

105 Hosting the Occupation of Art Education as Aporia

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Abstract

This article articulates an ethics of hospitality within art education that adopts an uncertain disposition to visual arts learning and affirms the unforeseeable while inviting openings for the transformation of art education knowledges and associated subjectivities. Throughout, I endeavor to keep the question of whom we teach unanswered and open, while searching for spaces of possibility within unpredictable, aporetic entanglements inherent in normalizing frameworks of art education. I contextualize Derridean notions of aporia, hospitality, monstrous arrivant, undecidability, and responsibility within the specificities of art teaching that call on us to approach the field as contradictory and ambiguous so that we might imagine the field and ourselves otherwise. Art education as an aporia must be both rule-governed and unruly, open to what may arrive to occupy our household.

I was recently asked to respond to the question “Who do we teach?” as part of a panel¹ that included participants from art history, studio art, and design. By asking for challenges to and strategies for recognizing and serving students from multiple constituencies with diverse learning styles, the session prompted panelists to share dynamic and effective curriculum exemplars from their respective disciplines. In contrast, as I prepared, I found myself ruminating on the implications of asking the question itself and some of its implications within my teaching contexts. Examining the very notion of recognizing and knowing who students are within schooling and schools of art and design while engaging discipline-specific content was my alternative slant to re-focus the question away from an array of “best practices” to service diverse students. This question “Who do we teach?” held my attention theoretically, pedagogically, and ethically. Additionally, as I lay out below, dwelling on this question facilitated a probing of the ways in which we engage with outsiders to our field and how these engagements can limit and/or expand the very field of art education to which we cling.

In order to directly face the complexities of attending to those moments of ethical disruption that reveal themselves as an openness to the Other, I ask that we approach art education as contradictory and ambiguous to keep the field in a state of undecidability. Correspondingly, I articulate an ethics of hospitality within art education that adopts an uncertain disposition to visual arts learning and affirms the unforeseeable while inviting openings for the transformation of art education knowledges and associated subjectivities. Throughout, I endeavor to keep the question of whom we teach unanswered and open, while searching for spaces of possibility within unpredictable, aporetic entanglements inherent in normalizing frameworks within the field of art education. I contextualize Derridean notions of aporia, hospitality, monstrous arrivant, undecidability, and responsibility within the specificities of art teaching that call on us to imagine the field and ourselves otherwise. Art education as aporia must be both rule-governed and unruly, open to the heterogeneity and incalculable of what may come to occupy our field as household.

Occupying the Question

Curriculum discourses in art education produce and regulate subjectivities of learners (Atkinson, 2008). As a field, art education continually creates restraints around itself to allow others in or exclude them from being recognized. Using priorities set before we even meet someone, we are also caught up in classifying who an art educator is, who a competent art student is, and who lies outside our field. Educators engage in re-presentations of students—in how they perceive them and use discourses to describe them often through stereotypical ideas about types of students as deficit and/or superior to other types, as insiders or outsiders. If we consider the question “Who do we teach?” in schooling and schools of art and design, for example, more often than not, we begin by answering through classifying and reducing a student into a thing devoid of his or her own subjectivity (Aoki, 1983/2005). Inherent in this is the limiting of possibilities for expansion of the very field we are protecting.

¹ The College Art Association’s Education Committee Panel asked for panelists to consider the following theme: “Who do we teach?: Challenges and strategies in recognizing our students, and developing and supporting curriculum for multiple constituencies.” My co-panelists were Annika Marie, Tera Galanti, and Christopher Moore. The panel, chaired by Joan Giroux and Cindy Maguire, was presented at the College Art Association Conference in Los Angeles on February 22, 2012.

Instead, Atkinson (2008) suggests we simply start with “Who are you and how do you learn?” to greet the subject that is not yet comprehended or recognizable (p. 235), thereby allowing the Other to speak for him or herself. “Who are you and how do you learn?” acts as a form of address toward each learner within pedagogical encounters that potentially disrupt assumptions of a deficit pedagogy and hegemonic dispositions of teaching. This “disruption of established states of pedagogical knowledge and practice through which learners are recognized” (p. 235) unpredictably turns against itself as an ethical imperative.

Relevant here is Foucault’s (1982) focus on the question “Who are we?” (p. 781), wherein those in power, professors, for instance, automatically categorize and attach an identity to someone, such as a student, thereby subjugating the student to the power and control of the professor—here power forms the subject. We know very little about our students upon first meeting them, but we often receive information on their current major, or in K-12 contexts are provided with a file on a student passed on by previous educators, psychologists, or administrators. This inevitably fills us with preconceived notions of a student’s capability that distorts our interactions, for better and/or worse. Instead, Foucault (1982) proposes we should not be permitted to answer “Who are you?” on behalf of another, for we cannot determine another’s answer or singularity in advance. According to Caputo (2000),

Foucault wants to keep this question open, and above all to block administrators, professionals, and managers of all sorts from answering this question on our behalf, thereby closing us in on some constituted identity or another that represents a strictly historical, that is, contingent constraint. (p. 30)

For when we determine in advance someone’s worth and ability, based on his or her disciplinary major for example, we are limiting the possibility of new modes of self-invention, and, as I maintain, disciplinary re-invention as well.

Occupying a Hospitable Field

Instead of diagnosing students’ needs, abilities, and identities prematurely, we need to be less sure of students in advance, and in doing so we potentially open paths to reevaluate our own positions of power and the very limits of our field. In an effort to embrace the aporia we encounter in art education, and inspired by Derrida’s notions of hospitality, it behooves us to welcome students from a variety of backgrounds unconditionally by addressing them in particular. In lieu of assuming we can answer the question of whom we teach, we might instead ask students “Tell me who you are” (Naas, 2005, p. 8). Here the “wholly other” within a Derridean (Derrida & Dufourmantelle, 2000, p. 26) ethics of hospitality (a framework indebted to the work of Emmanuel Levinas) is pertinent as it references something or someone unimaginable that exceeds and/or subverts our pre-formed expectations. In welcoming the Other, we, as art educators or hosts, are not seeking to reduce his or her independence through identification or dominance by fitting him or her into a space already created for him or her to fit into (Todd, 2008). In fact, the host has to accept that this “guest may change the space into which he or she is received” (Ruitenber, 2011, p. 32)—perhaps even transforming a disciplinary space. Hospitality here amounts to the deconstruction of the “at-home” (Derrida, 2002, p. 364) through a form of occupation by the Other.

For Ruitenber (2011), this at-home could be a curriculum that represents a discipline we

are very sure of and that we require students to learn with mimetic efficiency, thereby further buttressing our disciplinary fortifications. Yet, an ethic of hospitality in teaching “means deconstructing the curriculum, so that students come to understand how the ‘home’ of knowledge called curriculum came to be what it is” (p. 34).

A hospitable curriculum, then, pays explicit attention to the voices that have been excluded from its development, and the effects of their absence. Furthermore, it asks how it can give place to, or would be undone by, the arrival of new ideas—for new ideas do not necessarily sit comfortably in the existing home of the curriculum. (p. 34)

In order for the practitioners within a hospitable field to value the wholly other, they need to view the current limits of a field with “a certain provisionalness, as regulations temporarily in place, a temporary shelter taken before something else comes along that takes us by surprise” (Caputo, 2000, p. 177). This openness seeks out the wholly other for its potentiality to unfold present limits to novel articulations—acting as a nemesis to current parameters. In this sense, we do not know what art education is at any given moment. For in the midst of the wholly other, as Caputo notes, we can gain access to the edges and beyond the limits of our field:

... where we are forced to think anew, to confront what we did not see coming, to cross over into foreign lands, to rethink what we thought we knew in the light of what now imposes itself upon us and impresses upon us how little we really know. (2000, p. 179)

We are called on to respond to the unfathomable without a rulebook so that “an ethic of hospitality education must be constructed in such a way as to leave space for those students and those ideas that may arrive” (Ruitenbergh, 2011, p. 33). Here we might continually ask ourselves Biesta’s (2010) Rancièrian-inspired question “who can speak?” (p. 544). Art educators need to ask themselves this within their pedagogies. We have to begin from the assumption that every student, no matter the background, can speak within a field. This is really a reversal of how educating has been conceived. As educators we are expected to translate pre-established knowledge for students to acquire on our pre-set terms (despite repeated warnings about the fallacy of a faithful transmission from educator to learner [see for example, Dewey, 1916/1997 & Ulmer, 1985/1992]). Starting from the assumption of Rancièrè’s (1991) equality of intelligence, disciplinary knowledge is opened up in radical ways. From this position, we are stirred to examine if we are allowing for those outside of art education to have a say within our field. Who do we believe has the ability or capacity to speak on art education content, and how do we communicate these beliefs? This ongoing criticality and acknowledgement of how our “having been received into certain traditions has created conditions of inhospitality for the Other” permits us to possibly reduce our complicity in the perpetuation of these conditions (Ruitenbergh, 2012, p. 4).

Furthermore, I long for what Biesta (2011) refers to as the “beautiful risk of education” wherein we embrace risk in art education as we try to stay open to the risk of being interrupted or “being put into question by the other”—keeping our eyes, ears, hearts, and doors ajar (p. 540). Here we are taking a risk, not knowing in advance who we teach or how they learn. Such risk requires flexibility in the development and implementation of curriculum to accommodate an *emergentist* epistemology by reconsidering knowledge “not as something we receive but as a response, which brings forth new worlds because it necessarily adds something (which was not present anywhere before it appeared) to what

came before” (Osberg, Biesta, & Cilliers, 2008, p. 225). This is especially difficult and needed as our current era of evidence-based education is premised “on the eradication of risk and a desire for total control over the educational process” to the point where making “education 100% safe, to make it 100% risk-free[,] thus means that education becomes fundamentally un-educational” (Biesta, 2011, p. 540). Likewise, Caputo (2000) urges us to affirm a kind of structural blindness, that

. . . will, contrary to what we might expect, keep us open to innumerable mutations and unforeseeable possibilities, to incalculable ways of being and knowing, doing, and seeing, exposed to potentialities of which we cannot presently conceive, to things improbable and incomprehensible, unimaginable and unplannable. (p. 6)

Unforeseen Occupation

An ethics of hospitality (at the end of ethics) is oriented toward surprises, anomalous, unexpected, horizon-breaking events that are “an affirmation of something to come, something deeply futural, that we cannot foresee” (Caputo, 2000, p. 177). Derrida’s hospitality is preoccupied with the guest that arrives as the *monstrous arrivant*, for whom we do not yet have a name. The arrivant, as a borderline figure, pries open “such a proclivity toward the wor(l)d as given, stealing peace of mind and reading us back to ourselves in unanticipated and unfamiliar ways” (Wallin, 2007, p. 4). The unforeseen must be met with a hospitality that desires and affirms the surprise for which we can never be fully prepared. Therefore, we need to reach for a more anti-essentialist stance towards the prolific and polymorphic diversity in our seminar rooms, studios, community sites, and classrooms along with an open-endedness toward the subjectivities before us (Caputo, 2000).

Disturbances within pedagogical moments and practices seem particularly apt to this form of emergent ethics as we play on the edges of the frontiers of art education. Leaving the borders to our field permeable through an ethics of hospitality as interruption, provides an unfinished openness to monstrous excesses that undo us, our positions, our certainties, and our relations to our field. For in these encounters the laws and limits preserving mastery within a field are transgressed (Derrida & Dufourmantelle, 2000). It then follows that hospitality requires non-mastery, a relinquishing of control of our disciplinary attachments in relation to what the wholly other brings. Derrida’s (1999a) question “Is not hospitality an interruption of the self?” (p. 51) helps us to understand how we are implicated within an ethics as unconditional hospitality—a welcoming without restrictions or reciprocal exchange that disrupts us. If we invite others in, we must lessen our fortifications of authority and risk a disruption of the self by the new arrival—an occupation of the already known by the unknown, if you will.

Educational hospitality asks us to give over control of our inherited knowledge to the unpredictable Other. In order for this to be embraced within our teaching, we have to promote and encourage recognition of gaps, dissent, risk taking, and unpredictability so that a multitude of learning paths and outcomes might be encouraged. Educators have to be willing to be flexible in the face of this lack of control, flexible enough to change their current ontological states. This disruption of pedagogical knowledge and practice is called a *pedagogy against the state* by Atkinson (2008) in that there is a moving against fixed notions of content and learning toward the emergence of unknown potentialities of becoming—in other words, an “ethics of the unknown of becoming rather than established

forms of being” (p. 236). Prescribed curriculum and product-focused outcomes stifle the unpredictability and vulnerability necessary for spaces of relationality and transformation in education. How might this ongoing criticality and hospitality play out within art education?

Occupying *Chez Soi*

A ten-year old student I encountered during my first full-year teaching used drawing in a way I was not familiar with and in a style that didn’t adhere to developmental exemplars I had been trained on during my undergraduate studies. I was at a loss as to how to respond to his images of soldiers, cadavers, and mass killings that proudly showed up on my desk during any and all art lessons, even those having nothing to do with drawing. He bypassed the colored pencils, paint, charcoal, group sculpture assignment based on cultural identity, and observational drawing lessons. I was laboring under the assumption that students with a first language other than English may not understand my instructions for a lesson, but they could watch their classmates and see examples of how to complete a lesson in such a way that I could fairly assess their learning. His drawings functioned as excess to my developmentally appropriate, western canon of art, ruled by discipline-based art education. I, as educator, was bound by my contract and duties to plan, implement, and assess, which, ultimately, dictated I “engage in the violence of exclusion . . . through the erasure of . . . difference” (Phelan et al., 2006, p. 175). Would he fail my art class?

At this juncture, I realized the inhospitality of my profession. My priorities ordered that I all but ignore his use of drawing or deem it invaluable, insignificant, or incorrect. His interpretation of art as a way to tap into his overwhelming experiences as a child of war and witness to atrocities was exceeding the boundaries of what I had established. However, his satisfaction in this, his only form of communication in this classroom other than Tamil, pulled at a different type of responsibility beyond my disciplinary training. In my adherence to my duties as art educator, I had bypassed the urgency of creation and the need to use art for communication, irrespective of advancing a set of pre-established skills or broadening one’s appreciation and knowledge of master artworks. There was no place for this guest or his interpretations of art. Here I was thrown into an uncertain relationship with my own profession and values related to art that motivated me to go back to school for my master’s as soon as possible, but in the meantime, I had a decision to make.

This guest posed a threat to my security as host. I was in a panicked space of “undecidability” (Derrida, 1999b, p. 66) wherein what was familiar to me about art education became strange at a fundamental level. In unconditional hospitality we are asked to relinquish control over our mastery of a domain—as host I was becoming hostage. In this state of undecidability, multiple paths are possible, but one clear decision is not at hand—no textbook answer was forthcoming. As a fresh graduate, I would have to choose my response from beyond my art education knowledge that gave the impression that one curricular route could fit all. I couldn’t just turn this student into any other student; this context was unique and I was called on to consider him in an ethical way beyond my prepared script. I had to consider what would be fair and just in this specific instance. “The consequences of such efforts are uncertain—we may never be sure that we are doing the ‘right’ thing, yet it is within this ambiguity that our commitment to reducing violence is perpetually renewed” (Wang, 2005, p. 56). In the end, I betrayed my training and implemented a different mode of curriculum, one that came out of his needs to keep going. His pride was the basis of my assessment of his efforts. In my ensuing years of teaching art, his drawings became the foundation for his ongoing counseling, and as he gained more

English, he stopped drawing in this way and took up other art forms.

To whom was I responsible in this scenario? To the student, my profession, my disciplinary training, my curricular priorities, or my assessment criteria? In a sense, an overriding obligation to the student throws every other obligation into a specificity that we must facilitate repeatedly with individual students. The profession, discipline, curriculum, and assessment as provisional are what I keep coming back to again and again ever since this experience with the fifth-grade refugee, newly arrived from Sri Lanka some twenty years ago.

“Whatever and whoever turns up”

As Gilbert (2006) articulates, an ethics of hospitality and difference requires hosting “whatever and whoever turns up” (p. 26) so that the metaphor of occupation by an arrivant works to interrupt art education as usual. Månsson and Langmann (2011) claim that opening education up to the ambivalence of the stranger and the unknown should not be viewed “as a problem, but as a quest for humanity and justice” (p. 15). We need to endeavor to “temper our drive to educate with a willingness to endure the humiliations of surprise” (Gilbert, 2006, p. 33). Derrida’s hospitality requires us to circumnavigate an ambivalent and fragile gap between our ideal lesson or what we imagine art education to be and the inevitably, unexpected guest in all its singularity.

In an effort to work my job through an ethics of difference and hospitality, I entered into a space of indecidability, risking ambivalence in a profession that denies its presence (Gilbert, 2006). Here, as host, once I took up the responsibility to respond to the Other, I had to give up the fantasy of taking comfort in my training, the delusion of mastery in the knowledge base of my discipline. This student’s drawings irrupted into my identity as competent teacher. This

... coherence of the self [was] pushed into crisis by an encounter with another’s foreignness. This dynamic is what makes for the difficulty and the necessity of hospitality: in welcoming what seems strange in the other, we encounter our own sense of foreignness. (Gilbert, 2006, p. 27)

This experience revealed the dogmatic terms of students’ maneuverability within the limits of my rules of engagement within art education. It rendered my fixed ideologies transparent, vulnerable, and susceptible to reinvention. For Derrida, responding to heterogeneity is an ethical demand, “knowing that my judgement must come through a reflexivity in which I continually ask myself—is this a just decision? (Todd, 2007, pp. 596-97).

In every area of our practice, we need to continuously preserve a space for that which has yet to come. In its antagonistic potentiality between the familiar and the strange, this space holds the key to our renewal. Antagonism in our practices alerts us to anomaly that we may censor or ignore in order to keep control and continuity over ambiguity as a threat to ontological or epistemological security (Phelan et al., 2006). How do we educate others for this possibility and responsibility in art education? How do we hear the guest in such a way that our obligations are remade in more just ways that are opened ever wider to multiplicity and plurality? Here is where the abstractness of art education is put to the test in its specific implementation in the face of plurality, while we jockey between the particular and the general, the diverse and the same, harmony and confrontation, so that art

education lacks a definite outline or border in an ongoing re-performing of a field. The fifth-grade student marked “the limits of the familiar, the clear, the common” with all its inherent anxiety and foreshadowing of what is yet possible (Phelan et al., 2006, p. 177).

Veiled Occupations

Alas, as Waghid (2010) warns, we should not “reify encounters with otherness as some romanticised dream” (p. 104). While we may venerate the Other, we also need to be aware of how the Other only ever presents a partiality of who s/he is, a veiling of her or his specific features in order to protect the full strength of his or her otherness. Here who is unrecognizably different complicates an ethics of hospitality in a student/teacher relationship. Educators are constantly policing borders while opening up fissures to let some in without ever knowing for sure who they just let in or omitted access to. Without knowing who we are hosting, hospitality as a response to difference troubles the identity between guest and host, outside and inside (Langmann, 2010, p. 339). Furthermore, as Langmann points out,

Hospitality is not offered to every stranger, nor does every stranger perceive hospitality as a gift. Paradoxically, it is only those recognized, identified, and familiar strangers that have the right to be invited. In this sense, hospitality is never fully open to the other; there is always some violence and exclusion. (p. 340)

Therefore, through hospitality, we certainly risk letting in the “parasite” (Derrida & Dufourmantelle, 2000, p. 59) or reforming the Other into the recognizable, turning hospitality into hostility (Jones, 2007, p. 153).

All of us have experienced the unexpected in art teaching wherein we might be at a loss as to how to respond. What do we do in these antagonistic encounters with excesses that invite us to view existing frameworks as invalid? Typically, we are far from hospitable to the monstrous. Instead, the ambiguity of the arrivant is not tolerated for long as the unknown is “overturned by rational deliberations, attempting to convert the unexpected into the known” (Derrida, 1999b, p. 77). As we experience the drive to seek out sameness and control, neutralize difference, and colonize the monstrous within normalizing structures to which we hold fast, we expunge its power and invalidate its ways of knowing our field. In doing this, we resist being deconstructed and transformed through an encounter with otherness.

Occupying the Aporetic

Aporia present us with dilemmas or put us into a state of puzzlement. According to Wang (2005), we experience the aporetic when we exceed boundaries and find ourselves at an impossible passage with contradictory imperatives and conflicting gestures (p. 46). We may enter aporia through hosting the Other wherein we are asked for a response, not a technical response according to preset rules that would reinforce boundaries, but a responsible response that does not rely on predetermined principles or absolutes, but leaves “an uncertain condition for inventing singular responses” (p. 49). This involves a questioning and irruption into pre-established norms, practices, and tradition as well as a shattering of the self as stable. Therefore, aporia is a space of perpetual uneasiness of being pulled in opposite directions of contradictory engagements with tradition and promise in a quest for actions that “open up nonpresent possibilities” (p. 51).

The aporia or unresolvable dilemma of hospitality is that if we are too hospitable, we give up the power to act as host. Conversely, if we wish to preserve our power, we are inhospitable. But the perpetual interruption and instability between the roles of host and guest allow for an aporetic encounter so that something new disturbs our identities, exceeds our expectations, and alters the social field, while deconstructing safe places (Langmann, 2010, p. 343). We need to embrace an ethical attentiveness toward that which we don't expect in art education that highlights the contingent and shifting identities of student and educator. For in hospitality I adjust, I become in relation to the Other. In this responding, I am left changed for "to truly welcome the stranger is to arrive somewhere new" (Langmann, 2010, p. 344). If we assume we already know who a student is, how s/he learns, what s/he offers, or how s/he is ignorant, we shut down possibilities for our transformation, blocking vulnerability in our mastery, thereby fixing knowledge in time. Conversely, as Caputo (2000) reminds us, "When I am in a singular situation, faced with something singular, I do not have it, but rather it has me" (p. 180).

In searching for a response to the 5th grade student, I was unsettling and questioning myself. In dwelling within the uncertainty and ambiguity of this space, I exposed some of the inherent contradictions in teaching art. In embracing a responsible engagement with the aporia between commonality and difference, student agency and teacher authority, self and other, center and margin (Wang, 2005), we in art education explore alternative modes of pedagogy and the limits of our field. This encounter with my art student brought together tradition and specificity, discipline and life, for in responding to this singularity I wasn't completely ignoring my contract as teacher and my training as art educator, but I was going beyond the previous script and well-worn path. My response was not only negotiated from existing regulation, but it was also a singular, context specific re-invention of regulation. We need to maintain this double gesture in our field in a paired duty of "affirming yet questioning self and other through addressing differences" with a Derridean responsibility to imagine and invent new modes of subjectivity for both teacher and student (Wang, 2005, p. 59).

The teaching subject, as an aporetic subject within art education for example, finds him- or herself immersed in "the paradoxical demand of giving space, of creating space by delimiting it, and of enabling uses by constraining them" (Ruitenber, 2010, p. 272). The art teacher deploys and is obedient to what is already established as knowledge, rules, norms, and practices of our field along with the accounting for and regulating of such systems. Here the teacher must be certain, rational, and decisive according to established norms, according to *what is* rather than *what might be* (Delgado Vintimilla, 2012, p. 2). Yet, there is also "the logic of the promise, of what is yet to come, indeterminate or unconditional" (Delgado Vintimilla, p. 124) that is in excess of our contractual duties as art educators that interrupts predeterminations, embracing *what might be*. We need to be responsible to each of these logics as they might co-exist within our field, between the pre-established and what lies beyond it. Here we are immersed in the *aporia of responsibility* (Delgado Vintimilla, p. 126). The ethics of this cannot be codified in advance as this contingent responsibility occurs within the unique and singular transactions between student and educator, between the norm and its excess, between promise and contract (Delgado Vintimilla, 2012, p. 127). These are rare events of emergent undecidability in which, for instance, an educator admit s/he doesn't know how to answer a student's question or when we recognize the myths of assessment we are perpetually playing out. To rest with this undecidability immerses us in an impossible responsibility, risking being both an irresponsible and unrecognizable subject

in transgressing normative logics and pre-programmed routine. This dissensual rupture and paradoxical agitation mark the limits of our field and the unforeseen (Derrida, 1992).

Remaining Occupied

At this very moment, our art classes, seminar rooms, art museums, and community sites are occupied with arrivants awaiting our responses and inviting us as art educators into the aporia that imbues our field at the intersections of promise and contract, margin and center, ambiguity and tradition. While it is unlikely art education can be based on an unconditional hospitality,

... schooling that does not maintain a reference to the principle of unconditional hospitality loses its reference to education, and to ethical education in particular. Education, following this logic, ought to be concerned with giving place to students and with receiving children and adults who arrive, who are, in spite of the best attempts at preparation by teachers and administrators, unpredictable and wholly other. (Ruitenber, 2010, p. 270)

An ethics of hospitality incites us to occupy our field as a more temporary structure, provisional categorization, and less restricted to hybrid formations of knowledge generation. For this art educator, it is the participants within any given learning community that continually constitute a space of possibility, where the question “who are you?” is interwoven within a discipline’s curriculum and pedagogy, resisting a response by an art educator, but instead negotiated, transformed, and articulated slowly over a journey of uncertainty outside established borders. Every time we teach provides us with the chance to unbind knowledge and the limits of categorization that do not allow us “to explore that which we do not yet know or that which is not yet a subject in the world” (Rogoff, 2006, p. 3). In order to welcome alternative modes of self-invention in art education, I first have to recognize the partiality of my pedagogy and knowledge that can never fully accommodate the complex realities we are trying to live and think out together. I need to remain ever open to the “(im)possible promise” (Friedrich, Jaastad, & Popkewitz, 2010, p. 584) of hosting the occupation of art education by the Other.

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