Taraneh Fazeli with the Pedagogy Group

Contributing members include: James Andrews, Barrie Cline, Maureen Connor, Taraneh Fazeli, Susan Jahoda, Mark Read, Robert Sember, and Sasha Summer.

Born in Schenectady, New York, 1981

Taraneh Fazeli is a curator, educator, editor, and researcher with a practice that emerges from legacies of institutional critique and radical pedagogy. She studied at the Cooper Union and at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York and previously worked within the New Museum's Education Department (2012–15), was a Contributing Editor at *Triple Canopy* (2011–12), and was the Managing Director of *e-flux* (2008–11). Recent curatorial projects such as *The Temporary Center for Translation* (2014, New Museum) focused on the relationship of pedagogy and language to the ontological status of the postcolonial subject. Her current project *Sick Time, Sleepy Time, Crip Time: Against Capitalism's Temporal Bullying* proposes that, by reconsidering society's understandings of the states of debility, disability, aging, and rest (particularly their temporalities), we might find ways to care for each other as existence under capitalism becomes impossible.

The Pedagogy Group
The art educators, cultural workers, and political organizers in the Pedagogy Group explore, develop, and practice pedagogies that foster cooperative and collective skills and values. A key aim of the group is to resist the competitive, individualist, and market-driven subjectivities produced by mainstream art education. Activities include sharing syllabi, investigating political economies of education, and connecting classrooms to social movements. Core critic-in-residence Taraneh Fazeli is a member and invited the group to publish this text here.

Toward a Social Practice Pedagogy

This text was collaboratively-written as part of the Pedagogy Group's response to an invitation to contribute to the forthcoming textbook for high school and college students on the field of Social Practice art, ART AS SOCIAL ACTION *(New York: Allworth Press, 2018), edited by artists Chloë Bass and Gregory Sholette. The textbook version will include a collection of practices/tools and related lesson plans/curricula that are not published here.*

The Pedagogy Group formed in 2012 when we, a group of educators and organizers, gathered to discuss ways to bring the work of the Occupy Wall Street movement (OWS) into the art institutions, schools, and movements in which we work. Initially the group hoped to draft a syllabus that would advance a shared commitment to social change. However, as we learned how our teaching contexts varied in terms of curriculum and student populations, it became evident that a unitary syllabus would not work. Our focus turned to broader discussions of pedagogy, addressing how we could support each other's efforts to encourage collaborative relationships while also working towards the larger collective struggle for social justice. Over the past four years we have shared and workshopped syllabi, readings, and lessons that draw on our pedagogical knowledge and collaborative experiences.[1] Some of us describe this practice as commoning. Others talk of it as building the capacity to participate in and support social movements. What unifies our efforts is that they are guided by accountability to specific struggles and guided by critical reflection on our social subjectivities and political commitments.[2] Sharing, exploring, and reflecting together is, as it were, the social practice of the Pedagogy Group.

If our aim is to reorganize social relations and model a redistribution of resources, we must begin with ourselves. Heeding the slogan popularized by disability rights activists in the 1990s— "Nothing about us without us"—we stress to our students and constituencies the importance of artistic practices that emphasize making with rather than about.[3] In other words, approaches that assume one is able to choose to be interested in a struggle and make work about it are quite different from those that involve being imbricated in that struggle due to one's position in society. The former reinforces structures of privilege and exclusion while the later contributes to social transformation.

By sharing our practices of critical pedagogy, care, and mutual aid, we formed a community of support that works to counter the structural problems and systemic corruption prevalent in neoliberal institutions of art and higher education. We aim to form and facilitate learning experiences that model socially equitable ways of being. This includes exploring how art contributes to transformation. Collective creative endeavors can include the convening of diverse publics to participate in cultural rituals that envision alternative systems and new metaphors. They can also challenge conventional techniques and ethics of representation and thinking beyond existing visual languages.

After carefully and critically discussing the invitation to contribute to a textbook on Social Practice art education, we chose to provide reflections on pedagogical principles and experiences that educators with commitments similar to our own might find useful. The following actions, drawn from processes we use in our biweekly gatherings, were used to generate these materials:

1. Identify how pedagogy and "Social Practice" are resonant with or in contradiction to each other:

The period in which the Pedagogy Group has operated has also been the period in which Social Practice art has become firmly institutionalized. We do not use the neologism "Social Practice" (SP) to describe our work because this term fails to distinguish between practices that engage the social as a medium or form and those that unfold within specific constituencies and struggles.[4] Definitions of SP generally focus on the artist's move from the studio into public arenas and contexts of everyday life, while also incorporating artistic strategies originating within conceptualist avant-gardes. The practices that fit these definitions seldom address the political realities that condition social exchange nor do they undertake systemic analyses of power or investigate models of sustainability. The result is that these understandings of SP fail to counteract the Modernist commitment to the autonomy of artists and art.

The institutionalizing of SP prompts us to wonder whether we are witnessing another phase of the Modernist appropriation and domestication of political art movements evidenced by, for example, the incorporation of Social Realist photography and painting into the art canon. This process shifts art's value from the political economic sphere to the regimes of scholarship and auctions; technical skill, abstract aesthetic analyses, and the artist's biography and artistic influences eclipse the ideological struggles these works aimed to support. Most concerning, however, is

the manner in which the institutional contradictions of the art sphere are outsourced to artists who safely and temporarily bring the "political" into the art space.[5] We are concerned that SP-oriented educational programs, curatorial initiatives, and a growing slate of publications are defining a new autonomous sphere of practice within art and politics. Once again the "artist" and "art" stand apart from social practices created in everyday community and movement making. In this vision, art is not seen as operating in a political world but as creating a place for politics within the world of art.

Those of us who teach within BFA/MFA programs that house SP courses and concentrations are witnessing these contradictions play out. From our perspective it seems nearly impossible to positively influence or reconfigure social relations from within these settings and other art institutions. This is due to institutionalized imperatives that contradict the core values socially-engaged artists claim to espouse. At the institutional level, SP programs attempt to position themselves to aid specific communities in need, yet their host colleges, even if they are public entities, are not accessible to (or created for) members of those communities.[6]

For faculty, built-in structural problems include departmental hierarchies, competitive requirements for promotion, the rise of adjunct precarity, and lack of transparency in hiring and spending priorities. Non-SP faculty in hybrid programs may feel sidelined and devalued, sometimes refusing to take the work of SP students seriously. For students, the competitive selection process counteracts the driving ethos of SP from the start, even when coursework breaks down traditional teacher/student power dynamics and eschews antagonistic critiques. At the same time the possibilities for employment once an MFA or other degree in SP is acquired are limited, perhaps even more than for other art programs. Embraced by "diversity seeking" administrations, the field of SP builds its institutional reputation culturally, not financially. These programs are less likely to be targeted for project funding, scholarships, advancing or hiring new faculty, or for providing designated meeting spaces.

We take up the issue of SP pedagogy with these concerns in mind. Specifically, we ask how the principles and practices of radical pedagogy, a highly developed social practice in its own right, might be brought into these debates.

2. Describe specific teaching and learning experiences:

Following practices used in politically-engaged pedagogy, popular education, and community organizing, we draw extensively from our

experiences as educators working in settings that range from teaching art in union-supported colleges, teen programs, or SP programs in degree-granting institutions to facilitating workshops within social movements and arts institutions. As we have done for the past four years, we come together in conversation to exchange individual stories around the material conditions and experiences within our own classrooms or learning environments. The aim is to identify the contradictions, central struggles, and joys we each encounter when teaching.

We invited each member of the group to contribute a brief text that describes social transactions within the learning environment. These vignettes illustrate an awareness of how our pedagogical work is nested within collective struggle or political vision, or how it makes apparent a social contradiction.

3. Generate a set of themes and questions from these descriptions:

We read and discuss the collection of case studies. Each inspires questions that require its author to reflect more deeply and share insights. Readers register the connection between the moment or situation depicted and broader pedagogical/political concerns. We identify links that align our practices with collective learning processes, building political literacy. This analytic process—the move from concrete events to general propositions—is represented in the form and content of the following pages and mirrors the key shifts that often take place within the transformative spaces of certain movements and radical pedagogy itself: action, reflection, and analysis.

4. Discuss the themes and questions:

While preparing this text we read and discussed a press release from artists Samantha Hill and Ed Woodham in which they detail their sudden termination from the Mill Hill Visiting Social Practice Art Residency in Macon, Georgia on July 26, 2016, only twenty-one days into a three-month residency.[7] According to Hill and Woodham, the residency hosted by Macon Arts Alliance (a re-granting organization for the NEA) claimed to "bring together social practice artists, residents, and local artists" to "engage the neighborhood in creative projects that will result in a creative asset map and cultural master plan for the neighborhood."[8] Soon after the artists started talking to people from the neighborhood around the MAA and Macon's African American community, it became clear that the institutional rhetoric of cooperation was part of a complex "art

washing" gentrification plan to redevelop the area through arts tourism. The situation became more complex as various interlocked "place-making" organizations consolidated power through cultural cronyism, reinforcing longstanding racist systems enabling displacement.[9] As they were planning ways to reactivate sites like a soon-to-be-closed local public library and engaged with community members that MAA had steered them away from, the artists were suddenly terminated for failing to "work closely with the residents in the Mill Hill/Ft. Hawkins neighborhood" and for not providing "a positive representative of [the] Mill Hill Program at all times."[10] This case underscores how the language of community engagement may be used to legitimate opposing practices. These statements reveal clear differences in how the various stakeholders identify the "community" and evaluate art's impact. Hill and Woodham stressed the need to ask tough questions and listen deeply to a community's stories. One of these questions—"What kind of art practices can thrive and magically transform everyday life while refusing and resisting being a tool for growth by dispossession?"—prefigured the situation in which they would find themselves, one in which art is used to advance struggles of justice while also greasing the wheels of complicity.

With these risks in mind, we must prepare students to ethically navigate the arts sphere beyond school. Artists need to anticipate the benefits of and expectations around any socially-engaged work for themselves, their constituencies, and the institutions with which they are involved. To this end, we encourage students to ask about project funding, their relation to place, the role of the press, divisions of labor, institutional hierarchies, intellectual property, the long-term stewardship of a project, etc.

We have introduced models for commoning such as care collectives, free schools, and worker cooperatives. Sometimes, we involve students in discussions of economic relations inside universities that systematically produce precarity such as student debt and increased adjunct labor. After graduation many students discover they are unable to conceive of alternatives to established cultural conditions, accepting the spaces, grants, payments, and publications available to them rather than shaping their own opportunities and contexts. Consequently, we introduce into our lessons techniques used by autonomous grassroots social movements, such as people's assemblies and community-led popular education sessions.[11] We also draw from the work of our own members such as BFAMFAPhD's *Ten Leaps: A Lexicon for Art Education,* an example of a pedagogical project (open source text, workbook, and game) that guides teachers, artists, and designers towards a wide range of choices

for organizing work, compensating workers, and producing projects that become visible and open to contestation. As opposed to the common emphasis in art education on the audience's moment of encounter with artistic projects, this approach attends to the entire lifecycle of the work by addressing topics ranging from artistic process to economies, professional practices, and ecological sustainability.[12]

As educators we must respond to (social) practices that threaten the freedoms of learning, such as managerialism, surveillance, the increasing commodification of desire, and governance of vital social functions, from relations of affection and friendship to efforts of self-care.[13] These intrusions might be resisted by fostering other ways of being, such as finding ways to slow down and cultivate practices of listening and knowing that are unabashedly "out of sync" or "behind in progress." Despite the myriad ways time has been deployed as a medium or organizing logic throughout art's history, artists and art students are far from impervious to the time/space compression neoliberalism imposes. Scarcity, never-ending deadlines, and accelerated production schedules that demand immediate proof of progress and quantifiable results are common. Perhaps the ultimate flexible laborers, artists know all too well what it is to be told on one hand that they are not controlled by any one clock while on the other they are measured by standards of linear time in their work; schools ask students to be self-determined and self-disciplined before measuring their progress under core curriculums.

Furthermore, projects that find support under the rubric of SP often require outcomes that demonstrate remarkable action, change, or shifts, potentially working against intuitive, understated, or indeterminate practices. Within many classes that are structured around experimentation and student collaboration with community partners, students have only a semester to develop projects, leaving little time for listening and speculation before action is expected.[14] As teachers we equally feel this weight, struggling to maintain structures that emphasize duration (in long-term partnerships) or intentional ephemerality (in conscious but tentative experiments). We do, however, encourage collaborative work within our classrooms, utilizing methods of evaluation that counter ranking and competition.

We offer our students examples of practices grounded in alternative temporalities. For example, where the canonical listening experiments of Modernism transformed auditory perception (which included experimental scores, chance operations, event scores, and instructions), they stopped short of taking action to transform the world. The sound art collective Ultra-red, which shares one member with the Pedagogy

Group, has developed listening "protocols" that offer organizers, cultural workers, and community members an accessible process for practicing collective listening and incorporating the tenets of popular education into the long-term organizing required to sustain complex political struggles.[15] Ultra-red was founded in 1994 when Los Angeles-based musicians and sound artists in the AIDS social movement, ACT UP, established a needle exchange program on the streets of Hollywood. The group used audio recordings of police harassment of needle exchange workers in a series of early sound compositions intended to document and support the fight against the AIDS crisis. This representation of police violence had limited effect, however, and Ultra-red shifted its efforts to political organizing. Today, Ultra-red members organize in four cities around issues related to health justice, fair housing, popular education, and migrant rights and anti-racist struggles. The collective's protocols guide communities or collectives to reflect on their needs and aspirations and then develop these into questions for collaborative inquiry. For example, in confronting the privatizing of public education, a coalition of students, teachers, and parents may ask, "What is the sound of for-profit education?" The question guides a multi-phased investigation that includes taking sound walks, making site recordings, conducting oral history interviews, convening collective listening sessions, and hosting teach-ins concerning policies and laws. Thus, intentional and mindful listening practices are incorporated into existing organizing efforts in order to enable collectives to learn together and develop analyses that honor the realities of their members' lives and experiences.

5. Revisit the learning descriptions, identify common tools, and develop lesson plans that demonstrate how they are best used:

While identifying links that emerged in our vignettes, we take the opportunity to revisit past explorations into how pedagogical methods can disrupt the highly individualistic, competitive, and market-oriented education provided in many established art schools. For example, in our collaboratively-written statement "Listening, Thinking and Acting Together," we explored how socially-engaged pedagogy gets seated within the "new university" and considered what models, subjectivities, and values are often produced within that context.[16] To help foster the creation of more ethical economies of production and to foreground undervalued epistemologies, we shared two activities that members often employ in their classrooms to reframe problems and promote

dialogue and experimentation. The first is an asset mapping exercise, where students literally map out shared skills and resources amongst themselves. This initiates a group culture of mutual support that helps mitigate the competitive and individualized components of the educational experience. It is also a tool that students can use in many other aspects of their lives and long after they have graduated. The second, "Threeing," a method artist Paul Ryan developed to better understand human patterns of behavior, has been used as an alternative to the conventional art critique.[17] Rather than pronouncing judgment, participants build dialogue collaboratively to explore the possibilities of art projects. In the process hierarchical relationships give way to heterarchical ones.

Through our storytelling we discuss how we have implemented these tools in our classrooms and what they evoked. Then we compose a set of lesson plans for the textbook that positions the tools within larger historical contexts and movement work. Analogous to the way in which social practices can be employed to different ends, the efficacy of these methods varies depending on the nature of the institution or context they are situated within.

PEDAGOGICAL METHODS:

Fostering ethical community economies and alternative epistemologies through dialogue and experimentation

Q: How do we negotiate the contradictions between teaching the tenets of studio art practice and addressing the urgent needs that arise within our classrooms?

> It is Tuesday morning at 8:30 a.m. and class begins. We go around the room and check in with each other. I want to know what every person in our shared space is experiencing because how we *are* individually affects how we will *be* together for the next three hours and, ultimately, how *we will be together* for the rest of the semester. The check-in provides a context for a reading discussion, looking at two projects, and a class exercise.
>
> In my studio practice courses it is a priority that we make space for caring about who and what urgencies are in the room. These are the conditions that we bring to the work and, with facilitation, provide an opening for dialogue. A woman with a chronic illness is able to say she needs help fabricating a sculpture; the only person of color in the classroom is able to say that the silence in the room when he shares an account of a racist incident is really difficult; and a young man juggling two jobs and school says he is projecting his work because he couldn't afford to print it.
>
> Today disability, racism, and debt are what we bring to a discussion of Jack Halberstam's essay "The Wild Beyond: With and For the Undercommons," in Stefano Harney and Fred Moten's book *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study*.[1] After our discussion we re-boil our class kettle and drink tea while thinking through the logistics and implications of collective labor on projects and how to be resourceful when it comes to sourcing materials. I had prepared a prompt for our Intragroup Dialogue exercise as an entry into our next class project: *Practice as Maintenance.* I abandon the prompt and replace it with the topic of *silence*.*—Susan*

Q: How can we model different ways of being together within settings that are grounded in Eurocentric views of culture, that emphasize critique, and that are governed by neoliberal logics? How can we make visible the mechanics of power relationships and cultivate care and horizontality, while still allowing for contestation, difficulty, and difference?

> A partnered dialogical exercise I like to do within a structure for speaking and listening that is intentionally and hyperbolically accelerated asks participants: "When has time been a regulatory force in your life?" Afterwards, some share: one student told us how there's simply too much reading in all her classes to possibly complete and that she realized she was not really expected to absorb all the content, but rather, learn to manage time around insurmountable flows of data; another, who aligned her work with Mierle Laderman Ukeles's "Maintenance Art," shared on how the limits of living and making work with limited energy as a result of chronic illness became an asset; yet another told us about the temporal dissonance that occurred while working with a group of mothers of the Black Lives Matter movement (including her own), and asked for

---

[1] Jack Halberstam, "The Wild Beyond: With and for the Undercommons," in *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study*, Stefano Harney and Fred Moten (New York: Minor Compositions, 2013), 2-12.

feedback on how to move between their time of mourning and collective organizing, and the time defined by a school semester's deliverables. This discussion about temporalities in our own lives alongside recent art and theories that queer time, provides the ground for considering time as an artistic medium.[2] When done in the initial weeks of class, this exercise encourages students to negotiate the temporal shape of the classroom, their projects, and their lives together throughout the semester.

In his article "Being 'Lazy' and Slowing Down," Riyad A. Shahjahan suggests moving away from mind-centered epistemologies in the classroom that dislodge us from our bodies.[3] Re-inscribing the colonial project's separation of Nature from Culture, a Eurocentric conception of linear time whose forward motion and progress finds its corollary in current higher education logics that compel all towards neoliberal subjectivity. By emphasizing time that's otherwise we can foster other ways of being. We must bring life and the body back by focusing on sensorial ways of knowing and evaluating learning outcomes differently. Haptic play, practices of listening, cultivation of silence, or rituals as simple as sharing food and weekly check-ins become potential sites of emancipation.—*Taraneh*

I travel with two long-time collaborators from New York to São Paulo to participate in three weeks of workshops. Most of us have never met before so we begin with the usual pro forma introductions—name, city, affiliation, etc. Translating between Portuguese and English is really slow. We try simultaneous translation but it's as though we're not in the same room. Going slow is preferable. We settle in, get comfortable, grab food and coffee, and commit to holding a long, still focus. Hearing our introductions translated and re-voiced is our first collaborative work. We are here to discuss gender identity, queerness, the intersection between race and class. Translation becomes the metaphor and protocol for this collaboration. It also inscribes a global north-global south divide and makes even more relevant the "decolonization" framework that will be repeatedly invoked in the days ahead.

This slow listening carries through to our first workshop designed around the question: "why are *we* gathered *here* and at *this time*?" We begin by walking silently in small groups through the local neighborhood. Back in the workshop space we share our observations and organize the responses into themes and questions that are brought to the full group. As contributions are shared, the space is translated into terms that are specific to the group: transwomen share the indications they found of threat or safety while others point to the neighborhood's working class character. A resident describes growing up gay and mixed-race in this area and hearing the echoes of these memories. His story invites others to share comparable histories and a new round of introductions

---

[2] We look at artworks that employ non-linear temporalities: the work of a collective of artists with auto-immune conditions called Canaries addresses the flexible work and support structures that a group operating on crip time requires; Elisabeth Subrin's *Schulie* (1997), a film about radical feminist Shulamith Firestone (a woman who has been described as "out of time and out of joint"), which reanimates lesbian history's disavowed pasts by resurrecting an earlier documentary; and even pop cultural examples like comedian Maria Bamford's *Lady Dynamite,* a sitcom constructed through the lens of her mental illnesses. We read queer theorist Elizabeth Freeman's *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010) and disability theorist Alison Kafer's "Time for Disability Studies and a Future for Crips" in *Feminist, Queer, Crip* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013), 25-46.
[3] Riyad A. Shahjahan, "Being 'Lazy' and Slowing Down: Toward decolonizing time, our body, and pedagogy," *Educational Philosophy and Theory* (2014), 488-501.

is made that translates our preferred pronouns and other identifiers into nuanced, contradictory biographies. The intersectionality we will discuss is no longer abstract or pro forma. It is embodied. Here. Now.—*Robert*

PRACTICING CULTURAL EQUITY:

Exclusion from and difference within the classroom/institution as a site of investigation

Q: Who is *not* in the classroom or other institutional space of learning and why? How can we structure our learning environments to address the exclusion of various students and communities from them?

A day in the life of a semester:

"What is the relationship between the structural racism of slavery and the racism that is inscribed in the very processes that create trajectories that lead inevitably toward incarceration or higher education?"—Angela Davis[4]

We gather in the classroom having read Angela Davis's "The Meaning of Freedom," a searing critique of incarceration and institutional injustice. In preparation for working within a local community, across lines of race, gender, and class, we use her text as a jumping off point.

Students pair up and listen to each other answer a question posed by artist Rick Lowe, "What is my moment of race?" They reflect on Davis's text and recount a personal experience. We regroup, and, to gain perspective, each re-tells their partner's story to our group. Everyone has experience with race. We are all participants. The discussion prompts an acknowledgment of the denial of the role race plays in our lives. Many of the students' stories have never been told before.

A student of color asks, "What is the difference between public and private, especially in terms of education?" After some discussion, he says how grateful he is to be in the university we are in, and that, if not for financial aid, he would be "on the streets." His words produce an epiphany: this is how economic injustice, class, race, and entitlement manifest in someone's life. We feel the implications of this insight silently register.

The privilege of higher education, the scholarly elephant in the room, is perhaps less visible than the structural racism of judicial punishment. Despite gains in diversifying enrollment, as articulated by Davis, educational freedom, in addition to political and economic freedom, still carries a legacy of unspoken racist ideology. While we remain in a school that encourages competition and ranking, our process at this moment shifts towards mutual understanding and collective empowerment.—*Sasha*

Q: How can we avoid re-inscribing the colonial practice of embedding oneself as an artist into the social relations of "the other"? Instead, how might we foster relationships of genuine solidarity by recognizing students' various constituencies or existing social relations?

---

[4] Angela Davis, *The Meaning of Freedom: And Other Difficult Dialogues* (San Francisco: City Lights Publishers, 2012), 141.

Leshane recounts the devastating impacts of "permanent exclusion" on residents of public housing in New York City: any person living in public housing who is arrested and charged with a crime—though *not* convicted—is permanently banned from their home, under threat of eviction for their entire family. He narrates how sixteen-year-old boys are cut off from their families for carrying weed and how elderly parents are left without the support of their children. Leshane is clear and patient, yet speaks with an unmistakable urgency, as does his colleague Monica. They are our contacts at Good Old Lower East Side (GOLES), an organization dedicated to tenants' rights, homelessness prevention, economic development, and community revitalization. They're here to discuss their campaign against this policy of displacement. As my students listen I see traces of discomfort and disbelief on their faces. The disbelief is understandable considering the students' own class backgrounds, which, while not monolithic, probably wouldn't have exposed them to the harsh realities of policing policies within oppressed communities. There is a divide here, it is real and it is felt. We are just beginning the effort to communicate across that divide.

The group in attendance is being offered an opportunity to collaborate with GOLES, as part of a class that they are taking on collective practice. Over the course of the coming weeks, some of the initial wariness will wane. It won't be perfect or miraculous. The students arrive with their own struggles, and collaborative work is never simple. But consistency of engagement and sincere interest will go a long way towards bridging the distances between us.

There are awkward silences in this first encounter. I, as teacher, try to be quietly present to this discomfort without seeking to resolve it, confident that there will be time for people to become familiar with each other. Monica eventually breaks things down: "so, is this something you guys want to do or not, 'cause we could use the help to be honest." "Definitely, definitely," my students respond, almost in unison, clearly relieved to have been invited in. And so begins this relationship, fraught but tender and open.

I feel cautiously optimistic. This hope is grounded in my confidence in our partners, and bolstered by the knowledge that the school has committed to working with GOLES in a multi-year partnership rather than semester-by-semester. Most of all I am confident that Leshane and Monica's fierce urgency and clarity around this issue can guide us all to move to a place where our interdependence becomes tangibly felt, and we more fully understand that our own personal freedom is not fully realized until our friends and neighbors are equally free.—*Mark*

Q: In what other spaces besides the classroom or institution are people experiencing pedagogical processes? What can be learned from what unfolds there? Why is this happening outside?

Moving Beyond the Classroom:

In 2014 I found myself planning a workshop, *The U.S. Student Movement: Organizing for the 21st Century Strike,* with student and teacher organizers in New York's Union Square for the upcoming Montreal Student Movement Convention. I was invited to propose a session after two years of organizing with student unionists around the

growing education crisis. I gained insights from participation in OWS where I witnessed occupiers unwittingly reproducing the same oppressions we were fighting in the streets within the operations of the occupation.

I had recently left a teaching position at a NYC private high school in which I taught socially-engaged and media art to some of the most privileged students in society, followed by two years teaching and producing art programs in rust belt public schools targeted for austerity budget cuts. At the private school I witnessed white students learning the master's tools (law, international relations, and even conceptual art); at the public schools I saw mostly black and brown students, just as gifted and deserving, lining up outside their school building for long periods, soaked in freezing rain, waiting quietly to pass through police checkpoints.

Back in Union Square, we discuss how neoliberalism and white supremacy not only corrupt our schools, but also shape the thinking and planning capacities of movement organizers, especially alpha-liberals, with their social, academic, race, and class privilege. My analysis reveals how movement spaces reproduce social movements, and how blind spots amongst organizers often lead to confusion between the people working within these spaces. This knowledge helps us to avoid the destabilizing effects of authoritarian power relations on these groups.

Through small-scale workshops combined with analytical mobilization and planning models, teaching skills and insights can effectively reveal hidden hierarchies and decision-making patterns in movement spaces and collectives. This is one example of where radical pedagogy can make a powerful impact: beyond the classroom.—*James*

REVISITING ART'S ROLE:

Undervalued or revisionist cultural histories as a site of investigation

Q: If the social is merely one site to explore the fundamental problematics of society, do aesthetics, making, and other forms of creative imaginings play a particular role in processes of emancipatory transformation?

Q: How might we revisit the distinctions drawn between artist and artisan to address the role of cultural production in relation to social relations and political struggle?

I teach art to apprentice construction workers in a Labor Studies program.[5] When I look to find common ground amongst us, I discover it lies in the social practice of NYC subway graffiti. Studying its history provides an opening for understanding how structural racism plays out in urban planning and how the collective actions of the working class can build a different world.

Scotty Demel, an electrician, contributes *MACHINE,* a poem that is emblematic of what came up in the classroom. "When Moses ran his highs out to Long Island so that Levittown can be reached with ease, he aided the machine…"[Scotty is particularly

---

[5] While some assume my class is comprised primarily of white men, half of the program's students are people of color and a quarter of them are women.

affected by displacement and the role of construction in white flight to places like his hometown].

“Working all day and seeing your family briefly before you must go to bed and repeat this insane cycle... However, life always has a way of breaking through the machine. The rebellious nature of graffiti, is a sign of life poking through… your machine will not prevail.” [He emphasizes Taylorism’s bottom line and affirms graffiti’s pushback.]

“Much like the pride taken from graffiti work is the pride in a good conduit run… it’s as anonymous as graffiti on a bridge. But like graffiti, there are ways of running conduit so certain people will know who ran it. In the heart of the machine, life still prevails.” [Finally, Scotty connects the collective artisanal labor of electricians to the "sign of life" created by graffiti artists. Though hidden, these collectivities cheer him.[6]]

Drawing from my own experience with communities organized around graffiti writing in NYC during the 80s and Joe Austin’s *Taking the Train*, we discuss how the artistic form forged a system for liberatory self-creation through an "economy of prestige" based in aesthetic innovation.[7] Far from the Street Art that was a pathway to the gallery system, this art did not have a high value placed on it nor was it easily commodified. Pioneered by poor youth of color (chiefly young men), multi-ethnic crews formed around aesthetic guidelines. They developed communication systems to navigate around gangs and city authorities. In constant dialogue with the city, this art form worked against racist representational systems and was a fleeting but profound instance of poor and working class creativity.

Through this conversation we also found a way to engage (sometimes uncomfortable) parallels to organizing across difference in their unions, as well as students’ own role as builders in uneven development.—*Barrie*

---

[6] We read excerpts from Larry Shiner, *The Invention of Art: A Cultural History* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2003). Shiner argues that, before the eighteenth century, art and artisanship were not divided and art's valuation was contingent on its relationship to the rest of life. Asked to consider what they know from personal experience, the tradespeople in my class reframe their work in contrast to the individualism encouraged by art after the divide, and point to more collective and anonymous artisanal processes.

[7] Joe Austin, *Taking the Train: How Graffiti Art Became an Urban Crisis in New York City* (New York, Columbia University Press: 2002).

Notes

This text was submitted the week after the 2016 election. The Pedagogy Group feels that the election's polarizing effects and the long-term impacts of policy shifts promised by Donald Trump's new government make the stakes around evaluating the impact of Social Practice art—whom it impacts and how—all the more urgent. If democracy demands continual cooperation and perpetual self-critique, the transformational site of radical pedagogy can foster the requisite awareness that the suffering of those around us varies in all shades of intensity and historicity and that we must always expand our consciousness to include those who have different experiences than our own. This is no time for practices that disregard that effort, or lay claim to it but don't meet it.

1. For some of the tools that we've developed for use in our classroom together (further detailed in Step 5 of this text) see The Pedagogy Group, "Listening, Thinking and Acting Together," *Rethinking Marxism 26,* No. 3 (2014); 414–426. For examples of readings we've shared and discussed, see The Pedagogy Group, "Some Tools for Radical Pedagogy," *Art Journal 73,* No. 3 (January 2015); 89-91. This annotated bibliography is organized around questions that repeatedly come up in the group and a protocol we used to address them at the 2014 Open Engagement conference.

2. See Paulo Freire, Chapters 1 and 2 of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2000).

3. Ibid. This is related to Freire's foundational distinction that pedagogy be undertaken "with not for" the oppressed.

4. Throughout this text, when referring to the entire genre or set of practices and institutions that have emerged under the umbrella term Social Practice, we refer to it with the abbreviation of "SP." This is to help distinguish it from when we use the term "social" to describe a process that unfolds within specific constituencies and struggles.

5. For a detailed accounting of this form of "politics by proxy" see Brian Holmes's "Liars Poker: Representation of Politics/Politics of Representation" (2004), accessed November 20, 2016, http://16beavergroup.org/articles/2004/05/09/rene-brian-holmes-liars-poker.

6. Jodi Rios, "Reconsidering the Margin: Relationships of Difference and Transformative Education," in *Service-Learning in Design and Planning: Educating at the Boundaries,* eds. Tom Agnotti, Cheryl Doble, and Paula Horrigan (New York: New Village Press, 2011).

7. "Social Practice Artists Ran Out of Town," accessed August 15, 2016, http://us2.campaign-archive1.com/?u=59738127bacb34e4346674bbc&id=c3f922b326.

8. Ibid.

9. From a conversation between Samantha Hill and Taraneh Fazeli on November 15, 2016.

10. Ibid. Since the artists were "ran out of town,"[sic] the MAA convened an open meeting where members of the community directly addressed MAA and affiliated organizations for their contentious role in redeveloping the neighborhood. After that, the artists helped community leaders link up with outside funders who rallied to support them directly after hearing about the ordeal.

11. See *People's Assembly's Overview: The Jackson People's Assembly Model,* accessed November 20, 2016, https://mxgm.org/peoples-assemblys-overview-the-jackson-peoples-assembly-model.

12. See *Of Supply Chains,* accessed November 22, 2016, http://BFAMFAPhD.com.

13. See Annette Fuentes, *Lockdown High: When the Schoolhouse Becomes a Jailhouse* (Verso, New York: 2013) and Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998) and Franco Bifo Berardi, *The Soul at Work: From Alienation to Autonomy* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2009).

14. Rios, 39-55.

15. Ultra-red, *Ultra-red: Five Protocols for Organized Listening,* workbook 2 (Berlin: Koenig, 2012), 2.

16. *The Pedagogy Group, Rethinking Marxism,* 415.

17. Paul Ryan, *The Three Person Solution: Creating Sustainable Collaborative Relationships* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2009).