

BRIGHT LIGHT

ISSUE 3

ETHOS

**Edited by
MARK DEAN**

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Bright Light: Issue 3

Ethos

ISSN: 2055-1606

Published by: Camberwell, Chelsea,
Wimbledon Graduate School
16 John Islip, London, SW1P 4JU
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Graduate School and contributors

Designed by Camberwell Press
Printed in Belgium by Cassochrome

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the Bright Light Board for entrusting me with the responsibility of guest editing this issue, and for their support along the way. It was in many ways a leap of faith on their part, and as is the way with these things, the results may be at some variance from that which was hoped for; any such disappointment is down to me. But as is also the way, the process can generate unexpected value, and this is due to the generosity of those who agreed to participate in what was frankly a bit of an uncertain experiment. And so I would especially like to thank the contributors for their perseverance, imagination and good humour - I learned a lot, and enjoyed the journey. Special thanks also to Ellie Pitkin for putting up with our delays, detours, and for seeing us home.

Mark Dean, ~~March~~ April October 2016

EDITORIAL

Mark Dean

You don't have to read this. I didn't have to write this. I just wanted to establish that upfront. But does this mean we're engaged in free activity?

A first year student once said to me, after I had given a talk on the relation between contemporary art and religion, 'I don't understand how you can be an artist and religious, because art is about freedom, and religion is about doing what you're told'.

Now you may or may not agree with the second half of that statement, but chances are you would need to qualify the first half. *Bright Light* is an (in-house) academic art research journal, and so if you are reading it you will likely have some kind of engagement with academic art research, as a student or teacher. And as such, you will have learned by now that if 'art is free', you don't need to be in an academy to practise it. And so if you are in an academy, it must be for reasons beyond the 'freedom' of art.

So what are we doing here? Whatever our various answers to this question, they must bear some kind of connection to the reasons we came to art school in the first place. And if, like our young student, that was something to do with notions of art as freedom, then the distance between that aspiration and our current situation is a matter of on-going concern. That is, it affects students, as they progress through their course, and it affects teachers, as they seek to maintain a relation to their practice in the context of institutional demands and constraints.

This is not say that art and the academy are in opposition in this regard. Another thing we have already learned is that when the avant-garde attempt to overthrow the academy, they end up running it. For all its faults and frustrations, an art school is basically a place where artists gather together to talk about art. Of course, they may make art there as well, but that's not essential. And in talking about art, they naturally do so with those who write about it. So learning how to talk about art, especially your own, is what art school is really for. And it's not easy – especially for those who are less 'academic' as the saying goes. But even for those with a facility for words (innate or acquired), this does not necessarily enable the production of art worth talking about.

Discipline is defined as 'the practice of training people to obey rules, or the controlled behaviour resulting from such training'. But it is also the term we use for 'a branch of knowledge, typically one studied in higher education' (and of course it is also a religious term, wherein a disciple chooses to follow - which is not quite the same as being told what to do).

These tensions – between freedom, constraint, and discipline - have informed the production of the material you are now invited to read. The starting point was this:

A refusal of the demands of 'technos' – a move away from fulfilling the functional demands of instrumentalising operating systems sometimes deployed by institutions, such as REF. Instead, we look towards what moves, motivates and inspires.

The relationship between the spiritual language of 'inspiration' and the more psychological language of 'motivation' is a key matter to consider. What underlies both is the sense of maintaining movement. In this issue, we want to look at the motor that drives forward the movement to make art. What is it that helps us keep going?

An exploration of these issues seeks to address those who may feel disengaged from institutional preoccupations with the technicalities of audit culture. Instead of asking people to get in step with such technicalities, we ask people how people get on without them. The deeper question, is to ask what moves us when all the technical demands have been switched off. To whom or to what do we turn? What, in essence, is our ethos?

In pursuing this, a key question for me as editor was whether the 'movement to make art' is one of being driven, or being drawn. In terms of the current context, research culture as 'technos' could be understood as a driver, ie something to which one must conform; being driven to produce a cultural product, the parameters of which are defined in advance.

Alternatively, research culture as 'ethos' could be seen as something to which one is drawn, through commonality. In this latter understanding, difference remains, and to an extent it is this difference that defines the practitioner. But as the movement towards cultural commonality is fluid, so is this difference.

This understanding informed the methodology of this project. Thus there was not a predetermined theme, one which might have been expressed in an event that generated content for the publication. Rather, practitioners were invited to respond to the starting point by initiating ideas, drawn from their own practices, and reflecting on their own understanding of their situation within culture(s).

These ideas were then developed in conversation with myself as editor, as much guided by principles of chaplaincy as anything else. As a chaplain, I cannot tell anyone what to do. But perhaps because of this, I am free to talk about anything with anyone, if they want to. And of course, as an ordained priest, I am not speaking simply from my own individual perspective, although I am able to incorporate my personal experience, in so far as it may be helpful to others. In this way people may find their own answers to the questions that matter to them, but within a potentially broader context (in this sense at least, the ethos is not that different from the way we teach art).

The result here is a set of creative approaches to text-based research activity that began with personal connections, and will extend beyond this journal into social and performative space, as the material is presented live at the launch event for this publication.

(Eleanor Bowen has pointed out to me that, having been through this process, the outcome should hopefully be texts which speak for themselves. And so they do... nevertheless, here are a few observations drawn from my reading of them:)

When David Dibosa reflects on the possibility of an ethics that is not dependent on an instrumentalised notion of social value (because whose value is that?), he is doing so in relation to the curating of objects, but clearly this has the potential for wider relevance (as his movingly articulated subjectivity indicates). Significantly, in distancing the curator from social concerns by focusing on relations between objects, he does not speak in terms of curatorial freedom, but rather responsibility and commitment. It is through these disciplines that the potential for genuine freedom may be realised.

Patti Ellis speaks in terms of Super-Optimism, which sounds like a great ethos, until you realise that it is one of the defining cognitive characteristics of a career criminal. Notwithstanding, her campus novelette is not only hilarious, it is a precisely located example of how something apparently negative can be positively life (and art) affirming. The author will be reading from her work at the Bright Light 3 launch event in Camberwell (the scene of the crime, so to speak).

Jonathan Kearney writes specifically (and knowledgably) from his position as MA Fine Art Digital course leader, which might sound academic, until you read that he feeds his students in his own home. His reflections on food production as a metaphor for art-making put me in mind of a former teaching colleague who referred to art school as a 'sausage factory', but thankfully Jonathan points towards a more person-centred pedagogical approach.

Phil Mill's ethos in relation to exploring free improvisation is one of openness, non-hierarchy, leaderlessness. His text is in the form of a musical score, albeit an unconventional one, in that it is formed of elements of his own academic text. But at the same time, it is not a score, in the sense that neither he nor we can know what it would sound like by writing or reading it – it has to be realised in performance, and in community, as it will be by participants at the launch event for this publication. Hence it is presented here as a potential score. In conversation, Phil speaks of 'following a map of a place that doesn't exist: in the act of following we create a path' ... and perhaps that can serve as both ethos and technos for our current endeavour.

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BEING WITHOUT YOU: SEEING OBJECTS BEYOND SOCIAL VALUE

David Dibosa

PART ONE: NO MORE CURING SOCIETY'S ILLS

It always starts with a, “yes, but...”, a perplexed look, a prolonged stare and then the repetition of the dreaded phrase: “Yes, but...”. The interruption comes in the midst of lengthy explanations regarding my current work: I outline my main aims in leading a Masters course in curating “Yes, but...”; I detail the questions that have been central to my thinking, “Yes, but...”; I put forward the discussions held with my colleagues alongside whom different perspectives on the curatorial field have been developed. Still I hear the irrepressible refrain, “Yes, but...what is your ethos?”. I’m unsure as to how to explain my work in such a way as to make such queries redundant. How can I make it plain that my close colleague, Donald Smith, and I developed a Masters course in ‘Curating and Collections’ to ensure that our students could be given a balanced set of skills? “Yes, yes, but...”. How can I make it clear that part of that balance involved setting out a range of conceptual frameworks so that the students could make sense of the way in which artefacts are assembled? “Yes, yes, but...”. What do I need to do in order for people to understand that a curator’s skillset includes a gamut of practical abilities - exhibition-building, marketing, finance, insurance – in equal measure with conceptual and contextual framing? “Yes, yes but...”. It never seems enough to say this all so precisely. It rarely seems sufficient to marshal metaphors into place, to speak about playing the piano on both hands or flying on both wings or even, listening with both ears. Yes, yes, yes, but, but, but, what on earth is my ethos?

The question of one’s ethos seems so difficult to handle, so ethereal even, perhaps because of the pragmatics with which we are currently surrounded in Austerity Culture. The demands for efficiency and ‘value for money’, the need to economise and downsize, the calls for accountability and transparency, mean that technocratic preoccupations often come to the fore: it ain’t what you do, it’s the way that you *show* it. The ‘how?’, the ‘when?’ and the ‘how much?’, often underpin the formulation of questions evaluating progress. However, it seldom seems the case that many people base their enquiries on the articulation of the more fundamental question guiding an ethos: ‘why?’. Such lines of interrogation are rarely pursued within technocratic conditions because they do not lead to technical solutions. Rather, they drift into speculative and, even more fearfully, personal realms. The only way to address such drift is to mine the regions of individual experience that come into view. One needs to look for motivating factors – the experiences that drive, coax or force people into a given practice. What drove me to train as a curator can provide a key to understanding the ethos that I see behind curatorial practice. Don’t get me wrong, I am not generating a psychoanalysis of curating here. Having a sense of the drive is not the same as having a clear view of the engine. Rather, it would take a range of disciplines to clarify our costly operations in the field of curating. By understanding the drivers, though, we can get a handle on the fuel. The resources that we make available to us are what sustains us through periods of opposition and scarcity. In such terms, they are related to our ethos; it, in turn, does fit, in some unexpected way, into the strictures

of austerity. For austerity, for good or for ill, forces one to fall back on one's own resources, to understand one's motivations, to discover one's motors and their drives.

Driving towards a resolution of the questions that face me around ethos, I have to acknowledge that for many years now I have recognised that my own intellectual pursuits form part of a core drive. I use the term 'core drive' to inflect the Freudian sense of that which becomes central to my survival (Sedgwick and Frank, 1995: 60). It may seem unusual to link the intellect so centrally to survival mechanisms. A generalised notion of intellectual life might see the life of the mind – reflections on questions of ethos – as idle pursuits or lofty concerns preoccupying those who have the luxury to follow them. Without a profound connection to one's core drives then such generalised images of intellectual life might hold sway. However, a much more vivid image of intellectual life surfaces with a return to Freud. For, his insistence on the biological root of psychic phenomena becomes helpful (Freud, 1986). One can understand the life of the mind as part of the workings of the body. The production of mental phenomena - psychic images, distractions - becomes as fundamental to a living body as the production of bile by the liver. Intellectual life generates recognisable forms for such mental phenomena – arguments, propositions, analyses. The tendency to assemble, which I see as a cornerstone of the intellectual life of a curator, in turn, provides forms for the production of the phenomena that constitute curatorial knowledge – exhibitions, displays, assemblages. In light of this, one can still ask: how can a tendency to assemble constitute part of a core drive?

Permit me to take recourse to the resources extant in my personal memory:

17 May 2012. My mother has just died. Her eyes lie wide open, a gaze as empty as the deep reaches of distant stars. Her mouth hangs agape. A strange bubbling has foamed to her lips. Her head has rolled to one side. I am disturbed. Not by what I see but by what I feel. Cold composure. Shock, some might call it. I enter that slowing down of time that accompanies mourning and its unexpected ushers. Mourning, as the work of Geoffrey Gorer (1965) has shown, is above all, a time of composure. Grief does the wrecking. Mourning paces us, piece by shattered piece, it ushers us into a rhythm by which we might order our inter-actions with the world: whom we might call; when we might see them; what we may or may not say. "Before you do anything," I counsel myself, "First, close her eyes". I know that, before long, people will enter the room: nurses, doctors, staff. Time has slowed down but they will be here soon. "Now, close her mouth". Someone will hear me crying. They'll be here in a minute. "Not yet, though, wipe her face. Mum wouldn't want to go out looking like that. Not into the corridor. Not into the whole wide world". Re-composing our loved ones is the key act of mourning. Depending on how we see things, the dead may help in the task. And once we have recomposed their bodies – regained their composure, restored their posture, their likeness, their hairstyle - we can begin to assemble the objects that surround them.

The nurses have left. The doctor, with his short-sleeved shirt and sorrowful eyes has gone. Mum and I are alone but soon friends and family will be here, rushing from home and workplace in the wake of the news. "Is that the right dress?". The nurses and I have washed mum's body: a final act, closing the circle that started when she bathed me in the womb and without. My screams then matching her silence now,

an unexpected equilibrium, like the hour springing forward in spring-time then falling back in autumn. Year in, year out, life's seasons follow their unalterable rhythm. Yet, every time, we are surprised. "I'm still not sure the dress is right". As I look through the wardrobe at bright floral dresses worn on faded summer afternoons or dark velvet jackets worn on clear winter days, I realise it is not the dress. Mum needs a necklace. She always wore one. My fingers trail through her jewellery-box – a rosary, "Yes but not quite right". Then I see the glistening solitary pearl, encased in gold. "Her favourite". Of course, the rosary can be wrapped around mum's wrist. It need not go to waste. We have crossed her hands, the nurse and I. Now, with the rosary and her necklace, she looks restful, protected. Dressed, dignified, I stroke her hair into place. She is ready for her guests. The final touch is the Dutch-wax print cloth. Folded neatly. Some say death is the end of touch. Others, that it is only a beginning in a different way. Skin turns to paper; blood becomes ink; flesh then textile then text. All this is kept to make death tactile, to bring us closer to that from which we must first flee then embrace.

We hold onto one another, if we are wise. The prudent also hold onto objects (Winter, 1995: 113), things that we may need or may need us. Such objects get displayed to show status or power, integrity or love. Assembling objects for the purposes of display might be a loose way to describe the role of a curator but it is a precise place to start accounting for the curatorial drive. Note that 'assembling' is not the same as 'ordering', as the placing of objects in an order is only one limited function of a curator's role. Indeed, the ordering that accompanies the acquisition and collection of objects could be seen as much more related to a museological rather than a curatorial remit. The curator's task in the face of an order of objects is to take them out of that order and to reassemble them, according to the curatorial knowledge and spectatorial experience they want to re-produce. By attempting to place objects out of order, curators do need to know how objects have been ordered in the first place. *What was in that jewellery-box?* The prioritising of different sites of assembly – an artist's studio, a collector's study, a mother's bedroom, a bank's vault, a museum's store - becomes part of the process of analysing curatorial activity. The curator's assembly of objects generates a relation between a past ordering and a future imagining. For, the assembly becomes based on the production of a set of relations that we do not yet know, relations that have been objects of past knowledge but are becoming instead the objects of future imagination. The work of the curator in respect of this imaginative aspect is what gives the role a phantasmatic dimension and thus what allows us to return to the question of the curatorial drive.

To move back and forth across the threshold of past knowledge and future imagining forces curators to turn away from their audiences to face their objects instead. A rosary is not a necklace. *Although, there was something about the way the pearl glowed at her neck, something else about the way the rosary beads sparkled at her wrist. What that something was I could not say. I would not need to say because they sparkled and it glowed nevertheless.* The glowing and the sparkling do not need us. If we bring them together, they still do not rely on our awe. The curator's role is to work with the sparkle and the glow, not with the awe. The principle is one of first audience. The curator is already apart from the wider audience and need not anticipate broader social response. Their responsibility is to their selves, to refuse any compromise of the drive to assemble objects, to juxtapose their effects.

To connect an ethos to a drive would bring us into that tradition within European thinking that links Nietzsche to Freud (Assoun, 2002). Ethos, in such terms, is not so much a vehicle of morality as it is a tool of survival, something without which a person cannot do, if they are to recognise themselves in a role. In more abstract terms, one might talk in terms of what is required to produce the effects of a coherent subject-position. In more concrete terms, within the context of the current discussion, one might ask: what does it take to call yourself a curator? And, to do so without fear of being laughed out of town. For my part, it involves a connection to the drive to assemble objects for the purposes of display. The complexion that I currently give to this emerges from a series of discussions with colleagues such as Paul Goodwin, Linda Sandino and Lynton Talbot, as well as Donald Smith, to whom I referred earlier. The discussion has met a hiatus in so far as the emphasis on 'objects' to be assembled may have entered an unnecessary dichotomy with the conceptual frames that guide their assembly. For, one can argue that conceptual frames are objects in themselves, albeit abstract ones. In one sense, then, we could say that different kinds of objects are acting upon each other. For some reason, I still feel that it is important to work within the question without forcing a resolution to it: what is gained by making such a strong distinction between concrete and abstract objects in the formation of curatorial discourse?

I can only begin to answer the question regarding distinctions between objects, with reference to my own thoughts in respect of the course that I lead. Its *raison d'être* sits within the context of curatorial pedagogy in contemporary London. Our demand, within MA Curating and Collections, for a balanced approach, acts to even out the emphasis on an open, discursive and even conceptual framing of curating, which still holds sway among influential curators currently operating within the field. Consider, for instance, the most recent Venice Biennale, headed by the highly respected curator Okwui Enwezor (Higgins, 2015). The emphasis on a re-engagement with Marxian thought, set out in some of the key propositions of the Biennale, demonstrates the way in which conceptual approaches – working from the development of a concept towards the assembly of objects – have taken up a prominent position within contemporary curatorial discourse. By advocating a renewed focus on objects and, more particularly, objects within collections, our teaching seeks to redress the balance.

To what extent is the return to a more balanced approach needed? How far does it respond to emergent concerns? Such questions can be addressed in respect of a recent set of talks that I attended as part of the March Meeting of the Sharjah Art Foundation in the UAE (sharjahart.org). Organised by the internationally recognised curator Hoor al-Qassimi and attended by well-respected figures in the field, such as Hans Ulrich Obrist, the March Meeting drew on worldwide practices, from Guatemala to Vietnam, as a means of producing different international configurations. The effect was to discover a different emphasis from that which one might find in Western European or North American contexts. Such breadth of engagement made sense in respect of the panel that I chaired. With its emphasis on 'Curating, Context, Community', it set out to highlight the breadth of activity in respect of socially- engaged curatorial practice. My concern, of course, was to balance out such practice with an approach that shifted attention away from community towards objects, away from context to text. My intention had been to interrogate the assumptions that sometimes go under-examined in favour of a valorisation of 'community'. It felt important to shift the weight away from rhetorical

density held by such terms as 'openness' and 'transparency'. Had the moment not come to explore opacity and occlusion?

Although I wanted to work against any presumption of the transparency of curatorial intention, I found it hard to follow through on the line of inquiry that had led Derrida and Ferraris (2001) to write of the 'totalitarianization of visibility'. In the face of the urgency of some of the concerns discussed, some of my pre-formed questions seemed remarkably out of place: what could be promised by giving attention to the capacities of objects to obfuscate? What would happen once we accepted the possibility of the refusal of artefacts to be either legible or accountable or employable? Such were the questions that I wanted to pose but which, in the heat of the moment, I could not. Rather, I found myself marvelling at the ingenuity of the devices deployed by curators and institutional operators alike – devices designed to ensure that barriers to public engagement erected by military authorities or by the pressures of socio-economic conditions could be overcome. Take, for example, William Wells, Director of the *Townhouse*, a gallery and project space, housed, as its title suggests, in a residential neighbourhood in downtown Cairo. The closure of the *Townhouse* by the Egyptian authorities on the pretext of 'administrative irregularities' showed the difficulty of the conditions under which artists and curators could sometimes find themselves. In such circumstances, doesn't the visibility of a sustained practice seem paramount?

The refusal of visibility in favour of an exploration of the effects of opacity or occlusion is not, though, rendered entirely insignificant in the face of almost insurmountable political pressure and oppression. There has to be a place for critical thinking, which will not allow for any easy affirmation of resounding terms such as 'community' or 'sustainability' or 'visibility of practice'. Indeed, the reification of such terms makes the development of strategic and nuanced responses to oppressive conditions even more difficult to advance. Rather, let's consider what happens as we attempt to do without such terms, as we subject them to rigorous critique that might enable us to develop an entirely different ethos. Critiques, such as those put forward by Bruno Latour (2007: 21–25) with his advocacy of the abandonment of our continued reification of the 'social'. By pointing towards the over-generalised application of the term 'social', Latour's work underlines the lack of analytical attention that has allowed the term 'social' to be evacuated of so much critical content. Indeed, now that we have passed the high water-mark of Thatcher's rhetorical stance, "There is no such thing as society" (margaretthatcher.org) it has become possible for figures across the political spectrum, whether left or right, to advance radical programmes in the name of the advancement of 'society'. What might happen, then, if we follow Latour's admonishment to let go of our reliance on the unquestionable value of 'society'? How about going further in refusing the value of 'community'? Can 'context' go, too? Can we set aside 'visibility of practice'?

Without the legitimating narratives of 'building community' or 'developing society' or 'making practice visible', in which ways does it become possible to consider an ethos surrounding different approaches to curating? If we don't work from the assumption that our work is contributing somehow to the 'social good', how do we justify our work? Moreover, if we begin to doubt that there is such a thing as 'the social' or its inherent 'goodness', what kind of motivation might we find for the investment of resources needed for the building of exhibitions? The teaching of curatorial and exhibition-building

skills might seem questionable, if one could not unequivocally evince a dedication to the welfare of wider society or the social good. Indeed, it would be all too easy to suggest that a curatorial approach that refuses to awaken the social conscience should be seen as lacking ethos. However, this easy conjunction between 'ethos' and 'social conscience' can be sundered by turning to objects in respect of their relation to one another, rather than their relation to social life or wider societal well-being. The responsibility of the curator gets re-balanced by such means in favour of the care of the object, focusing on its 'cure' or 'treatment', rather than on the care of the social and the cure of society's ills.

PART TWO: VALUING OBJECTS An emphasis on object value starts from the point of view that objects remain effective in ways that can be opaque or, at least, resistant to the meanings assigned to them. Such opacity can be assigned to every object, including the objects that act as vehicles of meaning – words themselves. For instance, one can consider such a thing as the 'objecthood of script'. Indeed, one can go farther, as Derrida has suggested, in considering the 'objecthood of the spoken word' – words received as a physical utterance can be understood as things, objects heard emerging from the body of another (Kamuf, 1991: 20). Just as spit might spring from the mouth of a speaker so might words be seen to fly forth from the body of an interlocutor. Solid words or, perhaps, a solid aspect to words, could be a useful way of thinking through such matters. In such terms, one can think of the way in which language retains a double aspect: on the one hand, words can be seen as vehicular – transporters of meaning – on the other, they remain residual and opaque. Such was the teaching of the post-structuralist tendency in Western European and North American thinking (Derrida; Cixous; Spivak), pre-eminent during the latter part of the last century. Such thinking made it possible to understand that objects held facets that did not simply meet the aims of vehicles of communication, conveying social meaning to create and validate community. In such terms, it is not just some objects that stand outside of social constructs of meaning but rather an aspect of all objects that remains opaque.

Taking the opacity of objects as a starting-point, to where might our thinking lead? Does a lack of social value for objects entail a lack of all value? The question has to be taken forward through a supposition that there can be an object value that works independently of any social construction that can be placed upon it. In such terms, one can think of this as 'residual' – a value that lies beyond the limits of the social. Indeed the possibility of the exhaustion of the social becomes the grounds from which one can begin to give an account of the object. As Object-Oriented Philosopher, Graham Harman (2013) has written: "...objects must be non-relational, if they are to have any autonomous identity at all." Such a position sets out an important goal on the journey away from the social implication of objects: namely, that we can consider objects as autonomous. Indeed, if one were to follow certain strands of Harman's thinking, one would have to insist on it. The autonomy of objects from social demands could be useful in leading towards a consideration of other forms of relationality for objects – significantly the relation that objects have to one another. An insistence, in line with Harman, that one has to presume an absolute non-relationality between objects might be taking things too far.

Harman's position, articulated with enormous clarity in essays published under the title, *Bells and Whistles: More Speculative Realism* places emphasis on the absolute non-relationality of objects not only to the human subjects, who may wish to put a range of constructions on them, but also in relation to each other. For Harman, such non-relationality allows him to pursue his line of argument that the world or, as he terms it 'cosmos', is made up of individual and autonomous things. Such a view rejects the pervasive and sometimes persuasive argument that the things in the world are reducible to an essence or that they are pervaded by some unifying substance. Rather than the vast range of things in the world being categorised in such a way, Harman insists on their 'substantial form'. Such non-relationality between things in the world can help curators through its support for any insistence on the uniqueness of objects. This is argued for not just in terms of 'artisanal pieces' or works of 'connoisseurial importance'. It is also argued for in terms of mass-produced items and multiples. In an everyday way, one can think of such uniqueness as guaranteed by date and place of production, site of distribution, moment of disposal – such are the key points in the biography of the object.

The life-story of the object, however, need not be restricted to the essential markers of production, distribution and disposal. Curators can attend to the absolute ontology of objects – what it is that constitutes them as such – but need not be bound by this. There is a way in which curators can take a more generative approach without wholeheartedly committing themselves to some form or another of correlationalism – a doctrine that ties the object to the meanings ascribed to it, as well as the other effects of the inter-relation between objects and the human subjects who, from time to time, put them to use. The basis of such a generative approach has to be the way that the life-stories of objects impact on one another: the relation between dates and places of production; the crossing of lines in the paths of distribution; the different or sometimes shared points of disposal. Such contextual material involves a certain kind of politics but it is a politics of the everyday rather than a macro-politics of socioeconomic positioning and societal engagement.

Engaging with objects principally in terms of their relationality to one another becomes an important means of characterising the role of curators. It suggests that the discovery of such relationality – through form, through materiality, through object history – becomes one of the primary functions of curatorial expertise. 'Discovery' becomes an important term to consider here. For, it suggests a pre-existing relationality that has to be in some way unearthed. In terms of object histories, such would be the case. The relations that have already been established or, indeed, rejected, would need to be uncovered as a means of generating an account of an object. The history of the object's display – within the artist's studio or the collector's private study – become as important, then, as the history of the object's exhibition within the broader context of the public domain. However, the curatorial 'discovery' of an object's relationality must also include the setting out of possibilities, of relations not yet imagined.

The role of the curator to envisage new possibilities for the relations between objects provides an important point of departure from the characterisation of the curator as 'the one who administers the treatment or cure'. The keeping function of one who retains the value of an object is supplemented by the responsibility to create new values for objects. One means of producing such new values is by bringing objects into unseen

or, even, unforeseeable relations. Opening up new possibilities for objects, then, relies on having an understanding of the old values assigned to them. Under the auspices of the current argument, such values do not reside in the social but rather can be deduced from the historic relations – juxtapositions and assemblies – that form part of an object's history. The curator, then, acts as a pivot, moving between past and future to cast an eye on what has been assigned to a given object in order to speculate as to what relations can be brought into view.

The Janus-like position of the curator becomes the grounds for a form of ethics and, therefore, an ethos. Guardianship of the threshold between past and future becomes the basis for a responsibility not necessarily to other people but to time itself. Time need not be considered here in an abstract sense but rather, more concretely in terms of accretion and legacy. It is through curatorial intervention that one can see objects as accruing value. Curatorial expertise keeps such value, through documentation and record. Curatorial thinking leaves open the possibility that new values may be brought forward. The responsibilities that emerge out of such activity can only be lived out through a consciousness of one's disappearance over time. The curator works from the legacy of one in equal measure to working towards a legacy to leave to another. A curator's ethos, then, emerges through an awareness of limit, of finitude. One that encourages a commitment to a future beyond one's own limits, a future within which the unforeseeable relations between objects may come into being.

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Dr. David Dibosa is co-author of *Post-Critical Museology: Theory and Practice in the Art Museum* (Routledge, 2013). He trained as a curator, after receiving his first degree from Girton College, Cambridge. He was awarded his PhD in Art History from Goldsmiths, University of London, for a thesis titled, *Reclaiming Remembrance: Art, Shame and Commemoration*. During the 1990s, David curated public art projects, including *In Sight In View*, a billboard project in Birmingham City, England, as well as a sculpture park in the English West Midlands. From 2004-2008, he was Senior Lecturer in Fine Art Theory at Wimbledon College of Art, University of the Arts London. He remains at UAL, where he is now Course Leader for MA Curating & Collections at Chelsea College of Arts.

PARERGORN (PROPOSAL FOR AN INVERSE ARCHIVE)

Eleanor Bowen

Parergorn

a piece of work that is supplementary to or a by-product
of a larger work

Inverse archive

material left behind after sorting processes

'These fragments I have shored against my ruin'.
TS Eliot, The Waste Land

WORKING NOTES [EB/MD, CHELSEA CANTEEN, 2 11 15]

I'm reading your publication
I'm hearing your words
They are not here on the page
I'm reading 'this' but hearing '*that*'

'that' is not 'this'

so – the brief is, not to offer 'this' but 'that'?
much more scary

(resistance to being overheard)
but this is an academic journal
organ of the institution

yes, but it's internal

internal organ – does the organisation really want to know?

I want
internal conversations
hearing the unspoken
the body of a building
images floated nearby

IMAGES floated nearby

First, to get past the question, the substance of your call, which is (you say) to consider: *ethos* ... what motivates us in art and design practice beyond the demands of systems such as REF, towards a relationship between the spiritual language of 'inspiration' and the more psychological language of 'motivation' ... to ask what is the motor that drives forward (or draws out) the movement to make art until, finally *what is it that helps us keep going?*

In order to make a response, and because I am *what used to be called* a 'maker', I propose here an imagined structure, an armature or container for that response.

how to archive a body
find the parts and put them in a box
sort them out

organise, arrange systematically

or, as the scholar Diana Taylor suggests, imagine an alternative because there are ways to transmit knowledge other than keeping it as it was - a repertoire *song, dance, story telling, ritual enactment* that opposes the archive as a source of knowledge.¹

Etymologically a *treasury or inventory*, the repertoire proposed here draws on the personal in order to offset the institutional, perhaps suggesting a protean shadow, the inverse of something highly structured *apparently permanent but with movement built into it like a tall building engineered to bend with the wind* that nevertheless contains/is founded upon a residue *ruin*, the *detritus* tracks and traces of all of us and our times at, and moving within, the college.

[REF LARGE DRAWING, 1a]

As a student at Camberwell School of Arts and Crafts I made this drawing of our painting studio (first floor corridor, old building Peckham Rd). An inventory of responsive marks *made remade* over a period of time *days weeks months?* marking the movements of people, objects, light, and my own trajectories up down across a canvas surface that was larger than my physical and visual span.

how to make a drawing, not of a room but in it
how to draw inhabiting

I thought of it at the time as a cat's cradle, that weaving game with string over your fingers.

cat's cradle
collapsing order of gestures
a block of time evoked

1. Taylor, D. (2003) *The Archive and the Repertoire. Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, Duke University Press

... the duration that Bergson describes as the time of the human subject '... an indeterminate period of lived existence that may expand or contract according to the attention brought to it'.²

*The DNA of history*³

Years later I imagined this drawing of the space we inhabited as a portal for research, and now assume it again as a way in, this time proposing an *inverse archive*, a repertoire of ephemeral traces that, contained in memory *as is 'the drawn'*⁴ cannot be replicated.

Jules David Prown suggests that 'objects created in the past are the only historical occurrences that continue to exist in the present'.⁵ Artefacts, connectors with lost histories.

body of a building
step stair banister window hinge panel ledge

Prown's notion that an artefact may be read in order to access embedded histories of production and context is echoed in Taylor's assumption of the repertoire and, in this cluster of texts and images, I propose a particular repertoire that reveals itself through the witness of buildings that have (as artefacts do) time travelled, and through the fluid structures of personal memory that (as memories do) attach themselves to aspects of matter as they flow through the rooms and corridors, up the stairs and along the walls.

I present this as a collection of traces, using aspects of the old Peckham Road and Wilson's Road buildings at Camberwell College as measures, controls for memory and for a mix of drawings, sketchbook notes, phone photos and photographs.

FRONT DOOR, Peckham Road, old building [IMAGES]

PORTAL

First interview. Borrowed Aunty's fur coat. She paid for a taxi because Camberwell is quite a way out. Impressed where they dropped me off, up the steps in under the arch. Camberwell School of Arts and Crafts. That was the only time I went up those steps because you couldn't get in that way after that. I had to ring the doorbell. Elderly man in 50s ushering me in, apologising. What for? Into a room. Bulging portfolio. Charcoal drawings and oil paintings made in a freezing outbuilding.

2. Burgin, V. (2004) *The Remembered Film*, London: Reaktion, p. 9

3. Bowen, E. (2015) *Performance Research*, Vol 20 No. 3 'On Ruins and Ruination', p.156

4. Ginsborg M. (2001) 'Introduction', *The Centre for Drawing: The First Year* [ed.] Kingston A, Wimbledon School of Art, p.8. Michael Ginsborg proposes that 'the drawn', as opposed to 'drawing' in terms of activity or image, can be an attribute or property in disciplines other than drawing, for example in photography, or perhaps text.

5. Prown JD. (1982) 'Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method' in *Winterthur Portfolio*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (Spring) pp. 1-19

Re-entry. Same steps. Same bell. Something not memory goes ahead and opens onto a room.

**PAINTING CORRIDOR, Peckham Road, first floor
[IMAGES]**

Stairs past leaded windows the arts and crafts plaque and walk down our corridor something not a pain towards the painting studio where

*B freaked out in the corridor by the plan chest (X)
after we'd known her all year on foundation and she was happy why she suddenly turned on us
she and us? Telling us all to go to hell.
She is not here but a row of 4 black anti-Christ posters is.*

PAINTING OFFICE left (X) now blocked off. *Philip and Frances. They are drinking sherry. I want to use the darkroom. Stop making photographs they tell me, you'll lose your birthright.*

The sacrilege of impurity. [REF Krauss?]⁶

Hit from the left by a crowd of staff pouring into the corridor from the office

Chris Chimp Heinz Francis Dick Philip Steve Dave Robert John Gary David Peter Frank

PHOTOGRAPH. The staff cricket team.

*been in there all morning
I'm not a bloody teacher I'm a painter*

Yes right, we all need to keep going with that.
Fear of impurity instilled.

Past the high window, anarchic Anita on the window-sill laughing. And Gary.

before that, on the ledge painting sunsets

[IMAGE] TECH STUDIO/SHOP (X) Peckham Road, first floor painting corridor

Main thing: free paint.

PAINTING STUDIO, Peckham Road, end of first floor corridor

[PHOTOGRAPHS]

Models. *In the gloom we drew them every day except Friday, between 4 and 6. Taught to look. From there to there to there. Sometimes we put red crosses in.*

6. Krauss RE. (1993) *The Optical Unconscious*, London: MIT Press

One day in a huge circle around the model we had Auerbach. He gave us each a sentence. I still have mine.

[PHOTOGRAPH]

Looking was the basis of all good painting.

If you couldn't draw you couldn't paint.

We did not write.

Reflection was looking and conversations about looking.

Reading was Sargy reading us Bonnard's letters as we drew the model or peering into a Pissarro at the National Gallery, demonstrating 'topology'.

My lunch was an apple and a pile of cheese from the canteen.

In the '80s Camberwell staff and students protested against joining the Institute.

They got on telly, but it was too late.

At the end they had to teach drawing in the canteen. You didn't have to do it any more.

Project: Trace onto the stretched cellophane grid all that one eye sees from a static position.

Felt-tips outline the rapidly diminishing falling away from the self of all that is positioned around it in the room, and from this you understand how in terms of scale the eye (before the brain translates) sees differently, interpreting the optical world as felt.

Your drawing on cellophane is thus made with the brain not the eye.

Drawing inhabitation.

Myself where I am not.

Third year. *Coldstream our external examiner. But before that I was sent to work in Wilson's hall (first one ever) to do another drawing like the last big one.*

Philip and Frances say, 'It's ideal'.

Wilson's: THE HALL

[REF LARGE DRAWING 6]

Room (oil, egg tempera, charcoal and mixed media on canvas, 1976–7)

threshold rafter corbel beam

I can't make it work, and when I lose the surface they show me how to get it back with egg tempera. They enter it for a competition and it wins a prize but I get a lot of stick from other students. Bought by Norwegian glass merchant for his collection. Long story. When he asks me why the British didn't buy works by unknown young artists, I don't have a clue.

While I'm doing it a play is being rehearsed and then a film about drawing is made around a life class set up for the cameras. Philip Rawson as an expert examining footage of us as though we're specimens. David Hockney with yellow hair.

[PHOTOGRAPHS]

One day a woman wanders in. I'm JC she says. Tells me she's been off for ages. I would like to have talked to her again but she didn't come back.

EXIT

Parergorn: a piece of work that is supplementary to or a by-product of a larger work

University (ethos): a high-level educational institution in which students study for degrees and academic research is done

The proposal here is for an inverse archive, a repertoire of fragments that, like a cell of DNA, carries its inheritance within it. My attempt to respond to your complex call has been to imagine the supplementation of an institution with its own memories.

does an institution have a memory?

Perhaps a definitive 'exit' should not be suggested, but here what has been proposed is the *parergorn* framing of a microscopic part of a 'whole' – any 'exit' will thus open onto the greater part of that whole

not supplementation through memory, but an ongoing process that which traces or draws on life, the event itself

Second exit:

Extract from an interview with Jake Auerbach on sitting for a portrait by his father the painter Frank Auerbach, in a pamphlet accompanying the premiere of Jake's film about his father, Clore Auditorium, Tate Britain, 10 12 15:

It is intimate ... it feels like a natural conversation, not an interrogation. And if you work with someone for 40 years, you get to know them well. It can be physically tiring, but mentally it's fantastically useful ... a time when we have to do nothing. I don't have to look at emails or answer the phone. I just let my brain go fallow. During the second hour there's silence ... it's about everything. I think people sit for my father because he's good company. He's recording lives, their different facets, bit by bit.⁷

7. From an interview with Jake Auerbach on sitting for a portrait by his father, the painter Frank Auerbach, in a pamphlet accompanying the premiere of 'Frank', a film about his father, Clore Auditorium, Tate Britain, 10 12 15. interview first published in The Guardian, 30 9 15.

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CAMBERWELL RE FRAME

Eleanor Bowen

from working notes [MD/EB/PE/JK, South London Café, 1 3 16]

South London Café. Passmore Edwards philanthropist.

Long table facing window. M and J opposite, window behind. Cake between us.
my birthday cake. nobody wants any so I scoff the lot. P scribbling on mac
to left creating characters
out of us

Here we are.

Common ground: conversation.

Conversation, from Middle English (living among, familiarity, intimacy).

Being with.

Theology. Differential hermeneutics (disagreement amongst scholars re meaning
of a particular text).

Ethos.

University: *A high-level educational institution in which students study for degrees
and academic research is done.*

Compatibility.

We would like to flag up the student's fear of *being too subjective* in an academic
context.

FAQ: 'Can I say I'?

At your invitation, we reflect on 'inspiration'/'motivation', considering the line between,
and in particular the motor that drives forward/draws out a particular movement,
reflecting also on those lines of particular concern to those of us who operate within
the (art) institution (of 'art'), between **act/image** or act/**object**, material/**immaterial**.
Re: 'inspiration'/'motivation', is there a line between?

Move to another room.

If you take the stairs to the left of the old Passmore Edwards entrance where I arrived
that first day, instead (as I did) of continuing on round the corner towards the main
stairs of the old building, you come to another wing that twists and turns around an old
stairwell. Rooms on half-floors, rebuilds, additions. Spaces within yards of the spaces
we were in for three years and didn't know existed.

P does not take account of the past. The past is landfill.

Frame. [Under] and/or [Beside]

Heartfelt landfill.

Ground.

Debris.
Noise.
Fallout.
exit

It's not so easy to write about nothing.
That's what a cowpoke was saying as I entered the frame of a dream.
I been here before haven't I?
He just sat there staring out at the plain.
Son of a bitch, I thought. He's ignoring me.
He pulled a notebook out of his pocket and started writing.
Hey I said I'm not the dead. I'm not a shade passing.
You got to at least look at me I said. After all, it is my dream.
I drew close enough to see what he was writing. He had his notebook open
to a blank page and three words suddenly materialised.
Nope it's mine.
Well I'll be damned, I murmured. Patti Smith, *M Train* (2015)

CONTRIBUTOR DETAILS

Eleanor Bowen is a visual artist and writer, currently an associate lecturer at UAL. She studied painting at Camberwell School of Arts & Crafts (1974–7) and was subsequently awarded an Abbey Major scholarship (British School at Rome, 1977–9) before moving to the northeast, where she taught and had a studio practice in Newcastle. A drawing residency with the RSC (Newcastle) and the devising/co-teaching of an interdisciplinary module in drawing and performance led to an MA in Visual Arts and Theatre (Wimbledon, 2008–9) and a practice-based PhD (2000–5). Eleanor has exhibited widely and published several times in *Performance Research*. She has a collaborative writing practice with Dr Laura Gonzalez (Glasgow School of Art), most recently publishing an essay on hysteria and performativity (Oxford Inter-Disciplinary Press, 2014) and devising/performing texts for the symposia *Motherhood and Creative Practice* (London South Bank University, 2015) and *Material Culture in Action* (Glasgow School of Art, 2015).

www.eleanorbowen.co.uk (archive website)

FOOD, WITH, NOISE

Jonathan Kearney

A very early childhood memory is of being asked how many times I had breathed in the last 20 minutes. I still remember the shocked feeling that I did not know and indeed had never thought about it. In the fourth of his BBC Reith Lectures, Grayson Perry quoted a child who when asked what they thought an artist does, replied, 'they notice things' (2013, p.9). Maybe I'm being a bit harsh or unrealistic but why had I not noticed my breathing? Is it possible that sometimes the things we do, that are most important to life, like breathing, are the most unnoticed?

In my role as Course Leader for MA Fine Art Digital at Camberwell College of Arts, I emphasise (probably to an extent that annoys my students) the reflective process in learning and art-making. The process of choosing to actively look at what you are doing *and* who you are when doing it. A more colloquial way of understanding reflection is suggested by James and Brookfield as 'the way we "look back to go forward"' (2014, p.27). The reflection process can be challenging. Maybe it is particularly hard to notice the most instinctive actions like breathing? This publication has asked for consideration of - a reflection on - inspiration and motivation; what drives forward or draws out the movement to make art and to facilitate the learning of students in making art. This 'noticing' has been strange, a little like being asked how many times have you taken a breath since you started reading this?

So what? This reflective process has led to this, a piece of writing that is speculative, hypothetical, debatable; attempting to link disparate quotes and ideas, and making significant use of metaphor. At this point metaphor seems the only way to begin this exploration; therefore I present three somewhat unusual themes: 'food', 'with' and 'noise'.

FOOD In an essay 'The Pleasures of Eating' Wendell Berry (1990) eloquently points out the disconnect of most eating. He sees eating as the end of the 'drama of the food economy' that begins with planting; however, he is disturbed by the fact that many people are now simply 'passive consumers'. Food is processed and pre-cooked with the consumer oblivious to the any of the processes like growing, packaging and distributing the food. Talking about large food corporations, Berry scarily suggests, 'they do not yet offer to insert it (food), prechewed, into our mouth ... only because they have found no profitable way to do so.' He then draws an analogy saying, 'Like industrial sex, industrial eating has become a degraded, poor, and paltry thing.'

For Berry the classic passive consumer of food mostly finds on their plate,

'inert, anonymous substances that have been processed, dyed, breaded, sauced, gravied, ground, pulped, strained, blended, prettified, and sanitized beyond resemblance to any part of any creature that ever lived.'

This, he argues, leads to a place of exile, for both the eater and the eaten. They are both in exile from any biological reality.

So what is the connection with art making? Is it too simple to replace the food industry with the 'art industry'? Is the institution, whether academic or commercial (and is there a distinction anymore?), a negative force concealing a spreading passivity?

Berry suggests that the pleasure of eating starts with 'reclaiming responsibility for one's own part in the food economy'. Eating takes place in the world; it is 'inescapably an agricultural act'.

Actions, however small and seemingly insignificant, matter. They express the complexity of something much greater. The small creative act, the choice to be aware of materials, the generous sharing in communities of learning — these insignificant acts are paradoxical in their subversiveness. They open the space for alternatives, they uncover complexity and don't hide from ambiguity.

Twice a year our family host all the MA Fine Art Digital students for a meal at our home near to Camberwell College of Arts. A simple act of creating space for conversation. Around half of the 30+ students are online and can engage from anywhere in the world. Most come to London at least twice during the two years of the Masters course for a 'Low Residency', an intensive 10 days of workshops, visits, debates, discussions and collaborative making. These meals allow a relaxed place for face to face interaction across the more than 20 nations represented. But on reflection is it more than that? In carefully choosing and preparing food, even attempting to grow some of it myself in the summer months, is this part of telling a wider story, opening the horizon of learning? Can, or should, food, art and learning be a subversive, embodied and evocative act?

'The pleasure of eating should be an extensive pleasure, not that of the mere gourmet. People who know the garden in which their vegetables have grown and know that the garden is healthy and remember the beauty of the growing plants, perhaps in the dewy first light of morning when gardens are at their best. Such a memory involves itself with the food and is one of the pleasures of eating. The knowledge of the good health of the garden relieves and frees and comforts the eater.' (Berry, 1990)

What relieves and frees and comforts the art student?

WITH An attempt to grasp the underlying sentiment of education can so often be swamped by money, metrics and markets. Art education attempts to justify itself using this language, persuading student and parent alike of its value in these three areas. With two sons at university and a third on his way I know too well the numbing process of ploughing through mostly insipid course websites and frankly useless KIS (Key Information Set) data.

A fundamental question sits largely unnoticed. When teaching in university are we *working for* students; *being for* students; *working with* students; or *being with* students? In an in-depth critique of these four positions, the theologian and ethicist Sam Wells suggest that the first three actions: working for, being for and working with, are well understood and dangerously dominant. He argues that 'being with' is the area most

neglected and yet the one most needed. He writes as someone working with some of the most disadvantaged communities in society, where the seemingly obvious thing is to 'work for' and 'be for' and 'work with' anyone whose voice is marginalised. However Wells' counter-intuitive suggestion is that simply 'being with' is actually the most significant thing to do.

'There is an honored place for working for and working with – and even, in the right circumstances, for being for – provided that each recognize they depend on, must almost always to some degree be preceded by, and always aim to issue in, being with' (Wells, 2015, p.30)

In language rarely heard in the academic art world Wells challenges pre-conceived ideas of empowerment:

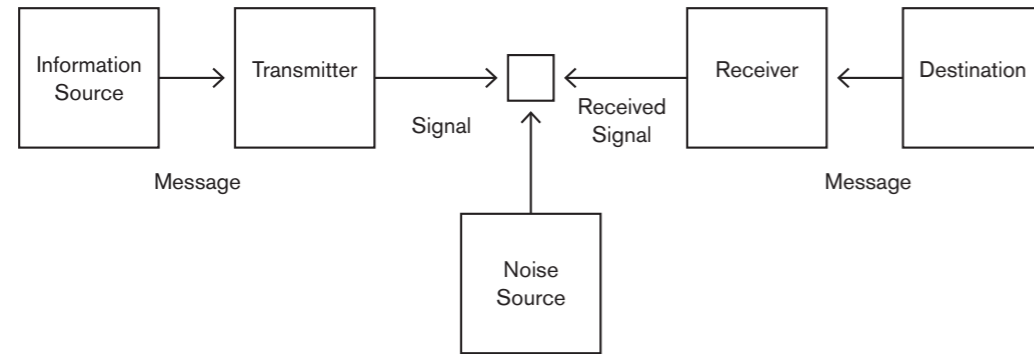
'Being with does not start with a problem – or, if it does, the problem lies with ourselves, rather than with the person in whom we perceive scarcity. We do not sit and have a coffee with a homeless person because we are trying to solve their problem – we do so because we want to receive the wealth of wisdom, humanity, and grace that God has to give us through them. We are not the source of their salvation: they are the source of ours.' (2015, p.29)

In many ways this is uncomfortable and strange; it asks questions about my role as artist and educator. Where is the power in the relationship? In whose interest is that power being used? As a Course Leader can I practice 'with-ness'? Can the course structure encourage this sort of engagement amongst the students? Why would I want to? As I tentatively explore these questions, recognising a chord that rings true, even if I can't fully articulate the constituent notes, it seems the tsunami of individualism that enthrones money, metrics and markets in education is the distraction. As Wells argues, 'Being with is not a means to an end: it is an end in itself.' He is very clear that this is not some strategy to enable more effective collaboration; 'it is an anticipation and a glimpse of the kind of interactions that may arise if the collaborative projects were to succeed.' (2015, p.30)

I suggest that his use of words like, 'anticipation' and 'glimpse' create space for this speculation. These words feel right for my own art practice (and teaching practice) that is built on contingency, chance and improvisation. This might not fit comfortably with standard models of course design and curriculum delivery, but maybe it is an approach that allows more space for openness and exploration? Is it a more fertile ground for the students to surprise me, to help shape my own learning? Does 'being with' diminish the role of the Course Leader/Programme Director or does it provide tools for breaking a model of scarcity and seeing limitless potential in generosity?

NOISE Claude Shannon wrote a Masters research paper in 1937 called 'A Symbolic Analysis of Relay and Switching Circuits'. In his paper, Shannon showed that Boolean algebra could be used to construct an efficient switching circuit for increasingly complex telephone exchanges. By manipulating just two symbols '1' and '0' this work formed the basis for digital circuit design. Shannon's ongoing research lead to another landmark paper in 1948, 'A Mathematical Theory of Communication'. This paper was

influential far beyond its initial mathematical and electrical engineering fields. It was the foundation for information theory that has seen applications in signal processing, data compression, cryptography, linguistics and biological modeling, to name just a few. Shannon's basic idea is summed up in this diagram:



(File: Shannon communication system.svg - Wikimedia commons, 2008)

In this model of communication, noise is seen as the interference that impacts on a signal as it is transmitted from the source to the destination. Noise is detrimental to the purity of the original signal, potentially causing confusion and misunderstanding. The metaphor of 'transmission' or 'transport' has often been used in relation to communication; something is transported, and any noise is seen as the enemy of this transmission.

Accepting that Shannon was simply concerned with an engineering problem rather than a semantic one, Daniel Chandler (1994) has pointed out the dangerously dominant position of the transport metaphor in information theory. Chandler suggests that this linear model ignores the two-way nature of communication, as it lacks any feedback system and fails to take into account context, relationship or meaning.

In a digital environment noise is again seen as a dysfunctional factor. The digital tantalisingly dangles the potential for perfect copies and strives to avoid any interference. Photographic software provides noise reduction tools in an attempt to create a single pure image.

However, an alternative to seeing noise as a dysfunctional factor is offered by the theologian A.K.M. Adam in his concept of 'differential hermeneutics' (2006). With its focus on text interpretation, hermeneutics is often concerned with correctness or legitimacy, with the noise of divergent interpretations a distracting element. However, Adam suggests that the deliberate study of interpretive difference means 'we would be in a better position to characterize and weigh the differences among interpreters' (2006, p.81). This would then create the space 'in which difference, far from implying error on one or another part, constitutes a positive contribution toward a fuller understanding of textuality' (2006, p81). This is not a pluralist position that lacks criticality; instead Adam suggests that 'a differential hermeneutic permits practitioners to see in interpretive variety a sign of the variety in human imagination' (2006, p.89). Therefore, the potential confusion and weakness of difference can be seen as a strength and a 'noisy peace of connected difference' (Weinberger, 2010a) can be cultivated.

In facilitating a course that is specifically looking at the breadth of fine art practice but exploring what questions, challenges, difficulties and opportunities are presented by the digital environment, we often find ourselves, staff and students, in a very noisy space. Although some, like Eli Pariser with his concept of the 'filter bubble', would suggest that noise in a digital space is narrowed by algorithms so that 'we're more and more enclosed in our own bubbles' (2012, p.4) and others like Andrew Keen (2015) would suggest difference is simply monopolised out by vast powerful corporations, the digital space is still often characterised by difference, a huge cornucopia of attitudes, perspectives and viewpoints. This is a very noisy space, a cacophony of different voices. However, the negotiation of this noise, navigating through the dissonance, seeking out notes, rhythms or chords that can be woven together into new melodies - is this not the human element breaking in? Is this the essence of a creative education? Encouraging exploration into a noisy unknown place feels a vital part of teaching. David Weinberger, in talking about how knowledge has been challenged in the digital age, captures some of the messiness (and exhilaration) of this approach. He suggests that we get to knowledge

'by having desires and curiosity, through plotting and play, by being wrong more often than right, by talking with others and forming social bonds, by applying methods and then backing away from them, by calculation and serendipity, by rationality and intuition, by institutional processes and social roles. Most important in this regard, where the decisions are tough and knowledge is hard to come by, knowledge is not determined by information, for it is the knowing process that first decides which information is relevant, and how it is to be used.'
(Weinberger, 2010b)

ENDING? The subtitle 'conclusion' sounds too certain, too confident after thinking through such divergent metaphors. The opportunity to reflect and then write has been uncomfortable but useful. Being conscious of your own breathing can be an enlightening experience. Likewise, with carefully considering the intuitive and the instinctive within teaching practice and exploring this through the lens of what moves, motivates and inspires, has illuminated areas for further consideration. I sometimes say to my students that I won't tell them what to do but I will try and ask questions so they can hear their own wisdom better. I have noticed that it can be hard to listen to yourself.

So it remains speculative, the hypothesis is unproven, the debate continues and the disparate links strive to connect. The core of art practice and teaching feels ambiguous. David Weinberger expresses this: 'knowledge is more creative, messier, harder won, and far more discontinuous' (Weinberger, 2010b). Can we extrapolate his use of 'knowledge' to include art-making, teaching or the creative learning process, all of which have a messiness that challenges institutional structures? Using these three lenses of *food*, *with* and *noise* to reflect on teaching and art practice I am conscious that 'as a maker of art you are custodian of issues larger than self.' (Bayles and Orland, 1993. p.108)

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CONTRIBUTOR DETAILS

Jonathan Kearney is an artist and part time Postgraduate Programme Director and Course Leader for MA Fine Art Digital at Camberwell College of Arts. Since 2004 he has pioneered online learning for fine art masters students. Uniquely, the MA Fine Art Digital course is offered both as a studio-based course in London and as an online option. In 2014 Jonathan added the UK's first Fine Art Low Residency element to the Masters course. With extensive international experience in both exhibiting work and teaching, Jonathan has particular interest in China, having lived there for 3 years. His research covers a range of interests from online and blended pedagogy, through art practice and theology engagement, to fine art practice in a digital environment.

www.fineartdigital.org/about/

MANIFESTO V CREDO

Mark Dean

- 1) In 1996, Johnny Depp asked Iggy Pop: 'Is it possible for anyone to be original anymore?'. Iggy replied 'No, but we can be kind, which is probably more helpful at this stage.'. I love this answer for its disconcertion - the way it shifts the terms of the question so radically away from the 'problem' of originality - and in the process reveals the real problem, which is our competitiveness, and the effect this has on our social relations. But before we consider the implications of Iggy's answer, let's review some earlier responses to the question.

Ecclesiastes (1.9) said 'There's nothing new under the sun'. The author of this biblical collection of wisdom sayings is in fact anonymous, the name Ecclesiastes being a Latin transliteration of the Greek translation of the Hebrew pseudonym 'Koheleth', meaning Gatherer. And, some millennia later, in 'The Death of The Author' (1977) Roland Barthes defined a text as 'a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture'. More recent postmodern theorists (Hazell, 2009) speak of 'the narcissism of small differences' to account for the strategies of consumer taste that we use to produce the illusion of our own uniqueness. (The term itself was coined by Freud (2002) to explain ethnic conflict, describing it in 1930 as "a convenient and relatively harmless satisfaction of the inclination to aggression", although of course the Nazis would soon prove Freud wrong about the harmlessness, but perhaps not the narcissism, of these 'small differences'.)

And it is curious how, despite the theoretical dismissal of the concept of originality, contemporary art is still obsessed by the notion. When I was an MA student in the early 90s, the director of a blue chip London gallery told us that no artist could work with fluorescent tubes any more, because Dan Flavin had done it first, and he therefore owned the exclusive right to make art from this material. Of course, the irony is that Flavin's use of commercially available lighting was at one level part of a wider critique of originality and uniqueness in art. But perhaps the greater irony is that (since I heard the gallerist's injunction) the tubes Flavin used are no longer commercially available, so a group of museums and private collectors have clubbed together to get these tubes specially manufactured in order that their Flavin sculptures can function. It would be interesting to know whether someone outside this group could purchase these specially-produced tubes, even if they could afford the expense. An artist I know tried to source the sound-absorbent material that he had seen lining the walls in a show of James Coleman's tape-slide installations, only to discover that the manufacturer had entered into an exclusive arrangement with Coleman, and so would now no longer supply anyone else with their product (coincidentally, Coleman's gallerist at the time was the same who had lain down the law about Flavin's tubes).

These ironies even extend to appropriation. When I began showing my video works internationally in the 90s, my gallerist at the time said it was a problem that Douglas Gordon had appropriated film before me, thus somehow making it his prerogative. Never mind that appropriation was supposedly the quintessential critique of the notion of originality in art. And never mind that Douglas Gordon did not in any case invent film

appropriation - if I ripped off anyone (other than those whose film and music I was appropriating, of course!) it was Joseph Cornell, Kenneth Anger, Dara Birnbaum, and George Barber. But I fear I am straying too far from my topic, which is not originality in art, but kindness.

What does this mean? At one level of course, it's simple. To be kind is fundamentally to treat others as kin, as being part of the same human family. This may not always be easy to do, but it is hardly difficult to understand. But what does it mean to be kind in terms of art? This is perhaps a more complex question. To start with, art often seems to be more about exclusive property and hierarchical status (see above) than the inclusivity of kinship. In any case, beyond the social relations surrounding the activity, it is not immediately obvious what kindness, or any other such feeling, has to do with art and its objects.

John Ruskin (1856) coined the term 'pathetic fallacy' to describe the Romantic-poetic tendency to ascribe human emotions and attitudes to things in the world - "*They rowed her in across the rolling foam, The cruel crawling foam... To her grave beside the sea*". But, observes Ruskin, 'the foam is not cruel, neither does it crawl'. And by the same token, neither can it be kind. There is a scientific version of the pathetic fallacy, too. The physical postulate of the Horror Vacui is commonly expressed as *Nature abhors a vacuum*. But according to the critique, Nature neither abhors nor admires. In fact, from this perspective 'Nature' itself is a type of pathetic fallacy - there is the world of natural things, subject to the natural laws of science, but there is not necessarily an entity - an essence intrinsic to these natural things - to which we can properly give the name Nature. Not unless we are entering into animism, or some other notion of nature as spirit.

And what of Culture? According to Arts Council England (2014) "[w]hen we talk about the value of arts and culture, we should always start with the intrinsic - how arts and culture illuminate our inner lives and enrich our emotional world. This is what we cherish.". I can criticise this quasi-religious language that exalts the status of art - indeed I have done so in a number of contexts, relating it to the Modernist engagement with Theosophy, leading to notions of 'Art as the new religion' (Garlake, 2015). But here I want to say that, despite my critique, art was, and remains, intrinsic to my life. In fact, one of the difficulties I had in accepting the Christian faith was the fact that, much as I had come to believe in God as the Most High, the highest actual experiences in my life thus far had been art experiences - viewing it, and making it. I'm talking about those rare moments when you see a work of art that transports you into itself. It doesn't happen very often but when it does you don't forget it. And, although I do not claim to make such works, there are moments when I connect with my materials, sensually and conceptually, so that the art somehow seems to be making itself, and at that moment at least I am transported. I know that this experience is common to many artists. Maybe it's why we continue to engage with art, when it is often so frustrating and disappointing. It is these peak moments that make the whole thing worthwhile (or perhaps I am simply addicted to the experience, chasing that high...).

This sense of engagement with creation is perhaps not dissimilar to those well-documented experiences of awe and beauty associated with the Sublime, and which led the Romantic poets to resort to the pathetic fallacy in an attempt to articulate their

sense of connectedness with the natural world. Many people today would still say that such experiences are the closest they get to what others might call a religious experience of God - hence the term 'communing with nature'. And I have experienced something like this myself, and very pleasant it is too. However, there is a part of me that these experiences do not touch, that (peak) art experiences do. It seems somehow unworthy to feel this - like when I walk along a beach and my eye is attracted by bits of plastic and broken glass polished by the sea rather than the natural shells and driftwood one is supposed to romanticise over.

I'm sure it would be better if I were able to simply be in the world, rather than have to mediate it via art. I suspect that, for me at least, art is a symptom of some kind of personality disorder - a disjunction that prevents me from direct experience and expression. If this is the case, then it will clearly condition my ability to be kind, if kindness is understood as a giving of oneself to others. However, it is also the case that art can provide me with a release from that condition of repression - which I think is what happens when I experience that sense of connectedness through art described above. And if I experience that through the work of others, maybe they can experience it through my work. We might understand this as a process of mediated generosity - a giving of oneself in kind, if you like. But then if I am giving of myself, I am giving something that is disordered - diseased, even. How can this be kind?

One way I think about this is to reflect on some of the music I used to listen to when I was really disordered - a 'sick boy, sick boy, goin' wrong' to quote from my favourite song by Iggy Pop. I know why I liked it then, but why should a late-middle-aged Anglican priest still enjoy a song entitled 'Death Trip'? Perhaps I shouldn't, but I do, and I think the reason that I still love The Stooges, and their cousins the Ramones, is that their negativity was neither an affectation, nor an imposition, but a way of speaking truthfully about their own lives (and by extension, those of others); and in this way, they made it positive, and kind (well, kind of). "*I knew we were going down and I knew no one was going for it. Because there were all sorts of weaknesses. The lyrics of 'Death Trip' are my way of saying 'I know what's happening to us, I know what we're doing, here's why... and I'm gonna sing about it.*" (Trynka, 2009). Iggy later reflected '*People said we were negative/ They said we would take but we would never give/ But we'd sing da, da, da, da, da, da, dum dum day/ Da, da, da, da, da, da, and hope it would pay*' (Bowie/Osterburg, 1977). And on his posthumously released solo album, Joey Ramone covered (without irony) 'What a Wonderful World' (along with a lovingly faithful reproduction of the Stooges' '1969'). But while I am seeking to understand this music in terms of kindness, I am not seeking to justify it in these terms. And although this music has been understood as 'art rock' (Iggy via his association with David Bowie, who introduced him to a wider pop audience when he produced 'Raw Power' - a year after doing the same for Lou Reed with 'Transformer' - and the Ramones in some kind of relation to the NY minimalism of Steve Reich et al) I am not seeking to justify it in these terms either.

The Dutch Reformed theologian and art history professor Hans Rookmaaker (1978) famously (in certain circles at least) said 'Art Needs No Justification'. He wrote this in part as a defence against the instrumentalisation of art, arguing that art is a gift from God, and should be practised and enjoyed as such. When Keats wrote "*Beauty is truth, truth beauty,*" - *that is all / Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know*', he was

paraphrasing classical Greek philosophy, but the formula is also a religious one; it appears in the Bhagavad Gita (Ch.17, v.15) as well as in Catholic tradition, via Thomas Aquinas, where Truth, Beauty and Goodness are understood to be One, and of God. So, when Rookmaaker says Art Needs No Justification, he is really saying that it has already been justified. For my own part, I have preferred to say 'Art has no justification'. This is not a philosophical position, but a practical one. As an artist, I have found that I cannot wait to know the value (social or otherwise) of my art work before I make it - otherwise it would never get made. In that sense I have to be selfish about it.

I think all artists have to be selfish with their time. That is, their spare time. Once they have fulfilled their general social obligations - job, family, partners, etc, - then much of their surplus time must be spent maintaining their art practice. In this sense, while ordinary decent human beings are spending time on others, being kind, artists are spending time on themselves. And it would seem difficult to justify this without recourse to either an elevated social status, or a general individualism, neither of which I believe in.

So I have nothing philosophical to say, and I am not writing a manifesto here. But I do have a creed, and I guess that is why I am writing - to try and understand some of the implications of my faith on my work.

- 2) I became involved with Christianity in the early 90s, at the same time as studying for an MA in Fine Art at Goldsmiths - which if you were around then you will know was a rather strange time and place to get religion. Nevertheless, 'The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.' (John 3.8). I had stopped making art for some years after graduating from my first Fine Art degree, and only started again in the late 80s, when I became involved with a spiritual programme of recovery after a personal crisis, a journey which also led me to church, and eventually ordination as a priest. It was not my plan, but here I am.

And in case you are wondering how I got over the problem of art hitherto being my highest experience, it was when I realised that the Gospel of John, in its intricate construction and layered language, was an amazing work of art, up there with the best I had known - but it was doing something more than those otherwise peerless artworks - it was pointing to something higher than itself. As the Gospel says, 'He must increase, but I must decrease' (John 3.30).

So the question of the relation between my faith and my work as an artist has been ongoing. In 1997 I made a conscious attempt to make a gospel artwork, and 'Scorpio Rising 2' was the result, which you can find online at tailbiter.com/scorpioising2. But in 1995 I made a work (Nothing To Worry About (Easy Rider/Frenzy - 6) that combined a looped image of someone reciting the first line of the Apostles' Creed ('I believe in God...') with the audio track from the rape and murder scene from Hitchcock's 'Frenzy'. This was shown in my first solo show, at City Racing, and I remember when I was making it, thinking 'I know where this work is coming from, but I have no idea what it will mean to anyone else'. And then the thought came, 'It's none of my business - my job is just to make the work as best I can'. And as it happened, that show was the point

at which people stopped asking me why I had done this or that (as they do at college) and just looked and listened.

At the time I hadn't consciously intended to make a religious art work - I had been confirmed as a Christian for less than a year when I made it, and even now I'm not sure if it qualifies - but it's probably the most direct expression of faith that I could have made at the time. Basically, there is a character (female, but with the pitch of her voice lowered to masculinise it) affirming her faith in God, who is then raped whilst reciting the Psalms, and then strangled while calling on 'Sweet Jesus' to help her. After she dies, her recitation of the Creed continues. It's a very grim kind of faith - negative, even - but it reflected my personal experience of sexual abuse and abandonment, and subsequent recovery through faith in God.

It's not ironic in a 90s, yBa way, except perhaps in the sense that Rilke spoke of in his 'Letters to A Young Poet' (Kappus 1929): '*Search into the depths of Things: there, irony never descends ... it will either fall away from you (if it is something accidental), or else (if it is really innate and belongs to you) it will grow strong, and become a serious tool and take its place among the instruments which you can form your art with.*'. Perhaps because of this, or perhaps just because of its grimness, it somehow passed as art at the time.

I have more recently shown it in the context of talks on the relation between my work as an artist and my work as a priest, and I have found that some people have become quite upset at the idea that it could be considered as anything to do with Christianity. One even wagged their finger at me and told me I should turn to Christ. I think there are probably cultural issues at play here, but it is also the case that the work is upsetting in itself, and I'm not sure I would make it now. Not because I don't want to deal with darkness - as I have said, if it is one's experience it is truthful to say so, and it can be 'kind' as well. But if some light has entered the situation, then to simply communicate darkness is not the truth, and so negativity may become unkind.

A more recent example is 'My Mum (V2-Sensitive)'. I discussed the making of this work, and its relation to the death of my mother, in a gallery talk around the time I produced it. The gallery subsequently invited me to install the work, and an extract from my previous talk was included in the press release for the show (Siderfin, 2011) available at www.tailbiter.com/art/my-mum-v2-sensitive-beaconsfield.

Some time later I received an email from an art writer I know, who was quite vitriolic in his criticism - not of the work, which he hadn't seen, but of the press release. He took issue with my description of the process of making the work. He didn't mention the references to the death of my mother, but my suspicion is that the death of his own mother had left him with unresolved feelings that were informing his animosity towards my text. We have never spoken about this, and I don't know whether it would be kind to raise it (since he closed the conversation down). Of course it can be kind to share difficult and dark feelings with another person, and as I have discussed, it can also be kind to make work from that position. But there is a gap between the two, and it is not immediately obvious how to bridge that gap.

I think the answer may have something to do with hope. For me the darkness has not gone away, but there is a light, which we can call hope. But to truthfully communicate that hope one must also acknowledge darkness. One can do this in art, because people can take it or leave it as a work. And one can do it in religion, because it is built into the narrative. But in our social relations, to be kind, one must gauge the level of acceptance of both the darkness and the light, and that is something that requires a two-way communication. But it is also the case that in the production of an art work, this balancing must take place - although here, the relationship is primarily with the material, as medium.

An example of this process is the recently completed series 'Pastiche Mass' (and if the art writer referred to above is reading this, please look away now). The series is based on the musical form of a Mass, which is of course in itself based on the liturgical form of the Mass (Eucharist, or Holy Communion). The starting point was hearing Aretha Franklin's recording of 'Save Me', which uses the same riff as Van Morrison's 'Gloria'.

I made a video work combining elements of these two songs with Nina Simone's and Patti Smith's respective versions of them. I then proceeded to make works based on the other sections of the Mass - Kyrie, Credo, Sanctus, Benedictus, and Angus Dei. I was pleased because I had managed to make a 'religious' work, in my own idiom as an artist, that did not require a prior interest in either myself (as an artist) or in religion per se.

Although my Gloria was the first work of the series, it became the last, because I kept reworking it. It was difficult to get the balance right, partly because I wasn't exactly sure what that balance was. I knew I wanted to remain faithful to the form of the Mass, because the work was not simply about me and my experience, and neither did I want it to become simply about anyone else, in terms of their taste or opinion regarding the content. The pre-existing form was a discipline that avoided both of those outcomes. And so I needed to reflect the content of the text of the Gloria. But at the same time I wanted to reflect the reality of experience - my own and that of others (because I do not seek to make images of God, but the representation of personhood - that is, the experience of being a person in a world where there is a God). The key in this instance was in the *miserere* ('have mercy'), which echoes the *misereres* in the Kyrie which precedes it, and also the Agnus Dei that concludes the setting. In the end I included Nina Simone's lyrical improvisations in her version of 'Save Me', which develop the theme of abuse in the guise of love, and speak of '*men of peace, men of war / Lord have mercy on our uniforms*'. So while the work is not about artistic self-expression, it is nevertheless implicating the artist, as priest. This does not negate the celebration intrinsic to the Gloria, but it precludes a triumphalist interpretation, by including the church in the sins of the world requiring mercy.

I have been enquiring into the possibility of kindness in art. But when Jesus was asked by the Rich Man what good he must do to enter into eternal life, he replied 'Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good.' (Matthew 19.16-30). And if kindness is a form of goodness, then perhaps that should serve as an end to my question.

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CONTRIBUTOR DETAILS

After studying photography and painting in the 1970s, and playing in bands in the 80s, Mark Dean began working with appropriated film and music in the early 90s, taking fragments of cultural material as objets trouvés, and reprocessing them to generate new material. This early work was shown at City Racing, London in 1992, since when he has regularly shown his video and sound work nationally and internationally; recent exhibitions include Christian Disco, Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam, 2014. From 1998-2003 he taught Fine Art at the Ruskin School of Art, and from 2003-13 at Goldsmiths College. From 2009-12 Dean was the recipient of a Paul Hamlyn Award for Artists, during which time he was ordained as a priest in the Church of England. In 2013 he was appointed chaplain to University of the Arts London.

www.tailbiter.com

SUPER-OPTIMISM (OR CRIMINALITY, AND FAILURE FOR THE GREATER GOOD)

Patricia Ellis

Foreword:

The campus novel is a literary genre popularized in the 1950s by writers such as Kingsley Amis and Malcolm Bradbury, whose books such as *Lucky Jim* (1954) and *Eating People is Wrong* (1959) satirically approached the cultural and ideological shift from 'red brick' to 'steel and glass' universities in the mid 20th century. Camberwell College of Arts is a visually jarring and architecturally hideous listed exemplar of this intellectual revolution.

As aesthetically ill-conceived building works are again underway at 45-65 Peckham Road, heralding a new radical era in Higher Education re-paradigming, this essay attempts to revisit the campus novel genre through the lens of the 21st century condition*; to find, if at all possible, some kind of "ethos" that might be derived from the hallowed Centre for Making Excellence⁺ vision – a five storey ziggurat clad in hypoallergenic cotton wool, promising 300 square feet of additional studio space between the ground floor mini-Westfield and upper floors' loft style luxury flats – the model of which illuminates with a quasi QVC halo effect from within its shrine casing in Camberwell's lobby.

If this text is at all familiar, it is entirely your fault for seeking truth in fiction: though all events actually happened and are told with agonizing veracity. As Mark Twain (in Kipling 1899, p.180)[±] said: "Get your facts first, then you can distort them as you please."

** Hallmarked by alienation as spectacle (characters with unchecked rampaging egos, resulting from the mono-dimensionality of living via social media broadcast, ignored by fb friends who are equally self-obsessed), extreme attention deficit (told in no particular order, narrative structure, or consideration for other people), and crippling lack of ambition for originality or imagination (pseudo-ironic blind championing of all things meta): this text is also a 'making of' documentary of this issue of Bright Light, and perhaps less than ideal case for practice-based – rather than academic – writing on courses.*

+ Or Centre for Excellence Making, or Excellence Centre for Making? Nobody's really sure what it's called, however, it's clear that the primary value is Excellence.

± Note to students: this is a Harvard endnote. It's just not that fucking hard.

Part 1:

Camberwell College Sculpture Studios, Year 3 Crit: Students' visual literacy skills are so whack we've abandoned critiquing art, and have devolved to attempting to understand ordinary objects. A student has brought in a quart of milk. Me: "Milk, in a medium sized plastic bottle: what does it mean?" 32 students in unison:

World Health Emergency
Global Warming
Environmental Destruction
Totalitarian Capitalism
Armageddon

* * *

So here I am, sat in Tate*, with a vicar who's eating a massive macaroon with whip cream and berries. It looks like an angelic hamburger. I'm six weeks late with this article, and he's the one confessing: "Man, I really fucked up. Everyone missed the deadline." And I'm like: "Dude, you're the worst editor ever."

(*Tate Britain, on show: Caro/Hockney/Contemporaries of Caro/Hockney/Contemporary artists that look like Caro/Hockney. Philip King/Peter Blake/Contemporary artists that have been inspired by King/Blake. Martin Creed/and/or/Isaac Julien.)

* * *

It's Job Performance Review time, and the Small Council of Line Managers is mulling over my annual achievements with genuine disinterest.

Them: "What are you working on for Research Outputs?"

[I have no attention span. I haven't written anything for publication in over a year. I started a gallery* in an investment bank in Canary Wharf that had 4000 square feet of floor space and walls made out of cardboard, the mission statement was "We will do jack-shit for you". I watched a lot of ITVBe, became an expert on The Voice and XFactor, and ate takeaways for 6 months solid. I know everything there is to know about Patty Stanger. I've been writing short blurbs on my phone. 2 minute stretches between bus stops is all I can muster. An SMS opus on cultural illiteracy: about a feral child who grows up to be in a 00's boy band, and then tries to make a come back on the reality tv circuit.]

I say: "Nothing."

* the full programme of which, before it's predictable London-demise under property developers' notice of immanent wrecking balls, can be viewed at: punkandsheep.weebly.com

* * *

The vicar is asking me why I wanted to write for the journal in the first place, and I'm tempted to say because a vicar asked me to... but that would make me look bad, so I say: "I need ethos." Which is both diplomatic and true.

* * *

[Also true: The Small Council of Line Managers 'suggested' that I should write an article for Bright Light: next issue edited by above vicar, Heavenly Intervention the only way I'll ever get published in an academically credible journal. I got £10K in research grants last year for a project Research Outputs doesn't consider to be research. So there I was, on the Church of England Hotline at Christmas explaining: "My friend Jordan and I set up a work experience program where 64 students from across UAL produced a 2 day symposia, exhibition, film screening, and live art event about art on council estates and in the community. It was called Look At The (E)state We're In (LATEWI). There were signs made out of cardboard and pop up panel discussions in local community hotspots, done with a beamer on a bed sheet." The vicar pauses, then asks: "So you're like Forrest Gump, then?"]*

* For full details, see: LATEWI.co.uk

* * *

In all campus genre novels, the ridiculously pompous mid-life crisis professor confronts his own failure by falling in love with a student.

In real life, students are immature, needy, physically disproportioned and spotty; their lives are a never-ending melodrama of housing crises, anxiety disorder medications, and Mediterranean holiday disasters. They are more interested in being sex than having it, and change gender every other week. Their #1 priority is their call package. In tutorials, they say things like "I'm paying your wages." They are unwashed and smell like goat.

In real life, tutors' mid-life crises are so complex and all-consuming they have no appetite for sex whatsoever, with their long suffering partners or anyone else. They live in constant self-flagellating turmoil that even though they are very successful artists, with mile long CVs, and works in collections across the globe, they are not on the current cover of *Artforum*, and they are not papped when they go Chiltern Firehouse. For this they blame: 1) their partner, the children their partner so adamantly insisted on, the mortgage that houses said partner and children, said children's nannies' and school fees. 2) The teaching job they had to take to support partner and children as the word 'artist' automatically takes 90000 points off your credit rating. The teaching job that demands they spend 5 days a week away from their beloved cobwebby studios. 3) Students. Who don't appreciate any of this. And especially students who don't ask for autographs.

Considering the root of all tutors' problems was the allure of regular sex with a partner in the first place, regrettably thwarted by acquiescing to the life-sucking demands of The University, the idea of university related love affairs is positively vomit-inducing.

* * *

I'm at The Approach afternoon drinking with Jordan*, and we're rehashing LATEWI's (lack of) critical merits:

(on show: coloured photographs of shapes/black and white photographs of shapes/paintings of shapes/and/or actual shapes in sculptural form, preferred material: bronze.)

I've ordered Jordan a vodka with regular tonic, rather than the Slimline™ he requested, and wonder if legally that would be considered poisoning. He doesn't notice, and carries on with our conversation, oblivious to the molecules expanding in his thighs: "Criticality is divisive, it's often seen as something adversarial. That spreads through the uni. Crits for example, they're not seen as a place where people can discuss ideas, they're seen by students as a power imbalance where someone's going to cut them down. It ignores the idea that maybe there's a community there that needs to be nicer to itself as it's already being targeted by a wider community."

* Jordan is the only tutor I know who 1) isn't in a Relationship 2) doesn't have Children 3) doesn't have his paycheck garnished by Mortgage Arrears Ltd 4) spends more time in his studio than at uni 5) disdains culture vulture media coverage 6) gets laid frequently 7) is mentally well-adjusted.

* * *

It happened slowly: armies of squidgy hirudinea, invertebrate flopping in cesspool. Embryonic horror as leg is sprouted; then not just the one, but two or five. And then it crawled onto land. I don't recognize these things.

We are dealing with a new species.

* * *

My office is Very Nice. It has a moulded ceiling with coats of arms, and stained glass windows picturing historical figures of artistic genii, both of which were made by Very Famous Artists whose irrelevant names are long forgotten. In the Very Nice Office stakes, I come in second only to the Head of Sculpture's office, which boasts an epic and sublimely contemplative view of The City's architectural wonders, which include a bank shaped like a dildo, a bank shaped like an 80s cell phone, and a bank shaped like Orwell's Ministry of Truth. With current building works, his office will soon boast a much less desirable, but no less epic or sublimely contemplative, extreme close up vision of a brick wall.

* * *

In my office: Student. I've given up on learning their names. This one has close-cropped hair and is dressed in a mauve sack-like thing, a warty tail poking out the bottom. It's impossible to tell if he/she/its got breasts or is just a bit podgy. He/She/It lays a tattered and tear-stained essay on my desk: 'Was Donuld Jud a Minamilest?' stamped with a requisite C+. It's saying: "Appeal." I'm saying: "Illiterate. Wikipedia. Marking Criteria Matrix. Academic Judgement." It's saying: "Unfair. I tried my best." I look up 'Trying Hard' on The University Policy site, which redirects to 'Extenuating Circumstances'.

* * *

The vicar has a dollop of raspberry-stained whip cream on his face. I've never been told off by a confectionary-lathered vicar before. It's an experience I'm enjoying, so I don't tell him. I do tell him: "It's so spectacularly incredibly unbelievably awesome that not one writer submitted for the journal." It's like a portal to a future where artists have some kind of self-respect has opened up and I'm buzzing: "Do you understand what this means? Oh wow, I'm so pumped. This is like the hottest publication ever."

* * *

Super-Optimism is a term in criminal psychology that describes a miscreant's absolute unwavering belief that they'll get away with it.

* * *

"You do know that I'm not going to write an academic text." I'm diva-tripping to the vicar. "Populism is my intellectual choice. I teach critical theory at a university, but I'm not interested in academia. I just think it's good for artists to know about theory so they don't get bullied at dinner parties."

* * *

At The Approach, following plate of chips, some obligatory discussion of trapezoids, and an executive decision that tonic is superfluous:

Me: Students and academics are expected to defend a position. I'm more interested in positions like trying things on at TK Maxx – you load up a cart with anything that is approximately your size, and go at it in the changing room until you find an ensemble for the weekend. But in academia there's the pressure to constantly be seen as Bond Street iron clad.

Jordan: Which is the opposite of what you'd want from an artwork.

* * *

In front of me: Student. This one's sprightly, freckles, looks like a ginger Harry Potter. It's fidgeting with its wizard specs with its tentacle and telling me, informing me: "Freud is an overwrought cliché and should never be cited in essays." I'm thinking: Freud (1918 in Meng & Freud 1963, p.61) said, "I have found little that is 'good' about human beings on the whole. In my experience most of them are trash..."

* * *

Back at The Approach: some divergence into the pros and cons of personal trainers, a diatribe on why *Gogglebox* is The Greatest Story Ever Told, a near fist-fight argument about the merits of photocopies vs retro-aesthetic photography, and, now onto Jack Daniels, Jordan and I are still at it:

Me: There's a difference in what people think of as 'criticality' vs 'critical understanding', where multiple and irreconcilable positions can harmoniously and appreciatively co-exist, which is more realistic. Contradiction allows for play and exchange. You have to embrace the inevitability of failure, and trust it's going to work out all right.

Jordan: Super-Optimism is ultimately a willful ignoring of potential things that could go wrong? Like, it's going to be awful, we're going to do it anyways...

Me: At no point did we ever think LATEWI was going to do anything but go wrong. And it doesn't matter because that's not the point. The point was: just doing it. It's not the outcome, it's the taking part.

* * *

The vicar wants to meet. The only time we can both make it is during his Wednesday Lunchtime Meditation session. I still haven't given him any text and he's apoplectic. Voice trembling with rage, he says "close your eyes and clear your mind", which I do; it takes no effort whatsoever. I know the vicar also has his eyes closed, and I'm bored so I check my email. I feel guilty and close my eyes again; I'm falling, wildly, wonderfully, into the emptiness of my head. I can hear the vicar's deep breathing: aggressive, hyperventilating. I peek: he's checking his email. He spits: "No one's submitted." He balls his fists and for a minute I think he might hit me, instead he threatens: "I'm going to schedule an Intervention."

Part 2:

I'm taking a PGCert course because the Small Council of Line Managers 'suggested' it. And:

- I recently gave up a perfectly fine career as an art writer because I was bored with writing about art and unhappy.
- So I decided to focus on something I really love doing: working with young artists (aka students).
- Which allows me to think about art all day, without having to write about it.
- I don't have a full time position; I have two half time positions. Both are Coordinator posts.
- Coordinator posts come with a Final Salary Pension Plan.
- I don't want to be writing about art now, and especially don't want to be writing about art when I'm 90 to pay for my Nursing Home.
- Being a retired writer, I know that the dictionary definition of 'Coordinator' is: a position with deliberately obfuscated job non-description, invented to fill some kind of clandestine management agenda, that will be made redundant on next regime change.
- If (when) I have to re-apply for my beloved teaching positions I won't even get short-listed as I don't have a PhD. Even though I am seriously good in a non-descript way at my non-descript jobs, and adore my non-descript student-things.
- I can easily imagine spending 4 years of my life researching and writing an essay. It would be lovely.

- Other than teaching, there are no jobs in the whole of the known art world that require a PhD (or have a Pension Plan).
- I've weighed out the cost of a Phd vs what I actually make as a full time tutor: it's financially stupid.
- I can't imagine spending 4 years of my life researching and writing an essay that only 2 other people will ever read.
- A PGCert won't help with any of this, but might squeeze me into an AL post on a Foundation course in some backwater culture void, where Pension can be transferred, if things ever go Really Wrong.
- The uni offered to pay.

* * *

From my PGCert blog, Oct 29, 2015:

*Today I presented LATEWI at a conference where I learned about the importance (and some interesting strategies) of being 'resilient' as artistic practitioners. This evening, I read Sterling's (2014) The Future Fit Framework where I learned about the importance (and some opprobrious strategies) of being 'sustainable' as education practitioners. And from both, I learned that: 'Resilience' and 'Sustainability' are two of my least favourite buzz words. It's not the holistic values and practices they convey that are problematic – how could you not get 100% behind 'bounce-back-ability' and 'keeping-mojo-in-flow'? – but their deficit connotations of 'survivalism' are a pessimistically exaggerated response to an anxiety that's both reactionary to and propagated by neo-liberal agenda. 'Resilience' is something you associate with weed killer commercials (or cockroaches), unwanted pests that just won't die; things don't need to be 'sustained' unless they can't survive on their own (like pandas) or are under aggressive external threat (like rainforests), 'sustainability' is 'hanging in there', not flourishing. Are our students' futures really so grim?**

BTW: I got an A+. Boyaka.

Note to students: *this is how you format a long quote. Duh.

* * *

This is what happened at the conference: I'm co-presenting with one of the LATEWI students. He's a mature student and genuine old skool Brixton Anarchist: the original Super Hans, and I suspect on at least one Met watch list. I present a film of the event that was made specifically for Marketing Purposes, and say: "This is what we did." He's gives a magnificently detailed lecture on the History of Housing and Human Rights Abuses in SW9.

A woman in the audience who I met at LATEWI says she was impressed by LATEWI's diversity of audiences and communities. And then things start to get bolshy. The academics have questions:

*What exactly did you teach students?
Did you educate them about the Evils of Neoliberalism?
Indoctrinate them to the Cult of Sustainability?
Propagate therapy-inducing guilt-burdens of Social Responsibility?
Militia-arm them with the survival-of-the-species imperative for Resilience?*

“Students were encouraged to develop their own ideas through independent research. LATEWI is a platform for all positions.” I say.

Dead silence.
Then:

Did you know that councils are doing social cleansing?

Me: Dead silence. And then they do what every academic who has ever encountered LATEWI always does, they explain it to me:

*I live on an estate.
I bought my council flat in the 90s.
It's awful what they're doing to poor people.*

To absolve them, I quote David Cameron: “We’re all in it together.”

* * *

In campus genre novels, the ridiculously pompous mid-life crisis professors wear polyester slacks, turtle neck jumpers and tweed jackets if they’re men. Women profesorettes – of which there are very few and strictly relegated to liberal arts departments – wear: hair in frazzled buns, shapeless smocks, cardigans, Fiestaware necklaces, exotic print scarves, pashminas. Tutors are arrogant and assertive, or bumbling and authoritarian; tutorettes are mousy and neurotic.

In real life, tutors wear: JCrew, Carhartt, Paul Smith, Gant, Massimo Dutti, Berghaus or Barbour. Pseudo-rugged brand-name leisurewear the last bastion of masculinity, keeping jellied innards cozily, yet fashionably, bundled. They are passively agreeable, and often look like they need a hug. Tutorette fashion hasn’t changed, though is now accompanied by ball-breaking demeanor, which belies a tacit knowledge they will – even from amongst their internal-applicant-only metro-sexual neuter colleagues – never be promoted.

Students once wore letterman jackets and a-frame skirts. They now dress as prophets and/or Inland Revenue auditors.

* * *

The Intervention: South London Gallery

(on show: indecipherable assemblage of archival print materials/8mm archival film of shadows/dancers/dancers’ shadows/documentary video about migrants [with subtitles]/and/or/yarn, in various archive-referential textual configurations.)

The back room’s been booked and there are cakes. Barely chromatically present: one tutor wearing navy and tan Reiss, grey Berghaus fleece; one tutorette in black pashmina. Nobody else has turned up. The epoch-defining symbolism of the near vacant room is so unspectacular I take a picture of it, with full confidence it will be shown in the gallery next door in 20 years time as a ‘culturally pivotal artifact’. The vicar, wearing

rope-soled shoes and a corduroy clerical collar, is conveying a message from The Powers That Be:

“The University would like The REF to be more conducive to what we do – but HOW?”

Drop-jawed at the mind-blowing idiocy of this question, the tutors cite the answer in unison, so simple it rolls off their tongues like a nursery rhyme as it meets the roaring chorus of the espresso machine, which filters their inaudible words into 4 decaf soy macchiatos that will momentarily be consumed with soul satisfying relish.

* * *

[I am relieved to recount that I've only crossed paths with Its Majesty, The Eminent Honourable Research Excellence Framework, PhD DPhil DUniv, once. It was at a dinner party in Shoreditch, in a flat next to Ibid. Lots of academics were there, and a couple of artists, and a few artist-academics. We were drinking red wine; The REF was sprawled on the sofa, hogging the Ferrero Rochers, and all the academics were cozying up to it, listening to its bullish stories and saying things like “Oh, REFfie, you’re so great!” just hoping it would invite them to its villa in Corfu. And one of my friends – she’s an artist, and a Very Talented one too – showed The REF a jpg of her new painting. I could see The REF staring to drool. Even though it had had more than it’s fill of the lobster ravioli, demanded seconds of the duck wellington, licked every last morsel from its terrine of crème brûlée, and was now – to my begrudging annoyance – monopolizing the Ferrero Rochers. It lifted a hirsute eyebrow: “Interesting...” it purred, “What do you think of Quentin Meillassoux?” “Oh, I don’t really watch Master Chef,” she replied, truly innocent. It tried to swallow her whole. Seriously, it took 8 Phd candidates to pry open its gruesome maw while I slapped it about the head with a Sotheby’s catalogue. Thankfully, somebody hailed an uber and that was the last I saw of it.]*

(*on show: black things/wood things/cast things/black wood things/casts of wood things/casts of black things/casts of black wood things/and/or things cast in black.)

* * *

Serving my coffee: Student. This one’s tall and spiny, still bearing the scars of our last tutorial. I’ve watched it cockroach-sneaky stir my drink with its antennae behind the bar. It hates me because of Dyslexia. And Martin Creed. Neither of which are my fault. In summer term it had discovered Creed’s *Work No. 203: Everything Is Going to Be Alright* (at Tate). And, understandably, fell passionately in love with it; it’s a good piece. It took a picture of it on its phone and posted it to its facebook, tumblr, instagram, and vine. It retweeted it over 8000 times. It’d felt like finally it’d found its Calling -- the secret to life, artistry, the universe and everything: it too could make a Neon Sign. This didn’t happen instantly, it took months to build up the confidence to approach such a quintessentially life changing masterpiece. It’d worked every SLG Colombian Fair Trade hour it could, slavishly serving lattes and changing nappies for extra tips. It spent over 3 months sourcing the best neon sign-maker in All The World: in a small village just outside of Hengyang. It spent another 6 months learning Mandarin to be able to fluently communicate the order. And waited... patiently... And then it arrived. 2 weeks ago,

SUPER-OPTIMISM
OR CRIMINALITY,
AND FAILURE
FOR THE
GREATER GOOD

to the Camberwell top floor studios. 13 meters long, 0.5 meters high: truly the most remarkable neon sign I have ever seen. There I was at its unveiling, basked in its serene unnatural glow: it was breathtakingly resplendent, kicking the ass out of Creed, and anyone who had ever attempted to harness the powers of monatomic gas for the purposes of High Art. It read:

ITS GOING TO BE OK

Hyper-aware that I was meant to say something, but barely able to find words in the grip of this near celestial brilliance, I tearfully choked my highest praise: "It was a brave decision to use it's as a pronoun."

* * *

I've recently discovered that all my classmates on the PGCert are there on disciplinary measures, and wonder if I've missed a commu from HR.

* * *

Our meeting at SLG is disrupted by a herd of milky-mums driving SUV prams. Over the screaming of their Burberry-swaddled spawn, the vicar is explaining why he specifically chose us as writers for his journal: "People like you guys are in a better position to make critical observations than those in established research positions." By this he means: he asked other, more reputable writers, who, sex-starved and mortgage-heavy, didn't want to contribute one more goddamn thing to The University.

He continues, perseveringly: "And though this process hasn't generated a great amount of word count, The REF is interested in our group as a methodological model."

OMG!!!! I AM SO EXCITED I CAN BARELY CONTAIN MYSELF: "You mean The REF is actually going to consider doing absolutely nothing as its operational policy?" This is the breakthrough I've been dreaming of. Excellence is so meaningless. As are Frameworks. Especially in relation to Art.

Vicar-scorn, a silent prayer: "It's interested in peer-group research support networks."

I want to believe it, but am somehow suspicious: "I presume The REF knows about Freud, right?"

* * *

My peer-group is ravaging the cakes, but I'm too hungover to eat. So I wander to the bar to make up with the student. I say: "Gavin Turk made neon signs that are pictures, not text." Hope reignited: a massive mandible smile. I'm feeling so helpful: "But you do know you can't be a YBA. You should try to do your own thing. Being an artist isn't about being a fan, it's about executing your own ideas: being the future. Or at least engaging with the now." The student looks perplexed, then says: "You mean be like Benedict Drew?"

* * *

Jordan's hungover too, so has cancelled his personal trainer appointment, and is now bored and sending me texts while making non-committal small talk on grindr:

Do you promise?

I will if you will.

The way collaboration is taught at uni is problematic.

Blow me. E2.

I quickly text back:

In real life, collaboration is organic, brought together through mutual interests. Which is the complete opposite of the proscribed group work students are made to do.

* * *

Where there were once delectable confections is now a sprawling field of icing smudges and crumbs, the remnants of forging conversations. The vicar, exhausted by this micro-triumph against the mounting impossibility of his task, and gorged on red velvet layer cake, is sleeping soundly in the corner. He looks blithesome, cherubic. In his dream: he's reading the articles that are yet to be written and – reflecting on the camaraderie this project has initiated – feeling completely ok with the fact that none of them are very good.

With ~~peers~~ new friends pudding sated and sugar-high pliable, and vicar safely basking, I probe for the unmentionable truth: "Why didn't you guys write anything?"

"If there was an Olympic gold medal for procrastination it would be mine. Competing demands, other things needed to be done." I picture partner and children, quaint house in the burbs, classrooms full of young student-things; executing a Choice: for happiness.

"I was afraid of judgment, being seen to be a failure. Especially by painters – they can be so unctuous."

"Wow, you care what painters think?" I'm impressed. "That's neat!"

"So what's your excuse?" she asks.

"I have an absolute unwavering belief that, as artists, we will get away with it," I laugh. "Besides, it's an academic journal, who's going to read it?"

* * *

As the herd of milky-mums begin their tank-pram procession to the till, I catch glimpse of an adorable and exceptionally alert tot, seeming to scrutinize everything with its parietal eye. "That one's going to be an artist." I tell its mother, who is less than delighted.

Post-script:

From the window of the Head of Sculpture's (still, for now) Best Office, below the coke-fuelled fetishes of The City skyline, in the back lot of Camberwell College, where the cafeteria – which was once a world class gallery until the Student-Thing Union demanded sandwiches – used to be, can be viewed the gaping evidence of bulldozers' Centred Excellence of Making: a Giant Hole. From the architects' blueprints, one can presume that this is where the Mindfulness Dojo and Lecture Theatre will go, conveniently adjacent to the iStore and Shoreditch House Satellite Bar. But at present it's just a chasmal pit of mud and rubble: a perfect breeding ground underlying a freshly poured foundation.

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* *Note to students: This is a bibliography. Do you see how the books listed match up to the endnotes? Do you? Really? For chrissakes, just look at it... Also, this bibliography only has 3 sources, only one of which I've read. This is something we have in common, I know. Now, listen up – this is a very important distinction to make: I can get away with this shit because 1) I am a grown up: I already have a degree and am not being graded and in real life there is no Harvard 2) this bibliography is provided for comedic purposes only, and bears no relevance to anything whatsoever, and 3) I'm writing this article pro bono in encroachment of a pre-existing agreed contract, and if The University wants me to expand my knowledge, they'll need to increase my spine points proportionally. What you need to know is: if you ever submit a bibliography this short and/or containing materials you haven't read, your essay will Automatically Fail. And not in a Super-Optimistic way either. On a positive note: I commend you for reading this essay. It's really long. Maybe the longest thing you've ever read. And it contains some big words too. Well done!*

CONTRIBUTOR DETAILS

Patricia Ellis is an artist, writer, and curator. She is also the Fine Art Contextual Studies Coordinator at Camberwell College, and the Academic Coordinator for Enterprise and Employability at Camberwell, Chelsea, and Wimbledon Colleges.

A TEXT SCORE FOR THE TEMPORARY SOUNDSCAPE (PART 2)

Phil Mill

Instructions to perform the score:

- 1 Select a location with site-specific interest (acoustically, geographically, etc)
- 2 Disperse the pieces throughout the space, connected or unconnected at different heights, angles, and positions, encouraging mobility within the piece
- 3 Provide instruments or no instruments; encourage potential participants to bring sound-making objects if possible
- 4 Make it known that there is no position for an audience, as there is also no position for a performer
- 5 There is no obligation that this score has to be performed by anyone
- 6 There is no time-scale of the performance

When viewing music from a social angle you end up with a separation; for example, through standard notation it is accessible to smaller groups who are trained to read, and follow this, often without their own interpretation (unless suggested through the score, which, from what I've noticed, has generated problems for musicians who have never tried to play 'beyond' the score).

He also often writes about noise as a negative in relation to listening; however in some Sound Art practices noise is accepted, and perhaps the negative reaction to noise is something that is part of teaching - to encourage perfection as opposed to exploring the imperfect or unwanted elements: noise, with its definition being 'unwanted sound'.

All music, any organization of sounds, is then a tool for the creation or consolidation of a community, of a totality. It is what links a power center to its subjects, and thus, more generally, it is an attribute of power in all of its forms. Therefore, any theory of power today must include a theory of the localization of noise and its endowment with form
- Jacques Attali

Well, first of all, that begs the question of whether "improvisation" is a single and identifiable genre with a universally understood ideology, which is debatable. I think that institutionalizing anything can have adverse effects, to the degree that academia is seen as a kind of self-sustaining mechanism tending towards the canonization of certain ideas at the expense of others
- Fred Frith

This then could be translated into our surrounding environments and our treatment of each other. In this method she generated text-based scores which were often a set of instructions or a text that was meant to be interpreted in the improvisation context.

R Murray Schafer, whose work in education also focuses on unorthodox methods, encouraging students of different backgrounds and practices. Schafer established the methods of 'Ear Cleaning', and says that before Ear Training takes place we should go through the process of Ear Cleaning which is a process of 'learning to listen'.

Through Oliveros' methods she perhaps encouraged listening, interpreted as a method of openness, encouraging others. Improvising not only to listen to themselves but to listen and respond to each other, establishing the collective element of improvisation ensembles.

Sound, being very temporary in existence, also has the ability to take a large number of forms, and most of the time without a physical existence.

This notion does bring up questions about whether this could exist in a university, when a university is set up as a way of developing an academic as well as creative practice in students.

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CONTRIBUTOR DETAILS

Phil Mill is a Sound Artist and Musician from Colchester, UK, Currently living and working in London with an interest in experimental and free improvised music, exploring the use of field recording, ambient composition and multichannel sound.

He graduated from the London College of Communication in 2015 with an MA in Sound Art as well as a BA in Music from the University of Essex. Previous exhibitions and live performances include Colchester Art Centre, The Minorities Gallery. Phil most recently presented a sound recording of *Frogs* at Chelsea College of Art in the landing space.

- Fig.01 Front steps old building Peckham Road Camberwell, mobile phone photograph, 2015 - Eleanor Bowen
- Fig.02 Front door old building Peckham Road Camberwell, mobile phone photograph, 2015 - Eleanor Bowen
- Fig.03 Interior detail old building Peckham Road Camberwell, mobile phone photograph, 2015- Eleanor Bowen
- Fig.04 Interior detail old building Peckham Road Camberwell, mobile phone photograph, 2015- Eleanor Bowen
- Fig.05 Interior detail old building Peckham Road Camberwell, mobile phone photograph, 2015- Eleanor Bowen
- Fig.06 Interior detail old building Peckham Road Camberwell, mobile phone photograph, 2015- Eleanor Bowen
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- Fig.13 B freaked out by the plan chest, old building Peckham Road, mobile phone photograph, 2016 - Eleanor Bowen
- Fig.14 3.2 PAINTING CORRIDOR painting office [X] left, now blocked off, old building Peckham Road, mobile phone photograph, 2016 - Eleanor Bowen
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