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What Schools Can Offer Art: Towards an Avant-Gardist Conception of Gallery Education

The article proposes a more central and critical function for gallery education. It argues that challenging gallery education’s marginalization, low status and reactive role within the art institution could lead to a transformation in the field of art more generally. Rejecting a one-direction model for bringing contemporary art to school students and teachers, the article considers the ways in which the encounter between art and compulsory-level education can have positive effects not only on school education but on art itself, particularly as it opens art to the possibilities of a less hierarchical and more socially critical purpose. From a radical perspective, an avant-gardist conception of art is shown to make common cause with critical pedagogy in a project of collective emancipation. Gallery education is proposed as a potentially avant-gardist practice, conceived in terms of 1) art’s becoming social; 2) bringing about the new; and 3) transforming the field of art. These three conditions are tested through an exploration of current debates and practices in art, art teaching and gallery education.

Keywords: Gallery education, avant-garde, art in schools, critical pedagogy, contemporary art, artist educator, artist teacher, symbolic capital, recognition, status, autonomy

Introduction

What benefits can art bring to schools? This is a familiar question, asked both in relation to what is taught in schools and with respect to the role public galleries can play through their education programmes. It is particularly urgent today when we are witnessing the diminishment and withdrawal of art provision in schools as a direct consequence of government education policies – what amounts to an assault on the principle of equitable provision. There is no doubt right now that art in schools needs defending. Nonetheless, against the prevailing tendency that focuses primarily on the benefits that art, and in particular ‘contemporary art’, can bring to schools, I want to open up the question of gallery education by considering instead what schools can offer art. How might it be that the encounter between art and compulsory education that occurs via museums and public galleries, as well as other initiatives, not only influences what occurs in school, but affects the values and functions of art itself?

In looking at the relation from this perspective I hope to avoid an approach which takes art as a known quantity – a thing that is ‘recognized’ and, as such, can be ‘delivered’ to schools, students and teachers, or else responded to according to standard protocols by ‘artist educators’ in the
gallery setting. Instead, I want to explore gallery education’s ability to pose art as a question and a possibility: what are the competing value systems of art? Who has access to artistic resources? Does art have a socially transformative potential? From this standpoint, gallery education will be viewed in terms of production, rather than merely in terms of interpretation; it will be seen in relation to the broad functions of contemporary art museums and public galleries – which conversely can be understood as transcending a primary exhibitionary function; and it will be seen in relation to the wider art world – considered as a set of relations organized through practices and institutions that are open to scrutiny and change rather than being the neutral backdrop of art-related activities.

In order to locate clearly the ways in which schools can affect art more broadly, I will adopt a structural approach that sees the art world as a relational field with various agents – such as artists and gallery curators – occupying various positions therein, and whose visibility is an effect of recognition – that is to say, of symbolic validation. According to Pierre Bourdieu’s sociological schema, what accounts for value in an artwork is not any innate quality but the extent to which it has been ‘consecrated’ by an agent, such as a museum, gallery or art magazine, with sufficient ‘prestige’ or ‘authority’ – a sufficient accumulation of symbolic capital – to invest in the given work, and by extension to ‘recognize’ the author of the work. The accumulation of symbolic capital might be a result of ambition to succeed within the system, and having the tactical skills to do so, and is likely to be an effect of wealth, family connections and class dispositions such as know-how, confidence and a sense of entitlement. Symbolic capital might occasionally accrue to more subversive activities, or else knowledge of how such capital operates can be the instigation for attacks on the hierarchies and divisions that enable it to function, or the impetus for alternative models of artistic value. Whatever its limitations, Bourdieu’s image of art world hierarchies dominated by unfree competitive accumulation stands as a corrective to humanist ideologies of art as a universal good. Such notions can often underlie gallery education rhetoric, with schools receiving the gift of art, thus reflecting art’s goodness back on itself in the forms of generosity and responsibility, and thus reinforcing rather than contesting dominant structures. My intention in this article is to show how gallery education in fact presents a possibility for exposing and challenging the hierarchies, exclusions and competitive practices identified by Bourdieu.

Rather than starting from the standpoint of what distinguishes art and education, and therefore how one can fill the lack in the other, we should begin instead with what they hold in common, as measured from the standpoint of equality and social justice – that is, according to a shared emancipatory project. Far from each being a homogeneous field of practice, both art and education are open to internal disputation and difference. For example, the radical discourses and practices of the 1960s and 70s in the UK around schooling, which built upon the achievements and challenged the limitations of the comprehensive system, have been systematically and successfully attacked in recent decades by a market ideology which has encouraged a socially divided education through instruments
such as the engineering of consumer choice in league tables, a standard-
ized testing and monitoring culture which has disempowered teachers, and the promotion of an enterprise- and employer-focused agenda in the classroom.\(^5\)

The recent history of art likewise reveals it to be a disputed field of practice – for example, opposition to the art market and gallery exclusivity finds expression in community or activist-based projects. As politics is never absent from either art or education, there is not a neutral position one can adopt in defence of either one (hence the persistent accusation that one side or another is ‘playing politics’ with education). Rather than equivocal relations based on vague humanistic ideals (who could object to ‘art’? or ‘learning’?), it is better to form true solidarities in order to directly challenge practices and values in each that help consolidate and accelerate concentrations of power and resources. I will conceive of this as follows: the avant-gardist conception of art makes common cause with the tradition of critical pedagogy insofar as they are both tied to a project of collective emancipation.

**Critical education and avant-garde art**

Theories of education as an emancipatory and critical force, and which therefore run counter to existing social and economic power relations and their reproduction through the state, have a long history, in which Paulo Freire’s radical ideas of education as a conscious act towards social change have a central place. According to Freire, critical education is not a ‘reflection in which explanation of the world signifies accepting it as it is’; rather, it should be envisaged as a ‘confrontation with the world’.\(^6\) Against a pacifying ‘banking’ concept of education, where students are empty vessels waiting to be filled with predetermined knowledge,\(^7\) Freire describes an active ‘problem-posing method’ whereby students, as ‘critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher’ can locate theoretical questions within their own lives and social situations, towards consciousness and a committed ‘critical intervention in reality’.\(^8\)

There is a clear parallel between critical education as described above and avant-gardist moves in art against such things as the purely contemplative and ‘disembodied’ reception of artworks, the adaptation of art processes to the (mass or luxury) market and the reproduction through high culture of the bourgeois order. Peter Bürger notably describes the historical avant-garde not in terms of aesthetic novelty and individual genius but, quite differently, as an attack on artistic individualism and a negation of art’s social isolation.\(^9\) Art’s self-perceived autonomy, as crystallized in modernist moves towards aesthetic abstraction, is, for Bürger, in fact premised on an ‘absence of any [real world] consequences’ – an inconsequentiality determined not by artists themselves, but by the special place assigned to art in the capitalist social structure.\(^10\) Against its confinement in the specialized sphere of high culture ‘the avant-gardistes demanded that art become practical once again’ and attempted to ‘organise a new life praxis from a basis in art’\(^11\) – a basis, that is, in values opposed to exploitation, rationalist means-end thinking and the pursuit of profit.
This negation of existing art through artistic practice itself is essential for bringing about the possibility of a genuinely new collective social experience with which art would be reconciled – a newness which stems from the singular powers of the imagination, of sensual affect, of critical deconstruction, symbolic re-engineering and so on. Art cannot, in Bürger’s conception, short-circuit its way back into life through a simple external negation of high art, for example, by becoming part of a commercial ‘culture industry’ for mass consumption.

It is my intention to adopt the expression ‘avant-garde’ in the context of gallery education in order to investigate the latter’s critical possibilities. If the coupling of the term avant-garde with gallery education seems incongruous then this is entirely the point. I wish to shift gallery education practices to the centre stage of art discourse, in the hope of challenging their institutionally sidelined position and reactive obligations to the ‘real’ exhibited art. In doing so I want to question self-identifying ‘critical’ or ‘controversial’ artistic practices that nevertheless operate unobtrusively according to hierarchical institutional structures, thus effectively reproducing these structures while often dismissing artistic attempts to negate them as naive and un-reflexively romantic or else disparaging institutional routes to wider social access as instrumental. My purpose is to imagine how the goals of the avant-garde, as detailed above according to Bürger’s schema, might be brought about through institutional apparatus such as publicly supported galleries, rather than in absolute opposition to and beyond them – even while this implies a simultaneous change in the way these organisations distribute resources and enable different types of practices. Writing of the approach recommended by Stuart Hall, Henry Giroux describes this as ‘using the very authority vested in institutions . . . in order to work against the grain of such authority’.

By maintaining the concept of the avant-garde, I am proposing forms of art that attempt to be impactful and transformative, both in terms of changing what art itself can be and in a wider cultural and social sense. Rather than an imposition from above by a cultural elite, this transformative power can be imagined as a struggle from below, in solidarity with other agents of change. While working against the reproductive systems of art world power inevitably puts one in a minority position within the field of art, the conception of the avant-garde as socially interested runs counter to bohemian notions of the cultural outlaw existing heroically on the margins of society and its conventions and against the idea of an ‘advanced’ art which is beyond the comprehension of common tastes and morality. It is therefore compatible with the values of the liberation movements of the 1960s and ’70s, including the women’s movement, to which Felicity Allen sees gallery education linked as a radical art practice. The alternative to cynical adoptions of contextual self-reflexivity by artists, curators, academics and others is not therefore to fall back on the equally conservative image of the ‘outsider’. As ‘representatives of the institution’, writes Carmen Mörusch, ‘critical gallery educators . . . have no opportunity to imagine an uncompromised “outside” for their work, or themselves as heroic figures.’ In reaching a more tangible ‘outside’ precisely through the public channels that the gallery provides, gallery
education practices can put the white cube exhibition space, which appears as a zone of freedom, under suspicion. The accusation that art is a minority cultural activity limited to an aesthetic realm which has negligible bearing on the world or the majority of people’s lives is a harsh one for a practice whose value still resides to a large extent on its progressive or radical credentials and self-image. The alternative image of contemporary art as a high-end version of celebrity culture, maintained by elite networks, conspicuous consumption and financial speculation, is equally damning.

By contrast with gallery exhibitions, art practices that take place in the context of gallery education tend to be peripheral and low status, and are sometimes denigrated as not much more than a funding requirement – worthy perhaps, but lacking the autonomy that ‘real’ art requires. In describing this zone of activity as potentially avant-gardist – in terms, that is, usually applied to conventionally recognized, high-status forms found in gallery exhibitions or modern art museum collections – I want to estrange us from standard accounts of significant and progressive art and direct the questions of access and social function towards art in general. Thus my purpose is not merely to defend gallery education as equal to high-profile exhibitions – as an equally valid, although less visible, space for critical artistic interventions – but to propose it as a model for critical art practice more generally. It follows that if art made in relation to schools can be shown to fulfil the criteria of an avant-gardist practice then we must rethink the assumption that it should play a secondary responsive role to the ‘real’ exhibition-based art (museum collections or programmed shows) rather than playing a primary productive role as art.

For the purposes of this article I will take the following three factors as definitive of an avant-gardist or critical art practice: 1) that art becomes social; 2) that art brings about the new; and 3) that art transforms the field. The three aspects in operation here are not separable in practice, but occur simultaneously. (Thus, in entering a wider social field, and being influenced by external phenomena, artists can engineer new types of encounter, which may subsequently act critically towards a more general transformation of artistic possibilities and so forth). Before I examine these factors in more detail, I would like to suggest ways in which emancipatory education makes common cause with an avant-gardist conception of art in each of the three cases outlined.

First, in the case of social function, Henri Giroux calls for a political project which ‘connect[s] educational struggles with broader struggles for the democratization, pluralisation, and reconstruction of public life’. He raises the need for a ‘critical public pedagogy’ to operate against the ‘corporate public pedagogy’ that dominates cultural discourse via the mass media, thus linking teaching practice – often presented both as a non-political and a subject or curriculum-specific activity – to wider social concerns.

Second, in the case of the new, we can turn to Gilles Deleuze. Responding to the obsession with the idea that solving pre-set problems designates what thinking is – as we can witness, for example, in SATs tests, summative assessment of coursework and the pre-eminence of exam grades – Deleuze writes: ‘as if we would not remain slaves so long as we do not...
control the problems themselves, so long as we do not possess a right to the problems, to a participation in and management of the problems'. Here the act of thinking, and the possibility therefore of bringing about something new, is stifled by a lack of autonomy and control over thought and the infantilizing relation to a ‘powerful authority’ who can accredit our ‘solutions’ as either true or false, according to what is already known.

The new is then not simply a question of innovative material forms, ‘contemporary’ methods, conceptions and so on, but a call to break out of valuation systems that would predefine and subsume creative energies.

Third, in the case of transformation, a short essay by Walter Benjamin entitled ‘A Communist Pedagogy’ gives an example of how such a thing might be conceived. While, for Benjamin, the bourgeois conception of education operates to enable the ‘natural disposition’ of the child to become the naturalized ‘ideal citizen’ of bourgeois adulthood, the poor and disinherited view their own children ‘not as heirs’, but as ‘helpers, avengers, liberators’.

Benjamin’s language may seem extreme, but the sentiment expressed is nothing other than that education should aim to bring about a more just social order and to work against the reproduction of the world as it is – to the continuing detriment of the majority of its inhabitants.

Seen from the perspective of the wider field of art, gallery education has a peculiar double nature, standing Janus-like at the border of the institution, facing both in and out. From within, gallery education is afforded a comparatively low status compared with curated exhibitions and high-profile public events. From without, it is afforded a comparatively high status, as representative of the cultural institution. It is this peculiar position of being both subordinate and dominant that allows gallery education to manifest more general tensions in the gallery organization and in the wider art world, and therefore to suggest and bring about changes. In posing the problem of what schools can offer art, I will take a speculative approach, using the three aspects of avant-garde art I have described above as a means of exploring certain discourses and practices around gallery education – and in the hope of raising broader issues as to the values, structures and practices of art today.

Social function

An important function of the public art museum or gallery is that it allows art to be made accessible to a wide public. While various motives underlie the formation of public galleries as an institution – the building of national character, for example, or the global ‘cultural capital’ accruing to a host city competing for business investment and tourism – a democratic ideal informs the ability of galleries to make the work of artists available. Crucially, this includes art of a controversial or dissenting nature. We should consider this democratic, distributive function of the public gallery from the point of view not just of potential audiences who can view works, but also of artists who require a public platform for current work and ideas. In recent times the platform offered by contemporary art institutions, informed by and in turn informing artistic practices, has expanded in
a multidisciplinary direction to include discussions on such things as philosophy, radical politics and education. The democratic and distributive function of the gallery is, however, compromised, first, by persistent class-based limits to access and, second, by the problem of inconsequentiality that Bürger raises as the fate of art under capitalism – the way the social and political content of art projects can be institutionally contained as ‘culture’. To make art practical by realizing its critical autonomy beyond a delimited realm can be understood in terms of finding channels where its influence may take effect in extended situations, providing possibilities for mutual encounters as art comes into contact with a variety of individuals and practices. Rather than grand art-into-life gestures, art’s social function can be imagined more in the way Grant Kester talks about art’s ‘openness to the specificity of the external world’.23

While art’s status and function were put on the agenda around the turn of this century by New Labour’s social inclusion rhetoric, the act of addressing class realities was immediately depoliticized by conceiving of inclusion in terms of a top-down delivery of what already exists, rather than in terms of an equitable distribution and ownership of resources of production and reproduction.24 The top-down provision of art has its roots in Victorian philanthropy. Here, an assimilating logic designed to prevent political ferment and social change underlay a progressive language of public access. As Andrew McClennan writes, ‘For [Matthew] Arnold, the purpose of culture was “to do away with classes, to make all live in an atmosphere of sweetness and light,” which in effect entailed the eventual “embourgeoisement” of society’.25 Education departments – staffed then, as now, mostly by women – began in circumstances where outreach was a central focus,26 only to be increasingly sidelined and detached from exhibition display as the dominant modernist ideal of art that ‘speaks for itself’ took hold in the mid-twentieth century – an ideology manifested in the ‘white cube’ aesthetic of artistic display.27

Felicity Allen describes gallery education practices from the mid-1970s onwards as undercutting such top-down methods, perceiving the former as a radical strategy ‘to shift art from a monolithic and narcissistic position into a dialogical, open and pluralist set of tendencies that renegotiate issues of representation, institutional critique and inter-disciplinarity’.28 Allen develops her arguments in the context of persistent misrecognition, by exhibition curators and critics, of what gallery educators do, and mentions the way education became the target for objections to government instrumentalization. ‘It seems sometimes there is a failure to identify how gallery education, like other artistic practices, questions or negotiates a route around government objectives, as opposed to simply implementing them.’29 Carmen Mörsch, following on from Allen, demonstrates how gallery education, through its capacity to engage a wider constituency, is in a position to challenge the assumptions and self-image of so-called cultural ‘institutions of critique’. According to her, ‘critical’ voices from exhibitionary practices (artists and curators), who subject gallery education to ‘disregard or contempt’ for supposedly being ‘insufficiently radical’,30 enact a form of what Gayatri Spivak calls ‘sanctioned ignorance’31 designed to maintain status differentials between exhibition curating and
education. In fact, as Mörsch points out, audiences for typical art events organized by artists and curators are ‘far more delimited than groups accessed by gallery educators. The many “academies”, “schools”, “seminars”, “workshops”, “sessions”, “encounters” and “lessons” initiated in the course of the “educational turn” are largely attended... by people who are similar in habits, lifestyle and attitudes to those of the curators.'32 For Mörsch, critical gallery education is sidelined within contemporary art institutions so as to maintain glamour: ‘the collectively produced preservation of the aura and exclusivity through the peer group’.33

The now familiar sight of groups of school students at places such as Tate Modern – so important as an affective experience of art and galleries, but under threat today owing to the shrinkage of time and resources for art in schools – is a necessary, although insufficient condition for making contemporary art available as a possibility for more people. The simple act of physically occupying the space of public galleries gives a degree of ownership over them – a palpable sense that such places exist and one is entitled as a citizen to enter them. Gallery education programmes and facilities can interrupt the automatic reproduction of art as the preserve of those whose family backgrounds grant them automatic access to it. This capacity extends beyond audience development to include the formation of future artists, curators and other actors in the field of art, who will go on to change the institutions from within. Inclusiveness will ultimately be a matter of who the artists and curators of the future are, and how the population as a whole is more adequately represented.34

It is worth mentioning that, in a culture of unpaid internships, gallery education is one of the means for relatively little-known artists to get paid to make art and to work within a gallery context – thus making art a more viable career option for those without independent means of support or advantageous connections. Hence gallery education can be seen as assisting inclusion not simply at the level of reception (educating non-art audience constituencies about art), but at the level of production (encouraging more people to become and maintain themselves as artists). A logical step, which may occur at some public galleries, is to link education-based visits to potential employment opportunities through such things as targeted work placements and apprenticeships in order to broaden the social mix of employees and freelancers.

Gallery education is also able to instigate a shift away from a sometimes-evident emphasis on ‘artist educators’, playing a reactive role in response to the existing collection or exhibition, and towards a primary role for the artist as producer. Artists who have direct contact with groups of students in a gallery environment, or within schools via gallery education placements, are able to demonstrate artistic practice as an ordinary human activity rather than as a fetishized object or installation attached to a name. This has nothing to do with preferring process-based artworks to delineated material forms, but is rather a challenge to authoritatively determined symbolic presence. Instead of being mediators to the official art – put in a position of performatively re-inscribing that art’s consecrated status – these ‘unofficial’ artists can appear in their physical, speaking presence as the demystifying exemplars of art and artists in action.
While gallery education departments have addressed some of these points directly, structural limitations often remain at an organizational level. For example, in an assertion of equal artistic status, the Learning team at Tate do not apply the term ‘artist educator’ to the artists they work with (they are simply called artists). At an institutional level, however, status differentials are enforced linguistically, with respect to the object, if not to the subject, by the insistence that what artists working with the Learning department produce are ‘resources’, rather than ‘artworks’ – even if no definitive material, methodological or conceptual characteristics differentiate the ‘resource’ object or activity from a curated ‘artwork’.35 A reluctance by exhibition curators to give ground on this matter would seem to point to a determination to enforce borders between what is art and what is not, for fear that, if art enters through ‘illegitimate’ channels and is therefore not backed up by a symbolic or commodity value, it may throw into question the value of ‘legitimate’ art. Apart from the danger that largely informal channels of symbolic legitimation would be bypassed, the constituency for gallery education-based art – largely pupils and teachers lacking symbolic capital – would be enough to debase the produce. The consequence of this value-conserving and value-accumulating approach is to diminish art’s social utility.

Schools offer art the opportunity to enter the social sphere – to escape from a confined cultural arena and to direct its potentialities beyond the limiting agendas of individual competitiveness and the market. On the one hand, engagement with pupils, teachers, school assistants and others opens art to a broader audience – an audience who can have agency as co-participants in various ways through the development process. It therefore opens art to issues and opinions beyond a comfort zone of homogeneous tastes, critical stances and political points of view. On the other hand, the engagement with schools acts to transform the production and distribution of art, both by enabling routes into art for a wider mix of individuals and by changing the conception of an artist from an absent symbolic presence, to an active human presence occupying the same non-exalted space as the audience. While such considerations point strongly to the democratic function of public galleries and contemporary art museums as civic forums of some kind, it is essential that, in an eagerness to make art consequential in an emancipatory sense, we do not lose sight of all that art enables with respect to the unknown, the affective, the idiosyncratic, the disruptive and the seductive – including that which is strange to the producers of art themselves. It is with this in mind that I now turn to the category of the new.

The new

The rupturing encounter also contains a moment of affirmation, the affirmation of a new world, in fact a way of seeing and thinking this world differently.36

If, according to Bürger, the capitalist organization of everyday life in the early twentieth century reduced human beings to a ‘partial function’37
then freedom for the historic avant-garde meant that art should extend beyond a sanctioned, limited zone of aesthetic experimentation, sensual affect and critical perception, so that these things could become features of life in general. If we are to assume an avant-gardist purpose today, under conditions of continuing domination, exploitation and inequality, then art should be a resource within a wider struggle from which to bring forward new forms of life (experiential, relational, aesthetic, cognitive, etc.). In crossing the border from institutionally protected art into the everyday world, however, artists must beware of subsumption into dominant instrumentalizing processes based on profit and power.

By operating in the area of formal education, art workers enter a minefield of potential compromise: amid dedication to understanding, creativity and individual confidence that will enable students to have control over their lives and contribute to society, forces operate that are dedicated to passivity and obedience to the existing order. These centrally imposed and market-oriented operations are both managerial (e.g. fixed curricula and predetermined assessment criteria) and disciplinary (apparatus of surveillance, compulsion, punishment and physical confinement). They can gain acceptance from teachers and parents as a response to the many social and family problems that students bring with them through the school gates. This is precisely the reason why artists have a potential to make a difference here, in collaboration and solidarity with likeminded teachers whose own personal stresses, along with struggles for autonomy and bottom-up influence, take shape amid and against the managerial and monitoring strategies employed against them.

Because terms such as the ‘new’, the ‘modern’, the ‘innovative’ and the ‘contemporary’ are constantly thrown up not only to enforce our subjective position as consumers, but to sell market-friendly policy changes and rhetorically to counter all ‘intransigence’ or resistance based on different values, it is important to resurrect Adorno’s concept of the new, which, according to John Roberts, ‘does not mean the faddishly latest, or novel, but the subjective agency by which art is compelled to retain its critical independence from the forces of instrumental reason, [both] social and aesthetic’.

Museums and public galleries of contemporary art make possible new encounters, for both visitors and a wider public through mass mediation. They sustain the production of new, experimental forms by providing artists with a platform and other types of support. The image of contemporary art has, however, been hijacked for profit-driven innovation (the ‘creative industries’) and speculative city branding. More insidiously, the image of the contemporary artist as a successful maverick serves to present the non-unionised, precarious, entrepreneurial practices of art world competition as a model for individualistically conceived success and status more generally. Given this, it is apparent that gallery education, as an instance of art’s operating outside the usual circuits of high-status cultural capital accumulation, i.e. within compulsory-level education, can
direct cultural encounters away from capitalist models of the new and towards non-profit-oriented notions of common benefit and social possibility. But, as a representative of the institution, there is at the same time the danger that contemporary art becomes a kind of brand itself, an identifiable and homogeneous thing, hypostatized as a ‘good’ through the very relation enacted between galleries and schools and teachers. New art institutions bring us ‘contemporary art’ and, thanks to the equalizing effect of the white cube gallery space, not only hide the determinations and competitive struggles that brought each particular work there, but also tend to flatten out the negation of previous artworks that have initiated and are manifested in new artworks (identifying only the points of positive influence that reduce the differences of art to a seamless flow with not too much at stake).

Emily Pringle usefully describes ‘contemporary gallery education’ as ‘characterised by experimental, open-ended, collaborative teaching and learning, [which] draws on a specific understanding of creative practice as “conceptual”’. As regards what ‘contemporary art’ might mean for gallery education, we are talking about what might loosely be described as a post-Duchampian legacy, where the criteria which determine judgement are other than those based on technical skill, formalist or medium-specific aesthetics, self-expression or the subject matter or narrative that is being communicated. We can appreciate the ‘new worlds’ potentially opened in the school classroom by artists in school residencies and teachers who are practising artists, when students are given the opportunity to work, and therefore understand art, beyond a limited diet of still life drawing and representational conventions of self-expression. A study commissioned for Arts Council for England (ACE) and Tate into the secondary school art curriculum has suggested that the inclusion of contemporary art enhances ‘understanding of social, environmental and citizenship issues’ and ‘increased visual communication skills’, as well as allowing the possibility of more ‘non-western and female artists’ to be used as references in the classroom. While it would be odd not to include examples of living artists in the school curriculum, especially as art can then be presented and problematized as being part of visual culture more broadly, the conclusions revealed in the study seem to put a lot of faith in an undifferentiated notion of contemporary art practice, rather than in the specific experiences and practices of the teachers involved and the way in which individual works or methods were used within the classroom context. (Clay modelling may be as ‘conceptual’ a medium as photography, while in individual circumstances technical drawing skill or various means to individual expression may be precisely the path to new experiences and possibilities.)

Constructivist and co-constructivist models of learning, as favoured nowadays in gallery education, can exemplify a type of structural confinement within the institution while promising the opposite. Seeking to escape the top-down model of authoritative knowledge (the ‘banking’ model of correct interpretations of artworks hanging in the gallery), these methods can paradoxically confirm performatively – precisely through open-ended discussion in the carefully maintained space – the
status assigned by the gallery or museum to the work, and consequently the power of the institution over and above individual and group encounters. George E. Hein describes the constructivist approach as follows: ‘Learning is not understanding the “true” nature of things … but rather a personal and social construction of meaning out of the bewildering array of sensations which have no order or structure besides the explanations … which we fabricate for them.’45

To deny the reality of structures, which exist beyond sensual intuition and yet have real effects on individuals, seems convenient for galleries and museums keen to portray a liberal and open image of freedom. But, while gallery education may to some extent be condemned to perform this recognition-of-authority role (which of course does not cancel the many valuable things that may come out of the same activity), it is also in an excellent position to confront precisely the kind of challenges to official value that inspire avant-gardist manifestations of the new. ‘Why is that art?’ ‘Why didn’t the artist make it himself?’ ‘What is so special about that?’ Such ‘philistine’ questions, common to school group situations, are similar to questions asked by conceptual art itself.46 Eve Peasnall, an artist working for the Learning department at Tate, has described how her introduction of herself as a practising artist to a group of younger school children led immediately to the awkward question ‘where is your work?’ as the group looked eagerly around the gallery space.47 Marijke Steedman, curator of Community Programmes at Whitechapel Gallery, has written: ‘when we work in learning contexts, and don’t present the operational realities of the institution, we’re presenting art to them as an autonomous dream space that isn’t implicated socially’.48 She gets the young people she works with ‘to read the gallery’s audience development and marketing strategy where they can see that they are at certain points the subject and object of that strategy because of their ethnicity or age’.49 The interesting thing here is that this is not fetishized as an artwork, in other words the disclosure of ‘confinement’ does not feed back as symbolic accreditation that re-establishes the institution’s critical reflexivity and therefore co-opts much of the antagonism that might result in a challenge to the institution’s power.50

The ACE/Tate commissioned study referred to earlier,51 on the benefits contemporary art can bring to schools, clearly identifies a critical area with which gallery education should involve itself, and yet the findings are far from convincing, relying as they do on crude multiple choice questionnaires and working on statistical averages that hide the really interesting singular instances of teaching, which may diverge from both the ‘conformist’ and ‘contemporary’ model set in opposition to each other. More in-depth analysis along these lines would doubtless generate recommendations that would raise contemporary art as a problem in a creative sense (how might the use of contemporary art materials in the classroom environment feed back into art practice more broadly?), rather than being a one-size-fits-all ‘solution’ to classroom ‘orthodoxy’ (contemporary vs. modernist/pre-modernist art). Those who work in gallery education tend to be particularly sensitive to the dangers of top-down benevolence, as epitomized by Victorian models of cultural enlightenment. Nonetheless, what
Raymond Williams called a ‘rhetoric of service’, as detectable in many museum and gallery policy documents on outreach and community projects (according to a Paul Hamlyn Foundation report), ‘too often places the subject . . . in the role of “supplicant” or “beneficiary”’ rather than something more like an active agent (someone who, as Deleuze says, has a right to ‘participation in and management of the problems’). They can even ‘display an almost nineteenth-century view of the passive subject, outside the institution, awaiting improvement’.

If contemporary art is treated for practical purposes simply as a label for current practice, which abides roughly by certain conceptual characteristics and not as a socially determined structural field of relations, then relations of power between the art institution and the school are more likely to become manifest. The sense that ‘contemporary art’ will shine light into the dark recesses of school art rooms is reinforced in the language, employed in certain gallery education environments, of the ‘critical friend’. This term is used to describe artists who act as mentors to teachers in certain projects. While the intention is to be supportive, and while this support may be welcome by many who take part, the language serves to perpetuate the sense of division, and indeed to exacerbate a concrete class divide between those who work in schools and those who operate in galleries. Although ‘critical friends’ could operate in terms of a mutual relation, with teachers bringing their experience to bear on what might be perceived as bad, problematic or particularly effective gallery practices, the traffic tends to be one-way, with artists employed to get teachers up to speed with artistic developments. While many art teachers will be eager for the opportunity to re-engage with their art practice, and while opportunities certainly exist in many such set-ups for feedback and genuine discussion, it is the conceptual framework engendered by the language of the ‘critical friend’ that structures something very like what Jacques Rancière has called ‘the singular art of the explicator: the art of distance’, introduced to perpetually divide the ignorant from the knowledgeable.

In this case it is the teacher as student who is stultified by being put in a situation where they are not quite ready to make (contemporary) art.

Contemporary art presented as a label, that is, indiscriminately and according to a conception that what is valuable is ‘new’ as in ‘the latest’ – on the lines of art world publicity – must be viewed as superficial and conservative. The genuinely new and different will be stymied by language and practices that exacerbate a notion that it is in itself beneficial and progressive – a gift to be conferred, rather than a structured field of competing and contesting practices. As the place where the value of art must now be defended more than ever from those who do not consider it a necessary element of every young person’s education, going ‘back to school’ may help us to articulate what the real values of art are and what they could be. Art as a school subject, after all, has the potential to do a number of things that may be a threat to the smooth reproduction of the crude corporate agenda currently dictating the norms of public life. For example, art classes help to produce confident, autonomous, thinking subjects capable of challenging the notion that there is a correct outcome or an authoritative way of doing something – art is one of those subjects
where there is clearly not a ‘correct’ answer predetermined in advance. It also allows an imaginative and discursive space where the widest range of concerns, materials and subjects can be synthesized in form, while other cultural material can be taken apart and analysed. Crucially it can transform students, for a period, from consumers of culture into producers of culture, through the expression of personal feelings and interests, and the manipulation, subversion and re-engineering of mass mediated visual and verbal signs. It also hands students control over the technical means of production and introduces them equally to symbolic and imaginative resources in the shape of other artists’ work – often of an idiosyncratic, non-conformist and anti-authoritarian persuasion. And it allows students precisely, in the spirit of Freire’s radical pedagogy, to connect personal experience to wider social and structural realities through narrative and other forms of expression.

It is the critical aspects of art in the broadest sense, learnt and practised both in and outside the classroom, which can then be carried over to further and higher education, often taken not with a planned-out career in mind but with something more like a sense of critical self-discovery. Rather than relying on familiar economic arguments for art’s contemporary relevance at the heart of UK education, we can assert the critical pedagogic value of art provision according to an avant-gardist insistence that art is ultimately seductive because it promises a real difference – an escape from that which keeps us confined and an experience which is substantially new.

Transformation

The measure of any art’s criticality will be the extent to which it affects its own framing conditions. By raising issues of status, function, access, power and visibility, gallery education could offer a model of transformation from below. This subversive possibility would be dependent on gallery education’s ability to overcome its subordinate position in relation to exhibition curation within the gallery, while relinquishing its dominant position in relation to school art teaching outside the gallery. These are really two sides of the same coin insofar as the school, as a practical and comprehensive arena where the principle values of art must be justified in terms of individual and social necessity, re-enters the gallery and, as an actor with low cultural status, challenges the exclusions and social divisions that account for the gallery’s higher status: its aura of non-instrumental, contemplative and critical ‘freedom’.

These hierarchical relations account for the status differences between artists who work in the broad area of education, but from different positions within the institution. The first of these is the symbolically recognized ‘relational’ artist or curator who, through the discursive frame of the ‘pedagogical turn,’ equates his or her practice with education. The second is the alternative case where the artist enters the field of gallery education at the periphery of the art institution to claim it as a legitimate place for an artist to work. In the first instance the artist takes the mantle of critical educator while remaining within the dominant modes of exhibitionary
production (exhibitions or high profile events). In the second instance, the artist who works within education and insists on being an artist is calling for visibility on new grounds, not according to the modes of recognition that currently pertain within the institution (bearing in mind that this structural challenge is dissipated owing to the way work in a gallery education situation functions as a stepping stone to higher-status activities according to the practical logic of existing hierarchies and access to resources through symbolic accumulation).

From the perspective of the school, where artists, or those who have been to art college, work as art teachers, the term ‘artist-teacher’ has been proposed. This term can be an assertion of the value of teaching for art – either in relation to one’s art practice or as an art practice itself. Here it can be a challenge to the low visibility and status afforded to art teaching in schools and, as such, an expression of confidence, particularly in the practical capacity of art (in line with the avant-gardist insistence that art become part of life).

But there are problems if the term ‘artist teacher’ functions not to challenge existing hierarchies, but to consolidate them. Both James Hall and Alan Thornton frame the benefits of adopting the artist teacher identity in terms of a deeply personal resolution, or management, of inherent tensions between classroom teaching on the one hand and art practice on the other. For Hall it is a question of ‘negotiating a new identity that integrates the teacher self or persona with an artist self’, something which ‘is not a straightforward or always comfortable process’. Tensions, which on a practical level can largely be put down to time constraints making it difficult for teachers to maintain a studio practice, are manifested symbolically owing to ‘a common perception that teaching is no more than a safety net for those who cannot find employment in other fields or professions’ (i.e. school art teachers are failed artists). In response, ‘self-identification’ through the artist teacher moniker can help [art teachers] to alleviate any sense of identity crisis by asserting the positive relationship between personal art-making and teaching. The danger of such an approach is that a language of personal empowerment, while identifying a real problem, tends to reinforce ghettoization and fails to cut across borders in ways that may expose and challenge institutionalized and symbolic power relations. By bringing art and education together at the level of the self, the designation ‘artist teacher’, which Thornton calls a ‘reconciliatory identity’, operates to divide the ‘real’ artist from the ‘teacher’ artist, and therefore to reinforce, rather than challenge, the attack on status which is the structural cause of teachers’ feelings of low self-esteem and of tensions between teaching and art practice.

In contrast to emancipatory modes of education where reflection finds its necessary complement in social action, the strategies outlined above focus the action inward. Real-world tensions, resulting from conflicting commitments, time restraints and lack of access to resources and networks, get turned into inner conflicts to be resolved psychically through the self-invention of a hybrid identity. And socially framed aspersions upon status become narcissistic wounds to be healed through a perpetually
infantilizing language of ‘developing confidence’ and building ‘self-esteem’. To adopt Nancy Fraser’s terminology, the ‘misrecognition’ suffered by artists teaching in schools, both at the level of the school and in the art world – the low value assigned to their artistic activity – leads, by way of a solution, to an ‘identity model of recognition’.\(^{63}\) This is when ‘members of misrecognized groups reject [negative] images in favour of new self-representations of their own making, jettisoning internalized, negative identities and joining collectively to produce a self-affirming culture of their own – which, publicly asserted, will gain the respect and esteem of society at large’.\(^{64}\) This model, however, has the effect of displacing demands for redistribution – in our case the visibility, influence, time, funding and other resources that follow from symbolic recognition. Fraser insists on approaching the question of recognition not in terms of identity, but in terms of status:

To view recognition as a matter of status means examining institutionalized patterns of cultural value for their effects on the relative standing of social actors. If and when such patterns constitute actors as peers, capable of participating on a par with one another in social life, then we can speak of reciprocal recognition and status equality. When, in contrast, they constitute some actors as inferior, excluded, wholly other, or simply invisible – in other words, as less than full partners in social interaction – then we can speak of misrecognition and status subordination. From this perspective, misrecognition is neither a psychic deformation nor a free standing cultural harm but an institutionalized relation of social subordination.\(^{65}\)

Crucially, this approach to recognition cannot simply be a plea to those with power (‘symbolic capital’) to magnanimously grant recognition (as a monarch grants a pardon) and therefore to demonstrate their authority and so performatively enforce the power relation. As a struggle over the equitable distribution of resources, recognition on the terms set out by the dominated group will by definition alter the power structures that exist. At this more political level claims for recognition are ‘aimed not at valoriz[ing] group identity but rather [at] overcoming subordination’.\(^{66}\) This is achieved by ‘changing the interaction regulating values that impede parity of participation at all relevant institutional sites’.\(^{67}\)

The primary thing that would need to be challenged, in the case in question, is the low artistic value assigned to art and discourse taking place beyond the spaces of art world prestige (galleries, art fairs, prizes, art magazines, etc.) – and it is here that gallery education again is well placed to play a leveraging role. The (often self-punishing) entrepreneurial bohemianism of the art world is an effect of maintaining borders between an imagined autonomous or glamorous zone of art, and a ‘normal’ world beyond – indicative of artistic failure. The lack of interest (what Spivak calls ‘sanctioned ignorance’) shown by art discourses and promotion mechanisms towards practices taking place outside the gallery scene or academy is an expression of, and reproductive engine for, positional hierarchies. It follows that, at the personal promotion level of what Angela McRobbie has called ‘network sociability’,\(^{68}\) there is little artistic capital to be gained by becoming a school art teacher, or even in talking to one: it is unlikely that ‘advantageous’ connections could result or that knowledge could be acquired that would
potentially advance one’s position in the field of art. The artistic values inherent in this field of work, or involved at the level of discussion with an art teacher, would be based on other criteria of use. In this respect we can see how the difficulties and possible negative feelings felt by art teachers who continue making their own work, or wish to do so, are from one angle not a specific occupational hazard but intrinsically connected with the constant general anxiety that hovers over issues of status in art – the ‘not ... always comfortable process’\(^{69}\) of calling yourself an artist in the absence of symbolic guarantees that you are in fact one (such as public exhibitions, gallery representation, magazine reviews and other authoritative inscriptions of your name in the social order.) In this sense, the personal (or professional) is political, as discussions that seem specific to the domain of school art or gallery education are seen to be rooted in the wider field of art, with more widespread consequences. Given that art as a whole is diminished when little room is afforded to experiences with art beyond high-status networks – for example, the encounters art precipitates and manifests among young people and teachers in schools – then raising the visibility of these issues, so that they are on a par with other artistic discourses in the gallery, makes possible effective transformations in art. By moving away from the identity model of recognition and towards ‘status equality’ the art world is reconceived: no longer a monolithic entity, disconnected, to various degrees, from an individual’s own art making, but a field to be shaped by the actors who make it up and the various interests they represent.

Gallery education, then, offers channels to counter institutionalized social subordination, as long as the practices in this delineated area of the contemporary art gallery or museum come out in the open. This in fact has a direct bearing on the second angle from which a so-called ‘identity crisis’ is experienced by art teachers in schools. This has to do with struggles over time and over teacher autonomy with regard to pedagogy. The highly pressured, curriculum- and assessment-focused environment of compulsory education not only leaves little time and energy for intensive and prolonged activities outside working hours, but such activities can be little valued in relation to what happens in the classroom. More than this, extra-school practices can be actively discouraged within schools, or seen as an impediment to teaching - a signal of a lack of commitment. I know of two recent cases where unsuccessful interviewees for state secondary school art teacher posts were specifically told in feedback that a factor in their \(\textit{not}\) getting the job was their intention to continue seriously with their art practice. This is perverse given the benefits a living, evolving art in symbiotic relation to classroom practice can bring to schools, but it is of course in keeping with the current right-wing rhetoric of vocational commitment above and beyond professional autonomy and workplace rights. What schools bring to art in this respect is the responsibility on the part of art institutions to raise the status of school art teaching so that it is not considered a sign of artistic failure, or a limitation to artistic ambitions and possibilities for exposure, but a viable and valuable thing to do. If we believe contemporary art is advantageous to compulsory education,
then more artists should become teachers. Whenever galleries, through their education departments and activities, move the concerns and experiences of art school teachers beyond the limited remit of ‘gallery education’ discourse and teacher-only groups (however valuable these may be), and place them centre stage in their spaces, programmes and public communications, they go some way towards countering the perception that ‘real’ artists do not teach in schools — and thus resisting the reproductive mechanisms that occur both in school at the level of autonomy and in the art world at the level of status.

What the new writings from within the field of art education appear to draw attention to and build on is a new mood, one which, together with all manner of dialogical, collaborative and relational practices, promises a more social role for art and the public gallery. It is equally apparent, however, that institutional forces operate against the development of such potentialities. Foremost among these is the determination to maintain existing hierarchies. A paradox of status is in operation: as learning situations are an increasingly common element of artists’ work within conventionally curated and promoted exhibition practices, the reaction may be not to bolster the scope of education departments as equal players within the gallery, but, on the contrary, to keep the ‘real art’ separate from what goes on in an arena considered low status and peripheral to the primary function of the gallery. This quarantining of education-based practice in order to retain status differentials suggests an aestheticizing impulse, the effect of which is to turn the activity of learning into a symbolically designated aesthetic experience, in the sense of diminishing its pedagogical usefulness. If this is indeed the case then, rather than approaching the hegemonic gallery practices in a spirit of deference or compromise in the hope of accruing some of their prestige or of gaining institutional equality, educational practices might do better to persist as a challenge to the status quo. It may be that the difficulties and objections are a sign of how existing art world structures and values have become an impediment to the further progressive development of the public gallery’s function. In this respect shifting from a secondary mediating role to a primary productive role is about more than education departments gaining autonomy within the gallery or museum; it is about art itself gaining autonomy by becoming free from the institutional structures that hold back its ability to act critically in the world. If art in schools enables access to zones of freedom unavailable in other subject areas, then schools may offer art ideas about how to transcend its own limitations.

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Notes

1 Among the changes affecting art provision are the mass conversion of comprehensive schools to academy status and the introduction of free schools, both with powers to diverge from a broad-based curriculum. Also, school performance tables measuring a core of ‘EBacc’ subjects (the model for the now abandoned EBC replacement to GCSEs) excluding art, design, music and drama and therefore rendering these subjects valueless in terms of league table positioning. Seventeen per cent of teachers surveyed for the Department for Education reported that art had been withdrawn as a subject option for the 2012–13 academic year. (This is after a 13 per cent reduction already in 2011–12.) See DFE/Ipsos MORI report, ‘The Effects of the English Baccalaureate’, 36. For 2011/12 poll figures see Press Association, ‘Pupils Forced to Switch GCSE Courses’.

2 Because the reduction of art in schools is not a government stipulation, but a case-by-case response by schools to art’s devaluation, less privileged schools may feel compelled to concentrate resources away from art so as not to jeopardize their league table position – a situation which is less likely to arise in more privileged schools which may still compete by offering a broad curriculum. The policy effectively engineers an example of what Steve Seidel has called ‘selective marginalisation’: the inequitable provision of art. Seidel, ‘The Past Didn’t Go Anywhere’. See also Kenning, ‘Refusing Conformity’.


4 By equating visibility with one’s competitively attained position in the system, Bourdieu’s schema seems to foreclose critical agency – a fact that can be appropriated to cynical ends by those in the art world who plead helplessness before its structures. Gene Ray has pointed to the way Bourdieu acts as an authoritative radical-theoretical alibi for what he calls ‘servility before established cultural power’. Ray reads Andrea Fraser’s essay ‘From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique’ as a reflexive accommodation to art world power arrangements. Fraser’s claim that we are ‘trapped in our field’ becomes, for Ray, a justification for playing by the rules of art world success, rather than challenging dominant institutions and transforming the field. Ray, ‘Notes on Bourdieu’.

5 See Benn, School Wars.

6 Freire, Education, 98.

7 Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, 53.

8 Ibid., 54.

9 Peter Bürger, Theory of the Avant-Garde. Bürger is concerned with what he calls the ‘historical avant-gardes’ represented in particular by Dada and Surrealism.

10 Ibid., 50.

11 Ibid., 49.

12 When the artist Santiago Sierra asserts: ‘I can’t change anything. There is no possibility that we can change anything with our artistic work’ he is surely articulating one of the reasons for his art world success. As quoted in Bishop, ‘Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics’, 71.

13 See some of the discussions in Wallinger and Warnock, ed., Art for All?.


17 Giroux, Border Crossings, 14.

18 Ibid., 4–5.

19 Deleuze, Difference & Repetition, 158.

20 Ibid. Interestingly, Deleuze extends his discussion of the new to the realm of symbolic relations: ‘how derisory are the voluntary struggles for recognition . . . for the attainment of current values (honours, wealth and power). This gets to the heart of the issues I will be exploring: the important difference is not between having power and not having power and therefore seeking power you do not have from those in a position to grant it – this opposition remains conceptually non-antagonistic. The real difference lies in the challenge to the status quo that those with less power are able to mount by claiming status and resources for themselves. This process can occur through different modes of struggle, including negotiation with and within institutions and reform from below.


22 For a more artist-focused approach to the question of art in schools, see Kenning, ‘The Artist as Artist’.

23 Kester, Conversation Pieces, 13.

24 For a radical alternative vision, see Cultural Policy Collective, Beyond Social Inclusion.


26 Ibid., 9.

27 Ibid., 24–5.


29 Ibid., 12.

Extending Anne Phillips’ theories of political representation and participation, cultural inclusion would demand a socially heterogeneous, gender-equal and ethnically diverse mix of artists, curators and others working in the gallery at all levels. See Phillips, Politics of Presence. The tripling of fees for university undergraduate courses seems likely to take us in the opposite direction.

An interesting thought experiment would be to turn the tables and call all artworks ‘resources’ in the sense that they might be useful in particular situations.

At the time of writing the Department for Education has presented an aggressively old-fashioned draft for a new national curriculum, requiring that art classes ‘instil in pupils an appreciation of beauty and an awareness of how creativity depends on technical mastery’. In the context of a national consultation the (necessary) defence of contemporary art and its methods is bound to seem progressive by comparison.

Robert Smithson once spoke of disclosing confinement, in preference to making ‘illusons of freedom’ through process art within the institution, and we can see how, in the meantime, such disclosure is itself dealt with through the institutionalization of ‘institutional critique’, and standard practices of reflexive criticality. See Smithson, ‘Cultural Confinement’, 155.

Raymond Williams championed a working-class ethic of solidarity against a middle-class ethic of service. While both are based in an ideal of community against notions of self-interest and laissez-faire, an ethic of service operates in practice ‘to maintain and confirm the status quo’, that is ‘the existing distributions of property, remuneration, education and respect’. Williams, Culture & Society, 328–9.

And so James Hall writes that art teachers should ‘articulate and continuously reappraise their art practice and, at an appropriate stage, use that practice to inform their teaching.’ Hall, ‘Making Art’, 109, emphasis added.

Certain practices are sensitive to the problem of authority, while not necessarily feeding back in a collaborative way to art structures in general: ‘Some recent trends have placed emphasis on the model of an artist working in a leadership role over the teachers and learners. While there are clear benefits of the addition of creative professionals entering the educational framework of learners to broaden their understanding of the subject and methods of engagement with it, our project’s focus was instead to support the teacher to diversify and extend their own pedagogic practice.’ Adams et al., Teaching through Contemporary Art, 10.

Interestingly the team involved with this project use the language of teachers as ‘active researchers’. Ibid., 38. A re-conception of what teachers do in gallery education projects as ‘research’, as opposed to ‘continuing professional development’ may be a means of challenging directly the hierarchies and status designations we have been speaking about (although CPD is the way such activities are sold to schools who pay for their teachers to attend).

See Mörsch, ‘Alliances for Unlearning’. 
60. Thornton, ‘The Artist Teacher’, 168
61. Ibid.
62. Ibid., 171.
63. Fraser, ‘Rethinking Representation’.
64. Ibid., 110.
65. Ibid., 113.
66. Ibid., 114.
67. Ibid., 115.
68. McRobbie speaks of a divide among creative arts graduates, between a ‘creative elite’ and those who become ‘reliant on a normal job and who are then in some ways social if not economic failures because on the party circuit of “network sociability” they do not have an interesting creative job to talk about.’ McRobbie, ‘Re-Thinking Creative Economy’, 32.

Bibliography


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Dean Kenning is an artist and writer. His artworks encompass various media, including kinetic sculpture, sound, posters, video and live performance. He is interested in a non-contemplative aesthetic of material compulsion, B-movie horror, humour and idiocy. Other work is often directly communicative, concerned with political subject matter and used in pedagogical situations. Diagrams
and other modes of conceptual visualization such as allegory are currently being investigated as methods of research and learning. Kenning has written for journals including Mute, Third Text and Art Monthly. Recently, in light of damaging changes across the sector in England, he has focused attention on formal art education, particularly on politically motivated artistic interventions and on the role of gallery education and artists in schools. He has been involved with community and educational projects at the Whitechapel Gallery and Tate Modern. Kenning is Research Fellow in Fine Art at Kingston University and also teaches at Central St Martins, University of the Arts London.