“Every Tool is a Weapon”: Queer Pedagogies and Public Arts Education

Therese Quinn, KyK Seminarium, May 10, 2010

Keynote Presentation

(1). Hello. I want to thank Elina Lahelma and her colleagues for inviting me to participate in this event. I’m honored to be here today. Before I start my talk, which is titled *“Every Tool is a Weapon”: Queer Pedagogies and Public Arts Education*, I want to note that I will be showing many images of artwork, and in the interest of time I will only attribute some of them verbally. If you have questions about the artists email me.

In 2007 a 19 year old artist named Xia Xiang was taking a Mixed Media class through an advanced arts education program at the Chicago-based Gallery 37 Center for the Arts (G37), when she was informed that the artwork she created in the course, a painting that depicted Xiang giving birth to herself, which was inspired by this painting, (2) titled, “My Birth,” the Mexican artist Frida Kahlo, could not be shown at the Center.

The following year, another young student’s feminist artwork was targeted: Tomi Mick, a high-school aged girl taking a photography class at G37 created a triptych exploring female bodies at different ages—(3) the work, which you can see Mick holding here, included images of her mother’s, sister’s and her unclothed chests—which was censored from the program’s final exhibition.

It’s important to point out that these students had taken their art history, as well as their feminism, seriously. Each referred to traditions of art-making and imagery in her own work, such as the use of the female body to explore important issues including the possibility of rebirth that Xiang pointed to, as well as heritage (4), illness (5), aging (6),

power (7), domesticity (8), divinity (9), and even art-making and history (10), as in these works connected to Mick's photography through form and content. You'll also notice that artists often borrow each other's visual ideas—as seems to be the case here (11) …. (12). This is a way of citing and also of entering conversations with other artists, across generations and locations. In fact, the ability to cite this way is good; it indicates creative literacy. Despite demonstrating their literacy, both Xiang and Mick's creations were censored.

(13) A protest against the exclusion of Mick's work was quickly organized by a group called Females United for Action, or FUFA. (14)…(15)… At that rally in front of the entrance to G37, (16)…(17). Tomi showed the photographs[1] that the organization excluded and distributed copies of a statement. She wrote:

> *Gallery 37 in downtown Chicago, Illinois has a very prestigious AP art program for high school juniors and seniors looking to advance in their art career and prepare AP portfolios. They advertise their students as "the best of the best," and once inside, they force us through tons of college prep workshops and encourage us to apply to at least 10 art schools each.*
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> *I auditioned for and was admitted to program. As a photography student of two years (this being my third), I was ready to explore my ideas and find my artistic concentration. Recently I've been working on images that portray women in un-conventional ways in order to challenge common ideas about the female body. I*

[1] These and pictures of the rally can be viewed at the Females United For Action Flickr link: http://www.flickr.com/photos/wgcan/sets/72157603335668254/with/3177598572/

created an unfinished piece of my little sister, me, and my mother, neck to belly-button, nude. The photos are created to sit next to each other in chronological order. They are supposed to demonstrate the differences in our bodies due to age, development, shape, body-type, etc. I was hoping to post the series in this Friday's end of the semester's art show. My teacher was with me all the way. He supported me when my idea was just an idea, and he supported me once it was executed. Then, just four days before the show, he told me that he had decided my piece would be " too controversial" for "the conservative Hispanic parents" attending the exhibit and so I would not be able to put the photographs in the show. He also refused to give me my prints until the end of the class period, after I said that I was leaving and not coming back.

There were never any written or verbal rules explaining what the boundaries were at Gallery 37, and as I said before, my teacher supported me when I started my artwork. Art is supposed to be controversial. We can't stand for this type of censorship of arts, especially the body-positive feminist kind. Who knows how many young artists have lost the desire to make art after encountering programs like this?

Mick also passed out a list of requests that had been submitted to G37, which asked the organization to make commitments to:

- Educate students and parents about the need for freedom of artistic expression; to

- Clearly outline its art-making boundaries; and to
- Meet with youth from FUFA to discuss setting a policy welcoming thought-provoking art and young feminist visibility.

FUFA delivered these to G37 with the signatures of over 100 people to protest its "undeclared policy of censoring…art" with any "controversial content". In response, G37 representatives agreed to schedule a meeting between FUFA youth and the principal of the arts program to discuss the incident and requests, but this woman was "unwilling to communicate directly…without her lawyers" telling FUFA that "she was following Chicago Public School policy, but she wouldn't refer to any specific rule disallowing the kinds of art that [FUFA] members made". The meeting was never held.

This story—of the censorship of serious artwork by young artists—is not a new one, either at G37, or for art education settings more generally. But it reminds me, at this time when public education everywhere and at every level is being reshaped by privatization, to look at the qualities of the organizations involved in these kinds of incidents, and in particular at their relationship to what is public and what is private. (18) For example, the United States, under the Obama administration, is strongly supporting the development of schools that are only semi-public, such as what are called charter schools—these and other forms of new schools receive public funds but are not required to educate all students, and, like private corporations, they can set many of their own rules through processes that are not transparent to society. (19) Parents and students are encouraged to "choose" these schools, and the schools are encouraged to offer unique curriculums, so that they can "compete" in an education marketplace. As a final

complicating factor, in most instances, the teachers at these schools are not represented by unions, and can be hired and fired as the schools choose. (20) Many scholars and others have pointed to the ways that privatization drains resources from public education. But today I am interested in exploring what happens in these new forms of education organizations to students, and even teachers, who are vulnerable socially, and specifically, in this instance, who are queer and politically radical.

This situation might seem distant from Finland's, but in fact, it may be more similar than you now—already, about 10% of children and youth in Helsinki attend a school other than the one closest to their home, one which requires some form of choice or selection by parents and students, and often also a demonstration of qualification for entrance, such as high test scores or strong audition or portfolio performance. (21) And, as can be seen from the recent changes on the university level here, when institutions privatize, free tuition, employment protection, and other concerns may take second place to calls for organizational efficiency and funding needs. So considering the implications of these trends is important everywhere.

(22) I'll start with a closer look at FUFA, which is an initiative of the Women & Girls Collective Action Network, or Women & Girls CAN, a grassroots non-profit organization that has prioritized placing the most vulnerable youth and their often-suppressed views—in particular queer youth and girls of color—at the center of their organizing. In particular, they have focused on media justice and social aggression against women, girls, and queer youth. (23) For example, FUFA initiated a successful campaign against ads for a local Spanish-language radio station, *La Ley* 107.9, that promoted violence against women—the ad, shown on billboards, the public

transportation system, (24) and Spanish language newspapers, "showed a row of Latinas photographed from behind in short shorts with '25 *pegaditas*' (which is slang for 25 hits or slaps)".

(25) As a form of counter-media and popular education, FUFA initiated a photo exhibit titled *Alternative Windows*. (26) The project enlisted hundreds of young people across Chicago, providing them with cameras and the goal of recording "positive images of men and women that we don't see in mainstream media". (27) Some of these pictures—(28) which range from intimate scenes of friends hugging and young men cooking, to more (29) stereotype-challenging photographs, for example, of the proudly revealed bodies of disabled youth—(30) are posted online and the group has also toured the exhibit throughout Chicago. FUFA's youth leaders and organizers, primarily young women of color, although the organization is open to all, choose their own issues and strategies, and can expect (and have so far received) the assistance and support of WGCAN's Board of Directors, which has signed onto an organizational mission that is forthright about its commitment to queer-identified social justice advocacy.[2] While FUFA's work is clearly educational, it does not provide public education.

(31) On the other hand, G37, does provide this service, offering Chicago's students public school credit. Yet much about this organization is unclear, including how it became an arm of the public school system, how it is funded, and how it is structured.

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[2] FUFA's Mission states: "Females United for Action is a Chicago-wide social change organization for people who identify as young women and gender-queer youth, with the leadership of youth of color at the center of our organizing. Media justice is one of many tools we use to end violence in our communities." Retrieved March 25, 2010, from http://fufayouth.org/fufa/

A final question might be, what makes its art program so advanced, if it can't accommodate either ideas or nude bodies, both of which are staples of art?

Its opacity and the answer to the question about the kinds of art G37 will and will not nurture are connected to the effects of privatization on public arts education. Privatization is core goal of neoliberalism, a framework that promotes free markets, deregulation and competition, and worldwide, public education has been a target of its promoters. From Chile, where currently only about 35% of children, the poorest students, attend municipal public schools, and only about 10% of these young people go on to university study—(32) here you see teachers and students protesting an education law that allows private companies to profit from public education funds—to New Orleans in the United States, in which, after Hurricane Katrina, all of the city's teachers, 8,500 people who were members of a teacher's union, were fired and replaced by largely inexperienced and uncertified teachers, and (33) most recently, to Providence, Rhode Island, where, again, all the teachers were fired in a move officially ignored by Obama, and praised by his secretary of education, Arne Duncan, there is overwhleming evidence that public education has been targeted as a site of potential profit for industry. In fact, there are now venture funds focused on public education as the next hot market for investors.

Yet these changes in schools create conditions that are inhospitable to the flourishing of radical, including feminist and queer, possibilities in arts education. Anyone might ask, why should this—room for radical visions and lives—be a goal for education? I'll offer three answers. First, because all education should encourage students to go to the root—which is the origin of the term radical—by digging deep for

understanding, and then reporting back—a public act—about what they learn. Tomi's teacher allowed her only part of this; he encouraged her to explore but denied her the right to display her ideas within her community. And next, we should care about these changes because the deep heart of all good education is a concern for justice—we want all young people to flourish, and know that none of us can truly thrive while some of us are ignored or oppressed. And finally, because the arts have always been used educatively, for social justice. (34) Here, across time, similar images have been used to propel social change—for abolition of slavery, (35) black power, (36) women's liberation, (37) LGBT rights to marriage, and (38) solidarity. Even the field of art education has taken up the imagery and cause of social justice, as you can see in this advertisement for the most recent US art education conference. (39)

I want to segue now from the examples of suppressed political, and specifically feminist art, and the broad goal of social justice, to the arguably even more contentious ground of *queer*, in relationship to education. Gay is often presented as threatening to social systems, like marriage (40) and families (41). Queer is also threatening, and for some similar reasons, but it does not equal gay. Queer is disruptive of all stable identity categories, and highlights how these identities are always changing. Still, some scholars of education have equated "queer" with lesbian, gay, bisexual and often transgender, identities, or some other version of those categories—sometimes an "I" is included, for intersex, or an "A" for allies, for example—"for convenience". Although not unusual, this correspondence confirms the social commonsense of clear, stable, and discrete identities, or the idea that as we reach maturity each of us will come to know "who we really are" once and for all, and that who we are as queer is primarily one thing or

perhaps, two, if we separate a fixed sexual orientation from a fixed gender identity. This commonsense also assumes other binary categories—white *or* black, not black AND white, and female *or* male, not both or neither, and so on. For many educators, including those who teach the arts, this emphasis has mapped neatly, if not always easily, onto a multiculturalism framework and resulted in calls for tolerance and representation. In US arts classrooms, for example, teachers have been encouraged to address history (42) by noting "artists who are or were gay or lesbian" and directed to resources such as books that are "devoted to art by homosexuals" and (43) offered lists of artists to include in curricula, typically white and European, and often male—such as Leonardo di Vinci, (44) Michelangelo, (45) Romaine Brooks, (46) Jasper Johns, and (47) Keith Haring. Is there a Finnish version of this? (48)

More recently, arts educators have been offered models of visual culture and media literacy projects addressing, for example, LGBT popular culture, (49) like the rainbow flag, which was created in 1978 by an artist named Gilbert Baker, and the flourishing of its re-designs by other artists, (50)…(51)…(52)…and communities (53)…(54)…(55)… and appropriations by (56) corporations eager to sell products to LGBTQ people. Teachers are also increasingly urged, in the United States, and here, as well, to address classroom conditions (57) that reflect structural oppression—bullying, name-calling, (58) safety and respect. Sometimes, arts and other educators are prompted to reflect the diversity and intersections of identities in their curricular choices, (59) although as Kristen Renn notes, few "deal at all with…race, ability, or social class within LGBT identities" and that "White, able-bodied, and middle-class are assumed norms". Finally, educators have been reminded to address LGBTQ-related topics, such as family

diversity, in teacher preparation programs. (60)…(61)… Although not without controversy. (62)

These are all potentially valuable directions: teachers must, of course, aim to create classrooms that are free from hostility and curricula that reveal our diverse lives, and teacher educators must create opportunities for young educators to learn how to do this. But, none of these directions begin to approach exploring queer as anything other than a synonym for lesbian and gay. As one example, deciding just what are "queer concerns" is far from simple and the subject of much debate, that goes something like this: Should we aim for "gay marriage" as a route to rights for an expanded group, or should we fight for rights for all, divorced from participation in marriage? (63) So, while there is a need for LGBTQ-representative arts curricula and measures that address the safety of LGBTQ youth and teachers, a *queer* arts education suggests other possibilities. It builds on feminism's insights about gender as a socially shaped aspect of human identity, and gay and lesbian arguments that homosexuality is similarly constructed, by disputing the naturalness of all sexual and gender identity categories, and by extension, all identity categories. *Queer* is, like all other areas of identity-connected theorizing, linked germinally to activism and movements for justice. Ideally, a queer pedagogy in arts education would engage the kind of challenging feminist art created by FUFA's members, by placing it within the history of artists and artworks that have aimed at disrupting naturalized gender and sexuality, such as (64) Marcel DuChamp, as cited here by Yasumasa Morimura, (65) who also cites cultural figures, (66) as well as artworks, (67) Rita Hammond, here performing artist Max Beckman, and Samuel Fosso, (68) giving us several kinds of "realness," (69) to name just a few. This kind of queer

pedagogy attempts to foster new possibilities for human liberation through challenging representations. In other words, it would be an arts education aiming right at the central vision of a democracy—the fullest development of people who are capable of living rich and self-directed lives and of participating just as completely in all aspects of civic society.

A radical and fully public and queered arts education of this sort would be grounded in a rich lineage of overtly justice-seeking and often collectively produced art, media, and other forms of material and visual culture that have benefited every social movement. (70) In feminism, there are many examples, of course. And in recent queer history, think (71) ACT UP, and the activists and artists who created the media that flowed from that movement, including (72) Gran Fury, General Idea (73), and many more, including Keith Haring, grounded visually here in history and a community (74)—as well as other subversive forms and practices (75) drag, camp (76) and the visual culture of camp (77), DIY, (78) punk, (79) riot grrrl, voguing, (80) and homocore, for a very few examples, that raise questions about who we are, who we can become, and how we might really rather organize our lives and world. In this same charged way, queered classrooms must include norm-challenging pedagogies and curricula that invite students to also consider what kind of society they want to live in, and the role they and others can play in creating it together.

To be clear, I'm not suggesting that teachers develop curricula based on nostalgic looks at earlier activist moments from their own or others' histories; justice-based teaching prioritizes context and relevance (and even as I say the words—Queer Nation—for, example, I'm aware of the distance between my own experiences and the going

moment, and geographical distance, as well). Specifically, I'm convinced that a justice-seeking pedagogy can't be crafted by recipe, but rather, it indicates directions, as the socialist popular and adult educator Myles Horton has said. But art and other educators offer their students many tools, and knowledge of queer expressions and tragetories should be among these. (81) Paraphrasing the popular "recipe" for an inclusive curriculum by injecting it with a little wisdom from musician Ani DiFranco's song, My IQ, from her 1993 album, *Puddle Dive*, a (82) queered curriculum should be a window, a mirror, and a "weapon if we hold it right"—a hammer, in my imagination—because sometimes windows and mirrors need to be shattered before a new world can be imagined and built. To put it another way, we can queer our pedagogy by wielding that hammer and offering it to our students, too. But current conditions in education make this difficult.

So to return to my home base in the US, with increasing support for privatized forms of schooling at all educational levels by United States President Barack Obama and his Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, it's getting harder to find the public in education. This shift from public to private in education, as in other public sectors, is of recent origin, roughly from the 1970s, and did not just evolve in the US, Chile, or anywhere else. Rather, it has been engineered by proponents of deregulation, and supported by large donations from philanthropists of earned and inherited wealth from business interests. In the US, the Waltons, whom Wal-Mart made "USA's richest family," have given millions to the causes of charter schools and vouchers, while Bill Gates, founder of Microsoft, has directed billions from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to support similar ventures in education.

The Waltons and other donors have been open about their support for schools that function like the market and the workplaces that made them wealthy. Charter schools fit this bill; they are often allowed to hire uncertified and inexperienced teachers. Once hired, these educators are often at will employees with yearly contracts, unrepresented by local collective bargaining agents. Charter school teachers are paid less than local salary scales, sometimes earning "significantly" less than teachers with similar qualifications, yet work longer hours each day and more days per year than those in traditional school workplaces. And they leave their positions at high rates. In many ways they resemble the new profile of the insecure worker constantly seeking new employment, more than the older version of the educator who performed a stabilizing role in her community.

Scholar Ruth Gilmore, has described these kinds of interventions into the scope and shape of the public sphere by wealthy private individuals and their organizations as "the ascendance of antistate state actors: people and parties who gain state power by denouncing state power." The Waltons and even President Obama match this description. Gilmore points out that as a state's support for the public sector declines, non-profits and other non-governmental organizations emerge to provide missing services. She notes that this comprises "a 'third sector' (neither state nor business)" that has been called the "shadow state." The shadow state fills the service void left as government withdraws; but this shift means less accountability by these providers, even as they, but not their employees, become more centrally important to society. Donors and unelected Boards of Directors control non-profits, not those who do the work, or the communities they serve.

So now, let's return to our case of FUFA and Gallery 37. In distinction with the explicitly political arts and education work of FUFA, G37, which was inaugurated in

1991 as a collaboration between Mayor Richard Daley's wife, Maggie Daley, and the Commissioner of Cultural Affairs, Lois Weisberg. (83) It has two downtown sites and offers classes in schools, parks, and neighborhood organizations throughout the city, and has never claimed to be a community-led or activist initiative. G37 has flourished against the backdrop of declining support for school-based arts instruction, which has been offered to fewer and fewer students nationally for at least a decade. In Chicago, too, a similar decrease in arts instruction has been noted. In fact, 20% of Chicago principals report that their schools offer no arts programming at all, with children in low-income communities of color less likely to have school arts than students in wealthier, whiter neighborhoods.

Yet, while central in terms of visibility, the arts education component of G37 may have been secondary to other purposes. For example, the program served to provide employment for teens at a time when federal funding for summer jobs programs was on the decline, and private employers showed little interest in hiring city youth. In 1990, the year before G37 offered its first classes, Illinois received $35.3 million for jobs programs, down $3 million from the year before; with those funds the state government planned to create 26,000 youth employment positions across the state, down from nearly 30,000 created in 1989. By 1993, Mayor Daley's summer jobs program consolidated funding streams—federal, foundation, and corporate—to provide employment to 14,000 city youth.

At G37's inception, there was another wide-reaching non-profit arts education organization already operating in Chicago. Urban Gateways was founded in 1961 by Jessie Woods, a disabled African American woman, along with four friends. Similarly to

the founders, Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr, and settlement workers of Hull-House, another Chicago institution, who were dedicated to bringing art and literary education to the city's poor and immigrant communities, Woods, who directed Urban Gateways for 19 years, wanted to create art education opportunities for Chicago's low income youth of color living in the city's segregated and under-served communities, primarily on the segregated south and west sides. (84) As a Black parent, Woods knew that education offerings for her community in the 1960s were sub-par, and also that arts education in particular was less likely to be seen as necessary and more likely to be cut under the "back-to-basics" regimes so often recommended for poor children when budgets were tight, then and now. As an indication of need and interest, in 1966, just five years after its inception, 341,000 people participated in Urban Gateways arts programming; and by 1993 the organization served over one million "students, teachers, parents, and principals". But by 2004, the year of Woods' death, and just over a decade after G37's start, the number of participants had dropped to 326,000. Urban Gateways began as a grassroots organization with a open access justice-focused mission, but has largely been replaced by G37 as a provider of extracurricular arts education for Chicago's youth.

Although well established and thriving, G37's status as an organization has morphed over time. When it began, it was one program with many arts education strands—students could study a range of forms, from circus arts and painting, to mosaics and poetry. At some point, the separate advanced arts track with portfolio review entrance requirements was created and the general arts offerings open to all students became more limited. Both tracks carry the name G37, but the advanced track is now described as a program of the Chicago Public Schools. (85) Perhaps most important, G37

is sponsored by a host of foundations and businesses including the John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Bank of America, UBS Global Asset Management, Abbott Laboratories, A T & T, Inc., the Wallace Foundation, and, controversially, Philip Morris Companies, Inc., "the tobacco, food and beer conglomerate," as well as others. Essentially, G37 placed under Mayor Daley's control the basic ingredient of patronage politics: a pool of jobs, in this case, seasonal for youth, as well as year-round for the administrative and managerial positions required to run the program, along with a steady stream of funding (Encyclopedia of Chicago, 2010). In 1995, Daley also gained control of the Chicago Public Schools, which is the third largest school system in the United States, and the second largest employer in the city, with over 43,000 employees and an operating budget of over $5 billion in 2010. (86) In Chicago, though, following the money means following the corruption; our last governor was ousted for trying to sell Obama's recently-vacated political seat.

While G37 advanced and basic forms both offer art education to the city's young people, they are not similar structurally. Just as uncertified and non-union represented teachers are hired for low wage employment in privatized schools, as holders of non-civil service jobs, G37's basic art education employees largely do not enjoy the employment security and higher wages of city government or public education.[3] The artists who teach classes are paid by the class, and offered no benefits; and although some certified teachers are hired to teach in the advanced program, no data about their employment—how many there are, what their work entails, if they are represented by the teacher's

[3] An interesting anonymous account of resource use by and employment with G37 was published in AREA (Art, Research, Education, Activism) Chicago's Privatization issue; titled A Lesson in Good Intentions, it is available at http://www.areachicago.org/p/issues/issue-1/a-lesson-in-good-intentio/

union, and so on—exists for public review. While G37's advanced program is reported to be part of the public school system, unlike that system, which is required to report basic data for examination, much of the data about G37's structure and employment practices are hidden from view.

Moving arts education from traditional public schools to non-profit and quasi-public providers like G37 also obscures exactly to whom arts resources are distributed; again in contrast with the Chicago Public Schools, G37 does not provide demographic information on student users of its school and neighborhood programs, but reports that about a third of the youth admitted to its downtown programs are from low-income families, compared to the 86% low-income rate of Chicago Public School students reported in 2010. Also, unlike Urban Gateways and in-school arts education, G37's AP and summer classes do not have open admission policies; rather, as with its advanced program, all youth must submit portfolios or audition to be selected, further restricting access to arts education.

(87) Similarly, rather than offering a range of curricular and developmental supports for all students in public schools, from drama and sports, to arts and career pathways, these programs are on the decline as general offerings, while being made available as niche or "choice" options for fewer students, through selective, or as it has been reframed by an activist in Chicago, "restrictive enrollment," schools. A recent example of this is a new fine and performing arts high school, the Chicago High School for the Arts, known as ChiArts, which was initiated as what is called a "contract" school, by a consortium of private foundation representatives. Contract schools are operated as

private ventures, and like charter schools, are released from many of the requirements of regular public schools.

With students chosen for admission on the basis of audition, academic record, and "potential," relative wealth is an unnoted but salient criteria at ChiArts, just as it is for Chicago's other restrictive enrollment schools and programs, including G37; 48% of ChiArts' students are low-income; many students attending the city's largely arts-poor elementary schools will likely need access to privately-produced and costly resources, such as after-school and weekend arts, drama and music classes, to develop portfolios and prepare for the performance auditions that are required for admission.

Finally, like the other semi-public arts education sites I've presented here, ChiArts hires uncertified, nonunion educators. The school's four department heads are all accomplished artists but none are teachers who have formal education degrees and licensure, though one was studying education at a local university as the school opened. On its website, in answer to the question, "Who will teach at CHiaRts?" the school ignores the question of education and credentials, instead describing a faculty of "full-time academic educators and artist-teachers" and "part-time artist-teachers." The framing of academic educators vs. artist-teachers, paired with references to working artists, reproduces corrosive stereotypes: that the study of pedagogy isn't important; that artist-teachers aren't academics; and that formally educated art teachers aren't working artists, or simply, that "those who can't, teach."[4] (88) It also reinforces an "art for art's sake" sentiment, through which, Randy Martin has noted, artists can "secure an identity [of artist] for a day's wage, but the rest of the week remains unsecuritized". To put it another

[4] Erica Meiners helped me recognize this point.

way, sociologist Andrew Ross (2000) notes that "the arts economy faces an uncertain future" while according to government reports education is a growing field. However, in ChiArts's framing, artists can stay "artists" while taking part-time teaching positions that would have previously provided full-time employment for certified art educators, and the school's full-time academic educators can find satisfaction in their full-time status. The school's ironic devaluing of educational attainment might support de-professionalizing trends in teaching and an anti-intellectual "teacher education is valueless"[5] discourse, but as long as there are hordes for hire, it and others like it will continue to gain ground in the US. But it should be noted, insecure, part-time, and just-passing-through teachers are not likely to take positions that might cost them their jobs, like defending the artwork of girls giving birth to themselves, especially when so many fully qualified teachers are being fired for no apparent reasons at all.

The cases of FUFA, G37, Urban Gateways, and ChiArts offer troubling examples of the problems that shifting responsibility for education from public sites to privatized education sites poses for a widely accessible art education and the possibility of queered pedagogies, including the sidelining and suppression of radical and queer visions, arts, and individuals.

Non-profit organizations, whatever their political commitments, are dependent on outside sources of funding, and for this reason, are less likely to consistently welcome challenging perspectives and people. (89) Privatization-pressured public schools, also struggling to compete for resources, may have incentives to smooth their edges, and

[5] This is currently a pervasive discourse, but for examples, see the comments posted in response to an entry I wrote about ChiArts on my blog, *The Other Eye*, upon which some of this is based, at: http://therese-othereye.blogspot.com/2009/07/chiarts-is-on-scene.html

remove those who are not mainstream. It is likely that for the near future at least, queer and radical students and pedagogies will continue to be targeted for exclusion. Some have suggested that a solution to this problem could be protection in the form of special schools for LGBTQ students.[6] But this seems a solution inspired more by the choice logic of the market, than by those who have a vision of the role of public education in building a democratic society. I don't want to release public education from responsibility for creating schools for all youth, including those who are, as Mattilda Bernstein says, revolting, that are joyous, arts-rich environments where diverse people encounter and learn about and from each other—it's an old vision, but one not yet achieved and still worth the work.

Let's close then, by returning to the more cheerful theme of queer pedagogies—ways of teaching predicated on attending to the needs of those who are most vulnerable, and to the idea that each of us is complex and multiple, and always changing—this is about gender and sexuality, for sure, and also action and justice—(90) and imagine how this vision, the vision of our young people, as evidenced here in the work of the Chicago activist group, Gender Just, might become central to animating a radically relevant and inclusive public arts education for our schools. (91) Tamara Beaubouef-LaFontant (1999) has challenged the paradigm of cultural relevance as a guide for education with a call for *politically relevant* teaching; similarly, I've tried to suggest here a way of understanding the project of queering pedagogy as inclusive of gender and sexual identity, but also moving beyond that terrain—a queered education is fundamentally an education for

[6] See a short essay on the topic at *The Other Eye*, "Making Chicago's Schools Safer for All," at: http://therese-othereye.blogspot.com/2008/12/making-chicagos-schools-safer-for-all.html

social justice. As Beaubouef-LaFontant claims, these times demand the biggest vision: it's not status congruity or visibility, but political clarity and action that will build the educational systems and societies we need. And we can start by dedicating ourselves to revaluing and reclaiming the public in education, which seems to me a very queer project to take up right now. (92)

Thank you.

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