

(de)Fending Art Education Through the Pedagogical Turn

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Abstract

This article reviews the current state of higher education in light of the pedagogical turn in contemporary art. It starts with an overview of higher education and its current struggles, followed by an outline of some of the features of the pedagogical turn in art, which is both critical of institutionalism and symptomatic of the current state of higher education. These ideas are discussed within the context of an art education graduate seminar. Finally, the argument is made for possible critical practices that take place inside the institution and that are inspired by priorities inherent in education as art projects aligned with the pedagogical turn.

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In this article I lay out how engaging with the issues and practices of the pedagogical turn in art, a significant shift occurring in art practice in recent years, invited and echoed my re-practicing of current curricular, pedagogical, and structural aspects of art education at the postsecondary level. I begin with a survey of art projects using educational forms as a medium along with some examples, pulling particularly from the free university movement. Then I reconsider the educational turn from within the institution as an alternative to projects that have worked alongside higher education. This reconsideration leads to an exploration of possible ways we might rupture naturalizing discourses and practices in art education within academia.

Pedagogical Turn in Art

“The straitjacket of efficiency and conformity that accompanies authoritarian models of education seems to beg for playful, interrogative, and autonomous opposition. Art is just one way to release this grip” (Bishop, 2007, p. 89).

Knowledge production within higher education has been subsumed by the market ideals of neoliberalism, systematizing academic work into predictable outcomes that are comparable. Higher education has been undergoing an institutionalization (Aronowitz, 2000; Readings, 1996) that redefines our practices of teaching, organization of time and space, definitions and valuation of activity, assessment of learning, and accreditation of teachers. As Larrosa (2010) notes, “[w]hat we have is an attempt to make the logics of the internal performance of the university strictly function in accord with the economic logics of capital and the governmental logics of the state” (p. 693). These changes are in response to the forces, structures, and ideologies of our larger society.

What many are referring to as the *pedagogical turn* in art is symptomatic of these institutional struggles (Krauss, Pethick, & Vishmidt, 2010). In this current rendition, education as art is being re-practiced as a form of critique focused on the institutionalization of education within the knowledge economy. Perhaps it is possible, as artist educator Bert Stabler shares in a recent interview (Ngo, 2010), “[b]y remaining at the margins of culture, fine art has ... managed to open up possibilities that education has not” (p. 213).

The educational or pedagogical turn—a shift in artistic and curatorial practices—embraces a diverse range of projects using education as form and pedagogy as medium that reflects the current move away from media-based to distributive practices (Allen, 2011). This shift in focus takes education out of a supporting role or the position of afterthought as simply an addition to an existing exhibition structure, “towards a situation in which educational structure has been developed as a semi-autonomous project in its own right” (Gillick, 2010, p. 168). Moreover, these projects are not beholden to existing educational and institutional structures, freeing them up to experiment with education as alternative cultural practices. As such, pedagogical practices as art practice or artist-driven education projects embrace self-education as they concurrently confront interrelations among education, institution, power, and market capitalism.

Through dematerialized mediums such as talks, lectures, classes, discussions, knowledge exchanges, reading groups, schools, and so on (Podesva, 2007), educational projects act as

artwork. Further, knowledge production comes about through the project and does not exist *a priori*, so learning within open forums of idea exchanges occurs without a student or master, but through equality in roles. These projects focus on the processual and the open-ended in self-organizational education within a *pedagogical aesthetics* (Rogoff, 2008, n.p.). In surveying art projects using educational forms as medium, Podesva (2007) posits these shared concerns and characteristics:

1. A school structure that operates as a social medium.
2. A dependence on collaborative production.
3. A tendency toward process (versus object) based production.
4. An aleatory or open nature.
5. An ongoing and potentially endless temporality.
6. A free space for learning.
7. A post-hierarchical learning environment where there are no teachers, just co-participants.
8. A preference for exploratory, experimental, and multi-disciplinary approaches to knowledge production.
9. An awareness of the instrumentalization of the academy.
10. A virtual space for the communication and distribution of ideas. (n.p.)

Projects such as the *Copenhagen Free University* (2001-2007), *Playshop* (2004), *Momentary Academy* (2005), *School of Panamerican Unrest* (2006-2007), *The Paraeducation Department* (founded in 2004), *Manifesta 6*, *Documenta 12*, *A.C.A.D.E.M.Y* (2005-2006), *unitednationsplaza* (2006-2007), and the New Museum's *Night School* (2007-2008), among many others, present a variety of models of learning/education/pedagogy, most of which take institutional failures, including the bureaucratization and standardization of the knowledge-economy (such as the Bologna Accord reforms and standardization of European higher education emphasizing comparable outcomes across programs and national borders), as their starting points for a reinvention of the academy, pedagogy, and schooling. For example, Copenhagen Free University (CFU) opened in 2001 by Danish artists Henriette Heise and Jakob Jakobsen in their apartment. Howard Slater, in his 2002 *Communiqué* to the Copenhagen Free University (Berry, Heise, Jackobsen, & Slater, 2002), claimed education involves the reproduction of what are already known and conformist subjectivities, following syllabi that amount to manufacturing blueprints both students and educators labor to complete on time. Knowledge in education systems becomes bureaucratized, an object hardened into certainty, measurable, and alienated from volition, emotion, intuition, or corporeality. In contrast, the free university movement welcomes not-knowing, exposure to error, subverting the commercial value of knowledge, along with curriculum and syllabi-free gatherings. By using the name *university*, CFU positioned themselves "as antagonistic to the 'normalising academy' in enabling different forms of teaching and learning and knowledge production" (Lambert, 2011, p. 32). CFU relocated knowledge production from the institution and back into the everyday life of residential space, dissolving borders of the private and public (Podesva, 2007), making its walls porous because the walls of the normalizing academy are so impervious that you must "leave your desires with your coat in the cloakroom" (Berry, Heise, Jackobsen, & Slater, 2002, n.p.). In 2007, CFU closed and was then, rather ironically, outlawed in 2010 along with all other self-organized and free universities by the Danish Parliament so as not to "disappoint" students (Norman, 2001).

To explore the insights I've gleaned from these art projects as a university professor

“working within the often ‘impervious walls’ of the Un-Free University” (Lambert, 2011, p. 32), I share how (dis)organizing a course at the juncture of art and pedagogy may permit the generation of alternative ways of knowing as well as the critical interrogation of norms and sites within the university.

Ghosts in the Machine

As the free university phenomenon attests, education is currently a site of contestation on exhibit. Not only are artists “staging pedagogy as a visible encounter” (Verwoert, Scott, Elms, & Cahill, 2010, p. 182), but through exhibiting pedagogy, there may be a chance to reset the terms of formal education by leaving the academy’s door open to these pedagogical possibilities within the dust-bunny filled corners of unglamorous art education seminar rooms (Spivak as cited in Sternfeld, 2010).

I agree with Graham (2010) that the pedagogical turn is, more often than not, reliant on limited understandings of education that are elementary and populist with the educator cast as toiling public servant without agency bound by the regulations set by the state.

The implication here is that artists, curators, and arts intellectuals are in a better position to produce—or at least imagine—alternative models (academies, night school, art schools) than those encumbered by the daily practices and instrumentalised demands of education. The other line of thought suggests that the academy (the university, the art school and its expanded network of museum, gallery and corporate networks of “knowledge transfer”) is a space in which to resist the incorporation of art and creativity into the excessively technocratic exercises and forms of standardization that have become customary in higher education. (p. 126)

This view sets up a strong dichotomy between the educator as toiling public servant constrained by the state and the artist or curator as autonomous cultural producer with unique abilities to expose power, unburdened by the controls of neoliberal institutions, which I know is, in large measure, also a fallacy. Perpetuating this separation does not help the struggle, doing relatively little to speak back, change institutional structures, or create sustainable initiatives. These were concerns surfaced by directing the culture of accountability toward the pedagogical turn in asking (and borrowing Rogoff’s [2008] questions) if such a turn “can be seen as capable of resolving the urgencies that underwrote it in the first place?” (n.p.). Further, do these efforts address education “at precisely the points at which it urgently needs to be shaken up and made uncomfortable?” (n.p.). In order to consider these questions, Aguirre (2010) recommends a re-assessment of both educational art and education “focusing simultaneously on their convergences and differences. We cannot look solely to the current range of art-educational projects without analyzing and monitoring the educational system of art as a whole. To do so would be to risk remaining stuck in a self-absorbed conversation without exits” (p. 175).

While it might seem paradoxically both discouraging that we are under critique and at the same time comforting that artists are taking up our cause, Fraser (2005) claims it is no longer viable to take a position inside or outside of the institutions as we are all the institution whether we are taking action against the institution or maintaining the conditions for its continuation. We are the institutions of education and art as art educators in schools and universities. We need to take responsibility for our roles in creating and

perpetuating the conditions of the institutions we are complicit in, benefit from, and take action against through our compromises, self-censorship, critique, and the rewards we are driven by (Fraser, 2005). Ultimately, critique and subversion of educational structures need to occur from both the outside in and the inside out of the institution, for artists and educators alike are in a struggle to (re)activate the institution of education as a site of critique, a place worth protecting and subverting for this very reason.

So, how might we pursue such critical work within schools and universities? One possibility is inspired by Verwoert, Scott, Elms, and Cahill's (2010) contention that, "[t]here needs to be a ghost in the machine, a person who works inside an institution, against its standards, to make the conditions which the institution is supposedly for actually happen" (p. 184). It is likely that this is what art educators are already undertaking, individually or in small groups. While I would like to see forces of educators, curators, and artists across contexts combine more often for greater collective mobilization, I also believe art educators in higher education have a particular ethical obligation or pull. I think we need to consider how we might inspire future art educators and researchers to creatively respond to tightly governed curricula and regulated pedagogies in their current or future art classrooms and research sites.

Educational art projects such as free universities provide us with opportunities to examine the very structures of art education we are wrapped up in. Indeed, through these works we may undergo consciousness-raising and potential transformation of the varied contradictions in practice and contexts we encounter daily in higher education. The consideration of these artistic efforts might inspire us to view our institutional practices as performance texts, projects, installations, and interventions that might performatively undermine authority as institutionally constructed. Again, what moves might we make from the inside out and from the outside in?

Hauntings Practices within Ruinant Utopias

In the context of late capitalism any progressive pedagogy is now questionable as we are attempting to maneuver as an "act of realizing a certain practice is haunted by the impossible" (Sternfeld as cited in Krauss, Pethick, & Vishmidt, 2010, p. 256). This maneuvering as necessarily temporary and ephemeral cannot dismantle or resolve the unmalleable problems of education, but still might provide ways "to bear them and to act on the basis of them" (Krauss, Pethick, & Vishmidt, p. 256). Lambert (2011) claims to be seeking optimism within such pessimistic realms as higher education wherein utopia encompasses dissensus and ruin. I am partial to the phrase *ruinant utopias* (Lambert, p. 30) that are imbued with anxiety and contradiction, committed to endless questioning and critique that require the malaise of the contemporary condition for reconstruction.

Wild (2011) describes schools and art classroom spaces as possible Foucauldian *heterotopias* wherein culture is represented, contested, and reversed through allowing alternatives to be explored that may counter the normalizing effects of the school as *panopticon*. As educators we are under surveillance, just as we observe our students within our classrooms, and such ongoing scrutiny promotes conformity and curtails innovation. In contrast Wild in declaring the classroom to be a heterotopia, asserts, "teachers and students entering will not be disciplined, silenced and put under observation. Instead, worlds of difference will be opened up, resistance will be encouraged and individuals will be given voice" (p. 429). Borrowing from Bey's (1991) *The Temporary Autonomous Zone*, Wild

(2011) suggests we act as pirates in creating temporary heterotopian-spaces through interventions as a strategy to resist the powers and subvert the rules of the school without objectives or assessments or permission turning our classrooms into installations (see also Horn, 2006; 2008; 2009). These events wherein communities of practice come together and then disperse are “minor forms of resistance to the narrative that the panoptican imposes, though by themselves they may not change how learning takes place” (Wild, 2011, p. 429). In what follows, I will describe a few such minor forms of resistance that I experimented with in a graduate course titled *Trends in Art Education: Contemporary Art and Theory for Art Education* (hereafter, *Trends*).

Syllabus-as-Intervention

While the sharing of a syllabus at the start of a course and the setting of a curriculum is something the free university movement avoids on purpose, it is something most of us have to do in universities. I find the practice of syllabus creation—the naming of my priorities in advance of what might happen in any given course—always problematic and farcical. Yet, at the start of every course, the opportunity to critically analyze the ethical, pedagogical, and social ramifications of a given curriculum’s agenda also presents itself. These are difficult issues that could be shared with students in an effort to publicly breach the natural state of affairs within the audit culture that is higher education. The artifact of the syllabus can rupture the circle of power and powerlessness that is ubiquitous in education. We can mark and make visible how the syllabus announces inequality.

In this I am inspired by Sprague’s (2011) edited volume, *Imaginary Syllabi* and Bailey’s (2010) *Other Syllabus* that challenge pedagogical structures through the syllabus as imaginary, critique, and intervention, unsettling expected notions of education-as-usual within universities. Bailey considers Britzman’s (1991) call for vulnerability, ambiguity, and doubt in the performance of authority in education. Within her graduate seminars in feminist pedagogy, Bailey created two syllabi, one fulfilling the requirements of the university and the second unsettling the first. The second syllabus illustrates the taken-for-granted power and authority behind the structure of the first syllabus embedded within institutional contexts by asking explicitly: “What are the real objectives operating here?” (Bailey, p. 147), and also foregrounds doubt and ambiguity by exposing typically unspoken comments and queries associated with a syllabus and course schedule, in effect disrupting her own expectations, priorities, and authority.

In the graduate course *Trends*, I began with a regular syllabus and then attempted to make the familiar strange by peeling back the official curriculum with a supplemental syllabus titled *Dangerous Syllabus* that aimed to engage students in the study of the agendas shaping their educational experiences or *the hidden curriculum* (Giroux & Purpel, 1983) of the course. This provided a form of intervention or point of entry to interact directly with these hidden structures that perpetuate order and power relations within universities, but are not regularly brought up and engaged with critically as they are not articulated within the official curriculum.

In the *Dangerous Syllabus* I shared how the course was coveted among faculty in the following sentence:

Required course status ensures that the faculty member teaching this class will have a full course and won't be susceptible to having a course dropped at the last minute at the beginning of a semester due to low enrollment.

Under **Readings** I stated:

READINGS: You will be reading a lot in this course and it all may mean little to you until years, decades later, or it may never cross into your teaching of art but inform other areas of your life, or not. Additionally, you may sell your textbooks as early as week 13 when required reading stops.

Additionally, I inserted uninspiring statements such as "Did you know? I am supposed to know more than you?"

Under **Objectives**, I shared:

What This Class Won't Do:

This class will provide no easy answers
I will not tell you how to know.
It will likely raise more questions than it answers.
Ontological transformation isn't comfortable.

In explaining **Evaluation** I specified:

STUDENT EVALUATION: How your performance of learning will be commodified, measured, and compared as if this is all that matters.
Grades will measure your transformation or appearance of surface compliance within the limits of our course only, thereby ignoring and invalidating the learning that occurs outside these assignments or the length of our time together in this course.

Under **Assignments** I described the expectations for course readings:

ASSIGNMENTS:

Weekly Readings and In-Class Engagement: Engagement is rarely safe within social and institutional hierarchies of the graduate seminar. Instructor and students may disagree, stifle, and restrict the speech of others. Likewise, student expressions of transformation might sometimes be no more than an acquiescent façade. This surface compliance presents as engagement and productivity. It can be a mode of survival for disempowered or disgruntled students and faculty that wish to remain free from persecution and harassment. Silence or self-exclusion is also symptomatic of these issues.

Reading reflexively and practically still involves a self-editing in deciding how much to reveal and to whom as one assumes there is one right way to interpret, throwing this weekly requirement into crisis. Personal feelings are rarely shared until the teaching evaluations at the end of the course when I am assessed for how much knowledge I produce, how well I entertain you, and/or how I demonstrate surface compliance with you.

Finally, I clarified the preferred mode of address in the following:

When you email me I want to be addressed as “Dr.” because you are typically asking something of me and this reminds me of my power. In person, my first name is fine because I enjoy the illusion of cultivating friendships with my students—I like to pretend I am on equal footing with you, except in email. The schizophrenia that ensues is intentional.

The *Dangerous Syllabus* revealed the invisible institutional systems in place that we negotiate in the roles we take on as student and/or professor. We discussed the discomfort, humor, and astonishment at what was revealed as well as a general sense that we all already knew these unspoken rules and thoughts, but never talked about them, let alone with each other—professors and students. Students new to university teaching revealed how they are now on the other side of this as graduate teaching assistants and how easily they took on this whitewashing of reality through the creation of their own official syllabi in line with university rules. It implicated all of us in how we internalize, demonstrate surface compliance with, and attempt to resist these structures. As artist Annette Krauss reflected on her 2008 project with school youth titled *Hidden Curriculum*, “[a]uthority, dependency, pressure to perform, role models, and standardized thinking are taught and learned, without this necessarily being made explicit or noticed” (Krauss, Pethick, & Vishmidt, 2010, p. 253). But as den Heyer (2008) acknowledges, “[s]uch inquiry is, however, dangerous. It requires a shifting of the terms of engagement by both teachers and students and such shifts are personally challenging, professionally frowned upon, and systemically discouraged” (p. 254), especially given the current climate in higher education towards accountability and the façade of corporate rationales for education. *Dangerous teaching* (a play on Lacan’s notion of *dangerous knowledge*) then, according to den Heyer, “is premised on a belief that what is needed to deepen democratic inquiry is not more knowledge, but knowledge dangerous to that already present in curriculum” (p. 258).

“How can you bring a classroom to life as though it were an artwork?” (Félix Guattari as cited in Bishop, 2007, p. 86)

One feature of the course that occurs each week is an *arting event* requiring a student to lead the class through an art activity. In line with the participatory turn in contemporary art, the main stipulation for these interventions is that the students (through walking, dialoguing, role playing, collaborating, intervening, learning, etc.) are the medium for these ephemeral situations. While this is not the first time this sort of intervention has entered the walls of the university or schools (see for other examples Irwin & O’Donoghue, 2012; Krauss, Pethick, & Vishmidt, 2010; Springgay, 2011; Watson, 2012), for most of these students it was the first time they had conceived of art as a participatory or even relational practice that is at odds with more traditional perspectives of art as object and medium as paint or clay, for example. As such, I made the first move and offered up two arting events within the first series of class meetings, thereby setting the scene for the risk-taking that followed throughout the course. The first event was the sharing of the *Dangerous Syllabus*, and the second, a collaborative installation, is described below.

Room to Maneuver

Another aspect of the free university movement that stands in opposition to the normalizing academy is a permeability in relation to the merging of spaces, such as domestic and institutional, private and public, and how this facilitates the generation of alternative ways of knowing. A possible local example of this spatial merging has captivated me for some

time. The Free Museum of Dallas (www.freemusuemofdallas.com) was opened in 2010 within the office of Michael Corris, artist and Chair of the Division of Art at Meadows School of the Arts at Southern Methodist University in Dallas. As Corris shares,

The Office of the Chair is the site of administration, a place where permissions are granted or denied. It is a site of dialogue, of negotiation.... However, the Free Museum of Dallas is about denying the warrant that traditionally accrues to the Office of the Chair. It is the seat of administrative authority, but also something else. This something else is not just a supplemental field of practice over which the Office of the Chair holds dominion; rather, it is a counter-practice or counter-sociality that registers a kind of contempt for the entire notion of a seat of administrative authority. So, the Free Museum of Dallas aims to free the Office of the Chair from itself. This is not to say that the business of the Chair is necessarily prevented by the coincidence of the Free Museum of Dallas. But if something of the authority of the Office of the Chair is not changed in some way—that is, if something is not lost and gained at the same time—then the Free Museum of Dallas is nothing but a bit of decorative frippery. (Corris as cited in Ruud, 2010, n.p.)

Corris aims to turn the academy inside out by considering what art might be possible embedded in academia. As such The Free Museum of Dallas acts as a fly in the ointment as its location and existence as *free* oppose the politics and ideologies at play within educational environments that mirror the forces of society at large. This challenging of existing structures inspired me to offer up my office as an installation site for *arting events*, events in which I did not participate *in situ*, until I was invited back into my office by students for dialogue. I thought the space and my absence might expand the students' "room to manoeuvre" (Krauss, Pethick, & Vishmidt, 2010, p. 254) within the institutional setting.

The first *arting event* held in the space was facilitated by me during our third class meeting. After introducing relational aesthetics in the readings for that session, I asked students to spend some time in my office responding to the prompt "What types of relations are possible here?" by tagging the space in some way. After 30 minutes, I was invited in, and we all gathered in the space to debrief as a group. The floor entering my office was covered in bubble wrap so that anyone entering or passing by would be announced by the sound of popping bubbles. My books were all placed backwards, so when I looked at my library, all I saw were pages not the identifying spines of books. Under my nameplate, my academic accomplishments were listed as if to brag. And on it went. One tag on a sticky note left in the center of my desk asks, "Is this what you wanted?" which I carefully keep in place to this day. Like Watson's (2012) upside down classroom (and the interventionist tactics of the Situationist International of the 1950s and '60s before him), these *arting events* acted as creative disruption through transforming spaces of the institution in order to "disrupt the ritual of the everyday" (p. 33). In the case of my office, I (too) was left initially "slack jawed" (Watson, 2012, p. 33) at how it (and I) were disrupted from the "'habitual impulses' with which we understand and occupy educational spaces" (Lambert, 2011, p. 36).

My office briefly functioned as a minor heterotopia in that it allowed deviance and juxtaposed unrelated worlds while suspending routine (Wild, 2011). (Ironically, the second collaborative installation in the office weeks later attempted to create a utopian space out of excess that is still on display, months after the event, surrounding me, visitors, and my actions.) It acted as a site "of antagonism in relation to the dominant ideologies of the neo-

liberal institutions in which they are embedded: an antagonism which generates spaces of potentiality” (Lambert, 2011, p. 42). Situations of creative resistance within higher education may problematize the norms and structures we labor within, thereby opening them up to critical dialogues about the nature of these loaded spaces. They also allow us to amalgamate both an inside-outside positioning with our students in solidarity, if, in the case of my office, only after the fact.

Player’s Choice

In the artists of CFU’s contention to maintain “imaginative expectations of what people are going to experience here” (Berry, Heise, Jackobsen, & Slater, 2002, n.p.), the Free University claims perviousness in its welcoming and validation of participants’ desires and experiences in the creation of knowledge. This

stands in stark contrast to the pre-ordained modes of learning and knowledge inscribed in much of the curricula we frequently (are obliged to) “deliver,” complete with its pre-set learning outcomes and prescribed methods of assessment. In the “normalising academy” (and this also applies to schools, colleges and work-based learning) students are routinely characterized by ignorance and lack: both conditions of deficit which will, it is hoped, be redressed via educational provision. Indeed, this is not just a matter of individual teachers’ presumptions but it is the assumption around which the entire formal educational system is structured. Whilst powerful, this system is not, of course, monolithic. (Lambert, 2011, p. 32)

The assignment *Player’s Choice* is one I typically include in graduate seminars under different titles wherein students choose what aspects of a course’s topics they wish to investigate further based on their needs and experiences and in dialogue with me. While I like to delude myself that this assignment edges towards the (im)possibilities of self-education within the university, with students devising their own objectives and self-assessing their work, I still okay their projects and have the final say on their grades. Nevertheless, I’ve begun to also consider how my curriculum and this assignment present and create the conditions for a multitude of paths and openings toward meaning-making and inquiry not unlike contemporary examples of installation art requiring active spectatorship (Bishop, 2005; Reiss, 2001) as explored by O’Donoghue (2010). For example, within Reece Terris’ installation *Ought Apartment*, objects and spatial arrangements “required viewers to engage in a dynamic process of meaning-making that was contingent upon searching for and making connections between what is represented, what is suggested and what is imagined” (p. 409) that provided myriad openings for interpretation. While O’Donoghue considered how classrooms and classroom photographs as installations might be a productive framework for educational researchers, I have been inspired to consider a curriculum as an installation offering opportunities “to imagine it as a space of relations, as a place of encounter, as a place of exchange and interaction” (p. 411) requiring student participation to function and interrogate our complicity and compliance within objective-based schooling. Like classrooms, curricula are constructed with particular uses, experiences, and paths in mind. When the end points are not established in advance by the teacher-as-expert, the students are an integral part of the directions for the course as they set objectives of learning for themselves in reciprocal relations with classmates and professor. The curriculum becomes open to interpretive possibility and (re)connection beyond the professor’s imagination. Within the curriculum-as-installation, self-directed learning can become a medium (Irwin & O’Donoghue, 2012).

Changing Impossible Spaces

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (as cited in Sternfeld, 2010) advocates for the “unglamorous pedagogy of the seminar room,” one that although it is

[i]ndirect and maddeningly slow, forever running the risk of demagoguery and coercion mingled with the credulous vanity and class interest of teacher and student, it is still only institutionalized education in the human sciences that is a long-term and collective method for making people want to listen. (p. 8)

In a continual undoing of what we take for granted and think we know, art projects associated with the pedagogical turn in art offer alternatives to rethink and re-practice the public dimensions of art education from within institutions of higher learning. Even as we are swept up in an era of standardization, institutionalization, and instrumentalization, I believe we still need to insist on “education as an alternative practice, instead of a reinforcing practice, as a crucial basis from which to start” (Krauss, Pethick, & Vishmidt, 2010, p. 260). The pedagogical turn in art resonates deeply with this quest. In the preceding, I have called for us to make more visible what is assumed, but not spoken, practiced, but intangible, in an attempt to focus greater criticality on our contexts and ourselves within those contexts by exploring power and position. It is hoped that the sharing of my local practices on the micro level within the “impossible spaces” of the university (Larrosa, 2010, p. 698) might echo with others and be a faint response to Atkinson’s (2008) call for pedagogies that “become commensurate with difference and change and at the same time politically tough and astute enough to see through their inevitable limitations when the time comes” (p. 240).

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