting new students, the good career opportunities were boldly emphasized (see Figure 2.1).[10] Students in the decorative arts had particularly good prospects:

> Since not only the retail trade, but also the industry and especially the branded goods industry are increasingly moving towards the creation of type shop windows for their customers and thus towards the realization of advertising appropriate and tasteful shop window designs, the profession of the commercial advertiser should have good prospects for the coming period. (Reimann, 1934, p. 35)

2 Shop Window Design

This market-oriented ethos found its most potent expression in the school's focus on shop window design, a discipline Reimann strategically elevated after incorporating the "Höhere Fachschule für Dekorationskunst" (Higher Vocational School for the Decorative Arts) on January 1, 1912 (Schule Reimann, 1927, p. 9). The integration was a strategic masterstroke that cemented the Reimann Schule's commercial and pedagogical identity. Founded in 1910 by a consortium including the Deutscher Werkbund, the absorbed school pioneered a dual curriculum of artistic and commercial window dressing, an approach Reimann would leverage to achieve global renown (Reimann, 1927, p. 16; Kuhfuss-Wickenheiser, 2009, p. 222). He consistently promoted the "art of decoration, with special emphasis on window dressing," as a core pillar of his institution, implementing a pedagogical model that paired theoretical instruction with direct, practical application in the retail stores of Berlin and beyond (Wickenheiser, 1993, pp. 321–322).

This strategic positioning was enabled by the Decoration Department's anomalous structure. As an entity within the private Reimann Schule, it

uniquely benefited from state subsidies and the oversight of a prestigious board of trustees, which included Werkbund leaders Hermann Muthesius and Peter Behrens (Oppler-Legband, 1914, p. 105). This direct institutional link to

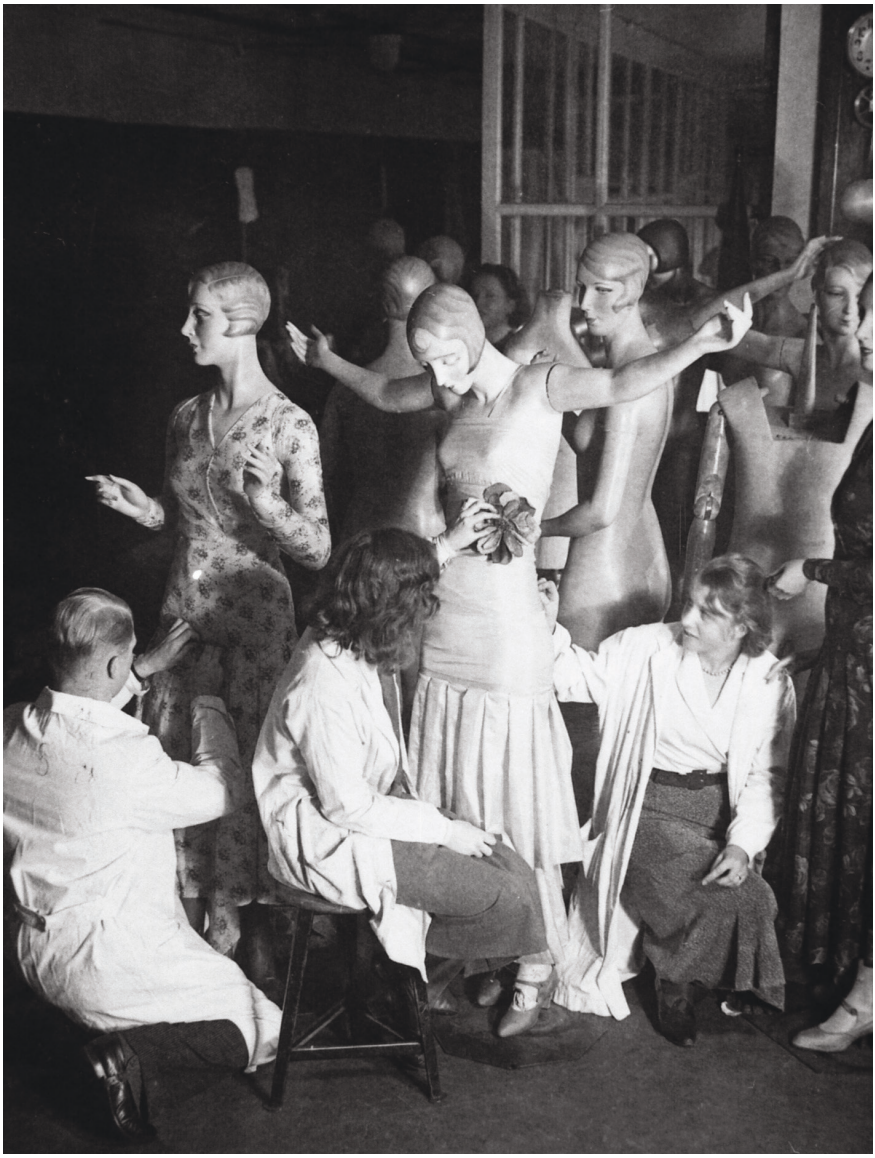

FIGURE 2.2 Willy Pragher, *Puppen-Stecken* (Assembling Mannequins), 1931. A workshop scene from the Reimann Schule's decoration department. Courtesy of the Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg, Staatsarchiv Freiburg, W 134 Nr. 003894, Willy Pragher Collection

FIGURE 2.3 Willy Pragher, *Schaufensterpuppen* (Harem), 1931. A storeroom scene from the Reimann Schule. Courtesy of the Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg, Staatsarchiv Freiburg, W 134 Nr. 003901, Willy Pragher Collection

the Werkbund provided both financial stability and a direct pipeline for the era's most critical design discourses, allowing the school to absorb, re-purpose, and ultimately commercialize them.

The curriculum enabled by this structure was, from its inception, unabashedly commercial. Its philosophy was clearly articulated by lead instructor Georg Fischer, who mandated that students seek every opportunity "in the sales sense that appear[ed] suitable for constantly increasing sales" (1927, p. 137). The school's success was quantifiable: by 1925, over a thousand Reimann-trained decorators were shaping Berlin's visual culture. Yet, the school professed a higher purpose, claiming the shop window "had the task not only of selling but also of educating taste" (Fischer, 1927, p. 137), thus positioning itself as an arbiter of modern popular aesthetics.

The school's pedagogy was an early, practical formulation of what Guy Debord would later define as the "spectacle"—a social relationship between people mediated by images (Debord, 1967). While students in the workshop learned to assemble the idealized figures of consumer desire (Figure 2.2), a haunting archival image of dismembered mannequin torsos (Figure 2.3) serves as a potent metaphor: a look behind the curtain that exposes the raw artificiality of the very illusion the students were taught to construct.

This claim to elevate public taste, however, must be understood within the era's fierce debates on the corrupting influence of commerce, a critique voiced powerfully by leading figures like Karl Ernst Osthaus. A Werkbund board member, Osthaus argued that industrial alienation manifested in shop windows that had devolved into mere advertising. He contended that by showing "the goods and not the production," the modern display severed the connection to craft, lost its stylistic integrity, and was thus forced to "show off [...] entice [...] [and] arouse desire" through artificial means (Osthaus, 1913, pp. 59–60). In a similar vein, critic Paul Westheim lamented the fundamental debasement of art by commerce, arguing that the prevailing decorative style "violated and spoiled" the merchandise because it subjected aesthetic principles to crude commercial effects (Westheim, 1911, p. 132). For both purists, the problem was the triumph of advertising over authenticity.

It was precisely this climate of elite discontent that the Reimann Schule so brilliantly exploited. Its innovation was not to adopt the anti-commercial spirit of Osthaus and Westheim, but to replace the cluttered kitsch they despised with a more sophisticated form of commercial spectacle. This new approach, however, did not always align with the stark, product-focused objectivity that purists championed. Instead, the school's imaginative, narrative-driven displays often perfectly exemplified the kind of artificial theatricality that critics like Osthaus satirized in his broader condemnations of the practice, such as his derision of "polar bear hunts with painted icebergs for fur displays" or "hams adorned with Raphael angels in lard" (1913, pp. 60–61).

Figure 2.4 exemplifies this critique, depicting a shop window design created by Reimann Schule students for dry wool. The display features a skier posed against a slope fashioned from wool threads, accompanied by a banner proclaiming, "and for winter sports only a sweater made of dry wool." The skier's sweater, represented merely by loosely arranged wool threads, was yet to be knitted. This tableau embodies precisely what Osthaus opposed: a nonobjective, narrative approach to window dressing that prioritized spectacle over substance, emphasizing whimsical storytelling rather than a clear presentation of the product's qualities and utility. A similar, perhaps even more striking, example of this narrative-driven pedagogy can be seen in a display for shoes and stockings (Figure 2.5). Here, the story is dictated with prescriptive clarity: "the matching stocking for every shoe." The display sells not a product, but a system of coordinated consumption. This focus on the narrative is so absolute that it becomes estranged from the object itself; the products are merely props in a scene that borders on the macabre. The use of fragmented, disembodied mannequin legs, arranged like parts in a machine, reduces the human form to a series of fetishized components,

FIGURE 2.4 *Window display for dry wool by the Reimann Schule's decoration department, c.* early 1930s. Source: *Farbe und Form: Ein Bildprospekt der Schule Reimann* (1934), p. 33

FIGURE 2.5 Willy Pragher, *Schuhdekoration* (Shoe Decoration), 1931. A workshop scene from the Reimann Schule's decoration department, showing the construction of a display for shoes and stockings. Courtesy of the Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg, Staatsarchiv Freiburg, W 134 Nr. 003896, Willy Pragher Collection

tools for the commodification of desire. It is a powerful illustration of the school's method: to build a spectacle, even if it requires deconstructing the body to do so.

This focus on narrative spectacle was not confined to the classroom; rather, the pedagogy of the Reimann Schule blurred the lines between the workshop and the commercial street. The classroom became a direct laboratory for the application of these principles. Photographs from the school's studios vividly document this process. Figure 2.6 shows a workshop where students construct the very decorative elements—such as a stylized grain emblem within a modernist circular design—that would later appear in commercial displays for products like Knäckebrot (Figure 2.7). The instruction thus moved seamlessly from the craft of making the props to the art of arranging them into a compelling commercial narrative.

This reliance on narrative spectacle over substantive design can be understood not just as an ideological choice, but also as a direct consequence of the school's pedagogical realities. The sixth annual report of the Deutsche Werkbund, published in 1914, lauded the school's thoroughness compared to other programs (Jäckh, 1914, pp. 98–99). Yet Else Oppler-Legband, a key

FIGURE 2.6 Willy Pragher, *Students of the Hertwig Class*, 1931, A workshop scene in the Reimann Schule's decoration department, showing students constructing the practical elements for commercial displays. Courtesy of the Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg, Staatsarchiv Freiburg, W 134 Nr. 003898, Willy Pragher Collection

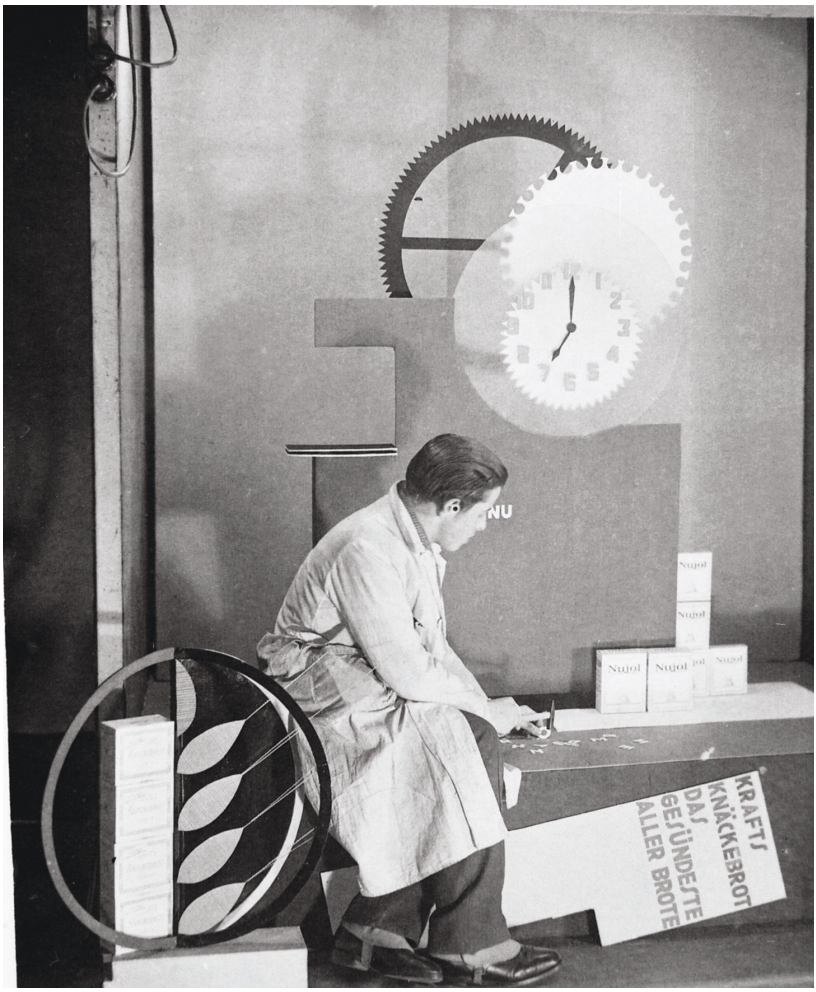

FIGURE 2.7 Willy Pragher, *Fenster für Uhren* (Window for Clocks), 1931. A student in a workshop constructs a display juxtaposing modernist motifs with a commercial product. Courtesy of the Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg, Staatsarchiv Freiburg, W 134 Nr. 003902, Willy Pragher Collection

instructor in the department, provided a more critical internal perspective.[11] She observed that financial constraints severely limited the time students could afford to spend at the school, which created a profound pedagogical challenge:

> But after only a week or two, a typical symptom that appears almost regularly in all students is severe depression, and they begin to sigh that it is

> impossible to learn in eight weeks what is necessary to become a good window dresser in our sense of the word. Unfortunately, in the majority of cases, the financial circumstances of the individual student do not allow for a greater extension of the duration of the course, so that our task can only be to explain to the individual in broad strokes what is really important in the endeavors of our technical school. (1912, pp. 105–106)

This testimony suggests that the condensed, financially constrained training necessitated a focus on easily digestible, high-impact compositional techniques rather than a deeper, more time-consuming education in design theory. This practical limitation finds resonance in Nina Schleif's later analysis of the school's output. Comparing two window displays, Schleif concludes that the "Reimann style alludes to modern art trends, but processes them in a way that was not intended to promote and educate the understanding of art in passers-by, but rather to defuse art for the broad masses in a way that was pleasing to the eye" (2004, pp. 44–45).

This strategy of "defusing" art for mass consumption marks the fundamental chasm between the Reimann Schule and the truly radical avant-garde, particularly the Berlin Dadaists, whose programmatic anti-art stance was a rebellion against precisely this kind of commodity fetishism. In stark contrast to the Dadaist critique of production and media, the Reimann Schule's pedagogy catered to a desire for spectacle, fully aligning itself with commercial interests. While both the Arts and Crafts Movement and the Werkbund also aimed to elevate public taste, they did so through refinement and institutional education, such as museums and exhibitions.[12] The Reimann Schule, on the other hand, with its primary goal of awakening and satisfying the needs of a capitalist, commodity-driven society, contributed to the development of a commercialized mass taste and the culture of mass entertainment.

The discrepancy between the avant-garde and the specific modernity of the Reimann Schule becomes even more apparent when one recalls the socio-critical, ethical goals of the original Arts and Crafts and Life Reform Movements, which vehemently opposed "the big city with its sensations and corrosive influences" (Andreesen, 1925, pp. 4–5). Yet, it was Osthaus himself who acknowledged the powerful new reality of the market. He argued that the "regeneration of taste" was continuing productively through the shop window and that, consequently, "The shopkeeper has thus become an educator of the people, or at least a mediator on whom the fate of taste depends in wide circles" (1913, p. 69). The Reimann Schule, more than any other institution, took on this role, albeit in a manner that the purists would have found deeply ambivalent.

3 Liberal Art Education

While the school's commercial practices offer a clear historical narrative, its intellectual underpinnings place it at the center of a much broader debate on liberalism and mass culture. The limited body of literature on the Reimann Schule predominantly addresses its trajectory within the context of the Nazi regime and the subsequent cultural transfer during its reestablishment in British exile (Breakell, 2021; Kuhfuss-Wickenheiser, 2019; Suga, 2014). This discourse highlights the school's significant role within the Jewish diaspora and its influence on global art and design cultures. Undoubtedly, Reimann set pluralistic cultural trends in Berlin, facilitated by the international scope of his institution, reflected in its diverse roster of teachers and students.[13] In this regard, the Reimann Schule distinguished itself not only through its commercial orientation but also its cosmopolitan outlook, setting it apart from the traditional German art and applied arts schools. Unlike these institutions, which were often steeped in national values and aligned with the Arts and Crafts Movement—despite its international reach and national romanticism (most notably represented by Lars Israël Wahlman)—the Reimann Schule embraced a more global perspective.[14] As a private institution, it followed contemporary trends, contrasting sharply with the elitist academicism that often characterized Prussian institutions, which were frequently criticized for their resistance to reform and their perceived backwardness. However, as discussed in the preceding section, the liberalism of the Reimann Schule—while opposed to conservatism—was also an economic liberalism and thus warrants a critical examination.

The inherent contradictions in "liberalism" lead directly to the critical theories that diagnose its effects on the culture industry and corresponding social systems. This economic liberalism, embraced by the Reimann Schule, is a core feature of a broader societal shift analyzed by Jean Baudrillard, where consumption is no longer oriented toward use value but toward "symbolic exchange value, the value of social prestation, of rivalry and, at the limit, of class discriminants" (Baudrillard, 1981, pp. 30–31). The Reimann Schule's success, therefore, can be read as a masterful capitalization on this new logic, where its "cosmopolitan outlook" became a marketable sign of modernity.

While thinkers of the Frankfurt School, such as Theodor W. Adorno, sought to shield autonomous art from the culture industry's reach (Adorno, 1974), a more fundamental assault on modern mass society was being mounted from a different intellectual tradition. Originating with the political theorist Carl Schmitt, this critique targeted not just mass culture, but the very processes of neutralization inherent in liberal democracy.[15] It was Leo Strauss who later

brought this "modernity problem"—a discourse already well established in pre-war Europe—to American intellectual circles. Strauss developed this line of thought by directly attacking the effects of mass culture on education. In his seminal essay *What is Liberal Education?* (1995), he articulated a vision for education as a "counterpoison" to mass culture's corrosive relativism, proposing a liberal education that would cultivate an intellectual aristocracy to guide a democratic mass society (Strauss, 1995, pp. 4–5).

This profound skepticism toward the homogenizing effects of mass culture finds a direct parallel in the aesthetic sphere. In a significant overlap with Strauss, Clement Greenberg saw the decline of aesthetic standards as a direct result of the democratization of culture (1997, p. 439). These critiques—which characterized mass culture as accessible to the "worst abilities" with minimal intellectual or moral effort—resonate powerfully with the Werkbund dispute and Osthaus's condemnation of shop window displays. Strauss's demand for a democracy that requires "dedication, concentration, breadth, and depth" (1995, pp. 4–5) mirrors Osthaus's insistence on an awareness of production processes as a precondition for style preservation.

The transformative change wrought by this logic of the sign extended into the domain of fine arts, where Pop Art exemplifies the tension between mass culture and the art industry. Richard Hamilton, educated at the Reimann School in London and a key figure in Pop Art, highlighted these dynamics by exploring this interplay. Similarly, Andy Warhol, initially trained in practical arts, transitioned into fine art by adapting the strategies of commodification and fetishization inherent in mass-produced goods. His work ultimately blurred the boundaries between mass culture and fine art, situating him as a central figure within the culture industry's art market—the processes of market liberalism and Baudrillard's "system of objects" brought to their logical conclusion.

Notes

1 Although the focus here is on German-speaking educational institutions, since the article concentrates on the Schule Reimann and the new type of school was most widespread in Germany and Austria, from "Werkstattschulen" to "Kunstgewerbeschulen," similar schools were also established in other countries by the end of the 19th century, such as the School of Arts and Crafts (Škola uměleckých řemesel) in Brno or the Academy of Decorative Arts (la instituţii de învăţmînt) in Bucharest.

2 Among the artists with practical experience who worked in the field of applied art and were then able to take up a corresponding teaching position are the book and poster artist Johann Vincenez Cissarz and the ceramist Jakob Julius Scharvogel (see Buchholz, Theinert, & Ihden-Rothkirch, 2007, pp. 23–25). For the history of Burg Giebichenstein Art Academy, see for instance Dolgner, Schneider, and Gründig (1993).

3 For an analysis of the discussion in the Deutscher Werkbund about design as a testing ground for the effects of consumption and commercialization in modern culture, see Schwartz (1996).

4 Arts and Cafts exhibitions in which the Reimann Schule participated were, for example, the "Kunstgewerbeausstellung" in Dresden in 1906, in the same year in the exhibition halls at the Berlin Zoo, and in 1909 it took part in an exhibition at the Stuttgart Museum of Decorative Arts.

5 This observation is from an interview with former student Natasha Kroll (1998, January 30), cited in Suga (2014, p. 13). From 1933 to 1936, Kroll studied poster design with Else Taterka and window dressing with Georg Fischer; from 1937–1940, she was a teacher in the display department at the London Reimann School.

6 The weaving/textile workshop was one of the few Bauhaus workshops that was economically sustainable and able to make a profit for the school (see also Schuldenfrei, 2018).

7 The Bauhaus had turned to industry at this time.

8 The Reimann School in London also integrated the concept of students doing paid work in the school's studios during their education (see Kohfuss-Wickenheiser, 2019, p. 90).

9 See also Growald (1914).

10 A dedicated brochure titled *Der Weg zum Beruf* (n.d.) was also produced.

11 Oppler-Legband's critique was informed by significant industry experience. A noted craftswoman and fashion designer, she had created the window displays for Berlin's prestigious Wertheim department store from 1904 to 1909 before being hired by Reimann for the decoration department faculty.

12 This educational model finds a key precedent in the South Kensington Museum (founded in 1852), which was conceived as a public teaching institution. The tradition was continued by the Werkbund exhibitions, conceptualized as showcases of cultural achievement starting in 1911. For a detailed analysis of the importance of museum foundations as educational institutions and nuclei for schools of applied arts, see Buchholz, Theinert, & Ihden-Rothkirch (2007, pp. 15–16).

13 Kuhfuss-Wickenheiser (2019, p. 87) states that of the more than 1,000 students around 1930, a third came from abroad.

14 The Bauhaus as an international school in terms of its teachers, its students and its design program was one of the few exceptions in this respect.

15 While Strauss and Schmitt arrived at their critiques from different political and philosophical starting points, their shared diagnosis of liberalism's tendency to devolve into mass relativism and technocracy is a significant point of convergence. Strauss, who was deeply familiar with Schmitt's work, can be seen as continuing this line of anti-liberal thought in a different context.

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CHAPTER 3

Words of Mouth—Ends of the Critics

Benjamin H. D. Buchloh

Abstract

This essay proceeds from the contradictions of teaching that are provoked and most clearly manifested in departments of artistic education, whether studio or post-studio: as the historian introduces young artists precisely to those canonic formations that the emerging artist aims to subvert, if not to dismantle altogether, the emerging artist encounters in the art history lecture the very authorities of historical formation that will provide the basis of a truly complex artistic subjectivity and historical project. A similar dialectic emerges within the specific epistemologies underlying the two practices: while an art historian teaching a future generation of art historians can always rely on the assumption that forms of discursive dialogue, even if opposed and mutually exclusive, ultimately will remain within the sphere of textuality (a critical deconstruction of a methodological model will at best result in significant revisions within the field's apparatus of methods). By contrast, the academic instruction of a younger generation of artists and the contributions to the initiation of their future production, will—if successfully received within the market and the institutions—contribute to the formation of potentially tremendously important economic, social and ideological strata, if not to topical transformations of the cultural state apparatus itself.

Keywords

art criticism – Formalism – Conceptual Art – Clement Greenberg – Leo Steinberg – Susan Sontag – Lucy Lippard – Jasper Johns – democratization of art – post-war American art – artist as critic

Criticism is the profession of the unprofessional.
— Joseph Schumpeter, 1942

> *St John said, the truth shall make you free, and was he right. There is nothing like the truth. The truth is delicious. You can eat the truth; you can drink it and you can sleep with it. There is nothing like the truth. And sometimes, when it is about yourself, it hurts. It hurts, but it still makes you free. Alas the truth can also be a weapon, a means of punishment instead of correction.*
>
> *— Clement Greenberg, 1984*

1 From "Classic" to Modernist Critic

Gustave Courbet's account of a critic he befriended, who was notorious for waking up in the middle of the night, standing in his bed, screaming 'I have to criticize,' remained as a warning in my mind not to adopt the professional identity wholeheartedly, or at least to doubt its motivations. And having encountered two of the most important art critics of the 1950s, Clement Greenberg in New York and Pierre Restany in Paris only once in my life, I distinctly remember my bewilderment at the peculiar airs they exuded: the Parisian all flair and fanfare, and the New Yorker all abstemious arrogance. However, in both instances I recall being puzzled by their auto-construction as presumably major public figures. Admittedly, both represented highly specialized forms of knowledge and competence of judgment that seemed to distinguish them from the spectatorial and readerly collective that contemporary artistic production supposedly addresses. The writings of the "classic critic" of the 1950s—as represented by Greenberg and Restany possibly for the last time in the twentieth century—were literally those of the eyewitness—, distinguished by privileged and primary access to the studio, the work and its maker. And it was this immediacy that vouched for the credibility of the critics' accounts. Distances—spatial, temporal, epistemological, methodological—and the degree to which these promised objectivity, warranted the truth value of the historian's narratives of the lives (and the works) of the artists.[1]

To formulate the nationalist ideologeme had thus become one of the last social functions of these critics of the 1950s (as opposed to critical reflections of the 1920s–1930s, which had been theorizing cultural practices as instruments of collective political transformation, for example). No wonder that their discerning judgments were dependent on innate or intentional disavowals of other historical phenomena, places and facts. And in order to sustain these necessary geopolitical distinctions and enforce their clamor for supremacy, each critic—and their many minor followers—constructed a narrative whose subtext was based on their specific penchant for omissions or calculated erasures.[2]

To a generation of European scholars, critics and curators, born like myself in the 1940s–1950s, an American critic like Greenberg acquired almost mythical proportions, seemingly having constructed the single most powerful artistic canon of the post-WWII period, undoubtedly one of the many causes for an ever increasing attraction to migrate to the American discourses and institutions on Modernism.[3] Nevertheless, the historical fact that a significant number of emerging or even already established European scholars and critics, including myself, left for the United States in the mid-1970s to engage with Modernist visual culture, remains somewhat of a mystery even at this moment. All the more so, since almost everybody among those would have considered themselves to have been on the radical left, even if the spectrum might have ranged from Marxist Leninists, Trotskyites to Debordian Situationism. And only recently, around 1968 had all of them—in one way or another—protested in the streets of London, Paris and Berlin against American Imperialism, politically against the war in Vietnam, and culturally against the American ideologies' compulsive consumption whose coercive regimes and ecological devastation was steadily becoming more evident since the early 1960s.

One explanation of this paradox might be the fact that the young European scholars and critics of 1968 transferred to the United States to study if not already to teach with a generation of disciples of eminent mostly German and French Jewish art historians and critics who had been forced to emigrate to the United States to escape fascist prosecution. The field of Modernist art history, most certainly in Germany, had hardly been formed before having been erased and had not been reconstructed for decades after 1945. And the field and profession of the modernist critic, the legacies of writers such as Carl Einstein, Max Raphael and Paul Westheim had now been transferred to a fundamentally different, yet newly foundational American context, as their roles as public critics and historians had been re-activated and reconfigured in the United States in the work of Clement Greenberg, Meyer Schapiro and Leo Steinberg. But another aspect, less recognized in its tremendous impact on Europeans, artists, historians and critics, was the fact that the methodological and historical models to comprehend the histories of Modernist production, as they had now been reconfigured by these American historians and critics also provided the basis upon which American artistic debates were activated and differentiated continuously since the 1940s (a phenomenon utterly absent from German, and to a considerable degree also from French critical culture until the 1960s, if not even later).[4]

These first movements within the field of a critical reception of Dada and Duchamp were now initiated in the United States, which in turn had a tremendous impact on the formation of American artistic post-WWII practices:

Jasper Johns would only be the first and the most eminent example of how an entire artistic trajectory was almost singlehandedly triggered by a reception of Duchamp's oeuvre and Dada within the context of artistic production, restituting, or rather endowing that history for the first time in the twentieth century with primary centrality (a process that would find its European sequels only several decades later). Thus, the other and probably even more compelling condition explaining the European drift to the United States clearly must have been the ever more compelling American artistic practices since the rise of Abstract Expressionism in New York, intensifying in the wake of its complex historicizations and critical interpretations by both the subsequent generations of artists and the ever more avid followers among critics and art historians. One could even speculate that in a paradoxical mirror image of historical transfers, the European avantgarde of the 1920s and 1930s, Dada, Surrealism and the Soviets, returned to an extremely belated reception to Europe through the primary mediation of American artists, ranging from Pollock to Sol LeWitt, (and thereby laid the foundations of a newly emerging complex European post-WWII artistic practices, in the way that Richter is unthinkable without Warhol or Buren is unthinkable without Ryman and Stella, and Hanne Darboven and Isa Genzken are unthinkable without Sol LeWitt and Eva Hesse) in a process of a peculiarly inverse reciprocity.

2 The Critic as Democratic Agent

Obviously, this historical and political process of radical democratization, as artistic practices since the 1960s increasingly emphasized that any cultural practice, be it visual or literary, would inevitably and increasingly have to challenge, if not to eventually eliminate all hierarchical orders differentiating the presumed novice recipients from the presumed 'expert.' In fact, the innate hierarchical division between privileged forms of knowledge that the expert claims as a placeholder for the interested engagement of a selected class-based audience had been precisely a perpetual target of all efforts the avantgardes (and some of the post-WWII neo-avantgardes). But it is doubtful that the critic, under the circumstances of a continuously expanding processes of democratization (which inevitably entailed also massive consequences of historical, subjective and aesthetic desublimation) could any longer withstand these processes and pose as a 'guardian of the secret' (as Greenberg had famously called one of Pollock's most eminent paintings).

It is certainly not accidental that the writing of criticism in the subsequent decade of the 1960s splintered into ever more incompatible philosophical and

aesthetic dichotomies, whose extremes we will try to sketch in two, more or less randomly chosen pairings of writings from that decade.[5] The first would be Leo Steinberg's and Donald Judd's simultaneously written, yet fundamentally different responses to Greenberg's legacy and their discovery of his artistic bête noir, Jasper Johns. One of the first compellingly argued criticisms of Greenberg's hegemonic, so called Formalist practice (which by that time had already spawned a number of increasingly powerful followers) was formulated by Leo Steinberg (Steinberg, 1972a, 1972b, 1972c).[6] An art historian whose comprehension of the complex epistemology of artistic practices and philosophical hermeneutics had not only motivated him to write a groundbreaking essay on Jasper Johns in 1962 (and thus initiated the reception of a new generation of artists, fundamentally changing the pictorial paradigms of the 'New York School'). Steinberg's essays also opened that school's curtains to an utterly unknown landscape of historical methods and philosophical principles (Steinberg, 1972c).

The extreme opposite of Steinberg's vast expansion of criticism, based on the ever more complex accounts of art historical knowledge, would be introduced at precisely the same moment in the writings of the artist Donald Judd. The artist not only reduced and reinforced the neo-positivist parameters and ahistorical armatures he had inherited from Greenberg to the level of a toolbox doxa, designing templates to process perception that confirmed his indisputable artistic authority. At the same time, performing, or rather enforcing one more time the functions of the critic as agent of local, regional and national ideological and economic interests, Judd also fortified the paranoid boundaries of a presumably insuperable triumph of New York School painting and sculpture, its trajectory inevitably leading and culminating in his own achievements, manifestly defying and disqualifying the ever increasing differentiations emerging in the various post-WWII visual productions in Europe, Asia or the Latin American countries.

3 Redefining Criticism: New Paradigms of the 1960s

Our second pair of exemplary paradoxical oppositions of critical thinking of the 1960s might possibly be even more perplexing. Two utterly incompatible demands for criticism, or rather the objections voiced against its seemingly enduring and pervasive power, were once again enunciated from extremely different philosophical and aesthetic positions. Thus, Susan Sontag in her notorious essay "Against Interpretation" (1966) signaled—if not outright called for—the termination of the critic's historical legitimacy:

> Today is such a time, when the project of interpretation is largely reactionary, stifling. Like the fumes of the automobile and of heavy industry which befoul the urban atmosphere, the effusion of interpretations of art today poisons our sensibilities in a culture whose already classical dilemma is the hypertrophy of the intellect at the expense of energy and sensual capability. [...] What kind of criticism, of commentary on the arts, is desirable today? [...] What would criticism look like that would serve the work of art, not usurp its place? [...] In place of a hermeneutics we need an erotic of art. (Sontag, 1966)

Sontag's call for an 'eros' of perception in her crucial conclusive statement, was at the time of her writing already an antiquated, romanticizing projection. The challenges posed by the procedural precision and the materiality of painterly and sculptural practices at that very moment, from Stella to Hesse, from LeWitt to Ryman had long surpassed the wishful aspiration that artistic production could still transmit the aesthetic enchantment of an unalienated sensuous subjectivity. Artistic practices since the early 1960s conceived of themselves as engaging with and engendering a materialist phenomenology of experience (and materialist implied precisely all aspects of the philosophical concept, from contemplating mere matter to the manner of mediation). It also addressed the very fact that artistic practices would now refuse the hegemonic demands of an external or transcendentally pre-existing discursive order of criticism. Increasingly engaging with different temporal and geographical orders, as much as different conventions of subjective perception, aesthetic practice aimed to simultaneously undo conventional concepts of subject formation. Not only had the previously ruling critical discourses maintained linguistic primacy and the dominance of specific communicative conventions, they sustained the social hierarchy by providing a presumably qualified speaker with interpretive privileges, so to speak. Rejecting the written criticism of the 1950s, criticism would now attempt to literally formulate a new terminology, to conjure and conceive different, de-hierarchized social and subjective constellations.

Thus, simultaneously with Sontag's liberal bourgeois pomposity reclaiming the privileges of an unencumbered aesthetics of eros if not ecstasy, we encounter Lucy Lippard's radically innovative conception of the critic and curator as a feminist activist and as a self-effacing mediator of artistic documents. Lippard, the historian of Ad Reinhardt in 1967, now in 1968 becomes the foremost critic of Conceptual art who only collected and delivered the barely commented documents of the artists themselves. In a spirit of self-negating neutrality, she dislodges even the last remnants of the critic's claims to privileged vision and

discursive functions. Lippard concluded her magnum opus as a critic (largely an accumulation of documents, photographs, charts and manuals provided directly by the artists themselves) in her Postface:

> It seemed in 1969 that no one, not even a public greedy for novelty, would actually pay money or much of it for a xerox sheet referring to an event past or never directly perceived, a group of photographs documenting an ephemeral situation or condition, a project for work never to be completed, words spoken but not recorded; it seemed that these artists would therefore be forcibly freed from the tyranny of the commodity status and market—orientation. [...] On the other hand, the esthetic contribution of an 'idea art' have been considerable. An informational, documentary idiom has provided a vehicle for art ideas that were encumbered and obscured by formal considerations. [...] Such a strategy, if it continues to develop, can only have a salutary effect on the way all art is examined and developed in the future. (Lippard, 1973, p. 263)

Radically consequent as Lippard's project actually was, it is only with hindsight that we can comprehend the historical and theoretical deficiencies of her belated enactment of an essentially factographic definition of the future consonances and equivalences of artistic and critical practices. First of all because Lippard's collectively operating agents of a newly accessible universal aesthetic, called Conceptual Art, in fact only designated the collective of artists as newly enabled speakers and readers. And while Lippard in fact disbanded the privileges of critical hierarchies and evaluation, and more importantly perhaps the hierarchies of genres and techniques, now relativized if not disqualified by a presumably universal photographic and linguistic textuality, the chasm between production and reception was only dramatically widened. Most tragic of all was Lippard's utopian self-deception that—given the rapidly advancing and increasing distribution of leisure time—, the reduction of the visual practices to readerly textuality would inevitably entail a new community of self-determining critics and readers.

We have already seen, however briefly, when glancing at Judd's writings, that the status and functions of criticism were very much on the mind of artists of that generation as well (Robert Morris's writings, by comparison, would qualify rather as those of one of the most eminent theoreticians of the sculptural production of that decade). That the critic's claims to provide literal and literary agency to a structure emerging from and operative within the field of the visual, had come under historical pressure if not outright doubt would also be signaled by a triadic derision by three artistic giants, performed in short

order from the late 1950s to the late 1960s: Marcel Duchamp, Jasper Johns and Richard Hamilton. Confronting the dogmatic voices of the critics of the 1950s thus generated at least three explicit artistic dialogic responses in actual works and statements produced by these artists, and we want to conclude by adding a final, if sketchy sampling drawn from criticism's opposite discursive sphere of actual production.

Johns' *The Critic Smiles* (1959), Richard Hamilton's *The Critic Laughs* (1969), and most importantly, Marcel Duchamp's lecture *The Creative Act*, ironically delivered at the annual conference of professionalized critical interpreters College Association in 1957, his radically emancipatory bill of readers and spectators' rights, which decisively transfers the traditional functions of the critic to spectatorial emancipation and self-constitution.

The first example would be Jasper Johns' enigmatic, or rather sardonic object, *The Critic Smiles*, a small sculpmetal sculpture from 1959. The title of the work, stamped by incision on the sculpture's base like a caption under a photograph or an inscription on a specimen object, announces an uncanny exchange between the practices of the artist and the critic. Trading the brush's bristles for a set of molars, not only confounds soft matter with bone, but implicitly inverts the painter's trade of the subtle application of encaustic paint with the critic's gnawing compulsion to bite. Only a few years later Johns will stage an even more vociferous attack on the profession: *The Critic Sees* (1961) (sculpmetal on plaster with glass). Again, we are confronted with a literal 'anatomy of criticism.'[7] This time, however, the relief does not only display the teeth as integral to the critic's anatomical and discursive apparatus, but in an act of almost diabolical substitution, Johns positions the lips of the speaking critic literally *in lieu* of the eyes, perversely shielded by the glass lenses of a pair of mockery spectacles. One might even speculate that Johns paid specific tribute to Greenberg's notorious fleshy lips, a critic that had indeed not provided Johns with any succor. Rosalind Krauss, at one point closer to Greenberg's formalism than later on in her career, described his physiognomy in the following manner:

> There are two seemingly mismatched fragments, just as I remember them: the domed shape of the head, bald, rigid, unforgiving, and the flaccid quality of the mouth, slightly ajar in the physiologically impossible gesture of both relaxing and grinning, As always, I am held by the arrogance of the mouth—fleshy, toothy, aggressive—and its pronouncements, which though voiced in a hesitant, stumbling drawl are, as always, implacably final. (Krauss, 1993, p. 248)

Johns' animus against the critic might have originated primarily from the conflict that the critic's writing and speech prioritize voice over vision. Whereas it had been precisely the artist's ambition to have his painting address its viewing subjects performatively, as the painting itself is suspended, if not actually already transiting from vision to language in what was clearly one of Johns' most revolutionary ambitions at that time. By excluding anybody's mediating interference (the very opposite of aesthetic experience), the work will yield its utopian aesthetic power to allow the viewer to become a reader on the painting's own newly emerging linguistic terms. The sovereignty of the voice of the artist aims to establish a dialogue with the sovereignty of the reader's and spectator's vision. And it is that dual sovereignty that the critic's mediation deflects and disrupts with its paternalizing intentions to speak for others or to others in lieu of the painting speaking without mediation to the newly authorized spectatorial and readerly subject.

4 Ends of the Critics

The extent to which the functions of the critic engaged that generation of artists becomes even more obvious when we discover that Johns' initial alert to the critics' problematic performances as blind speakers would not only be repeated by Johns in two subsequent works, but that his tribulation would find a dialogic response across the Atlantic in a work by Richard Hamilton in 1968. After having received a set of enlarged artificial teeth made from sugar at a funfair from his son, Hamilton mounted the candy dentures on an authentic electric toothbrush, designed by Dieter Rams and produced by Braun—then along with almost all of their products—a magnet of attraction for Hamilton and others to ponder the magic power of post-WWII design in West Germany. Repeating Johns' uncanny play of substitutions, transforming the object to be cleaned into a disabled cleaning device, Hamilton radicalizes Johns' title from *The Critic Smiles* to his own *The Critic Laughs*. If Johns had associated the critic with blindness, Hamilton's false dentures diagnose the critic's inability to laugh, to respond to a joke, and by implication his inability to respond to any artistic intervention that is restructuring the unconscious in order to experience a moment of sudden relief from the continuous and collective conditions of repression.

Just like Johns, Hamilton would even follow up with a second work contemplating the ever more precarious, if not ludicrous conditions of critical commentary. In 1971–1972, after a prolonged and apparently almost insurmountable

sequence of production problems had been resolved, Hamilton released a second version of *The Critic Laughs*. No longer a photographic image with manually applied painterly marks targeting the toothbrush and its grinning dentures, the follow-up version now confronts us with a perfectly produced assisted readymade. The candy dentures, recast in professional dental plastic, are now delivered in an authentic faux display case that features once again the original Braun device. One modification, however, at first easily overlooked, matters most: the brand name Braun has been replaced by a typographical simulacrum of the artist's name, Hamilton. Quite strikingly, yet another blow to the myth of the critic, the question is posed as to what should the critic now judge once all artisanal and artistic differentiations have been purged to an equal extent from life and from art? Thus, the dentures baring the critic's laughter or last laugh acquire an ominous note of mortality, in the best tradition of the *memento mori*.

Just like Johns and Hamilton, the practices of Pop Art and emerging Minimalism had insisted on their innate self-evident communicability. Even more, their iconographic choices and their formal and morphological structures had claimed universal accessibility. These claims to suture collective perception and enact *unmediated* legibility, had already been voiced once before as an emancipatory project with a variety of fatalities and some rare successes in the 1920s. But now, neither falsely popularizing, nor indoctrinating under the conditions of the collective erasure of the subject, the critic's claims to serve as the privileged and legitimate mediator between the studio and the page, between the artist and the collective of competent readers had also acquired a newly manifest futility.

That the socio-historically constructed role and the functions of the critic had been drastically reduced if not effaced altogether, was apparently inevitable. This erasure, however, seems to have been caused by fundamentally different, yet equally compelling historical, economical and ideological-political forces. First of all, the newly ruling order of universal equivalences resulting from the globalization of cultural practices, compellingly disqualifies any claim for hierarchical evaluations of any kind. Comparative qualifications and criteria can no longer be drawn on any consensus formed by particular classes, individual subjects and their interests, local traditions or nation state cultures. The second set of causes is no less powerful in its determinations, even though it originates in an utterly different spectrum of universalizing and relativizing forces. It is the fact that the final industrial commercialization of artistic production (retroactively even embracing and equalizing all the conflicting positions of the avantgardes of the pre-WWII period and the post-WWII

neo-avantgardes) eliminate the motivations and the credibility of any invested speech claiming to act as agency for a particular aesthetic, any ideological or political agenda. And lastly, once again the total obverse of the causes just defined: the universal politicization of artistic practices themselves can neither deploy nor tolerate the meddling voices of a critic's attempt to sift and secure viable practices and positions from mere political posturing. endow the object with that uncanny quality.

If we rally assume that we are now living in a time without critics, a time from which critics are not only absent, but when they are objectively no longer desirable or needed, what are the criteria of a time without criticism? First of all, I could repeat my old adage first stated over ten years ago, that a system of investment and of financialization of the art market does in fact not only no longer need critical input, but quite explicitly disqualifies it. Criticism is only a hindrance, or a farce once the patterns of cultural consumption have reached a status in which stock market and art market have become assimilated to such an extent that only market expertise, prognosis of profit maximization and growth potential are the central questions of professional comment.

Most importantly, we have to recognize that the universal acceptance of all practices, of all kinds from all sites and periods of production is not necessarily a sign of an emancipated global community. What currently appears as a revolutionary distribution of universal cultural access and assets and its ever expanding infinity of potential objects of desire, obviously is not the offspring and harvest of a truly liberated global collectivity. Rather, it operates as the phantasmagoria to still find meaningful structures of formal, material and social organization of subjective and objective experience in just about any formally defined aesthetic object of any time. Its compelling motivation is to dissimulate the actually governing conditions of an extreme totalization of digitally administrated technocratic regimes. It does not matter how politically ambitious the aims of artistic practices might be if the sphere of a public social and political culture is increasingly subjected to oppressive and censorious control.

Duchamp's utter and final delegation of aesthetic judgment and experience to the condition not just of spectatorial participation, but rather, of self-determination, the spectator's literal authorization (anticipating Barthes's later prognostic of the future of literal and literary authorization of readers) had already in 1957 diagnosed that the process of reception of cultural representations can only be recognized and evaluated, outside of any specialized and professionalized expertise by the liberated and self-constituting acts of spectatorial participation:

> If the artist, as a human being, full of the best intentions toward himself and the whole world, plays no role at all in the judgment of his own work, how can one describe the phenomenon which prompts the spectator to react critically to the work of art? In other words, how does this reaction come about? All in all, the creative act is not performed by the artist alone: the spectator brings the work of art in contact with the external world by deciphering and interpreting its inner qualifications and thus adds his contribution to the creative act. (Duchamp, 1959, pp. 77–78)

Notes

1 As the great art historian Leo Steinberg remarked early on, to emphasize the distinctions between art historians and critics was the rule at that time (and ever after, most likely): "In those days, the mid-1950s, practicing art critics were mostly artists or men of letters. Few art historians took the contemporary scene seriously enough to give it the time of day. To divert one's attention from Papal Rome to Tenth Street, New York, would have struck them as frivolous—and I respected their probity" (Steinberg, 1975, p. VII).

2 Examples would be the fact that the first generation of critics from the 1950s utterly failed to recognize even a minimum of Duchamp's and Dadaism's epistemological and aesthetic impact, the failure to confront the primordial restructuring of painting by the Soviet avantgardes, and most strikingly perhaps, the utter failure to recognize the centrality of photography in the visual cultures of the twentieth century. Two of the most paradoxical but consequential key hinges within that American context, initially utterly contained within the confines of Greenberg's power, were Robert Motherwell and William Rubin. Motherwell, a bona fide, even if slightly younger member of Greenberg's certified painters of the New York School, broke ranks with its ethos and aesthetics by editing the most comprehensive history of Dada activities at an astonishingly early moment in 1951. Motherwell's book *The Dada Painters and Poets* (1951), initiated the American rediscovery of Dada on all levels, including Dada's reception by artists such as Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns, and bringing about the first major exhibitions at Sidney Janis, for example. Rubin, a bit more than ten years later—while remaining a staunch follower of Greenberg's theories and aesthetics—followed Motherwell's lead by organizing the first comprehensive grand scale exhibition account of that history in his Dada and Surrealism Revisited, at the Museum of Modern Art in 1968. Comprehensive as it was at that moment, it was from a later perspective of course also scandalously deficient in its complete omission of any of the actual political and vast photographic dimensions of Dada and Surrealism.

3 Among the many examples of the seemingly never-ending European engagement with Greenberg's writings at the end of the twentieth century, and even the first decade of the following one, see among others: Bois (1996), Buchloh (1994), Clark (1982), Duve and Greenberg (2010), Guilbaut (1983), Harrison (1984), and Lüdeking (1994).

4 One example of a serious breakthrough in critical European visual culture would be Umberto Eco's Opera *Aperta*, which was published in 1962. Another, no less crucial, however later in their explicit engagement with phenomena of visual artistic practices, would be the writings of Roland Barthes.

5 Obviously, the number of critics and the ever more differentiated critical positions expanded to the same extent that artistic production itself rapidly evolved in the 1960s, demanding its unique and specific critical company and commentary. Paradoxically, however, this expansion could not guarantee that the viability of the methods of criticism would now be fortified and expanded as well. Rather it would appear that with the diversification and ever intensifying liberal randomization of aesthetic practices, the rapidly increasing indifference and irrelevance of criticism was solidified, finding of course its climactic conclusion with the formation of the "art industry" of the past two decades, where criticism has become manifestly obsolete and utterly pointless. See Buchloh (2012).

6 When critical legacies were almost pathologically internalized, another major factor emerged that forces us to dispute the viability of the current, let alone a future of the practice of the critic: not everybody succeeded as compellingly to transit from Greenberg's hegemonic model of critical writing and thinking as did Rosalind Krauss. For example, Charles Harrison's never ending labor of (un-)love for Greenberg in London was possibly even more inextricably entangled due to an imaginary Anglo-American formalist tradition leading from Roger Fry's Bloomsbury to Greenberg's Tenth Street. Harrison defended and extended Greenberg's legacies even after two generations of artists (Pop and Minimalism), had amply proven that the terms and the concepts, let alone the historical records and accounts of Greenberg's formalism had been utterly deficient from the start. See Harrison (1984).

7 Anatomy of Criticism had of course been the title of Northop Frye's notorious late Formalist study of literary criticism in 1957. Almost exactly the time of both the Duchampian and the Johnsian polemical farewells to the profession of the critic.

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CHAPTER 4

A Fragment of Society

"Art Education" as Infrastructure (*Great Britain, 1968–1978*)

Tom Holert

Abstract

Within a decade, between the late 1960s and the 1970s, a whole cycle of educational reform and retrenchment evolved in the British system of art schools. Taking the radical critical project of David Rushton and Paul Wood, two members and associates of the conceptual art collaborative Art & Language, as a guide to navigate this development might appear one-sided. However, their theoretical and political methodology holds the potential of effectively equipping the critique of current, 21st century predicaments of art and education alike, particularly regarding the governance by delusions (pertaining to creativity, subjectivity, autonomy, etc.). Staying closely to the historical texts and events proves productive with regard to the actualities of a post "educational turn" stage of development in contemporary art and education. Also, to be discovered is an early version of "infrastructural critique."

Keywords

Art & Language – Hornsey Affair – David Rushton – Paul Wood – infrastructural critique – Coldstream Reports – sociology of art education

1 Establishing "Awareness of One's Own"

In December 1978, *Politics of Art Education* was published by the Studio Trust, a not-for-profit offspring of the Scottish owners of the London-based art journal *Studio International*. The staple-bound A4-sized "Special Report on Art Education" of 65 pages, each page consisting of two columns of close-printed text in seven sections, was printed at a small commercial press in Dunfermline and collected by the two editors, David Rushton and Paul Wood, "from the factory in our car in a snowstorm," never to be commercially distributed and with "no

more than five hundred" copies in circulation. However, "in the left wing culture of the time," Paul Wood recalls, "this represented no small success" (Wood, 2024, p. 113).

A "publisher's announcement," printed at the outset, stated that

> education in Art is subject to continuing debate at present, and this report, it is felt, will enlarge the discussion both in Britain and America, since it represents a specially developed school of thought on the part of the joint editors. (Rushton & Wood, 1978, p. 1)

Not mentioned here, is the fact that due to editorial and economic problems, *Studio International* had withdrawn from plans to publish the "special report" in the pages of the journal itself. What's more, the "specially developed school of thought", i.e. Marxist, materialist analysis and reasoning with a polemical, anti-hegemonic bent, was considered too controversial to fit the journal's editorial politics at the time.

In the winter of 1978/1979, Rushton and Wood, still in their late twenties, were occasional educators, artists, writers, researchers and political organizers. When *Politics of Art Education* finally appeared, after having been postponed for more than a year, they had almost reached the peak of their longstanding engagement with an increasingly impatient, relentless critique of the ideological architecture of so called "liberal art education" in Great Britain.

From studying fine art in the late 1960s and early 1970s—Rushton at Coventry College of Art (in the West Midlands), Woods at Newport College of Art (in South Wales)—they had moved on to work as cultural producers conducting critical inquiries of the very educational environments in which they themselves were a part. In his early study days, Rushton became involved with Art & Language (A&L), the conceptual art group, of which Terry Atkinson, David Bainbridge and Michael Baldwin taught at Coventry in the short, yet formative period between 1969 and 1971 (Atkinson stayed on until 1973). A path breaking intervention in the established routines of fine art studies was the group's "Art Theory" course, an overwhelmingly ambitious proposition to enter into a dialogue on the epistemology and ontology of "art," which in 1971 was described by the student participants as "part of the Fine Art course which consisted in toto of: Romanticism, Epistemology, Art History, Technos and Art Theory" (Pilkington et al., 1971, p. 12).[1] Together with the journal *Art-Language* (and short-lived student journals such as *Analytical Art*, edited by Rushton during his studies in Coventry) or A&L's exhibition projects (such as the *Index* series, which was invited to documenta 5, in 1972) the "Art Theory" was foundational of a close-knit "society" (or "community" or "fellowship")

of discourse defined by shared political leanings, philosophical preferences, writing mode, and more.[2]

Paul Wood, for his part, began his studies in Newport in 1969, where conceptual artist Keith Arnatt was on the faculty and who invited friends and fellow conceptualists such as Michael Baldwin from the A&L group or Charles Harrison from *Studio International* to talk at the otherwise provincial college. Soon, Wood joined the society of discourse which assembled around A&L's themes and aesthetics. In the aftermath of the dismissal of teaching staff and the closing down of the "Art Theory" activities in Coventry in 1971 Rushton moved to Galashiels in the Scottish borders. Wood, who became a senior art lecturer at the Open University (in Edinburgh and Milton Keynes), continued from Newport to pursue an MA in the Department of General Studies at the Royal College of Art in London between 1974 and 1976 (which yielded an extensive reflection on "Theory and Practice" [Wood, 2024, pp. 79–89, 208–213]), but frequently visited Scotland, to collaborate with Rushton on various projects in the 1970s. They supported themselves through "alternating periods of unemployment and manual work", the latter ranging from laboring on building sites, a car factory and a tube mill to lorry driving, "alongside intermittent visiting lectures in colleges all over the place, as well as the bits of writing", all of which amounted to "a marginal, somewhat unstable, albeit vivid existence that was the price we paid for trying to maintain a militantly political-cultural practice in the wake of Conceptual Art" (Wood, 2024, pp. 120–121).

In 1974 they were commissioned by the Welsh Arts Council (today the Arts Council of Wales) with an £800 (i.e. approximately £8,500 in 2024) grant to research and write up a report based on an "examination of current methodology in Fine Art education." The survey was supposed not to be restricted to undergraduate fine art departments in colleges and polytechnics but to concern itself "both with the internal spectrum of such colleges e.g. their art history and complementary studies departments and their libraries, and also with foundation courses, university art departments, libraries and art education courses" (Rushton & Wood, 1975a, in Wood, 2024, p. 191). In their eventual (first) report on "Art and Education," published in 1975 (Rushton & Wood, 1975a), Rushton and Wood recommended setting up a microform archive and a journal

> to offer some access to work of a preliminary nature, in the belief that the 'groundwork' in art activity is both culturally and educationally important. [...] Suggested inclusions so far are: seminar and lecture notes (perhaps derived from tape recordings); artists' writings on their work and its relation to other activities; critics and historians' discussions on the

> methodologies and beliefs involved in their work; technical information on e.g. constructional problems; material by students in e.g. Diploma shows. (Rushton & Wood, 1975a, in Wood, 2024, p. 191)

The objective of such an interdisciplinary and inter-institutional network of information, conceived as "a cheap, unpretentious system," was to unlock and subvert the "debilitating intra-institutional isolation" of the individual and "invidious" art college reality (Wood, 2024, p. 195) and to get "into contact with other practices in the real world" (Rushton & Wood, 1975c, in Wood, 2024, p. 207). The microform-based info platform was one of the measures—"sketchy and speculative and 'gappy' rather than tight and well-ordered" (Wood, 2024, p. 205)—of arriving at a "shared activity of foundational criticism and construction which might involve its members in common ventures" (Wood, 2024, p. 205).

The work to be done with the purpose of developing the "members" of the art institutions' (class) consciousness was to induce an understanding of the "structure in which work is embedded" (Wood, 2024, p. 205)—a choice of words that intentionally or unintentionally riffed on the official title of the second, 1970 Coldstream report, *The Structure of Art and Design Education in the Further Education Sector* (Coldstream, 1970) for which the National Advisory Council on Art Education and the National Council for Diplomas in Art and Design, chaired by the painter William Coldstream, had joined in response to the criticism—primarily and most vocally expressed by protesting students and faculty in 1968 at the Hornsey and Guildford colleges in London—directed against a restructuration of art and design education initiated by the first Coldstream report from 1960.[3]

For Rushton and Wood, however, "structure" did not mean any curricular or course structure, but a traversing and penetrating condition of class hierarchy and bureaucratic power as embodied by policy papers such as the 1970 Coldstream report. The "external aspect" of this structure was considered relevant, "because obviously the form that a particular college course takes will follow from governmental and bureaucratic demands." This being said, the "internal relations" must be closely attended, not least due to the logistical and spatial conditions (library facilities, rooms for students' union meetings, etc.) as well as divisions such as those into "studio activity and history of art and general studies" (Wood, 2024, p. 205) reflect a structural denigration of thought and criticism in relation to the material production of "tangible" art objects.

In contradistinction to these institutional and epistemological separations and hierarchizations (and the devaluation of language and dialogue they implied), Rushton and Wood called for the engendering among students and faculty of "an activity which among other things would be sensitive to historical

and cultural methodologies rather than just historical and cultural objects, and which incorporate a sense of criticism into itself rather than as something external and half dead" (Wood, 2024, p. 206). Among the desirable affordances of such process-oriented and reflective "activity", they counted "a relationship to information of a wide-ranging order" (Wood, 2024, p. 205); this was to be established by way of the recommended microform archive, but even more by a "para-sociology of institutions" (Wood, 2024, p. 205):

> For the [art] college, and the kind of activity it fosters, is a fragment of society—an increasingly significant one in post-industrial terms—and the rush to sort out the problems of others [i.e. the grosser ills of society] stands in danger of emptiness if it does not proceed in step with a deep awareness of one's own. (Wood, 2024, p. 207)

Consequently, such "awareness of one's own" was considered a precondition to pertaining a conceptual grasp on the "consistency of the educational institutions with broader societal structures—particularly the consumer ethic", for this "has devalued any ideological and axiological inquisitiveness, encouraging an ontological self-aggrandisement" (Rushton & Wood, 1975, as cited in Wood, 2024, p. 201). Battling such delusions which were held as evidence of a systemic disavowal of the class dimension in the image that actors in art education fancied of themselves (supporting a certain idea of individualist creativity and competitiveness), Rushton and Wood made use of various theoretical traditions of historical materialism, the means by which they also sought to overcome limitations of A&L's earlier fixation on epistemology, logical semantics, and philosophy of science.

Their report, and the research on which it was based, became a matrix from which the later *Politics of Art Education* and other writings by Rushton and Wood (in many cases, these latter were versions and edits of chapters from the first report) scattered across small journals such as *The Fox, Ratcatcher, Ostrich* or *Issue*, have been derived.[4] In unequal parts, containing ethnographical field research, applied structuralist Marxism à la Althusser and critiques of ideology and hegemony in a Gramscian and, to a lesser extent, Frankfurt School vein, the writings assembled in the first (and second) report amount to a rich toolbox of analytical concepts and moral assessments. Until today, however, they have remained a well-known secret stored and maintained by the society of discourse of A&L and remained a nuisance to many others in no way interested in such a Marxist and "para-sociological" line of inquiry. In 1989, Peter Smith, a former student in Coventry, found that the "fundamental issues" raised by A&L's "conceptual mode of inquiry" met with resistance and refusal: "where

mystification rules the sceptic is not welcome, and in the end the art masters had their way"—"but not before a network had been established between the aforementioned institutions and some highly scurrilous pamphlets and small theoretical journals" (Smith, 1989, p. 66).

2 Recording at the "Infrastructural Level"

Building and navigating this network, Rushton and Wood contributed to a mode of critique that could qualify as a progenitor of what has more recently been brought forward, primarily by the late Marina Vishmidt, under the moniker "infrastructural critique." Vishmidt (and others who have followed her suggestion) addressed and went beyond the limitations of a convention of institutional critique in the arts which, instead of substantially transforming, if not abolishing the institutions it sets out to criticize, rather provides the means for their optimization. The project of infrastructural critique perforates and defies the spatial, social, psychological and institutional boundaries of the museum (or the art school) to engage the (collapsing, critical) infrastructures and power relations that traverse the neoliberal art institution, to make intelligible and thereby contestable its conditions of production and reproduction, moving

> from the institution as a site for 'false totalizations' to an engagement with the thoroughly intertwined objective (historical, socio-economic) and subjective (including affect and artistic subjectivization) conditions necessary for the institution and its critique to exist, reproduce themselves as an immanent horizon as well as a transcendental condition. (Vishmidt, 2016, p. 267)

In the historical moment "when the institution of critique simply (or flatly) becomes coextensive with the institution of art," Vishmidt wrote in 2017, attending to infrastructure is "focusing the link between the material and ideological conditions of the institution of art in a way that de-centers rather than affirms it" (Vishmidt, 2017, p. 227).

Only partly surprising, Vishmidt referred to the forms of criticism developed by A&L in the pre- or proto neoliberal 1970s. In one of her first texts about the move from institutional to infrastructural critique, she pointed to the fact that A&L member Mel Ramsden—long before Benjamin H. D. Buchloh or Andrea Fraser—coined the term "institutional critique" in his 1975 essay "On Practice," written for the first issue of *The Fox*, a short-lived, yet important

journal founded by the New York branch of the collaborative (Vishmidt, 2017, p. 230). Ramsden emphasized the problems of a totalizing or generalizing way of criticizing institutions, as it may result in "affirming that which you set out to criticize. It may even act as a barrier to eventually setting up a community practice (language … sociality) which does not just embody a commodity mode of existence" (Ramsden, 1975, p. 69). Warning against default modes of self-serving institutional critique, Ramsden stressed a notion of education as praxis of exchange. In accordance with this maxim, sometimes inside, mostly outside the institutions of art education, the members of A&L pursued educational interaction based on language and reason and the deflation of individualism and originality that prevailed in the institutions: "Commitment to teach and learn is a commitment first to dialogue, to commonality not point of view or authority. Teaching is constituted through a particular person's praxis. This is what we're after" (Ramsden, 1975, p. 70).

In the same issue of *The Fox*, Rushton and Wood placed their co-authored article, titled "Education Bankrupts," again based on a chapter from their first report. Assessing the state of art education in the United Kingdom of the mid-1970s, they gleefully suggested: "It is worth recording the bankruptcy of art education at an infrastructural level" (Rushton & Wood, 1975, as cited in Wood, 2024, p. 196). Perhaps even more than the stark assertion of art education's "bankruptcy," the incentive to "record" such "bankruptcy" at the "infrastructural level" clearly resonates with Vishmidt's "infrastructural critique". Rushton and Wood themselves were operating in the infrastructures of the art education of their time, in various capacities and positions, moving in and out of them. Through communication and organizing with students and junior staff in various art schools they developed insights into several concrete settings. Their recommendations pertained both to a mode of critical analysis and practical intervention "at an infrastructural level," addressing the local educational environments with regard to their spatial and technical affordances.

It deserves mention that Rushton and Wood's research was conducted in the most densely structured and subsidized national landscape of art education in Europe at the time. Although the number of small to mid-size art colleges in the network of Local Education Authority (LEA) in postwar England and Wales had dwindled from 180 in 1959 to 142 in 1971, an impressive institutional set-up, compared to other countries, nonetheless, remained in place.[5] By 1971 about 40 of these colleges of art and design had been accredited and could offer the new Diploma in Art and Design (DipAD), introduced by the First Report of the National Advisory Council on Art Education, the so called (first) Coldstream Report of 1960. At the beginning of the 1970s, about 26,500 students were engaged in study full-time and approximately 111,800 in evening classes

part-time. However, compared to the roughly 400,000 full time students in the universities, polytechnics and other higher education institutions, the art and design institutions, churning out 6,000 to 7,000 graduates annually seeking employment, represented but a clear minority of the early 1970s' educational and labor markets. Nonetheless, when the second Coldstream Report of 1970, produced in response to the 1968 student protests (more of which is discussed below) was presented to Margaret Thatcher, the newly appointed State Secretary of Education and Science in Edward Heath's 1970–1974 conservative government, and made public, art historian Norbert Lynton referred the readers of *Studio International* to the extent of state funding of the art education system, which was anything but a matter of course:

> That art education has been financed to the level of the last decade is little short of miraculous. It may indicate some farsightedness in high places. More probably it proves the survival of a superstition that came in with industrialization, a desire for some sort of insurance policy against the end of civilization. But superstitions have their limits. There will always have to be controls and considerations that seem to the insider irrelevant and obstructive. No strings, no money. (Lynton, 1970, pp. 167–168)

The "controls and considerations" were manifestations of the pervasive "bureaucracy" that is among the most fiercely attacked problems of art education in the writings of Rushton, Wood and other activists affiliated with A&L in the mid to late 1970s—and probably related to a Trotskyist critique of bureaucracy quite common among the Left. In a scathing 1976 article in the student journal *Ratcatcher*, an anonymous author identified a "pernicious infiltration within capitalist ideology," singling out "para-bureaucratization" as a key feature in the obstruction of class consciousness and the "excision of ideological critique" (as cited in Wood, 2024, p. 231). Bearing the trademark A&L style of prose, the author ranted about "art school para-bureaucrats" who support "the means of (institutional) production," or even worse, "para-para bureaucrats" who perform by means of false camaraderie. According to this text, the governance of art colleges functions as a third-sector "bureaucracy (civil society) separate from the state legislature," with a complex infrastructure of "multi-institutional" governance designed to secure "bourgeois tractability in a social section which might otherwise prove an unreliable instrument of ruling-class domination" (as cited in Wood, 2024, pp. 231–232). In this framework, the article concludes, "abstract art" or "Modernism" becomes the aesthetic ideology of this para-bureaucracy, as its meaning "can only exist in an idealist circularity":[6] "Art teachers' *de jure* institutionalization is for practical purposes symmetrical

with artists *de facto* institutionalization" (as cited in Wood, 2024, p. 233). Targeting the incorporation of faculty, staff and students into a self-styled, partly volunteer, mostly unconscious "para-bureaucracy" and "orthodoxy" of the art college, Rushton and Wood also attempted to navigate the "ideological desert" that transcends "art colleges as standardly conceived, and extends to schools, post graduate departments, teacher training colleges etc." (Rushton & Wood, 1975, as cited in Wood, 2024, p. 196). Only by recognizing the trans-institutional nature of the "structure," "the reinforcements of orthodoxy as spanning contexts," is it even conceivable that the given conditions can be exceeded—however, as Rushton and Wood cautiously maintained, in 1975, "attempts to go beyond this—at this time—would be pious or utopian" (as cited in Wood, 2024, p. 196).

3 "A Transformational Possibility in the Students' Context"?

As part of an exhibition project realized at the Museum of Modern Art Oxford in 1975 (i.e. around the time, Rushton and Wood's first report was published), A&L (in this case, Michael Baldwin) produced the essay "Putative Art Practice in Britain Is Focussed on the Art Schools." The title hinted at the deep imbrication of contemporary art as a mode of cultural production in the infrastructure of art education as a specific type of social reproduction. Although they were "not employed much in the art schools" after teaching their "Art Theory" course at Coventry, the group's members were concerned with the "class conflict" dimensions of educational politics and student protests: "Student struggles are embedded, in important ways, in the class-struggle mesostructure. Microstructurally, they constitute class-struggles in themselves. Art students in particular have been the victims of social dislocation and depoliticization" (Art & Language, 1975, p. 25). In an attempt to render palpable the ideological project underpinning the policy developments in the educational environment of 1970s Britain, they—not for the first time—targeted the "bureaucratic reification" of art education, a technocratic formatting and disciplining enhanced by art education's integration into the new polytechnic universities. The latter were to provide the "well known bourgeoisiefication tradition" (Art & Language, 1975, p. 25) with a veneer of reform.

At the same time, the art school continued to complement the art world as "a site of hegemonic mystification and dissident struggle," as Charles Harrison, a close associate and a future member of A&L, emphasized; he added that "the work of teaching was a practical aspect of the larger A&L project, and that the conditions of teaching and of studentship were among the problems by which

that project was defined at the time" (Harrison, 2001, p. 113). Seen that way, for A&L and the society of discourse which they founded, the institutional environment of art education proved to be both condition and object of their conceptualist art practice, thus preceding the "educational turn" of the 2000s and 2010s by several decades.

To what extent educational policies, teaching practice and artistic production were intertwined in the case of A&L is illustrated by Harrison's memory of the moment when

> the Chief Officer of the National Council for Diplomas in Art and Design [Edward E. Pullee] was called upon in 1971 [at Coventry College of Art Lanchester Polytechnic], to furnish a ruling that only 'tangible, visual art objects' would be considered acceptable for submission for final assessment.[7] By such means it was presumably hoped to resolve at a stroke both the aesthetic and the ontological status of pieces of paper with writing on them. Essays would be deemed acceptable supplements to 'studio work', so long as the latter was forthcoming. Otherwise, they would have to be mounted on the wall, assessed for their 'visual' qualities, and presumably found wanting. (Harrison, 2001, p. 68)

In many ways, the "Art Theory" course was a realization of A&L's contention that theory is indeed deeply entangled with practice. That art in the wake of Modernist abstraction is essentially a philosophical endeavour, to be liberated from the obligations of creating art objects in the traditional sense of luxury goods rooted in fictions of the romantic artist and the ideology of class. Implicitly referring to A&L's course, Charles Harrison—in a 1972 article in *Studio International*—asked for the abandonment (or stringent "review") of the "now conventional means of 'art education,'" which lack sufficient theoretical fundament, while "any claim to teach [art] must be defensible in terms of the claimant's theory or theories of art" (Harrison, 1972, p. 223). Only by providing such theoretical grounding, art schools would be able to overcome their "insulation" with regard to the wider system of higher education and to society at large.

Moreover, with A&L's 1975 essay in mind, their earlier "Art Theory" course not only was an attempt at ending this presumed insulation of art education but likewise a means to "penetrate (and be active) in the class struggle"—through negating or rather dislocating the traditional bourgeois values attached to the fine arts by way of A&L's specific conceptualist approach. By insisting the student struggle be conceived as a miniature class struggle, and student behaviour and thinking as class behaviour and class thinking, A&L's discourse relates the mythologies of learning and unlearning, of the teachability or unteachability

of art to the "bureaucratic reification," that was to be intensified in the UK around 1970 by the increasing integration of formerly separated colleges of art into polytechnics, larger clusters of non-university higher education with a focus on technology, engineering and other vocational studies that were thus linked up with art and design—a development that was both criticized and welcomed by more progressive leaning artists, designers and theorists. All of which was pushed quite stridently through by (no less a figure of neo-liberal iconography than) Margaret Thatcher during her (fairly notorious) stint as the State Secretary of Education and Science:

> Margaret Thatcher's imposition of a Polytechnic-like constitutional formula to the putative institutionalization of the non-Polytechnic art schools, etc., has served, under the guise of reformism (democratization), to strengthen the ideological and economic hand of hegemony. As with the Polytechnics, these allegedly educational institutions are designed (and mostly function) as suitable places of employment of a tractable bourgeois or narco-bourgeois workforce. (Art & Language, 1975, pp. 25–26)

Thatcher, however, was neither pioneering the Polytechnic development nor had she any particular interest in the art educational sector as such. Many of the policy features that led to the changes in the organization and structuration of art education in the 1970s and beyond were already present in the 1966 white paper *The Future Pattern of Higher Education within the F. E. System* that served as a blueprint for policy implemented by both the labor and conservative governments of the 1970s.[8] In 1971, abstract painter Patrick Heron published a much cited article in the *Guardian* newspaper, calling the absorption of the colleges of art into the new polytechnics the "Murder of the Art Schools" (Heron, 1971).

A&L's judgment on art schools, outside and inside the polytechnics, is damning, as they deny "these allegedly educational institutions" any educational function beyond their being "designed (and mostly function) as suitable places of employment of a tractable bourgeois or narco-bourgeois workforce", and here they seemed to be referring both to the teaching staff and the future employees in the culture industry, the students (Art & Language, 1975, p. 26). Hence, a crucial question to ask is exactly, whether teaching/educating is at all possible once the class-bias of the art school is acknowledged. This is followed by a questioning of the very conditions that could enable a formation of students from meso- or microstructural strugglers into mature class fighters:

> to what extent can those artists (etc.) who see their situation as problematic do any 'teaching' at all … The questions are readily amplified: to what extent can/must the class character of (art) student practice be regarded as a pointer to the grown-up artist's social-sectional problem of penetrating and participating in the transformations of the class struggle (and in the transformation that is the class struggle); to what extent do the grown-up artist's struggles and difficulties with respect to class activity and a possible intra-space revaluation (i.e. of art practice) present a transformational possibility in the students' context? (Art & Language, 1975, p. 27)

On the one hand A&L seems to collapse the distinction between student and post-college, professional artist, most likely in the attempt to undermine the hierarchies of learner and teacher, of student and practitioner and enable collaborations and communities beyond the inside/outside logic of educational institutions. However ironically, on the other, they appear to affirm the temporality, the evolutionary logic of education, that is to say, the presumption there exists something approximating a student artist and a grown-up artist, meaning the art school may persist in being conceived as a site of a distinct present of youthful learning containing within itself the projection of an advanced artistic practice in a post art-school future in the art world or other areas of professional (self-)employment.

In 1975/1976, A&L began to produce posters—designed by David Rushton, with texts written by Michael Baldwin and printed by Malcolm Anderson at Snag Mill Press in the Scottish borders—to be distributed across art colleges in Great Britain, advertising the partly fictional organization SCHOOL. The copy-text oscillated between a recruitment address and a "denunciation characterizing the condition of the art student as abject and useless, calling for them to acknowledge their wretchedness and 'become people in the process'" (Dennis, 2016, p. 259). As fictional as it may have been, SCHOOL nonetheless developed into a loose network of radical students in places such as Hull College of Art, Trent Polytechnic in Nottingham, Leeds Polytechnic (with the Leeds College of Art), and the Royal College of Art in London who were engaged in producing magazines such as *Ratcatcher*, *Issue*, or *Ostrich*. This action was not limited to writing and printing. In February and March 1977, the administration offices in the Darwin Building of the Royal College of Art were occupied, in a protest against general fee increases and a fee discrimination affecting overseas students.

The partly earnest, partly mocking agitation of SCHOOL conveyed a strong belief in learning and teaching as inroads to transformative class struggle, in

the indivisibility of education and revolution, and thus in the necessity of a radical pedagogy that would actually be worthy of its name. SCHOOL therefore was also a reminder of the choices to be made between different varieties of education, that the concept of "education" is a ground of contestation, something to be reclaimed and wrenched from the powers that impose specific meanings and functions on it.

Thus, A&L's SCHOOL project could also be regarded as a response to the enthusiastic embrace of "education" in the revolutionary moment of 1968, as exemplified in the "insistence" on "education" as performed by the students and staff of the Guildford School of Art in Surrey.[9] In a reaction to underfunding and incompetent management in June 1968, they had started an occupation of the school building that lasted into August of that year.

The demand for functioning educational institutions was part of the politicization of the educational realm from within and below that marked the affluent postwar decades of late-Fordist, social democratic welfare state reform in the Global North. Attending to the history of art education in the UK thus also incurred attending to the years of an unprecedented expansion of the educational sector, both quantitatively and spatially, discursively and geographically in the 1960s and 1970s. The modernization and development of the entire infrastructure of schools, colleges and universities arrived with numerous state-driven experiments in governance, curricular reform, and projects (often pretentious and inconsequential) of egalitarianism; around 1967/1968, this development of advanced educational institutionalism was met with feelings of discomfort and acts of resistance by students and staff who deployed their Marxist analysis of what Louis Althusser around the same time would dub "ideological state apparatuses" to attack the very reforms that promised a new democratization and inclusivity of education, which, however, primarily catered to economic interests operative in the increasingly global competition between de-industrializing industrial nations.

4 "We Are the Victims of a Historical Balls-Up": Hornsey, 1968

These contradictory movements and developments pertaining to educational policies and politics of knowledge did not leave the area of art education untouched. The growing body of research into the histories of postwar art education, particularly with regard to more radical forms of pedagogy,[10] bespeaks the demand for detailed accounts and appraisals during this period in which the potential of futures differing and antagonistic to neoliberalism's dominance, was still tangible. As for the colleges of art and design and the art and

design departments in the new polytechnics, important historical and archival work by Mark Dennis, Paul Wood and Elena Crippa on A&L in Coventry, Newport and other art schools (Crippa, 2013; Dennis, 2016; Wood 2024), Gavin Butt (2022) on Leeds Polytechnic; Sue Breakell, Naomi Salaman and Lesley Whitworth (2012) on Brighton, Crippa (2013) on Ealing School of Art and St. Martin's School of Art, or the Tate Research Department's research into the curriculum change in postwar London (Llewellyn & Williamson, 2015) has considerably increased the knowledge about the institutional dimension of art education in 1960s and 1970s Great Britain. However, there is one particular moment of educational politics and experimentation from very early on that, deservedly or not, has attracted the most interest and curiosity (and since ca. 2008 once more)—which involved Hornsey College of Art in North London.[11]

Notwithstanding the work on the existing (and missing) records and histories of the schooling of artists, however, the very distances involved in time may well have led to a significant degree of mythologizing and fetishizing, particular regarding the Hornsey occupation—which soon was publicly termed the "Hornsey affair" by the occupation's protagonists themselves, evidencing both its scandalous and temporary character. But in fact this very mythologizing should be explored critically, and certainly not dismissed—for within it is an essential dimension of the experience, reception, and afterlives of antagonistic educational politics during a particular conjuncture of the educational sector as a whole and of the realm of art and design education in particular. In the immediate aftermath of the events of 1968, the "Hornsey affair" was celebrated and decried, for a variety of reasons, and established as a hallmark or conversely a delusionary way of doing radical politics, both at the level of the local art college and the national context of art education.

It became dubbed an "affair" largely due to the way in which the occupation ended, after seven weeks of student self-government that began on May 28, 1968. The first step of what resulted in a very sorry conclusion came on July 4, when the school's principal Harold Shelton and the council of governors sent security guards with dogs to the school's main building (to no great avail, however, as the two dozen students present that day began caressing and feeding the dogs and offered the guards tea). In the days following this attack the students and the authorities started negotiations which resulted in an agreement to leave the school buildings for the summer break. The agreement was subsequently broken by the administration, as the principal did not resume operation before November 1968 (when operations normally commence in September) but fired seven members of the teaching staff for participating in the occupation and expelled around 40 students. Finally, following the example of the London School of Economics, that had also gained notoriety and the

reputation as a "school for rebels" in the popular press, the main building on Crouch End was fortified.[12]

The distance of over half a century to the seven weeks of occupation at Hornsey (a number of other sit-ins and art schools' occupations took place e.g. Guildford School of Art, which continued the Hornsey sit-ins in June and July, as well as in Brighton, Hull and Birmingham) should be acknowledged and made productive, as it presents both problems (of forgetfulness, of historical chauvinism) and possibilities (for reading and examining this material with a fresh, yet informed eye for their unfulfilled promise and unrealized futures).

Thus, the texts, posters, films, exhibitions and other manifestations of protest and critique generated by the Hornsey students and staff of 1968 are a resource which, in spite of the events and their archives appearing to be well researched up to now, actually deserve reconsideration. A brief description of the exhibition of the Hornsey activists at the Institute of Contemporary Art in London, reprinted in a Penguin paperback edited in 1969 by the Association of Members of Hornsey College of Art (The Hornsey Affair, 1969, p. 171), provides a sense of the subjects, shapes and spatialities of the debate that arose at the occupation's beginning in late May. In the absence of any other documentation or photographs, the sequence of objects and spaces mounted in the galleries of the ICA has to be recreated in the imagination. The Hornsey people attempted, perhaps not in the most complex manner, to translate the issues discussed by the occupants into the art gallery—by means of an environment apparently taking a ghost ride as its model. Before leading towards a labyrinth emulating the atmospheres of power and the subsequent open space of information and study, the parcours started with the horrifyingly enlarged apotropaic symbol of the contested Diploma in Art and Design (DipAD). The DipAD was the key instrument of a reform of art education within the realm of British higher education. It was to become emblematic for what was considered a wrong-headed correction of the old regime of art education based on outworn notions of the intuitive genius or its opposite, the vocational design technician. The DipAD was replete with problematic implications, a range of measures to arrive at "degree equivalence" and thus academic "respectability". In order to enable—or rather force colleges of art and design to offer grades that would be accepted in university circles and meet the levels deemed appropriate to the British economy and the labor market, a National Council for Diplomas in Art and Design selected, from 1962/1963 onwards, which art school and which curricula would qualify and be permitted to offer the new degree.

Moreover, to be allowed to enter, college candidates now needed GCE (General Certificate of Education) entrance qualifications comparable to those of the universities (a factor that within a few years effectively changing class

composition and participation towards the upper middle echelons at previously predominantly working-class colleges such as Hornsey). In addition, a hierarchy was established between DipAD students and vocational design students, the former considered prone to master intellectual tasks, the latter primarily expected to work manually. In this vein, the DipAD made the attendance of a foundational course compulsory and, subsequently, courses not only in fine art, sometimes dubbed "visual research," but also in art history and "complementary" or "general studies". These curricular changes necessitated the hiring of new academic staff, most of whom would arrive from university departments such as philosophy, history or literature, usually unprepared and lacking any experience in teaching at art colleges.

One of the first statements drafted and issued in the context of the occupation demands an end of reform and a paradigmatic epistemological cut instead of efforts to tamper with a concept of "art education" that has lost any contact with the needs, life worlds and social realities of those who are meant to receive it. The Hornsey protestors were quite vocal about the situation, and they found themselves a position in the socio-political hierarchy—that of victims and accusers who launched their rage against the futility of reform in times of "unprecedented change":

> We are the victims of a historical balls-up. A system of education which once worked now only serves to deprive us of our needs. The traditional system when it worked was capable of evolution and adaptation to suit itself to changing needs. In this present age of unprecedented change we stupidly attempted the old technique of adaptation and reform. But the threadbare cloth can no longer be recut and resewn to fit the times. (Reform is useless)

Rethinking is essential.

> The system is based on the departmentalization and specialization of knowledge, and the latest attempted reform was the introduction of two new specialities, Complementary Studies and Visual Research. The latter has the slight advantage of being more relevant to a school of art than the former. (*The Hornsey Affair*, 1969, p. 34)

There is no visual image that could illustrate the metaphorical disconnect between the "old threadbare material" of art educational policies and their conceptual frameworks and the "new specialties" of "complementary studies" and "visual research," but there is a later illustration, from Nottingham-based *Issue* magazine, that shows a ridiculously superheroic, naked male warrior

attempting to force a metal loop over a wooden barrel, the former featuring the inscription "THEORY," the latter, obviously in a haggard and degraded state, labelled "ART" (Rushton & Wood, 1979, p. 50). A relation of epistemic violence is conjured here, albeit satirically. Yet, one may also read the image as illustrating the desperate attempt on the side of educational administrators to push art toward academicism, to provide a stabilizing grip of "theory" in order to prevent art from falling into tatters. Not to mention the sexual politics of the image that associates "theory" with masculine strength and, arguably, renders "art" as a frail, feminized structure to be saved from its tragic destiny.

Another metaphor, close to that of the barrel loop, is grafting. It was used in one of the "documents" of the Hornsey activists, to emphasize the perceived violence and arbitrariness of the introduction of "complementary studies":

> One disastrous consequence of academic respectability was a split between practice and theory, between intellect and the non-intellectual sources of creativity. Perhaps the split exists to some extent inside all of us, and in society at large. What is certain is that the Dip.A.D. curriculum aggravated it by giving it institutional form inside the art college. An academic or theoretical dimension was added to art training by the simple expedient of grafting university type subjects on to the body: English literature, sociology, psychology, and so on. Naturally the people to teach these were found in the universities and formed a kind of mini-university within each art college: the 'Liberal' or 'General Studies' Department. (*The Hornsey Affair*, p. 118)

At Hornsey, the lecturers and tutors embodying this "mini-university" within the art college, particularly David Page and Tom Nairn, were active in co-organizing the occupation and the educational program of the seven weeks of self-governance; they also participated in the drafting of many of the "documents" in 1968 and the book *The Hornsey Affair* in 1969. In one of the reenactments of the debates of May, June and July of 1968 assembled in the one hour black and white *Hornsey Film* made by Members of the Hornsey College of art and directed by Patricia Holland in the attempt to get to grips with the events of the seven weeks sit-in, the subject of "complementary studies" is staged in a mock-up lecture and Q&A. The re-enactment in itself is interesting on many levels. Obviously, the energies of the occupants were not entirely drained after experiencing the treason and broken agreements by the administration and the suppression of their experimental changing hierarchical educational structures into a horizontal, trans-departmental "network" structure of learning, teaching and research. In the early months of 1969, the time when the film was shot, students and staff were eager to work on a representation of

the achievements and the failures of the previous year, to find performative, narrative and audiovisual ways to tell the story—both to themselves and the outside world. Obviously informed by the contemporary *ciné-tracts* and agit-prop films of Jean-Luc Godard, Chris Marker and others, the recent history of struggle was translated and recounted in ways that mixed documentary and fictional modes, earnestness and playfulness, forms of lay and documentary theatre. It proves relatively easy and maybe even necessary to be critical of such attempts at self-historicizing, for appearing to perpetuate the mythologization and delusions associated with the Hornsey events. However, following Catherine Sloan's revisionist account of the "Hornsey affair," the conceptual, organizational and educational productivity of this particular group of people between May 1968 and 1969 remains quite astounding (Sloan, 2013). Even if not all that arose from Hornsey stands the test of time and critical political analysis, many components of the practice and theory still seem valid, even when considering their complicity with a proto-neoliberal "artistic critique" and reading the *Pathosfiguren* of emancipatory struggles of the 1960s and 1970s as beating a fresh path towards new modes of capitalist extraction.

5 "Education's Alignment with Capital": Politics of Art Education, 1978/1979

For the members of A&L however, and David Rushton and Paul Wood in particular, Hornsey quickly became a sort of anathema, a glaring example of how student politics and the critique of the ideological state apparatus of education should not be played out. And they were not the first to dismiss the Hornsey protests and their brand of creativity as essentially unconscious of deeper issues of class politics. Tom Nairn, who besides lecturing and organising at Hornsey before and during the occupation was a contributor for the *New Left Review*, summarized the stand-off between the "people" of Hornsey and the militant "student political Left" as early in June 1968 with the following:

> The achievements of the Hornsey *coup* are remarkable, by any standards. Seen from inside, the changes brought about—in people and attitudes, rather than simply in administration—were astonishing. It is only yesterday that art students were paragons of self-satisfied apathy, further removed (even) than most other British students from any sort of political consciousness.
>
> Yet, the Hornsey movement has been very widely criticized, within the student political Left. Militants have tended to dismiss it as 'unpolitical', or 'corporative,' concerned only with the problems of art education and

> indifferent to wider issues. The Hornsey students confined themselves to stirring up other art colleges, and trying to establish a permanent control of power inside their own institution, instead of provoking a general crisis of British capitalism (or, at least, of the British Higher Education system). Why such narrow-mindedness? (Nairn, 1968, p. 65)

In the aftermath of 1968, members of the A&L group and affiliates were to prove particularly impatient and ungracious when it came to Hornsey. From their point of view, the Hornsey discourse lacked any firm footing in Marxist theory and in rigorous political and philosophical reasoning. In 1975, Rushton and Wood saw the "events" at Hornsey and Guildford and their aftermath—epitomized in books such as the 1973 *After Hornsey* and concerns about the "drawing of art education into the education main stream" (Piper, 1973, p. 13)—as mere "piecemeal attacks on particular personalities implementing and devising policies which were not—as policies—examined for their wider social and educational implications" (Rushton & Wood, 1975c, p. 80). Assumed lack of rigor and method in the protests caused them to become a backer, an anticipation, a testing ground of a late capitalist (and soon to be neoliberal) rationality that would pervade education, and especially art education, by mingling fuzzy epistemology, pseudo-radical pedagogy and "para-bureaucratic" managerialism.

Ten years after 1968, Rushton and Wood, published their second, "special" report, *Politics of Art Education*—belatedly, as they had rushed in an attempt to complete it in 1977 to complement the student mobilizations against increased tuition fees imposed in 1977–1978 at the Royal College of Art and elsewhere. Extending their long-term historical and polemical chronicle of the ideology of art education in post-war Britain, a kind of radical follow-up to Nikolaus Pevsner's 1940 *Academies of Art. Past and Present*, Rushton and Wood also took on the occupations at Hornsey and Guildford that "have already passed into folklore," proposing, "on the whole, to leave them there." For although

> the events of which these were a part were of pivotal significance in terms of the development of the left, and not merely of art education, it is equally clear that much of what came to surround the art school occupations was merely silly. In particular, the Hornsey occupation's feverish idealism not only carried away those responsible into the belief that they were involved in a revolution but also attracted droves of middle-class, middle management, middle-of-the-road apologists who thought they detected a reflection of what they'd like to do but daren't. (Rushton & Wood, 1978, p. 25)

Rushton and Wood sensed that the Hornsey protestors were not ready to embrace an understanding of education as inherently political, an inability (or unwillingness) which "played no small part in the relative ease with which the rebels were eventually suppressed" (Rushton & Wood, 1978, p. 26). Some of the participants in the occupation were deploying concepts from the Situationist lexicon, such as "spectacle," which, for Rushton and Wood added to an "anti-politicism" that was in sync with "a quite well-defined ultra-left political tradition, and isn't merely the natural channel into which a lot of bright young things' rebelliousness flowed" (Rushton & Wood, 1978, p. 26).

> And while we should not forget that it was fantastic—any direct action where people throw off the organizational forms which have been oppressing them and take over the running of their own work/education/lives, is fantastic—nonetheless the left were correct. The confusion and lack of political analysis at Hornsey was debilitating—not only aiding the relative ease of the defeat, but also contributing to the failure of art students to sustain their militancy while many other sectors did so. (Rushton & Wood, 1978, p. 27)

The suspicion and dissatisfaction with the Hornsey occupation and the discourse that it entailed, bleeds through every line of Rushton and Wood's certainly biased account. Lisa Tickner registers their "particular aversion to the sit-in documents," a reaction that in her view might have been "a little harsh (if politically coherent, against the backdrop of education cuts and rising unemployment at the tail-end of the Callaghan government, and given that they were allergic to 'a lot of self-serving claptrap about creativity')" (2008, p. 84). However, although it should not be taken for a fair and just rendition of what was actually going on, it has also to be read in context, for it was drafted in a situation of the increasing marginalization of a radical materialist analysis of art and art education in the mid- to late 1970s, in a period of economic slump and social disintegration and polarization in Great Britain, with the conservative-neoliberal forces waiting in the wings of crisis to take over (which happened in 1979, the same year in which Rushton and Wood's report on the politics of art education finally became available).

Politics of Art Education was also intended to be a revision of the 1975 *Art & Education*. Rather than "assuming the priority of methodological questions, or of concentrating discussion on technological solutions to problems of, for example, 'communications breakdowns' in art education" (Rushton & Wood, 1978, in Wood, 2024, p. 259), which formed part of the earlier report, Rushton and Wood set out "to consider the material, historical status of what goes on in art and design education. If one is to talk at all about art education, the talk has

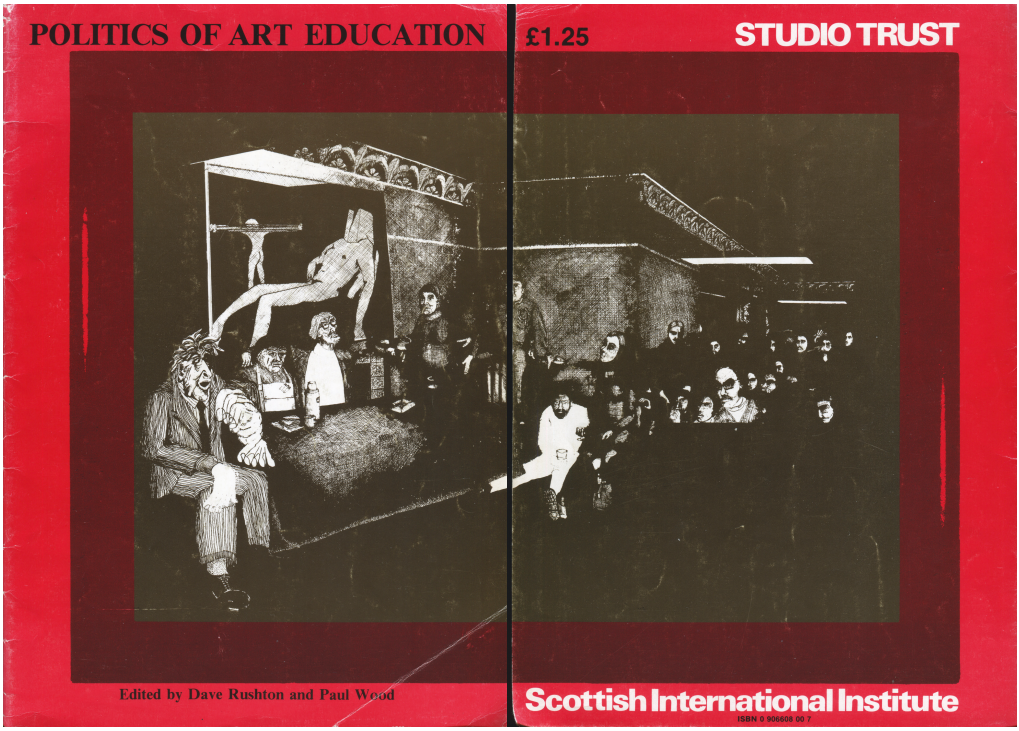

FIGURE 4.1 David Rushton and Paul Wood, *Politics of Art Education*, 1978, cover (featuring a drawing by Rushton, c. 1975/1976). © 1978 David Rushton and Paul Wood

to be of its class location and function" (Wood, 2024, p. 259). This increased focus on "education's alignment with *capital*" (Wood, 2024, p. 257) was supported by the observation that the "recent expansion of fine art in the boom-induced liberalism of the postwar period" (Wood, 2024, p. 254) taking place in the context of "the expansion in education policies aimed at the 'modernisation' of production in the 1960s" (Wood, 2024, p. 256), was an "expansionism" (Wood, 2024, p. 257) that in 1978 had collapsed in the face of a manifest crisis of capitalism. Bluntly rejecting any interest in art education per se ("There is little *in* art education that is worth talking about" (Wood, 2024, p. 259), Rushton and Wood emphasized, once more, the importance of attending to "the *infrastructure* of the historical development of art and design education" which derives "its significance by factors outside its subject domain" (Wood, 2024, p. 261; emphasis added).

The cover of *Politics of Art Education* was designed by David Rushton who also contributed an etching-like drawing he made in 1975/1976, depicting a lecture situation at Leeds Polytechnic at that period. Large patches of the theatrical scene are set in near darkness, recalling the odd art history lecture with

slides projected onto a wall. On the left of the drawing, the (projected?) image of a reclining female (androgynous?) nude with a cubist head can be seen, while a naked (male?) body is standing, arms stretched, as if carrying a cross (or working out with an expander). With their backs to the image, four men are sitting and standing at a table: to the very left an unidentified visiting professor from Vienna; next to him Terry Atkinson, wearing a vintage gas mask in a satchel around his neck (referring to his interest in the history of World War I), as well as, sporting a beard and glasses, the painting professor Christopher Cornford visiting from the Royal College of Art (the fourth, standing, figure eludes identification). In the audience section of the drawing, three members of A&L can be identified: Michael Baldwin (sitting on the floor), Lynn Lemaster (standing next to her future husband) and Philip Pilkington at what looks like a lectern with a lamp illuminating his face.

The situation did not occur exactly as depicted—a fact its maker confirmed (D. Rushton, personal communication, September 2024). Instead, Rushton deliberately evoked "a disquieting masculine expressiveness reemerging in art post Conceptual art," an atmosphere that echoes the "macho attitude" Lisa Tickner identified within A&L's influential "Art Theory" course at Coventry (2008, pp. 95–96, 178). To an extent, the cover of *Politics of Art Education* illustrated some of the worst aspects of its development since the "events" of Hornsey and Guildford in 1968, the second Coldstream report from 1970, and the dismissal of A&L from Lanchester Polytechnic in 1971/1972. The written content (and most likely also the content of the talk by members of A&L delivered in Leeds represented here) stood in contradiction to the revival of norms and protocols related to a traditional authoritative academicism and a "masculine expressiveness" that, at least from the point of view of Rushton and Wood, was to be witnessed inside the art schools. Granted, their Marxist focus on class kept them from observing issues of gender or race (as well as the question of form)—something they are ready to admit instantly today[13]—, Rushton and Wood's infrastructural critique of the governance of art and art education is still valid. Charting the seemingly opposing forces of educational policies of the entrenchment of the arts in structures of market liberalism and academic research on the one hand, and bourgeois interests in the maintenance of possessive romanticist individualism and national cultures by way of the arts on the other, they enable, as they themselves have brilliantly phrased it in *Politics of Art Education*, "to comprehend the refractions, in and through the generally transparent and unfelt ideology, of the tremors of production" (Wood, 2024, p. 260). Every infrastructural critique of the institution of art (and its material-ideological manifestations in art education) worth its salt should relate the

registration of the "tremors of production" to a "subjectivity" that can "act as a radical basis or a counterpower" (Vishmidt, 2017, p. 234). It was the political desire for exactly such a subjectivity that drove the radical critique of art education between 1968 and 1978, and it continues to be the precondition of any current and future critique open to "determination and inflection in situated emancipatory struggles" (Vishmidt & Sutherland, 2022, p. 85).

Notes

1 The influential educational, theoretical and educational work done by Atkinson and Baldwin from 1968 onwards at Coventry College of Art (to be integrated into what became Lanchester Polytechnic by 1970, which later went on to become the Coventry Polytechnic in 1987 and Coventry University in 1992) is thoroughly charted in the 2016 doctoral dissertation of Mark Dennis (2016). To an extent, this essay is organized along a similar timeline as Dennis's thesis—from "the interventions of A&L into the art schools of England and Wales, from the proposal of the Art Theory Programme in 1969, through to the publication of *The Politics of Art Education* by David Rushton and Paul Wood in 1979" (Dennis, 2016, abstract). However, it also includes a discussion of the struggle around art education as held in 1968 at Hornsey College of Art which was dismissed as unpolitical by the A&L collaborative. A year after the conference "art thinking doing art. Artistic Practices in Educational Contexts from 1900 to Today" at the University of Art in Berlin in June 2023 where this text originated, RabRab Press published *Biting the Hand. Traces of Resistance in the Art & Language Diaspora* (Wood, 2024), for which Paul Wood has collected and contextualized formerly dispersed and scattered writings most relevant for the research underlying this essay, together with further archival material and an extensive introduction. This valuable volume instigated substantial changes of the original paper. I am thankful to David Rushton, Paul Wood, Michael Baldwin, Sezgin Boynik, Louis-Antoine Mège and James Rumball for sharing material, thoughts and memories.

2 For discussions on "group," "collaboration," and "community," see the September 1973 issue of *Art-Language*, particularly Burn and Ramsden (1973, pp. 54–55). The concept of "societies of discourse" was introduced by Foucault (1970/2019). The term "discourse community" gained traction in communication studies and sociology in subsequent years (e.g., Chaney, 1977; Porter, 1986). For an exchange on these concepts in art history, see Rudinow (1981) and Wieand (1981).

3 For a comprehensive, critical overview of art education policies in Britain after 1968, see Tickner (2008, pp. 59–82).

4 A selection of these writings was first compiled in Rushton & Wood (1979), see also Wood (2024).

5 For contemporary overviews, see Black (1971) and Piper (1971).

6 This contrasts with Benjamin H. D. Buchloh's influential thesis on the "bureaucratic rigor" of conceptual art (see Buchloh, 1990). The bureaucracy discussed here is located within the modernism of art education, which much of the conceptual art of the period was directed against.

7 Edward E. Pullee, letter to Alan Richmond, July 29, 1971, as quoted in Pilkington et al. (1971, p. 120).

8 See Powell (2023, pp. 171–174). For the specific case of the fine art department at Leeds Polytechnic, see Butt (2022); for a general overview of the history and policy behind the expansion of polytechnics in the UK, see Pratt (1997).
9 See the photographs of Guildford protestors and posters (e.g., "We Are Insisting on Education") by John Walmsley (2017).
10 See, for example, Colomina et al. (2022), Harriss and Froud (2015), Meisel (2022), and Thorne (2017).
11 See Sloan (2013) and Tickner (2008).
12 See Kremky et al. (2021).
13 See Wood (2024, pp. 20, 134–135).

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PART 2

Practices of Resistance (*1960s–1980s*)

∴

CHAPTER 5

John Cage's Equalizing Abundance

Jeffrey Saletnik

Abstract

Although John Cage viewed the power dynamics inherent to organized educational structures with skepticism, he was associated periodically with conventional educational institutions like the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, University of Cincinnati, and University of California, Davis, as well as with more experimental, ad hoc institutions like Black Mountain College. This essay explores Cage's work as educator at various institutions, with particular attention to the nonhierarchical educational situations that the composer convened in the late 1960s as well as to his composition *Musicircus* (1967), understood in the context of the educational thought of Buckminster Fuller, Paulo Freire, Ivan Illich, and others. It argues that Cage's *Musicircus* in keeping—in its form—with Fuller's ambition to better society through design competence and—politically—with calls for education reform in the late-1960s.

Keywords

John Cage – Musicircus – education reform – Buckminster Fuller – abundance – Black Mountain College

1 A Space for Assembly and Concurrent Activity

In 1961, the planning committee of Southern Illinois University asked R. Buckminster Fuller how it might build a university campus from the ground up in Edwardsville, Illinois. The self-declared "comprehensive anticipatory design scientist" advised that the university should disregard all static curricular and architectural models; rather, he encouraged the committee to prioritize curricular, technological, and architectural mobility.[1] Toward these ends, Fuller suggested that it should eschew uniform, progressively staged curricula; and that it should invest in the "most comprehensive generalized computer setup with network connections," in "lots of real estate and lots of airplanes and helicopters," and in a lightweight one-half-mile diameter geodesic dome

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to house all university activities. The dome could be subdivided internally by easily rearrangeable "delicate oscillating membranes [and] possibly rose bushes or soap bubbles or smoke screens" (Fuller, 1964, pp. 86–88).

This kind of space—an all-purpose "transformable environment" for assembly and concurrent (yet disparate) activity—was like that of a circus, where "trapeses, platforms, rings, [and] nets" are gathered under the swiftly erected, portable architecture of a circus tent (Fuller, 1964, pp. 86–88). It also served a pedagogical imperative; a flexible, ever-changing environment would help students to co-ordinate their spontaneous comprehension of the whole (Fuller, 1964, p. 83). In Fuller's view, "old" educational structures that prioritized "specialization" hindered and perhaps even discouraged the kind of large-scale, socially relevant innovation brought about by those who recognize patterns of thought and activity across disciplines. The old institutional paradigm encouraged the monopolization and control of intellectual resources in siloed academic disciplines comprised of experts. This model ought to be replaced by systems and structures that facilitate the "comprehensive thinking" necessary to anticipate and meet societal needs—hence Fuller's proposal for a networked university with asynchronous curriculum housed in an enormous soap bubble-filled geodesic dome (Fuller, 1964, pp. 64, 81–88).

Fuller's scheme for the campus of Southern Illinois University was not achieved.[2] Yet it was significant to John Cage, whose composition *Musicircus* (1967) for any number of performers "willing to perform at once (in the same place and time)" as well as the nonhierarchical educational situations he convened in the late-1960s are in keeping with Fuller's educational vision (Kostelanetz, 1980, p. 194).[3] Fuller and Cage shared a commitment to radical educational reform, which they first explored together in 1948 during the Black Mountain College summer session. That summer, Fuller taught a course called "Comprehensive Design," was unsuccessful in his attempt to erect a large geodesic dome out of venetian blind slats, and played the role of Baron Medusa in a production of Erik Satie's play *Le Piège de Méduse* (1913). Cage gave several recitals of Satie's piano music, presented a community lecture entitled "Defense of Satie," and taught a course called "Structure of Music." As Fuller recalled, he and Cage also imagined together a "finishing school" that would "finish" or "break down all of the conventional ways of approaching school." It was to assume the form of a "caravan" that travelled from city to city and thus, as Fuller stressed in his subsequent proposal for the campus of Southern Illinois University, was mobile by design.[4]

Fuller's and Cage's respective educational thought would remain aligned for years to come. The design scientist and composer shared views with respect to how to marshal educational resources: Fuller generally observed that (nationalist) concerns with resource scarcity were factually unfounded, while Cage

advocated in the 1960s that one "choose abundance rather than scarcity" (Cage, 1969a, p. 10). And like Fuller, Cage argued that a university should permit students to do many things rather than specific things. He suggested in the late-1960s that a "university situation" might consist of a student- and faculty-generated centralized file system cum curriculum made available for use twenty-four hours per day. Among its files, one might simply be called "Things to do." Students who accessed this file's contents then would do things in need of doing in the world. Importantly, the file would be comprised of things *to do*—rather than things *to know*—and thus was meant to foster a process of inquiry rather than encourage one to possess (as an object) knowledge (Cage, 1969b, pp. 12–13). The value of knowing something was of little consequence to Cage per se; "if a person thinks of something to do that seems to us to be of no value," he remarked, then "we must then question our values—and perhaps broaden them to include the values of the person who thought of doing what he was doing" (Cage, 1969a, p. 12). An ethical pluralism informed Cage's pedagogy in the late 1960s; it challenged the prescriptive, domesticating power structures of education by creating nonhierarchical educational situations-of-abundance that welcomed interruption, distraction, simultaneity, and the interpenetration of ideas and experiences so as to realize a condition for equity.

2 At Black Mountain College

Cage's work as an educator to this point had been diverse: it included teaching children at the UCLA Demonstration School and for the Works Progress Administration in the 1930s; offering a course on "sound experiments" at the School of Design in the 1940s; and, among other courses, teaching "Experimental Composition" and "Mushroom Identification" at The New School for Social Research in the 1950s (Saletnik, 2009, pp. 147–166). Perhaps most widely known, however, is his teaching at Black Mountain during the summer sessions of 1948 and 1952, aspects of which prefigured his nonhierarchical pedagogy of the late 1960s. When reflecting upon the summers he taught at Black Mountain, the composer remarked: "I think what actually happened at Black Mountain was that many things were taught without there being any assigned times for that exchange to take place" (Cage, 1979, p. 77). Indeed, this happened—but there were scheduled classes (Cage's students recalled that they met with him privately more often than as a group) as well as conventional lessons, educational presentations, and performances (Patterson, 1996, p. 202). For his course "Structure of Music," a student recalled that Cage "would have [students] beat out rhythms, or clap them; and we

would … compose little melodies [which mirrored the] style of phrasing that Erik Satie employed" (Patterson, 1996, p. 202). The content of Cage's course and his lecture "Defense of Satie"—in which he elaborated how (in its equalization of sound and silence) Satie's and Anton Webern's use of phrase lengths (or duration) to structure a musical composition was superior to the tradition of Western harmony (which privileges sounds)—were traditionally presented.

The manner in which Cage presented his recitals of Satie's compositions for piano, however, are significant in terms of how his pedagogy developed. When asked to reflect upon memorable experiences at Black Mountain, a student recalled "the nights John Cage played [Satie] to us from inside his home while we listened under sky and trees."[5] Rather than perform in a traditional concert setting, with pianist visible to an assembled audience, Cage simply played his piano at home with windows open and allowed Satie's music to lilt about in night air and amidst all sounds. He introduced Satie's music to the community and simultaneously demonstrated how music could be understood as a continuity of all of the sounds (and silences) that occurred within established durational parameters. Aspects of Cage's work at the College in the summer of 1952 were similarly demonstrative. Although he had been hired to teach the course "Composition," Cage claimed to have had no students; rather, he organized readings of the *Huang-Po Doctrine of Universal Mind* (1947); performed his *Sonatas and Interludes* (1946–1948) for prepared piano; and he conceived of a performance later known as *Theater Piece No. 1* or *Black Mountain Piece* (1952) (Patterson, 1996, p. 224). Cage used chance operations to establish the durational parameters of the work as well as those in which each performer was to present their contribution to it, yet he did not know in advance what content the performers would contribute. David Tudor played the piano, Robert Rauschenberg played records and had suspended an array of his *White Paintings* (1951) from above the audience, Merce Cunningham and others danced, M. C. Richards and Charles Olsen operated slide projectors and read poetry, Nicholas Cernovich projected a film (Fetterman, 1996, pp. 97–104), and Cage recalled that he read his "Juilliard Lecture" (Cage, 1961, p. x).[6] Insofar as some of the activities that occurred within the compositional framework Cage established took place concurrently, they anticipate Cage's *Musicircus* and the composer's embrace of simultaneity in the 1960s more generally.

3 A Music of Reality

Cage's *Musicircus* was conceived of as a musical work and an educational form; it is consistent with the composer's description of music that is "at one

and the same time a pedagogical music and a music of reality, which takes for granted that pedagogy has been thrown out, finished, we've graduated" (Cage & Charles, 1981, p. 201). As an inter-material, counter-institutional, trans-disciplinary mechanism for liberation through non-obstruction, Cage's *Musicircus* is in keeping—in its form—with Fuller's ambition to better society through design competence and—politically—with contemporary calls for education reform in the late-1960s that encouraged the radical reconsideration and dismantling of educational structures.

Cage sought to circumvent and, to varying degrees, worked to apply pressure to the university apparatus at each educational institution with which he was associated in the late 1960s. At the University of Cincinnati, where he was composer-in-residence during the winter and spring quarters of 1967, Cage offered a seminar featuring discussions of various topics related to his interests (like Zen Buddhism and world improvement) that he thought also might be of interest to students. He presented public lecture-demonstrations and performances, including a presentation of his 1961 lecture "Where Are We Going? And What Are We Doing?" (Yang, 2013, pp. 49–63). The lecture, which notably had been first presented at an educational institution, is composed for four voices, three of which are pre-recorded by the speaker and amplified in performance and one of which could be spoken in real time by the speaker.[7] All voices are superimposed in performance, thereby making it difficult for one to follow any single voice. The result was meant to be an equalizing chaos (Cage, 1961, p. 195).

During fall 1969, as artist-in-residence at the University of California, Davis, Cage gave a course based upon the premise that he did not know what the students would study that semester (Cage & Charles, 1981, p. 89). He offered suggestions regarding what he and his one-hundred-twenty students might do together, including that they create a map of all things that had been done before and then use this to determine what things had yet to be done and might need doing. Ultimately, they determined that each student would use chance operations to select the number of and which books they would read in the university library. The first task (and the subject of an entire class session) was how to subject the library's card catalogue to chance operations. Chance-determined groups of students would meet in subsequent weeks to exchange information about the books they had read, which included texts on firefighting and Islamic art. Should a group decide that something they found interesting about their conversation that might be of interest to their classmates, it was the group's responsibility to determine how to share this with them: one group of students used chance operations to compose a poem based upon texts read as part of the course, another group made a film, etc. (Dinwiddie, 1969, pp. 21–26).

Along with UC Davis faculty and students, Cage also staged a day-long music festival entitled Mewantamooseicday. The multi-venue program of both simultaneously occurring and discrete events included an eighteen-hour and forty-minute performance of Satie's *Vexations* (ca. 1893), film screenings, and musical performances by university and community musicians. Among his contributions to the event, Cage read excerpts from his emergent text "Diary: How to Improve the World (You Will Only Make Matters Worse)" (1965–1982) in a large auditorium during the soundchecks and set-up for upcoming performances. Cage also composed a new work for the festival called *Thirty Three and A Third* (1969); he had twelve individually amplified turntables installed around the perimeter of a large room, along with the repository of nearly three hundred LP records he had ordered by telephone from a local record shop, asking the shop owner to select a wide range of recordings on his behalf. Between 8:00 p.m. and midnight, visitors were free to move about the space, which intentionally did not include seating. No instructions were given; however, in time, those assembled became active participants, selecting and playing different records simultaneously at a speed, volume, and for the length of time of their own choosing (Dinwiddie, 1969, pp. 21–26).

4 Toward Equality

At the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, where Cage was an Associate of the Center for Advanced Studies and Visiting Professor of Music from fall 1967 through spring 1969, and where his *Musicircus* first was performed on 17 November 1967, the composer had no formal teaching responsibilities and thus held no classes. He gave lectures when invited to do so and made himself available to students in person or on the telephone, posting a sign saying, "Anyone who wants to see me, may." The students "know that I'm here," he recalled, "and if they wish to see me, they can, and if they don't need to, they don't have to" (Cage, 1969b, p. 14). When students would come to see him, his approach was to "try to discover who the student is and what the student can do" and thereby making himself the student—the one who is learning—in the end (Cage & Charles, 1981, p. 88).

Cage composed *Musicircus* in conjunction with an arts festival entitled "University in Motion: Matrix for the Arts," in the context of which, in the course five days, the Merce Cunningham Dance Company performed; Saul Bellow, Harold Rosenberg, Gunther Schuller, and Harry Weese spoke; and Fuller gave a two-and-a-half-hour unscripted keynote address on the topic of "intuition" (UI Hosts Arts Matrix, 1967; Willis, 1967). The *Musicircus* took place

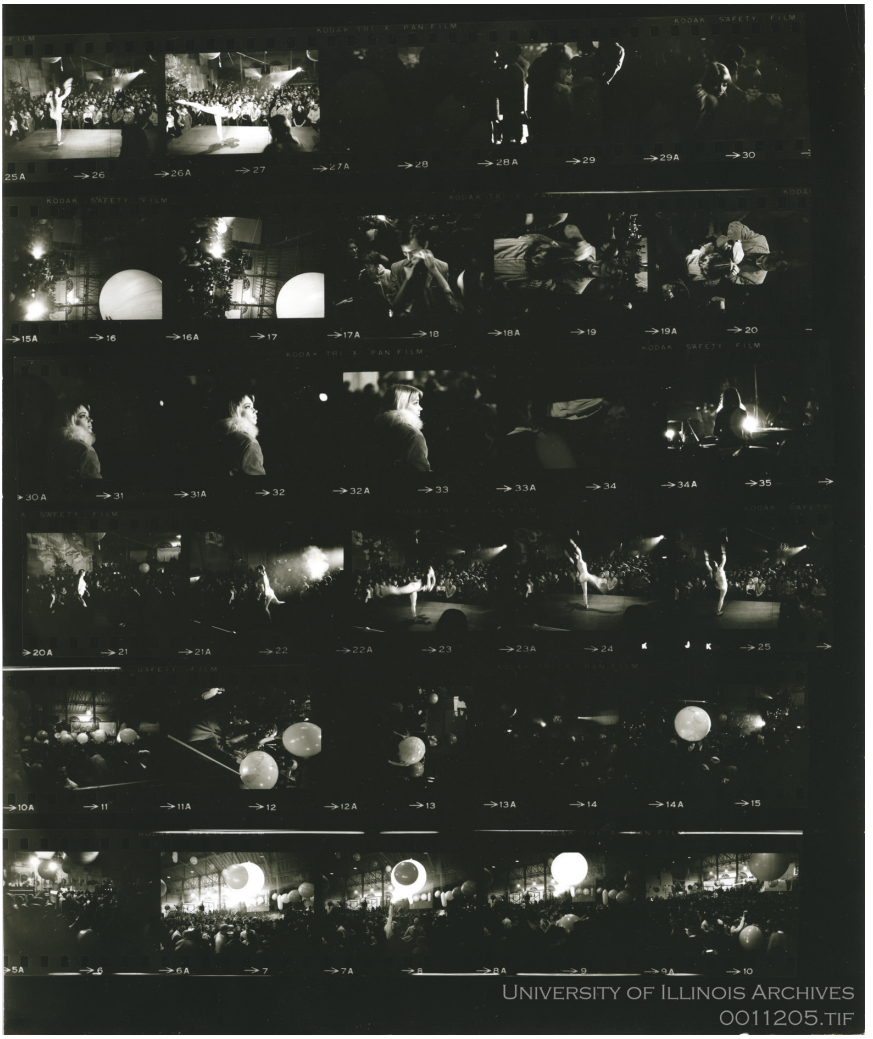

FIGURE 5.1 Photographer unknown, *Musicircus,* 1967. Contact sheet. Courtesy of the University of Illinois Archives

between 8:00 p.m. and 1:00 a.m. on Friday evening in a large campus arena meant for the exhibition of livestock—an enclosed earthen-covered elliptical field surrounded by concrete bleachers. There was no musical score for the composition, which Cage did not register for copyright protection so that it could be performed at no cost subsequently; indeed, no money was exchanged in direct relation to the *Musicircus*: there was no admission price, performance fee, or facilities charge for the use of electricity, heating, etc. The estimated five thousand attendees were free to move about the space as performers

performed simultaneously on various raised platforms. Small ensembles played contemporary compositions; Jocy de Oliveira gave a recital of piano music; a rock band and a jazz band played; Norma Marder sang; Carolyn Brown danced; and Claude Kipnis pantomimed. Ronald Nameth projected films and still images on several screens and upon weather balloons suspended from the rafters; multicolored spotlights shifted in intensity. Occasionally, the entire arena went dark save for the glow of objects coated in luminous paint. The ventilation system was amplified electro-acoustically. All of this as attendees circulated freely, some of whom ate cider donuts and popcorn.[8] The *Musicircus* produced an enormous sound able to be heard outside of the pavilion well-before one entered; its sound, which sometimes might suddenly swell unpredictably in sonic intensity, contained everything—like the thunderclaps Cage admired in James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* (1939). Unintended "objects surge forth" in a *Musicircus*, Cage remarked; and they do so amidst such abundance that they cannot be held in mind or possessed (Cage & Charles, 1981, pp. 147–148).

If, as Cage held in the late-1960s, the only kinds of ideas that were of real interest to him in the arts were "ideas that also work in lives" (Cage, 1969a, p. 10), then what work does Cage's emphasis on abundance—on "quantity not quality"—in his *Musicircus* do in the world? Its profusion of indeterminately occurring sound is in keeping with Cage's "ecological" approach to his work. He aspired to write music, give lectures, and educate in a manner that allowed one "to live in the world in its entirety [rather than] separate fragments or parts of the world." As he said, "We must construct, that is, gather together what exists in a dispersed state. As soon as we give it a try, we realize that everything already goes together" (Cage & Charles, 1981, pp. 215–216). Cage's *Musicircus* makes this premise manifest in its leveling abundance—everything goes together. Moreover, in eradicating the possibility of assigning value to anyone's distinct contribution to a *Musicircus*, the work challenges structures of power (related to cultural production and consumption, but also more broadly) by radically insisting upon equality.

That the composition of *Musicircus*—a work conceived of for an educational institution in the late 1960s—coincided with student unrest and calls for education reform is significant. Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron articulated in 1970 how educational structures were forms of symbolic violence among a broad socio-educational nexus that replicated inequality (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, pp. 11–31). Ivan Illich, who advocated for "self-motivated learning" rather than "schooling," argued that a latent curriculum in all schools fostered the myth that "bureaucracies guided by scientific knowledge are efficient and benevolent" and the myth that "increased production will provide a better life" (Illich, 1971, p. 74). Traditional schools, for Illich, were "designed on

the assumption that there is a secret to everything in life; that the quality of life depends on knowing that secret; that secrets can be known only in orderly successions; and that only teachers can properly reveal these secrets" (Illich, 1971, p. 76). And Paulo Freire criticized the "banking approach" to education in which content narrated by the teacher is merely "deposited" in the student—a dehumanizing dynamic meant "to minimize or annul the students' creative power" so as to preserve that of their oppressors (Freire, 1970, pp. 72–75). The teacher serves as absolute authority; "knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing" and thus is an oppressive régime that "negates education and knowledge as processes of inquiry" (Freire, 1970, p. 72).

Writing some years later and as Kristin Ross has elaborated, Jacques Rancière described this condition—of informed teachers and uninformed students—as a pedagogical fiction based upon a false assumption that the student progresses from ignorance to knowledge, or from a position of inequality to one of equality (Ross, 1991, p. 67). For Rancière—as for Freire, and as for Cage—the teacher must admit their ignorance; they must admit that they know no more or less than the student, who is capable of learning without having anything explained. One must thus *begin* from a position of equality—in which no one is knowledgeable, and no one is ignorant—instead of casting equality as a promise to be later enjoyed by those who have been educated sufficiently. Cage's *Musicircus*—in its abundance—in demanding parity—makes equality a practice rather than a goal. Perhaps this is what it can do as a model for living in and with the world and one another.

Notes

1 Fuller and other consultants, including critic Sybil Moholy-Nagy, architect Paolo Soleri, sociologist Howard Becker, and urban planner Edmund Bacon, were invited to make presentations at the planning committee's weekly meetings in the spring of 1961.

2 Gyo Obata designed a campus of six permanent structures situated around an oblong greenspace. Educational activity was thus separated in a library, student center, and in classroom, communications, science, and administration buildings.

3 *Musicircus* was not scored; however, a manuscript provides details about its first performance on November 17, 1967. See John Cage Collection, Music Division, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

4 R. Buckminster Fuller interview with Mary Emma Harris (1971), 61.12.4, North Carolina Museum of Art, Black Mountain College Research Project, Interviews, State Archives of North Carolina, Western Regional Archives, Asheville, NC.

5 Lubroth, Irwin, 61.12.3, North Carolina Museum of Art, Black Mountain College Research Project, Questionnaires, State Archives of North Carolina, Western Regional Archives, Asheville, NC.

6 There are several widely varied and sometime contradictory accounts of the performance, which William Fetterman summarizes in *John Cage's Theatre Pieces: Notations and Performances* (Harwood Academic Publishers, 1996).
7 Cage wrote the lecture for its first presentation at the Evening School of the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, NY.
8 For an account of the event, see Zumstein (1967) and Kostelanetz (1980).

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CHAPTER 6

"Why Don't You Do Something Good?"

Spectra of Assessment and Institutional Schisms in the Context of English Art Education

Jake Watts

Abstract

This article attempts to map continuums upon which current approaches to assessment in art education operate, specifically within the history and theorization of english art education. It will reexamine an example from St. Martin's Sculpture Course 'A' as it represents a hinge both historically and conceptually that exemplifies polarities on the continuums I will outline. The spectra constituted by the continuums mapped include, discussing intentionalist and/or anti-intentionalist approaches (Bellugi, 2020) to assessment; those which have manifested since the articulation of proceduralist (Danto, 1964; Dickie, 1974) and functionalist conceptualizations of art (Davies, 1990, 2018); it will do so by applying the above critical theories as lenses through which to revisit a particularly radical example of performative assessment from english higher education *Mask* (1972), a project conducted within Sculpture Course 'A', to exemplify how contradictions within art education assessment began to take root within England. Specifically, this article will explore how conflation and misunderstanding of the contrasting positions exemplified within *Mask* constitute a potentially productive but often seemingly unnegotiable paradox within the assessment of art in relation to the dominant educational organizing principles of constructive alignment (Biggs & Tang, 2007). By mapping this issue this article will advocate for a recalibration of assessment in art education which embraces the *diglossic* (Mulholland, 2019) power of the art education institution. One that accommodates the learner and the artefacts of their learning, not in service of an economic functionalism but instead embraces the complexity and subsequent richness of the subject area as being necessarily and procedurally non-conformist.

Keywords

assessment – St. Martin's school of art – Mask Project (1972) –proceduralism – functionalism – intentionalism – constructive alignment – Coldstream reforms – Sculpture Course 'A'

1 First, Principles

Before continuing with this article, I have attempted to outline the theoretical framework by which the observations and assertions which follow are conceived in relation to.

I do not intend to construct unproductive dichotomies (although they may emerge) but I believe mapping differing conceptions of art; how it is organized as an educational endeavour; and, how the learning within this system is interpreted, evaluated and valued (i.e. assessed) can help us locate the issues of dissensus within the teaching of art. By pointing out some of the continuums upon which these concerns sit, and mapping out the nature of the contrasting polarities involved, I hope to identify some productive tensions in which tutors and students can orientate themselves.

When discussing the concept of art and its mediation within this article, I am primarily deploying a definition of the concept via Arthur Danto's (1964) invocation of the artworld and its necessary ability to qualify anything as art, and, George Dickie's (1974, 1984, 1997) unpacking of this procedure as being indebted to the agency of institutional representatives within said artworld to be able to confer the status of art onto an artefact. This does not mean I will be ignoring functionalist definitions of art. The distinction between functionalism and proceduralism has been extensively explored by Stephen Davies (1990, 2018) but the most succinct articulation I can offer is that a functionalist definition of art presumes a function or purpose–most often as having an aesthetic character (Beardsley, 1982) or constituting an aesthetic experience (Zangwill, 2007). Whereas, proceduralism *does not* necessitate that art has a function; yet proceduralism can accommodate a range of functionalist perspectives within its mediation of art, especially within education institutions, but without committing to a singular one.

It is the remit of this collection of essays to explore institutional criticism of art. Here I am interpreting an institution of art education as one which is simultaneously a Durkehiemian actor unto itself endowed with thought, will and purpose (Latour, 1988, p. 384) *and*, as an assemblage of all the individual agents whose community of purpose is the maintenance and perpetuation of the system of art they ascribe to, writ small. As stated above, the institutions of art I am focusing on are further and higher education institutions who organize and accredit the teaching and assessment of art. Institutions which (explicitly or implicitly) operate on the presumption of a proceduralist definition of art. I do so because, aside from proceduralism being one of the most applicable and flexible theorizations of current art practices, a proceduralist conception of art—and the institutions it requires—also accommodates intentionalism and

anti-intentionalism within the discussion and definition of artworks (Livingston, 1998; Hughes, 1999). This in turn creates a logic to teaching and assessing the role of intentionality (or an antithetical position) within art education. The continuum of intentionalism and anti-intentionalism has its theoretical roots in literary studies and aesthetic criticism (Livingston, 1998; Hughes, 1999). It explores the extent to which the intention of an author (or artist, or art student in this instance) is to be considered in the evaluation of a work of art. While an overtly functionalist definition of art does not preclude the inclusion of intention as a factor of evaluating a work of art, as an interpretation and evaluation of a work it is not limited to the intentions of who produced it. Within this article I will identify the ambiguity of how such conceptualizations nest into, or potentially contradict, one another in combination with how this is communicated to students within the current systems of assessment within western art education, can be the basis of persisting bottlenecks in the education of artists.

A significant element of what is often occluded from students within processes of assessment of their learning is the roles of intent and the presumption of its function. Specifically, that more often than not, their learning—not their artwork—are being assessed. The issue of intentionalism within art education teaching and assessment has been a focus of Dina Zoe Belluigi's (2011, 2017) research which is empirical and situated. The critical argument evidenced by these studies is a compelling one and one I intend to abduct into to my own framework and argumentation.

Additionally, I also wish to highlight the scholarship of Susan Orr (2007; Orr & Shreeve, 2018; Bloxham, Boyd & Orr, 2011), which provides the most recent and comprehensive overview of assessment and evaluation in art education within England and Wales (not Scotland or Northern Ireland). Orr and Shreeve (2018, pp. 132–133) state that while most western universities now prioritize the processual aspects of a student's learning journey (via the principles of constructive alignment), this tends to neglect the 'process-product' continuum upon which professional practice as an artist operates. Tutors should support their students to understand and gain experience of, whether the overarching evaluative framework accommodates the artefactual elements (i.e. products) of their learning or not (Orr & Shreeve, 2018, pp. 132–133).

In this sense, the articulations I am mapping remain a hidden curriculum to many art students, especially within (but not exclusive to) the English art education system. My mapping of these issues is an attempt to give shape to the interrelated issues which underwrite the reality of experiencing such assessment processes. By grouping perspectives rarely attended to, but constantly at

play, within educational institutions I hope to demystify and provide a recalibration of these concerns.

One general inference I am positing is that intentionalist forms of art education assessment corresponds most strongly with proceduralist understandings of art making; and inversely anti-intentionalist forms of art education assessment generally share characteristics with functionalist conceptions of art. Further, that these general polarities within assessment paradigms reflect the forms of aesthetic criticism students will be subjected to in other institutions of art beyond educational ones.

In reality, students often have to independently negotiate the spectra between both conceptualizations of art and how much weight each position is given within their institution or course and more broadly beyond these settings. Such an endeavour is rarely articulated to students as a tangible aspect of their education, nor are they made aware of the long tail of this concern and how artists-as-students have since at least the 1960s had to navigate its complexities in some form or another.

Going one step further, I also suggest that these categorizations of arthood and art education assessment also map, in general terms, onto the *diglossic* nature of the art academy. Namely, that of the *ars/technê* etymological root of art embodies a desire for craft, functionality and an anti-intentionalist understanding of art education's role in society, which contrasts (but does not contradict) the *artes liberales* holism and perceived intentionalism of fine art education established from within the medieval university and now more prominently positioned within further and higher education conceptualizations of art education. As Mulholland (2019, pp. 2–3) advocates, the distance between these articulations is not an aporia, rather it is the source of art education's agency. Engaging with this paradox as a productive proposition can be form of power. The current models of assessment within western universities do not necessarily harness this potential power, rather they delimit it and are inimical to it.

I am wary that grouping these associations may universalize and flatten distinctions between these approaches (however well-intentioned). This is not my aim, as I know from experience as a lecturer and program director this only leads to consternation and misunderstanding between tutors and students. I will use this article to focus on a singular example from England's art education history to exemplify the confusion contained in a single exchange in relation to the institutional histories and theories which produced it. Everything that follows is secondary research collaged into, what I think, can be a useful exemplative analysis applicable to current efforts to assess artistic learning within further and higher art education.

2 Unmasking the Issue

To exemplify some of abstracted ideas outlined above I've decided to reframe (somewhat anachronistically) an example of how each of the polarities I've attempted to plot, map onto a historic example from english art education. This will allow me to contextualize some of the social and institutional conditions which precede and proceed the example given in an applied manner.

The example is from a then-student David Millidge's personal documentation of their participation in the Mask (1972) project on Sculpture Course 'A' at St. Martin's School of Art. During the project students were allocated individual spaces and given the option to prepare work and then allow their tutors into the space, if allowed in tutors then donned bag-like masks and began performatively mock-evaluating and interrogating the student and their work (Keshvani, 2020, p. 282).

The emergence of Sculpture Course 'A' was possible due to a regulatory interregnum within English further and higher art education. The typical historical account provided of this period often starts and ends with an invocation and discussion of the 'Coldstream reforms'; The Coldstream reform is a term generally used to refer to the first report of the National Advisory Council on Art Education (established 1959) chaired by Sir William Coldstream. By examining the subsequent overhauls in the sector primarily through the lens of the 'Coldstream Reforms' practitioners can sometimes tend to overlook the interconnectedness of such reforms with the municipal massification of art education, which preceded it and the expansionism of higher education that proceeded it, along with their contextual implications.

I will attend to some of the earlier associated developments during the Victorian era of English art education further into this article. For now, let's focus on the period generally inferred when discussing the Coldstream reforms. This period included the creation of 'new universities' mandated by the report of the Committee on Higher Education (aka the Robbins Report) authored by Lord Lionel Charles Robbins (1963), which was quickly followed by the 'binary policy' in England and Wales, which initiated an overt split between universities (new and old) and technical colleges, which began in 1965 and led to the establishment of 30 'polytechnics' in 1968 (Pratt, 1997, p. 2). This binarism only reified and exacerbated some of the dichotomies I've attempt to sketch out in the first section of this article. English Victorian Art Schools were largely subsumed into the new polytechnic institutions, it was primarily these institutions who would interpret and apply the National Advisory Council on Art Education's first report's advisory suggestions and would be regulated by the

subsequent National Council for Diplomas in Art and Design (NCDAD) aka the 'Summerson Council', chaired by Sir John Summerson through the 1960s into the 1970s. It was this body who adjudicated on which institutions became accredited to assess and confer qualifications in Art and Design in England and Wales. It also established and upheld the regulatory framework of how assessment was conducted within the accredited institutions. This body ushered in the Diploma in Art and Design, a three-year degree-equivalent qualification which came on stream in 1964 and superseded the prior National Diploma in Design. Itself another attempted reform in the structuration of english art education. Beth Williamson and Hester Westley (2015) have highlighted in their research into english artist and educator William Johnstone, the shift from the NDD to DipAD is an oft under researched and overlooked transition. Of particular note, is Johnstone's role in establishing the Basic Design approach to teaching art in England whose students (such as Richard Hamilton) would have an active role in shaping and informing the first report of the National Advisory Council on Art Education. Although I will not be exploring this historical trajectory in depth, it is worth acknowledging the intermittent ebb and flow of attempted reforms within english art education have tended to create opportunities for educators to productively address and harness the diglossic power of their subject. While often utilised examples (like Basic Design, Groundcourse, or Sculpture Course 'A') tend to become exceptional due to the proceeding regulatory neutralisation of their efforts, but their exceptionalism can provide models (mental and/or practical) for navigating the bottlenecks of larger structuration issues in further and higher education related to the assessment of art in the current.

The Mask project on Sculpture Course 'A' was only conducted once, as the concerns staff had regarding their student's preparation to receive criticism (performative, symbolic or otherwise) was unfounded (Keshvani, 2020, p. 282). The approach contrived by tutors was a response to the requirement from England's central academic body to evaluate their students as part of the then new diploma in art and design. St. Martin's was one of a relatively small selection of institutions and courses given permission to accredit students within the then newly established qualification structure. Sculpture Course 'A' took a behaviorist and cybernetics-influenced approach to teaching involved a range of radical interventions into teaching art such as locking students in rooms to silently explore material processes; fore fronting theory in advance of practice, and the integration of a non-teleological assumption to what students might produce through their studies along with a politicized and culturally critical approach to studying the history of art (Westley, 2010, pp. 31–35).

I have chosen Mask as an encapsulation of the approaches to teaching and assessment characteristic of Sculpture Course 'A' because it offers us a productive historical hinge from which we can reexamine the current moment. Mask exemplifies the specific schism manifesting within english art and art education at this time. The performance by the tutors was intended to invert and exaggerate the absurdity of applying functionalist judgement to their students due the philosophy of their teaching and their lack of expectation regarding whether a student would produce an object necessarily recognizable as, or conferred the status of, art.

The course has now received infamous status as a radical attempt to reevaluate, and challenge, the epistemological terms on which sculpture (and more broadly fine art) could be taught and assessed within England. The unanimity of the perceived success of the course's approach, along with the authoring of the course's historicization, is contested. This contestation is highlighted in Marina Vishmidt's article *Creation Myth* (2010), which reported on a symposium on the 'A' Course, which reconvened tutors and students after nearly 40 years, and the diverging accounts of the long-term affective impact of the pedagogy implemented during the course. The issue of diverging accounts was further compounded by the late withdrawal of Kardia's participation in, and permissions related to, the production of *The Locked Room: Four Years that Shook Art Education 1968–73*, a collection of archival materials and reflections from tutors and students by Rozemin Keshvani in 2020.

3 A Function of the System?

G: Why don't you do something good?
D: I think that's a ridiculous question.
P: Do you consider this good?
D: I don't wish to evaluate it.
P: What's good about it? Tell me what's good about it?
D: Well you tell me what's good about it?
G: There's nothing good about it.
D: That's your point of view.
G: Nonsense.
(From David Millidge personal Archive, reproduced in Keshvani, 2020, pp. 290–291).

The quote above is excerpted from pages 3–4 of transcript produced by student David Millidge (D) from a recording of his interactions with tutors Garth Evans (G) and Peter Atkins (P) during Mask. The quote ironicizes a lineage of english art education assessment. Specifically, the functionalist approach rooted in the preceding educational regimes which was based on aesthetic judgement of artistic learning via the artefacts produced as teleologically assumed standards of practice. The quote satires such assessment, boiling down evaluation of the work to a dichotomy of good/bad, of pass/fail, of a presumed performance by a student of a predetermined competency.

England's government had previously established what we could now term a functionalist approach to assessment. This was part of their efforts to massify art education across the nation, this was initiated when a Central budget for Art Education was established via a Westminster Parliamentary select committee in 1835 (Macdonald, 1970, p. 60) and resulted in the establishment of their first School of Design (1836). There followed a rapid expansionism of municipal art school buildings and institutions across England combined with the authoring and implementation of a state authored curriculum. While lobbying for an opening out of art education from the bourgeois and aristocratic clutches of the academy was well-intentioned, in practicality, the system reproduced the ossified curriculum of the academy of the prior three centuries. The misguided attempt to establish a national system based on a ringfenced and largely aristocratic body of knowledge had been intended by the Westminster government to establish an economically competitive culture of applied arts production which could support colonial expansionism and industrialization along with cultivating the burgeoning middle classes sense of taste within England. As articulated by Romans (2007, p. 219), the founding of the 1835/36 select committee was made up of a mix of Whig Ministers with more radical aspirations to instate a liberal public art education were convened with members of the East India Company and Tory Ministers hostile to the needs of industry and with conservative conceptions of arts social function. Under these auspices, the new School for Design was established and directed by the Department for Practical Art under the remit of the Board for Trade (Quinn, 2013, p. 216). What Quinn has convincingly articulated via his research into this period is that these philosophical and ethical dimensions largely map onto a dichotomy of 'cultured' and 'uncultured' attitudes towards art (Quinn, 2013, p. 219), which later councils (such as the Coldstream and Summerson councils) had to attempt to resolve, or at least address in the construction of new qualification and priorities. Quinn is particularly adept at tethering this onto the

spectra of 'studio' and 'non-studio' courses within english Higher Education, suggesting that the fundamental issues present in the conception of public art education persist and are reified within each curricula reform. As Quinn outlines, the issue of art education's intended function within an english context largely breaks down the line of private/public capital and its influence on the perceived impetuses of the art school system as it was established and I would argue equally so with its later iterations. Macdonald (1970, p. 60) goes further stating that the establishment of England's national art education was perceived as an "economic necessity" and would not have occurred otherwise. Thus, the specific function underpinning this predominantly functionalist system of art was to open the arts up to the public, but, only to the extent that it served the nation's economy. The initial principle had been to do this via the creation of art schools as *de facto* trade schools, Macdonald (1970, p. 176) notes that the pretence towards the newly established art schools training artisans for trade was quickly and effectively dropped after 1864 and instead the curricula of the new schools made a turn towards the aesthetics movement. This is another transitory moment embodying a consistent sway back and forth for a stake to the control the function of art in the English context which would continue to play out over the next century (and continues to do so to this day). It is a contestation which was, and continues to be, particularly poor at embracing the *diglossic* potential of art as a compatible endeavour, instead the history of these reforms primarily records the slot rattling to the extremes of continuums on which art's social function in England has been predicated.

One of the earliest and most prominent examples of the overly economically functionalist reifications of this idea was the instating of the 'South Kensington' curriculum after 1836, which was in full effect by 1852. This system was principally developed at the Slade School of Art by Henry Cole (Brown, 1912) and rolled out across England as an attempt to standardise accreditation in almost exclusively vocational training (i.e. a monoglossic interpretation of *ars/technê*). This included a set of 23 stages of drawing exam established by Cole's second-in-command Richard Redgrave (Burton, 2020, p. 13). Such assessment was indicative of what Houghton (2016, pp. 109–110) refers to as the era of the 'academic curriculum'. Royal Academicians actively attempted to import their curriculum principles into the new art schools, which centred a craft-focused proficiency in drawing into the curriculum and championed this as the transferability of these practices to trade applications as the means by which the new art schools of England would be economically valuable. This impetus ran contra to the initial intentions of Benjamin Robert Haydon, the original petitioner of parliament for the creation of public art schools (Macdonald, 1970, p. 60). The move towards the South Kensington system did not occur unopposed in England, with the largest critic of the purely *ars/technê* functionalist

curriculum, and proponent of a more liberal arts education, being John Ruskin. Ruskin questioned and criticised Cole's curriculum as unromantic and unimaginative approach to art instruction (Burton, 2020, p. 13). Here the dichotomy between, rather consolidation of, *ars/techn*ê and *artes liberales* overtly manifests. Cole's attempts to subordinate art to a function of craft servicing industry and denying art as a potentially expansive enterprise may have been relatively short-lived but its impact in shaping the sociological imagination of what art education can be has cast a long shadow.

4 All Part of the Process?

> D: I don't know, it's not a work of art.
> G: How do you know it's not a work of art?
> D: I don't know.
> G: How do you know it's not a work of art? You don't know whether it's art or not?
> D: No.
> G: Why don't you know?
> D: Cause I don't care.
> G: What, how do you know that it's not art? Are you an artist? Is this what is art?
> P: Do you make art?
> G: What are you smiling for?
> D: ……. think it's rather amusing.
> (From David Millidge personal Archive, reproduced in Keshvani, 2020: 290–291)

Although Sculpture Course 'A' had been intent on skewering its predecessors, through its behaviorist deconstructive individualist approach to teaching and assessment it, modelled a desire for, or at least highlighted the gap into which, the now ubiquitous, constructivist learner-centered model of assessment could be projected. This is a model which mandates learning outcomes and the assessment of the learner's intentionalism as being the predominant way art education can be standardized and given equal footing to its neighboring disciplines. This issue of over-assessing the person is not unique to art education, yet because it cuts to the core of how art was invented as distinct from craft forms of vocational knowledge but remains tethered to them (Shiner, 2001) it presents the fundamentally sticky issue of how teaching and assessment within the subject can vary, drift and ultimately undermine one another.

Intentionalism can be identified across many cultural practices but within further and higher education an overinvestment in its applicability has most recently manifested as the acquiescence to the naturalization of constructive alignment as the de facto framework for assessing and accrediting students in anglophone institutions of further and higher education (Biggs & Tang, 2007). The mantra of the student constructing meaning through learning to the extent they become an arbiter of their discipline, is now seemingly unquestionable. Despite its dominance, constructive alignment is a relatively new phenomenon within further and higher education which has swept across the majority of western education institutions from Australia to Alaska over the past twenty years. Its emergence is predicated on the constructivist model of education. The proponents of which, such as John Dewey, were attempting to remove education from the clutches of functionalist agendas dictated by political whims and economic policy across the twentieth century.

The shift towards constructive alignment has not occurred ex nihilo, nor has it not gone unchallenged. As Orr and Shreeve (2018, p. 127) point out, Elliott Eisner (1983) a north American educational theorist (and disciple of John Dewey and passionate advocate of art education) challenged the rising ubiquity of educational outcome-based teaching in and assessment (the precursor to constructive alignment), precisely because it attempts to simplify complexity through assuming the possibility of a (somewhat pseudo) scientific inductive form of prediction from which to gauge a learner's proficiency exists. Such a presumption is predicated on any given taught subject being a complicated but stable matter. This might apply to arts curricula if it was still a purely functionalist endeavour, whose intended function remained as that of Victorian England, one which prizes reproducibility (i.e. fidelity through the performance of copying) for industry. The inception of art necessitates more than the monoglossia of such a mode of production, which has only been further emphasized since the emergence of proceduralism has facilitated the conferral of the status of art to anything. This means art education also necessitates fundamental unpredictability and undermines the notion of it as a reproduceable performance that can be standardized. Here the importance of clearly teaching and assessing intentionalist elements of artmaking becomes pronounced. It is the incorporation of intentions into assessment of a student that are underwritten by the proceduralist definition of art. It is this same point which the heterogeneity of students' self-defined functionalist agendas is sustained, whether they are cognisant of this or not.

While an outcome-based approach accommodates intentionalism, it often struggles to also accommodate the diglossic desire to assess the artefact and intention together, or even acknowledge their interrelated co-constitution. As Bellugi (2022) has demonstrated in her empirical studies, one of the most

significant points of dissensus between students and tutors within assessment in art education regards when and how intention or an artefact start and stop being considered, and why. This is before delving into the range of intentionalisms that exist, as outlined via Stephen Davies in footnote 2 of this article, and could be deployed by an assessor, further complicating the clarity of what type of intention is being assessed within the interpretation and evaluation of functional aspects of a student's submission (if at all).

I do not intend to excuse all art educators from their responsibility to clarify these distinctions for their students but as I've tried to outline here, the ability to do so—regardless of how clear a tutor may be—will to some extent be undermined by the self-defeating nature of constructive alignment's need to simplify the complexity of an educational experience, a point exacerbated by art education's inherent need for explicitly unpredictable outcomes. Constructive alignment's self-defeating dominance has largely been used to reify institutional doxa into the form of regulatory documents who have then been imbued with the status of unquestionable art educational dogma. In this sense, the current regulatory moment in further and higher education within England is not far removed from the 23-stage drawing examination of the South Kensington system, only now its intended function is now dressed in neoliberal rhetoric of the individual learner who is presumed to be homo economicus. It is this dissonance which tends to alienate students and tutors from their shared community of purpose, that of learning how to explore the diglossic potential and power of art.

5 Spectra at the Feast

After England's Further and Higher Education Act of 1992, its art schools have only further been subsumed into efforts of standardization within western education models. Initially, within this process, institutions of art education may have been specters at the feast of the university-centered educational regulation. When art schools initially became subsumed into wider university structures, they also adopted the university's existing outcome-based models of assessment. While initially it seemed that university assessment culture could prove sympathetic to assessing the procedural and intentionalist forms of art-making, the overzealous commitment to learner-centered assessment within further and higher education has disbalanced the relationship between art education and its neighboring disciplines. This is because artistic learning isn't a purely person-centered endeavor, it is diglossic and requires a more equitable balance between person, process and product to meaningfully be applicable beyond an educational context.

I suspect another wave of state initiated institutional reforms are required. Reforms which critique the shortcomings of the current dogma, but not by sliding back towards the *ars/technê* end of the continuum. Intra and extra institutional critique, largely enacted via the flat institutionalism of alternative art schools and similar initiatives proliferated within the educational turn, has proved largely ineffectual at impacting assessment regulation within further and higher education and has seemingly abandoned it as a site of potential amelioration. I anticipate what is proposed next will need to codify a more overtly *diglossic* engagement with what it means to make art and assess those efforts. If this can be achieved, then the spectra of conflicting curricula and conceptualizations of what art is and how it might be taught from the past 200 years may more productively co-exist. What that may look and feel like is hard to anticipate, a more productive question might be how do we take the first steps to make the space of possibility exist for something else to emerge?

Notes

1 Specifically, Danto's concept of 'the art world', not Danto's anti-intentionalist approach to aesthetic criticism. The distance between Danto and Dickie on this matter is pronounced. Catherine Abell adeptly unpacks (2019, p. 136) the issue that Danto's rebuttals to Dickie fall into a trap of asserting that artworks across time share a generalisable function that they perform which non-art objects do not also perform, stating the functionalist schema is limited once "one must provide an account of what it is for an artwork to have meaning of the kind distinctive of (good) artworks, and then show both that all (good) artworks meet the account's criteria, and that all things that are not (good) artworks do not" (ibid). Abell's highlighting of 'good' as a qualifier will be useful later in this article.

2 There are several subsets of intentionalism which engage with the varying angles from which forms of intentionalism can be applied in the interpretation of artworks. In Davies more recent work (2018) he breaks down and considers the strengths and weakness of three subdivisions: 'Actual Intentionalism' that is predicated on what claims the author makes for their work and an interpretation of the work in its initial context; 'Hypothetical Intentionalism' that imagines the authors intentions and can unmoor the work from its initial context; and 'Value-maximising' (aka. conventionalism) which builds off of hypothetical intentionalism to interpret the work in a way that maximises its value as art (pp. 411)

3 "Bottleneck" is a specialist term within the scholarship of teaching and learning deployed by Middendorf & Shopkow (2018) within their "decoding the disciplines" methodology for reviewing and enhancing curricula. A bottleneck refers to assumed forms of knowledge such as mental models, or mapping of a discipline (often presumed to be tacitly communicated) that are not explicitly stated by an expert (i.e. tutor) to a novice (i.e. student) to help them professionalise via their studies.

4 Abduct here is not used to designate the act of taking away, it is instead an adverb for abductive reasoning. Abductive reasoning being a speculative form of reasoning which combines existing methods and ideas to produce a potentially new understanding, idea or approach to a phenomenon.

5 In am specifically invoking the artes liberales trivium, i.e. the 'lower' studies of grammar, logic and rhetoric.

6 St. Martins later merged with the Central School of Art and Design in 1989 and is now referred to as Central Saint Martin's College of Art and Design.

7 This report advocated for the establishment of a new qualification, the Diploma in Art & Design, which would supersede the existing National Diploma in Design (established in 1946). The council suggested that the new qualification should be a degree-equivalent qualification; as part of its formalisation, the new diploma courses should aim towards a liberal education in the subject, i.e. studied in its broader context (Strand, 1989, p. 11). This manifested with the recommendation that the new qualifications should include a minimum of 15% of the total courses being studied must include the History of Art and 'complimentary studies' (Strand, 1987, p.12). This was initially advocated for on the committee for by Professor Nikolaus Pevsner (see Pevsner, 1940), who helped establish the broad basis for these studies as a cornerstone of advocating for art as an academic, not vocational, qualification (McLoughlin, 2019, pp. 182–183).

8 Sculpture Course 'A' was not the first to employ such thinking and approaches in England, it was preceded by the (arguably) even more radical Groundcourse established and led by Roy Ascott at Ealing and Ipswich Colleges of Art between 1961-67. Kate Sloan has produced a brilliant and comprehensive study which provides extensive insight into the Groundcourse (see Sloan, 2019).

9 See footnote 7 for a more extensive description of how this manifested across the 1960s.

10 The private/public divide of education remains engrained in the english education at all levels. It is an english choice to maintain this division. This is starkly reinforced when neighbouring nations such as Scotland instead perceiving higher education as a common good which its citizens need not become indebted to the state to access. Only during the post-war reconstruction period was the private/public attitude challenged (although not entirely eradicated) in England, with this contestation only lasting roughly 40 years before the introduction of tuition fees in 1998 via the Teaching and Higher Education Act.

11 This form of examination was curtailed in England by 1915 (Macdonald, 1970, p. 304)

12 The function of this particular functionalist curriculum being to service industry via the teaching of academic principles established in academies of art.

13 While Millidge's archive was reproduced in Keshvani's (2020) book, a broader, publicly accessible digital archive of Sculpture 'A' course materials is held and maintained by the MayDay Rooms in London (n.d.).

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CHAPTER 7

Coimbra's Plastic Arts Circle in the 1970s

An Experimental Art Educational Laboratory in the Framework of the Traditional University of Coimbra

Isabel Nogueira

Abstract

Founded in 1958 within the traditional, conservative University of Coimbra in Portugal, Coimbra's Plastic Arts Circle (CAPC) was remarkably active in the 1970s, especially after the Portuguese Revolution of April 25, 1974, and the democratization of the regime. With the aim of promoting contemporary visual arts and raising public awareness for the realization of related causes, CAPC fostered relevant experimental, performative and educational programs and activities, which are the subject of this article. Special attention is paid to the 1970s, when the collective was an important and innovative field of experimentation in a country that had just opened to democracy (1974) and was emerging from 48 years of dictatorship. Contact with the international neo-avant-garde was extremely difficult under the conditions of the time, as it was the first attempt to effectively activate and establish democratization in the artistic field in a rural and geographically peripheral country. The CAPC had a remarkable impact on critical, progressive art education and continues to be active up to the present day, albeit in a modern and international context.

Keywords

CAPC (Círculo de Artes Plásticas de Coimbra) – Portuguese contemporary art – neo-avant-garde – Carnation Revolution – performance art

1 Revolution, Democracy and Political Culture

This study deals with the situation of art and the importance of art education for the change in art production after the Portuguese Revolution of April 25, 1974. The political openness that emerged was not only linked to the expansion of public and collective spaces but also to the concept of Celebration (Festa),

which encompassed sharing and artistic experimentation. Indeed, collective events, particularly in the realm of visual arts, were a constant feature of those years. The opening of the regime, which had political, social, cultural, and artistic repercussions, seemed to set in motion a parallel movement in the visual arts. This cultural movement was evident in several collective events that were significant not only for the period but also for the history of Portuguese art, as they intersected with the specific revolutionary moment and the broader international neo-avant-garde movement. Many of these events also had an intrinsic educational function at a time when art and culture needed to expand and mature. The final years of the corporative dictatorship, known as the Marcelist Spring (1968–1974), were marked by mounting crisis. The political and economic turmoil, exacerbated by the 1973 global oil crisis, evolved into a social crisis in a country that was increasingly claustrophobic and depressed. It is crucial to recognize that the Portuguese dictatorship, while ideologically aligned with Italian fascism, diverged aesthetically by adopting a reactionary stance, rooted in the context of a poor, predominantly illiterate, and rural society. Peripherality, ruralization, and dictatorship undoubtedly formed a challenging context for artistic and intellectual activity (Nogueira, 2024). But what was happening in the visual arts during these years?

The 1960s were characterized by a pronounced creative individualism, evidenced by a range of developments emerging from pop art and conceptual art. This period saw the rise of new figuration, which often continued into informal art, op art, land art, conceptual art, minimalism, process art, performance art, assemblage, and more. Artists aimed to be genuinely modern, despite their geographic and political constraints, although asserting this modernity was naturally easier outside the oppressive confines of a dictatorship. This diversification of artistic approaches was largely influenced by international contacts that were facilitated by emigrated artists, brief visits to major artistic centers, foreign specialized magazines, direct or indirect connections with journalists covering important art events abroad, and the rare exhibitions of internationally renowned artists held in Portugal.

Between the late 1950s and the early 1970s, large numbers of Portuguese artists emigrated to Europe and occasionally to the United States. An important factor driving this emigration was the financial support provided by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation from 1957 onwards (Nogueira, 2022). Among the various artists who left the country were prominent figures such as Alberto Carneiro, Ana Hatherly, Ângelo de Sousa, Costa Pinheiro, Eduardo Batarda, Fernando Lemos, Graça Pereira Coutinho, João Cutileiro, João Vieira, Jorge Martins, Jorge Pinheiro, José Barrias, Júlio Pomar, Lourdes Castro, Manuel Alvess. Helena Vieira da Silva had relocated to Paris early on and became a

French citizen in 1956. Most of these artists settled in Munich, Paris, and London. Exhibitions in Portugal showcasing the work of these and other Portuguese artists living abroad likely provided a crucial link to current artistic trends, especially in a country where information was scarce and working conditions were restrictive.

During the Marcelist era, official interest in modern and contemporary art was predictably low and contact with art from the United States and Eastern Europe was limited. Thus, the official art events organized by the National Secretariat of Information (SNI), which was transformed into the State Secretariat of Information and Tourism (SEIT) in 1968, were rather mediocre, as were the National Art Salons (1966–1969). In 1969, university students (felt most strongly by the students of Coimbra) took to the streets to protest against the oppressive regime, to which the government responded with imprisonment and forced conscription into the Colonial War. By 1972, repression and censorship had intensified, along with a rise in political arrests. The clandestine struggle against the regime grew stronger across intellectual, student, labor, and military circles

The Revolution of April 25, 1974, ended an anti-democratic, colonialist, isolated, and authoritarian regime. Portugal maintained the longest dictatorship in 20th-century Europe and possessed the most enduring colonial empire, extending across four continents. The Revolution was instigated by the military, disillusioned by the protracted colonial wars, and by the more or less clandestine actions of the anti-fascist movement over the years. This pivotal event opened the door for democracy in Portugal. The subsequent democratization process led to the stabilization provided by parliamentary democracy within a still dynamic society. The first constitutional government was elected in July 1976.

Despite the profound socio-political changes brought about by the Carnation Revolution, its impact on the development of art was less substantial than one might expect. One reason for this was that the structures in the institutional context, that is, in universities and museum settings, were deeply rooted. On the other hand, it was also due to the lack of a sufficient number of artists who could have brought about immediate change. Following the Revolution, only those artists who had left Portugal for overtly political reasons returned. Most of those who had emigrated mainly for artistic, intellectual, practical or educational reasons did not return, which illustrates the continuing problems in Portuguese cultural and artistic life. The change that has nonetheless taken place since the 1960s could only be driven forward by artists who felt committed to modernism regardless of their political or geographical context. This development stands in contrast to the assumption—often held during the

revolutionary period—that political upheaval would inevitably lead to artistic innovation.

The need for reform in art education was clear, although significant changes from official side did not occur until the 1990s. In particular, the Schools of Fine Arts in Lisbon and Porto were elevated to faculties and thus integrated into the university sector. Equally significant was the creation of Ar.Co in 1973, in Lisbon, originally conceived as an alternative to the Lisbon School of Fine Arts and offering a different educational approach (Nogueira, 2007, pp. 131–136). Our focus, however, is not on the universities of Lisbon or Porto, but rather on the University of Coimbra—originally founded in Lisbon, in 1288, and relocated to Coimbra in 1537, has consistently been one of the country's most prominent centers for scientific inquiry and classical studies—which, notablyParte inferior do formulário, never had a Faculty of Fine Arts. It was within this context that the striking experimentalism of CAPC emerged vividly in the 1970s. The 1970s were, in fact—contrary to the assumptions of more traditional historiography—among the most modern and artistically consequential decades of 20th-century Portugal (Nogueira, 2022).

Another important reason for the delayed change in art, which was similarly institutionally constituted, was the lack of museums of modern and contemporary art in Portugal for several years during this period. The Museu Nacional de Arte Contemporânea—Museu do Chiado, originally founded in May 1911, faced numerous challenges and did not open to the public until July 1994. In July 1983, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation inaugurated the Centro de Arte Moderna (Modern Art Center, CAM), which later adopted the name of the Foundation's first president and was henceforth known as the Centro de Arte Moderna José de Azeredo Perdigão. Additionally, a temporary contemporary art museum was established in the Vizela-Riba d'Ave Mansion, also known as the Serralves Villa, in May 1987. This initiative eventually evolved into the Serralves Contemporary Art Museum in 1999, marking a significant development in the contemporary art landscape in Portugal. In 1976, also in Porto, the CAC (Centre for Contemporary Art) was established, operating between 1976 and 1980 within the Soares dos Reis National Museum. It was not a contemporary art museum per se, but rather a space dedicated to contemporary art within an institution primarily focused on naturalism.

Immediately following the April 25, 1974, Revolution, the state proved incapable of developing a coherent and structuring cultural policy, resulting in the continued fragmentation of efforts among various actors within the artistic field. In this context, it can be concluded that the core issue lay in a certain fragility inherent to Portuguese cultural and artistic history, primarily manifesting in the difficulty of establishing innovative institutions—a constellation

of spaces, practices, and routines capable of fostering a fertile environment for sustained and consolidated artistic experimentation. Indeed, these challenges and deficiencies could not be simply overcome by the April Revolution and the subsequent democratization of the regime, as they are rooted in a persistent sense of political, institutional, and cultural modernity that has been repeatedly deferred, thus becoming increasingly difficult to structure and implement. But have these poor conditions completely prevented the emergence of contemporary artistic work?

2 Visual Arts in the Context of Democracy

Although there was no general restructuring in the arts and their institutions, the state at least supported some cultural promotion campaigns aimed at uniting the Armed Forces Movement, the National Salvation, the population and artists. One notable initiative was the creation of the *Painel do 10 de Junho* [June 10th Mural] in 1974, a tribute to the April Revolution organized by the Democratic Movement of Visual Artists. This large mural, divided into three tiers and comprising 48 square panels, symbolized the number of years the dictatorship had endured. It was destroyed in a fire at the Belém Gallery in 1981. In the immediate aftermath of the Revolution, there was a period of intense, militant engagement from artists, who were committed to a culture "in the service of the People" (Chicó, 1984, pp. 20–21; Nogueira, 2024; Couceiro, 2004). This era was characterized by slogans such as "Fascist art is bad for the eyes" (Marcelino Vespeira)—a motto announced at an event organized by the Democratic Movement of Visual Artists on May 28, 1974, at Palácio Foz—, "Fight aggressivity with creativity," and "Aesthetic quality is progressive; mediocrity is reactionary" (Salette Tavares).

From this decisive moment for a new way of engaging with public space emerged the joint actions of two prominent groups of artists who were committed to freedom of intervention and creative expression. Both groups, which were closely associated with CAPC, particularly through the artists' movement, attempted to adopt Wolf Vostell's concept of the "artist educator". This concept assumes that artists can contribute to the education and integration of the public and the community through their work. The "Acre Group" (1974–1977) included Alfredo Queiroz Ribeiro, Clara Menéres, Joaquim Lima Carvalho, among others (Sabino, 2021), and the "Puzzle Group" (1975–1981) included Albuquerque Mendes, Armando Azevedo, Carlos Carreiro, Dario Alves, Graça Morais, Jaime Silva, João Dixo, Pedro Rocha, and later, Fernando Pinto Coelho and Gerardo Burmester. Both groups, in their own way, embodied a

plastic-performative language with a conceptual orientation and a focus on social and artistic intervention, representing an innovative approach in the Portuguese context. About the "Acre Group" and its activities, the curator, artist and creator Ernesto de Sousa, who had developed a vague notion of experimentalism and a fascination with the transformative potential of art and who became a key figure in many of the most important activities and exhibitions of the 1970s, stated in 1975:

> Acre Group was built after 25 April as a serene and conscious attitude. [...] it is a project, and only projects are consistent. Today. Like the revolution. Everything else is outdated. When Acre Group rolled out a strip of plastic from the top of Torre dos Clérigos it was the dazzling body of Clara Semide that extended out. [...] As well as [the body] of other companions. And our own, as we start to understand all this. Extended (by the invented appropriation) of Nasoni's architecture, of Oporto, of the City, of the Country, of Dream, of Utopia. And this is worth as much, or more, than painting the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. (Sousa, 1975, p. 41)

The "Puzzle Group", founded in December 1975, made its first public appearance with an intervention at the Alvarez Gallery in Porto in early 1976, and was subsequently presented to a wider audience at the 3rd International Art Encounter in Póvoa de Varzim in August 1976. In 1977, Egídio Álvaro wrote a commentary on the group's activities:

> I think that underneath the whole activity of the Group there is a polemic attitude. [...] While in the last two years the stress has been exclusively on political intervention, PUZZLE dare to talk about themselves, about family and everyday problems, about the problems of art, about current myths and taboos (the national flag is just one among many) and even, and also, about politics, which is seen from an ironic, critical, dangerous point of view. [...] The primacy of ideas over technique. [...] For all this it seems to me that PUZZLE Group occupy a position at the avant-garde of the art field. (Álvaro, 1977, pp. 18–20)

During this period, a particularly notable event was the series of International Art Encounters, orchestrated primarily by critic, curator, and gallerist Egídio Álvaro in collaboration with the Alvarez Gallery, and widely publicized by *Revista de Artes Plásticas*. These encounters commenced in 1974 in Valadares and continued in Viana do Castelo the following year, subsequently moving to

Póvoa do Varzim in 1976, and concluding in Caldas da Rainha in 1977. The primary aim of these events was to convene both national and international artists—including Alberto Carneiro, Ângelo de Sousa, Carlos Barreira, Christian Parisot, Espiga Pinto, Fernando Lanhas, João Dixo, Manoel Barbosa, Miloslav Moucha, Orlan, Pineau, Serge III Oldenbourg, Shirley Cameron & Roland Miller, Tomek Kawiak, and Yokoyama, among others—in a series of round tables, debates, interventions, and exhibitions. These gatherings addressed pivotal topics such as "Art and Revolution" and "New Trends and the Avant-Garde" (Álvaro, 1975, pp. 8–18).

3 CAPC: Facilitating Collective, Educational, and Public Engagement

One of the most active collectives during this period was the Círculo de Artes Plásticas de Coimbra [Coimbra Plastic Arts Circle] (CAPC). Founded in 1958, CAPC aimed to promote contemporary visual arts and strengthen public commitment to their appreciation through a series of experimental, performative, and educational activities (Nogueira, 2005, pp. 169–182). These experimental efforts were closely linked to the work of de Sousa. One of the first encounters between CAPC and de Sousa took place in 1972 at the Ogiva Gallery in Óbidos on the occasion of the gallery's second anniversary. At this event, de Sousa presented and discussed images from Documenta 5 (1972), where he had met and interviewed Joseph Beuys. This conference, which saw vigorous participation from CAPC members, was instrumental in fostering further collaboration. The encounter also inspired de Sousa to write one of his first critical texts about the Coimbra collective:

> An intervention-like-the-name-of-Joseph-Beuys, which could have turned sour. But that is how it can go when one finds valid interlocutors instead of a passive, masochistic audience which even applauds and pretends to feel insulted. The Círculo de Belas-Artes/Fine Arts Circle (is this really their name?) de Coimbra were present, and their presence enlivened a DIALOGUE that was exceedingly more important than many ex-cathedra pedagogical flights. A dialogue that perhaps promises a whole future. (Sousa, 1973, p. 4)

Indeed, a highly productive collaborative workspace emerged among de Sousa, Alberto Carneiro, António Barros, Armando Azevedo, João Dixo, Rui Órfão, Túlia Saldanha, and other artists.

FIGURE 7.1 *Semana da Arte na Rua,* Coimbra, 1976. Photograph: unknown. Courtesy of Collection CAPC, Coimbra

Given the cultural situation outlined at the beginning, it is important to see CAPC as an independent entity in the context of Portugal's oldest and most traditional university. This helps to understand its surprisingly laboratory-like and innovative character, given its academic setting. CAPC's activities encompassed a range of exhibitions, aesthetic interventions, and performances. Notable projects include *A Floresta* (The Forest) at Alvarez Gallery in Oporto, 1973 and at Alternativa Zero in Lisbon, 1977, *Prenda para Josefa de Óbidos* (Gift to Josefa de Óbidos) at Ogiva Gallery in Óbidos, 1973, and *1 000 011.º Aniversário da Arte* (Art Anniversary), a project co-developed by de Sousa and CAPC based on Robert Filliou's original 1963 concept and publicly presented in Arles in 1973. Additional significant activities included *Arte na Rua* (Art on the Street) in Coimbra, 1974, *Semana da Arte na Rua* (Street Art Week) in Coimbra, 1976

FIGURE 7.2 CAPC performance Cores at Alternativa Zero: *Tendências Polémicas na Arte Portuguesa Contemporânea*, Lisbon, 1977. Photograph: unknown. Courtesy of the Collection Ernesto de Sousa, Lisbon

(see Figure 7.1), and *Cores* (Colors) in Coimbra and at Caldas da Rainha, Lisbon, 1977–78 (see Figure 7.2).

De Sousa described the group as "the only arts society in the country with a workshop spirit" (Sousa, 1976, p. 70), a sentiment further elaborated in his writings:

> CAP or C.A.P. these are the letters to keep in mind by readers travelling to Coimbra and wishing to talk under the pretext of art with art people. Action arts, fine arts, dark arts of freedom: to meet oneself and others. [...] What matters is not the whole dreariness of techniques and alienation, a convolutedly pre-built and pre-established beauty, that path leading to all the Academies (and, of course, to market economy). What matters is that discovery, which can only be achieved in a full exercise of body and mind, hands and head. Such exercise is the everyday practice of CAPC. (Sousa, 1974, pp. 4, 6)

On the subject of *Arte na Rua* (Coimbra, 1974), de Sousa has stated:

> [Notice] the exaggeration. For instance, to live in Coimbra, to be from Coimbra, our city that belongs to them, and to dare a (visual) activity that

> may go beyond the limits (of the city, of the street) and returns people to the lost dimension (to Paradise Lost). [...] to Celebration [Festa]—that is the example of the most complete exaggeration, of the clearest modernity, [...] 'ART can be LIFE.' (Sousa, 1976, p. 70)

In conclusion, the experience of celebration (festa), especially within the collective public space and fostered by the democratization of the political regime, was emblematic of Portugal in the 1970s. Concurrently with the political and social transformations in Portugal, artistic media—such as video, 8mm film, performative body work, and the "actions" of "aesthetic operators"—expanded and gained new significance. The 1970s, especially in the wake of the creative freedom unleashed by the revolution, were therefore pivotal, defining an era of rich and intense artistic activity that was unparalleled in both Portuguese and broader Western art contexts. This period was also a critical moment for the public affirmation of prominent female artists (Túlia Saldanha, Clara Menéres, Helena Almeida, Ana Vieira, Lourdes Castro), further marked by the activities of the CAPC, which functioned as a genuine laboratory of experimentation in a country emerging from dictatorship. While the 1970s occasionally produced art deeply engaged with the Revolution, the decade predominantly fostered works that were profoundly aligned with modernity, establishing it as one of the most politically and artistically significant decades of the Portuguese 20th century.

Indeed, at a time when the overhaul of higher artistic education (both theoretical and practical) was slow and, even by the 1990s, when its effective reform and modernization were finally realized, the updating of university curricula took considerable time to reflect contemporary art practices. In fact, it was at CAPC, in the 1970s, as a free and experimental laboratory, that true modernity in art education occurred. This was achieved through discussion cycles and conferences, as well as non-formal courses given by some of the country's most famous artists, who traveled to Coimbra specifically for this purpose. It is noteworthy that this way an informal, free and modernized artistic education was able to develop, and thus modern educational progress took place in the environment of Portugal's oldest university.

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CHAPTER 8

"(...) Radical Change was in the Air"

Judy Chicago's Pedagogical Work at Fresno State College in 1970

Marie-Christine Schoel

Abstract

In the context of the anthology's inquiry into the impulses that the critique of the institutional framework of art education provided for the emergence of novel artistic practices, this analysis places Judy Chicago's work at Fresno State College at the center of the investigation. Whereas the establishment of the Feminist Art Program (FAP) and the withdrawal of female art students from campus is considered the steppingstone for the development of a feminist art education, this study retraces a longer trajectory of the interplay between institutional critique and art pedagogy as impulses for the spatial concepts and feminist artistic practices that emanated out of the FAP. The investigation begins with Chicago's smoke atmospheres staged on the art department construction site in the spring of 1970, when the campus was experiencing violent protests, student boycotts, and clashes between Black and Chicana/o activists and conservative groups. These interventions, which attempted to "disappear the art building," operated as performative institutional critique that established the groundwork for the FAP's construction of an educational space fostering collective, cooperative, and performative practices, and thereby challenging gendered notions of the educational, the studio, and the private realms. However, the decision to withdraw from campus precisely when "radical change was in the air"–and when students were actively occupying and transforming campus space–reveals tensions within the program's approach to institutional critique and raises questions about missed opportunities for solidarity with broader civil rights movements. Such shifts have to be understood in the broader context of how spatial politics, institutional critique, and feminist pedagogy intersected in ways that both challenge and potentially reinforce exclusionary practices within art education.

Keywords

Judy Chicago – feminist art pedagogy – Fresno State College – educational space

1 Introduction

A radical act of institutional critique in the educational sphere can be found in Judy Chicago's withdrawal of female art students from the campus of Fresno State College (now California State University, Fresno) in 1970. Referring to the marginal number of women working as professional artists after graduation, Chicago proposed this dislocation and, thus, the founding of the Feminist Art Program (FAP) as a countermeasure (Chicago, 1982, p. 70). This off-campus space was intended to enable women's inquiry into the techniques and content of artistic practices away from the institution, which was deemed male-dominated. The development of her educational process depended on Chicago's search for a place that would allow her to distance herself from the Los Angeles art scene (Levin, 2018, p. 137) and the art education she had received (Chicago, 2014, p. 22). As Laura Meyer's research illuminated, the lesser-known Fresno FAP has to be recognized as a precedent for the FAP at the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) and the project *Womanhouse* (1971/1972),[1] which "could never have been founded *ex nihilo* at CalArts" (Meyer, 2009, p. 5).[2] Therefore, the Fresno feminist educational space, which was thought of as 'a room of one's own' after Virginia Woolf (Wilding, 2009, p. 80), has to be credited with having laid the groundwork for the development of novel art practices, such as collaboration, consciousness-raising as a source of content, and the exploration of traditional female connotated media such as needlework, as well as video and photography, performance, role-playing, and the use of costume.

In both cases, the Fresno and CalArts FAP, the withdrawal of female students from the campus is generally seen both as the springboard for the development of feminist pedagogy and art making and as producing predominantly white feminist spaces. Lesser attention has been paid to the environmental, performative, and collective works Chicago created on the Fresno State campus before founding the FAP. In the course of a mixed-gender, site-specific sculpture class in the spring term of 1970, Chicago and her students staged smoke atmospheres on the construction site of the Art Department. While her two smoke works at museum sites were deemed to display a critical stance towards the institution—her *Santa Barbara Museum Atmosphere* (1969) left burn marks on the façade of the museum (Hopkins, 2023, p. 56)[3]—her smoke works on the Fresno campus have to be regarded as enacting an equally critical stance towards the institutional framework albeit, in this instance, the educational institution. This critical intervention becomes particularly significant given that the smoke atmospheres emerged amid the student protests, boycotts, and political upheaval that gripped the campus in spring 1970, positioning the collective and performative smoke works within a broader context of the contestation of the educational institution.

Taking the smoke atmospheres as precedents for the FAP at Fresno, the study looks at the interplay of institutional critique toward the built environment of art education, feminist pedagogy, and feminist artistic practices. This not only confirms that the feminist art pedagogy implemented at Fresno State College offers an example of how the critique of the educational institution provided productive impulses for avant-garde art practices—even as feminist theory has contested the male-coded connotation of the avant-garde term itself (Schor, 2016, pp. 17–20). The trajectory from dissolution through displacement to reconstruction of educational architecture reveals both a challenge to the built environment and the emergence of transformative pedagogical approaches. The smoke atmospheres' performative dissolution of institutional boundaries thus established the groundwork for the FAP's alternative construction of educational space, demonstrating how spatial critique can evolve into pedagogical innovation. However, this analysis also sheds new light on questions about solidarity and the exclusionary potential of separate feminist spaces as, while the FAP successfully challenged gendered notions of educational space, its retreat from campus stands in tension with a moment of collective political resistance spearheaded by Black studies and Chicana/o studies students.

2 Smoke Pedagogy: 'Disappearing the Art Building'

In the latter half of the 1960s Chicago, then still known by the name Gerowitz,[4] started working with colored smoke during street parades and social gatherings with artists in Los Angeles, Pasadena, and in the surrounding beaches, mountains, and deserts. In calling the works 'atmospheres', she underlined the effect that unfolded when "disengaging color from any object context."[5] After Chicago took up her position as an assistant professor at Fresno State College in the spring term of 1970, she taught a site-specific sculpture class and, together with students, staged two atmospheres on the construction site of the Art Department. At the time the smoke atmospheres were executed, social unrest had erupted on the Fresno State College campus. As Kenneth Seib (1979, p. 5) noted in his detailed account of the events at the College, the

> relatively unknown California State College of about twelve thousand students is an ideal source of study, for what happened at Fresno State during the past decade is largely what has happened at similar colleges and universities throughout the United States.

Faced with the Free Speech Movement that erupted in the mid-1960s two hundred miles north of Fresno at UC Berkeley, violent protests against the

Vietnam War on university campuses, Black and social rights activism, and with the increasing momentum of the feminist movements, young academics challenged established curricula. The progressive movement in academia was met by a conservative backlash in the latter half of the 1960s, which led to the first student boycotts on the Fresno campus on February 24 and 25, 1970. Sit-ins, a hunger strike, and a campus march ended in violence between Chicana/o students and students from the agricultural department (Seib, 1979, pp. 11, 44, 63–66). The first smoke atmosphere was executed on February 17, only a few days before the first student boycott erupted, and was later described by the Fresno Staff Bulletin as follows:

> Miss Chicago [...] made points soon after she arrived on campus for the spring semester. [...] she held an art demonstration on the site of the new Art Building, at the time only a hole in the ground. The demonstration was called a smoke Atmosphere. It employed chemical smoke, thick and multihued, which could be sculpted in the air. Unfortunately, an unseemly wind somewhat ruined the effect. (Levin, 2018, p. 134)[6]

The tense situation on campus had still not eased by the time the second atmosphere was staged on the construction site in April 1970. The riots continued, and further demonstrations unfolded in response to the killing of four students at Kent State University in early May, and this resulted in a declaration of emergency on the Fresno campus on May 19 (Seib,

FIGURE 8.1 Judy Chicago, *Atmosphere: Disappearing the Art Building, Fresno State College*, 1970. © 1970 Judy Chicago. Courtesy of the artist and the Nevada Museum of Art

1979, pp. 69, 73). The photographic documentation of the second atmosphere shows two people squatting on the ground lighting flares while another fire burning in the background indicates a third flare (see Figure 8.1).[7] The smoke blurs the background into foggy hues of fuchsia and blue, merging into the sky and making it impossible to discern the outlines and dimensions of the construction site.

As becomes evident in the photographic documentation, a fundamental concern of Chicago's work with smoke lies in disturbing perception through dissolving spatial parameters and disguising the architecture through optical intervention. Looking back, Chicago herself remembers the atmosphere as an attempt "to try and 'disappear' that masculine looking structure" (Levin, 2018, p. 134). Whereas her atmospheres have been regarded as 'feminizing' the environment (Pinder, 2023, p. 52), there is an underlying impetus to the work and its use of flares at this historical moment that is related to violence, death, and militarization. In the same year as Chicago's smoke atmospheres on the Fresno Campus, Chris Burden, in his performance piece, *Deadman* (1970), placed flares around his supposedly dead body, which was covered by a tarpaulin as he lay on La Cienega Boulevard in front of the Riko Mizuno Gallery in Los Angeles. Phillip Kaiser (2019, p. 25) read *Deadman* as an example of the evocation of death in works by the Southern California artists at a moment in which "death was omnipresent in the military infrastructure located in Southern California's industrial complex" and which, therefore, reflected "the trauma of the Vietnam War, which lasted until the mid-1970s." The invocation of death and militarization of the smoke works in the context of the university campus linked them back to the violence that ignited in the course of student riots and to the milieu that the university presented for the contestation of the US's military invasion into Southeast Asia. In this context, it is particularly striking that the smoke atmosphere on the Fresno campus was referred to as an 'art demonstration' in the Staff Bulletin quoted above. The term 'demonstration' denotes a reading of the work as coming together or uniting in the expression of dissent or with the intention of revolt. As Moira Roth (1983, p. 94) stated in her early historiography of the women's performance movement, such dialectics of performative practices and social rights movements must be considered critical for the burgeoning performance movement of the 1970s. Faith Wilding (2009, p. 94), one of Chicago's students at the FAP, described this interrelationship by writing, "Sitting in at a lunch counter, occupying a building, blocking a street, marching and singing, were performative acts that enacted changing social relations and body politics." All of Chicago's atmospheres display a collective, performative approach, with friends, fellow artists, and pyrotechnicians involved in the process of lighting and dispersing the smoke. However, the notion that students were

engaged in an 'art demonstration' on campus indicates an intersection of performativity, protest, and pedagogy. The multifaceted meaning of the word 'demonstration' is, thus, expanded towards its connotation of showing or instructing.

Whereas Chicago's atmospheres in urban settings can be considered to have critically engaged with the built environment, the staging of the atmosphere within the construction site of the new building of the University's Art Department represents a particular configuration that should be further examined.[8] Staging the smoke work within the construction site drew attention to the physical supporting structures of the institutional space and to the material reality of its edification, thereby hinting at their meaning as symbolic carriers for social and educative issues. The construction site, in turn, can be read within the historical context of the rapid growth of the educational sector in the aftermath of the Sputnik shock as marked by the entry of the Soviet Union's satellite into space in 1957.[9] In the 1960s and 70s, it was "particularly striking and in many ways novel [how …] architectural design was put into the service of the educational aims" (Muthesius, 2000, p. 21). In the wake of the increasing awareness of the influence that the built environment had on the learning process, the idiom of a 'school without walls' presented a progressive planning concept for inclusive and flexible learning environments that facilitated student participation and self-determination in the learning process (Holert, 2021, pp. 50–54). Against this backdrop, enveloping the construction site in hues of colored smoke intervened in the material conditions of the construction of the learning environment by simultaneously laying bare the material framework of the educational institution and letting it disappear. As a result, the built environment was questioned as a prerequisite for learning in the context of a site-specific sculpture class that, itself, presented a break with the spatial parameters of studio art education. As Chicago (2014, p. 20) reflected, her utopian wish for the establishment of a women's art community that would provide the "means to show, distribute, and sell [artworks by women artists]; teaching other women artmaking skills; and establishing and writing our own history" seemed feasible in the climate of the 1970s when "radical change was in the air." Considering the atmospheres as interventions on campus, the metaphorical meaning of radical change lingering in the air is tied back to the deployment of smoke as a pedagogical tool. The smoke interventions performatively engaged with the relation of the body to the building of the educational institution, and it can well be regarded as posing an approach to the questioning of the means of access and participation within the institution and of the spatial policy of the educational environment.

3 Building a Feminist Educational Space

When Chicago arrived at Fresno State College in the spring semester of 1970, a group of students, spearheaded by Faith Wilding and Suzanne Lacy, were meeting regularly for consciousness-raising sessions while a group of faculty members was working towards the establishment of a women's studies department (Wilding, 2009, pp. 81–82). After Chicago proposed the idea of a women's class to the Dean of the Art Department, he introduced her to Faith Wilding, who would later become Chicago's teaching assistant. Together they organized and held interviews with students in the midst of turmoil still affecting the Fresno campus. As Wilding depicted:

> bomb scares caused building evacuations, antiwar marches and demonstrations took place weekly, five professors had been fired for their political activism. Most of the women we interviewed were art students, some of whom were already taking Chicago's outdoor site sculpture class. (1994, p. 34)

Personnel decisions repeatedly led to protests, such as those following the controversial dismissal of faculty, including the Black rights activist Marvin X and other instructors from the Ethnic Studies Program and the English Department, among them Everett Frost, Faith Wilding's husband at the time (Seib, 1979, pp. 20–33, 54). Against this backdrop of institutional repression, Chicago decided to break with the traditional institutional framework and curriculum, meeting 15 selected students off campus, alternating between the private spaces of the participants involved until they signed a 7-month lease for a 5,000-square-foot building for which each student paid $25 per month to cover rent, tools, and further expenses (Wilding, 1994, p. 34). The former barracks were located in a run-down part of the city, at the opposite end of town from the University, and henceforth, as Karen LeCocq, one of the FAP students, elucidated, "far away from the prying critical eyes of the male-dominated Art Department" (Youdelman & LeCocq, 2012, p. 71).

Chicago deemed the renting of a space to be a fundamental step in the pedagogical process through which she introduced her students to the professional artist's need for a studio space (Levin, 2018, p. 145). In addition to the studio space, the barracks provided a spacious kitchen used to cook weekly studio dinners (Youdelman & LeCocq, 2012, p. 65), a darkroom was installed, and a long shelf in the storage room off the kitchen was converted into a "film-editing table for splicing Super-8 film."[10] As Wilding (2009, p. 87) described, "there was an office with a telephone, a small library, and an art history research space

where we began the first women's art history slide collection." Smaller spaces were partitioned off for the installation of individual environments, and one room, fitted out with carpet scraps, was used as a 'rap room' for consciousness-raising sessions, and, thus, provided a gathering space for discussions about research projects as well as for conversations with visiting artists and

FIGURE 8.2 Judy Chicago, *Janice Lester in the Costume Room, Feminist Art Program, Fresno*, 1970. © 1970 Judy Chicago. Courtesy of the artist and the Nevada Museum of Art

writers such as Miriam Schapiro and Ti-Grace Atkinson (Wilding, 2009, p. 88). Another hangout was "the rickety old porch, on which we gathered to smoke, sun ourselves, and talk endlessly" (Wilding, 2009, p. 87).

One of the initial tasks Chicago presented her students was to build a forty-foot-long drywall. The assignment aimed to introduce the students to technical skills, to the use of tools, and to construction techniques, as well as the need to wear appropriate attire for physical work such as work boots (Roth, 2012, p. 80). This contested a crucial step in Chicago's eyes as "the fixing-up process seemed a natural way for the women to learn to use tools, develop building skills, and gain confidence in themselves physically" (Garrard/Broude, 1994, p. 67). As Wilding reflected, "The 'Wall' was as much symbolic as it was real; it defined our big exhibition/performance/studio space" (Wilding, 1994, p. 87). As Wollenman Johnson recalled, the wall was built opposite the entrance to the studio. Its position created a theatre-like setting with the wall functioning as a backdrop for performances and role-plays, and the partitioned-off space behind the wall as a costume storage and changing area (see Figure 8.2).[11]

In the context of the aforementioned pedagogical design concept of the open plan learning environment, this building of a wall as a pedagogical tool within the FAP seems to almost ridicule the idea of the 'school without walls.' The collective construction of a drywall can be seen as a radical diversion from the aim of the smoke atmospheres, which was to disappear the construction site as previously discussed. However, both contrasting approaches entail wrestling with the relationship of the body to the built environment through the performative. While the building of the wall, the handling of sheetrock, the use of tools, and the wearing of workwear and boots constituted performative acts rather than mere prerequisites for the implementation of performative practices, this collective engagement with architectural space emerged as a continuation of the performative spatial interventions established through the smoke atmospheres. The performative engagement with the built environment, enabled the students to interact differently within the educational space. As Wilding described,

> [t]he most transformative aspect of the studio was how we began to claim and use the space. Since most of us worked and hung out there daily for many hours, we were able to see each other's work as it developed, to give suggestions, encouragement and critique, and collaborate technically and conceptually. This organic process of becoming collaborators in a space of our own was one of the secrets of the Program's astonishing success. (2009, p. 88)

As becomes evident in Wilding's statement, having the FAP students take control of the design of the educational space fundamentally affected their art-making processes. As Wollenman Johnson remembers, working collectively in such a way was previously impeded by the campus as it lacked designated studio space for its students. Therefore, students had worked on their projects in the personal spaces that were available to them, mostly at home.[12] Thus, by being a shared space, the studio enabled immediate communication around practical experiences and knowledge exchange, the sharing of tools and materials during the working process, and fostered collective authorship. By encouraging the students to take matters into their own hands and by creating the possibility of working collectively, the FAP challenged the hierarchical relation between educators and students, as Chicago collaborated with the students on performance works (Chicago, 2014, p. 27) and increasingly pushed the group towards self-dependency (Chicago, 1982, p. 84). This, in turn, affected the class structure and the spatial and temporal parameters of art pedagogy and studio work. As Wilding recalls,

> Working off-campus in a building we controlled dissolved the normal academic time and space boundaries. [...] Instead of holding structured classes, we worked in groups, rotating responsibility for leadership. The groups included: consciousness-raising; reading/discussion; autobiography writing; photo/film techniques; art-history research; performance and play-acting; studio work with individual instruction from Chicago; group critiques; and Wednesday night dinners for social time. Each woman planned her weekly work schedule and formulated her semester's goals according to the credits (between 6 to 15) she was receiving from the college. We soon developed strong emotional and psychological bonds. Most of us ended up working (and practically living) at the studio every day. (1994, pp. 34–35)

The spending of social time together in the educational space was supported by incorporating facets of the domestic in the form of furnishings, shared meals, and a general approach of consistently spending time together. In addition to the kitchen, which provided room for social gatherings, the 'rap' room, furnished with carpet scraps, was dedicated to consciousness-raising sessions (Meyer, 2009, p. 7), the collective coming into consciousness about the social implications of personal experiences and feelings. The blending of the private with the educational space was further enhanced by the fact that one of the students, Cheryl Zurilgen, lived on the second floor with her partner, who worked in the studio downstairs, opposite the FAP studio.[13] The juxtaposition

of domestic spaces and spaces for the production of art enabled the immediate channeling of emotional and personal, autobiographical, awareness-raising processes, group discussions, and emotional support into the making of art. However, this intensive communal environment also generated tensions. Despite their shared working-class or lower-middle-class backgrounds, conflicts emerged among the FAP students, and some participants have retrospectively criticized Chicago's confrontational pedagogical approach (Meyer & Wilding, 2010, pp. 41, 48, 49). Nevertheless, others benefited from the support of the group. (Wilding, 2009, p. 94)

The capacity for both conflict and nurturing within the same space reveals the complex implications of the FAP's spatial experiment, which fundamentally traversed the idea of the educational sphere as a counterpart to the private realm. Thus, the feminist pedagogical space of the FAP in Fresno resembled spatial programs of socialist utopian cooperative living. At the Chicago Hull-House (founded 1889 by Jane Addams), for example, through the "equalitarian division of labor–domestic, logistical, pedagogical, and sociocultural–at odds with mainstream political institutions" all facets of living blended together as the "bedrooms were regularly borrowed for activities such as the making of costumes for the play put on at Hull-House" (Gourbe, 2015, p. 15). While it is acknowledged that the feminist pedagogical spaces of the 1970s had their precedents in such settlement movements, it is important to point out that while the educational space at the FAP in Fresno incorporated facets of the domestic, it simultaneously represented a conscious withdrawal from the private realm. In aiming to convince her students of the need for a studio space, Chicago pointed out the limitations that the home posed for artistic creation declaring that "You can't make an eight-foot painting in your bedroom" (Levin, 2018, p. 145). In contrast, being part of the FAP enabled the students to work in a designated studio space, to execute large-scale pieces, and experiment with a variety of materials. Thus, the artistic practice was brought from the individual private realm into the shared studio space that, in turn, integrated aspects of the private into the educational process, thereby opening up room to speak about the personal.

4 Concluding Remarks

Taking the smoke atmospheres as precedents for the FAP reveals a continuous engagement with educational space as pedagogical tool—demonstrating how Chicago's initial performative interventions on campus established the spatial critique that would define the feminist pedagogical experiment. The

withdrawal from campus was not merely an escape from institutional constraints, but rather it represented a continuation of the engagement with educational space as a pedagogical tool. The link between institutional critique and the emergence of novel approaches to art making developed from the dissolution of the material conditions of the art educational institution enacted through the atmospheres to the construction of a feminist educational space. These spatial interventions established a model for transforming rather than simply rejecting institutional structures, demonstrating how the dissolution of academic time-space boundaries could generate new forms of artistic practices and pedagogical engagement that fostered the unlearning of gendered, institutionally grounded structures and discourses about how and whom to educate.

This trajectory from dissolution to reconstruction demonstrates the inherent ambivalence of separatist strategies. While the spatial critique enabled transformative pedagogical innovation, it simultaneously raised questions about missed opportunities for broader coalition-building. Considering the political turmoil that gripped Fresno State College during the formation of the FAP, the proliferation of political activism by Black and Chicana/o students and active feminist reading groups raises the question why it was considered necessary to withdraw the female art students from campus as radical change was not only 'in the air' but actually occupying the campus ground. This specific historical context sheds new light on questions surrounding the politics of feminist separatist groups and their relationship to broader social movements. In this regard, Aruna D'Souza's term 'whitewalling'–the reproduction of racial exclusion through seemingly neutral spatial practices (D'Souza, 2018, p. 9)—provides a critical lens for examining the structural racial implications of the FAP's spatial strategy. While Chicago's students withdrew to construct their own educational space, Chicana/o and Black studies students actively continued their struggle to transform the institutional structures that the FAP had abandoned.

However, it can be argued that rather than constituting a mere escape from political and social struggles on campus, this investigation also reveals how Chicago's atmospheres emerged from and were embedded in the campus protests' practices of politicized engagement with and critique of the educational institution. Thus, both provided a catalyst for the dissolution of the time-space boundaries of education that characterized the FAP, whose collective, performative approach, exploration into the personal, as well as materials and practices deemed inappropriate for the traditional canon of art, mark the reason for its historically significant role as "one of the most important sites for the development of a politicized approach to the making and theorizing of feminist art" (Jones, 2007, p. 300).

This trajectory, from smoke atmospheres to feminist pedagogy, ultimately demonstrates how artistic practices and political protest were inextricably intertwined on the contested American university campus, reciprocally influencing and transforming each other to catalyze innovation and generate novel forms of art production, while simultaneously illuminating the enduring complexities of separatist strategies within broader movements for educational and social justice.

Notes

1 After the FAP moved to the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) in 1971 and was subsequently co-taught by Chicago and Miriam Schapiro, the dislocation of the students into a derelict mansion off campus led to the creation of the seminal project *Womanhouse* (1972). The students renovated the house and installed artworks that addressed the gendered connotations of the home and women's roles within the family; the resulting exhibition ran from January 30 until February 28, 1972. For a detailed history of the FAP at CalArts and *Womanhouse*, see, for example, Broude and Garrard (1994), Chicago (1975), Kaiser and Végh (2021), and Levin (2018).

2 Similarly, Faith Wilding, a student at the FAP at Fresno State College and CalArts points to the political activism and the establishment of a women's reading group by her and Suzanne Lacy. These circumstances "were auspicious for the success of Judy Chicago's plan to teach an all-women's art class", see Wilding, 2009, p. 84.

3 As Chicago retrospectively stated in the context of the reading of her smoke works at museum spaces as forms of institutional critique: "It looked like the museum was on fire. I *loved* that, [...] because, of course, museums were not exactly hospitable to women artists" (as cited in Gotthardt, 2017). For a general reading of Chicago's atmospheres in relation to Land Art, a key resource is the conversation between Philipp Kaiser and Judy Chicago (Nevada Museum of Art, 2019).

4 In late 1970, Dextra Frankel invited Chicago to Cal-State Fullerton, this time for a solo exhibition of her recent body of work, the *Pasadena Lifesavers*, doughnut shaped forms sprayed on sheets of acrylic, and her *Domes*, half spheres in pairs of three mounted on tables that were formed out of Plexiglas as well as photos of her atmospheres. The exhibition invitation announced the change of her name, from Gerowitz, the name of her deceased husband, to Chicago, the name of her birth city. In October, the announcement was printed in *Artforum* 9(2), October 1970, two months before Chicago's eponymous Boxing Ring Ad in *Artforum* 9(4), December 1970.

5 Frankel, D. (1970). *Judy Gerowitz* [Press material for the Cal-State Fullerton exhibition]. Dextra Frankel papers (UA-194 DF_Box1_F12). University Archives and Special Collections, California State University, Fullerton, CA, United States.

6 Gail Levin writes that Dal Handerson, faculty of Fresno State, took photos of performances by Chicago that she staged with her students (2018, p. 134).

7 On the left half of the photo, standing on a small elevation, another figure has turned the back towards the camera. Considering the stature and the full, dark, curly hair, the figure can be identified as Judy Chicago amidst the lighting of the flares by participants.

8 As Gail Levin in her biography on Judy Chicago contextualizes the erection of the building: "The department of fine arts was favored by a local philanthropist and trustee who worked in ceramics herself and had facilitated a new edifice for the arts building that was under

construction when Judy came on the scene." Levin also reports on another site-specific work that Chicago realized on the Fresno State Campus on the 21st of March 1970, the first ever celebration of Earth Day: "For Earth Day, Judy got permission to stage an environmental show on campus and had students haul in dirt, grass and other such materials, intriguing most of them but disturbing the dominant culture of future farmers and homemakers, for whom moving dirt was work—pure, simple, and hard—not art" (Levin, 2018, pp. 134, 138). At this point, I have not encountered any further information on the funding of the Art Department's building or Chicago's Earth Day performance, which would provide a compelling example not only of anti-canonical Land Art but also, given the context of the violent clashes between students of the agricultural department and Black and Chicana/o students, of the political tensions embedded in such site-specific work.

9 Tom Holert pointed out the connection between the education sector and space conquest in the context of the research on the education crisis in the aftermath of the Sputnik shock (Holert, 2021, pp. 18–19).

10 S. Wollenman Johnson (personal communication, September 6, 2024).

11 S. Wollenman Johnson (personal communication, August 12, 2024).

12 S. Wollenman Johnson (personal communication, August 12, 2024). While the lack of studio space could be read in the context of a displacement of women artists into private, domestic working spaces when discussing feminist art education, it is important to point out that this lack of designated studio space on the Fresno State College campus affected all art students. In response to this limitation, the Fresno Feminist Art Program made it a point of providing its students with a dedicated workspace, sharing the costs among the group.

13 S. Wollenman Johnson (personal communication, August 12, 2024).

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PART 3

Methodological Critiques and Pedagogical Legacies

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CHAPTER 9

Cross-Pollination

The Relationship between John Baldessari's Art and His Pedagogy

Rebecca Sprowl

Abstract

John Baldessari had a decades-long career as an art teacher and a Conceptual artist. When he founded the Post-Studio Art program at the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) in 1970, his teaching amalgamated with his avant-garde approach to artmaking. There he created a non-authoritative, think-tank situation for learning how to be an artist that he drew directly from his own artistic processes. He also formed invaluable links between contemporary art and the art education institution by utilizing his connections in the art world, generating a thriving visiting artist program. The institution had a reciprocal effect on his art practice, producing a dynamic cross-pollination. Many of his artworks from the early 1970s were characteristically and intentionally didactic in nature, critiquing the "rules" given to artists and outdated methods of learning in an unsubtle and satirical manner. He took an experimental approach to the emerging medium of video, creating pioneering pieces like *I am Making Art* (1971) and *Teaching a Plant the Alphabet* (1972) on the CalArts campus. During this time, his students often served as a test audience and participants in his work. His art reflected the new challenges of teaching art in the Conceptual era and revealed a variety of his personal philosophies on art education.

Keywords

John Baldessari – art pedagogy – CalArts – Post-Studio Art – Conceptual Art – artist-teacher – video art – performance art

1 Art and Teaching

John Baldessari had a long and eventful career as both an artist and art teacher. His dual career path began when he found inspiration for becoming an artist through working with juvenile offenders in the California Youth Authority camp.

The students at the camp agreed to behave in their lessons if Baldessari unlocked the arts and crafts building in the evenings. Realising how much art meant to them led him to reflect on art's broader importance in society (Davis, 2004, para. 3). Early on, Baldessari gained a variety of diverse teaching experiences with different age groups including teaching in San Diego public schools. He employed a trial-and-error system to try and find the best way to communicate with his students. Finding lecturing ineffective, he began experimenting with alternatives that drew on the philosophies that fueled his art. Baldessari explained,

> There's a great connection between teaching and art because they're both about effectively communicating and making contact. It's not just saying something, hoping or assuming it's going to be absorbed. You don't know. It's just getting the idea across—being accessible to the most astute audience or student, and not being esoteric or opaque to the less informed. (Stich, 2005, p. 78)

Baldessari made statements in multiple interviews about how his teaching and art production were one and the same, interchangeable, and greatly informed by one another. When describing the connection he stated,

> one will loop back on through the other, that my art would be sort of an example or illustrative or a metaphor, for what things I was dealing with in class. And I was going at my class much like I would do art, which was basically trying to be as formed as possible, but open to chance. (Knight, 1992, p. 28)

Baldessari enjoyed teaching but saw it primarily as a way to have financial stability as an artist, as was normal practice in his generation. He also discussed in several interviews the need to make teaching fun for himself, and to save his sanity in a teaching environment he decided: "I'm going to have to make teaching like art. Or somehow a form of art" (Baldessari & Craig-Martin, 2009, p. 48).

2 The Origins of Post-Studio Art

Hired as part of the founding faculty at the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts), John Baldessari was initially meant to teach painting. However, just before the school opened its doors in 1970, he notoriously cremated all his paintings made between 1953 and 1966 and even used the ash in a batch of inedible cookies as a way to symbolically digest and recycle the art. His *Cremation Project* can be seen as a grand gesture to escape the idea that a

work of art is a precious object that should be placed in a museum. It was also a ceremonial action to ensure a fresh start in his artistic practice after becoming dissatisfied with the Abstract Expressionist style he was working in between those years. He made a public ordeal of the project, even putting a notice in the local newspaper, so he would not be tempted to return to painting.

Baldessari wanted to eliminate the traditional definitions of art and the tendency in the profession to label an artist by the medium they work in, like "painter" or "sculptor." These ideas of emancipation influenced the direction he took as an educator and his vision for the CalArts course he invented and dubbed Post-Studio Art. He explained, "I wanted the students to have a space where they could do something other than painting or making objects. I tried to make room for something new; they didn't necessarily have to make things by hand" (Hertz, 2003, p. 82). In addition, CalArts's initial policy of not requiring grades or a curriculum left the door open for Baldessari to mold the course the way he saw fit.

Any boundaries left between Baldessari's teaching and artistic practices almost fully disappeared when he began teaching at CalArts. He wanted to create a class that was in tune with his current interests and direction as an artist. He did not want to title the class "Conceptual Art" because he thought it would be too limiting and perhaps exclude students who worked with certain materials. He titled it Post-Studio Art not knowing what that would come to mean, but he knew it was not painting (Christie's, 2014, 0:03:14). The phrasing of the title can be partially credited to Carl Andre, who first began using the term "post-studio artist" to describe himself and other artists making similar work. The course encompassed every student working in a generally non-traditional manner, or in other words, according to former student Jack Goldstein, it was "the catchall for everything outside of painting" (Hertz, 2003, p. 67).

The Post-Studio Art course description from 1972 makes it clear that traditional media were not a concern. It specifically mentions working with video, photography, and film, and inviting visiting artists who primarily worked in performance. The course description goes on to place focus on aspects of research and inquiry instead of technique, reading: "The investigation of such questions and issues as: Is the object necessary, originality in art, must art be visual, what is order, durability, place and process, art as experience, art as time and etc."[1] Baldessari recognized that things change in the art world so quickly that the art schools and the artists teaching in them can rapidly become outdated. Thus, having a constant stream of visitors who worked in contemporary media was a priority. Baldessari explained,

> It's about getting together a group of core people who might be exciting to young artists, so they might want to find out what's afoot. And then you

> put all that stuff in the pot and see what comes out, and you have no idea what's going to. (Baldessari & Craig-Martin, 2009, p. 52)

The 1972 course description also mentions that students should be versed in the history of modern art through to the work of Marcel Duchamp. Baldessari appreciated that Duchamp could be fun and simplistic and at the same time serious and sophisticated. Baldessari did not like to take art too seriously himself and felt a kinship with Duchamp's relaxed outlook and wanted to convey this to his students. In a 1973 interview, he describes his enjoyment of how Duchamp "always keeps art a little bit off balance" and later in the interview stated:

> One thing I try to do a lot with students is to keep them off balance, also imparting an attitude that I have of simply being skeptical, of being perverse, not believing everything I read and so on. (Roth, 2005, paras. 2, 95)

The idea of analyzing work critically and being skeptical of accepted practices in order to become innovators instead of repeaters was key to Baldessari's approach to teaching.

3 Teaching Methods

John Baldessari felt that to be an artist one needs to possess a certain level of obsession and therefore there is no specific thing to teach an artist because students need to pursue their own motivations and interests. Consequently, Baldessari developed educational methods that were well outside direct instruction and instead included individual mentorship, peer learning, and contact with contemporary artists. Baldessari sought to create a dialogue with and between students, rather than teaching specific information, and led by example. He expressed, "I've always been kind of painfully aware that when I'm teaching, I'm not. And when I don't think I'm teaching, I am. Students are watching you. You're teaching all the time, when you don't know it" (Baldessari & Craig-Martin, 2009, p. 49). The dialogues he prompted, typically during group or individual critiques of student work, used probing inquiry to get students to articulate their intentions and artistic choices. Former student Meg Cranston recalled, "He was interested in the internal logic of the work. […] It was always a line of questioning, like a therapist, never suggesting what you should do but asking a lot of questions" (Finkel, 2010, para. 9).

The strong belief that art could not be taught was articulated by Baldessari repeatedly in interviews as the notion was the root of his pedagogical approach. He would often say things like: "while I didn't think you could teach art, you could supply information" and "I don't think you can teach art; but you can

sure have a lot of good artists around" (Hertz, 2003, pp. 75, 81). Having artists around was fundamental to Baldessari's educational approach. He recognized that how a gallery describes an artist's work can be very different from how the artist would describe it (Hammer Museum, 2011, 1:02:29). He also explained that through interactions with other artists, "you learn that art is not orderly: You don't go A, B, C, D and end up with art" (Baldessari & Craig-Martin, 2009, p. 45).

3.1 *Developing Connections in the Art World*

Baldessari arranged for a plethora of visiting artists to come to CalArts and knew the benefits as he created similar initiatives at the schools he taught at before CalArts. He acknowledged that there was often an enigmatic mysticism that surrounded the concept of an artist, and he wanted to remove the mystery and show his students that artists face similar problems to their own. Former student Stephen Prina recalled that he would actively try to find young artists in the early, formative stages of their careers so the students could relate to them.[2] Jack Goldstein expressed, "The artists Baldessari brought out really expanded the information available to us" (Hertz, 2003, p. 68). The more Baldessari exhibited and traveled the more contacts he formed in the art world, and "tried to make CalArts kind of a watering hole for them" (Stich, 2005, p. 79). He also described himself as being the "Cupid between the art world and CalArts" (Knight, 1992, p. 27).

The artists Baldessari invited to CalArts worked primarily in New York City or European cities—where his own work was more accepted at the time—because he wanted to counteract the "L.A. aesthetic" he felt was present at the school. He explained, "The idea was to create a program which would transcend the local art situation" (Hertz, 2003, p. 75). Some artists dropped in while passing through California and others stayed for a whole term such as Vito Acconci, Yvonne Rainer, Richard Artschwager, and Laurie Anderson. Other guests invited in from New York—with the occasional artist stationed in California—included Sol LeWitt, Lawrence Weiner, Robert Smithson, Daniel Buren, Dan Graham, Joseph Kosuth, Hans Haacke, Richard Serra, Joan Jonas, Nancy Chunn, Paul McMahon, and Allen Ruppersberg. However, Sol LeWitt was such a non-believer in art education that he had CalArts students meet him at a nearby bar instead of on the school grounds—which was not uncommon for Baldessari's visitors (Hammer Museum, 2011, 1:02:48). European artists included Ulrike Rosenbach and Rebecca Horn. Former student Barbara Bloom recalled Gilbert & George's visit being particularly memorable shortly after they began performing their groundbreaking *Singing Sculpture* (1969).[3]

Baldessari felt strongly that artists learned from other artists, and because he viewed his students as already being artists, he also encouraged peer learning. Former student Matt Mullican commented that he understands that several factors were essential to his CalArts education but proclaims that the most important part was learning from his peers.[4] Baldessari also acknowledged

that he learned just as much from some of his students as they were learning from him (Salle, 2013, para. 60). Many students left a lasting impression on him, in fact, several decades later he recalled a piece Matt Mullican made in his class where he pinned a dry leaf to the wall and got other students to angle a set of mirrors to burn a hole in the leaf using sunlight (Connor, 2011, 0:05:43).

3.2 *Reading Material*

In order to keep up with the most recent developments in the field, Baldessari made a ritual of reading about art and going to exhibitions. For learning and inspirational material, he would collect and supply his students with a vast array of print media from his travels to New York or Europe. Many of his students recalled him returning from trips with a suitcase full of exhibition catalogs that the students would eagerly devour. He would present the information without placing judgment or opinion on what was worthy of considering or investigating further and simply highlighted art that was challenging conventions. He would also present media that was seemingly unrelated to art. Jack Goldstein recalled, "John would have magazines on the floor open to the ads, to the news photos. He was saying, Here, all of this stuff you can use in your art. I don't remember any other instructor who ever treated art that way, so tongue-in-cheek" (Hertz, 2003, p. 68).

Meg Cranston noted that Baldessari was one of the best-read people she had ever known. Reading was an integral part of his artistic process and something he wanted to instill a fondness for in his students. Cranston recalled that CalArts had built up an excellent library, and "a big part of our education was just hanging out in the library and looking at books and magazines" which also helped keep students up to date with what was going on in the art world.[5] She noted that *Artforum* was a common publication in circulation around the art office. As a great pursuer of information, Baldessari also took advantage of the access to books in the CalArts library to inform his work. He read to gather information to produce his art, not to sound posh or pretentious when speaking about art. Cranston recalled, "he said, I never use 'edifice' when 'building' will do," because he appreciated simplicity in texts and ideas, and even some theorists frustrated him because they overcomplicated their language and communication of ideas.

4 Art Practice and the Educational Institution

John Baldessari's desire to communicate simply and his scrutiny of published art material feature explicitly in his work even prior to teaching at CalArts. His text-based works from the latter part of the 1960s (work that remained uncremated) included formulaic instructions from "how-to" art books, and he used

institutional fonts and poster-like compositions to portray them. Examples of these text pieces include *Art Lesson* (1964) which illustrated rules for painting from a real how-to book and *Tips for Artists Who Want to Sell* (1966–1968), which described how mainstream subject matter and pleasant colors will help sales. Conceptual artists living in New York City at the time, like Sol LeWitt and Joseph Kosuth, were concerned with branding Conceptual art as a highly serious endeavor. Kosuth did not enjoy that Baldessari played with the ideals of the movement by adding satire to his pieces.

One of Baldessari's most notable text works is *WRONG* (1967), which he made after looking at a "how-to" book on photography. In the piece, Baldessari used himself as the subject of a photograph while standing directly under an extremely tall palm tree, as if it were growing from the top of his head, demonstrating what would normally be judged as bad composition. He then hired a sign painter to carefully put the word "WRONG" under the photo that was printed onto a canvas. The piece used the materials of art while at the same time poking fun at art. It playfully exhibits an authoritative, rules-based approach to education; the "wrong" can then be applied to both the composition and the approach to teaching artists. Jack Goldstein recalled, "His work always seemed very didactic; there was always something to 'get' in his work" (Hertz, 2013, p. 68).

Upon his employment at CalArts, Baldessari's interests quickly turned to exploring the currently untapped potential of video as an emerging art medium. At the time, video equipment was still very expensive for the general public, so Baldessari—admitting he would not have been able to afford it himself—took advantage of the availability of the high-end video equipment at the school. Baldessari describes his interest in video in a 1973 interview:

> I guess what videotapes allow me to do is to work in time, which I enjoy, because I've always been interested in movies and in music. It's always bothered me going to museums and seeing things on the wall—one, two, three—and I always wonder what happens in the space between two paintings. (Roth, 2005, para. 74)

He goes on in the interview to describe two exercises he would assign his painting students when he was younger. In one task students had to reproduce a painting like a Van Gogh and then extend it by six feet to capture what else Van Gogh might have viewed beyond the edges of the painting, and the other was placing two different paintings, like a Picasso and Matisse, close together and extend them towards one another until they merge (Roth, 2005, para. 74).

Many of Baldessari's video works made intentionally unsubtle references to education and often used pointless repetition and parody to make their point.

FIGURE 9.1 John Baldessari, *Wrong*, 1966–1968. Photographic emulsion and acrylic on canvas, 149.9 × 114.3 cm. © 2025 Estate of John Baldessari. Courtesy of the John Baldessari Family Foundation and Sprüth Magers

Baldessari saw teaching as a performance, but ironically felt that he was not well suited for performance art because he thought being a "movie star" made the artist too important and consequently the art too important, and he did not like things to be that serious (Roth, 2005, paras. 116–120). Nevertheless, he starred and performed in many of his own early video pieces that were made at CalArts, often with his students. These early works present evidence that he was experimenting with and learning to use this new medium right alongside his pupils. In *I am Making Art* (1971), Baldessari stands before a blank wall and continues to slightly change his body pose while repeating the phrase "I am making art" with each new movement, satirizing the idea that any action by an artist is potentially art. His face and gestures are dry and expressionless, and he, as Baldessari describes it, "touches different parts of his body as if it were a vessel imbued with art" (Cranston & Obrist, 2013, p. 120). It remains ambiguous whether or not the artist is actually convinced by his own declaration.

One of Baldessari's most famous video pieces which was made and viewed in his CalArts classroom was *Teaching a Plant the Alphabet* (1972).

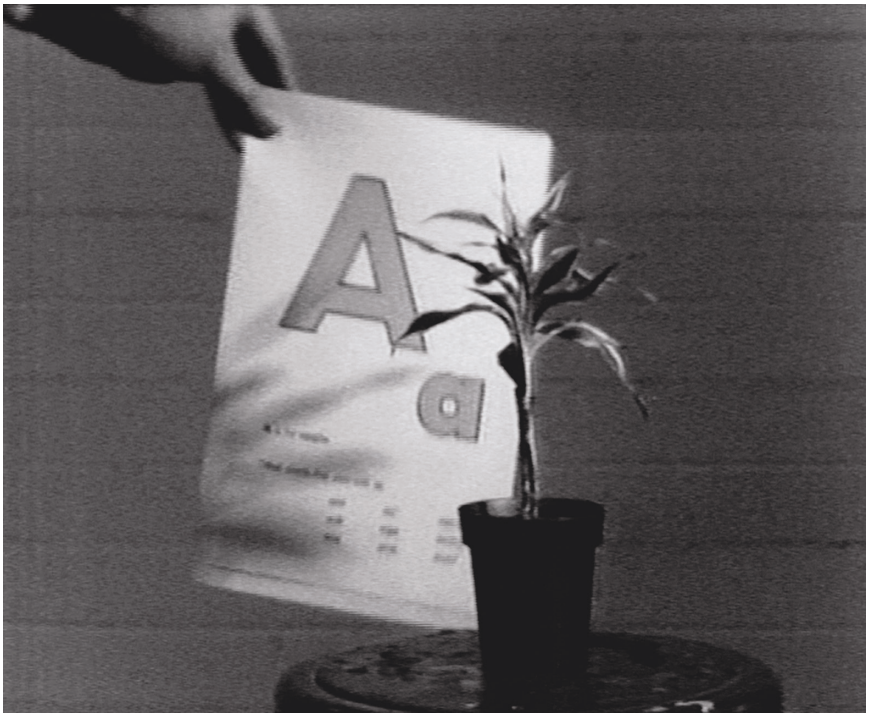

FIGURE 9.2 John Baldessari, *Teaching a Plant the Alphabet*, 1972. Black-and-white video, sound, 18:40 min. © 2025 Estate of John Baldessari. Courtesy of the John Baldessari Family Foundation and Sprüth Magers

The video consists of an English alphabet lesson being "taught" to a small, potted banana plant using large flashcards and the vocal repetition of each letter. A statement that Baldessari wrote in conjunction with this piece was: "If a person can communicate with plants, can the latter learn? The fundamental teaching device of repetition is verbally and visually employed, supplemented with visual aids" (Cranston & Obrist, 2013, p. 155). He does not explicitly comment on the authoritarian and monotonous nature of outdated practices in education but allows the viewers to consider it themselves through simple semiotics. Many compare this piece to Joseph Beuys's *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* performance from 1965, as they share a similar proposition.

A photographic piece that was made with CalArts students was titled *Portrait: Various Identities Hidden with Name/Date Cards* (*4* MR. *74*) (1974). Six photographs were taken of students, a white sheet of paper covering their faces with their first name and the date written on it. Then another set of six photographs were taken of Baldessari with his face covered by the same papers, inaccurately labeling him and giving him six new identities. An additional version of this piece was made a month later presenting ten photos of his students that all have "John" written on the paper in front of their faces and "8 AP. 74" for the date. In these photographic series, both teacher and student have shared, interchangeable identities, reminiscent of Baldessari's views on eliminating hierarchy in educational settings. These works were also perhaps the beginnings of Baldessari's later obsession with hiding identities and portraying anonymity through obscuring faces using colorful dots in his collage works that began in the mid-1980s.

4.1 *109 Assignments*

For the first Post-Studio Art class group of 1970, Baldessari created a list of one hundred and nine "assignments" that students could use if they were short of ideas, which he kept on hand for many years. Stemming from his well-known enjoyment of list-making, the assignments were thought-provoking suggestions for potential works, or at least starting points for ideas for works. Now published in several locations, the list promoted the use of all types of media including drawing, sculpture, photography, video, and performance, but centered on highly conceptual and imaginative ideas. Meg Cranston recalls that Baldessari detested giving assignments, as he wanted to teach without prescribing, and so it was not a good sign if he gave a student this list because "basically that's John giving you the answer, the idea is the answer". Although intended for students, several of Baldessari's own video pieces come directly from this list including *Folding Hat* (part of number forty-seven on the list), *Police Drawing* (number eight), and *I Will Not*

Make Any More Boring Art (number forty-five), all of which were created in 1971.

In the *Folding Hat* video, the person folding the hat and whistling was a CalArts student. The idea was derived from a comment a friend had made to Baldessari about how in his high school years students would fold their hats to create codes that could be understood by other students who knew the system (Cranston & Obrist, 2013, p. 114). The piece's corresponding statement attests to Baldessari's interest in using time in his work as well as the Conceptual art cornerstone of impermanency: "The act of endlessly folding a hat and whistling is presented as passing time, as a series of signals, and as ephemeral sculpture" (Cranston & Obrist, 2013, p. 115).

Police Drawing was the video documentation of a performance called "Police Drawing Project." During the performance, Baldessari entered his friend's art class in San Diego for about fifteen minutes, set up a drawing board, lights, and a video camera, then left. Later, a real police sketch artist entered and asked the drawing students to describe Baldessari's likeness, none of whom had ever met him before the event. The drawing turned out to be accurate enough so that if he were in fact a criminal he would likely have been caught (Cranston & Obrist, 2013, p. 129). Comparably, in an artist talk given at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NSCAD) in 1973, Douglas Huebler described a similar activity where he asked an outsider to attend his lecture during an advanced drawing class at the University of South Carolina (Kennedy, 2012, p. 214). After the intruder made a disturbance and quick exit from the classroom, each student had to then draw him. Both the Baldessari and Huebler versions of the activity created a mixture of Conceptual art blended with the long-standing tradition of drawing portraits in an art classroom.

I Will Not Make Any More Boring Art became a series of different installments in 1971. The origin of the idea stemmed from Baldessari's "dissatisfaction with the fallout of Minimalism" (Cranston & Obrist, 2013, p. 142). However, on the original assignment list and in his writings, he labeled it a "punishment piece" as it was similar to a reprimand given to a naughty school child, yet here the punishment was intended to be self-imposed. One version of the idea was simply a video of Baldessari repeatedly writing the title's phase in a notebook until the tape ran out in the camera. It was a mix of commentary on contemporary art, teaching, and a reflection on his art practice where his interest in using language led him to discover how language could easily fall into something overly academic and in turn create boring art (Stich, 2005, p. 80).

Another version of *I Will Not Make Any More Boring Art* became the entire premise for a Baldessari exhibition at NSCAD's Mezzanine Gallery. Due to the school lacking the funds to fly him there, Baldessari came up with an

alternative that involved NSCAD students voluntarily writing the title's phrase on the empty, white gallery walls in legible floor-to-ceiling rows for the duration of the exhibition (April 1–10, 1971). The exercise was not intended as a punishment for NSCAD students, they were simply stand-ins for Baldessari. By the end of the show, students had written the phrase in pencil over four thousand times, covering the entirety of the gallery walls. In all, it can be interpreted as an absurd and ineffective form of punishment that simply inflicts the shortcomings of the teacher onto the students. It can be a comment on the authoritarian nature of the typical student-teacher relationship and a critique of art education that is overly focused on imitation and repetition. Due to the success of the event, the school's lithography workshop made a print series taken from the sample writing of the statement Baldessari had sent to the gallery before the show. Garry Neill Kennedy, the then president of NSCAD, describes how the phrase became a mantra for the school: "Baldessari's penitential commitment to 'not make any more boring art' became emblematic of the College's mission. It was a constant reminder of what we were about as a community of working artists" (Kennedy, 2012, p. XVIII).

In conclusion, Baldessari's overlapping ideas about art making and art learning are evident in his art practice and teaching. He used an experimental and light-hearted approach in both and was able to achieve a generative harmony between his dual careers. He employed simple ways of communicating and sought to reveal the mysteries of what artists do, while still questioning the very definition of art. He incorporated an intentional element of didacticism in many works which served as a critique of the ways artists are educated. His use of parody and satire in video pieces like *I am Making Art* and *I Will Not Make Any More Boring Art* gave his students a type of ultimate permission to experiment, question, and push the boundaries of art. Overall, Baldessari merged contemporary avant-garde practices with the classroom in ways that left a lasting impression on art education.

Acknowledgement

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Notes

1 Post-Studio Art course description in CalArts's "schedule of classes" from Term 1, 1972, on display at the *Where Art Might Happen: The Early Years of CalArts* exhibition, Kunsthaus Graz, Austria, July 1–September 20, 2020. Personal observation, July 2, 2020.

2 Stephen Prina (CalArts student 1978–1980), interviewed by author on March 1, 2021.
3 Barbara Bloom (CalArts student, 1970–1972), interviewed by author on February 4, 2021.
4 Matt Mullican (CalArts student, 1971–1974), interviewed by author on January 14, 2021.
5 Meg Cranston (CalArts student, 1984–1986), interviewed by author on February 11, 2021. All quotes attributed to Meg Cranston without a parenthetical citation come from the interview conducted by the author.

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CHAPTER 10

Post-Post-Studio Art

The Next Generation of Artist-Teachers

Rebecca Sprowl

Abstract

When the concepts of dematerialization and the devaluation of the art object became foundational principles in Conceptual art, a discourse around what and how to teach artists arose. John Baldessari even proclaimed that art could not be taught and students were better off using their tuition money to rent a studio space. This shift resulted in the formation of the Post-Studio Art program at the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts), which replaced practical skill learning and medium specialization with a focus on theory, mentorship, and group critique. While Baldessari sought to demystify the artist by exploring their thinking processes, Michael Asher sought to demystify art through logic and critical analysis. The program greatly impacted some members of what came to be known as the Pictures Generation of artists and the "CalArts Mafia," many of whom also became university art teachers. Although the ideologies behind the Post-Studio program are tied to their time and place, and many students returned to using traditional media after leaving the school, a conceptual spirit persisted in their work. Former students from the 1970s and 1980s reflect on their time at CalArts in interviews with the author and reveal how their experiences in the Post-Studio Art program informed their philosophies on art education. Specifically, they discuss their views on the debatable necessity for skill-based instruction, their methods of group critique, and their approaches to course design.

Keywords

art pedagogy – CalArts – Post-Studio Art – Conceptual Art – group critique – course design – Barbara Bloom – Matt Mullican – James Welling – Ericka Beckman – John Miller – Stephen Prina – Meg Cranston – Sam Durant

1 Introduction

The American Conceptual art era of the late 1960s brought about a reevaluation of the art object which filtered its way into art education. The Post-Studio Art course at the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) served as one of the laboratories for Conceptual art educators to explore the notion of dematerialization. Their dedication to this experiment was signified in part by John Baldessari's 1970 *Cremation Project* where he burned all his paintings made between 1953 and 1966 in the summer before the first classes began. The concept of devaluing the art object informed the use of teaching methods outside of practical skill instruction and placed a greater focus on analysis and exposure. In turn, specialization in a specific medium like painting or sculpture was generally discouraged. In Eric Fischl's book *Bad Boy: My Life On and Off the Canvas*, the former student voiced that he felt that CalArts had a narrow vision for the future of art, one that distanced itself greatly from the art and techniques of the past. As a painter, many Post-Studio students were critical of Fischl's use of such a traditional form of artmaking. He stated,

> These students believed that craft-based art making, especially painting, was passé, that the idea behind an artwork is more important than its actualization, and that in some cases the idea per se—as expressed in performance or a written set of instructions—*is* the artwork. (Fischl & Stone, 2013, p. 55)

Baldessari founded the Post-Studio Art program at CalArts in 1970 for students who wanted to work outside of traditional media. With its strong roots in Conceptual art, the course naturally took on a non-authoritative structure that served as a think-tank for students to develop their practices and learn to be artists. Therefore, pedagogical methods like group critique, mentorship, peer learning, and experiential learning were employed. Baldessari consistently used a Socratic method of questioning to challenge students' definitions of art and activate their inner skepticism. In 1976, Michael Asher began his own Post-Studio Art course in parallel to Baldessari's. His version of the course was serious and academic with a concentration on theory and interdisciplinarity. Asher was clear on his views that education in general was overspecialized and many of his students agreed that learning should not happen in such a compartmentalized manner. Echoing the pedagogical values of Asher, former student Mike Kelley stated,

> I especially disapprove of specialization in art education on the graduate level. I am not against having technical courses to learn certain skills. But I

> do not think discourse should be defined by discipline. Higher education in the arts should focus on theory, history, and discourse. (Sholis, 2009, p. 312)

Many former students were influenced by their time in the CalArts Post-Studio Art course. To gauge this impact, eight research participants were interviewed who were taught and mentored by John Baldessari and/or Michael Asher at CalArts, all of whom went on to have successful careers as both professional artists and university art instructors. The artists include Barbara Bloom (CalArts student from 1970–1972), Matt Mullican (1971–1974), James Welling (1971–1974), Ericka Beckman (1974–1976), John Miller (1978–1979), Stephen Prina (1978–1980), Meg Cranston (1984–1986), and Sam Durant (1989–1991).[1] The interviews sought to reveal how their CalArts education affected their later artistic and pedagogical practices and how the institution helped to shape their outlook on art education. Some of these artists from the early years went on to infiltrate the New York City art scene, earning them the label of the "CalArts Mafia," while others fall under the umbrella of the Pictures Generation due to their fondness for exploring and critiquing mass media imagery and popular culture. The Post-Studio Art instructors considered their students to be already artists, which helped to accelerate many of their practices. However, some former students found being thrust immediately into the role of artist challenging as they had yet to find their niche.

2 Skill-Based Learning

The 1987 exhibition titled *CalArts: Skeptical Belief(s)* highlighted some common characteristics that ran through the work of early CalArts alumni. In the publication produced with the exhibition, former student Mark Stahl noted, "behind this diversity there lies an operative objective tendency. A conceptually 'cool' attitude is shared by these artists, and it is strong evidence of the profound influence of CalArts' faculty" (Lord et al., 1987, p. 12). They not only shared tendencies toward the use of text and appropriation and a generally rebellious aesthetic, but many former students also returned to using traditional media like painting. In other words, they resurrected the art object destined for the gallery. Although their objects were still clearly informed by the Post-Studio philosophies, demonstrating that the students reinvested their conceptual education into their work, they were still a notable change from the ephemeral performances and video work that was common at the school. Baldessari explained,

> My theory is that the ideas that were around then—borrowing freely from popular culture, documenting ideas and processes, exploring the relationships between words and images—these ideas were subsequently applied by some of my students to painting. Instead of using film or video or performance, they used the ideas and made paintings out of them. (Hertz, 2003, p. 77)

Neither Baldessari nor Asher felt it necessary to explicitly teach practical art-making skills during Post-Studio lessons. To them teaching how to make a well-crafted object was not teaching how to make art.

Although countless alumni went on to have successful art careers, some initially left CalArts feeling uncertain about how to move forward. Stephen Prina recalled only being given the opportunity to teach art history for the first few years of his career because he was considered a Conceptual artist and therefore thought to have no discernible skills to share with art students. Similarly, James Welling discovered that it was difficult to make a living as a Conceptual artist because it was not popular with most galleries and found that to break through the confines of his art school experience he had to make an "effort to unlearn the lessons of Conceptual art" (Spira, 2013, p. 33). He began by working with watercolors before committing himself to photography and views his time at CalArts as a preparatory phase in his work, which challenges the "already artists" position taken by the Post-Studio instructors.

Like many others, James Welling primarily used video as his medium at CalArts. However, he expressed that several former students from the early 1970s later realized that areas like painting "have a currency and a history" unlike video which had only been used in art for about a decade at that time.[2] Welling feels that working with more traditional media allows for a level of humility and understanding that newer media does not. John Miller was also invested in video art making during his time at CalArts as it was considered a liberating and revolutionary medium in the 1970s. He soon discovered that quality standards for video picture, sound, and editing in the 1980s quickly accelerated, becoming costly and arduous. Therefore, he too, returned to painting and sculpture. However, Matt Mullican, who now uses an extensive assortment of different media in his work—everything from performance to oil sticks on canvas—explained that Post-Studio Art was "not so much about the method but really about what that method means" and "what it means to be an artist independent of any particular way of making art".

Michael Asher separated technical art skills from knowledge, viewing them as independent entities. He proclaimed that he did not "believe a skills education requires a program since it doesn't require an intellectual dialogue with

the social and political, but rather a one-way understanding of the application of materials with a goal towards technical expertise" (Peltomäki, 2019, p. 203). Meg Cranston disagrees with Asher that knowledge and skill learning are at odds with one another, as she believes experimenting and playing with materials is also a form of intellectual inquiry. Cranston finds it odd that the Post-Studio instructors were both formally trained in fine art but were not interested in transmitting their practical skill knowledge in their teaching. She never fully embraced the "no information in advance of need" mantra put forth by the Post-Studio faculty and refers to their approach as the "Modernist God model" where the artist-teacher is the "vessel of knowledge". This model was derived in part from Baldessari's philosophy that art was unteachable. Cranston left CalArts needing to self-learn practical skills and when she began teaching decided this was not the best approach to art education. Matt Mullican, on the other hand, fully applied the "artist as the vessel of knowledge" model in his teaching. Although Mullican was never given practical art lessons beyond high school he does not fully dismiss the benefits they can provide, which are to allow art students to see what is possible and acquire a sense of what they enjoy.

Before attending CalArts, Barbara Bloom was already familiar with Conceptual art. She had read some texts by Sol LeWitt and therefore knew from an early age that she did not need to make objects to be an artist. She has never been a painter or sculptor but instead makes works that do not necessitate specific skills. She has noted, "I'm a writer, and probably a novelist, but I found myself standing in the wrong line in some way and inadvertently signed up to be an artist". She also finds inspiration in close readings of films and literature. Conversely, John Miller attended the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) before coming to CalArts which focused heavily on traditional techniques. In the *Skeptical Belief(s)* exhibition catalog, he recalls first-year RISD art students being required to take courses like Lettering for the purpose of training their hand-eye coordination. He stated, "That kind of blinkered imperialism typified the curriculum, its flip side being an ethereal faith in art" (Lord et al., 1987, p. 10). His comment exemplifies the conflict between disdain and simultaneous admiration that an artist of his generation can feel toward Modernist era art education methods.

Erika Beckman was also formally trained as an artist in her undergraduate years in Saint Louis prior to attending CalArts and found it vital to her later artistic and teaching practices. Many of her professors during that time were products of the Institute of Design in Chicago, formerly known as The New Bauhaus, and had absorbed the teachings of László Moholy-Nagy. Beckman found the structured Bauhaus-style instruction she received in drawing, painting, and design to be incredibly important to her work even though she went

on to work in the medium of film. She recalls having to complete every activity in Josef Albers's *Interaction of Color* book on color theory. Color has always been and remains a central factor in Beckman's films, often using it to create contrast against a black-box-theater style background and to augment the game-like atmosphere common in her work. As a teacher, Beckman has used her expertise in color to teach courses that explore the relationship between color theory and film, while using techniques like hand processing, film manipulation, and light filtering.

Baldessari's reasoning for not explicitly teaching practical skills was simpler than Asher's; he personally knew many successful artists who could not draw and therefore saw no reason to include it in his teaching. However, former students like Meg Cranston feel that the act of drawing teaches essential abilities like patience, observation, and tolerance of frustration. Likewise, Ericka Beckman views drawing as an internal thinking process, connecting the mind and hand, and it is an integral step in structuring her artistic process. James Welling feels the act of drawing or taking a photograph is a means to gaining "an understanding of how the physical body relates to the three-dimensional world". He believes "students should grapple with the problem of medium very early in their education" as "any entry point into visual experience is important". Welling had a similar experience to Cranston in having to self-learn technical skills after CalArts, feeling that it set back his photography career by several years. Regardless, in his teaching, Welling advocates for a self-led point of entry where students pursue their interests instead of beginning with specific techniques. Similarly, Stephen Prina avoids prematurely predicting what foundational skills students may need because he wants them to be making art on day one and therefore aligns with CalArts's system of obtaining skills as needed. However, he explains,

> I always talk about the importance of developing skills and developing one's familiarity with materials. I've never seen an idea, I've always seen ideas manifested through certain kinds of materials, whether it be text on a page or a block of stone. So, I do not diminish the importance of developing technical skills.

3 Group Critique

In the absence of direct practical instruction at CalArts, the act of group critique rose to fill the void. Therefore, technique lessons and object-making were

replaced with dialogue and debate, resulting in art education at CalArts becoming more about social exchange and idea incubation. Asher, like John Dewey and Marcel Duchamp,[2] believed that works of art were not complete until they reached the viewer. Therefore, for Asher, both art and art education were social activities, and the educational institution was the provider of the necessary peer group. During critiques Asher expected his students to not only explain their intentions for the work but to also account for the intended viewer reception. He believed that works of art should contain a rational logic that viewers can read and understand, and that self-expressive works are undemocratic because they become removed from culture and placed back in the hands of the artist (Peltomäki, 2019, p. 234). John Miller also strongly believes that art is a social process and the viewer's experience of the work is just as important as the artist's. He thinks the meaning of the work is not created in the studio but when it enters the social sphere. Due to the significance of audience reception, Miller sees group critiques as invaluable to art education as they serve as a way to view art through the eyes of others.

Asher's Post-Studio critiques were not concerned with opinions or the personal motivations behind the work but focused on any area of knowledge that could be relevant to the intention, display, or physical materials of the work; a model likely inspired by the creative process of Conceptual artists. Although he spoke infrequently during them, Asher's approach to group critiques was interrogative and competitive, and while some former students found these aspects generative, others found them disparaging. Sam Durant employs a similar student-centered model of critique with his students but removes all elements of aggressiveness as he feels the same outcome can be achieved without being destructive. He allows the presenting student to choose their method of critique from either the Asher model of being rigorously questioned by peers or the Mary Kelly model of collaboratively reading the signifiers in the work without any prior information from the artist. Either way, Durant wants students to set aside all assumptions and look at the work as if it were the first artwork they have ever seen.

Stephen Prina chooses to not even use the word "critique" because of its negative connotations with "beating an opponent into submission" and instead simply uses the term "discussions". Diminishing classroom hierarchy as much as possible, Prina positions himself in the room "like any other spectator" because he wants to view the work "from a non-expertise viewpoint". He detests the practice of the teacher interrupting a critique to pass judgment or to attempt to fix the work, stating that this "is a bankrupt, still current model in arts education and maybe all education" (Kaiser & Végh, 2021, p. 310). In his classes, he trains the artists to vet criticism and develop

confidence in their principles, and he trains viewers to avoid contributing comments that simply make the work more normative for them. Instead, the group analyzes how the work operates and pinpoints its deviation from convention which is where the work often truly exists according to Prina. Likewise, Ericka Beckman also takes a more positive approach in her critiques where she simply searches for what is original in the work and attempts to read the subtext.

James Welling developed his own unique approach to critiques which employs a word association exercise. Each member of the group formulates one word that applies to the work presented and then describes their reasoning behind their selection, which serves as a starting point for discussion. As an additional challenge, at times Welling stipulates that the words they generate need to begin with a specific letter of the alphabet. He explains, "It's sort of a didactic tool to encapsulate a thought about the work and then expound upon it". When a question arises during the critique about something like color choice, Welling inverts it, making the asker analyze why the question is even pertinent in the first place. Akin to the Mary Kelly method, Welling prefers the group to read and discuss the work prior to the artist speaking to avoid predisposition in the analysis.

4 Course Design

John Baldessari's version of Post-Studio Art not only rejected many traditional studio practices in favor of critical and conceptual ones but at times removed the studio altogether. It eliminated the dependence on making art in a specified place and encouraged the idea that art could be made anywhere at any time. Baldessari regularly took students to random locations that had seemingly little to do with art. He had a practice of having students throw a dart at a map of Los Angeles and then taking them to the location where the dart landed. Students would then explore the space using still or video cameras and would sometimes make art on-site. On one random trip to a farmer's market, Baldessari recalled one student photographing a dead chicken being pulled around by a string (Christie's, 2014, 0:04:10). Baldessari simply wanted to expose students to new experiences and situations, and as he put it "introduce them to culture, let's say in the broadest sense" (Knight, 1992, p. 27). Matt Mullican recalls going to locations like Forest Lawn Memorial Park in the Hollywood Hills which is the burial place of some of the most famous actors and artists, and to the Movieland Wax Museum and Palace of Living Art which had kitschy life-size dioramas of scenes from movies and

famous art. These adventures challenged the traditional definition of an educational field trip.

Some Post-Studio alumni similarly created courses based on exposing students to new experiences. When invited back to CalArts by Baldessari to be a visiting professor in 1981, Barbara Bloom taught a course titled On Location. The classes were held anywhere but an art studio, taking place in a sushi bar/bowling alley, on an airport landing strip, and at a restaurant up the Pacific Coast Highway that flaunted blue glass windows. Similarly, Stephen Prina conducted a class at Harvard University titled Loitering. He developed the seminar in response to the intensely driven study culture at the school. One of the tasks was to find a place on a greater Boston map that the student had never visited, go there, and give a presentation to the class upon return. Without being provided success criteria or specific assignments on what to make, Prina intentionally made students uneasy. Encouraging them to leave campus, be present around culture, and respond to their environment without any pressure to make art. Prina explains,

> Especially in art, I think it's very important to understand how to loiter, you don't even know what you're looking for, and you may simply stumble across something. You have to maintain the position of being in tune with your surroundings, or you may totally overlook a gift that is being presented to you on a silver platter that you didn't even anticipate.

He even replaces the word "art" in his classroom vocabulary with "cultural work" in order to place the focus on reacting and responding instead of creating and inventing. Prina credits Baldessari with influencing his position on seeing the world as a studio and not confining artmaking to a designated site.

Aside from location-based courses, Bloom and Prina designed other highly conceptual courses. When Bloom taught in Columbia University's sculpture department, she created a course based on the concept of gift-giving. She would discuss with her students the similarities and differences between art-making and gift-giving to develop a deeper understanding of the multitude of reasons for making objects. Some of her assignments were to: make a gift for someone in the class without revealing who, make a gift for a famous person, make a gift from a famous person to you, and make a gift that is incredibly meaningful to you but no one else would understand why. The notion of gift-giving is also prevalent in Bloom's artwork, reminiscent of the overlap visible in Baldessari's dual practices as an artist-teacher, where one informed the other. Bloom investigates concepts like generosity, concealment, rituals of exchange, and

the relationships between giver and receiver, object and owner in her work. Comparably, early in Ericka Beckman's teaching career, she ran experimental film courses that combined conceptual practices with the medium of performance that were reflective of her work. The way she framed her ideas as an artist informed how she constructed experimental situations for her students. At times she would simply give students a set of materials and see what they could create from them and at other times would design specific tasks that embraced the inherent autonomy of Conceptual art. Her courses often dealt with the relationships between sound and image, and she created collaborative assignments like: "make your own film instrument, make a film that plays itself, make a film that performs itself, make a film that makes music, and make music using a thing that you record on film".

Stephen Prina invented a course called Lay of the Land which intensely focused on exploring the concept of "the horizontal." Part of Prina's reasoning for developing the course was that "it plays against the tendency in Western art to verticalize our experience". The course exposed students to a range of cultural phenomena that counteract the vertical tradition to help broaden their interests. Topics included Jackson Pollock's method of working on the floor, Mike Kelley's floor blankets, and a chapter on horizontality in the book *Formless: A User's Guide.* Another element of the course had been to visit the impressive map collection held by the Harvard University Library. Students were challenged to come up with unusual categorical requests for the librarian. For example, they had asked for the most disheveled map, the smallest map, maps with sea monsters, maps that contain undertones of racism, and maps that embody love or hope. The librarian then had to interpret their abnormal requests, and the students explored the relationship between cartography and "the horizontal." Lay of the Land also included the films *The Draughtsman's Contract,* a British period drama-murder mystery from 1982, where an artist is commissioned to do a series of landscape drawings, and *La Région Centrale,* a Canadian experimental film from 1971, shot on an uninhabited mountaintop using a robotic camera arm.

Prina's affinity for incorporating films into art education may have stemmed from his CalArts experience, as exposure to avant-garde film had consistently been an important component in both Baldessari's and Asher's pedagogy. Prina even caught the attention of *The New Yorker* in 1994 when he ran a full semester course dedicated to the early films of Keanu Reeves. The concept for the course was inspired by a passage written by French theorist Ronald Barthes, where he proposed concentrating on a proper name instead of a historical situation. Prina connected Reeves's works with sociological and philosophical references, explaining "For instance, one week you not only have to watch 'My

Own Private Idaho' but have to read 'The Idea of Decadence' from 'Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism'" (Orlean, 1994, para. 1). The focus was not on the quality of the actor's work but the diversity and scope of the films he starred in that embody specific styles and could be examined against other areas of culture.

In conclusion, although many Post-Studio Art alumni later reevaluated their relationship with the art object, the philosophies of Conceptual art endured both within their artistic practices and their teaching. Some alumni may now reject the "no information in advance of need" approach to art education after reflecting on their experiences as students, but they also still refrain from basing the foundations of their teaching on practical skill learning. They have found new and inventive ways to help their students develop their interests and intellects, and the practice of group critique and the idea of exposing students to culture in a broad sense remain integral. Overall, former Post-Studio Art students continue to reexamine the artistic process and the complex relationship between artmaking and teaching.

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Notes

1 All interviews with research participants were conducted via Zoom: James Welling on December 8, 2020, John Miller on January 6, 2021, Sam Durant on January 8, 2021, Matt Mullican on January 14, 2021, Barbara Bloom on February 4, 2021, Meg Cranston on February 11, 2021, Stephen Prina on March 1, 2021, and Ericka Beckman on November 19, 2021.

2 All quotes attributed to former CalArts students without a parenthetical citation come from interviews conducted by the author.

3 The essential role of the beholder or spectator is described throughout Dewey's classic 1934 book *Art as Experience* and in Duchamp's notable April 1957, American Federation of the Arts talk in Houston, Texas titled "The Creative Act."

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CHAPTER 11

The Citizens Art School

Rehearsing Collectivity through Printmaking in South Korea, 1980s–1990s

Sooyoung Leam

Abstract

Inaugurated in the summer of 1983 by South Korean artists from the Gwangju Freedom Artists Association (est. 1979), the Citizens Art School (Korean 시민미술학교, Romanization *simin misul hakgyo*) considered woodcut print as a medium for critical reflection on and intervention in a society undergoing paradigmatic transformation. Conceived in the aftermath of the Gwangju Uprising (1980), a brutally suppressed anti-authoritarian protest that propelled South Korea's move toward democratization, the school remained active until the early 1990s. During this period, its influence extended beyond the city, inspiring civic art programs across the country, often in collaboration with local universities, night schools, and labor unions. Yet the pedagogical and artistic significance of the Citizens Art School has remained largely overlooked, all the while the socio-political art practice of people's art (Korean 민중미술, Romanization *minjung misul*) has been widely historicized within the pro-democracy movement. This essay revisits the school—its curriculum, inspirations, practices, and revival at the Gwangju Biennale—to explore the continued relevance of its bi-directional approach to art education. The program's week-long, multifaceted activities embraced printmaking both as a form of documentation and expression for the people, an exercise in self-learning and collectivization for social change. Embedded within a cross-regional network that bridged religion, activism, and culture, the program was led by locally based artists primarily for amateurs. At a time when once-radical, grassroots art initiatives have been seamlessly absorbed into mainstream cultural institutions, the Citizens Art School offers a compelling model for reimagining how art education might reclaim its political agency today.

Keywords

Citizens Art School – Minjung Misul – art and activism – woodcut print – learning play – Gwangju Uprising

1 The Birth of Citizens Art School

A black-and-white woodcut print titled *My Name Is …* (1981) holds a charged stillness (Figure 11.1). A mound of grass, carved in sharp vertical strokes, rises against impenetrable darkness. Beneath it lies a human figure, buried yet present. A wide-open eye stares out from below, as if to refuse closure. Caught between silence and witness, the figure seems to be pressing against the weight of earth and memory alike. The work's incomplete title, voiced in the first person, invites a confrontation

FIGURE 11.1 Hong Sungdam, *My Name Is …*, 1981. Woodcut print, 24. 8 × 21.2 cm. Courtesy of the artist

with the image and with the lingering questions it leaves behind: whose names have been erased, forgotten, or forcibly rewritten? Who speaks for the missing, and who listens when they cannot speak back? Created by artist Hong Sungdam (b. 1955) in the immediate aftermath of the Gwangju Uprising (Korean 광주항쟁, Romanization *Gwangju hangjaeng*)—officially known as the May 18 Democratization Movement (Korean 광주민주화운동, Romanization *Gwangju minjuhwa undong*) and abbreviated as May 18—the print registers both personal reckoning and collective mourning. In May 1980, amid nationwide unrest following the assassination of president Park Chung-Hee (1917–1979) and the subsequent military coup led by general Chun Doo-Hwan (1931–2021), Gwangju became the epicenter of resistance. Students at the city's Chonnam National University took to the streets, demanding an end to martial law and the restoration of democracy, which was met with brutal military suppression that resulted in killing, torture, and arrest of the civilians. The state subsequently sought to silence the truth of this ten-day civic resistance, but it sparked mass protests around the country that eventually led to a fully-fledged democracy in 1987.

The rise of the woodcut movement in Asia has often coincided with periods of turmoil, and South Korea was no exception (Ng et al., 2020, p. 1). In the wake of military oppression in Gwangju and across the country, artists gravitated towards realist aesthetics and media associated with *minjung misul* [people's art], practicing them as tools of resistance and critique.[1] This political art movement emerged from a desire to challenge the modernist values, and address the lived realities of the people, whose lives were shaped by the entangled forces of colonial legacies, authoritarian rule, and extractive structures of capitalism. Among its various forms, woodcut printmaking stood out as especially effective, not only because of its accessibility and affordability, but also its narrative quality. The bold, stark imagery served as a powerful tool for documenting and illustrating the turbulent times, often depicting solidarity against oppression, and scenes from the everyday life. Freed from the confines of galleries and museums, the prints could be disseminated through the streets, progressive publications, and even calendars, reaching the people by way of circumventing the logic of capitalism.

Although numerous artist and activist groups eagerly explored the creative and critical potential of the woodcut throughout the 1980s, the network formed by the founding members of Gwangju Freedom Artists Association, namely Hong Sungdam, Choi Yeol (b. 1956) and other graduates of his alma mater, Chosun University, including Lee Sangho (b. 1960) and Jeon Jeongho (b. 1960), deserve particular attention.[2] As young artists fresh out of university with a shared experience of May 18, they initiated the Citizens Art School (Korean 시민미술학교, Romanization *simin misul hakgyo*) specifically for non-art-professionals, probing the possibility of communal artmaking and ultimately

the "democratization of art" (Zeitgeist Committee, 1985, p. 150).[3] The school formally opened its doors in the summer of 1983 at the Gwangju Catholic Church (now the site of the May 18 Archives), but its foundations had already been laid in the years prior through grassroots alliances and cultural experiences in rural communities. The South Jeolla Province, where Gwangju is located, had long been a stronghold of peasant organizing, particularly under the influence of the Catholic Farmers' Union and the Christian Farmers Federation. This connection was not incidental. Under a series of authoritarian regimes, progressive churches often engaged in urban mission and actively supported prodemocracy activities (Bae, 2008).[4] Hong, a native of Haui-do, and an energetic young activist majored in art education, was deeply involved in these efforts. He spent his winters, outside the busy farming season, traveling to rural gatherings where he collaborated with farmers and helped facilitate indoor programs such as drawing self-portraits and depicting village scenes. What began as informal workshops gradually took shape as a structured curriculum.

Education without demand is bound to be short-lived. Recognizing this, Hong and his fellow artists also sought to cultivate interest in printmaking by distributing the *Twelve Madang* (literally, twelve courtyards; Korean 마당, Romanization *madang*) calendar since 1982. Featuring autobiographical woodcut illustrations, the calendar was designed as a functioning object, as much as a vehicle for introducing art into daily life. Circulated widely, it found its way into kitchens, shops, and homes, where it quietly became part of the visual environment. For many, the calendar offered a first sustained encounter with woodcut print, sparking curiosity and opening a pathway that gradually nurtured public demand for learning. Built on such a momentum, when the school opened its week-long course to the citizens, featuring talks, site visits, group discussions, and printmaking-related activities that culminated in a public exhibition, it was met with great enthusiasm.

At least eleven cycles of the School were successfully conducted in Gwangju until 1990 (Seo, 2022), and the curriculum was subsequently hosted by other organizations around the country, including Mokpo, Busan, Seoul, and Incheon, resulting in the temporary formation of an interregional and interinstitutional alliance.[5] It is important to note that Hong and his peers were not the only ones to explore alternative methods of art education for the public at the time. The Seoul-based collective Durung, for instance, is known to have organized three folk art programs between 1983 and 1984, which stemmed from the members' interest in revitalizing traditional folk aesthetics, such as Korean decorative coloring and Buddhist paintings through woodcut prints, murals, and large-scale banners (Kim, 2018). However, while these classes lacked a formal curriculum or system, the Citizens Art School established a clear pedagogical framework from the outset. In this sense, the use of the term

citizen (Korean 시민, Romanization *simin*) in its title is instructive. Unlike the more commonly used nationals (Korean 국민, Romanization *gukmin*), which identifies people in relation to the nation-state, or masses (Korean 대중, Romanization *daejung*), referring to a large, indistinct group of consumers of commodified culture, or people (Korean 민중, Romanization *minjung*), which carries implicit references to a particular social class, *simin* is a relatively neutral term. It emphasizes the constituent power and individual rights of the people, whose interests may not always align with those of the state.

2 Singular Plural: Bi-Directional Approaches to Art

The Citizens Art School posits that its mission is to "foster and enhance participants' ability to critically discuss and think through issues, enabling them to make informed decisions and take necessary actions when required" (Hong, 1986, p. 32). This vision assumed that art could meaningfully shape everyday life by cultivating critical consciousness. As a result, the school's curriculum rejected the passive assimilation of art discourses, especially those of the West, and challenged the structures of conventional education. Most notably, it regarded the role of the instructors and scholarly research as secondary. Artist-instructors were to act as guides, instead of teachers, and the participants were encouraged to delve into actual sites of living to witness and encounter, rather than study from a distance. As many have pointed out, such treatment of learners as a co-creator of knowledge drew inspiration from recently translated pedagogical texts like Brazilian educator Paolo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968), which redefines the relationship between teacher, student, and society based on critical analysis of the social class system (Lee, 2014, p. 81). Yet in fact, a more foundational source of inspiration for the school was Bertolt Brecht's (1898–1956) *Lehrstück* [learning play], also known as didactic or teaching play (S. Leam, personal communication, July 11, 2025). Conceived as "stages in a process in which a limited number of plot structures that could be reworked for new variants and versions," Brecht envisioned learning play as a space for self-education through practice, rather than a vehicle for delivering messages to a passive audience (Cohen, 2021, p. 198). Performed primarily by amateurs in small group settings, these plays aimed to cultivate political awareness and social consciousness through the act of performing, and by employing various theatrical strategies. In this way, theater became both a platform for representation and a site of education in its own right.[6]

What Brecht foregrounded was the productivity of the audience. The learning play fostered disciplined self-reflection, training individuals to align

consciously with collective goals. The collective, in turn, was not an anonymous mass, but a committed, organized body. The learning play therefore embraced a bi-directional approach: it simultaneously sought intervention and reflection, theatrical performance and social action, individuality and collectivity. One of the ways in which the Citizens Art School realized Brecht's vision of the learning play was by treating artmaking as a process of self-education and collective inquiry. In practice, each cycle of the school offered hands-on creative workshops, with lectures on topics ranging from 'art and life' to 'art as practice.' The workshops encouraged participants to reflect on the self and conditions shaping it by narrating and visualizing personal experiences. Lectures, on the other hand, explored art's potential to intervene and challenge the status quo. Field trips and group discussions served as a public forum for mutual learning—where participants could share their observations, thoughts, and feelings, and begin to rehearse forms of agency together. As the School branched out, its founding members laid emphasis on collaborating with local artists, activists, and scholars as well, so that the school would act as a connective hub: a site where artistic, civic, and political energies could converge.

Although original blocks are no longer extant, the participants' works are reproduced in *Shared Bread* (Korean, 나누어진빵, Romanization, *Nanueojin ppang*) (1986), a publication co-edited by the school and the Justice and Peace Committee of the Gwangju Catholic Archdiocese.[7] Featuring a selection of 221 black-and-white prints produced over the years and documentation of the school's activities, the book covers a wide range of subjects; it ranges from religious faith and the trauma of May 18 to labor struggles and everyday survival (Figure 11.2). Rendered in bold, expressive lines, the images reflect a process rooted in self-exploration and shared spirit. Participants' reflections included in the publication indicate how group discussions shaped what to depict and how to narrate a story through an image. One wrote, "At a time when we turn a blind eye to the stories we yearn to tell," we should "seek our true selves through the image of a mother crying over her dead son" (Citizens Art School, 1986, p. 40).

According to the School's promotional flyers, each cycle brought together 50 to 60 participants, with a modest fee of 5,000 to 7,000 Korean won, covering materials, travel, and field trips. At first glance, the structure of the program—weekday session lasting several hours—may suggest a middle-class audience, with participants who could afford both the time and the cost. Indeed, early cohorts included churchgoers and young activists who had encountered the artists through protest networks. Lim Young-hee, for instance, joined the inaugural cycle after learning about Hong Sungdam's initiative, drawn to the school as a safe space for self-expression under the state surveillance and repression (13th Gwangju Biennale Education Team, 2020, p. 49). Yet as the program expanded beyond Gwangju and was adapted by night schools, regional

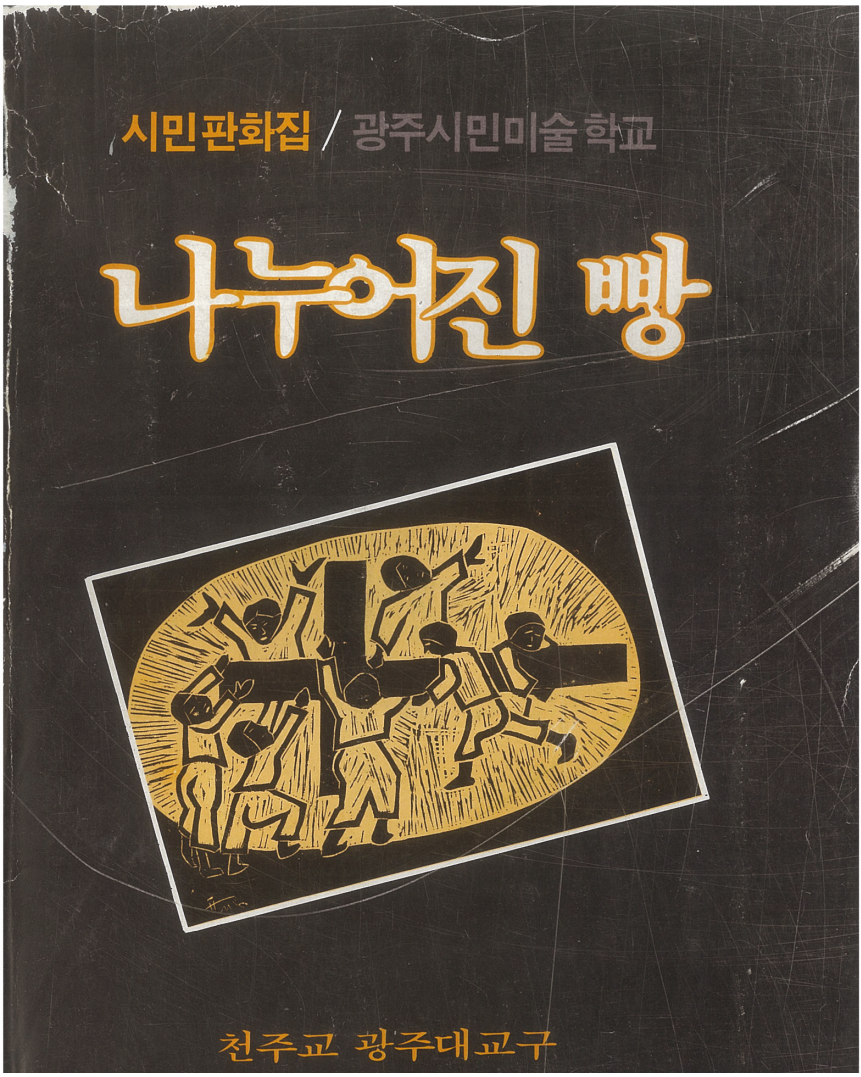

FIGURE 11.2 Front cover of *Shared Bread*, 1986. Courtesy of the May 18 Archives

partners, and universities, it began to attract a much broader spectrum of participants. Its curriculum proved flexible enough to travel, and accessible enough to resonate across different social strata (Choi, 1994, p. 194).

Artist Jeon Jeongho acknowledges that the instructors were particularly inspired by the affective quality of the participants' prints: "For us, as activist-artists, we had to be confrontational, direct, and fierce. It was difficult to focus on feelings when you are fighting against military dictatorship" (13th Gwangju Biennale Education Team, 2020, p. 153). But through the process of working with civilians, the artists came to understand the felt experience as a binding force

that enables one to imagine what society could be, rather than what it should be. The School's ethos to dissolve entrenched divisions between professionalism and amateurism, art and life, leisure and labor, production and consumption in reimagining the society is clearly outlined in the *mookji* (Korean 무크지, Romanization *mookji*) publications by Work and Play, a visual arts division of the group Hong and his fellow artists operated.[8] The first issue, published in the winter of 1983, featured poems and essays by metal and machine workers and farmers alongside diary entries by elementary school students, and an evaluative report on the inaugural cycle of the Citizens Art School.

By its third cycle, the school had expanded its concept of reality and community, revising the curriculum to prioritize group activities and field trips, particularly to marginalized areas of society, including tuberculosis hospitals, leper colonies, nursing homes, coal mines, markets, and farming villages. These encounters reshaped the participants' perspectives and encouraged them to shift their focus from personal concerns to the underlying social conditions and structures. The school made clear that the purpose of the visits was not to find a "subject matter" for art, but to immerse in "total life" (Choi, 1983, p. 2). Prints from this period reflect such shift. In one image, a visually impaired couple is shown against a barren landscape, reaching out into the void as they beg, accompanied by the words: "people must rely on each other," and "support one another" (Citizens Art School, 1984, p. 6). Another work showing an elderly farmer with his cow is paired with the reflection: "Through the sweat-soaked printmaking workshops, it became clear that we are all one; that we are a unity and a community" (Citizens Art School, 1985, p. 5). The recurring word "friend" throughout these works call viewers into the imagined community, where individual stories give way to a shared consciousness across class, age, and political affiliation.

3 Staging the Collective

What does it mean to rehearse ideas before articulating them in images? How might collective expression begin with shared gestures, voices, and improvisation? One of the ways the Citizens Art School adapted Brecht's idea of the learning play was integrating elements of Korean folk theater into its curriculum. Before the participants turned to printmaking, they often engaged in collaborative exercises, such as writing scripts, crafting masks, and performing scenes, that underscored the power of storytelling to reconfigure the present conditions. These practices drew from people's theater (Korean 마당극, Romanization *madanggeuk*), a contemporary reinterpretation of the traditional Korean mask dance (Korean 탈춤, Romanization *talchum*). If the mask

dance had originally flourished during the Joseon dynasty (1392–1910) as a social satire to challenge the rigid class system, often through improvisation and the use of pun, *madanggeuk* highlighted the dialogic space of performance itself. Loosely scripted and driven by interaction between performers and audience, it became popular amongst student activists in the 1970s for its adaptability, satire, and participatory spirit.

However, *talchum* and its contemporary interpretations are not solely instruments of subversion and critique. They equally embody a state of intense joy or spiritual exhilaration (Korean 신명, Romanization *shinmyeong*), rooted in Korean folk culture. As historian Kim Heo-kyung has noted, many dissident scholars and *minjung* artists of the time recognized *shinmyeong* as the emotional foundation for fostering and practicing collective bonds (Kim, 2018). Participants typically "crafted masks that reflected and typified the characters of the contemporary era" and "enjoyed improvising plays while wearing them" (Work and Play, 1983, unpaginated). Characters ranged from farmers and children to billionaires and ghosts; figures that evoke both the lived and spectral dimensions of capitalism. If these exercises offered a foundation for exploring how to embody a character, build a scene, and shape a narrative, then the subsequent translation from performance to print opened ways to translate movement, dialogue, and emotion into static yet expressive images.

The works produced throughout the course were ultimately curated into an exhibition, which became the defining feature of the Citizens Art School. Organized by the participants, these exhibitions brought the collaborative energy of the program into public view. They offered a space to engage with new audiences and publicize the discussions and insights the participants had developed, either individually or in groups, throughout the course. Preparation—selecting works, designing brochures, and creating promotional materials—added another layer of group practice. Exhibitions were held in venues like Kodume, a local art space, theater, and café, as well as at the Catholic Church's art space. Posters bearing reproductions of participant's work were placed along outdoor walls, turning the street into a temporary exhibition site. Considering that at least 2,000 copies of the brochures were printed, and that a significant number of prints were sold on site, the student exhibitions appear to have attracted considerable public attention. The proceeds from these sales were donated and used to support the organization of the school's next cycle, reinforcing a self-sustaining model. As Hong Sungdam recalled, "the exhibitions were a place to critically reflect on the self and at the same time relate to one another. It, too, enabled the students to gain a shared sense of responsibility" (Hong, 2025).

In 1985, the founding members of the Citizens Art School notably organized a traveling exhibition, bringing together 70 works by the participants and

50 prints by the instructors and other *minjung* artists. Entitled *Print Exhibition of the People's Era* and *Spirit of the Times: Printmaking Exhibition*, this two-part show united teachers and students as well as professionals and amateurs through a shared visual language. As one reviewer for a daily newspaper noted, the prints read like "statements made by the people" (Maeil Kyungjae, 1985, p. 9). In fact, through the exhibition, the school came to align itself more closely with the people's movement (Korean 민중운동, Romanization *minjung undong*) led by university students seeking to challenge the socio-political stagnation. Upon invitations from student councils and youth organizations around the country, the exhibition was held across 13 locations in seven cities, mostly taking place on university campuses rather than in conventional galleries or art museums. Soon, a number of these institutions began to run their own public art classes inspired by the Citizens Art School, notable examples including the Youth Art School at Myeongdong Cathedral, Seongnam People's Art School, and Incheon People's Art School (Kim, 2020). This organic process of dissemination demonstrates how grassroots artistic initiatives can influence and reshape institutional approaches to art education.

4 Citizens Art School Reactivated

The pedagogy formulated by the Citizens Art School was inseparable from the political and cultural conditions of its time. Grounded in the ethos of the 1980s democratic movements, the school embraced a model of solidarity shaped by organized, goal-oriented community of citizens (Kim, 2013, p. 104). This framework reflected a period when artists believed in a shared political agenda and collective responsibility. However, the same qualities that gave the movement the coherence, also opened it to criticism. The woodcut prints' crude visual language and lack of formal nuance were often seen as limiting, and the school's curriculum was shaped, in part, by the ideological convictions of the founding members. Though the end of the authoritarian rule in 1987 was seen as a major victory for the artists and participants alike, the rise of neoliberal globalization soon introduced new pressures, intensifying the very capitalist structures the school had set out to critique.

Paradoxically, it was in the context of the international biennials—those deeply entangled with both the global circulation of art and locality—that the legacy of the Citizens Art School found renewed relevance, precisely for its early commitment to self-education, collectivity, and socially engaged practice. This was possible also because biennials, characterized by their scale, recurring format, and attention to both local and global dynamics, increasingly came to be seen as valuable platforms for alternative knowledge production.

By the end of the 2000s, curator Ute Meta Bauer even noted that "biennials have begun to reformulate as art schools" and a "terrain for (counter)actions" (Bauer, 2009, p. 225). In South Korea alone, there have been several attempts to rethink international perennial events as testbeds for envisioning new models of learning. Consider, for example, the Anyang Public Art Project's Open School (2013), which temporarily conceptualized its public programs as open-ended classes, and *The Village* (2016) initiated by artist Ham Yang-ah during the Mediacity Seoul Biennale, which brought together 80 visual art educators and artists in the context of a summer-camp-cum-village community.[9]

What grants particular attention are instances that specifically turn to the Citizens Art School and redefine its relevance for today. These include *Gwangju Lessons* (2020) curated by Binna Choi in collaboration with Rwanda-born Dutch artist Christian Nyampeta for the Gwangju Biennale Foundation's special exhibition project commemorating the 40th anniversary of May 18, and Malaysian artist group Pangrok Sulap's participatory woodcut print workshops held at the 14th edition of the Gwangju Biennale.[10] The idea for the *Gwangju Lessons* is known to have sparked during a visit to the newly opened May 18 Archives as part of the 2016 Gwangju Biennale. It was there that the Biennale's then-curator Choi and participating artist Nyampeta encountered the publication *Shared Bread* and learned about the school. Drawing from this discovery and his close collaborations with Choi in the following years, Nyampeta developed a work centered on the concept of 'rematerialization,' beginning by teaching himself to carve into square linoleum plates based on the 70 black-and-white reproductions featured in the book. These newly produced plates were displayed as tiles on a wall for the exhibition *Gwangju Lessons*, first held at Akademie der Künste der Welt in Cologne, Germany. Visitors were invited to take a plate from the wall and print it at a workstation set up in one corner of the gallery, activating the original images once again. When the exhibition traveled to Gwangju later that year, the curator and the artist commissioned Gwangju based artist cooperative Cokkiri to generate a new set of wood plates, this time depicting an entire collection of images featured in *Shared Bread* with a 3D printer. As in Cologne, visitors were encouraged to make prints on site, rendering the exhibition space a site of collective artmaking (Figure 11.3).[11]

Building on his longstanding interest in the question of "how to live, rest, and work together," Nyampeta's central work conceived for the *Gwangju Lessons* deliberately refused to offer technical training on the medium or historical studies of the school (Nyampeta & Engqvist, 2018). Through the process of rematerializing the images once produced by the participants in the past, the exhibition effectively destabilizes the notions of authenticity and authorship, as much as it unravels the school's historicity. Referring to the depictions of everyday landscape "scenes from the revolution," Nyampeta suggests the

FIGURE 11.3 Installation view of *Gwangju Lessons* featuring Christian Nyampeta's *Scenes from the Revolution* (2020) and the Gwangju version of ARAC's *Un/Chrono/Logical Timeline* (2020) composed by the exhibition's participants from Chonnam National University and the 13th Gwangju Biennale Education Team. National Asian Culture Center, Gwangju. © Gwangju Biennale Foundation. Courtesy of the artist and the curator

subversive forces lie within the people, who may at times appear exhausted, sad, hopeless, lost, and even traumatized (Choi, 2020, p. 207).

For the Malaysian collective Pangrok Sulap, the enduring history of the Citizens Art School—particularly the continued artistic activities of key members such as Hong, Lee, and Jeon—deeply resonated with their own commitment to empowering rural and marginalized communities. Established in 2010, the collective primarily employs woodcut prints to disseminate social messages that reflect the narratives of Borneo's communities, including their endangered lifestyles, environmental concerns, and issues of human rights and ecological exploitation. Strong advocates of the Do-It-Yourself ethos, Pangrok Sulap views community engagement as a crucial part of the creative process. The stories and experiences shared by local people become sources of inspiration, while the act of carving and printing woodcuts transforms into a performative event. During these events, participants often join in traditional Sabah folk dances, transferring ink onto the final woodcut prints through their movements. Music is an essential part of this communal dancing and printing, as suggested by the collective's name, "Pangrok" (local pronunciation of punk rock) and "Sulap," a traditional hut or resting place used by farmers in Sabah.

Pangrok Sulap's series of public classes organized around their work *Gwangju Blooming* (2023) for the 14th Gwangju Biennale celebrated the spirit of mutual

learning. To the accompaniment of music composed and performed by the group, participants of all ages were invited to carve messages or images of their choice into identically sized woodblocks and collectively print them onto a large banner-like fabric. This activity was the culmination of Pangrok Sulap's research into the history and archives of South Korea's woodcut movement, and more importantly, friendships that developed through personal interactions with the members of the school. Their workshop generated a rare moment in which artists including Jeon, and other *minjung* artists who have now become senior practitioners, joined in to make prints, dancing to the group's live music.

While grounded in the urgencies of its time, the Citizens Art School's emphasis on shared learning and mutual agency continues to hold relevance, particularly in the face of growing threats to democratic values globally. Reactivations of the School through platforms like the Gwangju Biennale open up new ways to revisit its legacy, less as a closed historical event, and more as a set of questions that can be taken up differently in the present. These contemporary returns do not simply preserve the school's legacy but suggest how its core concerns around pedagogy, collectivity, and intervention, might resonate across contexts. In this sense, the educational activities centered around woodcut printmaking, as devised by the school, might be understood as rehearsals, for learning, for agency, and for democracy. Rather than exercises in technical mastery, they were a shared practice in forming political imagination. Echoing Brecht's notion of the learning play, doing and reflecting, individual expression and collective inquiry merged into the Citizens Art school's pedagogical process. Critical exploration of the school's legacy today is therefore not about retrieving a fixed model, but about engaging its ethos as a living proposition: that self-education and organization of committed collectivity are not ends in themselves, but practices that must be continuously worked through, especially in moments of political polarization and precarity.[12]

Notes

1 On the general introduction *to minjung misul* and cultural movement see, Lee (2007). On the historiography of *minjung misul*, see Yoo (2020).

2 Gwangju Freedom Artists Association was formed in September 1979 by eight artists from Gwangju, including Hong Sungdam and Choi Yeol. The members' first-hand experience of the atrocities of the May 18 was formative in shaping the group's grassroot activities in the following years. The Association subsequently changed its name to Visual Media Center in 1985. As art historian and critic, Choi has served as an important chronicler of the group's activities and of the broader history of Minjung Art, see Choi (1994).

3 *Simin misul hakgyo* has been variously translated as People's Art School, Civic Art School, or Community Art School, among others. This essay follows the translation that is closest

to the original definition of the Korean word, and the version used by the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Korea Research Lab.

4 The Justice and Peace Committee of the Catholic Archdiocese of Gwangju, for instance, played a pivotal role in issuing an official statement against the military government, and circulating information about the brutalities of the Gwangju uprising in and outside of South Korea.

5 Existing studies on the Citizens Art School has tended to focus on its activities until 1986 due to the lack surviving records, but Seo Yuri's extensive research into the school's archives reveal that the courses were held in Gwangju until the early 1990s. Her influential study also highlights collectivity forged by the medium of woodcut, and especially the participants' shared sensory experience, see Seo (2020).

6 In the 1980s, Brecht received exceptional scholarly attention in South Korea across German literary studies as well as broader literary and theatrical discourses. This reception intensified as it intersected with cultural movements committed to social transformation. Within this context, Brecht was regarded as more than a playwright or a theorist. He was taken up as a paradigmatic figure of socialist realism, whose work exemplified uncompromising dedication to revolutionary praxis, see Oh (1993).

7 *Shared Bread* (Gwangju: Justice and Peace Committee of the Gwangju Catholic Center, 1986). The reproductions were a selection from over 500 prints made by the participants. The book also contains their hand-written notes.

8 A *mookji* refers to a publication that took on the format of a magazine but was permitted to be published as a book due to the difficulties in issuing periodicals following the Policy for Merger and Abolition of the Press implemented by the Chun Doo-hwan regime. In 1983, with the release of numerous *mookji*, it developed into a publishing movement.

9 For more information on the Open School and The Village project, see LOT-EK (2012). *Upcycle.* LOT-EK; Seoul Museum of Art (2020). *Seoul Mediacity Biennale 1996–2022 Report*. Seoul Museum of Art.

10 Founded in 1995 to commemorate the spirit of civil resistance manifested during the May 18, the Gwangju Biennale distinguishes itself from other exhibitions born out of regional development and tourism.

11 According to Binna Choi, due to pandemic-related scheduling changes, it became impossible to ship the works made for the Cologne exhibition, prompting collaboration with the collective Cokkiri. The curatorial concept Choi and Nyampeta developed for the exhibition is detailed in the exhibition catalogue, *MaytoDay* (2020). For the Gwangju iteration of the exhibition, they also invited a group of students from Chonnam National University to follow parts of the school curriculum and conduct research into its history. The publication *2020 Gwangju simin misul hakgyo* (2020 Citizens Art School) was put together as a result of this collaboration with the Chonnam National University students.

12 I am deeply grateful to Hong Sungdam for generously sharing his experiences and insights into the organization of the Citizens Art School. My sincere thanks also go to Yoo Hyejong and Binna Choi for their invaluable feedback, and to Byun Youngsun for sharing archival materials that informed this research.

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CHAPTER 12

On Disturbed Methodologies

A Re-cap Almost in Verbatim of Spontaneous Interventions

Bernard Akoi-Jackson

Abstract

The need to constantly review, (or more appropriately, disrupt) the canon, be it in art theory, in art history, in art education or in art practice in general, is imperative. As an art educator who is also an artist, for the author, criticism of art education and institutionalized methods appeals to the desire to theorize this criticism from an unconventional perspective. In doing so, he tends to agree with a certain "battle cry" often attributed to the art world's enfant terrible, Banksy: "Art should comfort the disturbed and disturb the comfortable." In the pursuit of means to disrupt art-related thinking and practice and therefore, to disturb the institutionalized methods of art education, this study attempts to identify strategies that can be termed "disturbed methodologies." This research is based on experiences from the author's pedagogical projects in general, yet attempting to focus specifically on "Point(s) of Ellipses" (How to do stuff with the stuff we have and stuff we don't have)—a crash course in "Disturbing the Piece", which was on offer at the Danish National School of Performing Arts (Den Danske Scenekunstskole, DDSKS) in Odense, Denmark.[1] This course was representative of the kind of events the author is constantly experimenting with at the intersection of art practice and art education in the mode of critique, assuming the critical intellectual equality of all persons involved. The aim is to frame the work of art as essentially a non-consensual object resulting from a critical attitude leading to discontinuity. This hybridized entity (the artwork), inhabits liminal spaces that are effervescent and characterized by mixes of irresolvable desires. In this domain, the piece becomes novel constellations of heterogeneous objects and situations that disrupt habitual tropes and patterns of perception. By observing his own art-practice experience of institutional critique, "disruption" is seen in a practical, engaged approach to criticism rather than in a theoretical, historical or otherwise hermetic attempt at epistemological consideration. This article attempts to make an almost verbatim re-cap of the presentation made by the author during a colloquium on the history and practice of art education in Berlin in June 2023. Of course, there is the surety that memory will fail, but it is the effort that really matters, isn't it … (?).

Keywords

disruption – disturbed methodologies – performative pedagogy – postcolonial theory – canon – art pedagogy – Ghanaian contemporary art

1 Introduction

I would like to begin with an epithet. In the spirit of disruption, it is taken from nowhere in particular; cannot be attributed to anyone in particular; but sounding quite convincing, as though it came from the mind of an ancient philosopher, I elect to use it, even if it remains seemingly random, for it is honestly a poignant, almost irrefutable truism. But we need to note too that epithets are usually only obliquely related to the point one is trying to make, aren't they? So, we may never return to it, even though, at the end of the day, the point would certainly have been made. And then I'll share an anecdote about how my planned idea for the presentation somehow went south toward an unplanned, yet beautifully generative, route …

> An epithet that is attributable to no one
>
> … one of the most frustrating moments in the contemporary learning sphere, when it comes to ART, EDUCATION and PRACTICE, is to be at your wits end and not really know what exactly it is that you're doing; what exactly it is you're supposed to be doing or what it is exactly you even did in the past … OMG!

As has been hinted already, this so-called epithet is attributed to no one in particular. The author however, would perhaps, like to take the credit for it[?] wink, wink … then again, why would an epithet appear somewhere inside the text and not right before it? All these make up valid and fascinating positions for enquiry.

2 The Anecdote about the Unplanned Route

I recall having started my presentation in Berlin with a rather worn-out critique of orthodox classroom process. It is one that I usually make of the so-called lesson plan in a typical pedagogic situation. Flicking back my rather huge Shuka

or Maasai cloth scarf,[2] I took a step to the lectern, leaned in towards the microphone, and with a gradually developing smirk, breathed out: "The almighty lesson plan is only as good as the start of the actual lesson," as though it was meant to be a whisper. It was heard all through the hall, and deliberately so.

This critique, I believe, is not totally novel. What I wish to propose with this initial critical evaluation of one of the fundamental moments in conventional teaching and learning, is its futility. The futility of the idea that one is ever capable of predicting the totality of the outcome of the lesson before it actually transpires, should really be common knowledge by now. There is no real denying the fact that the intended lesson plan would always remain an intent, a potentiality, a desire. Because at the start of the lesson—in real time, in real space, with all possible configurations of concessions, conditions, and contexts—the entire pedagogic situation is thrown into chaotic conflict! And then what do we do?

Isn't it curious that almost every film, narrative or story begins with a conflict? It is this similar situation I tend to take students through. To facilitate certain frustrations within them that ultimately yield unexpected treasures. Imagine for instance, that you have been invited to attend an art exhibition. Given standard art educational practices of the late 20th century, you would expect to be ushered into a presumptively neutral venue with autonomous art objects that would be encountered by your disembodied eye, for your rational contemplation. Doesn't this sound all too familiar? So now, imagine that this exhibition you are thrust into is one that is quite impossible, if not literally impassable. It presents work, (a disturbed piece), by the contemporary Ghanaian artist Bernard Akoi-Jackson, whose general oeuvre has been described in his bio as: [work that is] "drawn to the politics of such vestiges of colonialist encounter as overtly bureaucratic rituals that lead to procedural stalemate in society. His multi-disciplinary, audience-implicating installations and performative pseudo-rituals have featured in exhibitions across the world" (Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum [MSU Broad], 2015).

The work's title is presented thus: *Untitled ... How to Usher the* [*an*] *African fully into* [*His*]*tory, like a sheep to the slaughter, as though s/h*[*e*] (*wasn't aware of*) *it all along and that his/her grin was not informed by a sly knowingness, but rather by a dumbfounded bewilderment and an eternal gratefulness to kin totally privileged by woes inflicted so long ago in antiquity, it is no use "mulling" over them in such contemporaneity, even though time continues to be cyclic ...* (MSU Broad, 2015). As complicated as the non-title goes, there's not much time to soak it all in before you are nudged on to navigate all the possible frustration so lavishly laid out before you (see Figure 12.1). And as if the ambiguities were not enough, you have a milling set of very busy-looking uniformed staff, who

also sporadically issue out verbal commands here and there. Distractions are rife! Visual, textual and sonic prompts are everywhere.

There is music playing at a decibel too loud and the heating has also been upped a notch, so that your entire orientation is put in slight disarray. And to be fair, there is also always room to exit it all, if you're not too settled in place. If you are able to survive the initial onslaught of complex and complicated instructions, you only graduate to another section of the process, where much more obscure hurdles must be surmounted, whilst also keeping some earlier instructions in mind, since you've been foretold, they will be needed later on in the process. Upon reaching the eventual end, if there is any such site we can designate as an end, you receive some kinds of rewards. You are presented, in Christian eucharistic style, with Ghanaian chocolate, brutally sawn through by an uncanny character, who also offers you Dutch Schnapps and a certificate. What oddities, right?

FIGURE 12.1 Bernard Akoi-Jackson, Video stills from the performance *Untitled ... How to Usher the* [*an*] *African fully into* [*His*]*tory, like a sheep to the slaughter, as though s/h*[*e*] (*wasn't aware of*) *it all along and that his/her grin was not informed by a sly knowingness, but rather by a dumbfounded bewilderment and an eternal gratefulness to kin totally privileged by woes inflicted so long ago in antiquity, it is no use "mulling" over them in such contemporaneity, even though time continues to be cyclic ...* (2015). Performed at Lilith Performance Studio, Malmö, Sweden, in May 2015, the work staged a fictitious bureaucratic ritual where participants were hemmed into a system of absurd tasks, reflecting on postcolonial identities. Courtesy of Lilith Performance Studio and the artist

Well, as it pans out in the artistic output, so does it also in the pedagogic situations that I offer in a typical class/lecture room encounter. All these are done in the already hinted at position that there's a need to continually disrupt the canon, whether in art theory(-ies); in history(-ies), in art education/transfer of knowledge(-ies), or in the very practice/praxi (the doing and thinking through that goes along). This is because I'm in some sort of agreement with Banksy, who is said to have suggested that art should comfort the disturbed and disturb the comfortable. In this brushed up anarchic attitude, I also operate from a pedagogic angle inspired by the complex praxis of Kąrî'kąchä Seid'ou, Professor at the KNUST Fine Art Department, who in a 2012 interview proposes that he stopped making art as we know it so as to make artists. His claim is supported by living proof that his emancipatory approach to teaching art, of which I am a beneficiary, has had him dedicate much of his art teaching to challenging students to develop practices that are arguably independent of prevailing systems. It is from his lead that I coin the series of strategies I employ in my own output as *disturbed methodologies*. These strategies frame the work of art as essentially non-consensual, in that even though most of the time, the public is implicated in the work, they are not participating so as to realize a hegemonic idea. The work(s) is/are hybridized and inhabit(s) liminal spaces that are so effervescent that the emergent piece(-es) become(s) "novel constellations of heterogeneous objects and situations that disrupt habitual tropes of perception" (Akbank Sanat, 2018).

So, this is how the anecdote has played out. I intended, as with a 'lesson plan', to talk about one particular event, only to have embarked on this unplanned route, which has had me touch on quite a lot of stuff. My offering is in memory of Bisi Silva, founder of the Centre for Contemporary Art (CCA), Lagos, and the itinerant Asiko Art School Project, a roving, non-traditional art school program.

In a similar manner, imagine you signed up to study at an art school (where myself and a host of similar-minded colleagues offer our services as lecturers, instructors, facilitators, etc.). You expect to be taken through tried and tested techniques, or to be introduced to set ways of working and knowing what art is, only to be met with rather unexpected instructions, examples and models (or, maybe added to what you expect, these other baffling examples are added to your already long list of references). The examples you see have never really appeared in the canons that your initial training almost always referred to (Figure 12.2). Imagine that in your first week, you are asked to try dreaming, which involves the remembering of the recent past and re-construction of possible futures. The course outline, if there is any, suggest that the work is to be based on ideas of play, humor and criticality. You will Re-visit the recent past;

you will Re-view some of the activities that were done generally in your formative studies.

After dreaming, you will then begin Waking, which involves your Searching through the debris of recent and future times with a series of participatory activities, which will have you engage in an analysis of some of the observations that arise from your reviews. They will also have you Re-read of your course proposal and Re-cap on the ideas that were broached. Then you will Re-view the proposal collectively, so as to determine the feasibility of projected ideas. For research, you are invited to "bump" into people, sites, spaces and ideas. You're encouraged to ethically eavesdrop on conversations in public transport or go out to town, visiting makers who may not necessarily refer to themselves as "artists." They must simply inspire conversations and encounters that become worthwhile for you and the general society. These activities are intentionally non-extractive, and they go on and on whilst doing them, your studio, if there is any such space available, starts filling up with tangible and intangible stuff. In a likewise manner, your mind is also filling up and you are wondering what to do with all this stuff that is accumulating. After a couple of weeks, you're almost breathless. Why does one have to go through all this?

FIGURE 12.2 Installation view of *Orderly Disorderly* (2017), the end-of-year exhibition of graduating BFA students from Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST). Organized by blaxTARLINES KUMASI, the exhibition was held at the Museum of Science and Technology, Accra. Courtesy of blaxTARLINES Kumasi

FIGURE 12.3 Va-Bene Eliken Fiatsi, exhibition poster for *Orderly Disorderly*, 2017. The poster announces the end-of-year exhibition for graduating BFA students, organized by blaxTARLINES Kumasi at the Museum of Science and Technology, Accra. Courtesy of blaxTARLINES Kumasi

We are proposing this because both learners and the facilitators of learning are aware that we constantly engage on a fraught historical note. Most of the contexts within which I am facilitating art education are often encumbered by certain historical disruptions. Via a singular act of transgression for instance, the infamous Berlin Conference of 1884–1885 through the action of Euro-American colonialist cartographers, etched out such literal boundaries upon the African continent. This contravention left in its wake a great deal of turmoil, initiating the atomization of African peoples and a devastation of their (our) collective psyche. So, it has become imperative to jostle people out of their collective slumbers, through these kinds of disturbing engagements. When African colonies began attaining their independence in the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s (led brilliantly by Ghana, as the first country south of the Sahara, to have obtained independence in 1957), it was the hope of the people that their leaders would make good, the promises of African excellence and self-reliance via a collectivization of the "African experience" (Armah, 2010).

By encouraging learners to venture into the real world, often outside of the cosy studio context of only the university, many transformative encounters are ignited. These ideas are also espoused in my PhD dissertation titled:

"Disturbing the Piece* A Post-Conceptual Praxis in Context." In the dissertation, I make the quote of a quote of Fanon via Armah thus:

> The revolutionary, according to Fanon, inserts himself among his people, without noise. This formulation is pivotal, but because it is so casually understated, its myriad implications escape casual readers. Cabral adds that in the revolutionary process, the desire for visibility is a teething disease, and that massive crowds, gathered together to make insurrectionary yearnings before the oppressor, make no sense. Quiet, selective, effective, efficient initiatives do make sense. (Armah, 2010)

So, let's imagine an art school in which not only faculty, but learners, technicians or facilitators operate as Fanonian revolutionaries. They all insert themselves deeply in their peculiar contexts, whilst being conscious of prevailing conditions and acting conscientiously, responsibly, and ultimately exuding a high sense of generosity. By being so politically alive to one's surroundings, inspiration is *tapped* from all round, not in an extractionist attitude, but rather in one that recognizes the interconnectedness of all and sundry. And being thus aware, the types of texts that inform this expanded and heavily disturbed approach to knowledge engagement, point to an acknowledgement of art as politics, and not as merely a reflection of political positions.

Knowing this, learners are encouraged to embark on historical and theoretical investigations of notions of contemporaneity via critically looking at ideas of rupture, disruption and disturbance within the field of contemporary art (Osborne, 2013). In these types of encounters, we are able to discuss some of the crises that have bedeviled the field of art. We then proceed retroactively towards a reading of Peter Osborne's assertion that contemporary art is "post-conceptual" (2013).

Being thus equipped, we also attempt to review notions of equality within aesthetics as politics as developed by Jacques Rancière in *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics* (2010), as the necessary conditions for a truly political art. That which can claim to be emancipatory, thus democratic. A salient argument of Rancière's is that contemporary art need necessarily operate in the 'aesthetic regime' to be adequately democratic. These ideas are further explored by the historian Grant H. Kester in *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context* (2011), where, on the contrary, a so-called "third way" is approached when it comes to politics in art practice. For Kester, "consensus" is the keyword. What we critique in this is his reliance once again, on what Rancière calls the "ethical regime" in the "distribution of the sensible" (2010). For I continue to insist that the work cannot be consensual as Kester proposes.

In a similar position, Claire Bishop is also dissatisfied with the appeal to the consensual and critiques it scathingly (2012). In her argument, Bishop seeks to restore faith—though restoration is perhaps not a fair attribute to her project—in Rancière's insistence on antagonism and dissensus as the approach to emancipatory art. It is in this unrelenting resolve in engaging with the realities of antagonism that my notion of disturbed methodologies warms up to.

Due to the multifarious interests of my artistic and pedagogic projects, the practitioners from whom I receive gifts of inspiration are not only limited to the field of art but spill out further to the lived public sphere. Of course, there are certain staples of disruptive praxis that cannot be left out of our engagements. We therefore discuss the work of practitioners of pedagogy as transformative artistic practice like Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Irit Rogoff, a practitioner from theatre Agyeman Ossei, who transforms the words and thoughts of one who believes in the healing and awakening of the spirit of a slumbering people (Ayi Kwei Armah), into innovative theatrical experiments, and artists Andrea Fraser, Hito Steyerl, Thomas Hirschorn, Francis Alÿs, Santiago Sierra, Superflex, Jonas Staal, Paul Chan, whose forms cause us to rethink our presumptions about art and Kąrî'kąchä Seid'ou, who gave up art making to make artists as art, as Seid'ou proclaimed in 2013, making reference to the beginnings of his artistic, pedagogical project in 2003.

FIGURE 12.4 *Bambolse and Kente-inspired mural*, executed with students at the Main Administration building of Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), Kumasi. Courtesy of the artist

In expanding the referential vocabularies and modes of making, I have hinted already that the forms and practices we engage do not carry the pretentions to art that we tend to witness in the so-called art world. With such fecund visual and conceptual cues, my colleagues and I are able to challenge students to either embark on their own projects, or as in the case shown in Figure 12.4, work on projects that occupy public spaces within the urban sphere.

Notes

1 From November 10 to December 8, 2018, I was invited by the DDSKS, to teach in the context of a project called TKU a set of activities that introduces students of Theatre, Music and Dance to innovative approaches to Artistic Research. I proposed the course: "Point(s) of Ellipses" (How to do stuff with the stuff we have and stuff we don't have). A crash course in "Disturbing the Piece" This experimental course presented several moments of challenge to the participants, who at the very end, became extremely delighted by the unexpected outcomes that eventually panned out. For the presentation in Berlin however, even though I had sought to share this particular project as a microcosm of my work, I decided eventually, to deviate slightly from presenting just this project in detail, rather, I offered general takes on my artistic and pedagogic approaches, via a series of anecdotal interventions.

2 The Shuka or so-called Maasai cloth, also known as the "African Blanket," is not necessarily indigenous to the Maasai people of East Africa, even though they are the ones known to wear it predominantly. Before colonization, the Maasai would have worn mainly leather clothes. The Shuka then, is said to have become more popular with the Maasai from the 1960s. One of the possible origins of Shuka cloth stems from Scottish missionaries during the early colonization of Africa. It goes to give therefore, that the cloth may have well been produce somewhere in Manchester and sold in East Africa, as another means of capitalist exploitation of culture.

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PART 4

Decolonial Challenges and Alternative Epistemologies

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CHAPTER 13

The Sanggar Legacy

Integrating Nature and Spirituality through Collective Learning at the Jakarta Institute of Art Education

Katherine L. Bruhn

Abstract

This article examines the legacy of the artist association (Indonesian *sanggar*) system in shaping art education in Jakarta, Indonesia, with a focus on the early 1970s and the formative years of the Jakarta Institute of Art Education (LPKJ). It explores how the *sanggar* model influenced the pedagogical methods of Minangkabau-born artists Oesman Effendi, Nashar, and Zaini, particularly through their integration of the Minangkabau philosophy *alam takambang jadi guru* (nature acts as our teacher). By analyzing their teaching practices at Balai Budaya and LPKJ, this article argues that the *sanggar* tradition's emphasis on experiential, informal learning persisted within LPKJ, helping to establish a unique approach to art education that contrasted with rigid academic systems. At the same time, it highlights the lack of attention given to the Minangkabau influence in existing scholarship on these artists' relationship with LPKJ.

Keywords

Sanggar system – nature as teacher – Minangkabau – Indonesia

1 Introduction

In 1968, the Taman Ismail Marzuki (TIM) cultural complex was established in Central Jakarta, Indonesia. Commonly known as TIM, this site featured various facilities, including an art gallery, performance and rehearsal spaces, a movie theater, and a planetarium. In 1970, adjacent to TIM, Jakarta's art institute opened its doors. Initially named Lembaga Pendidikan Kesenian Jakarta (Jakarta Institute of Art Education, LPKJ), it is now known as Institut Kesenian Jakarta (Jakarta Art Institute, IKJ).[1] These institutions were created in response to the demands of Jakarta's artists, who sought a dedicated space to gather and

create. Their request was supported by the newly elected Governor Ali Sadikin, who aimed to transform Jakarta into a modern city and recognized the vital role of art and culture in achieving this vision (Sadikin & Ramadhan, 1992).[2]

In its first decade, TIM became a hub of experimentation and cross-disciplinary discourse, benefiting from its close relationship with LPKJ. Unlike any previous Indonesian art institution, LPKJ brought together five faculties—visual art, theater, music, dance, and cinematography—under one roof. This innovative model reflected the desire of the founding artists to encourage interdisciplinarity and move away from rigid, formal teaching structures. This shift was further supported by incorporating the artist association (Javanese ꦱꦁꦒꦂ, Romanization *sanggar*) system, particularly among visual artists who developed LPKJ's painting studio, such as Oesman Effendi (1919–1985), Nashar (1928–1994), and Zaini (1926–1977).

Indonesia's first *sanggar* was established in the late-colonial era and played an important part in Indonesia's revolutionary struggle against the Dutch. These associations not only fostered a sense of nationalism among their members but also advanced a model of art education that emphasized greater equality between senior and junior artists compared to traditional educational structures. In this article, I will explore the meaning and history of the *sanggar* in Indonesian art, laying the foundation for an understanding of why and how these artists embraced the *sanggar* model in their teaching at LPKJ. Additionally, I will examine how their emphasis on the Minangkabau philosophy of *alam takambang jadi guru* (nature acts as our teacher) shaped their pedagogical approach. While previous studies of LPKJ have highlighted the connection between this idea and the *sanggar* tradition, as well as drawn parallels between LPKJ and Santiniketan in India, they have overlooked the influence of the artists' regional and ethnic backgrounds—particularly their Minangkabau heritage—on their interpretation of this philosophy (Fadlia et al., 2010; Dewi et al., 2021).

The Minangkabau, an ethnic group predominantly associated with Indonesia's province of West Sumatra, are known for maintaining matrilineal institutions of descent alongside Islamic practice, fostering a long-standing tradition of outward migration, or *merantau.* Oesman Effendi (commonly known as OE), Nashar, and Zaini were all part of this tradition, leaving West Sumatra in their youth. Although they spent most of their lives in Jakarta, where they became influential figures in this city's art scene, I argue that their Minangkabau heritage—particularly its emphasis on *ʿālam*—remained integral to both their artistic heritage and their pedagogical approaches as revealed at LPKJ.

The concept of *ʿālam* (*Arabic* عالم) held a Sufi meaning originally derived from Arabic related to "realms of perception" (Hadler, 2008, p. 148). In

modern Indonesian, *alam* translates to "nature," "universe," and "knowledge." Although the term is not unique to the Minangkabau, *alam* holds special significance within their culture. Minangkabau writer Ali Akbar Navis (1984) emphasized this by proclaiming, "*alam* is everything" (p. 59). Beyond being a physical space of birth, death, and growth, *alam* carries deep philosophical meaning, encapsulated in the adage, "alam takambang jadi guru" [nature acts as our teacher]. I will argue that for OE, Nashar, and Zaini, this Minangkabau understanding of *alam* informed their teaching methods. Learning from nature, in their view, extended beyond simply observing the physical world; it involved developing an internal awareness that allowed them to perceive *alam* as an ever-expanding source of knowledge.

This article will be structured in three parts. First, I will explore the history and meaning of *sanggar* in Indonesian art. Second, I will examine the relationship between OE, Nashar, and Zaini and their roles as teachers in Jakarta, first at Balai Budaya, then LPKJ. Third, I will discuss how the concept of nature as a teacher influenced their alternative approach to pedagogy. Throughout, I will rely heavily on Nashar's archives. In addition to his work as a visual artist, Nashar wrote essays for exhibition catalogues, articles for journals and newspapers, and authored two book-length texts—a memoir that recounts his early life from roughly 1940 until 1968 titled, *Nashar oleh Nashar* (Nashar by Nashar), and a collection of letters titled *Surat-Surat Malam* (Night Letters), written between 1968 and 1974.[3] Together, these volumes offer a rare first-person perspective on the history and development of Indonesian visual art, spanning from the Japanese occupation (1942–1945) through the first decade of Suharto's New Order regime (1966–1998). They provide significant insights into Nashar's training in *sanggar*, his connections with OE and Zaini, and their shared pedagogical approach and vision for art education in Indonesia. Finally, I will conclude with a brief reflection on the enduring influence of collectivism or the legacy of the *sanggar* in Indonesian art.

2 *Sanggar*: A Brief History

Since the late colonial era, collective organization has been integral to the development of Indonesian art and culture. In 1938, Indonesia's first *sanggar* was founded by revolutionary artists Sindudarsono Sudjojono (1913–1985) and Agus Djaya (1913–1994). Known as Persatuan Ahli-Ahli Gambar Indonesia (Association of Indonesian Drawing Experts, Persagi), its goal was to train artists, organize exhibitions, and promote nationalism at a time when native artists in the Dutch East Indies were excluded from studying or

exhibiting alongside their foreign counterparts (Spanjaard, 2016, pp. 29–40). Before formal art academies emerged in the post-independence era, *sanggar* played a central role in shaping Indonesian art.[4] These collectives, typically centered around one or more senior artists, served as places where artists studied, worked, and often lived together, fostering a sense of community that was crucial for their artistic and personal development.

The term *sanggar* was first popularized by Sudjojono. In an interview recounted by art historian Aminudin TH Siregar (2000), Sudjojono explained his choice of the word (p. 26). While searching for a suitable equivalent to "studio," he recalled the ancient Javanese term *sanggar*, meaning a place of meditation. He reflected on its connection to words like *sangkar* (cage) and *langgar* (a small Muslim prayer house), believing they shared a spiritual resonance. Sudjojono rejected the term *bengkel* (workshop) as inappropriate for a space dedicated to artistic creation, emphasizing that, despite its rough or humble nature, a *sanggar* was a place where artists engaged in a form of meditation. This outlook mirrored Sudjojono's broader views. He believed that the value of art lay not in its technical execution but in the character and soul of the artist.[5] For Sudjojono, true art was an expression of the artist's inner self, their spirit, and their connection to the struggles of the nation.[6] This understanding positioned the *sanggar* as a place where artists could cultivate their inner strength and authenticity.

Following the establishment of Persagi, numerous other *sanggar* emerged, leaving their mark on Indonesian art history. During Indonesia's revolutionary struggle against the Dutch, artists, including former members of Persagi, retreated to Republican-held territories in Central Java and established *sanggar* such as Seniman Indonesia Muda (Young Indonesian Artists, SIM) and Pelukis Rakyat (People's Painters).[7] Members of these groups played a role in documenting the revolution by joining guerilla fighters on the front lines. After Indonesia's independence was formally recognized in 1949, new *sanggar* such as Sanggar Bambu (est. 1959) and Sanggar Bumi Tarung (est. 1961) emerged, reflecting the growing influence and potential threat of Indonesia's communist party in the 1950s and early 1960s. While Sanggar Bambu remained unaffiliated with specific political ideologies, focusing instead on humanistic values and individual artistic expression, Sanggar Bumi Tarung was established to promote the platform of Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat (People's Institute of Culture, LEKRA), the cultural organization linked to Indonesia's communist party. Both Sanggar Bambu and Sanggar Bumi Tarung were based in Yogyakarta. In Jakarta, *sanggar* such as Gabungan Pelukis Indonesia (Association of Indonesian Painters, GPI; est. 1948) and Organisasi Seniman Indonesia (Organization

of Indonesian Artists, OSI; est. 1959) were significant for their contributions to artistic activity and their promotion of collectivism in the city's art scene, prior to the establishment of TIM and LPKJ. Nashar was also an active member of each.

As Nashar (2002) recounts in his memoir, *sanggar* were vital to his artistic development. Like most artists who came of age during the Japanese occupation and Indonesia's revolutionary struggle, Nashar lacked formal art training, as art academies did not yet exist. Instead, he learned under the guidance of senior artists, including Sudjojono at the Japanese cultural center, Keimin Bunko Shidōsho, and in SIM, as well as Affandi, who was active in revolutionary-era *sanggar* and served as an advisor to members of GPI. What stood out most to Nashar about the *sanggar* experience was the unique relationship between senior and junior artists. Rather than functioning as "ordinary teachers" who issued commands from a position of authority, senior artists shared their knowledge through their own practice and experience as established painters (Nashar, 2002, p. 19). This dynamic fostered a sense of family, creating a collective spirit that was distinct from everyday life (pp. 26–27). Nashar believed that this atmosphere—defined by mutual respect—was not only beneficial for artists but also an ideal model for society, as it nurtured a purer form of equality (p. 19).

In the *sanggar,* there was no formal instruction in specific techniques or theories; instead, artists were encouraged to simply paint. Affandi, recognized as a founding father of Indonesian modern art embodied this approach, as Nashar (2002) observed that he rarely provided direct feedback to junior artists (p. 21). Instead, Affandi motivated them by emphasizing productivity, often encouraging them to create as many as twenty small drawings a day (p. 24). His approach extended beyond the studio—when he painted outdoors, he invited others to join him, reinforcing the value of painting from life as an essential part of the artist's journey (pp. 64–65).

The ethos of collective spirit, mutual respect, and hands-on learning was also evident in the experiences of other artists of the period. Like Nashar, OE and Zaini were also deeply involved in revolutionary *sanggar,* having retreated to Republican-held territories in Central Java, where they joined SIM. As Nashar's memoir indicates, it was through SIM that he first met OE and Zaini (p. 38). For all three, their involvement in revolutionary-era *sanggar* immersed them in an environment that championed both the spirit of revolution and individual humanistic expression. When the revolution ended, and they returned to Jakarta, they brought this spirit and their experiences into their roles as educators and leaders, beginning with their work at Balai Budaya.

3 From Balai Budaya to LPKJ: Oesman Effendi, Nashar, and Zaini's Path to Alternative Pedagogy

Prior to their appointment as teachers at LPKJ, OE, Nashar, and Zaini began their work as educators at Balai Budaya. Opened in 1954, Balai Budaya was Jakarta's first art gallery established after independence and, much like the *sanggar* that shaped their early development, it served as a central gathering place for artists and intellectuals (Sidharta, 2019). In 1959, OE invited Nashar along with Zaini to co-lead painting lessons with him there (Nashar, 2002, p. 177).

This period was crucial for these artists as they began formulating ideas for an alternative model of art education that drew from their *sanggar* experiences but also sought to overcome its limitations. Nashar credits their time teaching at Balai Budaya with inspiring the concept of a "akademi bebas" (free academy), which they envisioned as an alternative to formal art education (p. 178). This academy would focus primarily on the practice of painting, sculpture, and other creative forms, with theoretical knowledge as a complementary, secondary element. The aim, as Nashar described, was to prepare students for the professional art world by emphasizing hands-on creation, grounded in the belief that a painter is born by painting or creating (p. 178). This reflects the same spirit emphasized by the *sanggar* model, where artists developed through direct engagement and lived experience rather than formal instruction. Nashar noted that their vision contrasted with traditional academic structures, emphasizing that a free academy should not foster a "scholarly soul" but instead address the limitations of the traditional *sanggar* system (p. 178). While Nashar does not explicitly detail these limitations, his emphasis on incorporating theoretical knowledge suggests an awareness of the gaps in the *sanggar* model he had experienced—particularly the absence of a more structured intellectual component that could enhance creative practice. The establishment of *sanggar* OSI in 1959, can be seen as a response.

Driven by the collective desire of participants, OSI was an offshoot of the lessons taught by OE, Nashar, and Zaini at Balai Budaya. When OSI was established, it organized a variety of activities, including exhibitions, discussions, and weekly film screenings. Nashar emphasized that OSI was meant to remain "free," fostering an atmosphere where members could independently develop their perspective on art, life, and politics (p. 182). This openness was encouraged by inviting speakers from different political backgrounds including members of Indonesia's communist party as well

as their opponents, to share their views. Such an emphasis on freedom and open dialogue was particularly notable given the political climate in Indonesia during the late-1950s and early-1960s, marked by the rising influence of the Partai Komunis Indonesia (Indonesian Communist Party, PKI) and its associated cultural organization, Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat (People's Institute of Culture, LEKRA). Ultimately, this period culminated in the violent elimination of the communist party in 1965–1966, followed by the mass killings of suspected communist sympathizers from 1966 to 1968, ushering in the New Order regime under Suharto, during which TIM and LPKJ were founded.

The experience of these three artists as teachers at Balai Budaya, combined with their prominent roles in Jakarta's art scene, made them natural choices to lead the painting studio at LPKJ when it opened in 1970. This transition represented a continuation of their vision for art education. Between 1968 and 1970, discussions about LPKJ's development saw many artists and intellectual advocating for a non-formal educational model, drawing inspiration from the *sanggar* tradition and from other holistic approaches, such as Santiniketan in India. This familiarity with Santiniketan came from Indonesian painter Rusli (1916–2005) who had studied there and, as a member of Dewan Kesenian Jakarta (Jakarta's Art Council, DKJ), played an active role in discussions surrounding LPKJ's development (Dewi et al., 2021, p. 1540).[8]

When LPKJ opened in 1970, it is stated that the *sanggar* model was strongest in the painting studio (Fadlia, 2010, p. 37). This was thanks in part to a class called "menggambar ekspresi" (expressive drawing), where students learned through direct engagement with their surroundings (Fadlia et al., 2010, p. 30). They traveled to diverse locations—from urban settings like Jakarta's harbor and train station to natural landscapes, including nearby mountains and beaches. This approach aimed to foster an understanding of art as an embodied experience, deeply connected to both the environment and the community. Up until 1973, this class was led by OE, Nashar, and Zaini. However, in 1973, both OE and Nashar left LPKJ following the introduction of more formal curriculum standards that clashed with their vision of non-traditional education (p. 39). Despite significant early support for an alternative educational model at LPKJ, pressures to formalize the institution and offer standardized diplomas ultimately prevailed (pp. 39–40). Nevertheless, the spirit that OE, Nashar, and Zaini instilled in the painting studio endures to this day, rooted in the belief that art education should draw inspiration from direct experiences and a non-hierarchical studio environment. Their contribution represents a critical link in the history of Indonesian art education, one that extends the lineage of *sanggar* into modern institutional contexts.

4 Nature as Teacher

Central to the pedagogical approach of OE, Nashar, and Zaini was the idea that nature itself was a fundamental teacher. This philosophy motivated their "menggambar ekspresi" class, where they saw it as essential for students to leave the studio and actively engage with their surroundings. While earlier *sanggar* practices, as seen in the example of Affandi, emphasized practical experience and learning through direct engagement, for OE, Nashar, and Zaini, this emphasis on nature as an ultimate teacher reflected a more profound cultural understanding of *alam*—both as physical reality and philosophical guide—inseparable from their Minangkabau heritage. To further explore this philosophy, an excerpt from Nashar's *Surat-Surat Malam* (Night Letters) provides valuable insight. This excerpt comes from "Letter 9," dated 1971, which is divided into two parts. Both parts focus on a workshop with students at the Kalibaru River in North Jakarta, led by Nashar and OE. Although Nashar does not explicitly state the students' affiliation, the date suggests that they were students from LPKJ, where they both taught from 1970 to 1973. Through his detailed description of the workshop and its purpose, Nashar shares his views on the relationship between artists and their environment. His reflections, directed to his *kawan* (unnamed friend), highlight the nuanced differences between terms like to teach (*mengajar*), to educate (*mendidik*), and especially to have a teacher (*berguru*). The excerpt reads:

> I am certain, that we both know and understand that a person cannot be taught [dididik] or molded [dicetak] to become an artist. If this is the case, what does it mean for this academy to want to educate people to become professional artists? In my opinion, if educate [mendidik] is meant in the same sense as teaching [mengajar], it will be impossible, even in vain. And if this understanding is carried out, it is certain that the result will be other than what is desired. Keeping this in mind, the term educate must be redefined. Because of this, in our workshop, the term educate possesses the meaning: to invite [mengajak]. The students are invited to work (with no obligations) according to their own abilities. As their mentors, we work very hard not to intervene. We invite them to work by themselves in order that they will each feel the process of their souls moving. We invite them to work continuously in order that a creative energy will grow. We are not their 'teachers'; rather, nature in both its tangible and intangible manifestations along with life [alam dan kehidupan] are their teachers. 'To have a teacher' [berguru] means the same thing as being one with that teacher. As painters, this is also our philosophy. Our only responsibility is to realize

> this [...] Of course, various things about this are difficult to explain. In fact, it is impossible to portray or understand this only using words. At most, such an explanation will function as an introduction before coming face to face with one's teacher. (p. 31)

In this passage, Nashar expresses his belief that artistic growth cannot be achieved through traditional instruction or by molding students. Instead, he emphasizes an invitation to self-discovery, encouraging students to forge their own paths and learn from the ultimate teacher: *alam dan kehidupan* (physical and intangible environment and life). His focus on feeling one's "soul move" and the impossibility of fully conveying his ideas through "words" underscores the intangible and spiritual dimensions of *alam*. This view aligns with how *alam* is understood in Minangkabau culture—not merely as physical nature, but as an all-encompassing source of knowledge, experience, and growth, offering a deeper moral guidance.

Nashar's approach to learning from *alam* not only shaped his pedagogical practices and that of his peers, but also found resonance in the broader cultural expressions of the Minangkabau. Historically, the adage "nature acts as our teacher," has been embodied in Minangkabau visual culture through the motifs that adorn traditional textiles, such as *songket,* and architectural forms like the matrifocal longhouse (*rumah gadang*). One example is the *itiak pulang patang* (ducks go home in the afternoon) motif (see Figure 13.1), featuring a repeating pattern of elongated, interlocking shapes that convey a sense of movement. Like most Minangkabau motifs, *itiak pulang patang* draws inspiration from *alam*—in this case, the way ducks walk in a neat line following their mother—to convey a philosophical principle. Here, it symbolizes the idea that, like baby ducks, a good Minangkabau should remain close to their cultural roots and not stray too far from Minangkabau traditions.

Unlike Minangkabau artisans responsible for the design of such motifs, OE, Nashar, and Zaini did not draw such explicit connections with observable phenomenon or our physical world. Instead, they used this philosophy as a way to capture and express their experience of the rhythms of *alam* in their work as modern artists who overwhelmingly produced abstract and semi-abstract compositions. This connection to their heritage was reaffirmed in 1976, when OE delivered a speech on the state of painting in West Sumatra, the Minangkabau homeland. In his speech, he asserted that although it might seem that his Minangkabau peers, including Nashar and Zaini, had distanced themselves from Minang culture, their sense of "Minang-ness" remained strong (Sabapathy & Flores, 2023, p. 480). The concept of *alam*, I believe, is the key to understanding this enduring connection.

FIGURE 13.1 The *Itiak Pulang Patang motif*, carved on a banister at the Minangkabau cultural documentation and information center, Padang Panjang, West Sumatra. Photograph: Katherine L. Bruhn. © 2025 Katherine L. Bruhn

This focus on *alam* challenges existing narratives about the pedagogical influences at LPKJ. While the *sanggar* model and external inspirations like Santiniketan in India are often credited for shaping the non-formal and experiential aspects of learning at LPKJ, the role of Minangkabau philosophy has largely been overlooked. What Nashar reveals was their emphasis on *alam* as the penultimate teacher reflects a distinctly Minangkabau influence that went beyond what was inherited from the *sanggar* tradition or other educational models. This insight invites a reconsideration of the foundational influences on LPKJ's educational philosophy, recognizing the significant contribution of Minangkabau values alongside other well-established influences.

5 Conclusion

In conclusion, the collective spirit that OE, Nashar, and Zaini nurtured throughout their careers—rooted in the *sanggar* tradition and later adapted at Balai Budaya and LPKJ—remains a defining characteristic of Indonesian art today. This ethos persists not only at institutions like LPKJ but also more broadly across the Indonesian art landscape, as evidenced by the numerous

artist collectives, alternative art spaces, and community-driven initiatives that continue to thrive. These collectives embody the same principles of collaboration, shared learning, and artistic freedom that have been passed down from the early *sanggar*. Moreover, for Minangkabau-born artists, the concept of *alam takambang jadi guru* continues to be an essential source of inspiration, providing a philosophical grounding that connects artistic practice with an ever-present awareness of the natural world. Importantly, the critical potential embedded within this model of art education—the integration of collective spirit, self-discovery, and a deep connection with nature—has the capacity to generate new and progressive developments both within the realm of art and beyond it. The enduring influence of both collective practice and *alam* highlights how Indonesian art, shaped by its unique cultural and historical contexts, maintains a powerful connection to its roots while evolving within contemporary discourse—ensuring that the spirit of shared growth, learning, and innovation remains at the heart of its artistic identity.

Notes

1 The change in name from LPKJ to IKJ occurred in 1982. This change was driven by the central government's efforts to standardize institutions like LPKJ, moving away from studio models to adopt more formal academic structures.

2 Scholars also underscore that TIM's establishment is inseparable from Indonesia's post-1965 sociopolitical climate. Art historian Claire Holt (1970, p. 165) notes that, prior to 1965, artists had long hoped for a national arts center. However, this dream was not fulfilled until after 1965 and was thus, a testament to what Indonesian studies expert David T. Hill (1993) refers to be the forging of a successful working relationship between anti-communist artists and government entities like Jakarta's governor Sadikin.

3 It is not clear when *Nashar oleh Nashar* was written. The only published version of this text that I have located was published in 2002 as a single volume along with the text of *Surat-Surat Malam*, which was initially published in the cultural journal *Budaya Jaya* in October 1976. In December 1976, it was then published by the Dewan Kesenian Jakarta (Jakarta Arts Council) as a book.

4 In 1947, a training school for art teachers was established in Bandung, West Java. Following Indonesia's independence, it became part of the Institut Teknologi Bandung (Bandung Institute of Technology, ITB) and is now known as the Fakultas Seni Rupa dan Desain (Faculty of Art and Design, FSRD). In 1950, an art academy opened in Yogyakarta known as Akademi Seni Rupa Indonesia (Indonesian

Academy of Fine Art, ASRI). Today, this school is known as Institut Seni Indonesia (Indonesian Institute of Art, ISI).

5 These views are referenced in a 1946 volume of thirteen essays by Sudjojono, titled *Seni Loekis, Kesenian dan Seniman* (Painting, Art and the Artist).

6 Sudjojono referred to these ideals as *jiwa ketok* (visible soul).

7 Republican-held territories refer to the areas controlled by the forces loyal to the newly declared Republic of Indonesia, particularly those under the leadership of Sukarno and Hatta, the nation's first president and vice-president. SIM was established in 1946 in Madiun by Sudjojono. It later moved to Yogyakarta, then to Solo, and finally back to Madiun (see Holt, 1967, p. 201). Many of SIM's members were former members of Persagi (Spanjaard, 2016, p. 36). In 1947, Pelukis Rakyat was established in Yogyakarta by Affandi and Hendra Gunawan after they decided to split with Sudjojono. Like Sudjojono, Affandi and Hendra Gunawan are considered founding fathers of Indonesian modern art.

8 Several essays highlight the role that members of the Dewan Kesenian Jakarta (Jakarta Arts Council, DKJ) played in the planning for LPKJ (Fadlia et al., 2010). Helly Minarti (2019, p. 182) notes that the DKJ was established as part of Sadikin's plan to support Jakarta's artists as an autonomous body working with the city government.

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CHAPTER 14

Taking (A)Part

Intermedia Textiles and Community Participation in Evelyn Roth's Creative Recycling Workshops, 1967–1975

Erika Kindsfather

Abstract

Since 1971, Canadian artist Evelyn Roth held public workshops to guide participants through the process of deconstructing discarded materials and reusing them to create new forms through "craft" techniques. Her creative recycling workshops materialized at educational institutions, festivals, museums, library and other cultural spaces. Emphasizing the generative potential of artmaking in everyday life, Roth cultivated alternative strategies to involve diverse publics in creative practices that used ordinary materials and accessible techniques. Connected to the environmentalist movement and an international network of artists who sought to challenge norms of artistic thought and practice, Roth positioned her work within the spheres of art and activism while simultaneously defying their conventional parameters. This chapter examines how Roth connected activism, artmaking and "everyday life" through the framework of alternative art education. Engaging with the archives of Roth's practice in the 1960s and 1970s, I analyze the strategies that she developed to approach art education differently and establish new avenues for participation in art and activism. I situate her work within broader historical contexts of experimental, interdisciplinary art movements, social activism, and their coalescence in spaces of alternative creative activity.

Keywords

textile arts – craft – intermedia – environmentalism – Canadian art history – material culture – plastics – high and low – everyday life

1 Introduction

Seated on a massive spiral textile, artist Evelyn Roth crochets, a wooden hook in one hand and fabric strips looped around the other. Collaborators lounge nearby, immersed in cutting garments into strips to be incorporated into the growing structure. Roth's half-smile, caught by the camera, invites viewers into this world of collaborative making, rupturing the stillness of the photograph with the liveliness of shared conversation and rhythms of crochet. This scene represents Roth's first public educational initiative to involve the people of Vancouver in a collaborative process of creative recycling through crochet. Unfolding during the Rainbow Activist Festival held at the University of British Columbia in 1971, Roth's informal workshop guided participants through the process of crocheting recycled fabrics into a monumental sculpture (The Vancouver Province, 1971, p. 27). The process-oriented workshop allowed Roth to share her technical knowledge and support participants as they practiced the techniques of stripping fabrics and looping them together in the formation of the massive spiral textile (see Figure 14.1). The Rainbow Activist Festival focused on the potential for artists to engage communities in the creative process around social justice issues. This event provided a practical and conceptual foundation for Roth to establish this multidimensional practice of technical skill-sharing, environmentalist consciousness-raising, and alternative artistic activity that challenged conventional divisions of "art" and "everyday life".

Roth began using discarded textiles to sew her own clothes as a teenager and continued to develop practices of reuse when she became involved in the Vancouver arts scene in the 1960s. By the end of the decade, she adopted the critical framework of recycling to situate her artmaking explicitly in relation to the growing environmentalist movement (Murray, 1977). The community-oriented educational direction that she developed asserted the critical potential of alternative artistic practice in activism, raised public consciousness around issues of environmental degradation, and shared strategies that people could apply in their daily lives to counter the rhythms of mass consumption. This chapter examines the effects of this discursive shift as Roth connected activism and artmaking through the framework of alternative art education. I ask, how did she approach art education differently to engage the public in art and activism? What strategies did she develop to intertwine her textile-based artistic practice, the environmentalist movement and creative knowledge-sharing? Focusing on the initial years of Roth's ongoing artistic career from 1967 to 1975, I will illuminate the ways that Roth challenged conventional boundaries of "art" and "everyday life" to generate community engagement in art and activism.

FIGURE 14.1 Evelyn Roth, *Environment for Reading Recycled from 110 Sweaters*, 1974. Installation view. Collection of the Robert McLaughlin Gallery. Photograph: Sharon Mollerus. In this monumental work, Roth transforms the yarn of 110 unraveled sweaters into an immersive, spiraling sanctuary. The crocheted structure and its recycled material composition echo her earlier "ARTicle," created for the Rainbow Activist Festival, transforming the domestic act of knitting into a grand, participatory statement. Licensed under Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic

I argue that she strategically used play, bold imagery and ordinary materials to counter the alienating effects of the assumed "seriousness" of these spheres and demonstrate the possibility to approach artmaking, everyday material practices, activism and community social dynamics differently.

2 Participation and Collectivity in Social Activism and the Arts

In 1961, Evelyn Roth moved from Edmonton to Vancouver and began working as a librarian in the Fine Arts library at the University of British Columbia ("The Tapes of Roth," 1976). Through her community connections, she became involved in a local network of artists, educators, and culture workers experimenting with unconventional approaches to artmaking. Many participated in social movements, establishing a distinct connection between artistic activity and political action driven by progressive social values (Watson, 2005). Artist Iain Baxter& describes their utopic vision, writing, "we thought that art could change life, change the environment, change Vancouver" (Baxter&, 1983, as cited in Pinney, 1983, p. 180).[1] Galleries throughout the city, the Vancouver School of Art (now Emily Carr University of Art + Design) and the University of British Columbia acted as institutional bases for artists, art students, educators and curators to stage experimental exhibitions, events, and boundary-crossing art practices. In 1961, Fine Arts Department Head B.C. Binning and Fine Arts secretary June Binkert organized a contemporary arts festival at the University of British Columbia that would become an annual event. Talks, workshops and exhibitions involving artists and theorists from cities across North America exposed Vancouver's art community to an international network of practices that rejected conventional approaches to media, engaged with the political concerns of social movements, and critiqued the alienating structures of dominant social order.[2] These events played a crucial role in overcoming regional isolation and developing art and activism in tandem through methods of collaboration, participation, and cross-disciplinary approaches to multiple media forms (Bancroft, n.d.).

The university hosted several individuals who were considering the cultural and sensory effects of "new media" in art and theory. The participation of Canadian media theorist Marshall McLuhan and several artists who engaged with media theory through interdisciplinary artistic practices especially impacted the direction of the arts in Vancouver, introducing the concept of "intermedia" to describe artistic explorations of multiple media forms (Watson, 2005; Lowndes, 1983). Intermedia artists shared the

community's utopic social visions and belief in international collaboration across cultural spheres towards a common good.[3] In 1967, Vancouver artists formed Intermedia, a loosely defined arts organization intended to facilitate avenues of collaboration and experimentation among artists working with diverse media forms. Cultivating her practice within this environment, Roth found ample ground to engage with social issues through creative experimentation with textile forms and collaborative processes of making. Roth created "wearable art," fiber sculptures, textile "environments" and participated in Intermedia's performance group TheCo. as a dancer and costume designer. Harnessing the organization's commitment to center materials and methods traditionally excluded from the world of "fine art," Roth asserted the critical cultural value of textiles and "craft" practices that have been systematically devalued for their associations with femininity and the domestic sphere (Parker, 1984).

In the summer of 1968, Roth joined UBC dance instructor and central TheCo. organizer Helen Goodwin in Northern California, where they and several other Intermedia dancers participated in a workshop organized by dancer Anna Halprin, landscape architect Lawrence Halprin and gestalt psychologist Paul Baum called "Experiments in Environment" (Roth, 2006). In downtown San Francisco, Kentfield, and Sea Ranch, participants in the 24-day long workshop collectively performed several experimental "scores" centered on building community dynamics and exploring new approaches to cooperative creative processes (Halprin & Burns, 1974). Roth described this hybrid performance/training workshop as a pivotal moment in her career, affirming her identity as an artist and introducing her to the practices of several others exploring spatial and social dynamics through alternative artistic activity (Roth, 2006). The methods, findings, and conceptual underpinnings of the workshop series were published several years later in *Taking Part: A Workshop Approach to Collective Creativity*, which also provided a handbook guide to organizing participatory educational initiatives (Halprin & Burns, 1974). In the chapter "Why Take Part?" Halprin and architect Jim Burns described the motivations of the workshops and publication, writing:

> Collective creativity is a growing need in our society. People are coming together for communal living purposes, in neighborhood interest groups, in special interest groups, and in groups struggling for personal growth and participation in the life/art experience [...] The desire to participate extends to all art, to education, to theater and dance, to politics, to the women's movement [...] But the desire to participate must be matched by a framework to allow it to happen. (Halprin & Burns, 1974, p. 2)

Responding to the need for methods that support alternative formations of community, the authors emphasize the cultural importance and far-reaching applications of the workshop's experimental approaches to participation.

Roth's engagement with this project coalesced with her involvement in Intermedia and related networks of community organizing. Roth used the visibility afforded by her experiments with wearables to bridge her creative endeavors and participation in local activism.[4] Roth and her then-partner Donald Gutstein were central organizers of the West Broadway Citizens Community, a group that advocated for the community members of the Kitsilano neighborhood (Murray, 1977). In the 1960s and 1970s, the neighborhood was threatened by the rapid expansion of urban redevelopment projects in Vancouver. Protesting evictions, destruction of the landscape, and the expansion of high-rise and freeway building projects, the organization allowed Roth to bring her art into the realm of community activism. She states, "art could not be done for art's sake. There are important issues to be dealt with in the neighborhood and one way I could help was through my art" (Roth, 1977, as cited in Murray, 1977, p. 33). Roth viewed wearables as a tool to draw attention to protest actions, using the visibility generated by her unconventional approach to dress to support community initiatives. The growing public awareness of the interconnected issues of ecological degradation, urban redevelopment, social alienation, and the power structures behind them fostered an environment where diverse social movements overlapped. This convergence blurred the boundaries between different social justice causes, creating opportunities for collaboration across various activist initiatives. Roth's participation in community organizing against urban redevelopment projects in Vancouver deeply connected her to this network of activism.

Distinctive yet intertwined meanings of "the environment" functioned in alternative arts spaces and social movements, leading Roth to make these connections more directly as she developed her multidisciplinary practice as an artist/activist. By the early 1970s, activist activity addressing ecological concerns proliferated in Vancouver, establishing the city as a center for the developing environmentalist movement in North America. The widespread coverage of major protests and the founding of Greenpeace heightened awareness of activist organizing around ecological concerns (Hunter, 1979). Roth describes how the increasing public interest and cohesion of the movement triggered her use of recycling to frame her existing practice. She explains:

> Recycling was very new in 1970–1971 and the media, unfortunately has an important role to play as to what emphasis is put on things. I was recycling before then but then I really developed as a "recycling workshop" specialist because there was a demand for a display at the Contemporary

> Crafts Festival at UBC which was all on recycling. (Roth, 1977, as cited in Murray, 1977, p. 35)

As Roth identifies, while *recycling* emerged in the early 1970s to describe the intentional use of discarded materials in response to ecological concerns, practices of reuse existed long before this term emerged in the context of social activism (Coates, 2016). Roth's practice is part of a far-reaching history of women's creative reuse of "unusable" objects, taking the resources at their disposal to create new things (Lippard, 1978). The rhetoric of recycling situated Roth's existing strategies within the discursive framework of environmentalism, making the political investments of her practice explicit and opening avenues for public visibility and engagement. Recycling allowed her to engage with social issues through her artistic practice after Intermedia's dissolution in 1971. Transitioning from Intermedia to the broader context of international alternative art practice and incorporating the relatively new framework of the environmentalist movement, Roth expanded her network while continuing to engage with the practical and conceptual themes that had defined her work in the 1960s.

3 (Re)Making Things in the Museum: Community Involvement in Creative Activity

Roth began to cultivate participatory "recycling workshops" in the early 1970s, intertwining her independent explorations of "wearable art" and textile sculptures with concepts and practices of collective activity in Intermedia, "Experiments in Environment" and community organizing. In 1971, Roth was invited to participate in the exhibition series *ACTS* held at the Museum of Contemporary Craft in New York City.[5] Established in 1956, the Museum of Contemporary Crafts (now the Museum of Arts and Design) was connected to the School of the American Craftsman and the American Crafts Council through their founder, philanthropist Aileen Osborn Webb, and several programming initiatives (Museum of Arts and Design, MAD, n.d.). A graduate of the School of the American Craftsman, Paul J. Smith, acted as the museum's director from 1963 to 1987. Expanding upon his earlier work developing travelling educational exhibitions and programming at the museum, Smith's directorial work emphasized craft education, public participation, and experimental approaches to curating and programming (American Crafts Council, ACC, n.d.). *ACTS* was among the initiatives that he set in motion to redefine the museum as a space for community, public education, participation and unconventional approaches to institutional practices.

Roth exhibited several wearables and held recycling workshops during the series' final exhibition, *Costume Statements*, which explored the symbolic, tactile, and social dimensions of body coverings through participatory events and performances. The press release announced the exhibition as one of the museum's "experimental efforts to involve people in the creative act by engaging their senses and imagination, and heightening their consciousness of themselves in relation to the environment" (ACC, 1971). A self-taught artist whose practice emphasized bridging the gap between the "art world" and "everyday life," Roth found a fitting institutional platform to experiment with her nascent participatory workshop practice that she initiated earlier that year at UBC's contemporary arts festival. People were invited to try on the wearables that Roth made from recycled velour, unraveled knits, and other recycled materials. As seen in Figure 14.2, she also created a space for visitors to crochet objects out of strips of fabric made from textiles donated by local garment manufacturers, textile distributors, and community members (ACC, 1971). These avenues of participation involved people in the process of artmaking and encouraged engagement with various definitions of environment, encompassing both the natural world and the experiential dynamics of relations among people, objects, and structures in a space. While the invitation to explore the tactile qualities of wearables drew attention to the sensory and social effects of dress, the recycling activities heightened public consciousness of ecological issues and alternative approaches to the material world. These activities created space for people to contemplate the social and environmental effects of cultural conventions and explore alternative approaches to the material world. While formal institutional spaces of textile arts education often emphasize technical skill training and professionalization for industry or art careers, the accessible public recycling workshops offered an alternative format to involve the public in processes of making and actuate the potential to engage in the material registers of everyday life differently.

Since the mid-twentieth century, "hobby craft" kits and instruction books proliferated on the mass market, drawing together the seemingly oppositional domains of "do-it-yourself" and mass consumer culture. Writing in 1978, feminist art critic and theorist Lucy Lippard examined the contradictions and cultural meanings of "hobby craft" in relation to class, gender and the conceptual and practical division of public and "domestic" space (Lippard, 1978). She describes how "hobby craft" functions differently for women in diverse class situations, acting as a leisure activity, economic necessity, or unattainable use of scarce free time. Lippard analyzes feminist artists' intentional references to histories of women's creative practices of reuse in textiles, collage, and other

FIGURE 14.2 Evelyn Roth and participants, *Recycled Costumes*, 1971. Performance and workshop during the exhibition Costume Statements at the Museum of Contemporary Crafts, New York. © American Craft Council. Courtesy of the American Craft Council Archives

"craft" practices to counter the systematic cultural devaluation of women's creative traditions and confront the patriarchal structures of the art world (Lippard, 1978).

Exploring the artistic potential of accessible materials and textile techniques in this moment where "hobby craft" practices were increasingly visible and understood differently across cultural contexts, Roth developed specific methods to overcome categorical constraints, destabilize dominant cultural regimes of value and indicate the critical educational aspects of the workshops. While the exhibition's conceptual framework amplified familiar materials and public involvement as sites of inquiry into "the environment" and the status of clothing in everyday life, the recycling workshop added layers of nuance to these themes. Cultural anthropologist Igor Kopytoff's method of "a biography of things" offers ground to understand the cultural meanings of the workshop materials (Kopytoff, 1986). Developed as a method to analyze the cultural forces that shape how objects are valued and circulated in different exchange systems, the "biography of things" follows materials as they travel along or diverge from intended paths of circulation to reveal the nuances of

how people use, value, and understand objects in different contexts (Kopytoff, 1986). Sourced from local textile and garment manufacturers and community donations, the discarded materials called attention to moments in the life cycle of commodities that are otherwise overlooked or obscured in conventional paths of circulation. Obtaining fabrics from sites of commodity production and "terminal" consumption, the mass of "materials for recycling" illuminated the status of "waste" as a culturally determined category rather than an innate quality of an object (Kopytoff, 1986). Redirected from landfill, the discarded materials become redefined through the creative interventions of participants in the recycling workshop.

Roth intentionally created a welcoming and playful atmosphere to undermine the anticipated "seriousness" of artmaking and encourage public engagement in creative activity. Conventional modes of artistic practice emphasize sole authorship, notions of artistic "genius" and formal training structures that alienate the public from direct engagement in creative activity. *Costume Statements* marked an institutional attempt to diverge from traditional boundaries between "artist," "art object," and "audience," rather embracing experimentation to carve out new pathways for collaboration and engagement in creative processes (ACC, 1971). The bright colors of the textiles and furniture, unusual structure of the central hanging, and casual arrangement of the recycling room drew attention to the space and established a sense of welcome. The chunky crocheted hats, booties, and mittens left in the space recontextualized seemingly mundane objects, subverting assumptions around the types of objects that could be considered "art." By employing familiar materials and objects as the basis for creative activity, Roth established an accessible visual and tactile foundation to catalyze participation in the recycling workshop space. The pleasure of artmaking, playful spontaneity of creative expression and time spent with others in collaboration replaced conventions of passive observation and quiet contemplation in the experience of the gallery space. Further, the playfulness of this creative environment subverted the idea that activism solely encompasses "serious" practices of protest, structured political organizing and publicized actions. Familiar materials and accessible methods of creation positioned activism and artmaking as cultural practices that could materialize in everyday life. Interweaving arts education, creative experimentation, and environmental activism, the recycling workshop offered ground for the community to reconsider conventional approaches to the material world, learn methods of reuse, and reevaluate everyday creative activities beyond their systematic devaluation as amateur "hobby craft."

4 Videotape Recycled

With the success of her early iterations of recycling workshops, Roth continued to develop her alternative educational initiatives. Aiming to reach diverse publics with her message and skill-sharing project, Roth cultivated methods to bring visibility to her practice and expand the scope of the workshop events. Roth became interested in using videotape as a medium for the construction of wearables, environments, and other objects during *Costume Statements*, where she noticed the structural possibilities of the "scratchy plastic material" (Roth, 1977, as cited in Murray, 1977, p. 32). Roth realized that the videotape's particular tactile qualities and material behaviors rendered it especially useful to conduct participatory workshops, as it allowed for objects to be made quickly using finger-crochet strategies, thus requiring little time and no additional tools to create items such as hats and bags (Murray, 1977, p. 32). In 1972, supported by her first individual Canada Arts Council Grant, Roth embarked on a road trip from Vancouver to St. John's, Newfoundland, holding workshops and participatory events centered on recycling videotape into hats and canopies across the country (Evelyn Roth Arts, n.d.). Over the course of the trip, Roth collected discarded videotape from news stations and other media sources, using it as material for these workshops and events. The abundance of videotape that could no longer serve its function as a device of new media technology allowed Roth to acquire plenty of material for these workshops. Further, her project brought visibility to this massive quantity of discarded tape, calling attention to the materiality of seemingly dematerialized media forms and their ecological impact in generating plastic waste.

While unconventional and repurposed materials were being explored in weaving and textile departments in art schools and universities, Roth endeavored to reach people who were not pursuing formal art training to situate creative reuse as an activity that could be incorporated into everyday life.[6] The videotape recycling workshops deemphasized technical skill, theories of practice, professionalization and the judgement of work based on notions of symbolic value and quality, rather focusing on rethinking everyday engagements with the material world and subverting boundaries between "art" and daily life. The educational dimensions of the recycling workshops formed through this alternative structure as people from different backgrounds were brought into the space of experimental artmaking to engage with the multiple aspects of Roth's practice as active participants.

In each city that Roth visited on her cross-country tour, news stations were invited to film the events and participate in the creation of videotape objects.

Roth would often crochet hats for media personnel as they interviewed her, demonstrating her technique while creating a playful metaphoric tangle of videotape in the process. Clad in a crocheted videotape minidress, boot covers, sunhat and "shield" bag—a costume of videotape armor—Roth appropriated the role of a "mundane public media figure" to catalyze widespread engagement with the practical and conceptual aims of her artistic practice (Roy, 2001). Further, the crochet videotape "car cozy" that covered her station wagon during the road trip helped spread her message. In a 1974 CBC special titled "Arts '74," Roth explains that she created the cozy to make a "visual statement" and share information about the project, adding pockets to hold posters and informational flyers that passersby could take wherever the car was parked (CBC Special, 1974). After installing the cozy, Roth noticed that it acted as a barrier to protect her car from the sun and keep the interior cool. Many people requested to commission a vehicle cover of their own (CBC Special, 1974). Illuminating the alternative uses of a material deemed "useless," the cozy demonstrated the value of recycling while serving multiple practical functions.

Using mass media as a platform and source of raw material for her recycling practice, she exploited the affordances of the very structures she critiqued—the passive consumption of media and cultural systems sustaining the production of material waste. An expression of power over her self-image and embodiment of her ideological investments, her deliberate self-fashioning produced a persona that allowed her recycling practice to gain public attention. Without the stability of a formal institutional setting and curriculum, these methods of cultivating visibility allowed Roth to share her message and spark community engagement in her public workshop series. Her use of dress to overcome the ongoing systemic marginalization women's artistic practices, challenging the relegation of "craft" to the domestic sphere and demonstrating the generative potential of an otherwise overlooked site of cultural signification.

Roth's transformation of videotape generated thought around the material and social status of video in society. In its conventional use, videotape supports dominant systems of mass communication, serving as a device to actuate the unprecedented speed and widespread circulation of information afforded by new media technology (McLuhan, 2013, pp. 336–372). Affording the rapid, widespread transmission and passive consumption of information and ideas, video offered ground to "connect" people through shared cultural knowledge in the private sphere of the home (McLuhan, 2013, pp. 97–115). Yet the centralized model of control over production of media content raised concern around the structures of power and value systems enforced through this mode of communication. As people experienced transformations in the pace and social dynamics of life with the increasing presence of electronic media in

society, cultural dialogues on its effects proliferated. Roth expressed concern over the role of television in everyday life. She states,

> [y]ou're watching the media [...] and one is usually caught by what's on the television [...] dull, stupefying material [...] it's really hard to enter a home where the people are watching a television program [...] it's like a line is connecting people to the TV set. (CBC Special, 1974)

The social and temporal dimensions of the cross-country recycling workshops opposed these dynamics of isolation and passivity, rather mobilizing electronic media's material refuse to generate new community experiences and counter dominant practices of consumption. The process of crochet triggered subtle shifts in normative experiences of time and social dynamics in the context of the recycling workshops. Traditional patriarchal structures and discursive conventions have used the repetitive nature of crochet to denigrate the practice as a mindless pass-time (Parker, 1984). However, in the context of the recycling workshops, repetition allowed participants to practice the technique while making their hats, establishing a structure of process-based learning and time for community engagement. While dominant capitalist systems emphasize speed and efficiency, the temporal dynamics of crochet invited people to slow down, form connections, and experience the pleasure of making things by hand with others. Women have used "craft" practices including embroidery, quilting, knitting and crochet to form community and participate in public social life in many contexts throughout history.[7] Evoking these often-overlooked legacies and asserting the value of "craft" practices in art and activism, the recycling workshops countered dominant cultural practices and beliefs on multiple levels, offering ground to overcome social alienation, passive consumption, and patriarchal regimes of value.

Roth's *Videotape Recycled* road trip brought attention to the cultural effects of mass communication and its contribution to the production of waste. The public transmission of her alternative practical and conceptual approach to the material world demonstrated the potential for a broad audience to adopt alternative methods of navigating their material and social realities beyond the constraints of dominant cultural practices.[8]

5 The Evelyn Roth Recycling Book

By the mid-1970s, Roth was a key figure in a local and international network of artists intertwining art and environmental activism. From the time of her road trip to 1975, she continued to host workshops across North America at art

institutions, high schools, universities, art schools, public festivals, and other spaces. Troubling the division between "professional" and "amateur" art practice, these workshops defied categorical boundaries to assert artmaking as a way to actively engage in and transform the rhythms of everyday life. As Lippard indicates in her pivotal essay on "hobby art," "everyday" creative activities—especially those pursued by women and involving material practices historically devalued as "craft"—have been conceptualized as mere pastimes or economic necessities, excluded from the critical cultural field of "fine art" (Lippard, 1978). Roth's connections to alternative art movements, use of institutional supports, and methods of highlighting the cultural and political aims of her practice functioned to overcome the interpretation of the workshops through dominant perceptions of "hobby art" or "craft." However, given the relative nascency of artwork and discourse that critiqued and challenged culturally determined hierarchies of creative practice, these concepts continued to frame the reception of artistic activity involving "craft" techniques. While Roth indeed grappled with conventional boundaries of art/craft, professional/amateur and institutional/grassroots throughout her career, she addressed the ongoing presence of these binaries and their limiting effects directly in her 1975 publication, *The Evelyn Roth Recycling Book*.

Aiming to reach a larger audience and shift the emphasis of her creative practice from recycling workshops to the construction of monumental sculptures, recycled textile "environments" and wearable art for festivals, events, and her performance group The Evelyn Roth Moving Sculpture Co., Roth collaborated with independent Vancouver-based publisher Talon Books to publish *The Evelyn Roth Recycling Book* (Murray, 1977, p. 35). Consisting of description, instruction and vibrant images, the book describes and depicts the strategies that Roth developed to create wearables, sculptures and furnishings from recycled wool, leather, fur, videotape and newspaper since 1967. The introduction distinguishes the book from the genre of instructional crafting guides, rather diverting from established fields of thought and practice. It begins:

> This is not an art book, although it shows you art objects; it is not in a strict sense a craft book either, although it tells you quite explicitly how to do the crafts involved in making the pieces illustrated. This is a book about how to make things before the notion of 'art' and 'craft' and 'use' became arbitrarily divided, or more particularly, the way Evelyn Roth thinks about making things right now. (Roth, 1975, p. 9)

Countering the division of modes of creation and the dominant cultural framework of "art" and "craft," Roth positions the book as a space to approach "making things" beyond categorical constraints. Lippard's analysis of the enduring

devaluation of "amateur" art-making and uneasy inclusion of "craft" practices in fine art spaces lends insight into the enduring patriarchal attitudes that continued to delineate parameters of artistic legitimacy and mediate arts spaces. Women artists working across traditional boundaries of creative practice and "hobby crafters" engaging in artmaking in their daily lives were forced to contend with structures of systemic exclusion and devaluation as positioned their work within or outside of institutional spaces. Accessible public workshops and published didactic material served as strategies to overcome the structural barriers to formal art education and assert the value of engaging in artmaking beyond professional practice. Yet the continued impact of categorical boundaries and hierarchies of value in institutional practices and discursive structures muddled the legibility of Roth's creative skill-sharing initiatives as "art education." Lippard and Roth's recognition of the constraints of existing hierarchal categorizations of creative practices and the institutional norms that sustain them indicates the prominence of these concerns and their impact on the perception of women's creative activity in the 1970s. Situating her book defiantly outside of the genres of the "art book" and the "craft book," Roth affirmed her project of sharing the strategies that she developed to make things beyond the confines of convention.

6 Conclusion: Transformations in the Material World

Unraveling, unraveling, unraveling (Roth, 1975). Roth begins her description of deconstructing garments into raw material with playful repetition, mirroring the rhythm of the action in writing. In the broader context of her practice, this *unraveling* spans material and conceptual terrain. Revealing and subverting institutional conventions, categorical hierarchies, and dominant social and material systems, Roth's alternative educational initiatives illuminated the potential to approach art and everyday life beyond the constraints of existing domains of thought and practice. Despite the challenges of carving out space to cultivate unconventional approaches to art, activism and art education, Roth found ways to assert the cultural and political value of public participation, ordinary materials, and "craft" techniques. Recycling workshops triggered departures from the rhythms of everyday life to actuate different ways of engaging with materials and forming community dynamics. As Roth cultivated strategies to generate participation in artmaking and activism through creative reuse, she demonstrated the instability of categorical boundaries and institutional conventions. Taking apart discarded objects to make them available for reuse paralleled the symbolic undoing of dominant practical and discursive

structures of art and everyday life. Establishing ground for the public to take part in creative activity guided by alternative social values and environmental activism, Roth's recycling workshops and publication allowed people to initiate transformation across multiple sites of cultural practice.

Notes

1 The artist's choice to include "&" at the end of his name reflects the increased interest in understanding artistic practice as an inherently collaborative activity. The artist describes this inclusion as a way to signify a "non-authorial take on art production" (see Anonymous, 2008).

2 For a list of exhibitions and events, see Gilbert et al. (1983, pp. 190–207). For an interview regarding the context, see Binkert (2005). For information on a specific exhibition, see The Intermedia Catalogue (n.d.-b).

3 Buckminster Fuller presented at Simon Fraser University in 1967 (Pinney, 1983). Victor Doray describes the influence of McLuhan's notion of the "global village" as it propelled dialogues among Intermedia artists (Doray et al., 2009).

4 Intermedia artists organized and participated in several activist initiatives and protest actions as a group. For example, in 1969, Intermedia sponsored and executed a consciousness-raising initiative against the proposed Georgia Viaduct freeway project. The group took a "protest bus" throughout Vancouver, distributing flyers on the effects of the proposed urban redevelopment project on local neighborhoods and the natural landscape of the city, see The Intermedia Catalogue (n.d.-a).

5 Roth was invited to participate by artist and dancer Marilyn Wood, who she met in 1968 at "Experiments in Environment" (Roth, 2006).

6 The work of Ed Rosenbach and Debra Rappaport are examples of creative explorations of found objects in the practices and teaching activities of weavers and educators. Rappaport exhibited wearables alongside Roth's work in Costume Statements and likely introduced Roth to videotape as a material for crocheting (see Constantine & Larsen, 1972).

7 Feminist art historian Julia Bryan Wilson analyzes several examples of these histories and ongoing collective organizing initiatives that involve craft practices (see Bryan-Wilson, 2017).

8 E. Roth (personal communication, June 30, 2021).

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CHAPTER 15

How to Teach Photography in the Place Where War Never Ends?

The Bezalel Photography Department as a Case Study, Jerusalem, 1910–1984

Noa Sadka

Abstract

The study of the development of the photography department at the Bezalel Academy in Jerusalem is motivated by the author's own experiences as a lecturer in this very department. Related observations thus form the starting point of this research, such as the strange feeling of teaching photography in a building located at the top of Mount Scopus, within walking distance of the surrounding Palestinian neighborhoods (such as al-ʿĪsāwiyya (العيساوية), ash-Shaykh Jarrāḥ (الشيخ جرّاح), and Wādī al-Jūz (وادي الجوز) from which some of the students come, while the pedagogical approach within the institution was chronically and mainly linked to America and Europe, as if it were a matter of teaching and learning photography somewhere in New York or London. For a discipline so naturally connected to and emerging from the specific reality in front of us, this seems to be a particularly tragic and misguided situation. The author traces the chronology of photography education over 80 years, from the time when the word "photography" had not yet been invented and the photography department was called the "Painting with Light Department" (1910) to the time when it became the academic department for undergraduate studies in the art of photography (1980). By revealing the pedagogical situation (photography teachers and teaching materials), a historical intra-disciplinary trajectory began to develop and the specific history of local photography, always considered fragmented, disconnected, and polarized began to take shape and build connections. As a result, several questions will take center stage: How has photography been perceived over the years? How has photography been taught? Can the pedagogical axis function as the historical axis of the development of the discipline itself? How does an academic artistic discipline mature into its own art form when the nature of service to other disciplines is so embodied and elemental in it? Is there a necessary connection between academization and the perception of photography as art? And how is it possible to teach and learn photography in a place that is constantly inflamed by never-ending wars?

Keywords

Bezalel academy – photography education – Israel-Palestine – institutional history – curriculum – art and conflict – pedagogy of place – Yaacov Ben-Dov – Lou Landauer – Avraham Hauser – Hanan Laskin

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Even when I don't say Palestine, it's Palestine, Palestine, Palestine.[1]
The problem of photography is the Palestinian problem.[2]

1 Art, Photography, Research, Life, Gaza Is Connected to Tel Aviv, It Is Close to Jerusalem

My lecture at the Berlin conference *Art Thinking, Doing Art* (June 2023) was based on my book *Photographic Truth is a Natural Truth: A Chronicle of a Photography Department* (2018). The material for this book was collected during seven years of intensive archival research. The book exposes and charts the history of the teaching of photography within a single department, in a single institute, from 1910 to 1984, and out of the pedagogical field, a historical, institutional, intra-disciplinary, local timeline is constructed, unique to the Israel/Palestine region, here in the Middle East.

But in October 2023, something had happened, something so terrible that it devoured and shook the living here terribly, adding more deaths to a land already saturated with blood and repeated military operations spanning decades of occupation. The number of corpses I have seen and continue to see never stops, never rests for a second. And when blood is approved, all blood is approved. Morning comes, and I see bodies of burned, dying, maimed, starving, dead children, and in the midst of these relentless sights of death, the act of writing an article, the act of teaching photography, the act of parenting, the act of my life must somehow continue. But how? How is it possible?

A military camp impersonating a state.[3]
We're not in Switzerland, we're in Jerusalem.[4]
No such thing as an artist in uniform, an artist has nothing to do with uniform.[5]
If I hadn't retired from the military, none of my research on the history of local photography would have taken place.[6]

Even if things look more or less okay and somehow good here, every minute, every second, some governmental-institutional wrong is happening, attacking, humiliating, robbing, restricting, grabbing, preventing, burning, beating, insulting, bombing, forcing, tying, handcuffing, raiding, detaining, uprooting, hurling, displacing, shooting, accusing, appropriating, destroying, ruining, stealing, arresting, overtaking, imposing, ruling, and massacring. And a little bit of oxygen, a little bit of air for the artists, photographers, photography teachers, the journey is almost impossible. Sometimes I say that until now I live on the oxygen given to me by the artist's grant of the Dutch government 25 years ago.

"Art, photography, life, teaching"—for these to happen and exist, the ordinary is essential. "When I get up in the morning, I open my eyes, my head is on a pillow; when I look at the ceiling, there is a ceiling; when I go out, the street looks like yesterday."[7] My street looks more or less like yesterday, but many other streets around me do not. My head rested on a pillow last night, but the heads of so many around me did not.

Gaza is connected to Tel Aviv, it is close to Jerusalem, it reaches right into the interior of my room in Tel Aviv. Gaza. And also, the Gaza envelope … with all its people, its women, its babies and its children, who have experienced the worst imaginable, how else?

I say it over and over again, and I respond online to those who are angry with me, who complain that I write "detached and righteous posts with one-sided empathy, carrying an imaginary flag of false consciousness from my cozy home in Tel Aviv." I respond by stating the obvious: "If my heart is here, that does not mean my heart is not there, and if my heart is there, that does not mean my heart is not here."

In my book *Photographic Truth is a Natural Truth*, I tried to illustrate the chronology of photography in Israel in a human and concrete way, through the dynamics of the teaching situation and the connection between the academization of the discipline and its perception as art, between the way photography has been conceived and taught over the years—teaching as the realization of consciousness, as the practice of a concept.

The Bezalel Photography Department and its faculty have played an important role in the development and formulation of modern, personal and contemporary art photography in Israel/Palestine, which seeks and maintains a living dialogue with America, less constrained by patriotic thematic obligations and burdened by the documentation of concrete reality—which is always painful, violent and catastrophic. In my archival wanderings through the minutes of departmental meetings, I have often come across sentences such as "the semester was suspended because of the war," "cut short, because the lecturer was drafted," "could

not hand in their assignments because of the war," "the school is empty because its students have been drafted." It is not in every country that one finds receipts for the purchase of gunpowder and bullets in art school papers under the title: "Incoming Mail, 1912-1913,"[8] it is not in any photography class that a student is unable to enter the darkroom because "the red light, the darkness—for him that's the tank" (Wakstein, as cited in Litman, 2013). It is not in every country that when a teacher asks a student to draw a teapot, cannons roar in the student's head; it is not everywhere that the position of "soldier" is so interwoven with the positions of "photography student" or "art photographer" without a shred of difficulty or contradiction; and it is not everywhere that a student puts his prosthetic eye on the table during a photography class, having lost his real eye during his military service.

This country is dated, noted, and mentioned by the dates of wars and military actions. And I started working on the book in one of the endless operations in Gaza, in 2014, among the countless photos of dead children, when installation pipes were connected to blood vessels, and blood was mixed with concrete mixed with blood, and organs, body parts of a dead child were laid on silvery cold metal surfaces, and Gaza, Gaza, Gaza … Gaze didn't let me go then nor does it let me go now, Gaza. And I shared a photograph and asked, begged to look at the photo, to look at the wall in it, the floor in it, the shoes in it, the IV held by hand in it, and Gaza is here. Even if I sometimes go shopping, drink coffee, think about organic food, my waist pain, my pelvic pain, talk about Diane Arbus in my classes, show a photo of the American Carolee Schneemann kissing a cat—Gaza is here. And I couldn't visit one of the lecturers in Alon Shvut, a Jewish settlement in the occupied West Bank, I just couldn't go there, sit in the living room overlooking a manicured garden, listen and talk about photography—Edward Weston, Ansel Adams, Lee Friedlander.

Every year, in my encounters with photography students, wherever I taught, I have experienced a lack of knowledge about the local photography scene, which led to eye shutting and alienating to what is happening "here" right up front, which is always so charged and loaded. I too, as a lecturer, ignored and did not see what was happening in front of me, and I even condescended to it, as if I was only consumed by Europe and America, and only talked to them, and only they fed me. But please, a little break from America, please. But after twelve years of teaching photography, I had this strange feeling that I'm living, teaching, photographing and working here, in the Middle East, next to Syria, Lebanon, Egypt and Jordan, only 70 minutes away from Gaza, and some of my students come from Arab towns and villages like Wadi al-Juz (Arabic وادي الجوز, Romanization *Wādī al-Jūz*), Issawiya (Arabic العيساوية, Romanization *al-ʿĪsāwiyya*), Kafr Aqab (Arabic كفر عقب, Romanization *Kafr ʿAqab*), Sheikh Jarrah (Arabic الشيخ

جراح, Romanization *ash-Shaykh Jarrāḥ*), and Umm al-Fahm (Arabic أم الفحم, Romanization *Umm al-Faḥm*), while all my academic-pedagogical heart is attentive only to America and Europe, forgetting what is right next to me. I found myself in class, unable to say another American name without feeling that it comes out crushed, used, stammered, coughed, strange, painful in the mouth. I found myself unable in class to show a photograph of a Westonian cabbage leaf or pepper when it is so close to boiling, hurting, checkpoint, wall, and prison. And I tried to mention photographers from here in every class: Palestinian photographer Karima Abboud (Arabic كريمة عبود, Romanization *Karīma ʿAbbūd*) and Youssef Nabil (Arabic يوسف نبيل, Romanization *Yūsuf Nabīl*), an Egyptian photographer. I tried. But what about all the photographers who work and teach right next to me?

At first, when I submitted my research proposal in 2013, I honestly thought that the study of photography at Bezalel began in the mid-1970s. I knew absolutely nothing about the previous decades, not even a dry, thin thread was there to indicate some dates and names, but as I collected my materials, spent time in the archives, and focused on the teaching situation as a potential research platform, one detail connected to another, one name connected to another, and a timeline of photography education in Bezalel since 1910 began to take shape.

> What did they teach when they taught photography in 1910?
> What did they teach when they taught photography in 1940?
> What did they teach when they taught photography in the 1960s up to the 1980s?

And how does an academic artistic discipline mature when the option of service is so natural, so embodied and elementary in it? How does a discipline take its first academic steps as an independent pedagogical field when the other disciplines consume photography as a practical profession, used for utilitarian purposes such as propaganda, documentation, advertising, design, education, archiving, or simply as part of everyday office paperwork? And how do you refer to a photography department in 1910 when there is still no Hebrew term for the machine that produces a photo, and for the act of photography itself; "photography" is called "quick painting" (ציור מהיר), and the reaction of the photographic plates to light is called "tanning pictures," and the photosensitive negative is described as a "plate that takes shape in the dark"? Did they call it the Light Painting Department, Fast Painting Department, Sun Picture Department, or Drawing with Light Department (מחלקה לציור אור)?

2 Constructing a Chronology: Photography Teaching at Bezalel Academy

2.1 *Yaacov Ben-Dov (1910–1913): The Photography Department, Sometimes Called the Drawing with Light Department*

> Because everything I will photograph here, in Palestine, would be positive things from the national perspective. […] I took […] two photos by his request. Poor children from Jerusalem for propaganda in America. […] For the photos I have sent him I ask for 12 francs; 1,5 francs each, and for the 7 small ones, 1 franc each, for a total of 25 francs.[9]

Yaacov Ben-Dov (Ukraine, 1882–Jerusalem, 1968) came to Palestine in 1907 after trying to study painting at the Odessa Academy of Art. Having failed in that, he looked for a profitable profession and turned to the study of photography. At the age of 25, he left his parents, friends and relatives and immigrated to Palestine on his own, settling in Jerusalem. According to another source, Ben-Dov was drawn to photography, then a new and unfamiliar art, from childhood. When he

FIGURE 15.1 Yaacov Ben-Dov, *Ben-Dov with a hunting rifle*, 1907. Gelatin Silver Print, 11.5 × 15.5 cm. © The Israel Museum, Jerusalem. Purchased through the gift of Rena and Robert Lewin, London

FIGURE 15.2 Yaacov Ben-Dov, *Cover for the postcard series Jewish Colonies in Palestine*, 1910s. Glass Negative, 13 × 18 cm. You can see that he planted his self-photography picture inside a postcard he designed at Bezalel. © The Israel Museum, Jerusalem. Purchased through the gift of Rena and Robert Lewin, London

bought his first camera and photographed his best friend, the resulting image had a double head, and Ben-Dov almost despaired of his new profession. However, he overcame his initial difficulties, and by the time he immigrated to Israel, he was already an experienced photographer. After working for a short time as a security guard in the orchards of Rehovot, he moved to Jerusalem and joined the first class of Bezalel students in 1908–1910. After graduating, he founded the photography department, which he headed until 1913 (Sadka, 2018, pp. 37–40).

Letters sent by Ben-Dov to Arthur Ruppin and Jacob Thon of the Jaffa *Office for Palestine* (המשרד הארצ ישראלי) in 1911–1914 indicate that during the years he headed the Bezalel Photography Department, it was used as a Zionist propaganda print shop, providing photographs of the country's landscapes and communities for fundraising purposes.[10] His letters contain details of his sales offers, with list of photographic subjects, including, for example, the dairy in Petach Tikva, the harvest and forest in Gedera, the sycamore tree in Smolensky Forest, the loading of wine for export on the beach in Jaffa, the first grape harvest, orange picking, scenes from Bezalel life, characters, motifs from the Judean Desert, all together with cost and payment calculations.

Reading Ben-Dov's letters reveals an explicit and bare motivation for his photographic work: Zionist and propagandistic, well-timed, commissioned, coordinated, and suited to its purpose. The photographer/self/subject—wondering

and wandering, seeing and trying to show what his eyes see and what his heart feels, without planning, calculating, correlating, summing, is not present. In his letters, Ben-Dov speaks of himself in the first-person plural and promises to "photograph everything that interests us [...] and only positive things from the national perspective." His language is practical and disciplined; he is willing to provide whatever is required. In his letters, I didn't find any expressions of a different photographer's consciousness—that of a photographer with a slightly flexible ideological backbone, a little loose, a photographer who stops by the side of the road on a cold, rainy day just because he's curious, just because he catches something out of the corner of his eye—a crooked sign with an arrow pointing to a "pea-pickers' field." In fact, Dorothea Lange never stopped by the side of the road to capture a settlement of people plowing, picking, harvesting or planting; she walked and traveled along the road, stopping because something caught her eye and drew her in like a magnet.[11] Lange didn't have to worry so much about her bread. Ben Dov's bookkeeping is heartwarming alongside the details of the subjects he documented and the places he visited: broken down into small change, from cents to francs, calculating, pricing, deducting, offsetting, and agreeing on the minimum price.

2.2 *Lou Landauer (1942–1948): The Photography Studies Sometimes Referred as "Department of Photography," Sometimes as "Photography Section," Sometimes as "Photography Branch," or "Photography Profession," and Sometimes Just as "Photography Lessons"*

> This country is one that requires all types of photographers. [...] An art-photographer draws using light on the photographic plate, which will capture even the photographer's personal perspective. [...] In photography there's no room for emotion, it is simply a matter of technique. [...] As for the Photography Department, indeed this was actually an experiment, and there were only difficulties.[12]

Lou (Levi) Landauer (Cologne, 1897–Lugano, 1991) immigrated to Palestine in 1933 with her husband Georg Landauer, a Zionist activist and director of the *Berlin Office for Palestine*. In Palestine, he served on the board of directors of Bezalel. Lou Landauer came to Palestine after studying photography at the Münchner Fotoschule (Munich Photo School) and at the Lette-Verein in Berlin in 1928–1930. At first she worked as a Zionist photographer, documenting planting and plowing, orchards, dairies, chicken coops, farm labor, children's communal homes, and homes in the kibbutzim.

In the early 1940s, Landauer began teaching photography at the New Bezalel, and a new chapter of her life and work began. Drafts and texts in her

handwriting, as well as minutes of teachers' meetings at New Bezalel between 1942 and 1947, show that the concept of photography was confused and constantly reformulated. Sometimes photography was seen as a matter of dry technique, a practical instrument to help the students of the Applied Graphics Department, who used it for professional and advertising photography, and sometimes photography was seen as a separate art form, equal to painting, sculpture and drawing, with its own theory and pragmatic content. However, the difficulty in obtaining essential materials prevented the field of photography from developing into a major independent discipline.

In 1945, a decennial exhibition was held in New Bezalel, featuring work by teachers and students in applied graphics, metalwork, hand weaving, sketching, painting, sculpture, calligraphy, and photography. Press reviews of the exhibition tell us something about the kind of photographic work that was attempted and studied in Landauer's classes: "The photographs presented are not limited to a naturalistic observation of the object" or "In an artist's hand, the camera is a tool that serves the imagination, and the artist can use it to achieve results that sometimes turn a realistic scene into an abstract—sometimes visionary—composition with surprising light and shadow effects," or

FIGURE 15.3 Lou Landauer, *Photography Lesson*, 1944–1945. Gelatin Silver Print, 11 × 15 cm. Courtesy of the Bezalel Academy Archives, Jerusalem

"Among Lou Landauer's photographs, I was most impressed by a photograph of a large cat's head" (Meysels, 1945; Ram, 1945).
In a teachers' meeting held on October 24, 1945, shortly after the exhibition, Mordechai Ardon, an artist who headed Bezalel in 1940–1952, said that the exhibition attracted a large audience and was appreciated by many, but "with regard to photography, some did not understand why and for what. And in particular, the cat scared many. They asked why there was no response to current affairs in the country? Why no reportage? Why nothing about Treblinka, Maidanek? Why, they asked, there was nothing about the Bible."[13]

When I discovered the minutes of that meeting, I was excited. I felt that they told a fundamental and essential story about the tragedy of local photography. A tragedy because so many photographic subjects and types of discourse related to photography are excluded and not allowed here. And as a photographer and photography teacher, I have experienced different kinds of bans. And what is forbidden is not explicitly stated, but it is felt and permeates situations of learning and teaching photography for decades. And it seems that photographers have learned to articulate and behave according to what is massively supported and accepted, which allows mainly big ideas, themes and motivations. The small and mundane, the personal and subjective, they have learned to avoid as if it were a plague.

In a letter dated February 3, 1948, Landauer asked the directors of the New Bezalel to allow her to take a two-month leave of absence, since the conditions for beginning her photography studies were not yet in place. Perhaps she was surprised by the intensity of the reactions to the cat head photograph? Perhaps she felt a bit out of place and disconnected when she attempted photograms of feathers, stems, orchids, and abstract compositions where only positive and heroic reportage photography was allowed? Maybe she got tired of here? Maybe she got tired of a photography department that was just called that without really living up to its name? Maybe she got tired of the constant shortage of materials, instruments and equipment, of trying to get hold of a photo enlarger from someone who had died? Maybe she was tired of dealing with disciplinary problems and the inability to collaborate, especially with Mr. Deutsch of the Applied Graphics Department? Maybe she was tired of teaching photography in her broken Hebrew and missing her native German? Maybe she despaired of the fact that there was never a permanent classroom for teaching photography, and the darkroom in her own house served her students? Maybe it was too much to teach photography to students who coming after Bergen-Belsen and asked to die? Maybe she was tired of a country where there was never a second of peace? Maybe she found it absurd and pointless

to teach the rules of light and shadow, negative and positive, to students who came from the Buchenwald concentration camps?[14]

In 1948, Landauer moved to the United States to gain experience in the complex color carbo process at the Kodak laboratory in Rochester. She later worked as a commercial photographer. In 1950, she apparently gave up photography and began working as a librarian at the Leo Baeck Institute in New York. Her husband Georg died in 1954, and around 1960 she emigrated to Switzerland, where she died in 1991.

2.3 *Avraham Hauser, Behira Eden, Efraim Degani (1962–1983): Photography Lessons Are Hosted by Other Departments, but an Annual Separate Syllabus Is Formed That Is Sometimes Referred to as "The Photography Department"*

> The idea was that they'd hold a camera and start seeing… This way, they entered the darkroom with love.[15]
> "Go out", he said, "and find me patterns."[16]

What characterizes this period in the history of photography studies at Bezalel is that the three teachers had a rich knowledge of all aspects of photography—practical, technological, professional and historical—and also made a living as professional photographers while teaching at Bezalel.

Avraham Hauser (Berlin, 1916–Jerusalem, 2000) owned a photography studio and worked mainly with artists, sculptors and painters; he also specialized in industrial, technical, architectural, portrait and advertising photography for government agencies, and was one of the first teachers of technical-professional photography in Israel. Hauser taught photography at Bezalel from 1962-1981.

Behira Eden (Jerusalem, 1933–Jerusalem, 2015) was trained by Hauser as a photo technician at the Applied Photography Institute in Tel Arza, Jerusalem. She later specialized in technical and microscopic photography, worked as an assistant in Hauser's studio, and taught photography in Bezalel from 1965–1978.

Efraim Degani (Berlin, 1912–Jerusalem, 2001) specialized in scientific/medical photography. In 1945 he opened a private studio and photo shop in Jerusalem, called *Photo Prisma*. In 1966–1983, he taught photography at Bezalel.

A review of the course materials written by Hauser, Eden, and Degani reveals considerable knowledge of the history of photography and its conception as a creative practice with its own material and formal uniqueness. The art of photography is detailed and taught through a structured curriculum, and clear, concrete demonstrations are always provided alongside theoretical lectures.

The photography curriculum includes studies in the history and technology of photography such as: lectures on classical and contemporary photographers, exposure calculations, methods of development, contact and printing, paper and negative gradations, film sensitivity, sharpness and depth, camera operation, as well as modernist Bauhaus themes such as light and shadow, matter and contrast, collages, photograms and photomontages. The exercises were formulated as requests to photograph textures, structures, line rhythms, repeating forms, photography from the perspective of a frog and a bird, outdoor photography with different lenses, photography of alleys, staircases, and buildings.

All these themes and exercises are dominated by the desire for self-expression, seeking the individual behind the camera, but it seems that the individual finds it difficult to rise due to the heavy weight of formal themes and over-defined photographic motivations.

2.4 *Hanan Laskin (1972–1984): From the Service to Disciplin: The Rise of an Academic Department*

Hanan Laskin (b. Tel Aviv, 1935) began teaching at Bezalel in 1972. He had completed academic studies in photography at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology and gained experience in professional photography, art photography, teaching photography and writing advanced photography curricula.

During these years, Laskin was considered the representative of the concept of "photography as an art" in Israel. He was interviewed in photography, art and culture journals, invited to lecture in Israel and abroad, wrote frequent photography reviews, served as a judge in photography competitions in professional journals, and was a member of prize committees on behalf of the Israel Museum.

Beginning in 1974, Laskin participated in several continuing education activities abroad. According to Laskin, the objectives included gathering information, attending international conferences, examining and ordering equipment, networking with photography experts, meeting with professionals to create a curriculum, viewing exhibitions, listening to lectures, and reviewing works in order to learn about photography studies at leading institutes.[17] According to Yosef Cohen, who taught at the Photography Department since 1975, "Hanan would travel around the world to various photography departments, where he examined photography studies systems [...] . His planning was based on extensive practical research on what was going on around the world [...] and what he created here is in fact the sum total of what he found there."[18]

In 1980, a four-year program was launched at the Bezalel Photography Unit, headed by Hanan Laskin. Two years later, it became an academic department

and was authorized to grant a BFA (Photography). The curriculum included the history of art and photography, the psychology of perception, communication, aesthetics, photographic technology, optics, electricity (physics), photographic chemistry, sensitometry, a conceptual workshop, basic design, sketching, artistic graphics (etching, lithography, silkscreen), audiovisual art, practical photography, and laboratory work. Photographic technology studies were now even more glorified in the program, for the partial, practical reason of having the need to prepare chemicals for development and printing, and because they were a unique, clear thematic backbone, essential and exclusive to the photographic discipline, which required its academic separation.

In those years, photography still had to grovel, to justify itself, to seek recognition and legitimacy. It was still attacked for its "ease," its mechanicality, its automation, its ordinariness, its commonness, and its lack of inherent "artistry." Photography was still seen in Bezalel "as a kind of foster child, an adopted son, an undervalued, less serious, less profound son. A kind of servant. 'Take a photo of this work for me, like a technician.'" Apparently, "the department's escape route in a later stage would be to completely dissolve photography's applied nature into growing abstraction and academization. It came to the point that sometimes, in student exhibitions, there was not even a single picture on the wall. And there was terrible cynicism directed at humanist photography, and it excluded many options."[19]

3 Epilogue: Teaching Photography Is Teaching Kindness

Understanding that the teaching sphere is critical to the creative sphere, and that the teaching sphere is critical to the research sphere, and that each sphere is connected and interrelated, nourished and nurtured, I have tried in my research not to exclude or erase, not to lower or raise, not to compartmentalize or discipline. I have tried to locate and collect all the pedagogical memories, and all the voices of the photography instructors associated with the Bezalel Photography Department from 1910–1984, without judging or opinionating. In the same way that I don't go out to photograph with a plan, with a formulation, with goals and objectives before each time I raise my camera, I don't approach the archive with a rigid methodology, and in the classroom I don't try to impose an authoritative, hierarchical model of knowledge transfer, and I don't demand from the students a terminology of justifications for each photo, print or exhibition, and I'm not afraid of a first-person language that is still wondering and stuttering its first steps.

For me, teaching photography is about teaching kindness, teaching to be a good person. Teaching to see and to show, to observe, to expose, to pay

attention, to reveal, to seek compassion and truth through framing. But how? How is it possible when I, who want to teach, who want to photograph, get up in the morning and see the never-ending cruel sights that the domain I'm connected to causes. And how can art be made, how can art be taught, how can art be learned, how can systems be shaken, how can one criticize a sovereign, and how can one reflect and oppose social structures, and speak one's heart out, in an occupied country where the current of events is so intense and painful? And I am so very tired of the winds of war. I want to photograph. I want to teach photography … Saja, Dafna, Muhathassem, Faiz, Lenna, Tomer, Ido, Shanny, Refael, Maya, Suhayeb, Guy, Noam, Merav, Omer, Omar, Arkadi, Saffa, Reut, Noga, Yoliya, Masha, Juvani, Jamal, Shelly, Bar, Marina, Oleg, Yuval, Yotam, Hanna, Essa, Tamar, Michal, Amal, Stanislaw, Salam, Moran, Mona, Muhammed, Mahmud, Itay, Sapir, Tal, Bahaa, Eden …[20]

FIGURE 15.4 Ella Barak, *The Author's Photography Class*, 2019. From a color analog negative. Courtesy of Noa Sadka

Notes

1 A sentence that came out of me during one of my seclusion sessions (April 2022). In these sessions, I retreat to a limited space—a room in my apartment or a gallery—for a few hours to several days and try to write down every sentence that comes into my head.

2 A paraphrase of artist Moshe Gershuni's sentence: "The problem of painting is the Palestinian problem" (הבעיה של הציור היא הבעיה הפלסטינית). In 1977, this sentence became a painting and joint action with the Bezalel Fine Art Department students.

3 Salman Natour, in a speech at a demonstration about fifteen years ago.

4 Shahar Mizrahi, a student, in a departmental discussion in 2022.

5 Bahaa Abu Hussein, email correspondence with the author, December 2023.

6 From a lecture by photographic historian Guy Raz in the author's course "Archive, Photography, and Text: Knots, Relations, and Symbioses," July 2, 2024.

7 Paraphrasing the words of Dr. Raef Zureik, Session "On the Yearning for Normality," Faculty of Humanities, Tel Aviv University, August 24, 2014.

8 Jerusalem Municipal Archive, Jerusalem, Israel, Box 231, File 280: "Incoming Mail, 1912–13".

9 Yaacov Ben-Dov, letters to Dr. Ruppin and Dr. Thon, 1911–14. Central Zionist Archive, Jerusalem, Israel (KKL3/578-74,92,80).

10 The Office for Palestine in Jaffa ("Ereẓ Israel Office") was established by the World Zionist Organization in 1908. It served as the central agency for Zionist settlement activities, including land purchase and immigration assistance.

11 The reference is to Dorothea Lange's 1936 photograph "Migrant Mother," on which she published a text (see Lange, 1996).

12 Lou Landauer, papers, 1945–1947. Jerusalem Municipal Archive, Jerusalem, Israel (Box 221, File 118; Box 218, File 74; Box 224, File 212).

13 Teachers' meeting minutes, The New Bezalel, October 24, 1945. Jerusalem Municipal Archive, Jerusalem, Israel (Box 224, File 212).

14 For these questions, see the chapter on Landauer in Sadka (2018, pp. 85–134).

15 B. Eden (personal communication, April 29, 2014).

16 The first exercise Dgani gave was to find "patterns," which Arnon Ben David (Art student, 1973–1977 and a darkoom lab assistant, 1974–1976) described as a "typical Bauhaus exercise." For the full interview, see Sadka (2018, pp. 353–357).

17 Hanan Laskin, papers. Bezalel Archive, Jerusalem, Israel (File No. 2).

18 Y. Cohen (personal communication, August 21, 2014).

19 M. Caine (personal communication, August 2, 2014). Caine taught in the department from 1981 to 2009.

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CHAPTER 16

Primitivism and Experimental Pedagogy

Allan Kaprow's Night *(1961)*

Emily Ruth Capper

Abstract

Allan Kaprow developed his earliest happenings as a college professor in the late 1950s and early 1960s, a time of dramatic change in American student culture. In his pedagogy and happenings alike, Kaprow sought to push student participants towards greater self-consciousness, often by defamiliarizing popular cultural forms and social rituals. A case in point is the happening *Night,* which Kaprow created at the University of Michigan in 1961. This paper reconstructs Kaprow's collaboration with Michigan students. It shows how *Night's* score fragmented, abstracted, and recombined motifs from student rituals that were rooted in racialized primitivist fantasies and designed and practiced by an overwhelmingly white student body. Kaprow's *Night* translated these fantasies into a formalist language of color, shape, and structural opposition, and reframed them with a pedagogical uncertainty about their status as art. While the happening used these techniques to elicit the students' self-conscious reflection, its engagement with race was ambivalent. *Night* may have defamiliarized student rituals, but Kaprow stopped short of a critique of whiteness, and in this way diverged from Michigan's nascent counterculture of civil rights activism.

Keywords

Allan Kaprow – primitivism – art pedagogy – happenings – college life – race – whiteness

1 Introduction

On a Saturday night in May 1961, about a dozen students at the University of Michigan gathered on the lawn in front of the School of Architecture and Design to experience what was advertised in the student newspaper as an

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"open-house" and "exhibit" by the visiting artist Allan Kaprow (Axelrod, 1961). The space in front of the School featured an uncanny pedagogical landscape of architectural fragments arranged in chronological sequence.[1] In walking towards Kaprow's nighttime "exhibit," the students would have passed through a full-scale replica of an ancient Greek archway to arrive at a paradigmatically modernist building, with its simplified rectangles of glass and metal and dramatically extended "space frame" roof, which a 1954 cohort of students had built themselves with commercial sponsorship (Brinkman, 1977, p. 57). Air came through the open sides of the pavilion and light filtered through the intricately patterned roof.

Kaprow's "exhibit" took place underneath this space frame structure and inside a tent-like enclosure he had instructed the students at Michigan to construct using a low-tech system of wires and pulleys (Figure 16.1). Comprised of ripped pieces of fabric and plastic sheeting, the draped enclosure was a loose approximation of a generically archaic or "primitive" dwelling. Crudely painted oil drums, tires, and wheel rims dangled precariously overhead, while bundles of uprooted saplings adorned the space's permeable perimeter. Prior to the event itself, a hand-painted sign forbiddingly read "*NO ADMITTANCE*" and barred entry to the enclosure.

A group of student performers, who had been working with Kaprow over the past week to build the dwelling, ushered the student audience inside. At various moments throughout two roughly twenty-minute performances at 8:30 and at 9:30 p.m., a student perched in the rafters tugged on the ropes, cut pieces of wood with a power saw that fell loudly onto the oil drums, and set newspaper confetti aloft by means of a noisy electric fan. All of this, it is crucial to note, was heard more clearly than it was seen, since the nighttime performances were lit only dimly and inconsistently by a collection of flashlights, camera flash bulbs, and matches. In the final act, several students covered in crumpled paper and rags emerged from cardboard boxes and a tangle of saplings. With arms painted red, blue, and yellow, the student performers splashed pink and blue water at the audience through the plastic curtains in a mock assault.

This Ann Arbor happening—which Kaprow later titled *Night*—shared materials, actions, and the use of an enclosed audience with the better-known *A Spring Happening* (1961), which Kaprow had presented at the Reuben Gallery in New York one month earlier (Rodenbeck, 2011). Unlike *A Spring Happening*, however, *Night* was performed, experienced, and made by university students. In fact, it was the first such site-specific happening that Kaprow created on a university campus as a visiting professor, a practice he would develop throughout the 1960s while teaching art and art history at Rutgers University

FIGURE 16.1 Allan Kaprow, *Night*, 1961. University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Irving Kaufman and students assemble the environment. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (980063). Artwork © Allan Kaprow Estate

(1953–1960) and Stony Brook (1960–1969). This chapter will focus on *Night*'s relationship to the modernist and formalist tendency towards "primitivism": the common, if troubling, practice in the modern west of constructing idealized fantasies of archaic and non-Western cultures to revivify and sometimes contest their own experiments with form and meaning.[2] In the 1950s art world, it typically involved visually appropriating and decontextualizing artworks and artifacts hailing from indigenous America, pre-classical Greece, Sub-Saharan Africa, Inuit peoples, China, Egypt, among other "exotic" locales and eras.[3] This chapter analyzes the primitivist dimensions of *Night*—its decontextualizing and abstracting operations, its allusions to archaic structures and rituals—in two ways: first, as a critical intervention into midcentury college art pedagogy, and second, as a complex engagement with the primitivism of mainstream

student culture at Michigan, a land-grant university that was overwhelmingly white through the 1960s.

This argument is part of a larger one in my book, *Happening Pedagogy: Allan Kaprow's Experiments in Instruction* (Capper, in press), where I argue that pedagogy was central to the way Kaprow conceptualized the happening in the late 1950s into the 1960s. Kaprow created the happening by radicalizing the experimental tendencies of modernist pedagogy that he experienced in classes with three prominent teachers at midcentury: Hans Hofmann, Meyer Schapiro, and John Cage. In his happenings, Kaprow used pedagogy to manage distributed agency in participants, wield an informal sense of authority over his work, mix high and low discourses as well as elements of planning and improvisation, and draw on his students' own practices of vernacular performance, all while riffing on the philosophies of his past teachers. A key component of Kaprow's pedagogy—evident in *Night* as well as in other environments and happenings—was his desire to use the lessons of formalism to provoke an ambiguous and open-ended sense of social self-consciousness in his college student participants.

2 *Night* as Art History Lesson

In Risa Axelrod's preview of *Night* in the student newspaper, she relays a version of Kaprow's now-well known art historical justification for the happening as a revivifying extension of modern painting through what he had famously called "a return to the point where art was more actively involved in ritual, magic, and life than we have known it in our recent past" (Kaprow & Kelley, 1993, p. 7). This claim can be read as a typical case of modernist primitivism, where the artist appropriates a mix of archaic or non-Western forms, understood as more immediate and collective, to ameliorate the alienation caused by capitalist-industrial modernity. In the context of midcentury art history pedagogy, Kaprow's embrace of archaic and non-western forms had its progressive side. As a professor at Rutgers and Stony Brook, Kaprow had long argued that non-Western art should be given a central place in a non-teleological art history survey, and was repeatedly censured for this by his faculty colleagues and administrators.[4] In this light, Kaprow's counter-appropriation of the modern space frame roof for his apparently "primitive" happening can be read as transgressive, which is to say as a polemical corrective to Michigan's Eurocentric art history lesson that positioned the Greek column as the origin point of architectural rationality.

Still, Kaprow's use of generic hallmarks of "primitive" creativity, such as weaving, bricolage, and body painting, did not seek to produce full contextual or historical understanding in students. Rather, they were mined for their affective charge and taught through a formalist lens. In this way, *Night* both parallels and exaggerates the formalism of the anthropologists he read on the topic of "primitive art," such as Franz Boas and Claude Lévi-Strauss.[5] Consider one of Kaprow's teaching notes for *Night*, which he sent in his letter to Kaufman. Here Kaprow instructs his student collaborators to use a "*naturally* casual" style in painting the environment's cloth drapery; and with respect to the sewing, tying, and spacing of the drapery, he advises: "Be *sloppy* but avoid repetitions of sloppiness" (Kaprow, 1961, May 7). Thus, in a characteristically paradoxical pedagogical gesture, Kaprow makes students highly conscious of formal polarities, such as repetition versus variation, in order to elicit from them the correct form of "sloppiness" or informality, a quality we typically associate with a lack of self-consciousness. As evidenced by the photographs that document the production of *Night*, the students painted the cloth strips in informal, yet highly individual and contrasting styles, ranging from broad linear gestures to intricate curlicue forms surrounded by hearts.

In another instruction, Kaprow draws students' attention to the formal properties of the car rims and barrels, whose circularity is contrasted with what he calls the "longish iron junk" strung up nearby. Kaprow stresses sonic form equally. As if he were composing an immersive percussion work using readymade instruments for Cage's experimental composition class (which Kaprow attended from 1957–1959), Kaprow's instructions were physically and logistically demanding.[6] He directed students to hang "11 varied sized iron barrels … 3 car wheel rims and eight pieces of longish iron junk. Check each of these for sound when struck to get a variety. Hang these at random over the area" (Kaprow, 1961, May 7). Despite Kaprow's use of the term "random," there was again a pronounced formalism at work: the assignment presupposed a numerical symmetry between eleven barrels and eleven other metal things (car wheel rims and iron pieces). And classifying objects in the manner Cage proposed for tape compositions, Kaprow assigned three classes of material (barrels, tires, pipes) with differentiated geometric shapes and equally distinctive audible tones. Having sourced, tested, and hung these large objects, the students were then primed to explore Hofmann-like formal oppositions by discussing, in Kaprow's words, "structural archetypes such as symmetry and asymmetry, central accents and eccentric ones, random order and determined order, repetition or alloverness, and so forth" (Kaprow, 1964, p. 138).

Night's temporality exemplified a paradoxical lesson about the ontology of art: while the happening was an exercise structured by formalist conceits, its performance as an event needed to be dynamic, mysterious, and even anxiety producing. This lesson reflected Kaprow's conception of the "metaphysics" of experimental art in the early 1960s. On the one hand, Kaprow, the avant-garde artist and teacher, was critical of any old-fashioned aesthetic mysticism focused on the conservative veneration of art. At the same time, he found the Bauhaus-derived efforts at demystification via visual training, which were dominant in university art and architecture departments at the time, to be too affirmative and rule-driven.[7] Similarly, in his pedagogical essays, Kaprow warned that exercises exploring the possibilities of abstract organization were not sufficient for teaching students to recognize art's distinctive metaphysical character, a metaphysics he similarly insisted on in his pamphlet for *Words* (1962) as a kind of ephemerality and indeterminacy, when he created that environment in the Stony Brook dormitory.[8] He writes: "the nature of art cannot be fixed—a common-sense judgment that can *easily* be separated from the mystique of holiness that also accompanies this period [of modernism]" (Kaprow, 1965). Here, Kaprow makes a distinction between a conservative mystification of art, which he rejects as ideological, and his own theory of the artwork's temporally extended, but accessible ineffability, which he derived from his study of dynamic formalism and "discoordination" in Schapiro's art history classroom.[9]

Night exhibited a populist metaphysics of art through a pedagogy that sustained a high affective temperature, one that Kaprow associated with a return to a premodern rootedness of aesthetics in "magic, ritual and life" (Kaprow & Kelley, 1993, p. 7). In writing to Kaufman about *Night*, Kaprow claimed similarly: "This is a gamble for all of us. It can work out great but it can also be a great and dismal failure. Everyone [...] should be aware of this [...] it'll make for that nice anxiety!" (Kaprow, 1961, May 7). Indeed, in *Night*, Kaprow sought to stoke that "nice anxiety" with instructions that were both demanding and loose. For example, he wrote to Kaufman that the time limit of one week that his students had to construct the environment and prepare for the performance was ideal; students had precisely enough time to "reflect on their roles," but not enough to rehearse or relax.

In this way, Kaprow saw modernist autonomy and ephemerality operating in tandem; in his view, anxiety and uncertainty facilitated the student's grasp of the magical aspect of modernist creativity. In *Night*, this approach is palpable even in the formal assignment for the sound installation of hung objects. Schapiro had taught that "We live more in the horizontal dimension than the

vertical [...] and we are not surprised to learn that the same line looks shorter when horizontal than when vertical" (Schapiro, 1972, p. 15). That is, if horizontal arrangements appear more natural in that they yield to gravity, vertical forms, in fighting gravity, are effortful constructions that intrinsically raise the question of their own precarity. *Night* similarly developed a phenomenological sense of energy and anxiety through its formal design: Kaprow's instructions asked students to hang heavy objects from the roof "just above head level (7 ½ feet)," in threatening proximity to the audience.[10]

3 *Night* as College Initiation Ritual

In the preview of *Night* in the student newspaper Kaprow likens it to what he calls a "springtime" event (Axelrod, 1961, p. 5), an angle that was symptomatic of Kaprow's anthropological fascination with the persistence of archaic beliefs and rituals in modern society. In this way, Kaprow's *Night* invited Michigan students to see their participation in critical relation to the numerous student-run happenings scheduled for earlier that semester, namely the events associated with *Spring Weekend*, which took place just a week before the students started work on Kaprow's *Night*. Indeed, for college students in the early 1960s and especially in a midwestern climate, the last few weeks of the school year could become genuinely intense, as elaborate rituals of openair celebration and memorialization overtook the daily grind of studying. Described by the *Michiganensian* yearbook as a series of riotous competitions between housing units, Spring Weekend included "a beauty contest and house building contest" (Harvey, 1961, p. 365). As documented in the yearbook, dozens of students mobilized to erect giant decorations of dubious refinement using old newspaper and glue. There was also programming overlap between campus ritual and happenings that covered the full range of aesthetic production; *Night* was technically commissioned by students as part of their annual Festival of the Creative Arts, which included everything from an interfraternity sing to a commodity-centric Foreign Auto Show (Anonymous, 1961).

Considered within the stream of springtime student-sponsored events, the haunted house qualities of *Night* come to the fore. The creaky pulleys, the chainsaw, the unidentifiable loud noises, the shadows and flickering light that Kaprow explicitly compared to that of a "Jack-o-lantern" in his letter to Kaufman, each could be said to call up this vernacular tradition of environmental performance art but then abstract it through formal contrasts in tone and frequent periods of silence. This is especially evident in an audio recording that Kaprow made at Michigan inside the environment for *Night*.[11] The sounds

on the tape, indexical though they are, have been deliberately arranged in the manner of *Musique Concrète*, a genre Kaprow had experimented with since the late 1950s. And it is possible that Kaprow played this tape of the environment of *Night* during subsequent performances of *Night*, a strategy of layering he used repeatedly in his prior environments. Here, such nonsynchronous amplification would have further abstracted the almost clichéd sound effects of the happening, such as the "thunder" likely produced by shaking a metal sheet.

Kaprow relished all the ambiguities and cross-references here; his campus happenings deliberately mimicked the aesthetics of different student productions to appeal to the students he taught. After all, this was also a practical requirement for the experiment to take place: he had to inspire their interest to successfully recruit unpaid student collaborators for extracurricular happenings. Kaprow acknowledged as much in a 1961 College Art Association (CAA) presentation, where he wryly proposed to pay his students "in proportion to how much of their bodies and minds were appropriated for his success".[12] Once such a pedagogical linkage with the students was in motion, Kaprow could defamiliarize student culture by scrambling more particular codes that regulated its forms of play. Take, for example, the five student performers who emerged beneath cartons placed within the soft enclosure in *Night*. Kaprow had instructed these students to make their own costumes by sewing crumpled paper and rags onto leotards or long underwear in what appear to be variations on the layered form of a pinecone, an upside-down tree, or a pile of leaves. In the teaching notes he sent to Kaufman, Kaprow elaborates as follows:

> The idea is to have each person look like *a pile of junk not a spook* [emphasis Kaprow's]. For the purpose of the right attitude, I'd convey this fact to the performers early enough to have them think about it. … The power of such spectres therefore will be felt only if they're ambiguous in their role, i.e. human being or junk pile, witch-doctor or spirit, fact or fantasy, art or life, etc., etc., etc. (Kaprow, 1961, May 7)

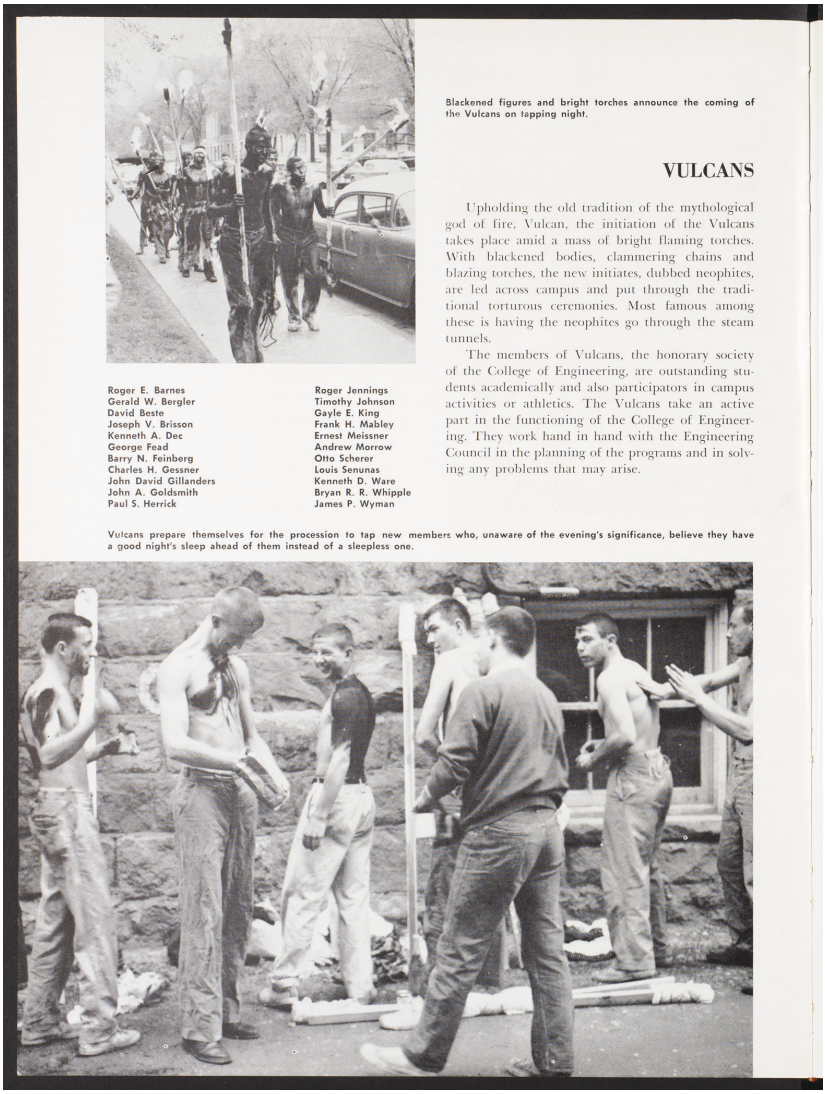
By invoking the term "spook," even while disavowing it so forcefully (*not a spook*), Kaprow tips the scales in favor of the haunted house referent and lends support to the possibility that Ann Arbor students experienced *Night* in this way. But as Kaprow makes clear in this quote, *Night* asked for murkier and less reified actions than the typical haunted house. Covered not only in rags but also in the art studio staples of paint and paper, five student performers would ideally shimmer with an unstable identity shifting between metaphysical resonance (as in "witch-doctor or spirit"), plain facticity (a "human being or junk pile"), and a pedagogical demonstration of ontological

questions ("fact or fantasy, art or life"). Equally important, Kaprow insists that the student performers "think" about themselves as a contingent bundle of shifting signifiers.

Kaprow's campus happenings referenced the primitivism of student rituals, but his use of formalism and the philosophical lessons of modernist pedagogy repositioned these rituals in a way that made them ineffective at enforcing social norms. Thus, in abstracting haunted houses and carnival floats in *Night*, Kaprow led students through a modernist process of defamiliarization. On one level this served a formalist pedagogical purpose—to teach them about the possibilities of form and structure. But the defamiliarizing process had another pedagogical purpose in this context, one that had more to do with social value and self-awareness. For, beneath Kaprow's abstraction of the college carnivalesque, weighty social questions were already under negotiation among students. If collective compositions of oversize paper mâché balls seemed relatively innocent, many student rituals at Michigan during the early 1960s were socially repressive. A student-built haunted house or carnival event may appear to be a playful, creative, and presumably inclusive tradition, but others—for instance, initiation rituals associated with hazing—were routinely exclusionary and humiliating, reflecting a darker kind of vernacular primitivism that evoked the premodern and the archaic, not as a critique of Western aesthetics, but as an indulgence towards the traditional maintenance of social hierarchy (Styrett, 2009).

In the *Michiganensian*, snapshots of these varied traditions bleed together, and acknowledging this continuum from the utopian to the disciplinary in the pages of the yearbook reveals more depth in Kaprow's attempts to provoke self-consciousness in student participants (Sheldon, 1969, p. 180). For instance, it is with a cheerful tone of habituation that the 1961 *Michiganensian* documented a springtime initiation ritual of the honorary society of the College of Engineering. The yearbook tells us that this society calls its distinguished engineering students "Vulcans," ostensibly in honor of the Roman god of fire and blacksmithing. But the photographs themselves allude to far more disturbing rituals, namely the racist tradition of blackface in the form of a torchlight procession (Figure 16.2). There are no women or African-American members of the engineering society that we can see in the photographs, even though Michigan first admitted an African-American student in 1853. The yearbook caption tells us that the "blackened" men are chained together, in an evocation of a chain gang and the history of US slavery. Such blackface spectacle presupposes our recognition that these are white student bodies and that what we are seeing is thus a pernicious white fantasy of inhabiting, as an adventure, black subjugation.[13]

We might also briefly consider another initiation ritual in Michigan, this one created and performed by male athletes belonging to the so-called "Sphinx" honorary society. "Painted with red brick dust" (in the words of the yearbook),



Blackened figures and bright torches announce the coming of the Vulcans on tapping night.

VULCANS

Upholding the old tradition of the mythological god of fire, Vulcan, the initiation of the Vulcans takes place amid a mass of bright flaming torches. With blackened bodies, clammering chains and blazing torches, the new initiates, dubbed neophites, are led across campus and put through the traditional torturous ceremonies. Most famous among these is having the neophites go through the steam tunnels.

The members of Vulcans, the honorary society of the College of Engineering, are outstanding students academically and also participators in campus activities or athletics. The Vulcans take an active part in the functioning of the College of Engineering. They work hand in hand with the Engineering Council in the planning of the programs and in solving any problems that may arise.

Roger E. Barnes
Gerald W. Bergler
David Beste
Joseph V. Brisson
Kenneth A. Dec
George Fead
Barry N. Feinberg
Charles H. Gessner
John David Gillanders
John A. Goldsmith
Paul S. Herrick
Roger Jennings
Timothy Johnson
Gayle E. King
Frank H. Mabley
Ernest Meissner
Andrew Morrow
Otto Scherer
Louis Senunas
Kenneth D. Ware
Bryan R. R. Whipple
James P. Wyman

Vulcans prepare themselves for the procession to tap new members who, unaware of the evening's significance, believe they have a good night's sleep ahead of them instead of a sleepless one.

FIGURE 16.2 The initiation ritual of the 'Vulcans' engineering society, as featured in the 1961 *Michiganensian* yearbook (p. 396). The photograph provides a stark visual record of how racist campus traditions, such as the use of blackface in this torchlight procession, were normalized. (Courtesy of the Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan)

these students used ordinary bath towels and exaggerated gestures of supplication to transform the everyday library fountain into what they positioned as an exotic locale: the Nile River (Harvey, 1961, p. 398). The photographs tell us little about how the so-called "neophytes" experienced their participation in the springtime ritual (since they're blindfolded and face-down), but the spectators, we are told, "enjoy the happenings."

As we recall, Kaprow's *Night* featured student performers lighting matches, swinging flashlights, and painting their skin the primary colors red, blue, and yellow. By comparison with the Vulcan and Sphinx student rituals, in Kaprow's formalist imagination, it may be that the primary colors were more likely to readily index both modernist painting and athletic "school spirit" with the more overt racial coding of face painting alive only as a secondary association. But a primitivist replay of racial stereotypes was something that Kaprow also seemed to perceive as a risk inherent to *Night*. Though he told Kaufman that the performers should not look like "a spook," one should note that this word had a double-meaning in the early 1960s: while it had long functioned as a lighthearted synonym for "ghost," in the U.S. at midcentury, it also circulated as a derogatory term for African Americans" (Oxford English Dictionary, 2023). Kaprow similarly marked the anthropological primitivism of *Night* as a danger in another passage in his letter to Kaufman: "I don't think it'd be a good idea to have [students] conceive their role as a voodoo ritual. This is a cliché and is overdone in modern dance" (Kaprow, 1961, May 7). Here he describes his pedagogical strategy to Kaufman with precision: he wanted to walk right up to a stereotype, not to simply repeat it, but to evoke it in a way that disarmed it of its usual social value.

Thus, while Kaprow undoubtedly mined the primitivism of student ritual for its sense of danger and affective charge, his pedagogy sought to deflate its clichéd and socially harmful referentiality—substituting a puny match for an imposing flaming torch or lecturing about aesthetic form to the point where the aura of a regressive fantasy lost its magic. On this view, we might say that the student engineers' torchlight procession indexes a white supremacy that *Night*'s painted students could defamiliarize and render less semiotically effective. The happening fragmented, abstracted, and recombined racialized motifs from student initiation rituals into a concentrated 20-minute experience that was at once more alarming and more indeterminate. Any conclusions over what *Night*'s critique was—or if there even was one—remain open-ended.

In this way, Kaprow's experimental pedagogy marked its distance from the pedagogical efforts of the nascent New Left counterculture, whose famous manifesto, *The Port Huron Statement*, was first drafted by a University of

Michigan undergraduate, Tom Hayden, precisely around the time his peers were collaborating with Kaprow on campus (Students for a Democratic Society, 1964).[14] As *The Port Huron Statement* had it, indeterminacy was a generational *problem*—a new generation of aimless middle-class white students needed to become aware of their detachment from democratic participation. Hayden and his compatriots advocated for "the Southern struggle against racial bigotry" among other pressing social inequities (Students for a Democratic Society, 1964, p. 3). No praxis so concrete is suggested by Kaprow, who we know was sympathetic to the Civil Rights movement but not directly involved in protest actions.

Kaprow's philosophical commitment to pedagogy as a medium for happenings meant that student rituals were integral inspirations for his work; indeed, Kaprow regarded some student rituals and pranks as a kind of vernacular experimentalism. He liked that student participants might be semi-skilled, or need to be deskilled, or be partially aware of the possibility of the happening being an instance of the work of art. In this context, *Night*'s modernist primitivism was far from a simple idealization and decontextualization of an imagined past. Through its use of an exaggerated formalism, and its deletion of some of the more insidious symbolism of springtime campus rituals, the happening revealed current campus practices to have weight as ideological fantasies. Though Kaprow adamantly never sought to intervene in students' primitivist fantasies in a didactic way—say, by instructing them to stop reproducing harmful stereotypes—he nonetheless transformed their nascent experimentalism into an ambiguously critical pedagogy.

Acknowledgement

This chapter is adapted from Emily Ruth Capper, *Happening Pedagogy: Allan Kaprow's Experiments in Instruction*, forthcoming from The University of Chicago Press in 2026. © 2026 by The University of Chicago.

Notes

1 My description of *Night* draws on the numerous documentary photographs of students building the environment, as well as detailed instructions, diagrams, and a "synopsis" that Kaprow sent to Irving Kaufman, professor of art education at Michigan. Kaprow asked Kaufman to get the students started with the building a few days before Kaprow himself arrived on campus to take up this pedagogical role. See Kaprow, A. (1961, May 7). [Letter to

Irving Kaufman]. Allan Kaprow papers (Accession no. 980063, Box 6, Folder 8). The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, CA, United States.

2 For an insightful overview of the history and historiography of "primitivism" from the 1930s to the present, see Etherington and Spinner (2024).

3 Michael Leja has shown that Abstract Expressionist painters distanced their abstract canvases from what they denigrated as mere design by connecting their work to a carefully constructed canon of decontextualized "archaic" and "primitive" art. Leja (1993, p. 69).

4 Kaprow, A. (1955, March 10). [Letter to Mason Gross]. Office of the President (Mason W. Gross), Faculty Correspondence (Box 42, Folder 19). Rutgers University Libraries, Special Collections and University Archives, Rutgers, NJ, United States.

5 We know that Kaprow read the foundational texts of modern anthropology, including Boas (1955).

6 No official record of enrollment at the New School in this period has survived, but several interviews have established that Kaprow took the course multiple times between 1957 and 1959. See, for example, Jacobs (1999, p. 97). On Cage's pedagogy at the New School, see Capper (in press).

7 Kaprow criticized what he saw as "the bland, utopian ethics" of Bauhaus-derived visual education, which he claimed doubles as "group therapy" in a paper he delivered at Penn State University. See Kaprow, A. (1965). The creation of art and the creation of art education [Conference paper]. Allan Kaprow papers (Accession no. 980063, Box 47, Folder 3). The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, CA, United States. Perhaps inspired by Kaprow, Kaufman made a similar claim in *Art and Education in Contemporary Culture*, arguing that progressive art education must ask students "to face pain and frustration as well as joy and achievement," see Kaufman (1966, p. 77).

8 Kaprow, A. (1962). *Words* [Booklet]. Allan Kaprow papers (Accession no. 980063, Box 7, Folder 5). The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, CA, United States.

9 Schapiro first introduced a key term for his thinking about form in both medieval and modern art—"discoordination"—in his 1939 essay on the Romanesque abbey church of Souillac. A discoordinated composition sets up, or "implies," correspondences between "parts, relations, or properties" and then actively "negates" them. Upon closer and longer inspection, the first negation conceals or distracts from a whole set of subtler, even mysterious, correspondences within the composition. Schapiro (2006).

10 Carolee Schneemann has stated that what she remembered most about participating in Kaprow's happenings was the sense that something might fall, see Schneemann, C. (2008, December 7). [Discussion at the University of Chicago].

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13 For an overview of the history of blackface minstrelsy as "a practice at once potent and slippery," including within white fraternities, see Cole and Davis (2013), Johnson (2012).

14 As the Introductory Note indicates, the statement was first drafted by Tom Hayden in 1961 and collectively elaborated during the founding Convention of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), held in Port Huron, Michigan, June 11–15, 1962. SDS was a national organization of leftwing students active during the 1960s in the United States. For a classic history of the New Left, see Miller (1994).

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Structured, and Hierarchized Index

DOING ARTS THINKING: ARTS PRACTICE, RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

Toward a New Aesthetics

Institutional Criticism in Art Education from 1900 to Today

Sandra Neugärtner (Ed.)

Has art education lost its critical edge? Is art becoming just another form of intellectual labor? *Toward a New Aesthetics* argues that the increasing "scientification" of art is directly linked to a decline in institutional self-critique. This study offers the first comprehensive examination of institutional critique within art schools. Through contributions from leading art historians, critics, educators, and artists, readers will trace a century of critical engagement, from radical challenge and transformative beginnings to today's institutional affirmation. Exploring international case studies, the book reveals how the rise of artistic research has profoundly impacted art's critical potential within the global knowledge economy.

Sandra Neugärtner is an art historian specializing in the dynamic relationship between art and society. Building on her 2021 publication, *Statt Farbe: Licht* (Gebr. Mann), she is currently preparing a second monograph investigating the profound transformations in early 20th-century art production through the work of Léna Meyer-Bergner.

Cover illustration: "Allan Kaprow, Night, 1961. University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Irving Kaufman and students assemble the environment." Artwork © Allan Kaprow Estate

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