

Text Supplement A

What we learn is not absolute (it's kinda a test), by Kym Maxwell

*... Doesn't honest learning require a leap that disengages what we know and engages us in what we don't? And doesn't this leap call for a kind of escape from ourselves? Isn't escape actually a kind of radical engagement?*¹

This exhibit was conceived when thinking about Claire Bishop's *Artificial Hells* (2012), Irit Rogoff's academic symposium *Bologna e-flux journal* (03/2010), and Ranciere's *Emancipated Spectator* (2009) and *Ignorant Schoolmaster* (1991) – all texts which explore the *educational turn* in contemporary art practice and discourse. I questioned what is our local context for these practices and discourses. My curatorial work is more of a relational inquiry into this field, through the selection of Australian artists that are, in the majority, non-pedagogic in approach, and situating them against pedagogic practices abroad. In so doing, I ask: *How may art intersect with knowledge if art's content is explicitly uneducational? And how may we learn from pedagogic aesthetics and theory?* This show does not attempt to focus on education itself as a standardized social/political structure, it is merely a critical means to explore the receptors and deterrents that form and transmit knowledge and art, a kind of truant distance from the codes of formal or institutional education.

Aware art interacts with philosophies, bureaucracies and markets and finds itself reinforcing those hierarchies and taboos, it is not unlike education performing an important social tool. With many institutes, pedagogies and arts practices hybridized into economic models, I question the institutional structures within this riddle of parallels of art and education. As Steyerl posits, 'the art field is a space of wild contradictions and phenomenal exploitation. It is a place of power mongering, speculation, financial engineering, and massive and crooked manipulation. But it is also a site of commonality, movement, energy, and desire.'² Education's one to many model, a result of the capitalist agenda has led to the rise of it as a power of the state, an entertainment as well as systemised gathering (a measure) of the labour

forces. This exhibition is a proposal as much as it is a proposition – *How may education and adopting its pedagogies affect the artworld and its parallels? Thus, how has the most static and addressed of all art codes, 2D, become a method of education, a force of culture?*

Within this exhibit artists' works represent varying vantage points of knowledge and education as either active or passive experiences of learning. All works explore differing accessibilities of art's intellectual codes (subject and object) with each production (the making) a form of knowledge and its transmission kinetic. Through autonomous and plural positions, the theory of knowledge in regards to the *educational turn* is questioned. Along with the self-educated curatorial process I perform (under the gaze) it too is turned. Halfway through the exhibit, a child-directed *curatorial project* in collaboration with Emily Floyd will be enacted. Thirty primary school children from Collingwood College will visit and re-imagine the exhibit exploring new connections between works, in galleries two and three, proposing a new direction for the exhibit. The children will re-curate the show and a team of installers (on Tuesday 23 September) will re-hang it. The children's curated exhibition will be represented to the public from Wednesday 24th of September till exhibition close October 5th. A celebration of this event will take place October 4th from 2–4pm.

The exhibition is partitioned into parts: the singular, the plural, participation, arts codes and narrative or truth.

The Singular – Knowledge

Elizabeth Newman's *Self Portrait* (2010) explores self in relation to the struggle of one's own subjectivity – the implicit folly to have one's own view similar to another and the slipperiness of another's truth is unavoidably referred to here. Bertoli states 'In Newman's work the mechanism of paintings ... finds its foil in the "subject".'³ To communicate things seen as they are but to leave things unfinished for the mind to 'read' them is the essence of her work. *Self Portrait* (2010), and postcards, *I'll see for myself* (1989) sit within this context proposing a higher order transmission of knowledge that one can experience for and of themselves. Signs of the self actualising also

resonate in the works of Antonia Sellbach, as she researches the implicit rules and limitations of an artist's practice. Her works on paper are part of a larger series of approximately 300 modular pieces entitled *The (Ever growing) Set*. Each modular piece (constructed with stained rag paper) fits together into multiple configurations and architectural spaces. Similarly Nick Selentisch's cognitive works explore the bureaucracies of life. As stated by Sutton Gallery, 'Selenitsch's practice promotes the artistic and social importance of "not-knowing". ... The play court he references and that we co-construct is in fact a representative, a frame in which to give meaning, articulating a "language" that is spoken from the empty place of power.'⁴

The Plural – Educations' Emancipation Through Art

Annette Krauss' five video works, *Hidden Curriculum*, highlight student voice within the contested sites of institutional learning such as museums and high schools, exposing expected behaviours of learning and their countercultures. Interviews with young adults and the artist challenge us to consider the difference between looking and seeing, gained knowledge and performing it as expected. A similar activation of voice appears in Robert Fairley's Room 13 (U.K), pedagogic project. As an artist pedagogue his pedagogical model of the '90s was funded by the children themselves developing a sustainable economic model for children to run their own artist studios with an employed artist in residence. Their initiative taking them to the Tate where their work was awarded the Tate's equivalent to Turner Prize for children, the *Barbie Award*. Simon and Tom Bloor's large chalkboard *A Sentence of Shapes 2 and 3* wall drawings collapse onto one another as 2D shapes; activated by visitors through gestural and textual marks with chalk onto the colourful shapes demonstrating the many participatory codes children engage with in daily life – these wall drawings are a re-enactment of the educational task by arts educator Kurt Rowland's from his instructional manual *Learning to See* (1968).

Art CODES – Codes Within Image, Universal Teaching

Peter Tyndall is a well-recognised figure in Australian contemporary art for his exploration into codes within language; his work extrapolates the evolving but still systemic codes for art as language. With his Zen mathematical diagrams, 1 x 4, 4 x 4 as a metaphor, Tyndall's *FIACPCE (Educational Kit)* 2014 closely references Vygotsky's theories of cognitive development. Vygotsky proposes 'information from the external world is transformed and internalised through language. Since language is both a symbolic system of communication and a cultural tool used to transmit culture and history.'⁵ Whereas, emerging artist Annabelle Kingston's three paintings deafly echo the naughties culture of developing knowledge through a wide variety of media, signs and signifiers. Her work explores the fluidity of media, language and meaning and their interrelation as a critical literacy within the 21st century. Lane Cormick's flag *Cook Mustard Beal Swan* hung previously in Neon Parc 2007 was part of a performance: the audience pelted with egg by the artist and his mates from the window. Both anarchistic act and art code the language of diagrams in Cormick's work within uneducated 'knowns' makes it the more trickier to critique – as it is these codes his work and persona shun. Dan Arps's video *Fractal Study (Our Ancestors)* 2011 and wall work *Untitled (Powerful Women)* 2014 directly use popular cultural tricks in order to tell the story of mutating truths. The unknown relationship of Dan's work with the intended message makes the image borrowing from the net an interesting ebb and flow.

Participation – Everyone Has The Same Intelligence

Emerging artist Kym Maxwell's video installation *Objects as Associative* (2014) reveals the weighted realm of a child's becoming through institutional environments. The destruction of readily available materials, discards, where children dabble with alchemy and objects is explored through the use of language and slow moving imagery in her video. She foretells the politics of self-directed learning in group dynamics: the indoor and outdoor learning as increasingly regulated sites. Sound as dialogue and environmental

language is often present in the works of Nathan Gray. His work *Corners* (2014) explores the first four numbers learnt and their interrelation to institutional interiors, perception and listening. Through rounds we hear the numbers one to four in new ways beyond symbolic intent. As the work moves in and out of a pace, new patterns and orders are revealed. Sean Peoples' *Friendly Floatees* (2014) a looped projected video work repeats an image of six rubber duckies at virtual sea, evoking a sense of being pulled together by the currents in the ocean. Based on the tidal shifts and gathering flotsam and jetsam Peoples's work accentuates the blocks and flows within institutional learning: posing to go with or against the tide. This work reflects on the treading water nature of education and the one to many model as if we, like the ducks, are from the same mould.

Narrative or Truth

Anastasia Klose's *Homage to Farnsworth* (2014) is via the reading of Iris Murdoch, as she states, 'If empathy can be described as love'. Herself the reference in her works as artistic form and action. Her recent objectification of self through Farnsworth, her basset hound, provides Klose with the opportunity to explore love whilst also explicitly creating a narrative of her relationship. Constantly in her work is the exploration of the very difficult realm of personal vulnerability where she extrapolates it into fiction. These crossovers are also explored in Dr Peter Hill's fictional texts and installations, the Art Fair Murders. For Uneducated he presents *Potlatch – A Fremantle Artfair* stand in which the audience can swap artworks with those from bozo ink and his collection of op-shop objects. Participants are invited to take and swap objects. This is explored in the same way through DAMP's approach to art making with its varied entry and exit points of art's transmission, through collaboration. In fact story telling is accosted through the building of a shared narrative within their process; moving across to audience through a series of staged actions and readings of their work. *Victoria's Secret* (2014) with its Bauhaus blocking of an angel figurine and Robert Crumb imagery evokes a sense of boundaries between fact and fiction within knowing and learning.

Notes

1. Nell McClister, 2004, 'Paul Chan by Nell McClister', <http://bombmagazine.org/article/2734/paul-chan> accessed August 18th, 2014
2. Hito Steyerl, 2012, 'The Wretched of the Screen', Sternberg Press, Berlin: 99
3. D. Bertoli, 2013, 'Stratified and gratified: Lizzy Newman's expanded feel', *More Than What There Is*, 3-ply, Melbourne: 87
4. Artist Nick Selenitsch, Sutton Gallery website <http://www.suttongallery.com.au/artists/artistprofile.php?id=45> accessed September 20th
5. Child Development, 'Play: The Work of Lev Vygotsky' <http://www.childdevelopmentmedia.com/play-the-work-of-lev-vygotsky> accessed August 20, 2014

Further

- Claire Bishop, 2012, 'Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship', VersoBooks, U.K London
- E-flux journal #14 (03/2010) [e-flux.com http://www.e-flux.com/issues/14-march-2010](http://www.e-flux.com/issues/14-march-2010) accessed August 30th, 2014
- Jacques Ranciere, 2009, 'The Emancipated Spectator', VersoBooks, U.K London
- Jacques Ranciere, 1991, 'The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons In Intellectual Emancipation', Stanford: Stanford University Press, U.S.A California