

‘The artist-as-educator: dialogue, community and the institutional site’

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ABSTRACT

The artist-as-educator: dialogue, community and the institutional site

The thesis seeks to examine current evaluations of events or projects delivered by artists within the educational function of the museum. The hybrid nature of the practice, situated as it is amongst several disciplines and their associated evaluative models, tends to be written about from one position or disciplinary 'mind-set'. Texts written out of an educational context tend to emphasise participants' experience and the perceived educational and/or social benefits rather than the aesthetic or political. It appears that the hybridity of the practice, counter-intuitively, tends toward a conservative approach when it comes to reflection and evaluation, as if those engaged in this relatively new way of working were using evaluation to argue a case rather than open up the field to enquiry.

Critiquing the tendency of such evaluation to reinforce the institution and others' agendas, the thesis seeks to gain some critical purchase on the artist's own understandings of practice using a 'quadri-hermeneutic' methodology inspired by data-oriented research and current and historic debates in hermeneutics and critical theory.

The main body of the thesis consists of an analysis of three artist-led projects. The methodology is applied to three types of data, each relevant to a particular project: a series of photographs documenting an event for older people, a transcript of a discussion with postgraduate students (both which took place at Tate Modern) and a transcript of an interview with a project curator at the Serpentine Gallery. The application of the methodology aims to disturb the artist's a-priori understandings by provoking doubt through the production of multiple (sometimes contradictory) interpretations of the data.

Rather than a conclusion, the final chapter of the thesis indicates how the partial resolution of the doubts and conflicts which emerge from the evaluative process provokes a shift in emphasis in the positioning of more recent projects. The thesis argues for self-evaluation as a form of continuous research capable of resisting the artist's conscious and unconscious accommodation of others' agendas, and offering new possibilities for practice.

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In Memory of Patricia Ross

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Introduction

The role of the artist working within the educational function of the museum or gallery is by its nature hybrid. Research in the field, directed specifically at the artist occupying this role, is somewhat limited and was, until recently, linked to specific organisations and journals tailored towards artists' professional development and support (for example, Engage,¹ Arts Council, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and Nesta). Speaking in very general terms, the literature from these sources tended to focus largely on the experience of the participants in museum and gallery-based projects, while the voice of the artist remained at the margins of the discussion. This thesis is an attempt to bring the artist's voice centre-stage through reflecting on my own practice. I would argue that many artists are attracted to the role because it allows them to operate in and through a complex site, involving overlapping disciplines and discourses. They might be interested in the socio-political aspects of the role and the emancipatory function of education, or may be drawn to the museum-related theme of epistemology, for example. It is impossible to give an account of all the literature relevant to the role and any review will be partial. Therefore, in this initial attempt to lay out the terrain, some texts are fore-grounded more than others based on my own understanding of the role. Nonetheless, the material consulted for this review is wide-ranging and includes texts describing the educational role of the museum, philosophies of interpretation and government policy. It includes research which makes direct reference to the artist-as-educator, research that addresses the context of the museum, and theoretical models which may influence the way s/he acts and reflects while in role.

The task is made all the more difficult because this is an area of practice in constant flux. The terrain shifted with a number of events and initiatives, primarily (the failed) *Manifesta 6* in Nicosia in 2006, whose aim was to supplant the art exhibition with the art school, and *Documenta 12*, 2007 whose leitmotif was '*What is to be done (Education)?*' From these core events proliferated a number of artworks and interventions, united by a preoccupation with the themes and processes of education, later gathered together under the umbrella term of 'the Educational Turn'.² Suddenly, what had been seen as a somewhat niche and relatively low-status activity (the artist working within the educational function of the museum or gallery) was subject to a new kind of scrutiny, and a body of literature was produced in an attempt to theorise this new tendency within arts practice.

The review is therefore separated out into two sections: the first section contains material specifically related to the artist-as-educator role in the UK which tends to treat the role as if it were a nascent profession; the second section gives an overview of material related to the 'practice' rather than the 'profession' of the artist-as-educator. The latter also lays out the contexts relevant to the social or educational-turn in contemporary arts practice.

Section 1: The Artist as ‘Professional’

The role of the artist working in the educational museum or gallery is a relatively new position, developed over the last twenty years. It is difficult to define as a profession as such because it is often just one strand in what Nesta has termed, somewhat euphemistically, a ‘portfolio career’. However, from the 1990s onward, the role began to receive attention from government bodies and organisations tasked to work within government agendas. There is a body of specific and on-going research commissioned by Engage, a professional network for gallery educators (not exclusively artists), which declares its core activities as ‘research, professional development and advocacy’. Alongside this research activity, there is additional relevant research funded by the Arts Council.⁴

A significant piece of research managed by Engage and the Arts Council was titled *Enquire*,⁵ one strand of The Strategic Commissioning Programme for Museum and Gallery Education, 2004-11, funded by the Department for Media, Culture and Sport and the Department for Education and Skills. The stated aim of this research was: ‘[T]o explore and identify the conditions for maximising the transformative potential of gallery education for young people.’ It could be argued that the use of the word ‘transformative’ locates the research within a set of beliefs inherited from the times of the great Victorian museums when the role of art and culture was the ‘betterment’ of the general public.

In the *Enquire* research there were three ‘clusters’ - groupings of cultural institutions, universities, teachers and young people. Various research approaches were used across the groups, the most common being action research, with each cluster adopting a specific research question. Data was gathered through questionnaires (before and after the project), interviews and focus groups. During the initial seminar for artists (which I also took part in as one of the artists delivering the funded projects), the lead researchers from *Enquire* introduced the ‘Generic Learning Outcomes’ (GLOs) as a way of framing the discussion about expectations and evaluation.⁶ The language used in the framework is telling: the focus is on ‘improving performance’ and ‘measuring outcomes’. The discussion about the GLOs as an appropriate model was heated and is reported in the research as follows:

‘The formal questionnaires also went against the grain of the artists’ self-identity; they raised anxieties about including formal activities into their hard-won informal ‘spaces’ which seemed to raise questions about their identities in relation to those of teachers.’⁷

During the discussion there was considerable resistance to the very terms of the evaluation model: it seemed that the participants’ conceptions of themselves as artists were severely challenged by the GLO framework and that they did not recognise themselves in the criteria or the terminology used, particularly because some key terms such as ‘creativity’

and 'enjoyment' were not properly defined and appeared so broad as to be meaningless. Under the heading, 'Limitations of the project and suggestions for further research' there followed a specific suggestion:

'The research project focussed entirely on the pupils' experiences of gallery education activities; it did not examine the experiences of teachers, gallery education staff and artist educators except insofar as they helped researchers understand the pupils' experiences. In further research this imbalance may be addressed by examining the learning processes undergone by these parties ... A further aspect of some importance is the role of the artist as educator; future research could usefully focus on ... the pedagogies adopted by artists and the learning processes of artists engaged in education work with children and young people.'⁸

Emily Pringle, then a PhD candidate at the Institute of Education (and now Head of Learning Practice, Research and Policy at Tate) made a contribution to the *Enquire* research with the publication: 'Learning in the Gallery: context, process, outcomes'.⁹ She reviewed current 'learning frameworks' which could be applied to gallery education then developed a conceptual model of her own that she hoped would inform future research in the sector. Interestingly, she drew a parallel with definitions of Conceptual Art, and in particular noted that 'scepticism and self-awareness in relation to the negotiation of meaning,¹⁰ are central to both Conceptual Art and contemporary gallery education practice. Her final proposal – a 'learning framework' diagram - had art practice at its centre and defined this as both 'the content of the artwork and the particular nature of the processes of its creation.'¹¹ Pringle stated her hope that this model would allow an overview of activity in the sector, support the development of new projects and structure their evaluation.

Much research in the sector aimed at the professionalisation of the role seems to result in the production of evaluation models and diagrams (for example those devised by Creative Partnerships¹² and the National Foundation for Educational Research). The deployment of the diagram as research and evaluation model could be seen as a way of borrowing the authority of other research disciplines which adopt a similar 'scientific' language, particularly perhaps the social-sciences. Although it is beyond the scope of this research to explore how the adoption of this language might influence research and evaluation, it is interesting to note that many, if not all, of the models developed in the field of museum and gallery education were short-lived and sometimes even parodied by the artists whose work they were meant to describe. The issue of evaluation is always present, however; it is used to secure funding for future projects, but more importantly the models and language used influence both the 'profession' and the artist's own internal processes of reflection. It seems that until recently most, if not all, of these models are imposed 'from the outside' of practice, hence the unease of many artists who are subjected to them.

Nonetheless, there is a history, largely anecdotal, of sophisticated and informed practice within gallery education. The fact that this history is as yet unwritten may be the consequence of several factors: education, as has been noted, is often perceived as secondary to the main (exhibitionary) function of the gallery; many artists who choose to work within the educational function of the museum do so because it allows them to operate 'under the radar' with the result that the work is not fully documented and made public; finally, this is a gendered practice, conducted largely by women, and has therefore not been seen as part of the 'official' histories of arts practice (this aspect will be discussed further in the next chapter).

In terms of gallery education in the UK, there are several significant centres of activity that have had an influence on current practice, with the same individuals moving from institution to institution, taking their practice with them. It seems important to note that the education archives at Tate (referred to in the next chapter) and at institutions such as the Whitechapel Gallery, are largely untapped resources. The archives at the Whitechapel will be particularly significant for future research.¹³ In 1976, Nicholas Serota became Director and assembled a team around him which included Jenni Lomax (now the Director of Camden Arts Centre). The work that Lomax instigated at the Whitechapel was pioneering; it was perhaps the first UK gallery to purposefully employ artists to devise and deliver a programme engaging local schools.

Serota had previously been director at Modern Art Oxford (1973 - 76) and it was here that Sarah Mossop later became Head of Learning and Partnerships. She describes what was then, perhaps, a common career trajectory; beginning as a postgraduate at the Institute of Education, where she says it was common practice for student-teachers to deliver sessions at Tate as part of their training, she was then seconded as a teacher to the Minorities Gallery, Colchester (now *firstsite*) where she was brought in specifically to develop an education programme. She explains that at this time in the late 1980s, changes in the national curriculum meant that pupils were expected to have direct engagement with contemporary art. Lomax was trained as an artist, whereas Mossop was trained as a teacher. Both however were part of fundamental developments in gallery education in the '70s and '80s that explored new terrain produced at the intersections between art, education and locality. This period also coincided with the early days of Engage, mentioned earlier, whose work involved 'ensuring this area of practice wasn't marginalised.'¹⁴

A further concept which has been decisive in the professionalisation process is that of the artist as cultural worker. Artists who work within the educational function of the museum or gallery generally do so on a freelance basis, moving from one institution and project to another. Cultural labour in the UK is explicitly linked to discourses of creativity and innovation, but the question remains: creativity and innovation for whose benefit? The artist working in the learning function of the museum learns to survive and thrive in 'the knowledge economy'; s/he might choose to work within the learning function of the art museum for a

variety of reasons, but a key motivation for many is financial. It is, however, rarely his/her only source of income. As noted in a research report by Nesta,¹⁵ ‘multi-jobbing’ is a characteristic of ‘cultural work’ and many artists are obliged to piece together a career where they work across different sectors and adopt different roles with the expectation that they bring an endless flexibility and creativity to each situation. The cost to the artist/cultural worker is seldom recognised; rather, the benefits are emphasised:

‘This is not to gloss over the economic reality of a labour market which often necessitates multiple job-holding and where unpaid work is common; but it does suggest that even if financial issues drive crossover, it is not the only reason, and the benefits can extend beyond supplementary income.’¹⁶

The precarious nature of the work, it could be argued, leads to a desire to fulfil the institution’s expectations with the aim of ensuring repeated employment; an artist’s sense of his/her own theory of practice risks being subsumed under the pressure. It might also result in an exaggerated sense of competition amongst artists who may also have limited opportunities (and desire) to share practice in the museum ‘as marketplace’.

The perception that the role of the artist is being overly-influenced by government agendas and neo-liberal philosophies of the market has resulted in a desire to re-examine the subject of the artist’s autonomy in the field. Discussions of autonomy are linked to an attempt to define and evaluate art’s intrinsic properties. The autonomy in art argument is an old one and can be traced back to the philosophy of Emanuel Kant. It was later, of course, taken up and elaborated into various theoretical positions within the avant-garde.¹⁷ More recently, questions of autonomy have also become part of a broader debate about neo-liberalism and the relationship of culture to economics. Charles Leadbeater in ‘Living on Thin Air: the New Economy’¹⁸ perceives a clear alignment between cultural policy and economics. From the foundation of the Arts Council immediately post-war, to the establishment of the Department of Media, Culture and Sport in 1997, the UK Government has perceived art as having both an economic and a social use, either as an export industry or as a tool for social inclusion. The examination of government policy documents and speeches produced over the past twenty years make these links explicit. From New Labour and the Conservatives to the Coalition, the instrumentalist/intrinsic debate continues to be central to arts policy. Key New Labour policy statements include the 1997 report *A Common Wealth* and the first DCMS Comprehensive Spending Review which put public service at the heart of what museums should do. The policy document *Centres for Social Change; Museums, Galleries and Archives for All* of May 2002 set the standards for access in museums and galleries. More recently, in 2007, the (then) culture secretary, James Purnell, commissioned *The McMasters Review: Supporting excellence in the arts - from measurement to judgement*. The report signaled a move away from the instrumentalisation of the arts towards a discussion of their intrinsic value: ‘excellence’ was

emphasised and measurement was to be based on the intrinsic properties of the artistic product. The theme of excellence was re-iterated in Jeremy Hunt's¹⁹ first keynote speech on the arts ('The lesson to me from this is that when art and politics clash, art wins'). While recognising the Labour government's achievements in terms of establishing the benefits of the arts in education, regeneration and the Creative Industries, he quickly moved the debate towards art's potential contribution to 'thriving rather than surviving' and David Cameron's promotion of 'General Well Being'. He also suggested a move towards an American-style cultivation of philanthropy to plug the gap in arts-funding.²⁰ The last fifteen years has seen various shifts in government policy towards the arts and it is not within the scope of the research to trace the impact of these shifts. Nonetheless, the political climate affects artists at a practical level (which projects are funded) and how success is judged. Whether a project is judged for what it can do (the instrumentalist argument) or for its value as art (the intrinsic argument) continues to be a central debate within the field of the artist working within the educational function of the museum. Artists' anxiety concerning their position within this debate can be seen most recently in art projects commissioned alongside the Olympics.²¹ In the Engage Journal #29 - *Art and the Olympics* – the curator Jess Fernie, in discussion with the artist Simon Pope, introduces the conversation with the following:

‘We are both interested in the idea proposed by this edition of the Engage Journal that the Olympic Games might throw galleries and artists off their “core purpose”. The implication is that there is pressure to deviate from a self-determined programme or trajectory, and sell out in some way to a global, instrumentalised machine.’²²

The training of the artist and the status of the art school has also been the focus of scrutiny in recent years. With the widespread adoption of the Bologna Process,²³ the art school, together with other higher education institutions, is being subject to a process of homogenisation. The field of higher education is envisaged as a global market with the student as mobile consumer: '[t]he Bologna Declaration (1999) sets out “the objective of increasing the international competitiveness of the European system of higher education” and points out the need “to ensure that the European higher education system acquires a world-wide degree of attraction.”’²⁴ With the art school, like the art museum, re-imagined as a market-place, it is likely that young artists learn to see themselves as consumers of knowledge and skills, with success in their future professional lives dependent on those qualities prioritised by the market (flexibility, innovation and competitiveness).

To summarise, the attempted professionalisation of the role of the artist working in the educational function of the museum has led to predominance of pseudo-scientific and economic models/metaphors within the literature. A focus on the 'measurability' of outcomes, homogeneity, productivity, flexibility and innovation within a competitive market-place is the result. The artist is not immune to the influence of these models and metaphors; they form part of the artist's world, determining how they describe and evaluate practice.

Section 2: A Practice, not a Profession

In recent years, there has been a notable turn towards pedagogy – its themes and processes – as a key area of enquiry for artists. The blurring of boundaries between art and education practices, and the increased reflexivity of the art museum or gallery, have seen projects which previously would have been managed by the education/learning department of the institution delivered by exhibition curators. At an international level, education was a core theme of *Documenta 12* in 2007 and of *Summit*²⁵ in the same year. The proliferation of the ‘exhibition as school’ model proposed for *Manifesta 6* saw various incarnations including Anton Vidokle’s *Unitednationsplaza* in Berlin (2006), Mexico City (2008) and *Nightschool* (2008-09) at the New Museum, New York. In the UK, the Hayward and Serpentine galleries co-presented a two-day conference, *De-Schooling Society*, 2010, with the ambition of bringing together:

‘international artists, curators, and writers to discuss and debate the changing relationship between art and education. Speakers [were] invited to present critical ideas on collective and participatory practice, pedagogical experiments and how such art can be understood and discussed.’²⁶

The Serpentine Gallery has continued the pedagogic approach with the *Edgware Rd Project: Centre for Possible Studies* and the Hayward Gallery planned the *Wide Open School* for Summer 2012 (subtitled *100 International Artists Reinvent School*) – ‘an unusual experiment in learning with courses devised and led by over 100 artists from 40 different countries.’²⁷

As a result, the artist working in the educational function of the museum is compelled to measure his/her practice against these recent developments. In terms of my own practice, two of the projects analysed in the second part of this thesis took place at Tate and consisted of encounters and discussions with members of public. The most recent artist to be commissioned to produce work for the Turbine Hall at Tate Modern is Tino Sehgal whose ‘innovative works ... consist purely of live encounters between people.’ His other works have been described as ‘more akin to a forum for discussion.’²⁸ The artist often uses games and rules to shift people’s experience of familiar environments. Characterised by elements of encounter, discussion and play, Sehgal’s practice has much in common with the activities generally devised and delivered by artist-facilitators working within the Learning Department of the museum. It is easy to see how this might provoke a process of self-reflection in the artist habitually involved in these activities delivered as ‘learning’ not ‘art’.

Relational Practice

The terms used to describe these forms of practice vary. Many are described as ‘relational’, having as a key reference Nicolas Bourriaud’s text ‘Relational Aesthetics’.²⁹ Bourriaud defines relational aesthetics as an ‘[a]esthetic theory consisting in judging artworks on the basis of the inter-human relations which they represent, produce or prompt.’³⁰ It is easy to see how these terms of judgement might apply to art work inspired by pedagogy. In educational contexts, it is common practice to judge the quality of relationships constructed between teacher and student and amongst students (as peers) as an alternative to more mechanistic theories of ‘knowledge transfer’ (what Paulo Friere termed the ‘banking’ model of education). For Bourriaud, art should create new social forms as a reaction against the ‘supplier-client’ relationship.³¹ This theory offers a novel way of viewing the activity of the artist working in educational contexts who becomes more a ‘social sculptor’ than a communicator of knowledge.

Critiques of Relational Practice, Political Theory

Bourriaud’s theories are not universally admired, however, with some theorists arguing that they lack criticality. Claire Bishop engages with the instrumentalist/intrinsic debate, reframing it as ethics versus aesthetics. Her challenge, made in 2006, remains valid:

‘There can be no failed, unsuccessful, unresolved, or boring works of collaborative art because all are equally essential to the task of strengthening the social bond ... I would argue that it is also crucial to discuss, analyse, and compare such work critically as art. This critical task is particularly pressing in Britain ... Reducing art to statistical information about target audiences and “performance indicators”, the government prioritizes social effect over considerations of artistic quality.’³²

The rigour of this critique is often lacking in the evaluation of the work artists carry out within the educational function of the museum. Rather than taking such commonly-used terms as ‘participation’, ‘creativity’ and ‘enjoyment’ at face-value, Bishop carefully analyses the claims made for those practices which seek ‘a direct engagement with specific social constituencies.’³³ She responds also to the theories of Grant H. Kester, often cited alongside Bourriaud, declaring:

‘[W]hile lucidly articulating many of the problems associated with such practices, [he] nevertheless advocates an art of concrete interventions in aesthetic form, but, ultimately, he fails to defend this, and seems perfectly content to allow that a socially collaborative art project could be deemed a success if it works on the level of social intervention even though it founders on the level of art.’³⁵

She claims that what she terms ‘the ethical imperative’³⁶ overrides any attempt to judge the work by other criteria. To defend her argument, she describes the practice of artists such as Artur Zmijewski, Aleksandra Mir, Thomas Hirschhorn and Jeremy Deller, which rather than being part of a ‘socially ameliorative tradition’³⁷ seeks, she claims, to challenge commonly-held ideas of community and the social function of art. This she states is achieved by the artist accepting authorial responsibility for the work, rather than sacrificing this position for the sake of a non-hierarchical collaboration with the public. Bishop’s critique of what she terms ‘authorial renunciation’³⁸ presents a challenge to many artists’ work in educational contexts. Although the artist might continuously re-evaluate his/her own assumptions and approaches alongside the participant, the role of the artist and participant are distinct. Even in peer-led projects, some individuals have a closer relationship to the host institution. A common experience is the identification of the artist-as-educator by the participant with the institution (museum or gallery). When these processes of identification are made explicit and are reflected upon by the artist and the group as a whole, they can be used as part of the artistic/pedagogic process but often this is not a focus of discussion. The ‘facilitator’ role is not a neutral one and many education workshops and projects might, on closer inspection, be highly authored situations (perhaps even authored by default by institutional priorities).

To return to the work championed by Bishop, these often involve the staging or re-staging of ‘difficult’ situations. Describing Jeremy Deller’s ‘The Battle of Orgreave’ (2001) she writes: ‘[I]t didn’t seem to heal a wound as much as re-open it.’³⁹ Research into artists working in educational contexts has tended not to address the themes of difficulty, discomfort and dissent. Bishop’s declaration that ‘good intentions shouldn’t render art immune to critical analysis’⁴⁰ might work as a corrective balance to the overwhelmingly positive reporting of art/education activities within the museum or gallery context. In an attempt to find an analytical framework that can accommodate discomfort and dissent, Bishop turns to political theory and in particular to the writing of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. In Laclau and Mouffe, a core concept is that of ‘agonism’. They claim that antagonism and conflict are unavoidable in society and that democracy’s role is to stage dissent, to convert antagonism into ‘agonism’ where the ‘enemy’ is transformed into an ‘adversary’. This is achieved not through artificial consensus but rather through recognising that our adversary has the right to hold an opposing opinion:

‘A healthy democratic process calls for a vibrant clash of political positions and an open conflict of interests. If such is missing, it can too easily be replaced by a confrontation between non-negotiable moral values and essentialist identities.’⁴¹

When art projects are delivered within the educational function of the museum, participants engaging in a discussion or process might see consensus as the desired outcome

(and this is often re-enforced in the ‘professional’ literature discussed earlier). Often, participants look to the artist-as-educator to provide this consensus (to give the final word) or look to some other external authority (the artist who produced the work or the curatorial ‘expert’ whose opinions are noted in interpretive labels and panels within the galleries).

A key theorist within current debates about how ‘relational’ forms of art practice are to be judged is Jacques Rancière. The text that has most significance for this thesis - ‘The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation’ - will be examined more closely later in the project analyses. In terms of his more general relevance, ‘The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible’⁴² is often cited in debates regarding the perceived tension between autonomous and ‘engaged’ art. Rancière identifies three ‘regimes’ of art: the ethical (where skill and ‘truthfulness’ are emphasised); the representational (where art is positioned according to ‘the distribution of the sensible’;⁴³ and the aesthetic (where art is not assigned to a particular space but exists somewhere between the realms of ‘art-as-art’ and ‘art as life’).⁴⁴ In the final ‘aesthetic’ regime, he attempts to frame a relationship between contemporary art and the political that does not try to smooth over contradiction but rather thrives on it, connecting the ability to ‘think contradiction’ with political agency. The ‘aesthetic’ regime of art is, for Rancière, an ‘undecided’ space where art’s legibility as art is not a guaranteed state.⁴⁵

The benefit of these theories for the artist lies in the way they provoke new questions, beyond the superficial consensus that tends to dominate the evaluation of museum and gallery-based projects. The application of these theories generates a number of critical questions the artist can ask him/herself: Is consensus the desired outcome of group discussion or activity? Whose voice is given most weight, and are some excluded from participation in the processes of interpretation? How is dissent managed? Is it encouraged? Can and should the gallery become an ‘undecided’ space?

The Museum and Institutional Critique

The qualities of the museum as historic site (both of display and education) have a bearing on how the artist understands his or her practice. In ‘The Educational Role of the Museum’,⁴⁶ Eileen Hooper-Greenhill and others trace the history of the major nineteenth century museums and their origins as educational institutions. She also describes their founders’ belief in the potential of their collections to improve and civilise. The museum was to provide a space where all classes could meet and learn to co-exist. This was motivated by a belief in the power of self-betterment and the improving effects of art. What Claire

Bishop calls the ‘ameliorative’ qualities of ‘socially-engaged’ practice seem to have their origins here, particularly for artists working in UK museums and galleries. In addition, ideas of community which persist to this day seem to have emerged in the nineteenth century; museums were considered as spaces apart where all social classes could meet. The trace of this thinking can be seen in government policy over the last decade and the museum’s perceived role in the advancement of social inclusion. Hooper-Greenhill’s largely positive evaluation of the role of the museum is contradicted by other theories where the institution has a less benign face.

Many of these critiques of the museum take the writings of Michel Foucault as their starting point. A reading of Foucault, particularly ‘Discipline and Punish’,⁴⁷ offers a picture of the institution as an attribute of the operations of power; his writings on the relationship between institutions and the ‘disciplinary society’ have meant that it is commonplace to perceive the museum as potentially malign and coercive. Adopting Foucault’s approach, some have chosen to see education as a ‘disciplinary practice’ which results in the production of ‘docile bodies’. Both Carol Duncan⁴⁸ and Tony Bennett⁴⁹ have taken this approach, seeing the museum as a place dominated by regulating codes of behaviour and the performance of the hierarchies of class.

Equally critical of the museum is Pierre Bourdieu whose key term within this debate is ‘habitus’, used to describe his notion of how social environments are structured and constructed. Bourdieu’s dismantling of the concept of taste reveals the real function of ‘innate’ artistic sensibility to be that of maintaining the power and privilege of the few. In parallel research in the field of visual culture, Norman Bryson has challenged ‘the natural attitude’ in viewing art and has developed the concept of ‘visuality’ which puts forward the idea that ways of looking (or ‘scopic regimes’) are cultural constructs.⁵⁰ The museum as a neutral space is revealed as a fiction, as is the perceived neutrality of looking itself.

The twentieth century has seen a persistent and persuasive elaboration of positions of critique which has included the activity of artists, including Marcel Broodthaers, Hans Haacke, Fred Wilson and Andrea Fraser. Fraser is particularly pertinent here as perhaps her most famous piece sees her adopting the role of ‘docent’ (the North American term for gallery-educator). Fraser also combines her museum-based practice with written reflections on that practice.⁵¹ However, institutional critique is a difficult strategy for the artist because of the variables at play in the museum context. As will be discussed later, one of Fraser’s most well-known performances, ‘Museum Highlights’, 1989, proved how unpredictable the dynamic between performer, participant and institutional context could be.

'New Institutionalism' and 'Performative Curating'

A recent development of theories of the institution and curating is 'New Institutionalism' (a term borrowed from the social-sciences), which has been seen by many as a response by the institution to the demands of relational/socially-engaged practices.⁵² New Institutionalism, as Claire Doherty explains, is 'the transformation of art institutions from within'⁵³ and is associated with the curators Jens Hoffman and Maria Lind, amongst others, and the concept of 'performative curating'.⁵⁴ The term describes an institutional environment in the gallery where the traditional boundaries between exhibition and learning departments are blurred. Any discussion of the role of the artist working in educational contexts of the museum or gallery must take into account these recent curatorial developments. With New Institutionalism, the institution turns the critique back on itself, pre-empting the challenge of the artist determined to view the museum as a 'disciplinary' institution. The increased fluidity between learning and exhibition departments, and the breaking down of hierarchies, has been seen as symptomatic of this trend. As Doherty explains:

'Some institutions perceive education as their "conscience", taking on the work of bringing the outside world in. We would like to argue that in fact, education departments have been able to take on a new and productive role by supporting practices that the traditional exhibition structure fails to support. Rather than carry out instructions enforced through funding, education departments can create a dynamic platform for new ways of working which attempt to locate a self-determined, politicised space within a de-politicised framework.'⁵⁵

When 'learning' becomes 'exhibition' however, there is the risk that the activities generated there lose some of their critical bite as they take on aspects of spectacle: an event to be observed 'at a safe distance', framed and contained by the institution. In terms of the status of these activities, 'performative curating' has considerable weight when the curators discussed have a national or international profile, but those curators who hold permanent posts in the learning departments of museums and galleries continue to be viewed as mere administrators. Research has been carried out into the role of education curators at Tate Modern⁵⁶ which sees the role of the cultural professional as being formed by a 'high trust, low accountability' culture driven by the curator's expertise in audience constituencies rather than traditional subject knowledge. Future research into the defining characteristics of the artist-as-educator will have to take into account the relationship between artist and curator as he/she acts as the interface between the artist and the institution. It would also be interesting to see how far 'ethical' concerns drive those who programme these activities and how education curators perceive their obligations to, and status within, the institution.

Nina Möntmann's description of Martha Rosler's seminal project at Dia, 'If You Lived Here...', 1989,⁵⁷ offers an example of the beginnings of New Institutionalism. Here, the artist acted as a 'freelance curator', usurping the role of the gallery curator or project coordinator. As Möntmann goes on to explain, referring to the project:

[N]ew institutionalism builds on an internalized critique within the institutions themselves. This critique is no longer seen as an - albeit ultimately "desirable" - activity conducted solely by artists against an institution (and limited to the exhibition format), but is instead deployed at the level of institutional administration and programming by curators themselves, who initiate a drive for critique and structural change together with artists.⁵⁸

Rosler, the artist, was therefore modelling an approach that would later be adopted by curators, eager to instigate critique 'from within'. However, the exhibition 'If You Lived Here ...', Möntmann tells us, was ignored by the artworld public and that for some, it was not even perceived as art. For some artists and curators, it is clear that the positioning of the work is key. Rosler's total co-option of Dia – a well-established exhibition space – and its complete, though time-limited, transformation, was intended as art. In fact, the work derives its power from this split between expectation and actuality. Its impact was therefore only felt much later when critics such as Möntmann highlighted its relevance for contemporary art practice.

Pedagogy and Ideas of Community

Theories from the field of pedagogy are also relevant to any discussion of the artist-as-educator. In *Critical Pedagogy*, the key text (along with other writings by Henry Giroux and Ivan Illich) is Paulo Freire's 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed'.⁵⁹ Freire proposes the idea that all education is political because it always deals with social relationships. Working from personal experience teaching adult literacy, he proposes a philosophy of education which rejects the 'banking' model where teachers transmit information to the student (who is perceived as a blank slate). Particularly interesting is his absolute rejection of the imbalance ('dichotomy') between teacher and student; Freire advocates a continuous exchange of roles. The desired outcome of education is action and this is achieved through the process of 'conscientization' where, through language, and in fellowship with other learners, the individual becomes aware of the social and political contradictions in his or her situation within society. This use of dialogue to reveal the 'life-worlds' of the student in the process of interpreting the art work is a common feature of pedagogic approaches in museums and galleries.

This concept of education as a critical, even revolutionary, tool is interesting when we think of forms of art practice as critique. A definite challenge to this understanding of the critical potential of education is the capacity of the institution to absorb and redirect critique. Since Critical Pedagogy always involves participation (where Institutional Critique as fine art practice does not), the current discussion about the value of art using participation to effect critique covers ground already prepared by educators and educational theorists, who have long been concerned to describe forms of social interaction and their implications.

Although not seminal to this research (which prioritises ideas from art/cultural theory and philosophy, as described later in the chapter on Methodology), an interesting if tangential reference is the work of Lev Vygotsky. His research ranged over many disciplines, including an early work on 'The Psychology of Art' (his PhD thesis, 1925). A psychologist by training, Vygotsky carried out an analysis of childhood development which led to his theory of 'cultural mediation', the notion that mental processes begin in the individual's relationships with others and are then internalised. Further work analysed the status of 'inner speech' which Vygotsky argued could not exist without the broader speech of social interaction. The strategy of asking participants to refer to personal experience in their interpretation of the art work (see project analyses, particularly the description of the Tate's approach – 'Ways In'), seems to assume that the 'inner world' of the individual participant is the foundation of meaning-making and that this is the motor of the interpretive process. This prioritisation of individual interpretations seems to dominate the field of hermeneutics generally and descriptions of group interpretations are rare in gallery-education literature, possibly because they are difficult to document and analyse. What would it mean to rethink the process and focus on the generative potential of conversation amongst participants in the formation of these inner worlds and what would the implications be in terms of the role of the artist-as-educator? Discussions of different conceptions of 'community' in the project analyses attempt to address these questions.

More recent applications of Vygotsky's theories (and those of his collaborator, Alexei Leont'ev) can be seen in the work of Yjro Engestrom in cultural-historical activity theory. Of particular interest is his concept of 'expansive learning'.⁶⁰ A further point of reference is the concept of 'situated learning' developed by social anthropologists Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger.⁶¹ Their concept of learning is that it is essentially a social practice not to be separated from daily life. The related concept of 'communities of practice' is useful when considering how professional identities are formed, especially that of the artist and in particular that of the artist working in educational contexts.

Interpretation

A core feature of the work of the artist working in education contexts is the interpretation of the art work on display. In a recent lecture, Jacques Rancière has argued for the role of the active interpreter. There is a strong tradition of interpretation (or hermeneutics) in philosophy which has direct relevance to the role of the artist-as-educator. Hans-Georg Gadamer, cited in Moran,⁶² states in 'Truth and Method' (1960), that in discussion, 'the understanding reached is "neither mine nor yours and thus exceeds the subjective beliefs of the partners in discussion"'. Meaning-making is collaborative, located within a specific historical tradition through language, and offers another form of 'truth' than that offered by the natural sciences. His theories were, in many ways, a continuation of those of Heidegger, who first stated, in 'Being and Time' (1927),⁶³ that understanding was a mode of being, an intrinsic aspect of 'being in the world'. Heidegger also proposed the concept of the 'hermeneutic circle', a diagrammatic description of the process by which questioning in discussion leads us to challenge the foundations of our own beliefs. Gadamer sees prejudices as inevitable and constructive. Through dialogue, we 'risk' our prejudices by exposing them to the opinion of the other. One of the most tenacious critics of Gadamer's theories is Jürgen Habermas; in particular, he critiques Gadamer's idea of consensus in discussion which he asserts may disguise ideological distortion. This lack of a critical perspective was recognised by Gadamer himself in 'Truth and Method' where he reflects that his approach 'espouses a universal optimism'. As hermeneutics demonstrate, the issue of interpretation is difficult both to record and analyse. Once again the issue of apparent consensus is raised.

The political theorists mentioned in the review are preoccupied with theories of democracy. Valuable here is philosopher Jacques Derrida's concept of 'democracy to come'.⁶⁴ Democracy is a state that is never realised but a point we travel towards. As in the construction of meaning, the participant and the artist-as-educator have to learn to cope with uncertainty, and with the idea that an end-point can never be reached. I would argue that this is a particular characteristic of the practice – this sense of reworking in the present, of living with uncertainties, of responsiveness to changing factors of influence. Evaluation models, if they are to be created, must be flexible enough to measure the fluidity of responses, moments of consensus and dissent, the production of professional identities which emerge then dissolve.

Conclusions

In the South East cluster research report from *Enquire*, artists are defined as ‘practitioners working with learning/education projects in the gallery environment (on site or off site) as part of the development of their own arts practice.’⁶⁵ The claim that artists use the educational context to develop their own practice is stated but not justified. Although there are repeated attempts in the *Enquire* report to map qualities in arts practice onto forms of pedagogy, because we never really hear the artist’s own understanding of the role and process, we have no way of testing this assertion. As the *Enquire* researchers generally come from a background in social sciences and/or education, the focus of the research tends to be on the perceived social and educational benefits (for the participants). As this work is largely evaluated within a theoretical framework derived from the social sciences or education, the artist may rely on other’s judgement about what is important in the practice rather than clearly identifying their own criteria and points of reference.

As this introductory chapter demonstrates, the artist-as-educator operates in a changing terrain. The tendency is now to view his/her activities as a practice rather than a profession, and theoretical material from philosophy and art/cultural theory previously employed to contextualise art practice is seen to be increasingly relevant to the field. To understand one’s role as an artist working in education contexts, a wide range of literature is therefore relevant, as the practice is produced in the ambiguous space created by overlapping discourses and disciplines. As a consequence, the approach to (self) evaluation must be rigorous, but sufficiently flexible to allow the artist to read one discipline or discourse through the others, inflecting all. The recognition of the implications of the shift from profession to practice informed the choice of methodology (discussed in Part 2), which had to accommodate the need for rigorous self-evaluation and the incorporation of theories not generally associated with art practices carried out within the educational function of the museum.

This first, introductory, part of the thesis sets the scene for the project analyses which follow in Part 2. The Tate case-study which follows here continues to prepare the ground for the later analyses by moving the discussion from the general to the particular. Using Tate as a case-study, it begins to locate the role within a specific historical and institutional context and to identify the main areas of concern. Read together with the introductory chapter, which prioritises material which would be immediately familiar to an artist working within major UK museums and galleries, it aims to give a fuller picture of the specific context in which I found myself at the outset of the research.

- 1: *Engage* is the National Association for Gallery Education. It is a membership organisation representing gallery, art and education professionals in the UK and in 15 countries worldwide.
- 2: I. Rogoff, 'Turning', in *E-Flux Journal*. 2008, viewed on 11 May 2012
<http://www.e-flux.com/journal/turning/>
- 3: *Nesta* (National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts) was a Non-Departmental Public Body – or 'quango' – until it became a charity in April 2012.
- 4: Historically, the Arts Council has a unique relationship to Government. In 2010, Arts Council England introduced a non-executive governance structure, the National Council, whose members are appointed by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport.
- 5: 'Enquire: Inspiring Learning in Galleries'. *Engage*, 2006, p.15.
- 6: In 2004, the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council carried out the *Learning Impact Research Project*, which resulted in the Generic Learning Outcomes framework for evaluating learning in the museum or gallery.
- 7: 'Enquire: Inspiring Learning in Galleries'. *Engage*, 2006, p.151.
- 8: *ibid.*, p.151.
- 9: E. Pringle, 'Learning in the Gallery: context, process, outcomes' *Engage*, 2006.
- 10: *ibid.*, p.7.
- 11: *ibid.*, p.39.
- 12: Creative Partnerships was England's flagship creative learning programme from 2002 - 2011. The Government withdrew funding in 2011.
- 13: Education Files at the Whitechapel are described as 'mainly artists' projects with local schools and recent records of other education workshops and projects.'
www.whitechapelgalery.org/archive viewed on 5 August 2013
- 14: S. Mossop in 'Pedagogical Curating', in *Gallery as Community: Art, Education, Politics*, M. Steedman (ed), Whitechapel, 2012, p.85.
- 15: K. Oakley, B. Sperry, A. Pratt & H. Bakhshi (eds), 'The Art of Innovation. How fine arts graduates contribute to innovation.' *Nesta*, Sept. 2008.
- 16: *ibid.*, p.6.
- 17: See, for example, P Burgen. 'The Negation of the Autonomy of Art by the Avant-garde', in *Participation*, C. Bishop (ed), Whitechapel, 2006
- 18: C. Leadbetter, 'Living on Thin Air: the New Economy'. Penguin, 2000.
- 19: Jeremy Hunt was Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport
<http://www.jeremyhunt.org/newsshow.aspx?ref=438> viewed on 11 May 2012
- 20: The full speech, made at The Roundhouse, London, May 2012, can be found at http://www.culture.gov.uk/news/ministers_speeches/7069.aspx viewed on 11 May 2012
- 21: Since 2008, the Cultural Olympiad has featured programmes and projects inspired by London 2012.
- 22: J. Ferney & S. Pope, 'Keeping to the Path: Maintaining "Core Purpose" in Participatory Art Under Conditions of Contemporary Patronage' in *Engage 29: Art and the Olympics*, K. Raney, (ed), Engage, Spring 2012.

- 23: The Bologna Process, named after the Bologna Declaration, was signed in June 1999 by higher education ministers from 29 countries (the UK included).
- 24: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/documents/WGR2007/Strategy-for-EHEA-in-global-setting.pdf> viewed 11 May 2012
- 25: *SUMMIT* was a forum for questioning and changing some of the fundamental terms of the debate around education, knowledge production and information society. It was held in Berlin in May 2007.
- 26: <http://haywardgallery.southbankcentre.co.uk/2010/04/22/deschooling-society/> viewed May 2012.
- 27: <http://wideopenschool.com/> viewed May 2012.
- 28: Tate Press Release, <http://www.tate.org.uk/about/press-office/press-releases/tino-sehgal-commissioned-tate-moderns-turbine-hall-2012-0> viewed 11 May 2012.
- 29: N. Bourriaud, 'Relational Aesthetics', Presses du Reel, Dijon, 1988.
- 30: *ibid.*, p.122.
- 31: *ibid.*, p.83.
- 32: C. Bishop, 'The Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents', *Artforum*, February, 2006, pp. 179-185.
- 33: *ibid.*, p.178.
- 34: G. Kester, (2004) 'Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art', University of California Press, 2004.
- 35: C. Bishop, C. 'The Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents', *Artforum*, February, 2006, p.181.
- 36: *ibid.*, p.181.
- 37: *ibid.*
- 38: *ibid.*
- 39: *ibid.*, p.182.
- 40: *ibid.*, p.183.
- 41: E. Laclau, & C. Mouffe, C (2001) 'Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics', Verso, 2001, p.4
- 42: J. Ranciere, 'The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible' (transl. G. Rockhill), Continuum, 2006.
- 43: Rancière describes 'the distribution of the sensible' as follows:
'I understand by this phrase the cutting up [decoupage] of the perceptual world that anticipates, through its sensible evidence, the distribution of shares and social parties... And this redistribution itself presupposes a cutting up of what is visible and what is not, of what can be heard and what cannot, of what is noise and what is speech.'
- 44: J. Rancière, 'The Philosopher and His Poor', (transl. J. Drury, C. Oster & A. Parker), Duke University Press, 2004, p. 225.
- 45: S. Berrebi, 'Jacques Rancière: Aesthetics is Politics', in *Art and Research, Vol.2. No.1.*, Summer 2008.
- 46: E. Hooper-Greenhill, 'The Educational Role of the Museum', Routledge, 1994.

- 47: M. Foucault, 'Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison', 1975.
- 48: C. Duncan, 'Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums', Routledge, 1995.
- 49: T. Bennett, 'The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics', Routledge, 1995.
- 50: N. Bryson, 'The Natural Attitude in Vision and Painting', Yale University Press, 1983.
- 51: A. Alberro (ed), 'Museum Highlights. The Writings of Andrea Fraser' MIT Press, 2005.
- 52: C. Doherty, 'The Institution is dead! Long live the Institution! Contemporary Art and New Institutionalism' in *Engage 15*, 2004
- 53: *ibid.*, p.1.
- 54: see also N. Möntmann (ed), 'Art and its Institutions. Current Conflicts, Critique and Collaborations'. Black Dog Publishing, 2005.
- 55: C. Doherty, 'The Institution is dead! Long live the Institution! Contemporary Art and New Institutionalism in *Engage 15* , 2004
- 56: H. Charman, 'Uncovering Professionalism in the Art Museum. An Exploration of Key Characteristics of the Working Lives of Education Curators at Tate Modern', *Tate Papers*, April 2005.
<http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/uncovering-professionalism-art-museum-exploration-key> viewed May 2012
- 57: N. Möntmann, '(Under) Privileged Spaces: On Martha Rosler's "If you lived here ..."', *e-flux journal 9*, October 2009.
http://worker01.e-flux.com/pdf/article_89.pdf viewed October 2009.
- 58: *ibid.*, p.11.
- 59: P. Freire, 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed', 1968.
- 60: M. Cole & Y. Engestrom, 'A Cultural-Historical Interpretation of Distributed Cognition' in G. Salomon (ed), *Distributed Cognition*, Cambridge University Press, 1997
- 61: J. Lave & E. Wenger, 'Situated Learning. Legitimate Peripheral Participation', University of Cambridge Press, 1990.
- 62: D. Moran, 'Introduction to Phenomenology', Routledge, 2000.
- 63: M. Heidegger, M 'Being and Time', 1927.
- 64: See J. Derrida, 'Rogues: Two Essays on Reason', Stanford University Press, 2002.
- 65: 'Enquire: Inspiring Learning in Galleries', *Engage*, 2004-2006, p.96.

Tate Case Study: the Artist as Cultural Worker

In terms of approach, this chapter stands apart from the others in that it does not seek to evaluate a gallery project. Nor does it use the reflexive methodology adopted in the main body of the research. Instead, it presents a vignette, taking as its starting point material from the Tate Archives - specifically the files on Education (1950 - 1998) - and uses these to sketch a portrait of the artist employed to deliver various aspects of the gallery's education programmes since 1950.¹

The projects described in the chapters that follow grow out of a particular context: that of gallery education in the United Kingdom. All museums with their collections have a direct relationship to knowledge and many would argue that any activity that a museum or gallery engages in is educational in the broadest sense, from the collection and curation of objects to the production of interpretative materials and events. As Helen Charman notes in her essay, 'Uncovering Professionalism in the Art Museum: An Exploration of Key Characteristics of the Working Lives of Education Curators at Tate Modern', we are currently witnessing,

'[A] refashioning of the museum, aspects of which persist from the mission of the first public museum of the Revolutionary state with its aim of realising the legacy of the Age of Enlightenment, that is political and moral freedom through education.'²

The history of gallery education in the UK can be traced back over the last two hundred years, with policy documents signalling periods of development and change. As Eileen Hooper Greenhill notes, before the 1845 Museums Act there were approximately forty museums, some of which:

'[W]ere established specifically for education purposes; the Ashmolean, for example, was attached to the University of Oxford and was built in conjunction with libraries, a lecture room and a chemical laboratory ... Dulwich Picture Gallery was established in 1814, attached to Alleyne's School.'³

The 1845 Museums Act allowed local authorities to levy public money to build new museums. Twenty-five years later, the Education Act further raised the profile of the educational function of the museum. During the same period (the latter part of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries), Hooper-Greenhill also maps the history of museums established in Mechanics Institutes and Literary and Philosophical Societies, aimed specifically at the education of the working classes. The eighteenth century idea of 'rational amusement', or the productive uses of leisure, dominated discussions about the role of the museum in this period; museums were considered useful for both moral and intellectual (self) improvement.

Perhaps the most significant institution with regards to the history of the educational function of the museum in the United Kingdom was the South Kensington Museum, founded in 1851 after the Great Exhibition (and later to be renamed the Victoria and Albert Museum). In the 1850s, the museum's director, Henry Cole, had an additional role as Head of the new Department of Practical Art (later the Department of Science and Art). The Museum's administration was linked directly to the country's educational structures and was controlled by the Board of Education for England and Wales from 1899 until 1944. The core principle driving the museum was the cultivation of 'taste' amongst the country's producers of artefacts. Other major national museums, including the British Museum, the Natural History Museum, the Tate Gallery and the National Gallery responded to the campaign by Lord Sudeley, debated in the House of Lords in 1913, for the establishment of guide-lecturers in museums, with the first lecturer appointed at the Tate Gallery in 1914.

During both World Wars, when school buildings were closed and requisitioned and teaching staff depleted, major museums stepped in to fill the gap in education provision, offering classes for school-children and producing exhibitions dealing with public information issues such as health, hygiene and food preparation. At the heart of collection-based education in the museum was the 'object lesson', where individuals were encouraged to develop a direct, sensory encounter with the artefact before applying 'judgement'.

From the 1920s onward, there was a separating out of the roles of curator and educator with the establishment of specialist education staff. As can be seen in the material from Tate Archives quoted later in this chapter, curators largely withdrew from direct contact with the public and began to rely for their status on their expert knowledge of the collections. Alongside this tendency, some argued that the museum should focus not on education but on the collection and preservation of objects as its core function.

In the 1930s, many regional museums established strong relationships with local education authorities; teachers were seconded to work directly in the museums and loan collections were established to enable objects to be temporarily held on school premises (further re-enforcing the potential of the 'object-lesson'). This is where the material from the Tate Archives begins. Museum education provision continued to be variable in the regions, with the national museums relying on guide-lecturers who mainly directed their talks at adult audiences.

Whereas from the 1940s, education staff in the regional museums were treated in employment terms as a separate category (sometimes funded by the Local Education Authority), lecturers in the national museums were considered museum staff and there was far less emphasis on provision for schools and teachers. It was not until the 1970s that the profession of gallery-educator began to emerge. Education, however, continued to be perceived as secondary to the exhibition function of the museum and educators were given the specific task of interpreting exhibitions for the museum's publics, (this 'hand-maiden' role was often undertaken, perhaps not surprisingly, by women). This rich and complex history continues to influence the activities of the artist working within the educational function of the museum, raising questions about art's relationship to knowledge and of the museum and the artist's obligations towards the public.

Amongst the numerous, ephemeral documents including meeting notes, policy statements and booking letters in the Tate Archives, there are traces from which it is possible to construct the role of the artist working in the educational function of the museum. However, the voice of the artist is rarely, if ever, recorded directly; the reader in the Archives is forced to locate this voice behind and between the more forceful discourses of the institution and the demands of its publics. This is an inevitable outcome of the nature of the archive itself, which is the repository of documents relating solely to the functioning of the Education Department within Tate. The contributions and communications of members of staff are, of course, given priority. However, from these documents, skewed as they are towards the institution, the artist's position appears to be one primarily of responsiveness; s/he is generally summoned by another's demands. In this way it confirms what has been noted from the Introduction: the voice of the artist is largely absent from the literature surrounding artists working within the educational function of the museum, where museum professionals document activities and write policy. Even when the artist's voice is present, it might unwittingly ventriloquise others' agendas. Perhaps one of the more poignant documents found was a copy of a reference letter written in the late 1950s by Miss Mary Chamot, Assistant Keeper, the Tate Gallery. A certain P. H. Oliver had applied for a lecturing position at South East Essex Technical College and School of Art. Miss Chamot replies:

'[He] gave a few public lectures here during 1955 and 1956. I found him a well-informed and sympathetic lecturer ... I have no knowledge of his work as an artist but I do know that he was teaching art at a school at the time.'⁴

The ignorance of the artist's practice (on the part of the institution), and the complete separation of this from his teaching role continue to be a sticking-point for many artists.

The approach taken in the case-study is connected to the methodology adopted later insofar as it takes a hermeneutic approach to the material and is 'data'-oriented. The 'reading between the lines' of the Tate Archive material corresponds to a contested strategy within hermeneutics, based on the belief in the possibility of *verstehen*,⁵ a form of understanding that seeks to 'look into' the inner motives of the person researched through a process of imaginative re-enactment. This is made doubly problematic by the fact that I am trying to conjure up the subject of the artist through others' responses, and through my own processes of recognition and assumed understandings of the context. I imagine myself in the position of the artist, being asked (as I have been over the years) to devise and deliver projects, give lectures and contribute to policy. In this chapter, I am using the archive material as a mirror, looking for points of recognition. This runs counter to the approach employed in Part 2 where the encounter with data is intended to create a disturbance in these self-understandings. However, at this stage, together with the introduction, it serves to create a picture of my position at the beginning of the research, embedded in debates about profession and practice, and closely connected to Tate as an institution.

The Institutional Context

Tate has been chosen as a case-study because it is an institution that, for various reasons, has had to publicly declare its position in relation to its educational function. In addition, it was the first museum in the UK to appoint a permanent member of staff in the educational role,⁶ has throughout its history been compelled to respond to government directives on education (a prerequisite of its continued funding by the Government through the Department for Culture, Media and Sport) and had a team of artists working within Education/Learning at Tate Modern from 2001 until 2010, which led to a sharing of understandings of the role, made public through various means (seminars, conferences and research papers). It is an institution that has seen various changes over the past seventy years, each of which has had a direct impact on the way artists work in this field and the way they make sense of what they do. In addition, it is a primary context within which I have learned to understand the role as I have worked periodically for Tate since 1997, as both freelance artist and curator within the Learning Programmes.

One particular aspect of the role which is currently attracting critical attention is the significance of the artist as ‘cultural worker’. This chapter seeks to outline the economic aspects of the role as this is a key interpretive context not addressed specifically in the main body of the thesis, but which bears relevance for current practice (see Part 3). At the outset of the research for this chapter, material from the Archives was chosen predominantly if relevant to the employment status of the artist in terms of payment, contracts, commitment/loyalty, etc. By this deliberate pre-selection of data it is intended to draw attention to the importance of the economic context to the practice of the artist-as-educator and to explore how the artistic and pedagogic operate in a context determined by the economic. While working in the educational function of the museum it is easy to become isolated in one’s own practice. The paucity of research from the artist’s position and the lack of opportunities to share practice (often driven by funding constraints) mean that it is difficult to test one’s understandings against those of others. The desire to see the role within the context of national (and international) shifts, where artists’ labour is increasingly valued in terms of its contribution to the wider economy, also reflects an attempt to move beyond the focus on individual experience.

Employment status is an essential part of the picture and one that is frequently side-lined in favour of literature which emphasises the more vocational aspects of the role. It has an inevitable impact on the artist’s understanding of his/her relationship to the institution, on how s/he relates to her colleagues and peers, but also how s/he conceptualises creative labour in general. When work is perceived to be scarce and precarious (and this is particularly true in times of cuts to museum budgets), the artist can feel s/he is in direct competition with colleagues for work. As Zigmunt Bauman argues in ‘Liquid Modernity’,⁷ the individual is thrown back on his/her own resources and the focus is on his/her ability to succeed or fail. This ‘interiorisation’ of practice works against any compensatory desire to read across the sector and to establish common interests amongst artists; in addition it takes away attention from the wider factors that pertain to the practice as a whole. Through a close analysis of the material in the Archives, combined with related material from other sources, I hope to better understand how economic models, both concrete and metaphorical, inform and sometimes repress the artist’s understanding of what they do.

Increasingly, these issues are also being addressed through practice; artists are using the themes and processes of economics in their work. For example in Santiago Sierra’s ‘Group of persons facing a wall,’ Tate Modern, 2008, the artist paid ten homeless people to stand facing the wall of the Turbine Hall for a fee equivalent to a night in a hostel. The experience was an uncomfortable one, for the paid participants but also for spectators

who were compelled to defend their own position as spectators. In this work, Sierra was working within the traditions of Institutional Critique, using the site of the art museum to raise uncomfortable questions, particularly about ‘taboo’ subjects. For me, it raised more specific questions about my role. Viewing my practice through the lens of economics, I was forced to challenge my own preconceptions and ask how my way of working as an artist in the gallery might be modelling a form of cultural labour that I was not entirely able to defend. This process of re-contextualisation of practice is a valuable strategy for the artist working in museum and gallery contexts as it allows him/her to see the work afresh. It is also interesting to consider why the theme of economics may be seen as taboo within gallery-based discussions. I remember several comments while working as a freelancer at Tate, from staff and fellow-artists, to the effect that discussing the economic value of the work was a digression from the real subject – from discussing the object as art. Critical theorists, following in the footsteps of Bourdieu, have noted how certain discourses are repressed in favour of discussion of supposedly ‘innate’ qualities (of the work and in the sensibilities of the museum visitor).

Themes selected from the Archive Material

Looking at the first artists working in an educational role within Tate is enlightening as it gives a picture of the various stresses and parameters under and within which the artist was obliged to operate. Remarkably, the issues remain current: the expectations of the various publics; the flexibility required of the artist-educators; the numerous demands; the ‘arms-length’ relationship to the institution; the precarious nature of the work; the mediation of the collections, etc.

Freelance versus Permanent Staff

The correspondence from the 1950s and 60s reveals the range of the public’s expectations and what the Gallery felt it could deliver. Several individuals contact the Director directly who regularly agrees to give tours of the Collections. The files from this period also reveal the models by which Tate employs its educators, and the portioning out of available work between freelancers and permanent members of staff:

‘Meanwhile I can explain that a permanent official Tate Lecturer, Mr. Simon Wilson, has now been appointed, who will give about three quarters of the public lectures. Mr Bradbury will,

however, continue to give some of the remaining lectures and will also give many of the special lectures which we arrange for school parties.⁸

In a report from the 1970s, there is a request put to the Director for ‘one extra full-time lecturer’ to satisfy existing demand and to ‘allow the expansion of services to continue and diversify.’ Also there is a desire to be less reliant on freelancers (‘a number of good people [employed] on a sporadic basis’) because of the lack of guarantees in terms of their availability. The management of freelance staff also involves ‘intricate juggling’ by staff. By having the guarantee of an extra, permanent member of staff, the gallery would ‘be free to engage free-lance people who would continue to make their valuable contributions to the lecture programme and other activities.’⁹

In a report initiated by Colin Grigg at Tate some twenty years later¹⁰ several different London galleries were canvassed with regards to their treatment of freelance staff. The Whitechapel Gallery, one of the galleries participating in the survey, responded that ‘[a]ll practical work [was] *farmed out* to freelancers’ (my italics). In addition, it was noted that as a result of Local Authority cuts, the gallery had been paying freelancers at a lower rate and that ‘[a]lthough many artists want[ed] to support the gallery and [did] not ask for high fees, some [had] begun to accept work from better-paying galleries.’ In the same report, staff at the Barbican noted:

‘There is a danger that freelancers whose contractual commitments become too substantial may accrue employee rights. It is important to be clear that they do not share the rights of postholders.’

It seems in some curators’ minds, the freelance artist is both a boon and a liability; this ambivalence may well be mirrored in the artist’s attitude to the institution. It is interesting that the Whitechapel Gallery raises the question of attachment. It could be argued that in order to work within an institution, particularly over a long period of time (no matter how precariously), the artist needs to align him/herself with some aspect of the institution and its aims through a process of internalisation.¹¹ Alternatively, this process might be seen instead as the freelancer attaching his/her own aspirations to the institution. In either case (and it might not be a simple case of either/or), what this might mean in terms of the artist’s self-conceptions will be discussed later in the thesis (as part of the analysis of the Serpentine project). At the conclusion of the report, Grigg offers a number of points for reflection:

‘[I]rregular employment is not prejudicial against freelancers – for every freelancer that is given more work another is given less.

‘[F]reelancer work is by its very nature insecure – the pay-off is of course freedom and flexibility.

‘[I]f freelancers accrue a certain amount of contractual commitments they become entitled to employee rights, in effect creating a new post. This is a liability.’¹²

What is immediately striking is the certainty with which these statements are made. It seems that one economic model - the 'free-market' model – is taken as read; no possibility of an alternative model is even alluded to. A concern with this theme continues throughout the decades up until the present day. The artist who is employed on a permanent basis clearly has a different relationship to the institution, based on the delivery of essential services (generally determined by the different funding structures of the museum or gallery). It is to be expected, in this case, that the artist will consider him or herself as part of the institution (how this squares with the modernist notion of the artist who traditionally has an ambiguous, or oppositional, relationship with the institution is a question that also arises in the analyses of projects later in this thesis). It seems that often that those artists made permanent members of staff are redeployed in largely administrative roles. These more stable relationships might allow changes to take hold within the actual structures of the institution.

However, the artist as freelancer is perhaps a more familiar image and it is easy to see how the institution would benefit from being able to draw on a wide pool of expertise. The artist, in this case, is less allied to the institution but suffers from the negative aspects of the precarious arrangement discussed earlier. Temporary alliances and a high turnover of artists create a sense of the artist's practice as commodity. The artist might feel the need to modify his/her practice to make it more attractive to the institution, attempting to anticipate the institution's needs. Alternatively, the artist might prefer to keep the institution 'at arms' length, seeing uncertainty as the price that has to be paid for independence.

Hierarchies of Employment and Pay

In the March 1994 Tate Report, there are indications of a hierarchy of practices within the different institutions. At the Royal Academy '[a]rtists and art historians are equally paid,' but '[a]ssistants and "fully fledged" assistants [are] paid differently.' In addition, 'the leading artist is paid a retainer fee.'

An interesting distinction is made at the National Portrait Gallery where '[s]torytellers/ actors are differentiated from artists as they are actually "*plying their trade*" when they work in the gallery' (my italics). If artists are not 'plying their trade,' what kind of service are they selling? Elaborating further, the statement continues: 'Their costumes and props need extra preparation. Their fee depends on the demand of the freelancer and the complexity and desirability of the programme.' There is evidently much discretion left to the employers as regards rates of pay and the criteria by which these are decided.

For example, it is not stated exactly how 'desirability' is measured (whether by numbers of participants or how far the programme fits in with institutional aims). It is difficult to tell also how these criteria might be communicated to the artist, whether explicitly or implicitly, and how this in turn affects their own ways of valuing their work in the gallery spaces.

Free Labour

The issue of free labour in museums continues to be a point of contention for artists with groups such as 'The Carrot Workers' Collective¹³ raising awareness about the increasing use of unpaid internships as a stepping stone to a career in the arts (a practice resisted for many years at Tate) and the number of voluntary posts advertised within the cultural sector. To paraphrase social theorist Angela McRobbie, for many, a career in the cultural sector can seem like, 'an internship without end.'¹⁴ In a report from the mid-1970s, the assistant keeper notes:

'Due to special circumstances which no longer obtain, we have been able to exploit, in the recent past, the services of students in this capacity. We have received the benefit of much good work at no cost.'¹⁵

Supply and Demand

Free labour is possible when the institution, through its reputation, can draw on a wide pool of volunteers. If trained artists are willing to offer their services for free (as is often the case), this must surely have an impact on the criteria artists use to judge their own practice. Whether the artist decides to work for free because s/he believes that it will lead on to better things (paid work, an exhibition) or because s/he hopes there will be a social or political impact, the issue of value – and who determines what practices are valuable and which are not – remains key.

When considering what qualifications a gallery 'host' might need (the equivalent of today's gallery attendant), an internal report acknowledges a situation where:

'It is well-known that Art Schools over-produce and there is a glut of Dip.A.D graduates: this means there would be considerable competition for a job at Tate and therefore a good selection. A number of Art Schools have good Art History Departments, (Chelsea, Camberwell, St. Martin's, Leeds, Manchester, Birmingham etc., etc.) and each of these regularly has a few students each year

with a flair for the academic side – some of which the Courtauld creams off. A great many of these people have no option but to go into teaching and I'm sure Museum work of any kind would appear an attractive alternative.'¹⁶

In the Tate Report from 1995 referred to earlier, where several London galleries were canvassed for their opinions regarding the employment of freelancers, the responses from the Serpentine Gallery make an explicit connection between a high turnover of freelancers and the image of the institution:

'Some freelancers are regulars at the Serpentine but the changing nature of the exhibitions and the desire to maintain a fresh youthful image tends to lead to new faces.'

The Educational 'Turn'

In the Archive material it seems that often artists are expected to behave more like performers in the gallery space and that this is potentially a way that they might be seen to 'ply their trade' to the public. It is interesting to think how the pressure to perform the persona of the artist in public might alter the artist's concept of herself and her practice. In a report from 1982,¹⁷ a member of Tate staff suggests:

'We may consider simply asking artists who are ordinarily painters etc. to do a "turn" which may be a lecture, discussion, demonstration or whatever they like and can be contrived.'

Later a distinction is made between performing one's practice and performance as practice:

'Naturally many types of Performance Art may be more appropriate in the Galleries and may not be considered to be within the province of the education department.'

The idea of performing one's practice is connected with the mystique of the artist. In a report to Heads of Departments Meeting on March 1986 it is noted that '[t]here is no doubt that the public is fascinated by the idea of artists talking about their work in the galleries.' This is reinforced later in the report:

'I would like to begin the 'Artist of the Month' series whereby each month a Tate artist would confront members of the public with one or more of his works hanging on the wall.'¹⁸

Although this practice certainly continues today within the educational function of museums and galleries, there is a general sense perhaps that this is somehow in bad faith: the educational 'turn' is beginning to be supplanted by the 'educational turn,' where there

is a desire for more coherence between the practice and how it is ‘performed,’ although this raises further questions (discussed later in the thesis).

Perceived Costs for the Freelancer

In the ‘Reflections’ section of the 1995 Report, Griggs notes that ‘[f]reelancers tended to express their dissatisfaction more as a desire for greater commitment and participation than for higher fees, adding that ‘[e]valuation was, on the whole, very unsystematic.’ He observes also that freelancers are dissatisfied with the lack of continuity in the relationship between the artist and the gallery and recognises their desire to have a greater impact at a structural level within the institution, noting ‘[s]ome freelancers feel under-used and would like to be more involved in the planning of long term policies.’

Intellectual Property

Finally, Griggs observes some anxiety amongst freelancers regarding intellectual property, noting that some ‘had reservations about increasing the communality of freelancers for fear of losing their ideas (to fellow freelancers or to the galleries themselves).’ This, reminding one of Bauman’s commentary earlier in this chapter, is understood to be a result of increased ‘competition between freelancers for jobs and ideas.’ Alongside this, again mirroring tendencies noted in Bauman’s thesis, he notes that artist-freelancers felt pressured ‘to remain at the source of their ideas and to stay ahead all the time.’

Current Practices: New Notions of Work/ Immaterial Labour

From the material in Tate Archives, it is reasonable to suppose that the economic framework in which the artist operates – both actual and perceived – plays a part in how the artist understands him/herself. As has been noted in the Introduction, ideas of creativity are often linked to notions of the free-market economy, with what some consider to be detrimental outcomes. There are several theorists who have addressed the idea of the ‘cultural worker’ and who are attempting to map out new definitions of labour. Foremost

amongst these in Maurizio Lazzarato who has developed the concept of Immaterial Labour where subjectivity itself is 'put to work'. He describes a situation whereby:

'A polymorphous self-employed autonomous work has emerged as the dominant form, a kind of "intellectual worker" who is him or herself an entrepreneur, inserted within a market that is constantly shifting and within networks that are changeable in time and space.'¹⁹

His descriptions of these new labour patterns could easily be applied to the freelance artist working within museums and galleries:

'Small and sometimes very small "productive units" (often consisting of only one individual) are organised for specific ad hoc projects, and may only exist for the duration of those particular jobs. The cycle of production comes into operation only when it is required by the capitalist; once the job has been done, the cycle dissolves back into the network and flows that make possible the reproduction and enrichment of its productive capacities.'²⁰

What is particularly important in terms of this research project is Lazzarato's analysis of how new subjectivities are produced by these novel working patterns; these break down the barriers between work and life through the use of existing social networks. The old avant-garde ambition of the breaking down of the boundary between art and life here takes on a very different inflection.

Subjectivity & Self-Valorisation

The processes of self-valorisation are particularly pertinent to the role of the artist within the educational function of the museum. Perhaps what is most important to note is what Lazzarato sees as the deliberate concealment of the fact that the interests of the worker and those of the company (or institution) 'are not identical.'²¹

The artist working in an institution like Tate may internalise many of the institution's agendas unreflectively, taking them as his or her own. Self-reflection, therefore, has the potential to become a site of resistance for the artist, a space where s/he can begin to separate out the different agendas that impinge on the practice.

Conclusions

The study of selected Tate Archive material has allowed a picture of the site in which the artist-as-educator operates to emerge. Whereas in the past, discussions of economic considerations were relegated to meetings held behind closed doors, issues of value, exchange (monetary and intellectual), and the potential for exploitation have become common currency within 'the educational/social turn'. In many cases (and the three projects described in Part 2 are cases in point), the economies operating in and through the complex site of the museum or gallery are rarely discussed, to the point where they might be considered taboo. Using the reflexive methodology described and applied in Part 2, I am adopting a strategy from Critical Interpretation in an attempt to create a space where these agendas can be brought to the surface and reflected upon. The methodology has been chosen specifically for its adaptability and its appropriateness for this complex task.

Finally, in Part 3, where current practice is described and analysed, economies in the broadest sense of the term become part of the works' structure, and are no longer a hidden context to be revealed through post-hoc analysis.

- 1: The Education Archives at Tate are currently under-researched. In 2011, partially in recognition of this fact, Tate Research invited applications for an AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Award PhD Studentship: 'A Critical Analysis of Artists' Engagement with Learning Programmes at Tate, 1970 – 2010.'
- 2: Tate Papers, 2005, p.2. <http://www.tate.org.uk/download/file/fid/7342>, viewed 5 August 2013
- 3: E. Hooper-Greenhill, 'Museum and Gallery Education', Leicester University Press, London and New York, 1991, p.10.
- 4: TG 22/1 Tate Records: Education: Policy and Programme, Tate Archives.
- 5: '*Verstehen*' is a concept associated with the work of social theorist Max Weber (1864 -1920) who sought to clarify to what extent our attempts to understand the inner motives of others are coloured by our own value judgements.
- 6: The first guide/lecturer was first engaged at Tate in 1914.
See H. Charman, H 'Uncovering Professionalism in the Art Museum: An Exploration of Key Characteristics of the Working Lives of Education Curators at Tate Modern', Tate Papers, April 2005.
- 7: Z. Bauman, 'Liquid Times: Living in an Age of Uncertainty', Polity, 2007.
- 8: Letter from Assistant Keeper, February 1968, TG 22/1 Tate Records: Education: Policy and Programme, Tate Archives.
- 9: Internal Memo from Mr T. Measham to Mr. M Compton, undated, TG 22/1 Tate Records: Education: Policy and Programme, Tate Archives.
- 10: TG 22/1/6, Tate Records: Education: Policy and Programme Education Department Meetings, March 1994, Tate Archives.
- 11 See M. Foucault, M. 'Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison', 1975.
- 12: TG 22/1/6, Tate Records: Education: Policy and Programme Education Department Meetings, March 1994, Tate Archives.
- 13: The Carrot Workers Collective.
<http://carrotworkers.wordpress.com/> viewed 2 September 2011.
- 14: A. McRobbie, 'The Los Angelisation of London. Three short waves of young people's micro-economics of culture and creating in the UK, *eipcp*, January 2007.
<http://eipcp.net/transversal/0207/mcrobbe/en> viewed May 2012.
- 15: Assistant Keeper, internal report, Tate Records: Education: Policy and Programme Education Department Meetings, March 1994, Tate Archives.
- 16: Internal Report, TG 22/1/2/1 Tate Records: Education: Policy and Programme Education policy 1971 - 1975, Tate Archives.
- 17: TG 22/1/4 Tate Records: Education: Policy and Programme Education Department meetings 1984 - 1987, Tate Archives.
- 18: TG 22/1/4 Tate Records: Education: Policy and Programme Education Department meetings 1984 - 1987, Tate Archives.
- 19: M. Lazzarato, 'Immaterial Labour', *generation online*, 1997.
<http://www.generation-online.org/c/cimmateriallabour3.htm> viewed May 2012.
- 20: *ibid.*
- 21: *ibid.*



Methodology

There were several methodological shifts through the course of the research, particularly at the outset. My initial aim when I embarked on the research was to define and describe the role and function of the artist working within the educational function of the museum. There seemed several strategies open to me: for example, it seemed important to compare my understandings with those of my colleagues, and to map the two relevant contexts – pedagogy and art – reading the role as an intersection between the two. I began by trying to argue that there was such a thing as the ‘profession’ of artist-educator, and that although this was a hybrid role, it found its coherence in the individual identities of artist-teachers who managed somehow to integrate the two. I had anticipated that although varied, these subjectivities would share a common ground, and that by identifying these shared understandings, I would be able to create a composite portrait that reflected the complexity and ambiguity of the role but could nonetheless be presented as a unity, recognisable in broad terms to colleagues.

As has been noted in the Introduction, during the course of the research the terrain shifted in two important ways and rendered this approach redundant. Firstly, recent shifts in artists’ practice (‘the Educational Turn’) and curatorial practice (‘New Institutionalism’) resulted in a call for the activities of the artist-as-educator to be judged ‘as art’. Although I am not certain that this is always possible (and if it is possible, many projects - my own included - would fall short), the call for clarity in terms of the criteria by which the activities taking place in the educational function of the museum seemed long overdue. In any case, to think of these practices as art seems a viable ‘thought experiment’ that might potentially lead to some valuable insights. The evaluation of artist’s work within the educational function of the museum has long been clouded by a lack of clarity regarding what it is that is being judged. In addition, there are a set of assumptions about education practices which are not always justified. In a discussion with a colleague who was also researching fine-art pedagogy, we complained about what we perceived to be the excessive scrutiny of the University Ethics Committee. After all, we were working as educators, and generally understood to be ‘doing good’, surely they could relax their criteria a little? The activities of artists working in education have generally been seen to contribute to ‘the social good’, although it is difficult to think how these claims can be justified, except in the most general terms. While not wanting to undermine the achievements of artists working in the educational function of the museum, it seems counter-productive to describe those achievements in terms of a social good that is then not verified. UK, museum-based education (or ‘learning’ as it is now called to emphasise participant experience), still carries with it the legacy of philanthropy in the great Victorian museums; its successes and failures seem still to be judged in social and political terms (particularly in the 90s with the advent

of New Labour), and are therefore not subject to the same 'audit culture' more commonly applied to the formal education sector. Whilst there was considerable resistance to the instrumentalisation of art (education) within the museum through Government policies of social inclusion and corporate-funded, community initiatives, artists could still work 'below the radar' if they satisfied the generally superficial criteria stipulated by the funding bodies. Working in this way was perhaps the main attraction for artists who liked the idea of operating within and against the institution, adopting the subversive strategies of Institutional Critique. However, the avoidance of all but the most superficial scrutiny has, I would argue, had unforeseen consequences: the artist herself is not obliged to evaluate her own practice, or even fully clarify the criteria by which these practices should be judged. This leaves the practice open to instrumentalisation by others who have control over how the work is (re)presented to the public. Equally, the conviction that one is 'doing good', no matter how vague and unformed, can override the admittedly difficult task of self-evaluation and deny the possibility this offers in terms of refining practice.

A new research methodology was required that would accommodate this shift in focus prompted by 'the educational turn' and critiques of the claims of artists working collaboratively to 're-enforce the social bond' (to repeat Claire Bishop's challenge). My reading of the literature surrounding the 'profession' of the artist-as-educator, supported by my exploration in the Tate Archive, re-affirmed my conviction that the artist-as-educator's voice was largely absent and rarely recorded directly. The project moved away from an analysis of others' understandings of the role towards a desire to look more closely at my own. In a sense it became both narrower and broader in its ambitions: narrower because it represented a turning inwards; broader because it attempted to engage with the idea of self-reflection as practice. The process of reflection, more perhaps than the practice of the artist-as-educator itself, has at times become the site of resistance, taking as its inspiration Foucault's last interviews and writings, where self-crafting is an activity that resists the technologies of both knowledge and power.¹ Any methodology adopted had to overcome ingrained tendencies of thought that dominated current methods of evaluation, allowing for a creative to-ing and fro-ing between theoretical models and the project 'data'. After the initial reading, I felt that the methodology needed to challenge preferred paths of interpretation by comparing and contrasting theoretical frameworks, prioritising none. The methodology chosen is that proposed by sociologists Mats Alvesson and Kaj Sköldböck; theirs is a four-level approach ('quadri-hermeneutics') which attempts to salvage aspects of the empirical research traditions whilst simultaneously problematising the researcher's assumptions. As far as I am aware, this is the first time this reflexive methodology has been applied to this field (Alvesson and Sköldböck have developed their approach predominantly in social science and business environments). What this approach allows is a recognition, however guarded and moderated, that the traditions of empirical research still have something to offer and that the value of collecting and reflecting on 'data' is that it provides a rich source of interpretative possibilities.

From the very beginning of the research project, I had a strong desire to stay very close to the 'data'. It was almost as if I wanted to replicate the trick taught to me by a professor at art-school who told me to look at works-in-progress reflected back to me in a mirror so that the faults in the composition would jump out. It seemed that there was a tendency within the literature, reviewed in the Introduction chapter, to select data to support an understanding that had been decided prior to the project. Through using this data-oriented approach (where data might include transcripts of conversations and interviews, photographs and even social acts), I hoped to surprise myself out of my a-priori understandings and this has been the case to a greater-or-lesser extent in the three projects analysed. In this, there is an affinity with the philosophical project of Paul Ricoeur who walked a fine line between objectivist and alethic hermeneutics, believing in the 'otherness' of data only insofar as it gave him something to work against, permitting him to challenge his most basic assumptions. Whilst engaging with this methodology, I was surprised how quickly I wanted to move away from a close analysis of the data, constantly pulled by the desire to think in more general, broadly theoretical terms. I had to force myself to look closely, to look again, to look differently.

Occasionally, in practice, something happens that forces you to reconsider all the basic premises that underpin what you do. This happens only rarely (I can think of two occasions when it has happened to me personally) - or perhaps the rarity lies in the fact that you realise the event's significance at the moment it occurs. This moment has been theorised by Alain Badiou in his articulation of a theory of the *event*, where the evental situation emerges spontaneously and demands a reconfiguration of forms of knowledge. Badiou writes that the event compels us to move beyond the state that preceded it, forcing 'the subject to invent a new way of being and acting in the situation.'³ As a researcher into my own practice, I wondered if more modest-scale disruptions could be willed into being. Returning to Paul Ricoeur, in his particular form of hermeneutics he advocates a dual approach to data where the interpreter moves between suspicion and hope, resisting the text whilst simultaneously being open to what it has to say. In this way, events of meaning can occur in the moment of interpretation, in front of the text before the eyes of the researcher. This has been the case to such an extent that I have become aware that many of the ambitions I held for my practice in galleries and museums prior to the analysis of the case-studies are perhaps not fully achievable in these contexts.

Although this has become a highly personal project, I hope the research may be useful to others working in the field insofar that it makes the claim that such a complex practice, sited as it is amongst various discourses and across several disciplines, requires sophisticated modes of evaluation if the reflective process (which drives the practice forward) is not to be reduced to a tick-box analysis – and the practice reduced merely to an illustration of others' agendas.

The Methodology: an example

In their Foreword to 'Reflexive Methodology. New Vistas for Qualitative Research',⁴ Mats Alvesson and Kaj Sköldböck (henceforth referred to as the Researchers) call for:

'an awareness among researchers of a broad range of insights: into interpretive acts, into the political, ideological and ethical issues of the social sciences, and into their own construction of the 'data' or empirical material about which they have something to say'.⁵

They go on to characterise their project as 'an intellectualization of qualitative method or a pragmatization of the philosophy of science.'⁶ This contamination of one approach by another seemed to me to be a useful strategy when reflecting on artistic practices which take place in the educational function of the museum. The hybrid nature of the practice, situated as it is amongst several disciplines and their associated evaluative models, tends to be written about from one position or disciplinary 'mind-set'. Thus, texts written out of an educational context (commissioned by the Learning Departments of museums and galleries, for example) orientate themselves by referencing perspectives which also emphasise participants' experience and the perceived educational and/or social benefits rather than those which emphasise the aesthetic/political. It appears that the hybridity of the practice, counter-intuitively, tends toward a conservative approach when it comes to reflection and evaluation, as if those engaged in this relatively new way of working were using evaluation to argue a case rather than open up the field to enquiry.

The Researchers conclude their Foreword with the warning that their text is 'a report on a work in progress, indicating a provisional position and some possible future directions but not any ultimate Truth.'⁷ However, they do offer a broad framework. There are four interpretive levels (or aspects) which are as follows: interaction with the empirical material (data-oriented methods which address how 'data' is constructed and situated); interpretation (drawing on various strands within hermeneutics to discover underlying meanings); critical interpretation (drawing on critical theory and its examination of ideology, power and social reproduction); reflection on text production and language-use (drawing on post-structuralist theories to interrogate one's own text and claims to authority – and to critique the research itself). The different layers frequently blur into one another and, depending on the project, some layers are emphasised more than others. In addition, there is a very strong link between the first and fourth layers, so that the initial selection and construction of the 'data' are intrinsically linked to the construction of the researcher's voice and position. This multi-method approach allows the researcher to offset one method against another, critiquing each.

The adoption of this methodology has proved occasionally frustrating, although the motivations for its choice seemed appropriate to the task of elaborating a more complex, counter-intuitive, less unitary account of practice. While the authors give a broad description of the methodology's four interpretive levels and the various sources that inform them, they reject a formulaic approach, asserting instead that the interpretive emphases will change on a case-by-case basis. Despite, or perhaps because of the frustrations of having to move between levels and theoretical frameworks, the approach seemed to offer a way out of a superficial approach to evaluating and reflecting on practice - a practice which had prior to the research been characterised by a certain naivety of approach and an inability to develop alternative or additional ways of working. I hoped it would also allow me to become more aware of how particular interpretations communicate specific agendas, making me more cognisant of my position as a researcher. Applying this methodology to past projects, my intention was that the evaluative process would become more layered and plural and incorporate sometimes contradictory elements. The method of evaluation was to become a continuous form of research.

In terms of the outcomes for my current practice, I anticipated that this process would lead to a way of working which might seem provisional and less full of certainties, but would perhaps be more responsive and nuanced as a result. I imagined also that in broader terms, the research process would prevent me from making unsubstantiated claims for those practices described under the umbrella terms of 'socially-engaged practice' and 'the educational turn'.

Towards the end of 'Reflexive Methodology', the Researchers offer an 'empirical example' of the methodology in action. To better explain the potential applications of the methodology in my own field, I have taken a single photograph from a series, the documentation of an event with a group of over-55s which took place at Tate Modern in 2005. The Seniors event itself is described in greater detail in the following chapter. Here, I am applying the four interpretive levels advocated by the Researchers to a single image to show how the methodology operates in practice.

'I would like to do more talking about different artworks, working out what the artist is getting at'

Seniors Programme
Regular series of events for local seniors



'Before this, we felt modern art was not really accessible to all'

Continuing Professional Development Programme
Training for community group leaders, organisations and local businesses



The Seniors event, documented by the photograph, was delivered as part of the Family and Community Programme at Tate (now the Adult Programme). As can be seen in the poster (entitled ‘Why talk about art?’), within a gallery education context, the photograph is put to use to convey a particular understanding of the Gallery’s Community Programme (as it was then called). Here the original photograph (reproduced on the previous page), has been cropped to emphasise the clasped hands which now occupy the centre of the image; the emphasis is on the faces and expressions of the participants (the pointing gesture has been cropped entirely from the image - this may be because one of the rules of gallery behaviour is not to point).⁸ The quotations from previous participants which now surround the image, anchor the possible interpretations: they include ‘Before this, we felt modern art was not really accessible to all’ and ‘To feel the freedom to say what I am thinking’ (the second phrase is not included in the illustration detail but is present in the poster itself). The image is changed, given a new context, and is put to work to promote Tate’s programmes. I have included the poster here to show how in specific contexts certain readings of ‘data’ seem to be prioritised over others. The original photograph seems to contain more data, but the context for its reproduction is not neutral. Its positioning as data within the frame of research may also prioritise some readings over others. The methodology asks the researcher to challenge the idea of the superficially most plausible interpretation and asks us to look at the context in which the data is reproduced. It seems likely that some interpretive pathways are repeated until they become habitual. Even the participants’ self-understandings may be influenced through internalisation of the gallery’s message.

For the purposes of this exercise (and perhaps counter to the recommendations of the authors who reject anything that might suggest an interpretive ‘formula’), I have adopted the same headings as used in the original text.

Interpretations

From the start, Alvesson and Sköldböck disclose a thematic bias in the interpretation of their example; they state openly that in the case of their chosen interview, they are interested in the themes of motive and morality. These themes seem broad enough to allow the processes of interpretation and re-interpretation advocated by the methodology. Most importantly, the bias (or research interest) is stated openly, immediately positioning the

Researchers within a set of debates. This interpretive bias is present in my own research. In terms of this image and the workshop it represents, I am interested in the idea of ‘community’ and how communities might be created and sustained by gallery education programmes. This emphasis is hardly surprising considering my professional background (for several years I was curator of the Community Programme at Tate Liverpool). It is easy to see how the data (the photograph) might be used to explore other themes by other researchers, but the importance of declaring a vested interest at this point demonstrates how Levels 1 (construction of data) and 4 (construction of the researcher) intersect.

Primary Interpretations

For Alvesson and Sköldbberg, the primary interpretation is the set of circumstances that produces the text or narrative in their example. In my example, the photograph is one outcome of a gallery-based workshop for seniors at Tate Modern which took place in 2005. In their account, the Researchers raise the potential problem of ‘undue influence’ created by an interview situation. They note ‘the interpretive work of the subject [the interviewee],’⁹ who presents a certain picture of himself, limited perhaps by his understanding of the interview format. In the photograph from the workshop, it seems possible (perhaps even probable) that the participant is proposing a version of herself which is, to some extent at least, determined by her expectations of the event and the setting. As the participant is also aware she is being photographed, it is also possible that she is performing to camera and to both a real and imagined audience. Paraphrasing David Silverman, Alvesson and Sköldbberg note ‘The manner in which people present themselves and their motives is greatly influenced by what is normative in terms of understandability and acceptability.’¹⁰

This is not to say that the gesture is deliberately ‘deceitful’, only that we are limited in terms of our possible interpretations by the distance from the event and a lack of other accounts. In this methodology, even at the level of these primary interpretations, there is the acknowledgment that there are several factors at play which negate the possibility of a simple, uncomplicated ‘translation’ of the data.

Secondary Interpretations

There is often a problem of separating out primary interpretations (determined by the circumstances out of which the data emerges) and secondary interpretations, especially when extensive editing has taken place. Secondary interpretations are defined as ‘generally explicit, conscious; the researcher typically realises that other interpretations are

possible.¹¹ However, they are also seen to be ‘mirroring (albeit incomplete and ambiguous) actual, i.e. historically correct conditions.’¹² In this section, the Researchers use aspects of source criticism as one way of testing the data. The first problem they raise is that of authenticity: how can we know that the image has not been fabricated or manipulated? Was the event staged for promotional purposes? Alvesson and Sköldbberg state that due to the researchers’ long relationship with the interviewee, they have no particular reason to doubt the validity of the data. However, they do raise the problem arising from the fact that when the data is a document of human activity, the situation (‘experiment’) is non-replicable, and that therefore greater ethical awareness is demanded from the researcher. This ‘forensic’ interrogation of the photograph at first seems unnecessary to me although it does make me think more carefully about the conditions in which it was produced. My first response is to note that I was present at the workshop so can personally vouch for its authenticity and I too have a long relationship with the subject of the photograph, having met her several times over the years. I have no reason to believe she is acting out of character. However, this enforced proximity to the data (I would never have asked these questions in this way were it not for Alvesson and Sköldbberg’s model), enables me to question my assumptions. What does it mean when I make the judgement that the subject of the photograph is not ‘acting out of character’? Having only ever met this person infrequently, and always in the context of a gallery-based education event, what is my judgement based on and what does this mean in terms of my way of working, then and now? One solution might be to ask the participant herself to reflect on the image. However, as in the case of Alvesson and Sköldbberg’s interviewee, this would be difficult and not the real focus of the research. Also, as already noted, the tendency within gallery-education literature is to rely heavily on participant feedback at the expense of documenting the artist’s understanding, so to do so would change the emphasis of the research project dramatically (see Levels 1 and 4 of the methodology). The purpose of the interpretation is not to arrive at a single understanding of the event, but to generate multiple interpretations to test my prior assumptions. An alternative offered by the Researchers in the analysis of their interview is that an interpretation might be formed instead by looking for repeated phrases or verbal conventions that might tell us more about the sector as a whole. This oscillation between part and whole is a traditional move within hermeneutics. In the case of this photograph, it might be useful to compare the woman’s gesture to those in the rest of the photographic series. My memory of the gesture is that it was something entirely new, but the plausibility of this interpretation would be undermined if I discovered that it was part of a ‘coherent’ vocabulary of gestures (including not just hers, but those of other participants). My memory of the event also tells me that she was not pointing at an artwork but at another participant, and that the gesture led to the younger woman on the subject’s right dancing momentarily with another participant. Her gesture draws people together rather than being accusatory. Returning to my initial (declared) research interest, this might tell me something about how ideas of community are formed during a gallery-

based education event. The eloquent image of bringing people together across a divide seems somewhat idealised, however. There may be other, less ‘utopian’ interpretations of the gesture and perhaps I am being overly influenced by the dominant narratives within gallery education. A more critical reading (Level 3) might allow me to test the limits of the hermeneutic method itself (Level 2), which has historically been taken to task for its normative tendencies.¹³ One aim of the application of the methodology to the data seems to be the production of doubt and its partial resolution, at least to the point where practice can proceed.

Critical Interpretation

At this, the third, interpretive level, a key question is: what is being normalised by the photograph? For myself as a researcher, informed by prior knowledge of this event in particular and by my experience of gallery education in general, I am unsure at this point how to answer this question. Who, with regards to this image in particular, is the agent of the normalising process? If I am to follow the example of the analysis of the interview with the advertising executive, I am obliged to take the *subject* of the photograph as the person whose account is privileged. But is the photograph I have chosen promotional or *self*-promotional? The fact that the photograph has been *taken* seems to shift responsibility onto the photographer and then beyond her to the institution which commissioned her. The photographer has been given a brief by a curator within Tate Learning; no matter how general the instruction, the photographer will have, to a greater or lesser extent, internalised the institution’s expectations. It is doubtful that the photographer’s intention was to critique the institution and its programmes, although there is always some ‘slippage’ in the data which permits other interpretations. The ‘teller’ of the account here is at the same time the woman dressed in pink, the photographer *and* Tate the institution. The fact that I do not give full agency to the subject of the photograph indicates a research position which will itself be brought into question at Level 4 of the methodology.

The gesture of the participant, however, could certainly be read as a critical one, if her agency (rather than that of the photographer or of the institution) is prioritised; she introduces an unexpected element to an overly-structured education session where many others might have felt inhibited. The pointing gesture runs directly counter to gallery rules (where pointing could lead to touching of the artwork, presumably), so whether aware of this or not, she is acting as a ‘rule-breaker’. Another critical interpretation (via Foucault) might insist that the participant has internalised and is reproducing the institution’s desired image of its communities (bringing people together, reconciling difference, etc).

At this point, Alvesson and Sköldbörg encourage the researcher using their methodology to source other material to help develop reflections, with the ultimate aim of increasing the quality of the interpretation. Here the image re-contextualised in the Community Programme poster might be useful, as would observations drawn from critical theory (Bourdieu's critique of naturalised behaviours in museum settings might be mentioned). If we are to understand the institution (Tate) as the agent controlling this account (as it does most forcibly in the poster) we could discuss its desire to represent itself as accessible to all ages and ethnicities. In the quotations surrounding the image, the words 'freedom' and 'accessible' stand either side of the image. To bring this account into question, the researcher might source facts and figures for the various categories of visitor, for example. At Level 3 of the methodology, we are asked to 'reflect upon the role of [the] work in relation to the reproduction or questioning of social institutions and ideologies.'¹⁴ It seems natural here to critique Tate as an institution and art museums more generally. The concept of 'Education' (education as institution) might be another target. The interpretations that have taken place at Levels 1 and 2 could be revisited at this point in the light of critical perspectives raised at this stage. Returning to Level 2 (interpretation) and looking more closely at the data, we can see behind the main action of the visitor participation the text on the gallery walls. The word 'free' is repeated twice (once in capitals) and the injunction 'Join Today' concludes the statement. Towards the entrance we have two entrance prices, one full the other concessionary. Although Tate's collection displays are free to the public, 'special' exhibitions have an entrance fee. This observation could be used to introduce a further, critical level of discussion, particularly with regards to the politics of museum access mentioned earlier.

Interpretations of Authority and Representation

As stated previously, what is perhaps most effective about the quadri-hermeneutic approach is the way in which each method intersects and critiques the others, so that none is prioritised or given the status of a 'true' method. At this stage of their analysis of the advertising executive's interview, Alvesson and Sköldbörg introduce the idea that the researcher who decides 'not to respect in full the subject's claim to be believed, may be setting himself up as in some way *above* the subject.'¹⁵ In terms of my practice, both as researcher and artist, this is a key insight and I now realise (post-analysis of the image), a strong personal tendency. The recognition that the artist/researcher may feel she has a 'special advantage' which allows her to disregard 'the subject's self-understanding' once acknowledged is hard to dispel; it also seems to suggest at least the possibility that the same sense of superiority might be a previously unacknowledged factor in the devising

and delivery of gallery-based projects. Once realised, it seems this reflection will inevitably have an effect on future practice. As stated in an earlier chapter, the artist working within the educational function of the museum may (as in my case) draw heavily on the tradition of Institutional Critique where any activity carried out by the artist can be viewed as an intervention, revealing the hidden agendas behind the institutional façade. This would seem almost inevitably to result in an ‘oppositional’ form of practice. Here, there is the realisation that this way of working may also reproduce a power imbalance in the relationship between artist and participant-group. This is discussed in the final chapter of the thesis.

After laying out the structure of the methodology and making claims for its potential to both provoke doubt and offer possibilities for future practice, the three case studies that follow demonstrate how the approach operates in practice, analysing three projects/events in depth. To summarise, by interrogating the data from the perspective of the artist, the project analyses that follow seek to open up a site for reflection and discussion, and to challenge current evaluative models which simplify complex experiences to satisfy pre-determined criteria of judgement. It is my argument that the artist holds a view of a project prior to its delivery and subsequent evaluation and that this view is, at least in part, formed by the institutional agenda and the ways in which similar projects have been described and understood in the past. Each case-study therefore begins with a project description which describes the contexts out of which each project/event arises. In Alvesson and Sköldberg’s methodology, we are encouraged to turn towards the data, with an attitude of both curiosity (about what the data might tell us, disrupting our a-priori notions) and suspicion (that data is never ‘pure’ but is always, already interpreted).

- 1: M. Foucault, 'The Care of the Self (Le Souci de Soi)', Editions Gallimard, 1984.
- 2: M. Alvesson, M. & K. Skoldberg, 'Reflexive Methodology: New Vistas for Qualitative Research', Sage, 2000.
- 3: A. Badiou in D. Atkinson, 'Art, Equality and Learning'. Sense Publishers, 2011, p.10.
- 4: M. Alvesson, M. & K. Skoldberg, 'Reflexive Methodology: New Vistas for Qualitative Research', Sage, 2000.
- 5: *ibid.*, p. vii.
- 6: *ibid.*
- 7: *ibid.*
- 8: For more discussion of written and unwritten rules in the museum see C. Duncan, 'Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums', Routledge, 1994.
- 9: M. Alvesson, M. & K. Skoldberg, 'Reflexive Methodology: New Vistas for Qualitative Research', Sage, 2000, p.264.
- 10: *ibid.*, p.264.
- 11: *ibid.*, p.261.
- 12: *ibid.*, p.262.
- 13: See Jürgen Habermas' critique of Hans-Georg Gadamer's 'universal' hermeneutics in 'Knowledge and Human Interest', 1968.
- 14: By 'work' I understand Alvesson and Sköldberg to mean the account produced by the subject of the text – in their example, by the interviewee.
- 15: A similar argument is made by Jacques Rancière in 'The Ignorant Schoolmaster', 1987, in response to the writings of Pierre Bourdieu and the New Sociology.

The Artist and Community

Project Description

In this case, the photographs selected document an event in the exhibition 'Open Systems' which occurred in 2005 as part of provision for older people at Tate Modern. These sessions ran as part of the gallery's Family and Community Programme within the Learning Department. At the time, there were quarterly drop-in events for over-55s which allowed a particular 'community' to develop, consisting of repeat visitors and invited groups. These events were free to individuals who lived in the boroughs of Lambeth and Southwark (participants also gained free access to the paying exhibitions). As the sessions were run on a week-day, participants could only attend if they were retired or worked part-time. Tate staff (the curator and assistant curator of the Family and Community Programme) liaised with staff from Southwark Arts Forum, a networking organisation representing artistic and cultural interests in Southwark, who acted as brokers, inviting (and providing transport for) various seniors' groups within the area. Events for seniors had been running prior to the Opening of Tate Modern in 2001, and included a film club and activities in the community garden. As a result, many participants were familiar with the gallery and the activities it offered, having built up a relationship over several years. Others were entirely new to the gallery. Some knew each other outside of the gallery events and participated in other local activities directed at older people. The dynamics of the group were therefore complex and fluid. Some of the relationships with participants developed over years, a defining characteristic of this programme, but unusual within the field of museum and gallery education – and indeed in my own work in general.

Sessions were generally very well-attended with a maximum number of thirty-five participants (split into two groups for the activities in the gallery spaces). The 'workshop' consisted of a ninety-minute session, beginning with a whole group introduction to the themes of the exhibition or display outside of the galleries, then a series of activities within the exhibition. These activities ranged from whole-group discussion to small-group tasks, often involving photographic or word prompts intended to generate discussion. The approach was based loosely on a set of methods initially developed at Tate Liverpool, documented as 'Ways In' in the Art Gallery Handbook.¹

Each chapter of the thesis offers a partial perspective of practice with recurring themes that appear, with particular inflections, through the interpretation of each project. In recognition of the complexity of the artist's practice in education contexts, which characteristically moves between a number of frames of reference generating materials in all media, each chapter constructs a conversation around a different type of data.

The interpretive bias of this chapter is my interest in the idea of 'community'. I would argue that the theme is central to the theory of practice of the artist working with members of the public in a museum or gallery context more generally, and is not specific to my practice alone. Much of gallery rhetoric, evident in marketing materials and internal/external reports, deals with the building of communities, with the potential of gallery-based activities to re-enforce social bonds and to attract those on the margins (the so-called 'hard-to-reach' audiences). As noted in Part 1, the origins of this concept of the museum/gallery's relationship to its publics can be traced back to the somewhat paternalistic ambitions of the great Victorian museums for public betterment.³ The theme was taken up again with the advent of New Labour, whose emphasis on education and cultural access⁴ had a profound effect on museums and galleries' perceived responsibilities to their publics. Also, as Tate is and was directly funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, the gallery was held accountable and was obliged to fulfil the government's agenda on cultural access. The question 'Who are the gallery's communities?' was repeated in meetings within the Learning Department – and tested in practice through events organised by the Public Programme team. In addition, the gallery's mission statement, which emphasises the desire to increase 'enjoyment' and 'understanding' of the collections, underpins all its activities. For example, the publicity for the Seniors event reflects this when it invites people who live locally to come to the gallery as individuals 'to meet new people' via an encounter with the artworks.⁵ The combination of the social ('enjoyment') and educative ('understanding') are a particular characteristic of this and other programmes.

As Helen Charman has noted in her essay, the education curator's professional expertise can be located in her specialist knowledge of her audience.⁶ As an education curator for the Adult and Community Programme in the late nineties at Tate Liverpool, and later as an 'artist-educator' for the Community Programme at Tate Modern, my theory of practice was profoundly informed by these implicit and explicit concepts of the gallery's communities. For example, while at Tate Liverpool, I inherited a programme that targeted groups such as those in prisons and users of the probationary services, mental-health service-users and staff and the visually impaired. Despite the beginnings of a critique of this

approach while I was in post, the concept of community promoted by the programme was one of trying to bring those on the 'outside' in; as such it was defined by a core opposition between inclusion and exclusion (terms frequently used at the time). This tendency to understand the gallery's responsibility to its communities as remedying the 'problem of exclusion' (from cultural activities) continues into the present and can be seen in current provision.⁷ As the event was part of Tate's Family and Community Programme and was aimed at a target audience (older people in the locality), these base-line ideas of community run through it from conception, through delivery, to dissemination. The institution's idea of community is made explicit in terms of how the event is framed and evaluated but is also internalised, to a greater or lesser extent, by the artist who attends planning meetings with curators (who were also present at the event itself).

In terms of pre-understandings which inform the artist's theory of practice, when working with older people in the gallery the 'reminiscence' model seems ever-present. In much research about museum practice and seniors, a therapeutic model, based on reminiscence, is still influential.⁸ Although it is not within the scope of this paper to discuss this research area in detail, I would argue that the model still dominates in much work with seniors, where assumptions operate dictating that older people in the gallery should be engaged in processes of remembering and being reminded of the past. There is also a particular emphasis on the physical presence of the object as many museums use collections of 'handling objects' as a point of departure for the reminiscence process. Although the traces of this approach arguably remain within aspects of its programmes (there are several references to handling objects within the teaching resources made available on the Tate website), there is a conscious attempt to move away from this form of stereotyping at Tate Modern. Instead, in an audience-group defined by age (and with an age-range of fifty-five and over this is very broad), there are mixed identities and interests and these have to be taken into account. Where it can be safely assumed that teachers visiting Tate (in their role as teachers) might wish to examine notions of pedagogy, no such generalisation can be made with seniors who have diverse interests. More so than perhaps any other group, seniors bring with them a wide and well-developed set of interests and life experiences and these can never be anticipated by the artist-facilitator or by the institution as a whole. This then is one of the discourses at play in a workshop for seniors: a set of assumptions about who people are and what they might be interested in dependent on age. Despite the desire to challenge these assumptions by curators and gallery-educators, it seems likely that this discourse (about seniors as a group) continues to operate at some level in the pre-understandings of artists, participants and curators. In terms of debates about access within the museum, the so called 'medical model' can dominate, where communities are defined in terms of their physical 'deficiencies'. The 'social model' which counters this, insists that it is the institution's responsibility to accommodate a range of needs, so avoiding the categorisation of a group in terms of what they lack. At these seniors events, there was

generally a higher staff-to-participant ratio than was normal with other groups. In addition, there were frequent discussions about mobility and hearing impairment which might have led to an assumption that this was a group that needed to be 'managed'. Looking ahead to the interpretation of the photographs, it seems likely that some of the metaphors underpinning my interpretations will be informed by these a-priori understandings of the audience group.

In addition to the gallery's role in influencing the artist's theory of practice and more general assumptions about this audience group, there are specific pedagogic concepts that inform the practice. In many museums and galleries, these pedagogies are not made explicit. At Tate, however, as a freelance artist, I was first inducted into a pedagogic approach in 1997 at Tate Liverpool by the curators who had designed it. The 'Ways of Looking' as they were then called consisted of four approaches through which artworks could be interpreted: the personal; the object; the subject; and context. The main premise was that there is no one, fixed, authoritative interpretation of the artwork and that all interpretation is informed by the personal, a-priori knowledge and experience of the viewer. This approach came with an emancipatory agenda, asserting as it did that the individual's interpretation was as valid as other more official forms of knowledge.⁹ The theme of interpretation (and interpretive communities) is discussed later in the thesis. However, at this point it is important to note that many of the activities documented in the photographs were designed to elicit a personal response and to construct a temporary, interpretive community as individuals shared their thoughts with others in the group. As such, in terms of a theory of practice, encouraging a group within the gallery to share their responses can be seen as a form of resistance or an intervention, especially when participants are surrounded by the gallery's official interpretations, visible in labels, wall-panels and brochures (it was common practice to insist that participants in the workshop ignored these until they had developed their own responses).

Finally, the history of Institutional Critique - of artists' interventions within the art museum to promote 'critical' awareness amongst the public - underpins many artists' activities within the learning function of the museum, mine included. The artist, within this history, stands outside (if not in direct opposition to) the institution. The artist as a politically/socially-motivated outsider has a long history, reinforced by practices in community arts in the UK since the '70s. These histories of community activism were also a part of many artists formation, with the principles learned outside of the museum or gallery a sub-current in all discussions. There is a current debate in the field of art and its institutions: instead of the traditional concept of 'outreach' where the institution connects with the public 'on the outside' of its walls, the art museum can instead be understood as a place which generates its own publics (this process is explored in Nina Möntmann's 'Art and its Institutions').¹⁰ The site of the institution is not only a physical but also a conceptual site;

its publics, for example, can be generated virtually. Tate's online presence (the 'Fifth' site in addition to Tate Modern, Tate Britain, Tate Liverpool and Tate St Ives) is a key conception of site which might be explored in future research, particularly with an older audience where the problems of mobility might preclude access to the physical site. By rethinking the institution primarily as a public and discursive site and as a place where subjectivities and constituencies are created rather than accommodated, the Seniors event and the Family and Community Programme can be seen as generating their own concepts of community. An analysis of the data might therefore reveal in more detail how these processes work in practice.

Prior to the analysis of the data that follows, my theory of practice might have been characterised as follows: the artist stands outside of the institution in a position of critique; s/he models alternative interpretations of the artworks of display and this has an emancipatory function; enjoyment and consensus are signs that an event has gone well; a group of older people have varied interests and needs but there may be a greater incidence of mobility/hearing issues that means the group may have to be managed differently within the gallery space.

A purpose of analysing photographs of the workshop for seniors in the 'Open Systems' exhibition is to test the theories of practice that underpin the activities of the artist-facilitator. By reflecting on the photographs from one particular workshop, I hope to begin to imagine the various concepts of community in operation within the museum/gallery site, and the artist's role in (unwittingly) proposing one model at the expense of others.

Primary Interpretations

This aspect of the methodology examines how data is constructed and situated. It is common practice to use photography to document education events in the gallery, but these are not generally employed in research. I first encountered the use of photography as a research tool working with Roger Hancock, a senior lecturer in sociology at the Open University working with Tate to evaluate a programme called 'Small Steps' which involved the participation of young children and their carers.¹¹ The article produced was later published in an edition of the journal *Forum* which examined the 'spatial turn' in research. I remember watching a more experienced researcher at work, and realising that photographs could be used as prompts for research.

In general at Tate, events are extensively photographed, but the images are used most often for marketing purposes, for in-house publications and reports rather than for research. On this occasion, the photographs were taken by Eve Georgiou from Tate Photography. Although she was not given a specific brief, she was directed by programme curators to document the session and ‘capture images that could be primarily used to publicise the programme’.¹² As has been noted in the example given to demonstrate the methodology, a photograph was later used in a poster promoting the Family and Community Programme as a whole. The photographer took a considerable number of images (over a hundred), some of which she immediately deleted. From the eighteen images passed on to me I have made a further selection of seven images, chosen because they seemed to be most representative of the event as I recalled it (the ‘criteria’ which determined this choice will be discussed in greater detail at a later point in the chapter). What is clear, then, is that the data has already been interpreted, first by the photographer (representing both herself and the institution who employs her) and secondly by my own selection which betrays a set of interests and pre-understandings of the role and this specific situation. This does not, I believe, take away from the images’ capacity to surprise. Research (and this particular research methodology) demands a particular kind of scrutiny of data. As stated elsewhere, Paul Ricoeur’s ‘Hermeneutics of Suspicion’ is an approach (or research stance) that informs this whole thesis. In ‘Freud and Philosophy. An Essay on Interpretation’ he states:

‘Hermeneutics seems to me to be animated by this double motivation: willingness to suspect, willingness to listen; vow of rigour, vow of obedience.’¹³

The ‘Hermeneutics of Suspicion’, as an approach, sits between Levels 2 (Interpretation informed by Hermeneutics) and 3 (Critical Interpretation) in Alvesson and Sköldbberg’s methodology. More generally, it seems to apply to their (and my) project as a whole in that it seeks a way out of what seems to be the intrinsic subjectivity of interpretation by reclaiming the value of data-oriented research. In this way, being open to what the photographic data has to say, I might start out by making claims for its authenticity: I was there when the photographs were being taken, they have not been digitally tampered with and are a record of an actual event. However, it is several years since the event and I would therefore imagine that many details will be impossible to recall. The discipline of historiography, where the reliability of source material is judged on ‘proximity’, would find that the value of data was weakened by this distance in time. I would argue that this gap can also have its benefits as the interpretive act is put into sharper relief. The data is rendered less familiar, which in Ricoeur’s terms is an advantage. With familiarity, our interpretations can become lazy and complacent; rather than look closely at the text/image, we adhere to what is familiar. Thus, we reproduce meanings unthinkingly – either our own or those passed on to us by other authorities. In addition, Ricoeur asserts the need for a critical openness; he demands objectivity, anchored in the text, but also suspicion – of the text itself (is it really as it seems?) and one’s own motivations to interpret in a particular way.

The choosing of one photograph over another is already a form of interpretation. The selection (shown at the end of this chapter) betrays an interest in group dynamics and a fascination with the role of the artwork in constructing that dynamic; all the images selected show groups and all but one are centred round an artwork (whether visible or not). The one exception is in *Image 3* where the focus of the group is a word/image prompt, part of the pedagogical approach adopted at Tate at the time. The selection illustrates the interpretive bias stated previously, i.e., an interest in how community is constructed in the gallery context (and what role the encounter with the artwork and, to a lesser extent, the pedagogical approach has in this process). My emphasis on the group and the rejection of photographs solely of pairs or individuals further betrays my initial understanding of 'community' as an entity more complex than a simple encounter between two people or between a single person and the artwork/gallery space.

Images have been further selected to provide a narrative; the seven images reconstruct the story of the session, presented in the order of occurrence. This narrative reflects both the pathway through the exhibition proposed by the curators and the typical workshop structure learned over a decade ago when I first started working at Tate. This structure consists of a 'preliminary activity' which takes place at the entrance where the participants are invited to examine their expectations of the exhibition, a 'work in focus' where the whole group discusses a single work (so establishing the principle of a shared interpretation), small group work where three or four participants are given a word/image prompt and are asked to make their own connections with the work on display, and finally a plenary. Narrative order and chronological sequence are ways of organising material that are 'naturalised'¹⁴ to the point where they may seem self-evident and beyond critique. It is important to acknowledge the power of linear narrative both in its capacity to structure activities and to determine how they are remembered. However, linear narrative, like the chronological display often adopted in the art museum, is a construct not a fact and can prevent us from recognising the multiple alternative stories running concurrently alongside or against the dominant account of the event. This aspect of narrative will be examined later in the chapter (Level 3 – Critical Interpretation). As stated, the selection also follows the room order established in the exhibition. At Tate Modern, pre-2005, the collection displays had different potential entry-points. Following the re-hang, visitors were compelled to enter the display at the same point, circling around a central 'hub' then exiting the same way they came in. This form of display would seem to tip the balance in favour of the curators, giving them the power to limit the possible narratives that visitors themselves produce when they choose their individual journeys through the gallery space. The artist working within the educational function of the gallery can also operate in the same way, shaping and limiting participants' actions, responses and interpretations.

The second aspect of the methodology, inspired by hermeneutics, asks the researcher to look closely at the data with the aim of eliciting a range of possible meanings. There are several hermeneutic strategies which may be useful here: looking at the relationship between part and whole or between text and context; examining underlying metaphors; and looking for patterns that may reveal hidden meanings. Hirsch, paraphrased in Alvesson and Sköldbberg,¹⁵ distinguishes between meaning (which he locates in the intention of the author) and significance (for us). Coming from the 'objectivist' strand within hermeneutics, he felt able to distinguish quite clearly between the two. In this case, the participants reflecting on the photographs might be able to describe their intention. The task I have set myself is, however, to read another's intention through the photographic document and this (arguably) is an act of imagination that reveals more about the interpreter than the interpreted. This conflict between claims for the potential for objectivity in interpretation and accusations of solipsism are at the heart of the hermeneutic tradition. However, in this methodology, the value of various approaches is recognised, with some recuperation of aspects of the objectivist traditions, without however claiming any one method as the most 'truthful'.

Through the practice of paying attention to the photographs – the equivalent of a close reading – *staying with* the text – elements become apparent that were overlooked when the image is approached from the certainties of a pre-understood position. These previously unnoticed details or aspects then compel the researcher to generate a new interpretation that accommodates the data. In this way they operate as a 'counter-image' that has the potential to counter any bias in the original theory of practice. To quote from the visual anthropologist Pink: '[T]he images can be thought of as visual spaces in which a number of different meanings can be invested.'¹⁶ The aim at this level of the methodology is to test the source to produce as wide a range of interpretations as possible, to disrupt pre-understanding and to generate new possibilities in practice.

One particular approach that might be of particular use is that which emerges from '*verstehen*' philosophy where meanings are re-enacted in imagination through the process of empathy. This approach was proposed as an antidote to law-based, pseudo-scientific forms of observation.¹⁷ A way of reading social acts, particularly through an interpretation of gesture and expression, it relies on the researcher to 'look within' and ask what circumstances might provoke the same gesture or expression in herself. Thus we imaginatively occupy the position of the participants, re-enacting in imagination the participant's gestures and expressions. I realise that when working with participants in a

gallery setting, this kind of feedback system is already in operation; I watch for signs of disinterest and change my approach accordingly. However, while practising, the analysis has to take place in a split second and my access to participants' gestures and expressions is limited. Repeating this task retrospectively, using the photographs as prompts, is useful in a different way in that it allows me to imagine, at leisure, alternative interpretations. This in turn might require me to uncover and modify some of the underlying concepts which inform my practice. The plausibility of my interpretations, however, is reliant on shared understandings. For example, in the first image selected (*Image 1*), I might say the figure on the right wearing the grey blouse seems uncertain, that she might be feeling uncomfortable or perhaps lost in her own thoughts. Speaking more generally, I have realised that it is easier to make these 'empathetic' judgements when the person depicted is not gazing out directly at the viewer. Personally, my reluctance to make claims for the participants' motivations is related to the ethical position where 'it is an indignity to speak on another's behalf' (Michel Foucault paraphrased by Giles Deleuze).¹⁸ This issue will be discussed in detail later in the analysis.

Gesture, Posture and Expression

As already noted, while working with others in a gallery context, the artist makes decisions about how the activity is being received, dependent to some extent on a split-second interpretation of gestures and expressions. The next part of this analysis uses the hermeneutic strategy of identifying repeated patterns (of gesture and expression within the images) to elicit other interpretations beyond the most superficial.

In two of the images selected for this analysis (*Images 1* and *2*), a participant is pointing. The gesture could be interpreted in several ways - as an instruction (most in the group are following the direction of the gesture in *Image 1*) or an invitation (to share an observation on something of note). In *Image 1*, I supplement my understanding of the gesture through my knowledge of the participants. The person pointing is one of the community group leaders (as explained in the project description, the larger group attending the session consists of several smaller groups, each of which had its own leader in this case a co-ordinator for older people's services for a London-based charity). In this case, the gesture may be read in relation to broader themes of control and hierarchies within a group. Remembering the exhibition structure, there is a Carl Andre floor piece which the woman on the right is standing on. The group participants have not yet entered into the main exhibition, but are standing at the entrance. With prior knowledge (knowing that the woman pointing is a group leader and therefore in a position of authority), the

gesture might be read as a command. This interpretation reveals a pre-understanding of the role of 'leader' of a group (someone who takes charge), but an alternative reading might suggest that the gesture is one of encouragement rather than instruction. The focus of the photograph seems to be the lower centre of the image, following the pointing hand; this leads to the space that the woman standing on the artwork is soon to occupy, the space of potential – the next step. Following through with this interpretation, the gesture might be a suggestion rather than a command. This interpretation has the potential to destabilise my pre-understanding of the role of the group-leader and power relations in the gallery more generally. As I look at the image, my mind tries to reconstruct a narrative, struggling to find a context. I try to remember what happened immediately before and after this point, but am also influenced by the more general narrative of my experience with these participants, this programme and pedagogic activities at Tate in general. From memory, the woman standing on the Carl Andre floor piece did not respond as if she were following an instruction and move into the centre, but stepped off the artwork and returned to the circle of observers, a gesture perhaps of refusal, reluctance or self-consciousness. My interpretations therefore waver amongst several possible positions. The uncertainty begins to dislodge the dogmatic position occupied prior to the analysis.

In *Image 2*, the woman on the right points across the Carl Andre to another member of the group who is out of view. From memory, she seemed to be suggesting they dance together (away from the gallery she was part of a dance group for older people who performed locally). She is holding the younger woman's hand but she is holding it at the wrist, perhaps pointing to the other person as an invitation for them to join hands. It is an unusual gesture – the joining of others' hands. The gesture brings together two people across the artwork and represents a quite complex dynamic. It is both forceful but unifying. Comparing the two gestures, which might have initially appeared quite similar, I am made to think about the expanded repertoire of gestures available to someone leading a group, or to someone momentarily taking on that role (as is the case in the second image). It also reminds me that I would be reluctant to make any physical contact with a participant due to the rules, both spoken and unspoken, proscribing physical contact in the gallery.

In *Image 1* there is an unusual focus on the feet of the people in the image and the downward gaze of the participants. Without the exhibition context of this image (with the floor-based artwork), participants' posture might indicate shame or embarrassment. Perhaps because of this lingering association, I read people's crossed-arm gestures as defensiveness or reluctance. Whereas this might be a justifiable response, especially when participants are unfamiliar with the gallery, as an artist-facilitator in this situation I would read these postures as a criticism. The total engagement of the group seems to be an unspoken aim of an artist leading a gallery session, but perhaps this could be a form of coercion and in fact be assigning too much power to the role of the artist (a criticism discussed later in the

analysis). In *Image 7*, two participants are looking downward at the artwork in order, it seems, to understand the 'trick' of the Charles Ray piece ('Untitled - Glass Chair', 1976). The crouching gesture challenges general expectations about behaviour in the gallery spaces, and perhaps also the expectations of older people's behaviour.

Other gestures/postures that occur repeatedly within the photographs are those of leaning in or towards a person or object, and standing upright or leaning back. Leaning towards would seem to indicate involvement and being drawn in to an activity, whereas drawing back might suggest a position of detachment or judgement. In *Image 1*, participants are standing upright or leaning slightly back; this would seem to chime with the reluctance or reticence that might be expected at the beginning of an event. In *Image 2*, the posture of the participants remains upright but the expressions are smiling and engaged, as if they have become an audience to an event. This same posture can be seen in *Image 6* when participants seem also to be in 'audience mode', watching the video piece as a group. In *Image 4*, there seems to be a different version of audience communicated through posture. Here participants sit or stand straight-backed, some with hands crossed on their knees. They seem to be listening politely and this formality might also be expected at the beginning of the sequence, before the participants have relaxed sufficiently in the situation. In *Image 3*, participants lean in towards a photograph or text prompt, whereas in *Image 5*, viewers lean in towards the peep-holes to experience the artwork, or lean towards each other to share responses. The metaphors of leaning towards or standing alongside recur in current theories of participation and community (discussed later in this chapter). Through noting these patterns here, I question my own superficial concepts of participation which prior to this analysis would have centred on how these gestures might demonstrate a responsiveness to the artist as instigator of discussion and activity. Before analysing the photographs, I would have acknowledged how the artist reads expressions, gestures and postures to determine whether participants were engaged or disengaged. However, an analysis of posture reveals that there are different modes of participation, not simply engagement or disengagement and that during the event, participants engage with the artworks, with each other and the spaces of the gallery independently of the artist's cues.

In some images (particularly the most formal – *Image 4*), people's expressions seem polite but not particularly engaged. However, there are a range of expressions legible across the images, from amusement to puzzlement. The variety of responses could be seen as a positive – an antidote to the desire for an either-or response expressed above. *Image 6* offers a set of expressions that are perhaps unusual in a gallery context. The facial expressions seem to register bemusement, curiosity but perhaps also caution, even slight repugnance. There could be a thriller being shown on the monitor; the group seems to be waiting for something to happen, mouths half-open. The video is Martha Rosler's 'Semiotics of the Kitchen' from 1975, where the artist performs, dead-pan, with a range of kitchen utensils,

wielding each like a weapon. The woman at the centre of *Image 6* mimics a gesture from the artwork, where the artist wields a kitchen knife. The mimicking gesture reminds me of the empathetic act in hermeneutics where we try to imaginatively inhabit the participant's action in order to understand intention. This physical inhabiting or modelling seems somewhat different than an act of empathy which only takes place in imagination, perhaps because it is performed in real space and is observable to others in the group.

Looking across the group of photographs, I am aware of the variety of gestures, groupings and interactions represented. It seems that in terms of being with others, the group have a broad repertoire in terms of how they engage with each other, with the physical spaces of the gallery and with the artworks. From the unusual but expressive gesture of grabbing a fellow participant's wrist in *Image 2*, to the unexpectedness of the woman crouching to gain a better understanding in *Image 7*, a close analysis of the photographs forces me to expand the parameters of possible gestures and behaviours available to gallery visitors.¹⁹ This wide vocabulary of modes of engagement seems also, from memory, to be accompanied by a kind of knowingness or self-awareness amongst participants. As will be discussed later, through the analysis an awareness emerges that the gallery is a space for looking, but also perhaps for being looked *at*. It seems that the 'innocent' position that allows gesture to be understood as a straightforward and uncomplicated communicative act is made difficult when the public nature of the gallery space dominates. This also leads to the theatrical metaphor underpinning these interpretations that leads me to contemplate a possible gap between gesture and intention, as if participants are performing a repertoire of gestures to themselves and to each other.

The gallery can be seen as a space that prioritises looking, where looking occurs and where it is performed with and in front of others. In *Image 1* most of the gazes are cast downwards, looking at the artwork. There is a complex intersection of gazes, with most participants looking at the feet of the principle 'actor' or the artwork itself. Only the male figure stares at the other protagonist (giving the instruction). In *Image 3*, different types of looking are represented. There is the group in the foreground, gathered around a central focal-point while others, not part of the group, seem to cast their gaze about in an unfocused way. There is a distinction to be made here between looking *at* and looking *with*. There seem to be social and socialising forms of looking represented in the images, and moments of solitary engagement (or disengagement). In *Image 4*, we are placed in the position of outsider or even voyeur, looking at people who are themselves engaged in the process of looking. The artwork, Sol Lewitt's 'Muybridge', 1964, an oblong box attached to the wall at eye-level (*Image 5*), creates an equality of looking amongst staff and members of the group (the members of staff are second and third from the right). The structure of the work itself seems to demand that we consider the difference between looking alone and looking with others. One member of staff is leaning forward in discussion with the man

who, up until now, has been quite isolated from the group. The artwork seems to demand a private, intimate form of engagement, but the woman on the left (the catalyst for social activity in a previous image) seems to want to share her response. Once again, an analysis of the images at this level is meant to produce a range of possible interpretations. A more critical appraisal of the processes of looking will be attempted later in the chapter.

Metaphor

In 'The Rule of Metaphor', 1975, Paul Ricoeur developed a theory of metaphor which has particular relevance to his theory of interpretation more generally. He explores how the metaphor functions structurally in language, through proposing a counter-image that is simultaneously *like* but *is not* the original – that is both familiar and unfamiliar. This dual aspect of metaphor allows a space of interpretation to open up in front of the text, where the reader can oscillate between familiarity (the self, the known) and the unfamiliar (the as-yet-unknown, the other). For Ricoeur, the structure of metaphor suggests an attitude for the researcher/interpreter. He suggests, therefore, that the interpreter try to discover the 'root' metaphors underpinning a text; these metaphors are hidden, but nonetheless determine what can be said or seen.

As noted previously, one metaphor that seems recur beneath the surface of this series of images in my interpretations is that of the participant as performer, protagonist or actor, with the gallery site as a stage and the other members of the group as audience. This is echoed in the relatively common usage in gallery education literature of the terms 'actor' (derived from analyses of human behaviour in sociology) and 'audience' (generally used in museum and gallery contexts). The passivity suggested by the term 'audience' has been criticised in the past and replaced by 'public/s', although the notion of visitor as spectator thrives, reinforced by gallery codes of behaviour where the artworks are fenced off by barriers or raised on a stage/plinth. The group as audience metaphor can be seen most clearly in *Images 1, 2, 4* and *6*. In *Image 4*, the passivity of the group seems most apparent and it is the photograph where I am perhaps most active (the artist-facilitator as actor). The members of staff hang back, seated in the outer circle like polite hosts at a party. Even within this limited selection of images, there appear to be different levels and types of engagement amongst the audience, although the dual relationship between actor/artwork and audience is a constant. The concept of a 'community' prompted by an artwork or by the activity of the artist-facilitator seems to be made possible by this particular root metaphor. For example, the 'communities' represented in *Images 5* and *7* conform less to the root metaphor of protagonist-audience (the idea that a community might be

characterised as much by dispersal as 'bringing together' will be discussed later). The exact extent to which the actor/stage metaphor continues to dominate both the artist's practice and the visitor's expectation might be difficult to determine; nonetheless, its prevalence in the literature would suggest that it remains a default position for both artist and participant resulting in sets of behaviour that are prompted as a result in this context.²⁰ Certainly, the recurrence of these metaphors in my own interpretations compel me to question how much my existing theory of practice is informed by these.

There are various inflections of metaphors of group and participation that make different interpretations of the images possible. In Tate's publicity, we see the community group characterised by the following examples:

'The programme is aimed at a varied range of Adult Community Groups and individuals - e.g. women's groups, homeless groups, learning disability groups - community group leaders, community group advocates, local parents and pre-school children, senior citizens as well as individuals living in Southwark or Lambeth.'²¹

As noted in the introduction to this chapter, pre-conceived notions of community tend to emphasise what people have in common, although there is a tendency in the museum and gallery to characterise groups through lack or disability ('homeless', 'learning disability'). The metaphor of group as a closed circle, as a unity, which includes some and excludes others also seems to be at the most basic level of our understanding. Thus we recognise images where individuals are brought together through a common focus (the artwork/artist-facilitator) as possible representations of community. According to this principle, *Images 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6* might be viewed as most successful, although in each, there are some individuals who are excluded or who go against the behaviour of the majority (for example the male participant's gaze in *Images 1 and 2*).

The 'Hidden Question' of the Text

A further interpretive strategy recommended by Alvesson and Sköldberg is to imagine what might be the basic, hidden question of the text. In the case of these images, the question 'Where is the centre?' for me seems to underpin the whole series. Another way of expressing this might be to ask, 'What is the focus of the image?' Out of habit, I often identify the locus of activity in the artwork, even when this is not visible in the image. For example, in *Image 1*, I remember the Carl Andre floor piece as the starting point for the activity, but the focus of the image might equally be the woman pointing or the man looking directly at her or the participant anticipating her next move. What becomes

apparent is that in each image, there are a number of possible centres or focal points. Moving beyond a habitual reading of the image, contemplating alternate foci of attention, allows me to imagine that the focus of gallery-based practice is not always located in the artwork or artist, for example, and that there may be multiple, simultaneous ‘centres’ of activity and that these may be in a constant state of flux.

Familiarity

Finally, there is the hermeneutic strategy of deliberately ‘bracketing out’ our prior knowledge of a setting or event. This approach asks us to deliberately ‘forget’ the contexts of the gallery and the educational frame of the event. Taking *Image 1* as an example, this could perhaps be an airport with its glass partitions, signs and metal chairs. Perhaps this is a group preparing to travel, although some have their coats on, others not; the leaflets could be travel documents. Perhaps this is not a group at all, but individuals who have gathered around an unexpected event, who will soon disperse. This thought experiment reminds me how unfamiliar the space and type of activity might be for many participants, and how I assume a familiarity and ease that in many cases might not be there. Also, what does familiarity mean in terms of practice? As stated previously, I had a long-standing relationship to at least some members of the group and had led similar events three times a year for four years. Although familiarity enables aspects of practice to function well, there is also the possibility that habit can create ‘blind spots’ and an unquestioning reliance on tried-and-tested methods, even when these may no longer be appropriate or effective.

Critical Interpretation

If ‘the hidden question’ of the text at Level 2 is ‘Where is the centre?’ at Level 3 it is perhaps ‘What is at stake?’ Whereas a Level 2 analysis asks the researcher to look for repeated patterns in the data, at Level 3 we are invited to ask who profits from a particular interpretation. In Level 3 of the approach, the researcher is asked to use an analysis of the data to consider the themes of ideology, power and social reproduction. The key question here is ‘What is being naturalised by the image?’ As noted previously, the historical overlap between the fields of gallery education and community arts means that many artists working in a museum or gallery context are used to applying these themes to their practice. It is therefore perhaps not surprising that this level of analysis feels the most comfortable.

The value of this four-part approach is that the levels overlap and colour one another. Thus, many of the elements that emerged at the hermeneutic stage can now be handled critically. If the second stage had been bypassed, at this level the research focus might have reverted to those themes that dominated in the original theory of practice. Instead, after close observation of the data, new themes have begun to emerge, including questions about the dynamics of participation and how a group or community might be defined.

The Photograph and Social Reproduction

At the level of primary and secondary interpretations within the methodology, the researcher is asked, at least to some extent, to take the photographic image at face value and to vouch for its authority. However, at the level of critical interpretation, we are asked to be more suspicious and to ask ourselves, 'What does the image naturalise or seem to place beyond question/critique?' Recent developments in social science and ethnography have seen the development of a 'hermeneutics of photography'.²² Here, rather than act solely as a mirror of the 'real world out there', the photograph is also employed to make clear the position of the researcher. When the photograph is used as a prompt from which to generate new narratives, the researcher is compelled at the same time to make evident the contexts which make these interpretations possible. Momentarily suspending such judgements and seeing the photograph as an unequivocal trace of a real event puts the researcher in a position where, to paraphrase Ricoeur, the data can 'talk'. However, the researcher must at this point, move beyond the 'matter-of-factness' of the photographic image and test it instead for its potential to generate meanings and to reveal the processes that make meaning possible in this particular case. The ethnographer, Sarah Pink describes an example of practice by her colleague Deborah J. Oakley who developed what she termed 'retrospective fieldwork'; in a particular project she reworked her own autobiography using a combination of photographs and memory as data.²³ Rather than undermining the position of the researcher, Pink, alongside other ethnographers, argues for the value of the individual as meaning-maker, and of the construction of subjectivities through research.²⁴ It is from this position that this section of the chapter attempts to make sense of the photographic data, not as a way of accessing the hidden motivations underlying participant behaviour, but rather as an attempt to reveal and reflect upon my position as a researcher and artist working within the educational function of the museum. This process will inevitably involve some conjecture about the motives of others, but rather than establish the 'truth' of a particular event, the intention is to reflect on my own position through the act of interpretation, using the photographs and my memories of the event as data.

A key thematic pairing, present in the literature²⁵ and also in my own theory of practice, is that of boundaries and transgression. Boundaries are marked in all seven images, evident in the fabric of the building and the gallery furniture: they can be seen in the edges of the artwork on the floor and the glass partitions in *Image 1* and *2*; the entrance to the exhibition and the circle of participants in *Image 3*; the plinths, perspex boxes and frames of *Image 4*; and the rope barrier barely visible in *Image 7*. Associated with these visible barriers are the various rules and codes of behaviour, some explicit, some learned through experience. Territories are asserted throughout the gallery, by barriers, by the division between public and private areas and through the presence and activities of gallery assistants. Returning to the theory of practice held prior to the interpretation of the photographs, many artists working within the educational function of the museum are conversant with key texts that critique the institution and there was for example, at least until recently, a clear line separating those operating under the title 'Learning' and those working in 'Exhibitions'.²⁶ The artist working within the educational function of the museum or gallery can see herself as the heir to older, interventionist art-practices. Partially for this reason, I enjoyed the frequently disruptive nature of the group (which was often much larger than others and moved around the galleries en masse). Interestingly, Carol Duncan²⁷ notes that museum visitors often 'misread' cues leading to rituals being badly or incompletely performed. This seemed particularly true of the Seniors events where a participant might drape their jacket over an artwork or leave a walking stick perilously close to a sculpture (*Image 4*).

In *Image 2*, the participant/protagonist invites others to perform a potentially transgressive act, but she does this with humour. She pulls the younger woman into the field of action. I remember feeling uncomfortable that the activity the participants engaged in (dancing) might take us too far away from our focus on the artwork, or perhaps too far from expected behaviour within the gallery. My discomfort with the analogy which was apparently being made between the Carl Andre piece and a common dance-floor reveals a flaw in my original theory of practice. If asked at the outset, I would have claimed my ambition to generate multiple interpretations to be an emancipatory act, but it seems some interpretations are more acceptable to me than others. I impose my own understanding of the Carl Andre as an object to be approached with respect and attention, rather than something to be simply danced over. Knowledge, authority and space interconnect in complex and disturbing ways. The dance seemed too exuberant but it was this unexpected moment of excess which disrupted my previous understandings of my role and of protocols within the gallery space. My remembered response implies a rigidity of approach, a set of expectations that initially did not recognise the potential of

the act. In training as an artist working in the Learning Department at Tate Liverpool in the early days of my career, I remember being told that I was there to speak on behalf of the art rather than the institution (and our freelance status seemed part of this). This is clearly not a straightforward task, however, and unpacking my allegiance to the artwork further, this is perhaps where my protective attitude towards it comes from. It seems of note that I have always struggled to articulate my own interpretation of Carl Andre's work, despite feeling particularly attracted to it. This sense of attachment allied to this incapacity to offer a clear 'reading' perhaps led to an over-reliance on gallery protocols – an allegiance to the institution rather than the artwork. By insisting that any response from participants should be closely tied to the interpretation of a specific artwork (or the range of interpretations I was prepared to accept), perhaps I am trying to reassert control. If I identify my authority with knowledge of the gallery and its collections, then my return to the work itself (or my interpretation of the work), might be coercion disguised as connoisseurship. The analysis of this particular image (*Image 2*) shows that while the application of the methodology allows the opening-up of the interpretive space and the disturbance of a-priori notions, some remembered elements of the event remain stable and come into clearer focus through the process of analysis.

In the museum or gallery context, along with transgression comes danger. When reviewing the photographs of the Seniors event, what strikes me in retrospect is the assumed fragility of the artwork (once again, I seem to be placing myself 'on the side of the artwork'). For example, the Hans Haacke 'Condensation Cube' (present, but not visible, in *Image 4*) contains water. The work is framed by the barrier on the floor, an uneasy and some would say intrusive gesture towards protecting the artwork. In *Image 7*, a participant crouches on the floor trying to understand the 'trick' of the Charles Ray piece, disrupting expectations about behaviour in the gallery spaces. This element of danger, and the artist-facilitator's desire to protect the artworks from the transgressions from an over-exuberant public is made inevitable by the artist's familiarity with (and allegiance to) both the artwork and the institution's structures and protocols. If the artwork itself provokes a 'dangerous' response (the Carl André floor piece in *Images 1* and *2* invites a form of participation – stepping on the work – that goes against the rules of behaviour expected in the rest of the gallery) then the artist is compelled to take an uneasy position between the artwork, participant and institution. The danger is always circumscribed, however; others are ultimately responsible for the physical safety of the artworks and the limits of 'acceptable' behaviour are tested but rarely broken.

With the Seniors group, I am much more aware that the agreement to participate seems given quite consciously through a common acknowledgement about what is at stake and where the boundaries lie. At Level 3 of the analysis, which asks how interpretations of the data can offer various representations of power dynamics, the performed gesture can be seen as something that is chosen and deployed with a particular objective in mind, rather than being an accompaniment to inner thoughts and feelings. Thus, the researcher is asked to analyse the rules of the game rather than understand, through empathy, the 'inner' state of the individual. The game is a useful metaphor as it allows the researcher to talk about winners and losers, rules and institutional power. The dance might also be an appropriate metaphor, as it allows for the possibility of participants exchanging roles (*Images 1 and 2*). There are moments when the group appears more as audience, facing in the same direction, as represented by *Images 4, 6 and 7*. When the audience is seated (*Image 4*), there is a greater sense of the lecture or school-group, or perhaps even congregation. It is clear how these metaphors might begin to speak to the subject of power-relations prioritised at this interpretive level. By employing these metaphors and offering multiple interpretations, the researcher avoids, at least to some extent, the problem Foucault identifies 'of speak[ing] on another's behalf,' but potentially falls into another trap: that of the 'intellectual' speaking on behalf of 'the people' (to be addressed at Level 4 of the methodology).²⁸

If the photographs discussed do not deal fundamentally with groups determined by fixed identities and roles, what else might they represent? Instead of separating out the roles, it might be more interesting to view the activity represented as something more unstable and collaborative. Perhaps in *Image 1* the agency lies with the woman who made the choice to walk across the artwork, her approach more creative and exploratory than tentative (as stated in earlier interpretations). The group-leader pointing at her feet may simply be reinforcing and supporting her action rather than instructing. The role of the group-leader (and mine as artist-facilitator of the group) might not be as powerful as I think. An analysis of the images allows me to question my pre-conceptions about individual agency and how these fit in with my tendency to think first of fixed, hierarchical roles, with the institution as the final arbiter of rules and behaviours. In terms of the theory of practice outlined at the beginning of this chapter, the artist might ally herself with the institution, with the participant, with the artwork or with historic conceptions of the artist as outsider. However, in the same way as the identity of the audience group is not fixed (as might be thought given Tate publicity for the programme), the same is perhaps true of the artist. As is evident in the photographs (except *Image 4*), the artist may in fact often find herself on the margins of an activity. The artist in these situations is just another player in a complex and fluid game; the photographs allow for the possibility of a flattening out of hierarchies as they do not promote the position of the artist, participant or institution exclusively.

As stated previously, the participants belong to several groups, their visits organised by an outside agency. There were several group leaders present and at different points they took control over part of the group or even the group as a whole, modelling different ways of leading and supporting activities and bridging the gap between one sub-group and another. Looking at the photographs, I realise that this complex dynamic was more significant than I had previously thought. In *Image 2* in particular, when the figure in pink takes on a galvanising role, I am compelled to consider how much control I had over what happened. From memory, I remember inviting participants to discover their own ways of moving across the Carl Andre floor piece and of physically negotiating the artwork and perhaps I had expected for them to do this one at a time. I had not, in retrospect, expected a participant to become the instigator of the action. Apart from my own role within this dynamic, it might also be interesting to attempt to understand this moment in terms of the introduction of a separate, independent dynamic which is brought into the institutional context. During this session, there were three separate groups with some stray 'drop-ins'. Each group therefore had its own dynamic and perhaps it is the overlap between the groups that created this (memorable) situation and the feeling of disturbance of my a-priori notions of the artist's control. Although not looking necessarily for the cause of the disturbance, it seems useful to describe it more carefully. My memory of the event tells me that its significance lay in the fact that the group members felt sufficiently confident to wrest the facilitator role from my control, whereas a closer look at the image (and a more subtle interpretation) might suggest that it was not a hierarchy of authority as such that was at stake, but that a set of possibilities had evolved through a particular set of dynamic encounters (amongst the participants but also with the artwork and the institution). In comparison with my original theory-of-practice, control seems not to be given or taken, but rather different permutations of a dynamic of control emerge and recede throughout the event. As Claire Bishop suggests in her publication 'Participation',²⁹ the history of participatory practices is now well-established but more work needs to be done to isolate the various genealogies and identify the processes and structures employed in these. To posit a straightforward opposition between the concepts of audience and participant is to ignore the subtleties at play in the various configurations possible when museum and gallery visitors, artist and the institution are brought together. The curator Maria Lind argues for a more careful analysis of the various terms used to describe artists who work collaboratively with others.³⁰ Of particular interest here is the distinction she draws between the use of the terms 'participation' and 'collaboration'. Participation, she argues, is a form of invitation: people are invited to take part in activity which has been devised and structured by another (in this case, the artist). Collaboration, on the other hand, establishes no such hierarchies of involvement. Adopting these definitions, the activities that constitute the Seniors event are participatory; the framework for involvement are established by the artist and the institution. However, within this structure it seems that, at least in theory, moments of collaboration may occur and these have the potential to absorb and neutralise the pre-constructed boundaries that govern permissible modes of interaction.

In contrast to the desire for narrative order and sequence (arguably an ideological position), expressed both in the layout of the exhibition and the artist's structuring of the event, the moments of discontinuity visible in the photographs (particularly *Image 7*) seem to suggest other possibilities and ways of being in the gallery space. Gilles Deleuze's theories of discontinuity, and his descriptions of localised forms of power and fluid networks where different points are active at different times, provide a framework within which to understand the photographs. Whereas my pre-understandings of my role present themselves in terms of a desire to identify the centre of the action (and my proximity to it), the image of the Deleuzian network allows me to see not just one particular narrative, but several running alongside each other. In this way the focus changes as each agent directs the action and relationships are no longer fixed and hierarchical. Michel Foucault, in discussion with Deleuze, connects the concept of 'the transversal links between ... active and discontinuous points' to politics and power:

'But if the fight is directed against power, then all those on whom power is exercised to their detriment, all who find it intolerable, can begin the struggle on their own terrain and on the basis of their proper activity (or passivity).'³¹

The weight given to passivity as choice interests me in this quotation, as do the moments when people perhaps decline to participate, which is one possible interpretation of the photographs of the Seniors event (*Images 1, 5 and 7*). In the context of my original theory-of-practice, I would have perceived these moments of refusal as a failure on the artist's part to engage the participants. In this new interpretation, it can be read instead as an individual's exercise of choice or an illustration of localised power. Participants' disengagement in this case can be seen as a positive - the exercise of their right to withdraw to focus on their own interests.

The apparent stasis of the group (most evident in *Image 5*) could in some ways be interpreted as a form of resistance to notions of the 'ideal' gallery visitor. The Seniors group tends to move slowly around the gallery spaces, often *en masse*; they might be perceived by other gallery visitors as an obstacle. In principle, community groups are not permitted in ticketed exhibition spaces as it is thought that paying visitors might resent being prevented from viewing work when a large group is present. However, for some reason, an exception has always been made in the case of the Seniors. Looking at the photographic series, I notice the shifting dynamic of the group and particular moments of intransigence. Whereas my pre-understanding of my role dictates that everyone should be included, an analysis of the images draws my attention to those moments when individuals resist the flow. Perhaps the real stasis in the situation is the calcification of my practice through habit. Looking at

the images, I realise that I may be unthinkingly reproducing what I learned long ago when first inducted into Tate's approach. At certain points this might lead to a reliance on a formula, on tried and tested methods. A revised understanding of the role of the artist (i.e., as being not always central to the action) would allow me to see a potential in the shifting dynamic of the group.

Knowledge

As has already been noted, the art object (traditionally the source of and catalyst for knowledge) is generally hidden in these images. In *Image 5*, for example, the group gathers around the work (Hans Haacke's 'Condensation Cube', 1963-65), the participants leaning in to get a closer look. Close-looking in the gallery is something we expect and it is related to the desire to understand, to discover the object's secrets. In hermeneutics, the language used to describe understanding is generally a variation on the themes of discovery and disclosure. It becomes difficult therefore not to consider knowledge as something that is hidden, somehow, within the art object.³² Etymologically, the word 'understand' has a different source and here knowing means to 'stand in the midst of' a situation. This could offer another, spatial metaphor of knowing which better conveys the complex interrelation of people, objects and spaces represented in the photographs. The gallery, as discussed, is a complex space and there can be a tendency amongst artists working within the educational function of the museum and gallery to avoid direct forms of interpretation of the artwork in an attempt to pre-empt the problems associated with knowledge and the object outlined above. From this perspective, the gallery is viewed as a collection of practices rather than a collection of objects and artists are invited to use the gallery spaces to set up parallel practices that throw light on the complexities of the site rather than address specific artworks. Rejecting the direct relationship with the art object could be seen as a lost opportunity, however. Traditionally, the space of the gallery has been where individuals commune privately with the artwork in a way that Bourdieu would say reinforces hierarchies of class and social status. The idea of hidden knowledge – hidden in the artwork, in the expertise of the curators, in the rarefied discourses of the institution and its related disciplines – is a concept addressed repeatedly in artists' practice within the museum or gallery.³³ Much so-called, 'socially-engaged' art practice is suspicious of the art object, due, I would argue, to its association with these hidden and hierarchical forms of knowledge.³⁴ This suspicion of the art object is not new, but its specific location within the museum and gallery and its resultant relationship to knowledge (and the transmission of knowledge) would seem to present a particular problem to the proponents of socially-engaged practice and 'The Educational Turn'. Jettisoning the object to prioritise the conversation would

however seem to be losing the opportunity of working with the complexities of the site.

The act of constructing knowledge in public, with the art-object as catalyst, demonstrates in Rancière's terms the individual's capacity to make meaning independently of those who claim specialist knowledge; it is the presence of the mediating object that permits a demonstration of equality in terms of intellectual capacity, as each person is compelled to interpret the text.³⁵ *Image 4* illustrates the public construction of knowledge advocated by aspects of Tate pedagogy at the time of the event. The potential problem of hierarchical knowledge (the artist's opinion is perhaps given more weight due to her relationship to the institution) is revealed by the imbalance in status between the artist-facilitator (standing) and the participants (seated). *Images 1* and *2*, in particular, where dynamic relationships amongst artist, participant, artwork and site emerge, suggest other ways of knowing, characterised by their fluidity, temporary nature and the public nature of the act.

Conviviality and the Social

In post-modern theories, the emphasis is on what our chosen metaphors prevent us from seeing. As noted, the social aspects of the Family and Community Programme (the community group as 'family?') at Tate are emphasised in the publicity material. This 'convivial' aspect of the Seniors event is most visible in *Images 2, 3* and *5*. Tate's stated mission, drawn from the 1992 Museums and Galleries Act, is to 'increase the public's knowledge, understanding and enjoyment of British art from the sixteenth century to the present day and of international modern and contemporary art.'³⁶ Enjoyment is therefore central to the Gallery's aims, but some maintain that enjoyment is at odds with the capacity to be critical. A comparison of *Image 1* and *Image 2* could provide an illustration of the power of conviviality. In *Image 1*, the gesture of one group leader seems to result in defensiveness and resistance. In *Image 2*, however, the group responds to the more playful gesture by smiling. Some participants can be seen as eager to see how the situation will evolve and even the young woman, a member of the public eavesdropping on the activity, is smiling.³⁷ The arguably common desire for 'resonance' (recognising oneself in another) and conviviality might, however, disguise a form of social conservatism – a desire to conform resulting from the desire to belong. When looking at the photographs, it is interesting to observe my own response to images that appear to document congenial moments. At these points, my own capacity for critique is momentarily suspended. Although I am aware that there are other potential readings of conviviality – one can take control with a smile and some use humour to regain control over a situation – the artist-facilitator's desire

to entertain remains a powerful element in my own practice and a default position for defusing situations which contain the potential for conflict.

Conviviality and criticality have been most notably linked in the writings of Nicolas Bourriaud . In 'Relational Aesthetics,' 1998, he argues for an art that offers an encounter marked by conviviality and openness, resistant to the usual forms of instrumentalisation of art. This championing of the convivial has been critiqued by Claire Bishop, amongst others, because it risks the suspension of critical judgement.³⁸ In terms of the potential for the photographs of the Seniors event to provoke critical interpretation, other theoretical contexts may, however, prove more useful. When observing *Image 2*, I remember the disruption and surprise – and the enjoyment of the moment. Others have seen the disruptive potential of enjoyment: Georges Bataille in 'The Accursed Share', 1949, formulates an idea of an alternative economy where there is always an excess of energy, a quota that is spent with no consideration of gain in return. Although it is not within the remit of this thesis to discuss Bataille's theories in detail, excess energy within a group, which Bataille might identify as 'non-recuperable' within the gallery's economies (of knowledge and of social-reproduction), seems noteworthy. If the evaluative frameworks which govern the activities of the artist working within the educational function seem often based on a ledger system of debits and credits (and scarcity), Bataille's theory allows us to recognise the value of an alternative economic metaphor where some acts are beyond 'productive use' (i.e., cannot be put to use by either artist or institution within current systems). In *Image 2*, the excessive moment was temporary and participants quickly returned to the group work which was part of the event plan (*Image 3*). In terms of a new theory of practice that might emerge from the analysis of these images, should these moments of excess be accommodated as an inevitable and positive outcome of the process? Are they sustainable and can they be activated in other contexts, outside of the gallery? As discussed previously, the gallery frames these situations quite powerfully; there are boundaries in place – both physical and institutional – which means that moments of excessive enjoyment never become too disruptive. The potential consequences of these observations on practice will be discussed in the final chapter.

Maurizio Lazzarato,³⁹ also using an economic framework to discuss enjoyment, notes on the other hand how these social energies and bonds can be put to use by institutions for their own ends. This can perhaps be seen in the way *Image 2* was used to publicise Tate's programmes. Whether this moment of excess energy (enjoyment) was in and of itself a form of resistance, or whether it was put to use by myself or the institution I represent is less easy to determine. However it seems likely that the scrutiny and questioning of enjoyment, a theme so often naturalised within the literature, will lead to a change in practice.

Community

Whereas the Tate Programme publicity characterises the groups according to age, role, gender, situation, ‘disability’ and locality, the photographs suggest groups which organise according to modes of engagement. These forms of coming together are temporary and interchangeable, whereas those in the institution’s ‘call out’ suggest fixed identities. Returning to the subject of ‘community’ and attempting to think about the subject (self) critically, there are two theories that seem particularly pertinent, particularly in the way they offer alternative readings of the photographic ‘data’. The analysis began with an attempt to draw out the sources of my initial understandings of ‘community’ which seemed to be based on ideas of unity, consensus and perhaps essentialised identities (for example, a fixed notion of the older person).

The first is Jean-Luc Nancy’s ‘The Inoperable Community,’ 1982,⁴⁰ where community is heterogeneous rather than homogenous and where people come together to be made more aware of the differences that separate them. He identifies a form of community that is not based on predilection – on friendships and hostilities – but rather on a recognition of the individual’s limitations when s/he attempts to move towards another. Specifically, Nancy characterises this community as improvised and temporal. He also sees these communities as having a tactical purpose, in that they are capable of resisting authority.

Giorgio Agamben’s ‘The Coming Community’, 1993, also proposes a way of being with others that is not predicated on an ‘essential’ characteristic (age, gender, etc.,) but is rather the provisional coming together of ‘singularities’ - ‘an inessential commonality, a solidarity that in no way concerns an essence.’⁴¹ Furthermore, Agamben’s community is yet-to-come, is in an endless state of becoming. These concepts of community which reject the notion of identifying with the other through shared, fixed characteristics seem entirely at odds with the Tate’s ideas of audiences which are generally constructed along essentialist lines. The artist who works in the community might also operate under a concept of community structured in this way. The photographs of the Seniors event, where it is possible to note disruption, dispersal and moments of ‘not belonging’, seem better served by theories of community that do not emphasise coherence but recognise the value of a less coercive and fixed mode of being with others.

As noted previously, on closer scrutiny, the photographs of the Seniors event offer a range of ways of understanding ‘being together’ which are not predicated on unity. In particular, *Image 7* can be seen as consistent in reflecting this new conception of community with its ebbs and flows, where some participants engage with the artwork alone, others talk

amongst themselves and some prepare to leave. For the artist-facilitator, who is assessing practice in terms of an essentialist theory, this conception of community might help him/her understand the benefits of relinquishing control, whereas under the prior regime, such resistance to unity would have tended to provoke anxiety in the practitioner.

Reflection on text production

The Photograph as Research 'Data'

As discussed previously, Ricoeur's hermeneutics straddle Levels 2 and 3 of the methodology and perhaps also apply to Level 4. His 'Hermeneutics of Suspicion' was influenced by his reading of Nietzsche, Marx and Freud and sought to uncover the less palatable aspects of the text, including the will to power and uncomfortable emotions such as shame. From memory, the photographer said she rejected those photographs that were 'over-the-top', a comment which, in retrospect, resonated with my own anxieties. There is a perceived demand to be something of a performer in these contexts (note the 'artist's turn' comments in the Tate Archives case-study), particularly when working with such a large group, and her comment made me aware that I sometimes over-act. The sudden insight provided by this kind of comment occurs rarely. A close scrutiny of data is an attempt to recreate these moments of illumination artificially, whilst they occur periodically in practice, apparently without prompting.⁴² Contemplating the data in terms of Ricoeur's hermeneutic, the images attracted me more for what they seemed to conceal than what they reveal, as if the photographic text were a puzzle waiting to be solved. Initially, using photographs as a starting point for research has proved more difficult than using a transcript of a discussion or interview. Rather than being a purely personal problem, this difficulty might also result from more general assumptions about research and the role of photography. From the outset, the use of photographs for me raised questions of representing 'the other', associated perhaps with issues in traditional ethnographic research where photographic material supports a relationship between researcher and 'informant' which maintains that objectivity is still possible.⁴³ This potential for the objectification of the other through photography raises the question of possible abuses of power in the relationship between the photographer and the photographed, researcher and researched. This potential is acknowledged when a participant in a gallery activity is asked for his/her permission to be photographed, by now common practice (although less formalised in museums and galleries than in academic research). However, reproducing the photographs

as part of a research project has proved a useful counterpoint to the use of images in the literature of museum and gallery education where they are generally used as promotional rather than research tools.

*Research as 'Self-Crafting'*²⁴

In adopting Alvesson and Sköldbberg's approach, I am aware that the methodology does not necessarily lead the researcher to draw fixed conclusions. Instead, the process of interpreting the data, moving fluidly from one level to another, concluding with an analysis of the position of the researcher (the interpreter interpreted) is circular and could be endlessly repeated. Whereas the desire to draw conclusions is always present (particularly within the context of the PhD thesis), the methodology seems to demand that judgement is held in a state of constant suspension, although it is clear that as soon as these reflections are made public, they are in operation.

The writing of the thesis through the adoption of particular methodology is to construct a research subjectivity. At the beginning of the research I had thought a possible solution, both as artist and researcher, might lie in collating and interpreting interviews from others, and that an answer might be found by creating a space of shared meanings amongst artists working in the educational function of the museum or gallery. However, through the course of the research, the idea and processes of disturbance took precedence and the focus shifted to the understanding of my own practice. Thus, it became increasingly important to propose a mode of research that resisted existing models of interpretation and evaluation, as I suspected that I had internalised these to an extent that was limiting my practice. It seems to me that self-doubt is written into Alvesson and Sköldbberg's methodology and the constant self-appraisal it demands is itself a form of resistance.

In the series of seven images selected, I am present in four of them as an object of research alongside the other participants. It seems I have specifically chosen images that place me on the periphery; I am half-hidden, caught unawares or waiting at the exit for the group to join me. Only in one image am I addressing the group as a whole, and here my position is shifted to the side and far away from the camera lens. To re-deploy the title of a Paul Ricoeur text, the photographs offer an opportunity to see *myself as another*:

'[T]here is no self-understanding that is not mediated by signs, symbols and texts; in the final analysis self-understanding coincides with the interpretation given to these mediating terms.'⁴⁵

For Ricoeur, we are not transparent to ourselves, and there is a constant tension between *logos* (the human capacity for reason which allows us to grasp universals) and *bios* (our location in a particular space and time). An interpretation of the photographic text will, in Ricoeur's terms, lead to self-understanding, as the interpreter alternates between these two positions.

Questions/ implications for practice

In terms of the implications of this analysis for future practice, there are no 'lessons learned'. Instead there are aspects of practice that seem to require further attention, and habitual ways of working that demand re-examination. At the outset, it seems that I was operating in accordance with assumptions about the role of the artist that I had adopted at the very beginning of my career, and that these had not really been substantially revised since. When asked to look again at Tate's approach to looking at artworks for the 'Art Gallery Handbook' in 2006, I struggled to make any major changes, as has already been noted. The areas in my practice that I might have considered problematic – a fixed idea of audiences or the power of Tate to render any form of oppositional practice innocuous, for example – were perhaps not the main issue. An analysis of the photographs documenting the Seniors event has brought other considerations to the fore. A main sticking point is the problem of knowledge and its relationship to power. My tendency to close down responses that were not in tune with my own (based on an idea of my own 'expert knowledge' of the artwork, sanctioned by the institution) and the habit of seeing my interventions as pivotal points around which the group activities revolve, now seem far more restrictive than my previous concerns in terms of the future development of my practice. The 'Ways In' approach, advocated by Tate at the beginning of my career seems in retrospect to be based on the individual's encounter with the artwork, not the group's. In this approach, the artist models the 'Ways In' to the artwork and makes these processes available to others. The potential of the group to generate interpretations amongst themselves and to occupy the gallery spaces differently (itself a way of knowing) is evident in the photographs but does not sit well with my original theory of practice.

Looking back, my notion of community was overly-simplistic and not because it was based obviously on essentialised identities, but rather because the group was in an unbalanced relationship with the artist-facilitator. If the artist is not necessarily the only person who controls outcomes, then apparently negative qualities noted in the analysis of the Seniors project, such as stasis and discontinuity, now seem less an indication of failure, but instead suggest that it is the original desire for coherence and conviviality that is mistaken and counter-productive. The issue of control emerges from the analysis on several occasions. The acquisition of new metaphors for 'community', that might

better accommodate resistance and dissent, demands something of the artist other than straightforward enthusiasm and the desire to act as a focal point for attention and activity. This will be addressed in the final chapter of the thesis.





Image 5



Image 6



Image 7



- 1: H. Charman, K. Rose & G. Wilson (eds), 'The Art Gallery Handbook', Tate Publishing, 2006.
- 2: 'Pre-understanding' is a term first introduced by Martin Heidegger to describe the process by which all understanding is based on preceding structures (conceptions and experiences) that together constitute the 'hermeneutic situation'.
- 3: For a detailed account see E. Hooper-Greenhill (ed), 'The Educational Role of the Museum', Routledge, 1999.
- 4: In 2008, the Labour Government's Green Paper argued for pupils of all ages to have access to five hours of 'culture' per week as a right.
- 5: Event Description from Tate Website:
 'Three times a year Tate Modern runs free events for seniors who live in Southwark or Lambeth. Senior events are very informal get-togethers led by Michaela Ross, Artist Educator and other experienced Tate staff. Refreshments are provided, as well as the opportunity to look at some artworks in the gallery and to meet new people. These events are aimed at individuals; hence you do not need to come as a group. Most importantly, you do not need to be an 'art expert' as these events are particularly suitable for those new to gallery-going or new to modern and contemporary art. Annual workshops are also organised as part of local and national festivals that celebrate age.'
<http://www.tate.org.uk/modern/eventseducation/community> viewed 10th March 2012.
- 6: 'The specialist knowledge of an education curator breaks down into three major areas. The relationships between each of these are to a large degree variable, the only constant being that they each impact on and inform all aspects of decision making, such that it is in their negotiation that the complex nature of this particular form of professionalism resides. These areas are: audience and policy contexts; learning theory and pedagogic content knowledge; and subject disciplines (in particular, critical art history and museum studies).'
 H. Charman, 2005. 'Uncovering Professionalism in the Art Museum: An Exploration of Key Characteristics of the Working Lives of Education Curators at Tate Modern' in *Tate Papers*, 2006
<http://www.tate.org.uk/research/tateresearch/tatepapers/05spring/charman.htm> viewed 10th March 2012.
- 7 'Everyone is very welcome because our programme is not only particularly suitable for community groups new to gallery going, but also to groups from a wide range of backgrounds. In fact our regular group visitors include: Access groups in Further Education, elders organisations, mental health service user groups and community centres. Our Staff also have extensive experience of working with adults with learning difficulties. Each session is tailor-made to suit all interests and abilities and might involve looking, talking, simple practical activities and the use of handling objects.'
<http://www.tate.org.uk/modern/eventseducation/community> viewed 10th March 2012.
- 8: See the series of workshops presented at University College London, in particular 'Touch, memory: the role of reminiscence', January 2007.
http://www.museums.ucl.ac.uk/learning/touch_research/index.html viewed June 4th 2008.
- 9: In 2005, I was commissioned to rewrite the 'Ways of Looking' for The Art Gallery Handbook. The title was changed to 'Ways In' and some of the approaches were modified to acknowledge changes in contemporary art practice, but fundamentally the philosophy remained the same.
- 10: N. Montmann (ed), 'Art and its institutions: current conflicts, critique and collaborations'. Black Dog, 2006.
- 11: K. Bagnall, R. Hancock, M. Ross, 'Pedagogy in a Public Space: children and adults working together at Tate Modern,' Forum, 2004.
<http://www.worlds.co.uk/rss/abstract.asp?j=forum&aid=2142> viewed 16 August 2011.
- 12: S. Griffin, Education Curator for Family and Community Programme, email conversation, 2008.
- 13: P. Ricoeur, 'Freud and Philosophy. An Essay on Interpretation'. Yale University Press, 1970, p.27.
- 14: Naturalisation – a term common within critical theory – refers to the process by which ideas are normalised through repetition
- 15: M. Alvesson & K. Sköldbberg, 'Reflexive Methodology: New Vistas for Qualitative Support'. Sage, 2000, p.63.
- 16: S. Pink, 'Doing Visual Ethnography'. Second Edition. Sage, 2006, p.125.
- 17: *ibid.*, p.52.

- 18: From a discussion between Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze, March 4, 1972.
<http://libcom.org/library/intellectuals-power-a-conversation-between-michel-foucault-and-gilles-deleuze>
 viewed 5 Aug 2011
- 19: For an overview of the ritualised nature of these behaviours see C. Duncan, 'Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums'. Routledge, 1995.
- 20: See Jacques Rancière's characterisations of different modes of spectatorship in 'The Emancipated Spectator', 2008.
- 21: Tate website
<http://www.tate.org.uk/modern/eventseducation/community> viewed 15 September 2011
- 22: See, for example, S. Moore, 'Hope and Ageing: Hermeneutic Photography as Qualitative Evidence,' 2010, in *Gerontological Nursing, Vol. 30, Issue 10*, October 2012.
- 23: J. Oakely, 'Own or Other Culture,' Routledge, 1996.
- 24: S. Pink, 'Doing Visual Ethnography,' Sage, 2001, p.27.
- 25: The key reference texts are Pierre Bourdieu's 'Distinction' (1984)
- 26: With the advent of New Institutionalism, these boundaries have become increasingly blurred.
- 27: C. Duncan, 'Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums'. Routledge, 1995.
- 28: Jacques Rancière's 'The Ignorant Schoolmaster,' 1987, can be read as a critique of this position – particularly of Pierre Bourdieu and 'The New Sociology'.
- 29: C. Bishop (ed), 'Participation.' Whitechapel, 2006.
- 30: M. Lind, 'The Collaborative Turn', in *Taking the Matter into Common Hands*, J. Billing, M. Lind & L. Nilsson (eds), Black Dog, 2007.
- 31: From a discussion between Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze, March 4, 1972.
<http://libcom.org/library/intellectuals-power-a-conversation-between-michel-foucault-and-gilles-deleuze>
 viewed 5 Aug 2011.
- 32: See S. Scrivener, 'The art object does not embody a form of knowledge,' *Working Papers in Art and Design*, 2002.
http://sitem.herts.ac.uk/artdes_research/papers/wpades/vol2/scrivenerfull.html viewed 11 April 2012.
- 33: See for example Andrea Fraser's performance 'Museum Highlights', 1989.
- 34: Jacques Rancière is a pronounced critic of the cult of 'the hidden' in intellectual endeavour. In 'The Ignorant Schoolmaster,' 1981, direct and public interpretation of the text is an act of radical democracy which challenges hierarchies of knowledge.
- 35: Jacques Rancière is a pronounced critic of the cult of 'the hidden' in intellectual endeavour. In 'The Ignorant Schoolmaster' (1981), direct and public interpretation of the text is an act of radical democracy which challenges hierarchies of knowledge.
- 36: http://www.tate.org.uk/about/freedomofinformation/Acquisitions_and_Disposals_Policy.pdf viewed 9 August 2011.
- 37: Henri Bergson's 'Le Rire', first published in 1900, tried to dig beneath the surface of conviviality, noting how difficult it is to laugh alone and how easy it is to laugh as a group. For Bergson, tragedy in literature emphasised the singular: an individual's misfortunes set him/her apart from others. Comedy, on the other hand, was essentially conservative in that it relies on general agreement about what is acceptable and what is not: it reasserts social bonds.
- 38: See C. Bishop, 'The Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents,' in *Artforum*, February 1, 2006
- 39: See M. Lazzarato, 'Immaterial Labour', *generation - online*, 1997.
<http://www.generation-online.org/c/fcimmateriallabour3.htm> viewed 20th March 2012
- 40: J. L. Nancy, 'The Inoperable Community,' University of Minnesota Press, 1991.
- 41: G. Agamben, 'The Coming Community,' (transl. Michael Hardt), University of Minnesota Press, 1993.
- 42: Pierre Bourdieu theorises these 'events' and consequent ontological shifts in 'Being and Event,' 2005.

43: S. Pink, 'Doing Visual Ethnography,' Sage, 2001.

44: Term taken from Foucault's 1982 lecture at the University of Vermont. His 'technologies of the self' are discussed in a later chapter.

45: P. Ricoeur, 'Oneself as Another,' (transl. Kathleen Blaney), University of Chicago Press, 1992, p.1.

The Artist and Discussion

Project Description

The data analysed in this chapter is a transcript of a discussion at Tate Modern of Meredith Frampton's Portrait of 'Marguerite Kelsey'.¹ The discussion took place as part of a ten-week module offered through the Masters in Education: Culture, Language and Identity at Goldsmiths, University of London. The module, devised and delivered in partnership with the Learning Department at Tate Modern, consisted of sessions delivered alternatively at the gallery and the university. The partnership between Goldsmiths and Tate Modern was established at the opening of Tate Modern in 2000 and had various outcomes in terms of teaching and research across the two institutions; the module referred to here was already well-established and had run yearly since 2003. It was structured thematically, with the four sessions each based in the collection displays at Tate Modern.² The themes of the module were: What happened to the object?; Body, sexuality and gender; 'Race' and nationality; and History and memory. The session described here was part of the Body, sexuality and gender session which took place in the Nude/Action/Body suite of the gallery). There were ten sessions in total, delivered alternately at Tate and Goldsmiths.

Interpretations and pre-understandings

In this chapter, the analysis is focussed on the concept of discussion as an aspect of practice. This is an interpretive bias, valid because of its centrality in the practice of artists working within the educational function of the museum. The data in this case, therefore, is a transcript of a discussion. In terms of the localised theory of practice that informed this event, the Learning Department at Tate at the time gave considerable weight to the value of discussion and interpretation in the spaces of the gallery. In trying to define what the Learning Department could provide for participants, the focus was on what was unique about the gallery space - the encounter with the artist (as facilitator) and with the artwork itself. As discussed in the previous chapter, I had worked for Tate since 1997 and had been involved in developing the gallery's approach to interpretation (renamed 'Ways In' for the Art Gallery Handbook in 2006). As a result, my own theory of practice with regards to discussion and interpretation was, as has been stated in the previous chapter, broadly the same as that proposed by Tate.

Traditionally, the great Victorian Museums had emphasised art ‘appreciation’ rather than interpretation.³ This more didactic model (a lecture rather than a discussion) persists in the system of ‘tours’ at Tate and in the curators’ talks.⁴ Historically, tours of collections were given by curators and relied on a notion of curatorial expertise derived from a scholarly knowledge of the collections. The imbalance inherent in the dynamic - expert representative of the institution lecturing a silent and attentive member of the public - was an aspect of tradition that Learning Departments at Tate and elsewhere deliberately set out to challenge from the 1970s onwards.

The Tate approach to interpretation at the time, discussed in the previous chapter, prioritised personal readings of the artworks on display and set out to enable participants to recognise their own capacity to generate meanings, even when they were unfamiliar with the work or the artist. This was attempted through various means and often through a group discussion of a single artwork where each participant was asked to offer a one-word response. Although artificial, particularly in the way each person was asked to take turns in responding, the method was intended to establish the principle that each person had the opportunity and ability to offer an interpretation of an artwork, and that each reading was equally valid. The artist-facilitator was encouraged not to fill any silences with his/her own interpretations. Instead s/he was encouraged to model types of questions that could be adapted and ‘owned’ by participants, the success of the approach depending on the assumed neutrality of the structure of questioning. Allied to this was the gallery’s policy of asking participants not to read gallery labels and texts until they had developed their own interpretations, an approach which aimed to counteract the dominance of the institutional account. Personally at the time, the ‘Ways In’ approach that encouraged participants to question the role that context plays in interpretation seemed to me to be particularly rich in critical potential, although the focus was largely limited to the contexts in which the artwork was displayed rather than the conditions which influence the interpretive process itself.

There seemed to be the general acknowledgement within the Learning Department at Tate at the time that the artist’s insider knowledge could be used to support and ‘scaffold’ participant responses to build confidence. Thinking back, I seem to have accepted beyond question that the generation of multiple, personalised, interpretations through discussion was in and of itself a form of Institutional Critique, liberating for both the artist and the participant. I remember, however, that doubts had already begun to emerge with regards to the approach; for example, the deliberate suppression of specialist knowledge by artist-educators was quite rightly challenged by participants in the Raw Canvas⁵ training programme, who expressed a desire to have access to the knowledge held by the artist-facilitator. The theory of practice informing my position prior to the discussion, therefore, could be described as broadly in line with Tate’s approach at the time, with the beginnings of some doubts which had not yet been fully articulated.

At this first level of the analysis then, the researcher examines the circumstances in which the text was produced (partly described in the project description above). On a practical level, visiting groups were encouraged to spend as much time as possible in the gallery displays rather than in separate studio spaces within the building. Given the gallery environment rules (determined both by the obligation to protect the artworks and by behavioural conventions), a focus was placed on interpretive tasks and these were predominantly discussion-based, although 'making' activities were also encouraged as long as they emphasised direct engagement with the artworks, curatorial principles, or the themes of the displays and the gallery as an institutional space with its own rules and regulations.

The text analysed here is a transcript of the final discussion in front of the painting 'Marguerite Kelsey' by Meredith Frampton (see *Appendix 1*). I have chosen to look more closely at this particular conversation because it is representative of a common aspect of my practice. Furthermore, the question of group discussion and its relevance to art/education practice is of general concern as it is a recurring theme in current theorising of art-practice influenced and inspired by pedagogy.

The choice to record this particular discussion was essentially pragmatic. The fortnightly sessions were guaranteed to take place for two, full terms and the long relationship between Goldsmiths and Tate meant that the structures were in place to request the participants' permissions. The alternative might have been to record a one-off 'community workshop', but the outcome would have been less predictable. The module attracted students from different masters programmes at Goldsmiths, but all participants had a broader interest in art education (on average, there were between ten and fifteen students per module, though not all students attended every session). The two-and-a-half hour session began with a studio-based seminar where students reported back on selected readings followed by a discussion addressing the theoretical/artistic contexts of the session theme (the reading for this particular session was Laura Mulvey's 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', 1975). Following the seminar, the group moved into the galleries and participated in discussion-based activities in front of the artworks. The whole-group discussion documented here occurred towards the end of the session and functioned as a plenary where the key ideas that had emerged during the session were brought together. The students were in a somewhat privileged position in that the sessions took place when the galleries were closed to the general public. As a result, the discussion took place when the gallery spaces were empty, whereas often such conversations are carried out with all the challenges of speaking in a busy, public space.

With the longer-term relationship established with the Goldsmiths group, the rules of discussion were aired quite consciously and were trialled over several weeks. The gallery session began with the whole group gathered around a single work. Each person was generally asked to voice a reaction to the work spontaneously, both to break the ice and to establish the idea that everyone could offer an equal interpretation based on their own 'gut' response. This approach seemed somewhat formulaic at the time, but nonetheless it seemed to establish the principle of equality, even if this was not maintained throughout the course, or even the session. As stated previously, the discussion from which the transcript has been taken took place towards the end of the session and two-thirds of the way through the course as a whole; as such, it can be assumed that the habits of discussion were fairly well-established, with some participants being more vocal than others (as can be seen from the transcript). Thus, in terms of the construction of the data, there were expectations on both sides, for the artist-facilitator and the participants. The parameters of discussion had been established through several means, both explicit and implicit. In terms of the tacit constraints, it seems likely that participants operated under an idea of what they believed was expected of them as postgraduate students and what they might therefore consider valid in terms of the content and style of discussion. As the artist, I was responsible for communicating the rules of discussion from the beginning of the course; it therefore seems likely that participants were used to looking towards the artist to lead the conversation and I seem to have assumed this role unquestioningly.

The analysis of this text is particularly challenging in that it is an interpretation of an interpretation – Alvesson and Sköldböck, referencing Giddens,⁶ describe similar situations in ethnography, where the researcher 'interprets interpreting beings'. The text is already an interpretation, the discussive component of a group encounter with a painting. An additional point of difficulty is that my own voice is part of the text. Here, however, the research focus is not directed at testing the validity of the interpretation of the painting offered by the group. Instead the transcript is offered as a trace of my practice as an artist working in the educational function of the museum, where the artist is expected to generate and structure group discussion. The analysis of the transcript text will not attempt to uncover the hidden motivations of the student-participants in this process. As stated previously, much of the literature about the practice of the artist-as-educator takes the experience of the participant as its default position for evaluation; the artist is rarely forced to confront the (often tacit) criteria s/he uses to reflect on and evaluate practice. Although the discussion is co-constructed, the analysis will focus on what the text might mean in terms of understanding my own practice.

The transcript is as far as possible a faithful representation of the discussion that took place, although making recordings in the gallery space is difficult because of the background noise. As a result some of the comments made within the group were inaudible and therefore impossible to transcribe. I have made no attempt to fill in the gaps of the conversation, although as a participant in the conversation I am also working with my own memories of the event which may over time have become distorted, helping me to ‘hear’ some parts of the conversation and not others. The form that this remembering takes is also of interest in that it too reveals a particular interpretive position. The full transcript is in the *Appendix* and should be read before the next stages of the analysis.

The ‘Interpretive Repertoire’

Level 2 of the methodology requires an explicit interpretation of the text, testing the material to see how many meanings might be generated. With regards to this particular transcript, I have decided to follow one particular strategy suggested in the methodology, attempting to find various examples of what Alvesson and Sköldbberg call an ‘interpretive repertoire’,⁷ a kind of inventory of phrases employed in the discussion process (with a focus on my own interventions).

One of the main characteristics of a hermeneutic approach is dialogue: dialogue between the researcher and the text (where the researcher ‘asks questions’ of the text), and between the researcher and the imagined reader of the text. The first hermeneutics came from exegesis, the study of biblical texts, and there still lingers from this tradition a preoccupation with the hidden ‘truth’ underlying a text. However, with Heidegger,⁸ meaning-making becomes foundational, an essential characteristic of being, and therefore relates more closely to the production of subjectivity. In terms of Tate’s approach to interpretation, there is no one, fixed meaning that resides in the artwork that waits to be unearthed by patient and rigorous enquiry. Rather there are multiple possible interpretations based on the lived experience⁹ of the viewer. However, the archaeological metaphor of ‘unearthing’ meaning still seems to run through and beneath many interpretative conversations in the gallery. In the transcript of this conversation, the desire for ‘truth’ can perhaps be recognised in the willingness to settle on a final answer, (S1: ‘*That’s got red too, hasn’t it? Ah...*’ where ‘*Ah*’ is the moment of discovery), but also in the appeal to other authorities (looking at the labels and text panels).

In terms of patterns within the text, an analysis reveals a tendency to employ the simple repetition of phrases which serve as either encouragement or affirmation (for example, the initial *'You like it'* response). Other phrases seem to be used as a way of eliciting or drawing out a participant's contribution (my repetition of the word *'domestic'* but with the intonation of a question, for example). The strategy of hesitation at the beginning of the discussion, (*'Er... so'*) might also function in this way, allowing participants to voice opinions which they are less than sure about. There are also examples where I use repetition as re-enforcement of someone's opinion, sometimes elaborating by adding a synonym (for example when I respond to the comment *'It's serene'* with *'It's serene, calm'* and later with the repetition of *'shoes and lips'*). Sometimes, however, my additions give a twist or inflection, for example when one participant's *'unnatural'* is translated into *'uncomfortable'*. This strategy of 'weaving' the conversation, a form of mirroring and elaborating participants' comments, is apparent throughout the discussion.

My interventions also include examples of questions that seem to insist that the participant continue with a line of enquiry, (*'Anything else in the painting that you think supports that particular interpretation?', 'What would that seem to imply?'*). There are other examples which refer explicitly to thought and meaning (*'Don't you think?', 'You know what I mean?'*) and these seem to function in a different way; rather than asking questions of the artwork, they appear to be asking for corroboration or agreement from other participants in the group. Other questions seem to ask for clarification (*'Smooth...you mean the surface?'*), while others appear to use the question form to achieve the hesitant tone of open-ended enquiry (*'So is it kind of saying...?'*).

At first glance, my language at the beginning of the conversation seems quite cool and restrained. Towards the end of the conversation, I use more emphatic language (*'extraordinary', 'incredibly', 'really interesting', 'really fascinating'*). Furthermore, there is a particular rhythm of exchange: at the beginning of the conversation, my interventions occur less frequently and are almost the same length as those of the other participants; towards the end of the conversation my comments alternate with those of the participants and are much longer. Rather than conversational gambits, they function more as statements (see, for example, the lengthy comment about Warhol's video piece).

A further hermeneutic strategy relevant to this level of analysis involves looking for what is surprising in the text. In this transcript, I am surprised at how often sentences are left unfinished and by the introduction of lines of enquiry that arrive and disappear quite suddenly. Certainly, the text is not a straightforward account by a single individual as is often the case in transcripts derived from interviews; these might appear, at least on the surface, more coherent. The transcript instead seems to give a representation of how interpretations are formed provisionally through group discussion, in the moment.

When looking at the transcript, one of the most obvious characteristics is its disjointedness. This corresponds to my pre-understanding of what a group interpretation should look like: the artist encourages a process of layering of interpretations rather than a coherent narrative. Looking more closely at the text however, there are moments when I reinforce the participant's interpretation and others where I veer off at a tangent ignoring completely the participant's line of enquiry (S1: *It's a bit, in those days, it's a bit, - well racy, yeah, to put your shoes on...* M: *I was wondering if we could say anything about the space of the painting?*). This observation would work against the theory of the conversation as a kind of organic (i.e., unmanaged) and emergent structure. Instead it could be said that this disjointedness is a deliberate strategy which sets out to prioritise one line of enquiry (my own).

If I were to attempt to construct or elicit a narrative from the text – telling myself, as Ricoeur advises, the story of its meaning,¹⁰ it would result in a picture of a gradual funnelling of the discussion, from the possibilities of plural readings and voices present at the beginning of the story, to the final statements belonging to one person (the artist-facilitator) which seem so authoritative as to silence all others. The final, incomplete phrase (*So he's trying to redeem her maybe*) partially redeems the narrative, allowing us to imagine other very different lines of enquiry. The forceful (and lengthy) introductions of a final, very personal context (working with domestic violence offenders) and the unsubstantiated final statement (the dancer-prostitute) has at least not brought the story to a sudden end.

There are several, possible metaphors which might evoke the pattern of discussion. One possible metaphor might enable us to view the conversation as a web, where each participant can retain her own place in relation to others; this might hold true in the earlier part of the conversation and help us to see the fragile quality of the exchange. A further, useful metaphor might be that of the kaleidoscope, where the pattern of meaning-making is temporary and ever-changing, reminding us that this exchange is a fragment and part of a longer conversation (that lasts for weeks and months, rather than a single evening). Looking again at the transcript, what comes to mind is a process of sedimentation, with my long and sometimes emphatic statements burying the shorter and more tentative phrases of the other participants. The act of trying to find a good 'fit' between metaphor and text can make aspects of the data apparent that were previously ignored.

As explained earlier, the introduction of new contexts, or forgetting of old ones, is a hermeneutic strategy that functions in the same way as the conscious effort to generate metaphors. When I deliberately ‘forget’ the context of the gallery and the postgraduate teaching, it is difficult to think where else this type of conversation might occur. My statements in the later part of the conversation have a particular tone that might be adopted in other arenas where persuasion is valued. The use of repetition (*‘controlled and controlling’, ‘hours and hours’*) and hyperbole suggests almost a sales context – which begs the question: ‘What is the artist-facilitator selling?’

Perhaps more unusual and ambitious is the attempt to rethink the practice of interpretation in the gallery as *arts* practice. As discussed in the Introduction chapter, the artist working in the educational function of the museum is generally judged primarily as an educator, with the evaluative focus on the experience of the participant. If the pedagogic context is deliberately ‘forgotten’ and the activity is reconsidered as a form or aspect of arts practice, other evaluative criteria are immediately brought into play. In particular, when discussion in the gallery is seen as arts practice, the exhibition context is often prioritised, that is, the discussion is framed or put on display and the activities are performed for a public. The spontaneous emergence of an audience may be one function of the gallery site and group ‘learning’ activities often attract an audience amongst the general public. The significance of this shifting of contexts for discussion-based practice will be discussed in the final chapter.

Critical interpretation

At Level 3 of the methodology, critical theory offers a framework through which to challenge our habitual assumptions. The researcher is also encouraged to ask herself in what way our usual interpretations reassert the status-quo. At this level of interpretation, the aim is to find ways of challenging forms of understanding which are perceived as natural or neutral, but are far from it.

The term ‘discourse’ can be used in several ways: it is used simply to denote a written or spoken communication (Level 1 of the methodology – the Construction of Data); it can refer to an instance of language that can be categorised according to its patterns and codes (Level 2 – Interpretation); or in the Foucauldian sense, it is an arrangement of concepts and ideas within which the world can be understood (Level 3 – Critical Interpretation).¹¹ Thus, in Foucault’s use of the term, the subject does not create the discourse, but rather the discourse produces the subject, in the sense that it determines what can be said.¹² At the level of critical interpretation, it seems that several discourses are operating within the gallery site, that these decide what can and cannot be said, and that these relate (to use Foucault’s terms of reference) to the institution, to subjectivity and to power.

The theory of practice that informed my position prior to this analysis would have claimed a level of independence for the artist working within the educational function of the museum. According to this theory, the artist is not seen by the participants in the same way as a lecturer or curator, but is instead something of an unknown quantity, without an allegiance to any particular discourse. I had thought this lack of allegiance (artists at this time were employed on a freelance basis – see Tate Case Study: the Artist as Cultural Worker) would guarantee a space for critique of the institution and its discourses.

The interpretation of the painting of Marguerite Kelsey on the gallery’s website at the time offered a particular type of reading, different from that generated by the group and the artist-facilitator both in terms of its content and presentation:

‘A professional artist’s model in the 1920s and 1930s, Marguerite Kelsey (1908?-1995) was renowned for her gracefulness and ability to hold poses for a long time. Her dress and shoes were chosen and purchased by Frampton for this portrait. They are both classical and, being uncorseted, deliberately modern. The simple, short-sleeved pale tunic dress worn with low-heeled shoes and her straight hair were all essential elements of the fashionable “garçonne style” created by the couturiers Coco Chanel and Jean Patou from the mid-1920s.’¹³

This interpretation offers us ‘facts’, but it is by no means neutral. The voice is that of the gallery ‘expert’, with an art historical background. We could describe this interpretation as ‘cool’, the opposite in many ways of the transcript of the discussion amongst the students. There is no uncertainty in the quotation above, which puts the instability of the transcript into sharp relief. For many, the panel text represents the voice of the institution and therefore carries great weight. We can see how the interpretation of the dress, described by a student-participant as ‘virginal’ might be over-ridden by the specificity of ‘garçonne style’. It could be said that the panel text functions as a form of rhetoric – persuasive because we hear the ‘expert’ voice behind the text.

An indication of a further ‘pedagogic’ discourse in operation can be found in a description of Tate’s approach to learning in the gallery:

‘The open and friendly learning environment of workshops fosters students’ skills and confidence. Workshops can support classroom topics and develop students’ subject knowledge, skills of investigation, and critical and creative thinking. The emphasis on personal input and opinions offers different routes into ideas and concepts. Students consider at least one work in depth by looking, thinking, talking and making, and other works are explored through discussion and activities in small groups.’¹⁴

The language used here emphasises the potential uses of interpretation in relation to the school context (references to ‘classroom topics’ and ‘subject knowledge’). The emphasis on progression seems to stress the possibility of achieving measurable outcomes, particularly in terms of skills. Whilst as an artist, my focus might be on the here and now of the interpretive process, other (institutional) interpretations of the same activity seem to present a more linear account: the text panel unearths facts from history which are brought, through attentive research, into the present; the Learning Department’s emphasis seems to be on what is produced by the interpretive process in terms of skills and knowledge.

At certain points in the transcript, it seems that both these discourses – the art-historical and the pedagogical – are ‘speaking’ through me. Looking closely at the text, I become aware that I often deploy the language of expertise, using specialist terminology belonging to both art history (my first undergraduate degree) and pedagogy. References to specific artists (Warhol and Duchamp), periods (Post-modernism, the Baroque), and terms from theory (‘the gaze’, ‘dualisms’) signal that these discourses are in operation. If these discourses help construct the subject of the artist-as-educator, they also produce what might be termed the ‘pedagogised’ subject (it is interesting to note that on only one occasion does a participant respond with her own reference to theory - ‘*I think John Berger wrote that whole thing about when a woman sort of is, you know, viewed by a man, she’s not really thinking about what she looks like, she’s thinking about what she looks like to him*’). I draw power also from my insider knowledge of the institution (my reference to the displays) and experience of managing previous projects (with domestic violence offenders at Tate Liverpool). It seems clear that the gallery site and the context of the educational ‘workshop’ give additional weight to certain discourses. Looking again at the transcript, the responses of the participants appear even more fragmentary and incoherent. Perhaps ‘coherence’ is only possible when the comments ally themselves to existing discourses. Returning to the text, Foucault’s thinking allows me to think more broadly about who is invited to speak in the discursive field of the gallery and who is not. More specifically, it allows me to question whether the position of the artist-as-facilitator of the discussion can ever be neutral (as has already been noted, the artist’s voice dominates the discussion). At the same time, I am invited to reflect on the institution as a space where power struggles are unavoidable and on-going, particularly with regards to which discourse dominates at any particular time.

Foucault has been critiqued for not being 'action-oriented'. What is the broader purpose of revealing and reflecting upon power structures and challenging naturalised conceptions of the Institution? Foucault responds:

'It's true that certain people, such as those who work in the institutional setting of the prison...are not likely to find advice or instructions in my books to tell them "what is to be done". But my project is precisely to bring it about that they 'no longer know what to do,' so that the acts, gestures, discourses that up until then had seemed to go without saying become problematic, difficult, dangerous.'¹⁵

It seems to me to be of real importance to arrive repeatedly at points in practice where you no longer quite sure of what you are doing. I would argue that this feeling of unease occurs when pre-understandings are challenged. This process of destabilisation may happen spontaneously in practice but can also be deliberately provoked through reflection. Foucault states that the discursive 'field' contains the potential for the development of counter-discourses. Within the transcript, there are points when these seem to be beginning to emerge (for example, '*Big feet, and I've got big feet so...*' where the participant locates meaning through relating the image to her own body and '*It's an evergreen*' where another kind of knowledge or expertise is being offered outside of the dominant discourses). It is perhaps by focussing on these points of fracture that new possibilities for practice reveal themselves.

Discussion as Formula

The argument that perhaps dominated my theory of practice at the outset of this analysis was that creating space for free discussion in a public space is a good in and of itself. Rather than focussing on the actual content of the discussion, the artist places her faith in the process, as if the way a conversation is proposed and staged provides a guarantee of value. As stated previously, Tate had its own approach to interpretation which seemed mirror these same beliefs.¹⁶ The discussion borrows its structure from the established formula, and it seems likely that this lends an aura of authority to the process for both the artist and the participants.

A similar confidence in structured discussion can be found in Jürgen Habermas' theories of discourse ethics. The question is important, because for Habermas, participation in public discourse is fundamental to what it means to be a citizen. Habermas' project is to find a universal, rational basis for discourse which will lead to the development of constitutions and institutions. He theorises that the problem with previous elaborations

of rational processes is that have as their focus the individual subject. Habermas instead seeks for a universal validation of reason in inter-subjectivity. He stresses the importance of consensus arrived at by reasoned argument.¹⁷ Bent Flyvbjerg summarises Habermas' criteria for ethical discourse as follows:

'(1) no party affected by what is being discussed should be excluded from the discourse (the requirement of generality); (2) all participants should have equal possibility to present and criticize validity claims in the process of discourse (autonomy); (3) participants must be willing and able to empathize with each other's validity claims (ideal role taking); (4) existing power differences between participants must be neutralised such that these differences have no effect on the creation of consensus (power neutrality); and (5) participants must openly explain their goals and intentions and in this connection desist from strategic action (transparency).'¹⁸

Using these criteria to reflect on the transcript, one can see how 'autonomy' and 'ideal role-taking' could be satisfied: each individual has the opportunity to declare their own response to the group and to empathise with other participants' positions. Arguably, the aim of 'transparency' is satisfied in that the process by which interpretations are to be formed is discussed and reflected on at the beginning of the course. The desire for 'power neutrality' however seems too utopian to ever be realised in practice. For Foucault, 'Power is always present' and communication can always be distorted by power relations.¹⁹ Habermas' 'communicative rationality' risks becoming a norm, a technique and a principle to be enforced or followed blindly. Foucault prefers to challenge statements of universality, focussing instead on the particularities of context and on key questions concerning power relations: who stands to benefit from this discourse? Who speaks and who is silent? This imbalance seems obvious to me when looking at the transcript; despite the apparent openness and informality of the conversation, the differences noted earlier (length of intervention, the activation of certain discourses) seem to tilt the balance quite clearly in the artist-facilitator's favour.

Interrogation and Making Public

The idea of discourse as a tool for emancipation has its basis in various theories. In 'The Ignorant Schoolmaster',²⁰ Rancière describes the career of Jacotôt, a nineteenth-century educator, who developed revolutionary methods for teaching in rural communities. Jacotôt discovers that students can teach themselves a new language simply by comparing a text and its translation, without the aid of a tutor. The bridging object in the gallery is an artwork rather than a written text, but it can be argued that each individual has an intrinsic capacity to make sense of the object in his/her own terms (i.e., from experience). For Rancière, the role of the educator is not to explain, which stultifies the student, but rather

to insist that the student pay attention to the object/text, describing what s/he sees and making a case from the evidence it provides:

‘These are in fact the master’s two fundamental acts. He interrogates, he demands speech, that is to say, the manifestation of an intelligence that wasn’t aware of itself or that had given up. And he verifies that the work of the intelligence is done with attention, that the words don’t say just anything in order to escape from the constraint.’²¹

In Rancière’s view, therefore, the role of the educator would be to ‘demand speech’ and draw the participant’s attention back to the object/text for verification. The ultimate aim of this process is emancipation - for the participant to realise his/her own power. In some ways the role seems coercive, even though the artist renounces the traditional role of transmitter of knowledge. The educator insists on action, on speech. An important aspect of the process is that it is carried out in public:

‘The circle of powerlessness is always already there: it is the very workings of the social world, hidden in the evident difference between ignorance and science. The circle of power, on the other hand, can only take effect by being made public.’²²

A case could be made that, within the history of Institutional Critique, it is indeed the role of the artist to make power-structures public. In Rancière’s strict understanding, however, the artist-educator must limit herself to insisting on speech and drawing attention back to the object. These strategies can be clearly identified at the beginning of the transcript of the gallery discussion. Less straightforward, however are the digressions from the object and the introduction of new contexts, even when these are used to critique the dominant strands of interpretation. It could, however, be argued that drawing attention to the context of the hang, the curator’s decision-making, the global brand of Tate etc., is simply expanding the concept of the object being interrogated. The strategy of ‘making public’ may perhaps have something in common with the ‘exhibitionary’ tendencies of current practices discussed earlier, when gallery-based discussion is re-contextualised as arts practice. However, the question remains: Who is the public – an audience, the institution or the participants themselves? This question will be addressed in the final chapter.

Gender

In Alvesson and Sköldbberg’s methodology, although gender is not examined in depth, they advise that ‘researchers should stop now and again to think for a moment in gender terms’²³ and ‘develop a willingness to emphasize gender conditions.’²⁴ The majority of the participants in the discussion were women and as is obvious from the content of the

discussion, the subject of the painting is a woman. The session had begun with a seminar discussion of the seminal text, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' by Laura Mulvey; the concept of 'the gaze' had been discussed at length and is reintroduced in the discussion in front of the painting. Gender underpins much of the conversation (at my instigation) concluding with the somewhat heavy-handed reference to domestic violence, combining issues of gender, violence and exploitation.

Hermeneutics of Suspicion

However, despite my repeatedly and deliberately raising the issue of gender and its art-historical/theoretical applications, when potentially subversive comments about sexuality are made, I immediately change the topic of conversation (S1: *'It's her arm that forms a kind of barrier across her genital area. Don't you think?'* M: *'Uh-huh'* [non-committal]). This seems to reflect a desire to maintain control over the tone and content of the discussion. The strand within hermeneutics close to Critical Theory – 'the Hermeneutics of Suspicion' - might instead point specifically to something shameful and hidden. A superficially open discourse might conceal an attempt at coercion, the domination of one interpretation (the artist's) over the others.

My own concluding interpretation in the text is rehearsed and reflects and reproduces a particular relationship with the painting. In the forceful assertion of the metaphor of the butterfly pinned in an enclosed space, I am using a very strong analogy in an attempt to limit the possible interpretations of the work. I would hope that this is not a common ingredient in my practice, in that it is too one-sided and non-reflective. If I try to empathise with my own position in the discussion, I could employ the themes of the 'Hermeneutics of Suspicion' to search for something hidden or repressed that underpins this particularly aggressive interpretation. I propose images of constraint and entrapment repeatedly in one particular section of the transcript. This over-emphasis (the repetition of deliberately 'imagey' metaphor – the woman as a pinned butterfly) might be a reflection of the original context in which I first engaged in a group interpretation of the painting, with a group of domestic violence offenders at Tate Liverpool. Although I mention this within the discussion, I am perhaps not able to reflect on how the trace of this experience might influence my actions in the present. In retrospect (looking back on the event, through the text), I might have felt it necessary to simplify and instrumentalise the interpretation because the course at Tate Liverpool aimed at re-habilitating offenders. At that time, the encounter with the artwork was used to explore the participants' pre-conceived ideas about gender. I remember also some heated discussions in the Learning Department concerning

the validity of this approach and how far it was in conflict with the gallery's aim of encouraging 'plural readings'.

At times, the discussion of gender in the text can be seen as heavy-handed, but my use of gender could equally be seen as appropriate within the tradition of Critical Theory where marginal positions are deliberately adopted to reveal the inherent power imbalances operating within cultural and other institutions.

Demoting the Subject

Looking again at the transcript, I become aware that I could be described in post-modernism terms as an 'unstable subject'. Through the discussion, I occupy several positions – that of the artist, a representative of the gallery, art historian, and pedagogue, amongst others. Alvesson and Sköldbberg describe how the concept of the subject changed with post-structuralism:

'In opposition to the dominating notion of the individual, the poststructuralists want to demote the subject from its central position – decentre it ... Language is not an expression of subjectivity, but – it is claimed – constitutes subjectivity ... From this it follows that subjectivity is something unstable, contradictory – a process rather than a structure.'²⁵

The artist facilitating a gallery-based discussion can easily fall into the trap of presenting a dominant, 'authoritative' interpretation, borrowing her authority from various discourses associated with the role. Here in this text, my voice dominates. I would not have been so aware of this had it not been so obvious in the transcript. Starting out on the analysis, I prioritise my own voice (the research bias) – but this is not a monologue and on closer reading I become aware of how unstable the conversation mode is, as if there were the potential for subjectivities to be constructed in the moment, for them to be discarded and then taken up again. In terms of the traditional hermeneutic strategy of comparing the part with the whole, the dominance of my voice becomes clear (in terms of time and space taken up in the discussion). In Heidegger's re-working of hermeneutic principles²⁶ the importance of the relationship between part and whole is superseded by the relationship between pre-understanding and understanding. If asked to describe my role before analysing the transcript, I would have spoken of the artist as someone who creates and defends a space within the institution where others can speak freely. A close analysis of the text allows for the possibility that other interpretations of my role are equally, if not more, plausible. This has clear implications for future practice in terms of how discussions might be structured differently, if the desire for an equal exchange remains a stated aim of the artist's discussion-based practice. This might be achieved through the deliberate de-centring of the artist-

subject. If the artist-subject is revealed as unstable, 'a process rather than a subject,' then other participants in the discussion might be more able to explore other subjectivities through the discussion process.

Reflection on text production

At certain points in the text I use the pronoun 'we' when I really should use 'I' (for example, when I say '*we just accept how it is*'). In terms of the interpretation of the text as a whole, the desire to make a voice heard that is often suppressed (the voice of the artist-as-educator) may be justified as an attempt to compensate for an exaggerated focus on the participant in previous research within the field. Although the principle aim might be to challenge the relationship between pre and post-understandings to enable new forms of practice to develop in the future, the research voice that emerges through the analysis does not have the dispassionate tone that might be expected from a research text. What strikes me most in this analysis is its occasionally confessional nature; my occasional embarrassment at revealing this material unedited in the transcript feels like the breaking of a research convention. The dominant mode of presenting research seems still to emphasise coherence, understanding and consensus. Alvesson and Sköldbberg note the 'fictive or literary elements in research'.²⁷ The 'confessional' research voice has been associated with feminist texts, for example and it is interesting that this emerges from an analysis of a project that is, at least to some extent, concerned with gender. The research creates a picture of the researcher, and this always has a fictive element.

Questions/ Implications for practice

To summarise, an analysis of the transcript reveals that my original theory of practice was perhaps too allied to that of the institution and that I relied too heavily for my authority on my ability to voice dominant discourses. It seems that the questioning structure adopted was not neutral as I had perhaps assumed and that power structures remained largely unchallenged through the discussion process. Thinking more generally, discussions may have a tendency to follow a formula; to some extent, this appears necessary as dialogue is made possible through the recognition of conventions. It might be necessary to reflect more on the conventions of discussion with the whole group to ensure that all participants are aware of how they are being used. The question remains, however, whether

the artist-facilitator should insist on speech/action from participants and how this might be achieved without relying on the authority of the institution or institutional discourses.

An additional issue that emerges from the analysis and is connected to the point raised above (and also touched upon in the previous chapter) is that historically, interpretation in the gallery seems to have been based on the interrogation of a single object and that the legacy of this tendency remains, leading potentially to the reiteration of well-trodden interpretive pathways. There are additional questions that emerge from the analysis of the transcript: what would happen if there were no mediating art object, but if the object were discussion itself?

The analysis seems to suggest that there may be a value in demoting or destabilising the subject of the artist-educator. The artist in the role of educator gains a level of power through her association with established discourses and this appears to stifle the voices of participants. Could the artist take on a different role and ally herself with counter-discourses as they emerge from the discussion? One of the aims of practice might be to consciously create situations where participants are able to explore different subjectivities. In addition, there is a possible value in recognising that roles can be fluid rather than fixed and that participants might occupy different roles at different points in the discussion. A further option might be for the artist-facilitator to be open about her allegiance to certain institutional discourses and themes, allowing participants to recognise and respond to the partial nature of her position.

The conversation took place in private, outside of normal gallery opening hours. The importance of the public nature of interpretation was raised during the analysis of the transcript and it seems that there is critical potential in performing one's interpretive capacities to others. As discussed in the previous chapter, this is something that the gallery can provide - a space where different kinds of publics can assemble.

The 'findings' from case-studies one and two will be summarised and added to those from the third in preparation for the open discussion of practice in Part 3.

- 1: <http://www.tate.org.uk/servlet/ViewWork?workid=4521&searchid=22818&tabview=image> viewed May 2012.
- 2: At this time, the collection displays at Tate Modern were arranged into four themes: History/Memory/Society; Nude/Action/Body; Landscape/Matter/Environment; Still Life/Object.
- 3: See E. Hooper-Greenhill, *The Educational Role of the Museum*, Routledge, 1999.
- 4: For example, the current tours in the Damian Hirst exhibition : <http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/talks-and-lectures/damien-hirst-curators-tours> viewed 7 May 2012
- 5: Raw Canvas was a peer-led programme at Tate Modern where young people had the opportunity to take part in a range of different projects. In 2003, I ran the year-long training programme.
- 6: A. Giddens, 'The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration,' University of California Press, 1984.
- 7: Although this is a term more commonly used in Discourse Analysis, here it applied more loosely to describe patterns and linguistic tendencies within the text.
- 8: M. Heidegger, 'Being and Time,' 1927 in *Basic Writings*, D. Krell (ed), Routledge, 1978.
- 9: Husserl's '*Lebenswelt*' from his 'Crisis of European Sciences,' 1936.
- 10: P Ricoeur, 'Time and Narrative III,' The University of Chicago Press, 1987, p.97.
- 11: M. Foucault, 'The Archaeology of Knowledge,' 1969.
- 12: "The question posed by language analysis of some discursive fact or other is always: according to what rules has a particular statement been made, and consequently according to what rules could other similar statements be made? The description of the events of discourse poses a quite different question: how is it that one particular statement appeared rather than another?"
M. Foucault, 'The Archaeology of Knowledge,' Chapter 1.
<http://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/fr/foucault.htm> viewed 8 June 2012
- 13: From the display caption, August 2004, reproduced at www.tate.org.uk.
- 14: <http://www.tate.org.uk/modern/eventseducation/schools/7237.htm> viewed 10 Jan 2008.
- 15: Foucault quoted in B. Flyvberg, 'Habermas and Foucault: thinkers for civil society?' in *British Institute of Sociology, Volume no.49, Issue no.2*, London School of Economics, 1998, p.224.
- 16: 'The emphasis on personal input and opinions offers different routes into ideas and concepts.'
<http://www.tate.org.uk/modern/eventseducation/schools/7237.htm> viewed 10 Jan 2008.
- 17: J. Habermas, 'The Theory of Communicative Action,' Vol I, MIT Press, 1983.
- 18: B. Flyvberg, 'Habermas and Foucault: thinkers for civil society?' in *British Institute of Sociology, Volume no.49, Issue no.2*, London School of Economics, 1998, p.213.
- 19: *ibid.*, p216
- 20: J. Rancière, 'The Ignorant Schoolmaster. Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation,' Stanford University Press, 1991.
- 21: *ibid.*, p29
- 22: *ibid.*, p15
- 23: M. Alvesson & K. Skoldberg, 'Reflexive Methodology: New Vistas for Qualitative Research,' Sage, 2000, p.164.
- 24: *ibid.*, p.222.
- 25: *ibid.*, p.164.
- 26: M. Heidegger, 'Being and Time,' 1927, in *Basic Writings*, D. Krell (ed), Routledge, 1978.
- 27: M. Alvesson, & K. Skoldberg, 'Reflexive Methodology: New Vistas for Qualitative Research,' Sage, 2000, p.170.

The Artist and the Institution

Project description

Neveroddoeven was a two-year project commissioned by the Serpentine Gallery, London (2005-2007). I worked alongside fellow artist, Abigail Reynolds and with the design collective, *Abake*, to look at possible connections between dyslexia and creativity. The project involved the artists working with two primary-school groups and a self-selecting group of adults with dyslexia. In addition, we worked alongside a team of researchers from the Department of Psychology at the University of York (led by Professor John Rack) and specialists from Dyslexia Action, London.¹

Outcomes included an interactive website, an exhibition in the Project Space at the Serpentine Gallery (March 2007) and a conference (April 2007). Louise Coysh, the project curator, was interviewed on 1st April 2008.²

The interview material relates to a specific institution. The Serpentine Gallery operates on a much smaller scale than Tate (the site of the other projects discussed in the case-studies), and has very different staff and funding structures. Unlike Tate, it does not have its own collections, but stages temporary exhibitions of modern and contemporary art alongside an active programme of events. More recently, it has established a reputation nationally and internationally for integrated programming and has thus become identified with tendencies in New Institutionalism.³ Its co-organisation (with the Hayward Gallery) of the conference 'De-Schooling Society' in 2010, plus the establishment of the satellite 'Edgware Road Project: The Centre for Possible Studies,' have put the Gallery at the centre of discussions of 'the educational turn' in contemporary art practice. When this project took place, however, these practices were at a more fledgling stage, although the Serpentine had already begun to establish a reputation for more experimental models for the production and reception of artwork. Thus, the interview material should also be understood within the context of a gallery culture that had already begun to reflect quite consciously on its own institutional structures and operations.

The outcomes of *Neveroddoeven* were shown in the project space, attached but somewhat separate from the main gallery.

The previous chapters have focussed on two aspects of practice: the artist's relationship to ideas of community and the role of discussion. This chapter uses an analysis of a text produced through interview to explore a third aspect of practice - the artist's relationship to the institution (specifically the art museum or gallery). This is an explicit research bias, a result of my own experience as an artist where the institutional site has always been a key aspect of practice, (a different approach to that taken by artists who prefer to work directly in community settings, for example). The art institution has always been, for me, a complex site, full of possible material for practice. In terms of the theory of practice that informed my position prior to this analysis, I had always been interested in activities operating within the tradition of Institutional Critique, where the artist acts in opposition to the institution and its representatives, effecting a kind of Romantic distancing from the centres of authority and power. A default position for many artists working in the educational function of the museum (myself included) seemed to be to understand the role as a form of intervention where the relationship is seen in purely oppositional terms, echoing the conception of the artist as someone who stands outside and against the institution. This position is described, for example, by Dave Beech in his essay 'Institutionalisation for All.'⁴ Here he references Pierre Bourdieu's inverted economy, 'whereby art is esteemed for the distance it takes from the established measures of value: wealth, power, popularity.' As noted in the preceding chapter, the artist working within the educational function of the museum can be defined in terms of what they are not – that is, not a teacher, lecturer or curator. As noted previously, this vacuum can be filled by several discourses which derive their authority from their associations with the institutions of art, but prior to my research, the artist as the unknown element operating at a distance from the institution, still seemed a viable position. As such, the key attraction of working as an artist within the educational function of the museum up to this point had been the potential the role offered to operate below the radar. The criteria by which educational activities are judged (outlined in the Introduction chapter) – the justification that by working within education you were 'doing good', building communities and fulfilling the institution's obligations with regards to social inclusion – could, I then thought, simultaneously disguise and enable a more critical agenda. This lack of visibility however might have been a double-edged sword, as will be discussed in the final chapter.

With regards to the institution then, my theory of practice at the outset was that the artist was broadly in opposition to the institution and had an obligation to work within it to achieve 'emancipatory' ends. This can be seen most clearly in the preliminary email question about 'contested territories' (*Transcript 2*). However, as with the previous analyses, this was not a monolithic position; I had begun to grow frustrated with opposition to the

institution as a default position for many artists-as-educators (see Tate Case Study: the Artist as Cultural Worker). At the same time, I had forged close relationships with many of the curators I worked with and could not view them as authority figures or straight-forward representatives of the institution. This together with the understanding that art institutions were in flux meant that a more nuanced understanding of the artist's relationship to the institution was required if my practice were to develop.

In the interview, therefore, the conversation with the project curator was directed quite consciously towards the theme of the institution. Motivated by a desire to understand the project from an institutional perspective, I hoped the analysis of the text produced would allow me to develop a more sophisticated understanding of the site of my practice and that it would disturb the concept of a simple opposition between artist and institution which I felt was beginning to limit my options.

In terms of the project which instigated the interview, the topic of space was a consideration throughout. At a very early stage of the research for the project, I took a series of photographs of children playing at one of the schools where I was working; they were using the grid and number patterns painted on the playground floor to devise their own idiosyncratic and private games, seemingly ignoring the traditional games the patterns suggested. From the beginning of the project there was an interest in ideas of conformity and the potential of personal interpretation to subvert given systems. The occupation of space, and the subversion of authorised uses of space, was very much in my mind from the beginning and this was my way of rethinking Institutional Critique (where the institution could be the gallery or school, but also certain pedagogic approaches). This interest was picked up and put into practice during the project and appeared finally in the interactive website. To summarise, ideas of space, conformity, autonomy, of rules of behaviour and of individuals' ability to work with and through given systems was explored throughout the project and these were reflected in the interview questions and the resultant text.

Primary Interpretations

The construction of the interview text (and prior to that, the selection of the interview process itself) was motivated by a desire to disturb my own pre-conceptions of my role within the art institution by focussing on another's perspective, in this case that of the project curator. The themes that I hoped to draw out, both during the interview and through an analysis of the text, are related to the institutional context and how this frames (both enables and limits) the practice of the artist working within the educational

function of the museum or gallery. I anticipated that through looking closely at the text, reflecting on the understandings of the project curator and comparing them with my own (brought to the surface via the process of interpreting the text), I could generate new and more sophisticated understandings of how arts practice might operate within institutional contexts.

There were two discussions with the interviewee: the first, quite short one in a café, led to an establishment of themes for discussion which I then emailed to her. (*Appendix 2*). These were only guidelines and when it came to the interview, this additional structuring of the discussion proved unnecessary and the conversation took its own direction. What was most important to me was to give the interviewee some idea of how the material was to be used. Prior to the interview, I emphasised that the data was really an opportunity for me to reflect on my own practice rather than a way for me to judge hers. Despite this attempt at transparency, when it came to the transcription process, I was haunted by a sense of imbalance, perhaps due to my own inexperience in the role of interviewer. While I am used to being in discussion with others in a gallery context, staging interviews is not a part of my practice. This lack of familiarity in the role, however, revealed new insights: facilitating discussion in the gallery had perhaps become a habitual practice and therefore might have been more difficult to reflect upon or critique.

In terms of the transcript, I attempted initially to keep editing to a minimum and intervene in the text only when the sense would otherwise have been lost. My own interventions in the text are short and I seem to be working within traditional expectations of the role (or my superficial understanding of this). Despite these limitations, the interview provided a rich and layered text, perhaps more a result of the interviewee's experience and generosity than through any particular skill on my part in drawing her out. My intention was that the interviewee's responses were there to act as starting-points for my own reflections on the art institution. As Alvesson and Sköldbberg point out in their example of the interview with the advertising executive, the discussion is framed by both the researcher and the interviewee's understanding of the interview situation, by what can and cannot be asked and how the themes are understood and interpreted by both participants. The curator and I had worked on the project over two years, so knew each other well. It is possible to assume, therefore, that the interviewee is not being overly-guarded in her responses, although she was presenting herself in 'professional' mode. She was also experiencing an important point of transition (she had recently left her post at The Serpentine Gallery after several years to take up a job elsewhere) and it is possible that she saw the interview as an opportunity to give her own account of her role, rather than adopt or evaluate the role as defined by the institution. As can be seen from the transcript, I let the interviewee speak and develop this account quite freely, although the parameters were established by our initial discussion and by our understandings of the roles of researcher/artist and interviewee/curator.

The interview format was constructed around themes rather than questions and answers. The themes (as determined in the first email) were not followed in sequence although they sometimes served as prompts. During the process of transcription, I remember struggling with the problem of my own identification with (or opposition to) the institutions represented. As becomes apparent, analysing the transcript some years after the event, new concerns surface unrelated to what now seems an exaggerated and over-simplistic, initial stance. The gap between transcription and interpretation means that the contrast between the original theory of practice and the realisations that emerge out of the interpretive process are more marked.

Secondary Interpretations

In terms of the ‘reliability’ of the data (using a term from Source Criticism), I was directly involved in both the project and for this reason can vouch for the ‘authenticity’ of the account (i.e., can state that it is not fabricated). Although there was a gap of over a year between the project and the interview, which could be said to weaken the value of the data in some ways, what does seem evident is the immediacy of the interviewee’s understanding of her role within the institution. The text, therefore, should still be able to offer a firm counterpoint to my own memories of the project and have the potential to disturb my own pre-understandings. Rather than expecting to verify the truth or accuracy of the interviewee’s comments by testing them against my own and others’ accounts, I am hoping to deploy them to gain insight into my own understandings of the role of the institution in my practice.

Distantiation

In his introduction to Paul Ricoeur, Richard Kearney summarises one of the philosopher’s main claims: ‘The shortest route from self to self is through the other.’⁵ Ricoeur himself describes this dialogic process (‘the hermeneutic arc’) as follows:

‘Here by dialectic I mean, on the one hand, the acknowledgement of the initial disproportionality between our two terms and, on the other hand, the search for practical mediations between them – mediations, let us quickly say, that are always fragile and provisory.’⁶

In the case of this transcript, there is no deliberate setting up of 'disproportionate' (oppositional) terms, although the very different roles of artist and curator lead to different perspectives on the project from the outset. By staying with the text, I hope to generate provisory mediations between my understandings of the project and those of the curator and so better understand how the artist-subject is constructed within the institutional context.

During the process of transcription, what struck me most clearly about the text is how distant it feels from my own voice and position. In the transcript analysis of the gallery workshop with Goldsmiths students, which included my own speech to a large extent, the first task was to render the text 'other', to stand back from it and attempt to read it as if for the first time. In this second example, the text has a sense of otherness from the outset. Even my own statements seem forced and unnatural (leading to embarrassment in re-reading them, reflecting the 'shame' of the audacity of assuming the authority of the interviewer perhaps). Or perhaps it reflects the artificiality of an interview situation where the interviewee is someone I know quite well.

The interview text reads sometimes almost as a stream-of-consciousness; the speaker hesitates, punctuating her phrases with repeated words and statements. There are asides, digressions and frequent examples given. At first glance, the speaker seems to be in the process of understanding herself through speaking. The status of the text is interesting: it seems to combine both the public (giving an account) with the personal (making sense through speaking). This is not, nor was ever meant to be, a polished statement. Its value as a text lies in its evocation of the processes of understanding 'as they happen,' and in the way it begins to delineate the areas of enquiry which may have some bearing when attempting to judge this form of arts practice (the full transcript should be read at this point).

At first glance, the transcript could be seen to be a form of disclosure. As stated previously, it is to some extent a summary and a position statement, as the interviewee was just about to move on to another post after several years working in the same institution. During the process of transcription, I was aware of the difference in tone between my statements and hers. The interviewee seems to still be speaking from inside the institution or from inside the institutionalisation of the role. I think that despite her hesitations (which as was evident in the Goldsmiths discussion transcript, may have a particular purpose with regards to how she wished to be perceived), there are also moments which appear more consolidating. There is almost a formality of purpose to the interview and a desire to record the scope of her previous practice and her successes. There were some 'off the record' moments not included in the text, but this transcript is 'on the record' and it offers a description of institutional allegiances and professional boundaries. Perhaps, however, this perception is borne out of my own desire to view the institution in the same way, not

as an environment consisting of diverse personalities and fluid relationships, but as a fixed and abstract entity. Looking again, during the interview there are various moments when the speaker identifies with other people within the institution and others where she steps outside and offers a critique. Despite its form, one can still identify moments of rehearsed speech (my own and hers) where she takes on the voice of the project manager and I adopt that of the researcher. These ‘ventriloquisms’ reflect the pre-understandings of our roles (determined both by the institution’s conception of the role and what we bring to it ourselves). When I look again at my statements in the text, I neither inhabit the role of the artist nor communicate my feelings about the project. It seems that to some extent we are both occasionally adopting self-protecting positions (although in retrospect, I am maybe the more guarded, partly explained by my role as interviewer).

Curatorial Voice

The hermeneutic strategy of comparing part with whole can be usefully employed at this level of interpretation. Reading the transcript, I find its tone difficult to place. The combination of colloquial, linking phrases (*‘well’, ‘let’s say’, ‘I mean’, ‘kind of...’*) with phrases that betray an expertise in the field (*‘funding criteria’, ‘social agenda’, ‘wider socio-political fields’*) and the general range of vocabulary and tone employed seem rare within the literature surrounding this type of activity. The interviewee trained as a curator, graduating from the MA Curating Contemporary Art at the Royal College of Art in 2003, and could therefore be said to have acquired a persona and language suited to the profession (historically, curators have come from an art history background). The course, established in 1992, was the first post-graduate course in curating contemporary art to be established in Britain and ‘is a vocational and academic course designed to provide professional preparation for those wishing to work as curators of contemporary art in both the public and private spheres.’⁷⁷ The interviewee identifies her capacity to communicate with a range of people with different communication styles as a professional strength (*‘You know, sometimes it’s a question of helping to reinterpret or having to communicate something in a different way to a different person because of their professional or cultural background, to some degree’*). The professionally-trained contemporary curator, unlike her predecessor, does not rely on a single form of address based on art-historical expertise, but it seems is expected to be capable of communicating in different ways with different interlocutors. This new curatorial ‘voice’ is perhaps best exemplified by the texts produced by Hans Ulrich Obrist, Co-director of Exhibitions and Programmes and Director of International Projects at the Serpentine Gallery. His main strategy for producing texts is the interview, so it seems that the conversational mode might be a more common way of making curatorial statements

than I had first thought.⁸ However, it is very different in style and content to what might be expected of a traditional curator of exhibitions. There is no statement of a curatorial concept as such and there is little in the text that seems particularly rehearsed or meant for public consumption. The interviewee's speaking style is cumulative and unrestrained. When transcribing the interview, I was aware of the length of the sentences and of the loading of one phrase on top of another. This speaking style might have been a result of our long, professional relationship but also perhaps of her understanding of the purposes of the interview. The text is full of complex information and it seems that whereas there are obvious flashes of expertise and the sense that phrases may have been spoken or written in other contexts ('*When working with older people, for instance, you'd want to know that you're going to be working with a collaborator who understands the aims and ambitions of the project*'), the majority of the text seems to have the informal and unstructured quality of ideas emerging at the moment in which they are spoken, unguardedly (for example, '*That was really interesting because she didn't quite know what it would be, so she was very open to thinking about anything, what it could be...without dismissing anything ...*').

As Alvesson and Sköldbberg point out,⁹ interviews often produce a positive account of the subject, the result of a desire for 'impression management' by both the interviewer and the interviewee. Conventions and norms operate through the interviewee's representations of herself and my interpretations risk reinforcing accepted understandings of the role of the institution within practice. However, the 'discrepancies' that emerge within the text (analysed at Level 3), function as checks and balances against these tendencies.

Narrative

Thinking once again of Ricoeur's hermeneutics: 'Self-understanding is an interpretation; interpretation of the self, in turn, finds in the narrative, among other signs and symbols, a privileged form of mediation.'¹⁰ The interviewee's account has its own pace and energy. As the project was unexpectedly long, with all the changes in pace noted by the interviewee, it is difficult to remember each separate point when the dynamic shifted, although there were many such moments usually signalled by the different encounters with the various partners in the project. To further complicate the assumption of a simple narrative trajectory, the curator refers to several projects that she was involved in during her time at the Serpentine, and these co-exist in her memory; she refers, for example to the project Disassembly¹¹ when she wants to make a specific point about the artist's experience or forms of evaluation. Hers is not a chronological narrative; rather the interviewee

organises events around the themes under discussion. In comparison to many research narratives, where the various projects are nominally arranged in order of occurrence, this interview acts as an important reminder that this form of sequencing tends towards over-simplification, inevitably suggesting a straightforward progression and a maturing of practice which seems somewhat idealised. The curator's narrative model, a kind of circling around themes and interests, is perhaps a more interesting and evocative one, offering another narrative structure - a corrective to the one perhaps more commonly presented by curators and artists.

When attempting to understand the narrative structure of the interview, the question becomes: what story is the interviewee telling herself? Whereas it could be argued that the beginning of the story is determined by the first interview theme of expertise, the main body of the interview and the conclusion seem driven by the desire to state her position by identifying what she is not:

'I think the reason I will never be an exhibition organiser... the space of the work – all the work is fixed to a degree. I love exhibitions but I would never find the idea of lone forms very exciting. The thing that I find interesting is thinking about the difficulty ... about that point of creation - because half the time, I mean it's very hard to articulate intention very often till you've done it, which is why I didn't carry on being an artist - but is what I find interesting about arts practice and what artists do.'

This reminds me of my earlier description of the artist working in the educational function of the museum as *not* a teacher or curator - a kind of blank space. As has already been noted, the interviewee had just changed posts and institutions and therefore there is an almost valedictory feel to the interview with its brief summaries of a number of projects in which she has been involved, all described in the past tense. The final statements about the institution having to find a way to document project-based work and to value the individual project participants reinforces this tone (*'until an institution learns to find ways to record and value that process ... it will never own the project because it will never retain or sustain the relationships it has with individuals or institutions'*). The final emphasis on her role as mediator and translator of the various languages, the call for a nurturing of individuals and relationships, and the striking contrast between the fixity of a certain style of 'art-world' presentation and the fluidity and intangibility of process seem to be an attempt to draw broader conclusions from her experience.

Metaphors of Space

The insight afforded by an analysis of metaphor is not that achieved by the 'expert' researcher who is able to discern the hidden meaning lying behind the public account;

rather, the analysis of metaphor is an invitation to stand alongside the ‘object’ of research, to see the world momentarily as she sees it, in an attempt to understand what it might mean to view a situation in that way. Following Ricoeur’s approach to language, where the choice of metaphor not only reveals a world-view but in itself has the potential to generate new thinking, the question becomes: what understandings are made possible by the various permutations of metaphor in the text in terms of the artist and curator’s relationship to the institution? Metaphors are sometimes not explicit; instead certain concepts seem to underpin the text as a whole (the ‘root’ metaphors referred to by Ricoeur). The first of these that I notice in the text is signalled by a repeated reference to space. In the transcript of the interview, the spatial metaphor first occurs with the mention of the ‘ambiguous territory between art and dyslexia’ (my emphasis). This is a metaphorical rather than physical space, although later references to the concept could be interpreted as referring to both spaces. The use of the word ‘territory’ has connotations of possession or occupation. Later in the interview, when the interviewee talks about Dyslexia Action (one of the partners in the project) ‘[giving] *their space*’ to the project, the physical and metaphorical spaces seem entangled and so the ownership or occupation of the physical space potentially refers also to the ownership of the discourses associated with it; Dyslexia Action offers up its physical spaces but also its expertise and reputation. Later, the physical spaces of the organisation are described as small in contrast with the school ‘*where there was a bit more flexibility and space.*’ This reminds me that, as discussed later in the interview, the decision to use the school space rather than the Dyslexia Association offices allowed the scope of the project to expand and for the boundaries of the project to become more porous (‘*what’s good for dyslexic children is good for anyone and it becomes about everyone – everyone in that class*’). The spatial metaphor therefore builds through a series of inflections or permutations, from space as territory and expertise to space as something purely physical with its associations of expansion and exclusion.

A familiar doubling of the spatial metaphor occurs with the use of the term ‘art-space’ which is used both to describe the gallery but also the space of reception which the work has to enter to be read as art. This is later described as a space ‘*where all the work is fixed to a degree.*’ A related permutation of the space-as-territory metaphor is introduced when the interviewee states: ‘*For me it’s [an] ... opportunity to ... have your foot in the art institution and also have your foot firmly fixed on the ground outside.*’ Later, the curator emphasises her rootedness in a particular space of expertise with the phrase ‘*you can’t expect someone with a completely different background to suddenly understand, you know, the background that I have – the MA, the BA, the art interest.*’ The repetition of the word ‘background,’ the awareness of being grounded in a particular discipline (one’s feet quite firmly in a particular camp), allows the curator occasionally to step outside, shored up all the while by her expertise in the role and its rooted-ness in a set of discourses.

In discussions about activities that blur the boundaries between art and education, developments of the spatial metaphor can often lead to binary thinking which is not always useful in practice (for example, the art space/non-art space, office/school, those included in the space of the project/those excluded). Perhaps the constellation (relationship/pattern) metaphor might offer a way out of the impasse in which these versions of the spatial metaphor risk placing us. In the interview text, I first introduce the image when I ask '*I suppose that's where the partners formed a constellation around ideas?*' This is later picked up by the interviewee when she tries to explain the different stages of the project: '*It's thinking how you then evaluate and reconsider that artist's position within that context, and what it is they're doing, and trying to do, almost reforming a different kind of constellation to allow that next stage to happen.*' This is perhaps supported by the curator's introduction of the term 'negotiated' practice ('*I see it more as negotiated practice rather than collaborative practice actually*') which implies that the curator tries to establish a network of relationships. The interviewee places the artist at the centre of this network, and rearranges (or curates) the relationships around this still centre.

The next spatial metaphor has a geophysical inflection. There are several references to '*different layers*' and '*layering of projects*' and the benefits of operating '*below the radar.*' This metaphor helps communicate a project structured to operate simultaneously on different levels and capable of independently satisfying the different criteria of judgement associated with each level. The 'below the radar' phrase (which I take up and repeat later in the interview) seems more value-laden. Whereas there is an attempt with the 'layer' metaphor to avoid hierarchies, to operate below the radar means to evade scrutiny. This, to me, is a familiar way to visualise practice and a metaphor that I have often used myself when trying to convey the sense that you can operate within stated evaluation criteria or institutional objectives whilst having another set of personal intentions which are the real drivers of the project but which are kept hidden (often even from the artist herself).

Within the interview, the artist's space is something to be protected. This is the space of potential or freedom from constraints: '*It was basically about saying to an artist "Here's an open situation. What would you do?"*' The interviewee talks about '*being able to give artists the space within [which] to work*' and ensuring that the artists are '*able to do what they do.*' This metaphor of the empty but protected space at the very heart of the project that the interviewee has curated might be related to a concept of practice referred to later in the interview which seems to reify '*the point of creation.*' The curator adopts the position of the well-informed observer, '*thinking about the artist and what they're trying to achieve.*' This metaphor of space as unrealised potential has its counterpart in theory, most pertinently perhaps in Irit Rogoff's 'site of potentiality'.¹² However, the question remains: what does this metaphor help us to see and who might it benefit? For the artist, the picture of an empty, 'non-space' might be considered somewhat utopian (etymologically, 'utopia' is a

combination of ‘eu-topia’ – an ideal place and ‘ou-topia’ – a non-place). It is arguably more of an outsider’s view rather than one usefully employed by the artist reflecting on his or her own practice: the ideal space, the non-space, the new space – as a metaphor might place unbearable pressure on the artist compelled to create from nothing and nowhere.

Openness

The theme of openness pervades the interview; this is true in the field of museum and gallery learning and education contexts more generally, where terms such as ‘access’ describe the stated desire of institutions to widen participation. There is always the danger that this might become a rhetorical device, overriding potentially more nuanced understandings of the way the institution operates, or perhaps even disguising less palatable attitudes towards ‘audiences’.

The metaphor in the interview text works through contrasting aspects of openness and closure in the project. When describing a partner in another project, the interviewee says that she was looking for someone ‘*open to thinking about a different kind of language,*’ and ‘*open to thinking about anything ... what it could be ... without dismissing anything.*’ The project ‘*evolves at its own pace,*’ is in ‘*constant evolution*’ and a primary benefit for the curator is the potential for having ‘*much more open conversations.*’ This seems to be an organic conception of openness, related to growth and potential. The project ‘*didn’t close itself down [and] actually ... was more successful as a result.*’ For the interviewee ‘*art isn’t about closing down and giving answers.*’

As previously noted, metaphors can also emerge in opposition to others. The openness of the institution and the crossing of boundaries are terms that are overused when referring to the practice of artists working with others, so much so that they risk being mere rhetoric. The interviewee is not afraid of closure however (‘*I mean obviously there gets to a point in production where you have to ask very closed questions and start to close things down*’), and as a consequence, her advocacy of openness appears much more nuanced. Clearly, it is not possible for the project not to have a conclusion, and this is where the function of the exhibition (rather than project) curator comes into play. In terms of the metaphor of closure then we have ‘*the constraint of an exhibition,*’ and ‘*the pressure of the expectation of marketing.*’ The interviewee relates this closing-down point to the final exhibition and to the scrutiny of outcomes.

Sometimes metaphors can be overused or asked to do too much work in a particular context. This could be the case when it comes to ideas of the art institution, where ‘the museum without walls’ has become a utopian vision apparently beyond critique. Openness as a metaphor has the potential to obscure more than it reveals, paradoxically closing down possibilities rather than suggesting them. The ‘Hermeneutics of Suspicion’ makes us aware of this duplicity. The text has much to offer if we listen, but is wise to be on our guard for metaphors that are both capable of generating possibilities, but which may also simultaneously reproduce or disguise relationships of power.

Looking more closely at the interview text and reflecting on the relevance of the analysis above, metaphors of openness and closure are woven together with those of space and time. Closure can sometimes be strategic and productive and is related to the narrative flow of the project for the interviewee. Perhaps then, rather than emphasise the perceived desire for openness in projects, greater attention should be paid to the moments of refusal and the point at which the curator or artist establishes a clear boundary beyond which s/he is not prepared to go.

Critical Interpretation

Counter-Images and Discrepancies

In the methodology proposed by Alvesson and Sköldbberg, it is suggested that an awareness of post-modern theories enables the researcher to approach his/her material in unexpected ways.¹³ Rather than proposing a methodology as such (which would run counter to the tradition as a whole), researchers inspired by post-modernism see the usefulness of looking awry at the material. Approaches might therefore include ‘perspectivisation’ (seeing familiar phenomena as strange) and ‘contrasting’ (attempting to understand phenomena in terms of what they do not mean). Rather than the patterns looked for in traditional hermeneutics, postmodern thought teaches the researcher to pay attention to discrepancies and fractures in the text.

Intransigence

In her first response to the statement about expertise, the curator uses the words ‘*rigour*’, ‘*tests ... against*’, ‘*robust*’ and ‘*challenge*’ to describe the role of the artist. The uncompromising nature of these words together construct a useful counter-image to the often ameliorative terms employed to describe the artist-as-educator. They also chime with Claire Bishop’s terms when describing some of the more provocative/agonistic practices discussed in the Introduction chapter. The curator’s notion of the artist is of someone rooted in his or her practice, almost to the point of intransigence. Her replacement of the ‘*everyone is an artist*’ credo with the riposte ‘*we’re bringing in the artists and they’re the experts*,’ (‘*at a certain point it seemed to be this conflict between social inclusion, that she [a partner in the project] had to be aware of in her role as occupational therapist – you know “everyone is an artist and everyone has the right to be” – and I’m saying ‘But we’re bringing in the artists and they’re the experts’*’) indicates a clarity of purpose that is not swayed by arguably less critical understandings of the role of art and the artist within these projects. Later she notes, ‘[S]ometimes [I’m] aware that I need to be very clear and to articulate a very clear and obvious position.’ It could also seem somewhat authoritarian. Nonetheless, the benefit of this position is its clarity. A more generally placatory and superficially ‘inclusive’ stance – adopted either by the artist or project curator – can be harder to pull apart for the purposes of critique.

Project-as-machine

Perhaps the most surprising metaphor employed to describe the project is that of a machine or car. More commonly found in business and management literature, or more generally in the theory of institutions, the machine metaphor here functions as a counter-image, working against the expectations of the reader of gallery-education literature. The usefulness of the metaphor lies in its capacity to bring ideas such as efficacy, responsiveness and fine-adjustment to an understanding of the project. One can see how this might be valuable for someone trying to articulate the project-management aspects of the role. Perhaps the reason that it is unusual when discussing collaborative/participatory arts practice is that it might conjure up thoughts of instrumentalisation (of art, the artist and the participants). However, the more positive associations emerge through a further examination of the metaphor: the project curator is a ‘*shock-absorber*’ (this term was hers and came out of the first, informal discussion), and she also refers to the importance of ‘*gear-changes*’ throughout the project. The process is being driven. The metaphor invites us

to view the role as one in which someone calibrates a complex machine with many parts; it is the curator's responsibility to control participants' energies and in some circumstances to limit their roles and functions. It seems that her immediate focus is the project rather than the institution, and a primary function of the role is to mediate relationships and to decide what is transmitted and what is not. This machine metaphor of control permits us to see project management as 'fine-tuning' or 'keeping things ticking over'. My own metaphor of control (thinking of the Seniors case-study, where I am responsible for managing events) seems to rely more on the image of a director, conductor or perhaps more controversially, gate-keeper. The artist working in the educational function of the museum or gallery is managed but also self-manages. The processes of institutionalisation (including self-institutionalisation) will be explored later in this analysis through a discussion of the relevant theory.

In addition to the 'project-as-machine' image, whose destabilising power comes from the re-contextualisation of a metaphor more commonly deployed in other fields, there is another picture that stands out in a text which generally speaks of professionalism, competency and efficacy. Quite late on in the interview, the curator claims that it is '*the job of the gallery to make up any gaps or holes.*' This metaphor of repair, of 'making good' or patching up might at first glance seem to contradict the earlier machine-based metaphor. Postmodernism teaches us not to seek coherence where there is none, or to structure the interpretation of an account through the use of polarities, so it is perhaps not useful to see this as a case of a metaphor of order versus one of disorder. '[Making up] *gaps and holes*' might bring to mind the image of a leaking ship, but the repair, however provisional, holds. The gallery has a responsibility – to the artist, to the project – and perhaps this is a metaphor of care rather than control (or loss of control).

The Curator and the Institution

At this level of interpretation, we are asked to identify what is being naturalised by the account and what elements of power or ideology are operating beneath the surface of the text. The interviewee appears to be able to balance her allegiances in a sophisticated way. It is clear at points that the interviewee identifies with the institution. She describes and promotes, for example, gallery projects in which she had no personal involvement:

'The idea for those primary school kids to see an artist making his work in their school and then for it to be owned by them was great. This wasn't a project I had any involvement with at all'.

She is clear that the relationship with the institution offers something ‘*unique*’ to the external participant or partner (‘[Y]ou’re offering them [something] *additional, unique*’). Adopting Bourdieu’s term, this surplus quality could be described as ‘cultural capital’, a mark of status which the institution offers which cannot be acquired except through association. There are moments when the interviewee emphasises (perhaps overstates) the success of the projects she has been involved in, for example when she says:

‘But for teachers and for those parents it wasn’t about their kid being labelled, it was about doing this amazing, fun thing that you could do with your friends, with your classmates, your Mum and Dad, you know whoever - really opening up opportunities.’

Alongside this, the interviewee is not afraid to emphasise her expertise, and this in turn leads her to have expectations of the partners in the project:

‘[Y]ou’d want to know that you’re going to be working with a collaborator who understands the aims and ambitions of the project, and that it might be something that as an institution you’re offering them [something] *additional, unique*...but equally you’d want to know that you’ve got someone who’s open to trying something new out’.

This, I would argue, is quite unusual amongst curators working within the educational function of the museum or gallery, whose allegiance is generally directed towards the communities or partners involved in the project. In this case, the institution, artist and curator are not there simply to service others’ needs.

For the interviewee, the institution is not a monolith, speaking with one voice. She identifies ways in which her role differs from those of others:

‘I think in the role I was in at the Serpentine, the equivalent were the exhibition organisers, or curators as they’re now ... called, and in a way they’re always on deadline and ask very clear, direct, specific questions.’

There is the recognition that the institution can accommodate different roles and personalities without losing its identity. However, her final allegiance seems to be towards the individual: ‘*It’s not about the institution, it’s about the people*’.

The analysis of the text is conducted in anticipation of a disturbance of the initial theory of practice. As noted at the beginning of the chapter, my understanding before the analysis was that there was a simple opposition between the artist and the institution. I, like others, might have relied on the theories of Foucault to shore up this position, ignoring the fact that his thinking on the ubiquity of power was far more subtle than my uses of his theories might suggest. Most relevant in this case, Foucault describes the process of self-institutionalisation whereby the individual interiorises the agenda of the institution, making it his/her own.¹⁴ A critical analysis of the interview text might productively ask: what are the subjectivities named by this particular discussion and how do these relate to the dominant

discourses about the relationship between the artist and the institution? Returning to the 'shock-absorber' metaphor and the expressions of agency and control within the text ('*bringing an artist into [a] situation*'; '*OK, we're going to have you in a school two days a week...*'), it is easy to see how certain quotations from the text could be used to support this picture of the artist being manipulated by the institution. However, looking more closely at the text and allowing it to disturb pre-understandings rather than confirm them, other phrases could support a very different interpretation, for example: '*quite often at the beginning of a project [I almost want] to sit back and see how it evolves*'; '*It's thinking how you then evaluate and reconsider that artist's position within that context, and what it is they're doing and trying to do.*' Here the agency of the artist is recognised and protected.

Ethics and Funding

At the level of critical interpretation, Alvesson and Sköldbberg ask the researcher to look for material that might be suppressed within the text. In the case of this interview transcript, the interviewee confronts the issue of funding head-on, although she feels that these concerns should not be passed on to the artist. These ethical friction points, which the artist might put to work if s/he were aware of them, are deliberately kept out of the sphere of practice. As was discussed in the chapter about the Artist as Cultural Worker, the financial aspects of practice are often treated as taboo. The project curator acknowledges:

'I was aware that there were all these funding aims and objectives in place which were written in a certain way to clarify certain funding objectives but actually were never ever passed on to the artist [...] you know that the impact of that work will have value and it will deal with those kind of things but it's not important for the artist to know what the agenda is.'

She goes on to say that only in an extreme case, where the funding was from a contentious source, would she make this information available to the artist. The project curator's aim is clearly to protect the artist's practice from being instrumentalised by funding considerations and she considers '*how you support an artist and guide them but not to fulfil funding criteria, because that's then the job of the gallery to make up any gaps or holes in whatever way needs to be done.*' However, by withholding this knowledge, it not only removes a possible context for the artist to reflect on their practice, it might also encourage them to second-guess the desires of the funder and respond accordingly. It could be argued that this well-intentioned protectiveness with regards to the artist, shown by a representative of the institution, could in fact be detrimental; the artist might fall back on his/her pre-understandings and seek to 'play it safe', relinquishing the opportunity to reflect more closely on what is in fact an essential component of the practice.

A key process identified in the interview, which distinguishes the activity of the artist and project curator from that of the exhibition curator,¹⁵ is that of dialogue. This seems to be what characterises the ‘negotiated’ (rather than collaborative) art practice. Chosen partners in the project become ‘interlocutor[s]’ and ‘*the starting point is a conversation.*’ The process of dialogue – which for the interviewee seems to be both a way of working but also an important product/outcome in its own right – is connected to the layering metaphor introduced earlier in the interview, and to the fact that the artworks have multiple outcomes in different formats (some of which are ‘*intangible*’). For the project curator, ‘*that accumulation of things, of different kinds of discussions for me is probably the motivation – why I do it.*’

As discussed in the previous chapter, one potential benefit that might be claimed for discussion-based practice in a museum or gallery is that it leads to an open exchange of opinions, what Gadamer described as a ‘fusion of horizons,’ where all understanding emerges from the historically-determined ‘horizon’ in which each individual is inevitably situated.¹⁶ Through dialogue, Gadamer argues, our prejudices are laid bare and they themselves become subject to questioning, (he seeks to reclaim the word ‘prejudice’ from its negative connotations, restoring it to its original meaning of ‘pre-judgement’). At certain points in the interview transcript, however, ‘dialogue’ becomes ‘translation’ and the skill of the project curator lies in her ability to modify her language and tone according to her interlocutor:

‘[S]ometimes it’s a question of helping to reinterpret, or having to communicate something in a different way to a different person because of their professional or cultural background.’

The function of ‘translator’ seems to be central to the interviewee’s understanding of the role. It is potentially a very powerful position. Where the post-structuralist theories discussed in the last chapter propose a ‘de-centring’ of the subject, here the interviewee presents herself as occupying a position at the centre of the conversation, translating the project aims for its various participants. There is also the acknowledgement that the institutional approach is dependent on individuals within that institution ‘*constantly re-examining and re-assessing what it is they’re doing.*’ The suspicion that projects delivered as part of the ‘Learning programmes’ in museums and galleries might be highly authored (either by the project curator or the artists brought in to deliver them), seems to run counter to the ethos of participation claimed by many ‘socially-engaged’ practitioners and curators.

In comparison to the analysis of the photographs of the Seniors event, as a researcher I feel as if I have far fewer scruples when analysing the transcript of the interview than when interpreting the photographs of participants. Here, I seem to have a clear conscience in identifying the voice of the project curator with that of the more 'faceless' institution and with the opposition between the artist and the museum/gallery, a stance familiar to artists aware of the legacy of Institutional Critique. Level 2 of the methodology, therefore, was perhaps the most challenging as this is when the researcher is expected to stay close to the text and suspend judgement. Level 3, unsurprisingly, came far easier. During the process of reflecting on the text, I have become aware of the tendency to re-enact habitual positions. There is evidence that I believe it acceptable for the artist to stand outside of the institution, similar to the way a researcher thinks it possible to remain detached and objective when observing the object of study. While I recognised and analysed my own contributions to the text in the previous chapter, here I ignore or minimise them and focus entirely on the interviewee's comments. However, if my ambition had been to represent the curator/institution as a fixed entity, the analysis of the text begins to make this option impossible and makes evident instead the various ways the project curator herself understands the institution. Hers is not an uncritical allegiance; instead she seems to see herself at the centre of a network of relationships and she allies herself with various partners at different points in the project. She sees herself as both part of – and separate from – the institution. By contrast, my position with regards to the institution seems much more fixed. A more flexible position which recognises the fluid and changing understandings of the relationship between artist and institution might lead to more possibilities in practice.

Narrative is a powerful form of interpretation. The interviewee's construction of a narrative prompts me to think how research expectations of might also demand a story with a beginning, middle and end. The methodology adopted deliberately resists this form of interpretive closure. For this reason, I have kept the final chapter as 'open' as possible, with suggestions of areas of enquiry for future practice rather than conclusions.

Questions/ Implications for practice

Reflecting on the interview text, I realise that the artist may be placed in a situation where most activities are accommodated, but where the outcomes are translated and parcelled up for different audiences and not necessarily 'owned' by the institution. This potentially makes self-reflection difficult, as any tension that might arise through the artist trying to work in and through institutional structures is diffused. The *Situationist* concept of 'recuperation' (where critical energies are absorbed and redirected by the institution) might be relevant here; the institutions of art can defuse the critical content of the art object through incorporation and display, but also perhaps through 'franchising out' the more messy or uncomfortable aspects of a project. Recuperation, therefore, seems more likely when the stance of the artist is less worked-through and perhaps less reflexive. It is also worth noting in this respect that *Neveroddoreven* was located in the gallery's 'project space' - a satellite to the gallery-space proper - and this might also be relevant to issues of recuperation.

What emerges also is that the relationship of the artist to the institution might be just as complex as that between the project curator and the museum/gallery. The particular mixture of intransigence and ambivalence, the desire to operate both inside and outside of the discourses of art, might even be said to be a defining characteristic, or more accurately an area of productive confusion, for the artist. The strategy of the artist acting in straightforward opposition to the institution appears, post analysis of the text, both limited and limiting. Instead, the artist might attempt to work within and through institutions (where these are understood as both physical spaces and discursive sites).

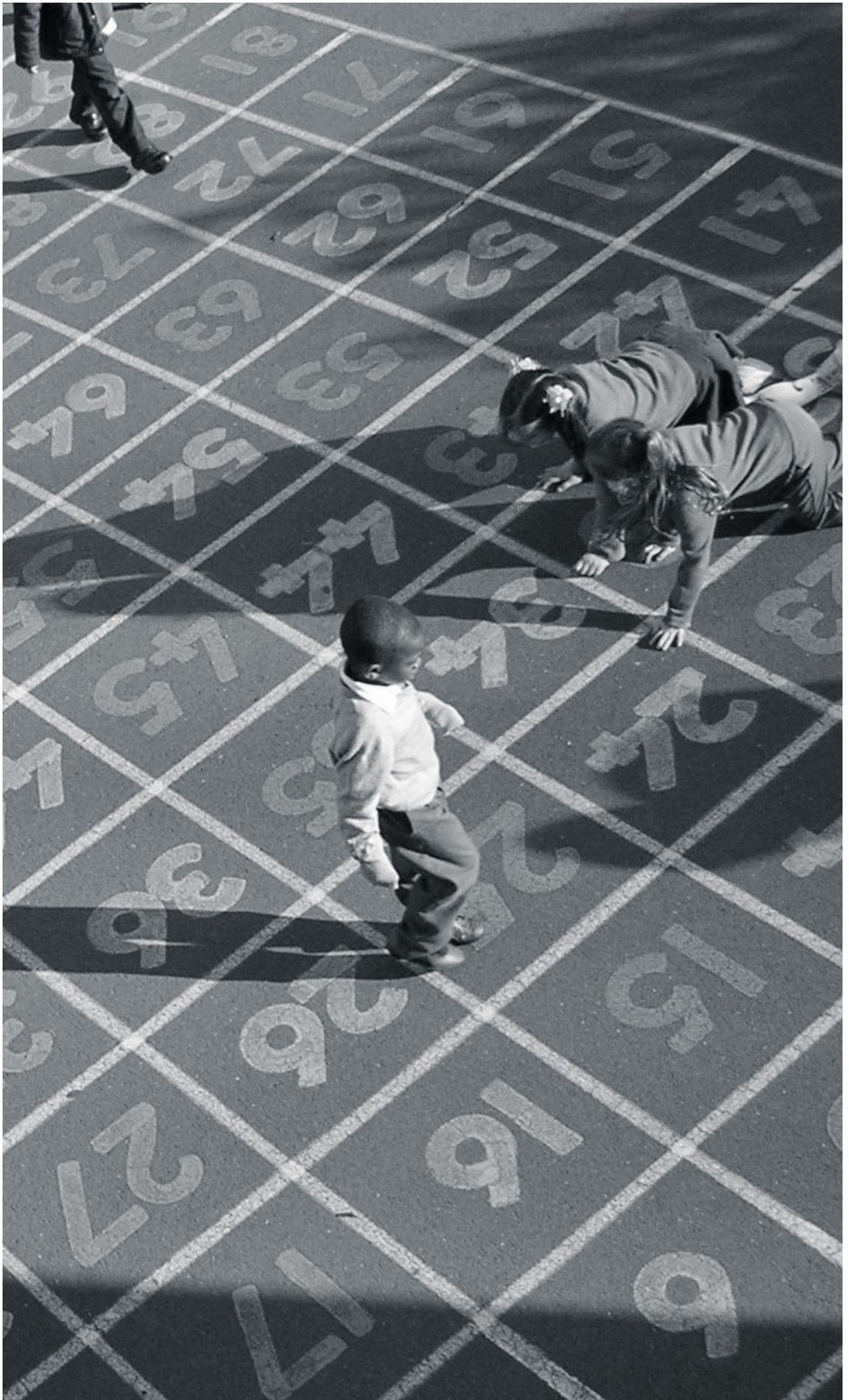
A further realisation is that the strategy of operating 'below the radar' which formed part of my original theory of practice perhaps no longer serves its purpose. It seems that the activity's potential for critical disturbance is reliant, at least to some extent, on its taking place in public. The public enactment of interpretation and engagement (where the audience might be the artist herself, the participants, the public and the institution) permits a level of reflection which can counteract a tendency amongst all players to revert to habitual positions. Related to this point is the strategy of being clear about the boundaries of roles; making these explicit can help address the problem of power imbalances (which are harder to confront when hidden). Rather than an aiming at a generalised 'openness', there seems to be a value in creating points of closure in a project, where various limits are made clear to all involved.

To summarise Part 2, the setting up of a reflective loop for my practice, based on a tiered interpretation of selected 'data', never had as its intended outcome a set of fixed

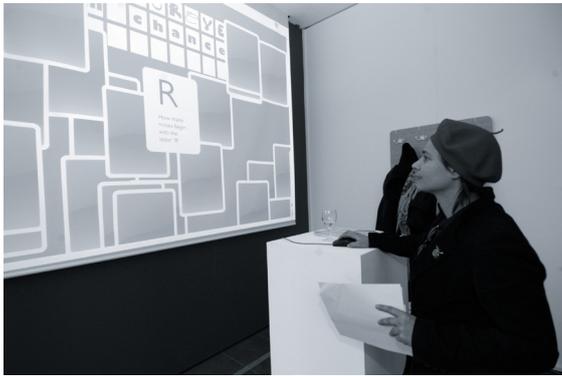
evaluation criteria by which to judge the practice. Instead, the aim of this process was to open up the interpretive field and to keep judgement at bay for as long as possible: to let the data talk. The different interpretive levels provided by the methodology allowed me to reflect on the evaluative frameworks commonly used to judge these practices and to recognise their limitations. The artist-subject working in the educational function of the museum or gallery is an interpreting subject: s/he interprets the site, the institution's desires and the responses of the participants, constructing a subject that is (or should be) in an on-going state of re-crafting. Fixed models both of practice and evaluation seem to absolve the artist, participant and institution of the responsibility of this on-going work.

Whereas I began each case-study with an interpretive bias (an interest in 'community', 'discussion' and the 'institution'), post-analysis, these categories have expanded and become diversified, with several, common sub-themes. Throughout the process, values changed and in addition, areas of enquiry emerged which I had previously not considered immediately relevant to my practice. These included, amongst others: the de-centring of the artist and alternative models of artist-facilitation; the potential of consciously inhabiting different roles at different points in an event or project; alternative models of community and the significance (and positive value) of apparently negative aspects of participatory practice including intransigence, stasis and discontinuity - the possibilities offered by deliberately staging dissent in an event/project; a renewed awareness that forms of communication are never neutral and the necessity of resisting the formulaic; the institutional site as a set of possibilities (rather than monolith) and the benefits of making activities public at different stages and for different audiences; and the evaluative potential of economic metaphors when asking questions about who really benefits from activities delivered in the educational function of the museum/gallery.

- 1: <http://www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk> viewed 10 June 2012.
- 2: See Appendix
- 3: See S. Tallant, 'Experiments in Integrated Programming,' *Tate Papers, Issue 11*, April 2009. <http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/issue-11> viewed 11 May 2012.
- 4: D. Beech, 'Institutionalisation for All,' *Art Monthly 294*, March 2006.
- 5: R. Kearney (ed), 'Paul Ricoeur. The Hermeneutics of Action'. Sage, 1999, p.1.
- 6: P. Ricoeur, 'Love and Justice,' in *The Hermeneutics of Action*, Sage, 1992, p.23.
- 7: http://www.rca.ac.uk/Docs/3RCA_PROSPECTUS_CCA.pdf viewed 10 June 2012
- 8: 'Since 1993, Obrist has conducted more than 300 interviews, 75 of which are collected here in a selection that respects the cultural and professional diversity of the interviewees.'
From the Book Description for '*Interviews Vol. 1*'
<http://www.amazon.com/HuO-Hans-Ulrich-Interviews-Hans-Ulrich/dp/888158431X> viewed 10th June 2012
- 9: M. Alvesson & K. Skoldberg, 'Reflexive Methodology: New Vistas for Qualitative Research,' Sage, 2000, p.269.
- 10: P. Ricoeur, 'Oneself as Other. The University of Chicago,' 1992, p.144.
- 11: Disassembly, 2006, was a Serpentine Gallery project, commissioning artists Faisal Abdu'Allah, Christian Boltanski, Runa Islam, and architect Yona Friedman to make work in North Westminster Community School, London, one of Britain's largest inner-city secondary schools.
- 12: I. Rogoff, 'Turning,' *E-Flux Journal #10*, 2008.
<http://www.e-flux.com/journal/view/18> viewed 27 Aug 2011
- 13: M. Alvesson & K. Sköldberg, 'Reflexive Methodology: New Vistas for Qualitative Research,' Sage, 2000, p.184.
- 14: M. Foucault, 'Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison,' 1975.
- 15: In many institutions, those working in the education function of the museum can be called 'managers' or project/education curators – this is to distinguish them from exhibition curators who traditionally work in the exhibitionary function of the museum. In the transcript, the interviewee describes the different approaches to communication:
'I think a lot of exhibition departments don't ever really take on board or think about that because they assume that the way you present is all to do with the building style and the look, it isn't about communication.'
- 16: H. Gadamer, 'Truth and Method', 1960.







TEMPORARY SCHOOL
MEALS
DISCUSSION AS PRACTICE
FRI 27 FEB 7pm



Notes Towards Applying The Research Findings: Temporary School & FLAG

Context

This final chapter presents two related projects, both of which emerged towards the later stages of the research period. They were both intended to explore, through practice, some of the questions that arose through reflection on the earlier, three case-studies. For each project, notes and images are gathered together under four headings, informed by the research findings from Part 2. Although this section does not offer conclusions, it begins to suggest some frameworks by which such projects might be evaluated.

As stated earlier in the thesis, my main ambition was to find a way of reflecting on my practice that could resist conscious and unconscious accommodation of others' agendas. Although this was a very personal mission, it was instigated by developments in contemporary practice and therefore I would hope that the tentative research findings have a broader significance for others engaged in the field. These two final projects, *Temporary School* and *FLAG*, were a response to 'the educational turn' in contemporary art practice. Irit Rogoff, who coined the term, asks:

'[W]hat constitutes a "turn" to begin with? Are we talking about a "reading strategy" or an interpretive model? [...] Are we talking about reading one system – a pedagogical one – across another system – one of display, exhibition and manifestation – so that they nudge one another in ways that might open them up to other ways of being?'¹

As yet, 'the educational turn' does not seem to have cohered into a distinct and recognisable strand of practice; instead it appears more as a general tendency amongst selected artists to use the themes and structures of pedagogy in their practice as a way of exploring general themes around knowledge, value and authority. The question remains: what distinguishes 'the educational turn' in art from activities devised and delivered by artists within the educational function of the museum? Using Rogoff's definition above, we might answer the question by focussing on the issue of reception – on how these projects are read. The strength of initiatives such as *Unitednationsplaza*² is that they defy expectations. Where the public expect an art exhibition, they are presented with an art school; instead of an art object, they are presented with a discussion. They approach the artwork adopting the traditional position of spectator, but the work defies this expectation and demands a different kind of engagement. This mapping of one system onto another

generates new ways of reflecting on both. Education activities within the museum or gallery have not, until recently, been 'read across' the other system of exhibition and display and the question remains: what becomes of the educational ambitions of a project when it is turned towards exhibition and the values of the artworld?

'Turning' might also be understood as a refashioning, as a reply or redirection. Both *Temporary School* and *FLAG* can be understood in this sense. These projects re-turned forms and processes associated with 'the educational turn' to pedagogical contexts - a kind of 'double bluff' - the first within the educational function of the gallery, the second within the art school. Returning to Rogoff's definition above, it would seem that reading the pedagogical system across one of display is quite different from reading the system of display across one of pedagogy. Rather than 'nudge one another', it seems to me that one system dominates and frames the experience. There have been accusations that 'the educational turn' aestheticises education and that a process of 'recuperation' (intended in the *Situationist* sense of the term) takes place when education is framed as art, emptying it of its subversive potential. As stated in the Introductions chapter, I am not certain whether my activities as an artist within the educational function of the institution (gallery or art-school) can or should be viewed as art practice. It remains to be seen whether re-turning these activities to an educational context, whilst simultaneously maintaining aspects of practice more commonly associated with the exhibitionary function of the museum or gallery, can create a site of resistance not easily absorbed by the institution. The evaluative process effected through the analysis of the case studies, however, has allowed my tacit criteria for judging my practice to rise to the surface (and the potential of practice to resist incorporation by the institutions of art *and* education seems to be the fundamental aim of my practice). It has enabled me, however tentatively, to give my reasons for judging recent projects, moving beyond a reliance on a 'gut' response.

I had thought to call this final chapter, 'This Success or this Failure' after the Tino Sehgal piece staged at the ICA, London in 2007. In this work, Sehgal filled the gallery space with a group of school-children who were instructed by the artist simply to play in the space for four hours 'without toys'. My initial, unconsidered response to the two final projects described here was to describe one as a failure and the other as a success. Applying the evaluative frameworks derived from the analysis of the case studies, I am able to articulate, if only hesitantly, why I might judge them as such.

Temporary School REPORT CARD 2008

Term Ending: December 2008

Name:

Subject: **LIFE CLASS**

Days attending —
 Days Absent —
 Days late —
 Days of stagnation —

Topic	Grade	Comment
1. Perspective	—	_____
2. Relationships	—	_____
3. Comprehension	—	_____
4. Free time well-spent	—	_____
5. Dexterity training	—	_____
6. Care of equipment	—	_____
7. Foreign travel	—	_____
8. Revision	—	_____
9. Responsibility assumption	—	_____
10. (add your own)	—*	_____

Grade codes

- 1 Good
- 2 Satisfactory
- 3 Unsatisfactory but improving

Signed:

Promoted to:

Notes

L-noun

- i. an institution where instruction is given.
- ii. a college or university.
- iii. a regular course of meetings of a teacher or teachers and students for instruction; program of instruction; *summer school*.
- iv. a session of such a course; no school today; to be kept after school.
- v. the activity or process of learning under instruction, esp. at a school for the young; *As a child, I never liked school.*
- vi. a building housing a school.
- vii. the body of students, or students and teachers, belonging to an educational institution: *The entire school rose when the principal entered the auditorium.*
- viii. a particular faculty or department of a university having the right to recommend candidates for degrees, and usually beginning its program of instruction after the student has completed general education: *medical school*.
- ix. any place, situation, etc., tending to teach anything.
- x. the body of pupils or followers of a master, system, method, etc.: *the Platonic school of philosophy.*
- xi. any group of persons having common attitudes or beliefs.

-verb (used with object)

- xii. to educate in or as if in a school; teach; train.
- xiii. Archaic. to reprimand.

Origin: bef. 900; ME *scōle* (n.), OE *sc_1* < L *schola* < Gk *scholē* leisure employed in learning

From Dictionary.com Unabridged (v 1.1). Random House, Inc.

Temporary School

Project Description

Temporary School was a project commissioned by *firstsite*, Colchester in 2008. Initially, I had been asked to devise a training programme for the team of artists who were to work within the education function of the gallery, once it had re-opened to the public after a period of closure. The opening, however, was constantly deferred and there was no public learning programme for the artists to devise and deliver.³ While waiting, I suggested to the Director that we set up a *Temporary School* for local artists (*firstsite* in its previous premises had, for fifteen years, established an artists' support programme for local practitioners). The proposal suggested that a self-selecting group of artists meet periodically over a year, deciding together on the 'syllabus' of the school, dependent on the group needs. The main form of communication would be a Wiki and the group would decide together how to spend the £3000 budget.

The project ran from October 2008 to April 2009; after this point participation petered out. There were four main events: the launch (at the old *firstsite* premises), a Christmas party (at Colchester Arts Centre), a meal (held in a temporary construction next to the site where the new building would emerge) and an event with *Talkeoke*.⁴

There were also numerous informal meetings and email conversations amongst the ten to fifteen participants.

De-Centring the Artist-Subject

As described, *Temporary School* was a response to a request for an artist-training programme, meant to prepare artists wishing to work within the educational function of the gallery (*firstsite*, Colchester). At this stage in my practice, it seemed problematic to devise and deliver a programme as I had done in the past for other institutions. Aware of the inadvertently 'authoritarian' nature of many interventions I had previously considered democratic, I was reluctant to take the lead or to present myself as an expert. I had a desire for a more equal form of knowledge-exchange and it seemed that this might be achieved by

adopting some of the 'pedagogical' forms being employed by those artists operating under the umbrella term of 'the educational turn'. In particular, I looked at artists who had created temporary art schools, including Pierre Huyghe,⁵ and at the establishment of artist 'salons' in London.⁶ The initial idea, therefore, was that rather than train a group of artists to work in the educational function of the museum, we would decide together what we needed to know through the co-production of a programme of events.

During the project, I attempted various strategies to encourage others to take responsibility for aspects of the project. These were not always successful and it seemed that the situation was loaded with expectations on both sides. Many participants simply wanted a space (real or virtual) where they could show their work. Others resisted the notion that discussion and self-organisation could be considered aspects of arts practice. In retrospect, I did not realise how much my own pre-understandings of practice had been formed by my experience as a research student at a London art-school. It could be argued that a lack of self-understanding of myself as an artist constructed by a particular set of circumstances and experiences, left me incapable of recognising and working with others' subjectivities. My desire to establish *Temporary School* was research-driven and quite theoretical - in retrospect a research experiment which was imposed on an already-thriving, artistic community with its own, well-established support networks. I had not demoted/de-centred myself as a subject. Neither had I realised that I was operating from a different position - no longer the artist working within the educational function of the museum/gallery, but rather the artist-researcher, 'parachuted in' from the outside. The analysis of the case-studies in the previous chapter have enabled me to understand how the artist-subject can be constructed, by default, through allegiances to both institutions and institutional discourses. In this case, I had exchanged an allegiance with the museum/gallery to one with the research department of an art school with all its associated discourses. My lack of awareness of how I was identified by these meant that I could not deal with these issues directly nor reflect on how they might be operating for the participants in the project (one of the strategies/solutions suggested by the analysis of the case-studies).

The means by which participants are recruited to projects is a central feature and contributes to the way the artist is viewed by participants. Within the educational function of the museum and gallery, there are generally 'key players' within the community, school or university who act as a broker, and who deal directly with the project curator (the institutional partner). In the case of *Temporary School*, the curator generated a mail-out list and booked spaces for preliminary meetings but after a certain point took a step back to respect the self-organising ambitions of the project. The initial 'call-out' took the form of a school report-card, inviting participants to reflect on the concept of a school and their own personal-development requirements as artists. The approach was an attempt to establish common ground and a shared language based on a familiar concept, but in retrospect, what was missing was a process of translation and the development of an understanding of how the school model might function in this particular context.

A reflection on modes of communication has become an increasingly important feature of art practices that use models of self-organisation. The options are increasingly varied, but priority is given to models that allow for open access and exchange and user-generated content. For *Temporary School*, a Wiki was deliberately pre-selected as the main form of communication as this was understood to be a non-hierarchical and open model. As has already been noted in the analysis of the case-studies, however, forms of communication are not neutral and they can inadvertently result in, or even accentuate, power imbalances. In this case, many of the participants were unfamiliar with the technology and others were reluctant to air their views publicly. As Maurizio Lazzarato warns, apparently democratic modes of communication can be put to work in ways not fully understood by contributors, and the idea that ‘one has to express oneself, one has to speak, communicate, co-operate,’⁷ can be understood as an authoritarian command. Transparency can be perceived as a kind of tyranny. The idea that the numerous edits of texts remain present on the Wiki can be paralysing for some; the capacity to speak relies on a familiarity with, and a trust in, a particular framework of communication – a shared language. There was a sense that many participants were unsure about the nature and function of this forum. Others used it as a vehicle for promotion of their own practice and post-analysis of the case-studies, I might have seen this a positive response, with the Wiki as a stage for representing sometimes contradictory positions within the *Temporary School* structure. However, as it stood, the Wiki form risked being used only by those familiar with the format. There are many factors that undermine people’s ability to contribute and no single model of communication seems to guarantee open and equal participation. In this case, I often resorted to posting on others’ behalf, occasionally editing the material, re-enforcing my pivotal place within the project.

The Institutional Site and Making Public

firstsite Colchester had a strong tradition of working with artists through residencies and mentoring schemes. The gallery was also preparing to move into a new space (although the completion of the new building was repeatedly delayed); effectively, *firstsite* was without a site and occupied a provisional building near the spot on which the new, highly-contested, gallery was to emerge. Later, the gallery was to occupy temporarily a disused shop and resident artists made use of an empty ship container. From the beginning, the project felt somewhat rootless. Although the lack of site and the provisional nature of the project might initially have been taken as a positive, it seems in retrospect that there was too much openness. The themes of openness and closure which dominated the analysis of *Neveroddoeven*, seem salient here. The repeated deferral of the opening of the new

gallery took away any natural aim or end-point. It also removed a 'frame' by which the project might have been made public and presented as a form of art practice. Participants 'performed' solely for themselves whereas they might have done so within, and for, the institution - *firstsite*. The events were insufficiently and poorly documented and this took away the possibility to 'frame' the project in retrospect (although this is being attempted, to some extent, within the context of this thesis). The different outcomes - the Wiki, documentation of the various events, research articles, etc., might have been parcelled out for different audiences at different stages, as with *Neveroddoeven*.

During meetings, participants would inevitably fall back on familiar models of artistic production and reception. In particular, there was the influence of a grass-roots organisation of artists, *Slackspace*, that had occupied an empty shop in the town, working within legacies of community art practice and a thriving, local music/performance scene. In retrospect, the attempt to graft a model of practice onto an already well-established art community was perhaps more authoritarian than the training model originally proposed by *firstsite*. The project raises questions more generally about who a temporary art school serves, who participates and how such initiatives might simply reinforce the power and prestige of the 'lead' artist (an issue since the establishment of Joseph Beuys' 'Free International University' in 1972). In the same way, projects held up as key examples of 'the educational turn' have been accused of appealing to a narrow audience. The proposal to introduce an art school as exhibition by Anton Vidokle and others as part of *Manifesta 6* seemingly ignored the fact that Nicosia already had its own, already-established academy; *Beaver 16 Group's* programme of events has been criticised as nothing more than an extended, self-organised postgraduate programme for artists emerging from American art-schools.

Community

Whereas I read participants' intransigence as an absolute negative – a refusal of the project and the model of practice – these might have indicated new areas of enquiry and activity. *Temporary School* came out of a desire to conduct artist training in a more 'democratic' way. However, the underlying desire to persuade and to bring people together, noted in the analysis of earlier projects, meant that I ignored the possibilities offered by intransigence, by the idea that a 'community' could temporarily cohere without everyone being in agreement. Looking back, the concept was grafted onto an existing set of circumstances and did not take sufficient account of existing networks. It seems as if I was still operating the form of the 'supplier-client' relationship critiqued by Bourriaud (and mentioned in the Introductions Chapter). I was unable at the time to conceive of the

potential of creating a platform where existing networks could operate on their own terms (an understanding which emerged from the analysis of the first case-study). In retrospect, the strong characters from the local art community, capable both of enthusiasm and dissent, reminded me very much of the participants in the Seniors event. Whilst on both occasions I had quite a fixed idea of the artist-participant relationship, the gallery at least offered a public space, understandable to most, where the boundaries of this relationship could be tested.

Economies of Practice

On a wider level, Lazzarato notes that ‘the skills involved in direct labour are increasingly skills involving cybernetics and computer control (and horizontal and vertical communication’ and that ‘the activity that produces the “cultural content” of the commodity, immaterial labour involves a series of activities that are not normally recognized as “work”’.⁸ The activation of social networks is an essential part of these projects and the blurring of boundaries between work and leisure is an essential characteristic of these new forms of intellectual labour. Participants become ‘active subjects’, making decisions and co-ordinating various production processes. As Lazzarato notes, this requires an ‘investment of subjectivity’ and it is not always made clear who reaps the rewards in this emergent realm of immaterial labour’.⁸ It could be argued that I, as ‘lead artist’ and instigator of the project, *Temporary School*, stood to gain most from others’ participation. Indeed, the way the documentation of the project is presented in the context of this thesis demonstrates how the outcome of others’ energies can be put to work for individual benefit. Despite the gesture of allowing all participants to decide on how the budget might be spent, participants were reluctant to claim a fee for their own time and input, perhaps due to the tendency of participants to work for free when engaged in these forms of practice, where some vague objective of ‘social good’ is understood, without being stated explicitly.

Temporary School offered a set of possibilities that were never fully realised. While in the midst of practice, I seemed incapable of reflecting and changing course, with the result that I, along with the participants, eventually abandoned the project. My methods had become habitual and too restrictive for the task at hand, demonstrating the necessity for a different kind of reflection that would bring my criteria for judging success and failure to the surface, enabling me to develop new approaches to practice.

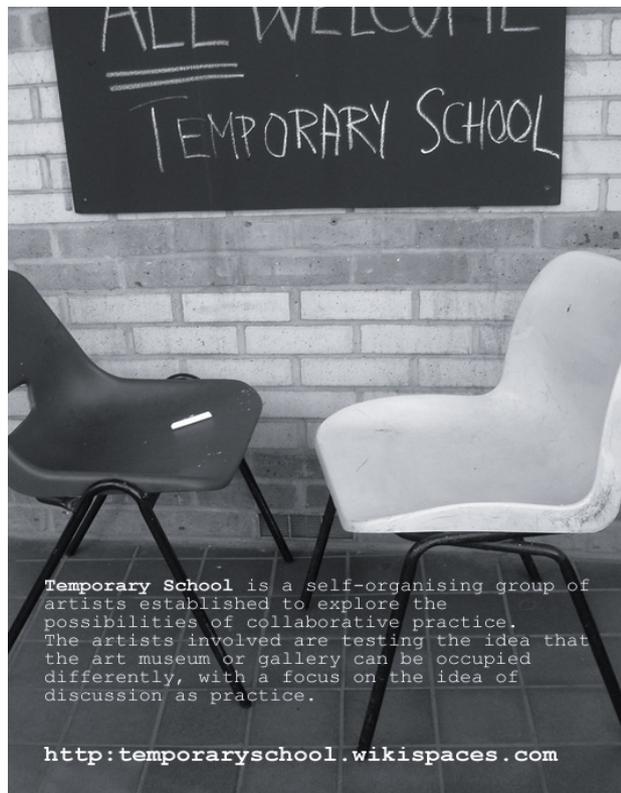
An Open Manifesto

Talk about art

Make art by talking

When: Thursday 30 April, 7-10pm

Where: Colchester Arts Centre





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April 27 - 29 twothousand & ten

The Triangle Space
Chelsea College of Art & Design
10 John Islip Street, London, SW11 1JU

Through a three-day intervention into the public gallery that is the Triangle Space, **FLAG** returns to, explores and plays with the 'educational turn' by re-turning the exploration of art and pedagogy to the art educational institution itself, in this case Chelsea College of Art and Design. The event is a shared venture amongst participants in dialogue with each other and the institution, the latter understood as both a physical entity and as a discursive arena. Speakers from inside and outside the art educational institution are invited to come and explore this topic within a setting of artworks that also engage with these dialogues. Key issues for pedagogic practice are methods and sites of knowledge-transfer, the artist as educator, collaboration and participation and the idealization of art education. **FLAG** intends to encourage a process-based approach, stimulating dialogue rather than aiming at conclusions.

www.chelsea.wiki.org/index.php/FLAG

Agenda, Calendar, Dates, Website



FLAG

Project Description

FLAG is an on-going collaboration amongst researchers and students at the University of the Arts London, begun in 2010. From the beginning, *FLAG* was understood as both a practical component of mine and my colleague, Katrine Hjelde's, PhD research and a collaboration with students at University of the Arts London interested in creating their own spaces for collaborative learning. *FLAG* is still in operation, most recently contributing to the conference '*Reflections on the Art School*' at Tate Britain, Friday 8th July, 2011.

FLAG, the event, April 2010, was a three-day intervention in the *Triangle Space*, a public exhibition space at Chelsea College of Art and Design normally dedicated to student shows and projects. Speakers from inside and outside the art educational institution were invited to come and explore 'methods and sites of knowledge-transfer, the artist as educator, collaboration and participation and the idealisation of art education,' within a setting of artworks that also engaged with these themes.⁹

De-Centring the Artist-Subject

As was noted in the first chapter based on material from the Tate Archives, the artist working within the educational function of the museum generally responds to another's demands. Both *Temporary School* and *FLAG* were self-instigated projects but were a response to a particular 'call' which was then refashioned or 'turned' (earlier projects had been carried out within the confines of a fairly well-established brief, proposed by the commissioning institution). It is this sense of personal agency that characterised both projects that allowed me to explore more fully my own ambitions for my practice. The main strength of *FLAG*, in retrospect, was that the student role was shared by all those involved in the project. Participants were all students at the University of the Arts London and therefore also had shared understandings of what the project could offer and equal access to channels of communication. Although we were both also tutors, Katrine Hjelde and I tended to emphasise our research-student status throughout the project. Occasionally, our roles took on different inflections, with Katrine Hjelde taking responsibility for maintaining

the momentum in terms of communication and planning, while I, on the other hand, relied on my contacts with museums, galleries and other universities to invite speakers for events. This, however, seemed no different than other participants offering their own forms of knowledge and expertise. Opportunities to participate were quite varied; people were invited to make work for the exhibition or event and some produced furniture (for the event), posters, food and contributions for the independent publication, 'SALTBOX'. Others took the opportunity to show pieces they had already produced which responded to the themes of *FLAG*, giving them a new context.

The Institutional Site and Making Public

FLAG was clearly and deliberately sited. It began as a student research group under the name '*Turning Educational*' and was then developed in collaboration with Katrine Hjelde, together with students from the University of the Arts London. As such, the project was firmly rooted in the academy from the beginning. *FLAG's* limiting of its participants, context and relevance could be seen as a deliberate intervention, an example of the strategic closure proposed at the conclusion of the third case-study. Its ambition was to return the debates provoked by the pedagogic tendency in art practice back to the site of education, where it could have a different kind of impact. The event was tiered and there were audiences for the events and exhibition, although these consisted predominantly of students and staff within the University of the Arts London. The status of the Triangle Space was discussed, located as it was quite firmly within the institution, next to the student canteen and far less outward-facing than the other exhibition venue onsite, Chelsea Space, which looks out onto the Parade Ground and across to Tate Britain. Siting the exhibition and events in the Triangle Space clearly limited the audience, but there was an interesting and productive blurring between the spaces of production and display, as its everyday use was for the display of ongoing student projects. The exhibition and events were made public, or rather semi-public; there did not seem to be the ambition to attract an audience beyond the staff and student body, academics from other institutions and gallery professionals involved in curating similar projects. The 'Educational Turn' has been accused of being solipsistic - a conversation turned in on itself. It seems, however, that this kind of self-interrogation, whether by the individual, the group or the institution is potentially valuable in that it generates a space of reflection out of which new possibilities may emerge.

FLAG, as has already been noted, was deliberately located in a very particular site and community - that of the University of the Arts London. Although the core participants were few in number, the different events staged allowed different levels of participation. Participants were allowed to drift in and out of the project, contributing when they felt they could map their own practices and interests onto the sites and spaces generated by the core group.

The restricted nature of the core group was reflected in the modes of communication through the project. For *FLAG*, although the Chelsea Wiki was used for the dissemination of information and a Wordpress site was later set up to document events, the main communication took place face-to-face during lunchtime meetings in the art school studios and through closed email groups.

During the project, a fundamental question emerged: what makes people feel able to respond to the call to participate? What makes 'the call' legible and to whom? In critical theory, Louis Althusser offers the concept of 'interpellation' where a subject is brought into being by a call or summons. The image he offers is of the police officer shouting 'Hey you!' When we respond to the call, we construct ourselves as a (guilty) subject. Perhaps a more pertinent image when considering the call-out for these projects is the following:

'[W]e all have friends who, when they knock on our door and we ask, through the door, the question 'Who's there?' answer (since 'it's obvious') 'It's me.' And we recognize that it 'it is him,' or 'her.'⁹

The '*Call Out*' is a mode of communication familiar to all Chelsea College of Art undergraduates and for students further afield; the walls of the art school are papered with them, written by staff, students and visiting lecturers. *Call-outs* are used by tutors offering optional courses but also by students instigating their own projects. This form of *call-out* mimics 'real world'/industry experiences where open calls are made within a competitive market. Thus, for *FLAG*, the call-out read as follows:

'This is an invitation to anyone interested in and/or involved with forms of knowledge exchange to contribute to the programme of events or material for the exhibition. Do you make work that relates to your educational experience or which has been informed by theories around pedagogy?

- 1: Workshop proposals – do you have a proposal for a workshop relating to these themes?
- 2: Contribution to publications – do you have written or image based material that relate to this theme(s)
- 3: Artworks (in any media) that deal with these ideas in some form?

In this art/research project all participants share stakes in the ownership of the goals, processes and outcome of the art and research surrounding this, providing a collective opportunity to either consider their existing practice in relation to this 'turning' or to explore different ways of working in relation to pedagogy as art, individually or as group(s).¹⁰

Despite the declaration of shared ownership, the tone of the call-out corresponds to this idea of the open market. By responding, it could be argued that the participant must recognise the convention or formula of the *open call*.

On this occasion, the text was written collaboratively and then designed by one of the participants. There is a peculiar indirectness to the language, an exaggeration of academic detachment, where the abstract entity *FLAG* is the subject. The sentences are lengthy; it is part position statement, part call. Whereas this mode of communication is legible to those who operate within the art school, it seems unlikely that it would be understandable outside of this context. Responding to this call therefore creates a subject; participation locates the individual within a set of communication practices specific to the site of the art school. The call-out speaks in a form of code, recognisable only to those engaged in the relevant debates. Although *FLAG* was a deliberate re-direction of 'the educational turn', with the declared aim of creating a reflective space within the site of education, the specificity of the target audience could leave it open to critiques of exclusivity.

Economies of practice

Using economic models to evaluate these kinds of practices allows us to ask the question: who gains by these activities? The deliberately circumscribed nature of *FLAG* in terms of site and community seemed to result in positive outcomes for participants: roles seemed more explicit and relationships were less hierarchical. Also it seemed clearer what people might gain through their involvement in the project; students used their participation to explore aspects of shared practice and some, myself and Katrine Hjelde included, used the event and the material generated towards obtaining an academic qualification. It seems that *FLAG* potentially created a site of reflection on knowledge-exchange within the educational institution and this arguably challenged existing evaluative models within the academy, testing at the very minimum, the dominant model of individual authorship and the way collaborative practices were judged and graded. However, the fact that there was a limited public beyond the academy could be seen as a loss. In retrospect, I am reminded of Andrea Fraser's famous (or infamous) 1989 performance '*Museum Highlights*' at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Here, Fraser critiqued the museum as institution by taking on the role of a tour guide under a pseudonym; her interpretations became progressively more outlandish until she was found using the same terms and tone to discuss a water-fountain as she had a landscape painting. She was to repeat the performance

at other institutions but as her performances became better known to the art-world public, the *cognoscenti* (literally those ‘in the know’) would attend and mock those in the audience who were duped. This seems to illustrate the potential within apparently critical practices to reaffirm rather than subvert existing power imbalances, particularly when performed in a gallery space for an ‘art-world’ audience. Once she had realised that the critique had backfired, Fraser had no choice but to frame the performance differently, delivering it in the dedicated lecture spaces of the museum as a named artist’s performance (the Public Programme is generally delivered as part of the educational function of the museum/gallery). Inevitably, as a result of this compromise, the work lost the power of surprise and potentially a part of its critical force. The ‘success’ of *FLAG* seems largely dependent on its restricted site, audience and ambitions. Whether such practices can ever survive and resist the exhibitionary ‘frame’ offered by the museum/gallery, or whether other sites could better serve their ‘emancipatory’ agendas, remains to be explored in future projects.

Conclusions

At the outset of the research, the field in which the artist-as-educator operates (in terms of both existing practice and theory) seemed to be characterised by polarised positions: art versus education, a profession versus a practice, single authorship versus collaboration, aesthetics versus ethics. This dichotomous thinking presented an obstacle to the artist, resulting in a calcification of practice and a formulaic approach. The problem was further exacerbated by the fact that the criteria for evaluating projects delivered within the educational function of the museum are generally established by others (the institution, funders and participants). In addition, there was a lack of discussion of the subject-position of the artist, with the focus largely on the experience of the project participant; this lack of self-evaluation seemed also to be limiting the artist’s development and her ability to bring to light and examine underlying theories-of-practice.

As a response to these problems, the researcher set out to examine three related case-studies using a ‘quadri-hermeneutic’ approach, in the hope that a close analysis of the project ‘data’ would both bring to light and disturb a-priori positions, offering a way out of the polarised positions in the literature and suggesting alternative approaches for future practice. Each case-study had an interpretive bias based on the artist’s understanding of the main areas of significance for the practice of the artist-as-educator: dialogue, community and the institution. These categories have been disturbed and expanded by the research findings and further questions have arisen regarding the artist-subject and how the processes of self-reflection enable the artist to respond more flexibly to the given circumstances of each project.

This final chapter has already touched on criteria of (self) evaluation and how these have been disrupted and expanded as a result of the findings from the case-studies (without these in turn becoming new formulae). This concluding section will take up the themes presented in the Introduction, reflecting on the current situation in light of two recent, significant publications in the field. Both these publications take the form of anthologies or conversations, perhaps representing a continued reluctance to arrive at any firm conclusions about participatory practice and the 'Educational Turn'. It is also perhaps a recognition that these forms of practice necessitate particular forms of documentation and dissemination that allow for a non-hierarchical, co-existence of several voices/perspectives. Thus, the thesis comes full-circle, using current literature as a spring-board to anticipate the problems which might be encountered in future practice. It seems particularly relevant to return to Claire Bishop's writings as these provoked the first about-turn in the research. In addition, the Whitechapel publication cited here includes interventions by artists and curators with whom I am currently collaborating in various ways.

Contributors to both publications call, at different points, for a re-evaluation of the terminology used to describe this practice. To give these final comments a structure, therefore, I have taken up the original terms in the thesis title and translated them to reflect current changes in thinking. There is also a more practical consideration in that I hope these newly-considered terms will act as tools for future projects, a concrete outcome of the research findings which demanded a more nuanced approach and language with which to describe practice. I begin, however, with a discussion of the artist-subject, as this was a central theme that emerged out of all the case-studies and in the research more generally.

The Subject

In recent publications attempting an overview of the 'Educational Turn', there has begun to emerge a more sophisticated understanding of the artist-subject in relation to practices that blur the boundaries between exhibition and education; this has clear implications for future practice. One aspect in particular that arose from the project analyses was how an over-simplistic notion of the artist-subject, generally understood through its opposition to 'the institution' and related figures (curator, teacher), results in a lack of responsiveness to the particularities of a project. This 'oppositional' way of understanding the artist-subject is not new in participatory practice; as Grant Kester notes in his introduction to 'Gallery as Community: Art, Education, Politics',

‘It should come as no surprise, then that ostensibly advanced art (often founded on a masculinist notion of transgressive individuality) has so often been contrasted with the dowdy do-gooderism of community art.’¹¹

There are, however, alternatives that can be found in the history of gallery education and other practices. As artist and curator Janna Graham notes later in the same text:

‘Within the history of feminist practice, we have kinds of practice, we have this kind of duality and friction between an interest in care and an interest in “The Fight”. I think that this kind of discomfort, this uncomfortable terrain is a feminist history that’s interesting to reclaim because it doesn’t choose one over the other.’¹²

Perhaps in future projects, therefore, the key issue will not be the necessity of choosing between two positions: the aggressively individual author of the project or the self-renouncing artist- subject. There may be other ways of authoring that offer more possibilities once these false dichotomies have been abandoned. In light of the project analyses which indicate both successes and failures, it seems important to note that an exploration of the artist-subject should, wherever possible, be factored into any future project as an integral element. The artist might, for example, declare a vested interest from the beginning of the project and establish a position which others can respond to openly. As seen in the project case-studies, when the artist-subject does not declare her position, a project can become authored by default by the institution and its agendas (or by participants’ understandings of these). In the recent Whitechapel publication, artists and curators struggle to find new ways of describing how they operate in this problematic terrain of declared and tacit subject positions. Artists in particular talk of ‘personal interests’ and ‘explicit commitments’ and these are the positions around which the activity of the project pivots.

Returning to Bishop’s statement that provoked a volte-face at the outset of this research (‘There can be no failed, unsuccessful, unresolved, or boring works of collaborative art because all are equally essential to the task of strengthening the social bond’), it seems important to re-iterate that it might not be a simple choice between aggressively claiming a project as one’s own (and gaining ‘artistically’) or renouncing authorship (and gaining ‘ethically’); instead, the challenge is to find new subject positions that allow the artist to navigate this ‘uncomfortable terrain’. In her most recent publication, Bishop herself recognises the limitations of earlier arguments:

‘One of the book’s objectives is to generate a more nuanced (and honest) critical vocabulary with which to address the vicissitudes of collaborative authorship and spectatorship. At present, this discourse revolves far too often around the around the unhelpful binary of “active” and “passive” spectatorship, and – more recently – the false polarity of “bad” singular authorship and “good” collective positions.’¹³

Although the focus of this thesis has been on the experience of the artist, the link Bishop makes here between the positions of the artist and the participant is potentially of interest for future practice. In her conclusion to, 'Artificial Hells. Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship,' she paraphrases Rancière:

'In his essay "The Uses of Democracy" (1992), Jacques Rancière notes that participation in what we normally refer to as democratic regimes is usually reduced to a question of filling up the spaces left empty by power. Genuine participation, he argues, is something different: the invention of an "unpredictable subject" who momentarily occupies the street, the factory, or the museum – rather than a fixed space of allocated participation whose counter-power is dependent on the dominant order.'¹⁴

The notion of a 'predictable' versus an 'unpredictable subject' seems to offer alternatives in practice and it is interesting to note that Rancière claims that this becomes possible only when straightforwardly oppositional positions are rejected.

In the spirit of Bishop's call for a more nuanced, critical vocabulary, these concluding paragraphs will expand the terms which make up the title of this thesis to show how the emphasis has shifted in recent thinking in the field.

Dialogue – conversation

In terms of recent practice and criticism, there seems to be a move away from an interest in dialogue and interpretation towards an exploration of the potential of 'conversation'. As can be seen from the case-studies (particularly the discussion of the painting by Goldsmiths students), in certain contexts what began as dialogue or interpretation can become formulaic. Dialogue implies an exchange between two points or positions; given that a recurring theme in these concluding statements is the benefit of moving beyond dichotomous thinking, it is perhaps not surprising that 'conversation' has become a favoured term in current literature. While Rancière, in 'The Ignorant Schoolmaster,' insists on the mediating presence of the object to be interpreted, Bishop expands this notion to suggest that for these theorists, what is really on offer is an alternative framework 'for thinking the artistic and the social simultaneously ... art and the social are not to be reconciled, but sustained in continual tension.'¹⁵ The term 'conversation', used by artists and curators alike, also has more of an association with the social, partly explaining perhaps its increased use in the literature.

'Conversation' also implies the presence of more voices and a more relaxed form of exchange without the need for consensus or an end-point. Emily Pethick, Director of

the Showroom Gallery, uses the term to describe preferences in both curatorial and artistic practice. She states that the curator ‘has an important conversational role’¹⁶ and later goes on to describe a ‘conversational’ example of arts practice:

‘Wendelien van Oldenborgh is an artist who I link a lot with this approach. Her films often open up conversations around unresolved histories, bringing together diverse groups who have expertise or personal connections to the particular subjects and issues at stake, which she has described as a “polyphonic” approach.’¹⁷

This, the artist claims, helps defend against the ‘concretisation of thought’ – or the risk, perhaps that dialogue becomes formulaic, limited by ‘accepted narratives expressed through the location’¹⁸ (or institution, in my own case).

Community – locality

The term ‘community’ is perhaps the most contested of the three in the current literature. As revealed through the case-studies, the idea of a community formed around fixed identities no longer seems valid, although learning departments in museums and galleries have historically separated out their audience groups according to age, educational level and their position ‘at the margins’ (the so-called ‘hard-to-reach’ audiences). As has already been noted, when I first started at Tate in the 1990s, my title was Curator of the Adult and Community Programme. When I came to Tate Modern, I worked on the Family and Community Programme; this has now been absorbed into the Adult Programme, together with what used to be called Public Programmes (which dealt with the ‘general public’ and academic audiences). The problem that many artists and curators currently have with the term ‘community’ is that it implies a split between the institution and its audiences. This raises questions about artists working within institutions where the lines between audience groups are clearly demarcated (Tate continue to work with what have been traditionally defined ‘hard-to-reach’ audience groups, despite the apparent integration of programmes). The successes of the Seniors event described in the case-study seemed to be a result of the breadth of the group (over-55s) which allowed for various sub-groups and the development of a complex dynamic, despite the ‘essentialist’ grouping (according to age).

The current tendency seems to be to substitute ‘locality’ for ‘community’. For example, artist Emma Smith describes her unease with the term ‘community’:

‘I don’t use it ... I tend to use the terms “neighbourhood” or “locality” But I’ve never found labelling particularly useful in any context ... If you base the idea of community on locality then you see that there is a huge amount of difference within that. Localities, particularly urban ones, are complex and involve multiple networks’¹⁹

For some, this seems to connect with the concept of ‘working “from the middle”’ of a situation, against traditional hierarchies where ‘criticality is an active process that is lived through without objective distance.’²⁰ The transition from ‘community’ to ‘locality’ might allow the artist to see herself operating from within a group of people who share a set of interests rather than common, fixed characteristics. Although other artists have sought to recover the term, in my own context of museum and galleries the word ‘community’ continues to have difficult associations based on the history of the politics of ‘access’. It has been used in the past to identify groups of people outside of the gallery and this ‘othering’ process continues to infect the term. As noted earlier, ‘locality’ has a neutral, geographical connotation and the artist, rather than being an ‘objective’ observer is potentially a part of this geography, working from the middle rather than intervening from the outside. The term ‘locality’ also seems to suggest the possibility of people gathering around a set of concerns or questions. This use of the term recognises participants’ agency – the possibility for both engagement and refusal – and also allows for changes over time (participants might gather but at different points may disperse, dependent on the level of interest/concern).

Institution – the project

The case-study based on the interview with the curator Louise Coysh from the Serpentine Gallery highlighted the reflective, self-critical processes engaged in by individuals operating within institutions. With curators working both inside and outside the museum or gallery, with obligations towards various project partners, it seems impossible, post-analysis of the case-study, for the artist to adopt an oppositional stance towards the curator as representative of the institution. Although the curator has a clear allegiance to the institution, the first priority for many involved in current discussions is the project. Future projects might therefore involve the artist working in and through institutional structures to realise the project, in conversation with an individual curator who is attempting the same from her own perspective.

Many galleries, like the Serpentine, now have offsite or satellite spaces which are rooted in a particular locality and have more of a ‘laboratory’ feel when compared with the main, exhibition space. It seems clear that the choice of institutional partner for future projects will have a decisive impact on the kind of practice that emerges and how it is valued. It no longer seems a viable option for the artist to operate ‘below the radar’ within larger institutions. Janna Graham, current Project Curator at the Serpentine talks about the previous Head of Learning, Sally Tallant’s, acknowledgement of the necessity, previously, for what she termed ‘stealth programming’, but that once a certain way of working had been

proven to the institution, it needed to be ‘built into the main programme.’²¹ The ‘project’ is a shared concern and the responsibility of both the artist and the curator. This way of working now has to be made ‘official’ so that it can be acknowledged and evaluated by artists and institutions alike.

Many of the contributing curators to the publication ‘Gallery as Community: Art, Education, Politics’, like Coysh, propose an organic or iterative way of working on a project which includes periodic points of openness and closure, but resists the traditional path of working towards one, fixed end-point or exhibition. Curator, Kate Gray states, ‘I actually lose the excitement if I feel like the project has a kind of pre-ordained end.’²²

If the artist’s aim is to experiment with different subject positions and the notion of an ‘indeterminate subject’ as part of future projects, it makes sense for her to work with a curator who is working in a similarly reflective way, albeit from an institutional perspective. Smaller institutions seem more able to take on board these lessons from New Institutionalism, emphasising their allegiance to individual projects rather than institutional programming, whereas larger institutions struggle with fixed time-scales, the pressure to achieve visible, institutionally-branded outcomes and have fewer opportunities to engage in ‘conversational’ modes of curating. As Emily Pethick notes:

‘This goes back to thinking about an institution *or a project* (my italics) as not being fixed, but receptive and self-reflexive and able to adapt and change according to what is discovered through the process.’²³

Thinking ahead, therefore, this new terminology of *conversation - locality - project* might enable a more flexible and nuanced form of practice, based on ongoing self-reflection and a reconsideration of the position of the artist-subject, capable both of recognising and making public her personal interests and commitments.

- 1: I. Rogoff, 'Turning'. *e-flux Journal*, Nov 2008.
<http://www.e-flux.com/journal/view/18> viewed 25 Sept 2011.
- 2: <http://www.unitednationsplaza.org/> viewed 25 September 2011.
- 3: *firstsite* Colchester finally opened, in its new building, in 2011.
- 4: *Talkeoke* describes itself as a 'dynamic mobile chat show'
<http://www.talkaoke.com> viewed 14 June 2012.
- 5: Artists Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Pierre Huyghe and Philippe Parreno opened a Temporary School for five days in Umeå, 1997.
- 6: For example, *Canal*, formed in 2006.
<http://www.ica.org.uk/16959/Peripatetic-organisations-London/Canal.html> viewed 25 Sept 2011.
- 7: M. Lazzarato, 'Immaterial Labour,' *generation - online*, 1996.
<http://www.generation-online.org/c/fcimmateriallabour3.htm> viewed 25 Sept 2011.
- 8: *ibid.*
- 9: L. Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', 1969-70, in Mirzoeff, N. *Visual Culture Reader*, London, Routledge, 2002.
- 10: From the FLAG Position Statement
- 11: M. Steedman (ed), 'Gallery as Community: Art, Education, Politics', Whitechapel Gallery, London, 2012, p.16
- 12: *ibid.*, p.1
- 13: C. Bishop, 'Artificial Hells. Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship', Verso, London and New York, 2012, p.8
- 14: *ibid.*, p.283
- 15: *ibid.*, p.278
- 16: M. Steedman (ed), 'Gallery as Community: Art, Education, Politics', Whitechapel Gallery, London, 2012, p.64
- 17: *ibid.*, p.55
- 18: *ibid.*, p.55
- 19: *ibid.*, p.23
- 20: J. Graham and E. Pethick, 'Ideas that have Shaped the Terrain' in *Gallery as Community: Art, Education, Politics*, Whitechapel Gallery, London, 2012 p.55
- 21: *ibid.*, p.83
- 22: *ibid.*, p.69
- 23: *ibid.*, p.75







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Appendix 1

Transcript from Tate Modern Session 19/02/07

MA Art and Education Module: Contemporary Art, Identity and Pedagogy, Goldsmiths College, London



M: Er ... so I think perhaps we could start with this painting here. Erm ... do you have any first responses?

S1: Like it!

M: You like it.

S1: Like it...absolutely. It's very serene.

M: It's serene, calm... Why does it appeal to you, do you reckon?

S1: Cosy.

S7: It's an unnatural pose.

M: It's uncomfortable?

S7: Yeah

S3: Big feet, and I've got big feet so...
[everyone laughs]

S6: It's very smooth. A little bit like...

M: Smooth.... You mean the surface?

S6: Yes, it's a little bit like those films where you have that soft focus.

S1: That white dress is, I suppose, quite virginal.

S5: I couldn't hold that pose. I think that's a ... (inaudible)
(Here there is a discussion of the points of the colour red in the painting beginning with the focus on the red shoes but then passing on to the sitter's lips and the stamen of the flower)

S1: That's got red too, hasn't it? Ah..!
[everyone laughs]

M: Go on.

S1: Well it looks a bit phallic.

S4: It picks out the shoes.

M: Well the stamen is the sexual part of the flower.

S1: So is it kind of saying that the dress is a sort of front – to her sexuality – red shoes?

M: Anything else in the painting that you think supports that particular interpretation?

S1: The shoes and the lips.

M: The shoes and the lips. How's it actually structured? We've got the red stamen, the lips and the shoes...

S1: A triangle.

M: Yeah, what would that seem to imply?

S6: It's quite - sort of secure – isn't it, that sort of shape

M: Yeah. . .

S1: But not as boring as a square.
[everyone laughs]

M: I think if you're thinking about intention and composition ...
It's very balanced, so I suppose we can assume that ... Who do you think made that choice?

S4: I think it's more like the artist, the painter.

M: Why?

S4: Well, she's not looking at you. It's very much about the onlooker, the poise and this sort of quite controlled balance. Erm... sort of like, you know, holding him in that position for him to observe and, you know, enjoy – if it was a him.

M: Uh-huh.

S1: Do you think the setting might say something about the constraints? It's quite domestic.

M: Domestic?

S5: I think it's quite exotic.... No colour, anything that makes it a human environment.

M: These are all decisions that have been made ... a decision not to indulge in kind of ornamentation, but ...

S6: But that would be distracting as well.

M: From ...?

S6: From her. You'd have all these other things to look at. And it's the idea that...if she - it is a she isn't it? If she's decided she's going to compose this thing, especially with the triangle thing perhaps...general way of looking at a picture. If there were things around it, it would kind of cancel out the whole point of ...

M: So you're kind of thinking that he or she makes a conscious decision about how your eyes ought to travel ... the painting. Do you think?

S6: I think you would anyway. Everyone who does a painting, you don't just stick it...
(inaudible)

M: We'd look at it in a very different way. That kind of simplicity, that kind of paring back ... We've just noted the three points of red in a kind of triangle in what is otherwise a quite drab interior, so it's kind of selective.

S1: Just the way they're kind of poised straight.

S6: So it looks like she's about to get up doesn't it? I think it looks quite, I don't know, quite polished and quite beautiful. They look slightly... it's like, you know, when you run your fingers across something.

M: Yeah

S6: ... kind of suspense, adding to that.

M: Makes you feel ...

S6: Makes you feel uneasy, I think, well it does to me, just because she's ...

S4: Yeah, really stuff like...

S2: And yet her face is saying something different, to me her face is quite, sort of...

S5: ... part of me wants to react ... whether that's the artist's intention, for me it's like a barrier.

S1: It's her arm that forms a kind of barrier across her genital area. Don't you think?

M: uh-huh (non-committal)

S9: It's too kind of structured looking in a kind of like, slightly... I don't know, like 'I'm not looking at anything, but really...' You know what I mean?

S9: Yeah.

M: Is she absorbed?

S9: Yeah, maybe ...

M: It's maybe a kind of frustration, like she's had no choice. She's put in a position where she has no choice.

S9: It's almost the tension of 'I don't want to do this'.

M: Where do you see that? Is it in her expression?

S9: It's in her fingers. I also think that...it says that there is something underneath that you're looking at, especially with her shoes ... she doesn't look like she would get up and put those red shoes on. Think that's ... the artist that's put her in those shoes. Who is it [the artist]?

M: Meredith Frampton is the artist (I don't want to reveal the gender) – she's Mary Kelsey ... her position, to have her feet tucked up on the settee, with your shoes...

S: ... her hand

S6: It's a bit, in those days, it's a bit, - well racy, yeah, to put your shoes on ...

M: I was wondering if we could say anything about the space of the painting?

S5: ... the chair, the arm ...

S4: It looks too shallow, the space ...

M: It looks impossible, yeah ... I suppose if she were sitting back into the space – which is impossible because the space is so constricted ... although a lot of you were picking up on it when you said, 'The hands, the hands.' Something about the hands and about her looking uncomfortable ... I suppose this painting's supposed to create a certain kind of picture, and it works really well, but then there's something ... and I think it's that idea of there being a very smooth surface. And that's supposed to be really convincing. It's like people look at the arm and they say, 'It's like a photograph!' – so skilled.

This room is called 'Realisms' – fabulous post-modern plural. I suppose this is kind of a photographic realism. It's almost as if someone tells a story really, really well, with lots of detail, you believe it don't you? Even if there's something going dramatically wrong with the hip ...

D: Yes

M: It's a really narrow space isn't it, almost like a butterfly squished in a glass. If we think about how she's presented to the gaze of the viewer. She's flattened.

S6: There's a mark on her thigh. Is that where the paint's cracked?

M: Yeah, I think it's where ... I don't think you'd notice it if the painting weren't so smooth.

S: That really draws attention to her ...

M: Yeah

S: Maybe it's a ... she's got a shoe fetish!

M: What clues do we have about her hair?

S: It's quite dowdy – she's pushing boundaries ... her dress ... her hair's quite short – then her relaxed pose in some ways and yet, it is quite formal ... between what's ...

M: The flower – certain kinds of flower ... she's not wearing any jewellery - I think she just appears to me impossibly passive ... I mean, do you get the sense she's thinking anything?

S1: I think she looks almost impassive like you are ... quite happy for you to stare at her, you know. She's sort of, you know...

M: There's this fantastic Andy Warhol film of a model ... at the Factory and he'd just leave the camera on and make people sit there for ours. I saw the films, they're brilliant – you've got Marcel Duchamp – for ages he's impassive, then his mask starts to slip and you can see that he's uncomfortable. The models just stare into the camera and it's fascinating. They're being really stared at and then there's this kind of absenting of themselves. And they can just do it for hours and hour and hours.

S6: Isn't that the kind of idea – they're actually looking into their mind's eye at a picture of themselves? I think John Berger wrote that whole thing about when a woman sort of is, you know, viewed by a man, she's not really thinking about what she looks like, she's thinking about what she looks like to him. She sort of goes into herself, so ... It's like the cinema with the whole mirror thing – that it's kind of narcissistic.

M: What ... yeah – go on.

S1: I was going to say, do you think the colour of the flower and the colour of the dress are significant?

M: Yeah, it's a camellia, sorry, magnolia. It's something he knows about her ... she's like a hothouse flower.

S5: It's an evergreen.

M: I think what's really interesting about this painting and what we've talked about with other groups is this vision ... which is kind of seamless, that we just accept how it is ... I think our first comments were very ...

S1: Superficial...

M: When actually you realise it's ... like codes.

S6: It's like – didn't you say downstairs it's like when you take something apart, its beauty is lost, otherwise ...

M: Yeah.

S6: Don't know ...

M: It seems to me like a very controlled and very controlling image, do you know what I mean, with everything squished out - squished between two panes of glass so she almost has to elongate herself. It's a very confined space, and not just a physical space but also a symbolic space ... very narrow ...
What kinds of dualisms are at play? Pure and sexual ... It's almost as if the artist is thinking ...

S4: Do you think the triangle makes you feel more closed in, draws the points together?

D: There's lots of curves going on – lots of interlocking going on all over the place. That table ...

S: I guess that sort of works with the triangle.

M: It's quite classical, the perfection of the triangle. Then if you think of the Baroque, things leaking out and being a bit wobbly. That would be incredibly disruptive, wouldn't it ... some active elements. What if she were to turn around and look at us?

S4: I think it would be a...

M: It would be a different painting wouldn't it? Her gaze...

S4: It would be more confrontational.

M: If you look at the way this room has been curated, if you look along the wall – some models have their eyes closed. If you did an inventory of all the portraits in the building – a list of the gazes, people who are looking right at us, people who are ... so we're encountering this person, person to person. But it's really fascinating how this kind of works on a formal level ... symbolic values ... supported by the composition, colour, elements, scale. It's very finely-honed isn't it? It's not leaving anything to chance, at first glance ... natural, and then it's incredibly artificial.

S1: Do you think it says more about the artist or the sitter?

M: I used to use this painting at Tate Liverpool. I used to use it with domestic violence offenders which was extraordinary – the assumptions: 'Is she pregnant?' 'She looks like she's never done a day's work in her life'. But then the painting enables you to question those responses. Where do those assumptions come from? It's a really interesting painting in that sense ... questioning responses.

I think she was a dancer.

S4: She looks like a dancer.

M: Dancer/prostitute – the two things seemed to be inter-changeable in the society of the time.

S4: So he's trying to redeem her maybe ...

APPENDIX 2

Interview themes (discussion with Louise Coysh, Serpentine Gallery).

The idea of there being particular areas of expertise associated with a particular individual within the partnership

Project Curator as mediator/ 'shock absorber'

The 'educational' function of the institution - how it's understood, how it operates

How projects evolve - what for you were the key moments when the project developed/ changed course

Ownership and idea of 'contested territories'

Genuine relationships (as opposed to..?)

APPENDIX 3

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Interview with Louise Coysh, 1st April 2008.

MR. The first theme we came up with was the idea of there being particular areas of expertise 2/associated with a particular individual within the partnership.

LC. Yes, I think that's a very accurate statement (laughs). Well I guess thinking about Neveroddeven, that was really important in that project because it was specifically exploring this quite ambiguous territory between art and dyslexia. It was really important to have people who were expert or had knowledge in those fields so, yes, there's always a need for that kind of specific expert if you like. Bringing an artist into any situation, you're looking for someone who has rigour in terms of their practice and someone who tests their kind of research against a different kind of situation. You obviously need someone who's quite robust in terms of doing that, so by 'expert', maybe it's thinking about people's experience. I would say it's always really important, actually, to have artists who even if they aren't hugely experienced in, let's say collaborative practice or... but they're experienced and grounded in their work, so that they're able to manage the challenges that might evolve... And then I guess, in terms of a project where you have very clear partners within other organisations, then you're looking for a different kind of expertise to the art institution, if you like, or the commissioning organisation, where they bring a different research methodology to the work and also bring a kind of expertise in terms of thinking about access. In something like the Dyslexia Project, well, for both artworks – because they were both about communication – [the partners from external organisations were there] not to challenge [them] as artwork[s], but actually to help the artwork succeed on [a] level [where] they were able to be useful and functional as well as existing in this kind of arts-space. So that was really interesting – thinking about using the kind of 'normal' expert as the evaluator is really interesting as well, so Dyslexia Action actually gave their space to do something different. So I guess in a way, though we haven't really thought about this, for John Rack [Professor John Rack, head of research and development at the charity Dyslexia Action] in a way he was able to do what we'd asked the artist to do: challenge [his] practice.

MR. So on a case by case basis, from project to project – does the idea of expertise change from project to project?

LC. I guess before this conversation, I hadn't really thought about it as expertise but that, of course, is what you're looking to bring together when you start to develop projects and begin – whether that starting-point is a conversation with an artist, context, or a question - it's always that point where you're looking for someone... I mean, there's expertise in terms of establishing strong collaborations, when working with given groups. When working with older people, for instance, you'd want to know that you're going to be working with a collaborator who understands the aims and ambitions of the project, and that it might be something that as an institution you're offering them [something] additional, unique...but equally you'd want to know that you've got someone who's open to trying something new out, because actually, as an interlocutor with another organisation, it's really essential to have someone who's open to a different kind of language, or a different kind of discussion. Even if they don't fully get it from the beginning, you see that there might be some kind of potential. I guess, just to quantify that, a really good example is the 'Seeing Voices' Project at the Serpentine. Jackie Ede, as she's now called, was the Head of Occupational Therapy and Rehabilitation, and she was trying to get in touch with art galleries and museums in central London as a way of bridging this kind of geographical distance between mental health service users out in North East London, and actually wanting to formalise links and communication with...

MR. So she contacted you?

LC. So she'd contacted loads of places in London and found Serpentine, and found me, and we had a conversation and she came and met us. But she already had the expertise in her field and she was – because occupational therapy is about meaningful activity rather than art therapy - she was wanting to engage people in meaningful activity, but knew that wasn't something she was able to provide. That was really interesting because she didn't quite know what it would be, so she was very open to thinking about anything, what it could be... without dismissing anything.

MR. So what was the instigating point for Neveroddoeven?

LC. That was a project which came about because of the Cy Twombly exhibition and it wasn't something I was involved in at that point but Sally (Tallant, Head of Education Programming, Serpentine) was starting to think about language, and how artists create their own form of visual language, particularly in terms of someone like Cy Twombly being an elder statesman who has obviously created a vocabulary over decades, and so that was the starting point really. Then thinking about the myth of the dyslexic being creative, which as we know, speaking to John Rack, can be a very positive thing for some people but can also be a real negative to those who don't perceive themselves as creative. So it really evolved out of that position, but it was quite a weird project in terms of thinking how and what it actually would be. The way we were thinking about projects up to that point were artists' residencies, and they were quite conventional in some degree – you know, an artist goes into a/ a school, b/ a community centre – or whatever – and does this thing. It wasn't necessarily about even a very specific place or site it was about a question or area.

MR. That's a really key point isn't it? And I suppose that's where the partners formed a constellation around ideas. It did seem 'siteless' in lots of ways.

LC. But it was good because then it gave us the opportunity to open up and actually work in sites and I think that's why originally we were thinking it was going to be one artist at Dyslexia Action, somehow being creative in what was quite a small building which had very tight constraints on its time and what could be done with people who came through there, because they were obviously going there to have lessons in literacy. It wasn't like a school where there was a bit more flexibility and space. Then the idea started to come back to 'Where do you start to encounter language?' and one of those things is at school, in the education system. And then at what point are you on your own? It's obviously childhood and adulthood - that natural division came in thinking about which artists are working in these areas – you know thinking about your work and pedagogy and the stuff that Abigail was doing challenging the order of things at the Oxford English Dictionary and adult education. So then, then it found its path through the artists' practice. The site started to become identified, but at that point it was quite far down the line in a way.

MR. Something about your role – before we talked about you as a mediator or even 'shock absorber' which is definitely how I perceived you. I said before, I felt defended and generally protected from all kinds of things. I was basically interested in why you would

take on that role and how you... it's an interesting role to become identified with - in some ways a facilitator but also stopping some things from coming through - a mediator who is a selective mediator.

LC. I think the reason I will never be an exhibition organiser - obviously you have a different set of negotiations scheduled but pretty much... the space of the work - all the work is fixed to a degree. I love exhibitions but I would never find the idea of lone forms very exciting. The thing that I find interesting is thinking about the difficulty... about that point of creation - because half the time, I mean it's very hard to articulate intention very often till you've done it, which is why I didn't carry on being an artist - but is what I find interesting about arts practice and what artists do. And I guess I don't also see myself as someone who is completely integrated into the artworld in a sort of all-consuming way so that it precludes any other interests. For me it's a really nice opportunity to, if you like, have your foot in the art institution and also have your foot firmly fixed on the ground outside - looking at formal education and a broader socio-political arena is interesting. So it's thinking then how an artist is fairly often delivering the aims of the institution to a greater or lesser degree - and that institution isn't always an art one; it may be a community one.

MR. So there's a perceived, not pressure exactly, but definite interest...

LC. I think I've always been interested in that aspect of... I mean, I see it more as negotiated practice rather than collaborative practice actually, and I really enjoy being involved within that discussion and sometimes being aware that I need to be very clear and to articulate a very clear and obvious position; but quite often particularly at the beginning of a project almost wanting to sit back and see how it evolves and there's definitely... maybe the shock-absorber thing is to do with gear changes in a way. Projects almost need the opportunity to evolve at their own pace and I think that's something, actually whether intentional or not, the Serpentine is really good at being able to accommodate. From your project which was probably meant - and this is thinking about it moving away from being a residency - it was probably meant to be from 3 to 6 months, then it turned into 2 years. Or Nils Norman's which was originally a 3 month contract that turned into 2 and a half years. Or Disassembly which sort of...

MR. That's really unusual isn't it? Looking at this whole idea of project management...

LC. Because you don't have the constraint of an exhibition, you don't have the pressure of the expectation of marketing, so the benefit of maybe being slightly under the radar is actually being able to give artists the space within which to work. And I think it's not just duration. Thinking also about Faisal Abdul Allah at North Westminster, going 'OK, we're going to have you in a school two days a week for a year and we know what we're going to do for the next three months and then we'll see how it goes.' It's thinking how you then evaluate and reconsider that artist's position within that context, and what it is they're doing and trying to do, almost reforming a different kind of constellation to allow that next stage to happen.

MR. Isn't that hard for you to kind of... I can imagine, for me, the quality of the project improves in many ways because what you're working to is almost the pace of development of relationships, expanding to accommodate the time it takes to accommodate relationships. But just in terms of getting your head around your workload, if you initially anticipate that something's going to last from 3 to 6 months and then goes on for 2 years...

LC. For me, I'm not that bothered about the big private view, the speeches or the exhibition - although when it gets to that point it's really exciting. I think knowing a project has integrity and knowing it's got all these different layers - it lets you have an outcome which is strong, an artwork in its own right, be that artwork of many manifestations - thinking about your website, Abigail's playing cards, Nil's book, Faisal's images, which did exist as huge banners but now exist as digital files, and all the different permutations - but actually for me it's all of the memory and the baggage that comes along with that project that I think is really interesting. I was talking to Faisal about this the other night: for him Disassembly isn't the artwork necessarily, for him it's the lived experience and those incidents where you know, a teacher turns round and says, 'Actually, this has been an amazing year and I'm not going to return at the end of it because they can't top it' and I think things like that... and so for me it's that accumulation of things, of different kinds of discussions for me is probably the motivation why I do it, and the thing that I least enjoy is that point where it does have to become really public. At that point the work is subjected to

scrutiny, maybe, by an institution which doesn't – or hasn't – fully engaged in that process. And because of the nature of most art institutions, it's geared up to public presentation but doesn't necessarily value the process that has brought that together. It's really difficult - I've become this weird champion of evaluations because that's really the only way of capturing the intangible to some degree, and I don't think even that on its own is enough. But I think trying to capture the impact and learning experience – it's always one of those things – with Disassembly we had a dedicated evaluator and a research assistant with them but even that wasn't enough because actually you're dealing with, you know, four artists' projects which have got multiple people involved in them. That was, in fact, the most in-depth evaluation I've been involved in as the project organiser but I can still see it's not quite enough. I guess it's that difficulty of not being able to disengage – because you get so engaged in a project – and also thinking about the artist and what they're trying to achieve.

MR. It's in the nature of the work, isn't it, of the project? It is, as you say, below the radar in terms of conventional exhibition-making. I think it's something I really struggle with: how you value, how you document and how you judge that kind of practice? I mean, is it that child's experience, my experience and how do you measure those things?

LC. Have you seen the Disassembly evaluation? I should let you have a copy of that. It's actually really interesting because Faisal kept a journal, so Emily pulled off quotes and stuff out of that and did actually do a lot of in-depth interviews, and interviews along the way, that tracked evolution for the artist and the different people involved so that's really interesting. But yes it's the intangible ... unless... I think institutions are doing it because of the funding requirements – but I don't think they're necessarily doing evaluation as practice – I think that's a bit ..? But I do think evaluation as evidence is really, really interesting – evidence that can support the value of creativity – can just mean to support the argument to government. Although I do think that this becomes an interesting tool, because when artists are being... or funding is linked up to a social agenda - as long as the artist feels able to work within an agenda that doesn't denigrate what they're trying to do. I don't think that's necessarily problematic – it's more – it's facing up to reality by doing that rather than trying to make out that the artworld doesn't exist within wider socio-political fields.

MR. That's brilliant – it really ties in with loads of things I've been struggling with. I started out my thesis thinking of Claire Bishop's critique of that kind of practice – that it's no good judging participatory practice in ethical terms – it has to be judged as art, in terms of an aesthetic. I think there is a problem – and I don't think these projects are a form of social instrumentalisation or political instrumentalisation – I think there's some surplus, something else beyond that. So it's not therapy, it's not... you know... it's that and something else. So, it's very difficult to untangle.

LC. Yeah, I guess that's where the shock-absorber comes in. Because at the Serpentine I was very involved working with the Head of Grants and of writing funding applications and how you interpret the jargon or the requirements of someone like the HLF (Heritage Lottery) and also knowing that you want to do a certain thing with a certain project and not wanting to compromise either in a way. It's interesting because Disassembly was like this, I think possibly it was a very different set of circumstances with the Dyslexia Project, but being aware that there were all these funding aims and objectives in place which were written in a certain way to clarify certain funding objectives but actually were never ever passed on to the artist, and I think that shock-absorber thing where you see – you know that the impact of that work will have value and it will deal with those kind of things but it's not important for the artist to know what the agenda is. I mean obviously you wouldn't, you know, if the project was funded by the BNP to use a very extreme example, then obviously to not tell the artist something like that, that would be completely unethical. It was basically about saying to an artist 'Here's an open situation, what would you do?' Obviously the selection of the artist is really, really important and then also thinking about how you support an artist and guide them but not to fulfil funding criteria, because that's then the job of the gallery to make up any gaps or holes in whatever way needs to be done not in a way that detracts from the project so for instance you might have – well Toby Paterson did a project for Hornfield Primary School where he did one of his murals in the stairwell of the school that was designed by Dennis Lasden. Obviously, there needed to be all this interpretation stuff which he wasn't ever going to be able to do. The idea for those primary school kids to see an artist making his work in their school and then for it to be owned by them was great. This wasn't a project I had any involvement with at all but then a team of architects and an artist-educator were then brought in to do all that kind of interpretation stuff and to work with the school kids and take them on the school trips

and look at architecture and things like modernism, and so they very clearly fulfilled a very strict brief, but the artist was able to make his work. I think it's really important to think about layering of projects and how you ensure that you make it clear for participants or an audience on the one hand, but then also that you ensure you have the artists being able to what they do.

MR. I think as well for Neveroddoeven, for me what was interesting is that I'm not sure that I have a clearer idea whether dyslexia's genetic, whether it's social. I mean there was no attempt really throughout to come up with answers, even at the conference. Somehow for me it was that keeping the question open. What was really interesting for me was Abigail's group, their commitment to the project and making their voices heard and the children in the school making their voices heard in a different way. That was the one unquestionable positive of the project. But it wasn't as if we set out with research questions – or perhaps we did set out with research questions but then by the end, we just had even more questions. We just problematised the whole situation. But we weren't forced to come to any conclusions.

LC. It's realising that it would be absolutely stupid to ask two artists in two years to do something that dyslexia specialists are still grappling with. And I think that was what was interesting about having Professor Uta Frith, (Emeritus Professor in Cognitive Development at University College London's Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience), who was looking at the part of the brain where word recognition and language are formed - and I think for Abigail's group that was really interesting – that was being confronted with some hard, scientific research – maybe a little too hard when she started talking about 'warts'. But of course it would be ridiculous to ask an artist to be a scientist or a social worker or a teacher in very conventional terms, so I think that's what made the project interesting because art isn't about closing down and giving answers, it's about creating a new space where much space can be created – a constant evolution if you like. I think because it didn't close itself down actually it was more sophisticated as a result. I think what the adult group did was more sophisticated as a result than asking 'What is dyslexia?' – it could've been really pedestrian. I actually really like the thing that Mel Saunders said which was really true in your work – that actually what's good for dyslexic children is good for anyone and it becomes about everyone – everyone in that class. And I can't really – I think I made the decision that you couldn't have children labelled dyslexic being pulled out and having special things – and actually that turned out to be really nice because we knew the project was with Dyslexia Action and it meant that the artwork had the Dyslexia Action label on it. But for teachers and for those parents it wasn't about their kid being labelled it, was about doing this amazing, fun thing that you could do with your friends, with your classmates, your Mum and Dad, you know whoever - really opening up opportunities. And as a result, the literacy co-ordinator for Westminster had me meeting up with different new primary school teachers – thinking about mnemonics – because that's how they're teaching everyone at the moment. So I think in that sense it was a real success to think about broad application as an artwork then as a genuine tool which was what we were also trying to achieve with that.

MR. Before you compared curating projects to curating exhibitions in a traditional way, and I was just wondering about how those projects helped you be in the institutional space in a different way. The idea that you can keep projects open, then the time frame – you're not constrained by marketing, and also you don't have to answer questions, that idea that there's no fixed ending point – I know there was the conference and the creation of the website and such. I was just wondering if that's something you were aware of – that somehow you're behaving differently within the institution in comparison with your colleagues?

LC. I think. I mean obviously there gets to a point in production where you have to ask very closed questions and start to close things down. I think in the role I was in at the Serpentine, the equivalent were the exhibition organisers, or curators as they're now ... called, and in a way they're always on deadline and ask very clear, direct, specific questions. I think the benefit of being able to have much more open conversations and not just with the artists but with all the different people concerned. You know, with the Hearing Voices project Sally and I were having a moment with Jackie where we really had to explain some of the – well we didn't feel it was jargon – but obviously the way we were communicating the things – at a certain point it seemed to be this conflict between social inclusion, that she had to be aware of in her role as occupational therapist – you know 'everyone is an artist and everyone has the right to be' – and I'm saying 'But we're bringing in the artists and

they're the experts' and having to say that this doesn't denigrate the contribution of other people – obviously this is why you're working with us. And almost talking things through. You know sometimes it's a question of helping to reinterpret or having to communicate something in a different way to a different person because of their professional or cultural background, to some degree. And that's really interesting and I had to shout down the phone at a Chelsea Pensioner the other day not because I was being horrible but because he was deaf and most people in the office – I had people telling me to shut up – people not actually being aware of having to communicate with people in different ways because pretty much most people are you know, artworld-induced, professional capacity. You know there's almost a kind of standard which they have to work with. Sometimes I'd be speaking to an artist in Denmark on a mobile phone trying to sign off a book, you know, you down the road or a Chelsea Pensioner or someone who completely had no idea about any single word that I said because it was so artworld and then you realise you have to change language and that also means you have to communicate in different ways and the whole access stuff. I think a lot of exhibition departments don't ever really take on board or think about that because they assume that the way you present is all to do with the building style and the look, it isn't about communication.

MR. That's bizarre isn't it?

So I guess that's how I see my job as completely different because you can't - whilst I don't think you can second-guess anything – be it an exhibition or whatever – you really can't second-guess the things that are going to upset people, or confuse people or really impress people. Sometimes peoples' enthusiasms can be too difficult – so over-enthusiastic that they then want to do all this other stuff – almost the things that the artist wants to do. Then that's another shock-absorber thing - all of that kind of stuff - and with the best will in the world as just one person you can't completely expect to transform – why would you want to? – you can't expect someone with a completely different background to suddenly understand you know, the background that I have - the MA, the BA, the art interest - and then get exactly what it is. But also the interesting thing is to see what value it is that they bring to the project which is really exciting and you can never, never second-guess what that's going to be.

MR. I think you've answered everything and more – the educational function of the institution...

LC. But I would say just to add to that that it's only as good as the people being the educational function of the institution. It's not about the institution, it's about the people. I guess it's about curiosity for me – like education in an arts institution isn't about having set formulas but it's about the individuals that constantly – it's that evaluation thing – constantly re-examining and reassessing what it is they're doing. I think as soon as something becomes formulaic it's not education its rote learning to some degree and I think that's the thing that you – an institution's only as good as the people in it at any given time and you can't assume that it's the institution that owns the work for the reasons that I've said that actually the notion of process – until an institution learns to find ways to record and value that process – it will never own the projects because.. it can own the artwork but it will never own the project because it will never retain or sustain the relationships it has with individuals or institutions because it's all about the personality of the artist, of the, you know, curator, organiser and their counterparts in those institutions. I think that's something that is really short-sighted not to value them more in a way.

