

Grammars of the Possible:

Moving Beyond Binaries of Representation and Non-Representation in Gallery Education

Janna Graham

It is often the case that generalised arts discourse makes broad binaries of the gradations through which practices live and breathe. One such binary is made between practices dedicated to “representation” and those dedicated to what is often described as “non-” or “post-representational” work. This distinction emerges from important interventions about the order of knowledges privileged by representational regimes. Michel Foucault, for example, suggests that the shift from the classical age to the threshold of modernity, is one in which art and knowledge converge to become “post-representational” (cited in Tanke 2009: 50), that is moving from a mode of ordering that seeks resemblance, towards one that seeks to break and re-order knowledge. Others (Lippard 1973) have described the “de-materialisation” of the representational and spectacular regimes of the art world in the artistic practices of the 1960s and 1970s which sought to politically challenge the representational and financial regimes of the art world and its forms. The turn to “relational” (Bourriaud 2002) and “dialogical” art works of the 1990s and early 2000s challenged the idea of art as a “mere representation” “insulating” the viewer from direct experience of it and rendering them subject to the “transcendence effect” (Kester 1999/2000).

More recently the move to a “post-representational” landscape has been thought in terms of its impact on curatorial practice, suggesting that curators move beyond exhibitions and displays that “represent objective values” and towards questions of “curatorial action”, “education” and the “unplannable” (Sternfeld/Ziaja 2012: 62–64). Accounts of curating in the post-representational have tended to emphasise questions of time over space. Pablo Helguera (2010), for example, suggests that “today, time is our real estate, and learning how to use it productively is as important, and perhaps even more important, than how we use the four walls of a gallery”, where Adrian Heathfield (2014) poses a “durational aesthetics” against spatial orders of representation asking rather than focusing on art’s representational orders, its formation of subjects, and relations or use of space, what might be gained by thinking through its manifestation in time? Here traditional curatorial concerns with “arrangement”, “visual display” and “authoritative historical narration” are aligned with regimes of representation, where the ephemeral, the durational and the unplanned are aligned with the possibilities of post-representational.

As a practitioner engaged in radical pedagogy, research and activist projects that bridge galleries and communities, I have often affiliated the stakes of my work within this post-representational terrain. Rather than constantly asking



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that education work be held subservient to or desiring of the esteemed realm of exhibition and display, the call to the post-representational has offered gallery educators and pedagogically engaged curators like myself a position of agency, autonomy, and given us the right to *look away* from traditional forms of knowledge production in galleries. But over the years I have also observed that the tendency (my own included) to pit the one (representational practices) against the other (non-post representational) can sometimes miss the subtlety of movements between representational and non-representational paradigms within sustained politically and pedagogically engaged work attached to art galleries. Strangely, this can have the effect of re-inscribing the hegemony of exhibition and spectacle-based understandings of representation, erasing the myriad of other representational forms that surround resistant cultural production. This poses a problem for two reasons: one, it aggregates (and segregates) around questions of display/non-display what might be more effectively organised around questions of political affinity/antagonism; two, it sweeps away the complex field of micro-politics, those lesser seen and becoming representations that occur beneath, above and around the main show.

This contribution seeks to complicate these distinctions using examples from my work with research collectives through the *Edgware Road Project* in London from 2008 to the present and by offering a number of avenues for de-centring binary logics. Referring to theorists including Gayatri Spivak, Henri Lefebvre, Paulo Freire and Suely Rolnik, I do this to offer a picture of the resistant work of education in art galleries that includes their various mechanisms of production, and therefore their various regimes of representation and non-representation – those that exist in front of publics and those that take place behind the scenes, those that are residues of emancipatory processes and those that are in direct conflict with them. If we dislodge our understanding of gallery pedagogy from the images and representations we are meant to see, and from the binaries which we have assigned them, what is the field that emerges? I argue that it is important to look across these registers to see the way in which regimes of governance – including marketing, fundraising, but also modes of subjectivation of workers and audiences in galleries – are currently organised to include both representational and non-representational aspects of the work of gallery educators. I suggest that radical pedagogy in gallery education requires that we transform the use of both representational and non-representational practices. I invoke a *grammar of the possible* to suggest that radical pedagogy in galleries requires a new lexicon and a new *grammar of life* through which to think these questions.

Representation is dead! Long live representation...

In her text *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, Gayatri Spivak (1988: 271–277) warned of the danger of a tendency she read in the conversation between two French philosophers in which the euphoric declaration that “There is no more representation; there’s nothing but action” was made (ibid.: 275). She suggested that provoking such absolutes in the field of representation stabilises an invisible *I*, that of Euro Western subject-hood, that of the intellectual that requires

no representation, remaining unquestioned and unquestionable. She argues that what is conflated in this assertion are two forms of representation: the re-presentation of artists and philosophers, that is, the making of the artifice, the artists's presentation and portrayal of the world, and representation in politics and the law, as the ability of people to speak, be seen and be heard by those in power through a representative or a forum for self-representation.

These two sides of representational practice – re-presentation and representation – though contingent, Spivak argues, speak to different political questions.¹ In discussions around critical art and gallery practices, for different reasons, it is not uncommon to hear a related set of distinctions made: between questions of presentation and questions of politics and the political. To critical agents, those concerned with artifice, the presentation of subjects and subject matter (what Spivak describes as re-presentation) are often assigned to the realm of old-fashioned commitments to craft and display or to the vacuous world of the market. Those on the side of non-representation (what Spivak describes as representational), interested in the people, the distribution of power, vocality and access, are often accused of lacking an interest in aesthetics.

I bring this up here to suggest that calls for the non-representational (my own included), though liberating for gallery educators in suggesting forms of articulation and valorisation that acknowledge and celebrate their long over-looked and under-valued practices of knowledge production, do not do away with either the violence or the possibility of the representational realm as they exist on both sides of this divide. Spivak (1984/1985) suggests a “strategic” use of certain representational practices that she describes as “essentialist”,

¹ This is an abbreviated discussion. For further details of representation in Spivak's understanding, see the contribution *Showing each other something that does not exist yet. Thoughts on the representation practice of Büro trafo.K* by Nora Sternfeld in this volume. to always maintain a friction between the call to representation of marginalised groups and the desire to dismantle the regimes that necessitate this call (and that always render it unanswerable). In thinking the question of representing gallery education within a practice of radical pedagogy that attempts to de-centre Eurocentric subject-hood, I suggest that such a “strategic” use of representational regimes might still be necessary both in analysing the violence of the unacknowledged *I* and in thinking about alternative configurations of the relationship between representational and non-representational elements.

I argue this because though recent readings taken up in the sphere of art, such as those of philosophers like Jacques Rancière (2010), bring questions of aesthetics and politics into closer proximity, in the operational discourses of cultural institutions there is often very little conscious recognition of the relation between the two. Representation is seen to be the role of the exhibition curator who is bound by questions of display, spectacle and hierarchical relations of connoisseurship, where the gallery educator is bound with questions of the people, their marginalisation and their ability to speak. There are a number of blind spots in making this discursive separation, whether it is made by the hands of those who uphold the dominance of cultures of spectacle and display or those who argue against it. The most blatant of these is that aesthetic operations and representational concerns are always at play in pedagogical work, as are political concerns and the question of *voice* in the production of display. Of more pressing concern, however, is the way in which this dichotomy is routinely operationalised to uphold social hierarchy, segregation and the continuous seep of global, hegemonic corporate interests.

Take for example image 1, which appeared as part of a 2015 combined campaign for *Beyond Petroleum* (BP) corporate sponsorship and the art gallery *Tate Britain*. The ad was opportunistically placed in, among other sites, the 2015 annual programme guide for the nationally revered *BBC Proms musical festival*.² Viewed by upwards of 300 000 people annually the *Proms* are cloaked in British national iconography and espouse to amplify high British culture to the masses through cheap ticket prices. In the ad, a young woman of colour gazes up at images in *Tate Britain's* collection with the hashtag OMG (short for Oh My God!), suggesting (not our horror but) her wonder at what appears to be an educational experience she is having at one of Britain's most renowned national galleries. A neo-liberal redo of the *Paris Match* image (image 2) was made emblematic by Roland Barthes in his text *Mythologies* (1957: 115).

² See online: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/proms> (last access: 25.09.2017).

Image 2: Front Cover of Paris Match 326 (1955): *Les nuits de l'armée*, Paris: Paris Match, © Paris Match.



The subject of the image conveyed by BP, here not a young man but a young woman, lifts her eyes upwards in a kind of awe at the seeming greatness of the nation as it is represented here not by the military (as indicated by the beret and salute in *Paris Match*) but by an arts educational experience (she is wearing what appears to be a school uniform) at the hands of a national cultural institution and the corporation *Beyond Petroleum*, re-branded in 2000 from *British Petroleum*, when its logo, incidentally, turned from a shield to a flower. The image caption reads: “Connecting societies with the arts. Be inspired by some of Britain’s most stunning artworks at the BP Walk through British Art displays at Tate Britain. Open all year round. Admission is free.”

It makes clear that the relationship between art and the social, in its widest, most inclusive definition, is made through a public private partnership that renders inextricable the interweaving of gallery education, national pride and colonial concepts such as “integration” and corporate ownership. Much has been made of BP’s use of arts institutions to *greenwash* its corporate image, otherwise tarnished by its devastation of massive natural resources like the Gulf of Mexico and the colonial violence it wreaks on communities of

colour around the world. Campaigning groups like *Liberate Tate* have pledged hundreds of hours to direct action against BP sponsorship of *Tate* displays, and indeed were recently successful in having them withdraw.³

I bring image 1 into the conversation as a call for new assembling practices. Rather than concentrating on attributes associated with particular professional practices in galleries, we might more usefully congregate representational and non-representational concerns around pertinent social questions: in this case, the long history of colonialism in galleries that have used both cultures of spectacle and display and of durational, social and educational practices to enact colonial violence. From this perspective, it is important to note that the hashtag OMG BP ad was not placed on banners that one encounters when entering the *Tate* where the brand must critically negotiate art-informed and engaged visitors. Rather, it is placed in the *BBC Proms* guide, where the contradictions between the gallery's attempts to be self-critical and create *access* and its alignment with the interests and power of global, ruling elites might not seem as prescient. Placing this image elsewhere (not at *Tate*) neutralises this contradiction. Here we see an example of the way in which galleries operationalise binaries like representation/non-representation to strategically distract from their complicity in the exploitative relationships of global capital. The so-called processual, educative experiences of galleries often seen to be without representation and rather providing access to art or politics via cultural experience, can be read here as a powerful representational force, just as lesser represented modes of production around cultures of exhibition display, i.e. their sponsorship and working conditions, are often muted.

The so-called “non-representational”, engaged work of gallery education is used to uphold the making of national subjects as obedient, brown bodies within the neoliberal entanglement of regimes of national and corporate representation. The combination of the wonder of the student photographed and the text accompanying the image makes clear that her appearance in the image is the outcome of access enabled by BP, re-instating regimes of segregation (some bodies *require access*). The hashtag OMG and the launching of the image within the language of social media also suggests the degree to which our understanding of the representational regimes of art (as spatial, authoritative, top down, display-oriented) are complicated by the social circulation of imagery that oscillates between

³ More can be read about this story at *Liberate Tate*, online: <http://www.liberatetate.org.uk/tate-and-bp-2/> (last access: 25.09.2017). regimes of representation and those described as non- or post-representational. Hito Steyerl (2014) has noted the degree to which non- or post-representational aspects of art and curatorial practice align with neoliberal processes of ordering and imaging, suggesting that social media “makes the shift from representation to participation” in which dominant image and ordering regimes are directed by “popular energy” but no less attached to hierarchical relations of power.

The BP ad makes clear the stakes in claiming back the representational terrain of gallery education as a site of contradiction and struggle, even if the aim is to work towards a field of practice that attends to the durational, organisational, unplannable and invisible aspects of our work.

Towards another lexicon

Spivak's distinction between notions of representation, between the making of subjects (through artifice and display) and their political agency can be further complicated by Henri Lefebvre's more spatialised distinction. He describes two kinds of representational practice in the production of space: "representations of space" – those spaces which "find themselves aligned with the relations of production and the 'order' that they impose" and are perhaps the most obvious to us, i.e. in state planning and architecture – and "representational spaces" – those which may operate through images and symbols or not, but are linked to the "under-ground side of social life" and in the everyday experience of users and inhabitants (Lefebvre 1974: 33). Here, the side of experience, use and process is not seen as non-representational but as the terrain of a different set of representations that both inform and struggle against the dominant spatial order. This dialectical relationship in space is the dynamic of its production.

These more complex notions of representation (though by now quite dated) point to the need for a more nuanced and expanded understanding in the practice of gallery education, one that can account for the scales at which a wider variety of representational practices operate.

This re-orientation was something that myself and artists, researchers and community groups grappled with in our work to invent a neighbourhood art and research project in London's *Edgware Road Project* titled the *Centre for Possible Studies* (Graham et al. 2012). The project, which has taken the form of a space, an archive, a series of research projects and publications, in addition to exhibitions and performances, was set up through the Projects strand of *Serpentine Gallery*⁴ in 2008. Where the gallery sits in a park surrounded by some of the most expensive real estate in the world, the *Centre for Possible Studies* sits in the context of a neighbourhood undergoing three distinct and equally violent forms of gentrification. Here, migrant communities – predominantly, though not exclusively from the Middle East – have built the "representational spaces" of the road since the 1970s, making it an important site of reception and cultural articulation for people arriving to London from the region.

The role of gallery education and outreach activities in securing the “spaces of representation” imagined by the ruling elites of the projects of colonisation and gentrification was very much on our minds. The *Serpentine Gallery*, the project’s host, though at a geographical distance from local gentrification projects, is nonetheless also a host to global elites. Designated a *public* institution due to its receipt of significant governmental funds, its boards of directors and patrons, who regularly attend high production parties and events at the gallery, align it very closely with the interests of the agents who are currently re-shaping the financialisation of cities (the current head of the Board of Trustees being former mayor of New York City, ninth richest person in the world and CEO of Bloomberg Ltd, Michael Bloomberg). Myself and others associated with the *Centre* were often invited to sit with developers and city planners, literally in rooms high above the neighbourhood looking down upon it, to hear about their plans, and see their future representations of the neighbourhood. As a group of vastly underpaid cultural workers, aligned with those most marginalised by visions of the city made by such a global elite, how could we produce a terrain in which our work could challenge this position of the arts, and form solidarities through both the visible and less visible aspects of our work? What forms of resistant sociability could be made to confront and re-make these spaces of representation?

When I describe the multiple years that artists and community groups have spent working on studies of housing, care, gentrification, education, policing and migration in the area, it is frequently asserted that the work is about *process* and not about *representation*. However, as per Lefebvre’s distinction, many studies in the project have been as concerned with the representational processes (questions of display, visibility, etc.) as they have with the more processual and temporal elements. What distinguishes them from the spaces of representation of urban and gallery elites, is that they are produced from below and in direct response and, where possible, utility to local struggle. For example, within each study there is a deep engagement with the historical archives of those who have made use of tools of emancipatory pedagogy to counter colonial and paternalistic forms of education and social research. This historical material in the form of posters, photographs, workbooks and pamphlets breathes life into new imaginaries of resistance against the powerful forces of forgetting that disconnect generations of struggle from one another. The posters, photographs, workbooks and pamphlets also give indications of how others have managed the processual and representational elements of social projects in the past. Less about a spectacular or nostalgic orientation to material culture, they were still very interested in questions of display and understood the visual vocabulary that these archives provide are sites of learning and very consciously connected to action in the contemporary context. The material was arranged, reviewed, and questioned to inform decisions on how we might address problems in the present.

In a study undertaken by designers and young people in the local area, for example, the history of radical sociologists who worked with teenagers in the 1970s to support them in taking control of the council’s youth services provided an important precedent for challenging the consultation mechanisms surrounding social change in the area, which exclude most of who live there. Very little had been done to address young people – deemed less significant on

account of their inability to vote. Here, a movement from looking at the representational spaces of the city produced by seventy young people supported the making of new representational entities, new archives and new practices. For example, students made gestural tableaux depicting their understanding of the use of public space in the area. Photographic images of their tableaux were not seen as records of an art education activity but as the basis for analysing the conditions of public space (images 3, 4 & 5).

Questions for you:

- How many people are in your family?
- How many people are in your class?
- How many people are in your school?
- How many people are in your neighborhood?
- How many people are in your country?
- How many people are in the world?

(THIS IS)/(IS THIS) YOU?



The City from Our Perspective

maybe something to do with the lamplights - not to increase safety, but to improve aesthetically -
at night the lights are glowing
different colours around the lights - **creates an atmosphere** and makes it nice, making it less depressing like Oxford Street at Christmas - so nice
who would object to that? making the atmosphere more intense in a positive way
finding somewhere for **gangs** to hang out
if there was a place where they all actually **chill and hang** - social areas where they can do what they want **chill and hang** so they don't have to do it anywhere else
when they properly do it, it looks so amazing like Banksy.
they have **battyman** trousers, and they wear a hood
the difference is, **we show our faces** - we don't dress like that
they don't mean to look like it's just their style
explanation of 'battyman': they're showing a symbol off, and it's not nice **it's stereotypical**
what if you exist between the two? friends in gangs, and not in gangs, and then there are people who look like they're in gangs... what about female gangs?
they **spike their hair up**
they have names like Shamoqua - their **tag names**
when you think of a gang, **you think of knives and hurting people** - it's not always like that, sometimes you're just in a **group of friends** and you're not trying to hurt anyone
some gangs are not necessarily involved in criminal activities - but they've **developed their own language**, nationalities, groups - popular, not popular, **Kowwara**, **Neeks**, dumb bums, popular but not in a good way
they're not popular because they do good in school - what are they popular for?
what's different between me and everyone else?
Blanca did not deserve it.
how and why do you feel like it's your decision, who 'deserves' it and who doesn't, when you're in a gang?
having everything means you could lose more
if that's being popular, i'd rather be the **biggest nerd ever** - girls get stereotyped more than boys
we're good at cooking, good at giving babies; we're not as good drivers as men
it's ok when they're going around, getting all they can get
girls are hypocrites at the same time
all teenagers are kind of stereotyped, and it's not good - it's hard being a teenager if you thought about designing a space for gangs, you really have to know what a gang is these are all issues that play out in space and design
postcode war is really stupid
you can't help where you live, where you get born
this all comes from America - there it works; we're amateur compared to America so if you're a professional, what does that mean? You kill 15 people in one day?
in City of God - that's how gangs are - but here you know, we have welfare - they have nothing. But here they act as if it's all about
whether you can buy guns on the street, like in America - that makes a big difference to the violence that a gang produces. if you hand in a knife in America you get a free x-box
campaign across Mexico where you'd get some appliance - a fridge, a TV set - if you hand in a gun
a man took all of the guns, and melted them down to make shovels
maybe some of them were used in guerrilla gardening
if it didn't sell Weed and didn't have any weapons, I wouldn't call it a gang
in Cockney Orange, that's a gang, with their own language
but a gang could just be a group of friends - it's a word that's stereotyped
JIFFY = 'dodgy' - it's Cockney!
they have sandy earnings - I'm not trying to stereotype, just trying to say - they had a bad atmosphere around them
do you think the word gang is a naturally stereotyping word?
I think of the word gang as a club
are we a gang?
they're just people that have each other's backs, if you need something they're there
there's nothing wrong with being in a gang - **just knowing the limitations**
there is peer pressure though
graffiti art - a way of making your pieces stand out more than anyone else's
about you, and your opinions - not about the public anymore
a gang is about you, and who you exclude completely from your world
we would have to think about not only the place, but the design of the group themselves - how that process works
if you've got that space, then the gang is going to want that as their own
you need to make a space for every single gang
what happens in the space and how people come together is a different question
it's possible, through design, to create a platform
they grow out of it eventually, I think when they're older and they're crickhead
POSTCODE WARS
it depends on you as well, you don't have to involve yourself in it
I don't have to involve myself in it to make friends
sometimes they don't even care who you are, what you're like, but it just matters what end you're from
LDM gang - Lawson Green or Little Green? Who knows?
being approached by gangs - it's where you're from? you're just so scared
my friend has a friend who got arrested because his sister was raped, and then he wanted to kill the person who raped his sister, he stabbed him, but the other guy didn't die, and then he was arrested - he was 15/16
people get hospitalized just for being somewhere else
do you think that it will ever be stopped?
no unless we took postcodes away
embassies are interesting places - they represent a certain country with the city
even if you're in the embassy car, you're in that country - even though really you're here - the territory of that country
the border of a gang, and the border of a country - it's comparable
very strongly policed border
we recreate these rigid structures from the structures that we're living in
there are people who work very hard on collective groups are these 'gangs'?
that's what I like about London, it's so mixed
community centres - places where people from one country can come together
countries like America question - do you have Arabs? do you have Indians? - in London, we have everyone, you have no original people [in Australia] - or only a few left
they have a hard time in the city - it's sad because it's their own country
we're not up in it, we can't imagine going to a place where there's not our own



Images 3, 4 & 5: Selected images of *Possible Studies Pamphlets* made by students with designer Bahbak Hashemi-Nezhad: *Studies on a Road* 1(2) (2016): *The Edgware Road Project*, London, © Edgware Road Project, online: http://www.serpentinegalleries.org/sites/default/files/downloads/public_10_pamphlet_final.pdf (last access: 25.09.2017).

As such they were important to circulate, to be seen and heard in the area. Young people, themselves dis-satisfied with processes that had no visual or display outcome, worked with designers to produce posters of the various discussions they had about the area, to pack the language that is used to describe it and the vilification of young people as “gangs”. These posters, visual registers of their ongoing analysis, and the production of a representational imaginary that included their voices, were later shown at *Serpentine Galleries*, and provided the basis for producing the project’s key areas of research – including local actions in which they conducted their own consultations around change in the local area, with, unsurprisingly, very different results than those undertaken by the local government Council, responsible for the gentrification process.

This relationship between historical representations, representations produced in the project, and associated actions and communication with the world beyond the project was something we grappled with in the early days of the *Centre for Possible Studies*. We were very conscious of wanting a record of the various kinds of representations, ephemera and documentation that were associated with the project but also of the need to combine these materials in ways that might respond to the changing situation on the road. Bombay-based media artists and activists CAMP⁵ joined the project early on and worked with various groups involved to build an online archive and distribution platform⁶ to be used and owned by the people in the area.

6 The online platform can be seen at <http://www.edgwareroad.org/> (last access: 11.09.2017).



Image 6: Front cover to *A Better Way* (2013). *Edgware Road Partnership*, London, © Edgware Road Partnership.

Working first with the shop owners and workers who were threatened by the new plans for a “cleaned up” and “bettered”⁷ Edgware Road (image 6), CAMP built the platform for digitising and housing the personal archives held by owners and workers in the area so that there would be a record of their contribution to use in future negotiations with the Council on their right to remain.

The shop owners were also very interested that these histories, alongside local plans rarely publicised for the area, be made public through various practices of display and representation to galvanise support for their campaigns, through the simplest means of distribution available to them: table mats to be put out in the restaurants (image 7). CAMP built into the platform the ability to drag and drop content from the archive into the table mat and other formats useful on the street, to enable rapid production of print materials (image 8). However, the group was also interested in higher profile exhibition held at the gallery as an opportunity to galvanise public support for their ability to stay. Here again, the direct relationship between the represented

⁷ The most recent plan for the Edgware Road called A Better Way can be found online: http://www.edgwareroadpartnership.co.uk/_downloads/ERP__BROCHURE_MAY2013.pdf (last access: 25.09.2017). The process of “cleaning up”, “bettering” or regenerating areas of London has been described by housing activist and researcher Anna Minton as “social cleaning” (Minton 2009: xxix). Using areas like Paddington Basin (in the Edgware Road neighbourhood) as case studies, she describes the way that agents in neighbourhoods, including sex workers, street beggars and low income housing residents, are displaced by the demolition and selling off of public housing assets in the city. This social cleaning is accompanied by a cultural dimension that vilifies these same agents in order to legitimise the financialisation process. Minton has also suggested (2017) that now such groups are not only vilified in this process but actively removed by Councils who buy housing stock in other parts of the city and sometimes other cities altogether. aspects of the project and the actions undertaken in the less visible realm of political organisation and campaigning can be thought in terms of the production of representational space. Working across these registers attempted to counter the tendency in what has become a small industry of gentrification art projects, which routinely separate the memorialisation of the contribution of various communities from their acts of resisting the gentrification process. This was at odds with the *spaces of representation* produced by the *Serpentine* and the art world more generally, with its tendency to render the projects under the authorship of CAMP as artists’ projects. Regularly negotiating these different representational domains produced a difficult and conflictual set of problematics for the project.

Moving through cycles of archiving, acting and reflecting upon actions the *edgwareroad.org* archive has then produced many generations of material, including, most recently, a pamphlet series reflecting on the first six years of the project and a shelf in the local library in which these early and various other studies are housed along with those produced by agents not related to the project. While these practices might be described only as *durational* or *post-representational*, such characterisations would miss out on the importance of engaging directly with the logics of display and presentation that countered the image of the neighbourhood from above and that conflicted directly with the spaces of representation of the contemporary art field. Here representational practices attempted to produce a radical political imaginary that could galvanise people to fight precisely in the arena of representation.

Conjugating otherwise

In light of this and in order to claim a space that could be both representational and processual, we often made use of Paulo Freire's articulation of the "investigation". Outlined in chapter 3 of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1996[1969]), Freire understands the "investigation" to be a process through which those internal and external to a problem or "limit-situation" come together to produce an analysis of it based on their experiences. This process oscillates between the creation of synthetic representations of a problem (what Freire describes as "codifications") and convivial and dialogic forms of encounter – looking together, describing what is seen, honing in on particular analyses and suggesting forms of collective action (what is described by Freire as "de-codification"). Codifications of the problems (or limit-situations) in Freire's practice with groups engaged in literacy programmes often included visual art works such as those produced by Brazilian artist Francisco Brennand for national literacy campaigns in Brazil (PNA).⁸ De-codifications, though largely discursive, durational and attendant to questions of the organisation of knowledge and the making of groups also produced visual remnants, such as the writing of text on flip chart pages, doodling, tea stains, plans – but as by-products.

Codifications, however, are consciously designed for participants in the investigation to reflect upon and are generated through the identification of key themes. In codifying images of oppression, questions of how representational material is displayed and organised and to whom it is presented are paramount. This process of codification and de-codification is cyclical, representational and durational. Through it, groups analyse the various dimensions of a problem, moving swiftly between questions of display and presentation and practices of discourse and group-building. It continues even after an action is taken on the problem and exists until it is no longer necessary. It is used within a group for its own purpose, but can also be extended to a broader public, at which point a codification might be exhibited as the basis for analysis by a wider circle of participants and publics to gain their perspectives and think of actions on an issue.

On the Edgware Road we used the language of the investigation or "possible study" to allow for a montage of knowledge forms that has thus been frequently adopted by artists and resistance movements, to produce cuts with established knowledge forms and part with the aura associated with single texts and objects. This sense of montage was important as in early conversations with local residents and users of the area, a concern was expressed about how studies operate in the procedures of gentrification, through which the local government Council and developers portray the images of an area as deficient and a picture of the future as ameliorated by way of the "necessary" privatisation of public assets or the removal of unruly elements. The *studies* of the local government Council and the developers, peppered with images of new green spaces and clean streets, and smiling people engaged in pseudo-consultations, often covered over the various kinds of manipulation that take place in the spaces of representation

⁸ Brennand's codifications for the distinction between nature and culture used to instigate conversations with groups about their agency in the world, online: <http://vifalahomenageiapaulofreire.blogspot.co.uk/p/dilalogos-com-brennand.html> (last access: 25. 09. 2017).

rendered invisible by top down neighbourhood change. As such, practices like intentional neglect and “clean up” campaigns that displace people who have made homes and lives in an area are not part of the representational imaginary. Unlike the studies of the Council and developers we felt it important that our studies be poly-vocal, and look both outwardly, focused on the various questions and problematics visible and articulable in the arena of development, and inwardly, at the processes of organisation and emergent representational forms that were being enacted within the groups involved in the project.

An early experiment at the *Centre for Possible Studies* attempted to mobilise this process. Through it, and in collaboration with the experimental film collective *no.w.here*,⁹ we invited residents, historians of gentrification in the area, sex workers, students, etc. to make short films and still images in response to the neighbourhood. Montage as a form allowed for these various movements to engage with each other, in the form of one polyphonous study. It produced a significant analysis of the local area by presenting images of the various kinds of surveillance, policing and responses that had been generated by the development process, and gave a much wider perspective on the issues to be addressed than either the Council or resistant groups could have done on their own. Our attention was equally focused on the invisible mechanics of production and more visible outcomes. For example, we were drawn to the fact that the process of editing such a montage was initiating new hierarchies in the project, which in itself became the topic for investigation as much as the question of how the neighbourhood and these lesser seen dynamics were visibly represented. This catalysed a number of seminars and subsequent encounters around less hierarchical modes of research and representation, including historical enquiries into movements such as *Free Cinema*,¹⁰ *Mass Observation* (Mass Observation 1939), didactic films created by trade unions, anti-racism groups and social movements in the 1970s, among others.

The function of representational work, of the codification of aspects of the neighbourhood within the investigation, was to support deeper and wider analysis of a problem, to support participants in a group to take action upon that problem and to be part of the process of reflection. Freire’s problem-posing form of education works against what has been prevalent in gallery and other forms of community-oriented arts education (and is currently valorised by funders), that is the notion that a problem can be defined by those outside the experience of it, i.e. the state’s ideas of the problems of the poor or of young people, to be ameliorated through an experience of art. With collective analysis and action rather than improvement at stake, resulting representations are not produced as complete narratives, nor as testaments to the power of arts experiences. They are presented as fragments and abstractions, activated through discursive and de-codifying procedures.

Our use of the practice and aesthetics of the study/investigation at the *Centre* again proved to be a tension-inducing provocation to the regimes of communication in operation at our host, *Serpentine Gallery*. On numerous occasions, the visual vocabulary produced by the project was deemed to be “abstract” or “confusing” for the institution’s senior managers.

9 See online: <http://www.no-w-here.org.uk> (last access: 25.09.2017).

10 Christophe Dupin: A History of Free Cinema, online: <http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/592919/index.html> (last access: 25.09.2017).

Falling neither into the field of discrete marketable art images by individual signature artists (for whom obscurity and abstraction are rarely questioned) nor into the images of people enlightened through the experience of art such as the OMG! image with which I began (image 1), visual representations of the *Centre for Possible Studies* projects fell outside of the usual visual registers.

On one occasion, tense negotiations ensued when, on its exhibition invite card, we decided to forgo an image created by an artist in favour of the publication of the two hundred participants of a school's project. Here, the presentation of a single artist recognisable to an arts audience was seen to be more valuable than crediting the hundreds of people participating in the project, for whom the visiting artist represented only a very small portion of their larger process of neighbourhood analysis. Though worked through, it was clear that this orientation towards a self-articulated problem (in this case, the issues faced by young people of colour in the area) and not around the signature of an artist was at odds with the regimes of representation of the gallery.

On another occasion the image of a file folder with the word "Gentrification" written in marker pen was eliminated from a gallery publication about the *Edgware Road Project* for being "hard to understand". It is hard to imagine how the term Gentrification, a key word for project participants but also in wider circulation, and the file folder, an image very regular to those involved in studies at the *Centre* and to anyone involved in administrative work, would be difficult to understand. The tension around this image was rather that it stood in for a different form of representational practice, through which participants posed the problems of the area in their terms, in this case jarring with kinds of communication accustomed to buffering the tensions between the poor *participants* and those who create the conditions of poverty and expropriation. This visual register of "the study" sat in direct opposition to requests for either single authored artistic work on the one hand or happy images of children on the other.

Grammars of the visible and invisible

Situations like the one that I have just described, small incidents around representational issues that are themselves rendered invisible with the cultures of display in art galleries, are nonetheless important. It is around many such incidents that we can read the political landscape of cultural work. Rolnik (2007) describes this wider spectrum in the field of politics, as a difference between macro-politics – visible and utterable aspects of reality, and micro-politics – those less visible "forces that shake realities". Each of these fields includes representational and non-representational practices. Under current experiences of neoliberalisation however, Rolnik finds that the "perverse logics" of colonial and economic domination subsume the representational forms that emerge from the realm of micro-politics into the macro-political realm where the logic of the mediated image (think hashtag OMG, image 1) dominates. Here cultures of display and spectacle are assumed to be the field of representation, as they are in a constant state of spectacularising micro-political experience in order to dissociate and de-politicise resistant forms of social life. Rolnik suggests that it is only in bringing together resistance in both of these scales, the micro and the macro, that we can awaken our "resonant capacity from its long-suffering hibernation". When resistance in the field of macro-politics, i.e. in activist practices pitted against dominant images, laws and narrations, is met

with the invention of less visible and representable dimensions of resistant social life, we begin to overcome this constant sensationalisation of experience.

Felix Guattari's term "semiotization" (Guattari 2013: 51f.) is useful here to describe the understanding of representation in which Rolnik is operating. He uses it to indicate a more fluid and mobile sense of practices through which meaning is made, allowing micro- and macro-political entities, things which are more and less visible, human and non-human, perceptual and sensible things, into new collectivities of meaning-making. A notion of semiotisation attempts to move us towards a re-negotiation of the representational field in which logics and lexicons are not a given, but malleable and shaped by provocations from the less visible and more experiential aspects of life. Semiotisation understands the emergent grammars that ensue as existential, where representations are understood in direct correlation with attributes of life worlds.

Gilles Deleuze (1994: 23, 165) describes this vividly in his account of the process of learning experienced by a swimmer, who at first senses the water and their own buoyancy, conjugating points of alliance between their singularities and those of the sea (what he describes as the problem), while at the same time encountering the actual need to move, by acknowledging the objective ideas of the body, the sea and the movement of the waves (what he describes as the solution to the problem). The oscillating relationship between registers of the perceptible and the sensible, the micro and macro is therefore an interplay, not teleological, not a before and after, but transversal, retaining the tensions and problematics of two different registers while allowing for the ignition of encounters between them.

Crucial in Rolnik's suggestion is that what is deemed significant or insignificant to questions of representation can be re-composed around other oppositions – oppositions that resist the dominant field of images and their associated relations of production, and convene around shared sensations of discomfort with current modes of exploitation and shared commitments to ending them. In this new lexicon of perceptible and sensible practices, the BP image (image 1) could, for example, sit alongside the pay-cheques of cleaners who work at the *Tate*, the counter-colonial symbolism produced by artist activists in the *Liberate Tate* Collective, the sponsorship agreement and transcripts of the discussions of students about corporate greed. Questions of form (representational vs non- or post-representational) could be turned to the question of how to end the relationship between cultural institutions, corporations and colonial violence.

Here I am not attempting to outline the contours of a new curatorial practice, in which displays are made of the invisible contradictory endeavours of art galleries (though this also might be useful). I am rather hoping to imagine a different cultural orientation and a different set of representational cartographies, where what we look at has everything to do with what we want to change, and how we look at aligns itself with our commitments to making this change happen.

A final mechanism for attending to both micro- and macro-political registers of our work relates to the question of how and when aspects of the study become visible. The question of visibility was brought up very early on by one of the study groups at the *Centre for Possible Studies. x:talk*, a sex worker-led collective providing free english/know your rights-classes

and producing research from a sex worker perspective, had an important critique of the role of visual representation in the marginalisation of the voices of sex workers. Exposure, for them, was a complicated task, as the gaze on the body of the sex worker is such a long and established trope. A condition of their work with the *Centre* was that they not have to engage with artists or the processes of visualisation of their work or experience. Rather, they were interested in how they could use the *Centre* to produce statements and data about the area from a sex worker perspective. They were then less interested in the processes of visualisation of the arts and more in the administrative infrastructures and invisible aspects such as the cultural capital of the *Serpentine Gallery*, which they used to gain additional funding and increased credibility when producing their own reports on the issues facing sex workers against the dominant narratives perpetuated by the police and the rescue industry.

Attention to the registers of visibility and invisibility was also very present in a study of solidarity between migrant and non-migrant precarious workers which now takes the form of a theatre group. This group, working to interrogate the term “Implicated”, i.e. the complicated chains of responsibility and oppression within neoliberal working conditions, make the micro- and macro-political situations of precarious work visible through methods including *Forum Theatre*,¹¹ drawing heavily from the writings of both Freire and theatre director Augusto Boal.

While the focus in the early days of this study was the making-visible of experiences of exploitative work and social experiences across arts and service sectors, and bringing them to wider and larger publics through theatre events, as time went on the group has become equally focused on internal relationships of power. Here questions of what is visible and is not visible have become crucially important. How, for example, could the administrative conditions under which they came together through a programme funded by *Serpentine Gallery* become part of the process of making things visible and audible?

Here, a budget fragment, detailing how money was distributed from the gallery to the group became an important visualisation of power relations, which a smaller group decided to focus on. Their attention to the distribution of funds, which at the time were much more heavily weighted towards the reputed artists in the project (“artist” facilitation fees, production) than to “participants” who were generally unpaid, opened up a difficult but important process of re-distribution of power in the group, initiating a process of co-facilitation, payment for actors and solidarity funds for those in the group when at their most precarious.

This performative relationship with the making-visible of administration extended into other areas of the project, including the relationship with the projects’ overall funders. With the group, we examined the language of the grants that frame arts participation projects with “migrant” and so-called “vulnerable” communities.

¹¹ Forum Theatre is a practice developed by Augusto Boal in which groups make body images of moments of oppression in their lives, inviting the audience to play an active role in addressing issues and re-configuring relations of power (Boal 1992: 18–23).

Group members were critical though also savvy to the conditions of funding and, for a time, decided to take aspects of the documentation of the project into their own hands (and out of those of the *Serpentine's* documentation procedures), making a video for funders with their own ideas of how the group should be represented and what language could be appropriately used. In this constellation, a budget fragment sits beside a performance image and the notes of our discussions of re-formulating power relations to produce a study of the various registers around the term "Implicated".

This making visible of the often-hidden conditions that underpin arts education or community projects was a crucial shift, one that turned the gaze once again onto the power configurations and towards our own resistant forms of engagement with one another, but also liberating the responsibility for these aspects of the project from "the institution" to those of the common interest. This is now something very important across the various groups involved in the work of the *Centre*, to think through how studies are narrated to the various publics with whom they intersect, not just the more spectacularised moments of visible enactment.

Other worlds

Returning to Lefebvre's description of the dialectic interplay between relations of representation, it is important to underline that shifts toward a different conjugation of represented and non-represented entities must be equated with correlating shifts in the relations of production. Put in another way, practices of assembling the materials of our work otherwise must be held closely to practices of doing our work otherwise. Re-aligning around concrete problem-posing questions that are developed and analysed by those most effected by an issue, finding ways in which to gather solidarities of action and change around these questions, and enabling concrete engagements with the less visible conditions of production are tangible re-orientations away from representational practices in arts education that uphold the dominant neoliberal cultural order.

As such they cannot occur without an understanding of the field of gallery education as one of struggle and conflict whose stakes are the wrenching away of resources from cultural frameworks dominated by the ruling elites, be they in government, in corporations or on the boards of trustees of contemporary art galleries. At the *Centre for Possible Studies* this way of working at times meant sacrificing funding, popularity, institutional visibility, but equally has resulted in important practices of intervention into the various problematics of the area. This has implications for the field of gallery education but, most importantly, for the world in which gallery education is situated.



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