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**Constructing the Knowing - Woman - Artist - Teacher**

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Ruth Boyask

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## **Abstract**

Within art education and general education theory, various accounts have been made of the relationships between effective teaching and artistic practice. In this dissertation I have forged the identity 'artist teacher' to represent the relationships between art making and teaching. The text represents my quest to construct the artist teacher from the conversations of a group of five women secondary art teachers. On the way I align myself with poststructural and feminist theories of knowing and aesthetics, I contest universalising paradigms of patriarchy and Modernism and form opportune alliances with scientific rationalism. The artist teacher who is the sum of her experiences (art making, teaching) proves to be elusive and I reconstruct her as the knowing-woman-artist-teacher (to represent her multiple identities). As I explore notions of subjectivity I locate the knowing-woman-artist-teacher in a site of struggle between being knowing and being known. Sitting in tension between collusion and critique of the existing orders of art education she (I) seeks spaces for the agency of her and her students.

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## **Constructing the Knowing - Woman - Artist - Teacher**

A dissertation requires a question. I needed a question to answer so I asked myself how I had come to be here. I was writing a dissertation in the University of Canterbury Education Department because I was 'teacher'. I was 'teacher' because I was 'artist'. How was I 'artist' and 'teacher'? When I found other women who had crossed this ground before me, who had attempted to unravel the identities of artist teacher, the question became momentous. I saw myself reflected in their words and I began to believe that this question was imperative. We had asked it. 'We' must include all women who are artist teachers. Maybe I should have taken myself less seriously.

## Owning Up

*Introducing the text and its relationship to my assumptions about research, knowledge and self.*

This text is one representation of the journeys that I am undertaking (undertook) by enrolling in the dissertation paper EDUC 695. Located in the discourses of art education, I am tempted to describe this text as an illustration, but that may hide differences between image and text that make my engagement in writing difficult and time consuming. I find the fabrication of words tied closely to rational time scales. Pictures may occur in an instant. I suspect that for the reader (who has not undertaken the journey alongside me), this text may appear partial, disconnected and at times ambiguous. But I suggest to you that this is acceptable within the theories of knowledge that are the fabric of the assumptions I make about research, theory and practice. The poststructuralist and feminist theories I have drawn from depict knowledge as incomplete and transitory. Truth is not an undeniable fact but an ideology that changes over time. Henry Giroux claims that the poststructuralist critiques of essentialism have made visible the openings that enable human agency. "At stake here is a critique of any principle which, because of its claim to universal status, denies human agency by foreclosing decisions about how it is constituted and how it is to locate itself in the grid of social reality" (Giroux: 1994: 114). This would indicate that even the universalising discourses of emancipation exert control and inhibit agency in their attempts to speak with unified voices. A closed system may be read as hegemonic, whereas an open system acknowledges difference and allows alteration. Please read this text as open.

This year I have read theoretical texts that have thrilled me as much as novels, and left me with more questions than answers. The openings in their prose, wrought by complexity, ambiguity or obscurity, have enabled me to make various and intricate readings. I have developed meaning in the spaces between facts and this has allowed the elaborate re-construction of ideas and words that becomes this text. Their openness has enabled my agency. For example Jacques Daignault writes that to know is to kill (Daignault: 1994: 198-9). His language is so dense that my head aches. I re-read the same sentences and paragraphs over and over. Will I ever understand what he has written? Or does he resist understanding because to know is to kill? To know definitively is to end the possibility of finding new meanings. I am referring to ideas about knowledge and its openness and closure at the beginning of this text because they pervade my research. They are in my mind as I read and write the words of theorists, my research participants and myself and I will them to be in the minds of my readers. But who is the "I" that writes and reads?

I have encountered questions on the nature of the subject at points throughout my journey. As I investigate art education theory, policy and practice I read the positioning of the subject as its subtext. Janet Mansfield claims that New Zealand has predominantly promoted the "...*individual* as the *self-expressive* 'maker' of arts" through its child centred art education policies and implies that the aims of the socially critical art education initiatives of the 1990s were a critique of the centrality of the subject (1998). Dennis Atkinson suggests that the assumptions of art teachers inscribe levels of ability onto their students. They confer subjecthood on students who conform to their notions of able (1998). Feminist theorists such as

Luce Irigaray and Valerie Walkerdine have revealed how women have been excluded from subjecthood within the dominant discourses of western civilisation (Irigaray as discussed in Martin: 1997, Walkerdine: 1985). "The 'thinking' subject was male; the female provided both the biological prop to procreation and to servicing the possibility of 'man'" (Walkerdine: 1985: 6). How does gender position itself in the discourses of the art room? Or in this research project? These are questions that I examine (but cannot definitively answer) in the course of this text.

Who is I? Who is the I that writes, reads, interacts with others and thinks. In one version of this text my supervisor has suggested that I take more ownership of the statements that I make, and I have tried to address her suggestion. Yet I am left wondering who is the "I" of the text? In the transcribed conversations of my research participants (including myself) that I investigate later on in this text "who is I" becomes extremely difficult to discern.

**It's so much easier to develop ideas, I find, if I'm talking to someone else.... You feel supported. I find the department I'm in at the moment really good. --- is really good. I don't know, but you would know the programme. The art history one. We still use it... I change it. We don't have a rigid system.**

With its "I"s, "you"s and "we"s, this short excerpt from the conversation of my research participants (including myself) may have represented a specific number of subjects in the minds of its speakers. Placed in this text where the words have been removed from their intention, who do they refer to? Are "I"s the reader, writer or speaker? These issues could have been examined in light of psychoanalytic and

semiotic theory but this text must be finished by the 28 February 1999. In this text I have not enough time to contemplate these issues to the depth they deserve, yet I make some reference to them throughout. Jan Jagodzinski makes deliberate use of "i" rather than "I", "...the lowercase 'i' has been used purposely to subdue the ego that lies behind authorship as represented by Cartesian thought and modernism in general" (Jagodzinski: 1992: 160). The upper case "I" in this text may be read as used purposely. It may refer to a knowing-woman (me?) who excluded from subjecthood within the patriarchy, now makes a claim for her own subjectivity.

In these opening paragraphs I have started to disclose some of the theoretical issues that have had particular significance throughout my journey of Education 695. They may be understood as the key signifiers of meaning and are referred to throughout this text as they have arisen at various times and in various ways. But as this text is a representation of a journey I would now like to return to its beginning. I take you back to my initial ideas and inspirations for this project.

## Artist Teacher Roles

### Artist Teaching

*Examining initial ideas for the project, the curriculum and art education theorists who fired my interest and references to the methodology, practices and procedures of the project.*

In a recent paper on gendered identity and art education I briefly commented on the tensions between teachers trained in the visual arts entering into the verbal discourses of education. "Their discipline is visual rather than verbal which may suggest that a disinclination towards academic inquiry and classroom based research may be evidence of the conflicts between feminine "doing" and masculine "knowing" in art education" (Boyask: 1999: 8). This may be understood as the starting point for my inquiry into the relationship between the artist and teacher roles of art educators. I wondered how art teachers were different from other teachers? What impact had the discipline of art made on the curriculum and pedagogy of their classrooms? I had already reflected on the similarities between the practices of teaching and art making in my own art room<sup>1</sup> when I discovered my thoughts in the texts of other women.

Laurie Ball is an art teacher from Michigan who explores her personal relationship with art practice and teaching. She can examine the sets of skills required for both roles and rationalise that they are different, yet is faced with the dilemma that they

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<sup>1</sup> Art room in this text refers to a specialist art classroom. Art room appears to be the common term used by secondary art teachers.

are inseparable and related. Teaching makes her a better artist as it forces her to pull apart art into digestible pieces which aids her critical faculty. As an artist she writes discipline and courage into the curriculum of her art room. She illustrates the relationships between art and teaching by describing herself as an artist teacher.<sup>2</sup>

"My life is not unlike the artwork, changing as I interact anew with my students and with my own artwork. With each moment, I evolve as an artist teacher - sometimes being more one than the other" (Ball: 1990: 59).

When I started this project and read Laurie Ball's article I think that I wrote myself into the role of holistic artist teacher. I could remember instances when I had felt the same exhilaration from a successful day in the art room as when I stood back and contemplated a series of particularly well executed paintings. But at the start of the project it had been months since I had been in an art room and at time of writing it is well over a year. Am I an artist teacher? Perhaps I now have more in common with Wanda T. May and Madeleine Grumet who have also considered the relationships between art and teaching? With carefully sculptured language and ample bibliographies, the shape and substance of their writing betray them as theorists. Teachers of teachers, they examine the question of art practice and art teaching from positions physically removed from the primary and secondary school art room. They examine it from positions where they are sometimes named curriculum theorists.

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<sup>2</sup> In my text I have used her term 'artist teacher' to represent the relationships between art making and teaching.

Although Wanda May refers to the debate of art education policy makers on the intuitive versus socially constructed subject, she suggests that there are more significant influences in the classroom than formal curriculum documents. Policy documents are rarely referred to in the everyday practices of art teachers' development of curriculum. May considers personal experience of art and education to play a larger role in the curriculum of the art room. Artist teachers examine, express and experience their own understandings of the values and meanings of art and models their understanding of art for their students. The relationship with their students is one of mediator rather than mentor as artist teachers re-create and reflect on their own art knowledge in the classroom to assist students to develop their own understandings of art.

"Artistic teachers do this by astutely perceiving the nuances and qualities of their students' experiences and how best to respond to them. They do this when they reflect on their practice as a perpetual project or work in progress" (May: 1993: 212).

Madeleine Grumet similarly explores how the artist teacher constructs curriculum in the classroom. It is a re-presentation or improvisation of the "first curriculum" - domestic life as presented by parents and caregivers.

"Although the material for the lesson, the unit, and the course may be determined by the state, the school board, and the standardised test, when it enters the classroom it too becomes domesticated.

The art of teaching invites us to play with the material, to mix what is chosen with what is imposed... Often we do not have the material we need. We

substitute. We make it up. We bend the music to our old knees and make up new songs. We pull the furniture of the course into a web of relations that makes sense to those that live it, and working with the given, we show children how to make it up all over again and make it their own" (Grumet: 1993: 207).

Grumet suggests that curriculum should be an amalgamation of our own knowledge with that of recognised theorists and practitioners. In the teacher education programme which she teaches at Brooklyn College, beginning teachers are encouraged to reflect on and draw from their autobiographies, the biographies of their peers as well as "authorised" texts.

Empowered by Grumet and May, with the confidence to use my own experience and knowledge to develop meaning, I critically examined the concern that art had been demoted "from a stand alone subject in the curriculum to 1/4 of 1/7..."(Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Art Educators: June 1998: 13) in the New Zealand Curriculum Framework.<sup>3</sup> Although I recognise the economic implications of a generic arts curriculum as real threats to art education, arguments that visual art is quantifiably different from dance, drama and music appeared to collude a little too easily with notions that art is an academic or pseudo-scientific subject and hence valuable to preserve. Having listened to and engaged in the authorised discourses of art curriculum in New Zealand with some misgivings, it was with pleasure that I read Pen Dalton. She seemed to voice the doubts I had been having about debate on the development of *The Arts/Nga Toi* curriculum statement.

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<sup>3</sup> The development of *The Arts* in the New Zealand Curriculum Framework is an area that is examined more closely in a later section.

Pen Dalton critiques the practice of founding curriculum in the debates of Modernism<sup>4</sup>, both within scientific and essentialist frameworks. She regards the universalising discourses of Modernism as unable to recognise difference and produce more inclusive power relations. As a feminist she is particularly concerned that Modernism denies subjecthood to women. "...If we want to transform power relations between the sexes we need a reassessment of Modernism and its practices in institutions and social relations" (Dalton: 1995: 43). The Modernist privilege of scientific method can be seen in an art education curriculum that only allows reference to its own legitimating practices. "The dominant belief persists that the best art and art criticism grows out of the practice of art itself, supported by the values, beliefs and methods of science" (ibid.: 45). Dalton suggests that alternative practices could be adopted by examining the practices and theories of film theory, cultural studies and feminist psychoanalysis which are concurrently shaped by and critical of Modernism. Although she recognises a recent widening of practice in art curriculum to include "...art history, art criticism, aesthetics, professional practice, feminist art, community art and non-western approaches," (ibid.: 46) she is concerned that these are still focused within the existing and internal debates of art rather than attempting to deconstruct these as oppressive forms of knowledge. The debate against the development of a unified arts curriculum appears to be insisting on the uniqueness of art. I have read this as a cultural hegemony which controls

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<sup>4</sup>Pen Dalton uses "Modernism" rather than "modernism" and although she does not offer an explanation I have continued to use this as a representation of Modernism's universalising discourses.

resistance and is blind to oppression. It draws boundaries around knowledge and how to attain it.

Reading and re-writing the words of these women, my reflections became knowledge. I had become knowing. Now engaged in full time study I sat outside of the art room and described its meaning. Ideas about the relationships between the curriculum of the art room and my own and other's histories as artists would form the basis of my research. I would examine the artist teacher in detail. It is a shame I did not read Maxine Greene's paper *Art, Technique and the Indifferent Gods* until much later, or her criticism of confusing art making with morality<sup>5</sup> may have sounded a warning against inscribing experience as the fundamental means for the artist teacher, and hence my research participants, to “come to know”. Theory on the artist teacher had agreed with my experience and became the truths that underpinned my research questions and data analysis. For the purposes of this dissertation I had committed myself to listen to the voices of artist teachers, without interrogating my designation of them as artist teacher. With knowledge to support my assumptions about being an artist teacher I thought I was ready to listen.

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<sup>5</sup>I examine this in greater depth in the later section *Women Teach and Learn Art*.

## Research is a Conversation

In *Searching for Pleasure* I suggested that conversation was an integral part of art education theory and practice (Boyask: 1999). Although art education theory and research is inconspicuous within the academic circles of New Zealand (Barry and Townsend: 1995, Mansfield: 1995a), I hypothesised that it existed but was developed and communicated through unconventional means. The conversations, debates and gossip of groups of art teachers can be understood as sites of inquiry and contemplation. In light of this hypothesis it seemed fitting to investigate the reflections of artist teachers through conversation. I invited four women to my house to talk with me about our experiences as artist teachers. Five art teachers sat in a living room on three Sunday afternoons, drank tea and chatted.

In the transcriptions of our conversations, the words of the research participants became abstracted from their speakers. In the discussion it became clear that we had many similarities in our histories as artists and teachers and there appeared to be many times in the conversation when our experiences overlapped. We had experienced the same school art exams and the same art school and the same teacher training. The poor quality of the tape had flattened out many differences in speech that made individual voices recognisable. As names and places were removed in the interests of privacy, the keys to identification were also removed. The text had been unified into a single flowing monologue. With so many commonalities I was disappointed that the text did not readily address my questions about the artist teacher. On reflection, I realised that I had read sameness where separate voices were still clearly discernible. As a researcher I had believed that

stating my subjectivity in the conversation would protect me from bias. When I was asked,

**Are we going off on tangents all the time? Not answering your questions?**

I replied,

**It doesn't matter....I'm just giving these things as guides because these are things that have occurred to me, but you might come up with something way more interesting.**

But when read within the constraints of my research questions, the conversation really did appear meaningless when it strayed from my "guides".

In describing this process I am struck by how many of the decisions I made now seem arbitrary. Why were they women? Why did I approach these particular women, who had similar amounts of teaching experience and came through the same tertiary institution as me? The ambiguities could be rationalised away with the hindsight of theory, but that would obscure the chaos of research. Research requires making moments of sense from a paucity of conscious thought and excess of fortuitous event. It is confusion that is elucidated in flashes. "When I say confusion, I mean such a stock of differences that come suddenly into view under the light of a flash..." (Daignault: 1992: 203). I now charge myself with finding flashes of meaning from the confusion of this research.

## Knowing About Art

### An Art or an Arts Education?

*I look briefly at the history of art education in New Zealand to try to locate myself within its recent past.*

In the 1890s drawing was acknowledged for its potential to develop co-ordination between the hand and eye while doing "...something for the brain which keeps them all in relation" (N.Z. Gazette: 1891: vol. II: 1125). It was an appreciation for the combination of visual, motor and cognitive skills that drawing develops that led to its introduction as a compulsory subject in New Zealand public schools by Robert Stout, Minister of Education in 1885. With the aim of advancing "Technical Instruction" Stout set in place a progression of changes that would ultimately attempt to increase the status of drawing in primary schools to the equal of subjects such as arithmetic, reading and spelling. In 1885 he revealed to Parliament the rationale behind his move. The Royal Commissioners Report on Technical Instruction which was presented to the British Government in 1884 suggested that an education in drawing was the key to technical proficiency (N.Z. Parliamentary Debates: 1885: 114). The report remarked on the English workman's lack of artistry in the manufacture of goods. "For sound workmanship he is not to be excelled by any foreign workman, but he has lacked the artistic finish and touch of many continental manufacturers" (ibid.: 115). Stout's aim in raising the skill level of drawing was to assist in building an innovative as well as efficient body of tradespeople.

Art became more recognisable in the New Zealand education system in 1929 in the Syllabus of Instruction for Public Schools. Drawing was still the primary focus but its purpose had shifted. It was considered desirable that drawing should be a means to express emotions and ideas as well as graphic representation. Preparatory classes were prescribed in "free representation in colour of events in the child's life and of scenes illustrating folk-tales, fairy-stories, and nursery-rhymes" (N.Z. Gazette: 1929: vol. I: 39). These developments can be interpreted as the beginning of a child-centred approach to art education in New Zealand that is still evident in documents such as the school certificate examination prescription. A child-centred art education is regulated through the discourses of child development and the authority of the artist (Mansfield 1995b, 1998). Together these discourses construct the child/artist as a knowing subject.<sup>6</sup>

Key figures in the history of New Zealand art education such as Charles Beeby, Gordon Tovey and Doreen Blumhardt promoted a primary school art education that would develop "...creative imagination and powers of self expression..." (Mansfield: 1995b: 25). Within this model teachers act as guides for their students and do not directly intervene in the artistic process. Children are positioned as artists and empowered to create their world through making art works.

"Prior to the late 1980's, while still seen as important 'frills', commonsense understanding supported the notion that the arts had flourished as a result of the legacy left by Beeby and the Welfare State where education had been seen as a

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<sup>6</sup>See Walkerdine (1985) on how child development theories construct 'the child' as a subject. See Mansfield (1998: 9) on *The Autonomy and Authority of the Artist*.

'public good'....under this paradigm of liberal humanism, the arts were seen as a legitimate dimension of 'self expression' and were valued intrinsically" (ibid.: 33).

Janet Mansfield claims that the child-centred model of art education came under attack in the late 1980s as neo-liberal or market-centred ideologies became more prominent in education. I feel that she may have overlooked the significance that another strand of art education theory had on policy and practice in New Zealand. Mansfield refers to socially constructed theories of art education but does not seem to examine the extent to which they have altered the shape of art education, particularly in secondary schools.

Critics of a creativity or child-centred art education rejected the notion that art was solely about making. They promoted an art education that emphasised the socially constructed nature of art rather than an individualistic one. "Art is a social product and it is historically situated and produced and does not descend as divine inspiration to people of innate genius" (Wolff: 1981: 1). Kathy Anderson claims that in New Zealand art education "a major shift occurred in 1989 when the J1-F7 Art Education Syllabus for schools was developed based on pluralistic views and the recognition that art is a social institution and part of social life" (November 1998: 3). One of the three sections in the syllabus is devoted to knowing about art as a social institution. Socially constructed theories of art are also evident in the current University Bursary examination prescriptions which require students to "...develop an understanding of existing procedures and practices which underlie the making of art and design and the practice and extension of these in individual performance"

(UBPA: 1997). Students are required to know art as a social production in order to extend existing procedures and practices into individual performance.

The development of the New Zealand Curriculum Framework in the 1990s saw art renamed visual art and combined with music, drama, dance and literature to form the generic *The Arts/Nga Toi* essential learning area (Ministry of Education: 1993: 15). Since then *The Arts/Nga Toi* has undergone a number of changes, including losing literature and being put to the end of the list for the development of a curriculum statement. The latest reports from the Ministry of Education claim that the draft curriculum statement will be in schools by the beginning of term two 1999.<sup>7</sup>

Proponents of a socially constructed art education in New Zealand seem to be particularly vocal in condemning the current development of *The Arts/Nga Toi* curriculum statement. Kathy Anderson claims that the final specifications given to *The Arts* curriculum writers "...seem to have more in common with child centred approaches, ideas of aesthetics, personal growth and appreciation of the arts and less to do with the socially critical aims of the current art syllabus" (Anderson: November 1998: 4). Yet when I read the *July 1998 Visual Arts Draft Material for The Arts Curriculum Statement* I can find no remaining trace of her assertion. Within this document the Visual Arts is divided into two strands; Visual Arts Practice and Visual Arts Contexts. At its most simple, practice appears to be

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<sup>7</sup>As stated by Kerry Harvey, Curriculum Division, Ministry of Education at the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Art Educators Conference Common Ground, 17-20 January 1999.

making and context appears to be knowing and it is also stated in *The Arts Framework Model* that "this model assumes that in Arts Practice there is learning in Arts Contexts, and within student learning in Arts Contexts there is learning in Arts Practice" (The Arts: July 1998: notes). I can find no privileging of the child over society.

Ted Bracey voices concern that visual art has been undermined by its inclusion in a generic arts curriculum. He claims that each of the arts consist of "...distinct domains of knowing such that they cannot be collapsed into each other without making nonsense of the idea of art itself" (Bracey: February 1998). By arguing for an art that is a distinct form knowledge, I feel that Bracey is arguing for an art that is elitist and oppressive. Pen Dalton claims that an art education that insists on its autonomy is both oppressive and deluded. She claims that the Modernist practice of art, which I believe to be the dominant narrative of art education in western democracies, has always given a privileged position to the discourses of science.

"The Modern structures of seeing and the dominant structures within which meanings and sexual difference are produced remain untroubled. In order to disturb those practices which produce sexual difference and women's oppression it would be necessary, at least to begin with, to uncover and deconstruct the basis of the Modernist knowledges underpinning art education: to re-examine what is meant by such concepts as 'art', 'seeing' and 'the child': assumptions upon which educational theory is built" (Dalton: 1995: 46).

In *The Arts* debate I sit in tension between critique and collusion. I can understand the concern that art may diminish in status and funding through its inclusion in a

generic arts curriculum. It is currently being proposed by the Ministry of Education that it will be compulsory for secondary students to take only one of the four arts subjects to a level to enable them to enter Year 11 and schools will be required to offer only two of the subjects.<sup>8</sup> *The Arts* subjects are expensive to fund and may not appear essential to financially overburdened schools. If implemented these policies will have serious consequences for art educators and their students when schools and communities choose not to offer visual art. An art education that is predicated on economics may only value measurable outcomes and in art education these are often not easy to discern. Is this just a reassertion of reducing the value of art education to the acquisition of quantifiable technical skills? Yet if it is possible for one moment to step outside of these economic constraints, the intent of *The Arts* curriculum statement appears to be a re-formulation of the social **and** individual aspects of art education. It is also a deliberate attempt to examine the relationships between art and some other forms of knowledge which is encouraging debate on Modernist assumptions of the value of an art education. With its critique of universalist constructions of knowledge, maybe this text will be read as part of its debate?

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<sup>8</sup>see previous footnote

## Knowledge, Truth and the Teaching of Art

*At the beginning of this text I referred to knowledge as incomplete and transitory.*

*In this section I explore some justifications for this claim and I also examine the term artist teacher in light of a critique of phenomenology.*

I live in a world of rationality and positivist logic where inflating emphasis is put on the ability to predict outcomes and measure results. In workplaces, potential employees are measured against competencies listed in job descriptions. In politics polls are conducted to pinpoint the electorate's opinions. In educational institutions students are assessed against pre-stated performance criteria or standards. When the threat of unit standard assessment was darker and intending to encapsulate all assessment, my colleagues in art education were particularly concerned. The lucid logic of unit standards seemed to be missing the point of an art education.

"Listing criteria for art does not constitute an art problem. Combining criteria will not make art, just as cooking is more than combining ingredients" (Jones Jnr: 1995: 16).

Positivism in art education can be seen in its adoption of the formalities of educational existence; curriculum statements, lesson plans, behavioural objectives, normative assessment. Yet despite art educators' attempts to adopt rational teaching and assessment practices, art knowledge is rarely perceived to be objective facts. The art syllabus and debates on the development of *The Arts* curriculum statement demonstrate resistance to the prescription of content in art curricula. Despite the similarity of form to documents that define what is taught in subjects such as

physics and mathematics, the content of art curriculum documents and exam prescriptions are vague and illusive. The curricula of art rooms and studios throughout the country defy capture as they flourish in the informal conversations and chance readings of students and teachers.

The philosopher Nietzsche offered an alternative to the positivist vision of truth. He critiqued the dominant discourse of positivism that presents scientific method as a means of revealing an objective truth. Truth is multifarious.

"I came to my truth by diverse paths and in diverse ways: it was not upon a single ladder that I climbed to the height where my eyes survey my distances" (Nietzsche in Kofman: 1993: 2).

Nietzsche conceived of philosophy as both a science and an art. His use of poetic language represents his challenge to the proliferation of mathematical formulae and scientific methods common in the philosophy of his day. Using the ambiguity of poetry he obscures his theories to avoid their interpretation as fact. "Facts are precisely what they are not, only interpretations" (Nietzsche in Flew: 1984: 247).

Phenomenology is a theoretical position that also attempts to encapsulate the ambiguous, illusive and diverse. William F. Pinar and William M. Reynolds explain the phenomenological position through the following metaphor.

"The firmament in the positivist sky twinkles with precision and rigor. However, the spaces between stars and those hidden by clouds recede and disappear. Phenomenology seeks to name those spaces, their relation to the stars and to us.

The unity of the epistemological whole resides in ourselves" (Pinar & Reynolds: 1992: 1-2).

For the phenomenologist, truth is not an observable fact, it is a subjective position that resides within the self. Heidegger, an early phenomenologist, critiqued positivism and similar theories on the basis that they give no account of the perceiving subject within a supposed objective world (Flew: 1984: 143).

Acknowledgement that it was a human subject who perceived the world and that each may perceive a single event differently lead to the conclusion that knowledge is subjective and is derived through individual experience.

The educational theories of Madeleine Grumet and Wanda May that I referred to in an earlier section may be understood as sited within the discourses of phenomenological theory. They claim that experience is the basis on which the curriculum of the classroom is built. A phenomenological perspective on the artist teacher acknowledges experience as a way of coming to know. Through teaching and learning art, and often being artists too, artist teachers come to know something about art education. This contrasts with a positivist perspective on the teaching of art which privileges policy documents as the primary means for developing curriculum, traditional canons of art knowledge (such as Hartt's version of *Renaissance Art* (1969)) and using discrete competency statements in the rationalised assessment of art products. The positivist vision of coming to know art depends on the teacher as the repository of the "correct" version of truth and their reproduction of these truths in the classroom. A phenomenological position allows

students to develop their own truths through the examples of their teachers.

Phenomenology validates difference and diversity.

"Feminist research has from its beginnings been preoccupied with the politics of knowing and being known. Openly ideological, most feminist research assumes that ways of knowing are inherently culture bound and that researcher values permeate inquiry" (Lather: 1992: 91).

Feminist theory also authenticates the role of experience. Recent feminist theory has asserted that it is impossible to separate out objective truth from subjectivity. Any attempt to do so can be regarded as an oppressive strategy for controlling what counts as legitimate knowledge (Pritchard Hughes: 1995). Feminist theory has developed in response to regimes that undermine the experiences of women and do not value them as valid forms of knowledge. It critiques the insistence that logic and science are privileged forms of knowledge. bell hooks is an African American feminist educator who has written about how she utilises both experiential knowledge and academic analysis. Although she presents subjectivity and experience as powerful bases for formulating theory and analysis, she also questions the essentialist practices that privileges experience as the most authentic way of knowing.

"In the classroom, I share as much as possible the need for critical thinkers to engage multiple locations to address diverse standpoints, to allow us to gather knowledge fully and inclusively. Sometimes, I tell students, it is like a recipe. I tell them to imagine we are baking bread that needs flour. And we have all the other ingredients but no flour. Suddenly, the flour becomes most important even

though it alone will not do. This is a way to think about experience..." (hooks: 1994: 91-2).

Conceiving knowledge as multiple and diverse allows practitioners to be recognised as having valuable contributions to make to art education theory. Although the dominant discourses of positivism have traditionally told us otherwise, contemporary critical theory presents experience as a valid way of knowing. But in this text I have made references to my concerns at how I originally universally ascribed the theories of the artist teacher to teachers who trained as artists first. By suggesting that their experiences were the basis for their pedagogy had I overlooked the possibilities of knowing through means other than direct experience? My engagement in theoretical analysis as well as my experiences as a learner and art teacher and my connections with other art teachers and learners have helped to make me knowing about art education. My multiple locations have formed my shifting perspectives. The parts of this text that represent my knowledge<sup>9</sup> are constructed from traces of my past experiences as well as my theories and the theories, experiences and words of others. Each time I re-read this text on my word-processor I alter its shape as experience and knowledge alters my understanding of what I have written. I have come to know through diverse ways.

Does knowing about art require artistic ways of knowing? An art educator who accepts that art knowledge is not a set of discrete facts may look for suitable ways

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<sup>9</sup>For explanations on what else this text may represent see the next section. It describes the poststructural subject who cannot completely know its own identity which is partially constructed by

to come to know about art in order to assist others to do the same. Clues to how this may be attempted can be found in contemporary postpositivist theory. Scientific method can be recognised as one strategy for knowing. Experience is another way of knowing. Through reflective practice art teachers may develop knowledge about art education and participate in art education discourses.

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the unconscious. As I can never completely know myself I also suggest that I can never know or claim to know the entirety of this text or what it represents.

## Who Knows?

*Discovering "Knowing About Art" as a site of contention within New Zealand art education leads me to an examination of knowing and being known (subject/object).*

If education is described by the market, as it has been suggested in recent policy initiatives of the New Zealand government, then education becomes a business. But even within the meanings of business, I believe that there are spaces for critical pedagogues to redefine an education beyond a notion of trade. Business can also mean "a task or duty", "a thing that is one's concern", "serious work or activity" or "a difficult matter" (OEED: 199). If the business of the artist teacher is a serious or difficult matter I can think of few things more serious and difficult or concerning than the business of knowledge. The artist teacher must cultivate an environment where the student 'comes to know' the processes and procedures of art and its practices. Grumet and May suggest that the student will 'come to know' mediated by the curriculum of the classroom (1993,1993). The artist teacher gives direction to the curriculum by drawing on her knowledge of art. But disagreement has occurred in New Zealand art education between describing differences between knowledge of art practice and knowledge of art theory. Since 1990 the content of the art curriculum in our schools has been officially directed by the Art Education syllabus. It states that; "the aim of art education is to enable students to learn to make artworks and to develop an understanding of the actions and relationships in cultures and society" (Department of Education: 1989: 6). Phil Pearson points to difficulties in achieving this aim when "...teachers and others in the field have consistently translated 'understanding the actions and relations of art in cultures and

in society' into 'knowing how to appreciate artworks'" (1998: 12). He suggests that the root of this tendency is a consistent misreading of the word "art" as "artwork".

I think the following excerpt from the conversation of my research participants reveals Pearson's claim that all practitioners have consistently misread the aim as rather suppositious. Yet the conversation appears to be referring to a similar practice the artist teachers have observed in some of their colleagues.

**I think the way we approach our teaching has also been influenced quite strongly by being at --- art school. Being. I notice it with --- and also going to teachers college here, that we teach in a similar sort of way. Whereas I think that um, some of the other art teachers who have been through other art schools or quite a while ago teach a wee bit, well their whole approach is a bit different.**

**Their philosophy is a bit different too isn't it?**

**Yeah definitely. It's quite interesting how you pointed out how --- teaches. In the junior school. It's almost like two opposing philosophies, well I mean, I guess the senior school he teaches photography and he teaches it quite a lot like --- ---. A lot of the students do documentary photography, but he does it and other stuff too. But you know they get top grades, a lot of the students and its all sort of contemporary and he's up with it. And the junior school, basically the art that I see some of his students producing is pretty much like I was doing at high school. Not really many artist models and...**

...no artist models.

Yeah. I remember too.

Yeah.

It's quite strange, how sort of not really.

He was quite traditional. In a way.

It's really only to do with the doing isn't it, the practical side. There's no sort of knowing about art...

Yeah.

...aspect to it. Like we are a lot more aware of...

I think I did that too much at the beginning when I was teaching this year. I think I kind of overdid it on the writing part. I'm surprised I didn't lose the kids all together. I still probably give, like I'm trying to hold back on the homework at the moment because I think I was...oh they did it, well, some of them did it, but um I was sort of handing out a lot of homework to core art kids which I don't know if they get that much from other art teachers.

Perhaps the problem that Pearson and the artist teachers (as they critically examine the practices of other art teachers) are referring to is a desire for what Henry Giroux terms "...a pedagogy of theory..." (1994: 116-7). Within this notion is an assumption that "...teachers have a responsibility to teach theory..." (ibid.). Pearson's criticism appears to be a concern that the syllabus aim has been severed. Misreading art as artwork has dislocated art theory from art practice and given a privileged space to the latter. By creating a curriculum of art practice, it may appear that Pearson's art teachers are obscuring the social and cultural relationships of which artwork making is merely one product. The result of such assumptions may be the perpetuation of notions of artistic talent, where a small minority of students are successful in school art courses. Yet Giroux proposes that accompanying a pedagogy of theory should be "...a pedagogy of theorizing..." (ibid.) and it is the second that requires teachers to create a pedagogical space for students to theorise. For the student within this type of environment, theory is not just something to know, it is also something to do. In the later section *Talking to Know* I investigate the possibility of theorising through discussion. At this point in the text I would also like to re-present the possibility of "theorising through art making" as another way of "coming to know". Under this rubric art teachers may create a pedagogy of theory and theorising through a curriculum of making. As I am endeavouring to use written reason and not art making to explain this, I request your patience as I search for my point.

"According to Bourdieu, the aesthete's 'disgust' toward the impure pleasures of the flesh is the means by which he or she ensures 'ethical superiority,' performing his or

her distance from the chaos of human corporeality and the stench of fully embodied desire" (Jones: 1994: 27-8). Amelia Jones critiques Pierre Bourdieu's sanitised aesthetics as a masculinist and oppressive objectification of embodied pleasure. She locates female pleasure in the body, and claims that the history of its refusal is a refusal of female agency (ibid.). Madeleine Grumet claims that women "...have kept silent for so long that now we have forgotten that knowledge from and about the body is also knowledge about the world" (Grumet: 1988: 4). Removing art making from art theorising may be read as a negation of the delights of feminine tactility and the privileging of the masculine purity of theory. Is Pearson promoting an art education that values abstract notions of the interrelations between art, culture and society above the physical pleasures of making? What implications does this have for the agency of the woman artist teacher and her female students? I suspect that within a male defined order of art education their female bodies may be regulated as they are subjected to the scientific gaze. They may become known rather than knowing.

"By the nineteenth century the female body had become the object of the scientific gaze and the 'truth' of woman's nature was asserted, backed up with hard evidence. Woman's relation to knowledge was restricted to her naturalized capacity for nurturance, she was assigned the place of the facilitator of knowledge as mother and as teacher, servicing the knower but distinct from and incapable of becoming the knower herself" (Martusewicz on Walkerdine: 1992: 152).

Georgia Collins argues that masculinising and feminising discourses of knowing are adopted within art education. Collins values the feminine discourses of creativity,

self-expression and enrichment within an art education yet she identifies a trend for masculine or scientific discourses to submerge the feminine (Collins: 1995). With the advent of standardised assessment, formal curriculum statements and greater emphasis on knowledge and technical skill art education may be read as a site of the conflictual paradigms of patriarchy. "Patriarchy...is constructed on the paradigmatic structure of subject/object, master/slave" (Martin: 1997: p61). In her paper *Patrilineage* Mira Schor explores how patriarchy has re-inscribed the genealogy of women artists as a patrilineage. In art history, criticism and review, the art works of women have been referenced to the history of male artists and their matrilineage eviscerated. "If women are denied access to their own past they always occur in history as exceptions, that is to say freaks...and they are forced to rediscover the same wheel over and over, always already losing their place in the growth of culture" (Schor: 1994: 56). This suggests that within the patriarchal paradigm of master/slave even the woman who achieves mastery may be objectified in the course of history.

"I have noticed that, repeatedly, in feminist work, theorists as diverse as Moira Gatens, Julia Kristeva and bell hooks assert that social change can only come about through a theory of the subject that is different from the subject of liberal humanism..." (Martin: 1997: 61). The suggestion here is that within feminism the supremacy of the liberal humanist (male) subject as the locus of meaning is under attack. Jacques Daignault refers to a similar attack from structuralism.

"Structuralism is right when it throws back into question the central position of the subject in humanism; and it is by insisting on the fact that the subject is symbolically determined, it succeeds in decentering it, indeed even dissolving it"

(Daignault: 1992: 208-9). Within the social sciences, a structuralist perspective declares that meaning resides in the structures and interrelationships of society (Flew: 1984: 341). In this light it can be seen that the critique of the child-centred approach by socially constructed theories of art education was part of a wider social movement. The policy initiatives in art education of the late 1980s, evident in the art syllabus and University Bursary Prescriptions, were directly related to the critique of the primacy of meaning residing in the self. Structuralism's project of decentring the subject enabled poststructuralist and feminist theorists to find new ways to reconstitute the subject which may have implications for a different art education.

Michel Foucault reconstitutes the subject as a site of power relations in a state of continuous struggle.

"There are two meanings to the word subject: subject to someone else by control and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjects and makes subject to" (Foucault: 1982: 212).

Foucault's subject shifts between knowing and being known. Henry Giroux claims that the poststructuralist subject has been drawn from Freud's theories of the unconscious. The subject can never be completely knowing because its "...self formation is never completely produced or revealed in consciousness" (Giroux: 1994: 113). Because rationality exists in consciousness, it can only ever be partially responsible for the actions and experiences of the subject. The subject is always more than the sum of its consciousness and experience.

According to Betsan Martin, Luce Irigaray presents "...significant theoretical and practical ways towards a different theory of subjectivities" (1997: 61).

"Rather than subject to object, she is proposing a paradigm of subject to subject relationality in which processes of objectification would be incorporated within subjectivity, rather than being projected on to the other. She regards this as a new balance and a call for a new consciousness" (Martin: 1997: 62).

At first, I found this statement abstrusely full of impenetrable subjects and objects, but with the assistance of my dictionary I think I am developing some meaning from it. The psychological meaning of "subject and object" is "...the ego or self and the non-ego; consciousness and that of which it is or may be conscious" (OEDD: 1441). Whether it was a deliberate intention of the Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary or not, I think the first of these definitions may be read as a subject to object paradigm but the second definition may be read as an objectification incorporated within subjectivity. The ego and the non-ego clearly refer to what is and what isn't the ego ('the one' and 'the other'). The second definition is more ambiguous. That which the consciousness may be aware of (or object) is predicated on being conscious (subjectivity). The object is constituted through subjectivity and is related to the subject rather than existing in opposition to or outside of it. A subject to subject paradigm within art education may engage a relational notion of doing and knowing (i.e. knowing through doing and doing through knowing) rather than an oppositional one (knowing/doing).

Before I return to the woman artist teacher and her female students theorising through art making, I want to locate myself and this text within notions of a new subjectivity. (I need some justification for continuing to write within the traditions of the master narratives.) According to Schor's patrilineage and Irigaray's new subjectivity, women who participate in the binary paradigms of patriarchy are perpetuating the objectification of women. Women are 'the other' to men's norm. Women are known in relation to the history, knowledge and truths of men. Does this text perpetuate the dominant male order? It questions the dominance of science although it makes use of its form. It locates itself in the history of women's words although it also references itself to the masters (Nietzsche, Foucault, Friere, Gramsci). It makes visible irrational forms of theorising although it employs reason as a justification for this. Rebecca Martusewicz claims that these types of contradictions are part of what it means to be a woman who knows. The project of post-modern feminism is to make spaces in the fabric of patriarchy for the voices of feminist critique. This involves sitting in a constant position of tension between perpetuating the existing order and proposing new possibilities (Martusewicz: 1992: 155). After all, Schor and Irigaray both rent spaces in the existing order in which to develop their critiques.

It was in the dominant discourses of child development theories that Valerie Walkerdine made spaces for her feminist critique. She revealed how girl children have been constructed as inferior learners through the discourses of child-centred curricula (Walkerdine: 1985). Perhaps a child-centred art education could be seen as a supreme example of the construction of girls as known. It focuses on the child as the active creator of his own world, legitimising its practice through the

examples of the historical great masters. Girls and women are passive objects of desire, whose images have been reconstructed under the gaze of master painters and sculptors. Yet it is also within socially constructed theories of art that woman artist teachers and their female students have failed to attain subjecthood. In decentring the self, the possibilities of body-centred female pleasure have been negated. And in promoting a theoretical over an embodied notion of art, woman's capacity for knowing has been regulated and diminished.

I have already suggested that within dominant discourses of theory women may create spaces to challenge existing orders and extend its possibilities. Irigaray claims that women have no compunction to work to the rules of theory as they have been constructed outside of its boundaries. "Because in relation to the working of theory, the/a woman fulfils a twofold function - as the mute outside that sustains all systematicity; as a maternal and still silent ground that nourishes all foundations - she does not have to conform to the codes that theory has set up for itself" (Irigaray: 1991: 8). There are openings for the agency of those who are overlooked by the hegemony of theory. Although theorists such as Irigaray claim that participating in patriarchy is merely serving its ends, perhaps by finding these types of openings in existing orders, the woman artist teacher can make spaces for the agency of her female students? And within these spaces develop new possibilities for art education?

Jacques Daignault claims that;

"the individual is, in fact, the meeting between an I that is cracked and a Me that is dissolved....Shall we lay bets that the crack and the dissolution within the subject together define the sensuality of sense? That leads to an aesthetics that problematizes the subject instead of excluding it or placing it in the center, aesthetics that does not exclude emotion without reducing everything to it either" (1992: 209).

Daignault's aesthetics appeals to me as an aesthetics that can include a multitude of spaces and a multitude of pleasures. He appears to leave aesthetics open enough for me to imagine what it may constitute. If its sense is derived from sensuality, then I imagine that his aesthetics is able to concede to an embodied notion of art education. Within its terrain the artist teacher may construct a pedagogy of theorising which engages her students in coming to know a philosophy of the beautiful through the corporeality of art making. But Daignault's aesthetics is an ideal that is not inscribed into existing policy or practice. It is an ideal that may not be of practical use to the artist teacher as she attempts to bring her students of today into critical consciousness.

## Talking to Know

*Theorising through discussion, conversation as a way of "coming to know" and talk's relationship to openly ideological research.*

Elsewhere I have suggested that conversation is an integral part of art education theory and practice. Art education theory and research does not have a visible public face in New Zealand (Barry and Townsend 1995, Mansfield 1995). Art educators are reluctant to participate in the written records of academic debate such as journals and other non-fiction publications. I have previously hypothesised that as art is a visual rather than verbal discipline, theory exists but is developed and communicated through unconventional means.

"... the debates, critical investigations and politicking surrounding art education are not absent. They are just invisible. On a formal level art teachers' associations and professional organisations are the centres of the critical commentary of art education policy and revelations of experiences in classroom practice. Written records are made in the form of meeting minutes or occasional handouts but are rarely rationalised into official public records. On an informal level, social gatherings of art teachers often focus on the interactions between the disciplines of art and art education. They are events where the main topics of conversation are professional gossip, imparted wisdom and personal experience" (Boyask: 1999: 8).

Similarities may be drawn between the oral practices of art teachers and the words of women. In the traditions of many cultures, women's words have been spoken outside of the public domain, but even these private voices have been denigrated within the dominant male order. "The term 'romantic fiction' is used in much the

same way to designate the printed word of women as 'gossip' is used to designate the spoken word of women" (Spender: 1996). Dale Spender associates gossip, conversation and informal chat with the history of women's words. Since the beginning of the women's movement in the 1960s feminism has promoted conversation as a significant means of political analysis through consciousness-raising groups. "Consciousness-raising is achieved by a small group of women through their discussion of intimate personal experiences, and by revealing the universal and political nature of those experiences" (James: 1982: 235). Feminist scholars have attempted to rediscover and revalue the words of women that have been communicated through oral rather than written records. Researchers such as Melanie Tebbutt and Jennifer Coates reclaim these terms as valid areas of investigation as they reveal the often obscured history of women (Tebbutt: 1995, Coates: 1996). The traditions of feminist analysis reminds me not to overlook the informal aspects of the oral traditions of art educators. Consequently, when I refer to conversation (and use the informality of its language) in the course of this text, I am positioning the notion of conversation as a valuable site of theorising that has been obscured by the discourses of rational debate. Conversation is regarded as a marginalised form of talk yet it can also be included within a notion of "discussion" which in rationalism may be a more acceptable form of theoretical analysis.

David Bridges examines the potential of discussion as a site of learning and contemplation. In his book Education, Democracy and Discussion Bridges lists a range of competencies that are developed through talk. He claims that the most significant of these is the ability to improvise "...linguistic expression in response to a constantly and rapidly changing state of argument and to a social climate of subtle

and shifting moods" (1979: 28-29). To keep up with and contribute to the intricacy and unpredictability of a discussion requires complex cognitive skills. A discussion is an entity that may shift from gossip to oration to instruction. Bridges suggests that thought and talk are intricately interrelated and that not only is complex thought a requirement of complex talk, but also vice versa. He quotes the author E.M. Forster "How can I know what I think until I hear what I say" (ibid.: 28).

Bridges does not examine the relationships between language and gender, but by using the term discussion rather than conversation is he validating a tradition of oral theorising? I suspect that Spender would suggest that within the dominant male order, women gossip while men discuss, yet in its dictionary definition "discussion" refers to a more inclusive notion of "talking to know". Conversation refers only to an "...informal exchange of ideas by spoken words" (OED: 318). Discussion encapsulates not only the sentiments of conversation but also "...an examination by argument, written or spoken" (ibid.: 411). Within a notion of theorising through discussion, both writing and speaking, formally and informally may be portrayed as ways of knowing.

Other merits of "talking to know" are pointed to by Morry Van Ments in the book Active Talk (1990). He discusses the history of communication in terms of the written and spoken word. With the development of printing in fifteenth century Europe, writing radically altered the culture with a shift away from two-way communication. It has only been with the advent of mass communication that oral communication has again had some prominence in societies dominated by western traditions. New technologies such as the Internet are adapting to recreate the

advantages of two-way forms of communication. Two-way communication "...offers the chance of correcting misunderstandings, using the expressive power of the voice, following up individual needs, establishing rapport and ensuring that the speaker conveys the full sense of what he or she wants to say, and that those who listen gain all the knowledge and information they need at that particular moment" (ibid.: 13). Oral communication as described by Van Ments may be read as a pragmatic mode of theorising. It occurs with regard to the practical needs of its participants, either to impart or deliver information. He is more concerned with the content of discussion rather than the educative or conceptual potential of its form but when the form of small group discussion is examined it has often been depicted as a manifestation of democracy (Lasker: 1949, Bridges: 1979).

"Participation is part of a process of political and moral education. It is an education in responsibility which can only be developed by wielding it" (Parry as cited in Bridges 1979: 159).

It is not just the content of group discussion that elicits learning. Participation in the processes of discussion may itself achieve educational goals. For example, participating in a decision-making group may educate and initiate members into a democratic way of life (ibid.: 159-162). Sharon Rich suggests that it is often the informal or spontaneously arisen teacher groups that have a greater chance of effecting the professional growth of its members. She maintains that groups created and driven externally (e.g. by school districts), rather than by the teachers themselves, have a significantly lessened chance of providing an environment where individuals may reflect on their own practice or collectively work towards

furthering their profession. "The ability of the group to succeed seems to depend primarily on the ability of the members to maintain a balance (between professional, practical help and personal support) and thwart the tendency to institutionalization" (Rich: 1995: 21, parentheses added). The thwarting of institutionalisation may be represented by the conversation or social aspect of the group. In his book Learning in Groups David Jacques claims that "most groups need the social dimension to provide emotional involvement, morale, interest and loyalty..." (1994: 34). He suggests that participation is predicated on some form of pleasurable reward.

The concept of a theorising through discussion is not only a way of describing the oral traditions of art teachers it may also be deliberately employed as a strategy for educational transformation. Patti Lather has claimed that the validity of research that is openly ideological may be determined by its "catalytic validity". This refers to "...the degree to which the research process re-orientes, focuses, and energises participants in what Friere called 'conscientisation', knowing reality in order to...transform it" (Lather: 1986: 67). A subjective and reflective researcher may engage the site of research as a means of raising the critical consciousness of herself and her participants. Critical consciousness includes full awareness and critique of the structures and ideologies that cause oppression. Full conscientisation cannot occur through intellectual endeavour alone. It is brought about by a combination of theory and action (or praxis) and dialogue with others (Elias & Merriam: 1980: 151). In his notion of conscientisation, Friere drew on the theories of Antonio Gramsci. His term "organic intellectual" is "...one whose philosophy emerges from an understanding of the common sense world and the historical and economic

forces which have shaped it" (Weiler: 1988: 15). The organic intellectual is one who has "come to know" through experience and critical analysis. It is within this genealogy that I have positioned my research on the artist teacher. I have claimed that the oral practices of art teachers constitute a theorising through discussion. Theorising through discussion is a means of professional development and also has potential for pedagogical practice. The artist teacher may adopt discussion or conversation as the form for a pedagogy of theorising in her classroom.

In the following sections of this text I locate the conversations of a group of women art teachers as a potential site of conscientisation as I prepare to look for flashes of meaning in the confusion of the conversation. Will they reflect their understanding of the 'historical and economic' forces which have shaped their world? Will they reveal moments of conscientisation in the curriculum of their art rooms?

## Women Teach and Learn Art

### The Conversation

*Describing the form of the conversation and talking about how I have come to use parts of the conversation as representations of the knowing-woman-artist-teacher.*

Art is the basis for my expertise in education and it is the value of an art education that engages my interest in educational research. I have a persistent belief that how I have to "come to know" is worth knowing by others. The theoretical artist teacher recreates her own understanding of art in the classroom in order to model this process for her students. My original intention for this research project was to examine the relationships between the experiences and classroom curricula of real artist teachers through their conversations (I have already referred to the conversations of art teachers as an alternative (or pragmatic) form of theorising). I developed the following research questions as the focal point for the conversations of the research participants and to structure my reading.

- What are the experiences of art teachers that impact on their art and teaching practices?
- How do the experiences of artist/teachers manifest in the pedagogy and curriculum of their classrooms?

Although it is not explicit in these questions, I had already committed myself to investigating the experiences of "women" artist teachers. My initial reasons for this

were included in my proposal. "As this is research indebted to feminist theory and the work of woman art educators it will centre on the knowledge and practices of women art teachers,"<sup>10</sup> although there are other ways of reading the focus of my research on the experience of women. The feminist theories of Luce Irigaray propose that women who participate in the social structures of patriarchy are perpetuating the objectification of women. She suggests that relationships between women are a means to attain a subjectivity that is different from the subjectivity of men within the patriarchy. "Irigaray argues not only for subjectivity for women; this is subjectivity that is specific to women"(Martin: 1997: 60-1). Within this framework, if the "I" of this text claims to be a knowing subject, "I" must operate outside of the male defined order.<sup>11</sup> "I" must find its meanings in its relationships with the words of women.

I had also expressed an interest in investigating the differences between the practices of artist teachers. To achieve this I proposed to include women of varying years of teaching experience and age. Yet this was not what ultimately occurred. When I spoke to my first potential participant she told me that she had recently talked with some colleagues about forming a discussion group of art teachers. She

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<sup>10</sup> This quote has come from the proposal for this dissertation submitted to the Department of Education, University of Canterbury, March 1998

<sup>11</sup> I wondered how this sentence would work if a male reader was identifying with the "I" of the text and whether this would re-place the "I" within the male defined order. But Irigaray is proposing a complete shift in the relations between subjects. She proposes that in "...an economy of exchange across differences, men's subjectivity would change, as would the subjectivity of women. The difference that would characterise women and men would be based on radical alterity (radical difference), not 'otherness'." (Martin:1997:62) Does this mean that within such an economy a male reader would not be able to objectify moments where the "I" betrays its femininity?

suggested a number of women who had already expressed an interest in meeting. Eager to relinquish some of my power as researcher I approached her suggested candidates and also one other to whom I had already mentioned the project. It may not have been apparent to me at the time, but rather than being varied in age and experience, the five women who met on the first Sunday afternoon were in their mid 20s - early 30s and had between 6 months - 2 years teaching experience. They had also attended the same tertiary art school and teachers' training course. These similarities may have made it easier to hide the essentialism inherent in my theories about artist teachers.

After two sessions (and two transcriptions) I was looking in my collected data for proof that the research participants made art out of the curriculum of their classrooms and drew from their experiences for exemplars of ideal art practice (as suggested by May and Grumet). Despite my claims to the contrary I had deliberately directed the conversation towards these ends. Prior to the second session I asked the participants to reflect on the two following questions;

- How do reflections on our own experiences of art and art education shape our pedagogy and curriculum?
- If understanding in art is a wider issue than merely being able to make art works then can art teachers be said to be artists?

I now think that rather than examine the relationships between experience and curriculum, whether deliberate or otherwise, I had orchestrated an environment

where I would find agreement with my reflections on the artist teacher. That is, the artist teacher is self reflective, draws from her own experience to model art practice for her students and uses the values of art to develop the pedagogy and curriculum of her classroom. On examining the transcriptions, I was disappointed to find only qualified agreement with these assumptions. I felt that throughout the conversation the participants often looked to me for guidance and tried to provide me with the answers I was looking for.

At first this was not a comfortable realisation for a feminist researcher attempting to engage an environment of conscientisation. In expecting the start of my journey to logically lead to its conclusion, I had not questioned my assumptions carefully enough. Attempting to impose an order on the chaos of my research made it difficult to uncover meaning in its conversations. After some consideration I decided that there may be a relationship between encountering my assumptions as a researcher and what may be problematic in the universal application of theories on the "artist teacher".

At the start of this project finding my experiences reflected in the words of others had made me knowing. My association with the university and position as researcher had also made me knowing. And these associations engaged me in discourses of reason and authority. I see similarities between my case and the difficulties Janet Miller encountered in the development of an informal discussion group. She was the only university teacher among a group of her former students who intended to explore together issues of curriculum theory and qualitative research. Prepared to shed her "...role as a professor and to assume membership

within this group as a peer" she overlooked the significance of photocopying articles on teacher research for the first meeting. It was not until they first sat down together that she encountered her own assumptions.

"Within liberatory and feminist conceptions of curriculum, pedagogy, and research that we had studied together, for example, the notion of professor as 'expert', as the one who created and disseminated knowledge to others, was viewed as impositional and oppressive. And yet, as the silence continued, I realized that I *had* settled into my seat as the professor, still assuming responsibility for setting the directions and intentions of this fledgling group" (Miller: 1992: 246).

In my case, knowledge had blinded my capacity to render my experiences visible as examples rather than truths. What other assumptions still remain invisible to me in the course of this text? Do you see them? The artist teacher may also be unaware of all assumptions and authoritative knowledge that are determining the curriculum of her classroom. She may be unaware of where all of the discourses of her classroom may have come from. And maybe, like me, she will decide that much of the curriculum of her classroom occurs fortuitously and chaotically, both related to and sometimes unconnected from her experiences. Right now (writing now?), I believe that I am more than the sum of my experiences.

Left with transcriptions full of blind alleys, contradictions and occasional collusions I was unsure how to continue with my journey. How could I continue to relate the conversation with the artist teacher? I understood my research as the principal function of the group and I interpreted the conversation as a site of struggle where

my direction was a form of coercion and its deviations were resistance. This reading appeared to be eminently incompatible with my feminist and liberatory aspirations for the artist teacher or subjective participant researcher. Yet on self reflection I could not deny that there were other agendas being pursued within the conversation despite instances where the other participants said things like,

**I suppose we better talk about experiences and teaching and stuff.**

These interjections were made because they realised they were off task. They were resisting my “coercion”. For example, during the second conversation a considerable period of time was devoted to issues of classroom management which is data I have found no use for but may have had particular meaning and significance for the others.

But it is my associations with the university and my position as a researcher that has empowered me to authoritatively and physically describe the events in a way that could never be reciprocated by any of the other participants. I have the power to make my version of events the correct version. I am beginning to see a way forward and it is related to the "I" of the text.

Miller claimed that she "...truly wanted to research *with* these teachers, and not about them..." (ibid.: 247). Constrained by the time requirements of EDUC 695, I think it is too late for me to make researching with (not about) these women a significant part of this text (although I will make some reference to its possibilities in a later section). This is why the conversation, which should have had the primary

position, takes second place behind theory as a means of analysis in this text. What I will attempt is to make visible some of the ways in which I constructed and now wish to re-present the conversations of my teacher participants. I have previously made claims for subjecthood, I am now revealing myself as the possessor of the Eye/I. "Possessing the Eye/I provides one with the power of critical thinking and looking, i.e. mastery and excellence. This Eye/I has many other names - the military disciplinary eye, the panoptic eye, the eye of critical reason, the rational eye" (Jagodzinski: 1997: 85). Under this masterful and authoritative gaze, the conversation may reveal insights not about the artist teacher as an essential category but as a representation of my (m/eye?) interpretation of the text. Artist, teacher, knowing and woman are representations of identity that are shaped by the discourses that surround them. The inclusion of a dash between categories represents the shifts in identity that may occur when one aspect is adopted, rejected, unrecognised or re-fabricated. The "Eye-I" of the text is also a shifting identity. At this point in the text the "Eye-I" may refer to a knowing-woman who, excluded from subjecthood within the patriarchy, now makes a claim for her own subjectivity **and** authenticates constructions of the artist-teacher within the dominant discourses of scientific rationalism. Eye-I am a knowing-woman-artist-teacher and Eye-I have the power of reason.

"Thus, while the educated woman is historically born of the master narratives, she also embodies a tension of resistance and possibility....to live as a feminist educator is to live a tension between a critical theoretical space and an affirmative political space" (Martusewicz: 1992: 155).

Can I make use of the power of reason for emancipatory ends? Having claimed that art educators use discussion as a way of coming to know, can Eye-I re-present sections of their conversations as a way of revealing an invisible theorising through discussion? Can Eye-I authenticate their theorising by association with the rationality of this text?

## Constructions of the Artist -Teacher

*This section is an example of how Eye-I try to authenticate theorising through discussion. Starting from my direction, a representation of the artist-teacher is constructed through conversation.*

Now? Well the other thing that I've sort of been vaguely interested in is um, this other thing. "If understanding in art is a wider issue than merely being able to make art works, then can art teachers be said to be artists?" Well what I mean there is, do you have to, like when we were talking about, last time, whether you were actually practising art and like just about everyone said 'no' because they didn't have time. I mean are we still artists? Like I feel like a lot of the stuff that I do is part of being an artist and one of those things is teaching. And when I'm teaching it's almost the same process as when I'm making art somehow.

Uhm.

And its the same, the same with other things. Like I collect bits of crappy china and I think of that as an extension of my interest in art and I think that the way that I bring curriculum into the classroom and bring in certain artists and why I like certain artists and appreciate certain artworks is all tied into me as an artist and my experience of art. So can an art teacher who doesn't actually make art works be an artist?

That's a hard one.

I suppose that at some point if you've been making works, I mean do you stop being an artist and then start being one again? In those in between stages when you're actually not practically making something.

I think the thing with art is, I make a little bit of art now, a tiny bit, but even when, you're doing art all the time in the way that I teach and --- teaches in that we do exemplars and do little diagrams on handouts and things so that everything you do is art but it's just a different kind of art.

You probably are still an artist. I mean you think how much we draw and think about art, I mean if you divided up your day into "how often have I thought about art today?" either in a teaching way or a um...

That's true.

...you know. It'd be like every fifteen minutes you'd think some sort of art related thought. That normal people wouldn't do. But you know what I mean. It might be in the most abstract sense but I remember --- saying once that, you know, people were saying "how could you handle being a maths teacher for 20 years and still keep in touch with outside life?" and um she said that the main difference is maths teachers and science teachers don't live maths but art teachers generally do live art.

Uhm. I agree with that. You do think of it all the time, because you have to think so much. You don't have text books in front of you saying turn to page, chapter number 19, exercise 8. Blah blah blah. Because a lot of people just built it up for them. Just give it to them like that. Whereas in art, the art teacher has to think of all the projects to do and do it themselves and make sure it works and stuff like that. So you're always thinking, always thinking a lot harder.

Yeah. I think its true too that it manifests itself in different ways. Like you were saying about collecting china and stuff like that. I feel like that like in my home, you know the way you arrange things, that's sort of part of the way you are as an artist in a way.

You see things differently. Yeah. The world is slightly slanted.

I think it is. I've been looking at your row of wine glasses and sort of fitting them into a cube formation for the last half an hour. They're so neatly stacked like that. And I think you sort of visually amuse yourself a lot of the time. You wonder what else other people do. Because I sit there a lot of the time looking at things going... (tilts her head)

I suppose you're right. I was looking at the piles of plates going...thinking...round, round.

And the textures of things are always interesting and reflections...

I was quite interested at the start of the year when we had that, we had a painting course for two days, bursary painting course and --- --- took part of it and we started doing this drawing just like we did at art school of a huge big still life and he said to me "Oh have you done quite a bit of work?" And I said "Oh, no." And it, he must have seen, oh I mean I don't know how perceptive he is or whether it actually meant anything, but he seemed to think my drawing had improved since I left art school. So that, that was quite interesting considering that I hadn't really done a lot of drawing as such. Although I probably have done quite a bit just with bits and pieces. On the board, handouts.

Remember how we were trying to draw those chairs on the whiteboard, using the right perspective. We found it really difficult.

It took ages.

Even, I found I did a lot of stuff in my brain, like just unpicking pictures and the way pictures were put together in order to explain them. Just sort of drawing in my head. Like with Diebenkorn and Giacometti I always like turned the page, but when I started to look into them and understand what all those lines were about and lines over the top of each other and things and it actually, yeah, assisted my understanding of their work at the same time I was helping students to understand what they were about too.

**It's terrible, I had, this will amuse you, I had a nightmare about kowhaiwhai on Friday night. In the middle of the night I couldn't get kowhaiwhai panels and kowhaiwhai workbook pages out of my head, it was just all in front of me. It was just terrible. It sort of borders on an obsession sometimes.**

## A Moral Art Education

*In this section Eye-I intervene in the conversation to reveal a shifting positionality of the artist-teacher. The artist-teacher struggles between collusion and critique of the values of a school art education and the values of the Fine Arts.*

In 1968 Maxine Greene suggested that the prevalent interest in developing an aesthetics of education was to counteract the threat of a technologically or vocationally driven education (1971: 555). As I have suggested earlier, in many western nations including New Zealand there has been a visible policy shift towards skill based education since the late 1980s. Education has been judged as valuable based on its ability to produce measurable results. Recent policy documents emphasise the student/employer relationship (Ministry of Education: 1997) and commentators claim that our educational policies reflect a change in values from liberal humanism to neo-liberalism (Codd: 1995, Mansfield: 1995b). Within the discourses of education, the promotion of an aesthetic education has continued to be promoted as an alternative to current policy initiatives. Can the theories of Wanda May and Madeleine Grumet on the artist teacher<sup>12</sup> be read as an alternative to the vocational trainer?

Grumet is not a visual art specialist and in her paper *The Play of Meanings in the Art of Teaching* she proposes that teaching itself (rather than just art teaching) can be an art. She is describing teaching through the practices, theories and values of art (1993). Some sense of these values can be obtained from the aim and objectives of

the current New Zealand art syllabus that were constructed with reference to both the international discourses of art education and the culturescape of New Zealand society. They have little emphasis on vocation and instead advocate an education for school students that will "...enrich their sensory, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual awareness..." or help them to "...understand the significance of art in their own culture..." (Ministry of Education: 1990: 6). As I re-read the objectives it appears that many of them prescribe lessons on morality and it makes the following comment from Maxine Greene seem quite pertinent. "It seems to us that those who see the teaching act as analogous to artistic "making" somehow assume that artists are peculiarly moral and joyful people, exerting a primarily beneficent influence upon the world and their fellow men (sic)" (1971: 556-7). Focusing on experience, understanding and enrichment, the art education encapsulated in notions of the "artistic" teacher appears to promote a liberal humanist morality. It is subject-centred. Janet Mansfield claims that art education in a neo-liberal environment is market-centred rather than subject-centred (Mansfield: 1995b: 68). Is the moral code of art education in the art syllabus incompatible with the morality of a market-centred education system?

Through an examination of the syllabus objectives, art education in New Zealand schools could be said to promote a moral enrichment that is incompatible with an outcome driven education system. The complexity of these objectives means that their results are unmeasurable. It may also be hard to draw direct links between the achievement of the objectives and vocational skill. When art is equated with

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<sup>12</sup>See section on *Artist Teacher Roles*.

humanist morality, its values are difficult to fit within a means end rationality and this may be why art teachers are currently perceiving themselves and their subject as under threat. In an earlier section I have made reference to links between the school subject of art and discourses of gender. The school subject of art may be seen as a site of an oscillating relationship between masculinising and feminising discourses, but when compared with the discipline of art<sup>13</sup> a stronger relationship with the feminine may be attributed to the school subject. The values of New Zealand art education may betray similarly gendered relations as they sit in tension with the dominant discourses of the market in the syllabus or make some concessions for them in the July 1998 Draft of The Arts Curriculum Statement<sup>14</sup> (Ministry of Education: 1990, Arts Curriculum Development: 1998).

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<sup>13</sup>Within this text I associate the discipline of art, the art school and the Fine Arts with the similar moral values of intellectualism and cultural imperialism of the University. In the following quote Dennis Atkinson describes how the discourses of the University structure and position learners. "Under the gaze of this discourse pupils are subject to specific practices and bodies of knowledge which position pupils as subjects within particular curriculum discourses. Pupils are woven into specific curriculum practices through 'master signifiers' and their discourses which structure pupil subjectivities, in terms, for example, of ability." (1998:39) For my purposes I have re-written this quote with pupil as artist, curriculum as art and the university as the master signifier.

<sup>14</sup><sup>14</sup>An example of this can be seen in how the two documents both address the reasons why people (students) make art. The *Sources of Motivation* section of the syllabus refers only to sources of motivation that enhance personal development (art as personal enrichment). (Ministry of Education: 1990:8) The Draft curriculum statement claims that motivation may arise through either personal experience or a brief, revealing a relationship between art making and industry. (Arts Curriculum Development: 1998)

I have claimed that the current values of art education sit uncomfortably within the current environment of neo-liberalism in education. Yet as I concluded in *Searching for Pleasure* in New Zealand secondary art education there are;

"...spaces between the discourses of accountable outcomes and the market. The art syllabus promotes 'knowing' through 'doing' and offers potential for students to explore the existing practices of art through their own investigations and develop their own meanings. The University Bursary Practical Art exam prescriptions contain contradictions that promote drawing as an exploratory tool and learning process as course content despite their focus on outcomes. There are resistances in art education policy and practice where Jones's (1994) sensual and chaotic pleasures can be incorporated into art education" (Boyask: 1999: 25).

In the above mentioned paper I also claimed that art education had adopted the semblance of rationality to maintain its status, and consequently funding and resourcing in secondary schools. R.S. Peters suggested that within societies founded on western democratic principles, that the adoption of rationality as the basis for moral education was a middle path between romantic protest and the constraints of traditionalism. Purposefully using reason (as Eye-I does as she writes this text) one may choose to accept or reject established moral codes (1973: 140-1). "For science and a more rational universalistic type of morality gradually emerged precisely because social change, economic expansion and conquest led to a clash of codes and conflict between competing views of the world" (ibid.: 143). Peters seeks a consensus of what should constitute a moral education by dividing the form and content of morality. He points out some of the fundamental principles that underlie

a rational version of morality<sup>15</sup> including; "...consider people's interests...", "...the settling of issues on relevant grounds - i.e. the banning of arbitrariness...", "...people should tell the truth..." and there should be a preference for freedom of speech and action. These principles do not...

"...provide any detailed content to the moral life. Rather they supply a form for the moral consciousness; they sensitize us to what is relevant when we think about what is right and wrong" (Peters: 1973: 143-4).

Within the conversation I have found frequent instances where the artist-teacher reflects on the rights and wrongs of art education. These moments appear to be shifting positions that are sometimes consciously constructed through experience and/or analytical thinking and are at other times unreflective assumptions. Adapting Peters's division of morality, I propose that when contemplating the values of art education they can be examined as a relationship between form and content. I have already identified the current art syllabus as a site that provides the form of an art education not the content. "Rather than identify particular issues for art education content the syllabus's main intent is to inform teachers about the types of content and learning outcomes that should be found in an art programme" (Boyask: 1999: 16). In schools the examination prescriptions are also sites which determine the form of an art education. I will now describe the significant role pedagogy plays in determining the form of an art education and the values it instils. I have looked for moments where the values of an art education have been insinuated in the pedagogic gaze of the artist-teacher as represented in the conversation.

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<sup>15</sup>Peters claims that he is able to do this because rationalism is a theory of universalisms.

Within the conversation there were frequent moments which illustrated a conflict of values between the pedagogy of artist-teachers and artist-tutors.

**I don't know why it has to be like that at art school. Like in schools when, you know as a teacher you don't, you try hard to treat all students equally, don't you. But when you're at art school it is as if they, they aren't ashamed about the ones that, the people they like more than others.**

The artist-teacher represents her pedagogy as equitable. Whereas the art school and its values is frequently characterised as unfair and unfriendly, particularly to women. The conversation reflected this with several references to male tutors and their predominance at art school.

**Like, I actually found them, some of those male tutors very unapproachable to speak to about my art. And you wonder how different it could have been if you had female tutors?**

However, the art school also appears to be an environment where women feel compelled to examine how they have been constructed through their gender. My time at art school was the first time I addressed issues regarding gender in any deliberate way. I have recognised this as a common experience of many women involved in art. The following excerpt represents a woman-artist who had engaged in finding meaning (coming to know) from the work of maori women artists. After

being ignored by her male tutors, she was finally supported in her endeavours by a female tutor.

**Because like when I talked to --- because she was a female she accepted, I was looking at maori women and I had a wee talk with her and she was like the first person there who said "Yeah, go for it. Go and do it. Interesting." Sort of support there and I felt reassured and sort of like great, basically my experience does exist...**

It seems there are spaces where women can and do find pleasure within the institutions of Fine Arts, yet I have already suggested that this is more probable within an environment that focuses on learning more than on assessment and engages bodily pleasures as well as the intellect (Boyask: 1999). I find it difficult to imagine that the dominant values of art school would not include the rationality and intellectualism of the university which houses it. And when the conversation claimed that after art school,

**...nearly everyone I've talked to feels bad about their time there,**

...it may have reflected a difference in values between the art school and the women-artist-teachers who attended it. But I do not want notions of a gendered morality left unproblematically. To assert that the values of art cherished by woman-artist-teachers are entirely different from those of the masculinised art school may merely be constructing a romantic fiction. The artist identity in the woman-artist-teacher became knowing through the discourses of the art school. In

the conversation, the knowledge of woman-artist-teachers colludes with notions about the production of a particular type of artist. We discuss teaching perspectival projection as a primary means of drawing, without questioning its associations with the dominant discourses of western art.

Dennis Atkinson claims that "...pupils' drawing ability is not a natural state, but is a product of the pedagogic gaze which is constituted within particular sites of discursive practice" (1998: 28). He offers examples of how drawers are constructed within the discourses of the western tradition of vision and art. His teachers are unreflective of their assumptions about the relationships between drawing and the (factually) seen. I have read similar assumptions about visual representation as the basis of a successful art education in the conversation of the artist-teachers.

**And I mean, sure you sort of have a huge number, hundreds and hundreds of paintings, of A4 paintings, um that all look exactly the same. They um, I think if that was done then I mean they can build on that base knowledge of how to use, you know, how to control paint and how to make a successful basic composition. You know. Whereas you get kids in fifth form that don't even know what horizon line is and that.**

Although unlike Atkinson's teachers, as this pedagogic gaze searches for moments of collusion with the discourses of visual representation, it is aware that ability is predicated on knowing (and teaching) the right codes rather than innateness.

Like when you're helping kids with observational drawing and they're looking at something, like those boxes we're getting them to draw at the moment. Some of them will be sitting on the floor and they'll be looking at the box and they keep trying to draw the side of the box but they're drawing it, the diagonal lines going maybe up to an eye level viewpoint when it's actually a lot lower because they're looking at it from a lot lower down and once you can figure that out from the start then they can actually draw the whole thing better. But I wouldn't have known that before this year. I'd have just sort of said well yeah it looks kind of strange doesn't it but just try and make it look a bit more realistic, whereas now there's actually some sort of overall principle to get things to look right.

The artist-teacher may become knowing through teaching as she realises that what was previously considered natural, is made up of a set of learnable rules. Was this moment of recognition of the regulation of the artist-teacher's practice, resistance to the universalising discourses of visual representation? Through recognising the social construction of the rules of perspectival projection I believe I can claim that this moment at least part way represents Dennis Atkinson's ideal of an art teacher.

"Art teachers have the difficult task of responding to the personal power of pupil's drawing practices while initiating pupils into the socially-constructed traditions of curriculum practices and techniques. Concentrating on the latter can operate a closure whereby the former is underplayed or even pathologized" (Atkinson: 1998: 40).

In the next two excerpts, the conversation reflects moments where regulation that may potentially "pathologize" the experience of students, is perceptibly recognised and critiqued. The knowing-woman-artist-teacher is represented through a critical awareness of the discourses that authorise pedagogical and curriculum practice. She has named them Modernist.

**That whole seventh form year though, the bursary subject, it's all based on modernist practice isn't it, and one thing I do find frustrating at times is that kids can't really bring in their own experiences as much as they could at, say like at a later level, like at art school or whatever.**

It appears that the art school that was reproved for its exclusive and oppressive pedagogy in one part of the conversation is also valued for the inclusiveness of its pluralist curriculum in another. The knowing-woman-artist-teacher points to the regulation of the Bursary Prescription within Modernism as a constraint for developing an inclusive curriculum. Can alternative ways of developing curriculum be explored within the regulation of the University Bursary prescription?

**Well I had a situation a few weeks ago where I had a, I've got a girl in my 7th form class and she was saying well I find it really difficult to relate to this work that I'm doing. I want to do something that's more personal. And she'd had a lot of um, she'd been thinking about it a lot and said that she really wanted to do something to do with her brother who committed suicide a couple of years ago.**

And my first reaction was like "oh no! you've got to keep right away from that."

Is this 7th form?

Yeah. And I had a chat to you about it and some other teachers and I actually worked out that it was possible to do that within the formal modernist structure. You can sort of combine the two

You can, yeah. Especially in photography you really can deal with social issues.

Yeah but it's actually, it is quite hard to find a way of doing it I think.

Especially in painting. I'd find it, I wouldn't know how to...

How's --- going. I sort of saw from a distance what she was doing.

She's done, yeah she's done some quite good work. She's sort of, what she's done is put it into a still life, like objects that belonged to her brother into a still life situation...

That's nice.

**...in boxes. So she's using artist models who use sort of grids and structures and developing it formally as well. So it has some meaning to her but it's also developing the work pictorially as well.**

**Through modernist prescriptions.**

The knowing-woman-artist-teacher has sought a solution to the exclusion of her student's experience within the authorised curriculum by colluding with its form and critiquing its content. By refocusing her pedagogic gaze she has made a space for difference in the curriculum of her classroom and through her example has consequently taught a lesson in morality. I am reminded of the words of Madeleine Grumet. "We pull the furniture of the course into a web of relations that makes sense to those that live it, and working with the given, we show children how to make it up all over again and make it their own" (Grumet: 1993: 207). The requirements of pictorial development are the given, by altering its content the artist-teacher has shown her student how personal development can also be one of the values of an art education.

**It's a different kind of teaching at um, when you think about how the university lecturers, you know the way the art school lecturers taught us was a completely different style of teaching than the way that we have to teach a class of 30 4th formers. But um the ideas that may come through, you know could be carried through from things that we've been taught by our lecturers. But do you, do you understand that?**

**Um.**

**Yeah. The way that you teach it is actually different but the ideas are actually the same.**

## Continuing the Conversation

*Eye-I examine the conversation as a site of learning and its potential development into a teacher support group.*

I start this section again with Maxine Greene who thirty years ago claimed that, "teachers need to become self-aware, intensely conscious of what they are doing as they engage in teaching, free and open enough to experience encounters with the diverse human beings in their classes, courageous enough to tolerate and even to promote tension and discord, strong enough to avoid sentimentality" (1971: 562). Throughout this text I have suggested that the conversations of art teachers are sites of contemplation. I believe that their conversations are potential sites for the self-reflection and consciousness-raising necessary for Greene's exemplary teacher. Within the course of this text I had expected to reveal the conversation of five women art teachers as a site of critical consciousness-raising. What I may have ultimately revealed is the conversation as a construction of my gaze.

I have made use of the conversation to represent what it means to be a knowing-woman-artist-teacher. I have presented the conversation as an alternative site of 'coming to know'. But I would be very uncomfortable in claiming that my re-interpretation of the conversation was the only interpretation, or the most valid. Despite the conversation inducing me to critically examine my expectations of myself as a researcher, I am aware that it met different expectations for the other participants. It appears that the conversation provided a space where participants could discuss difficulties in the classroom, share ideas and knowledge gained in

practice, and take part in the professional gossip that creates a sense of community in art education.

Well that's one thing, because I know that last year and this year --- said it would be really good to get together more often, for support, and you know, just to share ideas and things and it was quite hard especially at ---. That's one of the reasons I was quite keen too, just to make more contact with others.

It makes a huge difference doesn't it. Cos I remember when I started, the girls that I was in my year of college with, we met a few times....It definitely makes such a difference when you're able to bounce ideas off people. Or try something somebody else has done. You know. Its quite hard trying to work in isolation. Especially if you're at a school where there's no other art teachers. Which I was.

Where was that?

---. It was just so hard.

Yeah well I know that when I was at --- and I was working with --- it was just great particularly being beginning teachers together

And some people don't like to share ideas too. Have you found that?

**Oh yeah. I found that at --- actually.**

**I won't show you my resources kind of thing. You've not come across that yet?**

Earlier in the text I referred to Janet Miller wanting to research with and not about the group of teachers that she had engaged with in discussion. She wrote the paper I cite six years after the group's inception. It appears that in the six intervening years, the assumptions and dynamics of power of the group has become part of their curriculum. Through discussion the group members deconstruct the power relations of the group, both within the collaborative and in relation to their differing roles as educators. They examine how their identities are aligned and/or separated from each other (Miller: 1992).

"As we continue to meet on back porches and living rooms, still juggling coffee mugs, bagels, and conversations, we ponder the discrepancies in our expectations as collaborative group members as well as members of various educational communities. We now examine these issues, not only as they surface within the contexts of our collaborative or of our studies of curriculum discourses, but also as they erupt in our daily work as teachers and researchers" (Miller: 1992: 250).

As a researcher and educator I sense value in enabling an environment where assumptions and expectations can be examined and re-examined from shifting locations. As I suggested near the beginning of this text, within a system that resists closure through universal truths and maintains an openness there is the possibility of agency. Within openness is the possibility of learning. I am trying to re-imagine my

project as I learn from the examples (not dictates) of others. There were several significant differences between the collaborative teacher group described by Miller and the group of artist teachers. Despite the multiple agendas of its participants, the initial meetings of the artist teacher group were organised around the requirements of my research. The collaborative teacher group initially came together to define its own purpose as an "emancipatory research collaborative" (Miller: 1992: 249). Time scale was another significant difference between the two groups. The artist teacher group came together for three sessions, the collaborative teacher group had been talking together for six years before Miller addressed her assumptions in the cited paper.

It seems that the research environment I facilitated achieved a certain amount of Patti Lather's "catalytic validity". The conversation has continued beyond my research requirements, in the homes of others and involving other art teachers. Since my three sessions have ended, the art teacher<sup>16</sup> group has started to find its own reasons for meeting. Will it continue to exist? Will it exist as a site of contemplation and conscientisation? I do not want to anticipate the direction this group may take but I would like to point to some instances where Sharon Rich's study of teacher support groups may have implications for its future.

In Rich's study her respondents commonly identified talk as a significant factor in deriving meaning from participation in a teacher group.

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<sup>16</sup> I use art teacher (and not artist teacher) now to represent the shift in identity from object to subject.

"Without opportunities for free-flowing talk, teachers remain locked in their classrooms with little opportunity to begin to reflect critically or even to articulate the beliefs they hold and which protect their substantive selves. Once talk begins, teachers can explore the ways in which they have begun to make meaning of their practices and their professional lives" (Rich: 1995: 20).

Rich found that meeting in each other's homes rather than in an institution contributed to the cohesion of a teacher group. She suggests that an informal environment helps to foster an atmosphere of trust and support where teachers feel encouraged to honestly offer their opinions and self reflections. Teacher support groups which have been contrived rather than allowed to evolve are less likely to be reflective or open environments. Now that the art teacher group has been freed from my 'coercion', it may find the space to evolve into a group where the agenda may focus more explicitly on the needs of all of its participants. Rich claims that in the most successful teacher support groups "...the agenda is set by the teacher-members and they have the opportunity to find personal and professional support within the group" (ibid.: 21).

## In-Conclusion

Here is the space for summarising the main points, tying up loose ends and, according to my dictionary, making a judgement based on reason. Considering the themes that have emerged throughout this text, I don't know how conclusively I can achieve all of the aims of a conclusion. Reason appears as the dominant narrative of this text, however its place in my journey of EDUC 695 has been more ambiguous. For example R.S. Peters's Authority, Responsibility and Education became written into this text through chance and circumstance. I selected it from the library shelf as I recalled an excursion to Melbourne where my partner pursued this author unsuccessfully in every second-hand bookshop we passed. I took the book home because the parcel tray of baby Lily's buggy was not quite full. I renewed the book twice because it was easier than returning it and did not open it until three days before it was due back the third and final time. When I opened the book and saw the chapter on "Form and Content in Moral Education" I immediately connected it to a draft of what I've since titled "A Moral Art Education" which I had just received back from my supervisor. We had both agreed that I was having difficulty explaining "...what is meant by morality in this context?" R.S. Peters has fortuitously helped me to find a solution to my problem.

It is the type of experience outlined above that has made me doubt the comprehensiveness of reason and scientific method to wholly make sense of the world. At the start of this text I referred to my assumptions about knowledge being incomplete and transitory. In New Zealand, knowledge about what constitutes the value of an art education has shifted and grown as policy, social and philosophical

theory and art and educational practice interject in its discourses. The discourses that shape art education are so numerous and intricately tangled that they can never be entirely knowable. With such a large number of possibilities for knowledge in art education it seems unforgivable to restrict either the content of the curriculum or the ways of coming to know it within oppressive, universalist paradigms such as patriarchy, Modernism or science.

Within my research I found that I had inscribed the artist teacher as a universal category. Upon encountering my assumptions I re-discovered the tension that defines the location of the educated woman. Within the master narratives I sit between critique and collusion as I concurrently adopt and reject discourses of science and rationalism. By attempting to re-inscribe the artist-teacher as an objectification incorporated within my subjectivity, I have attempted to re-present struggles of identity rather than essential categories. The “I” of this text is a site of conflictual identities. At times its scientific gaze objectifies its prey and at times it is used purposefully to rend emancipatory spaces in the fabric of reason. At times in this text, reason has been used purposefully as the locus of meaning and at times it has been used to re-present alternative ways of knowing.

My construction of the knowing-woman-artist-teacher embodies the potential of her agency in its convergences and shifts between identities. Within the fluctuating rhythms of the knowing-woman-artist-teacher I imagine the multiple possibilities of attaining subjecthood and becoming knowing. In this text I have charged the knowing-woman-artist-teacher with developing flashes of meaning from her multiple positions within the art room in order to assist her students in “coming to

know". As I have become knowing in the course of this text, I have discovered an embodied notion of art education as a possible alternative to child-centred or socially constructed curricula. Reconceptualising theory as something to 'do' may re-inscribe theory as a physical pleasure. It may also enhance the potential of women and girls to become knowing subjects within the art room as they engage in the female pleasures of the body.

I have interpreted moments in the conversation when the knowing-woman-artist-teacher has ruptured existing curriculum policy documents to include an embodied art education in the curriculum of her art room. Despite prescriptions that are shaped from discourses that either advance the male subject or dissolve the self, she creates spaces within their regulation to include the bodies of her and her female students in the art room. She sits in tension between critique and collusion of the existing orders of art education. She has been shaped by the master narratives of the Fine Arts, yet she has also recognised meaning as multiple and diverse. She has come to know in diverse ways and she writes diversity into the curriculum of her classroom.

**That meaning thing is quite difficult. Like it's quite easy to write off the things that are meaningful to teenagers. As being not very important or being quite cliché, but it's their genuine experience. Where do you draw the line? And do you say no Kurt Cobain photographs?**

**It is quite hard. It's the whole putting art up here and their experiences down here, um, it needs to be relevant but at the same time it can't be, any art that's**

too self indulgent tends to be boring. Or not boring, but sometimes, I don't know. I just remember what it was like looking at some of those photography folios that we were putting out in that bursary marking thing.

like, like...

And people photographing their boyfriends and stuff.

And their friends.

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