

Encountering Pedagogy through Relational Art Practices

221

Rita L. Irwin and Dónal O'Donoghue

Abstract

Two artists involved in 'socially engaged art' practice were invited to work with art education teacher candidates and instructors in an effort to rethink notions of teaching, learning and art. We initiated this residency, which we called 'The Summerhill Residency', to examine how learning encounters might create environments for meaningful exchanges between the ways in which artists and secondary art education teacher candidates learn to think about pedagogy and the nature of artistic learning. Drawing upon Bourriaud's theory of relational aesthetics, we consider, yet trouble, the relational aspects of the processes and products of the artist residency, and examine the crisis of imagination that permeated teacher candidates' experiences. Throughout the project, *a/r/tography* offered a rich form of living enquiry that opened up possibilities for learning within a community of enquirers.

Keywords

a/r/tography, relational aesthetics, art teacher education, contemporary artists, pedagogical turn

Preparing secondary school art specialists is not just about preparing educators for teaching art, it is also about artists preparing to teach and artists preparing to produce art while teaching. As art teacher educators, we are interested in studying the nature and qualities of interactions and connections that occur within relational art practices because we believe that relational art practices offer ways to rethink the language and practice of pedagogy. The nature of these interactions and connections has the potential to shift how we often think about preparing art teacher education candidates. To think further about the potentiality of interactions and connections we present this article as we performed it at the October 2011 *iJADE* conference on the centrality of art, design and the performing arts in education: that is, as a non-linear exchange of ideas, concepts and practices. The form of our article closely resembles the nature of an art education intervention, the Summerhill Residency [1], which we discuss in this article. In an effort to further perform this potential, we invite readers to experience how we juxtapose ideas that have consumed our attention during and following the residency.

RITA: So, let me shift focus now.

In the Summerhill Residency, we wanted to study how art teacher candidates [2] *learn to learn* within a programme of teacher education. Teacher education has been primarily focused on learning to teach (see Grauer 1998). Instead, focusing on learning 'involves moving into and through an evolving space of possibility' (Davis *et al.* 2008, 83). It is this evolving space of possibility that our experimental art teacher education programme, with a focus on a/r/tography, offers, *becoming pedagogical*. A/r/tography offers a materiality, a physicality, that is not addressed by many teacher education programmes. Action research is often employed in teacher education programmes as a way of encouraging enquiry. Our work employs a/r/tography as a hybrid form of action research that embraces the arts and education as forms of enquiry. Learning entails change on multiple levels across multiple identities. The complexities of *becoming pedagogical*

as an art educator must include a shift in understanding oneself as a pedagogue and as a pedagogue who is also an artist. Moreover, experiencing the practices of artists, researchers and teachers contiguously can disrupt the arbitrary boundaries of fixed disciplinary knowledge. Thus, through a/r/tography, teacher candidates may experience a generative flow of knowledge in the spaces between and within these practices: as a result, they are learning to learn, or *becoming pedagogical*.

DÓNAL: During the past decade, many artists, curators and cultural theorists have turned their attention to the potential and possibilities of education as a medium and practice of art making. Committed to developing alternative models of learning and spaces of pedagogy, artists and curators have initiated pedagogical projects and staged educational events as artworks of varying size, influence, visibility, discernibility and degree of actualisation. These include, but obviously are not limited to, 'Platforms' of *Documenta 11*, 2002; the A.C.A.D.E.M.Y project, 2006; the educational leitmotif of *Documenta 12*, 2007; the unrealised Manifesta 6 experimental art school proposed as part of the *European Biennial of Contemporary Art*, 2006, and its subsequent publication, *Notes for an Art School*; and, the *unitednationsplaza* from which the *nightschool* projects emerged. Several conferences and events such as *Transpedagogy: Contemporary Art and the Vehicles of Education*, 2009 and the *De-schooling Society Conference*, 2010 have provided productive spaces of exchange and debate about the pedagogical potential of contemporary art and curatorial practice.

In November 2008, inspired by Jacques Rancière's book, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*, the Canadian artist Paul Butler initiated an artists' residency at the Banff Centre, Canada and called it *Reverse Pedagogy*. As 'a going back to school' of sorts, or a form of unlearning, *Reverse Pedagogy* served as an experimental residency where 20 artists, freed from the pressures of individual and market-driven art production,



lived and worked together for four weeks, teaching and learning from one another, and sharing skills, knowledge and conceptual approaches to art making and thinking (Butler 2008). While the residency was framed by the traditional notion of education as retreat, the artists, Butler tells us, 'were asked to come with no expectations or preconceptions, and just see where [they] end up' (2008, 61). Although artists were encouraged not to have expectations and preconceptions in advance of arrival, there was a purpose to the residency: it was to focus on 'the context surrounding the act of making art' (2008, 61) in an effort to rethink current and conventional modes of artistic production. This context, in which Butler was interested, included the daily activities of the entire group – the meals and drinks that members prepared and shared, the walks and hikes and other physical activities that they took together, and the movies, discussions and conversations in which they participated – which were considered important components of, and investments in, establishing networks of solidarity and sociality that would support each artist in his or her practice. For Butler (2008, 61), it is within and across these spaces of eating, drinking, talking, hiking, and living and working together, that 'there is the potential for the emergence of new artistic possibilities'.

Less concerned with how these artistic possibilities materialised or the forms that they took, it was the potential of these moments of interaction and connection to which Butler refers and which oftentimes operate 'below the threshold of the understood and the seen' (Johnstone 2008, 18) that most interested us as teachers of

teachers. We were curious about the conditions that made *Reverse Pedagogy* both possible and probable. We were especially interested in how the principles that underpinned and guided this social, pedagogical and artmaking event might be mobilised and amplified for practices of art teaching and learning in schools. These principles – patience, trust, generosity, uncertainty, chance, respect, complexity, free organisation, consensual decision-making and ambiguity – were underpinned by several certainties, of course – that the artists would meet daily, have access to sculpture, photography, ceramics, printmaking and computer-lab facilities at the centre, work freely, cooperate or not in events collectively decided upon, and have food and shelter for four weeks – and yet, they seemed to encourage artists to recognise the always becoming nature of themselves and their work. Yet, these underpinning principles did not ignore that each artist came to the experience with certain forms of knowledge and knowledge commitments, but promoted an understanding of knowledge as performative rather than a recognisable entity (O'Donoghue, 2009).

RITA: In the fall of 2010, we interrupted the foundational art education courses within our programme with an artist residency because we wanted to think deeply, creatively and ethically about pedagogical practice possibilities through contemporary art practices. At a moment in history when education is becoming an area of enquiry for contemporary artists, we also wanted to ensure that our art teacher education programme opened up spaces for

Figure 1
Left image: Sample
of the CV project.

Right image:
Stacked used copies
of the original
Summerhill text by
A. S. Neill. Artist
residency product
under the direction
of Helen Reed and
Hannah Jickling.
Photo credit:
Heidi May

investigation into current contemporary art practices. Two contemporary artists involved in 'socially engaged art' practice were invited to work with our teacher candidates and instructors as we questioned and rethought our notions around teaching, learning and art. The artist residency and the resulting creative objects have helped us develop a new language for preparing prospective teachers of art.

Inviting social practice artists Hannah Jickling and Helen Reed into the programme inspired teacher candidates and instructors to trouble deeply held notions of teaching, learning and contemporary art practices. Jickling and Reed are both recent graduates of the Portland State University MFA in Social Practice programme, and both are interested in the pedagogical turn in contemporary art practices (see Reed & Jickling 2011). During their three-week residency, the artists' chose to focus on two projects. One was based on the historically significant book, *Summerhill: A Radical Approach to Child Rearing* and another based on the notion of CV (curriculum vitae) knowledge [3].

In 1960, A. S. Neill critiqued and re-imagined society and schooling in his seminal text *Summerhill: A Radical Approach to Child Rearing*. During the residency, the artists, teacher candidates and instructors critiqued and re-imagined art teacher education by reading used copies of this out-of-print book.

The original book advances a radical approach to learning that is not grounded in theory but rather experience. Through the residency, the artists collaborated/co-laboured with the teacher candidates and fellow instructors, and created a revised version entitled *Summerhill, Revised: A Radical Approach to Teacher/Child Rearing*. The 40 copies of professionally bound books produced represent a material artefact of the residency.

DÓNAL: In an effort to draw attention to the idea of knowledge as a form of capital which can be accumulated, exchanged and mobilised in different contexts for particular purposes and with particular benefits, both artists invited each teacher candidate to hand write his or her curric-



ulum vitae in a form that best suited what he or she intended to communicate. The artists conceived of this as a community-building project that allowed for personal expression. Later, all CVs were bound into one book and a copy was given to each member of the collective (including artists in residence, teacher candidates and the research team).

To return to the *Reverse Pedagogy* residency; as teacher educators, we were curious about the possibilities that this immersive and emergent pedagogical event offered for rethinking art education pedagogical practices – a topic that recently has been taken up in our field in publications such as *iJADE* and *Art Education*. In what ways might this event help to reveal the hidden labour of pedagogy, we wondered? While we grow up in schools (Britzman 2003), and while 'the mass experience of public education has made teaching one of the most familiar professions in this culture' (Britzman 2003, 27), pedagogy and its qualities are, however, not always visible or recognised. What if, we asked, we were to structure part or all of our art teacher education curriculum and instruction courses around the types of practices and set of principles advanced by the *Reverse Pedagogy* residency? Might it make visible the work of pedagogy – the thought processes of, and decisions



and directions that educators make and take about content and experience, and method and manner? Might it create a space for meaningful exchange between the ways in which artists and secondary school art students learn? It was not our intention to imitate, mimic or endorse the form of pedagogy advanced in *Reverse Pedagogy*, or to uncritically recreate the learning conditions that Butler set up for the artists who participated in the residency. First of all, we would have to rely on reports of what took place at *Reverse Pedagogy*, and knowing that a cohesive narrative of what happened was impossible and that certain acts of translation, required in order to make the experience intelligible to particular audiences, were incapable of capturing the learning experiences of the residency in all their complexities, we sought instead to think alongside *Reverse Pedagogy* rather than to think from it, or in it.

Conscious that any report of *Reverse Pedagogy* and what it achieved may also 'construct the very materiality it [attempted] to represent' (Britzman 2003, 244), we sought to create conditions similar to the ones that Butler created for participating artists, which we hoped would enable us to recognise and register the affordances, gains and limits of a pedagogical model that brought together a group of individu-

als around a shared concept, idea or project but insisted that they have no expectations or preconceptions about the event in advance of its happening. The latter, of course, we knew would pose a real challenge to our teacher candidates because, as Deborah Britzman (2003, 27) reminds us, 'those learning to teach draw on their subjective experiences constructed from actually' having grown up in schools. Teacher candidates, she says, 'bring to teacher education their educational biography and some well-worn and commonsensical images of teacher's work'. Given these challenges, we wondered how we might invite our teacher candidates to imagine teacher's work as comprising more than explanation and explication. Following John Dewey's critique of traditionalism, we wished to create learning experiences and conditions of learning that were about and that activated direct experiences (see Dewey 1991 [1910]). So, we initiated the three-week artist in residency pedagogical project that Rita has mentioned.

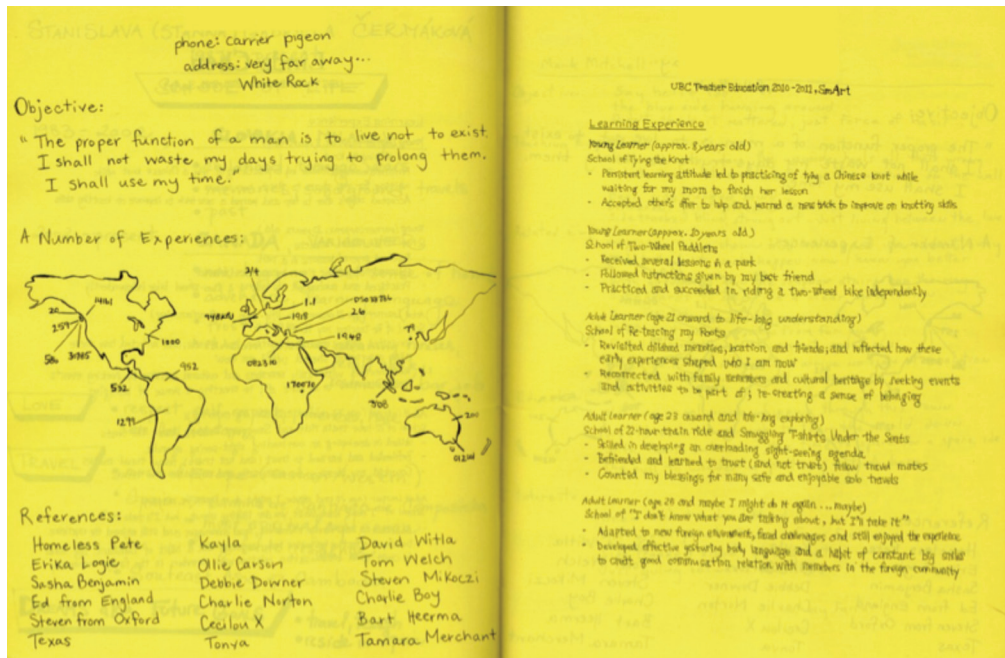
Wanting to shift the reliance on skills-based pedagogy, which is not only prevalent in teacher education programmes but also in schools, to a more conceptual driven pedagogy, we were particularly curious about how an enquiry into things that contributed, directly or indirectly, to

Opposite page:

Figure 2
Summerhill Revised: A Radical Approach to Teacher Child Rearing. Artist residency product under the direction of Helen Reed and Hannah Jickling. Photo credit: Heidi May

This page:

Figure 3
Exhibition of 40 revised versions of the original Summerhill text. Artist residency exhibition under the direction of Helen Reed and Hannah Jickling. Photo credit: Heidi May



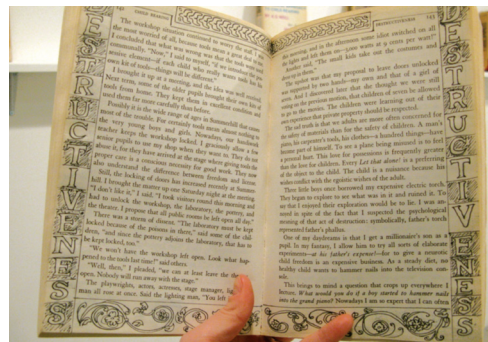
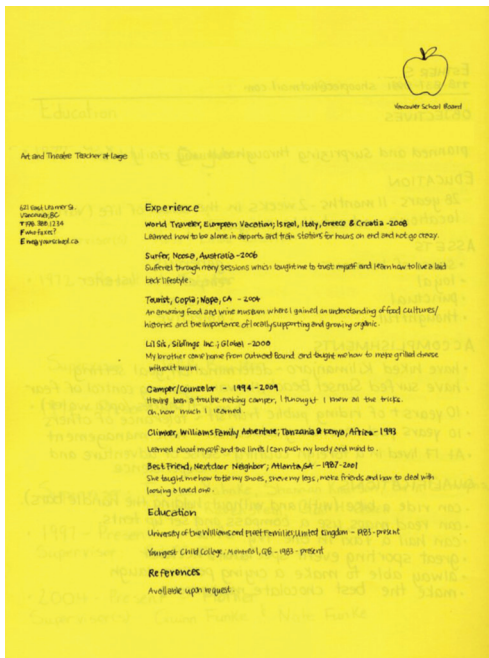
processes of teaching, learning and art making might contribute to creating a different language of pedagogy. Moreover, we wanted to move away from the idea that 'all knowledge has immediate, transparent, predictable, and pragmatic application' (Rogoff 2010, n.p).

We started the project from a position of 'being with': that is, from a position of having certain knowledge, not always recognised as such perhaps in contexts outside of its place of emergence, but intelligible, to a large extent, by and through its encounter with other knowledge and knowledge formations. The position of 'being with' does not imply that one is closed to experiences that have the potential to shape, extend, confirm, problematise, undo or make uncertain the knowledge that one has. Rather, 'being with' recognises that encounters are processed and made sense of through certain knowledge frameworks that teacher candidates have been introduced to, and to which they have become attached over time. But, of course, those frameworks are never fully formed, always in the process of becoming something else through interaction with other knowledges and knowledge formations. In processes of

undoing, making uncertain or extending knowledge, there is always the potential for other ways of knowing to emerge.

In an interview between Irit Rogoff and Peggy Phelan published in *Art Journal* (2001), Rogoff talks about her practice of starting a project from a position of being 'without', which is not too dissimilar from our position of starting this project with the concept of 'being with'. Rogoff (Phelan & Rogoff 2001, 34) says:

Being 'without' is an interesting formulation because it isn't turning your back on, or denying, what you had at your disposal previously. It assumes that you had a model, to begin with. You lived it out, so you got as much out of it as may have been interesting at that point. And you've now found yourself in a position where you're actively doing without the certitudes you have had without as yet having produced a hard-and-fast subject or methodology to replace them. For myself, I'm finding the notion of 'without' a very productive one because it intimates process rather than method and alludes to a condition in which you might find yourself while doing work.



227
Rita L. Irwin and
Dónal O'Donoghue

We were interested in creating conditions whereby knowledge of art and art practices that were acquired and developed during teacher candidates' BFA programmes (by that we mean sensibilities to the world and the ability to articulate those through different forms and formations) could be thought with and through theories of learning and teaching in an effort to eradicate traditional distinctions between artmaking and art teaching. We wanted to create conditions that would invite teacher candidates to think about pedagogical possibilities from their place of knowing, and to imagine pedagogical realities from these places for which there are no pre-existing models.

RITA: We want to share several themes that permeated this intervention.

Learning in the margins

The Summerhill Residency invited teacher candidates to consider how learning in the margins might be a productive place to think about processes of teaching and learning. Specifically, marginalia in the Summerhill books

became opportunities for learning in the margins.

Studying the marginalia in Summerhill texts provoked teacher candidates to study how others' encountered the work, challenged the work and perhaps, even extended the work. While they examined and discussed the original Summerhill text, they also discussed the marginalia. To some this was disruptive; to others this was stimulating.

As the discussions unfolded, an art project emerged under the direction of the artists. Teacher candidates were asked to take responsibility for creating their own artistic marginalia for particular sections of the book. The result was a revised edition, filled with creative and discursive interpretations of the radical approach to learning, not only in the margins but, throughout the text. One teacher candidate appreciated the result but was critical at the same time: 'I think it's fantastic to see that sense of community ... I don't think we really collaborated on it though. We're all in the same book, but we all did something separate from each other, and nothing relates to one another except for the print that was underneath.' So while examining the marginalia in the book and creating something unique was important, more could have been done to extend the study of the marginalia within and beyond the project.

Learning as a medium

While many teacher candidates were unfamiliar with art as social practice, they were open to learning through the experience. This openness left traces of understanding rather than tech-

Opposite page:

Figure 4
Sample CV project
(name of student
removed). Artist
residency product
under the direction
of Helen Reed and
Hannah Jickling.
Photo credit:
Heidi May

This page:

Figure 5
Sample CV project
(name of student
removed). Artist
residency product
under the direction
of Helen Reed and
Hannah Jickling.
Photo credit:
Heidi May

Figure 6
Sample revised
Summerhill text. Art-
ist residency product
under the direction
of Helen Reed and
Hannah Jickling.
Photo credit:
Heidi May



niques, skills, methods and lessons. These traces became reflective moments for analysing what was happening, how their thinking was changing, and how they might engage in social practice in their future positions as secondary art educators. One trace element worth exploring today is the experience of learning as a medium. The Summerhill Residency was an intervention in the programme. In the 'methods' class, teacher candidates typically learned how to plan for instruction, particularly for their extended practicum. With a three-week intervention during a 13-week semester, teacher candidates became the resource for the social practice directed by the artists. In discussing this with teacher candidates later in the year, one spoke of her realisation that they were the medium for learning through social practice as they investigated pedagogy. Writing a paper on the experience in another class she said: 'That also was the first time it was apparent to me that I was the medium.'

While there was a tendency to think of the residency as a collaborative undertaking between the artists and teacher candidates, once the final revised edition was displayed in an exhibition and a researcher wrote a short

exposé (Springgay 2011), some teacher candidates critically examined the perceived contradictory notions within the project. One who was very involved in every aspect of the project made this comment:

I was starting to think about my own art practice and really, we're mediums . . . I didn't form this art practice, you know. I was part of the process, but my name wouldn't be . . . when I started reading the extensions of Summerhill, it was Helen and Hannah's art practice, and we were the subject.

If art as social practice is steeped in pedagogical engagements, who gets recognised for learning? How are material art products related to the process of engagement? How might the process of learning become as important, or even more important, than the product? An exhibition and an article, authored by the artists and one researcher, quickly reminded teacher candidates that they were part of a larger art world that promotes social practice yet charges artists with the same expectations of material practice.

Suddenly they realised they were the

medium for learning and for art as social practice. They needed to negotiate the space between learning as process and learning as product, learning for oneself and learning for others, and perhaps more importantly, learning as an artist and learning as a pedagogue. In the early stages of the project, teacher candidates often felt they were co-artists in the residency. However, after the exhibition, Jickling and Reed were given the primary credit for the project, bringing to light questions of identity, art practice and pedagogy for the teacher candidates.

While some critiqued this shift to the visiting artists, other teacher candidates viewed this as an opportunity to rethink art as social practice and the place of pedagogy in art as social practice. Some teacher candidates started to understand what was happening by recognising they were artists working with Jickling and Reed and they were the medium through which Jickling and Reed worked.

Learning through intervention

Learning as an intervention opened the space for reflecting the messiness of what it means to be an artist and a pedagogue. Teacher candidates began to interpret their experiences through an examination of the aesthetics of space and outside/inside as the intentional and unintentional spaces for learning. Teacher education programmes are known as places in which teachers teach others to teach. The intervention dramatically shifted this perception through artists exploring ideas of teaching and learning. They did this through creatively looking for 'Summerhill' named places in the local context. A field trip to the Summerhill Retirement Residence opened up an unexpected place for learning to learn. Senior citizens learning in a variety of ways, every day, disrupted teacher candidate perceptions of aging and learning. Another field trip to the Rasmussen Book Bindery taught teacher candidates a process they had never examined before and yet would employ through the residency. And finally, a field trip to a park where many walked together and thought about the walk as demonstrating art as social practice prompted debates

on the definition of art, learning and teaching. Teacher candidates, artists and instructors were rethinking the nature of learning by debating the assumptions in Neill's Summerhill text alongside the learning theories they were considering in their entire teacher education programme, and through their own experiences in the art as social practice intervention. The Summerhill Residency experiences provoked a new awareness of aesthetic practice perceived in unexpected places and of pedagogical practices perceived in unexpected places. As one teacher candidate said: 'You need to expect the unexpected and maybe to try to get something out of this yourself.'

Learning through collaboration

Socially engaged art practice engages a community in problem solving by labouring together through difficult topics and ideas. When this co-labouring is democratically shared, collaboration may emerge. As one teacher candidate offered: 'You know, I don't maybe remember the daily . . . but Hannah and Helen, I remember everything that we've done with them as a group collective, where we . . . haven't been as enriched in a classroom setting. I think something gets lost.' Working alongside artists, as a collective, was intensely meaningful for some teacher candidates.

In many ways, the revised Summerhill edition advances a shift from learning to teach, to learning to learn. While the later involves theory and experience, it also involves art and pedagogy in an art teacher education programme. Teacher candidates, artists and instructors posed many more questions than answers. Questions such as: What is the social life of objects? How do we create the conditions to move? What qualities did the project promote? How were responsibilities practised through the identities of artist, researcher and teacher?

As such, the teacher candidates confronted taken-for-granted ways of seeing, knowing, creating and appreciating, and engaged in learning to learn *despite learning to teach*. We say *despite learning to teach* because of the ever-present need to learn to teach that remained in

229

Rita L. Irwin and
Dónal O'Donoghue

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Figure 7
Exhibition of 40 new versions of the original Summerhill text. Artist residency exhibition under the direction of Helen Reed and Hannah Jickling. Photo credit: Heidi May

many courses and experiences in the programme. Teacher candidates experienced these dilemmas most notably on practicum, especially if their host school advisor was not a proponent of contemporary art practices.

Learning to learn

The Summerhill Residency intervention provoked 'knowing through contemporary art practices' and, as such, prompted many teacher candidates to rethink how they understood aesthetic practices and how they conceptualised learning to learn. Several teacher candidates felt that the research process of individual and group interviews throughout the year provided an avenue for reflecting deeply on the intervention. Although in-class discussions may have prompted similar debates, these smaller and often more intimate gatherings of interested students sparked deeper thinking about pedagogy and art practices. Moreover, by giving the project attention across the year, teacher candidates were prompted to reflect on the process, the products, the field trips, the consequences and so much more in a systematic fashion. As one teacher candidate stated: 'It's the most memorable experience because we were out and we were doing something that was not sitting in a classroom, and it was supposed to be an educational experience but we weren't in the regular atmosphere of the classroom.' Many teacher candidates appreciated the variety of learning experiences outside the typical classroom experience. The continuous reflection also pointed out that the intervention was not complete. Once the book was published and given to each teacher candidate, many wanted to study the new revised version. They wanted to enquire again, to interrogate the new marginalia their peers inserted into the book. They wanted to question the lack of aesthetic collaboration. They wanted to enquire more deeply into the intervention's product as a continuation of art as social practice. It is here that we as teacher educators missed an opportunity. While we discussed the final product, we didn't engage with it as art as social practice. Perhaps we could have pursued an art as social

practice response to the programme the teacher candidates were completing. This might have been an occasion for shared authorship, not only of the intervention itself, but of the a/r/tographical implications of the process. While this may be a critique of the process, it also underscores the endless institutional demands on a teacher education programme and how difficult it is to pursue alternative means and ends. Nevertheless, many teacher candidates engaged in active living enquiry. Many teacher candidates' exemplified qualities we imagined for art educators who are becoming pedagogical by demonstrating a continuous state of enquiring, of creative engagement and of learning as pedagogues. Moreover, teacher candidates began to understand the possibilities of a/r/tography as a way to offer a materiality for enquiry.

DÓNAL: While the project was loosely organised around the question, *what can we learn about pedagogy from art practice?*, we were especially interested in creating, to use Dennis Atkinson's (2011, 15) words, 'learning encounters that precipitate new forms of learning'. By focusing on the present and the emergent, we wished to create the conditions and confidence to venture into unknown and unexamined territories (O'Donoghue, 2008).

By that we mean to venture beyond the traditional, the known, the expected. Beyond, Homi Bhabha (1994, 6) says, 'signifies spatial distance, marks progress, promises the future; but our intimations of exceeding the barrier or boundary – the very act of going beyond – are unknowable, unrepresentable, without a return to the "present" which, in the process of repetition, becomes disjunct and displaced'. So while Dennis Atkinson (2011, 15) argues that 'it is all too easy to rely upon established traditions of teaching and learning, that is to say traditional epistemological frameworks that presuppose specific ontologies of learning which may be incommensurable to the social realities within which they function', and it is, we also need to be mindful of the challenges that going beyond raises for our teacher candidates, which

requires that we do not ignore how the practice of teaching is already imagined, articulated and mythologised in advance of ever inhabiting the position of teacher. In this project we wanted to do what Hannah Arendt proposed in her book, *The Human Condition* (1958, 5): 'to think what we are doing'.

RITA: The Summerhill intervention, presented art as an encounter (see Bourriaud 2002, 18), is a relational activity that sought to infuse a pedagogical space with connections. Contemporary works of art that activate a relational response begin with a dialogue between and among individuals, groups, institutions and contexts.

DÓNAL: We are particularly drawn to the possibilities offered by Nicolas Bourriaud's theory of relational aesthetics, which has received much attention, as it is the first comprehensive attempt to make sense of the most recurring form of art making in the 1990s and the 2000s. Elaborated in a book by the same name, relational aesthetics has provided a critical language for articulating this art practice. As Bourriaud told Tom Morton in an interview published in *Frieze* in 2009, the theory of relational aesthetics emerged from 'the close observation of a group of artists who happened to become leaders of their generation'. It was 'the first attempt to build a reading grid for their practices, it opened a discursive territory on which I have no grip any more' he explained (Morton 2009, n.p.).

Relational aesthetics describes an art practice commonly referred to as relational art or relational aesthetic practice (and other times as socially-engaged art, community-based art, research-based or collaborative art). This art practice invents, produces or reconfigures social relations between individuals, groups and communities. Notwithstanding the criticisms levelled against relational aesthetics (see Bishop 2004), relational aesthetic practices, it is suggested, create 'new models of sociability' – that is, 'new ways of being with each other' that exist 'beside or beneath a real economic system' (Downey 2007, 274). As Stewart Martin (2007, 370) explains: arts 'sociability' is the principle

'object' or 'work' of relational art; and art's 'objects' are subordinate to the social or relational dimension. In other words, relational artists propose and stage scenarios, events, happenings where people come into contact with each other and relate to each other in new and different ways and this becomes the focus and form of the work. As Bourriaud (2002, 14) explains,

the possibility of a relational art (an art taking as its theoretical horizon the realm of human interactions and its social context, rather than the assertion of an independent and private symbolic space), points to a radical upheaval of the aesthetic, cultural and political goals introduced by Modern art.

RITA: Relational art is not concerned with looking at objects or imagining conceptual ideas to consider, but rather seeks to provide events for an audience as a gift, an offering (see Nistrup 2004). These events are specific to a site, location or even a context, as they seek to offer a space for participation for those who wish to be engaged in thoughtful considerations. For Bourriaud, this is called the criterion of co-existence. The events are never finished as the discourse evolves with each re-enacted event involving different participants and/or different perceptions situated within time and space. Communication and community are simultaneously at play. The event takes place through communication, and through communication people co-exist together and form affiliations. Art as an encounter is a relational activity where we can observe our own patterns of behaviour and idea creation through our own and other's monitoring and enquiry. In this sense 'Bourriaud has been an effective advocate for the contemporary tendency to emphasize process, performativity, openness, social contexts, transitivity and the production of dialogue over the closure of traditional modernist objecthood, visibility and hyper-individualism' (Radical Culture Research Collective 2007, n.p.).

Our original intention for the Summerhill Residency was to provide teacher candidates with a contemporary art experience that could

help them critique an ever present positioning of education under modernist principles. The Summerhill Residency provided an experience with contemporary art most teacher candidates had not experienced before. They were put into a project that stressed an open-ended approach, a hermeneutical cycle of reflection, action and reaction, and a field of transitivity where the artists, instructors and teacher candidates, along with their artistic and pedagogical practices, were apparently socially unified and professionally structured. Inherently, we wanted the teacher candidates to understand the unequivocal connections between aesthetics and politics, for art and pedagogy. We wanted them to question and debate possibilities (see Downey 2007), and to be in a state of becoming pedagogical as teacher candidates and as potential educators.

To what extent did the teacher candidates shift their thinking as a result of the intervention?

Perhaps one way of addressing this question is to consider the revised title to the book produced through the residency. The original text was entitled: *Summerhill: A Radical Approach to Child Rearing*. The revised version is entitled: *Summerhill, Revised: A Radical Approach to Teacher/Child Rearing*.

A radical approach was assumed in both texts. Yet the question remains: *was the residency a radical approach?*

Bourriaud claims that modernism was focused on an endless pursuit of the beginning or something original, and since then, 'all radicality seems to have vanished from art' (Bourriaud 2009, 45). Radical social change is replaced with mass culture overwhelmed with signs and symbols. 'If for modernism, the "return to the root" meant the possibility of a radical new beginning and the desire for a new humanity, for the postmodern individual it no longer represents anything but the assignment of an identity' (Bourriaud 2009, 50). Bourriaud goes on (2009, 51) to describe this change as a radicanant way of being:

Ivy belongs to the botanical family of the radicanants, which develop their roots as they advance,

unlike the radicals, whose development is determined by their being anchored in a particular soil. The stem of a couch grass is radicanant as are the suckers of the strawberry plant. They grow their secondary roots alongside their primary one. The radicanant develops in accord with its surfaces and geological features. It translates itself into the terms of the space in which it moves. With its once dynamic and dialogical subject, caught between the need for a connection with its environment and the forces of uprooting, between globalization and singularity, between identity and opening to the other. It defines the subject as an object of negotiation.

Bourriaud goes on to suggest that current contemporary artists are radicanants constantly putting down new roots. Whereas modern radicals delimited ideas to seek the original root or idea, contemporary artists are adding and selecting ideas as a way of multiplying identities, and thus relocating, reassigning and reimagining their roots. With fragments of identities, contemporary artists are able to transplant their ideas into different environments as they acclimate to various contexts and events. Thinking ourselves into our pedagogy and art practices, we have come to realise that the revised text might have been more appropriately titled: *Summerhill, Revised: A Radicanant Approach to Learning*. Jickling and Reed, as artists committed to social practice, pursued a radicanant aesthetic practice and pedagogical approach. They may not have used this language, but it may help us understand the impact of their work.

DÓNAL: Following Maxine Greene (2007), if we say imagination is 'a passion for possibility' then we might also say that we encountered a certain degree of crisis in imagination on the part of teacher candidates during this project. Imagination, Green (2007, n.p.) says 'signifies a summoning up of heretofore unsuspected alternatives, of roads not taken, of unwritten letters to the world. It signifies a new kind of authenticity, perhaps the return of a lost spontaneity – an ability to retrieve meanings funded over time.' Recognising the potential that the CV and

Summerhill projects offered for coming to know in unexpected and less traditional ways, teacher candidates found it difficult to imagine a learning context in secondary schools whereby the principles underpinning both projects could be put to work. Fearful of the ethical challenges embedded in projects such as these and the uncertainty that accompany them, our teacher candidates, for the most part, were reluctant to commit to practices that may be perceived to be out of line, or not in line with the system of schooling that they perceived to be in existence. Dwelling too easily and submitting to what Hannah Arendt (1958, 5) calls the 'complacent repetition of "truths"', they were locked into their own perceptions of what schools demanded of them, and imagined the benefits of their engagement from this perspective: 'Throughout the whole process I was trying to link it to how I would take this and incorporate it into my lesson plans and stuff' said one teacher candidate.

From their perspectives as becoming teachers, this perceived system of schooling demanded particular pedagogical approaches and a commitment to specific content and modes of assessment. The fact that these systems of schooling and the demands they placed on teachers and students were at odds with the unpredictable nature of art and its experience did not move our teacher candidates enough to want change, but rather called forth clichéd responses such as the following. One teacher candidate explained:

For myself, all of my work ends up being a product, like its paintings or ceramics, or wood sculptures. It is always something tangible and this experience has been a very good reminder to keep going outside of the box, and look at what people are doing even if you're not strongly drawn to that kind of work.

Arendt cautioned against clichés such as these, suggesting (1958, 4) that 'cliches, stock phrases, adherence to conventional, standardized codes of expression and conduct' have 'the socially recognized function of protecting us against

reality, that is, against the claim on our thinking attention that all events and facts make by virtue of their existence'. Reality, as Tom Holert (2011, 40) suggests, 'can actually be changed by thinking it up differently'.

We must ask why it is the case that our teacher candidates lack the 'passion for possibility' that Greene identifies as imagination; why are they reluctant to think up reality differently? Do we expect too much from our art teachers? Do we expect them to translate the oftentimes untranslatable for pedagogical practices? Is their task of providing an education in art an impossibility in this century, and should we be calling for a reconceptualisation and renaming of what happens in schools in the name of art? (O'Donoghue, 2011). While many artists working in our time are committed to finding or creating openings to that which exists beyond the present, we found that for the most part our art teacher candidates showed signs of resistance to thinking without structures, to thinking beyond structures, and to imagining a different idea for the structures that they perceived in advance of their experience in school classrooms. 'I really appreciated the unconventional aspect of it all' one of our teacher candidates explained, 'because I feel like the rest of our careers after we finished this, it is all going to be so conventional, so I appreciate that part of it at this point.'

To come full circle and to return to Paul Butler's *Reverse Pedagogy*; of particular interest to us was that *Reverse Pedagogy* required a commitment to finding ways of working together, to negotiating differences and taking advantage of similarities in efforts to identify opportunities for action and response not always fully articulated or understood in advance. It demanded a willingness to be open to opportunities and possibilities in new contextual configurations and realities, and to engage as learners in individual and group investigation, contemplation and reflection. These are qualities, which we believe, are foundational to any learning situation. *Reverse Pedagogy*, it could be argued, was a project about the means in and through which we come to know. Most surely, it

prompted one to think about the given and the possible in the process of coming to know.

RITA: Most compelling to us, was the role *a/r/* tography played in setting up the conditions for making rich intellectual connections within the Summerhill Residency: *a/r/* tography is a form of research enquiry, a pedagogical strategy, and a creative activity (Bickel *et al.* 2010; Irwin & de Cosson 2004; Sinner *et al.* in press; Springgay *et al.* 2008). Knowing that all three forms of knowing were valued allowed for possibilities unseen before. *A/r/* tography became a way of opening up to possibilities for student and teacher learning (see Leggo *et al.* 2011; Prendergast *et al.* 2008) within a community of enquirers.

Elsewhere in the literature on *a/r/* tography, four commitments are described as the conditions for a community of enquirers:

- a commitment to enquiry;
- a commitment to a way of being in the world;
- a commitment to negotiating personal engagement in a community of belonging; and
- a commitment to creating practices that trouble and address difference (see Irwin 2008).

All four were prominent in the Summerhill Residency. Moreover, *a/r/* tography afforded us the possibility of encountering pedagogy through relational art practice. These were encounters that intervened and interrupted comfortable places of knowing and provided opportunities to rethink pedagogy.

As teacher educators grapple with shifting to a 'learning to learn' orientation from the 'teaching to learn' orientation, rethinking how we might set up conditions for learning is immense. Moreover, art educators have an additional expectation. Not only are we shifting how we think about learning we are shifting how we think about art. Experimenting with ways to exercise both is a major project for the field of art teacher education. The Summerhill Residency afforded us opportunities to engage with learning in ways that were at once concerned with contemporary art and pedagogy. While every enactment of art as social practice will be different, art educators who are interested in including artists' residencies in their programme may

benefit from examining the challenges, processes, products, material effects and social engagements described in this article.

Notes

1. We want to acknowledge and thank other individuals with whom we worked to bring the project to fruition: Hannah Jickling and Helen Reed, our visiting artists, and Adrienne Boulton-Funke, Natalie LaBlanc-Ruttan, Heidi May and Stephanie Springgay who conducted the research with us. We also want to thank the entire secondary art teacher education class of 2010–11 at the University of British Columbia. They are: Anna Ryoo, Stanna Cermakova, Claire Williams, Esther Shoop, Gillian Smith, Heather Toomer, Jamie Smith, Jessica Millikan, Joanna Jedrzejczyk, Jonathan Lorne, Judy Leung, Julia Lim, Kay Pham, KT Zydek, Landon Shantz, Linda Chen, Linna Song, Lyndsey Gantert, Mark Mitchell, Mehran Modarres, Peter Shin, Roxanne Gagnon, Safi Arnold, Shanaaz Mackay, Shirley Chan and Zac Pinette.

We also want to acknowledge and thank the Social Sciences and Humanities and Research Council of Canada for funding our research programme.

2. Teacher candidates are often called student teachers in other jurisdictions. They are called teacher candidates in the Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia where this project took place. They complete a degree before entering the 12-month after-degree programme. Many art education students have completed a BFA before enrolling in the BED programme.

3. More information on the artists and this project can be found at: <http://hannahjickling.com/projects/summer-hill-revised/>

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