

Where Theory Belongs

Four Ways to Experience a Seminar in Contemporary Art

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This paper explores how the format of the seminar as used in contemporary art education is changing and the social, economic and political reasons for these changes. It will highlight these changes through examples of recent experimental approaches to presenting seminars to postgraduate fine art students attending Chelsea College of Art at both Tate Britain and Tate Modern with the Tate Research Center: Learning. Reference will also be made to historical art-educational programmes that have previously challenged models of education within the context of the seminar. The paper discusses how such seminars can evolve, how they can ‘look’, and how through their specific approaches, they can enable students to learn in exciting formats which offer a source of shared new knowledge construction.

Introduction

The value of a seminar in contemporary art is increasingly difficult to explain or indeed know. In most instances this is due to changing relationships between art, democracy, education steeped in capitalist agendas, pedagogy and new cultural forms of intellectual exchange. However, what is most notable is that the exchanges of a single authority in the delivery of a seminar, as historically and traditionally adopted, are questioned on a regular basis by staff and students. Such single authored practices have defined traditional pedagogic methods within social and cultural forms of instruction. New ways of accessing general knowledge and with it raised political awareness in both schools and universities, are now generating highly prized collective models for sharing ideas and furthering discourse for those in attendance. This is especially relevant when considering the changes to student numbers and staff resources, as witnessed in the last ten years across most universities dealing with the arts and humanities. Here students are recruited from increasingly diverse global backgrounds, the effect of which is to introduce variations upon what is expected from a seminar and can hopefully lead to uncharacteristic and critical understandings of what is being openly discussed and disseminated.

Such changes and expectations alongside student awareness and their utility of socially engaged art practices, increased modes of participation in non-specific art practices and altered perceptions of what constitutes contemporary art in the various neoliberal structures associated with art education, have resulted in the adoption of experimental approaches to knowledge-generation within the theory of contemporary art. A tenuous link with traditional models of the hierarchical seminar is subsequently stretched in the face of peer learning, collective

debate and online social media platforms. Steadily the autonomous nature of the learn-ed and learning individual is questioned, re-evaluated and distinctions co-opted or by-passed in new models. In other words, at the heart of these changes is a new type of learning interaction and a source of new shared knowledge construction. This offers exciting models of delivery, reception, live interaction, and critically moves the traditions of a seminar forward when applied innovatively to contemporary art theory.

The Post Master Seminar

The Post Master Seminar (PMS) series offers such an innovative platform. It is a programme that represents an experimental orthodoxy in relation to more conventional methods of learning art theory in a postgraduate seminar. During October-December 2014, the series involved a collaborative partnership with the MA Fine Art degree course at Chelsea College of Arts, University of the Arts London and Tate Research Centre: Learning, combining both Tate Britain and Tate Modern. The significance of this collaboration is founded not only geographically, as both Tate Britain and Chelsea College of Art are housed beside one and other at Millbank, but more importantly because both parties are united in discovering and charting new forms of learning and research for art communities in the future. As stated on the Tate Research Centre: Learning website, 'The Centre is co-created, conversational, speculative and propositional. It sees value in openness and risk and has creative practices at its centre.' ¹

During the first unit of the course (October to mid-December 2014), twelve Chelsea Alumni were selected and paid by the university to deliver three seminars in one day. In total, this resulted in the production of thirty-six seminars presented to the MA Fine Art students attending Chelsea during this period. Each seminar was conducted and delivered to pre-arranged groups of approximately fifteen students - in some cases more than this attended and in others less. In addition, Lana Locke an emerging artist and PHD student at Camberwell, Chelsea, Wimbledon (CCW) Graduate School generously assisted and committed her time in co-convening the seminars. Selected texts for reading were discussed and qualified with the postgraduate theory coordinator and uploaded as PDF's in a downloadable form online at the University in advance of the seminar starting date. What makes this process valuable to the students is that the files can be downloaded anytime during the course year. If for some reason a student is not able to attend a seminar, the selected material is available online throughout the course. Moreover the current technology available to students delivers improved access and centers towards a process of revision. Importantly, this is a recurring process of revision, paramount to contemporary student learning. It provides valuable resources available to be engaged with in a 'casual' mode of online engagement. In other words, such processes of revision construct new observations of research practice for the student that are often undefined in their purpose yet relate highly to artistic thought and production. The purpose of such revision permits processes of cognition and unconscious points of recognition to surface more meaningfully into practice, or rather the possibility to encompass new practices that may otherwise become ignored. Returning to revise this

material is also very supportive to students further down the course, when the submission of a critical research paper is required.

In preparation for the seminar the individual conducting it is asked to reflect on what constitutes the importance and significance of the selected texts in relation to furthering the activities of a professional art practice? What is the relationship of reading, writing and practice-based 'making and doing' within the subjects being discussed? What do these interrelated activities promise in the holistic production of theory and practice towards a developing process?

While reading texts proposes broadly philosophical, cultural and critically theoretical concerns - the emphasis is placed on how this material is activated, digested and made live to the students in a collective, creative and non-traditional seminar format. What sort of pedagogical practice does this activity incite in the chosen candidate presenting the seminar? In concentrating on these concerns, the assigned reading materials also support a current and historical basis for what defines a relationship to the theories of critical art practice. This supports and attests to the history of art (and diverse artistic practices) whilst reflecting on less obviously sufficient and undervalued transformative moments within the production of contemporary art. Within today's post graduate level of study it is necessary to fully acknowledge the present moment and critically engage with models of art practice that are meaningfully informed within their understanding of intercultural, post-aesthetic and socio-political relations.

The PMS programme proposes such distinctions and repositions the relevance of reading the selected texts as an exchange of core practice-based values of art production in a manner of meaningful group exposure and realisation. This includes being aware of how diverse the field of theory and seminar engagement has recently become, and also sets limits on authenticating theoretical readings from direct sources offline. In this respect the proposed subjects for reading are required to represent an objective balance of holistic relations to the theory and practice of the candidate conducting the seminar. This in turn validates the interdependence and interdisciplinary frameworks created by today's artists, that are models of peer-led contemporary art research and production, wherein the divisions of theory application, research-led practices, and practice-based initiatives are readily available considerations for all current art school students.

In attending the postgraduate course at Chelsea, students are advised from the outset to register the importance of 'self-direction' at this level of study. This includes informed reading, exploration of knowledge (with a solid reference to modern art history), allusion learning (that is, self-organised group discussions on specific subjects of interest), use of imagination and forming one's own philosophy, all as equal and essential in meeting the course requirements.

Whilst the format of open, non-expert discussion within a learning structure has been used successfully in various community groups, such as feminist consciousness-raising groups or other activist groups, the idea of

the non-expert becomes more problematised within educational institutions. Graduate and postgraduate art education is traditionally based on the notion of the expert (or master), the experienced artist, specialist or theorist - the practitioner visits an art school to give lectures, tutorials and run seminars while the courses and departments themselves are organised by employed expert pedagogues and specialist practitioners, etc. The career trajectories of influential art teachers are common knowledge in the EU. In countries such as Germany for example the art teacher is usually given the status of a professor and sometimes the phenomenon of a personality-cult might be associated with that person, where teaching and status meet. This history of the 'expert' is conflicted by a littered past comprising a one-sided view of male dominated art historical narratives. By contrast, in the case of the Independent Feminist Art Program set up in Fresno State College in the early 1970's, Judy Chicago and Miriam Shapiro along with several others, openly offered a critical turn in the history of gendered roles within art education. The Independent Feminist Art Program involved developing the central tenets of a feminist art practice that gave priority to acknowledging and instating what a feminist art practice holistically produced, questioned and creatively developed 'is'. In an interview with Tom Vandeputte and Sidsel Meineche Hansen Chicago claims the following distinctions in founding the first woman's studies department in 1970: 'I did this so it would be possible to begin to see women's art production and the history of woman's struggle for aesthetic freedom as separate from the tradition of male centered art making.'²

Further examples distinguished by new pedagogical circumstances, are equally synonymous with institutions of dispersed pedagogy that ideologically challenges education within universities and offer new cooperative forms of engagement. In an introductory catalogue essay written by Eugene Blume and Gabriele Knapstein for an exhibition titled: Black Mountain, the authors declare the following: 'Every successful praxis demands to be reproduced, especially if it carries the aura of utopia. The fact that Black Mountain College ³ was not born of some ideological leaders agenda, but was simply around-'not by design,' as Ed Dorn, the poet and student of Charles Olsen, said-may well be the key to understanding its success'.⁴

So how are we to accept and consider a recent graduate who delivers a seminar themselves, rather than in reference to the expert and experienced tutor? This is where I have favored multiple voices as essential to the idea of the current discursive seminar. In many respects, it is recent graduates who are at the cutting edge when it comes to producing new-knowledge and where as a consequence, different kinds of expertise are accounted for. PMS encourages not only young role models for students which in itself provides hope for the future (especially in the current economic climate) but also this provides the presenter with the opportunity to gain experience in leading with their knowledge whilst acquiring teaching methods and experience. In addition, the invitation for Alumni to participate presents them with a unique opportunity to critically reflect upon their own relation of theory and practice in an acknowledged world-leading context across both Tate sites. The ex-student independently conducts a seminar (in some cases for the first time) within the professional context of the Tate

seminar rooms housed in both Tate Britain and Tate Modern. In each case the individual chosen to present has recently completed a master's or undergraduate degree at Chelsea. The selection process was based on different criterion of artistic engagement, personality, intellectual pursuits, subject investments, critical awareness to cultural debates and communication interests within teaching. As a general guide the presenters were sent the following considerations:

'Where does art theory belong? Post Master Seminars will address some of the most influential methods of cultural production by returning art theory to recent graduates, emerging artists, cultural practices, producers, programmers, pedagogues, curators, writers and researchers who critically engage a self-determining public. What is meaningful art theory in relation to your art practice? Increasingly online evidence suggests a contemporary art writing that reproduces a tokenistic and theoretically unregulated process of discovery. Nevertheless, who provides accountability towards the status of contemporary art theory? What is theoretical responsibility? PMS is an experimental and rigorous platform that supports and exposes the very latest in emerging art theory practices that utilize new forms of self-questioning, evaluation and criticality. It reinstates further accountability towards the status of contemporary art theory. Post Master Seminars will provide a necessary platform to fully explore and engage the breath of such a status.⁵

In preparation for the seminar, several preliminary conversations supported and enhanced a convivial engagement towards the subject of theory. The program attempts to alter an attitude commonly associated with theory (as well as often associated with the lecturer of theory) as hierarchical, worthy, power struck and at times weighted with grand intellectual voices. PMS seminars convincingly deflect such attitudes in order to construct an application of theory that supports ordinary and non-exceptional pursuits alongside pragmatic exposures often found in moments of oversight, negligence, vulnerable life practices and peripheral memories.

In this respect, assembling inside Tate Britain and Tate Modern enabled all parties to focus on the subject at hand, since they were liberated from the expectations of college and a degree course. This in turn allowed the seminar to move beyond one institutional framework and safely expose the highly professionalised demands of highly accomplished artworks placed inside another more established institution. The diversity of the seminar rooms offered by the Tate was a strong influence on the experience of each seminar. In Tate Britain the rooms included both the Taylor Digital Studio and Duffield Room in the Clore Entrance and in Tate Modern, the McAulay Seminar Room and the Level 1 Seminar Room. In each case these rooms generate a specific influence on the process of discussion and internalisation. For example, in Tate Modern, the Level 1 Seminar Room is without windows and presents an endless sense of time. In Tate Britain, the Taylor Digital Studio offers the experience of luxury in a comfortable and relaxing environment of low-slung colourful sofas. It is technically and digitally well-resourced and with its floor to ceiling curtains, creates a colourful and enclosed division of space. The 'ready-to-

work', 'can-do' attitude of the rooms are both dynamic and advanced and very unlike the traditional art school experience of a seminar environment.

In this respect, it is helpful to reflect upon the context of each individual presenter. Both the presenter and the students become increasingly aware of this distinction in terms of the Tate collection itself, whereby the value and meaning of the artworks garners a different status and thus repositions collective thoughts. One of the privileges encountered when walking through both Tate buildings early in the morning, before the seminars begin and public start to enter, is that students become exposed to the vast passages of artworks displayed within the Tate site. The collection of objects, paintings and other works of art encountered during this period of the day is generally done so without any public spectators. Each still and silent section of the building engenders a feeling of respectful privacy, students walk quietly within them and the artworks deliver something resurgent in preparation for the day ahead. What makes this ambling journey very important is that it's purpose is directed towards a seminar room, and yet a counter-task is inadvertently offered which is to enable a glimpse at the artworks displayed, a glimpse that engages an experience totally aside from the focus or exercise of the day. The allusion of this task proceeds in simply looking at things as within 'allusion learning' and 'peer-learning'. Everyone does look - but we don't always learn from it.

Introducing the intimacy of such an engagement permits older hierarchies to move to the side, whereby students can actually begin to shed their unqualified ideas of art and begin to appreciate learning as a totalising process. This is well described in an article by K.J . Topping which states the following in relation to reciprocal tutoring in the educational community; '[...] since this enables all involved to function as both helper and helped, avoiding any social divisiveness according to perceived ability and status, and offering a richer apprenticeship for future involvement.'⁶ In other words, establishing non-hierarchical relations in a process of peer learning with critically engaged voices, will lead to involvement of individuals who might otherwise feel marginalised from a group's core and has the potential to generate a future of richer more inclusive cultural activity.

The seminar programme is instrumental in exposing a targeted and under resourced group of postgraduate students in contemporary critical practices. This programme explores processes of learning that work through hierarchical educational boundaries. It moves towards holistically integrated non-hierarchical, inclusive peer learning and allusion learning processes that open up an artist-led discourse of new knowledge. In addition, it also introduces a process of continuity and reception for the professional journey after graduation from the course. Central to the success of this series of seminars is the utilisation of postgraduate energy, collegial collectivity and engagements that reinforce the unstable practices of artistic development associated with risk, economic uncertainty and capitalist determinants of a post-studio era in the arts.

Collective forms of experimental, interdisciplinary and shared peer learning form the beginnings of exciting collaborations, such as those between Chelsea and the Tate. They generate new modes of peer-monitoring that

can insightfully prepare a postgraduate student community for the social realities of the art world and the untold successes that lie ahead. In addition, it enables Tate to reflect upon a set of contemporary opinions and attitudes of emerging artists for its own engagement with new and upcoming artistic modes of production.

Four Ways to Experience a Seminar in Contemporary Art, summarises the experience of four of the presenters who were asked to write about their individual seminars. These accompanying texts demonstrate in their own words, how each artists' process within the seminar supported their thinking and their practice, and details the experience of taking a lead in organising a seminar.

Four Ways to Experience a Seminar in Contemporary Art

(a.)

In the first case, Jennifer Hawkins who graduated with an MA in fine art from Chelsea in 2013 titled her seminar, *Return to Hickey's Dragon* and closely returned to various aspects on the theme of beauty. Jenny addressed how the subject of beauty is historically surrounded by controversy and how resistance to the subject of beauty is socially ascribed, recasting beauty as political power with a hidden agenda. She refers to a text by Dave Hickey, *Enter the Dragon: On the Vernacular of Beauty Chicago*, 1993 who discusses the agency of visual pleasure, doom and beauty's efficacy to inconsequence. Alongside this Jenny introduced the writing of: Elaine Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just*, Princeton, 1999. Scary is against beauty, it distracts and incites wrong social arrangements. For her, more directly significant to the visual field is the subject of 'staring', and how this is potentially destructive to the object.

A key concern arose during the seminar when Jenny asked whether the viewer felt closer to beauty or further away when walking in the Tate? In this relationship are you closer to the idea of God or to art history? This led to discussing the theme of market value in contemporary art and questions arose about whether artworks survive corruption and censorship and what the market values above art? What art appears to look like... as well as what it looks like does not indicate what it means. Lastly, Jenny returns to Scary and restates that radical content flourishes under market disinterest.

In support of this highly successful seminar, Jenny introduced quotes and images by artists who have addressed the theme of beauty. In each case Jenny illustrated the subject's relationship to beauty and the furthering of the subject into social, historical and cultural models of abstraction. However in presenting different artworks to make this clear, Jenny referred to a trans-historical view of beauty with different forms of expression and practice.

Perhaps the strongest discussion point within the seminar was highlighted when the students' attempted to actively respond - it was during these tense moments that the struggle to contain the subject of beauty was well documented and returned Jenny to the beginning of the seminar whereby she stated how this subject remains continually controversial. The informal and steady influx of artworks and images alongside established artist thoughts on the subject of beauty creatively generated allusion learning within a group discussion. The

unassuming non-hierarchical delivery of the presenter (in this case Jenny) deflated any sense of intellectual uncertainty and generated a collective confidence to debate the subject in a highly productive form.

(b.)

Lana Locke titled her seminar *Power Relations, the Art Object and the Space*. Lana is working on a PhD by practice at Chelsea and used this opportunity to explore in a live setting her field of research titled: *The Agonistic struggle of the art object against the space in which it is installed*. As noted in her text below she 'took the stance that critique of the institute represented positive engagement, and considered the idea of consensus within the art institute as unproductive and in need of disturbance.' Her seminar involved a model of pedagogical instruction that adopted a positive use of conflict debate as well as presenting specific knowledge to the students in attendance. She chose two texts from Chantal Mouffe: 'Artistic Activism and Agonistic Spaces', *Art and Research - A Journal of Ideas, Contexts and Methods*; Vol 1. No.2 Summer 2007 and Griselda Pollock: 'Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity' in *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art*, London, 1988. She began with a divisive thought regarding the workings of power by immediately asking the students during the walk to the Taylor Digital Studio in Tate Britain to please look at the signage surrounding the Tate rooms. Secondly, she asked the female students to form a circle in the Taylor Digital Studio and left the response of the male student's open – immediately attempting intimacy and the potential for agonism through division. One could sense where this strategy was leading and yet while there was a nod towards patriarchy... this moved the attention from power to the question of what do I as a woman have as a role in contemporary art? This led to a personal declaration regarding 'agonism' which relates to a text Lana wrote before her recent marriage and read out to the students, and how agonism is a way in which to think about differences and power relations within the institution.

The chronological hang of the permanent collection – a controversially discussed decision by the curator and recent departed director of Tate Britain, Penelope Curtis – was discussed with great attention to the successes or failings of a gallery or museum archiving history. The inventiveness of the chronological hang was felt in one seminar to positively alter the reading of history and counter the political and social understandings that define those periods. Such concerns led to funding cuts in the UK that are often discussed by students evoking much discontent.

Lana performed her task with great awareness, assurance and dexterity towards the fragility of the subject requirements represented in Mouffe's agonism. The splitting of gender relations that Lana asked the students to perform, skillfully demonstrated through their own performances, what agonism is. Through participation Lana's method of 'allusion learning' highlighted what issues agonism has the potential to raise within the wider historical context of art history, contemporary culture, gender relations and current political concerns within contemporary art. The students participated in a seminar that imaginatively ignited the notion of why a range of discussions are

essential to the production of art, especially given the challenge of immediate peer disconnectivity where an ongoing process of learning and development is hard to sustain. In setting up a physical duality, which led the students to feel agonised, this seminar essentially provoked a wider discussion on agonism and the gendered power relations in art.

(c.)

Terry McCormack is an artist that graduated from Chelsea in 2001 with a undergraduate degree in fine art, he titled his seminar: *To Intimate; Awkwardness & Camp*. Terry introduced a slide projection with images taken from an exhibition *Notes of Neo Camp*, Studio Voltaire, London, June-July 2013 curated by Chris Sharp and *Last Seen Entering the Biltmore*, South London Gallery, London, June-September 2014 curated by Anna Gritz.

In referring very clearly to Susan Sontag's seminal essay, *Notes On Camp*, Terry included five key texts to read: (1.) Lauren Berlant, 'Intimacy' *Critical Inquiry*, vol 24, No 2. 1998.(2.) 2. Susan Sontag, *Notes on Camp, Against Interpretation*, New York, 1966 (3.) Douglas Crimp, *Boring Camp, Our Kind of Movie*, MIT Press, 2012 (4.) Felix Gonzalez Torres & Robert Storr (Interview), ArtPress, 1995 (5.) Sasha Torres, *Caped Crusader of Camp, Pop Out; Queer Wahol*, Duke Press, 1996.

Terry's seminar introduced recent queer theories with a distinct concern regarding the suitability (or not) of the institutionalisation of queer theory within contemporary cultural art practices. In re-reading Susan Sontag and her complex relationship to photography, this seminar introduced a rolling exhibition of projected slides alongside playing a sound track from Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. The seminar presented a highly engaged and informed study on queer/LGBTQ history that culminated with a discussion on queer aesthetics. Terry examined in detail where Sontag's text might fit in a present day context. In addition, highlighting the multiple associations that adopt 'camp' as a term, beginning with how the word 'camp' names and connects to the idea of the disowned. He then introduced some ideas from Roland Barthes' text *Mythologies*, 1957 (Sontag borrowed from this work) such as semiotics, national identities, marginal notes, numbered points, shortened essays, holding a phrase or form, sincerity and how the sincere voice has changed so much in recent history. Thus indicating a shift in the culture of camp and demonstrating a clearer understanding of the term 'neo camp'. While the word camp was discussed as an elevated intellectual term, this seminar proposed a more intimate and delicate association. Curiously, it was revealed through discussion how unfamiliar students were with the notion of camp and this led to further discussion on the subject of marginality alongside the history of LGBTQ visibility. Terry managed to reveal new knowledge to the students through a non-hierarchical approach to discussion and through the inclusivity of discussing a marginalised field, which by association, lead to a strong sense of inclusivity within the student group, whilst also combining this with a clear and detailed history of LGBTQ studies. The history of queer studies is currently expanding, which is important given the acknowledged and documented invisibility of the subject in the past.

This seminar moved swiftly through a complex history of community estrangement into a highly engaged present day relationship of 'camp' imbued as a form of nostalgia and critical debate. A key question surfaced which was whether we are living in a period of added camp? (Warhol's added camp was noted in relation this) In addition, *Notes on Neo Camp* curated by Chris Sharp was shown on slide projection and raised a discussion on whether the exhibition title is intentionally apolitical or rather recuperating alternative values on camp. This seminar offered students the opportunity to engage with a practice that highlighted the importance of complex, thorough research and life experience. The seminar itself produced an intimate environment and context through which to explore anti-normative strategies associated with queer understandings and public exposure.

(d.)

Milena Michalski completed her masters in fine art at Chelsea in 2014 and titled her seminar: *Taking shots with guns, cameras and in the dark: on research-based art practice*. This seminar stems from a research background in war crime sites and Milena's experiences dealing with victims of family loss in conflict war crime areas. In focusing on the complexity of conflict and how this is manifest politically, personally and practically as unexplained and obscured, Milena addressed several key examples of this process through artworks in video and photography. In each example, Milena reclaims the undocumented and the invisible in order to discuss problems of representation, sensitive articulation and the use of war related imagery.

We read and looked at three artworks beginning with: Richard Hamilton's print *On Kent State, 1970* [7](#); Adela Jusic, *The-Sniper* posted by Alessandra Ferrini (Mnemoscape in moving images, THE ARCHIVE 19/06/2013) which was supported by a large projection in the Taylor Digital Studio Tate Britain; and lastly we discussed Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin's, *The Day Nobody Dies*, 2008 a photograph on display in the *Conflict, Time, Photography* exhibition, Tate Modern, London, November 2014-March 2015.

Key questions arose from three very different works of art relating to war imagery, ranging from a work by Richard Hamilton about the shootings at Kent State University which addresses the treatment of memorialising or censoring a statement too terrible to submit to 'arty treatment'. Adela Jusic's fascinating artwork about her father, an experienced sniper in the Bosnian Army who was shot dead in 1992, which raises the issue of how personal material occupies the field of catharsis in making, living and restoring memories. This video work articulates the death of Jusic's father being shot by another sniper, from the mindset of his daughter, while his diary is read aloud and describes how many individuals (each numbered) have been killed each day whilst on duty. Lastly and by way of contrast, the artwork by Broomberg and Chanarin's takes an exposed in-vivo roll of photographic paper as a witness to war. This artwork offers a critique of traditional forms of conflict representation, embedded in the photographic process of war-image production. The photographic outcome which is a darkened exposure on paper denies the viewer the cathartic effect of the conflict as seen for example in traditional genres of war photography. It is merely indexical, just a piece of paper. Questions arose as to whether Broomberg and

Chanarin's work prioritises a process of conceptual discovery above any heartfelt criticality. Do such processes authentically question the very purpose of war and conflict as a vehicle for critical debate? As noted by Milena from the outset of her excellent seminar; what is it to be in the front line? To bear witness to war?

Seminar Descriptions

a. Jennifer Hawkins: Return to Hickey's Dragon

In this case study I will reflect upon a seminar I presented for the Post Masters Seminar (PMS) programme hosted at Tate. When I was invited by Stephen Wilson to be a part of PMS, the brief was 'an experimental approach to teaching art theory....you will decide where art theory belongs'. For me, theory belongs in my own research, a contemporary perspective into beauty. To prepare for the seminar I first concentrated on the two texts I would use to declare my research interests these were: Dave Hickey, *Enter the Dragon: On the Vernacular of Beauty Chicago*, 1993 and Elaine Scarry Elaine Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just*, Princeton, 1999. These texts would give me the accountability on which to base my seminars.

I used Hickey's inaugural text because I felt it would open up possibilities for re-thinking the position of beauty within post-modernity. Using Hickey's text as a starting point in the revival of the re-thinking of beauty and how it can be reclaimed in a contemporary context. The second text I chose was from the scholar of language and ethics Elaine Scarry, she not only takes up the revival of beauty but asserts that the complaints against beauty are incoherent. She writes with such authority that beauty is innocent and that its banishment was unfair due to the fact it is entomologically linked to fairness and justice. Having chosen both texts I devised my short statement to set out my position and intentions for the seminar. My statement is as follows: Since Modernity and the Enlightenment the critique of beauty is fraught with cultural anxieties and political complaints against it. Some see this politicisation as a loss made good. However, can we give up on the language of visual effect, or on finding visual pleasure within an artwork, on taste! We cannot return to the beauty of the past, nor can we ignore the suspicion that it is always inevitably socially inscribed. I suggest that instead of avoiding or resisting the experience of beauty within art, like the modernist avant-garde of the past, to not see beauty as a thing or an object but as unfixated and ever changeable. In this seminar I want to think about how beauty affects every artist's practice, if there's a decision to reject beauty for ugliness, is it used as a purely private and subjective experience or is it embraced fully and celebrated?

I used my statement and texts not just to declare my research interests, I also had other agendas in relation to the statement I had sent to the students. I wanted to get a reaction from them. In my opinion Beauty is a controversial subject and by presenting these seminars I hoped to gain some up-to-date knowledge on how people reacted when faced with the rejoinder of this subject and if they even feel it is worth a rejoinder. I used the seminar as a platform for experimentation as to how strong my own position and views were in relation to a revival of beauty.

In preparation for the seminar I decided to structure it so that I had a certain amount of control over how the discussion would proceed. I always start seminars by introducing myself and then ask the students to do the same in turn and explain what their practices are concerned with. This constitutes as a good ice breaker for the seminar to begin. I then continued with a short history of beauty; concentrating on its development through Modernism to the present. I found this useful to set up a criticality towards the subject; for example beauty's status before Modernism was that beauty and art were thought of as belonging together with beauty as art's principle investigation and aim. However, since modernity beauty's relationship has become estranged from art due to the fact that the critique of beauty has changed. Beauty no longer stands for itself instead it stands in for objectionable conceptual frameworks. Avant-gardism took this up and recast beauty as concealing political power and hidden agendas. Beauty is no longer subjective but controversial. I wanted to highlight the controversy surrounding beauty and carried this through to the quotes I picked out from the texts. Finally I prepared some quotes taken from different artists on their views on beauty. With these positions I hope to emphasise that beauty is a contested category for instance Alex Katz ⁸ and Agnes Martin celebrate beauty whereas an artist like Robert Rauschenberg declares aesthetics to be banal and faded.⁹

However, no matter how much I prepared the seminars, they were always different and I tried to be flexible in my delivery to suit the group. The first seminar I presented was to a small group so it was quite intimate. I felt like I could concentrate on each student and get more from them on their views. When I introduced the quotes from known artists I seemed to stir up more enthusiasm from the group, this may be because they could relate to the artists or may be due to the fact I included a visual of their artworks to accompany the quotes. So, for the second seminar I decided I would allow more time on the quotes which worked better for the flow of the seminar. For the final seminar I had to move my group from Tate Britain back to Chelsea College. I did not find this to be a hindrance but it seemed to give the seminar an extra level. It was poignant due to the issues I raised within Hickey's text.

If I did the seminars again I would experiment with emphasising our position within the institution and maybe exploit our location further. I would ask the students to keep in mind whilst walking through the gallery how Hickey explores the banishment of beauty carried out by the intellectuals and elitists in museums and universities and how we should take beauty back. He states that they are carrying out the assault of beauty with their position as shadow government. He compares these institutions to Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon where Bentham sets up his warden to carry out constant surveillance. Bentham warden cares, 'He has no wish to punish the offender, merely to reconstitute the offender's desire under the sheltering discipline of perpetual, covert, societal surveillance in the paternal hope that, like a child, the offender will ultimately internalize that surveillance as a 'conscience' and start controlling himself as a good citizen.'¹⁰ He continues to state that we are 'such obedient children of the Panopticon', we have internalised this surveillance and have sided with the institution. Walking

through the hallowed halls of the Tate suited this line of discourse and hopefully helped the students think about their own practices position in relation to the institutions 'umbrella of care'.¹¹

Answering the question where does art theory belong? I feel that my seminars use art theory as their foundation and it weaves itself into the whole experience of the day. I feel that the location of the seminars helped the line of enquiry the seminars took. The seminars are a productive process; I was able to evaluate my own position in relation to my research and had new views in how I could develop and go forward. I hope the students find the seminars as useful as I do presenting them. I still feel my delivery could be stronger and I would like to find a way of making the texts more accessible in the way the artist quotes seem to be. However I feel this is only achieved through evaluation and learning from the seminars

b. Lana Locke : Power Relations, the Art Object and the Space

My approach to theory in the context of my practice and delivering this PMS seminar has been to find theories that strike a chord with what is already going on in the art practice, seeking not to define the practice, but to articulate some part of what it is seeking to achieve, as well as inspiring new ideas.

My practice-based PhD at Chelsea College of Arts, currently titled *The Agonistic struggle of the art object against the space in which it is installed*, is concerned with the power relations influencing the art space and how the art object can have a more active, critical role in relation to the space. The PMS Seminar enabled me to put my research interests into practice by testing them in a group dialogue context.

I sought to engage the students through two short readings. My first reading, Chantal Mouffe 'Artistic Activism and Agonistic Spaces', *Art and Research - A journal of Ideas, Contexts and Methods*; Vol 1. No.2 Summer 2007 provided a background to my interest in agonism as a combative artistic strategy within the space. The second, 'Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity' in *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art*, London, 1988, was neither in agreement nor opposition to the first reading, but provided a completely different means of reading art's relation to the space, and specifically the work of Modernist female artists and their more subtle disruption and subversion of the space through painting.

The experimental platform of the PMS seminar allowed me to develop a teaching strategy for delivery that brought out the thrust of these texts as I activated and performed what I saw as the key points. In tandem, this gave me the opportunity to highlight the issues for a proportion of the students who I knew would not have read the texts provided in advance.

Agonism is a political theory that focuses on the value of conflict - rather than harmony - within democracy and seeks to channel political conflict positively. Throughout the seminar I therefore took an agonistic approach in seeking to challenge the space we were in through our discussion and to challenge each participant to take an active part in contributing to the group. Having completed my own MA in Fine Art at Chelsea College of Arts only two years previously, I was acutely aware of the power relations that can operate within a group learning format,

such as the tendency for more vocal students to dominate and the quieter less forceful students to stay silent or only offer points of agreement. Likewise, I encouraged the students to embrace the PMS format where as a recent graduate I was on a more level playing field with them and that rather than acting as a voice of authority, what I said could be challenged too. It was however useful to exert this authority when needed, to quiet the dominant voices in the group and bring out the reticent ones.

I performed the power relations of the second feminist reading by instructing all women to sit in one section of the room and all men to sit wherever they wished, or wander around as they pleased. Through this stark set up I sought to bring to life Pollock's reflection on the spaces of Modernity which remained closed to women, as well as to consider how 'Modernity is still with us, ever more acutely' ¹² and whether contemporary female artists continue to be disadvantaged in the art world. It was interesting to discover how the groups responded to this instruction. In one group all the male members sat in solidarity with the female ones. In another they were far more aloof and in the third they challenged the idea of gender and suggested that if someone did not subscribe to either gender then I would be putting them in a difficult position with this instruction. This led to a more engaged discussion where I was able to elaborate on the feminist position as a minority position that was not specifically female. The Pollock text illustrated how productive a minority position could be artistically.

In addition to the texts, I brought in the space of the Tate as a third spur for the discussion. I asked the students to reflect on the act of an art college holding a seminar in a museum institute and whether this represented a smooth transition between one and another or whether there was something more agonistic even in this exchange. Were we able to take on an active role in relation to either institute and if so, where were the opportunities to engage? I gave some examples of my own installations of art objects within, between and outside of the institutes and other artists' strategies for challenging the space. I took the stance that critique of the institute represented positive engagement, and considered the idea of consensus within the art institute as unproductive and in need of disturbance. This extended to the consensus within curation and art represented as a cohesive display. I pointed out the BP logos that were visible on many of the gallery walls in Tate Britain and the *BP Walk through British Art*, which when challenged by the Griselda Pollock reading became immediately flawed as we thought of the myriad of artists who did not fit into that narrative. A further point for discussion was then the value of art and our role as art practitioners if we did not become recognised or financially successful and what it meant to fail.

By taking on this active role in performing the group discussion, the format of repeating the seminar three times over the course of a day with three different groups of students highlighted the need to be adaptable to the responses of the groups and to how quickly or slowly they grasped and responded to the issues discussed.

Across the groups, I learned that when I put the work in to push for contributions from those who had remained silent, they would invariably have very valuable points to make. This rewarded my interpretation of the agonistic

approach as a teaching method. Whilst it would not always be appropriate to take such a confrontational approach in all scenarios, I have continued to find it helpful in subsequent teaching situations to adopt an oppositional stance to ingrained views within a group, or where a group consensus appears to prevent experimentation or critical thinking.

The experimental platform of the PMS format is very valuable for testing new approaches to theory and practice and I would enjoy devising new strategies of engagement for a future seminar.

c. Terence McCormack: To intimate, Awkwardness & Camp

As an artist, whose work is often engaged with the politics of sexuality, I approached this discussion with the students on the MA programme at Chelsea College of Art, principally about how identity politics are re-shaped and re-evaluated as cultural markers of the last quarter of a century. I started with Susan Sontag's Notes on "*Camp*", *Against Interpretation*, 1966. Camp, as a term, has increasingly dwindled from academic usage and was more commonly being used as a tool to cover a wider, even generic, spectrum of art practice - notably in exhibitions such as *Notes of Neo Camp*, Studio Voltaire, London, June-July 2013. I led the group to consider how sexuality is often informed by politics of the time and how this has been reflected in exhibitions that have adopted and developed camp to demonstrate the evolving shapes that define the term and how it has 'rubbed up' against visual and linguistic shifts and styles. I also wanted to play with the dialectic of how the contemporary appropriation of even recent 'historical' terminology, such as Sontag's 'camp', can adapt or belie original arguments in favour of another one, but also how this can be grappled with, be it the interface of academia, art institution, archivist or the role of an artist.

A key point to the talk was the position of how to construct or create a framework about awkwardness (the group were given selected texts before the discussion), one of the texts that I thought expanded this idea included Lauren Berlant's 'Intimacy' *Critical Inquiry*, vol 24, No 2. 1998, an essay that discusses the force of normativity onto the private sphere. Calibrating the efforts made often 'painful, contorted', by those outside a patriarchal, non-reproductive structure; search for and invariably have to 'adapt' models of intimacy from the dominant codes that circulate out of a familial, patriarchal society. Berlant argues, that this bears a direct assault onto relationships misaligned from this value, often painfully situated across unstructured social and political levels. This awkwardness between the self and the social, I wanted to provoke as an argument between where the choice of that expression can be afforded or made. In thinking especially of the historical shifts of that expression and how that later is archived or repeated as an artistic code.

'How can we think about the ways attachments make people public, producing trans-personal identities and subjectivities, when those attachments come from within spaces as varied as those of domestic intimacy, state policy, and mass mediated experiences of intensely disruptive crises? And what have these formative encounters

to do with the effects of other, less institutionalised events, which might take place on the street, on the phone, in the fantasy, at work, but rarely register as anything but residue?' [13](#)

In considering the intimate as containing a force of optimism formed principally from threats outside of this bond. Where and how this trauma is occasioned and how can it be expressed is of interest in the formation of the coding and social efforts of camp within the gay community at the time of Sontag's writing. The discussion ran chronologically seeking to contextualise the history around Susan Sontag's 1964 paper *Notes on "Camp"* and how it continues to be of relevance to visual thinking. Starting with how Roland Barthes' *Mythologies* from 1957 had influenced Sontag's approach to the essay form, I wanted to consider the essay's background – one that is specifically pre-internet. I also pursued the lineage of how gender and sexuality has become a central pivot to reading *Notes on "Camp"*, a position that differentiates itself from Barthes essay in both its openness (and also blasé) to gay cultural codes and sexual vernaculars, and perhaps more broadly, identity as a vehicle for ways of interpretation. The essay became synonymous with the emergent seam of Pop Art that predominated practices in the US and to some extent the UK. Pop Art exemplified how everyday materials provided a rich surface to be redeployed with ambiguity and affect, often signalling the hegemonic and patriarchal values embedded in design and form.

'I am strongly drawn to camp, and almost as strongly offended by it. That is why I want to talk about it, and why I can. For no one who wholeheartedly shares in a given sensibility can analyse it; he can only; whatever his intention, exhibit it. To name a sensibility, to draw its contours and to recount its history requires a deep sympathy modified by revulsion.' [14](#)

The pop that is considered in Douglas Crimp's essay *Boring Camp, Our Kind of Movie, The Films of Any Warhol*, Cambridge, 2012, takes in the double aspect of both Sontag's subsequent boredom in the endless discussion of camp – she its figurehead – and Warhol's use of time, duration and of principally boredom in his work. How the elevation of the banal and the everyday, provoked a lethargy rather than outrage as in previous modern movements is of interest to Warhol's use of filmic time as much as his recasting of material directly. The position of the urban and indifferent, blasé and jaded became pivots central to the urban and the sophisticated though ultimately predicated in how enjoyment, interest, liking could be made or found. Indeed, how these allies of disinterest mark the surface of camp's interpretation, one that potentially belie the serious intent, create a shadow onto which Terry Castle and Crimp both turn camp into an elusive term, often reductively situated as a social 'pop' commentary of an era.

'[Warhol].. sought expansion - 'liking things' - not by constructing fantasy worlds but through a single-minded attentiveness to the world as he found it.' [15](#)

Picking up on the social role of camp, the discussion covered Sasha Torres's essay 'Caped Crusader of Camp' [16](#) and how popular culture at large was almost inured to the flagrant send up of masculinity, as made

example in the 1960s US TV series, *Batman*, as one that was more 'swish', than 'thwack'. Camp also became a term became associated to adolescence and fantasy constructs, as revealed in Sigmund Freud's *Family Romances*.¹⁷ Considering the popularisation of camp and how camp became denigrated and possibly feared by association became a key part of the discussion. Especially in the rise of civil rights of race and sexuality through the 1970s and the Stonewall riots ¹⁸ as a cultural flashpoint moment, pointed to 'camp' as a reduced, homophobic term, this was discussed in relation to Lauren Berlant's essay *Intimacy*. The discussion considered the later ramifications of the AIDS crisis and how artists particularly those involved with *Group Material*¹⁹ often redeployed iconic dangerously 'status quo' and nostalgic images of American culture to usurp its power and to reveal the ignorance of an epidemic fuelled by prejudice. How these altered and transgressed the formative language of camp as a political identity was discussed. How these politics of that time compare directly to a now coined post-AIDS's western landscape is one that I wanted to consider in relation to the exhibition *Notes of Neo Camp* devised by Chris Sharp.

'This is why *Notes on Neo-Camp* becomes such a compelling alternative and serviceable post-homosexual mode and metaphor for art, in the sense that Victorianism can now be seen as a metaphor for art - it moors camp from its provenance in homosexual culture, while nonetheless exploiting its bond to artifice and artificiality. Indeed that is why this work seems so ambiguously ironic; not due to ambivalence, but due to a certain tendency towards creating deliberate compounds of sublimation and de-sublimation. Both pre and post structuralist, these works seek to affirm a fully self-aware 'erotics of interpretation'. ²⁰

Notes on Neo-Camp, an exhibition curated by Chris Sharp, looked at the latest developments of the term 'camp'. Sharp extended the use of Sontag's deliberate stress on style over content. Sharp thereby arguing a new self-conscience play, predicated around the urbanite or dandy as construct. The play between effete and sexual politics thereafter became a central discussion to the group. How these constructs of neo-camp refer to the widening historical value of the term and its place in an economic downturn. The discussion looked at reviews and feedback from the show, also the works individually, to reconsider the term and any historical lessons available in these contemporary practitioners' methodologies. The talk also looked at the sophistication of identity politics as a format to play out the amalgamation of history in the present, looking at artists such as Henrik Olesen and Ryan Trecartin as those whose practices further the complex relationship of identity politics and sensibility across widening media. How these refer back to Sontag and her revision of *Mythologies* and playing with structure and the imposition of self onto mass media was how the discussion ended. Though how this looping in effect often veers into established and hegemonic codes was crucial to the students and how the modes of interpretation are set aside in intimacy.

Straddling between theory and practice, I wanted to engage the group through being 'camp', or allowing 'camp' to enter the room. Inspired from Sontag's writing and her personae, I made a roughly assembled 35mm slideshow

presentation to begin the seminar. The slides were black and white photocopied portraits I found of Sontag herself, which were projected large on to the wall with the tape recorder playing Verdi's 19th-century opera Macbeth. I chose this opera, as 19th Century opera is cited by Sontag as an example of camp. Further reading of this opera, noted how the witches central to the story occupy a hokey, slightly obvious physical movement of being ordinary and impersonating the supernatural. I wanted the simple pairing of iconic images of Sontag with the high dramatic content of Verdi's opera to unsteady the discussion, in how the students had prepared for a seminar as trope within the institution. I also wanted to expand how they as practitioners could use theoretical strands of thinking, to actually develop separate works that can open up ways for them to reconsider the importance and value of that theory. In terms of how I would develop later talks and events, I would consider these creative aspects essential in how to deliver a paper, or present a discussion. How they can allow a break in expectation and encourage students to participate, I think is potentially vital in allowing students access to various ways into discussing the subject. How the subject can lead into and develop alongside a student with differing interests I have found a key way to access a teaching methodology

d. Milena Michalski, Taking Shots with Guns, Cameras and in the Dark: On Research-Based Art Practice

The aim of this seminar was to explore how theory can inform how we engage with what we see, how we interpret visual, verbal or other information that is not always clearly contextualised, and how types of representation or abstraction can – or should – allow the artist and viewer see things in fresh ways. The thematic focus was conflict, and photography provided a material focus.

My own practice has explored light and photographic methods in relation to war and war crimes, always dealing with questions of how to make the invisible visible, how to draw attention to particular issues, and what should remain obscure, unstated, and invisible. This last nexus of issues is especially important regarding the use of very personal material, which I have sometimes used in my work. Broadly, the seminar considered the use of war-related imagery in art and the ways this is mediated in various practices. How is such imagery used: to shock, provoke thought, inspire action, or as a form of witnessing and catharsis. The seminar was intended to be, and proved to be, participatory, and students extended the debate beyond the initial examples, as I had hoped they would.

To achieve this aim I took three works, from different periods in different media with contrasting theoretical underpinnings but with conflict and violence as a linking theme, and used these as a springboard for discussion. The three works were: Richard Hamilton, *On Kent State*, 1970; Adela Jušić's *Sniper* 2007; Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin's, *The Day Nobody Dies*, 2008 that was part of *Conflict, Time, Photography*, Tate Modern, London. In addition, I discussed my own practice in relation to these works. The common threads of conflict as subject and photographic material permitted comparative reflection on the temporal, medial and theoretical

differences in addition to how these issues have informed and played out in my own experience and practice.

The approach served to challenge the seminar participants, including me – to surprise ourselves, to engage critically with no preconceived outcome. As a result, everyone had a chance to think in ways that they may not have considered before.

Each of the works discussed is linked thematically to conflict and violence, and materially to photography in some form hence the dual sense in which 'shots' is used – with 'guns' and 'cameras'. The 'shot in the dark' concept reflects the questions and dilemmas of interpretation surrounding the creation of an artwork, image or statement: how much should an artist explain? How much should the viewer infer? How much should be made explicit and how much left unsaid? Many theories come into play in seminar discussion, from engagement and activism as an artist or spectator to the appropriation of imagery and the use of abstraction or documentary approaches.

Hamilton's was the first work discussed. In the 1970s Richard Hamilton used his camera to shoot TV images of the news in search of a subject for his work. This random approach captured 'by chance' what Hamilton labelled 'the most powerful images that emerged from the camera.' Yet, he 'felt a reluctance to use any of them' or to 'submit' this terrible incident 'to arty treatment.' However, he felt it was right to bear witness 'to keep the shame in our minds' and that 'the wide distribution of a large edition print might be the strongest indictment I could make.' ²¹ The salience of Hamilton's print was both reinforced and questioned by one participant who noted that the clothing company Urban Outfitters had sold a T-Shirt with the print and blood splatter – confirmation of its effectiveness and reach on one level but also of comment-free banality of the image. Another participant was inspired to discover the great Pop artist's work and how the image was made.

The Jušić film starts with a hand drawing a red circle on a white piece of paper. There is no sound. This image is gradually superimposed by a black and white photo of a man, the red circle grows until it covers the man's right eye, taking on the appearance of a target. A female voice lists days and 'items' from a diary, concluding with 'December the 3rd: My father the sniper, was shot by a sniper, into his right eye.' This was Jušić's father, a sniper, and the diary is an inventory of his victims. The filmmaker's treatment of such personal material received criticism for leaving certain facts unstated; she felt she could not show the piece to her family, yet felt she had to make it. Jušić was not interested in taking sides in the war in Bosnia; in this piece she presented events from the viewpoint of a daughter, a witness to the destruction of war, suggesting that every casualty, regardless of ideology or 'side', is a person with a tragic story. Theoretical (and ethical) questions arise from this, including those of catharsis, the portrayal of suffering, the use of (auto-) biographical material, and of form and content. This piece contrasts well with Hamilton's in authorial intent, in reception, in medium, in levels of political engagement and in aspects of performativity. Yet at the centre of both is an image of a man who has been shot, one depicted as he is being shot, the other shot after the image was taken, yet symbolically also as the film

unfolds. The dispute over Jušić's judgement/absence of judgement regarding her father, or on the war provoked reflection in seminar on the essential question of whether artists should pass judgement at all.

The third work I introduced was Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin's, *The Day Nobody Dies*, 2008. In June 2008, the artists travelled to Afghanistan to be embedded with British Army units on the front line in Helmand Province, posing as photojournalists. Instead of taking a camera, they transported a roll of photographic paper 50 meters long and 76.2 cm wide contained in a simple lightproof cardboard box. In response to each event that would typically be recorded and disseminated by news media, as well as more mundane moments such as a visit to the troops by the Duke of York and a press conference, they unrolled a seven-metre section of the paper and exposed it to the sun for 20 seconds. They were not 'concerned with what the images looked like, as long as they were different, the important thing was that the paper was physically in that place, bearing witness'.²² This abstracted form of bearing witness, in their theory, denies the viewer 'the cathartic effect offered up by the conventional language of photographic responses to conflict and suffering; raising questions about authenticity as opposed to reproducibility.' The result is a roll of coloured paper, which is 'purely indexical'. This piece evoked the strongest and most dynamic responses among seminar participants. Some responded very strongly to the idea of the artist as 'witness', challenging 'formalism' and apparently 'removing the appearance of subjectivity' (in the words of one participant). Others, reacted in contrasting fashion, whether wanting to avoid any contact with conflict, believing it should be more concretely depicted, or seeing subjectivity as displaced, or put in a different place rather than removed. We touched on ideas of post-conceptual art.

Finally, I introduced personal concerns over how much autobiographical material I might use, how much explanation should be offered, and how much can be abstracted or left open to interpretation. The ways other artists deal with these questions and theorise them are relevant to my practice and research, where there is often a small trigger such as a fragment of an image or a phrase that leads to a larger project through a process of empirical experimentation. I do not know or plan the outcome firmly in advance, but see where things take me. It was interesting to see how different students responded, what a wide variety of approaches they have and how nationality (and different educational systems) can be a strong factor in how people respond.

I think the group benefitted from my delivery as a multi-faceted speaker: as a recent MA Fine Art graduate at Chelsea, and having overlapped as a student with some of the current students on the course, working as a practising artist but also as someone with a background in academia, I was able to pitch the discussions at different levels at different moments as appropriate. The seminar could be improved by insisting that all the students read the material first and comment on it, as I had the impression that many had not read it before the seminar which is why I took care to read it out.

The repetition of the seminars was extremely useful. I initially presented my chosen images and gave a lot of context. In the second and third seminars, I left more open at the start and was guided more by student response

in terms of the direction we took next. With each successive group, I could incorporate responses and ideas and theories raised earlier and also take the discussion further in certain directions. It is both draining and exhilarating to do three consecutive seminars on the same material in one day. I was also encouraged by the discussions that ensued in the initial seminar and was less self-effacing about my own work in the later ones, realising that there was genuine interest in my work.

Notes

- 1.Tate Research Centre: Learning website, accessed 10th July
2015: <http://www.tate.org.uk/research/research-centres/learning-research/about>
- 2.Sidseleine Meineche Hansen and Tom Vandeputte (Eds.), *Politics of Study*, London, 2015
- 3.Black Mountain College is continually referenced as an alternative force in art education. For example, in an exhibition held at Arnolfini, Bristol and Kettle's Yard, Cambridge in 2005, the history of Black Mountain College is articulated by Mike Sperlinger in a review written for *Art Monthly* (Nr. 293) in 2006 'Starting At Zero: Black Mountain College' 1933-57. Sperlinger writes: 'Over time this tiny American college which during its 24 years oversaw a paltry 1,200 students, many of whom did not complete their courses, has become a kind of magnetic myth – a composite of the Bauhaus, a kibbutz and a proto-fame academy. The romance of the name is underpinned by the roll call of sometime teachers, which included Josef and Anni Albers, Buckminster Fuller, Willem and Elaine de Kooning, John Cage, Robert Motherwell, Merce Cunningham, Cy Twombly, Franz Kline, Clement Greenberg, Charles Olson and a host of others while students included Robert Rauschenberg, Arthur Penn, Ray Johnson and Edward Dorn'.
- 4.*Black Mountain: an interdisciplinary experiment 1933-1957*, The Nationalgalerie- Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, June-September, 2015
- 5.This introductory text was written to communicate the projects intentions as well as to distribute the programme to students and to the chosen presenters. It was printed and handed out in hard copy as well as available as an online resource.
- 6.Keith J. Topping, 'Trends in Peer Learning', *Educational Psychology: An international Journal of Experimental Educational Psychology*, 25:6, 631-645.
- 7.Richard Hamilton, *On Kent State*, 1970
- 8.Alex Katz and David Sylvester, *Alex Katz: Twenty-Five Years of Painting*, London, 1997
- 9.Jack Flam (Ed.) *Robert Smithson, The Collected Writings*, California, 1996
- 10.Dave Hickey, *Enter the Dragon: On the Vernacular of Beauty Chicago*, 1993, p.17
- 11. *ibid*

- 12, Griselda Pollock 'Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity' in *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art*, London, 1988
- 13, Lauren Berlant, 'Intimacy', *Critical Inquiry*, Vol 24, No 2, Winter 1998, University of Chicago Press
- 14, Susan Sontag, *Notes on Camp, Against Interpretation*, New York, 1966
- 15, Douglas Crimp, *Boring Warhol, Our Kind of Movie, The Films of Andy Warhol*, Cambridge, 2012
- 16, Sasha Torres, *Caped Crusader of Camp in Camp: Queer Aesthetics and Performing Subject*, Ed. Fabio Cleto, Edinburgh, 1999.
- 17, Sigmund Freud, *Family Romances in The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Volume IX, 1909: Jensen's 'Gradiva' and Other Works.
- 18, Further Reading on the context and legacy of the Stonewall riots and the later political movements associated; can be found in: Christopher Nealon, *Foundling, Lesbian and Gay Historical Emotion before Stonewall*, Duke University Press, 2001. *Feel Tank*, Chicago: <http://pathogeographies.net/> Edmund White, *The Beautiful Room is Empty*, NBSL, 1994. Joseph Litvak, *Glad to be Unhappy, After Sex*, Janet Halley & Andrew Parker (Eds.), Duke University Press, 2011. Douglas Crimp, *Our Kind of Movie*, MIT Press, 2012. Martin Duberman, *Stonewall*, Plume, 1994. Hannah Dee, *The Red in the Rainbow; Sexuality, Socialism & LGBT Liberation*, Bookmarks, 2011. Andrew Ross, *Uses of Camp, No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture*, Routledge, 1989.
- 19, Further reading on Group Material and associated artists: Julie Ault (ed.) *Show and Tell: A Chronicle of Group Material*, Fourcorners, 2010. Nancy Spector, *Felix Gonzalez-Torres*, Guggenheim Museum Publications, 2008. Douglas Crimp, *Melancholia and Moralism*, MIT Press, 2002. Gregg Bordowitz, *The AIDS Crisis is Ridiculous and Other Writing*, MIT Press, 2003. Douglas Eklund (ed.) *The Pictures Generation 1974-1984*, Yale University Press, 2009
- 20, Chris Sharp, 'Notes on Neo-Camp', *Kaleidoscope 14*, Spring/Summer 2012.
- 21, The Tate Gallery 1984-86: *Illustrated Catalogue of Acquisitions Including Supplement to Catalogue of Acquisitions 1982-84*, Tate Gallery, London 1988, pp.371-5, www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/hamilton-kent-state-p77043/text-catalogue-entry, accessed 20.9.2014
- 22, Broomberg and Chanarin on *The Day That Nobody Died*, 2008, in Simon Baker (ed.), *Conflict. Time. Photography*, London, 2014, p. 73, <http://www.broombergchanarin.com/text/tate-etc/> , accessed 20.9.2014.

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