AESTHETICS IN AN EXPANDED FIELD: TOWARDS A PERFORMATIVE MODEL OF ART, EXPERIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE

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by
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This dissertation is a recasting of the concept of the aesthetic which seeks to reinstate “the full etymological range of the Greek άισθησθαι – to perceive, sense, feel,” which “is analogous with ‘sensibility,’ the immediate physiological contact with the world through intuition (Anschauung)” (Scherer, 1995). This is achieved by recasting the aesthetic as a second order performative phenomenon – that which is illocutionary in any sensory experience, social interaction or utterance (Austin, 1962, Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). With the aesthetic understood as such, art becomes a way of knowing and doing which may function analogically relative to all other facets of human experience and endeavor. The aesthetic – the illocutionary – may be understood as the motive force infusing all socio-cultural relations and productions.

Chapter two defines the performative in the context of photography; a visual medium which may be analogically compared to the arts in general. Chapters three and four extend the performative conception to classroom teaching specifically and education generally. We do not merely teach young people what it means to be members of our society, we engage in an endless performative process – an aesthetic process – of defining that society and identifying the consequences of citizenship. The classroom is therefore a societas (Oakeshott, 1975) in miniature, in which students are engaged in research; the aesthetically fueled relations which form our socio-cultural conventions and knowledge (Goodman, 1976, 1978, Ingram, 1995, Kuhn, 1970, Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, Rorty, 1989). Chapter three draws its analogy between art production and scientific research and extends that analogy to the studio art classroom.

Chapter four imagines an educational apparatus which has shifted its theoretical base from the currently dominant “forms of knowledge” paradigm (Hirst, 1974) to a poststructural, relational, performative model. Existing art education paradigms – DBAE (Clark, Day and Greer, 1987) for example – are as rooted in the forms of knowledge theory as any other academic discipline and would be altered as fundamentally as any other discipline under such a paradigm shift. Again, art production and consumption are posed analogically to the production of knowledge and the construction of social conventions and relations.
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

This dissertation is a landmark along a path I started down long ago, first as a student at the Rochester Institute of Technology and later as a Master of Fine Arts candidate at Arizona State University. My thesis committee at ASU accepted and encouraged my forays into contemporary philosophy and critical theory when it would have been easier to insist that I stop reading so much and start making more art. David Foster, Dan Collins and, especially, Bill Jenkins – who helped me stay the course at a time when doing something else with my life was beginning to look like a very good idea – oversaw the radical change in my understanding of art and artmaking that eventually produced this document. To Dan I owe additional thanks, for it was his invitation to teach at The Deep Creek School that provided my introduction to Charles Garoian. The conversations that Charles and I shared during hikes in the San Juan foothills led to his suggestion that I apply to Penn State, and the rest is, or is about to be, history.

It’s a cliché perhaps, but no less true for being one, to say that I learned as much or more from my student-colleagues at PSU as from my teachers. Elizabeth Reese and Themina Kader, my collaborators in the teaching of ART 100, helped me keep my head in the classroom, as did Kevin Tavin, who also goaded me into consideration of broader political contexts.

Coursework in other departments proved to be invaluable, particularly the seminar on the work of Deleuze and Guattari taught by Jeffrey Nealon and Richard Doyle. Daniel Conway’s ethics seminar also provided a critical test of my developing ideas.

Dan also graciously agreed to serve on the committee overseeing this dissertation, as did Charles. Brent Wilson has inspired throughout with his indefatigable curiosity and intellectual enthusiasm, and I am proud that he too agreed to read and evaluate this work. My committee chair, Yvonne Gaudelius, provided considerable challenges and critical support.

Finally I wish to acknowledge the nonacademic contributions of two people who figure large in my life. Richard Laugharn has been my steadfast friend for over tens years now, remaining faithful even after I embarked on this project that I know is antithetical to his own sensibilities. Our desert trips and the camaraderie they contain, as sporadic as they have become, sustain me in ways I cannot adequately measure. And then there is Diana Keane. Diana sees qualities in me that I would otherwise be inclined to disbelieve. Her forthright and unabashed love and affection are the foundations of whatever strength I may possess and the haven in which I find peace. Where ever my life takes me from here will be home as long as Diana and I go there together.
CHAPTER ONE: AESTHETICS IN AN EXPANDED FIELD
If the value of “the arts” to our society and culture has never been in dispute, neither has the precise nature of that value ever been crystal clear. Even in the literature of its strongest advocates, the purported value of art is at once unquestioned and ephemeral. The value of art seems to be a matter of metaphysics; a truth to be understood intuitively, via one’s experience of it, rather than intellectually or empirically. Such a model is suitable and adequate for those who already believe – artists and appreciators alike – but is of little use when the task is to win over skeptics whose values may be informed by more practical, prosaic concerns; as when parents, school boards and administrators consider the role of art in an educational curriculum.

Proponents of Discipline Based Art Education (Clark, Day and Greer, 1987) sought to establish art as a distinct field of knowledge in the manner of other core academic disciplines – the existing canon of liberal arts and sciences, and the physical and applied sciences – but have been unable to present alternatives to the metaphysical model of artistic significance. The function of art in the DBAE paradigm – to “intrigue and delight us,” (p.139) or to produce “significant, even profound, aesthetic experiences,” (p. 140) is nothing if not difficult to quantify. This creates problems for advocates of art’s place in the K - 12 curriculum, not to mention seemingly insurmountable obstacles for proponents of art-centered curricula, who are struggling in a political atmosphere in which everyone seems to agree that public education is failing at its most basic mission – simple linguistic and numeric literacy. How can one argue that art is necessary in any complete curriculum when its standards are so ephemeral, not to mention incommensurable with those of other academic fields? When the public conception of education is based largely on standardized test scores and other statistical abstractions, and the general impetus is to create National Standards, how does one test for the recognition or creation of “delight,” to say nothing of profundity? When there are so many solutions being offered – more rigorous curricula in math and hard sciences, a return to the traditional liberal arts model, privatization of the entire enterprise – how is it possible to convince Congress, school boards and parents that a general curriculum based on artistic practices and principles is academically legitimate when its vocabulary is largely constituted of immeasurable subjectivities and its value a matter of taste?

“What’s wrong with doing something simply because you like it?” asked a senior photography student – only weeks away from the completion of a B.A. degree – during
a recent critique. If students believe that the purpose of art is largely to stimulate
pleasure in the maker and audience, then it should surprise no one if their parents –
who are, among other things, congresspersons and members of school boards – share
similar beliefs and are inclined to consider art as an extracurricular activity, and an
expendable one at that.

This dissertation will seek to demonstrate that such difficulties do not lie within the arts
themselves, but rather are a consequence of the criteria with which they have been
judged and taught – the very models of knowledge, inquiry and learning that are the
basis of our curricular status quo. It is my proposal that art presents us, not with a
distinct body or form of knowledge, but rather a distinct vocabulary that may be
deployed – when useful – in any facet of human experience or endeavor. It is my
contention that the adoption of such a vocabulary opens alternate perspectives which
may be of great assistance to us in some of the more difficult aspects of our societal
project. Specifically, the arts may enrich us by providing a way to think the
irreconcilable – the contradictions common to a newly global society which defy rigid
epistemological classification.

Discomfort with incommensurability, unease with the inability to craft a single coherent
set of rules to encompass the varieties of human experience, is the product of a world-
view driven by a rigid epistemology – the study of and search for the nature, sources
and limits of knowledge. Richard Rorty posits that “to construct an epistemology is to
find the maximum amount of common ground with others. The assumption that an
epistemology can be constructed is the assumption that such common ground exists”
(1979, p. 316).

Drawing on Dewey, Heidegger, Wittgenstein, and Thomas Kuhn, Rorty suggests that
we must put aside our accustomed epistemological modes in favor of a model of
knowing as an interpretive practice; a proposal he offers as an “expression of hope ... that our culture should become one in which the demand for constraint and
conformation is no longer felt” (p. 315). For one to so accept that there may be no such
common ground is to be, in Rorty’s terms, a “pragmatist.” If such a culture may be
imagined, then it should not be difficult to imagine further that it would belong to a
society populated by artists.
To imagine thus requires, however, a reconception of the descriptor “artist” as well as an expansion of the scope of aesthetics. “The term ... in its full etymological range of the Greek \textit{αισθησθαι} – to perceive, sense, feel – is analogous with ‘sensibility,’ the immediate physiological contact with the world through intuition (\textit{Anschauung})” (Scherer, 1995). Aesthetics thus conceived would be concerned with all sensory perception, but in the interval beginning with Kant and continuing to the present moment, it has become limited to the perception of beauty, and that perception is often limited to the beauty specific to that class of cultural products called “artworks.” Indeed, such restriction was fundamental to the art movements that dominated the bulk of the twentieth century, for which “pure aesthetic attention [was] conceived to be incompatible with interest in other values, including moral and social values and cognitive concerns for truth and falsity” (Hein and Korsmeyer, 1993). Such categorical breakdowns were already in place at the time of Kant’s three \textit{Critiques}, and his identification of three related but independent modes of consciousness (TABLE 1, Scherer, 1995) participated in the structuring activity of the Enlightenment. In the first \textit{Critique}, aesthetics conforms to the Greek model of a science of the senses, but by the time of the \textit{Critique of Judgment}, (1790/1992) his identification of the \textit{a priori} principle of purposiveness has provided him with a basis for a science of beauty. It is the concept of purposiveness, along with the “Analytic of the Beautiful,” and the “Analytic of the Sublime” that have had the most influence on our conventional understanding of the aesthetic.

Kant differentiates the judgment of taste – defined as the “faculty of judging the beautiful” – from judgments of pleasure and goodness. Recognition of the beautiful is not a matter of cognition, of logic, but purely subjective, in spite of its necessary presupposition of universality. This is to say that while a judgment of taste does not insist on the necessary agreement of all who might evaluate its object, it does present itself as though such agreement were indeed the case. “There can be no rule according to which anyone is to be forced to recognize anything as beautiful, ... and yet, if we then call the object beautiful, ... we claim the assent of everyone” (Kant, 1790/1992, p. 379). As regards the merely pleasant, however, no such universal voice is possible, for each person’s physiological responses to stimuli are their own. Thus, while recognition of the beautiful may involve the senses, it does not depend on or produce a “pathologically conditioned” satisfaction (p. 377). Similarly, the beautiful may not be conflated with the
good, for the latter concept is always tied to an interest, a purpose, a preconception, none of which are necessary for the judgment of beauty. This is the “purposiveness” of the object of aesthetic judgment, its capacity to serve a function without design or plan, without interest or intent. Its function, insofar as it has one, is wholly internal and can be assigned no objective worth.

Kant’s Table of “Higher Powers in their Systematic Unity”

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<th>GENERAL POWERS OF CONSCIOUSNESS</th>
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Table 1.

Kant further associated Beauty with what we now call “art” through its differentiation from the “Sublime.” Beauty implies structure, for “it is not what gratifies in sensation but what pleases by means of its form that is fundamental for taste” (p. 381). It begins with sensation, but requires that sensation be ordered, for “the delineation is the essential thing” (p. 381). The sublime, by contrast, is a judgment not of quality, but of quantity. It “is that in comparison with which everything else is small ... that, the mere ability to think which shows a faculty of the mind surpassing every standard of sense” (p. 388). Sublimity, unlike beauty, is not a characteristic of the object of contemplation, but is the state of mind produced by the disinterested contemplation of such an object; it “does not reside in anything of nature, but only in our mind, insofar as we can become conscious that we are superior to nature within, and therefore also to nature without us” (p. 391). It is this capacity that Kant identifies as the aesthetic imagination; an imagination that produces ideas which express indeterminate concepts, which “arouse
more thought than can be expressed in a concept determined by words” (p. 392). This is the ability, the “faculty of the mind that constitutes genius” (p. 391).

Kant sought to revivify metaphysics through the “systematic articulation of the whole body of knowledge” (Scherer, p. 17). Cognition, desire and judgment, it was hoped, would find their synthesis in this new metaphysics. What has occurred in common practice is, instead, a reified separation of the three, with only the most tenuous relationships acknowledged. Such an isolated form of Kantian judgment is the typical object of aesthetics as practiced in mainstream arts education, as reflected in the predominant theories which guide the classroom practices of teachers and students alike. One of my earliest lessons as a newcomer to the field of art education was to learn that even the fourfold tracks of the DBAE paradigm were intended as a study of art alone; that history was the history of art, not the place of art in history; that criticism was criticism of art, not criticism (social, political, cultural) through art; that aesthetics was the philosophy of art not the application of art to philosophy. And, of course, art making is art making.

In the existentialism and phenomenology of the early and middle periods of the twentieth century, we find a considerably different treatment of the aesthetic. While Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty necessarily followed in the footsteps of Kant, nowhere in “The Origin of the Work of Art” (1936/1971) or “Eye and Mind” (1964) is there anything to support bastardized Kantian assertions like those of Clive Bell, who claimed that “to appreciate a work of art, we must bring with us nothing from life, no knowledge of its affairs and ideas, no familiarity with its emotions” (1913/1958/1991).¹ In Heidegger’s formulation, the work of art touches off an unresolvable struggle between “world” – understood as culture, the arena within which we live and act – and “earth,” his metaphor for the reality of Being. “World and earth are essentially different from one another and yet are never separated.” Heidegger tells us, “The world grounds itself on the earth, and earth juts through world” (1936/1971, pp. 48-49). It is in the work of art that such a contestation becomes possible, because the artwork, as it was for Kant, is free of the burden of utility borne by most manufactured things. And yet its purposiveness is constitutive of Being itself.

¹ Such a statement is a clear oversimplification of the disinterested purposiveness that Kant claimed for aesthetic judgment, but nevertheless, it provides the theoretical basis for what we think of today as “modern” art.
Almost as if to retrieve the sense of the original Greek ἀισθησθαι, Merleau-Ponty uses the work of the artist – most famously Cézanne – in his efforts to delineate a phenomenological ontology. His statement that, “only the painter is entitled to look at everything without being obliged to appraise what he sees” (1964, p. 161), echoes Kant’s principle of disinterested purposiveness which characterizes aesthetic judgment, and yet, as with Heidegger, the painter’s seeing and painting is an exemplary emergence of Being.

“Nature is on the inside,” says Cézanne. Quality, light, color, depth, which are there before us, are there only because they awaken an echo in our body and because the body welcomes them. ... Thus there appears a “visible” of the second power, a carnal essence or icon of the first. It is not a faded copy, a trompe-l’oeil, or another thing, ... for I do not look at it as I do at a thing; I do not fix it in its place. My gaze wanders in it as in the halos of Being. It is more accurate to say that I see according to it, or with it, than that I see it (p. 164).

Merleau-Ponty goes on to write,

This voracious vision, reaching beyond the “visual givens,” opens a texture of Being of which the discrete sensorial messages are only the punctuations or the caesurae. The eye lives in this texture as a man lives in his house (p. 166).

Both Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty tend to privilege the work of art – poetry in the case of the former, painting for the latter – in their aesthetic theorizing. Bound up as it may be in the very essence of Being, it still remains the exemplar of its kind, a distinct way of knowing with its own unique characteristics and potentialities.

For a model more in keeping with lay conceptions of aesthetics, we may look to “the aesthetic point of view” of Monroe C. Beardsley (1982), in which the presence of the aesthetic in an object or experience is dependent on the purposes and concerns an individual brings to his/her viewing of the artifact or participation in the event. In this model, the aesthetic is differentiated from other qualities of an object or experience, with which it is said to be incommensurate. The example of architecture is given, and to
this end Beardsley cites Sir Henry Wotton stating (in a paraphrase of Vitruvius) that “Well-building hath three conditions: Commodity, Firmness, and Delight” (p. 17). Which is to say variously that a building might serve its function (bank, post office, etc.) wonderfully well, and yet be flimsy of construction and unsurpassingly ugly, or be of stout construction and compelling form, but difficult to get in and out of, or most likely, be both adequately utilitarian and firmly made, but of little aesthetic distinction. The three categories appear to have little or nothing to do with one another, and each provides its own distinct criteria for evaluating the quality of the building.

Such distinctions are reminiscent of Kant’s proposed categories of mind. Since for Beardsley, like Kant, the aesthetic is necessarily disinterested, it cannot have any bearing on ergonomics or engineering, which are bound up in interests and intentions. Indeed, this, along with Beardsley’s definition of aesthetic gratification – that which “is obtained primarily from attention to the formal unity and/or regional qualities of a complex whole” (p. 22) – is clearly reminiscent of Kant’s criteria for aesthetic satisfaction, as opposed to mere pleasure or practical fulfillment. In his forward to the collection of Beardsley’s essays that he edited, Michael J. Wreen says that the author’s 1958 work, *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism*, “more than any other single text ... made the philosophy of art a respectable area for contemporary Anglo-American philosophers to work in,” and that the work has “acquired almost the status of a reference work” (in Beardsley, 1982, p. 7). If such is the case, then it seems certain that aesthetics in its broadest contemporary application has a very narrow definition; one in which “it refers almost exclusively to theories of art, beauty, and criticism” (Scherer, p. 18). This conception persists in spite of work of philosophers who forcefully demonstrate the relevance of the aesthetic to the formulation of social and ethical practices (Eagleton, 1990, Hein and Korsmeyer, 1993).

– TEACHING ART, TEACHING AESTHETICS

The neoKantian aesthetics of philosophers such as Beardsley are fundamental to most models of art education, leading up to and including DBAE. In *Educating Artistic Vision* (1972), Elliot Eisner wrote, “the prime value of the arts in education lies ... in the unique contributions it makes to the individual’s experience with and understanding of the world” (p. 9). So far, so good. Among art’s inherent abilities are its potential to provide a “sense of the visionary in human experience” (p. 9), its “capacity to vivify the
particular” (p. 12), and its power to “generate cohesiveness among men” (p. 16). But then Eisner restricts the play of those abilities by asserting that they belong to a particular field of knowledge when he insists that “the visual arts deal with an aspect of human consciousness that no other field touches on: the aesthetic contemplation of visual form” (p. 9, my emphasis). Eisner never demonstrates exactly how this contemplation of visual form provides a sense of the visionary, vivifies the particular and/or generates social cohesiveness. In any case, I can scarcely imagine that contemplation of form alone (visual or otherwise) is sufficient to provide the range necessary to play as grand a role as that in which Eisner casts art. In my classroom experience, were it not for tales of Jackson Pollock peeing in Peggy Guggenheim’s fireplace and the drunken camaraderie of the Cedar Bar, then most of my college undergrads would have little patience for abstract expressionism, the formalist fulminations of Clement Greenberg notwithstanding.²

In later writings, Eisner seems to have seen this parallel between art and life when he connects the exercise of aesthetic judgment to more pragmatic aspects of existence. In *Beyond Creating: The Place for Art in America’s Schools* (1985) he wrote;

> The exercise of judgment in the making of artistic images depends upon the ability to cope with ambiguity, to experience nuance, and to weigh the tradeoffs among alternative courses of action. ... These ... are precisely the skills that characterize our most complex adult life tasks” (p. 67).

On the other hand, in a subsequent and more rigorous treatment of what came to be called Discipline Based Art Education, Gilbert Clark, Michael Day, and Dwaine Greer make it explicit that this model conceives of art education in terms of a “forms of knowledge” paradigm (Hirst, 1974), concentrating on the “aesthetic domain ... that is considered essential for a balanced education” (Clark, Day, and Greer, 1987). With the exception of one short paragraph in this later work,³ neither they nor Eisner suggest that art necessarily interacts with or has implications for other cultural phenomena. These writers propose that the purpose of art education is to fill the aesthetic gap in a

² Witness the Tom Wolfe bestseller *The Painted Word* (1975) in which Wolfe manages to simultaneously ridicule modern art while making the “boho dance” seem a romantic and desirable life indeed.

³ “Discipline-based art education encourages teachers to make appropriate connections between art and other subjects in the school curriculum” (p. 145).
well-rounded general curriculum. Aesthetics remain the domain of art, which may be related to, but remains distinct from grammar, science, ethics, and other common components of a curriculum.

What has followed from this is an isolated “art-for-art’s-sake,” stripped of virtually all potential social or cultural agency. This phenomenon has been critiqued over the past thirty years on a variety of theoretical bases – psychoanalysis, feminism, marxism, cultural studies of various flavors; the list grows longer by the day it seems – with little impact on the segregation of the arts from other areas of study, and negligible impact on art instruction. Little more than ten years ago it was still possible for the critic Maureen Sherlock to succeed at provoking the art faculty by stating at the beginning of a lecture at the Arizona State University School of Art that, “Art is about Ideas. It has always been about ideas. If your art is not about ideas, then you are not an artist. You have a hobby.” The next morning I remember one of my professors ranting; “that woman dismissed everything we do!”

Whereas Heidegger feared that the consequence of a metaphysical empiricism would be an overweening “technoscience” (1971), this isolation of the aesthetic within the “arts” and its concurrent identification with form has made possible the rise of a corresponding “technoart” in which beauty and meaning are produced via artists’ capacities to manipulate tools and materials. Students in my non-majors’ survey course strenuously argued, for example, that a recent Hollywood remake of Godzilla was superior art to its predecessor on the basis of its advanced special effects. Similarly, when asked to propose a semester long production project, my senior photography majors are far more likely to describe their choice of camera, film and printing media than to put forward ideas for pictures and what they hope those pictures might do.

My expansion of the aesthetic field draws on the work of Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, but more significant perhaps is the contribution of John Dewey. In Art As Experience (1934), Dewey recognizes that what we call art is a distillation of the kinds of experience we encounter all around us on a daily basis. For Dewey it is the aesthetic in experience that distinguishes it as an experience, as opposed to mere perception. Dewey posits an aesthetic component to life itself, and in fact, claims the necessity of the

4 Best approximated perhaps by our obsession with information technology and its possible impact(s) on human life in the century to come (see Haraway, 1997).
aesthetic for the possibility of growth. “Life itself consists in phases,” says Dewey, “in which the organism falls out of step with the march of surrounding things and then recovers unison with it” (p. 14).

For only when an organism shares in the ordered relations of its environment does it secure the stability essential to living. And when the participation comes after a phase of disruption and conflict, it bears within itself the germs of a consummation akin to the esthetic (sic) (pp. 14 & 15).

In the process of living, experience is necessarily continuous, as creatures respond in various ways to various environmental stimuli. Much of this experience is inchoate, insofar as it is undifferentiated within the sensory stream and the individuals reactions to it. For Dewey, the aesthetic is that quality which is “neither emotional, practical, nor intellectual” (p. 37), but lends unity to coherent experience, and defines its specificity. It is the presence of the aesthetic which composes inchoate experience into an experience, with identifiable form and limits, and discernible relationships which render it meaningful. In this way Dewey – unlike Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty whose analogies move from art to life – argues from life to art. He demonstrates the aspects of life which must be shared with artistic creation if it is to attain its real end, which is, as he puts it, “to build up an experience that is coherent in perception while moving with constant change in its development” (p. 51).

Further elaboration of the broad scope of human experience and endeavor as an aesthetic project, may be found in the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1983-1987). Deleuze and Guattari seek to put aside questions of knowledge – insofar as they may be summed up by conceptions of meaning – altogether. In their register, each bit of culture is a productive mechanism; literally a machine, primarily engaged in production of forces which provide impetus for other productive machines. This ideation of culture greatly extends the cultural territory to which J. L. Austin’s (1961) concept of performative utterances – linguistic forms which, rather than simply represent outside referents, actually do things – may be applied. The result is a model of significance which accounts for the ineffable in experience, something the recent vogue of structural semiotics appears to strip away from perceptual encounters. Deleuze and Guattari place particular emphasis on the concept of the *illocutionary*, (1987) which, following Austin, is the motivating component of any performative utterance. In the
series of lectures which have since been published as *How To Do Things With Words* (1962), Austin distinguished performative utterances from constative statements, the latter characterized as descriptions or declarations subject to judgment of truth or falsity. The former satisfy two conditions:

A. they do not “describe” or “report” or constate anything at all, are not “true or false”; and

B. the uttering of the sentence is, or is a part of, the doing of an action, which again would not normally be described as, or as “just,” saying something (p. 5).

The ritual text of a common marriage ceremony provides an example of such a performative utterance. The ultimate declaration of the presiding preacher or judge, “I now pronounce you husband and wife,” (accompanied by the obligatory ritual kiss) is easily understood by all in attendance, but is a very abstract statement from a semiotic standpoint. How does one distinguish a “husband” or a “wife” from other sorts of men and women? How may we verify the truth or falsity of this statement; by examining the presiding official’s credentials? In addition to – and significantly more basic than – the signifactory function by which the words are comprehensible to the wedding guests, these words have altered the ontological status of the couple to which they have been directed. The man is now no longer a bachelor, but a *husband*, the woman no longer a single woman, but now a *wife*. In an instant, their identities have been significantly shifted, for, as Austin states, to speak these words is neither to *describe* nor *indicate* what is being done, but to actually do it. Austin identifies three classes of performative statements: the *locutionary*, *perlocutionary*, and the *illocutionary*. The illocutionary is the force that drives the performative from its beginning as a statement (locution) to its conclusion as an effect (perlocution).

Deleuze and Guattari move significantly beyond the narrow confines of Austin’s original work when they insist that;

the theory of the performative sphere, and the broader sphere of the illocutionary ... has made it impossible to conceive of language as a code, since a code is the condition of possibility for all explanation. It has also
made it impossible to conceive of speech as the communication of information: to order, question, promise, or affirm is not to inform someone about a command, doubt, engagement, or assertion but to effectuate these specific immanent, and necessarily implicit acts (1987, p. 77).

The constative ceases to be of interest when one recognizes that very few utterances rely on their truth value for their significance. Communication is thus understood as fundamentally rhetorical in that it always reflects the intentions of the speaker and is also always a mechanism for furthering those intentions. The meaning of an utterance, in the sense that we may understand it as a representation is of little interest; “how it works is the sole question ... A symbol is nothing other than a social machine that functions as a desiring-machine, a desiring-machine that functions within the social machine, an investment of the social machine by desire” (1983, p. 180).

It is the disruption in the field, the momentary instability of forces (illocutions) that Dewey suggested as a prerequisite for the presence of the aesthetic, and that Deleuze and Guattari focus on. Desire is the prototypical illocution precisely because of the specific way that it works. Desire desires desire, which is to say that it is best identified by its insatiability. To experience desire is to be moved to act and then act again; the action in no way consumes the desire that motivated it. That any act of true creation (as opposed to mere replication) is a response to desire may be seen in its compulsive nature, characteristic, not only of our primal urges, but also of the fundamental curiosity and will to know that drives intellectual life. Indeed, our every living moment is invested with desire; as we experience the give and take of human relationships, as we respond to our environment, as we conform to standards of behavior, as we debate public policy, and, lest we forget, as we fall under the spell of works of art. This sort of illocution, as I will apply it in the work to follow, is the component of any experience or phenomenon which we may recognize as aesthetic. To become attuned to such illocutions, and to embrace their desiring nature is to become, in a sense very different from the usual effete and disparaging connotation, an aesthete.

In keeping with a performative spirit, I have no wish and will not attempt to create a systematic structure from the expressions of the various thinkers this work draws upon. I propose instead to deploy them as illocutionary agents – forces that will drive
the production of analogies. Culture, in the view I intend to present, may be understood to be a self-organizing, non-equilibrium system within which everything is political in a most fundamental way – which is to say, contingent on relations among human beings seeking a basis for social activity – and suffused with experiences of an aesthetic nature. Our conceptions of the role and scope of education, and the creation and implementation of curricula, understood as subsets of the cultural, are then not only inescapably political, as many contemporary educational theorists insist, but also quintessentially aesthetic, an ongoing deployment of creative forces which produce, in addition to miscellaneous concrete artifacts, further fuel for the cultural machine.

The use of analogy is central to this formulation. Unlike the gesture of figurative substitution that is metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980), analogy implies multiplicity and comparison rather than replacement. Metaphor is a logical extension of an epistemologically dominated world view, one that “finds” knowledge, structured in discreet units and with an essence that is there to be revealed if only we can configure a perfect vocabulary with which to represent the universe. As Rorty (1979) expressed it, we may see the true nature of the world if we can construct a perfect mirror in which nature may be reflected. To operate metaphorically is to replace one vocabulary with another, in the hope of finding a superior mirror which will truly reflect the essence of nature. Such a conception of knowledge is characteristic of Enlightenment empiricism, which persists as a normative mode among both academics and lay-people to this day, as is evident in the structure of texts ranging from Kant’s Critiques to the curriculum of an average grade school. What we seem to have discovered of late is that particular bodies of knowledge can be most sharply focused when unique mirrors are crafted especially to match. Rather than search for the overarching metaphysics required to reconcile these incommensurable bodies, Rorty favors (as do I) an ongoing comparison of vocabularies aimed, not at the ultimate substitution of one for another, but at the continual development of more useful new lexicons. We do not, therefore, discard metaphor, for it is in itself a vital illocutionary agent. What we seek to avoid are stale and conventional metaphors, which become mere constatives, signifiers pointing to fixed signifieds, representing what we already know.

5 A paraphrase of Lee Smolin (see note 7 below), The Life of the Cosmos, 1997, p. 156.

When one analogizes, the primary act is one of comparison. Difference and likeness become equally useful, as each affords an alternate perspective on the phenomenon at hand. Thus analogy enables Rorty’s proposed alternative to the mirror metaphor; a hermeneutic approach to the world. To employ such an approach, one crafts not reflective mirrors, but interpretive vocabularies. The project is not to represent the universe perfectly, but to describe it adequately, and, since there are potentially as many descriptions of the world as there are potential describers, this presupposes a conversation. In such a conversation individuals will doubtless wield a variety of incommensurable vocabularies, each based in the purposes of the speaker, within his/her historical moment and cultural context. An empirical process imagines a terminal point to its investigations; as a conceptual if not actual condition – the march of progress toward ultimate understanding. Contra this linear model, the hermeneutic mode can best be represented as a circle or spiral in motion. Each interpretation is subject to illocution and may be modified or superseded by further interpretations. New ideas spring from and arc back on previous conceptions. This is the hermeneutic circle, an aesthetic, desiring machine, not closed or finite, but moving, morphing; a perpetual source of cultural kinetic energy. Within this cycle old metaphors collide, ricochet, merge and break apart, resulting in new insights and new purposes. The goal, as Gadamer (1975) insists, is not to nail down “truth,” but to engage in dialogue, which is characterized as “play” (spiel) and results in self-formation (bildung). To be an aesthete, to be subject to these illocutions and consciously operate within the moving circle, is to accept the temporary nature of any available position. It is necessary, of course, to take a position in order to do or say anything, but the aesthete realizes that the context of his/her position is in inevitable flux, and that it will be necessary, sooner or later, to move in response to the shifting ground. Unlike the strict empiricist, for whom such a shift would bring his/her inquiry to a dead end, the aesthete seeks the instability, for from it comes the illocution, the energy which drives the cycle and gives birth to innovation.

– AESTHETICS IN AN EXPANDED FIELD

When attempting to justify the application of an aesthetic vocabulary to a broad range of human activity, it is tempting to invoke the original Greek sense, for to do so would be to assert that the aesthetic is concerned with all sensory perception. To do so however runs the risk of making the aesthetic seem to be a better “mirror” than
empiricism, when my purpose is not to replace one with the other, but to see if the adoption of an aesthetic vocabulary can produce movement, heat and light. The analogical nature of the project will hopefully allow aesthetics to illuminate epistemology and politics without negating either. My use of aesthetics is then, on occasion, somewhat conventional, insofar as the clearest available examples of aesthetic operation may be drawn from the arts – though what constitutes the aesthetic nature of the arts is less normative in my model – and it is within this space that the analogy generates its force.

The most dramatic and challenging analogy I wish to draw may be summarized in the following statement; all politics has an aesthetic nature. I would even go so far as to say that culture is a self-organizing, non-equilibrium system in which there is only the aesthetic and the political. Understood in this way, politics and aesthetics are not discreet areas of practice. The political, in this sense, represents the entire field of human relations and production. The aesthetic is the performativity of those relations, the sparks that fly from them, the energy that enables their social function, drives them through their recognizable patterns, and stimulates the evolution of new ones. Though they may be examined in isolation, they are irrevocably bound; the aesthetic shapes the political, is the source of its power, and the political provides context for the aesthetic.

The premise stated above is a paraphrase of Deleuze and Guattari’s assertion that “there is only desire and the social, and nothing else” (1983, p. 29). In keeping with the strategy of analogy, it is also a paraphrase of theoretical physicist Lee Smolin (1997), who, in a demonstrating that it is the absence of thermal equilibrium that makes life possible in the universe posits that the universe is “a self-organizing, non-equilibrium system” (p. 156). Dewey also uses the word “equilibrium,” though in a markedly different way than would a physicist for whom the word denotes a single, uniform energy state. Such a system, in its state of thermal equilibrium, would remain static until it happened to come into relation with another system existing at a different energy state. Dewey’s “equilibrium” indicates “balance, harmony ... rhythm,” but not stasis. It is a product of contending forces, of different energies.

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7 In a discussion of the Gaia hypothesis, Smolin defines “a living system” as one which is “A. a self-organized non-equilibrium system, such that B. its processes are governed by a program which is stored symbolically, and C. it can reproduce itself, including the program.” He does wish, however, to stop short of saying that the universe is alive.
Equilibrium comes about not mechanically and inertly but out of, and because of, tension... Because it is active ... order itself develops. It comes to include within its balanced movement a greater variety of changes (p. 14).

As one might expect, the difference between the two uses of “equilibrium,” upon which the resemblance between the philosopher and the physicist depends, is perhaps best demonstrated with an illustration from the arts. Thus an acclaimed painting or sculpture might exemplify Deweyan active equilibrium in the tension, harmony, and unity of its formal attributes, and yet still constitute an instance of cultural non-equilibrium through its sheer unfamiliarity, its distance from the daily visual experience of its average viewer. Such a position depends upon and yet, negates to some degree, Kant’s principle of the universality of the aesthetic. If a judgment of formal equilibrium does not absolutely determine the presence of a universal value, it at least speaks in the “universal voice,” suggesting the possibility. Simultaneously, however, the impossibility of final equilibrium, of universal comprehension, the irreducibility of the work, and perhaps even its inaccessibility to some – who may well be able, but simply not wish to engage it for reasons that can neither be affirmed nor denied – opens the way to the “greater variety of changes” which is the dynamic aspect of Dewey’s “active order.”

Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985) provide an example of Dewey’s notion of “active order” within an overtly political sphere. Laclau and Mouffe have come to understand the Gramscian notion of “hegemony,” as “the key concept in understanding the very unity existing in a concrete social formation” (p. 7). Insofar as any community must consist of an assemblage created of any number of such contingent “concrete social formations,” then hegemony is understood to be multiple, and the active contestation that results, what Laclau and Mouffe characterize as the “antagonism” expressing the relations between hegemonies is the necessary condition for a radical democracy; a free play of competing interests which are continually reinventing themselves in the course of struggle.

Antagonism, far from being an objective relation, is a relation wherein the limits of every objectivity are shown ... if, as we have demonstrated, the

8 Because it may simply not be to their “taste.”
social only exists as a partial effort for constructing society ... antagonism, as a witness of the impossibility of a final suture, is the “experience” of the limit of the social. Strictly speaking, antagonisms are not internal but external to society; or rather, they constitute the limits of society, the latter’s impossibility of fully constituting itself (p. 125).

Laclau and Mouffe’s antagonism is nothing less that the illocution of political discourse, and to acknowledge its inevitability is to acknowledge the aesthetic nature of politics. Acknowledging that antagonism is the likely consequence of cultural and social contingency – the impossibility of literal translation from one vocabulary to another – David Ingram (1995) adopts a common mode of artistic practice as political practice when he suggests that political discourse requires “metaphorical paraphrase.”

To conceive rational argument in this manner – aesthetically – violates the formal logical canon of semantic univocity; two persons, say, can be said to argue rationally even if they do not literally intend the same thing by the same expression ... What makes historical continuity and democratic community possible is thus the aesthetic capacity to fashion new metaphors that bridge and transform what otherwise appear to be incommensurable interpretations, worldviews, identities, and idioms (1995, p. 9-10, my emphasis).

In order to avoid its connotations of substitution, as previously explained, I prefer to put aside “metaphor” in favor of “performativity” as my choice indicator of the aesthetic. This is also in better keeping with a characterization of the political as a field of aesthetic forces producing relations, institutions, and meanings. Again, the aesthetic is used as a synonym for Austin’s illocutionary. What is aesthetic about Smolin’s non-equilibrium universe, Laclau and Mouffe’s antagonistic cultural formations and works of art in general is that they produce energy which furthers their own existence, is productive of physical and social interrelationships, and generally makes them meaningful.

Again, we may draw an analogy between the arts and the political to provide a working demonstration of such performativity. According to its proponents, “Performance art” is performative, not performing, in that the performance artist is
occupied with doing rather than meaning. The artist does not begin with an attempt to represent or signify. He or she acts but is not “acting” (Garoian, 1999). The gesture is not a representation of this or any other reality, but rather an action that is, in itself, real. Unlike stage or cinema, there is no need for “willing suspension of disbelief” in performance art, for there is nothing for the audience to disbelieve. The viewer’s relationship to the performer is neither imaginative nor voyeuristic, because what takes place on the stage is an event that the audience is not merely witness to, but also implicated in. While it is true that such works often utilize the body in a metaphorical fashion, the figurative substitution must be affected in the face of a physical encounter with an actual body. If a performance artist subjects his/her corporeal body to physical stress, then the audience is confronted immediately with that act and its consequences.

When, for example, the artist Stelarc suspends himself in a gallery, over a street, or above the waves by means of large fishhooks that pierce his flesh, the viewer must negotiate the presence of actual wounds, actual blood, before any form of disinterested contemplation is possible. Thus the metaphor maintains its illocutionary capacity, as the performance becomes a comparison between the physicality of the artist and that of the viewer in which the two experiences collide.

What passes for meaning in the performative work is a mobile assemblage of the action, the artist’s experience of the action (which has it’s own specificity of time, place, etc.), previous audience responses, coupled to this audience response, linked to the responses of the next audience; an assemblage set in motion by the illocution of the performance. The work does not produce meaning, it may not even lead the audience into such production, rather, it unseats all established meaning, deterritorializing the audience, launching them down a “line-of-flight” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983). Creation of metaphor under such conditions is the audience’s attempt to reconcile their incommensurable identities, and idioms. If they are successful in the attempt to craft new metaphors then all the better, but such a reterritorialization, to the extent that it is performative at all, is but tertiary perlocution. The point, if there is one, is to establish relations, often between unlikely parties, on unfamiliar terms, but the nature of those relations, even allowing for the most deliberate and conscious of an artist’s intentions, remains indeterminate. It is in this respect that the performance artist’s relations to his/her audience – which differ from those of painters, sculptors or users of other more conventional media only in degree – are analogous to those everyday encounters we have with other human beings. Art making then, insofar as it includes an aspect of
exhibition, is inescapably political, and politics is, also inescapably, aesthetic.

– THE AESTHETICS OF POWER

The inextricable relation of politics to power might give pause to one considering the possibility of the former’s aesthetic nature. Power is frightening because of its obvious potential for abuse. Famous aphorisms such as “power corrupts” and “power flows from the barrel of a gun” – originating as they do in conventionally political contexts – indicate the word’s pejorative connotations, and, while many of us may wish for power without intending ill treatment of others, I would wager that few would happily accept powerlessness. Even Foucault, the great contemporary philosopher of power, accedes to the violent connotations of the term, saying that, in the field of historical inquiry, “one’s point of reference should not be to the great model of language (langue) and signs, but to that of war and battle. The history which determines us has the form of a war rather than a language” (1984, p. 56).

But Foucault has much more to say about power than can be contained in the above quoted preference for war metaphors over linguistic ones. His interest was in the “mechanics of power” (p. 58), rather than a simple critique of its balance. In Foucault’s conception our concern ought to be with the manufacture, distribution, and effects of power; its productive capacities in addition to its restrictive potential.

If power were never anything but repressive, if it never did anything but to say no, do you really think one would be brought to obey it? What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression (p. 60-61).

This is the power that informs the social antagonism of Laclau and Mouffe, the power that demands the creation of new idioms as described by Ingram. It is here that power emerges as a form of desire. It is in this sense that power belongs to the performative, to the illocutionary, and hence, to the aesthetic.
To shift power from the realm of the political to the realm of the aesthetic is to discard sovereignty as the basis of political philosophy in favor of relationality. As Foucault has noted, to continue to structure our conception of politics around problems of law and prohibition, to persist in organizing it in terms of the state, is to remain wedded to a purely repressive version of power (p. 63). A relational, performative conception of power and politics is capable of defining the limits of state (and other) hegemonies, as it demonstrates that the whole field of power relations is shared by diverse, and not necessarily commensurable structures. The antagonism that arises among the entire range of “power networks that invest the body, sexuality, the family, kinship, knowledge, technology, and so forth” (p. 64), constitute the limits of these, and all, organizations. Such relations are mimicked by the relations created between audience and artist, as in the work of Guillermo Gómez-Peña and Coco Fusco in the early 1990s. Their “performance strategy” of segregating the audience according to criteria such as ethnicity, linguistic capabilities, immigration status and social class creates a temporary social organization with characteristics directly analogous to those described by Foucault and Laclau and Mouffe (Gómez-Peña, 1996). This performance strategy is obviously also an illocutionary strategy which destabilizes ordinary “privileged” audience members; “forcing monolingual/monocultural Americans to feel like outsiders and ‘minorities’ in their own country, even if only for an hour or two” (p. 95).

Described in previously used terms of equilibrium, power flows when one individual comes into contact with another, producing a temporary disruption. To the extent that the disruption is resolved, the individuals create a network, a community, which is then subject to further disruptions as other individuals and other networks are encountered. The power is manifest in infinitely various expressions, which all have in common their essentially performative, aesthetic character, which is not to suggest that territorializations do not occur. If a network becomes self-aware – if the individuals that are its component parts become conscious of their necessary and inescapable relations with others and actually begin to act as a collective – it confronts the possibility of its own sovereignty and must deal with its repressive potentiality which may or may not be realized, or, if realized, may be exercised to a greater or lesser extent. The territory may have become defined, it may have located frontiers and marked boundaries, but it cannot achieve stasis, for it is ever subject to the possibility of encroachment from without, or disruption from within. Being relational in nature – a network of networks of networks (it is possible to imagine even the individual as a network of networks) –
its character is never long determined. To cast it in another way;

There is always a Palestine or Basque or Corsican to bring about a “regional destabilization of security.” ... It is as if a line of flight, perhaps only a tiny trickle to begin with, leaked between the segments, escaping their centralization, eluding their totalization. ... From the viewpoint of micropolitics, a society is defined by its lines of flight, which are molecular. There is always something that flows or flees, that escapes the binary organizations, the resonance apparatus, and the overcoding machine: things that are attributed to a “change in values,” the youth, women, the mad, etc. May 1968 in France was molecular, making what led up to it all the more imperceptible from the viewpoint of macropolitics (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 216, my emphasis).

To the extent that the student/teacher relationship is – inescapably – bound up in power relations, the teacher employs his/her illocutionary capacity in order to foreground the “molecular” – in this instance, the practice and function of art; magnifying it in order to make its operations apparent on the macropolitical level of culture.

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This dissertation relies heavily on my experiences as an artist and teacher and so draws on that with which I am most familiar; the medium and practice of photography and the teaching of that practice within the context of the university. These doings are the illocutionary acts which provide a space where my ideas may expend their performativity, and, likewise, the performance further stimulates the musings which this dissertation seeks to elaborate.

Toward that end, the second chapter looks at photography as a cultural practice and a cultural phenomenon, examining its most durable genres as performative exemplars. Since its invention, virtually all major moves to aestheticize photography have been attempts to impose existing aesthetic vocabularies on the medium and its products.

Both turn-of-the-century “pictorialism” and the “straight” photography that reacted against it depended on the formal criteria and language of already credible art forms – drawing and painting in particular – for their justification. And yet, except for a small population of faithful initiates, a photograph insists on remaining a small, flat version of something else; Ansel Adams’s orchestrations of black, white and gray remain rocks, trees and moss, however Wagnerian their affect, Edward Weston’s penetrating vegetable still-lifes remain salad fixings, however elegant, and an Alfred Stieglitz nude remains a naked woman, however tasteful its execution. This observable fact makes the medium seem well suited to semiotic analysis – the medium’s entire raison d’etre has been based on its assumed nature as an indexical, denotative mechanism; the ultimate device of constative communication – but while such analyses may tell us what photographs mean in great detail, they typically give us little idea how or why they mean it. And yet, the performativity of these images and many other less well regarded examples I could name, is undeniable, its most common – if inarticulate – evidence being the statement I hear repeatedly from my photo students in critique; “that’s cool.”

Chapter three will develop an analogy between artistic creation and the political construction of community. Education’s domain is that of social and cultural construction. How we teach, as much or more so than what we teach, is indicative of the nature our society is presumed to posses and, increasingly, the nature of the society we wish to create. Teaching has become, for me, less a transference of information, knowledge or wisdom, than a political performance, which is to say that it is an unscripted and unscriptable collaboration between students and teachers, teachers and administrators, administrators and parents. We do not merely teach young people what it means to be members of our society, we engage in an endless process of defining that society and identifying the consequences of citizenship. Under a governmental philosophy such as that on which our nation was founded, democracy is created and recreated daily in the classroom.

In actual practice, contemporary education (even in the arts; a condition that DBAE exacerbates more than it mitigates) is grounded in an epistemological empiricism, the intent of which is to transmit an existing standard repertoire of facts and skills that form a basis for future activity. Such an empirical vocabulary does make sense if, for example, one’s project is to design and create utilitarian objects, as does an engineer or production potter. The ability to take precise measurements and design procedures
which will yield consistent results is crucial to certain components of such a project. It is wholly inadequate however, when it comes to either predicting or producing the pleasure one derives from the feel of a finely shaped bowl or the euphoria produced by the sound of a precisely tuned engine, let alone generating the impulses which move the makers to create the objects which in turn move us. While it is evident that the empiricism of technique plays a necessary role in generating such effects, it should also be clear that such skills alone are inadequate. As filmmaker John Waters put it, “technique is merely failed style” (1999) – which is to say that style which does not do something, which lacks performativity, lacks illocutionary force, is a hollow, dead thing. Performativity distinguishes what is aesthetic in a work from its style. The aesthetic involves stylistliness but is not equivalent to it. If the aesthetic (illocution) leads to effect (perlocution), then style is affect (locution). The latter is necessary to the production of the former.

The nearest available approximation of a performative pedagogical paradigm in widespread practice is the research model commonly employed in the sciences. Research as a pedagogical mechanism in the sciences is, however, a practice generally restricted to graduate studies and, even then, may do little to speak to the individual concerns of the student. Chapter three describes the structure and strategies of an undergraduate “art research” course that I have developed and offered on a trial basis as part of my university’s pilot of a new core curriculum. This course recognizes that “the creation of art [is] predicated on memory, cultural history, and ... experience of contemporary culture” (Garoian, 1999, p. 199), and that illocutionary experience has a central role in studio art production. The chapter also examines the performative nature of teaching (Ellsworth, 1997, Garoian, 1999) and the necessarily aesthetic experience of the student/teacher relationship. In addition, it seeks to demonstrate ways in which artistic creation may be analogous to inquiry in other disciplines, as well as the mechanisms through which the visual arts contribute to the fabrication of standards of good and bad, right and wrong, truth or falsity; in short, our construction of knowledge and socio-cultural norms.

The fourth and final chapter constitute a look forward, a speculation on the further development of these ideas, and their consequences for curriculum and instruction. I will again look to my own practice as an educator which I understand to be inextricably entwined with my practice as an artist. The images I create inform my thinking about
education, which prompts me to modify my syllabi and classroom presence, which influences my picturemaking and thinking in a prototypical hermeneutic circle. It is this recognition that puts the lie to that old saw; “those who can, do; those who cannot, teach.” Teaching here receives its due recognition, not only as a legitimate form of doing, but as one which depends on all the performative capacities of its practitioners. What would a school, specifically a university, look like if it were reconceived along the theoretical lines outlined above? The speculative answer is crafted from Rorty’s critique of epistemology and Kuhn’s interpretation of the history of science, and assumes the central role of the aesthetic as illocutionary as described above.

When I first began to teach, having just completed my M.F.A., I believed that, to a certain degree, my classroom effectiveness was tied to my ability to relate to my students in a very direct way. As I have grown older – while my students remain perpetually 18 to 21 – I have become aware of a generational gulf opening between myself and the young adults who come to my classes for photographic arcana and my office for academic advising. Where once I might have feared such a gap, believing that it thwarted communication and therefore education, I am now more energized by it, believing as I now do that this difference, among others, is a key aesthetic (illocutionary) component of the process in which we are engaged. This dissertation will – I hope – make comprehensible what I have come to believe; that it is the thrust required to bridge this gulf, the illocutionary sparks that fly when the distance is closed, and the new worlds generated as a result of those forces that is truly both the process and purpose of education.
CHAPTER TWO: THE PERFORMATIVITY OF PHOTOGRAPHS
The young man sitting in my office – I’ll call him Ray – looked confused and frustrated. A student in my digital photography class, he was at a loss as to how to approach his final project and had come seeking help. Ray was a good student, in the third year of our program, who was used to doing well in his photography classes. My class, however, was not proceeding like the others he had excelled in. His confusion it seemed, stemmed from our very different understandings of the nature and purposes of photographs. “What can a photograph possibly be about” he asked, “besides the person, place or thing that was in front of the camera?”

This class, more than others perhaps, has an intensely technical curriculum, and necessarily so, given the complexity of the subject. It would be a simple matter to fill four credit hours of class time with hard facts about bits, pixels, scanning, masking, compositing, printing, digital cameras and whatnot. But given that digital technology is not merely another way to make photographs, but also the means by which virtually all published imagery is prepared for dissemination (and increasingly, the means of dissemination as well), it seems hardly adequate to concentrate simply on how to use these tools. Given the range of uses that all these digitally created and prepared images are put, given the ubiquity of their presence, I have often found myself struggling – in all of my classes, at all levels of the program – to help my students address the “why” of using these tools; be they cameras or computers. And this is where I was losing Ray.

Even the most technical assignments in my digital class contain an element of “why?” Why should this part of the picture be sharp and not that part? Why color instead of black and white? Why put this object in that part of the frame and not over there? This is not simply a question of the student/photographer’s purposes, but also – and perhaps more importantly – a matter of the performativity of the tools and materials. The real challenge is to help the student develop an understanding of the connotative nature and illocutionary potential of the techniques they are learning. The final project is the first opportunity the students have to demonstrate, not just their technical facility, but their understanding of what the techniques might do. The students are free to utilize the techniques we have covered in any way they, but with one caveat – I expect them to be able to tell the class why they are doing what they’re doing, what they hope viewers (myself, their classmates) will get from their pictures and how (in this particular
instance) the techniques of digital photography support and further those aims.

To Ray – and most of his classmates for that matter – a “good” photograph had always been one which was focused in all the “right” places, “properly” exposed with “appropriate” contrast, “correctly” color balanced and which featured a subject that was intrinsically “interesting.” His idea of an “idea” for a photograph was an appealing subject, and his notion of a project was to then make a number of the very best photographs possible of that subject. As it happened, Ray was the photo editor of the school newspaper and his passion was sports photography. Now I was asking him to think about why he loved photographing sports and what those photographs were supposed to mean or be to others who might see them. His confusion had been building a long time before he came to see me. For starters, much of what had been going on in class did not seem like photography to him; there was too much emphasis on altering what the camera had recorded. Then there was this whole “meaning” thing. Photographs are documents, records of events, transcriptions of discreet moments in time. Their meaning is self-evident. He made pictures of sporting events because he enjoyed sports; what else could possibly be said?

I talked about metaphor. I talked about symbolism. I talked about sports as a reflection of American life and values. I talked for half an hour. Ray listened intently, the furrow in his brow getting deeper with each passing minute. I am certain he left my office with a severe headache. The work he produced for his final consisted of a number of promotional posters for the university’s athletic department. It was technically excellent, but Ray was right, it wasn’t photography so much as graphic design, and Ray didn’t give a damn about graphic design. He was frustrated and I was frustrated because I seemed unable to relieve his frustration.

The only thing differentiating Ray from most of his classmates and most other people I know is the degree of his bafflement and his willingness to come to me and demand clarification. That the camera is a denotative device, a mechanism that produces constatives is an understanding that we come to unselfconsciously, through experience, much as we learn to speak our native language. Indeed, the “language” of optics and single point perspective is, arguably, the native visual language of the western world and, to an ever-increasing extent, the global culture as well. That photographs are not –
contra Baudrillard (1983) – simulacra, but documents – accurate, direct denotations of the world as it happened to appear before the photographer at a particular moment – is simply what makes them photographs. Documentation, for most folks, is the essential nature of photography.

– PHOTOGRAPHY IN PHILOSOPHICAL CONTEXT

A people’s conceptions of the nature of knowledge and reality provide the basis for all their inquiry, invention and production. Which is to say, a la Rorty, that our purposes and beliefs determine, not only our acts, but the kinds of mechanisms we contrive to further those acts. Dennis Grady (1977/1982) presents the European intellectual landscape of the Victorian period as a field dominated by the competing paradigms of positivism and metaphysical idealism; the two having in common a conviction that truth is something “out there” to be discovered, which maintains an appeal for academics as well as the lay public to this day. This shared conviction did not, however, prevent the intellectual community from taking up sides in this philosophical contest, with poets and painters and other “artists” flying the banner of metaphysics and scientists making up the legions of positivists. The intellectual schism that C. P. Snow (1959) referred to as the “two cultures” originates in this historical moment. So powerful is the institutional validation of that rift – from before the time of Snow’s landmark lecture and persisting to the present moment – that its place at the foundation of curricular design is largely unquestioned. This is reflected in the predominance of a “forms of knowledge” paradigm (Hirst, 1974) that presents the sciences as disciplines that proceed from a rational, material basis, with the arts continuing to claim a spiritual basis. Also emergent from this cleft was the notion of a culture stratified in terms of value – high versus low, “popular” as opposed to “fine” – a culture that not only presumed distinct forms of knowledge, but also that certain forms were of greater import and worthy therefore of serious scholarship.

10 “It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal. The territory no longer precedes the map, nor survives it. Henceforth, it is the map that precedes the territory – PRECESSION OF SIMULACRA” (Baudrillard, 1983/1984, p. 253).

11 My use of quotation marks will hereafter indicate a reference to this presumed stratigraphy; “art” therefore refers to a traditionally defined and accepted form of culture, whereas the absence of quotation marks will signify a much broader and more inclusive set of practices and products that may still be distinguished in traditional terms from science, but is inclusive of certain applications of technology and disregards a hierarchy of value.
Born in a Europe that saw so clearly the distinction between the sciences and the arts, high culture and low, photography suffered the status of an illegitimate child in a royal family – inferior and even embarrassing on one hand, but undeniably useful in certain circumstances. Among the most enthusiastic of its early practitioners were painters who used the camera as a sketching device, but who were often reluctant to acknowledge the fact for fear that if the truth were known it would diminish the value of their work (Scharf, 1968, Coke, 1972). For while it represented the ideal solution to the centuries old technical problem of realism in the pictorial arts, photography was also a technology, inescapably born of the Enlightenment. Its key components – its optics and chemistry – were byproducts of the general flourishing of scientific inquiry and experimentation in the 400 odd years reaching from the Renaissance to the 18th century. That it emerged full-blown in the mid 19th century is then part inevitable serendipity and part product of the positivism that came to dominate the world-view of the Victorian scientist.

This is to say that the profound belief in objectivity and the centrality of that belief to the world view of Victorian Europe – not the technology of photography – is the truly important factor in the transformation of visual culture in the west, post-1839. The pervasive existence of such beliefs prompted the invention of a technology that supported them. The emergence of photography then, is a “cyborg” birth, being as it was “a fusion of the organic and the technical forged in particular, historical, cultural practices” (Haraway, 1997, p. 51); the logical climax of a technoscientific evolution which began with invention of linear perspective nearly 500 years before. It is no accident that photography was invented in Europe. An examination of the pictorial traditions of Asia, particularly China and Japan, reveals an approach to the representation of space that is utterly unrelated to the physics of lenses. The documentary nature of photography was assumed to be apparent on its surface at its moment of invention because such a characteristic was a critical component of basic European philosophy already reflected in the institutionalization of renaissance perspective in the art academy. That philosophy – largely unchanged – remains the barely conscious foundation of our present western world view.

From the moment of Daguerre’s presentation to the French Academy, photography constituted an over-determined “regime of signs” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987). Predating the field of semiotics, it was understood from the very beginning as a purely
denotative sign, a sign without a code (Barthes, 1977). Appearing as it did to faithfully transcribe the projections of the camera obscura, photography reified linear perspective, firmly establishing that renaissance invention as the unified field theory of optical reality and the camera as a prime metaphor of a positivistic worldview. Because its inventors believed in the possibility of purely objective observation, and believed that such a “disinterested purposiveness” was capable of revealing the ultimate meanings imbedded in nature, the camera was valued precisely because it promised to yield only constatives. It was useful because its products were without connotative capacity; no interpretation required. The power and appeal of lensed imagery has been thus sustained from that moment to this.

Contrary appearances notwithstanding, photography was, however, born not quite whole. It lacked an “axiomatic substructure,” a set of visual conventions, standards of quality and significance to call its own. Not that this was much of a problem. Having been invented in pursuit of a perfect linear perspective, which had become wholly axiomatic of painting by the 19th century, it was no great stretch to appropriate the conventions of painting altogether (Frampton, 1972/1982). These served perfectly well for utilitarian applications of the medium, but made photographers seem presumptuous if their aspirations were to produce “art,” which was, in the mind of the average Victorian intellectual, beyond the reach of mere technology. Only as the metaphysical-idealism that grounded the academic art world was eroded by a positivistic modernity in the period stretching from the turn of the 20th century through the Great War was photography eventually able to finally step out from the shadow of painting by developing and employing its own identity; a process that can be seen to culminate in John Szarkowski’s 1964 exhibition and book, The Photographer’s Eye.¹²

The degree to which the emergence of photography relieved painting of its former burden of representation is subject to debate. What is clear is that once the plastic arts

¹² Undoubtedly taking his cue from formalist theories developed and applied to painting by Clement Greenberg and Michael Fried, who in turn owed a debt to the earlier thinking of Clive Bell and Roger Fry – but without acknowledgment of any such influence – Szarkowski (Curator of Photography at New York’s Museum of Modern Art from 1962 to 1991) defined in words and pictures the special material characteristics of photography that differentiated it from painting and that, if consciously attended to, by either photographer or viewer, would transform any photograph into an art object. It would be difficult to overstate the influence of Szarkowski’s exhibitions and ideas on what became an “academic” photography world as the medium was incorporated into university art schools in the 1960s and 70s.
embraced a positivistic philosophical basis – as demonstrated in Cubism, Futurism, Orphism and other modern art approaches that appeared between the world wars and the New York school of abstraction that emerged after the second – photography was to some degree relieved of its burden of painterly conventions. Modern painting became positivistic in that its attention turned largely to its own ontology; its practice predicated on the realization that before it can be a portrait or a still life or a landscape, a painting is a highly structured pattern of pigments on a flat surface. From the impressionists to Cézanne, from Cubism to Abstract Expressionism, painting slowly turned its gaze away from the world and toward its own surface. If such mediumistic introspection was the path to “art” (which by now had become as much an honorific title as it was genre of cultural practice) then photography needed only to delineate and adhere to its own material identity. There is an irony in this development. If a formalistic ideal applied to painting inevitably led away from representation into abstraction, that same ideal applied to photography produces a hyperrealism far exceeding that of the most complex and accomplished perspectival painting, delineated by maximum depth of focus and sharpness, an extensive tonal scale and the faithful rendering of single point perspective which is the signature of the one-eyed camera. The upshot of all this is that an increasingly sophisticated theoretical approach to the medium of photography had very little visible impact on the form of its products. Not only was art photography often indistinguishable from other uses of cameras, any product of a camera, viewed through the formalist lens could be appreciated as an art object. Compare, for example, Ansel Adams’s Yosemite pictures to his industrial illustration. Compare the essentially anonymous images of photojournalism to the “art” of Garry Winnogrand. Adams was not able to support his family on sales of his art until very late in his career and so worked most of his professional life as a commercial photographer – shooting architecture, portraits and the like for corporate annual reports and other such assignments. The signature formal elements of his art – exquisitely sharp rendering of detail, dramatic tonal scale, etc. – and the technical skill for which he became renowned also secured him commercial clients seeking attractive representations of their products, places of business and themselves. The case of Winnogrand is slightly different. His art recognizes and borrows formal characteristics from photojournalism that are the result of their context of production; unexpected compositions and odd perspectival renderings resulting from attempts to capture fleeting action, high contrast and film grain produced by use of fast films and small
format cameras. The only thing differentiating the physical object that is a Winnogrand photograph from an AP news photo of the same period is that the Winnogrand lacks an extensive caption that places the image in an historical context and tells us why it is important (Barthes, 1977, Flusser, 2000); that, the intentions of the respective makers, and the needs and purposes of the respective channels of distribution and consumption.

Since it is a truism of art criticism that the intent of the author has no interpretive privilege, it should be no surprise that art museums today house thousands of photographs made originally for purposes totally unrelated to “art.” Verisimilitude in this instance, as the chief characteristic of the photographic image, tells the informed art audience what sort of object they are appreciating and cues them as to the sort of formal attributes they are to appreciate. This is very different from the function of verisimilitude in the news photograph, but, regardless of its origins or of the intentions of its maker, a photograph’s primary claim to significance remains embedded in that verisimilitude, it’s capacity to speak in constatives, its status as sign without code.

Ultimately, modern formalism (a la Szarkowski) and semiotic interpretation (Barthes, 1977, Eco. 1979, 1990, and others) have been ossifying influences on photographic practice and pedagogy. Postmodern upheavals aside, little has changed over the past thirty years. The formalism which Szarkowski presented as a source of meaning has hardened into fetishized craft; bravura manipulation of tools and materials signifying accomplishment and even genius. Semiotic analysis – even when stretched from its structuralist origins to accommodate incommensurate interpretations – most often results in shallow verbalizations that poorly explain the significance of an image which is apparent in its material presence. Photography is hardly alone in this. Workers in ceramic, glass, metal and wood have all been denied “art” status in the past – largely due to the utilitarian nature of their labor – and have either taken refuge in the lesser category of “craft,” or, equally self-consciously and defensively, aggressively sought to deny the historic material utility of their products. “Art” potters then, have made tea pots that can’t pour and cups that one cannot drink from. Similarly, “art” photographers have made images that do a poor job of representing presumed reality, succumbing again to a simplistic mimicry of painting, as exemplified by abstraction. Whereas the first generation of art photographers mimicked the physical characteristics of established art media such as watercolor, pastel and printmaking processes, by utilizing photo materials that could be subjected to physical manipulation – the hand of
the artist intervening in the purely mechanical process of photography – their formalist
descendants often acknowledged the irrelevance of subject matter, producing images
that were purely photographic but often difficult to decipher as representations.\textsuperscript{13} To the
extent that any of these efforts succeed in their search for an audience – this is true of
abstract art of any sort – the existing conceptual language fails utterly to explain that
success without seeming trivial in comparison to the phenomena it seeks to explain, and
the teaching of “art” retreats into technical instruction in the face of our inability to
meaningfully address meaning.

\textbf{– THE PERFORMATIVITY OF THE PHOTOGRAPH}

The preceding pages imply that there is much more going on with photographs and
other sorts of images and art objects, over and above their denotative capacities and
their material demonstration of the artisanship of their creators. If it is possible or even
beneficial to construct a rationale for the function of art in the general curriculum, it it is
then necessary to craft an alternate vocabulary of significance that will acknowledge the
cultural utility of art and be capable of generating interpretations commensurate with
the actual experiences of an array of audiences. It is with this goal in mind that I present
Deleuze and Guattari’s (1983, 1987) language of schizoanalysis and performativity and
Vilém Flusser’s (2000) discussion of the photographic apparatus with intent to
demonstrate their utility with regard to a range of photographic practices and genres.
Their key insights, which I will apply specifically to photography, may be summarized
as follows:

\begin{quote}
The truth of the matter is that social production is purely and simply
desiring production itself under determinate conditions. We maintain that
the social field is immediately invested by desire, that it is the historically
determined product of desire ... There is only desire and the social, and
nothing else (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983 p. 29).
\end{quote}

and,

\textit{Image} contains within it magic; \textit{apparatus} contains within it automation and

\textsuperscript{13} The “what is it?” game is a common aspect of my sophomore photo critiques whenever one of the
students ventures into this abstract terrain.
play; program contains within it chance and necessity; information contains within it the symbolic and the improbable. This results in a broader definition of a photograph: It is an image created and distributed automatically by programmed apparatuses in the course of a game necessarily based on chance, an image of a magic state of things whose symbols inform its receivers how to act in an improbable fashion (Flusser, 2000 p. 76).

Photography, in this idiom, is to be understood then as a machine or apparatus, fueled by and productive of desire. The connection of photography to desire is not new and has not always carried the most positive connotations. Among the statements of Susan Sontag that so attracted the ire of photographers and others whose professional identity was bound up in the medium was her association of the camera with the phallus, and her strong suggestion the act of photographing was a violation akin to rape. (1977) To counterbalance the anger of that statement, it is worth remembering that Sontag also declared; “in place of a hermeneutics we need an erotics of art” (1964/1982 p. 104).

Discussions of desire often turn to eros, but only because it is an arena of desire that is universally experienced, if not understood. The erotic is probably also the most easily exploited arena of desire, and though photography has plays a major role in this, it is hardly the most useful example for my purposes here. Desire in the lexicon of Deleuze and Guattari and in the sense which I wish to explore is a much more general phenomenon. Desire is paradoxical, perhaps unique in its dual nature as both fuel for and product of social interactions. As such, it is the quintessential illocutionary performative phenomenon, a source of social and cultural perpetual motion.

Desire is the set of passive syntheses that engineer partial objects, flows and bodies, that function as units of production. The real is the end product, the result of the passive syntheses of desire as autoproduction of the unconscious. Desire does not lack anything; it does not lack its object. It is rather, the subject that is missing in desire, or that desire lacks a fixed subject. Desire and its object are one and the same thing (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, p. 26).
As stated in the previous chapter, desire desires desire. Desire is the itch which when scratched only requires more scratching, or the “pleasure [that] delights in its own delight and so is endlessly convoluted” (Hein, p. 8).

Desire is the quintessential aesthetic motivator. It is the difference between my Monday through Saturday bowl of corn flakes and my Sunday morning cinnamon roll and espresso. It is a hunger, not for sustenance, which may actually – if temporarily – be achieved, but for pleasure, which is difficult to sustain and a taste of which stimulates a taste for more. Obviously the metaphor only holds so far; consume enough of anything and one will eventually become sated, if not downright ill. But once this passes, desire returns in its full force.

So how then do photographs function as desiring machines? Where does their performativity – particularly their illocutionary capacity – lie? Or, put another way, what are the aesthetics of the photograph? Here, the traditional distinction between utilitarian “documentary” photographs and “art” photographs actually provides a useful point of departure. In the modern idiom, as delineated by Szarkowski and all but unconsciously adhered to today, the former derives its significance primarily from its subject, while the latter is defined by its formal and material qualities. As we shall see, both of these may function as objects and producers of desire, of illocution.

Surrealism is arguably the art genre most associated with desire, and Rosalind Krauss’s (1981/86) analysis of that genre also provides insight into the desiring nature of photographs. Surrealism’s subject matter was often erotic – featuring objects of (typically male) desire and laying bare the psychological machinations of the desiring subject. Krauss finds a greater significance in Sontag’s (1977) simplistic observation that photographs, as miniaturized versions of reality, are inherently surreal, opening the door to a comprehension of desire that transcends eros.

Krauss posits that the most important surrealist formal strategy is “doubling.” “It is doubling that elicits the notion that to an original has been added its copy ... in being seen in conjunction with the original, the double destroys the pure singularity of the first” (p. 109). This may seem no more than a reiteration of Sontag’s earlier assertion that “Surrealism lies at the heart of the photographic enterprise: in the very creation of a duplicate world” (1977, p. 52), but Krauss goes on to equate this doubling with the
very essence of communication. Quoting at length from Levi-Strauss’s discussion of phonetic doubling, she declares it to be the very “signifier of signification” (p. 110).

Even at the babbling stage the phoneme group /pa/ can be heard. But the difference between /pa/ and /papa/ does not reside simply in reduplication: /pa/ is a noise, /papa/ is a word. The reduplication indicates intent on the part of the speaker; it endows the second syllable with a function different from that which would have been performed by the first separately, or in the form of a potentially limitless series of identical sounds /papapapa/ produced by mere babbling. Therefore the second /pa/ is not a repetition of the first, nor has it the same signification. It is a sign that, like itself, the first /pa/ too was a sign, and that as a pair they fall into the category of signifiers, not of things signified (Levi-Strauss, 1970, pp. 339-340).

The photographic analogy would hold that a photograph does not merely denote a subject, but rather denotes its subject’s connotative capacities. Or, to extend the analogy into the performative realm, the photograph denotes its subject’s nature as an illocutionary, desiring agent.

So how does photographic doubling signify desire? In the simplest sense, what is most often doubled is that which is most often considered desirable; an attractive human being, a beautiful landscape, an alluring product. Standards of desirability are both elaborated and disseminated through photographs (Berger, 1972). But more importantly, to experience the photograph is to experience its subject at a distance. It is this “spacing,” inherent to the photograph, “that makes it clear ... that we are not looking at reality, but at the world infested by interpretation” (Krauss, p. 107), and also intensifies the circular experience of desire; the photograph removes us even further from the possibility of fulfillment. Or it may, on the other hand, seem to bring us nearer to that which we know to be irretrievable in its absence. Persons, places and events transform themselves and even vanish with the passing of time, yet their photographic images remain frozen in a perpetual now. What has passed may also be present in a tangible form. Barthes (1980) noted, when writing of Alexander Gardner’s portrait of one of the Lincoln assassination conspirators, that the human subject of an old photo is simultaneously dead and about to die. Desire may also be manifested then as a
nostalgia; a yearning for the absent, the temporally and/or spatially displaced, the dead.

In the case of sports photojournalism – harking back to Ray, my student, for an example – the amplification of desire through photographic doubling and spacing is clear. The sources of desire in sport are multiple: the envy and appreciation of physical prowess, the “creativity” of the athlete, the athlete him or herself as “celebrity” (enhanced by the inaccessibility that goes with it), the temporary release from mundane experience, are but a few possibilities. All of these, perfectly effective in the presence of actual athletic performance, are repeated, doubled and redoubled via myriad photographic reproductions. The inaccessibility, the unknowableness of the athlete/celebrity for instance, is particularly exaggerated. If a fan hangs out at the stadium long enough, he or she may eventually meet his or her hero, may even eventually form an actual relationship with the object of their desire (in which case the locus of performativity would shift). But the fan does not truly desire the athlete/celebrity, but rather desires the experience of desire. Compounding the vicarious relationship with the athlete/celebrity, is the vicarious experience of the act which these gifted humans perform. Doubtless some armchair athletes participate in the sports they also spectate, but rarely at the degree of difficulty and risk represented in the imagery of sports journalism. The viewer is permitted to identify with the object of his/her desire and experience what they experience without training or coaching, without traveling to exotic locations and without the risk to life and limb that actual participation might entail. Also absent (obviously) are the various material perks that come with celebrity status, but this lack merely serves to further stimulate the production of desire.\footnote{As reflected by the popularity of ESPN and MTV programs in which sports and music stars show off their elaborate homes, cars and other ostentatious lifestyle accessories.} The virtual relationship and participation afforded by photography – in the form of magazine illustration, live game broadcasts supplemented with instant replay, and the infinite highlight reel offered by Sportscenter every hour on the hour – obviates the need for an actual relationship or participation and, by further distancing the fan from his object, makes these even less likely, thereby enhancing the production of desire.

The mechanism of sports photography, then, resembles that of pornography. If the viewer were to have an actual relationship with an actual person, that person, now
subject rather than object, would bring their own desiring mechanisms into the relationship, problematizing the desire of their partner. Physical dangers (STDs for example) are avoided through the virtual relationship, as are potentially negative social and legal consequences that might arise if such a relationship were actually played out. There is also the risk that the relationship will become sufficiently predictable, sufficiently territorialized, sufficiently constative, that the production of desire will altogether cease. For all these reasons, the double may then reasonably seem a more reliable source of desire.

In the case of sports photography, the performativity, the desiring production, contains an obvious element of escapism. But what of photojournalism proper; the news photo, the documentary image? In what way are these ostensibly informational, descriptive images performative? How do they participate in the production and consumption of desire? As in my first example, the doubling/spacing technologically inherent to the photograph is key. To reiterate Krauss, the informational photograph is not reality, but an indication of a world imbued with and insistent on the subtleties of interpretation. The photographer need not strictly attend to Barthes’ list of connotative mechanisms (1977 pp. 21-25) to successfully indicate significance. The very impulse to photograph is indicative of a illocutionary moment; the encounter with something that recenters the photographer’s attention and diverts it down a line of flight. The act of photographing is largely reactive; a response to stimuli within the visual field. That illocutionary stimuli functions as such due to an often invisible, virtually instantaneous act of interpretation on the part of the photographer. This moment in this place is important, or at least may be (we’ll let the editor sort it out later). While themselves productive of lines of flight, these stimuli are also reflections of an often rigidly territorialized set of conventions; a program (Flusser, 2000) akin to that which controls the repetitive function of factory machines. The cultural and political context the photographer works within, his or her religious faith, his or her moral compass, effectively predetermine the range of situations and subjects as well as the range of photographic effects to be employed. To the extent that a news photograph signifies anything in a semiotic sense, it signifies these contextual conditions. To the extent that it may be decoded, the text will likely reveal more about its author than the object of his or her gaze.

A semiotic decoding is not, however, the most common response to the informational
photograph. Indeed, much of any viewer response to photographs is not reflective and deliberate but reflexive and automatic. The design of the photographic machine or apparatus practically guarantees this. An apparatus is a particularly territorialized mechanical assemblage, which is directed by a program functioning in the manner of “a combination game based on chance” (p. 68). As in the throwing of dice, “all possible combinations are realized by chance, but over time all possible combinations are necessarily realized” (pp. 68-69). The range of possible outcomes are limited by the program – the six arrays of dots on each die – and each individual outcome is random, but over time the gambler will roll every possible combination from snake eyes to double sixes. All technologies, apparatuses, are created, programmed, to perform specific functions. Photographic technology was created as a pointing and naming mechanism by a nineteenth century European culture that equated cataloging with knowledge production, the index with understanding, and understanding with control (Grady, 1977/1982). The illocutionary function of informative photographs ends in a constative pointing/naming perceived as understanding. This, by extension, brings with it a perception of agency. Photojournalism and documentary photography create an impression that we are participants in events far larger than our immediate environments. As the documents they produce pass into history they lead us to believe that history is our story, even when the incidents history relates have had no direct relation to, or bearing on, our lives (Flusser, pp. 60-62). So perceived, the accuracy of photographic documents “can appear to be a question of technique and have nothing to do with inherently nonliteral tropes,” presenting “a ‘real’ world that preexists practice and discourse [and] seems to be merely a container for the lively activities of humans” (Haraway, p. 136). News photographs then, “are fetishes in so far as they enable a specific kind of mistake that turns process into nontropic, real, literal things inside containers” (p. 136).

When the viewer encounters a photograph, the first illocutionary event is connection; the photograph places the viewer in the footprints of the photographer, thus raising him or her to the status of “witness.” The 1986 explosion of the space shuttle Challenger, broadcast live, was “witnessed” by millions who then became victims of the tragedy. This sequence of events played out once again in the September 2001 attacks on New York City and Washington D.C. The photographic apparatus, enhanced for the global information age created “witnesses” around the globe who responded variously with jubilation or outrage depending on their cultural and political programming. Even
viewers – such as the students of the teacher/astronaut who died in the space shuttle incident and anyone in the vicinity of lower Manhattan on 9/11 – whose lives were actually tied to the event, are then appropriated by the apparatus; the photographic apparatus, as wielded by the news media apparatus. Cameras in the classroom transformed student shock, horror and grief into an historical event that other viewers were then invited to participate in and respond to. Cameras in the streets of New York delivered images of friends and family of the dead and the fortunate survivors attempting desperately to get through the apparatus from the other end, crying out for connection with a faceless America somewhere out in TV land. These examples show the apparatus functioning automatically, according to its program. This capacity to connect the viewer and move them to a state of emotional investiture in events may also however, be deployed as a deliberate strategy, as when the government of the United States released strategically chosen images of sophisticated weaponry making precision strikes on enemy targets during the 1991 Gulf War. Similarly, saturation distribution of images depicting the World Trade Center towers belching smoke and flames makes a non-visual threat like anthrax or smallpox tangible and provides all the justification necessary for the subsequent war on Afghanistan and the – apparently inevitable – war on Iraq.

Connection makes action possible. No explanation is necessary for the image contains all explanation within its rectangular boundaries; “in the image we see with our own eyes what the war looks like” (Flusser, p. 62). Printed text or recorded commentary are superfluous, for “the text simply consists of instructions as to how we are to see” (p. 62). The photographic image is capable of standing in for thought because, as an apparatus, it has been designed as a simulation of thought. “Not for example in the way one understands thought corresponding to introspection ..., but in the way ... (in which) thought consists of clear and distinct elements (concepts) that are combined ... like beads on an abacus, in which every concept signifies a point in the extended world out there” (p. 67). This is thought conceived of as a string of constatives, each denoting a corresponding referent. Through this conception of the photograph, not as a double or representation which signifies the requirement of interpretation but as a state of some thing in “the world out there,” the viewer is freed of the responsibility to author his or her own understanding of events. Thus armed with visual “facts,” the viewer need feel no constraint to respond – display the American flag at every opportunity, paint a placard and march in an anti/pro war demonstration, volunteer for military
service, send money to relief funds, bomb a mosque, attend a lecture on the “true” nature of Islam or whatever – each according to his or her personal programming. “The photograph gives rise to the impression that we are able to act in a historical way towards [events]. In fact, the actions described are nothing but ritual acts” (p.60). The ritual may be empty, or may have real consequences but is, in either case, reactionary and wholly territorialized within the program of the photographic apparatus. We are able to react only to what the apparatus presents within the limits of its programming.

The performativity of novelty is also territorialized by the distribution apparatuses of photographic imagery. Novelty is the source of illocution, information and, ultimately, significance (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, Flusser, 2000, Lotman, 1981). The shock of the new is among the most common illocutionary experiences. The great cultural success of popular mass media is largely a result of its capacity to deliver an experience that is continuously “new.” In so doing, what the mass media apparatus has done is make novelty itself redundant and empty. Images “permanently displacing one another according to a program are redundant precisely because they are always ‘new,’ precisely because they automatically exhaust the possibilities of the photographic program” (Flusser, p. 65). The arrival of new photographic images via newspapers, magazines, television and the internet – Sportscenter every hour on the hour, CNN around the clock, Time magazine every Friday, my local newspaper at 6:00 AM every day – is as regular and reliable as the sunrise, and the degree to which they succeed in their simulation of critical thought is so marked that an enemy who truly wished to throw our society into chaos might be well advised to target our image production and distribution apparatuses. The irony which makes such an attack unlikely is that to do so would deprive such an enemy of his/her own use of the apparatus, which in itself is value free, a ready container for the ideology of any party who may access it.

It is thus critical to understand that the programming of these apparatuses has taken place “automatically,” in accordance with other preexisting programs which have also

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15 Flusser states that such responses can be ascribed to “the last vestiges of materiality adhering to the photograph.” “If one sees (a photograph) in a newspaper ... one can cut it out and keep it, send it to friends with comments, or screw it up in rage. One thinks one is thereby able to react in an active way” (p.60). My contention is that even immaterial photographs delivered by mechanisms of the information society – television, the internet, grant license to, and even demand, viewer response because they render every receiver of the image a witness to the events it purports to contain.
arisen in a mindless, automatic fashion. While it is true that the informative photograph as programmed by a media apparatus which has in turn been programmed by a political apparatus, and it is tempting to credit authorship of these programs to oppressive entities called “imperialism, or “capitalism,” these phenomena are simply possible combinations in the chance operations of the apparatus. To ascribe these programs to “secret, superhuman powers at work ... that have maliciously created all these programs instead of taking it for granted that the programming proceeds in a mindless automatic fashion ... [is] a thoroughly disconcerting process in which, behind the ghosts that have been exorcised, more and more new ones are summoned up” (Flusser, p. 64).

The performative quality of sports and news photographs and the way in which they are territorialized that I have described above may easily be applied to other genres of photographic imagery. I have already specified the correlation between sports imagery and pornography, and it is clear that fashion photography deploys a similar illocution. Advertising photography in general relies on suspension of thought and generation of desire. Portraiture is sometimes another form of informative image, sometimes a fetish, depending on the identity of the viewer and his or her relationship to the ostensible subject.

But what about the photograph that has been defined by its maker as “art” – created according to and embraced by the institutions of the “art” apparatus? To the extent that it performs at all differently from the examples described above, much of the imagery existing under this rubric is incomprehensible to a general audience and produces little or no illocutionary effect at all, other than say, bewilderment, or perhaps more famously, the contempt and hostility expressed by social conservatives toward contemporary art that presents subject matter and ideas which they find objectionable (Hirsch, 1987, for example). The latter response is an aesthetic effect – possibly even the one intended by the artist – but not necessarily a part of the “art” world program of connoisseurship and consumption, though it may be absorbed into the programming of some art institutions – alternative galleries, performance spaces and other organizations operating out on the periphery – that find it useful.

Since the advent of modernism (and the invention of photography) “art” has looked to ever more rarified conceptions of concepts such as beauty and the sublime for its raisons
d’etre, reformulating and adapting Kant to contemporary purposes. These shifting definitions trace an arc from the metaphysical to the positivistic as described by Grady (1977/1982). “Art” photography today has constructed a comfortable niche for itself that embraces both; the positivism of photographic chemistry and physics as a conduit for quasi-religious truths. The calendar published by the Hasselblad corporation for the year 2002 – a twelve page advertisement for the company’s expensive line of camera’s and lenses, featuring photographs made with the same – demonstrates this science/religion yin/yang view of the medium, month by month. July is illustrated by the work of Sally Gall, with a photograph of the Yangtze River gorge in central China taking center stage. Accompanying the image is a statement in which Gall acknowledges the roots of the medium in nineteenth century science, but also lays claim to transcendent powers when the camera is held by able hands;

At its lowest level photography preserves what we see, it encapsulates the visual record of a historic moment. In the hands of the best, cameras capture much more than that. They give us images that hint at the things that lie below the surface, they summon forth again the emotions, the moods, that accompanied us in a particular place and time. Such images allow us to see what is hidden; they reveal the essence of a thing (2002, no page number).

Aside from whatever it is that separates the “best” photographers (Gall presumably among them) from the rest of us, what remains unclear is the nature of the “essence” of, in this instance, the gorge of the Yangtze. In fact, there is much more left unsaid than is revealed. The exploding population of China’s eastern cities and the increasing material aspirations of that population which have led to one of the largest hydroelectric projects the world has yet seen – the Three Gorges Dam, which will inundate a large section of the Yangtze gorge – goes unnoted. Also unmentioned is the fact that the Three Gorges project will not meet the energy needs of China’s rapidly developing economy. The impact of the project on the local agrarian economy goes without comment. What remains is a tourist postcard rendered in exquisite shades of

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16 Hasselblad’s editors provide no help; “And so what is it that makes a master? Is it the drive, the ambition, the burning need to convey, to communicate? is it the mastery of equipment, technique, and approach, a combination of expertise and inspiration? Who knows? perhaps it’s all these things, perhaps none. But, whatever it is, this quality, however hard it is to explain, however hard to achieve, it is easy enough to see” (introduction, 2002).
gray, which fails even to note that the attraction it presents will likely not exist by the
time a viewer might get the chance to act on a compulsion to see it for him or her self.

That said, such photographs do posses illocutionary capacities. Most are generated
through subject matter and their performance is similar to that of images belonging to
the genres previously discussed (you will recall, in fact, that these other images often
cross over into the art apparatus). Images ranging from Ansel Adam’s Yosemite
pictures to Robert Mapplethorpe’s exquisitely rendered homoerotic images produce
desire through the same mechanisms of doubling and spacing described earlier. But
something distinguishes them from other photographs with which they share subject
matter. What distinguishes Clearing Winter Storm (1944) from the thousands of
photographs made by tourists each year from the same vantage point? What
distinguishes Joe (c. 1980) from the gritty imagery of S&M publications? What makes it
possible to sell Adams and Mapplethorpe in galleries or at auction for thousands of
dollars?  

Understanding the very real difference between acknowledged “art” images and
colloquial photographs requires understanding that performativity is often *not* an
inherent quality of cultural works but is rather a conditioned response to phenomena
that the viewer has learned to regard as significant. “Art,” therefore, is not simply
whatever the artist calls “art,” but also whatever the viewer has been taught – by the
education apparatus, by the museum/gallery apparatus, by the visual culture apparatus
– to regard as “art.”

While human response to some illocutions appear to be hardwired psychological, even
physiological phenomena, others are clearly contextually dependent reactions to
learned values. “Art” is a clear example of the latter, as is amply demonstrated by the
evolution – from Kant to the present – of what an informed audience might rightly
consider beautiful. The emergence of the “art” photography genre in the early 20th
century (Solomon-Godeau, 1983) provides an excellent example and the career of
Alfred Stieglitz is perhaps its clearest instance.

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17 One obvious answer is the works’ existence within the art market apparatus, but this is outside the scope
of this work.

18 Phenomena which I have neither the space nor the expertise to consider here.
Stieglitz is arguably among the most important definers of contemporary “art” photography and American modern art in general. His role as impresario and champion of photographers such as Edward Steichen, Paul Strand and Charles Sheeler resulted in the transfer of favor from what we now know as “pictorialism” to the “straight” photography which eventually resulted in the canonization of the medium as a legitimate form of modern art. Stieglitz’s own tale of his making of one of the medium’s cornerstone masterpieces, The Steerage, provides a narrative account of the process of relearning the definition of “art” photography and the codification of its essential characteristics.

The Steerage was made in 1907 while Stieglitz and his family voyaged from New York to Germany aboard the luxury liner Kaiser Wilhelm II. Disgusted with life in first class among the “nouveaux riches” as he described them (1942/1966, p. 129), he sought refuge on a forward deck and soon found himself overlooking an area where third class passengers were passing time in the open air. Stieglitz response to the contrast between this environment and its occupants and his own quarters was expressed as follows:

On the upper deck, looking over the railing, there was a young man with a straw hat. The shape of the hat was round. he was watching the men and women and children on the lower steerage deck. The whole scene fascinated me. I longed to escape from my surroundings and join these people. (p. 129)

The urge to flee his social class was quickly replaced by more artistic concerns. In the

19 “Pictorialism” is the label applied to strategies employed by aspiring “art” photographers over a period of time ranging approximately from 1890 to the end of the First World War. Representative artists include Steichen, Robert Delaunay and Clarence White, who employed a variety of formal devices — soft focus, hand worked printing processes such as gum bichromate and platinum — intended to mimic the characteristics of recognized “art” media such as water color and pastels. Beginning with Stieglitz’s declaration of a “Photo Secession” in 1913 and as reflected in his own work and that of Strand and Sheeler, “straight” photography — which embraced the medium’s more machinelike qualities; sharp focus, smooth, glossy surfaces, extreme detail — emerged as an approach more in keeping with the work of the European modernists for whom Stieglitz played a major role in introducing to American audiences.

20 Approaching the problem from a semiotic point-of-view, Allan Sekula described this process in his essay “On The Invention of Photographic Meaning.” (1975) Sekula used The Steerage in comparison to a photograph containing similar subject matter and made in approximately the same historical moment (Lewis Hines’s Immigrants Going Down Gangplank, New York, 1905) to demonstrate the emergence of this alternate means of understanding the significance of photographic imagery.
A round straw hat, the funnel leaning left, the stairway leaning right, the white drawbridge with its railings made of circular chains – white suspenders crossing on the back of a man in the steerage below, round shapes of iron machinery, a mast cutting into the sky, making a triangular shape. I stood spellbound for a while, looking and looking ... I saw shapes related to each other. I saw a picture of shapes and underlying that the feeling I had about life. (p. 129)

Stieglitz dashed back to his cabin and returned with a camera to find that the people had not moved; the composition was as he had first seen it. One plate was exposed, carefully transported to Paris where a local photographer lent his darkroom for the processing. The developed negative was then returned to the safety of the plate holder for the return trip to New York.

_The Steerage_ received lukewarm reviews when first seen by Stieglitz's friends. One said, “but you have two pictures there, Stieglitz, an upper one and a lower one” (p. 131). “Thenceforth,” wrote the disheartened photographer, “I hesitated to show the proofs to anyone” (p. 131).

The problem, however, was not with the image but with the audience, and Stieglitz realized this;

finally in 1910 I showed them to Haviland and Max Weber and de Zayas and other artists of that type. They truly saw the picture, and when it appeared in _Camera Work_ it created a stir wherever seen ... de Zayas had taken a print to Paris to show it to Picasso. Picasso was reported to have said, “This photographer is working in the same spirit as I am” (pp. 132 - 133, my emphasis).

Stieglitz’s response to the initial performative prod of subject matter (“I longed to escape from my surroundings and join these people ...”), was to translate that subject matter into two-dimensional design (“I saw shapes related to each other ...”). The illocution he experienced is then transferred to the design (“I saw a picture of shapes
and underlying that the feeling I had about life ...”) with the expectation that viewers would experience the design in a manner proximate to the artist’s original experience of the subject.

Stieglitz was primed for this in ways most of his contemporaries were not. Steichen, who had been living in Paris, pursuing a painting career, had been sending news of the “modern” scene, and would eventually send the works of the modernists themselves in what would become the first exhibitions of European modernism in the United States – sponsored, of course, by Stieglitz. By 1910 many more American artists had made the pilgrimage to Paris, become enamored of what Braque, Picasso and their contemporaries were up to, and returned home to their own careers, fully indoctrinated in the new, formal, aesthetic. Finally, The Steerage had an appropriate audience. In 1910, this audience was small – even in Paris, let alone New York – and, despite the institutional success of modernism, the audience remains small to this day, consisting as it does of an educated few who frequent museums and and the galleries that cater to their educated tastes.

Even accepting that reacting to the illocution of form is a learned response, we may well wonder; how are such formal illocutions productive of desire? From Barthes’s (1977) invocation of jouissance to Sontag’s (1964) call for an “erotics” of art, the commonly utilized metaphors are those of sensory, and most commonly sexual, pleasure.21 Indeed, the success of design as a source of illocution in American culture is most visible within the genres – sports, fashion, advertising, entertainment journalism – which most resemble erotic imagery in their effect. While examples of the force of design exist in print media, film and video are the mechanisms which have embraced formalism with the most vigor and to the greatest illocutionary effect. All these genres depend upon their capacity to conjure a vicarious experience for the viewer by making them surrogate participant, owner, partner, mate of what/who ever is the ostensible subject of the image at hand.

– ILLOCUTIONARY AGENTS: SUBJECT, FORM AND CONTENT

The predominance in contemporary movies and television of a style of graphics and

21 Again, this suggests physiological phenomena that are beyond the expertise of this writer or the scope of this work to explore in detail.
visual editing and sound most often associated with music videos and computer games presents the most striking and clear evidence of the link between the formal and the erotic. The emergence of so-called “extreme” sports – mountaineering, skydiving, snowboarding, freestyle skateboarding and the like – provides content ideally matched to these formal vehicles. ESPN’s coverage of an “X Games” event blends images of immensely talented, physically strong and attractive young men and women performing remarkable feats in a montage of rapid fire cuts, choreographed to visceral, driving rock and roll, and framed with design elements rendered in intense, heavily saturated color. The experience of the representation of the event is clearly intended to mimic the physical experience of the event participants and, in all likelihood, exceeds the performativity of an audience experience of the live spectacle because it is capable of stimulating more senses in more ways via its available array of formal mechanisms. That this is so is underscored by the ceaseless technical innovation in sound and picture production that characterizes the industries which provide the hardware and software used in the production of these televised spectacles, for – as indicated previously – illocutionary capacity is subject to the territorializing effect of familiarity, thus demanding continual innovation and novelty.

The “art” world demonstrates the degree to which the performativity of form has been integrated into our common response to pictures, despite the fact that abstraction of the sort that characterized high modernism is now simply one among many picture making modes embraced by artists and institutions. The return to prominence of representational and figurative works, particularly in recently emergent genres of video, installation, digital media and – most evidently – performance, is in part, a reacknowledgement of the depth of our responses to pictorial doubling and spacing. Even accepting that our responses to these mechanisms are conditioned, their continuing power should come as no surprise since they are characteristic of the oldest known visual arts and have never been entirely missing from the history of art.

What is different – in the art of the western world at least – is the diversity of formal strategies which coexist without question or tension in the contemporary “art” world. In fact, it is this very stylistic pluralism which demonstrates the key role that formal considerations now play in the function of an artwork. The nineteenth century saw an institutionalization of particular genres of content and subject that went largely unquestioned – history painting, for example – along with an equally institutionalized
imposition of renaissance perspective, accompanied by minor debates over appropriate formal approaches\textsuperscript{22} that would seem odd in today’s “art” world. The pictorialist photography of Stieglitz’s Photo Secession had equally rigid specifications for content, subject and form, largely borrowed\textsuperscript{23} from institutionalized painting and adapted to the technological mechanisms of photography.

Today it is taken for granted that the artist is free to determine content and subject derived from his/her personal concerns and experiences, and that the form of the artwork, its medium and materials, is determined on a basis of its hoped for capacity – its performative capacity – to drive the viewer in directions desired by the artist. A sculptor might choose to execute a work in different materials (bronze? aluminum? stainless steel?) or apply a particular patina based on the illocutionary implications of those choices. Similarly, an “art” photographer will choose a camera (SLR or view camera? 35mm or 8x10?) and print media (gelatin silver? color coupler? platinum? giclé?) based on the different ways these mechanisms render images and the attending differences in the way the resulting images are received by viewers. These differences are not qualitative; that is, they do not determine the position of the work in some cultural hierarchy or define it as “art.” If all are productive of desire, then the choice between one or another is a choice between alternate routes and alternate destinations, of coordinates which plot whichever course pursued by the viewer as a consequence of the aesthetic encounter. The formal component of an artwork as desiring machine then, constitutes a navigational apparatus which determines the initial direction of the viewer’s flight.

While it is without question that the bearing of a particular line of flight may be a matter of political, social or even philosophical concern, as such, it remains perlocutionary; a third order performative. If our concern is to do things in the world, then we must inquire, not simply into the meanings of the works of others – which is to say their guiding ideology – but also into the workings of the apparatuses they have devised to contain and deploy these ideas. Sometimes the significant question is not “what does it mean,” but “what does it do?” Photography, like any technology, is, in

\textsuperscript{22} Ingres and Delacroix could argue, for example, over the relative importance of line versus color in painting (de la Croix and Tansey, 1980, p. 740), while neither would have dreamt of abandoning renaissance perspective, and both exemplified academic standards of content and subject matter.

\textsuperscript{23} see note 19.
itself, value free. That its invention is born of our values is not a fact that proscribes the moral effects of its potential applications. As human values change, so too might the applications of this or that technology shift. We may decide that we are better off without some technologies – the internal combustion engine as a mode of mass locomotion perhaps? – or we may simply decide to to use some for different purposes. We might choose to consider photographs as utterances – statements requiring interpretation – instead of evidence – raw facts. In such an instance the integrity of photography would be of little concern in comparison to the integrity of photographers. While the cultural and social apparatuses within which a technological apparatus is deployed are obvious areas for critical study, the medium can neither be deified nor scapegoated for the uses it is put to by its handlers.\textsuperscript{24}

What the technology does provide is a desiring machine, an illocutionary apparatus that may keep the culture in “active equilibrium” (Dewey), or if you prefer, socio-cultural/political non-equilibrium.\textsuperscript{25} While the illocutions they produce and the contestations that they represent is still largely territorialized within categories of race, gender and class, the pictorial technologies of the late twentieth century afford, if not actual participation, then a simulacra of such agency, to a degree heretofore unexperienced by individual citizen subjects.\textsuperscript{26}

Education is, in part at least, a process of cultural, social and political indoctrination. This is as unavoidable as it is true. For education to be anything more, if it is to be transformative, empowering and enlightening, then it must not be sufficient to simply come to know things, which is nothing more than rote absorption of received meaning. We must also address the matter of how that knowledge, those meanings have come into being. This is the question of what knowledge and the mechanisms that create it do. The teaching of photography, or any other art technology, ought to be no different

\textsuperscript{24} Donna Haraway echoes this when she states that the term “computers” “is metonymic for the articulations of humans and nonhumans through which potent ‘things’ like freedom, justice, well-being, skill, wealth, and knowledge are variously reconstituted. ‘The computer’ is a trope, a part-for-the-whole figure, for a world of actors and actants, and not a Thing Acting Alone. ‘Computers’ cause nothing, but the human and nonhuman hybrids troped by the figure of the information machine remake worlds” (1997, p. 126).

\textsuperscript{25} See note 7.

\textsuperscript{26} This territorialization of aesthetics within such hegemonic structures is indicative of significance of this performative vocabulary for visual culture studies.
than the teaching of engineering or biochemistry or rhetoric; it ought to be undertaken in order to impart an understanding of how the technology may be made to do the bidding of its operator. In fact, the performativity of photographs, as described above, may provide an argumentative analogy with which to illustrate a key bifurcation in pedagogy. The teaching performance may be (and often is) simply denotative, centering on the reproduction of received socio-cultural norms. Or might it be more productively understood as a connotative process? Might the presentation of well-established ideas and attitudes be undertaken as a doubling of those phenomena which signifies their own status as socio-cultural signs and products? To teach denotatively, as though meaning exists apart from a process of production is to reduce the operator to the role of mere functionary who exists in order to maintain the smooth, uninterrupted operation of a nested hierarchy of transparent cultural and political apparatuses and the programs which control their function. To foreground a connotative performativity – the production of illocution as opposed to mere constative knowledge – in one’s teaching makes the apparatus visible and its programs legible. This in turn introduces a new possibility into the game of chance that is social and cultural production; the possibility that the operator may rewrite the program and alter the course of the apparatus. The significance of such an opportunity may be understood simply by recalling that in any such game, while “all possible combinations are realized by chance, ... over time all possible combinations are necessarily realized” (Flusser, p. 69).

It is easy enough to say these things. My experiences in the classroom with students such as Ray demonstrate that it is much more difficult to actually put them into practice, let alone evaluate their effectiveness. These difficulties are, in fact, demonstrative of the aesthetic at the core of the pedagogical project, being, as it is, inescapably political – constituted of disparate, interacting purposes, predispositions, and assumptions, of teachers and students interacting within well established, if largely unexamined, hegemonic structures. Ray, two years after taking my class, is now a successful alumnus of Montana State University, employed as a staff photographer by a newspaper in Florida. The extent to which his university education is responsible for his success is not clear, but, on his terms, he is a success. And – who knows? – he may yet become successful on my terms. Transformative experience often does not come to us fully realized. What is apparent to me now as I reflect on my encounters with students such as Ray, is that student presuppositions are not merely constatives to be displaced with performatives. Each student is, in his/her own fashion, flowing along a line of flight,
and any attempt to simply supplant their course with one of my choosing disregards the illocution that the student brings to the pedagogical relationship. It is, as my struggles with Ray make clear, not adequate to simply tell students that they are engaged in the very construction of their world. Such a claim, so stated, is in itself constative, and sounds absurd on its face. But to facilitate a classroom experience that allows the student to discover this process lying beneath the surface of their own existing purposes and practice would constitute a truly performative pedagogical strategy.
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH AS PERFORMATIVITY, ART AS RESEARCH
One day not long ago, while waiting for everyone to gather for a faculty meeting, I mentioned in passing that I was working on a proposal for an experimental art class for non-majors which utilized a research paradigm. One colleague responded – less than charitably – to my description of the course by saying, “oh, you mean you’re trying to convince engineers and scientists that art is valuable.” Such comments can be disheartening. To be labeled an apologist for anything is to suggest that the subject in question needs legitimation, and in this case, artists would be justified in believing that their life’s work needs no such external validation. If one can get past the institutional insecurity behind reactions like that of my colleague, however, there are a number of questions here worth asking; namely, what is the role of studio art instruction relative to teaching in other areas of the university? What are the relationships of artistic practices to the intellectual and creative activities at the core of other academic disciplines? And finally, how and to what degree can those relationships be exploited as pedagogical strategies? My chosen strategy for the above mentioned course is one of analogy. Unlike metaphor which substitutes one thing for another (art is research) or simile which emphasizes likenesses (art is like research), analogy places its subjects in parallel, accepting difference as well as similarity, using the known as a point of entry into the unknown. As Robert Crease (1993) has observed,

Freud (who used them often) observed that analogies prove nothing, but they can make us feel more at home. They permit unfamiliar phenomena to be viewed in new ways by drawing connections, sometimes surprising ones, with things that are familiar; analogies are imagination-liberating, wrote Liebnitz. Human beings, remarked Italian philosopher of science Giambattista Vico, understand the unfamiliar by the familiar (p. 5).

My analogy superimposes the metaphors of scientific research on artistic production, purely as a pedagogical strategy, an illocutionary provocation. Crease describes such a strategy as “argumentative analogy,” in which the secondary term (scientific research in this case) brings a fully articulated structure of meanings to bear on the primary term (art production and, by extension, art instruction), “not in order to notice a parallel structure in a set of ideas associated with the primary subject, but to develop an appreciation of that structure in our perception of the primary subject” (Crease, p. 76).
My task as a teacher is to deterritorialize student preconceptions of our ostensible subject; opening a space in which they may expand and supplement those existing notions. The play of analogy provides an alternate lens that will project the presumably familiar object of study in an unfamiliar form, the mapping of which may result in unanticipated insights. I have chosen the research paradigm for my analogy because research is doing; it is performative in every sense. The researcher acts in response to the illocution lying in wait among the known facts of a discipline and performs a set of acts that may result in new understandings (Kuhn, 1970). For non-majors in my research class, the mere notion of making “art” provides a degree of illocution and the research analogy affords a footing on which they may begin to build. For my art/photography students, more accustomed – conceptually at least – to the idea of making pictures, it is the analogy itself is illocutionary being a way of speaking and thinking about activities that they may presume to already understand at some level or another. Both groups come to class bearing a concept of the subject inscribed by their cultural milieu, on the macro level (culture) as well as the micro (family, friends, teachers, etc.). In either case, the choice of scientific research is a response to the common preconception that the domain of knowledge is science. This is not done without awareness of the limitations of scientific methods. I hope, in fact, to stake a claim for art on the territory of knowledge which will put the “two cultures” (Snow, 1959) on equal footing to the benefit of both.

While preparing the administrative paperwork required to propose this new course and submit it for core curriculum designation, I was directed to examine the university’s core curriculum standards and guidelines (Montana State University, 2003a) and describe how my proposal for a research course in studio art addressed the points contained therein. I noted that there are two sets of these guidelines, a general criteria for the overall core curriculum and specific requirements for courses in each of its four disciplinary rubrics; natural sciences, social sciences, humanities and fine arts. The general specifications included points such as, “the human condition, both individual and collective, should be explored and analyzed,” “where feasible, courses should be interdisciplinary and provide the opportunity to link the subject under study to insights from other academic fields,” and “each course should have stated objectives for thinking, writing and speaking,” which my analogical strategy easily addressed. I was bemused to discover, however, that the disciplinary guidelines for fine arts core classes were little more than word for word reiterations of the general standards, with
occasional addenda such as “the arts are forms of nonverbal communication present in all cultures,” or “fine arts courses should make use of cultural references and other sources of inspiration in our world.” The fine arts standards were merely a simple assertion that, yes, we believe the arts do the things asked for in the university standards.

This then begs a question; if the institutional assumption is that courses in the arts perform the same general function as courses in other disciplines, then why do we also assume that each discipline has its own distinct object which each pursues in its own distinct fashion? Art and science are both creative activities used by human beings to explain their place in the world. Artists ask and attempt to answer basic human questions; who are we? Where do we come from? Where are we going? Though I doubt anyone in the university would dispute this observation, they would likely insist – as students in an honors seminar I recently taught did repeatedly – that art and science are distinct phenomena resulting from distinct activities with distinct processes and goals. Science is about knowledge, while art is about imagination. The structure of the Montana State University honors program, which titles its Fall seminar for incoming freshmen honor students “Knowledge” and offers its “Imagination” counterpart in the Spring term, reflects this distinction and supports the common student preconception. The program’s administrators give lip service to imagination – to the aesthetic – but fail to credit its necessary function in the production of knowledge. My students, allegedly the cream of the first-year crop, often became annoyed and impatient with any kind of critical analysis, with efforts to extract the knowledge from the art we were studying, insisting that such an approach was inappropriate for works of fiction or poetry. In one weekly staff meeting, some faculty criticized one text used in the seminar on the basis of its simplistic and facile deployment of a variety of complex social sciences. The associate director of the honors program responded by picking up the book, pointing to its spine and saying, “Look. Its says right here. This is a novel.” End of discussion. The world of the university neatly bisected into facts and fantasies.

The common classroom tendency is to place artworks in a supporting role, to describe their cognitive function as illustrative rather than meaningful in a direct way. Artworks (even those which are not created within the paradigm of realism), to the extent that they are considered to have a relation to knowledge at all, are understood to be representations of “states of things” (Flusser, 2000) – ideas, emotions, or other premises
which could also be expressed in other ways (ie. semantically). They are “illustrative demonstrations,” which may guide viewers “to a position from which they can recognize the rightness of a perspective on something” (Young, 2002, p. 80). This model acknowledges the illocutionary capacity of the artwork and the significance of that capacity to the work’s function, but largely by way of identifying the artwork as a mode of illustration superior to semantic modes. This still does not credit the artwork for any ability to create knowledge. In fact, when artists seek to engage realms of inquiry treated in, say, the sciences, the cognitive value of the work is often reduced to a state of dependancy on the primary discourse. “Since discourse-dependant artworks are simply statements about these matters, they have little cognitive value” (Young, p. 149). Such a proposition, however, fails to acknowledge that any discipline engaged in the production of knowledge is discourse dependent, at the very least to the extent that its meanings are embedded in the discourse of history (Gadamer, 1979/1989). Nevertheless, the segregation of artistic practice from scientific practice persists.

A university art department further compartmentalizes artistic production. Subdivided according to medium, its teachers largely occupied with the transmission of well established techniques which students will then mostly use for well established purposes. This is demonstrated by the course offerings and requirements of such departments. Based on technologies that teachers understand and students wish to utilize, such courses are defined by medium (ART205 - Painting, ART206 - Metalsmithing, ART207 - Sculpture, ART208F - Ceramics, ART209 - Printmaking) and degree of difficulty (ART315 - Advanced Ceramics, ART325 - Advanced Metalsmithing, ART333 - Advanced Sculpture, ART338 - Advanced Drawing, ART341 - Advanced Relief Printmaking, ART348 - Advanced Intaglio Printmaking, ART350 - Advanced Painting) (Montana State University, 2003b).

This reduction of art instruction to the transmission of constatives is profoundly ironic, contradicting as it does the commonly accepted notion of art as an expressive, even spiritual vocation. However common the conflation of art with an application of technical skills may be – and after the examination of typical undergraduate art course

27 “A composer or a poet could simply provide a semantic representation of his feelings or those of other people. He could say, for example, ‘I feel rather desolate from time to time’ or ‘Quite a lot of people nowadays seem to feel a languid insouciance.’ These statements do not, however, provide information about what it is like to experience the represented effect” (Young, 2002, p. 93).
offerings it would be difficult to conclude otherwise – popular mythology and basic self-image render it highly unlikely that a many artists would happily define themselves as technologists. Nevertheless, it is equally unlikely that they would be eager to call themselves “scientists,” or even accept the more general appellation of “intellectual.” They, to a degree at least as great as their scientist colleagues, are invested in the distinction between imagination and intellect. Their self-conception is built upon it. It is what makes them and their work valuable. While the professionalization of the arts in order to secure their place in the university is a well established fact (Singerman, 1999), art faculty have managed to create professional status for themselves, largely by insisting that imagination is a distinct way of knowing that may be accessed through immersion in the techniques and crafts of “art.”

Do artists do research? My guess is that many working artists would say no, preferring to define their work in more familiar terms of creativity or self-expression. Assuming for the moment that this is the case, then we might ask; if it does exist, does research in the arts only occur in the academic realm? Certainly it is in the setting of “higher” education, where research is a well established concept, that artistic practice appears most likely to take forms that are recognizable as research to our colleagues in other disciplines. Accepting this second premise, then we must ask what forms of artistic practice fit the criteria for research activities? Some recognizably artistic practices, like other activities employing other technologies, are based in the mass production of standardized products, while others are overt departures from such conventions. So while the commercial portrait photography of the nineteenth century is a research topic for art historians, the actual making of commercial portrait photographs, now as then, is clearly not research because it is (most commonly, leaving room to acknowledge the occasional specific deviations) a rote application of well established standard techniques. Nor would contemporary fashion photography fit the research model, even when it is technically innovative, because the picture is always being made for purposes external to research.

28 Such a conception is not incompatible with my basic performative model. So conceived, art making becomes ritual; a skillful repetition of acts and precise reproduction of forms which establishes and maintains the artists’ and audiences’ connection to forces greater than those at play in the material world (Navaho sand painting being one such practice with functions entirely apart from what anglo culture understands as “art”). The ritual generates illocution (the experience we understand as “spiritual”) via its nature and function as a “refrain” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). The function of chants and drumming and other repetitive practices in a variety of religious traditions are perhaps more familiar examples of this phenomenon. Such a conception of art and art making is at odds, however, with the epistemologically based, “professional” constructions that characterize art as an academic discipline (Singerman, 1999).
to the photographer/artist, not necessarily of his or her own device. The artist, in such an example, is a functionary (Flusser, 2000) to the portrait apparatus, or the fashion apparatus and his/her continued employment depends on his/her ability to further the goals of those apparatuses.29

So what sort of artistic practice could be described as research? Research often happens when art is made, with or without intent on the part of the maker. As a part of my art research class, I required the students to identify and interview a local artist whose work they found interesting in some way and to write a short essay interpreting the artist’s work as research. A common theme which emerged from these interviews was the inability of the artists to understand the question (which, it must be acknowledged is likely as much a function of the way my students framed it as of the artists own concept of their activity). Most, rather than speaking of the knowledge which resulted from the production of their work, spoke instead of the search for facts and skills which allowed them to make the work in the first place. Most, though not in such terms, defined themselves as technicians, as makers of things, not ideas, information or knowledge. Nevertheless, ideas, information and/or knowledge are still there for viewers to extract. It is a matter of the perspective from which the audience chooses to regard artworks and the uses they choose to put these works to.

Lacking much in the way of precedent, it is again necessary to draw analogies with other established academic disciplines in order to demonstrate such perspectives and purposes. In doing so I have identified (at least) three distinct forms of artistic research; scientific, or formal, anthropological/sociological, and literary.

1. Scientific, or Formal Research: investigations into the nature of materials and processes. A ceramist for example, who works with native clays and create glazes and finishes from natural materials (rather than driving over to the local art store, or placing an order with a regional supplier) must perform systematic experiments in order to discover what is possible with these unknown materials and to develop an approach (a

29 We are all, to some extent, functionaries. However, as Flusser has indicated (and encouraged), there are always artists who seek to work against the program of their apparatuses. In this manner, research is possible within such contexts. But yes, the burden is with the artist, who, lacking conscious effort to the contrary, is much more likely to simply replicate formulas that have been proven to succeed (slimming poses, long focal length lenses to compress long noses and female sexuality as a marketing device, to name but a few formulaic practices of the portrait and fashion apparatuses).
technology) that will make it possible to use those materials in a deliberate and expressive way. Many such artists base their entire production on these kinds of investigations, rarely utilizing a particular set of discoveries for long before moving on to develop another approach or use of the raw materials. This variety of artistic research came to a head in the 1950s and 60s in the form of completely nonrepresentational abstract painting and sculpture. Such artists totally discarded any utilitarian pretense of representation in favor of pure research into perception and the nature of materials. This is such an art historical commonplace that the recent Hollywood film, *Pollock* (Harris, 2000) depicts the critic Clement Greenberg declaring that painting is about flatness; the surface of the canvas and the nature of the marks made upon it, nothing more.³⁰ The point of the research is to create/discover new artistic forms, which are interesting and valuable in their own right, apart from any social or economic utility they may possess. To the extent that such work poses basic ontological questions as to the nature of “Art,” it may be conceived as philosophical research as well.

Looking further back in art history, to western Europe between the World Wars, the Cubist innovations of Braque and Picasso – and many other modernist “isms” emerging at the time – may also be seen as “scientific” experiments. Analytic cubism’s central premise was the attempt to picture an object or scene from multiple viewpoints simultaneously on a single canvas. Conventional art historical wisdom indicates that these efforts developed logically from earlier approaches such as Impressionism, in which painters like Monet were less interested in representing their ostensible subjects than in studying the visual effects of light and atmosphere. Monet painted the same subjects – haystacks, poplars along the Seine, the facade of the Rouen cathedral – over and over again, at different times of day in all manner of weather, the compositions remaining essentially static, altering color palette, brushwork and other elements of the craft as his disposal in an attempt to analyze the nature of light. Similarly, Cézanne’s subject matter was material for the study of basic perception, reducing volume to shape and color. Such works may be seen as experiments in human perception, a research program exploring the limits of visual representation.

2. Anthropological/Sociological Research: In this variety of research program, the

discoveries of artist-scientists described above are employed as tools. The refinement of those tools – the artist’s technical virtuosity – is significant only insofar as it provides a means to an end. The practice might range from very structured data gathering, to a more intuitively processed, less rigid survey of some socio-cultural phenomena. Again, the specific nature of the subject has its origins with the individual artist, who is conscious of established traditions and is working in response to or as an extension of the ideas of others, as does any good social scientist. Often the response may be to intellectual work in other disciplines. French academic painting of the European colonial provides a good example. Caught up in the popular wave of interest in middle eastern cultures (Said, 1978), painters traveled to Morocco, Arabia and the like, then returned to their studios to produce genre scenes of the Arab world. That these images illustrate and support the racist and sexist assumptions of their historical period does not discount their nature as research. Painting provided a means to study other peoples, a way to know them. The Victorian mind associated knowledge with identification and possession, and images – serving as pointing or naming devices – furthered the quest for knowledge as defined by the standards of the day (Wells, 1999). In a culture that accepts the immutability of facts, such knowledge is easily territorialized. Documentary photography displays such tendencies today, with National Geographic magazine providing the oldest, but by no means only, example. Issues of cultural bias and presumptions of objectivity are no more (and no less) a problem for the documentary photographer than for either his/her nineteenth century predecessors or anthropologists of any historical period.

Indeed, work of this sort finds illocution in such pitfalls. Claude Levi-Strauss, concluding his fieldwork in Amazonia in the late 1930s, asks himself why he has come all this way to do this work; is it merely an occupation like any other, or does it represent a more radical choice, which implies that the anthropologist is calling into question the system in which he was born and brought up? ... Through a remarkable paradox, my life of adventure, instead of opening up a new world to me, had the effect rather of bringing me back to the old one, and the world I had been looking for disintegrated in my grasp (1955/1973, p. 376).

It is at such a point – where basic human questions are engaged – that the work
becomes philosophical research. The artist him/herself may be consciously and
deliberately asking such questions – the great questions of philosophy; what can we
know? what ought we to do? what do we find attractive? (Eagleton, 1990)\(^{31}\) – or may
produce works (the motivation for which is irrelevant) that the viewer may utilize for
such purposes. I may, for example use the painting of Edward Hopper as an adjunct to
my inquiry into basic existential problems. I may find Hopper illustrative of problems
raised by Sartre. I may further observe that Hopper’s painting emerges out of similar
social and historical context – global war, global economic crises – as the work of that
best-known existentialist thinker. Or, with equal validity, I may find in Hopper’s
isolated figures in unadorned, largely empty spaces an invitation to contemplate my
own mortality, humanity and the nature of human relations – entirely without prior
knowledge of the existentialist philosophers. Was Hopper an existentialist? It scarcely
matters as long as the work may be used by someone to consciously engage such
questions.

3. Literary Research: The work of authors such as Annie Dillard suggests that poets and
novelists have a sense of their work as research which may be much more clearly
defined than that of visual artists. The Writing Life (1989) illuminates the inquiring
nature of its subject in prose that is emotional, intellectual and visceral by turns,
describing a process that would not sound unfamiliar to laboratory researcher or
theoretical physicist:

When you write, you lay out a line of words. The line of words is a
miner’s pick, a woodcarver’s gouge, a surgeon’s probe. You wield it, and
it digs a path you follow. Soon you find yourself deep in new territory. Is
it a dead end, or have you located the real subject? You will know
tomorrow, or this time next year.

You make the path boldly and follow it fearfully. You go where the path
leads. At the end of the path, you find a box canyon. You hammer out
reports, dispatch bulletins.

The writing has changed in your hands, and in a twinkling, from an

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\(^{31}\) Which may be understood to correspond to “the three mighty regions of the cognitive, the ethico-
political and the libidinal-aesthetic” (Eagleton, 1990, p. 366).
expression of your notions to an epistemological tool. The new place interests you because it is not clear. You attend. In your humility, you lay down the words carefully, watching all the angles. Now the earlier writing looks soft and careless. Process is nothing; erase your tracks. The path is not the work. I hope your tracks have grown over; I hope birds ate the crumbs; I hope you will toss it all and not look back.

The part you must jettison is not only the best-written part; it is also, oddly, that part which was to have been the very point. It is the original key passage, the passage on which the rest was to hang, and from which you yourself drew the courage to begin (pp. 3-4).

Examples of visual art forms analogous to literature are as numerous and varied as the range of writing that they might resemble. Particularly obvious are the culturally ubiquitous media of film and television. Their literary nature, their explicit narrativity, often overwhelms their visual nature, however, the obviousness of their literary function rendering them weak for the purposes of my analogy. There is more force to be generated from the examination of more unlikely forms. Again, academic art of the nineteenth century provides clear examples in the form of history painting and monumental sculpture. The creators of such works sought to imply their narratives or project their allegories without the movement and sound of film and television. They began, like their literary counterparts, with an idea, a vision, which, once the first mark was made on the canvas, was adjusted, as Dillard puts it; “not to the world, not to the vision, but to the rest of the paint” (p. 57).

Looking for more contemporary examples, we might take poetry to be the literary genre that visual art most resembles. The primary functional characteristic of a poem is affective – illocutionary – more so than semantic and informational. The poem often “does” more than it “means,” as do many visual artworks. The sequential photographs of Minor White have a deliberate relationship to poetry; a creative form that White also explored (White, 1978). Like the component words of a poem, the individual photographs in a White sequence do not have a relationship that is necessarily obvious or rational. Their power derives from the juxtaposition of imagery they present.

32 The students in my department’s film program put as much or more energy and care – and rightly so – into their screenplays as they do their camerawork and editing.
Photography also provides examples of narrative and allegory which are less obvious than film and TV. Duane Michaels also works in a sequential mode, but, unlike White, he uses multiple images to tell small stories; often clear analogs to short stories and fables.

When we consider the work of artists such as Sherrie Levine or Robert Heinecken we find a form of visual non-fiction, which the respective authors clearly intend as social criticism. Again, the illocutionary mechanism is juxtaposition. Levine frames photos of fashion models in the familiar silhouettes of Washington and Lincoln. Heinecken screenprints a newspaper photo of a South Vietnamese soldier carrying the severed heads of Viet Cong agents over a two-page spread of fashion magazine advertisements. As members of the interpretive communities (Fish, 1980) that intersect in these works – consumers, Democrats, Republicans, hawks, doves, feminists, patriarchs – we acknowledge the re-presentation – the doubling – of these disparate images, combine their formulas, and recognize the critique that is explicit in their combination. They are simultaneously thesis statements about, experiments on, and, when read by the viewer, interpretations of socio-cultural phenomena.

– ART KNOWLEDGE/ART AS KNOWLEDGE

Art is a multidimensional hermeneutic encounter which is to say that it begins in the imagemaker’s experience of the universe and his/her interpretation of that experience. That interpretation then, constitutes an hypothesis about the artist’s relationship to the world (or at the very least, some aspect of it). The work of art itself is, then, that hypothesis made manifest in material form. This is experimentation. Media and materials are technologies employed to test the thesis, much as a biologist uses a centrifuge or a physicist uses a particle accelerator. Each individual art work is an experimental trial. Periodically these trials are presented to an audience, consisting primarily of peers in the artist’s chosen medium, but often reaching a more general public as well (in a way that science rarely does), in the form of exhibition. These presentations are juried, with varying degrees of rigor depending on the venue, in a manner similar to the vetting of scientific publications.

The first audience – prior to public exhibition – is the artist him/herself. The artist, like the scientist, must interpret the data gathered via his/her experimental trials and
measure the original thesis against that data. Here the artist reaches a hermeneutic fork in the road; does the data support the original hypothesis or does it suggest an alternate theory? Either conclusion may be satisfactory and may result in modification of the experimental model – the formal approach to the creation of individual artworks. If the hypothesis appears to hold, then changes in the next trials will subject it to new questions. If the hypothesis collapses, or another, more compelling idea – perhaps not even related to the original – emerges, then the next trials may shift the emphasis of the research in new directions. This may go on through numerous cycles of experimentation. When the artist becomes comfortable with his/her conclusions and the hypothesis has been consolidated over the course of sufficient testing, the work is ready for public exhibition (or, more precisely, the artist is ready to pursue such opportunities, knowing that jurors, curators, dealers, critics and the like may very well reject his/her efforts).

Once it reaches the gallery space, the work becomes in itself an experience for the wider audience. This is what I mean when I say that art is a multidimensional hermeneutic encounter. What began as a test of a thesis about the artist’s relationship to his/her world becomes a question about the viewer’s relationship to that same world as perceived by the viewer. What began as an interpretation must now be interpreted. It now becomes a potential catalyst for the viewer’s own research. To the extent that it is successful in this role, it has become an illocutionary agent, generating multiple paths of inquiry for multiple viewers, each according to their own context and concerns.

Note that it is the artwork that manifests this performativity, not the artist. The artist is responsible for this illocutionary effect only insofar as he/she is responsible for the material presence of the work. It is the work that moves the viewer. The artist may represent a particularly specific interpretive community (Fish, 1980), but he/she in no way holds the key to the significance of his/her work. The artist occupies a double space here in that he/she is both creator of and subject to the work; for the he/she becomes an audience at the conclusion of each trial; required – as is any other viewer – to interpret his/her own production and, again, like any other viewer, subject to potential deterritorialization. “Art lies in fulfillment,” says Gadamer (1986-85, p. 391). But by fulfillment Gadamer means not the simple completion of the work, but the recognition of meaning in it (Baker, 2002). The work of art is a “text” then, in all the rich complexity that Barthes (1977) brought to that term; infinitely plural in its significance,
subject to no external authority, even that of its creator. The recognition of this condition is the fundamental aesthetic experience. “The basic hermeneutic experience (in the strong sense of Erfahrung), Gadamer will argue, is the experience that our anticipations of understanding have been shattered” (Grondin, 2002, p. 44).

There are obvious limitations to this analogy. We may, in fact, consider ourselves fortunate that the actual lived experience and practice of artists does not precisely correspond to the sciences as rigidly practiced in educational models shaped to serve technological and economic development. These distinctions may be understood as variations of style or of dialect if you will rather than essential contradictions between kinds of practices. Or perhaps it is more accurate to think of them as indications of basic theoretical differences at the foundation of specific acts of inquiry. The role of theory is perhaps the most apparent distinction between the scientists, who foreground it, and artists, who generally find it superfluous at best and destructive at worst. Among the most common objections my students raise is an assertion that they experience no need for theory in order to create, and that they are uncomfortable with analysis after the fact, preferring to enjoy their work and that of others purely on its own terms. The first of these is absolutely true and the second is a matter of personal preference. There is nothing to say that an artist’s motivations need be overtly understood as anything more than intuited urges if that is the mode the artist favors. Nor is it necessary for a viewer of an artwork to be engaged in heavy intellectual lifting in order to quantify the benefit derived from that experience. To paraphrase Rorty (1989); there are as many ways to do and think art as there are individuals to do and think it. Bearing in mind however, that – as Einstein reminded a young Heisenberg (Rhodes, 1988, p. 130) – theory defines the questions we may ask and the phenomena we may observe, these preferences are themselves partially descriptive of what may be the art work’s operative hypothesis. In any case, there is operative theory behind motivations and interpretations, whether they are explicitly stated or not.

The thesis might, for instance, be metaphysical in nature; founded in a conception in which the universe must remain, to some degree, rationally unknowable. In this view, it may not be possible to fully comprehend, before the fact, what motivates creation. Similarly, the artist’s practice may be based in the not uncommon dualistic conception that holds art/science, knowledge/creativity to be fundamentally opposed practices and phenomena that compliment and balance one another, but do not interact – a
position that, as I have indicated, I find common among my university students, particularly those majoring in the sciences or engineering. In this view, the entire theory-experiment-analysis-conclusion process might seem inappropriate when applied to art, which properly belongs to the realm of imagination, has emotional causes and effects at its center and is distinguished by its limitless range of interpretation and significance, free of the bounds of rationality. Such a view might indeed hold that art is an arena for the irrational, and any attempt to explicate it can only diminish its force and value.

Or, it may simply be that the artist in question does not yet know him or herself to such a degree that would allow the derivation of a coherent set of questions. He or she may have not yet adequately surveyed the field, may not yet have enough background information to give voice to their own purposes or to have a sense, either of what is possible, or of what remains to be done. The situation would be analogous to that of a young student of science casting about for a specialty, particularly in our contemporary moment where disciplines evolve and morph with increasing frequency and pace. Whatever the case, the phenomenon of the unknown or unknowable hypothesis is due largely to an absence of analysis and introspection, both of which may follow after experimental trials have begun. Or not. Again, there is nothing holding any artist to such a requirement – unless of course, they are so unfortunate as to stumble into my classroom and be registered for credit.

Yet another problem are the many practices that a lay audience might define as art that are in fact the production of fixed constatives, that rely on the standardized application of well established techniques and produce consistently recognizable products. These products, from a semiotic standpoint are zero information statements (Lotman, 1981). They are wholly familiar and immediately recognizable within the social and cultural context in which they have been created. They tell their audience things they already know. They present no new knowledge or experience. Flusser’s (2000) articulation of the photographic apparatus operated by photographer/functionaries is a paradigmatic case. To briefly summarize; the camera is a technological apparatus that operates according to a program – f/stops and shutter speeds, focal length and depth of field, film speed and photo chemistry. The program determines what the apparatus may produce; in this instance, out pops perfectly realized renaissance perspective. The photographer/functionary utilizes the camera program according to a hierarchically
superior program – a set of conventions we may variously recognize as journalism, advertising, fashion – which are in turn determined and manipulated by programs operating further up the hierarchy – free market capitalism, representational democracy, conventions of race, class, gender, etc. Such instances of artistic production – the creative mechanisms of visual culture – actually provide a further adjunct to the research analogy, standing as they do in the same relation to “art” as does technology to science (Heidegger, 1936/1971); the latter being typically thought of as “pure” research – engaged in the creation, or discovery, if you prefer, of new knowledge – whereas the task of the former is to systematize and apply the products of science to utilitarian chores. Science/research often leads to the development of technologies, but the mere application of an existing technology is not a scientific practice. Science is productive, technology is reproductive. The clichéd and sentimental “western” art, for example, which predominates in the galleries of my hometown main street is technological in a manner analogous to my microwave oven, even as the latter denies the existence of the lifestyle represented by the former. The oven is a useful device because it heats my soup in a quick and consistent fashion, thus allowing me the time to contemplate the more esoteric purposes of my life. “Western” art is a similar mechanism in that it reproduces existing popular myths of the the “Old” west that sustain the purposes of many residents of the “New” west – city dwellers from the coasts and midwest who vacation there, or who purchase second homes there and generally play at being pioneers. This is not to say that there is nothing aesthetic about such artworks. Their illocution is, however, proscribed to a large extent, territorialized within distinct boundaries which neither artist nor audience wishes to transgress. Wildlife art, cowboy art and Ansel Adamsish landscape art all succeed with their target audience precisely because they are sentimentalizing. Images in these genres are not windows on the world. They are, rather, mirrors in which we see ourselves. In the sentimentalized representations of wildlife art, for example, we see ourselves as we wish we to be but know we are not yet and secretly fear we will never be. We don’t want to see predators soaked in the blood of their kill, we don’t want to know that chimpanzee groups sometimes kidnap each others’ young because we do not wish to confront what is base in our own behavior.
After over twenty years of experience as a student and teacher in the photography programs of five different colleges and universities, it is apparent to me that, while theoretical vocabularies of knowledge production have made their way into the jargon of university art instruction (Singerman, 1999), once in the studio the tendency is to fall back into the mode of object reproduction, rather than knowledge production. While both productive and reproductive practices are engaged in at various times in various contexts, the tendency is to fall back on reproduction, since it is – as the dean of my college freely confessed one day – a far easier way to teach. Some of these programs have been housed within art departments, some exist within their own administrative structures inside a larger college, and some are unsure just where they belong. In each case – three state universities, a spendy private college and a community college – the curriculum has been overwhelmingly technical, and attempts to address photographic practice as a form of research have been sporadic at best, even at the graduate level, and what, if any, role they play within the general curriculum has been vague. The operative metaphor is one of “literacy.” There are well defined bodies of facts within each academic discipline and a corresponding set of skills which will allow graduates to function a productive members of the society. Reading, writing, speaking, mathematics are all necessary skills. Knowledge of key scientific facts and a reasonably broad based familiarity with the arts serve to enrich each person’s experience of the world. Or perhaps this learning serves to instill proper respect for scientists and artists within the lay population? Whether understood as altruistic or self-serving, academic disciplines are thus conceived as technologies insofar as they represent structures and methods which may be applied to the task of living. If a student departs into the world, bags fully packed with pertinent and useful knowledge, if they have become adept technologists, then they have the best chance of success in life that we as educators can possibly give them. Teachers are likewise technologists in such a scenario, the best being able to most effectively transfer their own accumulation of skills and knowledge to their understudies.

In any case, these objections ought not prevent us from thinking through the research

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33 When I interviewed for my current position at Montana State University, the Dean of the College of Arts and Architecture asked me where I believed the photo program was most appropriately housed. I was later to learn that this question had been a point of some contention within the college. At MSU photography has always been combined in its own department with the film school, first as the Dept. of Film and Television, then later becoming Media & Theater Arts after absorbing a theater program that was in danger of complete extinction. With no clear majority, some faculty favored a move to the School of Art, while others preferred the status quo.
analogy and applying it to curricular structure and pedagogical practices. What I am describing is less a way to do art than a way to talk about what artists do, and to fit that discussion within a generalized sphere of intellectual inquiry. At the present moment, with budgets under strain at best and shrinking at worst, it should not be surprising if administrators question the necessity of an art on their campuses. Even without such external pressures however, they are much more willing, if not to question the place of the arts in the core curriculum, then to at least ignore it. Finally able to attend a meeting of the “New Core” advisory committee, at the end of a semester in which class conflicts made regular participation difficult, I noted, for example, that the Fine Art core designation was entirely missing from the latest version of the proposed curriculum. I wondered aloud, half in jest, if that absence was related to my absence from the committee, only to have the chair reply, “yes,” without a trace of humor. There is much discussion but little debate, for example, over the need for art majors to be “science literate,” while the question of “artistic literacy” for science majors is rarely raised. When the question is addressed, as in the DBAE model for K through Twelve art education (Clark, Day, Greer, 1987), it is likely to be defined by a list of artists and artworks of importance to a particular tradition and the key terminology of that tradition’s discourse. Or, as in the emergent field of visual culture studies it may be identified as an ability to deconstruct the artistic trappings of consumer culture for its ideological content (Duncan, 2001, Freedman, 2000, Tavin, 2001, B. Wilson, 2000, M. Wilson, 2000, etc.). These are both in keeping with the well established “forms of knowledge” educational paradigm (Hirst, 1974) and reminiscent of the simple-minded literacy touted by E.D. Hirsch (1987). Alternatively, when collapsed into “visual” literacy, it becomes a developmental phenomenon (Sinatra, 1986) and as such is more a proper object of research in that field than an educational objective.

My conception makes a technology of literacy; shifting its position and status from goal state to means. What art has to bring to the general education equation is close contact with the illocutionary – the rush of as-yet inexplicable inspiration, the creative leap, and an experience of negotiating the resulting line of flight it. An experience in the arts allows all students to be scientists in a very fundamental sense; creators of knowledge, not simply technicians of the already possible. As it concerns art departments, a research paradigm offers the promise of students who are not merely craftspeople but also thoughtful individuals who reason from their specific experience towards more generalized expressions which encompass, not merely their own joy, but also its
greater significance as something shared with their fellow humans. This they then may track back to cultural sources and forward toward broader social consequences.

How all this looks in a classroom depends to some degree on the audience for the particular class. Whereas if the students are non majors, taking the course for elective or core credit, then the commonly assumed goal is to broaden their intellectual perspective by demonstrating connections to their chosen fields of study and alternate formal approaches to intellectual life. The notion of technical mastery does not apply. Indeed, though formal characteristics become an important point in the evaluation of the research program, material virtuosity – talent if you will – has no part in the evaluation of this group of students. The focus of the class is conceptual; the goal an understanding of knowledge as an aesthetic phenomenon which emerges from various and disparate cultural practices. If the students are art majors, however, then, while the basic purpose of the course is the same – to broaden their intellectual perspective by locating their chosen activity in a larger intellectual context – it must also be imbedded in the more traditional concerns of technical instruction. The differences are ones of sequence and degree rather than kind. My experimental core course begins, for example, with hypothesis formation, whereas I introduce this research aspect around mid-term in my photography majors’ courses, coinciding with the assignment of a final, independent project which encapsulates the overall course content and directs it at each student’s specific interests.

In either context, the problem of hypothesis formation is the big one. I frequently hear photo majors, often as late as their senior year, lament that they have no ideas or are uncertain where others find ideas. This I understand to be a basic unfamiliarity with their own personal theoretical base; the values and assumptions that define them as members of a society and also construct them as individuals. Such values and assumptions are often as transparent as the air we breath and are acquired as unconsciously as we draw breath, but they also, to reiterate Einstein, define the limits of the questions we are likely to ask and the evidence we are able to gather. Developing an ongoing awareness of them is the first step in any process of inquiry.

Hypothesis formation is especially difficult in the arts because today – unlike earlier periods in western history – there are no longer institutional boundaries imposed on what subjects the artist may or may not treat. The common practice of reviewing
existing literature obviously still applies, but simply surveying the literature of art or even of a specific medium is unlikely to provide focus. Art is probably better understood as a set of processes than a set of disciplines. The “disciplines” of art are an array of technologies from which the artist may chose his/her tools. Only if he/she is a pure formalist do they constitute fields of inquiry. To assume otherwise would be analogous to assuming that a student chooses to study chemistry because he/she likes the lab glassware. There doubtless is a parallel with the individual who becomes a biologist because they like looking at things through microscopes, but even so, the decision to become a biologist is not made until he/she decides what to put under the microscope.

Unlike the student of science, who may pick his/her subject from a field conveniently subdivided into biology, chemistry, physics – each of which is then subject to further compartmentalization and specialization – the student of art must look outside their specific art training and make their choices from a vast array of potential subjects. There are other contexts in addition to those of the art school and/or art world – historical, philosophical, political, even scientific – that may contribute to the specific knowledge produced by the research program. In addition, and of much more immediate utility for the student, there are subjects that constitute his or her personal history; the immediate life experiences – unique to the individual and relevant to a broader audience because they are human – that each student brings to the classroom. With such an array of possibilities before them, it is no wonder students are bewildered and retreat into technique, which provides, at least, easily recognizable borders to probe.

Approaching studio instruction from within a research metaphor is, in part, an attempt to show students how they might begin to impose order on the apparent chaos of potential research agendas they might pursue through the various media with which they are presented.

I have, in the last year, initiated an idea generation exercise as part of the final project assignment for my photography majors. The exercise is identical regardless of the technical basis for the course, being employed in exactly the same way for my sophomore black and white photo students as for the juniors who are taking my digital imaging course. I begin by asking several simple questions and asking the students to free associate answers, giving them a couple of minutes to compile short lists. They are encouraged to write down their first thoughts, in single words or short phrases,
without judgment. If they are consciously pondering their responses, they are working too hard. The questions I have used are large in conceptual scope but simple in form (what do you love? What do you fear? What do you wonder? What do you dream/hope? What do you know/what are you certain of?). In between questions the students are asked to share their first responses. When everyone has compiled three or four answers to each question, I then ask them to create further lists from the existing ones; lists of pairs of terms or ideas. Specifically I ask them to make one list of pairs that appear to belong together and another of pairs of terms which seem in conflict. After a few minutes dedicated to this pairing, the exercise moves to its next stage in which I ask the students to volunteer a pair of terms from either list. These are written on opposing sides of a chalk board or some such, and I then ask the group to volunteer image words that each term in the pair connotes. Which might result in something like Table 2 (below).

With these lists on the board, it then becomes a matter of making connections between the two columns and these new combinations provide the core components of an image. While the exercise is played out beginning with combinations which seem natural, I soon progresses to and focus on the apparently oppositional pairs. The obvious matings tend to produce zero information statements, constatives, dead metaphors, clichés – pictures already seen and well understood. The unlikely combinations – piano/car crash, grim reaper/picnic, coffin/garden, Christ/piano – even if they seem forced, are the more provocative, the most performative.

Idea generation exercise: image words for combination

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARENTS</th>
<th>DEATH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HOME</td>
<td>DARKNESS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GARDEN</td>
<td>HOSPITAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOTHER</td>
<td>CAR CRASH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FATHER</td>
<td>GRIM REAPER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROSES</td>
<td>CHRIST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PICNIC</td>
<td>LILIES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIANO</td>
<td>COFFIN</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.
This essentially is an exercise in conceptual montage, its emphasis on combination because within the juxtaposition of terms resides the root of possible significance. While any single term from either column has the capacity to conjure images, these are most likely familiar locutions. Introduction of contrast supplies illocution and moves comprehension into new realms. With the concept of supplementarity Derrida (1970/1992) has suggested that any perception of meaning, manifested even on the most fundamental level as an awareness of presence, is a function of juxtaposition. If all signification is understood as a system of differences, then meaning is the result of play among contrasting signifiers and not a matter of essences. The recognition of significance depends upon the introduction of yet another term which can be distinguished from previously employed terms. André Breton is reported (apocryphally perhaps) to have defined surrealism as “the chance encounter of a sewing machine and an umbrella on a dissecting table.” Derrida proposes that not only our dreams but even our waking reality depends upon such unanticipated supplementarity.

As it foregrounds supplementarity, art-as-research serve’s to illuminate processes of inquiry in general. Connections are discovered, relationships perceived, well before conscious comprehension is achieved. The more unfamiliar these structures, the greater the likelihood that a new conception will emerge. Such a process, though proceeding necessarily backwards, after the fact of reconception, is illustrated by Alan Lightman in *Einstein’s Dreams* (1993). This collection of fictional thought experiments imposes many past and current theories of space/time on the familiar, perceptual, Newtonian universe, yielding images of startling beauty. In one world, time slows as one moves away from the center of the earth, prompting residents to not only build on the highest heights but to construct their homes atop towering stilts in an effort to extend their lives a few seconds. In another, every structure is in motion since time slows as motion accelerates. In yet another, time’s passage is gradually suspended as one moves toward the center of the community.

Once the problem of hypothesis formation has been addressed and students have begun to cut through the fog of their own acculturation and identify their own peculiar fascinations\(^{34}\), then we may turn attention to the matter of experimental design, which

\(^{34}\) Annie Dillard has written that the writer looking for subjects ought to concern him/herself, not with what he/she loves best but with that which he/she alone loves at all (1989, p. 67).
is research jargon for selection of tools and materials and consideration of the formal characteristics of ones’ artwork. This sequence is not rigidly cast. My photo majors, in fact, actually begin to design experiments before they develop theses simply because it is likely the doing which has attracted them to my classroom in the first place, but also because technical proficiency is the result of repetitive trials and the sooner they begin, the better. On the other hand, non majors, such as those in my experimental core course, have, as previously indicated, no expectation of virtuosity, making it more reasonable to approach the questions of media and form from a more abstract perspective.

The key principle common to both groups of students is that tools and materials, in addition to their obvious practical utility, bring with them additional levels of signification and performativity. Across centuries of application, different media have acquired different sets of common connotations which then also provide further opportunities for supplementation and illocution when added to the connotative qualities of the images they are used to render. This principle applies equally to established classical media as well as more innovative and unfamiliar techniques. Indeed, one such example of media specific connotation is the way in which varying levels of prestige are attached to various material manifestations of the traditional plastic arts. Painting is particularly hierarchized – as a perusal of any auction catalog will immediately demonstrate. Works executed in oils are most valuable, hence most prestigious, while acrylics and watercolors fall somewhere further down the scale. Painting in general commands greater esteem than do printmaking processes, which in turn are valued higher than photography. But material and formal choices also deploy connotations beyond conventional art world value judgments. Imagine a figurative sculpture, cast in bronze; patination choices are obviously made based on the desired effect (however intuitive these decisions may often be), but imagine the deliberate illocution generated by casting the same figure in different materials – how different would the response be if it were rendered in aluminum or clay, stainless steel or gold? The subtle plurality of effect resulting from such formal variations may be seen in the oeuvre of Rodin, in which, for instance, versions of his best know works survive in forms ranging from clay and plaster maquettes to, finished marbles and bronzes (Krauss, 1986).

In direct relation to material choices are the stylistic decisions made in the course of
utilizing materials. Terry Barrett (2000, pp. 119-126) has characterized a number of criteria for judging artworks – realism, expressionism, formalism, for example – that are recognizable largely on the basis of their visual style. If crafting an image is a problem of juxtaposition of its elements, then the manner in which the elements are combined works on the viewer in its own distinct fashion; is your photomontage actually a collage, with its edges and overlaps and joins distinctly visible, or have you chosen to approximate the seamlessness of the straight photograph via darkroom or digital techniques? Which brushes do you favor for your oil paintings? How big are your canvases? Do you paint on canvas at all or favor smooth panels? Do you prefer hot or cold press papers for your lithographs? White, buff or somewhere in between?

Art students often have these choices thrust upon them by the requirements of a specific class – my sophomores are limited to black and white photo materials and 4x5 inch view cameras which must operate on a tripod. My juniors must funnel everything they make through a computer. Dealing with non-majors is somewhat more problematic from an instructional standpoint, since their expertise may vary widely and the facilities available may place limits on their range of choices as they design their experimental models, but simple tools such as point and shoot cameras, children’s watercolor sets, charcoal and pastels and relatively undemanding techniques such as collage and assemblage give them access to a wide range of stylistic and formal possibilities. One might also consider the coming ubiquitousness and increasing accessibility of the personal computer and digital imaging software as offering truly sophisticated tools to a growing array of potential image makers. The hardware and software capabilities of the Apple® iMac™, for example, make every owner a potential multimedia artist and web publisher.

The larger middle segment of the non-majors course is occupied by the design and execution of artistic experiments with the direction and progress of these to be determined by each individual’s needs. This takes place, not only in consultation with the teacher, but also in the form of progress reports in which the students share the origins of their research programs and the rational for the form of their experiments with their peers. Every artwork is the product of a triangular relationship between subject, concept and media. Each student is likely to have clearer notions of one or two of these components than the others. In almost every case, the combination of two will lead to the third, sometimes as a result of conscious exploration and contemplation,
sometimes as a result of pushing the experiment forward, even though it lacks a clear
hypothesis. The latter is, I believe, a very common experience for working artists and
characterizes much of their practice. With a subject in mind and a medium in hand it is
possible to proceed without a conscious concept, having faith that one will likely
emerge from the repetition of experimental trial. Again, the juxtaposition of just two
elements is capable of generating illocution sufficient to drive the research

Once the experimental trial – the body of work – has attained adequate size and
gathered sufficient information, then the process of analysis may begin. For that
process to be useful the body must possesses, in addition to adequate numbers of
works, an apparent thematic and material continuity. Like any experimental trial, the
size of the sample is important to the credibility of the study. My photo students often
seem to think that when I recommend a minimum number of works for an assignment
that I am just making them work harder. My actual rational is that for a body of work
to coalesce as a readable expression, a certain degree of repetition is required. I recall a
conversation I had some years ago with a museum curator, in which we were
discussing the work of a photographer we both knew. She made the observation – and
it was clear that her intent was disparaging – that “Charlie has been making the same
photograph over and over for the past 25 years.” I let the comment pass and didn’t
think about it much at the time, but now I’m convinced that this is, in fact, what every
artist who aspires to be anything more than a mere functionary does with their life’s
work. Images are ambiguous signifiers at best. Any coherence they are able to exhibit
can only be strengthened via repetition of the utterance – an instance of the doubling
concept discussed in chapter two, in which each recurrence of an utterance indicates the
significatory function of the original. It is also an instance of a refrain (Deleuze and
Guattari, 1987), in which the cumulative effect of repetition is productive of illocution
beyond that of the single example. On a more fundamental level, such repetition is a
clear demonstration of the commitment of the artist to the ideas examined in the work,
as well as the depth of complexity of his/her questions. Thematic and material
continuity lend to the coherence of the experiment in similar ways. Repetition of key
elements and the deployment of elements which carry analogous connotations provide
the viewer with the clues necessary to translate an artist’s peculiar visual language.
Over the course of an artist’s working life, a certain amount of drift in these areas is to
be expected. In fact, the shift from continuity within a particular series to diversity
within the complete oeuvre is another indication of a healthy, complex, dynamic
program of research, which a perusal of the catalog raisonné of virtually any major artist will demonstrate.

At some point near the end of the semester students are required to shift gears from an experimental to a presentational mode. In the world of the working artist this means submitting to peer review in the form of exhibition and publication. In the classroom this is encapsulated in the final critique. It is at this point that interpretation/evaluation/valuation becomes the primary activity; the artist puts on his/her audience suit and joins the crowd of viewers in asking, not simply “is this any good?” but more importantly, “what is this about? What does it do?” The criteria for a successful program of artistic research will almost certainly differ from that of an equally successful program in the sciences, but in certain key areas they are identical. Successful art is difficult to quantify. Whereas successful science (insofar as it is “normal” [Kuhn, 1970]) tends to produce discreet results that suggest discreet (if temporary) truths, successful art is often considered to be so precisely because it possesses a certain profound ambiguity. The capacity of an art work to speak to a broad audience which may satisfactorily interpret it from a broad range of perspectives is a common sign of artistic success. Textuality (Barthes, 1977) is, therefore, among the first signifiers of artistic success. In truth, this is characteristic of successful research in any field. It is the illocutionary capacity of the research program, as indicated by its impact on the activity of others, by which we measure intellectual achievement. Influence is a major measurement of important work.

There is, however, a degree of difference between the illocutionary capacity of scientific research and that of art. While scientific work may eventually have an impact on the general public, it is likely to do so indirectly via its technological manifestations. The science remains in the background. The research itself is rarely studied by anyone outside the corresponding field. While it may be argued that artists seem to make art primarily for themselves and other artists, our culture, nevertheless values the arts in such a way as to encourage the non-art making public to consume it, via museums, galleries, theaters and concert halls. The distance, however, separating art from science here is probably small. Flusser’s (2000) concept of apparatuses and functionaries indicates that the art most individuals encounter is technological (in the sense that it is conventional). Flusser distinguishes between technologists and researchers when he states that artists are, in his view, operators who refuse to be functionaries, who
continually strive to find ways to defy and rewrite the programs which control their apparatuses. Nevertheless, the visual culture industry produces a steady supply of easily digestible imagery with undeniable aesthetic impact and clear social and cultural consequences (Duncan, 2001, Freedman, 2000, Tavin, 2001, B. Wilson, 2000, M. Wilson, 2000, etc.). Whether one’s illocutionary experience is found in the museum or on daytime TV, alters neither its function nor its significance.

If such a classroom strategy is to succeed, the teacher must function as an illocutionary agent; someone who presents knowledge as a mechanism for inquiry, and inquiry as a form of flight. This demands that the teacher be in flight as well; a engine of desire, whose movement students clearly witness. In retrospect, this is how I would describe all of my significant teachers; their own restless flight inspired and fueled my own. The performative classroom is an assemblage, a machine composed of other machines, student machines and teacher machines. Academic disciplines and the knowledge they create are tools these machines use to maintain the larger machine and set it in motion. The classroom machine consumes ideas and produces more in turn – the desire, the curiosity, the fuel for student and teacher machines alike.

My photography classes conclude with a big final project that utilizes the new technologies introduced over the course of the semester, but whose conceptual basis is determined by each individual student. Now that I’ve shown them how to do things, I refuse to tell them what to do. This requirement is an illocutionary gesture, a conscious adoption of a particular mode of address (Ellsworth, 1997), intended to upset their preconceptions of a college course. Many of them are less than confident in their ideas and when they come for help I ask them variations on four basic questions, the answers to which provide the foundation for anything they might create in fulfillment of the assignment: Who are you? Where do you come from? What do you know? What do you care about? Their answers provide both fuel and a launching pad for both the assignment and for, indeed, anything they might do in their lives. To the extent that they may become confident and secure in their answers, they may learn to fly.

But this assignment also stimulates problems common to any paradigm shift. By the time a student reaches my classroom, he or she has been “schooled” for at least twelve years. The expectations built up over those years have come to contribute greatly to his or her identity and sense of competence. Being deprived of accustomed roles can put
those sensibilities at risk. The experience is no less unnerving for teachers, who are secure in their accustomed approach to the classroom. Unmapped territory often makes us uneasy. But such sensations remind me of the example set by my M.F.A. committee chair who once told me that he tried to always teach “on the ragged edge” of what he himself understood. *Terra incognita* is an invitation for exploration and an opportunity for growth.

Form is another problem. From the micro level of the individual classroom to a meta structure like a curriculum, we have to figure out how to make this work. I struggle every day to avoid the patterns established by my prior schooling. What I do in the classroom is based as much on what my teachers did not do as it is on what they did. But you don’t become effective simply by thinking in new ways. There must be new methods as well, and those are not often easily manufactured. On the institutional level we have to create a way to effectively serve all the students in our charge. The “new” core committee on which I serve at my current university is finding it challenging enough to craft methods to serve as few as 300 students – out of a student body of over 11,000 – effectively. The questions of scalability and sustainability are an entirely other set of problems.

And that brings me to assessment, in the classroom as well as, again, at the institutional level. How does one put a quantitative measurement on the intellectual growth of an individual, or on the pedagogical effectiveness of an entire program? Standards and testing have always been problematic for the arts. Most faculty have had individuals in their classrooms at one time or another who were vital, interesting human beings, and potentially at least, vital and interesting artists, but who were, by most conventional measurements, poor students. So what then defines an educated person? A colleague once offered up the physicist Robert Oppenheimer as a paradigmatic educated person – not due to mastery of his discipline, but because, upon witnessing the world’s first atomic explosion, he summed up his feelings by quoting from the Bhavagad Gita; “I am become death, the destroyer of worlds” (Rhodes, 1988, p. 676). It is not the mere knowledge of the Hindu text that defines Oppenheimer as an educated man, but rather, his ability to make a connection, in real time, as things happen, between his knowledge and his experience. If this is the goal state – an ability to do things with knowledge – then yes, we must devise technologies to evaluate such skills. Perhaps this is where my analogy must be reversed. If by drawing an argumentative analogy from science to art
I have managed to expand an existing conception of the latter, then perhaps the conventions of artistic practice and evaluation may be brought to bear on the general educational project to similar effect.
CHAPTER FOUR: TOWARDS AESTHETIC/PERFORMATIVE EDUCATION
I remember the first day of my first college class as clearly as I remember my wife’s face. It was Chemical Engineering 100, the seminar for new freshmen. The teacher was the head of the department – a small man, thin, bald, with a ruff of hair about his ears. He had a drawn face which gave him a resemblance to Max Schrek portraying Dracula in *Nosferatu*, but with thick, heavy glasses. I don’t recall all that was said, but two things stand out. By way of introduction we were asked to turn to our classmates, on the left and right, fore and back, and learn their names. The point of this exercise was not, we were informed, to begin to know the colleagues with whom we would be sharing the endeavors of the next four years, but to meet the individuals who would *not* be part of the Chem E department by the end of the term. The other declaration that has remained with me over the intervening 25 years was formed in a similarly negative style. We would not, we were told, be learning how to be engineers, or how to do what engineers did – the companies which were to hire us after graduation (assuming any of us survived to graduate?) would teach us that. Just what we were to be taught, I cannot recall.

In fairness to my former teacher – a well respected, and even loved, member of the university community – the subsequent performance of those students who did not drop out of his program (as I did) is all the validation his career requires. It was under his guidance as chair that his department attained the enviable reputation that it continues to build upon to this day. The anecdote above is illustrative of only a single aspect of what I assume to have been a complex pedagogy; including a range of performances, each appropriate to a specific context, perhaps even to specific students. My anecdote is a caricature then, employed to call attention to a generalized malaise, characteristic of the educational apparatus in general. For all the emphasis on science in our educational rhetoric, our pedagogy reflects a very limited sense of what science is or does. What we tend to teach is more a history of science, which serves to define science as a practice and construct an argument for that practice as culturally significant.

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35 Here we would do well to recall Flusser’s warning (iterated in chapter two) not to ascribe responsibility for the apparatus’s performance to any of its individual components; that to assume that some specific agency has “maliciously created all these programs instead of taking it for granted that the programming proceeds in a mindless automatic fashion,” is “[a] thoroughly disconcerting process in which, behind the ghosts that have been exorcised, more and more new ones are summoned up” (pp. 63-64).
When we teach math or science, we teach what mathematicians and scientists know, we rarely teach students how to be mathematicians and scientists. Art instruction is, likewise, often an indoctrination into a rationale for the significance of art as it has been practiced (Singerman, 1999) – we teach art students what artists know (technique) and have done (history), but shy away from teaching them how to do what artists do, or why to do it. This tendency persists, from our earliest school days to the highest levels of education, when, as an M.F.A. or Ph.D. candidate, a student may finally begin to conduct their own research program, notably distinct from those pursued by their teachers. The above presumes, of course, that we indeed know what it is that mathematicians, scientists, and artists do and why. The assertion of this dissertation is that within a performative hermeneutic conception, what these and other intellectuals do is produce knowledge (Kuhn, 1970, Goodman, 1976, 1978, Rorty, 1979, Crease, 1993, Singerman, 1999). Such intellectual work is fueled by illocution, desire, the aesthetic. T.S. Kuhn (1970) has illustrated that such work in the sciences is not the everyday “normal” practice, but rather constitute revolutions; the work from which new projects with new purposes are formed, and new knowledge is made. The research scientist bounces established facts against new, experimental data and alters his or her working model of the universe accordingly. Similarly, artists apply their “normal” knowledge of materials and processes to their specifically situated, experience of the world – which may correspond more or less well to the normal knowledge in which they have been schooled – in order to create a new reflection of the universe, in their own image, as it were. It is in this way that Rorty would say that such intellectuals carry on a conversation with their predecessors and with each other. The purposes of those conversations are subject to change as different sets of locutions collide with one another, with varying degrees of illocutionary force, and not necessarily predictable perlocutionary effects. “Truth,” in a society with such a philosophy, will then be understood as “whatever the upshot of such encounters turns out to be” (Rorty, 1989, p. 52). Communication, in a society of this sort, operates via aesthetic mechanisms. That is to say, along with Deleuze and Guattari (1983, 1987), that society is a desiring machine within which individuals feed on one anothers’ illocutions, and that knowledge – tradition, morality, culture, truth – is that which the machine produces. Knowledge, in turn, yields yet more desire, and the society/machine putters along. And in this manner, worlds are made (Goodman, 1978).
Rorty characterizes the yearning for a foundational theory of knowledge (in itself perlocutionary, in that it is the outcome of a desire for certainty) in terms very similar to Foucault’s description of power concepts grounded in sovereignty (1984, pp. 63-64). Each is understood as a system of constraint – structures and codes that must be adhered to – and therefore as repressive systems. Focusing on sovereignty restricts analyses of power to the examination of state apparatuses or to individuals engaged in relations of dominance and submission, when these are, in fact, “far from ... able to occupy the whole field of actual power relations” (p. 64). Power, like presence and truth, is then seen as an element in a hermeneutic circle, contingent on every other element, and incomprehensible in isolation without consideration of the whole system. As Rorty would have it; “hermeneutics is an expression of the hope that the cultural space left by the demise of epistemology will not be filled – that our culture should become one in which the demand for constraint and confrontation is no longer felt” (1979, p. 315).

Our existing educational paradigms are anchored in the metaphysical humanism that Foucault, Rorty, and this dissertation set out to challenge. As it plays out in schools at all levels, the matter of transcendence may be deferred, but there is clearly an epistemological center to the educational project (Hirst, 1974, Hirsch, 1987, Martin, 1994, Spring, 1997). Teachers and schools are repositories of knowledge, which is understood as a commodity that may be weighed and measured according to standard scales. Judgments of success or failure, evaluations of student performance and teacher competence are bound up in quantitative measurements of these knowledge/commodities, as our obsession with standards, testing, and rankings demonstrates. This current dominant paradigm of education is exemplified by the “Forms of Knowledge Theory” of Paul H. Hirst (1974). Hirst’s theory describes seven categories of knowledge, including mathematics, physical sciences, religion, the fine arts, philosophy, moral judgment, and the understanding of the human mind. The forms, while not “eternal and immutable” phenomena, are distinguishable as such because they possess inherent, unique characteristics and exist in specific relations to one another. Jane Roland Martin (1981, 1994) charges that the categories on Paul H. Hirst’s list do “not refer to disciplines,” which would characterize them as fields of discourse, but rather that “the forms of knowledge are to be understood as classes of true propositions” (p. 171). When taken for granted, such paradigmatic concepts, laws, and
genres determine in advance much of what will be presented and done in a classroom. Hirst’s “basic and mistaken assumption ... [is] that the nature and structure of knowledge determines the nature and structure of liberal education” (p. 172). As represented by the forms of knowledge theory, the traditional humanistic paradigm of education, as Martin points out, “ignores feelings and emotions, ... ignores procedural knowledge or knowledge how, ... [and] excludes from a liberal education the development of artistic performance, the acquisition of language skills ... and education for effective moral action, as opposed simply to moral judgment” (p. 173).

Even when it recognizes the mutability of knowledge, such a paradigm nevertheless defines it as something “out there,” to be recognized and collected, and fails to account for where that knowledge came from in the first place; the cultural presumptions and historical contingencies behind its formation. The learner (child) in such a scenario is merely a recipient of conventions crafted by other (adult) members of the society. Over the past fifty years, American society has evolved into a state of unprecedented cultural pluralism. While always diversely plural in theory, our founders and those who have followed have largely taken for granted the institutions of Anglo-Saxon, Protestant Europe, and sought, through schooling, to assimilate all who did not share those perspectives upon their arrival in the New World (African slaves, Irish and Italian Catholics), not to mention those they found waiting (diverse populations of Native Americans) (Spring, 1997). This is an epistemology of the “grand narrative;” a less than attractive aspect of metaphysical humanism, which made European colonialism, not simply thinkable, but a morally justifiable political project. If, on the other hand, society is an aesthetic machine, a desiring machine, we may then see our currently burgeoning array of diverse cultures as a primary illocutionary source; an engine of desire fueling the production of knowledge, maintaining the apparatus in motion, disrupting stagnant equilibrium and maintaining it’s vitality.

Derrida’s critique of such “logocentrisms” as those indicated by Roland Martin, is built on the paired concepts of “supplementarity” and “différance” (1970, 1992). Not content to merely question the distinction between the physical and the mental, this critique suggests that there is no presence whatever, outside the functioning of language. The logocentric presumption is metaphysical insofar as it holds that signs constitute, in some essential way, the presence of their corresponding signifieds. Such a theory would
appear to place human beings – being the penultimate arbiters of signs – squarely at the center of the universe, but this is far from Derrida’s intent. Supplementarity and *différance* suggest that the hermeneutic circle does not find a foundation in corporeal existence, that there is no essence lurking behind language, no presence, in fact, of any kind. If all signification is understood as a system of differences, then meaning is the result of play among contrasting signifiers and not a matter of equivalence to transcendent signifieds. The perception of a presence depends upon the introduction of yet another term which can be distinguished from previously employed terms. Nothing exists until something is added to previously existing codified perceptions, and each supplementary act produces new differences, which are again subject to supplementation. Presence is therefore always at a remove, always at least one step out of reach, always desiring. There can be no center, no fundamental ground, human or otherwise. This is not to say that there is no “real.” “Desire does not lack anything; it does not lack its object. It is rather, the subject that is missing in desire, or that desire lacks a fixed subject. Desire and its object are one and the same thing.” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, p. 26). What is real is, rather, “the end product, the result of the passive syntheses of desire as autoproduction of the unconscious” (p. 26). The field of play cannot be transcendent if it is formed as a result of the construction of the game – if it is at once the object and product of play.\textsuperscript{36} As Derrida (1970, 1992) would have it, even our zones of commensurability are born of difference and deferral, then our educational “game” is not, *a priori*, there to be learned and played, but remains to be made up as we go along. Supplementation then, is productive of illocution. The essence of the game is aesthetic.

\textbf{— TOWARDS A REHABILITATION OF HUMANISM}

The sort of hermeneutic conversation described by Rorty, in which, one is “willing to pick up the jargon of the interlocutor rather than translating it into one’s own” (1979, p. 318) would constitute a Poststructural informed humanism. What may be understood as humanist in Poststructural is reminiscent of that which is described in “Existentialism is a Humanism” (1946, 1975), Sartre’s answer to the charges of nihilism leveled at that earlier but equally unloved philosophical phenomenon. For all the differences between Poststructural and existentialism, they share an ill-informed popularity in their

\textsuperscript{36} An echo of Flusser’s (2000) model of the game of chance, as described in Chapter Two.
respective historical moments; entering into vernacular usage and becoming elements of style rather than contemplation. When Sartre says that, “most of those who are making use of this word would be highly confused if required to explain its meaning ... and, indeed, the word is now so loosely applied to so many things that it no longer means anything at all” (p. 347), he could easily be Lyotard or Jameson speaking of postmodernism. But beyond the popular misconceptualizing that each has been subject to, there are other, more pertinent similarities. Sartre writes that existentialism is the only theory

which does not make man [sic] into an object, ... the subjectivity which we thus postulate as the standard of truth is no narrowly individual subjectivism, for as we have demonstrated, it is not only one’s own self that one discovers in the cogito, but those of others too. Thus the man who discovers himself directly in the cogito also discovers all the others, and discovers them as the condition of his own existence (p. 361).

So understood, the ontology of existentialism appears as a supplementarity and a play of différance; each individual consciousness constructed as it encounters other beings who appear to share its way of being-in-the-world, yet remain stubbornly independent of action. It is this play among subjectivities, this generation of forces, which renders existentialism a humanistic philosophy. This is Derrida’s theory extended to its logical limits; individuals exist only insofar as they are part of a chain of supplementation. There is only a self insofar as it is accompanied by an other. While this places the individual subjectivity at a remove, it also inextricably entwines it with all other subjectivities. If it is impossible to imagine a self without also imagining others (and vice versa), then it is also impossible to imagine self-interest apart from the interests of others. With this interrelationship of interests, it is possible to define humanity – without a central nature or essence – as a community of human beings; a rhizomatic structure (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, 1987) in which each individual is necessarily connected to every other.

Such a community would constitute, in Michael Oakeshott’s terminology, a societas (1975). That is to say, a collection of beings, thrown together by chance, who have agreed to collaborate, not out of obligation to a perceived universal character and
destiny, but in pursuit of simple mutual benefit. What constitutes mutual benefit is the outcome of a freely evolving polylogue, which exists as long as the ontological necessity of others is recognized, and the conversation is unrestrained by absolute conditions. This is a community posited on a basis of interrelatedness and the necessity of change, as opposed to the a priori rights of individuals characteristic of a conception founded on sovereignty. Sartre, again, states it clearly when he writes that,

freedom is willed in community. We will freedom for freedom’s sake, in and through particular circumstances. And in thus willing freedom, we discover that it depends entirely upon the freedom of others and that the freedom of others depends upon our own. Obviously freedom as a definition of a man [sic] does not depend on others, but as soon as there is a commitment, I am obliged to will the liberty of others at the same time as my own. I cannot make liberty my aim unless I make that of others equally my aim (p. 366, my emphasis).

This is liberty conceived according to an unfamiliar paradigm. Liberty as defined in common American social and political presumptions is equated with individual sovereignty. If sovereignty – the right of the individual person (or nation) to self determination, to serve his/her interests – is our prime concept however, then we are necessarily complicitous in a system of prohibition and repression. Fundamentalist movements, for example,

which have seemed to appear everywhere in the course of the past twenty years understand themselves as acting in defense of a sovereign identity, under attack by the newly expansive and diverse world culture which has become visible as part of the current age of information and communication (Vattimo, 1997, p. 28).

For such a fundamentalist, to acknowledge the legitimacy of the interests of others (individuals, nations), let alone take these interests into account when crafting his/her own policies and practices, is to compromise self-determination. Such self interested interpretations of conditions and events “are those that do not recognize themselves as
such – and which, as in the tradition, regard other interpretations simply as fraudulent or wrong” (p. 28). That to ignore the interests of others is to disregard their rights is beside the point. Alternately, if our individuality is constituted in relation to other individuals, if our self-definition is understood to be bound up in the definition of all selves, then we have no reason to enforce self-interest to the detriment of others. The restraint that prevents victimization of the members of the societas is a result not of codified repression, then, but is an act of self-preservation.

But this is not to claim that such an ontological view eliminates the possibility of antagonisms and conflict. To the contrary, conflict is the motor that drives the societas to change, antagonism is illocution, and change is the only imperative of such a postmodernly humanistic social organization. Radical democracy as envisioned by Laclau and Mouffe (1985), is not a quest for an invariable center, a contest to unseat one stable hegemony and replace it with another, but rather a free play of competing hegemonies which are continually reinventing their goal in the course of struggle. Such struggle loses its potential for violence when its participants lose their sense of sovereign identity, and with it their desire to constrain others to any single interpretation of the social interest, for, again, “interpretations that lead to violent struggle are those that do not recognize themselves as such – and which ... regard other interpretations simply as fraudulent or wrong” (Vattimo, 1997, p. 28). In the societas, cultural contestation will not be thought of as battle – the victor being the last idea standing – but perhaps as a collaborative, ritual dance, in which the object is to stimulate and please all participants (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980).

But what becomes of the individual amid all this community-making? Whether in the context of Enlightenment rationalism or nineteenth century romanticism, the autonomous individual has held an almost sacred stature in the secular metaphysics of humanism. Humanity is, paradoxically, at once universal and unique – unique in each particular instance, in the capacity to exercise free will, and to act in the pursuit of self-interest; universal insofar as every particular individual enjoys an equal autonomy. Sovereignty is a concept founded on the rights of autonomous individuals, and if that is laid aside, what becomes of those rights within the societas? Its very definition identifies it as an aggregation of beings with nothing in common, but for their accidental presence

37 As related in Chapter One.
at some place at some time. It is free will which allows individuals to function as illocutionary agents within the communal machine, providing the necessary antagonism and conflict which drive it ever towards change. The rights of the individual, like any other purposes, are locutions which make action possible for the social collaborator, both for him-or-herself and for the community, and in this sense, each individual provides essential aesthetic force which drives the societas down whatever path it follows.

The concepts of supplementarity and différence, as described above, while signaling the “death” of the (transcendent) subject, also posits the necessary uniqueness of each individual, insofar as it may be identified as such. Unlike the uniqueness of a metaphysics, which is posited on a basis of “this or that,” the uniqueness of the supplement is predicated on an “and” (Deleuze, 1995). Individuality is in no way singular, not mere difference (this self which is not that other). It is radically multiple and fluid – now, my self and that other, then, my self and another other, here, my self and some other, there, my self and still another. The binary code of computers, the simplest linguistic system yet developed by humanity, demonstrates this potential for multiplicity. Multiple instances of “this or that,” “on or off,” – “bits”, in the jargon of computer science – combine and recombine to produce a dizzying diversity of possibility. A small collection of eight bits of information, each bit with a potential value of either one or zero, contains the possibility of two hundred fifty-six permutations. Increase the amount of data to 24 bits, and the possible outcomes soar to over sixteen million. How much diversity is possible, then, among five billion human beings, each of whom are capable of many more states than merely on or off, alive or dead? Supplementarity does indeed accost us with the end of the subject, understood as a fixed, privileged, isolated soul. But, as stated previously, there is no lack, for it also presents us with a radically unique subject, ever caught in a cycle of becoming; unique because it can never be twice the same. A radically aesthetic subject productive of, and subject to forces which yield change, in both it and everything with which it enters into relations.
To accept the model presented above is to no longer be concerned with what is “true,” but rather to attend to what is performative – aesthetic – in a given society. This in turn necessitates an alternate conception of the pedagogical task. The fundamental change from which others will follow is in the conception of knowledge itself. If we proceed from the principle of supplementarity with all its implications, then constative categories of instances and utterances cease to be critical in and of themselves but may be seen as locutions – the technology of knowledge production. To think of knowledge as performative, or, more precisely, locutionary, is to say that even apparent statements of fact are deployed with intent to achieve some purpose, be it economic, political, moral, or otherwise. The nature of those purposes constitute another instance of locutionary performativity, and are themselves subject to illocutionary force, the pressure, distinct from signification, that can lead to change. Knowledge ceases, here, to be an end in-itself, and becomes a means to ends, which are themselves subject to supplementarity. Relations come before understanding, before knowledge, and desire is characteristic of relationships. What counts as knowledge in a performative model is that which is produced when the force of relationships – the antagonism rising out of difference – is brought to bear on prior accumulations of understandings. The encounter with the unfamiliar stimulates a deterritorialization, a disruption of understanding which, when resolved, produces new knowledge. If the understanding with which we begin can be seen as a product of prior networks of relations – previous conversations and contestations – in which our predecessors interpreted and were subject to interpretation, then incommensurability ceases to be a valid condition for cruel repression.

Thus, the performative model does not discard conventional forms of knowledge, but sees them transformed (contra Hirsch, 1987) from the ends of education to its means. The forms of knowledge on Hirst’s list are conventional, they are the accumulation of locutions – actions, tools, and purposes – which ancestors pass along to each successive generation. Such knowledge will continue to be handled in a constative fashion, insofar as it makes up the normal vocabulary of the societas, which is to say that it can be brought to bear in familiar situations and used to obtain predictable results in those situations. If we surrender the notion that the disciplines represent classes of true
propositions and ground their value instead in their perceived utility – the variety of instances in which they work, the puzzles they may solve (Kuhn, 1970), their “rightness” (Goodman, 1978) – then we have an organization of knowledge that is capable of illocution. These applied “facts” are the technology and material of knowing – arithmetic, language skills, Newtonian physics, etc. – which make it possible to erect shelters, grow food, and communicate our desires, among other elemental functions of both individuals and communities. Such facts do not, however, constitute the center of the educational project; rather, they are the tools, the brick and the mortar, with which students (and other citizens) go about constructing and modifying cultural structures, for such creation, such “worldmaking as we know it always starts from worlds already on hand; the making is remaking” (Goodman, 1978, p.6).

With knowledge now understood as a means to pursue purposes – the “we-intentions” (Sellars, 1968) of the societas – then our educational mechanisms emerge as primary worldmaking machines. The school is the societas in miniature; it is an aggregation of individuals brought together in their present configuration for no transcendent reason, who need to learn the rules of the cultural game as it is played on the larger field. This is not so very different from common conceptions of schooling – indeed, this conception of education is no less engaged in indoctrination than any other – except for the basic understanding of the nature of the game to be played, both in the classroom and beyond. The key difference is that it is an indoctrination into a process, not a prescribed set of outcomes. Such a school (if I may risk venturing into utopian territory) would function as a microcosm of the community and a mechanism for bringing that community together for the purposes of perpetual dialogue and redefinition. To teach in such a fashion would be to nurture a “strong objectivity” (Haraway, 1997), a critical reflexivity which operates freely across disciplines, as it examines the construction of knowledge. Imagine the possibilities;

if [a science textbook was] read in a high school English class to illustrate the structure of foundation narratives as well as in a science class to illustrate the structure of the natural-technical world? And what if the biology text were read in lab classes as itself a moral discourse and not just a science book that has a wannabe chapter on the techniques of moral reasoning? What if the study and crafting of fiction and fact happened
explicitly, instead of covertly, in the same room, and in all the rooms (Haraway, p. 110)?

There is no single method by which to put such a project into practice in actual classrooms. As I presumed in the example of my former professor at the beginning of this chapter, pedagogy is rarely singular (and is always performative, regardless of the form it assumes in any single instance). Every teacher is, by turns, a dictator, a jester, and a facilitator. To perform the strategy described above would require teachers to effectively instill the constatives of the subject in question, while capturing and maintaining the attention of students (perhaps the most overtly aesthetic task at hand) and providing whatever support – intellectual, emotional, material – is required for them to meaningfully connect the subject to their own lives and worlds. It is in this last capacity that the teacher serves as a “liminal servant” (McLaren, 1993, Garoian, 1999), an illocutionary agent whose task it is to simultaneously open gaps in the discourse, inviting contention and struggle, and then enter into these openings at the student’s side, introducing them to the technology (forms of knowledge) they may find helpful to navigate those openings.

A few practical requirements ought to be obvious. Since the project is to generate and participate in dialogue with one another and ultimately with other citizens outside the school context, small class sizes – a dozen students or fewer per teacher – are imperative. Each core group works to establish its own societas, which provides a place to stand in relation to the other groups at a particular developmental level, and ultimately to the school as a whole. In order to thwart the territorialization which is characteristic of existing pedagogical practice and ensure continual illocutionary production, the group make-up ought to be subject to frequent rearrangement. To continually expose students to the effects of difference on every level is to reinforce the concept that community-building is an infinitely ongoing process of contention. To further apply this concept, groups must be required to work collaboratively with others – not just at their own perceived developmental stages, but at higher and lower levels as well – on mutually developed projects that implicate a broad range of disciplinary knowledge, deployed as an array of productive mechanisms. In this respect, the classroom conversation is not simply about the content of the class. It actually is content – being as it is an example of the play of locutions and the forces they generate. The
classroom conversation is a hermeneutic encounter. In this instance, strong objectivity is not something that is preached, but rather practiced; played out in the day-to-day relations of teachers and students. This is radical democracy in the classroom; “the principle means by which spectators/students become critical thinkers and participate in society as critical citizens” (Garoian, p. 43).

That the actual production of knowledge and evolution of understanding may proceed in such a fashion is amply demonstrated in The Song Of The Dodo: Island Biogeography In An Age Of Extinction by David Quammen (1996), a work that makes its point through both its content and its narrative form. The book itself is a rhizome. Which is not to say that one does not read it from page one to page last but rather that its account of the history and significance of biogeography as an intellectual field does not march inexorably forward toward its conclusion. This is not simply science journalism, but literature – an artwork that deploys its aesthetic nature in service to its epistemological goals. It leaps back and forth, to and fro, from historical vignette to contemporary profile, from the Malay Archipelago to Madagascar, from travelogue to theory. In crafting such a work, Quammen reveals the art at the core of the science, the passion behind big ideas, the illocution that drives intellectual creativity.

The scientific discipline of biogeography did not exist in 1831 when Charles Darwin left England aboard the Beagle, bound to fundamentally alter human conceptions of nature and its processes. Quammen illustrates the intellectual evolution that followed Darwin’s voyage as biology morphed from a Victorian natural history based in taxonomy, into a rigorous contemporary science founded on theory and experiment. The book is peopled with characters both famous and obscure and is plotted with their personal evolutions as they combine their obsession with – pick one; ants, birds, butterflies, chuckwallas, marsupials, spiders, snakes, etc. – with close observation in the field, with extensive surveys of existing data and ideas, with collaboration with other similarly driven individuals, in the course of lifetimes of becoming.

Quammen demonstrates the futility of insular thinking in intellectual life. In a case study of extinction and proliferation of various species on the island of Guam, the story begins with ornithologists unable to adequately explain the mass disappearance of birds

Though it is possible to pick and choose sections and chapters as the spirit moves, without any one suffering much loss of individual integrity.
from the island. The investigation is handed off to herpetologists when a nonnative snake species emerges as a prime suspect in the case. Entomologists enter the picture when it becomes clear that what is happening is a “trophic cascade,” a sequence of “cascading disruptions that can pass between trophic levels ... between different categories of interrelated organisms” (Quammen, p. 342).

Similarly, we learn of individual scientists whose ideas force them across disciplinary divides. Quammen introduces us to Edward O. Wilson, a myrmecologist who discovered early in his career that “it just didn’t seem enough to continue enlarging the natural history and biogeography of ants” (p. 412). Wilson was convinced that much of the whole range of population biology was ripe for synthesis and rapid advance in experimental research; but this only could be accomplished by mathematical models. He was a mediocre mathematician, by his account, with no training beyond algebra and statistics. So ... he taught himself some calculus and probability theory out of textbooks. Returning to Harvard, he enrolled in a mathematics class and sat conscientiously, as an associate professor, in a small desk among a crowd of undergrads. Eventually, after further remedial classes, he had enough math to feel comfortable. (p. 412)

Wilson would eventually meet and collaborate with a mathematician turned ecologist named Robert MacArthur, and the result would be *The Theory of Island Biogeography*, (1967) a work whose influence is demonstrated by the frequency with which it is cited in other publications on ecological biology. According to Quammen, *The Theory of Island Biogeography* was cited 161 times in 1982 alone. By comparison, most ecological publications rarely receive as many as two dozen citations in any given year. (p. 435)

“‘There’s nothing more romantic than biogeography,’ says Edward Wilson, ... but intellectually it was a muddle. Amorphous, disorderly. It lacked quantitative rigor.” (Quammen, p. 427) Higher education aspires to rigor – both quantitative and qualitative – and reformers such as James B. Conant, who, while at Harvard from 1933 to 1953, introduced the tenure system as we know it, standardized testing for admissions and the concepts of general education and the core curriculum (Menand, 2002), have at least created the image of measurable standards. But aesthetically it is lackluster. Rigid, static.
It lacks illocutionary performativity. The position of the arts within academe has often been precarious, largely because they are perceived as being, like biogeography, long on romance, short on intellectual rigor. What educators in the arts and the more comfortably academic disciplines have failed to recognize is that each has much to offer the other and that such a collaboration may do nothing less than bring the experience of students into line with the experience of practitioners within the various fields of intellectual endeavor.

Among existing classroom models, however, I believe it is the studio art class\(^\text{39}\) that may come nearest to the sort of performativity that Quammen identifies in the practice of island biogeography. Production of knowledge in the art studio is a process of observation and insight; of the recognition of problems and the acquisition of mechanisms to apply to their potential solution. To be an artist is not merely to be an expert within an established field (as Wilson was in myrmecology, the study of ants), but to apply that expertise to questions which arise in the course of his/her participation in the \textit{societas} and, when necessary, seek out new mechanism through which those questions may be probed (as did Wilson when he returned, as a student, to the mathematics classroom).

Recognition of the limen, the opening, is the critical first step. Wilson realized the potentialities of island biogeography and entered into that vacant space. In my experience as a college art teacher, I have found my job to be easiest when my students have similarly identified questions which compel them and therefore have clear purposes in mind for the knowledge they come to class to obtain. I have had very little trouble engaging beginning photo students in complex cultural conversations drawn from their own photographs in the course of a critique. Those photographs were something they wanted to do for their own reasons, and that made the implications of those images for others a valid object of their concern. It was much more difficult to draw the members of my early digital imaging classes in discussions which managed to probe to such depths. It took me several semesters to put a name to the difference between the two groups of students (there being very little crossover between the two in those early semesters), but finally it occurred to me that while the photo students came to class wanting to make pictures, the computer students came to learn a tool. The photo students were learning tools as well, but they had, readily at hand, a project to

\(^{39}\) As described in Chapter Three.
which they could directly apply them. The computer students had, at best, very abstract purposes for the knowledge they wished me to share – a future job, a promotion, maintaining a business’s competitive edge in a cutthroat commercial art industry. Not that such purposes are undesirable or inappropriate; it is just that in very few instances did the purposes of the second group have any direct bearing on the students’ identities, their connections to each other and the community, or their relations outside that community. Their purposes remained abstract, static, and lacked the illocutionary power to drive them into and through unfamiliar territory. And my assignments were not creating the sort of illocutionary rupture that would draw them into their own issues via the mechanism of Adobe® Photoshop®. Therefore, my task as teacher took on an additional component. I had to become an aesthetic provocateur, in order to mine the performativity required to make their new knowledge powerful. I had to help these students identify the purposes that these new skills could be knocked up against in order to create a critical mass, the chain reaction that is the production of knowledge.⁴⁰ To the extent that my efforts to inject the classroom with illocutions were successful, those early digital photo students were subject to greater deterritorialization and, to the degree that they felt themselves to be successful in my class, possibly learned even more than their analog counterparts.

In an art classroom, students evaluate their progress by entering into relations with one another through the medium of the works they produce. Critique is a crucial aspect of most studio art teaching practice. Students often find these experiences intimidating and unpleasant; hardly surprising if critique is approached in a conventionally constative manner which stresses the primacy of technical mastery and has the ultimate purpose of judging student work as good, bad, or simply indifferent. Common practice, as Howard Singerman asserts, “necessarily psychologizes and personalizes critique” (1999, p. 211) with the intent

to change and discipline [the student] rather than her “object” or her skills. This harshness adds to, and is layered upon the everyday cruelty of the crit, of cliques of students and sometimes faculty who control the local

⁴⁰ Devices like the idea generation exercise described in Chapter Three were created in the wake of this earlier epiphany.
circulation of discourse, wielding it as a weapon. (p. 211).

To function performatively – and successfully – the critique must be structured by teachers (and understood by students), not as a competitive exercise in valuative judgment, but as an instance of conversation within the societas. It is insufficient to simply make things, which are then to be judged on a basis of “goodness,” for the things themselves are no more ends, in-and-of-themselves, than are the tools and materials from which they were fabricated. To take up their works as elements in a general socio-cultural conversation and to work through the ways that they may be interpreted as such is the purpose of critique as I conceive it. In so doing, it is critical to psychologize and personalize the critique, since these are the simultaneous origins and destinations of whatever illocution and significance an artwork may generate. In doing so, however, it is imperative that the teacher take great care to avoid the cruelty that Singerman notes. Interpretations and judgments inevitably intertwine, and such instances are where the teacher-as-illocutionary-agent steps in to reopen the limen that judgment closes. No one is afforded the luxury of merely standing on judgment, for judgment without justification thwarts conversation. It is in critique that the play of supplementarity and contention become visible, as well as the possibility of conciliation and agreement. In critique, student/artists come face to face with the subjectivity of their peers. In the confrontation with the multiplicity of their own production, their lack of authority over its ultimate significance, they may come to understand that the dialogue, the play, is the goal. Works are but a mechanism through which to participate.

– CONCLUSIONS: THE PLACE OF ART IN CULTURE AND EDUCATION

Simply stated, the field of culture which we call “art” is useful because it is one of relatively few remaining spaces in which aesthetic force is understood to be driving the engine of production. This conception renders it, therefore, capable of providing a lens

41 My own student experiences suggest that some teachers create such a critique atmosphere as a deliberate pedagogical strategy.

42 It is precisely because a good critique may wander very near the boundary of what we would recognize as therapy, that I have often wondered, if my intent was to teach, might I have better served my students by pursuing an advanced degree in psychology rather than education?
through which to imagine aesthetic workings within the broad field of social relations (politics). “Artistic creation” – understood as a fully engaged social activity and not as the hermetic insights of solitary philosopher/artist/geniuses – is paradigmatic of what Cleo Cherryholms has called “critical pragmatism” (1988). Artists working in such a fashion live in the world and are also of that world, insofar as they recognize the contingent nature of their identity and the web of relations that constitute a self. What differentiates such an artist – a “strong poet,” to borrow Harold Bloom’s phrase (1973) – from his-or-her fellows is that s/he lives, not in the territorialized, ordered, structured spaces of the culture, but in the gaps – the indeterminate, transitionary, originary areas where nothing is at rest, nothing can unequivocally be said to be “true” or “false,” and everything remains to be seen. The strong poet employs existing social and cultural structures as tools and materials, perhaps even going so far as to tear down an existing edifice only to recycle it into a different form. S/he is the generator of novelty, of provocation, of desire, of contrast and contention; contention being, to reiterate Garoian, “the principle means by which spectators/students become critical thinkers and participate in society as critical citizens” (p. 43). This capacity is not a function of the artist’s special nature, some gift of talent not shared with other human beings. It is rather a vocation, the dedicated pursuit of a life’s work, chosen by an individual. This is unlike the religious conception of a “calling” insofar as it is not generated by a voice or sign from God, and yet very like the example of the priesthood in that it is an act of personal devotion to an activity larger than oneself.

Perhaps the distinction is better characterized as one of focus, for every participant in a culture occupies this or that gap at one time or another, finds themselves disconnected, subject to some antagonism or another. The strong poet concentrates his-or-her energies on entering the gap, creating the gap, while most of us – though we occasionally drop into such a crevasse and find ourselves in flight – labor to the contrary, to remain securely footed on solid ground. If we retain for the moment the normal distinction between artists and other individuals, then it appears that most folks concentrate their energies on production within the structures that they find at hand, and within our existing cultural framework, and yet, we should hesitate to credit artists with a singular propensity for radical thought and action, for these territorialized individuals include many among their number who we might wish to call artists. Art, being, like any other culture category, an entirely conventional concept, provides its own choice of preconceived structures within which it is possible to work. Examples of
completely conventional and territorialized creations abound. Any practice which is ultimately distilled into a style and practiced by rote will serve as a sufficient example. This is “normal” art, akin to Kuhn’s normal science. This is what is perpetuated when, for example, film students memorize the directorial techniques of Stephen Spielberg and the storytelling conventions of Hollywood commercial cinema. The world view that engendered these techniques is rendered invisible and unquestionable through their unreflective application as stylistic attributes. But the artist who is also a critical pragmatist concentrates not on existing structures but on structuring. S/he is more likely intent on developing new vocabularies to apply to old questions which have remained outside the normal paradigm, and/or the application of existing techniques to questions never before asked. Viewed through the lens of modernism, there appear one or more such revolutionaries at the genesis of every cultural advance. The example of Alfred Stieglitz was presented in chapter two. Stieglitz’s practice diverged from established norms of photographic art and resulting works such as *The Steerage* often seemed strange to his contemporaries, who only after a period of exposure to the revolutionary art emerging from Europe were able to see a connection between Stieglitz’s picture and painting as it was being redefined by artists such as Pablo Picasso. Seen through a performative, pragmatist lens, individuals such as Picasso and Stieglitz are not gifted geniuses who have revealed transcendent truths, but dedicated laborers engaged in continual development of more effective tools and the manufacture of socio-cultural practices which promote the dialogue on which community is founded.

The articulations between existing political structures – forms of knowledge, codes of ethics, systems of governing, and modes of production and consumption – are generative of aesthetic forces, which drive these machinic structures in the production of new configurations. These forms, codes, and systems do not simply direct our actions, but are part of the process by which they themselves are conceived. The work of a strong poet might well bring about an unaccustomed articulation between two or more conventional systems, rupturing existing boundaries, and setting off processes of reestablishment in new forms and/or in different locations. The structures are not autonomous but, as asserted previously, rhizomatic; decentering one node in the network requires a reconsolidation of every other node. The pattern has played out

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43 See Chapter Two; Flusser’s metaphor of the “apparatus” as a wholly conventional, territorialized “program” (2000).
repeatedly down through recorded history; a technological innovation made possible by a new understanding of a particular form of knowledge, alters the existing patterns of material production and consumption, which in turn disrupts existing social structures and power relations, which in turn necessitate an adjustment of systems of regulation and control, which found their legitimacy on new ethical equations. Any working structure, any defined cultural territory, is generated by such relations, and operates as long as the forces generated are retained in balance, one to another. Thus, the aesthetic is not merely a disruption of balance, but the tension existing between all elements found in balanced relations. If that tension dissipates, if true equilibrium is reached, then the machine ceases to be productive.

With this in mind, it is important to understand that, while this dissertation has utilized examples from higher education, the real emphasis ought to be on primary schooling. Young children live a thoroughly aesthetic life, pulled this way and that by illocutions of many forms, originating in many locales. Their innate performative impulses are, however, often suppressed rather than nurtured. Such students then run the risk of becoming those

who just are not “interesting” enough, who do not quite understand the questions being asked or cannot perform the identifications and transferences necessary to install the discipline and its demands at the site of the superego, [and] fall through the cracks of teaching (Singerman, 1999, p. 211).

We have all had, at various stages of our lives in education, classmates and students for whom the teacher/student relationship was adversarial at best. Conventional techniques of instruction (lectures) and evaluation (testing, grades) and classroom management reproduce a relational system based in dominance/submission and the subjugation of self to the demands of the institution. By the time such a student has reached high school – let alone college – the damage has been done. Ironically enough, many of my photography students have fallen into this category. They are self described as intellectually deficient. He/she may say they have chosen to study photography or art because, “I’m no good at math,” or perhaps they have chosen to express themselves visually because, “I don’t like to read and hate to write.” The college

44 As related in Chapter Three.
art instructor faced with students such as these is engaged in damage control education at best, and runs the risk of actually exacerbating these inadequate self-conceptions when the student discovers that the study of art has its own intellectual demands. What potential performativity a teacher might hope to tap has largely dissipated, and the system is becoming stagnant.

As stated earlier in this chapter, power relations understood in terms of a binary system of dominance/submission are one example of such a stagnation. Aesthetic energy – power, literally – is here conceived as something to be hoarded and deployed in a deliberate and purposeful manner, rather than as a force to which all are subject and none may control. Such territorialized power relations finds an apt analogy in the water rights law and reclamation policies in the American West. Traditionally, the river is seen as a linear phenomenon, beginning in the mountains and ending where it empties into the sea. Whatever flows to the sea unused in a productive manner is wasted. Similarly, the rights to use the water in the stream were distributed on this linear basis. As we have seen over the past fifty years, such “power” may be warehoused by those with the capacity to build dams and alter the flow of the stream, often with severe consequences for those below. What was once an open system, a network which could be plugged into at any location on its grid, is now closed. Formerly, changes in the network forced changes in relations all around the grid; periods of drought and flood fed into and required the response of other related networks. When the grid is bounded and closed, some connections are necessarily severed, and some parts of the network shrivel and die. As long as the process was maintained as a give and take, as long as water (power) continued to flow, the network sustained itself. Now constituted as a controlled structure with circumscribed boundaries, it has begun to slowly collapse inward, disappearing into the mud and silt where the river once ran to sea.

The current institutional reliance on standardized testing and the continuing demand for national standards is itself an expression of territorialized power relations. The desire to measure and define and quantify – to map the territory – is also a desire to constrict and proscribe. In education, faculty have the tenure system; created ostensibly to ward off such limitations on intellectual activity. Students lack any such protective mechanism. They are helplessly subject to the boundaries represented by their teachers’ intellectual conceptions, political ideologies, and pedagogical strategies. Here knowledge (power) flows in one direction only; originating from discreet sources (the
institution, the curriculum, the teacher) and coming to rest in discreet receptacles (the students).

In the material example of the river, it appears unwise to isolate components of the overall system, for separation of one or more seems to lead to the eventual diminishment of the whole. But does this hold true for cultural systems? The analogy may seem at first to be a poor fit. Contemporary social conservatism is born not in reaction to the circumscription of the cultural network, but to its expansion. In order to survive as a people, it is deemed necessary to seal ruptures, eliminate sources of tension, and generally maintain cultural equilibrium. If national and cultural borders could be maintained as impermeable membranes, then the social machinery would be able to productively chug along toward its destination, wherever that may be. Such a conservative application of the river analogy to teaching would likewise determine that such an embrace of multiple student subjectivities (and the accompanying acknowledgment of related subjectivities in the world outside the classroom) threatens the coherence of the educational project. But even our “normal” scientific vocabularies demonstrate that a system in such a state of equilibrium is dead (Smolin, 1997). We recognize that the universe (of which the river is a micro-model) is an open system with energy flowing in and out at all times, and that it is this open flow that makes life possible in the universe. If agency is a potential that may only be realized by those who live upstream, who have the capacity to horde power, then it is also a potential step towards the end of life as it is currently understood. The implied syllogism might go like this; if knowledge is power, and if power flows from the barrel of a gun, then knowledge is a bullet.

If, on the other hand, knowledge and power are relational and founded in processes of dialogical exchange rather than constraint (Foucault, 1984, Rorty, 1979), then the more freely these relations flow the more functional and beneficial is the conversation that ensues for all who participate in it. If we as educators are to define ourselves as critical pragmatists in the hope of conceiving something such as political and creative agency, it must be defined as the potential to tap into the flow, to draw from it and give back in equal measure. Education, understood as the dialogical flow in microcosm, prepares citizens for responsible participation in the societas, and education in the arts demonstrates the opening of liminal spaces required to facilitate such participation. In addition to presenting a mechanism of participation which shares the contingent nature
of dialogue, education in the arts also offers analogies through which students may understand the relational nature of all knowledge and, by extension, the relational nature of the policies and practices for which knowledge provides the justification. Education in the arts may first demonstrate the presence of the Bloomian poet’s hand (whose strength will vary) in all cultural production and discourse, and then having done so, turn its attention to stimulating the exercise and application of each individual’s poetic aspect to the function of the societas.

Despite his persuasive arguments for the contingent nature of language, selfhood and community, Richard Rorty balks at the notion of teaching our children to be “private ironists” in matters of public life and policy, saying that he “cannot imagine a culture which socialized its youth in such a way as to make them continually dubious about their own process of socialization” (1989, p. 87). This amounts to the preservation of a privileged class of strong poets who will define and redefine the cultural structures within which the rest of us daily operate. It is my contention that the culture Rorty cannot imagine is precisely one that practices what Cherryholmes calls critical pragmatism. The critical pragmatist, in my estimation, is a participant in the founding of his-or-her cultural frameworks, a process in which I believe we all currently participate, to admittedly varying degrees of consciousness and purpose. Every social encounter, every meeting with an other, however genial, requires dipping a toe into the stream of power. The operative codes of the sphere in which the encounter occurs provide a launching point for the relations which follow, but that is all. They may be adhered to, but it is more likely that there will be a negotiation, that a new territory will be crafted to suit the specificity of each meeting. Thus every human interaction is an aesthetic event in which forces put familiar conceptions in play and demand their reinterpretation in order to craft a response. Accepting that there is no individual subject except in relation to others renders the public/private duality no more tenable than other previously debunked binarisms, such as those of mind/body or intellect/intuition. What Rorty defines as private has no significance apart from its eventual consequences in the public realm. The simplest relationship between two persons is but a microcosm of the whole of society. If this is conceived as a closed relation, then it may well favor one party to the detriment of the other, but if understood as a flow of forces into and out of an unbounded network in which the identity and survival of every node depends on the identity and survival of every other, then it is just as likely to direct its productions towards mutual benefit.
The overarching goal of a performative hermeneutic educational system, to the extent that one may be identified and designated as such, would be to prepare individuals to take part in the socio-cultural conversation. Or, as Michael Apple puts it, “to move toward a political and ethical structure,” which would require that “educational ‘science’ and technical competence be secured firmly within a framework that continually seeks to be self-critical” (1979, p. 162). This requires the acquisition of an adequate, if not permanent, “normal” vocabulary, by which one may understand others and hope to be understood. Beginning with the fundamental acquisition of this lexicon, it can and must be demonstrated that even when individuals appear to share a vocabulary, it is not likely that each will deploy it in the same way, to say nothing of the fact that our vocabularies will always and necessarily be incomplete, and that there are nomenclatures which may be equally serviceable for some, while corresponding to our own in only the most superficial ways.

Again, it must be obvious that such a pedagogy demands a complex and multifaceted performative practice that must meet the student on his/her own terms. There is need of each of the three teacher figures described by McLaren (1993). In the anecdote that opened this chapter, I portrayed a teacher acting as a “hegemonic overlord”; setting the parameters within which the classroom conversation will take place. In my interaction with Ray, related at the opening of chapter two, I was attempting to play the liminal servant’s role without having adequately established such a framework. I recall another day in another classroom when what I imagined to be a particularly lucid lecture was disrupted by my own sense that the students were attending to me much as they might watch television. McLaren’s “entertainer” has since been a critical persona in my classroom. These three figures – the hegemonic overlord, the entertainer and the liminal servant – are co-dependant. Isolating any of these characters is problematic, potentially even destructive; the overlord become a dictator, the entertainer a mere jester, and the servant has no basis on which to serve. If, on the other hand, students can be simultaneously and appropriately stimulated, provoked and assisted in efforts to self-consciously apply their newly acquired vocabularies in this self-reflexive way to the relations in which they are already engaged – those of family, friends, classmates, and community – then we have a hope that they will go on to become more flexible participants in the broader range of discourse that exists between communities and nations.
BIBLIOGRAPHY:


Harris, E. (Director). (2000). *Pollock* [Film]. Sony Pictures Classics.


APPENDIX A:

NEW UNDERGRADUATE COURSE REQUEST
DEPARTMENT OF MEDIA AND THEATER ARTS
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND ARCHITECTURE
MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY
NOVEMBER 15, 2001
New Undergraduate Course Request
James Linker, Assistant Professor
Department of Media and Theater Arts
College of Arts and Architecture
November 15, 2001

Course Title: MTA 280, Art As Research
Credit Load: 3 credits (1 lecture, 2 lab)
To Be Offered: as part of the Montana Learning Community pilot program in Fall of 2002

A. Course Description:
   1. This course is intended to fulfill the lower division research requirement of the proposed Montana Learning Community curriculum. In keeping with the stated interdisciplinary nature of the MLC curriculum, it uses the research metaphor common to the social and natural sciences to illuminate artistic practice and allow students to understand – by conducting their own artistic research – how the arts interact with and relate to other disciplines of academic inquiry in the creation of knowledge and culture.

   2. Course Content Outline:
      a. “artistic” ways of knowing; a brief cross-cultural and historical survey of the functions and purposes of “art.”
         i. survival
         ii. transcendence
         iii. power
         iv. science
         v. history
         vi. information
         vii. art for art’s sake
         viii. commodity
         ix. entertainment
         x. social/cultural criticism/activism

      b. models of artistic research.
         i. Scientific or Formal.
         ii. Anthropological/Sociological/Philosophical.
         iii. Literary.

      c. methods of artistic research.
         i. concept (where do ideas come from?).
         ii. form (media).
         iii. content (meaning).

      d. the research project.
         i. proposal.
         ii. practice.
         iii. conclusions.
         iv. evaluation.
            A. critique.
            B. exhibition.
3. Reading may include excerpts from the following texts:

B. Level of Offering:
   1. No.
   
   2. Prerequisites are the Freshman College Seminar (CLS101V, GENS101V or BUS101V) and UNIV121, Ideas & Perspectives.
   
   3. No.

C. Relationship to Other Courses, Curricula, and Departments:
   1. In addition to being an integral part of the MLC curriculum, this course has the potential to support any studio course offered in the College of Arts and Architecture by providing an early experience of creative activity outside the assignment driven and technique specific model that dominates art instruction. As an analysis of the actual practices of artists, it provides a broader context within which the student may consider their further course work, at all levels of the curriculum, on through the capstone experience.
   
   2. No.
   
   3. Only to the extent that other instructors in the College of Arts and Architecture may incorporate a research component (and identify it as such) in their studio courses. This is not a common practice, at MSU or elsewhere.
   
   4. The instructor is a member of the Research Task Force of the Montana Learning Committee and course development has been funded with grant monies from that program. The Dean of Arts and Architecture and Department Head of the School of Art are both aware of this proposal, but there have been no specific consultations.
D. Students Served:
1. The course is primarily intended to serve students participating in the MLC pilot program. Beyond that term, the course would potentially serve to fill the research core requirement for second year students from all areas of the university. While it is true that students in engineering, the sciences, business or agriculture have little understanding of the relationship of the creative arts to their chosen field, students in the College of Arts & Architecture are just as unlikely to have encountered the notion of art as research.

2. The course eventually would serve up to thirty (30) students divided into recitation/critique sections of no more than fifteen (15). The initial offering under the pilot program would best be undertaken with a single section of fifteen students.

E. Resources:
1. Aside from the instructor's time – the course will be taught as an overload – the only resource demands will be appropriate classroom space. While the lab portion of the course will be much less involved than even ART114F, it will still be necessary to meet in a studio space adequate to the demands of that limited production.

2. James Linker has taught photography at Arizona State University, photography and the history of photography at Glendale Community College in Glendale, AZ, studio art and art history at The Pennsylvania State University and photography at Montana State University. He is currently writing a doctoral dissertation in Art Education (at the Pennsylvania State University).

3. It is not expected that this course will require any additional library materials.

F. Other Supporting Material:
The instructor's vita and the proposal to the MLC project are attached.
APPENDIX B:

COURSE SYLLABUS, MEDIA AND THEATER ARTS 280;
   ART AS RESEARCH
FALL SEMESTER 2002
MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY
ART AS RESEARCH?

The title of this course suggests that artists participate in the creation and shaping of knowledge, much as do thinkers and practitioners in other fields and disciplines. The key assumption in this statement is that at least some artistic production has conceptual underpinnings which allow it to be regarded in relation to other modes of intellectual activity. We are going to test this premise, utilizing a vocabulary and strategies borrowed largely from the sciences, where the language of research is well developed; drawing analogies between scientific and artistic theory and activity.

We will begin with a brief overview of the functions and purposes of art, spanning both time and cultural context. Then, against this background, you will each identify a general topic for your own research project. At this point, we will review common research practices – use of the library, the internet, etc. – as they may be applied to artistic practice, as well as examining the ways in which traditional and contemporary art practices (media) may be seen to constitute particular kinds of research tools. By this time, you will have begun to accumulate a store of background knowledge – through a review of relevant literature – your topic will become more specific, and you will choose a medium.

This is not a course in media and techniques. You will not be evaluated in terms of your virtuosity of craft. No prior formal training is required or expected. I will be presenting you with a variety of approaches that require very little technical expertise; collage and assemblage with found objects and images, photography, performance and digital media being a few examples.

WHAT IS THE “PRODUCT”?

At the conclusion of the term, each of you will present a thesis statement which will outline their research topic, an overview of relevant historical and critical literature and the rational for their chosen formal approach. Accompanying this written statement will be a body of artworks which constitute the “experimental” aspect of the research and demonstrate the ideas described in the statement. This work will be reviewed and discussed by the entire class in a final critique.
READING LIST:

Some of these readings we will discuss in class. Those which we do not discuss are intended as stimulants to, and references for the development of your research program. However, for each of the readings you will be required to submit a 150 word synopsis of the pertinent points you have discovered in each, with an eye to applying these ideas to your research. Synopses are due the week following their assignment.

COURSE WORK:
You will give three oral presentations (with visual aids, as appropriate) as you determine your research topic, refine your questions and develop an experimental model.

You will have four formal meetings with me on an individual basis as you design and execute your research program. I will of course be available for consultation at other times as well ...

There will be an informal presentation of your work-in-progress in the 12th week of the term.

You will prepare a short paper (7-10 pages, 12 point type, one inch margins, double spaced) interpreting the work of a local artist as a research program. This paper will draw on materials we have read in class and that you have encountered in the course of your research, as well as an interview with the artist. This will be presented in class and will be due during exam week.

There will be a formal presentation of your research and a critique of your experimental data (the art!) on the last day of class.
EVALUATION:
The various assignments will be weighted as follows:

10 synopses – 3 % each, 30 % total

3 midterm presentations – 5 % each, 15 % total

work-in-progress presentation – 5 %

final presentation & paper
local artists as researchers – 15 %

final presentation
research program & artwork – 15 %

attendance, participation, etc. – 20 %

Final grades will be assigned according to the following percentage breakdown:

A= 95% & up        A- = 90-94%
B+ = 85-89%         B = 80-84%
B- = 75-79%         C+ = 70-74,
C = 65-69%          C- = 60-64%
D = 55-59%          F = 54% & below
EDUCATION:
MFA 1991, Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona.

TEACHING:
Assistant Professor of Media & Theater Arts, Montana State University, Bozeman, MT. Fall 1998 to present.
Adjunct Instructor of Art & Art History, Glendale Community College, Glendale, AZ. Fall 1991 to Spring 1996.
Graduate Teaching Assistant; Arizona State University, School of Art, Tempe, AZ. Fall 1988 to Fall 1990.

HONORS AND AWARDS:
Research and Creativity Grant, Montana State University, 1999.
University Graduate Fellowship, The Pennsylvania State University, 1996-97.
Nathan Cummings Travel Fellowship, Arizona State University School of Art, 1990.

CONFERENCE PAPERS AND PRESENTATIONS:

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS:
2003: Line of Sight; solo exhibit, Southern Light Gallery, Amarillo College, Amarillo, TX.
2002: Rocky Mountain Biennial 2002; Museum of Contemporary Art, Fort Collins, CO.
2001: Land / Scape; solo exhibit, University of Laverne, Laverne, CA.
2000: Land / Scape; solo exhibit, Blue Pony Gallery, Bozeman, MT.
1999: A Deeper Map; permanent exhibit at the Pueblo Grande Museum, Phoenix, AZ.
1998: Deep Creek at the Ice House, Art Detour, Phoenix AZ.
1997: Elvis, Bigfoot, UFOs, Kemi Art Museum, Kemi, Finland.
1996: Close to the Border VI, New Mexico State University Art Gallery, Las Cruces, NM.
1995: The Made Image, Cornell College, Department of Art, Mount Vernon, IA.
1994: Photo Biennial ’94, Westport Art Center, Westport, CT.
1993: Computer Influence, Downey Museum of Art, Downey, CA.
1992: 19th Annual Art Faculty Exhibition, Glendale Community College, Glendale, AZ.
1991: Climbing Lu Shan, solo exhibit, Harry Wood Gallery, Arizona State University School of Art, Tempe, AZ.
1989: Photography at Arizona State University, 11 East Ashland Gallery, Phoenix, AZ.
1988: 22nd Southwestern, Yuma Art Center, Yuma, AZ.


REPRESENTED BY: Artifacts Gallery, 308 E. Main St. Bozeman, MT.