ArtSchooling

Jeannene Przyblyski & Allan deSouza

This conversation between Jeannene Przyblyski and Allan deSouza is a response to notes by deSouza, which clarify and situate pedagogical practices within the art school. Examples of those notes are included here (in italics) as background to the ensuing conversation.

**JP:**

Dear Allan,

The only way I can think to begin this collaboration is in epistolary form—salutations! Conversation seems somehow more non-coercive than a manifesto. It’s the give-and-take of the critique that I’ve always loved—the sense of beginning from a common premise with neither “teacher” nor “student” knowing quite what will happen next. It’s the very opposite of the Socratic method, where an ineluctable, causal chain of correct answers, skillfully elicited by the master, is the indicator of success, of lessons learned rather than insight mutually discovered as part of a process with no end clearly in sight.

I thought of proposing brief responses to some of your notes—the ones that resonated with me the most in my current condition of the non-teaching, side-lined art school administrator (or perhaps better, the condition of other-teaching, in the sense of insisting that learning continues to happen in extremely improvised and constrained forms and encounters, no matter what). How does that sound?

**AdS:** I imagine you doing exactly that. We will discuss your responses, your critiques of my notes, how else you conduct critiques and your pedagogy in general, particularly given your experience across art, art history and administrative disciplines. Can we think of this process as itself akin to the critique, of together “bringing forth” meanings towards possibilities of practice?

**JP:** Agreed!

*The art school’s mission should enable its students to become cultural agents, that is, producers of/within culture, rather than being simply consumers of culture. Academic programs (art history, critical studies, etc.) deal with the production of ideas and cultural knowledge as well as their critique, and thereby situate their students alongside other forms of more material production.*

*An art school plays roles in the production of objects (material culture/art works), of object producers (artists), of discourse production (artists/scholars/teachers) and discourse circulation (all the previous, plus pedagogy, exhibitions, and publications), of criticism of culture and as producer of critics and theorists of culture (all the previous).*
I'm being presumptuous, but this is my understanding of the relevance of academic programs within an art school. Also, I'm using certain terms like “academic” and “studio” for the sake of convenience, rather than proposing actual separations. With most university art history departments physically dislocated (during the 1970s-'90s) from studio art departments and relocated to the humanities, academic students are removed from a direct critical relationship to art making.

It’s funny: when I began my arts education as an undergraduate at UC San Diego, art and art history existed pretty seamlessly in one department within a university largely dedicated to the sciences, with little to no separation between art criticality and academic criticality. My art theory course was taught by David Antin as a spoken performance (and he recorded each lecture for his own ends). My “Intro to Photography” professor, Allan Sekula, had us calibrating f-stops and mixing chemicals, and also reading Foucault and Marx, as well as John Berger and, more as ironic counterpoint, John Szarkowski (in the 1970s and ’80s he was as much an anathema to emerging post-modernists as Clement Greenberg!). Manny Farber painted his film criticism in some alchemical way, and Eleanor Antin acted out her own art history. I thought this was normal. Artists fearlessly thought in public. They were articulate, historically-minded, argumentative, and funny.

When I got to UC Berkeley in the late 1980s, art and art history existed on opposite sides of the campus. In the doctoral program in the History of Art, I learned a lot about looking at art that was all finished, at least on the artist’s part (and the artists in question were mostly long dead—really finished). This was serious business, and often exhilarating. So much of my sense of a visually attentive writerliness remains informed by my teachers from that time: Carol Armstrong, T. J. Clark, Michael Baxandall, Anne Wagner. But still, there was something frustrating about it, and just a little sterile. I kept wondering what was going on in the studios on the other side of campus. When I finally wandered over there, I was told that art historians knew nothing about art. This was also more than a little frustrating.

Ending up teaching at an art school was permission to put these two orphaned halves of myself back together. But that also was a little stymied, at least in the ‘90s. Art schools could be entrenched and self-policing in their own rights, no matter that or perhaps because they were “avant-garde” and certainly because they continue to have a long history of being embattled. A righteous wordlessness was highly prized in some sectors. As junior faculty, this was a form of resistance that was often sometimes difficult to overcome. And yet it was the students who knew differently.

AdS: Certainly, my own art school education strongly influences and provides practical tools for my pedagogy (for example, Mary Kelly’s clearly defined methodology for critique). But I also received and conducted hands-on training outside of formal school settings, as a member of artist collectives that ran art and education workshops. These also provided political training, giving me more of a socially-grounded purpose for education that is not always compatible with current students’ expectations and desires. But it’s negotiating these conflicting desires—understanding those of students and not imposing mine—that seems to be the challenge and the reward of teaching. I think this is similar to how I conduct my studio practice: there are ideas I work with that gradually
take material form, but in doing so those forms gain their own momentum until I’m trying to keep up with their unfolding and their reshaping of those initial ideas, rather than trying to re-impose them. It’s never completely new territory or that romantic “losing of the self” since it’s more of a cumulative process, learning from one’s own past practices and the constant learning from others.

The importance of academic programs within an art school is that they locate criticality and historicization within the realm of making. And this applies inversely to studio programs located in relation to history and theory of art and to critical studies (making in relation to criticality). Academic students learn the discursive processes involved in making artwork in order to better locate their own criticality, and studio students learn to critically locate their own processes of making. Academic students need to be adept at looking at and addressing actual artworks, rather than only through reproduction (this can admittedly be done at a museum); they also need to understand processes of making, rather than only encountering finished works (this has to happen at a studio or where work is being made). The art school is a primary site for these kinds of engagement, and no education in contemporary art can be considered complete without these firsthand forms of engagement.

JP: I remember that it was a dozen years or so ago that I began to be more present at the art school where I had been teaching part-time (I’m noticing in your text that you are naming names less than me). I was taking on more classes and responsibility, being included in more discussions and shortly to be hired to tenure. I remember very precisely the first time I encountered the term “interdisciplinary” used there. It was in the context of a discussion of curricular revision, during one of the many periods of economic and conceptual crisis for this school, which had so often in its history positioned itself as a place for principled exceptionalism, a place uniquely dedicated to art for art’s sake (although the idea of the “sake of art” had thankfully expanded somewhat beyond the confines of the discourse of modernist formalism). One of the studio faculty maintained that the program had long been “interdisciplinary” because students moved across media—from print-making to painting, from painting to photography, from photography to film or sculpture, etc. Having come from a conceptually-based art program (in a research university, no less), I was more than momentarily confused, arrested rather than placed in that state of heightened contingency, that for me signaled interdisciplinary thinking and practice. Wasn’t this all art, after all? And how could art signal its interdisciplinarity by its adjacency to more art? I had always thought of interdisciplinarity in terms of a productive friction, constraint, resistance: the confrontation with something other than sameness that had the capacity to produce a greater illumination through difference (that Benjaminian “sudden flash” of awareness that came of the unexpected collision of images, thought systems, ways of knowing and being in the world). Art was a set of permissions to come at ideas differently, but I was never much interested in the ideas that only existed as and for art.

AdS: Despite the “frustrations” you mention, it seems that you remember your education with some affection. I remember my time at art schools with more ambivalence. I always just got on with learning and making work so I don’t think I was ever looking to “fit in,”
but as a student I never quite understood the cultures of art schools. I don’t know whether it was the slacker rebellion or the rampant careerism, or when the two oddly coalesced. You mentioned a “righteous wordlessness,” and while I know exactly what you’re referring to, it was its particular forms that I found undermining. For example race—specifically whiteness—was naturalized to the extent where there was no language to address the blindness that masqueraded as “color-blindness.” In hindsight, I think of that as so provincial, and one that failed to engage with the contemporary world let alone my own experience. It was a self-perpetuating culture that demanded assimilation—and I experienced it as a form of coercion.

As an educator now, that experience translates into an imperative for a global scope and a consideration of multiple positions. This may seem such a basic premise, but I see instances where the challenges posed by postmodernism (and whatever other “posts” we may inhabit) are met by an entrenched retreat to modernism, where—to point to your example—Szarkowski might be taught as a leading light rather than as a counterpoint.

I’m also not advocating one approach exclusively, for example, prioritizing the “global” over the “local” but suggesting an examination of and engagement with both.

**JP:** Well, remember that I wasn’t at an art school when I first encountered art practice. And this was perhaps why I experienced it as liberating rather than coercive. In my academic courses at the university, which I had always approached with some confidence (I was a “good” student!), I had felt harshly disciplined in terms of class and gender identity. I recall one time in particular: in the first year writing program, we were assigned to write a short essay based on Herbert Marcuse’s *One Dimensional Man* (this was the ‘70s, after all). I had to read my response in class, which was nerve-wracking enough for a young and very tentative aspiring “intellectual.” When I was finished there was a long silence, and then the graduate TA observed that he had “always wondered what a working-class Polish Catholic girl would say about Marcuse”—and that comment was not intended to be complimentary. I recall this as the traumatic scene of my entry into academia (which it seems I am both condemned and privileged to inhabit for the rest of my working days). Because I was given to know very certainly that none of these things—working-class, Polish, Catholic, girl—were tickets to the “assimilation” that was demanded, expected, imposed and went without saying for some. And if I was (always) already to be held at a distance in that academic arena, then art became, for me, the site of encounter where those othering experiences of culture and subjectivity could be stated, visualized and explored, personally and critically, in the work and the critique.

At the same time, we might be making a mistake to think that modernism had ever been completely done in by postmodernism—hence the always possible eternal retreat to Szarkowski and the later Greenberg and all of the “righteous wordlessness” that still clings to the critique in some quarters. The wooden stake through *that* heart still needs to be secured. Its great resilience, I think, has to do with its status as a singular narrative. On the one hand the myth of that singularity (which was never true at all, but produced only under the pressures of criticism and art history as selective *discrimination*) enabled postmodernism as a multifarious field of de-essentialized discourses amidst which we could position ourselves, contingently and polemically, politically and provisionally. On the
other hand, the absence of a dominant narrative seems to sometimes instill in students a sense of drift, or non-commitment, as if art could be “anything” at “any time,” and not produced from a sense of cultural urgency or in a specific context.

AdS: I might have had the opposite trajectory in that I was never (held to be) very “good” at art when it came to particular skills, and in fact, the most common response I remember from elementary school (“has difficulty with paint”) through to graduate school (the latter from Paul McCarthy at my MFA show) was of surprise that I had completed a work “well” or that I had achieved whatever might have been seen as markers of success. Faced with low expectations, I think I looked to more academic disciplines where I could respond critically and, I admit, more polemically.

I’ve been mulling over how to respond to the incident you describe with the TA, and wondering over my reticence to do so. My own experience is rife with similar examples. It’s not that I’m past them, or that they are relegated to a “past” moment, but I continue to think through how to use such experiences generatively. Their effect, obviously, is humiliation and dismissal, even when their perpetrators might claim no malignant intent or even that the whole thing is a “joke.” But, as we know, the “joke” may be continually reinforced, with little to repudiate it. I’ll give one example, while being acutely aware that to speak of such things is to be seen to be “whining”—which is its own form of dismissal. The system I went through to get into undergrad was that you sent your portfolio to your first choice school. They might call you in for interview on the strength of your work, then either accept you or send your portfolio on to your second choice, and so on. I got interviewed 12 times at 12 different schools over a three-year period. Each time I would walk in the door, and each time I would register the almost “Fanonian” looks of confusion, panic or horror when the faculty saw this brown person walking in. Nothing about my name or my accent on the phone had prepared them for what I would look like. Twelve times I was told something along the lines of, “We really like your work but we don’t think you’d fit in here.” That was the late 1970s, and I was part of the first generation to have come from the colonies but to have grown up predominantly in England and the first such generation to go to art schools. If American students are horrified when they hear this, which they usually are, it’s partly because they’ve already forgotten what happened within America not much earlier. So how to use such experiences? On one hand, we went through that so subsequent generations wouldn’t have to. But one still encounters such responses; in some instances they may be as blatant, in others more skillfully disguised. In my daily life now they are generally on a smaller scale. Speaking back, not just to these instances so as not to give them more substance than they deserve (hence my initial reticence), but speaking back to their enabling cultures remains central for me—whether as a teacher or as an artist. This then leads to other questions of the most appropriate means, form, and language with which to speak back.

JP: I think we are very much talking about forms and modes—as we move between disciplines, institutional and cultural contexts and even continents—but perhaps there’s some space between the “by any means necessary” polarity of overt radicalism and a quieter, consistent “fortitude” that may be equally radical. I’ve always thought of art and art critique as being very much for the public—leaving the art that people make “for
themselves” to its own mostly therapeutic devices and insisting that the space of critique is public space, no matter that the public might be limited and intimate and increasingly familiar over the course of the randomly imposed brackets of a semester. Above all, the critique is not a free “safety zone” (where anything can be said and stays in the room) but a space where risk, consequence and accountability are negotiated as real social relationships in real time.

In that sense, for me, the teaching/critique identity is a public performance (David Antin did teach me something, after all) and the selective disclosure of what may seem private or personal experience is a part of that performance. On the one hand, this thinking was just a useful way of getting over my tendency toward shyness in public (the public me wasn’t really me, even if it was selectively produced from parts of my experience). On the other hand, it was a way of undoing the abstract and essentialized authority of the master/teacher by breaking that identity into a more composite, fallible and feeling identity, expressed as a function of language, in relation to which students could place some part of their own composite and sometimes more emergent public selves (which is to say that students are often still sorting this out during the critique and to be honest, maybe I am too, just a little). I think the deliberative choice of this performance is the answer to accusations of “whining”--those accusations being just another form of coercion to be resisted.

I say this in a different way below (and by saying this I acknowledge also that this conversation was non-linear and asynchronous in the making and that its sequential representation here is somewhat of a fictionalized, instrumental performance as well, which is why I’m liking this mode of writing/talking so much).

AdS: Yes, neither my artwork nor my teaching might appear “radical” or “activist.” No one gets naked in my classes, no one smashes things (though students will show me their video documentation of such performances done in other classes). I’m glad there are spaces for students to do these things, but they know that I don’t think nakedness or smashing things is inherently radical. They do know that I emphasize language as a way of identifying and thinking through a complex of questions, and that the “thinking through” can be done within any discipline or medium (with each one having its own languages).

Art schools, at least those that are accredited and offer degrees, necessarily involve some aspects of coercion. Admission and selection processes, scholarships, reviews, grades (even if only Pass/Fail), graduation, etc., are all rites and structures of passage and therefore of coercion and discipline. Even without these overt disciplinary structures in place, the “hidden,” regulatory forces of competition, peer pressure, favoritism, cronyism, “tradition,” habit, etc., still operate if left unacknowledged.

JP: At the same time, I sometimes wonder whether art schools are the best place to explore the discursive and disruptive, non-coercive potentials of art. Because, as you began to suggest, the art program within a university can, in certain circumstances, position itself as a space of critical alternative. The art school left to its own devices is
doomed to become...just another school.

**AdS:** Despite what I’ve written above, your question about whether “art schools are the best places to explore the discursive and disruptive, non-coercive potentials of art” fills me with a momentary panic! Am I completely wasting my time teaching?! Am I deluded or naive in thinking that I have altruistic motives?

**JP:** Don’t panic! Let me try to put it another way. Each setting has its struggles, it seems to me. The art program within a university is more often than not easily marginalized (those nutty, nonconformist artists!) and often under fire given today’s concerns over education as a “value proposition.” On other hand, the art school, in the comforting myth of insular utopianism that it can tell itself, somehow foregoes the friction of a more expansive interdisciplinarity as an array of rigorously practiced disciplines that is present in the university. So rather than experiencing that productive constraint from without, it begins to turn inwards, to police itself in odd and even small ways. It can become a dominant (coercive) narrative in its own right.

This doesn’t mean teaching is (ever) a waste of time. But it perhaps requires even more vigilance with regard to self-awareness of one’s position within a collective discursive project of practice and critique. I’ve always felt that both my practice and my teaching were performative and specifically located; my art practice always begins with something outside myself, toward which I advance, and around which I circle in very externalized, spatialized ways. And I think that informs my methods of critique. I often feel, in ways that are different than some of my colleagues, that I am never trying to get inside the student—to find out who he or she is through the work. Instead, I am always trying to talk with students to understand how their work sits in the world. Maybe some would say that this is the same thing. But I see it differently, and I do see it as less coercive, partly because it allows the student to have the option of re-locating themselves in the process of the conversation, and partly because it embodies and locates the audience for the work as more than an unspecified mass of passively receptive viewers. In the critique, the audience is, in extraordinary ways, speaking.

**AdS:** We’re increasingly required to “professionalize” our teaching and prepare students as “professionals” under the pressure of “real world” scenarios. Given that students sometimes crave singular direction, definitive answers, and leadership (as a mask for coercion), what roles can discursivity, disruption, and non-coercion continue to play? And how might these questions apply to our art practices?

**JP:** This I need to ask you more about. On the one hand, my current experience is that the students are demanding this professionalization in the face of “real world” scenarios as much as any external pressures....

**AdS:** I agree that this demand for “professionalization” comes from all angles, including from students. And in relation to that, I want to go back to your points about teaching, like your art practice, being site and discourse-specific. I agree, too, with your pursuit of art and teaching as processes of exteriority, if I can put it that way. Both are processes through which a public, or publics are formed. I’m particularly drawn to the nuances you
bring to the critique situation as one that negotiates “real social relationships in real time.” Since it is a somewhat “secluded” space and one that coheres around a faculty person as director, it might also be useful to address the critique as a rehearsal space where language, meaning and social relations are tested and examined.

I want to return to another point you made. I remember a faculty discussion in defense of maintaining disciplinary departments (Photography, Painting, etc.) precisely because of the generative “friction” between them. I see a lot of value in that but in order for it to function that way, I do think each discipline requires a pedagogy that historicizes and conceptualizes its potentials and limitations, rather than one that promotes it as a naturalized form that magically accesses and reveals the interiority of the artist. I’ve often heard, “That’s not what we do,” or, “That’s not what we’re interested in.” If ever I were tempted to resort to anything approaching those sorry excuses, then it would be incumbent upon me to first identify who that “we” might be, then examine how those practices and interests came about historically and how they might be used. I agree that it requires a necessary vigilance to situate an artwork within the world or at least within culture, rather than within the psyche of the student—and though we do often act as social workers, therapists, or parents, those are not our roles. (Lari Pittman, at UCLA, would welcome new students with a speech to that effect—though he put it somewhat more bluntly!)

Another friction, though not necessarily a productive one, is generated by whether departments perceive themselves as skill or conceptually-based. The former might promote manual dexterity and time-tested “traditions” as the foundations through which creativity will proceed; the latter, derived from avant-gardist ideas, might see effective intervention in the here-and-now proceeding through ideas and actions, notwithstanding that this has become its own “tradition.”

I also agree with you that it’s a mistake to imagine that modernist ideas have been fully superseded by post-modernist ones. We can still see their persistence and their continuing allure within the classroom and also within the artworld in general. And it’s important to keep in mind that artists are willing to maintain modernist mythologies of artistic transcendence because we benefit from them, at least in the short term. We deal with students who might have been told all their lives that “art comes from within” and that it’s all about “being true to oneself.” They might see the point of art school as helping them develop their “innate” skills into marketable ones and providing sufficient professional access to the artworld. Historicizing and contextualizing their work, situating it as a social practice rather than as inherent and hermetic might seem irrelevant unless it provides them with the necessary language to “pass”—and I mean this more as passing as artists than passing school.

Taking my cue from Kwame Anthony Appiah from his book, Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers, we might be more successful in changing habits rather than in changing minds, perhaps with the hope that changed ways of doing things will eventually change ways of thinking about them.

Since we live in multiply and complexly coercive societies, the school bears some
responsibility to prepare students to function (and thrive) within—and to resist—these coercive, competitive arenas. This needs to be done alongside developing non-coercive alternatives or counter-practices. In order to perform these multiple tasks, the school needs to recognize and align its own disciplinary and counter-disciplinary practices, and to do so on every level of its functioning beyond its marketing rhetoric.

JP: An experiment in non-coercive teaching and learning: my current institution was founded on an interdisciplinary premise—“all the arts under one roof,” with no walls in between. This premise attracted me powerfully. The institution was formed not amongst departments or media within one realm of art practice/discourse, but across the visual and performing arts, still and moving images, images and sound, etc. Imagine my surprise upon arriving there and finding such rigid interdisciplinary intransigence that some students almost never took classes outside their “school” (except for “liberal arts” requirements) while those students who insisted on working between schools were literally doubled down on in terms of expectations and administratively split in two—counted as a “half student” for budgetary and census purposes in each school. Upon reflection, this began to make a certain amount of sense to me: of course the most ambitious interdisciplinary aspirations might yield the most reified, disciplining of the disciplines. The friction of which we were speaking operates as a kind of grating stasis.

This year we have begun a new project, notable for being not a project at all, but a hypothetical space in time. After substantial negotiations, all of the schools agreed to withdraw from one 3 hour block of time in the course schedule—to schedule nothing, and certainly require nothing, during this time and to make as many spaces as possible available for self-organizing student use. At first glance, it seems as if nothing is happening. Some students complain: what are we supposed to do? Some faculty attempt to negotiate: are you sure I can’t require thus and such rehearsal during this time? The students really need it, after all. But interestingly enough, in this nothingness, this lapse of frantic production that otherwise characterizes this institution, things have begun to happen. A student organizes a lecture/workshop series as research for his thesis project—it lasts only as long as he needs. Another holds a series of readings. A short film gets made by dance and video students and is shown elsewhere than the classroom. Someone takes a nap in the main gallery. This is also useful. I am interested to watch this experiment unfold. The students haven’t fully realized it yet, but in a place that evokes the terms “pedagogy”, “mentor” and “metier” so effortlessly and without hesitation, this is the one space opened up where the tables are turned, and the students may seize the opportunity to teach the teachers.

AdS: Below, as part of my “original” text, I suggest the studio critique as a non-coercive practice, but one that is nevertheless to a greater or lesser extent directed by the faculty member. I love the example you provide here of the institution stepping back to allow for possibilities of student-directed practices. I’m reminded of my undergrad years at Bath Academy of Art, in the west of England (a notably Indophile school with Howard Hodgkin on faculty—so I can speculate about their acceptance of me; and their possible later disappointment since I turned out to not be “sufficiently” Indian). A group of
students, myself included, developed a collaborative performance practice (with Augusto Boal, Jerzy Grotowski, and Antonin Artaud as models), and we considered it as an extension of our studio practices. We even built a small theater on school grounds, and petitioned the school to have our performances assessed towards our final degrees. During our final summer while students were away, the school demolished the theater, subsequently rejected our petition and insisted we make work within our “disciplines.” That was a prime example of “that’s not what we do” coercion.

**JP:** Somehow this puts me in mind of Robert Smithson’s *Partially Buried Woodshed* — the notion of putting an institutional structure under such pressure that it collapsed, even if the resultant de-pressurization was only temporary. I think of a field of monuments to (failed) non-coercive experiments in teaching. Would that look like a reverse mirror-image of the dumping grounds for monuments to the fallen dictators of the Eastern Bloc? Perhaps we could put a certain “condemned” studio classroom of historic character there, as well as an architectural model of the aerospace facility where my current institution was forced to set up camp after a catastrophic earthquake. It was in that space, I am told, that the walls really came down. The point would be both the commemoration of loss, but also a reminder of the space of opportunity that is opened up when a set of collective practices are forced to reinvent themselves, again and again. That is our challenge as teachers, it seems to me: to understand the ways in which we must constantly move between positions of disciplinary enforcement and undermining, from within. It’s this movement, I think, that really comprises the non-coercive....

**AdS:** What a great reference. If only I’d known then of *Partially Buried Woodshed*. We know that all institutions go through these periodic reinventions, even if the “reinvention” is so that it can appear exactly the same. The New Genres department in which I’ve been teaching is exactly at this point you’ve just described. A department that prides itself on its ability and agility to reinvent itself, and was—symbolically, I would say—housed in perennially temporary quarters, has recently lost those housings. Literally unhomed and displaced, but also renewed, what monument would mark its originating location at the time when it was, indeed, “new”?

*The critique, central to art school pedagogy, can strive to be a non-coercive practice, where desires and anxieties are “brought forth,” with the possibility of their rearrangement. The critique is the site for the production of knowledge that is localized and contextualized through the art object/event, but also an examination of that knowledge and its processes of coming into being. If meaning is constructed through the viewers’ (note the plural) encounter with the art object/event, the role of the critique is to examine that encounter and the processes through which meaning is constructed. Since that encounter occurs within a system of discourses, we also need to examine those discourses through which meaning is produced.*

**JP:** About now I’m wondering if your original text has the status of the object of critique (the art object/event), or the voice of the “master” (the “control” in the conversation, the more impersonal authority around which we organize an evolving knowledge and awareness). It seems to shift between these two polarities as I read and re-read, think and write. But that is the process of the critique, it seems to me: to begin to speak as yourself
(the viewer/critic) in response to the other (art object/event) and then to see your speaking self, and the selves of others, outside yourself.

AdS: Hopefully less of the “master”, and more of the object to be collectively critiqued!

I’m reminded of the way Okwui Enwezor situates contemporary art in a global context of encounters within proximity (as the aftermath of colonial encounters across distance), which, “devotes itself to the critical interrogation of social subjectivity in the intersection of the self and the other.”

JP: Yes, what I think is most interesting about this dialogue is the way that it caused your original text to be othered—not the “you” any longer to whom “I” was speaking, but the text that another “you” and “I” are writing around. I’m reminded of the first lecture/performance I ever saw you do—in which you enlisted a few students to bring other voices, and hence to splinter your subjectivity as a speaking artist (if I remember it right).

It’s about now that I think we need yet another. Okwui would be good, if he’s available...

AdS: This original text is similar to what you were describing earlier about your art practice beginning with something outside yourself, advancing towards it, and around which you circle. If anything, this text might have been produced through me, but it’s from myriad sources and influences, and formed along multiple trajectories that include both you and Okwui as colleagues and mentors. And I’m grateful to be able to acknowledge that here.

One method of the critique is to defer judgment; it does not judge whether a work is good or bad, but it can and does examine the terms under which those judgments are made. It is primarily through that deferral that the critique can be non-coercive.

The review is inevitably a more coercive practice since it involves assessment and judgment according to the school’s mission, and is where the “standards” of the school/department/faculty are manifested: through the personnel and work being assessed, through the dialogue around it, and through the criteria being used for assessment.

These two practices together, the critique and the review (despite their overlap), involve their own identifiable sets of practices, procedures and outcomes, and provide a dialectical preparation for and critical relationship to the artworld (encompassing museums, galleries, dealers, publications, collectors, artists, schools…).

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