Making in the Space of Uncertainty
Andy Ash

In the late afternoon of February 22nd, I rushed from work to join a queue at the Houses of Parliament. The Thames yawned greyly as if shot already into knees. But I was keen, I wore my best suit. I ignored the winter rain. I was ready to engage with democracy. Eighty minutes later at security I was asked to take off my shirt, belt and shoes and the contents of my bag into a grey plastic tray. No matter. I had been invited by the National Society for Education in Art & Design (NSEAD) to the Art & Design CPD forum. At last the view to an alternative. I put myself back together and walked through the hallowed place where democracy happens. I was awed by the large spaces filled with stained glass light, dark wood and marble. I was directed past these spaces however, up and up and away from all that. Higher I climbed, stairs, doors, corridors, corners, more stairs. As I progressed the sculptures, the marble floors, the handmade carpets, the gold framed paintings and the rushing, urgent pin-striped people gradually fell away until I reached my destination, Committee Room 21. An attic room, cramped in the far corner of this immense building on its third floor, a nowhere space where the legitimacy and potency of government and decision making felt thin and neglected. My heart sank. But when I opened the door, to my surprise, the room turned out to be packed. Art education, I’m pleased to say, was well represented. We were approximately forty teachers, students, and university lecturers. Familiar issues were raised: How are we to cope with the art teacher shortage? What about the deliberate downsizing of the GCSE & A-Level, as the EBacc dominates the curriculum space? Why are there no specialist art teachers in primary? How are we to cope with the time/space squeeze? What happened to Art & Design CPD? How can we support art teachers suffering creeping insecurity as they are disempowered in increments with each new government initiative? Many pertinent questions were raised in Committee Room 21. We were learning in and we were engaged, poised to discuss, to listen, to inform and be informed and get things moving. That’s what Parliament is for, right? But it felt, all the way up here in the Gods, that no one was listening. One MP out of 650 (the chair) and one Lord out of 300 (who left after fifteen minutes) were present in our space. Even the well-used soundbooths of success stories about the UK creative industries, that they generate £84.1bn a year and account for 2.8 million jobs’ and that ‘it’s the fastest growing sector of the economy’ (The Guardian, 2016) were forgotten. No one is listening in this parliamentary place. No one really cares about the space we are forced into. To make it worse, we are constantly told in education, to ‘adapt to an inevitable future’ and that there are ‘no alternatives’.

It’s a challenging and uncertain future space that we stare into as art teachers, so what can be done to conquer the ‘tyranny of the idea that there are no alternatives’? Firstly, as you see this in Occupation of Tate Exchange by IoE/UCL PGCE, art student teachers view themselves as Artist Teachers. We expect them to challenge assumptions about identity and the relationship between their art making and teaching (Prentice, 1997). To actively look at the borders and spaces, and to struggle, reframe our academic canons (Giroux, 2005). I feel that reframing how you see yourself helps with reorientation and opens up different possible futures. Where you see yourself and how you can develop or shape self helps you think differently about acting and changing. Secondly, we engage the art student teachers in research and evidence based practice (Pring, 2004), and argue that there is not a single ‘best practice’ but a range of best practices. Through collaboration, sharing and telling their stories they develop a ‘community of practice’ (Wenger, 1998) and as makers they are able to gain from ‘communities of inquiry’ (Shields, 2003) which is rooted in John Dewey’s principle of ‘learning through occupation’ (Wallace, 2007). By building a community of learning, developing a socially engaged practice (Burgess, 2004) we aim for ‘epistemological curiosity’ (Froire, 1998) a deeper understanding and knowing which emerges from the engagement and dialogue. Finally, I would highlight the study of contemporary art as a rich resource to engage learners in contemporary society (Burgess, 2003). This challenge takes learners past ‘traditional school art’ (Elford, 1976) to more discursive and broader social, cultural and political practices. Giving ‘voice to learners’ (Ruddock, 2004) enables learners to take control, to become ‘producers of their culture, not just consumers’ (Allen, 2001) is empowering.

I’m suggesting we challenge our assumptions. That we become confident in asking hard questions about the future of art education. Like the artist teachers in this Tate Exchange Occupation, we make, we collaborate, we look to explore other ideas, other potential futures, other notions of practice, that support our personal and professional interests better. I am conscious that in shining a light on a different space I am advocating a practice frustrated with concerns for art teachers – this may also antagonise many (bell hooks, 1994) but that’s ok. Disagreeing, arguing, even encouraging learners to engage in ‘respective disagreement’ (Burgess, 2004) is part of what we need to be doing in a democratic society.

‘It could be argued that art teachers need to behave more like real artists and less like bureaucrats. School art, at its worst is the art of the bureaucratic: neat, safe, predictable, orthodox and amenable to MOT type testing. School art adds up: the real thing rarely does’ (Rosa, 1993).

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Space
Young, energetic and dynamic people, students are often confined in classrooms. Set tables; seating plans; health and safety and so on restrict movement and imagination. I am interested in exploring the way students occupy spaces and the restrictive nature of classrooms. Do many students feel more comfortable in subjects like Art and Drama, simply because they are spaces in which to be active?

Place
If I am a school student what is my place or role? In his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968), Paulo Freire urges teachers to break from the traditional ‘banking method’ of teaching, where the teacher has knowledge and deposits it into students, as if into a bank. He encourages teachers to see themselves as teacher-students and students as student-teachers; independent thinkers with whom we can learn and share ideas. In this way their place changes from receiver to collaborator in their own education.

Can ‘Teacher as Collaborator’ turn ‘Student into Collaborator’, with rich results for both teacher and student? *Student-Teacher* (2017) was inspired by my first school placement. I noticed students dancing surreptitiously in every lesson and practicing moves and routines in the corridors and courtyard at break and lunchtime. I asked the other trainee teachers if they had noticed all the dancing, and they too began to see it happening in their lessons. Dance moves on the way to the bin; under the desk; when waiting in line. More dancing than graffiti. One day after school, a group of Year 7 students came to the art department and spent two hours practicing their dance routine in preparation for an assembly performance. Together with four other trainee teachers we asked the students if they would teach us a routine and if we could collaborate in learning and filming the dance. The experience was fun, mutually respectful, invigorating and in the end we all learned something.
Our idea is based upon the education and social structures which dominate school careers. The hut is a representation of this school structure: it is a space, fragile in nature, which the inside seems cramped and suffocating. The poem mirrors this, it speaks within the voice of Shakespearean comic pantomimes, a structure taught in school, a voice in Shakespearean characters of educated people. The poem, as it progresses becomes fragile, like the structure of the hut on closer observation. The poem breaks from structure not the finished product of the project either. This is part of a process. This work in its formation of a hut and poem is finished, but this Point B is a resting point of reflection.

The student’s rejection of their own structures of planning, to be free, as they believed utopian education to be, allowed them to full circle in rejecting and then incorporating structure back into their assemblage of practice. This process took us all by surprise. It is undecided whether the unnamed hut is a monument, an installation, or a shack. The categorisation of language to assert its being is not set. The poem, is written upon the same materials as the hut, the two are combined. One structure informs the other and this is also a cyclical process.

Point C is next. How will the students take this project into their future experiences in the world of medicine, architecture, literature, film and the arts? The project has been about discovery, rejection and rejuvenation of previous rejection. Thus, this project lays open endless opportunities within their future careers.

NB: After speaking with one of their tutors, having finished the placement, I heard how one student has gone on to incorporate the hut into their Art A-level practice – and is experimenting on a catch 22. We collaborate, We take risks, We hit the learning objectives, We are equal agents, and together we construct equal intelligence. You taught me a new way to think about things. You allowed me to think I had potential. That expression was beautiful. And one of the FBI’s! You allowed me to think I had potential. That I could change the world, That I could break free of the mould. Choose Me. Choose a job. Choose a career. Choose a family. Choose a fucking big television. Choose washing machines, cars, compact disc players, and electrical tin can openers. Choose good health, low cholesterol and dental insurance. Choose fixed interest mortgage repayments. Choose a starter home. Choose a life. Those famous words of Irvine Welsh’s Renton resounded much more than Shakespeare do.

It’s not quite Iambic pentameter miss, but postmodern prose has got a few tricks too.

But what’s the point miss
What are the learning objective of Rentons words?
Those structures of life no longer exist, We are part of the precariat miss.
We don’t have a say in this place. An agent of change you said I think miss You commented on my collage, My performance, My sculpture, You inspired me...

But miss why can’t our work be in the gallery? We hit the learning objectives, We took risks, We collaborated, We were the proximal zone of learning. We went outside our comfort zones. Not to lead us into temptation, Not to open up the gates of opportunity. So why you taking the limelight? Miss, you have failed to realise And acknowledge that you are stuck in a catch 22. Without us, your purpose as a teacher Ceases to exist. We’re your students, We’re your structure, Just as much as we are to you. So why did you ditch us in this project? Ranciere’s Ignorant Schoolmaster Springs to mind. We’re equal agents, and together we construct equal intelligence. You said that’s what Vygotsky and constructivist theory states. So precarious is the space for our work in this place? How come your work is here? And ours ceases to exist? Seems a bit like you are taking the mick. Miss, you have failed to realise And acknowledge that you are stuck in a catch 22.
I don't think that drawing on your hand is a form of self harm, but if you are experiencing pain, you should consult a professional. Instead of cutting yourself, it could be a sign of self harm.

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Parents' Evening

'Mary keeps herself to herself."

TRANSLATION: I don't know who your child is.

'Sally certainly is a lively member of the class."

TRANSLATION: Sally regularly misbehaves and shouts across the room.

'Sally has a wonderful imagination and really contributes in class, but she also needs to allow for other contributions."

TRANSLATION: Sally is incredibly difficult to handle and never lets anyone else talk.

'Gavin can make use of the Sixth Form studio when he has spare time."

TRANSLATION: He needs to do some bloody work sharpish as he's got little to no work done.

'Art GCSE / A-Level will require a lot of extra work outside of lessons."

TRANSLATION: Your child treats my subject as a 'relief' from the rest of their timetable and I would rather spend my valuable time teaching students who take art seriously.

'Lola is working well – she just needs to keep up the good work."

TRANSLATION: Lola is making steady progress.

'Sally has made a start with her homework."

TRANSLATION: Sally has made the sum total of two lines in her attempt at a still life.

'Julian is a very enthusiastic and active member of class, who sometimes can become distracted."

TRANSLATION: Julian is a hyperactive child, and resides in a fantastical world. He will use any excuse to veer off the subject.

'Jonny occasionally becomes frustrated in class, but when he is focused he works really well."

TRANSLATION: When Johnny loses focus and becomes distracted, he screams at me. It requires advanced skills in diplomacy (resembling peace talks) to get him to calm down.

'Please can you go and collect your sketchbook from the pile."

TRANSLATION: I have no idea what your name is and am stealthily trying to identify you.

'Roland has lots of potential, excels in some subjects but his attendance and punctuality is just off target."

TRANSLATION: Roland shows glimpses of being bothered enough to do well in subjects he likes, but just doesn't really care about the others.

'Lisa can occasionally be overly defensive when working with adults."

TRANSLATION: Lisa spent the form time eye balling the student teacher in a blatant show of intimidation [true story].

With thanks to the following people who contributed: Isabelle, Tindara, Olivia, Sam, Jilly, Joseph, Philippa.
**ALEX JAMES**

We are in an age where the pressure to cut costs is squeezing the time and value accorded to Art as a component of education. In my experience the main casualty has been the Critical and Contextual Studies element, with practical outcomes being emphasised whilst knowledge of artists, artworks and movements – the elements that ground practical tasks – being occasionally left behind. This emphasis has also increased the perception of Art and Design as a ‘non-academic’ subject. I feel that this is not only a disservice to the subject, but also to our pupils who then accept their talent within Art and Design as less academically significant than other subjects. I have observed within Art and Design as less academically significant than other subjects. I have observed that students who have not learnt to think critically about during KS3 struggle to build on their own ideas at GCSE.

I wanted to give some of my students the opportunity to fill this gap. I therefore chose to facilitate a series of discussion-based workshops on controversial artworks with Year 10 students from my form. The students looked at work by artists such as Ai Weiwei, Damien Hirst, the Guerrilla Girls and Marc Quinn, which we used as a stimulus to discuss what Art is and how these artworks could inspire their own work. They were prompted to think about what they are passionate about and how they, as artists, could represent their ideas, using the Content, Colour, Process, Form and Mood (CCPFM) framework as a guide. They were also asked to take some of the images outside the classroom and discuss them with at least one external person.

I recorded these discussions and in response have produced a series of interactive images to mirror the interactivity of the live event. These images not only capture some of the students’ actual comments, but also use colour and space to show the voice of teacher and student voices, which changed as the students grew more confident in analysing each work. These can be found on postcards as part of the Tate Exchange Occupation.

The students seemed to really enjoy engaging with artworks on this level and I was impressed with what they managed to draw out of each other during the short time we had. This illustrated the benefit students could gain from devoting more time to analytical activities as a proportion of their overall studies and, conversely, the missed opportunity in not doing so. This project has in turn given me new insights into my broader teaching practice. It brought home to me how much can be learnt in a short space of time through discussion, and that this can be a much more efficient medium than always having to write things down. At the same time I am conscious of the need to evidence learning outputs and I will therefore look to build more discussion elements into my assessment processes where possible.

**JESSICA FRICKER**

What do you not like in Art?

This was the question I presented to a group of Year 9 art club pupils from my placement school. Their main criticisms were: critical feedback, the teacher talking too much and boring topics. The responses were as anticipated, while being eye opening at the same time. Topics were said that I did not anticipate to be: drawing in proportion, everything having to be perfect, drawing certain facial features and certain parts of the body. These are all topics we teach and certain facial features and certain parts of the body. These are all topics we teach and these outcomes, which changed as the students grew more confident in analysing each work. These can be found on postcards as part of the Tate Exchange Occupation.

The outcomes that this group created also raise questions. I wonder, do the pupils have a point? Does everything need to be perfect? Could we encourage our pupils to be a little more expressive and free, within what is meant to be a free, open and self-expressive subject? Or is it that we, as teachers and artists, need to be a little more free, open and self-expressive ourselves?

During this process I encouraged pupils to make their point clear, helping with their word choices and print colour. I also made a print about my dislike of portraiture, using a general image of a portrait with visible guide lines used to mark the features. An image similar to this was given to me with little explanation time and time again during my school years. Finally we created a series of prints that showed a variety of opinions with a variety of themes.

The outcomes that this group created were highly effective and express emotions that any pupil could feel. These pupils were brave to express their own opinions so freely, especially to an art teacher. These outcomes, that presented issues pupils have within art, also raise questions. I wonder, do the pupils have a point? Does everything need to be perfect in proportion? Could we, as teachers, be a little gentler at times when giving feedback, so it does not seem so negative? Does every outcome need to be ‘perfect’? Could we encourage our pupils to be a little more expressive and free, within what is meant to be a free, open self-expressive subject? Or is it that we, as teachers and artists, need to be a little more free, open and self-expressive ourselves?
JOSEPH CRITCHLEY

In an article published on 30 December 2016, The Guardian’s Education Editor Richard Adams described a simple scene which captured my imagination immediately. During a tour of a secondary school in North London, Adams and a group of other visitors witnessed a teacher insist that a student pick up a grape from the floor in a corridor. The student obliged, the tour resumed and the school’s headteacher continued with her manifestos, weaving the moment seamlessly into her speech.

‘Do you see that...?’ In other schools that would never happen. You’d never see a teacher ask a pupil to pick up a grape, because they’d get away.

But would they really, and would it really never happen in other schools? What does being able to get a student to pick up a piece of fruit really say about a teacher, or a school? It’s a simple ask to a student to pick up a grape, would they do it? What if a student asked me, would I? Could a high-ranking member of teaching staff ask an NQT to pick up a grape? What if the grape weren’t a grape, but a dead mouse or a squashed bit of half-eaten pizza?” I found myself looping the scene in my head repetitively, turning it over in my mind, and very quickly things started to get weird.

I wondered if anyone else had read the article and developed a mild obsession with the picking up of the grape. Days went by and my fixation festered uncomfortably. What if there were others? Perhaps elsewhere within the teaching community the story of ‘grape-gate’ had begun to pick up momentum?”

Migration

The last three weeks of my first placement allowed me to develop an exclusive project with a Year 9 class, based around the theme of ‘space and place’. During the first lesson the class and I discussed issues that they had come across when moving around the school, between two sites. Migration was brought up by a few pupils and the class decided to use this as the main theme to explore, which led them to identify issues associated with this topic, such as immigration, languages, transport, journeys, refugees and birds.

Pupils researched and took a great interest in El Anatsui, the Ghanaian sculptor whose work addresses a vast range of social and political concerns. Anatsui utilises a range of tools as well as developing new processes to produce his sculptures. By using found materials including bottletops, nails, and railway sleepers, the artist transforms cloth-like sculptures into complex assemblages with a distinctive visual impact, in order to interrogate the history of colonialism and draw connections between consumption, waste and the environment. Anatsui’s iconic bottletop ‘tapestries’ were a popular interest throughout the class and pupils were amazed by the transformation of simple discarded materials into beautiful installations.

In the second and third lesson, the class began creating sculptures in their groups. These related to the issues they had identified by using materials found within the art department and other areas of the school. During these lessons, a pupil from each group volunteered to ‘migrate’ around the room, to negotiate with other groups to take one item from each other’s table before returning to their own. Pupils were then able to add these ‘migrated items’ into their sculptures. The sculptures that the pupils produced developed into a boat, carrying several refugees and a language barrier which consisted of ten different languages that pupils had learned in school.

The result of this project meant that pupils could gain a greater knowledge of how artists address popular issues that have occurred, and are current around the world. The class worked collaboratively to learn and build on skills in relation to the space and places around them (inside and outside the classroom).

Would the students cotton on though? Maybe... Not in every school, but probably in some. Sixth Form art studios, the resentment would start to build into something tangible, from formless angst into the beginnings of an idea. The art teachers would think it was brilliant of course. ‘Ooh interesting... Okay, let’s talk about how this could work.’ Soon there would be piles of grapes on desks, bags of grapes hanging from ceilings, single grapes on plinths, fields of grapes on fake blood splattered sheets. It would be a health and safety nightmare. Maybe it would get properly out of hand? Students might start spray painting grape-like dots in cryptic patterns on public property, or meeting late at night to secretly create gigantic mountains of tiny green plasticine balls to dump later in a provocative location. Perhaps it would become a movement. ‘Grapism.’

Things were getting out of hand, but I couldn’t stop myself. I began to get genuinely excited about the potential of the grape as a sublime visual metaphor for the teacher/pupil/student relationship. The subtle distinctions between respect and fear, authority and tyranny. In a waking nightmare I pictured myself laden with arms piled full of grapes, staggering slowly about my business, sweating with nerves and exertion, full of fear and anxiety. I imagined the horror as I tripped as if in slow motion, losing my grip on 10 or 12 of my precious cargo. I watched distraught as they rolled away, at best forgotten, alone and beyond my reach, but just as likely crushed underfoot.
Supplement to Issue 3, 4 April 2017

ERRATUM

Many have taken issue with this issue. It has become a bit of an issue.
Please report any further issues to the nearest attendant.
We are dealing with the issue.

KATE BENTLEY

This is one of three publications, entitled Issue, that were published to accompany Occupation, a three-day event at Tate Exchange (April 2nd – 4th 2017). Occupation is the result of a collaborative project between the Institute of Education / University College London and Freelands Foundation, investigating Teaching as a Socially Engaged Artistic Practice.

Edited by Henry Ward

Exhibition and publication concept developed in discussion with a group of IoE / UCL PGCE students

HANNAH YATE
First Day at Secondary School
OCCUPATION

TATE EXCHANGE LEVEL 5, SWITCH HOUSE, TATE MODERN

1–5pm STENCILLED SPACE
Drop in family workshop with artist teachers Georgina Hodgson and Honor Pinner

2–5pm PARENTS’ EVENING
with artist teacher Jack Goffe and others

Southwark Room

1–2pm WHAT IS AN ART TEACHER?
PART III – PANEL DISCUSSION
Do we need Art Teachers?
Andy Ash, lecturer IoE/UCL (Chair) with Phil Scott, Head of Art at Brampton Manor School,
Prof. Richard Hickman, Cambridge University, Isabelle De Tscharner Vischer, PGCE Art Teacher,
Sorcha Tucker, PGCE Art Teacher,
George King, 6th Form student

2–3pm FILM REEL
Series of films made by current PGCE students, IoE/UCL
Student-Teacher by Lena Abbas
The Way Things Really Go by Catrin Andrews
Girls Will by Sam Golding
Gum-less by Jilly McAteer
MORE Designing, Less Dividing by Esther Wakelin-Stotten

3–4pm BUILDING LEARNING SPACES
PART III – TALK
Open School East
Anna Colin

4–5pm FILM REEL
Subtle, subversive, satirical
Alumni IoE/UCL PGCE Artist-teachers engage with education
Compiled by Lesley Burgess

5–6pm SCREENING
Fully Awake, directed by Cathryn Zommer (2009)

Tuesday 4 April