

Art teachers, as artists themselves, are particularly well positioned to make creative use of obstacles and constraints in relation to their specific school environments.

Art Education as Potential Space: A Conversation About Navigating Divides in the Process of Becoming an Art Teacher

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The authors reflect on some challenges, opportunities, and lessons learned in the process of planning and implementing an artistic investigation of physical space in a public high school in Chicago. This article is the result of conversations between a student teacher and a preservice teacher educator working in collaboration. Our definition of 'divides' includes both the sense in which divides function as obstacles, barriers, and/or forms of constraint, and also productively as opportunities to navigate and work through tensions between opposites. Working with the psychoanalytic concept of potential space, we suggest how students, art teachers, and teacher educators might make use of the tensions in-between divides as a resource for our conversations, teaching experiments, and school-based art projects. The article combines theory and practice to propose a way of thinking about the subject of art teacher preparation, or the teacher candidate, as learning to navigate the divide between her fantasies of teaching, and the realities of classroom life.

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This is how space begins, with words only, signs traced on the blank page. To describe space: to name it, to trace it, like those portolano-makers who saturated the coastlines with the names of harbours, the names of capes, the name of inlets, until in the end the land was only separated from the sea by a continuous ribbon of text...Space as inventory, space as invention. (Perec, 1974, p. 13)

What might it look like to move into potential/transitional spaces as educators and hold school there? (Ellsworth, 2005, p. 62)

Jack Watson (2012), a high school art teacher working in Chapel Hill, NC, offers a curricular example of high school students using school space as a site for collaborative, interventionist art making. In his article "We Turned the World Upside Down," Watson describes what occurred in his classroom as he was teaching a unit on "the contemporary practice of interventionist artists who seek to creatively transform spaces and disrupt the ritual of the everyday" (p. 33). As Watson was beginning to explore this kind of art making as a topic of discussion with his students, he was surprised to enter his classroom one morning to find that everything in the room—from the posters on the walls to the letters written on the blackboard—had been turned upside down. Watson recognized immediately that this was an artwork produced by his students; he goes on to describe how using school space as a point of inquiry enabled his students to make an immediate personal connection to the content of the project. As Watson (2012) points out, the project also opened an opportunity for students to engage in critical thinking:

Strategies for artmaking that are active and socially engaged enable students to make use of the methods of communication that they already possess but [may] feel disempowered to use. Some students suggested, for example, that public space is an illusion—the high traffic, open spaces of their everyday lives may be publicly accessible, but they are not democratically governed. (p. 34)

Interventionist art making provided a conceptual framework where Watson's students could, according to Pinder, "democratize and further problematize the norms and structures of public spaces, opening them up to critical dialogues about the nature of space as well as the nature of art itself" (as cited in Watson, p. 34). Moreover, the students' intervention played with the space in-between a series of divides: active and passive; classroom and art gallery; observer and participant; and student and teacher.

In our roles as Associate Professor of Art Education and Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) candidate in the Art Education Department at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC), together we had the opportunity to investigate these in-between spaces, both physical and conceptual, during the spring semester of 2015. Over a period of fifteen weeks, our conversation about divides moved among the topics of contemporary art practice, lesson planning, and the challenges embedded in the experience of learning to teach in a magnet arts program populated by students with strong artist identities, but situated within a highly regulated Chicago public high school. A high school lesson plan on 'spatial interruptions' was inspired by Gordon Matta-Clark's *Splitting* (1974), in which a critical commentary on private property, postwar family values, and the American dream emerges from the artist's process of physically splitting an abandoned house in two (Racz, 2015); and by Doris Salcedo's (2007) installation, *Shibboleth*, where a crack in the floor of the Tate Modern evoked themes of immigration, border crossing, and displacement (Henley, 2007). In each of these works, a physical divide or rupture of continuity opens a space for deep reflection and learning about issues of local and global consequence. Moreover, these works have in common a concern with divides as a meeting place between material structures and realities, and psychical processes such as memory, imagination, and emotional response.

In this article, we reflect on some challenges, opportunities, and lessons learned in the process of planning and implementing an artistic investigation of physical space in a public high school in Chicago. The article represents a conversation between the

two authors from our perspectives as student teacher (Miriam) and preservice teacher educator (Karyn) working in collaboration. Our definition of *divides* includes the sense in which divides function as obstacles, barriers, and/or forms of constraint, and also productively as opportunities to playfully navigate and work through tensions between opposites. Patton (2010) emphasizes how “restrictions open up the possibilities for chance and change” (p. 50). While Patton is talking about the practical and systematic uses of obstructions to build productive challenges into art education projects, in the process of making sense of Miriam’s experience of becoming an art teacher, we struggled to understand the unanticipated encounter with obstacles as an opportunity for development and growth. Making sense of Miriam’s experience of learning to teach required us to reconcile a series of subjective divides between: the past of learning and the present of teaching; the comfortable and familiar with what felt unfamiliar or strange; the possible with what seemed impossible; and the hard knocks of reality with our capacity to imagine alternatives (Britzman & Pitt, 1996; Greene, 1995). How, we wonder, might teachers make use of these tensions as a resource for our teaching experiments and school-based art projects? And, how do art teachers locate potential spaces for teaching and learning within the regulated spaces and constraints of working in public schools?

Art Education as Potential Space

Students who are learning to become art teachers bring enthusiasm and creativity to their plans for their future students, along with a desire to experiment with contemporary art practices and methods. A tension arises when lesson plans and projects that contain conceptual and/or participatory elements push the boundaries of what is expected or considered acceptable within the culture of public schools. This type of project often requires a process of communication and negotiation with the host teacher and possibly the school administration. While this process can become frustrating for the student teacher, who may be asked to re-think and modify lesson plans, it can also offer valuable lessons in compromise, specifically in understanding what it means to bring flexibility to

one’s vision of oneself as a teacher while also holding onto something of the initial idea for the project. At the same time, the process of becoming a teacher is freighted with the pressure beginning teachers feel to demonstrate their knowledge of the subject matter, engage their students’ interests, and meet the objectives of a lesson plan. In the process of becoming an art teacher, unanticipated obstacles are not uncommon, although they can easily come to feel insurmountable: a lesson plan appears ruined, a project no longer feasible. Student teachers may feel the impulse to “throw the baby out with the bathwater” and start all over again.

Contemporary art educators have taken an interest in the potential for growth and learning contained within the encounter with obstacles (Patton, 2010, 2014; Siegesmund, 2013; Van Moer, De Mette, & Elias, 2008). Patton (2010), for example, explores the sense of play and potential within “using obstruction-based methods for teaching and discovery” (p. 51) in the art classroom. He points out that one typical use of obstructions in art education involves the teaching of technical skill activities, such as the use of the non-dominant hand in drawing. Drawing upon the pedagogical methods of digital game play, wherein the player learns to navigate a series of obstacles within the game, Patton (2010) argues that obstructions, when introduced into the structure of an assignment, can give students something to work within and against. “Through obstructions,” Patton writes, “students developing artwork can limit their focus without restraining their possibilities” (p. 51). This sense of “freedom within restrictions” offers students ways to think about how systems operate, and how to navigate within them.

It is through this process of making that students learn the nuances of the ‘problem’ they are solving. The assessment of the making process can include the history of the student’s idea, the limitations of materials, and complications of making. (Patton, 2010, p. 52)

While Patton is interested in the playful and critical experience of engagement that can come from the

encounter with obstacles built into a game or project, a psychoanalytic orientation positions obstacles as existing both within the outside social world, and within the inside world of subjective experience. This interaction between inside and outside brings us to the unanticipated obstacle, or the ways in which obstacles come to be felt as welcome or surprising, surmountable or insurmountable. Adam Phillips's (1993) book of psychoanalytic essays on obstacles invites us to consider the potential within obstacles and constraints from the inside out. Phillips defines the obstacle as a reflection of what it comes between. An obstacle sheds light on our "fantasies of continuity" (p. 80) and "conceal[s] . . . the unconscious desire" (p. 81), while also revealing it. Phillips (1993) writes "Tell me what your obstacles are . . . and I will tell you what you desire" (p. 82).

Art teacher preparation is a place to consider the "fantasies of continuity" that students bring to their experiences of learning to teach; for example, the student might feel motivated by her wish to become the favorite art teacher she had in high school or by her desire to help unmotivated students realize their artistic potential. Fantasies of continuity also make the student teacher vulnerable to the unique challenges she will encounter in a new classroom, and they may raise unsettling questions: What if things do not go as planned? What if I don't know everything I need to know? These questions speak to the pressure beginning teachers feel to demonstrate mastery, even as they encounter and work through obstacles and constraints in classrooms and schools. Our interest, in this article, has to do with working in the space in-between the student's fantasy of teaching and the realities of classroom life. We ask, how do obstacles encountered on the path of becoming a teacher create potential spaces for growth and learning?

D. W. Winnicott (1971), a mid- twentieth century English psychoanalyst and pediatrician who was renowned for his work in child psychology, used the term *potential space* (p. 41) to describe the transitional space of development that exists between the mother and the baby, between subjectivity and objectivity or, "between me-extensions and the not me" (p. 100). Winnicott defined potential space as the space

between the inner and outer world, and also as the moment within development when the baby begins to understand oneself as its own autonomous subject. According to Winnicott, this space is constituted by "the interplay between there being nothing but me and there being objects and phenomena outside omnipotent control" (p. 100). Winnicott describes this space as playful and where cultural experience takes place; it is the basis for creativity in both art and life.

For Winnicott, there is more to creativity than the production of a tangible artistic product. He links the capacity to participate in cultural experience to aggression, specifically to the subject's process of learning to destroy the internal obstacles that interfere with development and growth. Winnicott (1971) write that the process of working out "the interplay between originality and the acceptance of tradition as the basis for inventiveness" (p. 99) is but one example of how artists make productive use of potential space. Just as artists define their own unique contribution on the basis of tradition (previously established techniques, practices, and so forth), students who are learning to become art teachers are asked to plan lessons and projects on the basis of best practices and professional standards. And yet, there is more to lesson planning than learning to follow a set of instructions verbatim. Finding the potential in a lesson plan or project involves negotiating one's ideas in relation to what is possible and permissible in any given school, and perhaps also managing to push the boundaries of what is possible or permissible a little bit along the way. Often the most enlivening projects are those that engage student teachers in a process of encountering obstacles and working out strategies, not simply to navigate around the obstacle, but to incorporate it. Planning and implementing lessons and projects thus becomes a process of working through what may and may not happen when teachers, students, ideas, and artmaking come together in schools.

We can compare the everyday processes of negotiation that occur in the art classroom to Winnicott's (1971) transitional space, an area he saw as crucial both for development and learning. Transitional space is a kind of potential area of experiencing the world for individuals involved in the perpetual human task

of maintaining an inner life, while having one foot firmly planted in reality. The objects and experiences of transitional space are neither under magical control like an internal object, nor are they outside the infant's control, as the mother often is. Adam Phillips (1988), describes the elements of play and flexibility characteristic of the transitional space:

Children's play was not only the child's more or less disguised representation of a craving for the object, but the child's finding and becoming self. The transitional space in which the child plays, or the adult talks, is, in Winnicott's view, an intermediate area of *experiencing* to which inner reality and external life both contribute, and it exists as a resting place for the individual engaged in the perpetual task of keeping inner and outer reality separate yet inter-related. (p. 119)

The concept of transitional space offers a useful analogy for thinking about the qualities of experience characteristic of learning to become an art teacher. The process of learning to teach operates within a potential area of experience, where internal and external obstacles are encountered, and where the beginning teacher's identity and capacity for flexibility are navigated. This might appear in a student teacher's developing capacity to retain what is useful and workable from a lesson plan or project idea, while at the same time learning to re-create the plan in relation to external obstacles and constraints. Returning to Patton (2010), the encounter with obstacles might position the teacher to recognize the need for students to create their own meanings, rather than recreating the teacher's meaning (p. 53).

Transitional space, as educational theorist Elizabeth Ellsworth (2005) points out, is an area of negotiation that draws upon both past and present understandings:

It is the transition of reacting to the outside world in habitual ways, based only on past experiences, traumas, fears, or senses of who we are and what we want—to responding to the oldness and newness of the outside world, contemporaneously, in

the here and now.

Winnicott's transitional space is what makes possible the difficult transition from a state of habitual ("natural feeling") compliance with the outside world, with its expectations, traditions, structures, and knowledges, to a state of creatively putting those expectations, traditions, and structures to new uses. (p. 30)

Ellsworth (2005) raises the pedagogical paradox at the heart of Winnicott's (1971) formulation of transitional space: transitional experiences are the foundation of our most enlivened and enlivening experiences of learning, but the nature of transitional experience is such that it cannot be easily described, planned for, or intentionally provoked (p. 60). This is because transitional experiences, when they are felt to occur, are experienced as a convergence of multiple events, sensations, and actions across time and space. Student teachers cannot know in advance how their ideas and desires for their lesson plans and projects will be shaped by the experience of having once been a student themselves. Yet, they can learn to see these experiences as informing—without determining—the possibilities for the teachers they are becoming.

Ultimately, according to Winnicott (1971), the task of parents and teachers is disillusionment, and the child's developmental task is that of reality acceptance, although each of these tasks is ongoing. The student teacher may need to experience a degree of frustration and disillusionment in the process of planning her curriculum in order to engage in the kind of play that belongs to transitional space. Teacher educators and mentors who supervise this process will need to listen carefully to the student teacher's project and lesson plan ideas, and introduce the question of school-based pressures and demands, without encouraging excessive compliance. This is a delicate process, because compliance with external demands means the student teacher's imaginings—the source of so much creative potential—have been interfered with before they are able to have them. For preservice teacher educators, there can be a potential space of curiosity about how student teachers will encounter and make use of their own obstacles, rather than

removing those obstacles or reducing their efforts to a set of instructions to follow.

In the next section, Miriam reflects on some of the obstacles that structured her experience of learning to become an art teacher, and what she was able to make of the encounter with obstacles. Throughout the Spring semester of 2015, Miriam and I met weekly to discuss her lesson plans and experiences in her high school teaching placement. With memories of her own high school art education in mind, Miriam had designed a project in which students would participate in an investigation of school space. The idea was for students to wander the hallways, stairwells, and corridors of their school, documenting and thinking about how they might artistically interrupt the rules, both official and hidden, that govern the uses of space. My role as Miriam's faculty supervisor was to offer feedback on lesson plans, act as a "sounding board" of sorts when problems arose, and to support Miriam in her process of making connections between her day-to-day experience in the school and her developing understanding of herself as a teacher. On several occasions, I visited Miriam in her classroom for observations.

Spatial Investigations: Obstacles and Openings Miriam's Story

The first time I (Miriam) entered the school where I would complete my student teaching, and walked the three flights of stairs up to my host teacher's classroom, I noticed that the stairs had the same tile pattern as the stairs in my high school and the vents in the corners had the same metal grates. The space felt simultaneously familiar and unfamiliar. It was as if the memories of my high school experience were embedded in the physical spaces I was moving through. At the same time, I was aware of how different it felt to go back to high school in my new role as a student teacher.

In the magnet high school that I attended, my art teacher encouraged, supported, and facilitated experiences in which students used the school as a container for our own art making practices. He did this by using the classroom as a studio for his own art making, while also encouraging students to manipulate the space in ways that served our own creative purposes. One year,

a student used a refrigerator box to create a private studio space in the back of the classroom; this space was handed down year after year to students working on independent projects. We were also encouraged to think of the entire school as a home for our individual and collaborative art making. Our creative practices included art works, but also our experiments in artfully inhabiting school space. This experience fostered a rich art making community within the school, and also supported my developing identity as an artist.

During my student teaching semester, with my high school art making experience in mind, I was excited to imagine ways in which physical space could be used productively to deepen, facilitate, and create conditions for student learning and art making. In her project *Hidden Curriculum*, Annette Krauss (2008), a visual artist working in the classroom, created a series of workshops that allowed students at two schools in Utrecht to investigate the hidden curriculum within the culture of their high schools. Krauss defines hidden curriculum as "the unintended or unrecognized forms of knowledge, values and beliefs that are part of learning processes and daily life within high schools" (p. 5). These workshops encouraged students to analyze, name, and share through investigative and performative interventions the ways in which structures of power within the school, as well as the structures that exist in public space in general, can be identified, negotiated, and interrupted. Krauss hoped to highlight with students how the norms and structures of a space shape the ways in which people operate within it. Krauss explains the conditions of possibility for doing this project in a school context:

Scrutinizing remote or hidden learning processes as well as unregulated spaces in everyday situations was a way of putting forward these investigations in the specificity of the school, with its highly coded environments and implicit habituations. I approached this by trying to dislocate or put aside certain dominant structures, such as notions of 'good' and 'bad,' and to create specific situations that could generate other narratives. This was in order to give the pupils a starting point for relating to school in another way, and to share moments

that could lead to different approaches that would be initiated by the students themselves. (p. 31)

Krauss's focus on developing alternative, student-generated narratives of school space served as a curricular example and guide for my project. Moving beyond the dominant narrative structures of "good and bad," "permissible and prohibited," and "classroom and school," became the primary focus of the experience I was hoping to create for my students.

In the project I taught, "In Need of Interruption: Visualizing Collage Interventions in School Space," students began by identifying the regulatory structures of school space as the basis for creating visual interruptions, which they would use to generate alternative narratives of the space. We used a floor plan of the school to identify specific spaces, and the rules that govern them, and we discussed the ways in which students navigate and get around the rules. Students carried out a photo investigation of unused/ forgotten corners of the school that they claimed as potential spaces for their own creative practices as artists and students. Students then created collage material and used it to introduce visual interruptions within the photographs. For examples of the techniques of adding material and subtracting material in the process of creating visual interruptions, we looked

at contemporary collage and installation artists such as Arturo Herrera, Amanda Williams' (2015) *Color(ed) Theory Series*, and Jonathan Safran Foer's (2010) artist book *Tree of Codes*. Students also developed their own set of diverse strategies for creating interruptions within their photographs.

Marshall and D'Adamo (2011), describe arts based research as

distinctive in its lacing together of creation and critique, and in its explicit correlation of art practice with research structures and methods...it changes how students see themselves as researchers who constantly follow a research path of their own making to construct new meanings, new insights, and new knowledge. (p. 14)

As students participated in the project as arts based researchers, it was my hope that the project would give them an opportunity to create new and altered versions of the everyday space of their school. I envisioned collage as a tool for students to simultaneously re-create and critique the physical spaces they inhabit, leading to visual interventions that would suggest previously unarticulated meanings, insights, and knowledge.

In asking students to investigate school space independently and outside of the way they typically inhabit the school, I found myself stumbling upon various obstacles that prevented me from approaching this project as I had originally imagined. For example, when I described my proposed project to my host teacher, she explained the constraints that we would be working with in this school: the doors to the student restrooms were kept locked, students were not permitted to use cell



Figure 1. A student working with collaged visual interruptions. Artwork by Mariah Munoz.

phones and cameras, and students were not permitted to linger in hallways outside of passing periods and fifteen minutes at the end of the day. Under no circumstances were students allowed to wander the hallways at any time. I was unsure, initially, if students would be allowed to leave the classroom at all. In addition, student artwork was rarely found outside of specifically reserved gallery space. I quickly realized that not only would these rules force a shift in how I would have to teach this project, but that the rules

were also shedding light on some larger challenges to the way I had imagined myself existing within school space as a teacher.

A conflict emerged between what I had imagined to be possible within this project and the reality of working in this particular school space. Initially, I saw this conflict as a significant obstacle in the way of what I was hoping to accomplish. As my host teacher and I discussed this challenge, I began to realize that in order to create the conditions for the kind of investigations that I was hoping students would participate in, I would have to find a way to navigate the obstacle presented by school rules without putting my students, myself, and my host teacher in a compromising position of violating these rules. This felt like a potentially insurmountable constraint. While I hoped for a rescue from my host teacher as someone experienced with negotiating the rules and regulations of this particular school, she intentionally left it to me find a solution that would help me both to identify opportunities for flexibility within the rules and satisfy the goals of my project.

I found myself in a situation where I was trying to think in-between what I had imagined my project

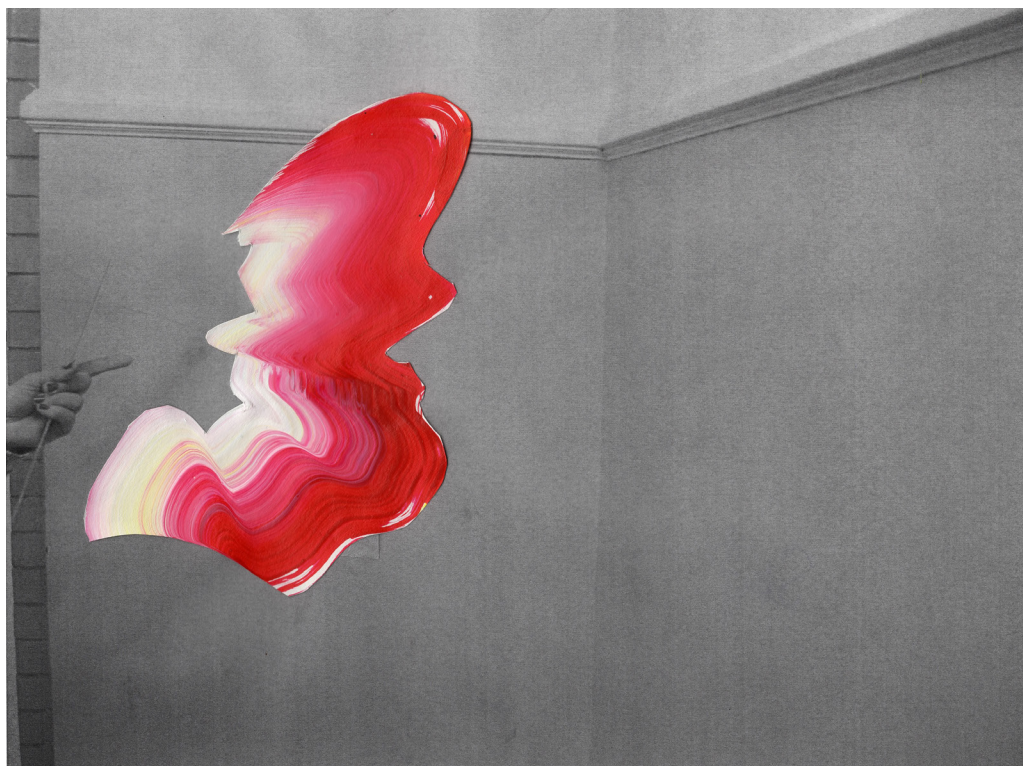


Figure 2. Example of student artwork by Sky Bernard.

would look like and what was actually going to be possible. While navigating this situation was extremely frustrating for me at the time, I can now appreciate the push I received towards “finding the potential” in a difficult situation. The solution involved some coordination and collaboration between myself, my host teacher, the students, and another teacher in the department, who very generously watched the class during her prep period. My host teacher and I accompanied small groups of students on a walk through the school as they installed their artwork from the first project and simultaneously took twenty photographs to use as a basis for the next. This was far from the leisurely, independent investigation of school space that I had originally imagined. I found myself apologizing profusely to the students and thanking them for putting up with such a chaotic moment.

Even as we were moving forward with the research, our hurried walk through the school made the project feel like a failure. While initially my focus was turned towards figuring a way out of this failed experiment, I slowly began to realize that the students and I were managing to make something in the



Figure 3. Example of student artwork by Mariah Munoz.

space in-between everything going as I had originally planned, and the conditions that were shaping what was actually possible for my lesson plan.

We were finding and working out a new relationship to spaces around and in-between the obstacles and constraints set before us. As I began to notice students using the photographs they had taken that day to create collage interruptions within the images, I also noticed that, in an important sense, their work processes were coming from an in-between space.

Patton (2010) argues that “students’ critical thinking emerges when they must focus on the limitations of the process” (p. 54). While I had presented students with constraints and techniques to help them work through the prompt of visually interrupting an image, I found that they were working far beyond the techniques and examples that I originally provided. Just as we had done in the hallways and corridors of the school, in their photographs of these spaces, students were working from the front, underneath, and through the images, constantly innovating new ways of interrupting that I had not previously envisioned. At this stage of the project, the students and I were stumbling on new potentials by working in response to limitations, both in the parameters of the project, and the parameters of the space.

This realization helped me to see my experience of learning to teach as operating from a potential space. This was a space of negotiation between what I had imagined teaching to be and the challenges of navigating the structures of power that govern educational spaces. As a high school student, my experience of learning was shaped by a flexible and playful space that my art teacher helped to facilitate. This space had a significant impact on my learning and the development of my artistic identity. As I tried to bring this experience to my student teaching, I was confronted with new responsibilities in the role of the teacher that I never previously understood. I had to learn to acknowledge the challenges and constraints of my own curriculum, while continuing to imagine its potential. In learning to navigate school space with my students, playfully and with flexibility, I found that my identity was evolving from student to teacher within this dynamic, in-between space. The generative pivots students made in relation to the constraints at hand led to new possibilities for imagining and implementing the project, and also to creative developments that I never could have anticipated.

While our process of working within a set of constraints felt like a chaotic experience, it provided each student with the material for the next step of the project. The photographs were for the most part shot on the fly (a direct result of my instruction to snap twenty photographs in five minutes), and this hastiness found

its way into the artwork. For example, in *Figure 2*, my hand appears, pointing towards a corner, probably in the effort to direct a student's attention. Despite our intention to focus on space alone, due to the rushed nature of the day and the mixture of exploring, teaching, and documenting that took place as we worked, limbs and people appeared in the photographs. Ultimately, this made the artwork more interesting and more meaningful because it represented something of our shared experience. My understanding of what can occur when students are invited to "interrupt" dominant narratives of school space was growing beyond seeing school as a space solely represented by flexibility and play, to also seeing the obstacles and constraints that must be negotiated and incorporated in the process of working with school space.

As this realization was coming into focus for me, I was also able to recognize some general themes in my analysis of student artworks. The first theme concerned students using the space depicted in their photograph as material for a completely abstract image. In *Figure 3*, the student used interruptions to transform the space into abstract shapes and lines while the source of the image, a stairwell, is not immediately clear. The second theme focused on the nature of the spaces that students chose to photograph. While some students photographed spaces where they were not generally allowed to be, others placed themselves in relation to rules or structures. In *Figure 4*, a student looks into a restricted storage room filled with boxes.

The adult, the figure of authority, is blocked by a pile of boxes and cannot see the student behind the camera. This interruption both recognizes and plays

with the rules and regulations that govern the space. Lastly, in *Figure 5*, the student photographs a close-up of a gate, also highlighting the structures that prevent students from moving freely through the school. The emergence of these themes showed the variety of ways in which students incorporated and reflected on their own experience of obstacles in school space.

During our final critique, as I listened to the students talk about their experiences of the project, I learned a great deal about how they created meaning out of the process of pivoting around the obstacles we



Figure 4. Example of student artwork by Adrianna Morales.

encountered in our investigation of school space. As a result of working in relation to constraints, students were able to imagine themselves *within* the surreal visualizations of the school they had created, and this was powerful for them. The students could place themselves inside of their work because the constraints of reality were represented in dynamic relation with an imagined world that they had created.

Conclusion

A fifteen-week conversation about Miriam's experience of navigating obstacles and constraints within



Figure 5. Student artwork by Genevieve Glueckert.

this specific project pushed us to think collaboratively about how obstacles encountered in the process of learning to become an art teacher can be a resource for student teachers' development and growth. Student teachers may bring an ambitious, idealized sense of what is possible to the less than ideal conditions of the classroom. One specific challenge, both for student teachers and for those who mentor them, is to resist the impulse to think in divisive terms about projects and lesson plans as being either possible or impossible, exciting or disappointing, successful or unsuccessful. Learning to become an art teacher involves learning to work within the potential spaces that emerge when our lesson plans and project ideas comply with the rules and cultures of specific schools, and also take on a life of their own.

Ellsworth (2005) asks, "What might it look like to move into potential/transitional spaces as educators

and hold school there?" (p. 62). Ellsworth's question can be addressed by the various ways that potential space found its way into this project: within the subject and prompt of the lesson plans; within the student work; and within one student teacher's process of finding the space of potential in relation to obstacles and constraints. Moreover, we see Ellsworth's question as potentially useful in thinking through what this project might offer other students, art teachers and teacher educators. In our view, the art classroom is a particularly rich place to engage and work through the inner and outer dialogues that constitute potential spaces of learning. Teachers, in anticipating the many obstacles they face in their day-to-day work, might be reluctant to undertake a project that brings them to an uncomfortable place of having to challenge or circumvent structures of power within school spaces. Yet, through this project, we have come to see working from obstacles and constraints as part of the ongoing, creative labor of enlivening school-based art education. Art teachers, as artists themselves, are particularly well positioned to make creative use of obstacles and constraints in relation to their specific school environments.

The process of planning and implementing a spatial investigation within one high school can be applied to a broader conversation about art education and teaching. While arts integration, media literacy, design education, and STEM to STEAM represent ongoing efforts to bridge disciplinary divides, in the context of shrinking resources for public education and the arts, art education itself becomes a potential space of advocacy and struggle. As we reflect on the different kinds of obstacles that teachers and students encounter in different school environments, we realize that we are drawn to the complicated version of the story as opposed to the linear, "all problems have been anticipated and all objectives have been met" version. Becoming an art teacher means finding new ways to demonstrate the relevance of art education from the potential spaces of the classroom every day.

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