

First comes the human being and then the school, or that's how it was. Today we are students for life. We praise those that want to possess more, access more, get the credit and be acknowledged for more, that want to know, pay for it, and be more and more unique. All this to be the virtuous student of life.

I imagine a teacher of this same system but with an anatomy that might point us elsewhere. I imagine a teacher who's kept their head so close to their syllabus that they see it as a field, a landscape of blurred names and sounds for things. A teacher that has taught their class so many times that they have lost all interest in the course material and have resolved to teach it as an undulating song: an opera without words, tuned to the shifts in attention, boredom, daydream, trust, and distrust that animate the classroom. A teacher that has found themselves so Zoomed-out, yet again as a talking head, that their trunk has transformed into a hollow box with a proscenium cut into it, a small puppet theatre that has lost its distinctions between genuine person and acted character, private home and public stage, in a spatial mixup of all things back to front. A teacher that has wiggled their toes so deep into the soil in search of firm ground that they've pulled up roots, accidentally gathering their own botany of weeds, a private encyclopedia of the base, the foreign, the undesirable, the oh too adult, and the lewd. A teacher that has been so flooded by the endless bleh of widely accessible and ever-overgrowing discords, doom scrolls, AI synthesizers, and forums, all so information-rich that they have had to empty their own head to keep them afloat. This teacher, I imagine, does the worst and the best. They are an airhead: light at the top, weighted at the bottom, and transient in the middle.

– Timmy Simonds for Miss Othmar

I. Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook  
*The Two Planets Series (2008)*  
*Necessities Rhythm (2020)*

'The Two Planets' Series concerns a group of villagers who have never known art of any kind, or even the word art. The villagers are in each video sitting like students in front of Old Master paintings from different times and far-away places. The content of the village workers and their unknown knowledge about art is the embroiling of teacher and lesson at the same time. In the case of such videos screened in an educational setting, the viewers will be students who are mostly familiar with the artistic context and much cleverer than the villagers/teachers seen in the videos. In our activities in art circles, we take little interest in others' lack of knowledge about art, but in the videos, both those without knowledge and those of us with it are mutually trying to increase such knowledge. Examples of the latter are in the form of two writings about 'The Two Planets.' One of the writings concerns a talk about the terminology of *mise en abyme*. The other writing shows the same historical period of the masterpieces in the set of work. 'Necessities' Rhythm' and 'The Two Planets' Series are similar in terms of dissembling pretense by calling aspects of our being into question. The Two Planets Series reflects the narrow sphere of artistic knowledge and the habit of accepting, without question, well-known masterpieces, the classification of works of art, and comparison and contrast between formal knowledge and instinctive reaction. Necessities' Rhythm conveys bitter fissures between species, and presents parallels between intensive human consumption and indifferent living in cruel contrast with the peaceful-clean nature of a would-be world. Both works question what it means to be human from the position of viewers of the framing of indirect strange classes, putting them similarly into the position of the learner.

*At my teaching farewell party, I began my speech with the sentence: "I don't think that in the university where I teach In the Faculty of Arts, there will be many people working like this. This is because every time I park my car at the Faculty of Fine Arts there will be a dog running to greet me. Then four or five dogs will gather together and run in groups to come to class. After that, the dog, or dogs, and I will be in a class for about 15-20 minutes waiting for the students to arrive late." Of the video work where I gave a seminar in a morgue and taught, in effect, corpses, it was jokingly mentioned that students' tendency not to think, debate and critique had meant that I had mingled with dead students.*

*During my later years of teaching, I founded two new courses, Visual Arts and Multidisciplinary Art, in the hope of dissolving the hard lines of pedagogical division that were part of the institutional politics that protected teachers' existing safe areas of knowledge, rather than encouraging them to develop them individually. This reductive process appears to me to be less effective than striving for the integration of teachers according to their unique contributions. By now, the event of creating the two new art teaching curriculums has become as normal as everything in our world. The two courses' freshness has gradually dried under human beings' indifference to everything except self-ness. Our present reality may teach us to understand the whirlpool of ephemerality and impermanence in which we are placed. Such observation, however, enables me to view the light irony of the two referenced works shown in a context of reflection on the meaning of teaching in the art educational institution.*

II. Jef Geys  
*Middelheim Diptychs (1999)*

Middelheim high and low will be subdivided into 110 'quadras.' In each of the approximately square parcels that are reminiscent of a huge allotment, I had a countryside expert search for, pick, and dry a plant. The dried specimen receives a family name in Latin and Dutch, a number, and is framed. At the places of discovery a steel pole of about two meters high is placed in the ground and onto this a drawing in A3 format.

You could think of it like 'bus stops' with information panels. The drawings are a mix of early 17th century to 19th century porno images mixed each time with a 'corporate image' from large companies. In order not to startle the children, the drawings are placed high up. The dried and encased plants hang together on one wall in the Braem pavilion."

*(...) bridge the staggering divide between art-reality-school (...)*

*The school is incredibly important, but we have not come so far in that regard: When you notice how all the knowledge acquired outside of school sticks and the knowledge obtained in school does not, then you have to reconsider that every educational reform must start from the perspective of the teacher and not the student.*

*(...) That's where my first problem lies, hey, the studies. I didn't study linguistics. I haven't studied Germanic [languages]. I didn't study Greek. I didn't study Latin. I didn't study mathematics: what did I actually study? Nothing, hey! So I didn't study anything. (...) that lack, or yet that desire to know and understand those systems, had led me to try to understand, in a number of ways that may not be clear to everyone, what is going on inside those systems, and within those courses, what happens there, what the intention is, where they are actually going, what they have to do with each other (...)*

III. Alison Knowles  
*99 Red North (1970)*

While The House of Dust was installed at CalArts, Alison Knowles developed a computer program to generate random combinations of direction, colour, and quantity. She invited students at CalArts to interpret the results in each person's chosen artistic form. Alison herself interpreted 99 Red North by installing 99 red apples in lines pointing north and inviting visitors to take an apple and exchange it for any object they wished. It was installed outside on a broken tennis court, alongside The House of Dust, outside the main buildings at CalArts. For this installation of 99 Red North, visitors are once again invited to leave an object in exchange for an apple.

"I lined up 99 apples, not all in one line but in three lines, and the idea was that you could take an apple if you put something in its place. So I have a wonderful slide of someone who left his car keys because he'd always wanted to walk to work. He took his apple and left his car keys."

*I had taught only sporadically. I had taught things like a workshop or a summer program, but Fluxus, once I got into it, really took us all over the place and gave me a kind of credential for teaching because I don't even have a master's. I graduated from Pratt Institute as an artist. I never thought I'd be teaching, really. But then I began to feel that teaching should have to do with the real experience of the teacher rather than only book learning or whatever you want to call it. And CalArts offered that. It offered positions to people who didn't necessarily have a degree background. And so, since I had been traveling with the Fluxus group and had some opinions about new forms, I was able to jump in and enjoy teaching in Allan Kaprow and Paul Brach's department.*

*(...) I think each person did pretty much with that idea whatever they wanted to. I was putting up something called the House of Dust so I had these huge sculptures coming in on a flatbed truck and they had to be activated. I mean, I wasn't going to have them just sit on the land. They were weird-looking things, but they were important because the building itself was so unfortunate—the CalArts building—I felt you might as well put an apartment house there. So I would have my classes and my meetings out at the House of Dust, and we had a rail to run sound lines out there so we could do readings, and we had quite a number of food events out there. (...)*

*It was so different not only from the Villa Cabrini, but also from the big building we moved to in the second year, which we always called the Dow Chemical Center. [laughs] The house seemed very refreshing in its weirdness compared with the rest of the school. It had a circular hole in the top, so people who were into serious meditation could start at five in the morning out there under the light.*

*As I said, I have no credentials to teach, (...) I have no formal way to present—say, as Allan would, having taught for years. But I listen. I like to listen to what people have to say back to me and it helps me to make new work that they have a strong reaction to. Of the hundreds of salads that have been made, there has never been one the same as the other. I had a salad yesterday out on the street while I was doing errands, and I noticed that I never would have put wedges of tangerine in a salad—I never mix fruit with lettuce. So one has one's idées fixes about salad. (...)*

*(...) we came in there without the organization that a good teacher usually imposes. So I think the people who couldn't get along there were people—and I mean students—who couldn't relate. But we really had people all around to help the people who had more traditional backgrounds, the ones who were uneasy about trying to make their own work right away or work outdoors or do something with two dogs and a fish. I mean, whatever was proposed, we'd have people to help and to get something out of that person.*

IV. Gabo Camnitzer  
*Suit of Mirrors (2019)*

Suit of Mirrors is part of a series of activities and pedagogical tools I began developing in 2017 to facilitate young people in understanding the relationship between subjectivity (their sense of self) and their milieu (the environments they inhabit), and most importantly, the exaggerated separation of the two. In the summer of 2017, I organized a summer school with Mehdi Torkman under the heading of “Kamouflasjefellesskapet” (The Camouflage Society) at Tenthaus Oslo for young people in Oslo, Norway. As part of the school’s activities, we all created camouflage suits which we then wore on an excursion in the city center. It was during this process that I conceived of the suit of mirrors. Suit of Mirrors was first activated during a workshop I facilitated in 2019 at a middle school in Angered, Sweden, with the support of Gothenburgs Konsthall. The suit of mirrors aims to aid young people in visualizing and exploring their dialectical relationship to their environments. Young people in the workshop took turns wearing the suit while navigating their school during normal class hours. They explored classrooms, cafeterias, offices and hallways. There was a lot of laughter, confusion, and discovery. The students took photos of each other and then reflected on the process by creating collages which became a giant book whose only copy is housed at the school. The version of the suit shown here was fabricated by Claudia De Sousa-Baptista in New Bedford, Massachusetts.

*I was five or so and my mom’s best friend, Gloria, was babysitting me while my parents were away. I adored Gloria and always wanted to impress her. When it came time to put me to bed, Gloria lovingly tucked me in and said goodnight. Before leaving the room, she turned off the light. I was accustomed to sleeping with the light on at night. Pensively, I said to her, “But I sleep with the light on.” She curtly but lovingly responded in her Trinidadian accent, “not anymore.” I was caught off guard by her confidence and care; I was speechless. She left. I lay in the dark and contemplated the gravity of what had happened. I think this was the first moment I grasped, intellectually, that I was mutable. I sometimes still sleep with the light on, but it is usually by mistake.*

V. Montez Press Radio

*Radio Table from 46 Canal (2018-2024)*

The table, a 4'x4' piece of 3/4" thick birch plywood, is at the center of our world at Montez Press Radio. It's stained with elbow grease from years of meetings, joyful spreadsheeting, and daydreaming. It's pockmarked with Sharpie from writing the names of a thousand friends and guests on flyers. Its surface layer is a thin, sticky residue of oil-based wood sealant, beer, wine, seltzer, and cheese dust calcified over countless hours of conversation, listening, and sharing. Now in its fifth year and on to its third table, Montez Press Radio has gone from an idea — an excuse to commune sonically and casually (drunkenly) with artists and thinkers — to a small non-profit organization bravely embarking on the seas of grant writing, committee appointing, budget calculating and inevitable resolution tabling. Sitting at the radio studio's latest table, glossy and unfamiliar without the old patina, I can't help but remember the belief I once had in those quixotic avant-gardes who sought to merge art and life. I wonder what they would think of how we have brought their ideas to fruition; in a world where art functions as a tool of commerce to affirm compulsory and competitive individuality, and life is valuable insofar as it submits to the logic of constant production, circulation, and accumulation to justify its worth. I'm less sure than ever about the path forward but I'm certain any pursuit of that old ideal, of merging art and life, requires sitting together. Perhaps we'll be sitting at the new table Timmy made us when we figure it out, or maybe it'll happen at the fourth table, or the fifth.

– Thomas Laprade

*The party was filled with finger foods and sweet wine and sentimental toasts. It couldn't be denied how many people the money brought together, how many unlikely friendships and bonds, like this one, formed across borders, our connection to each other the deep well of family wealth that found itself distributed amongst the pockets of American, British, and European artists who would meet two or three times a year to argue about the books, magazine issues, theater productions, and radio broadcasts we were all somehow involved in, creators of, masterminds behind. This was the gift the money gave us, to not just have ideas, but to be able to turn them into tangible objects, lived experiences, stories, lessons.*

*I hurried him into the bathroom stall before a security guard might see (how horrifying it would be to get caught, like a junkie, like a child, in a place as opulent as this) and he broke out two longish lines on his phone screen. The toilet flushed automatically behind us.*

*We inhaled through the rolled up tickets he'd gotten earlier in the day at the Hauptbahnhof, on his journey here. "We should use bills," I said, but he insisted that this paper was cleaner, printed just today off of a big, sterile roll from the industrious dispenser of the train station automat.*

*"Clean paper to balance out the dirty drugs."*

*"Wait - no one's told you about the cancer inside the receipts?"*

– Stacy Skolnik



VI. Laura Bernstein

*In the Shape of a Watch-Coat (2012)*

“To be sure, in coolish weather you may carry your house aloft with you, in the shape of a watch-coat; but properly speaking the thickest watch-coat is no more a house than the unclad body;...so a watch-coat is not so much of a house as it is a mere envelope, or additional skin encasing you. You cannot put a shelf or a chest of drawers in your body, and no more can you make a convenient closet of your watch-coat.”<sup>1</sup>

“I began my construction of this piece holding this passage. In an attempt to prove Ishmael wrong, what if in fact, I could wear all my belonging on me and treat my coat as if it were a closet. To be self-sustainable, self-sufficient and self-contained like the great whale whom “carries a surplus stock of vitality in him, [or] just as the camel crossing the waterless desert carries a surplus supply of drink for future use in its four supplementary stomachs.”<sup>2</sup>

My second skin, my watch-coat would contain pockets and pouches to carry all that I might need to survive. Using the cream colored wool from old naval one-piece suits, I began by deconstructing the original forms creating shapes that would hold the things that I use on a day-to-day basis. Spools of thread, scissors, my water bottle and lunch tin, hard drive and sketchbooks.

But for the watch-coat to fulfill its full potential, it would have to house more than just the physical. I found myself molding impressions—Vague, imprecise fossil-like forms that spoke more toward absence and association. Worn on the outside, these pockets are no longer private storage spaces that conceal intimate belongings. Rather, they act as placeholders for memories or empty vessels available to hold future experiences. The coat speaks to an imagined place and time, heavy but malleable.

*How I am shaped as an educator is undoubtedly formed by who and what has taught me both within and without the classroom and studio. Not an imitation but a reaction or some confluence of the two.*

*A demonstration. The performance of a demonstration requires breaking down information step by step. But in talking while making, my language breaks down--not great for a teacher, when you must narrate out loud the steps you are taking. I've always had to work against my own bias of prioritizing language over visuals. Where did I inherit this hierarchy, prioritizing words over images? Let's instead learn to ask lots of questions and see things from every angle like a sculpture. If you teach it, you should probably do the thing yourself first. So when I started teaching stop-motion animation to College students, I decided to start working with stop-motion within my sculptures and installations.*

*I first began teaching stop-motion animation in the media lab at the Children's Museum of the Arts (CMA) from 2015-2019. The classes were mostly co-taught, which made for dynamic opportunities to both lead and to follow, to observe and be observed.*

*While doing a “how to” demo of stop motion, with paper cut-ups, my teaching collaborator, C, illustrated a rocket slowly launching across the screen. Midway through the demo we both knew the optics were all wrong, the rocket looked like a phallus; yet, as we looked around the classroom, at the polite, eager to please children we also recognized how we could no longer control how this example was about to proliferate around the room. When it came time to share, we witnessed the power of mimicry enacted in full force as we watched rocket after rocket, launch, explode, and combust across the big screen.*

1 & 2: From Chapter 35, *The Mast-Head* (p 175), and Chapter 85, *The Fountain* (p 390), of *Moby Dick* by Herman Melville, 1851

VII. Paul Mpagi Sepuya  
*Screen (OX5A2655) (2020)*

(...) When I started making the images with the mirrors, I didn't set it up as a way to invite the viewer in – that's never been a part of it. It was about being able to work with the kind of picture where the figure-ground relationship got kind of mixed up, but in relation to the unfolding of time, so that the recurring background of the images would be this sort of shifting and slowly changing space of the studio.

(...) If I were to make a portrait of you now, it's not about trying to make a portrait of you now, it's not about trying to make a definitive sort of thing. The construction of it, the setting, how it is in the studio—it's part of the larger construction of the studio in a certain sense...There's never an intended outcome. The factors are set and then whoever I'm shooting responds to it. We experiment, and then I adjust the factors based on the experimentation.

*Teaching is a stable if difficult job and incredibly freeing for my studio practice. It is a practical job that I both love and dream of quitting almost weekly. But I really am passionate about teaching and care deeply for the students, to whom I am very loyal. Connecting with them is what keeps me going.*

*(...) Really where I have found the challenges of intergenerational differences most productive is in graduate teaching and advising with our queer, BIPOC, immigrant, and first-generation students. They are the most passionate, thoughtful, and vocal members of our community, and I am constantly learning from them about language and theory, aspects of self-determination, and issues of concern and advocacy. They keep me on my toes. For me, it has been a process to see myself as a member of the faculty moderating, translating, critiquing, and advocating for these shifts rather than being part of these students' cohort, if that makes sense. I only completed my MFA six years ago, and in many ways I still feel so close to the students and their experience.*

*(...) In spring 2020, and every quarter since, I have posed the following challenge to white artists and art students: Rewrite your artist statement to include the word "whiteness." It's up to you to figure out what to do with it. It began as a series of Instagram posts. It's interesting but not surprising to list the range of responses. Those include thank-yous, requests for help in doing the work, anger at not capitalizing "White," and so forth. Whether we like it or not, artists of color have been made to answer for the questions of race and ethnicity. Gay, queer, and trans artists have been asked to answer for the questions of gender and sexuality. White artists, as far as I know, have never been asked to do something this simple. And it's the hardest thing.*



VIII. Adam Putnam

*Untitled. (red hallway) (2019)*

The magic lanterns were an attempt to make something out of nothing. Fragile objects on the verge of collapse get activated by a single light bulb, casting ephemeral, architectural spaces. In this instance the hope was to have the light project an endlessly receding, dark hallway.

In fact, I have always had an elusive diagram in my mind that instead of a light bulb, it would be my body itself projecting the architectural spaces.

Perhaps a glimmer of this improbable notion can be seen in the early photograph on display.

*Apparently, I once told a student to go home and cut the eyes out of a photograph of his mother. I'm not sure what the result was, but this story has been repeated back to me multiple times, and while I have no memory of ever saying this, it is probably my best assignment to date.*

IX. Franz Erhard Walther

*First Work Set – #34: To Have Time (Armpiece) (1967)*

*#8: Night Piece (1965)*

The First Work Set is a series of activatable artworks that Franz made from 1963-69, shortly before he started teaching at Art Academy Hamburg in 1970. The majority of the works in this series are made from a thick tarpaulin fabric (a thick type of canvas) and are stored in a thin linen sleeve when not in use. To be activated, each work is opened up by its user(s), activated for a self determined amount of time, and then packed back into its stored form. While many of the works from this set are for two or more people to activate together, there are a few that are meant to be activated alone by one person.

The activation of *To Have Time* is described as:  
–to have time, resolutions, gathering–

The user - usually sitting at a table - pushes his forearms into the bag, presses his elbows into the corner of the piece, places his hands on top of each other and then remains in this position.

The activation of *Night Piece* is described as:  
–night piece, shadows entertain–

The piece is laid out. The candles are placed on the floor on the right and left, a few centimeters away from the piece, in an extension of the longitudinal axis and lit. The user observes the movement of the shadows caused by drafts. As the candles burn down, the shadow becomes larger and also touches the cloth - black on black.

*I started my studies in 1957. I was eighteen years old. By chance I had learned about the existence of a School for Applied Arts in Offenbach, a town near Frankfurt. I sent my application and was invited to take an aptitude test and was eventually accepted. After two years of studies, developing my Wordworks, I changed to the Art Academy Frankfurt. After three semesters, because of the nature of my experimental work, I was expelled from the academy. I applied at the Art Academy Düsseldorf, at that time the most advanced Art Academy in Europe. They accepted me and I entered the class of Karl-Otto Götz, one of the leading informal painters in Europe. He was much more tolerant of me, giving all his students artistic independence. For me, this is an exemplary attitude. There I could develop and conceive of my own art independently. The same was for Gerhard Richter and Sigmar Polke, with whom I studied in Götz's class.*

*Why, at all, do I tell this personal story? At that time, I realized that art can't be taught. So what is possible as a teacher? It is possible to create a sanctuary, a refuge in which an artistic individuality develops. With that attitude I accepted an appointment as professor at the Art Academy Hamburg in 1970. My condition for accepting the position was that my teaching had to be free from academic pressure and conventions of the academy. My teaching should only need to relate to contemporary art. I insisted on studies of art history beyond its traditional methods. I felt that commitment for all of this had to be authentic.*

X. Elizabeth King  
*Theater* (1972-73)

You close the two halves around your head, a private one-person show. I made it 53 years ago when I was a student at the San Francisco Art Institute. This is the only piece I ever made that came to me in a vision in advance, after a bike accident on a San Francisco hill. The closet door only opens for the person sitting in the chair, and then closes when they leave. The sibyl in the closet is made of rubber latex. When the door opens, she looks at you through the mirror on the wall. Her jaw is hinged and she once chewed, the motion in the mirror catching your eye, but the latex is too fragile now. One of my teachers refused to try it, though I made the theater adjustable for people of different heights.

*You make a work of art and it's always less, and more, than you think. Milan Kundera said the novel should be smarter than the writer. But how do you do this, let alone teach it? Intent lights the fire in the studio. But the best ideas show up late, unwelcome and pushy. The artist wants to go one way, the work wants to go another. Process saves us from the poverty of our intent.*

*A good teacher can show you how to look. Bill Geis was one of our teachers at SFAI. In class critiques, he looked at what we made and delivered an astounding verbal performance of where each work took his eye and his mind. Or where it didn't. Either way we witnessed a virtuoso real-time talking demonstration of the act of looking. Things we hadn't seen, we saw.*

*It's good to have more than one teacher, since there are different kinds of looking.*

XI. Patricia Belli  
*Limb* (2024)

I am interested in the evocative value of materials, whether it is the suggestion of their own history, as in the case of driftwood, bones or plastic waste, or associations from similarity, for example when a branch recalls a knee:  
it excites me how the same branch can be both things before your eyes: knee and wood.

Together, driftwood and plastic waste speak about death;  
an anthropocentric world facing the abyss.

*When I returned to Managua in 2001, I founded the Space for Artistic Research and Reflection (EspIRA). EspIRA lived from 2001 to 2021. Its aim was to create a space for systematic artistic education through exercises and activities focused on creative freedom and critical responsibility.*

*Criticism and experimentation were done with enthusiasm or pain, or both. We had no formalities, instructors and students alike were called by their first names, and, as a matter of fact some students were simultaneously instructors and vice versa, depending on their particular needs and expertise. Some of the first participants of the workshops went on to become program coordinators; maybe ten, or so became instructors of different programs.*

*The school had many different spaces throughout the years. It started in my house, then moved to a larger house, then to a gallery. Always in-kind support. The different spaces allowed different creative possibilities, but we did not consider them limiting (...) there was always the street, the park and the city to make, to show and to share. In the words of one of EspIRA's former students, Dariana Valenzuela:*

*"The game of creativity is not limited to a work of art that is going to be exhibited; I try to bring my creative project to the discovery of everything I can, including myself, and then go on to create new ways of being in everyday life."*

XII. Pepón Osorio  
*reForm* (2014-17)

In 2013, two-dozen Philadelphia schools were shuttered by city authorities in an effort to close a budget deficit. In response to these closings, Osorio collaborated with ten students to create an immersive environment in a classroom at the Art Education and Community Arts Practices program in the Tyler School of Art. Using the surplus of discarded materials from their program, the students built a world, however small and temporary, governed by their own rules, designed according to their own visions, in which they might think experimentally about education in an idealized way.

“I looked at this building as a ghost. I saw it also as a metaphor for the state of public education. It’s just one big shell without any content, without any function whatsoever in the community. I’m sure you know (...) how (schools) were placed (...) in the centers of communities in the 40s and 50s. (...) So I was wondering, how was this community around the periphery of this building functioning? And how was that displacement affecting the community?”

*I’m not interested in accepting things as they are given to me... It happened as an artist, when I was developing my work, my practice, and when I came into teaching my subconscious allowed me to find the same thing.*

*When people talk to me, I listen to what they want to tell me, but little by little I move away from what they are saying and more into what they are not saying. That is a way to access information and also make them aware of what they didn’t want to say (...) To me, there is more in the silence than there is in the verbal.*

*(...) there is this whole notion of “you don’t know much, as the professor I know everything and I am going to teach you what you need to know,” which is the existing model. What I am doing with the students is actually revealing that what you need to know is in there. It is already in there. If you turn it and shift it a little bit, it just might change the whole ball game. All you need to do is expand on the changing of that frame. That’s all (...) There’s nothing that they need to acquire, it’s just changing the configuration of how they understand the world.*



XIII. Shellyne Rodriguez

*Robert Blackburn Printmaking Series (2024)*

These prints hold a space. Sometimes it's a communal space in our common living areas inside the internal colonies on the periphery of empire. Sometimes it's the quiet nooks we inhabit where we get to be with ourselves. The living beside each other and the being with ourselves properly, shapes our experiences.

It is these lived experiences that meet each other in the commons. And it is the commons that holds the potential. Where we might come together to study and organize our collective power. Where experience can meet consciousness. Where we ground together (in the spirit of Walter Rodney).

*Following the arrest of an estimated 500 students at the Columbia University and City college (CUNY) encampments in solidarity with the Palestinian Resistance, hundreds of New Yorkers rushed to One Police Plaza to provide jail support for these mighty students who faced a militarized police force aided and abetted by the cowardly leadership of their respective institutions.*

*I, along with an army of other professors who have been unjustly fired or reprimanded for supporting the Palestinian resistance and speaking out against genocide were present that day. To my surprise, I encountered two of my former students from two completely different schools who I had taught semesters apart. They were together.*

*Soha, is a Muslim hijabi girl I had taught at Hunter college. The other, Joey, a young Jewish boy I taught at the School of Visual Arts. It was a joyous reunion. Seeing them there together supporting other students was invigorating!*

*Soha declared that, "ya Allah professor your class was the best!" and Joey thanked me for sharing an essay with him written by the Palestinian Jewish scholar Ariella Aïsha Azoulay titled "Unlearning our Settler Colonial Tongues" which wove through language and the colonial erasure of Arab Jewish life by the Zionist project. "I'm so glad I read that essay back then, it really helped me deal with this moment we are living now," he said.*

*I had done my job, and here was the confirmation. Outside of the holding cells, where students and faculty were putting study into practice, together.*

*It turned out that Joey had transferred schools and he and Soha were now classmates and fast friends. This encounter reminded me that the institution isn't shit. What makes a school is how we hold space together. The classroom is a relationship between students and teachers and learning happens for all of us.*

XIV. Anton van Dalen

*Avenue A Cut-Out Theatre Props (1995-2015)*

These are puppets and props from an itinerant theatre that Anton carried with him around the East Village in the mid 1990s. The brick building, address 166 (Anton's home), acts as a box to store all the other pieces of the puppet theatre, with two straps on its back to turn it into a backpack. A smaller version of the same building with an oval cut underneath it, is worn as a hat. On its peak is a drawing of Anton calling to his pigeons from his coop, a practice he has continued since his childhood in the Holand. Together, the puppets and their "images constitute a kind of history of the East Village during the artist's time there: its immigrant populations, its tenements, its drugs and violence and art scene and homeless settlements and riot police, and later its condos and investment bankers." Speaking to a group of students from a program at the Cooper Union brought to his studio by Marina Gutierrez, he said,

(...) that's what this little theater that I'm going to show you guys is all about. It's sort of a record of what it was like for me coming [to the East Village] essentially as a white guy from Holland, [who] grew up in a very orthodox church that was Calvinist. I feel that whatever I do (which it happens to be is art), as a sort of a documentarian, I feel obliged that I want to make a recording of what's happening around me. And so I'm always looking, "What is happening? What is changing?" It was sort of a way of trying to understand the life that I inhabit (...)

(...) what I think I've found is that (...) in the neighborhood, that you don't always want to be like an observer of life, that you have to step into life. And then when you step into life, you meet a lot of friends. And it's a very (...) you don't feel guilty about just sniping on the sidelines, right? That you're participating in the process of building a new community, that's really what you're trying to do there.

*Here comes another one down. Here they come. When they're on the coop, they can't really see the skyline. They only can see the neighboring [buildings] like across the street, but now they're starting to fly together because that's what they want to do slowly. So it's partly what I show them. And also partly there's a natural inclination, like people, to crowd together and to fly together.*

*Yeah. For me, it's interesting that I've been doing this since I was 12 years old. So what is that? 70 years going on. To think that there's still a part of one's life that is intact from that long time ago. It's sort of an interesting thing. Because we kind of live our life, you know, It's like a journey that's always moving away from something towards something else. And that there is one part of one's life that remains, that is possible to have that same intimacy with nature. I think it's, for me, it's a very precious kind of relationship I feel with them. Because in a way you kind of have to allow them to trust you, that you are actually trying to do your best with them and to be fair about it.*

XV. Timmy Simonds

*Inversions of the bad teacher (2024)*

These pages are different reflections on what teaching is or might be. Each has a bouquet of bleached and transparent parsley resting on them. The parsley is preserved by glycerine, which acts like skin, sweating when it's humid and drying out in the cold.

Some of the texts are perversions of what other educators have historically stated in hoping to make a change to education, others are reflections on the sound of my own voice while teaching. I started writing texts like these after a semester of teaching across 3 schools and juggling the changes that came with remote teaching. At the same time seeing a sudden deflation of what accredited education means and any value in getting a degree. At the same time I was reading *Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1968)*, a text that outlines the oppressive and conservative "banking model of education" that Paulo Freire remarked as plaguing education, governance, and class inequality, not only in his native Brazil but in the greater world. In the book he outlines 10 points that define this model of teaching and learning, starting with "The teacher teaches and the students are taught." I wanted to know what might be revealed, what might be reimaged, where we might get, if nearly 40 years after this was first published we switched the place of the words "student" and "teacher":

The students teach and the teacher is taught.  
The students know everything and the teacher knows nothing.  
The students speak and the teacher listens meekly.

*During the pandemic I began a habit of calling other teachers and asking them about their memory of teaching "in person." Some of them were close friends of mine and others were teachers I had never met, so after going through the different contexts in which they'd taught, I'd ask them to imagine a moment in one of these classes—say, 15 minutes in, or let's say 10:17 AM—and to imagine that all the sudden time stopped. Everyone and everything frozen. I'd suggest, now imagine that I, Timmy, am just outside this room and I open the door and see everything as kind of garden of sculptures. What would I be looking at?*

*I didn't really think about it as nostalgia. I was more interested in how teachers imagined the social shape of the classroom—their stance in relationship to their students, the details of their hands, direction of eyes, things like that—and that irreconcilable distance seemed to help. In fact, at that moment, I was teaching a creative writing class for visual artists, all seniors, who after 4 years of a private arts education had been told there would be no culminating senior thesis show. We had become very close because of that. The parallel world of their writing suddenly became the only one. And like most of the world, we were new to Zoom. I'll never forget the feeling of watching someone read aloud in that class. Their forehead so impossibly close, illuminated by the white google docs page, head slightly tilted at an angle as they negotiated several windows, their eyes moving back and forth and their mouth barely in view. It's like we'd taken the intimate perspective of a book, yet we were so far away. That intimacy, a completely new relation to physical distance, in the delicate role of teaching, was unreal.*

XVI. Douglas Ross

*Pan-American (1997)*

While studying in an MFA program in the mid-1990's I made some 'walking pieces.' Roaming, peripatetic movement that frequently produced or projected some kind of image. At one point

I made a wearable robotic video camera that attempts to record Magnetic North relative to the wearer's body. I called its acts and artifacts pan-American, given the action of the camera, given my nationality and where I was walking, given that the camera's consuming yet limited view and technical mechanism, tethered to a force outside the frame over the horizon, began to analogize some useless longing of Manifest Destiny.

The south (or north)-pointing lodestone spoon of Han Dynasty China invented for divination and geomancy 2200 or so years ago became an instrument of navigation centuries later, appearing to provide accurate orientation and direction. We later learned that Earth's magnetic field drifts and reverses every 200,000 to 300,000 years... a polarity reversal usually taking 1000 to 10,000 years. Given this, who is relative who is not also absolute?

*Employed to teach people pursuing a degree or life in art, architecture, and film making, I've primarily taught art making, thinking, writing, and art talking... the codes, attitudes, theories, manual skills, histories, hierarchies, personal experience, and professional requirements of what I've understood must be transferred and forewarned. It's difficult to trace exactly how I came to know or believe some particularities. Thankfully I haven't unlearned that art helps us question and unlearn.*

*I recently met someone who met a former grad student of mine and alleged that the artist/former student said something to the effect that my seminar was therapeutic or that I was a therapist for the people enrolled. Hearing this was instantly disturbing because when I was in art school at age 18, one of the first repetitious edicts I absorbed other than "to name is to numb," was "art is not therapy." Curiously, while art school's critique formats are motivated toward healing some presumed problem with the work and correcting the maker's perspective, the purpose of art education is making people cry, not out of catharsis, but because whatever they are doing is not good enough yet. We have standards, and no one is making culture until credentialed.*

*"Here's my syllabus, reading list, and requirements of the course" doesn't mean anything to five-, six-, or eight-year-olds whom I worked with more recently, nor was it*

*so consequential during my first university position, teaching four different undergraduate courses in a country where I didn't speak the language and students' facility with my native tongue varied, our mutual understanding consistently brittle. Both situations have taught me how to listen. Presently, the uses, divisions, and vulnerabilities of time (not a schedule,) of how we'll decide to share the time, the anxiety and pleasure of not knowing what will happen, will be accomplished in time, and what states of being and self might be willed and transcended, is what remains important about the school, student, teacher situation.*

*Working with and for students, more than other of life's encounters, has always given me a peculiar sense and responsibility of predestination, that no matter what the outcome, we were meant to meet. "Who were we before we met, and what might we become after?" - is one of the questions that must be asked, partially answered, and to some extent forgotten so that we can get started. Here the time of education merges into living and intensifies as bracketed off "missing time," separate from the world. Despite this feeling of personal predestination, the time-space of education conversely creates the conceit and relief that no matter what happens there's always something missing, unresolved, and that could have happened otherwise. That something will inevitably be missing is obvious, but what is or will be missing remains unique.*

*I understand art gains energy and meaning from what is missing, unresolved, or withheld, while the artist, no matter how unruly, is supposed to be consistent, complete, known, and full proof. Still, about time, no one in school or the studio complained we've gotten nowhere together, but on the contrary, that the time had to end, that time showed up. This might explain how several friendships subsequently arose from teaching, so we could continue the time.*



*Miss Othmar School for Teachers*  
is an itinerant school of teachers with no students.

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