

Learning through an autonomous experience of art as a social practice

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School of Arts and Communication Design

Gavin Larcombe

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Abstract

This practice-based research project is designed for artists who also work as teachers within a formal educational setting. It provides a practical methodology for those who wish to make art with students and would like to establish an alternative approach to learning.

As a teacher of art, I believe it is important to continue practising as an artist as this can motivate and sustain a personal desire for learning. Through this, it is possible to inspire and instil a similar passion in the students. However, sustaining one's art practice, whilst fulfilling the requirements and responsibilities associated with teaching is not without its difficulties. To overcome this problem, I believe it is possible for the art teacher to regard their situation as a unique opportunity and consider their social interactions with students as a stimulus for making art.

When developing my own art practice with students, I realised I would need to address questions relating to both ethics and aesthetics. This decision was made in response to the theoretical arguments of critics including, Nicolas Bourriaud, Claire Bishop and Grant Kester who frame the broader situation of art as a social practice. As a result, several pertinent questions arose, which would later inform my own practical experiments.

- The activity of conversation often plays a necessary and valuable role when artists work with others. However, how can this activity be experienced as art and differentiated from other forms of social interaction? In other words, how do I distinguish my practice as art from the activity of teaching?

In order to answer this question, I referred to the theoretical ideas of Jacques Rancière and Theodor Adorno. These ideas enabled me to recognise how the materials, methods and forms used by artists permit a variety of interpretation, enabling their work to be understood as art. In response, I sought to ensure my experiments when working with students would result in a physical artwork. This enabled the work to be partially judged in terms of its formal qualities and, therefore, distinguished as art.

Although making a physical artwork with students proved valuable, I also needed to resolve the other important outcomes and educational benefits my methodology offered. As my research project progressed, further questions emerged.

- When artists seek to work with other people there is a danger that cultural and educational inequalities are reiterated. This can involve the artist failing to recognise

their own privileged position or acknowledge the differences of those invited to participate. Therefore, how does the artist as teacher negotiate this fraught social and educational process? In other words, what is the nature of my relationship with students? How does learning take place and what is being learnt?

With further reference to Rancière I recognised how an overemphasis on the artist (teacher) or critic could limit one's ability to learn through art and could signal wider, social, educational and cultural inequalities. Rancière's solution to this problem involved a relationship based on absolute parity between the student and teacher. However, this approach to learning proved unrealistic in practice.

In order to formulate a more pragmatic account of my working relationship with students I referred to my own practical experiments and the psychoanalytical ideas of Jacques Lacan. From this I was able to develop an alternative approach to learning through art.

In practice this involved students being invited to take an active role in developing a curriculum. This curriculum often concerned a social issue, relevant and educationally significant to the students. When investigating this issue, students were trained to analyse appropriate information and texts in order to form their own opinions or arguments. In order to express these opinions through art, students were initially required to examine the way other artists create meaning through various methods and techniques. Examining these methods and techniques not only encouraged students to form their own interpretation of art but also provided inspiration when making their own artworks.

As a result, I believe this approach represents a new method of teaching and making art with students. Through this methodology students gain a degree of control over their learning, reinforce critical literacy skills and develop an ability to interpret art, independent to that of the teacher. Equally this methodology provides an opportunity for the artist as teacher to learn with and be challenged by the students. As a result, a more realistic examination into the artist-student relationship occurs, thus influencing the artwork produced.

Within the conclusion of this thesis a more detailed practical guide is provided for those wishing to adopt this methodology in the classroom.

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Declaration

‘I confirm that this is my own work and the use of all material from other sources has been properly and fully acknowledged.’

Gavin Larcombe.

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Introduction

Reasons for research project

Prior to this research project my art practice involved making and displaying artwork in public places. I found this way of working often-created opportunities for social interaction, providing some insight into other people's daily lives and experiences. As a result, I began to realise that my practice proved more thought-provoking when a product of my conversations with people. This was also at a time when I had begun my teaching career following post-graduate study. In becoming a teacher of art, I discovered the difficulties in trying to maintain one's art practice, whilst meeting the expectations and responsibilities associated with the job. However, I also recognised that school was already a unique and inherently social environment, where part of my role involved encouraging students to reveal their thoughts and opinions through discussion. During my master's degree I sought to pursue this aspect of my art practice. I became increasingly interested in the possibility of collaborating with students as a means of making art, whilst providing an alternative approach to teaching. Therefore, the reasons why I began this research project was firstly because I wanted to maintain my art practice, as this would also help motivate me as a teacher. I recognised that my working relationship with students provided a focus for making art. Secondly, I believed that in making art with students I could create a new approach to teaching that was less prescriptive or focused only on my instruction of practical skills. In other words, I wanted to provide a greater sense of student ownership, create something that reflected my relationship with them and provide an opportunity in which both me and the students could learn.

For reasons described in Chapter One, establishing a collaborative relationship with students became a less significant priority in the development of this research project. Instead this research can be understood as a practical methodology for artists working as teachers, or those ambitious to make art with students and provide an alternative approach to learning.

Aims of research project

- 1) To provide a model for artists who also occupy a professional teaching role.
- 2) To establish an alternative approach to learning achieved through an experience of art as social practice.
- 3) To enable students to develop analytical skills and acquire an ability to interpret art.

Context

The first chapter of this thesis charts the contemporary situation for art as a social practice by referring to the main theoretical arguments presented by critics including Nicolas Bourriaud, Claire Bishop and Grant Kester. Performance, participation, and collaboration are three concepts that are used to define various forms of art as a social practice. Therefore, this chapter will examine how these critics define these concepts. These definitions are inherently dependent upon how these critics approach the broader question concerning the relationship between aesthetics and ethics. The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to examine these competing arguments in order to develop my own model for art practice.

Chapter one begins by focusing on Bourriaud's definition of performance, participation, and collaboration (1.2). His definition of these concepts is a consequence of his approach to the ethical question of authorial rights but is also influenced by his own concept defined as relational aesthetics. This section will, therefore, examine Bourriaud's claims for relational aesthetics. For example, Bourriaud believes social interactions, triggered through an experience of art, provide an antidote to social interactions mediated through consumerism. Another claim is the assumption that the rights of those invited to perform or participate by the artist are automatically guaranteed and deemed a satisfactory justification for the work. In general, Bourriaud appears to judge art as a social practice predominantly in terms of its social efficacy or ethical approach. However, I will challenge some these claims and highlight the contradictions inherent within his definition of performance, participation, and collaboration.

I will then focus on Claire Bishop's definition of these concepts and opposition to an overemphasis on judging art in relation to ethics (1.3). In brief, I support aspects of Bishop's argument as I recognise how recent government policy and changes to the wider political, economic and social landscape in the UK have influenced this particular field of art practice. This can be broadly attributed to an increasing emphasis on accountability and the requirement for artists to clearly demonstrate the social impact of their work in order to secure funding. More importantly I will highlight Bishop's emphasis on the artist as principle author, whilst placing less priority when judging art in relation to the question of rights which, to some extent, I partially support. However, I will also demonstrate how Bishop complicates her argument as she presents a confused definition for collaboration by conflating it with participation.

This will then follow with a more detailed critique of Bourriaud's relational aesthetics and Grant Kester's dialogical aesthetics, which shares some similar characteristics. In response, I explain how an overemphasis on the ethical question of authorial rights limits one's experience of art as a social practice (1.4 & 1.5). Specifically, I question why these critics focus on social interaction or dialogical exchange, whilst neglecting an appraisal of the formal qualities of performance, participatory, or collaborative art. In short, I believe these critics do not adequately justify why the process of conversation within relational or dialogical art is different from other forms of social interaction. I therefore argue that a focus on conversation, at the expense of a consideration of the formal qualities of art, limits how it can be experienced. Equally, Bourriaud's depreciation of a physical art object in favour of social exchange does not, as Bourriaud claims, provide an adequate means of resistance to capitalist exchange. To support my argument, I will discuss the concept of commodity fetishism, established by Karl Marx, as a means to highlight the flaw inherent to Bourriaud's claim.

In relation to this argument against an overemphasis on social exchange, this chapter will also highlight the potential lack of a more complex analysis in terms of the relationship between artist and participant(s). In this situation, I believe differences or conflicting opinions within the group become neutralised or co-opted into one perceived ethical position. Within the summary of this chapter I demonstrate the implications of these problems with reference to my own practical experiments with participating students. Specifically, I illustrate how my priority to ensure shared authorship caused me to neglect the relationships and differences between the students involved and thus impeded any potential outcomes. This section also refers to another practical experiment focused on my attempt to encourage the participation of children within a local community. Through my evaluation of this experiment I not only demonstrate my failure to address the relationships formed, but also highlight how the activities I had used to promote participation proved difficult to differentiate from a compulsory art lesson.

These theoretical discoveries that enable me to reflect and question my own practice were partially in response to Jacques Rancière's ideas and redefinition of aesthetics and politics. Within the middle section of this chapter Rancière's proposition for an autonomous, heteronomous dialectic within art is discussed (1.6, 1.7 & 1.8). In brief, this proposition is based on the fact that art is an inevitable product of the artist's heteronomous intentions, however, when experienced by an audience there is something involuntary or beyond the

artist's control. This means that the autonomy of art is not because it is free from social concerns, but because one's experience of it is free from the intentions of the artist or critic. In support of this theoretical idea this chapter also refers to Theodor Adorno who, prior to Rancière, developed a similar argument (1.9). Adorno demonstrates how the materials, methods and forms associated with art are loaded with unintended meaning and once entered into public domain, art acquires a life of its own. The significance of this discovery has not only enabled me to reconsider the unintended formal qualities of relational art, as discussed in the final section of this chapter, but has also helped me recognise the successful outcomes which, I have sought to retain within my own art practice. In short, I have realised that my working relationship and interaction with students must culminate in something that can be judged in terms of its formal qualities and thus permit several ways for interpretation.

In summary the theoretical ideas and arguments in chapter one provided a number of valuable lessons from which my practice could proceed. Firstly, I realised that it is no longer necessary to ensure authorship is shared equally with students as this would detract from a more complex understanding of our relationship and potential differences. In other words, an over-emphasis on authorial rights could potentially co-opt or neutralise contrasting voices within the group. Secondly, I recognised that, although conversations form a valuable and necessary part of my approach, they cannot be understood as an end in themselves, but as a means in the production of art. Therefore, in order to distinguish the outcomes from other forms of social interaction it remains important these outcomes can be experienced in terms of their formal qualities. In other words, it is not necessary to neglect the production of a physical object in favour of social exchange.

Chapter two provides further evidence to support my theoretical argument for an autonomous experience of art as a social practice. This chapter will then outline how one learns and what is learnt through the model I propose. In order to achieve this, I refer to the psychoanalytical ideas of Jacques Lacan. This is not only because of the way he approaches art and literature, but because his ideas on language and discourse emphasise the need to acquire analytical or perceptive skills. Equally his ideas on psychoanalytical treatment provide a valuable insight in terms of the relationship between the analyst and patient, which is useful when considering the relationship between the artist and participating student. Through developing a better understanding of this relationship, I believe there is an opportunity to examine the influences that shape one's intentions, opinions or beliefs.

In order to demonstrate Lacan's support for an autonomous experience of art I refer to his argument that regards language as something unstable because the signifiers or symbols contained within language cannot necessarily represent fixed ideas or concepts (2.1). Following on from this idea Lacan claims that language can also have an influential effect upon one's subjectivity (2.2). This claim is further developed when Lacan addresses the concept of discourse, which he perceives has a surreptitious and persuasive influence upon all aspects of human life. In response I draw a comparison between this idea and Bourriaud's own proposition that all forms of social life are now largely mediated through consumerism. Although compelling, both these arguments remain hypothetical and must be regarded with a degree of caution. However, what these arguments highlight is the need for cultivating one's capacity for analysis or one's ability to recognise the persuasive use of language (2.3). With reference to my own practical experiments I demonstrate how the students' analytical skills, when focused on a particular issue, were enhanced when exposed to a wider variety of opinion and fact.

The final section of chapter two concerns Lacan's ideas surrounding the relationship between the analyst and patient (2.4). Although I do not wish to pathologise students as they are not patients requiring psychoanalytic treatment, the ramifications of Lacan's ideas have proved useful when considering the relationships formed within participatory art practice. In one observation Lacan questions one's desire to help others, highlighting how this is partially motivated to satisfy one's sense of moral duty or purpose. Understood in relation to art as a social practice the consequence of this argument suggests a need for artists to reflect upon their intentions or desire to solve social problems. Another significant idea gained from Lacan's account of the analyst-patient relationship is how the process of dialogue and debate can be used to interrogate the causes that influence one's thoughts, opinions and beliefs (2.5). When applied to art practice this approach not only thwarts the potential neutralisation of difference, but also provides an opportunity for learning and self-reflection. Although recognising the importance of dialogue and debate with students, I was also aware that it would need to be experienced as art. Having established these guiding principles, it was necessary to test them out within practice. At this point within chapter two I refer to an example where dialogue and debate becomes a vehicle for writing and performing spoken word poetry. In this example I demonstrate how differences of opinion within the group are interrogated and used as material for art. In response I develop an argument that explains how

this approach to art as a social practice presents an opportunity for learning and self-reflection for both artist and student.

This proposition for an opportunity for learning and self-reflection is developed in more detail in chapter three. To achieve this, I refer to the theoretical ideas of Jacques Rancière for two main reasons. The first is because of the valuable insights provided by Rancière when approaching the question of aesthetics and ethics, which frames the situation of art and social practice. Secondly, Rancière's theory of intellectual emancipation and approach to pedagogy establishes a cause to defend my own model. In short, this chapter illustrates areas where I am both sympathetic and critical of Rancière's ideas. These areas of agreement and opposition are illustrated with reference to examples of my own art practice.

The first section of chapter three focuses on Rancière's critique of the artist or intellectual who assumes responsibility for educating an audience (3.1). In support I recognise how this pedagogic relationship can potentially reinforce divisions or inequalities within society. In relation to this argument Rancière also establishes two other critiques, which appear to relate to the ideas presented by both Lacan and Bourriaud. The first challenges the idea that a master discourse is so subtle and influential that all attempts to resist are absorbed. The second is against the proposition that social life has been eroded through an embrace of capitalism. Whilst I accept Rancière's argument against the hypothetical concept of a master discourse, I reiterate my earlier position that this critique is contingent upon one's capacity for perception. I develop this argument towards the end of this chapter when focusing on how one learns. Nevertheless, Rancière's critique of the intellectual figure who assumes responsibility for revealing a false consciousness is significant when understood in relation to art. This can be recognised in two ways. The first can be understood in terms of the artist directly educating an audience, thus establishing a direct link between cause and effect. Alternatively, this argument can be recognised when the focus is on encouraging an audience to actively participate as a means to satisfy a perceived form of ethics. In response I recognise how these approaches to art practice can lead to the neutralisation of difference or reduce an understanding of art to one focused on the heteronomous intentions of the artist or critic. To avoid these potential pitfalls, I make continued reference to an example of my own art practice that demonstrates how the potential neutralisation of difference can be avoided through a process of dialogue and debate. With continued reference to this example, I also illustrate how the process of dialogue and debate culminated in something that could be judged in terms of its formal qualities and thus permitting multiple interpretations.

The second half of this chapter begins by examining Rancière's theory for intellectual emancipation (3.2). For Rancière an experience of art that is limited to the intentions of the artist or critic reflects a traditional and unequal pedagogic relationship between master and student. To illustrate this idea this section refers to the growing emphasis on the professional expert and how education has become a form of mass entertainment. This argument also provides some reflection when considering the increasing emphasis on pedagogy within the field of art as a social practice, as it potentially reinforces unequal educational and cultural opportunities. As a result, I refer to an example of my own art practice in order to demonstrate how I have addressed this potential problem by adopting a process of dialogue and debate. I conclude how this approach provides me with an opportunity to confront my opinions or intentions and acknowledge my privileged position.

The final section of chapter three questions how one learns or acquires a capacity to translate art, as proposed by Rancière (3.3). Whilst I agree with Rancière's call for an autonomous experience of art, I do not regard his justification for how one acquires analytical or interpretational skills as adequate. For Rancière the acquisition of these skills is a consequence of self-will or self-application alone. This, therefore, assumes that everyone has equal educational opportunities to develop their own capacity for translation, which undeniably, is not the case. This argument also highlights Rancière's belief that one cannot cultivate an ability to translate art or develop analytical skills. This is because he assumes cultivating capacity in others reflects an unequal pedagogic relationship and reinforces divisions in society. In response I challenge this argument by referring to an example of my own art practice and demonstrate that students can be taught analytical skills without this necessarily leading to an unequal or incapacitating relationship. As a result, I am able to demonstrate how this methodology provides an alternative approach to learning that is not based on a dictatorial relationship between artist and student, nor does it represent an unrealistic form of equality.

Chapter four summarises the chronological development of my own art practice in response to the key theoretical ideas and arguments explored within this research project. This chapter highlights how these arguments have enabled me to evaluate and think through my experiments when working with children. I also refer to examples that challenge some of these theoretical ideas presented within the situation for art as a social practice. Therefore, this chapter is presented as a practical guide for artists who also work as teachers within a

formal educational setting and demonstrates how both artist and student can learn through my approach to art as a social practice.

Methodology of research project

This practice-based research project sought to provide a practical model for artists, working as teachers within formal education. This project aimed to establish a model that would provide an opportunity for learning and self-reflection, and enable students to develop analytical skills and a capacity for interpreting art. To achieve this, I provided an in-depth examination of theoretical ideas and arguments to inform and evaluate my own practical experiments with students. Consequentially I also referred to my practice-based research as a means to think through and challenge some of the arguments and ideas presented critics and theorists within the broader situation for art as a social practice.

I began my research project with an initial practical experiment. I was invited to contribute towards an arts event organised for the residential community of Whitley in the city of Reading. The purpose of the event sought to celebrate the local community and provide children normally lacking free opportunities to create art beyond school. As well as recognising the importance of this overall aim, I also sought to fulfil my own personal objective in trying to give more responsibility to GCSE students I normally taught in school. I encouraged the students to act as mentors, helping the younger children create a series of collage designs. Although I wanted the interaction between students and children to result in physical art, my primary objective was to provide greater agency for students, thus enabling a more equal relationship. This decision was influenced by Bourriaud's concept of relational aesthetics and what initially appeared to be an effective means of addressing the ethical question of rights when artists seek to work with others.

In order to evaluate and develop my initial practical experiment I referred to theoretical arguments presented by other relevant critics. This enabled me to consider the broader question concerning the relationship between ethics and aesthetics and map out the situation for art as a social practice. From this I was able recognise factors troubling my own practical experiment and establish three important questions.

- 1) Ethical questions inevitably emerge when artists attempt to work with others. How do I navigate this issue without limiting one's experience of the outcomes produced? In

other words, how do I differentiate my practice as art from other forms of social interaction?

In short, I realised the difficulty in distinguishing my practical experiment as art from my normal teaching practice. When focusing too intently on trying to achieve an equal relationship, I also recognised this could result in me treating the students as a homogenous group, rather than considering them as individuals. As a result of this discovery, further questions arose.

- 2) How do I develop an approach that examines the relationships formed and address the potential differences within the group?
- 3) When artists seek to work with others, there is a danger that educational and cultural inequalities are reinforced. How can my approach address this potential problem?

In response, I was able to adjust my approach when delivering my second practical experiment. Although initially organising workshops outside school, I quickly realised the impossibility for students to perceive me as something other than their teacher, as I would ultimately remain responsible for them in my professional role. Therefore, my new objective for my second project focused on encouraging students to investigate and develop an opinion or argument about a specific social issue, (the causes of food poverty in the UK). This change of emphasis in my project was also in response to a critique against Bourriaud and the inability of relational art to address the differences of those invited to participate in such practice.

The second objective I wanted this project to achieve was to create a physical or visual artwork, (digital video), through which various opinions concerning the issue of food poverty could be expressed. In response to further theoretical argument I realised that although the activity of conversation proved essential to my approach, I needed an outcome that could be differentiated as art and experienced or interpreted in various ways.

However, when evaluating this project, I realised that my choice to focus on this particular social issue meant the direction of the project remained focused on my opinions or choices. In other words, I had not provided an opportunity for the students to have some input over what they should learn, what the area for investigation should be and whether it was relevant to their lives.

In order to establish a focus for learning with students I began referring to the psychoanalytical ideas of Jacques Lacan. The reasons were twofold.

- 1) Although not directly compatible, Lacan's ideas on the relationship between the analyst and patient (analysand), provided valuable insight when considering my relationship with students.
- 2) When exploring a particular social issue, Lacan provided a means to analyse the influential role language plays with regards to one's thoughts, opinions and beliefs. As a result, this provided a focus for learning.

When establishing a focus for learning, I also referred to the field of aesthetics and the philosophical ideas of Jacques Rancière. Specifically, Rancière highlighted how learning through an experience of art is clearly dependent upon one's freedom or capacity to interpret art. As a result, I recognised the importance of students acquiring an ability to interpret art in order to successfully create their own work. This, however, presented a new question. How does a student acquire such ability for interpreting art? In other words, how can a student learn through my approach? However, I found Rancière's solution to this particular question, to be unsatisfactory and flawed and thus sought to provide an alternative pedagogic approach through practice.

Therefore, when developing my third practical experiment, I was able to address this question of how one learns. Rather than encouraging the students to explore a social issue I deemed important, I instead asked them for their opinions on what they would like to explore. The purpose of this was to accommodate differences of opinion and provide greater opportunity for student ownership. As a result, a discussion with students developed concerning perceptions of self-image and the potential influential role of social media and popular culture upon their lives. This was followed up by students being asked to analyse information relevant to these issues as well as examples of spoken word poetry by artists exploring similar themes. Through this approach students acquired an opportunity for learning focused on two main areas. This first involved students acquiring an ability to analyse a text in order to form their own opinion or argument, specific to the issues raised. Secondly, instead of providing students with an interpretation of art, they were exposed to various methods and techniques used by artists and encouraged to consider their effect. These methods and techniques were later used by students to express their own point of view. This was achieved through spoken word poetry, which students later performed and recorded. During this

process of analysis, my own opinions were also challenged by students. This influenced my response to students through my own written and performed work, culminating in a sequence of recorded exchanges between me and the students.

Organising this practical experiment this way enabled me to develop an alternative approach to learning through art. This approach is summarised as follows:

- 1). Establish a mutually agreed focus for learning for me and the students based on a relevant social issue or area for investigation.
- 2). Provide an opportunity in which differences within the group were recognised and addressed, rather than obscured by a perceived form of equality.
- 3). Produce of a physical artwork with participating students which, as an outcome, could be experienced as art and interpreted in a variety of ways.
- 4.) Demonstrate a new way of teaching art by helping students analyse information specific to the agreed social issue being explored and prepare students with the necessary skills for interpreting art, in order for them to create their own.

Chapter1. Mapping the contemporary situation of art as a social practice

This chapter will chart the contemporary situation for art as a social practice in relation to the arguments presented by Nicolas Bourriaud, Claire Bishop, Grant Kester and Stewart Martin. Through an examination of these critics and their various and competing arguments this chapter will focus on two key questions. The first includes the ethical question of authorial rights for those individuals involved in art as a social practice. The second question examines the way in which art as a social practice is judged.

It is possible to argue that all art practice is social. However, for the purpose of this thesis, this chapter will only examine art practice loosely described as being performative, participatory, and/or collaborative.

Therefore, this chapter will begin by examining how Bourriaud and Bishop define performance, participation, and collaboration. How these critics come to define these concepts will be subject to how they address the ethical question of authorial rights. In response, this chapter will, therefore, highlight some of the contradictions inherent to their competing arguments.

Following this examination, the ethical question of authorial rights will be addressed in relation to my own argument supporting the need for an autonomous and heteronomous dialectic within art. Through this proposition for an autonomous and heteronomous dialectic I will provide a re-evaluation of relational art.

Finally, this chapter will refer to my own practical experiments, illustrating their various problems and merits and thus highlight the necessary amendments to my approach, in light of the theoretical ideas and arguments explored.

1.1. Defining performance, participation, and collaboration in relation to the ethical question of authorial rights

Collaborators are distinct from participants insofar as they share authorial rights over the artwork that permits them, among other things to make fundamental decisions about the key structural features of the work. That is collaborators have rights that are withheld from participants (Beech, 2008).

I would argue that this definition by Beech clearly outlines the difference between a participant and a collaborator. Even though it is possible for an audience to participate within a performance this does not necessarily mean they would have authorial rights. On the other hand, a group of collaborators could contribute towards a performance and maintain a degree of authorship. It is not, however, possible for someone to participate and collaborate at the same time. As Beech describes above, to participate is to participate in another person's art practice. The way in which Bourriaud, Bishop, and Kester conceive performance, participation, and collaboration, therefore, depends on where they situate the rights of those involved in such art practice.

1.2. The contradictions within Nicolas Bourriaud's definition of performance, participation, and collaboration in relation to the ethical question of authorial rights

Performance

Once a performance is over, all that remains is documentation that should not be confused with the work itself. This type of activity presupposes a contract with the viewer, an "arrangement" whose clauses have tended to become diversified since the 1960's (Bourriaud, 2002, p29).

It is possible for one to recognise that a performance is characteristically ephemeral and requires documentation in order to record its existence. It can, therefore, only be witnessed live, at specific times, and it is necessary for an audience to either be aware or be invited. Clearly the emphasis is on an arrangement between artist and audience. As Bourriaud states; 'the spectator is thus prompted to move in order to observe a work, which only exists as an artwork by virtue of this observation' (Bourriaud, 2002, p29). In many respects this could be said for all forms of art, whereby an audience is necessary for something to be understood as art. However, Bourriaud appears to make the claim that all spectators play an active role in the completion of the work. This is particularly evident during the opening of an exhibition programme. This arrangement or "rendezvous" between artist and audience and their interaction is, for Bourriaud, what forms the artwork's 'relational dimension' (Bourriaud, 2002, p29). As a result, this appears to present an alternative to the more traditional idea of a performance as something that an audience or spectator passively observes. Instead, this definition of a performance can be understood as the opening night of an exhibition where the spectators are conceived as performers within a situation created by the artist.

Why, therefore, does Bourriaud wish to position the spectator as an active performer instead of someone who passively observes? This can be understood in relation to the wider changes in societal life, employment practices and the advances in communication and information technology. As a result, it is possible to see how these changes may have enabled greater opportunity for social interaction.

The Internet and multimedia systems, points to a collective desire to create new areas of conviviality and introduce new types of transaction with regard to the cultural object. The “society of the spectacle” is thus followed by the society of extras, where everyone finds the illusion of an interactive democracy (Bourriaud, 2002, p26).

With reference to Guy Debord’s book *Society of the Spectacle* (1967), this description suggests how the Internet and social media have provided greater opportunities for conviviality, but this is largely mediated through consumerism, advertising and capitalist exchange.ⁱ Examples of this could include the representation of friends within advertising, who come together over their enjoyment over a well-known brand. Other examples could include television programmes, such as *X-Factor*, that appear to actively involve an audience and generate discussion through social media platforms. In response, Bourriaud focuses on the spectator as an active performer because he is attempting to challenge those other illusory forms of conviviality mediated through technology and consumerism. He argues that the interaction between artist, spectator and art ‘encourages an inter-human commerce that differs from the “communication zones” that are imposed on us’ (Bourriaud, 2002, p29). In other words, the contemporary art exhibition allegedly provides a performative space based on discussion and creates a specific kind of sociability that is apparently different to other forms of social interaction mediated through capitalist exchange. Exactly how this type of social interaction is different from other examples mediated through capitalist exchange remains unclear.

It is possible to see how some forms of social interaction mediated through capitalist exchange could be considered artificial. However, it is also possible to argue that the contemporary art exhibition is also an artificially created social situation. As the critic Hal Foster states; ‘even an art audience cannot be taken for granted but must be conjured up every time, which might be why contemporary exhibitions often feel like remedial work in socialisation’ (Foster, 2004, p194). In other words, the artist is responsible for creating something, that could be considered, a contrived social situation.

Equally, Bourriaud appears to emphasise the authorial rights of the audience who are perceived to play an active role in the production of meaning. However, the idea of a contract implies that an audience are entering into something established by the artist and are, therefore, agreeing to their terms. As a result, this does not automatically guarantee rights of those who have been invited. Another problem with this notion of performance is that it is only available to a particular type of audience and is not necessarily open to, as Bourriaud argues, a ‘universal public’ (Bourriaud, 2002, p29).

To summarise, a performance defined by Bourriaud can involve an audience who are invited to the opening of an exhibition. Allegedly different to other forms of social interaction this situation provides a ‘free space’ to which the audience plays an essential part (Bourriaud, 1998, p16). This would suggest an ethical concern with regards to authorial rights of those involved. However, the emphasis placed upon a contract between the artist and audience implies a relationship whereby the audience do not have rights but are agreeing to terms established by the artist. Equally this ignores the possibility of exclusion because this will only be available to a particular audience, invited by the artist or gallery. It is, therefore, difficult to perceive how these situations provide a less artificial alternative to those forms of social interaction mediated through consumerism.

Participation

Depending on the degree of participation required of the onlooker by the artists, along with the nature of works and the models of sociability proposed and represented, an exhibition will give rise to a specific “arena of exchange” (Bourriaud, 2002, p17).

Participation for Bourriaud can be understood in relation to his concept of exchange. An exhibition provides an opportunity for an audience to participate in art and to participate in an exchange of conversation. This alternative to art’s place in the economic system is described by Bourriaud as a “social interstice” (Bourriaud, 2002, p45). Bourriaud develops the idea of a social interstice with reference to Karl Marx’s concept of commodity fetishism established in *Capital* (1867). Within the economic system the symbolic function of money permits the exchange of commodities. However, Bourriaud argues that art can stand outside the general economy because ‘art represents a barter activity that cannot be regulated by any currency, or any “common substance”’ (Bourriaud, 2002, p42). However, this appears difficult to accept when considering an example of participatory art defined by Bourriaud.

For example, Christine Hill's art practice is understood as an example of participatory art that involves the undertaking of various everyday jobs. The participatory artwork known as the *Volks boutique* was a small business and shop established in eastern Berlin in the early 1990s and was later exhibited at *Documenta 10*. The business itself involved selling 'second-hand clothing at affordable prices', whereby 'communication between the artist and her public was the crucial element' (Kaplan, 1998, p39). However, the difficulty with this example of participatory art is how it provides an alternative to the general economy when it is presented within the context of the international art market. Ostensibly this type of art practice may appear as a radical alternative to a more traditional approach based on the production and sale of objects produced by a principle artist. However, it is difficult not to perceive this type of participatory art as something that is an extension of the more traditional and commercially successful approach. This situation is best described in an article titled; *The New Conservatism* (2017) by Morgan Quaintance.

What makes this new conservatism different from overtly rightist or self-consciously traditionalist forms is that it advances its agenda surreptitiously by presenting itself as forward thinking, inclusive and socially conscious. This hypocrisy largely goes unchecked, because to the cursory eye most progressive, politicised, altruistic or critically engaged attitudes within the art world may seem to be adopted without contradiction (Quaintance, 2017).

Clearly this argument illustrates the contradiction inherent in an art practice that appears socially conscious and inclusive 'but without ever losing sight of the trajectory from the gallery to the museum-laboratories of the new economy of art' (Alliez, p89, 2010). Bourriaud claims that through the exchange of conversation or 'these little services rendered, the artist fills the cracks in the social bond' (Bourriaud, 2002, p36). In other words, this form of participatory art provides an alternative to capitalist exchange because it is based on the exchange of conversation, rather than a physical art object. This form of participation can also involve the artist encouraging others to participate in a simulation of everyday life in order to provide a solution to society's problems. This simulation of labour through a participatory art practice is presented as a means to heal the alienating effects of the actual labour market. However, one could be forgiven for drawing comparisons between this form of participation and other forms of voluntary work. Equally it is difficult to determine how an audience, encouraged to participate in conversation or buy second-hand clothes, automatically guarantees that they have rights with regards to the artwork. Therefore, the

question remains, how does this form of participatory art practice provide an alternative to the general economy? Secondly, how does this form of participation address the question of rights, who is allegedly given rights (who is the audience)? And what rights do they actually have? These are questions that have been raised by Beech through his critique of participation.

The social and cultural distinctions that prompt participation in the first place, which participation seeks to shrink or abolish, are reproduced within participation itself through an economy of the participants' relative proximity to invitation. Outsiders have to pay a higher price for their participation, namely, the neutralisation of their difference and the dampening of their powers of subversion. Participation papers over the cracks (Beech, 2008).

In other words, although participation can appear to heal the cracks between the social bonds, it can also have the opposite effect. Despite efforts to include, participation can also exclude, particularly those who lack the means or inclination. This relates to a further point made by Beech when he describes those who are 'participation rich and those who are participation poor' (Beech, 2008). In other words, this implies a discrepancy between a predominantly middle-class audience who have greater opportunities and more likely to be invited to participate than those culturally and socially disadvantaged. Equally the arrangement or contract made between an artist and their participants can result in the homogenisation of a group who can become the artist's subject and therefore lack agency.

In summary, Bourriaud provides a definition of participation that is based on an activity that can improve social relations. One of the ways this can be achieved is for artists to imitate everyday life in order to encourage the participation of an audience. It is, therefore, assumed that this will undermine the capitalist economy because it abandons the physical art object as a commodity in favour of exchange through conversation. However, it remains unclear how this is achieved, especially if these examples of participation continue to contribute to an international art market. Equally it remains dubious how these forms of participation can automatically assume the rights of the participants simply by the artist involving them in their project. Similarly, although this form of participation appears to promote inclusivity, it appears to neglect its ability to exclude or deny the rights of those who are not invited or are culturally or socially disadvantaged.

Collaboration

The assumption with regards to the rights of those involved is again characterised when Bourriaud describes his notion of collaboration. Through this definition there appears to be an emphasis placed upon the importance of trust inherent within the collaborative process. Bourriaud articulates this when referring to the art practice of Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster. Within the artwork titled; *welcome to What You Think You're Seeing* (1988), Gonzalez-Foerster focuses on the biographical lives of the gallery owners associated with the artist. Although the issue of trust would appear to be an important characteristic, there is perhaps a contradiction within Bourriaud's definition of collaboration. This is evident when he describes Gonzalez-Foerster's work as an 'unspoken contract that binds the gallery owner to "his/her" artist' (Bourriaud, 2002, p33). The connotations related to the term, contract, appears to go against the emancipatory ideals expressed by Bourriaud. This is perhaps most clearly recognised when Bourriaud describes Noritoshi Hirakawa's art practice as a form of collaboration. During a show at the Pierre Huber Gallery in Geneva (1994), Hirakawa exhibited work based on the documentation of his travels to Greece with an anonymous woman. This was organised following the artist advertising for a travel companion. As Bourriaud explains, 'the images he (Hirakawa) exhibits are always the outcome of a specific contract drawn up with his model, who is not necessarily visible in the photos' (Bourriaud, 2002, p33). It is, therefore, clear that Bourriaud does not consider the visibility of those he describes as collaborators as an important aspect of collaborative art practice. In other words, the collaborators within his definition do not appear to have any authorial rights. As a result, this could be regarded as something completely at odds with what could be assumed as a necessary characteristic of collaboration.

In summary, it would appear that Bourriaud's definition of collaboration would appear vague. An emphasis placed upon the notion of trust between people working together is a characteristic that would be associated within the process of collaboration. However, Bourriaud appears to undermine this idea by emphasising the notion of a contract, which would suggest a more formal and perhaps less trusting agreement. Equally the collaborative process is something that would require, by definition, the sharing of authorial rights. Instead, Bourriaud appears to disregard the role of visibility of those who are meant to be understood as collaborators.

The definition of performance, participation, and collaboration must therefore be understood in parallel to Bourriaud's overarching concept of relational aesthetics. Within relational aesthetics a performance can be understood as a situation created within the gallery context by the artist. The audience are perceived to have authorial rights as performers who actively contribute to the overall work. However, the perceived inclusive and ethical nature of this situation is contradicted by an emphasis on the function of a contract or arrangement made between the artist and audience. Equally the claim that this type of performance is able to provide a more genuine or less artificial form of social exchange in comparison to those found within consumerism is also questionable. These issues are also reflected in Bourriaud's definition of participation. It is claimed that participation can heal the alienating effects of a capitalist economy achieved through conversation and social exchange. However, this claim for participatory art practice could easily be interpreted as an imitation of the forms of free labour that already exist with a capitalist economy. As a result, the authorial rights of the participant invited to contribute to such a project appear dubious. In contrast it could be assumed that Bourriaud's definition of collaboration would pay closer attention to the ethical question of authorial rights. However, the continued overemphasis on the notion of a contract, whilst neglecting the visibility of those described as collaborators appears confusing. Assuming the issue of authorial rights is an essential characteristic for a collaborative project this does not, however, appear to factor within Bourriaud's definition.

1.3. The contradictions within Claire Bishop's definition of performance, participation, and collaboration in relation to the ethical question of authorial rights

This section will examine Claire Bishop's definition of performance, participation, and collaboration. Outlined within the initial pages of her book, *Artificial Hells*, (2012), Bishop attempts to avoid the ambiguities of the term 'social engagement' by focusing primarily on 'participatory art' (Bishop, 2012, p1). However, Bishop's definition of participation appears to blur with the concept of collaboration.

Performance (delegated performance)

In order to define the concept of performance, Bishop introduces her own term, which she describes as 'delegated performance' (Bishop, 2012, p219). This involves the hiring of either professionals or non-professionals to undertake a job performing art at a particular time and place, whilst following the artist's instructions. However, the development of delegated

performance must be understood in relation to the wider economic, social and cultural changes that have taken place since the 1990s. These changes have included an increasingly part-time and temporary labour economy. In many ways the effects of this can be found within more recent forms of performance art.

Noting the simultaneous rise of outsourcing in both economic and in art in the 1990s is not to suggest that the latter exists in complicity with the former, even though it seems telling that a boom in delegated performance coincided with the art market bubble of the 2000s, and with the consolidation of a service industry that increasingly relies upon the marketing of certain qualities in human beings (Bishop, 2012, p231).

Delegated performance, therefore, involves a process of hiring and outsourcing that reflects an increasingly insecure labour market of flexible work patterns and the erosion of workers' rights. This also marks a change to a previous generation of performance artists such as Stuart Brisley, Adrian Piper, or Valie Export, who performed using their own bodies or would encourage audience involvement. However, an emphasis upon an artist who hires individuals to perform for a specific duration framed by the gallery is something open to critique in that it may reflect, rather than challenge a precarious labour economy. As a result, Bishop differentiates the various forms of delegated performance into three subcategories in order to provide a more complex understanding of this term.

1. The first type of delegated performance involves the hiring of non-professionals, used to perform aspects of their identity within a gallery. Santiago Sierra's art practice is an example of delegated performance. Initially this work involved the exhibition of objects made by low paid workers, which later developed into the exhibition of the workers themselves, performing mundane or potentially degrading tasks. In the book, *Social Works: Performing Art, Supporting Publics* (2011), Shannon Jackson criticises Sierra because he 'makes little mention of the histories' of those individuals he hires (Jackson, 2011, p68). Clearly for Jackson, Sierra's work fails to uphold the rights of those hired to perform, resulting in a form of exploitation. Therefore, this point of view places emphasis on the ethical process of hiring a non-professional public to perform.

To judge these performances on a scale with supposed 'exploitation' at the bottom and full 'agency' at the top is to miss the point entirely. The

difference, rather, is between ‘art fair art’ and the better examples of work which exploit precisely to thematise exploitation itself (Bishop, 2012, p239).

Clearly for Bishop the ethical question of rights is not something this type of performance should only be judged against. Sierra’s art practice can be understood as an attempt to turn the economics on which the work is formed into a material. As a result, this strategy by Sierra poses a challenge to how this work is judged as art in relation to the ethics involved.

2. The second strand of delegated performance involves the hiring of professionals related to their professional identity. An example of this can be found in Tania Bruguera’s *Tatlin’s Whisper 5* (2008), where mounted police demonstrate crowd control techniques on an audience. Less controversial than Sierra’s art practice this example illustrates a more straightforward contract between an artist and a hired and perhaps, less vulnerable performer. Nevertheless, this performance is also based upon the instructions of the artist who is the principle author.
3. The third strand of delegated performance involves situations that are constructed and recorded through film and video. The video *They Shoot Horses* (2004), by Phil Collins is based on a group of Palestinian teenagers from Ramallah in the West Bank who are paid to perform to disco music for eight hours. When asked to consider his relationship with his performers, Collins described himself as not being ‘particularly interested in taking a position which is resolved or has some benevolent, worthy glow about it’ (Collins in Cotter, 2006, p47). Although not as extreme as Sierra’s art practice it is possible to see how Collins is less concerned with the authorial rights of those teenagers involved. In support of Collins’s position, Bishop reiterates the fact that his work is less about providing a ‘benevolent collaborative practice’ and more concerned with how ‘he depicts them’ (Bishop, 2012, p226). Thus, Bishop is clearly focused on the artist and their ability to create a narrative about those hired to perform.

Another example of Bishop’s delegated performance is the video called *Them* (2007), by Artur Żmijewski. Within the video Żmijewski introduces four different social groups with different political and religious backgrounds to produce symbolic depictions that relate to them. Each group was later encouraged by the artist to alter each other’s work, which led to antagonisms. However, the video was received

negatively by some members of the group as they believed the artist deliberately created a 'pessimistic representation of the workshops' (Bishop, 2012, p227). Whether these antagonisms reflected a natural response from the group or whether this was perhaps, incited by the artist, is open to interpretation. What is nevertheless clear is Bishop's continued focus on the artist's ability to construct 'a narrative that conveys a larger set of points about social conflict' (Bishop, 2012, p227). These artworks, therefore, highlight wider social or political problems without explaining them in an explicit way. Although exploitation or oppression maybe reflected in their form, they do not attempt to provide a singular ethical solution. This is why Bishop is less concerned with how these art practices address the ethical question of authorial rights.

In summary, Bishop's definition of performance involves the artist hiring either professional or non-professional individuals to perform. This approach, therefore, appears to reflect wider social, economic, and cultural change. As a result, Bishop provides examples of performance that appear to address these wider issues. What is significant about Bishop's definition is the fact that she is less concerned with an emphasis on the ethical question of authorial rights of those involved. What she does emphasise is the importance of the artist as principle author and their ability to create a narrative that perhaps reflects those hired to perform.

Participation

There can be no failed, unsuccessful, unresolved, or boring works of participatory art, because all are equally essential to the task of repairing the social bond. While I am sympathetic to the latter ambition, I would argue that it is also crucial to discuss, analyse and compare this work critically as art, since this is the institutional field in which it is endorsed and disseminated (Bishop, 2012, p13).

Similar to delegated performance, Bishop's definition of participation continues to emphasise an art practice less focused on providing an ethically watertight model. She is critical of critics including Bourriaud that define participatory art in terms of its ability to repair social problems, rather than provide a reflection on its form. 'Instead of supplying the market with commodities, participatory art is perceived to channel art's symbolic capital towards social change' (Bishop, 2012, p12). As a result, Bishop attempts to understand why participatory art has been received or valued this way. In response she continues to examine the wider social and political changes that have taken place particularly in recent British politics.

Participation became an important buzzword for social inclusion, but unlike its function in contemporary art (where it denotes self-realisation and collective action), for New Labour it effectively referred to the elimination of disruptive individuals (Bishop, 2012, p14).

The social inclusion policy of the Labour government in the 1990s did not necessarily help the living conditions of vulnerable or poorer people. In other words, the social inclusion policy was more specifically about helping people cope in an increasingly deregulated and privatised world. This has been further exacerbated by successive government policy such as David Cameron's speech in 2010, which introduced the concept of a 'Big Society' (Cameron, 2010). Although the concept of a big society attempted to encourage community participation and collective responsibility it could also be understood in relation to the austerity measures that have eroded social services in the UK since the financial crash of 2008.

The term participation has also been adopted by business and reflects a change in the way labour is organised. Whereas the labour market in Western society was once predominantly based on heavier industries and manufacture, it is now more focused on the production of information, communication and service sector work.ⁱⁱ

Related to the decline of heavy industry a new form of creative industry has developed. In response, British government policy since the 1990s has sought to focus on the notion of creativity in schools. Evidence of this can be found in a report titled; *All Our Futures: Creativity, Culture and Education* (1999), written for the Department of Education and Employment by Sir Ken Robinson. A more recent example of a government education policy is the growing emphasis for a school curriculum based on science, technology, engineering, arts and maths (STEAM).

For the UK to grow and exploit new economic opportunities we need young people to be prepared for the changing needs of the labour market. It is now widely accepted that employers value employees with 21st century skills-a mix of cognitive and personal skills, like creativity and collaboration (Bakhshi, 2017, p1).

This creative and cooperative approach in education can be seen as a means to develop skills considered desirable for business, leading to a more productive workforce that is capable of demonstrating resilience in a changing economic and labour market. The proliferation of creative industry also reflects an increasingly entrepreneurial, and self-sufficient workforce that has led to a shrinking public sector. Artists themselves could be seen as a reflection of

the increasing need to be self-sufficient, entrepreneurial and flexible. This emphasis on government policy has also directly impacted upon participatory art practice itself.

The conflation between the discourse of art and creativity can be seen in the writing of numerous artists and curators on participatory art, where the criteria for the works assessment in both cases is essentially sociological and driven by demonstrable outcomes (Bishop, 2012, p16).

As a result, this emphasis on government policy can be seen to have made some impact on the way participatory art is assessed by considering the social outcome it may or may not provide. Evidence of this can be seen in a description of a participatory project titled; *Tenantspin* (2000-), written and curated by Charles Esche. *Tenantspin* was a television station set up by the art collective Superflex for the residents of a council housing estate in Liverpool. In a report by Esche, titled *Superhighrise: Community, Technology, Self-Organisation* (2001), Esche makes reference to government reports on social housing as a means to justify the *Tenantspin* project. This emphasis may have been the result of public funding targets that seek evidence of a tangible and positive impact upon the community. However, this assessment of participatory art has, in many respects, focused too heavily on its ‘effectiveness as a “tool”’ (Bishop, 2012, p16). Inevitably this type of participatory art resembles other forms of social enterprise that may in fact prove more innovative, but are judged outside the realm of art. The point that Bishop makes is that although critics or curators like Esche consider forms of participation like *Tenantspin* as art, they appear to simultaneously judge them for their non-artistic qualities. As a result, this forms Bishop’s central argument that is opposed to an assessment of participatory art practice based only on the ethics involved.

All of this is not to denigrate participatory art and its supporters, but to draw attention to a series of critical operations in which the difficulty of describing the artistic value of projects is resolved by resorting to ethical criteria. (Bishop, 2012, p19).

Therefore, Bishop proposes a particular kind of participatory practice that articulates the dilemma of how much or how little control the artist should exercise over the participants. An example of this is provided with reference to Jeremy Deller’s *The Battle of Orgreave* (2001).

The reason why Deller’s *The Battle of Orgreave* has become such a *locus classicus* of recent participatory art therefore seems to be because it is ethically commendable (the artist worked closely in collaboration with former miners) as

well as irrefutably political: using a participatory performance and mass media to bring back into popular consciousness an unfinished and messy history (Bishop, 2012, p35).

The Battle of Orgreave can be regarded as an interesting example of participatory art because of the distinct groups that were involved. This includes the mining community of Orgreave and the police who were directly affected by the events during the strike. The second group being the battle reenactors for whom the work had, it is assumed, less emotional significance. As a result, the work does manage a dialogue between these two distinct groups and a dialogue between social history, (the re-enactment of a historical event as a form of entertainment), and art history. In other words, *The Battle of Orgreave* managed to balance both ethical concerns through its process but remained critical in its ability to highlight a marginalised and contentious part of recent British history. Therefore, it is possible to recognise the importance of Bishop's argument when she states that this example of participatory art requires a more complex reading rather than simply being judged, on how well it "repairs the social bond" (Bishop, 2012, p36).

However, when referring to Deller's work Bishop appears to employ both concepts of participation and 'collaboration' simultaneously (Bishop, 2012, p35). Conversely, Bishop also praises Deller for not 'embracing the Christian ideal of self-sacrifice' (Bishop, 2006, p183). In other words, Deller does not renounce his role as principle author.

Although *The Battle of Orgreave* would not have existed if it were not for Deller, this description is nevertheless confusing because of Bishop's synonymous use of the terms, collaboration and participation. Collaborators, as previously established by Beech, have authorial rights that are withheld from participants and this is why they should be considered as distinct concepts.

To summarise, similar to her approach to delegated performance, Bishop refers to the wider social and political landscape when providing a definition of participatory art. Understood within the context of recent British government policy, aimed at promoting social inclusion, community participation, and an emphasis on creativity in education to adapt to a changing economy, it is clear how these factors have influenced participatory art. This has resulted in an emphasis on assessing the social impact and ethical process employed by artists who encourage participation. The problem with this emphasis is that it becomes increasingly difficult to differentiate participatory art from other forms of social practice. As a result,

Bishop chooses to champion examples of participatory art that are less focused on providing a tangible solution to social problems achieved through a clear ethical process. With a similar emphasis to that of delegated performance, Bishop reinforces the importance of the artist as principle author when defining participatory art. The difficulty with this, however, is that she conflates the concept of participation with collaboration. This is despite the fact that collaboration is a concept that requires a move away from the artist as principle author.

Collaboration

The independent stance that Hirschhorn asserts in his work-though produced collaboratively, his art is the product of a single artist's vision-implies the readmittance of a degree of autonomy for art (Bishop, 2004, p77).

As outlined previously, Bishop does not appear to make a clear distinction between participation and collaboration. This is further emphasised when she discusses Thomas Hirschhorn's *Bataille Monument* (2002), as an example of collaborative art practice, whilst simultaneously regarding it as the product of a single artist's vision. One of the possible reasons why Bishop might consider *Bataille Monument* as being potentially collaborative is because of the way Hirschhorn apparently describes the individuals involved as 'subjects of independent thought' and not simply viewers 'coerced into fulfilling the artist's interactive requirements' (Bishop, 2004, p77). Similar to participation, Bishop continues to focus on the possibility of a collaborative practice that balances the ethical question of authorial rights with the artist's political intention. Other forms of collaborative practice that appear to focus on the relationships formed and the ethics involved are, therefore, considered limited. This is evident when Bishop contrasts Hirschhorn's *Bataille Monument* with the Turkish art group, Oda Projesi (project room).

Based in Istanbul and initiated by three female artists, Özge Acikkol, Günes Savas and Secil Yersel the group developed *Apartment Project* (2000-2005). During the project the artists attempted to transform their private residential block into a multipurpose public space for the local community. The residential block was located in a district of Istanbul known as Galata, which contains a mixture of social classes. Galata being an ancient district of Istanbul dating back to the Ottoman Empire, has seen a large process of gentrification, partially in response to tourism. This must also be understood within the wider context of Turkey's turbulent political situation, corrupt political leaders and an economy precariously based on foreign investment and borrowing.

During the collective's five year occupation of the apartment they hosted nearly thirty projects, including youth theatre workshops, picnics in the courtyard; exercises in building long-term relationships in the neighbourhood, rather than making objects, hosting exhibitions, or marketing the production of art' (Thompson, 2011, p199).

From this description it appears that Oda Projesi was attempting to slow down the effects of private investment through a process that would help reinforce a struggling community. For this reason, Maria Lind defends Oda Projesi and considers it to be successful because those involved in the project were able to 'wield great influence' (Lind, 2004). In contrast to Bishop, Lind does not regard Hirschhorn's *Bataille Monument* to be a successful collaborative project because of its lack of focus on authorial rights. Instead she describes the role of those involved in *Bataille Monument* in terms of 'executor' rather than 'co-creator' (Lind, 2004).

However, by focusing only on whether the artist has successfully shared authorial rights does appear to limit the way Hirschhorn's work is judged. In this respect Bishop makes a valid point in that 'ethical judgments on working procedures' appear to be valued more than what is produced and can be considered as art (Bishop, 2012, p22).

However, Bishop's own description of Hirschhorn's work, being both collaborative and a product of the single artist's vision foreground the recurring problem when using these terms simultaneously and underlines the significance of the ethical question of authorial rights. Bishop's argument with regards to an overemphasis placed upon ethics would perhaps gain more ground if she avoided using participation and collaboration as synonymous terms. Equally it is important not to judge collaboration as automatically superior to participation simply because it is perceived as a more ethical approach. In this respect this accusation could be directed at Beech who distinguishes collaboration from participation because of the emphasis on authorial rights. In his defence, however, Beech does not appear to suggest authorial rights are the only criteria to which collaborative art practice should be judged. One could argue that it is merely a necessary requirement in its definition.

To summarise, Bishop's definition of performance, participatory, and collaborative art practice is understood in relation to the wider context of a changing, social, political and economic landscape. This is evident within her survey of recent examples of performance art, that are described in relation to changes within employment structures that have resulted in a more flexible and precarious labour market. Therefore, delegated performance can be seen as

an attempt by the artist to reflect and potentially challenge these circumstances through the hiring of other people to perform. Bishop's definition of participatory art is also understood in relation to the wider context of government policy, social inclusion and other appropriations of term found within business. The result of which has contributed to a situation in which participatory art has become increasingly understood as a social instrument and judged according to the way it addresses the ethical question of rights. Although this is a valid and important point expressed by Bishop, she nevertheless overemphasises the notion of the single artist's vision and role as principle author. This is a prominent and consistent focus throughout her definition of performance, participation and most confusingly, collaboration. As a result, this forces one to consider how the form of collaborative art practice can simultaneously be a product of the artist's singular vision. This is not to say that one should necessarily focus primarily on the ethical question of authorial rights within collaborative art, but this should nevertheless be regarded as a necessary requirement.

1.4. The critique of relational and dialogical aesthetics: Challenging an emphasis on the ethical question of authorial rights

As previously outlined, Nicolas Bourriaud considers the concepts of performance, participation, and collaboration in relation to his concept of relational aesthetics. Relational art can involve a situation in which an opportunity for verbal exchange is enabled by the artist within the gallery space. Within this situation the audience enters into a contract with the artist and thus allegedly contributes to the work. The ability to encourage social relations through either, performance, participation, or collaboration, can allegedly provide an alternative to the general economy and can repair the social bonds eroded within a capitalist society.

Perhaps the most cited example of relational art is Rirkrit Tiravanija's *Untitled (Free)*, (1992), which took place at the 303 Gallery, New York. During the exhibition, Tiravanija cooked food in the gallery space, inviting the audience to eat and engage in conversation. Although accessible to the general public, it is difficult not to imagine, as highlighted by Bishop, an audience composed of mostly 'art dealers and likeminded art lovers' (Bishop, 2004, p67). As a result, this reiterates the question regarding the assumed inclusive or democratic nature of relational art.

The quality of the relationships in “relational aesthetics” are never examined or called into question...all relations that permit “dialogue” are automatically assumed to be democratic and therefore good (Bishop, 2012, p65).

Therefore, the problem with relational aesthetics is that relational art is judged specifically on its ability to encourage social interaction through conversation. This assumes that those encouraged to interact socially and exchange in conversation are automatically represented and have rights. However, as previously established, this is clearly problematic because the audience are effectively contributing towards what the artist has created.

This also presents another problem in that other forms of performance or participation that do not specifically seek to encourage social interaction can result in being deemed exploitative or fail to “fully” represent their subjects’ (Bishop, 2006, p180). In other words, they are considered unsuccessful because they do not appear to guarantee the rights of those performing or participating. This is an argument that has been directed at Santiago Sierra by the critic Grant Kester.

Sierra is drawn, in particular, to display the docile, constrained, overtaxed and instrumentalised bodies of his “marginalised” subjects. They are deprived of agency and set to task, the very monotony or absurdity of which will expose the violent illogic of neoliberal economy (Kester, 2011, p166-167).

Clearly Kester regards those paid to perform in Sierra’s work as being only images of exploitation and suffering. In other words, Kester opposes what he regards as a negation of rights of those paid to perform in order to illustrate their marginalisation. The extreme nature of Sierra’s work is clearly contentious, but Kester’s assessment only reinforces the assumption that performance, participation, or collaborative art should be judged specifically against the ethics involved and its ability to solve society’s problems. Sierra’s work is about showing the image of exploitation itself rather than overtly explaining, for example, the plight of migrant workers.

Another example of Santiago Sierra’s work titled; *workers who cannot be paid, remunerated to remain inside cardboard boxes* (2000), involved Sierra paying a group of Chechen refugees who were seeking asylum in Germany. The refugees were required to perform by being concealed in cardboard boxes for a duration of time in the Kunst Werke Gallery, Berlin. Although the work clearly provided little voice or agency for those paid to perform, it

paradoxically drew attention to a marginalised group, thus highlighting the social or cultural disparities that exist within society.

Sierra knows that there is no such thing as a free meal: everything and everyone has a price. His works can be seen as a grim meditation on the social and political conditions that permit disparities in people's "price" to emerge (Bishop, 2004, p70).

Although this could be regarded as somewhat glib description, it is possible to consider Sierra's work as something that questions but does not attempt to resolve notions of democracy and ethics, otherwise assumed within relational aesthetics. Whereas relational art appears to gloss over its ability to exclude or negate the rights of those involved, Sierra's work makes this fact apparent. In other words, Sierra does not attempt to suggest that the people he pays to perform have rights or that he is able to heal the social divisions in society. Instead he appears to foreground social inequalities within the context of an exhibition or gallery space. This is perhaps best illustrated in Sierra's work titled; *Persons Paid to have their Hair Dyed Blond* (2001), in which he asked illegal street vendors to sell items within the 2001 Venice Biennale. This could, therefore, be interpreted as an attempt to disrupt a significant event in the international art market calendar, which, as Bishop points out, is based on 'unspoken racial and class exclusions, as well as veiling blatant commerce' (Bishop, 2004, p73).

To summarise the process of dialogue and social exchange that characterise relational art, could be seen as a superficial attempt to address the ethical question of authorial rights. This is because it fails to address the question of who is invited, and the quality of the relationships formed in an artificial environment created by the artist. Consequentially this can lead to a situation where other forms of art as a social practice that do demonstrate a clear ethical approach can be judged by critics, including Kester, as unsuccessful or exploitative.

1.5. Dialogical aesthetics

Within in his book *Conversation Pieces, Community, Communication in Modern Art*, (2004) Grant Kester proposes the concept of dialogical aesthetics. An example of dialogical art can be found in relation to the Austrian art group, WochenKlauser and their project titled; *Intervention to Drug Addicted Women* (1994-1995). This involved WochenKlauser organising an event that invited sex workers, politicians, and journalists from Zurich to

discuss issues associated with prostitution. This resulted in an initiative that provided a safe house and pension scheme for sex workers within the city. The result of these services established by WochenKlauser was, according to Kester, a ‘creative act, a “concrete intervention” in which traditional art materials of marble, canvas or pigment were replaced by “socio-political relationships”’ (Kester, 2004, p3). Similar to relational aesthetics the emphasis here is placed upon the social relations formed as a means to heal the cracks in society. This concrete intervention represents the form of the artwork and something that replaces the production of a physical art object.

Another example provided by Kester is Suzanne Lacy’s performance *The Roof is on Fire* (1994). Similar to WochenKlauser, Lacy sought to bring together various different groups within a community. In this work Lacy attempted to challenge the way young people were portrayed as being problematic by authorities in Oakland, California. Although different in outcomes, both projects for Kester ‘shared a concern with the creative facilitation of dialogue and exchange... conversation becomes an integral part of the work itself’ (Kester, 2004, p8).

Further similarities with regards to relational aesthetics can be seen with an emphasis on conversation as a form of exchange. Kester defines this dialogical project as ‘a process of performative interaction’ that resists the notion of the artist depositing ‘an expressive content into a physical object, to be withdrawn later by the ‘viewer”’ (Kester, 2004, p10). However, it remains unclear how any artist could avoid depositing meaning into the artwork. This would surely be the case whether it is focused on dialogical exchange with a marginalised group or not. It is, therefore, important to consider how the dialogical project is to be judged.

When contemporary critics confront dialogical projects, they often apply a formal methodology that cannot value, or even recognize, the communicative interactions that these artists find so important (Kester, 2004, p10).

Therefore, Kester does not believe it is appropriate to judge dialogical artwork using the same methodology used to judge the formal appearance of art. He justifies this claim by stating that ‘it is necessary to understand this work as specific form of art practice with its own characteristics and effects, relate to, but also different from other forms of art and other forms of activism as well’ (Kester, 2004, p11).

Despite stating the necessity to judge these works as art, how does one judge the process of conversation in these works differently from other forms of social work that encourage

dialogue? In other words, how does social interaction and dialogical exchange constitute the form by which these artworks should be judged?

Although allegedly maintaining a separation between art and the social issues being addressed, Kester remains focused on judging the ethical process involved rather than consider the formal qualities of the artwork. This is apparent within a discussion concerning Rachel Whiteread's *House* (1993) and Loraine Leeson and Peter Dunn's billboards project, *West Meets East* (1992). When comparing these artworks Kester appears to concentrate on Leeson's and Dunn's ability to enter into a 'dialogue with a community', whilst valuing their 'capacity to listen' (Kester, 2004, p24). From his description Kester does not appear to consider the photography made as a result of the billboards project. Therefore, rather than provide an assessment based on the form of both artworks, Kester instead focuses on the conversations and relationships developed between the artist and the community. As a result, this clearly limits the way the work can be understood and focuses on the ethical process rather than a consideration of the artwork itself.

To summarise dialogical aesthetics, similar to relational aesthetics, is focused on the ability for art to solve problems within society through conversations between artists and communities. This ethical process that characterises dialogical art is something, Kester believes, constitutes the form of the work. Therefore, it should be judged differently to conventional art forms but should nevertheless be judged as art. However, this proposition is problematic because it remains unclear how the ethical process of conversation should be judged differently from other forms of social intervention. By neglecting an assessment of physical form in favour of ethical process thus limits how the work can be experienced or understood as art. In other words, dialogical and relational aesthetics are focused on the ability for art to provide answers to social problems. In this situation art is explicit in its intentions and, therefore, meaning is reduced to one possible outcome.

1.6. Art as a social practice and the proposition for its autonomous experience

I believe in the continued value of disruption, with all its philosophical, anti-humanism, as a form of resistance to instrumental rationality and as a source of transformation. Without artistic gestures that recalibrate our perception, that allow multiple interpretations, that factor the problem of documentation/

presentation into each project and that have a life beyond an immediate social goal, we are left with pleasantly innocuous art (Bishop in Allen, 2011, p221).

Judging performance, participation, or collaborative art practice against purely ethical concerns can limit an understanding of the work to its social efficacy. Being broadly sympathetic to Bishop's position, it is necessary to allow for multiple interpretations, rather than simply focusing on the way these associated art practices address the ethical question of authorial rights. In order to allow multiple interpretations Bishop introduces the idea that art should articulate 'a tension and confusion between autonomy (the desire for art to be at one remove from means-ends relationships) and heteronomy (that is, the blurring of art and life)' (Bishop, 2012, p27). In other words, art as a social practice should articulate its own inherent tension between being a socially constituted practice, whilst also retaining an ability to be experienced as art.

This position relates to the ideas of Jacques Rancière and his redefinition of the term, aesthetics, established in his book *Aesthetics and its Discontents* (2009). Although historically associated with the baggage of connoisseurship and elitism, Rancière rehabilitates an understanding of aesthetics by focusing on its relationship with politics.

Politics exists as a deviation from this normal order of things. It is this anomaly that is expressed in the nature of political subjects who are not social groups but rather forms of inscription of 'the (ac) count of the unaccounted' (Rancière, 2010, p35).

In this respect politics is, therefore, defined as something that takes place when there is a deviation from an existing social group by those who are excluded. This means that politics is not about a struggle between existing political groups. Instead it is a struggle between an existing or elite group and a group that is unaccounted for. The existing group, defined as the *police order* is responsible for what is perceivable and who can participate in society. In short, the police order organises or distributes what and who is visible. This emphasis on visibility is why Rancière considers aesthetics to relate to this concept of politics.

The relationship between aesthetics and politics consists in the relationship between this aesthetics of politics and the 'politics of aesthetics'- in other words in the way in which the practices and forms of visibility of art themselves intervene in the distribution of the sensible (Rancière, Trans Corcoran, 2009, p25).

This, therefore, establishes the idea that art is capable of intervening or disrupting what Rancière describes as the distribution of the sensible. The sensible being something that can be understood to relate to one's senses. This means that art has the potential to recalibrate our perception of society and a perception of ourselves. In order for this to be achieved there needs to be a degree of autonomy in the way art can be experienced.

For aesthetic autonomy is not that autonomy of artistic 'making' celebrated by modernism. It is the autonomy of a form of sensory experience. And it is that experience which appears as the germ of a new humanity, of a new form of individual and collective life (Rancière, Trans Corcoran, 2009, p32).

Therefore, the autonomous nature of art is not because it is separate from social concerns but instead focused on its ability to be interpreted in various ways. To judge performance, participatory, or collaborative art only in relation to ethical criteria would thus deny the autonomy of sensory experience. This is a consequence of both Bourriaud and Kester's position because they reduce an interpretation of relational and dialogical art to its effectiveness as a social tool.

In order to fully understand why an autonomous experience of art is proposed by Rancière it is necessary to examine the way Western art and society has been organised throughout history. This is understood in relation to what Rancière defines as the three separate regimes of art that include the ethical, representational and aesthetic regime, established within *The Politics of Aesthetics* (2004). Although appearing sequentially, these regimes can co-exist simultaneously.

1.7. Rancière's ethical regime of art (from Plato to now): A description of relational and dialogical aesthetics

It is in this sense I speak of an ethical regime, it is a matter of knowing in what way images' mode of being affects the ethos, the mode of being of individuals and communities. The question prevents 'art' from individualising itself as such (Rancière, 2004, p21).

The ethical regime relates to a Platonic understanding of the arts in which the imitation of reality is focused on specific ends. In other words, the purpose of the arts is to support the ethos of society and can, therefore, be understood as being totally heteronomous. As a result,

the ethical regime supports the distribution of the sensible as it supervises what or who is visible. However, the ethical regime does not just relate to the way the arts were conceived in relation to Plato's ancient Greece. Rancière illustrates a more contemporary example of the way art and politics have contributed to the supervision of the senses. He describes how, 'ethics amounts to the dissolution of norm into fact: in other words, the subsumption of all forms of discourse and practice beneath the same indistinct points of view' (Rancière, Trans Corcoran, 2009, p110). In other words, conflicting moral points of view normally associated with ethics have been reduced to a single point of view. Thus, the division between conflicting opinions are dissolved.

The suppression of this division has been given a privileged name: it is called consensus...Consensus is the reduction of these various 'peoples' into a single people identical with the count of a population and its parts, of the interests of a global community and its parts (Rancière, Trans Corcoran,2009, p115).

This notion of consensus, therefore, attempts to neutralise conflicting points of view and other forms of dissent. 'The result in the UK is an art world whose only steady, top-down movement seems increasingly to be towards the absorption and neutralization of aberrant forces' (Quaintance, 2017). In other words, this neutralisation in art can be understood in relation to the way potentially subversive forms of art practice have become absorbed and legitimised through private finance, institutions and eventually the establishment. This results in what Quaintance goes onto describe as;

The reinforcement and creation of an ideologically and demographically homogenous art world; and a sector tacitly in step with state power's agenda of using culture as a decoration for and tactic to divert attention from the human fallout of destructive government policy (Quaintance, 2017).

Clearly parallels could be drawn to Bishop's argument when she illustrates how terms such as participation have been used as a remedy to solve the problems caused by an exploitative labour market and shrinking public sector. This is, therefore, why those types of participatory art practice that attempt to find solutions or say what they show can ultimately lead to the 'neutralisation of difference' (Beech, 2008).

The result of this situation is something Rancière defines as an 'ethical community' in which everyone appears to be included but difference is subdued. (Rancière, Trans Corcoran, 2009, p115). In other words, the potentially conflicting viewpoints of participants are neutralised by being

gathered together in common cause through a perceived ethical viewpoint of the artist. In this instance it could be argued, therefore, that it is the artist who becomes what Rancière has described as the police order, capable of neutralising others. As Rancière states; ‘this gathering, then is part of an attitude to art that is stamped by the categories of consensus: restore lost meaning to a common world or repair the cracks in the social bond’ (Rancière, Trans Corcoran, 2009, p122).

In summary relational or dialogical art can be understood as being based on a single ethical point of view that attempts to include an audience in order to supplement perceived societal problems. These practices reflect Rancière’s ethical regime of art because they create situations that imitate life for a specific purpose. An example of this could be Bourriaud’s definition of participatory art that simulates the labour economy in order to render services and fill ‘the cracks in the social bond’ (Bourriaud, 2002, p36). Another example could be Kester’s dialogical art that leads to a ‘concrete intervention’ (Kester, 2004, p3). The result of which contributes to the distribution of the sensible in that the work can only be understood in terms of its social efficacy. The result of which, as Bishop has previously pointed out, reduces art to other forms of social practice.

1.8. Rancière’s representational regime of art (from Aristotle to now): A description of Claire Bishop’s position

I call this regime poetic on the sense that it identifies the arts-what the Classical Age would later call the ‘fine arts’- within a classification of ways of doing and making, and it consequently defines proper ways of doing and making...I call it representative insofar as it is the notion of representation or mimesis that organises these ways of doing, making, seeing, and judging (Rancière, 2004, p22).

The representational or poetic regime, therefore, means the regime of an autonomous art form. This can be understood in relation to Aristotle’s critique of Plato which led Aristotle to consider the arts as being free to pursue the imitation life, without needing to support the ethos of the polis. During the Renaissance a hierarchy of genres were established in what became the development of the fine arts. In other words, this reflected a regime that either sanctioned or denied various ways of doing and making. This in turn also reflected a ‘general order of occupations’ that differentiated the autonomous fine artist from what could be assumed as the anonymous artisan (Rancière, 2004, p22). This is, therefore, why Rancière

considers the representational regime of art as a 'regime of visibility', that allegorically reflects a 'hierarchical vision of the community' (Rancière, 2004, p22). In other words, the ways of doing or making that are categorised as either artistic or non-artistic simultaneously reflect another form of regulation based on the occupation or positions people hold within society.

Another characteristic of the representational regime of art established by Rancière is that it relates to the term mimesis.

Mimesis first means the correspondence between poesis and aesthesis. Because there was continuity between the intrinsic consistency-or the 'autonomy'-of the play and its capacity of producing ethical effects in the minds of spectators in the theatre and in their behaviours out of the theatre (Rancière, 2008, p6).

Therefore, the concept of mimesis can be understood as the relationship between poesis (means of production) and aesthesis (a way of being that is affected by poesis). In other words, the concept of mimesis can be understood in relation to a straightforward relationship between the cause and effect of an artwork.ⁱⁱⁱ

In this respect one could argue that Bishop's over-emphasis on the importance of the artist's 'singular vision' reflects her belief in a direct relation between the artist's intentions and meaning behind the work (Bishop, 2004, p77).

In her plea for a more obvious and direct exposure of an artist's relationships with the dominant social framework, Bishop plays into the hands of those in the culture that would rather control and contain complexity and critique (Gillick, 2006, p106).

As this suggests, Bishop appears to contribute to a form of transparency that calls for a more straightforward relationship between what the artist intended and how art is understood. In many respects this echoes the argument presented by Roland Barthes when he described how 'contemporary culture is tyrannically centred on the author, his person, his history, his tastes, his passions' (Barthes, 1967, p2). This is not to state that the intentions of the artist are irrelevant, but if they take precedence, limitations will be placed on how the work can be understood.

Despite expressing a mode of mimesis through an overemphasis on the artist's singular vision, Bishop simultaneously attempts to exemplify support for an 'autonomy of experience' of art (Bishop, 2012, p27). In other words, Bishop also appears to support the idea that art should be open to multiple interpretations that go beyond the intentions of the artist. As a result, her

argument appears contradictory because on the one hand she is supporting the idea that art says what it shows, whilst on the other hand she is calling for a break in this relationship.

In opposition to the representational or mimetic regime, Rancière clearly proposes a break in this uncomplicated relationship between the intentions of the artist and how meaning is interpreted. This is evident within his book *The Aesthetic Unconscious* (2009), in which he introduces a new relationship between the terms, *logos* and *pathos*. The meaning of *logos* relates to those intended, explicit and conscious forms of thought and *pathos* relates to those unintended, hidden or unconscious forms of thought.^{iv}

Art is defined by its being the identity of a conscious procedure and an unconscious production, of willed action and an involuntary process. In short, the identity of *logos* and *pathos* will henceforth be what attests to the existence of art (Rancière, Trans Keates, 2009, p28).

In other words, this describes an experience of art that is the result of the heteronomous intentions of the artist, but also something that is involuntary and beyond the artist's control. This dialectic between the autonomous experience and heteronomous production of art is something that is characteristic of what Rancière defines as the 'aesthetic regime' of art (Rancière, 2004, p22-23).

However, Bishop does not appear to fully reflect this idea. Evidence of this can be found when she refers to Thomas Hirschhorn's work as representing 'an important shift in the way contemporary art conceives of its viewer, one that is matched by his assertion of arts autonomy' (Bishop, 2004, p74). As a result, Bishop does not situate the autonomy of art in terms of the unintended aspects of the art form, which can be experienced beyond the author's intentions. Instead, she is suggesting that the artist is themselves designating the autonomy of art, presumably because they appear less concerned with the heteronomous or ethical question of authorial rights. Further evidence of this confusion can be found when she describes Hirschhorn's practice as both collaborative, but simultaneously something 'initiated by an artist, whose singular energy propelled a disparate bunch of people' (Bishop, 2012, p263). Bishop's continued emphasis on the artist's singular vision therefore reduces an autonomous experience of art in much the same way as a judgement focused specifically on ethics. Both are focused on the heteronomous intentions of the artist and the straightforward effect these intentions might have. In relational or dialogical art, the heteronomous intentions appear to focus on an ethics of practice as a means to solve societal problems, thus, saying what it

shows. Although approached differently Bishop also focuses on the heteronomous intentions of the artist. This is because she reduces the meaning of the artwork to an unambiguous political position that is free from ethical concerns. Locating the autonomy of art in this respect, therefore, means that Bishop's approach is more closely related to Rancière's representational, rather than, aesthetic regime. This is because she perceives an experience of art to directly reflect the artist's political intentions or cause. Similar to the way relational or dialogical art reflects an ethical regime, Bishop's own approach also imposes a regime of visibility that prevents art being understood in multiple ways. In this respect, she also appears to embody Rancière's police order in that she sanctions what is visible as art, whilst imposing her own hierarchy of occupations through an emphasis on the artist's authority.

In summary this section proposes that art as a social practice should be interpreted in multiple ways, rather than focusing only on its ethical process and effectiveness as a social instrument. In order for this to be achieved, art should articulate its own inherent tension between being a socially constituted practice, whilst also retaining its ability to be experienced as art. This idea is reflected in Rancière's redefinition of aesthetics, which is inextricably linked to his notion of politics. For Rancière, politics happens when there is disruption to an existing order of visibility. This can happen when art articulates a relationship between its autonomy and heteronomy. This does not mean that art is free from social concerns, but that art should be experienced autonomously and allow multiple interpretations. This, however, does not take place within what Rancière describes as the ethical regime of art. In this regime, art is responsible for supporting society and is, therefore, strictly heteronomous. Within this regime conflicting viewpoints are reduced to one perceived ethical position. This can be recognised within some forms of relational and dialogical art. These art practices can potentially neutralise difference by gathering people together to contribute to a common goal established by an artist. These art practices can also simulate everyday life in order to offer support to societal problems. However, this can potentially limit an interpretation of the work to a single ethical cause.

Opposing this focus on the heteronomy of art are practices defined within Rancière's representational regime. Within this regime the focus on art's autonomy imposes a different order of visibility that leads to a hierarchy of art and artistic activity. Underlying this emphasis on art's autonomy is the concept of mimesis. The process of mimesis reflects a direct relationship between the artist's intentions (political cause) and the effect it has on an

audience. This process of mimesis continues to influence an interpretation of art whereby meaning is assumed to reflect the intentions of the artist.

Although different in approach, the ethical and representational regimes of art impose their own limitations on perception. Rather than encourage a focus on the autonomy or heteronomy of art, Rancière proposes that both should be articulated simultaneously through his concept of aesthetics. This involves a break between cause and effect, and this is achieved when art reflects a mode of logos and pathos. In other words, art should reflect both the heteronomous intentions of the artist and allow an autonomous experience of the art form.

Although Bishop appears to support this idea, she ultimately undermines her position by emphasising the importance of the artist's singular vision when referring to examples of performance, participatory, and collaborative art. As a result, she appears to reflect a direct relationship between the artist's political cause and the effect it has on an audience. Therefore, this inadvertently limits an interpretation of art to what the artist intended. In other words, Bishop does not reflect the autonomy of art to be the result of the art form acquiring a life of its own beyond the artist.

1.9. A re-evaluation of relational art: The continued proposal for an autonomous and heteronomous dialectic

As previously established relational aesthetics is primarily focused on the social efficacy or ethical process involved in performative, participatory, or collaborative art practice. As a result, this can clearly limit the way in which these associated art practices can be experienced. In contrast, Bishop appears to support the idea that art as a social practice should be experienced autonomously as proposed by Rancière. However, Bishop imposes her own limitations because she focuses too heavily on the intentions of the artist and thus misrepresents Rancière's argument.

In contrast, Stewart Martin provides a more consistent argument in support of this idea, which he describes within his essay the *Critique of Relational Aesthetics* (2007). Within his essay Martin draws attention to problems that exist within relational aesthetics and instead presents an approach that focuses on the autonomous and heteronomous dialectic inherent within relational art.

For Bourriaud the forms of social exchange within relational art are considered as something that can resist or provide an alternative to capitalist exchange. This is apparent when Bourriaud states that relational ‘art represents a barter activity that cannot be regulated by any currency, or any “common substance”’ (Bourriaud, 2002, p42). As previously illustrated this claim is justified through the subordination of the physical art object as commodity, whilst elevating the relations between people and the ethics that this entails. The difficulty with this argument, as Martin points out, is that ‘relational aesthetics unconsciously articulates the radical extension of the heteronomous dimension’ (Martin, 2007, p371). In other words, although Bourriaud considers relational art to be able to resist the effects of capitalism through a heteronomous or ethical process based on fostering social relations, whilst negating the production of a physical art object, it inadvertently articulates an extension of capitalist exchange. This is because it reduces an understanding of art to its usefulness as a social instrument. In other words, Bourriaud, contradicts Karl Marx’s concept of commodity fetishism established in *Capital* (1867), despite its apparent influence upon relational aesthetics.^v

It is the commodification of labour that constitutes the value of ‘objective’ commodities. To think that the source of value is in the object-commodity is precisely the error that Marx calls fetishism (Martin, 2007, p378).

As Martin points out, relational aesthetics ignores the fact that the real value of a commodity is the labour involved in its production. Instead, relational aesthetics reaffirms the assumption that a commodity’s value is a natural quality of the commodity object and has nothing to do with the labour of people and their social relations. The irony of this approach to commodity fetishism by relational aesthetics is the fact that within an advanced capitalist economy the relations between people have become increasingly prevalent and commodified with the continued growth of the service industries. This is a point previously made by Bishop when she describes the way in which the notion of participation has been co-opted by business and government.

What Martin therefore proposes is that relational art could be understood differently if its judgment goes beyond an emphasis on the heteronomy of social exchange as advocated through relational aesthetics.

The problematic status of these works (relational art) in Bourriaud’s terms can be reinterpreted far more convincingly in terms of a dialectical theory of

commodification and art. The ambivalence of Gonzalez-Torres and Tiravanija can be seen as a precise presentation of the contradictions of an art of social exchange; not so much a micro-utopia, but as an immanent critique of capitalist exchange relations (Martin, 2007, p380).

Therefore, Martin proposes an approach to relational art that articulates its struggle with capitalist exchange and exposes the contradictions inherent within commodity form, as outlined by Marx. Martin provides an example by referring to Rirkrit Tiravanija's *Untitled (Free)*, exhibited at the 303 Gallery, in New York (1992). Rather than focusing on the social relations formed, the importance of this work can be located in relation to the unintended aspects that ultimately expose the 'gallery as a seller of commodities' (Martin, 2007, p380).

In other words, Martin proposes an experience of relational art that focuses on the unintentional aspects of the work. This idea is underpinned through the ideas expressed by Theodor Adorno, although the similarities with Rancière's concept of logos and pathos are notable.

The dual nature of artworks as autonomous structures and social phenomena results in oscillating criteria: Autonomous works provoke the verdict of social indifference; conversely, works that make socially univocal discursive judgments, thereby negate art as well as themselves. Immanent critique can possibly break through this ridged alternative (Adorno, 2002, p248).

What this illustrates is a situation in which art reflects the dialectic between autonomy and heteronomy. If art becomes strictly autonomous then it becomes harmless in its ability to reflect on its social formation. If the focus is strictly heteronomous then arts' ability to be interpreted differently is lost. In order to break the impasse of being understood as either one or the other, art must be self-critical. Therefore, it is important to clarify what exactly Adorno means when he suggests that art should be self-critical.

The supposition of lived artistic experiences is based on the assumption of an equivalence between the content of the experience- put crudely, the emotional expression of the works- and the subjective experience of the recipient (Adorno, 2002, p244).

This, therefore, suggests that artist's experiences or intentions that are expressed within artworks and thus represent a perceived content are automatically assumed to be experienced

in an uncomplicated way by an audience. Similar to Rancière, Adorno clearly moves beyond the subjective intentions of the artist that could lead to a univocal interpretation by an audience. This suggests that there is something other than the artist's own experiences that are being experienced by an audience.

Every work possesses materials that are distinct from the subject, procedures that are derived from materials of art, as well as from human subjectivity. Its truth content is not exhausted by subjectivity but owes its existence to the process of objectification. That process does indeed require the subject as executor, but points beyond it to that of objective other (Adorno, 2003, p375).

In other words, it is the form of an artwork and the history attached to the processes and materials used in its production are thus experienced in a way that goes beyond what the artist may have intended. This clearly compliments Rancière's definition of aesthetics in which art is the result of both artistic intervention and unintended or unconscious aspects associated with its form. Although art is the product of the artist, the materials, methods and forms are nevertheless already loaded with meaning. In other words, art inevitably 'takes on its own autonomous life beyond that of its maker (and it might be added its receiver)' (Hellings, 2014, p88). In other words, an experience of art should not be reduced to the artist's intentions that could lead to a univocal interpretation by the audience.

This emphasis on the materials, methods and forms of art being experienced beyond the artist or critic's intentions provided a foundation from which to proceed when developing my own approach to art practice. The importance of this discovery was only recognised, however, after several previous experiments. In 2014 I developed a project titled; *Live well for less?* (see appendix 3). The focus of the project was to explore the issue of food poverty and the increasing use and proliferation of food banks in the UK. From the outset my aim was to expose both myself and the students to the complexity of the issue. This was achieved through several activities over a number of months, including an investigation into the system of social care, food shopping on a small budget, a visit to a local food bank, a workshop at the local council's debt and welfare department and finally a series of interviews with the general public. The aim of which was to provide a wide selection of opinion and fact and to mitigate the potential effect of my own bias point of view upon the students. I have since realised that in choosing to focus on the issue, which I deemed important, I was perhaps inadvertently directing the students toward my own political position. Fortunately, this was not the case as

some students expressed different and often conflicting opinions concerning the issue of food poverty. I believe this was because of the wide selection of information presented to the students, especially having visited the local council and food bank. What was also significant about this project was the fact that my own intentions or opinions, nor that of the students, limited an experience of the work produced. This was because these various opinions were performed and recorded, culminating in a video titled *Live well for less?* (2014) (see appendix 3). In other words, the artwork in the form of a video acquired a life of its own beyond either my intentions, or that of the students.

This autonomous, heteronomous dialectic in art can, therefore, be understood in terms of art's ability to be experienced in a variety of ways despite being the product of the artist's heteronomous intentions. An artwork is autonomous not because it is separate from social concerns but because it acquires a life of its own and can, therefore, be experienced beyond its maker. As a result, once the artwork is entered into public domain the artist is effectively relinquishing total control over the work and so their authorial rights become destabilised. This is not to say they cease being the author but that the social, cultural, political and historical connotations associated with the materials and methods employed cannot be reduced to either the artist or the audience. This is argued by Adorno when he states;

The more that art is thoroughly organized as an object by the subject and divested of the subject's intentions, the more articulately does it speak according to the model of a nonconceptual, nonrigidified significative language (Adorno, 2002, p67).

In other words, when the artist's intentions or authorial rights are, to some extent deprived, the art object is released from a fixed interpretation of meaning. Consequentially the artist's rights become less significant once the artwork enters public domain.

As a result, an artwork that articulates this situation is better equipped to critique its own subjection to capitalist exchange. This is because it can articulate the contradiction inherent in commodity form.

If in monopoly capitalism it is primarily exchange value, not use value, that is consumed, in the modern artwork it is its abstractness, that irritating indeterminateness of what it is and to what purpose it is that become the cipher of what the work is (Adorno, 2002, p21).

In other words, commodities as illustrated by Marx are fetishised because they are valued not in relation to their use, but according to their exchange-value. This represents an inversion in that commodities are endowed with an autonomous life of their own. Artworks experienced beyond the intentions of the artist also acquire an autonomous life of their own and also demand to be valued despite the possible lack of social purpose or clear definition. Therefore, this tension in art reflects the same contradiction in commodity form. This is what Adorno means when he states, 'the absolute artwork converges with the absolute commodity' (Adorno, 1997, p21). Thus, an artwork that articulates an autonomous, heteronomous dialectic is able to reflect or exaggerate the same fetishism inherent in commodity form. However, if art as a social practice is reduced to the artist's intentions or ethical process involved, this ability to highlight the same tension in commodity form will thus be denied. Therefore, art as a social practice that strictly reflects its heteronomy will simply mimic capitalist exchange, rather than articulate its struggle with it. Relational aesthetics is clearly vulnerable to this potential pitfall because it overemphasises the ethical process in promoting social exchange within relational art. Although approached differently, Bishop also inadvertently considers art as a social practice through a strictly heteronomous dimension. This is because of her overemphasis on the singular vision or experience of the artist and their political intentions, thus preventing an autonomous experience of the work.

To summarise, Bourriaud considers relational art as a barter activity that is not regulated by the common substance of money form. The difficulty with this position is that it reinforces the assumption that a commodity's value is based on its exchange value. Marx describes this assumption as the fetishism of commodities. The actual common substance permitting a commodity's exchange is the social character of labour invested in a commodity. However, the symbolic function of money obscures the social labour invested in a commodity, and so they appear to acquire a life of their own. The result is in an inversion whereby commodities become fetishised things and people (workers) become material.

Bourriaud's depreciation of the physical art object in favour of social relations inadvertently supports the assumption that a commodity's value is not the result of the social labour invested, but a natural quality inherent to the commodity form. In other words, the emphasis on social relations as a means to heal the alienating effects of capitalist exchange means, relational art is understood in terms of its heteronomy or social use, rather than being understood as art. An alternative approach can, therefore, be achieved through an emphasis on the inherent autonomous and heteronomous dialectic within relational art and other forms

of performance, participatory, or collaborative art practice. This means that although art is a product of the social, ethical or heteronomous intentions of the artist, the art object is nevertheless experienced autonomously because it has acquired a life of its own beyond its maker. In this situation the rights or intentions of the artist, therefore, become destabilised. Through this autonomous and heteronomous dialectic, art demands to be valued despite the indeterminate nature of its use or social purpose. As a result, this reflects the same contradiction inherent within commodity form in that it also demands to be valued independent of its use. Therefore, an autonomous and heteronomous dialectic within art emphasises the fetishism of commodities and thus articulates its own struggle with capitalist exchange.

Conclusion of chapter

This chapter has mapped out the contemporary situation for art as a social practice. This can be understood in relation to three different concepts used to define art practice that are inherently social in character. These concepts include performance, participation, and collaboration. This contemporary situation is also framed by several competing arguments presented by critics that include Nicolas Bourriaud, Claire Bishop, Grant Kester and Stewart Martin. These critics define and use these concepts differently and this is because of the contrasting ways in which they approach and emphasise the ethical question of authorial rights.

Bourriaud's definition of performance, participation, and collaboration must be understood in relation to his concept of relational art. Therefore, a performance can mean a situation whereby an artist invites an audience to exchange in conversation, framed within the gallery context. As a result, the audience who perform within this situation are assumed to automatically have rights because of their contribution. This assumption regarding the rights of those involved is repeated within Bourriaud's definition of participation. This is because it lacks an adequate consideration with regards to the question of who is invited to participate and what this involves. Instead, the perceived inclusive character is deemed as sufficient evidence for a presumed successful form of participatory art. This assumption remains a persistent problem when defining collaboration. Bourriaud appears to disregard the importance of the collaborator gaining visibility. This is not to state that a sharing of authorial rights should be the sole focus for collaborative art practice, but it could be assumed as a

necessary characteristic. Therefore, although Bourriaud's definition of performance, participation, and collaboration appears to emphasise the ethical question of authorial rights, on closer examination this is not necessarily the case.

This issue concerning the potential pitfalls when overemphasising the importance of sharing authorial rights has enabled me to reflect upon my own art practice. During one specific project I set out to develop a collaborative relationship with a number of students. Through conversations with the students the project focused on several issues related to mass media and the question of authenticity. Several experimental videos were made for the purpose of carrying out a more ambitious task of creating an online mock television channel titled; *Yes Please TV!* (2015) (see appendix 2). However, this work remained unrealised as the project was beset by differences of opinion that resulted in the majority of the group to withdraw. As a result, much of the responsibility to sustain the project was left to one particular student. Despite these challenges the main problem troubling this project, I believe, was my overemphasis on trying to ensure authorial rights were shared. Although the remaining student expressed satisfaction in terms of having the freedom to develop a project beyond the GCSE art curriculum, the overall project was limited because it did not materialise into something that could be experienced autonomously. In other words, my intentions to address the ethical question of authorial rights became paramount, rather than focusing on producing art. This is not to say that participation is more preferential than collaboration, or the rights of students are not important. Instead I believe that the production of art is a priority, regardless of whether this is achieved through a participatory or collaborative approach.

When considering Bishop's definition of performance, participation, and collaboration the emphasis on sharing authorial rights is less significant. Instead a focus on the artist as principle author is a consistent feature within each of these concepts. Performance is characterised by the artist responding to wider social or economic change. This involves professionals and non-professionals being hired to perform in accordance to the instructions of the artist. This focus on the artist remains an influential component within Bishop's definition of participation. Similar to performance, the concept of participation has been influenced by wider social political and economic change. As a result, this has led to a situation whereby participatory art is increasingly judged against ethical criteria and deemed successful or unsuccessful depending on its social efficacy. A symptom of this situation is evident within Bourriaud and Kester's arguments because they both prioritise the ethical process of social exchange as a means to solve problems within society. However, there are

several problems with this argument. The first is the fact that it remains difficult to perceive how this form of social exchange is different from other forms of social intervention. Therefore, it prompts one to question how the process of conversation, contra physical art object is to be understood as art. The other problem is that although relational and dialogical aesthetics emphasise the notion of inclusivity, this ignores the fact that this can potentially neutralise difference and can co-opt conflicting opinions into one common ethical position. This is, therefore, why Rancière regards relational and dialogical aesthetics as something that regulates perception and thus contributes towards an ethical regime of art.

This question concerning art's ability to distinguish itself from other forms of social interaction, as well as the danger of neutralising those invited to participate, highlighted problems inherent within my own art practice. In 2013 I was invited to develop a project that would contribute towards a wider community art initiative. This initiative aimed to encourage local children from the residential area of Whitley in Reading to participate in a number of art-based activities. (See appendix 1). In response I invited a group of students, who I normally teach to mentor the younger children from the Whitley community. Through various activities the students helped the younger children create a Dada inspired poem and collage based on the local community and its history. This resulted in several successful outcomes, including children gaining an opportunity to create art outside school, whilst the older students were able to demonstrate their prior knowledge and acquire a degree of responsibility. However, on reflection it proved difficult to distinguish this approach to participation from a conventional art lesson or other forms of student mentorship that already exist within the context of school. In other words, it proved difficult to recognise how this project could be experienced as art. The other problem was the fact that although community involvement and student mentorship were well intentioned aims, it proved difficult to see how the children's potential differences were addressed. In other words, the perceived inclusivity of the project and wider initiative belied the fact that those invited to participate became co-opted into one ethical aim. This was evident when one particular student required a degree of persuasion and cajoling in order to work with younger children from the Whitley community. Therefore, these differences between students and children were ignored. If I had interrogated these differences, I believe a more revealing account of the relationships formed through this process of participation would have emerged.

These valuable discoveries within my art practice were informed, to some extent, by Bishop's critique of relational and dialogical art. However, Bishop undermines her argument because

she also reduces an understanding of performance, participation, and collaborative art practice to focus on the artist's singular vision. This is particularly confusing when she refers to collaborative art practice, whilst simultaneously emphasising the artist as principle author. As such, she imposes her own limitations on what is perceivable as she expresses a direct and uncomplicated relationship between what the artist intended, (their political motivation), and how this is received by an audience. As a result, this reflects Rancière's representational regime of art. Art within this regime is characterised by the relationship between poiesis and aesthesis, or to put simply the relationship between the artist's cause and the effect it has on the audience. As a result, this effectively limits an interpretation of art to correspond with the heteronomous intentions of the artist.

Therefore, the contemporary situation for art as a social practice has meant that an experience of performance, participatory, and collaborative art practice has been limited by one of two possible approaches. Either it is something that directly reflects the intentions or political motivations of the artist or it is judged in terms of its ability to solve social problems as a result of its perceived ethical process. In order to avoid either of these approaches it is therefore necessary to articulate art as a social practice in terms of an autonomous and heteronomous dialectic. Adorno develops this argument when he describes the autonomous life of the art form. This is because the materials and processes employed do not simply reflect the heteronomous intentions of the artist. In further support of this idea Rancière develops his concept of aesthetics, which is based on a relationship between the intended, conscious actions associated with artistic production, and those unintended or unconscious aspects related to its form. In conclusion performance, participation, and collaborative art practice involves the heteronomous intentions of the artist. These intentions may address the ethical question of authorial rights, especially with regards to collaboration. However, this will result in the production of an art form that will acquire its own autonomous life and will thus be experienced in a multitude of ways, beyond the artist(s) or audience. This discovery, therefore, has provided a foundation from which to proceed when developing my own model for learning through art as a social practice.

Chapter 2. The psychoanalytic approach of Jacques Lacan and the implications for learning through an experience of art as a social practice

This chapter will examine the psychoanalytic ideas of Jacques Lacan in order to develop an opportunity for learning and self-reflection through art as a social practice. This will be achieved by providing further evidence supporting an experience of art that is not limited by the intentions of the author, critic or audience. Specifically, this will involve Lacan's concept of the sign within language, made in response to the field of structural linguistics. For Lacan, the signifier's role within language is ambiguous and fluid. As a result, this idea has implications for how one experiences art.

This chapter will also focus on the perceived influential effect of language and discourse upon human life, as argued by Lacan. Although problematic, this concept highlights a number of important implications for learning and establishes the need to acquire analytical skills.

Finally, this chapter will pay particular attention to Lacan's ideas surrounding discourse and the relationship between the analyst and patient. Specifically, Lacan establishes an approach based on a process of dialogue and debate that leads to interrogation into the causes of one's thoughts, opinions or beliefs. When applied to art practice this approach provides an opportunity for the artist or participating student(s) to have their opinions challenged. The potential advantages of this approach to conversation are discussed and illustrated through an example of my own art practice towards the end of this chapter.

2.1. The arbitrary role of the signifier within language: Supporting an autonomous experience of art

The author, the scribe, is only a pen-pusher, and he comes second...Similarly, when it comes to our patients, please give attention to the text than to the psychology of the author (Lacan, SE 2, 1988, P153).

In developing an approach to psychoanalysis, Lacan proposes how the analyst should read the patient's conversation as a text, instead of focusing on what the patient may have meant. In other words, the analyst should experience and interpret the patient's discourse in itself. As Lacan suggests, the author comes second and therefore, their authorial intentions are of secondary importance.

In response to Lacan's emphasis on the author being of secondary importance to an experience of the text, this section will demonstrate how this psychoanalytic approach reflects the way art can acquire a life of its own beyond that of the author and can thus lead to an autonomous experience.

This point is further reinforced by the fact that Lacan's psychoanalytical approach was the direct result of his own experience of both art and literature. This is most clearly illustrated within Lacan's essay *The Purloined Letter* (1956), which focuses on Edgar Allen Poe's fictional story *The Purloined Letter* (1845). The story is set in Paris and involves an amateur detective called Dupin who is responsible for retrieving a letter stolen from the Queen of France. The letter, which contains compromising information, is taken by a character called Minister D who uses it to exploit the vulnerability of his victim. In turn the letter is opportunistically stolen back by Dupin without raising the suspicion of Minister D. Although various characters assume ownership of the letter, throughout the story the contents are never revealed and remain ambiguous. As Lacan states; 'the story tells us virtually nothing about the sender or about the contents of the letter' (Lacan, *Écrits*, 2006, p19). In other words, the intentions of the author, (the Queen), are unknown because the contents of the letter remain hidden. As a result, the letter and the intentions of the author are regarded as arbitrary as they bare no real consequence to the characters or the way in which one experiences the story. Therefore, the story stands as a metaphor for the way in which art and literature can acquire a life of its own beyond that of its author. As a result, it is possible to argue that this illustrates Lacan's support for an autonomous experience of art and literature.^{vi}

Further evidence to support this argument can be found when Lacan challenges a method of literary criticism in which the life and experiences of an author are used as means to determine an interpretation of the literature itself. This approach, as Lacan states; 'grants the critic power to make the writer's private life intrude into the literary work to the degree of his own vanity' (Lacan, *Écrits*, 2006, p625). This argument is further articulated when Lacan critiques Sigmund Freud's own use of art and literature as a means to understand the psychology of the artist or author.

The evocation by Freud of a text by Dostoevski does not suffice to say that the criticism of texts, a game until now reserved for university discourse, has received more air from psychoanalysis (Lacan, 1971, p3).

In other words, art and literature should not be reduced to a single explanation provided through the psychoanalysis of Freud. This is something also outlined by Rancière when he describes Freud's approach to literature as one that is based on translating 'fiction into biography', whilst neglecting an experience of art from a 'formal perspective' (Rancière, Trans Keates, 2009, p54-55).

This argument could also be applied to the art critic who is preoccupied with the artist's intentions as means to elucidate the meaning of the artwork. An example of this can be found when Bishop refers to examples of performance, participatory, or collaborative art practice, as being a direct reflection of the artist's own political motivations.

Given these avowed politics, and the commitment that mobilises this work, it is tempting to suggest that this art arguably forms what avant-garde we have today: artists devising social situations as a dematerialised, anti-market, politically engaged project to carry on the avant-garde call to make art a more vital part of life (Bishop, 2012, p13).

As such, Bishop assumes a direct relationship between art as a social practice and the political cause or commitment of the artist. Although artists will inevitably have political opinions, these should not be asserted explicitly in order to 'dictate lessons' (Hellings, 2014, p114). As Lacan states; the 'author is only a pen pusher' and their political commitments, experiences or intentions 'comes second' to how one experiences the work (Lacan, SE 2, 1988, P153).

In order to further illustrate Lacan's support for an autonomous experience of art it is necessary to examine the influence of structural linguistics upon his own psychoanalytic ideas. Specifically, this relates to the way Lacan developed the ideas of Ferdinand de Saussure.

Within the *Course in General Linguistics* (1916), Saussure established the concept of the 'sign', which forms the basic unit of language (Saussure, 1983, p67). The sign is composed of two parts including the signified (the concept) and the signifier (the spoken word, phrase or speech sound representing the signified). As a result, Saussure perceived the signified and signifier to be 'intimately linked' or two sides of the same coin (Saussure, 1983, p66). In other words, Saussure regarded the signifier as something that simply represents the signified concept in an uncomplicated way. However, Lacan challenges this arrangement and instead perceives the signifier as something that does not simply function in 'representing the

signified' (Lacan, 2001, p166). Therefore, meaning is not the result of a signifier representing a pre-existing signified concept. It is instead the result of a 'chain of the signifier that meaning 'insists'' (Lacan, 2001, p170). In other words, this relationship between signifiers is more fluid in comparison to the assumed stable relationship between signifier and signified. Within Lacan's system, different signifiers can replace other signifiers. This, for example, can be seen when the meaning of certain words or phrases can change over time or within different cultures. As a result, 'it is this differential nature of the signifier which means it can never have a univocal or fixed meaning' (Evans, 1996, p190).^{vii}

In many respects this could be associated with the idea that an art form can acquire an autonomous life of its own, as argued by both Adorno and Rancière. Although the artist will employ certain materials and methods that signify their own intended concepts, those materials and methods will inevitably signify different things to different people, within different historical, social and cultural contexts.

Therefore, there is no guarantee that the signifiers employed by the artist will be received in an uncomplicated way by an audience. In other words, the signifiers represented through the materials or methods are themselves arbitrary because they will not necessarily reflect a straightforward signified concept. As a result, it is possible to argue that Lacan supports the proposition that an artwork can acquire an autonomous life of its own because meaning is never fixed. Once the artwork enters public domain the artist's authorial rights or intentions will inevitably become destabilised.

In summary, it is through his response to structural linguistics that Lacan challenges the uncomplicated relationship between the signifier and signified that structures language. In relation to an experience of art, the materials and methods (signifiers) employed by the artist cannot automatically be assumed to simply reflect their intentions or signified concept. In other words, there is no direct link between the signifiers contained in the artwork and the signified concept or intention made by the artist. Therefore, an interpretation of art can shift due to the changing nature of the signifiers contained within it. As a result, Lacan's approach to an experience of form within art and literature is one that is not founded upon the artist's heteronomous intentions or biographical life. As a result, it can be argued that Lacan's concept of the signifier supports an autonomous experience of art.

2.2. The influence of the signifier upon the psyche

Through his response to structural linguistics, Lacan established how language, broadly speaking, is structured by the ambiguous and fluid nature of the signifier in relation to other signifiers. However, the influence of social anthropology upon Lacan's ideas also led him to regard the signifier as something that has an influential effect on human behaviour and thought. This perceived influence of the signifier upon the human subject is most clearly illustrated through Lacan's continued analysis of *The Purloined Letter* by Allen Poe.

It is the letter and its detour which governs their (the characters) entrances and roles. While the letter may be *en souffrance*, they are the ones who shall suffer from it. By passing beneath its shadow, they become its reflection. By coming into the letter's possession-an admirably ambiguous bit of language- its meaning possesses them (Lacan, *Écrits*, 2006, p21).

Although the meaning of the letter remains ambiguous, its influence within the story is, nevertheless, important because it allegedly constitutes each of the characters at different points. For example, the dispossessed and vulnerable victim (the Queen), the criminal who is blind to his own dispossession of the letter (Minister D), and the husband who is blind to the letter's very existence (the King).

Lacan presents Poe's account of a written document (a letter) which passes through various hands as a metaphor for the signifier which circulates between various subjects, assigning a peculiar position to whoever is possessed by it (Evans, 1996, p103).

In other words, the role of the letter, understood as a signifier, is not something that is possessed by the characters within the story, but is instead something that allegedly positions them. This is, therefore, why Lacan states that, 'when I say, "the use of language", I do not mean that we use it. It is language that uses us' (Lacan, *SE17*, 2007, p66). Therefore, the act of enunciation is not an uncomplicated reflection of one's conscious self, but an unconscious process of being a subject within language. In other words, the role of the signifier is believed to unconsciously influence everything including one's use of language, thoughts, behaviours and desires.

In some ways there is no denying the fact that language can be used to persuade people to think and believe certain things. As such, this can be achieved through subtle means or the

blurring of facts. An obvious example of this relates to the UK's recent referendum on leaving the European Union. However, Lacan's proposition that the signifier has an all-encompassing effect, influencing all aspects of human behaviour, thought and desire, remains difficult to believe as this claim cannot be supported with concrete evidence.

As such, this argument reflects that of Dylan Evans who wrote *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* (1996). Evans describes how he eventually became disillusioned with regards to Lacan's psychoanalytic ideas.

Lacan's intellectual development acquires a tragic pathos. His early ventures into ethology seem tantalisingly prophetic. If Lacan had pursued them further, he might perhaps have been one of the first to question Freud's hegemony and initiate a move to a more biologically-based psychology. Instead he poured his energy into what would eventually prove to be a historical cul-de-sac (Evans in Gottschall, 2005, p50).

In other words, Evans questions the influential effect of social anthropology upon Lacan's ideas, believing it led Lacan away from a more scientific study of the mind that could otherwise be supported with empirical evidence.

Understood in relation to art as a social practice the belief that the role of the signifier surreptitiously influences all aspects of life could be understood in relation to Bourriaud's notion of a 'society of extras' (Bourriaud, 2002, p26). This concept is based on the belief that opportunities for social interaction are now largely mediated through consumerism. In other words, the covert influence of signifiers found in advertising manipulates all aspects of social life, thus creating, for Bourriaud, a situation 'where everyone finds the illusion of an interactive democracy' (Bourriaud, 2002, p26). The role advertising plays in a modern society can appear pervasive and does, to some degree, influence one's desires, both subtly and in more overt ways. However, it remains to be seen whether all forms of social conviviality are artificially influenced through an ideology of capitalist exchange. Equally an emphasis on social exchange, contra art object does not, as previously outlined, constitute an effective alternative means to challenge the negative consequences of a capitalist economy.

In summary, Lacan presents a concept whereby the role of the signifier is not only ambiguous and fluid but that it also structures one's use of language, thoughts, desires and beliefs. However, while it is possible to recognise the potential influential effect of language upon one's behaviour and thoughts, the notion that all aspects of life are conditioned by the

signifier remains difficult to prove. In many ways this idea appears to reflect Bourriaud's own proposition that all aspects of life are mediated through capitalist exchange which, he assumes, relational art can challenge.

2.3. Lacan's theory on discourse

Lacan's approach to psychoanalysis developed through a response to social anthropology led him to consider the human subject as one constituted within language and conditioned by the unconscious influence of the signifier. This idea was further developed within Seminar XVII *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis* (1969-1970). Within this seminar Lacan proposes how the 'determination of the subject, and therefore thought, depends on discourse' (Lacan, SE17, 2007, p152). In other words, Lacan argues that it is discourse that structures society and conditions one's behaviour, understanding and beliefs. Changes that take place within discourse will inevitably mean psychological and societal change. Therefore, it is through an understanding of discourse to which the transformation of society can be achieved.

The discourse of the master

According to Lacan the discourse of the master 'embraces everything, even what thinks itself as revolutionary, or more exactly as what is romantically called Revolution with a capital R' (Lacan, SE17, 2007, p87). Similar to the role of the signifier, the master discourse appears so influential that it encompasses everything, including political insurrection. As such, it can control and neutralise other elements that might attempt to oppose it.

Evidence that might illustrate the influence of the master discourse neutralising other forms of resistance could be understood when considering relational aesthetics. Although relational art is presented by Bourriaud as an alternative to capitalist exchange, it nevertheless remains tied to the market.

Despite a passion for the vocabulary of change amongst those who populate the art world's upper echelons radical alteration of the field has not taken place...The result is an art world whose only steady top-down movement seems increasingly to be towards the absorption and neutralisation of aberrant forces, and the consolidation of its own regressive institutional influence over what may be considered art (Quaintance, 2017).

As this suggests, it is possible to recognise how the master discourse of capitalism, propagated through institutions, including galleries and museums, can potentially absorb and neutralise divergent forms of art practice.

Despite the potential influence of the master discourse within certain situations, the continued emphasis on its all-encompassing effect remains somewhat fatalistic in that it appears to offer no escape. Establishing this argument, Rancière describes how this discourse presents a form of ‘left wing melancholy’ in that it can only ‘urge us to admit that all our desires for subversion still obey the law of the market’ (Rancière, 2011, p33). In other words, this concept can be regarded as ineffective in that it only provides a self-fulfilling prophecy, whereby all forms of resistance only lead to a re-articulation of the master discourse. Equally the other problem troubling this concept is that it is again based on a hypothesis, rather than through ‘verifiable facts’ that could prove the influence of the master (Rancière, 2011, p37).

The discourse of the university

Associated with the discourse of the master is the discourse of the university. An essential factor related to the discourse of the university is knowledge. However, Lacan states how it is ‘impossible not to obey the commandment... “Continue. March on. Keep knowing more and more”’. Very precisely, every question about truth of this sign is quashed’ (Lacan, SE17, 2007, p105). In other words, this means that the type of knowledge being pursued is never questioned. As a result, the endless pursuit for knowledge is again allegedly governed by the hidden influence of the ‘master signifier’, which functions as a vehicle for the ideology of the master (Lacan, SE17, 2007, p32).

In an attempt to illustrate this concept, it is feasible to refer to recent education policy in the UK. During his time in office the former Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove (2010-2014), emphasised the terms ‘accountability, choice, standards and competition’ (Clark 2012, p47). As such, these words could be regarded as master signifiers that not only structure the education policy but also obscure an agenda that has led to increasing costs for undergraduates and the proliferation of grammar schools and privately funded academies in mainstream education. However, whilst it can be recognised that the meaning of such signifying terms can appear ambiguous, the extent to which they conceal an alternative agenda appears questionable. In other words, despite using signifying terms such as accountability, choice or competition, an agenda for education based on, for example, greater opportunities for the privileged was, to a large extent, self-evident. As Rancière argues, ‘in

the end the hidden secret is nothing but the obvious functioning of the machine' (Rancière, 2011, p44). In other words, the ideology of the ruling class does not operate as surreptitiously as one is perhaps led to believe.

Other reservations that might illustrate the assumed covert influence of the master signifier could also be understood in relation to the concept of participation. Participation as a signifier has become, as Bishop has argued, 'an important buzzword for social inclusion' (Bishop, 2012, p14). Therefore, in this respect Lacan's challenge to the signifier simply representing a single signified concept appears valid. Participation understood within the context of art as a social practice will mean something different, than that of one related to government policy promoting social inclusion. As Bishop highlights, participation used in the context of social policy can be understood as a means to enable members of society to be 'self-administering' and less reliant on the welfare state (Bishop, 2012, p14). In other words, the meaning of certain signifiers can shift but this does not necessarily mean they always operate as an effective means to obscure a hidden agenda, as Lacan might suggest.

However, it could also be argued that one's capacity to recognise the subtle influence of the signifier or the persuasive use of language does inherently require a degree of education or understanding of politics. In other words, analytical skills or an ability to read the messages contained within certain signs must, therefore, be the product of a process of learning or cultivation.

Acquiring analytical skills through a process of cultivation can be illustrated through an example of my own art practice. Whilst working on the project titled; *Live well for less?* (2014) (see appendix 3), students were exposed to a wide variety of information and opinion, particularly from those experienced with the causes of food poverty. This enabled the students to develop a more nuanced understanding of the problems raised. As a result, these students were better prepared when interviewing or discussing these complex and difficult issues with the general public. For example, in one particular discussion one student highlighted a number of common misconceptions that relate to the circumstances and eligibility of people needing to use food banks. I believe the student's ability to sustain this debate with an adult was a direct result of their previous discussion with local food bank volunteers. The significance of this account clearly illustrates how the persuasive use of language is less effective or deceptive if one has exposure to a wide variety of information or opinion from several sources.

In summary, it is through Lacan's theory on discourse that he further develops the concept of the signifier's influential role in all aspects of human life. For Lacan, discourse conditions everything and so it is only through an analysis on discourse that psychological and societal change can take place. As a result, Lacan establishes the discourse of the master as the most prominent. This discourse is believed to encompass, absorb and neutralise everything, including forms of resistance. In some respects, this could be understood in terms of relational art that remains tied to the economic market but is presented as a valid form of resistance. The problem, however, with the master discourse is that it could be regarded as a fatalistic concept as it appears to provide no alternative means of escape. Related to this criticism is the fact that Lacan cannot provide verifiable facts supporting his continued emphasis on the all-encompassing character of the master signifier.

Associated with the master discourse is the discourse of the university, which functions as a means to surreptitiously disseminate the master discourse through various fields that involve the production of knowledge. The production of knowledge is, therefore, underpinned by what Lacan defines as the master signifier, which not only functions to guide knowledge but conceals the ideology of the master. In terms of art as a social practice this can be understood when considering the signifying term, participation. In other words, the function of the term, participation, differs when understood in relation to a policy for social inclusion presented by government. However, the suggestion that the signifier effectively obscures an agenda based on, for example, the government absolving its social responsibility is, perhaps, questionable. Nevertheless, this argument is largely contingent upon whether one has gained opportunities to develop a capacity to perceive the subtle and potentially misleading use of language.

2.4. The discourse of the analyst and Lacan's concept of ethics

It is the discourse of the Analyst that, according to Lacan, offers the only ultimately effective means of countering the psychological and social tyranny exercised through language (Bracher, 1994, p123)

Within this discourse the role of the analyst is to help the patient reveal the hidden effect of the master signifiers that influence one's behaviour and thought. This approach presented by Lacan, however, must not be understood in terms of one that reflects an authoritarian relationship between analyst and patient. As Lacan states, the role of the analyst should not work towards "an emotional re-educational of the patient" (Lacan, 2001, p250). In other words,

Lacan warns against an approach that involves the analyst forcing the patient to adapt to a perceived normal way of life that is potentially influenced by the master discourse. The reason for this relates to the way Lacan perceives the notion of reality and the assumption that it is something that can be universally understood. As such, reality cannot be thought of as an objective and unproblematic concept but something that ‘takes different forms according to the way the subject deals with it’ (Lacan, 1953, p11). This means, therefore, that one’s perception of reality is specific to the individual.

In response Lacan challenges some psychoanalysts, including Heinz Hartmann, who regards the analyst as someone who should help the patient achieve ‘reality mastery’ through a process defined as ‘adaptation’ (Hartmann, 1958, p22). As a result, Lacan is opposed to the fact that Hartmann perceives the psychoanalyst as someone more qualified to re-educate the patient.

For today’s psychoanalysts, this relation to reality goes without saying. They measure the patient’s defections from an authoritarian principle that is always employed by educators (Lacan, 2001, p255).

Clearly Lacan regards this approach as one reflecting an authoritarian relationship whereby the analyst imposes their view of reality onto the patient, thus leading ‘to an exercise of power’ (Lacan, 2001, p251). The problem, however, with Lacan’s critique of this approach to psychoanalysis is the fact that the patient will inevitably look to and require help from the analyst. The idea that an alternative point of view provided by the analyst will inevitably lead to an authoritarian relationship is, therefore, questionable.

In contrast, however, an experience of art that is limited to the heteronomous intentions of the artist or critic, ethical or otherwise, can be regarded as a neutralisation of other positions or perceptions of reality. As previously argued by Beech, an attempt to repair social bonds through an ethical approach can have the adverse effect on those invited to participate with the artist.

As such participation sounds promising only until you imagine unpromising circumstances in which you might be asked to participate. In troubled and troubling circumstances, participation is a malign violating force that neutralizes difference and dissent (Beech in Walwin, 2010, p26).

Although potentially motivated for good reasons the participatory artist could potentially impose their own ethical position onto the participant or audience. Equally this argument can be applied to critics, including Bourriaud, Bishop or Kester, who push their own theories when discuss art a social practice, thus preventing alternative interpretations.

The other reason why Lacan is opposed to a psychoanalytical approach focused on encouraging the patient to see things from the analyst's point of view relates to his definition of ethics. Although the desire to cure a patient by the analyst would appear a reasonable response, for Lacan, however, it reflects a traditional understanding of ethics that is placed 'under the tutelage and authority of the good' (Lacan, SE7, 1992, p218). In other words, a traditional understanding of ethics is one that is based on a moral duty towards others.

The desire of the men of good will is to do good, to do the right thing, and he who comes to seek you out, does so in order to feel good, to be in agreement with himself, to identify with or be in conformity with some norm (Lacan, SE7,1992, p237).

Therefore, this suggests how the desire to do good can be understood in terms of moral responsibility through which one may gain a stable sense of identity or purpose.

This understanding of ethics, based on a sense of moral responsibility to help others, could be illustrated through a consideration of the community arts movement in the UK during the 1960s to 1980s. During this movement several initiatives were established including *Interaction*, which served as an umbrella organisation for various other groups. These groups provided educational as well as artistic activities that sought to involve local communities and those considered marginalised within society.

Characteristics of the movement can be summarised as follows: it was positioned against the hierarchies of the international art world and its criteria of success founded upon quality, skill, virtuosity, etc. since these conceal class interests; it advocated participation and co-authorship of works of art; it aimed to give shape to the creativity of all sectors of society, but especially to people living in areas of social, cultural and financial deprivation; for some it was also a powerful medium for social and political change, providing the blueprint for a participatory democracy (Bishop, 2012, p177).

Therefore, the initial impetus for the community arts movement was based on a process of democratising authorship through participatory activities, focusing on those perceived as culturally and socially disadvantaged. However, the movement came to be regarded as something increasingly prescribed and a vehicle for solving societal problems.

The community arts movement faces several major problems which it has consistently failed to confront. If it does not face these soon, it will become just one more worthy branch of whatever the government chooses to leave of the welfare state. Meals on wheels, homemade scones, inflatables and face painting: the kindly folk who do good without ever causing trouble (Kelly, 1984, p1).

In other words, the community arts movement became increasingly judged in terms of its social efficacy, partially due its dependency on public funding. Equally, the movement was also troubled by its own internal contradictions because of its over-emphasis on repairing communities through inclusion. However, when there were attempts made to go beyond social cohesion in order to achieve something more subversive, they were not always received favourably.

Among the complaints made and doubts expressed were: the word 'community' was dishonest and elided differences of class, race, gender, etc.; community art was poor art for poor people; it was social work masquerading as art; community artists were middle class do-gooders who were patronising the working class; certain community artists had political motives and were trying to convert people to their point of view, to use public monies for subversive ends; wall decorations were often a blight on the environment rather than an embellishment (Walker, 2002, p132-135).

As this suggests the good intentions of some activities within the community arts movement could be understood as something that neutralised difference as they became increasingly focused on the heteronomous intentions and political motivations of the artist. Therefore, this illustrates how the motivation to help others inherently involves a relationship with power, which the artist must negotiate.

Negotiating this relationship with power is something Lacan attempts to resolve through his concept of transference between the analyst and patient. The following section will examine this psychoanalytical concept in order to evaluate the relationship between the artist and participating student.

In summary, Lacan presents the analyst as someone who can help the patient expose the hidden influence of the master discourse that allegedly influences one's thoughts, desires and beliefs. However, Lacan's concept of the analyst is one that seeks to avoid forcing the patient to see things from the analyst's perspective. As a result, Lacan challenges an approach to psychoanalysis that focuses on the analyst re-educating the patient by providing an alternative perspective. However, providing an alternative perspective may not, necessarily, lead to authoritarian relationship, as argued by Lacan, as the patient may require help from the analyst. In contrast, however, when one's experience of art is limited to the heteronomous intentions of the artist or critic this situation can lead to a neutralisation of difference. In other words, although the participatory artist may be motivated for good reasons, there is a danger they could inadvertently impose their own ethical position onto an audience. In this respect, this situation reflects Lacan's ideas concerning ethics, whereby the analyst's desire to cure a patient is perhaps also motivated by a need to acquire a stable sense of self or purpose. As such, this idea provides some reflection when considering aspects of the community arts movement. Although motivated through good intentions, some of the practices within the community arts movement could be regarded as a vehicle for the artist to push their own moral or political agenda. As a result, Lacan's theory on ethics demonstrates how the relationship between analyst and patient must be negotiated carefully and thus highlights a similar dilemma inherent to art as a social practice.

2.5. Lacan's concept of transference

In order to avoid a relationship based on the analyst forcing their opinions or good intentions onto the patient, Lacan introduces his concept of 'transference' (Lacan, SE11, 1977, P231). This means the concept of transference specifically relates to the relationship between analyst and patient.

Sooner or later some chance gesture of the analyst is taken by the analysand (patient) as a sign of some secret intention, some hidden knowledge. At this point the analyst has come to embody the subject supposed to know; transference is established (Evans, 1996, p199).

Through the course of psychoanalytical treatment, transference can be understood in terms of the patient perceiving the analyst as someone who has the answer to their illness. Although this is an inevitable consequence, Lacan suggests how the analyst should reflect on this

perception of being an expert and recognise the danger in trying to fulfil their own desire in ‘wanting what is good for the patient to too great an extent’ (Lacan, *Écrits*, 2006, p184). In other words, the analyst should acknowledge and be mindful of their overzealous desire to cure the patient in accordance with their own view of reality.

According to Lacan the analyst can avoid this potential situation by encouraging a ‘dialectical experience’ (Lacan, *Écrits*, 2006, p177). This concept can be understood as an ongoing process of dialogue and debate that will eventually lead the patient to examine the cause of their own desire. According to Lacan, this is achieved by focusing one’s ‘attention to the text than to the psychology of the author’ (Lacan, SE2, 1988, p153). In other words, through a process of dialogue and debate the analyst can help the patient examine the influential effect of the signifier upon one’s thoughts desires and beliefs.

However, when applied to art as a social practice the participating student cannot be regarded as a patient who requires psychological help or treatment from the artist as analyst. This is not to say the consciousness of the student is not transformed through an experience of art, but that the circumstances leading to a relationship between the artist and student are inevitably different from that of the analyst and patient.

However, the concept of transference when applied to art as a social practice does have significance in that it presents an opportunity for both artist and student to challenge one’s stable sense of self. In other words, it is through an ongoing process of dialogue and debate that one’s intentions and bias opinions can be interrogated. As Lacan states; ‘the only thing one can be guilty of is having given group relative to one’s desire’ (Lacan, SE7, 1997, p319). This does not mean that one should pursue one’s desires or intentions, regardless of the consequences, but that one should seek to interrogate the cause or influence behind one’s thoughts, opinions or beliefs.

In some respects, this emphasis on learning and self-reflection achieved through a process of ongoing dialogue between analyst and patient can be compared to the pedagogical ideas of Paulo Freire. In his book titled; *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), Freire attempts to reconfigure the relationship between the teacher and student by introducing his approach to learning based on a process of ‘problem posing’ (Freire, 1996, p60). Instead of a more traditional pedagogic approach involving the teacher transferring information to the student, this method involves a process of mutual reflection.

The students-no longer docile listeners- are now critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher. The teacher presents the material to the students for their consideration, and re-considers her earlier considerations as the students express their own (Freire, 1996, p62).

In other words, material presented by the teacher encourages consideration and response from the student. As a result, this enables the teacher to reconsider and reflect upon their own intentions. In many ways, this emphasis on dialogue and debate to challenge the ideas of both teacher and student appears to complement Lacan's concept of a dialectical experience.

It could also be argued that this emphasis on conversation that characterises this approach to learning appears to reinforce the ideas expressed within relational or dialogical aesthetics. However, it is important to point out that relational and dialogical art does not examine the relationships formed but neutralises difference to one single point of view. In other words, relational or dialogical art is automatically deemed successful by Bourriaud and Kester, simply because they provide an opportunity for conviviality. This means that whilst a process of dialogue and debate can prove beneficial, it must, however, address the relationships formed and result in an outcome that can be experienced as art.

In response to this argument, it was necessary to test this approach focused on a process of dialogue and debate within my own art practice. From the outset I was conscious that this process would need to articulate the differences of opinion that would potentially emerge and consider how these possible differences could become material for making art. I began by inviting students to participate in a series of ongoing discussions, outside normal lesson time and over several months. The purpose of this was to develop a theme that related to everyone in the group. As the theme evolved it became apparent that the issues being discussed loosely reflected feelings of expectation, to which each member of the group felt subject. This not only related to expectations based on academic success, but also expectations associated with peer relationships and self-image. As their teacher, I was aware that I occupy a position of responsibility and authority in my professional role and would, therefore, express opinions that would not necessarily reflect those of the students. This was particularly the case regarding what I perceived as the negative influence of grime music, a derivative of rap, upon some members of the group. However, through an ongoing process of dialogue and debate, underpinned by information gathered to support each other's points of view, my intentions and bias opinions were inevitably challenged. In one particular instance one student

highlighted the possible contradictions in my argument by referring to my own adolescent interest in Hip-Hop music, which I had previously expressed to the group. Therefore, this process of dialogue and debate led to an unsettling of my intentions and enabled me to consider the influences from which my opinions were borne. In other words, this process of debate with the students helped me acknowledge that much of my opinion was predominantly in response to mainstream news coverage that emphasised the perceived glamorisation of violence within grime music. Equally, however, there were instances where the students reflected upon influences within their own lives. This included the influence of social media upon their behaviour, choices and self-perception. As a result, this opportunity for argument and counterargument provided material for the collective production of a series of spoken word poems based on the students' individual perspective of the issues raised. Sections of these poems were performed and recorded, resulting in a split-screen video titled; *It's about...* (2018) (see appendix 4). As a result, I believe this approach through dialogue and debate did not result in the neutralisation of difference but led to a transformation of one's consciousness through self-reflection. The outcome of which could be experienced autonomously as art.

The importance of producing an artwork in response to an ongoing process of dialogue and debate with participants is something that has been clearly emphasised by the artists Loraine Leeson and Peter Dunn.

For us it is important that this process culminates in the production of an artwork- the visual power of the product is an important part of the empowering process- for participants to see and have confirmed that they have contributed something concrete that they can feel proud of (Dunn & Leeson, 1997, p28).

In other words, greater opportunity for intellectual empowerment is achieved when the process of dialogue culminates in something that can be experienced as art. Leeson's photographic mural *West Meets East* (1992) is an example that, in many ways, exemplifies this position. *West Meets East* was the product of a wider initiative called *The Art of Change* (1992-2002), 'which conducted projects that focused on the production of visual representations that were substantially influenced by the participants' (Mörsch, 2005, p110). In response, Leeson was requested to work with a female group of secondary school students from the east London district of Bow. The girls were largely from Bengalese heritage, some of whom had only been living in the UK for a short period of time. Initially the development

of a topic achieved through the process of dialogue proved challenging as this was partly due to language and communication problems, but also by the fact that the students initially found it difficult articulating themselves through brainstorming activities. To overcome this problem Leeson suggested the use of objects significant to the girls as a means to trigger conversation. Following continued communication problems, the use of found images from magazines was suggested by the students' art teacher. In response, this approach was adopted and thus demonstrated a degree of flexibility by the artist. This did not mean Leeson sought to sacrifice her own rights or agency, but instead made a sensitive response to the context and participants she was working with. Although Leeson had reservations with regards to how the found images from magazines would 'serve as carriers for the girls' statements', she, nevertheless, allowed a degree of disruption to her own authorial intent (Mörsch, 2005, p114). Following this decision, the students started to develop and appropriate the images for their own use, whilst employing drawing and collage techniques.

A comparison of all the images that were produced brought one common theme to light: a reflection upon what it means to simultaneously exist in two, often contradicting systems of rule – that of the British and that of the Bengalese- and the practice of connecting these while negotiating daily life. By means of their images-unlike with the initial attempt at brainstorming- it was possible for them to decide upon this as their common topic (Mörsch, 2005, p114).

This further illustrates how the artwork appears to be the product of a process of debate rather than being the result of the artist's singular vision. This meant the students were provided with an opportunity outside their normal education where they could explore the representation of identity through various materials and forms, whilst examining how certain cultural codes may operate within mass media. In other words, the photographic mural *West Meets East* was the product of an autonomous experience of art that potentially led to a transformation of consciousness for the students, teacher and artist involved.

Perhaps one possible criticism of *West Meets East* was how it was exhibited following its production. Mörsch describes how 'its publication never went without additional explanations both then and later. Information panels that documented the development, context and process both visually and textually always accompanied the end-product, which in this way did not have to "speak for itself" (Mörsch, 2005, p116). However, the problem with this method of display is that it potentially limits an experience of the work. Whilst it is

possible to recognise the advantages of documenting the ‘methodologies and extend the reach of the practice’, I would also argue that the billboard that displayed the photo-mural *West Meets East* spoke for itself and could be experienced autonomously (Leeson, 2017, p93). In many ways this issue relates to how one acquires a capacity for understanding or translating art. Enabling individuals who potentially lack an opportunity to experience art is something I strongly support. However, I believe *West Meets East* previously achieved this aim through a process that encouraged the students to explore and examine the representation of their identity.

In summary, Lacan’s concept of transference provides an approach that attempts to address the problem facing the analyst and their relationship to the patient. According to Lacan, transference occurs when the patient perceives the analyst as someone who as the answer to their psychological problem. The analyst should, therefore, acknowledge this perception of them as someone who occupies a position of privilege and expertise and recognise how their desire to cure could potentially force their perception of reality onto the patient. To avoid this relationship Lacan proposes an ongoing process of dialogue and debate, whereby the analyst helps the patient develop an ability to analyse the cause of their neurosis.

The concept of transference within psychoanalysis provides reflection when developing an approach to art as a social practice. However, it is also necessary to highlight the significant differences distinguishing both fields. Specifically, this can be recognised by the fact that the participating student is not someone who requires treatment or asks for psychological help, as would a patient. Specifically, the significance of this concept for art as a social practice is the emphasis placed on the process of dialogue and debate. In other words, this approach to conversation can highlight the artist’s privileged position and allow space for contradiction and counterargument, thus challenging the intentions and bias opinions of both artist and student. This, however, is not to say the artist should sacrifice their own rights or agency with the sole intent to achieve a perceived form of equality. This would ultimately obscure the artist’s privileged position and would again limit an experience of art to one focused only on a question of ethics, thus failing to distinguish it from other forms of social work, including psychoanalysis. Therefore, the process of dialogue and debate within performance, participation, or collaboration cannot be an end in itself, but must result in something that can be experienced as art. It is through this autonomous experience of art that an opportunity for the transformation of consciousness and intellectual emancipation can be achieved.

Conclusion of chapter

This chapter has examined the psychoanalytic ideas of Jacques Lacan in order to develop an opportunity for learning and self-reflection through an experience of art as a social practice. Through his theory of psychoanalysis, Lacan refers to the ideas contained within structural linguistics, with specific focus on the concept of the sign, used as a basic unit of language. However, Lacan challenged an arrangement of the sign that reflects a straightforward relationship based on the signifier representing the perceived stable signified concept. As a result, Lacan overlooked the significance of the signified and instead emphasised the signifier's fluid and potentially ambiguous role in language. An example of this can be recognised when one considers how certain words, images or symbols can be understood in various ways, depending on the historical or cultural context. In terms of an approach to psychoanalysis this concept would function as a means to interpret the discourse of the patient in order to examine the influential effect of the signifier. However, the significance of this discovery in relation to art supports an idea whereby the materials and forms employed by an artist are experienced in a variety of ways that do not necessarily reflect the artist's intentions. As a result, it is possible to argue that Lacan's concept of the signifier supports the idea that art can acquire an autonomous life of its own, beyond that of the author. Further evidence supporting this claim can be found with reference to Lacan's own experience of art and literature, which led to the development of his approach to psychoanalysis.

Following this, Lacan developed his concept surrounding the signifier in relation to social anthropology. This led Lacan to not only regard the signifier as something fluid but also something that structures all aspects of human life. However, Lacan's hypothesis that all aspects of life are structured by the signifier is troubled by its inability to provide firm evidence to support this claim.

Nevertheless, Lacan further develops this concept of the signifier's influential effect by establishing his theory on discourse. According to Lacan, the discourse of the master is something that encompasses one's thoughts, desires, and beliefs. Therefore, this means that the master discourse is so influential that it can also neutralise and absorb forms of dissent. This is because the discourse of the master is propagated through the discourse of the university, which is responsible for the production of knowledge and is structured by the master signifier. However, the master signifier not only structures knowledge but also allegedly functions as a means of obscuring the hidden ideology of the master.

In some respects, these concepts can be illustrated through forms of art as a social practice. For example, relational art can be regarded as something absorbed and neutralised by the master discourse of capitalist exchange, despite its perceived efforts to establish a form of resistance through social exchange. However, there are a few problems with Lacan's concept of the master and university discourse. Not only do they present a somewhat fatalistic situation, due to the master's all-encompassing influence, but also because these concepts remain speculative as they are unable to provide verifiable facts. Equally the notion of the signifier being able to obscure the ideology of the master is also questionable. Signifying terms such as participation can be used and interpreted in a variety of ways; although, their ability to conceal an alternative agenda must be regarded with a degree of caution. However, it must also be acknowledged that this largely depends on one's ability to recognise the potential deceptive use of language. In other words, opportunities to develop such a capacity for analysis are not necessarily available to everyone. As such, this argument illustrates the need for an approach to learning through an experience of art as a social practice.

In response to the alleged influential effect of the master and university discourse, Lacan establishes the concept of the analyst. Within this concept the analyst is considered as someone who can help the patient discover the cause of their neurosis. However, Lacan warns against a relationship whereby the analyst tells the patient what to think. For Lacan the analyst's desire to cure the patient is motivated through a need to acquire a stable sense of identity or purpose and reflects a form of ethics based on a sense of moral responsibility. In some respects, this reflects a situation, whereby the political or moral position of the artist is inadvertently foisted upon a community or audience. Despite being based on good intentions this desire can limit an experience of art to one focused on a question of ethics or the heteronomous intentions of the artist.

To avoid this situation within psychoanalysis, Lacan introduces the concept of transference. Inevitably the analyst will be perceived by the patient as someone occupying a position of expertise, who has the answer to their condition. As such, the analyst should recognise this perception of them and be mindful not to force their perception of reality onto the patient. This can be achieved through an ongoing process of dialogue and debate.

As a result, this provides reflection when developing an approach to art as a social practice. However, there is, nevertheless, an important difference distinguishing both fields. Participating students cannot be regarded as patients who seek help or require psychological

treatment from the artist. Instead the significance of Lacan's concept of transference for art is focused on the idea of a dialectical process of conversation, which can provide an opportunity for both artist and student to disrupt or unsettle their bias opinions or intentions. This process does not mean the artist should sacrifice their own rights in a bid to achieve a perceived form of equality. This would only deny the fact that the artist clearly occupies a privileged position and would again result in a heteronomous experience of art. Instead the process of dialogue and debate is a means in the production of art, rather than something focused entirely on the moral or political intentions of the artist. It is, therefore, through this approach to art as a social practice that a transformation of consciousness and self-reflection can take place.

Chapter 3. Jacques Rancière's theory of intellectual emancipation and the implications for learning through an experience of art as a social practice

This chapter aims to examine Jacques Rancière's theory of intellectual emancipation in order to question how one learns through an experience of art as a social practice. The first section will discuss Rancière's break with the notion of the intellectual figure who claims responsibility for directly transforming or raising the consciousness of others. As such, this critique of the intellectual figure who educates from a position of assumed authority can be recognised in terms of the relationship between the artist (master) and spectator (student). It is possible to recognise this pedagogical relationship when considering the growing trend for education as a form of mass entertainment and the turn towards pedagogy within the field of art as social practice. However, this chapter will demonstrate how it is possible for artists who invite students to participate to acknowledge their privileged position and avoid dictating lessons. Rancière's approach focuses on the spectator's ability to experience and translate art, free from the intentions of the artist or critic. Through this approach the spectator is allegedly able to achieve self-emancipation and transcend their subjective position. Although supportive of an experience of art that is free from the artist or critic's intentions, this chapter questions how one acquires an ability to do so. In response, this chapter will demonstrate how a capacity for translating art can be acquired through a process of cultivation. This proposition will be supported with reference to an example of my own art practice.

3.1. Rancière's critique of the transformation of consciousness presented within post-Marxist discourse

Following the events of the Paris student riots of 1968, Rancière became disillusioned with the post-Marxist ideas of his former teacher Louis Althusser. For Rancière, Althusser's ideas were too detached from the practical concerns of the working class and focused too heavily on the belief that their own false consciousness prevented them from recognising the cause of their situation. As a result, this led Rancière to ask;

Why has the philosophy of intelligentsia or activists always needed to blame some evil third party (petty bourgeoisie, ideologist or master thinker) for the shadows and obscurities that get in the way of the harmonious relationships between their own self-conscious and the self-identity of their 'popular' objects of study? Was not this evil third part contrived to spirit away another more

fearsome threat: that of seeing the thinkers of the night, invade the territory of philosophy (Rancière, 1982, p12).

In other words, the idea of a false consciousness reflected within post-Marxist theory only served to maintain, rather than challenge the divisions that differentiate those destined for intellectual pursuit from those consigned to manual work. As such, Rancière relates this argument to the ideas expressed within Plato's *Republic*, who presented a hierarchical structure for society, whereby certain people were destined for certain occupations.

In book 3 of Plato's *Republic*, Socrates asks his questioners to accept an unlikely story: If some people are philosophers and legislators while others are workers, this is because divine providence mixed with gold in the soul of the former and iron in the soul of the latter. This unlikely story is necessary to give consistency to a world in which the difference in conditions has to be accepted as a difference in natures (Rancière, 2012, p10).

As a result, Rancière draws a comparison between the ideas expressed within Plato's *Republic* and the idea of the privileged intellectual who assumes responsibility for speaking on behalf of the proletariat and their plight.

This argument is further developed when Rancière critiques the discourse presented by left wing intellectuals, including Althusser, who have contributed to what he perceives as a 'melancholic form of leftism' (Rancière, 2011, p35). As such, this discourse could be regarded as somewhat fatalistic in that it presents a perception that all attempts to resist capitalism inevitably become appropriated and neutralised. To illustrate his argument Rancière refers to *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (2006) written by Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, emphasising how this melancholic form of leftism is not necessarily based on fact but on the notion that 'things are not what they seem' (Rancière, 2011, p37). As a result, this position, according to Rancière, is effectively impotent because 'it is only able to cast a disenchanted eye over the world in which critical interpretation of the system has become an element of the system itself' (Rancière, 2011, p34). In other words, this discourse of revealing a hidden ideology as a form of resistance only leads to a re-articulation or elaboration of that ideology.

In many respects Jacques Lacan's ideas appear to reflect a discourse based on revealing the hidden ideology of the master. This is particularly true when considering his theory of the *Four Discourses* (1969-70). As outlined in the previous chapter the discourse of the master, established by Lacan, is characterised by its all-encompassing effect in that it can absorb and

neutralise all forms of knowledge and resistance. Supporting this concept is the university discourse, which not only structures the production of knowledge, but also conceals the surreptitious agenda of the master. In response, Lacan focuses on the analyst as a means to examine the effect of the master discourse upon psyche. For Rancière, however, simply raising one's consciousness of such facts does very little to change the divisions of labour that structure society. In other words, the hierarchy of occupations is preserved because the emphasis appears to focus on the privileged intellectual who assumes responsibility for revealing the mechanisms of domination. This argument could also be extended to some social practitioners of art. An example of this could be found when considering some aspects of the community arts movement that could be regarded for 'patronising the working class' (Walker, 2002, p132-135).

Related to this melancholic or disenchanting discourse is what Rancière describes as 'right-wing frenzy' (Rancière, 2011, p37). According to Rancière, this discourse perpetuates the idea that the social bond in Western society has been slowly eroded by the relentless embrace of consumerism. Understood in relation to the field of art as social practice, right-wing frenzy is reflected within both relational and dialogical aesthetics, whereby the erosion of the social fabric can be healed through dialogical exchange. However, Rancière argues that both discourses lead to the same critical model based on 'the endless task of unmasking fetishes' (Rancière, 2011, p49). In other words, both discourses claim to reveal the uncomfortable truth that our lives are mediated by the images offered by capitalism. As a result, these models fail to provide an adequate form of resistance because of how the intellectual or artist transforms the consciousness of others.

The melancholics and the prophets don the garb of enlightened reason deciphering the symptoms of a malady of civilisation. But this enlightened reason emerges bereft of any impact on patients whose illness consists of not knowing themselves to be sick (Rancière, 2011, p40).

Clearly this argument represents a direct challenge to Lacan's concept of the analyst who encourages the patient to transform their consciousness by revealing the influence of the master discourse to which they are subject. However, it is important to point out that the analyst, conceived by Lacan is not someone motivated through good intentions or a desire to cure the patient. In terms of art as a social practice the performance, participatory, or collaborative artist is not an analyst who cures, solves social problems or imposes their own

moral or political cause as this would lead to what Lacan describes as ‘an exercise of power’ (Lacan, 2001, p251).

In other words, focusing on the artist’s political cause or ability to solve social problems would clearly limit an experience of art as a social practice. In order to allow for a more autonomous experience of art it is, therefore, necessary to examine the relationship between the artist and those invited to perform, participate, or collaborate. This relationship, as such, is characterised through a process of dialogue and debate, which can highlight the privileged position occupied by the artist and challenge their moral or political intentions. However, conversations are not a substitute for the work but are a means in the process of making something that can be understood as art. If this does not occur there is a danger that this type of practice will become indistinguishable from other forms of social work. This is something emphasised by Beech when he states how some forms of participation simply ‘paper over the cracks’ (Beech, 2008). In other words, forms of participation that are deemed successful because they appear to include an audience or help a deprived community can effectively deny alternative voices and obscure the privileged position occupied by the artist.

This problem can be understood when referring to the descriptions of Inigo Manglano-Ovalle’s art practice, which formed part of a wider exhibition titled; *Culture in Action* (1992-1993). Focusing on his own community in the West Town neighbourhood of Chicago, Manglano-Ovalle established a video collective called Street Level Video (1993-). The largely Mexican and Puerto Rican community was characterised for its problems with gang violence and high levels of social deprivation. In response, Street Level Video has been described by Kester as something that sought to ‘encourage emphatic identification between gang members and neighbourhood residents across both generational and cultural boundaries (Kester, 2004, p117). The problem with this description is that it clearly places emphasis upon the artist’s desire to heal the community rather than provide, as previously argued, a consideration of the artwork itself. The curator of *Culture in Action*, Mary Jane Jacob also expresses a similar opinion when she celebrates what she perceives as a change of emphasis in public art.

Public art has shifted from that of renewing the physical environment to that of improving society, from promoting aesthetic quality to contributing to the quality of life, from enriching lives to saving lives (Jacob, 1995 p56).

This further demonstrates how both critics place greater value on the social efficacy of the project rather than on the artwork produced by artists, such as Manglano-Ovalle. The legacy of Street Level Video continues to benefit the local community, but this alone does not constitute something that can be experienced as art. However, this does not mean that Manglano-Ovalle and Street Level Video have not produced artworks. *Tele-Vecindario* (1993) is one example that includes a series of video clips created from interviews and conversations with local residents. An experience of these videos may, therefore, provide a more insightful reflection on the artist's relationship with the community that is, perhaps, more complicated than one simply focused on an attempt to save lives through participation.

Limiting one's experience of art as a social practice is a problem I have sought to avoid when developing my own practice. During the project *Live well for less*, (2014) (see appendix 3), I was aware that I inevitably held certain opinions regarding the causes of food poverty. Therefore, my aim was to develop a better understanding of the situation and encourage participating students to also examine and form their own opinions regarding these issues. As a result, the project and video illustrated the complexity of the issue through something that could be experienced as art. In other words, the project did not aim to solve the problem of food poverty. This is not to say the project did not result in positive tangible outcomes, such as a whole school foodbank donation. Neither would I argue that these tangible outcomes should be disregarded as a 'bi-product' (Leeson, 2017, p136). However, I would not deem the project successful simply in terms of its ability to encourage a greater sense of altruism, as this charitable activity was an existing part of school life. In other words, the project and video functioned as a means to highlight and give prominence to a significant social issue happening both locally and nationally. Acknowledging the social function of participatory art practice is something supported by Leeson when she describes how the 'resonance' of her own work 'did not only derive from the visuals, but the total experience of the creative actions' (Leeson, 2017, p134). Understood in relation to my own art practice I recognised how the work's resonance was not only located in the video produced, but also in terms of having one's opinions challenged and the opportunity for students to develop analytical skills. In other words, art as a social practice clearly has a social purpose, which has wider effect. However, it must also be judged in terms of its formal qualities in order to differentiate it as art, thus allowing a variety of interpretations.

This problematic situation where one's experience of art becomes limited is, to some extent, illustrated by Rancière within his book *The Emancipated Spectator* (2011). The focus of the

book examines how theatrical spectacle, understood in its broadest of terms, has historically attempted to address a traditional perception of the spectator as someone immobile and passive. For Rancière, this has resulted in two different conclusions. The first relates to a Platonic understanding of theatre being a scene of illusion, which prevents the acquisition of knowledge and action. The second conclusion is potentially a reaction to the first in that theatre should instead try to activate passive spectators into active participants. In response to these conclusions Rancière suggests how theatre has historically attempted to address both these issues through two different strategies. The first involves encouraging the audience to grasp the meaning of the spectacle of theatre, whilst maintaining a gap between the two. In other words, although the audience are not necessarily encouraged to actively participate in the artwork the authorial intentions are made explicit, leading to a definitive understanding of the work.

To illustrate the direct influence of the artist's cause upon the spectator Rancière refers to artworks that are characterised by a 'clash of heterogeneous elements' (Rancière, 2011, p26-27). This is demonstrated with reference to the tradition of collage, whereby conflicting and contrasting images are arranged to reveal 'the violence of class domination concealed beneath the appearances of democratic peace' (Rancière, 2011, p27). In other words, the clash of contrasting images can, for Rancière, reflect a potentially straightforward relationship between the artist's political or moral message and the intended effect. Perhaps a more adequate illustration that highlights this problem can be found when considering Bishop's approach to performance, participatory, and collaborative art practice and her over-emphasis on the artist's singular vision.

The second response made to the Platonic critique of theatre, whereby the ignoramus passively gazes upon the theatrical spectacle, is one that is focused on encouraging an audience to actively participate in the production of the work. This approach can be recognised when considering the participatory art practice of Stephen Willats. Willats who was once a student of Roy Ascott and clearly influenced by his behaviourist teaching methods sought to work with communities outside the art world. Willats was particularly keen to close the gap between the artist and the audience by encouraging the active participation of communities in order to transform their consciousness.

A pre-requisite for an artwork that manifests a counter-consciousness is that the separation which existed between the artist and the audience is closed, that they

become mutually engaged, to the point where the audience become the rationale in both the making and the reception of the work (Willats in Kester, 2004, p91).

The communities Willats encouraged to participate were invariably those considered deprived or socially marginalised in cities in the UK and wider Europe. His strategy when working with these communities was to gather information from them through questionnaires and conversations which he later fed back through material in the form of diagrams and charts.

In an article titled; *The claims of social art and other complexities* (1978), James Faure Walker describes Willats' projects as 'condescending and manipulative, experimenting on the subjects through maze-like either /or recognition tests as if they were rats learning to press Pavlovian stimulus' (Faure Walker, 1978, p18). In many ways this highlights the potential pitfalls when artists attempt to help others understand the hidden truth behind their circumstance in order to activate resistance. This point is also made by Rancière when criticising an approach based on 'the endless task of unmasking fetishes' (Rancière, 2011, p49). As such, these reservations concerning some forms of participatory art practice reflect the potential neutralisation of difference, as argued by Beech.

This potential problem of the artist imposing their political intentions onto a community is something that can be brought into focus when considering the Brentford Towers project (1985), organised by Willats. During the project Willats encouraged the participation of residents from the Green Dragon Lane housing estate by asking them to collect and examine objects that held personal significance. Willats then documented these objects and transcribed the conversations with the residents involved. They were then asked to create a display board with the documentation and write down the significance of their objects. The display boards were then exhibited within the communal areas of the tower block. Willats describes the aim of this approach as follows;

The work was to connect the internal reality of life within the tower block, with culturally idealised symbols that featured in the world outside, uncovering the means by which residents expressed their resistance to the repressive forces surrounding them inside the tower block (Willats, 1987, p5).

What remains unclear from this description is how each of these potentially diverse and personally significant objects all came to represent some form of resistance. In other words,

were the objects chosen at random or were the residents encouraged to select specific objects in order to satisfy a theme established by the artist that focused on forms of resistance?

Associated with this question is why the artist chose to display the work within the tower block itself rather than opting to expose the work to a wider audience beyond the residents themselves.

The series of display boards were presented in a sequence, starting from the first floor on the 6 October and moving up with the next display on another landing every two days, until the top twenty second floor of Harvey House had been reached. The effect of this sequencing of presentation on different floors was to change the residents' behaviour, so that they would travel to those on different floors and in so doing meet other residents (Willats, 1987, p5).

Clearly this form of exhibition represents a form of resistance to the art market but what it equally demonstrates is the artist's attempt to find a solution to the problem of isolation facing the residents.^{viii} As a result, this example of participatory art practice appears to reflect the right wing frenzy Rancière describes, characterised by the desire to reveal and thus mobilise an audience according to the artist's political cause.

In summary, Rancière challenges the notion of the intellectual figure who assumes responsibility for directly raising the consciousness of those considered subordinate. However, this discourse, for Rancière, is symptomatic of the inequality and divisions within society. In response, this discourse is distinguished by two subtle differences. The first is characterised by the notion of a master discourse that surreptitiously influences those who are suppressed. As a result, all forms of resistance become neutralised, leading only to a preservation of the status quo. The second variation of this discourse critiqued by Rancière is one that presents the idea that the social bond has been eroded by the relentless embrace of capitalism. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the intellectual to reveal the uncomfortable truth to those lacking the critical faculties to recognise its effect. As a result, this critique could be related to the artist or critic who attempts to educate or impose their political cause onto an audience, which would clearly limit an experience of art. Rancière illustrates this potential pitfall when he refers to two different approaches that characterise some forms of art and theatrical spectacle. The first approach is one based on establishing a straightforward transmission between the artist's cause and the effect it has on an audience. The second focuses on art practice that attempts to encourage an audience to actively participate in the

production of the artwork. The problem, however, with some forms of participatory art is that the artist can assume responsibility for educating or imposing their own political or moral point of view onto the participant, audience, or community. As a result, this can potentially result in the neutralisation of difference, leading to a univocal experience of the artwork.

Therefore, in order to allow for a more autonomous experience of art as a social practice it is necessary to examine the relationship between the artist and those invited to perform, participate, or collaborate. Art as a social practice will inherently involve a process of dialogue and debate, whereby the artist's intentions can be questioned and potentially destabilised. However, this process of conversation must lead to something that can be experienced as art. This is not to say art as a social practice does not have a wider social consequence. This is particularly the case when considering its ability to highlight a social issue, challenge one's opinions or foster analytical skills. However, art as a social practice that is deemed successful simply because an audience are invited to participate in an activity of social exchange can only limit one's experience.

3.2 Rancière's alternative pedagogic approach in order to achieve intellectual emancipation

For Rancière the strategy of unmasking fetishes and the mobilising of audiences reflects a logic of intellectual emancipation that is based on a pedagogical relationship between master (artist) and student (spectator) in which the master attempts 'to abolish the distance between his knowledge and the knowledge of the ignorance of the ignoramus' (Rancière, 2011, p8). Put differently, this approach can be understood as an attempt by the artist or critic to close the gap between their moral or political cause and the effect it has on the spectator. Within this logic of emancipation, knowledge is perceived as a gift bestowed onto the ignorant and thus perpetuates an 'inequality of intelligence', therefore reinforcing the divisions within society (Rancière, 2011, p9). In order to consider this position more thoroughly this section will examine Rancière's alternative theory of intellectual emancipation.

Within his book *The Ignorant School Master* (1991), Rancière introduces an alternative pedagogical approach to what he regards as a traditional method of explication, which assumes one person's intelligence is greater than that of another.

Explication is a myth of pedagogy, the parable of a world divided into knowing minds and ignorant ones, ripe minds and immature ones, the capable and the incapable the intelligent and the stupid (Rancière, 1991, p6).

In other words, this approach to education is one based on a pedagogy of ‘stultification’ in that the student (spectator) will only reach a point of equality or enlightenment having listened to and retained the explicator’s (artist’s) narration (Rancière, 2011, p9). As a result, the student remains dependent upon those assumed to be more capable or regarded as experts in their field.

In some respects, Rancière’s critique against this pedagogic approach, in which the student is dependent upon the master, relates to the ideas previously established by Freire. Freire opposes what he regards as the ‘banking concept of education’, where students ‘memorise mechanically the narrated content’ of the teacher (Freire, 1996, p53). Similar to Rancière, Freire is also critical of a pedagogic relationship in which the master (teacher) stultifies or ‘annuls the students’ creative powers’, thus incapacitating them and therefore reinforcing divisions in society ((Freire, 1996, p54). However, despite sharing a similar desire to reconfigure the teacher-student relationship, Freire’s approach differs from Rancière’s in that he proposes a mutually beneficial relationship between teachers and students, rather than one based on a process of self-tuition.

Through dialogue, the teacher of-the-students and the students-of –the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with students-teachers. The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach (Freire, 1996, p61).

In other words, in order to overcome this unequal or contradictory relationship there must be a recognition that the teacher can learn from and with the student through a process of dialogue. To some extent I support this proposition in that the student has an opportunity to challenge the opinions or intentions of an artist (teacher) through a process of dialogue. In other words, this demonstrates an opportunity whereby the latter can reflect and learn from the former. However, my support for this proposition is not without a degree of reservation as I do not believe this approach necessarily exemplifies an equal relationship, nor should it. Artists working as teachers inherently occupy a privileged position and are ultimately responsible for the student in their professional capacity. Therefore, it would be misleading to

suggest that this represents an equal relationship as the teacher will inevitably have certain rights and privileges that the student does not. However, what Freire and Rancière's ideas do challenge is the perception of the artist (teacher) as an expert.

This overemphasis upon the expert is something that reflects broader concerns relating to society at large. In an article titled, *Weberian Lessons: Art, Pedagogy and Managerialism* (2010), Beech considers the growing emphasis placed upon the role of the expert in modern society and the occurrence of education as a form of entertainment. Evidence of this can be found when referring to the proliferation of television programmes focused on educating consumers on a range of issues from fashion to cookery. Whereas these skills would have previously been acquired from traditions inherited through family and community, this has increasingly become the domain of the professional expert.

The embedding of education in entertainment, I want to argue, is a contemporary articulation of the rise of the expert in culture. Education as-entertainment can only cast the consumer or audience as a student...Therefore, the social history of expertise explains something hidden and crucial here; the rise of the expert as an unremarkable social presence can be seen as following the pattern of an increasingly rationalised, bureaucratic, managerial and administered society (Beech in O'Neill, P & Wilson, 2010, p52).

In many ways, this description of an increasingly bureaucratic and administered society, characterised by the rise of the professional expert reflects Rancière's argument against a 'distribution of positions' (Rancière, 2011, p13). In other words, the emphasis on the expert reflects a society that differentiates between those who are perceived as capable from those who are not. Equally it could be argued that the rise of the expert reflects a process of stultification in that the student (audience) desires, and is dependent upon, the expert's narration and knowledge.

As a result, Beech associates the proliferation of art practice, characterised for its pedagogical approach, with an increasing emphasis on the professional expert in society.

The (art's) turn to pedagogy must also involve the turn to the controversies, hierarchies, tensions and troubles that characterise pedagogy at large. Education is a fraught social process that leads systematically to an uneven distribution of cultural capital (Beech in O'Neill, P & Wilson, 2010, p60).

Clearly the adoption of pedagogical methods by artists can equally reinforce as well as challenge educational and cultural deprivation. As a result, this would appear to reflect Rancière's own argument against the artist as expert who attempts to educate a community or audience by imposing their own moral or political agenda from their position of authority.

Further evidence of this can be found when considering artists who work within an educational context, such as those who visit schools or those who contribute towards a gallery education programme.

Although it could be argued that artists have particular skills, it could also be observed that the skills attributed to artists are what inspired and creative teachers, working within a supportive environment provide anyway (Pringle, 2002, p21).

In other words, the visiting artist may potentially be regarded as a professional expert in their field, as opposed to a teacher of art, even though they may possess comparable skills to that of a professional artist.

In order to challenge this emphasis upon the expert, Rancière describes the experience of a teacher named Joseph Jacotot referred to within *The Ignorant School Master*. Jacotot was required to teach a group of Flemish students the French language, despite not being able to speak Flemish himself. In response, Jacotot provided his students with a book called *Les Aventures de Télémaque* (1699), which was published in both French and Flemish. Having asked the students to read both books Jacotot was surprised to find how quickly the students had begun to translate the meaning of the words for themselves, despite Jacotot communicating very little. As a result, Rancière describes how this approach depended less upon the teacher's explication, but on the students' 'poetic labour of translation' (Rancière, 2011, p10).

In order to further illustrate this concept of translation, Rancière refers to a description of a joiner from a 19th century French revolutionary newspaper. The joiner described how he momentarily disconnected from his work, whilst gazing upon a garden from a room in which he was working.

The divorce between the labouring arms and the distracted gaze introduce the body of a worker into a new configuration of the sensible: it overthrows the 'right' relationship between what a body 'can' do and what it cannot (Rancière, 2011, p71).

In other words, the joiner was able to temporarily suspend the occupation positioning him because he was able to appropriate the aesthetic experience of the scene. This experience had been influenced by forms of literature, which the joiner had been reading in his spare time. However, Rancière is keen to point out that these novels did not remind the joiner of his condition or reflected social issues specific to him, but instead triggered ‘new passions’ (Rancière, 2011, p72).

The joiner gains access to the community of dis-identified proletarian subjects by appropriating the ‘sorrows’ of the idle romantic hero’s René and Obermann even against the will of the writers who had invented these characters (Rancière, 2011, p73).

In other words, the joiner was able to appropriate these narratives (written for a predominantly middle-class audience) beyond what the author intended. As a result, the ability of the joiner to appropriate the literature further highlights the question of authorial rights. In other words, authorial rights over the artwork can inevitably become destabilised, to some extent, once the artwork enters public domain.

In many respects this emphasis on the spectator’s appropriation of the work appears to reinforce the argument for an autonomous experience of art. Further evidence of this can be found when Rancière describes the need for a gap or ‘aesthetic rupture’ between artist and spectator (Rancière, 2011, p7).

It is not the transmission of the artist’s knowledge or inspiration to the spectator. It is the third thing that is owned by no one, whose meaning is owned by no one, but which subsists between them, excluding any uniform transmission, any identity of cause and effect (Rancière, 2011, p15).

In other words, this third thing can be understood as the artwork which acquires a life of its own beyond the intentions of the artist or even the audience or critic.

To illustrate this argument in support of an aesthetic rupture it is possible to refer to the performative and participatory art practice of Joseph Beuys. In an article titled *Beuys: The Twilight of The Idol* (1980), Benjamin H.D. Buchloh critiques Beuys’ use of objects to symbolise and construct the myth surrounding his artistic persona.

He (Beuys) dilutes and dissolves the conceptual precision of Duchamp’s readymade by reiterating the object into the most traditional and naïve context of

representation of meaning, the idealist metaphor: This object stands for that idea, and that idea is represented in this object (Buchloh, 1980, p206).

In other words, this argument suggests that Beuys had reinstated the authority of artistic intentionality through his use of metaphorical objects such as fat, felt and fur relating to his alleged experiences during the Second World War. This point is perhaps further emphasised when considering the lectures and chalk boards Beuys used to explain his ideas.

The style and content of his programmatic statements- the ceaseless explanation of his art, the world, its problems, and their solutions- appear to be consistent with the image he projects of himself as a shamanistic healer: he speaks with the authority of a man who knows all the answers, and in doing so consolidates his auratic authority as an artist with his message of salvation (Verwoert, 2008, p3).

As a result, this description of Beuys would appear to reflect Rancière's argument against the artist as expert who dictates the lesson from a position of authority through a pedagogical process of explication.

To balance this argument, however, Verwoert also considers a conflicting characteristic of Beuys' art practice that appears to challenge the authority of the artist and the alleged forcefulness of his intentions or politics. With reference to the performance titled *ÖÖ-Programm* (1967), Verwoert describes how Beuys welcomed new students who were enrolling at the Kunstakademie, Dusseldorf by barking inarticulate sounds at them through a microphone, whilst holding an axe. According to Verwoert the absurdity and ambiguity of the performance, therefore, challenged the authority of his role as both professor and artist through a strategy of exaggeration that appears to contradict the more conventional perception of Beuys as an inclusive pedagogue.

Rather than deny the structural authority that accrued in his role as professor (for example, by appearing as an emphatically liberal pedagogue), Beuys exposes this structural authority in a deliberately exaggerated way and demonstrates its complicity with forms of mythical authority. Given the obvious absurdity of the presentation, it seems fair to assume that he did it with the idea of pushing his authority to its limits (Verwoert, 2008, p12).

In this respect, *ÖÖ- Programm*, performed by Beuys appears to embody the aesthetic rupture rallied by Rancière, whereby the ambiguity of the performance was available to be experienced autonomously.

In summary an experience of art based on a straightforward link between cause and effect relates to what Rancière perceives as a traditional pedagogic relationship between master and student. Within this relationship, knowledge is perceived as gift bestowed on the student (spectator) through the master's (artist or critic's) explication. For Rancière, this represents a pedagogic process of stultification and thus re-articulates the divisions within society. In other words, the artist (master) is regarded as an expert who assumes responsibility for educating an audience perceived as ignorant. Evidence of a growing emphasis on the role of the professional expert in society can be found within mass culture, whereby education has become increasingly perceived as a form of entertainment. This situation is equally apparent when considering an increasing emphasis on education within art as a social practice. In this respect, the adoption of a pedagogic approach in art is something that can equally reinforce as well as challenge the divisions and distributions within society.

Through an example of my own art practice I believe I provide an alternative pedagogic approach to one focused only on the narration of the professional or intellectual expert. Clearly my position and responsibility as both artist and teacher has meant that the students potentially perceive me as someone who is supposed to know. Therefore, when I invited students to participate in the project *It's about...* (2018) (see appendix 4), I did so whilst considering Lacan's discourse of the analyst. However, having been influenced by Lacan's psychoanalytical ideas, it was also imperative not to perceive the students as patients in need of psychoanalytical treatment. In order to avoid pathologising or dictating lessons from high, I referred to Lacan's concept of a 'dialectical experience', adapting it to my approach to art as a social practice (Lacan, *Écrits*, 2006, p177). This dialectical experience based on a process of dialogue and debate provided an opportunity for the students to challenge my opinions when discussing the influence of popular culture and social media. As a result, this foregrounded my privileged position and enabled me to reflect upon my intentions and relationship with the students.

In response to the problem of the intellectual expert who assumes responsibility for 'unmasking fetishes', Rancière proposes a process of translation as an alternative approach to learning through art (Rancière, 2011, p49). Understood in relation to an autonomous experience

of art this pedagogical process involves an appropriation of art beyond what the artist or critic intended, therefore rupturing a straightforward relationship between cause and effect. Through this appropriation of art, the spectator can transcend the position to which they are assigned. In other words, the spectator can disrupt their assumed position of ignorance and dependency upon the explicit narration of the artist or critic. To some extent, I support this argument in that it calls for an appreciation and translation of art's formal qualities, rather than focusing only on its effectiveness as a social tool. However, what undermines Rancière's argument is that it fails to explain how one develops a capacity to translate or interpret art.

3.3.The problem with Rancière's pedagogical approach and the implications for learning through an experience of art as a social practice

Despite presenting a compelling argument focused on the aesthetic break between cause and effect, the difficulty with Rancière's concept, however, is that it fails to explain how one gains the capacity to poetically translate an artwork. Rancière attempts to defend his pedagogic approach to achieve intellectual emancipation by suggesting how education should start from a point of assumed equality rather than inequality. In other words, rather than assuming the student (spectator) performs poorly because of a lack of intelligence, Rancière suggests that it is more likely to be the student's lack of application which is holding them back.

I will not say that he has done less well because he is less intelligent. I will say he has perhaps produced a poorer work because he has worked more poorly, that he has not seen well because he has not looked well (Rancière, 1991, p50).

As a result, this suggests that the student or spectator should use their intelligence to see and think for themselves. In other words, a student's or spectator's capacity for intellectual emancipation is determined by their own desire or self-will to translate the work of art.

In many ways, this emphasis on self-discipline and application can be regarded as a requirement in the process of learning, whether through an experience of art or within other fields. However, this argument fails to acknowledge that learning opportunities are rarely equal.

Triggering new passions is all well and good, and this can be taught and learnt, despite what Rancière claims, but only if one has the free time and the

opportunity to indulge in these new passions...educational opportunities have a very real cost (one increasingly pays for attention rather than paying attention), which means that they are increasingly limited to those who can afford them, which is a reality Rancière's radically utopian theory of emancipation conveniently ignores (Hellings, 2012, p120).

This critique of Rancière's theory of intellectual emancipation is further illustrated when considering the description of the joiner. For Rancière, the joiner dis-identified the occupation to which he was assigned. However, this argument can also be applied to someone who has had the opportunity or advantage of being educated but does not recognise or dis-identifies with their own privileged status in society.

Rancière fails to mention that a privileged bourgeois is a dis-identified capitalist. It is dis-identification that allows the better-off to think they are better full stop. The same is true in art. A privileged aesthete is a dis-identified scholar. This is the precise logic of the symbolic violence of aesthetics, according to Pierre Bourdieu, in which the acquisition of cultural capital occurs on the condition that the knowledge is presented while its acquisition is systematically forgotten (Beech, 2010, p11).

As a result, the idea that intellectual emancipation, achieved solely through an individual's will to translate an artwork is clearly questionable. Rancière's theory appears to disregard the degree of cultivation that is involved when developing one's capacity to learn through an experience of art. 'To cultivate a capacity is not, of necessity, to project incapacity onto an other or to participate in the inequality of intelligence' (Hellings, 2012, p120). Understood in relation to art as a social practice the ability to cultivate capacity does not automatically mean the artist will inevitably impose their intentions, political opinions or solutions onto the spectator or participating audience.

Cultivating a students' capacity for interpreting or translating art can be illustrated through an example of my own art practice. When writing and performing a series of spoken word poems during the project *It's about...* (2018) (see appendix 4), the students had an opportunity to develop their capacity for interpreting art. This was particularly evident during a spoken word poetry workshop, which I had organised for the students. During the workshop students were exposed to a wide selection of resources and examples of spoken word poetry. Through discussion and questioning techniques, students contributed to an analysis of these works.

This opportunity for interpretation and analysis enabled the students to experiment and test various devices including writing in third person or using anaphora or metaphor when creating their own poetry. Having experienced a variety of material the students were also provided with several thematic ideas concerning gender, identity and conflict. Although these activities could not be understood as an end in themselves, I believe they enhanced the students' ability to translate poetry and thus cultivated their capacity to write and perform poetry of their own.

To further illustrate how art as a social practice can cultivate one's capacity for analysis and interpretation, I will now refer to a group of artists who established an approach to learning through photography known as the Hackney Flashers Collective (1975). The collective was comprised of several female artists who came from a variety of backgrounds, including teaching and free-lance photography and were recognised for their general affiliations with both socialist and feminist ideas. In an article titled; *Hackney Flashers Collective* (1979), Liz Heron describes her experiences of being part of the collective.

There was disparate political experience. Some had been active in left groups and trade unions, some in community politics and some in the women's movement; the group's cohesion was its feminism, even though not everyone agreed on what that was. There were other differences- in levels of practical and technical knowledge. I joined about two years ago because I wanted to learn about taking pictures and at the same time have a reason for taking them-to work in a group and explore ideas about how pictures were used (Heron, 1979, p126).

This suggests how the collective consisted of members who had acquired various levels of technical skill and critical and contextual understanding. Through various workshops and group discussions their initial work titled; *Women and Work* (1975), consisted of a hundred black and white photographs that documented low-skilled and low-paid work by women in the Hackney area of London. Although the *Women and Work* series aimed to highlight issues concerning gender and social inequality the collective recognised the problem of simply documenting the plight of the female workforce through their photography. In response, they began contrasting their photographs with images found within advertising in order to examine the broader issues associated with the representation of womanhood and femininity. Clearly an important aspect of these workshops was the process of dialogue and debate between members of the group. However, it is again necessary to point out that whilst dialogue and

debate proved an important pedagogical tool, it must not be confused with the artwork produced by the Hackney Flashers.

An example of artwork produced by the collective includes a series of photographic collages titled; *Who's Holding the Baby* (1979). The focus of this work drew attention to the lack of adequate childcare facilities within the Borough of Hackney but also questioned the divisions of labour between the sexes within capitalist society. The form of this series of photographic collage was developed through a strategy of juxtaposing contrasting elements of image and text. As a result, it could be argued that an experience of this artwork may reflect an uncomplicated or straightforward link between cause and effect, as critiqued by Rancière. However, this criticism fails to adequately explain how one gains a capacity to translate the assumed straightforward messages contained within this type of artwork, other than through self-will and application.

If one considers the members of the collective it is possible to recognise how they were able to gain an opportunity to cultivate each other's capacity to 'understand how ideology works and challenge it' (Heron, 1979, p128). This was achieved through a process of dialogue and debate that did not neutralise differences of opinion or alternative voices but was a means in the production of something that could be experienced as art. As such, this approach represents a process of cultivation that does not reflect an inequality of intelligence, whereby the privileged master projects incapacity onto the student.

The incapable and the invisible always already possess a capacity for capability and visibility, which may require cultivation. One has various incapacities, but one is not incapacitated. Spectators always already are spectators, that is a given, but that does not preclude their becoming active, cultivated, educated and emancipated spectators (Hellings, 2012, p120).

Clearly this argument is equally applicable to an understanding of the spectator who may perform, participate, or collaborate in the production of art. In other words, an experience of art as a social practice does not necessarily result in an inequality of intelligence between artist (expert) and spectator (student), so long as lessons are not dictated, and intentions imposed.

To summarise, intellectual emancipation, for Rancière, is achieved through a process of translation in which the spectator appropriates an artwork beyond the intentions of the artist. In this respect, this concept reinforces an approach to learning through an experience of art

that is not confined to one purely focused on the intentions of the artist or critic. However, the ability of the spectator to translate art, for Rancière, is dependent upon the spectator's own self-will or application. This emphasis on self-will allegedly provides an approach to learning that is not based on inequality because it assumes the spectator is capable of translating art without being reliant upon those perceived as more intelligent. In other words, one's capacity to translate art is not achieved through a process of cultivation. This is because cultivation, for Rancière, involves a relationship whereby those regarded as being capable project incapacity onto those perceived as incapable. The difficulty, however, with this proposition is that it fails to acknowledge that some individuals have more opportunity to translate art than others. In other words, Rancière's approach to learning, achieved through self-will alone, ignores the fact that this is, perhaps, only possible for those who are privileged enough to indulge in such passions. As a result, it is possible to argue that cultivating a capacity to translate art does not mean that this must automatically involve a projection of incapacity. Evidence supporting this claim can be found when considering an example of performance, participatory, or collaborative art, whereby the individuals involved demonstrate various levels of skill or critical or contextual understanding. In this situation a cultivation of capacity can be achieved through dialogue and debate. This process, however, cannot be regarded on its own, as this would limit an experience of art to having only one possible outcome, thus suppressing alternative voices. Instead, dialogue and debate provide an opportunity to examine one's moral or political intentions, articulated through the artwork produced.

Conclusion of chapter

This chapter has examined the ideas of Rancière in order to illuminate the way in which learning can take place through an experience of art as a social practice. Clearly Rancière is opposed to the idea of an intellectual figure being responsible for directly transforming or raising the consciousness of those perceived as occupying a position of subordination. For Rancière, this relationship merely reflects an unequal relationship between those consigned to one occupation and those destined for intellectual thought. This position is perhaps most persuasively argued when considering an experience of art as a social practice that is reduced to a straightforward link between cause and effect. In this situation the audience either becomes a vehicle through a process of participation or their experience of art simply becomes a reflection of the artist or critic's moral or political cause. This relationship based

on the artist dictating the lesson to the audience can be recognised as a pedagogical relationship that leads to a process of stultification, whereby the student is dependent upon the narration of the master. Therefore, this reflects, for Rancière, a relationship based on an inequality of intelligence, in which certain individuals are perceived to be more capable than others. In some respects, evidence of this can be found in relation to the growing cultural phenomena of education becoming a form of entertainment, characterised by the professional expert, who is perceived as a principle source of information and advice. This situation, to some degree, can be recognised when considering the increasing embrace of pedagogical methods within art practice. In this respect the notion of the artist as educator further illustrates the need for reflection when considering the divisions and unequal positions occupied within society.

In order to address these concerns Rancière presents an argument for learning that attempts to avoid a perceived dependency on the artist or critic as pedagogical master. This means the process of learning, for Rancière, is achieved through an emphasis on the spectator's self-will and application to translate a work of art, which will enable them to transcend their subjective position.

As a result, Rancière is opposed to the idea that one's capacity or ability to translate is the result of a process of cultivation. This is because cultivation, for Rancière, automatically involves a relationship of inequality between those perceived as having greater intelligence than others. However, the problem with Rancière's emphasis on developing capacity through one's own self-will is that it fails to acknowledge that one's capacity to translate art requires time and opportunity, which is only available to those privileged enough to indulge in such passions. Therefore, cultivating this capacity does not necessarily mean those perceived as more capable or knowledgeable will inevitably impose or project incapacity onto others. This can be understood when considering art as a social practice that involves individuals who embody a variety of abilities. When artists work with other individuals a process of cultivation can occur through dialogue and debate. This, however, does not inevitably mean the artist, who occupies a privileged position, will impose their intentions onto others. Instead the process of dialogue and debate can provide an opportunity to examine, and possibly disrupt those intentions. As a result, I believe this constitutes an alternative approach to learning that is not focused on an intellectual figure dictating lessons, nor does it assume an unrealistic form of equality between the artist and student. However, this approach based on a process of dialogue and debate is not a substitute for the work, as this would again limit an

interpretation to one focused only on the heteronomous function of art. In other words, this process must culminate in something that can be experienced autonomously as art in order for a transformation of consciousness to occur.

Chapter 4. Summary of art practice

This chapter summarises the chronological development of my art practice in response to the key theoretical ideas and arguments explored within this practice-based research project. This chapter, thus, provides a methodology for artists working as teachers within formal education. With reference to subsequent examples I will also demonstrate how the artist and student can learn when adopting my approach to art as a social practice.

In 2013 I contributed towards a community art initiative organised in the residential area of Whitley in the city of Reading (see appendix 1). The initiative's main aim was to provide local children with an opportunity to make art about their community. My contribution to the initiative was to encourage children to create a Dada inspired poem and collage based on local news and historical events. In addition to encouraging children to participate in these activities, my other aim was to provide an opportunity for GCSE students from my school to act as mentors and work with the younger children. This approach led to a series of successful collage designs, of which the younger children were particularly proud. The experience was equally beneficial for the GCSE students who gained a degree of responsibility in helping the younger children.

However, in response to my theoretical research I was able to re-evaluate the success of this initial practical attempt and recognise the difficulties and missed opportunities inherent to my approach. A significant problem was my inability to distinguish these activities from other forms of social interaction or what I would normally deliver in the classroom. I became aware of this potential problem through Bishop's critique of relational aesthetics when she states how 'all relationships that permit "dialogue" are automatically assumed to be democratic and, therefore, good' (Bishop, 2012, p65). In response to this argument, I recognised how my community art project proved difficult to judge, beyond the overall sense of inclusivity that it appeared to provide. In many ways this was a consequence of the fact that the activities organised for the children of Whitley were essentially designed to satisfy the community initiative's main aim. Bishop illustrates this problem when she considers participatory art practice in relation to government policy on social inclusion. In order to secure funding and support, it becomes increasingly necessary for artists to demonstrate their work's social impact when working with communities. In this situation an assessment of participatory art focuses specifically upon on its 'effectiveness as a "tool"', whilst its formal qualities are overlooked (Bishop, 2012, p16).

Another significant problem with this approach was that it failed to account for GCSE students who were less willing to work with the younger children. My recognition of this problem was partially made in response to Beech, who describes how, ‘in troubled or troubling circumstances, participation is a malign violating force that neutralises difference and dissent’ (Beech in Walwin, 2010, p26). In other words, when people work together, they will inevitably harbour differences of opinion or intentions. However, participatory art practice can potentially obscure these differences through a perceived emphasis on ethics. This is something also argued by Rancière when he states how ‘all forms of discourse and practice’ are subsumed ‘beneath the same indistinct points of view’ (Rancière, Trans Corcoran, 2009, p115). As a result, I recognised how these arguments applied to my own approach, which unintentionally subsumed differences within the group. Alternatively, I realised that this problem could have been averted if I had examined the social interactions between the students and children, as this would have provided an opportunity to understand and articulate their differences through art.

In response to these important discoveries I developed a new project titled; *Live well for less?* (2014) (see appendix 3). This project aimed to examine the causes of food poverty in the UK and the increasing requirement and use of food banks. During this project I invited a group of students to participate in several research gathering activities. The purpose of these activities was to obtain a wide selection of opinion by interviewing food bank volunteers and representatives from the local council. I believe this opportunity helped the students develop and inform their own opinions and acquire a degree of analytical skill. Consequently, this meant the students were prepared when debating these complicated issues with the general public, thus creating a situation where differences of opinion were not subsumed into a single ethical position. These conversations with the general public were later re-enacted by the students, resulting in the production of a digital video. Although characterised through a process of conversation, these social interactions were, therefore, not something that simply reflected a perceived form of inclusivity, but were a means in producing something that could be experienced as art. In other words, the video as an outcome was significant because it could be experienced in a variety of ways. This emphasis on producing something that could be freely interpreted was partially supported by Adorno, who describes how; ‘every work possesses materials that are distinct from the subject, procedures that are derived from materials of art, as well as human subjectivity’ (Adorno, 2003, p375). Rancière also presents a similar argument when he describes how ‘art is defined by its being the identity of a

conscious procedure and an unconscious production, of willed action and an involuntary process' (Rancière, Trans Keates, 2009, p28). What these arguments establish is the idea that art is very much a product of the artist's intentions, but the materials, methods and forms used in its production will inevitably be experienced beyond the artist's control. Although not intending to find a solution to the problem of food poverty, my choice in wanting to focus on this particular issue revealed the fact that I inevitably harboured bias opinions. However, the video based on a re-enactment of the debate could, therefore, be experienced beyond my intentions, from which the video and project originated.

Another factor distinguishing this approach from the community project was the fact that I was less restricted in terms of satisfying an external aim. Although this approach shared some similarities with the community project, as they were both forms of participation, the emphasis on inclusivity was no longer a main priority. I believe this was partially a consequence of my unique position as an artist and secondary school teacher. Although working within a different set of institutional parameters, my circumstance was less bound by a need to fulfil external demands set by the community initiative. Equally my existing relationship with students when working on *Live Well for Less?* proved advantageous in terms of building trust. However, building a relationship was more difficult when working with children from the community of Whitley, mainly because of time constraints.

In summary, *Live well for less?* (2014) addressed several problems that hampered my initial attempt when working with children from the community of Whitley. The first problem was mitigating the potential neutralisation of difference amongst participating children or students. The effects of this potential problem were reduced by concentrating on the difference of opinion expressed by students when discussing the issue of food poverty. This was also encouraged through opportunities for students to examine a wider selection of information. The second problem was the difficulty in recognising how my interactions with children or students could be experienced as art. Although the process of conversation remained important, I no longer considered this as an end in itself, but as a means to producing a physical artwork, which would inevitably be experienced in a variety of ways.

Despite these discoveries I was not, at this point in my research, fully aware of their significance. Although conscious of wanting to produce something that could be experienced as art, I remained focused on attempting to achieve a more collaborative relationship with the students. The reason for this was because I recognised that my previous attempt (*Live well for*

less? 2014), was ultimately the product of something I had chosen to examine, therefore, undermining my attempt to remain impartial. As a result, I wanted to develop an approach whereby the focus of the work would emerge through my discussions with the students. In doing so, an idea was formed around the role of mass media, popular entertainment and the impact of fake news as a cultural phenomenon. In response, the group created a number of preliminary videos and collages that parodied day-time television programmes and celebrity magazine articles. These initial experiments were intended to be used as a means to develop a fake online television channel titled; *Yes Please TV!* (2015) (see appendix 2). However, during the project there emerged disagreements between some of the students over the content and direction of the work. This again provided a valuable opportunity which I failed to acknowledge or address at the time. In my overzealous attempt to achieve a collaborative relationship, I passed the responsibility of resolving these disagreements to the students, without my intervention. On reflection, I later realised that my focus on sharing authorial rights, belied the fact that my relationship with students was inevitably unequal, as I was ultimately responsible for them as their teacher. Disregarding one's privileged position is a problem also undermining Rancière's pedagogical approach and concept of the ignorant schoolmaster. According to Rancière a lack of educational achievement is not because an individual is less intelligent, but because they 'have worked more poorly' (Rancière, 1991, p50). In other words, Rancière's pedagogical approach assumes that everyone has equal intelligence and equal opportunities to use this intelligence to, for example, translate art. This means one's capacity for translation is only dependent upon self-will alone. However, the problem with this idea is the fact that learning opportunities are seldom equal. The assumption that everyone has an equal opportunity for intelligent thought denies the fact that some are more privileged in pursuing their passions than others. Therefore, my over-emphasis on sharing authorial rights effectively obscured my privileged position as an artist and teacher. Equally this also meant that this approach did not address the differences amongst the students, thus causing them to abandon the project.

In response to these problems I proceeded to find an approach that would examine my role and provide a more genuine account of my relationship with the students. To achieve this, I referred to the field of psychoanalysis and the theoretical ideas of Jacques Lacan. For Lacan the analyst is inevitably perceived as an expert by the patient and must, therefore, resist an abuse of their power in 'wanting what is good for the patient to too great an extent' (Lacan, *Écrits*, 2006, p184). In other words, the analyst should avoid forcing their opinions upon the

patient in order to satisfy their desire to find a cure. In response to this potential problem Lacan proposes a ‘dialectical experience’ or process of ongoing dialogue and debate between analyst and patient (Lacan, *Écrits*, 2006, p177). The purpose of this approach is to provide an opportunity to interrogate the intentions, opinions and beliefs of both analyst and patient.

Although not directly compatible when considering the relationship between the artist and student, Lacan’s emphasis on dialogue and debate to challenge or destabilise one’s intentions proved valuable when developing my own approach to art as a social practice. In response I sought to test this idea in practice when developing a project and artwork titled; *It’s about...* (2018) (see appendix 4). Through an ongoing process of dialogue and debate the students had the opportunity to challenge my bias opinions when discussing, what I regarded, as the negative influence of social media and some aspects of popular music upon young people. However, this was not an attempt to forgo my own authorial intentions but foreground my position and provide an opportunity to examine the influences from which my opinions originated. This opportunity for reflection was also pertinent to the students whose thoughts, opinions and beliefs were also open to examination. The students’ ability to challenge opinion, however, highlighted how this was largely dependent upon the information available and opportunities for them to develop analytical skills. Recognising these factors were the result of my continued critique of Rancière’s position on how one learns. In other words, I realised that the ‘poetic labour of translation’, as proposed by Rancière did not adequately demonstrate how one acquires a capacity for translation, interpretation or analysis (Rancière, 2011, p10). In response I proposed how one’s ability to analyse or translate art is the result of a process of cultivation. To support this claim, I referred to the development of a series of spoken word poems created by the students. These poems functioned as a means to articulate the various debates I had with the students about the perceived influence of technology and media upon their lives. In order to be able to write and perform poetry it was necessary that the students became familiar with this type of word-based performance. This was achieved through the organisation of a spoken word poetry workshop. The workshop provided an opportunity to analyse existing examples of poetry and develop an understanding of the devices used by poets to communicate and express their ideas. As a result, these skills were later adopted by students when writing and performing their own work. I believe this acquisition of analytical skill not only enabled the students to examine the influences that potentially conditioned their opinions, but also gave them the confidence to challenge the opinions of others, including my own.

In summary, my practice-based research has developed either in response to or sought to challenge various theoretical arguments contained within the situation of art as a social practice. My initial practical attempt was framed by a community initiative that generally aimed to encourage the participation of children. However, I recognised that this approach was restricted by a number of similar problems inherent to relational aesthetics. Although the process of social interaction was instrumental in my approach it, nevertheless, proved difficult to be distinguished as art. This was partially because this initial attempt was focused on satisfying the initiative's main aim in fostering a sense of inclusivity. The second problem was the fact that this approach neglected the differences of those invited to participate. To some extent these problems were addressed within my second experiment titled; *Live well for less?* (2014) (see appendix 3). Although social interaction and conversation remained central to my approach, I also focused on how this process could be articulated as art. In response to the ideas of Adorno and Rancière, I recognised that an overemphasis on the ethical or heteronomous function of art would limit one's experience of it. Instead the materials, methods and forms of an artwork would inevitably live beyond the intentions of the artist and would be interpreted in a variety of ways. In response to this argument, I wanted to ensure the project also resulted in the production of a visual outcome that highlighted the issues raised and the differences of opinion that emerged through the process of conversation. In other words, I wanted to ensure the project not only addressed difference, but could also be experienced as art.

However, my third practical experiment; *Yes Please TV!* (2015) (see appendix 2), did not appreciate the significance of these lessons and remained focused on achieving an equal relationship with students. The consequence of this resulted in some students becoming disaffected as I missed an opportunity to address differences within the group. I realised that my overemphasis on sharing authorial rights reflected an unconscious attempt to obscure, rather than acknowledge my privileged position. This was not only a problem inherent to relational aesthetics but also troubled Rancière's pedagogical approach. I realised that my desire to achieve an unrealistic form of equality with students corresponded with Rancière's own concept of the ignorant schoolmaster, whereby students are assumed to be equal and learning happens through a process of self-tuition. The difficulty with this concept, however, is that education is inherently an unequal process, as there some who have more learning opportunities than others. As a result, my emphasis on sharing authorial rights, rather than addressing difference only obscured this fact.

Therefore, in order to navigate this problem and examine my relationship with participating students I referred to the psychoanalytical ideas of Lacan and his emphasis on dialogue and debate. This process would provide an opportunity to challenge one's intentions and provide a means for me to acknowledge, rather than obscure my privileged position as an artist and teacher. In response to this discovery my fourth and final attempt titled; *It's about...* (2018) (see appendix 4) attempted to test this approach to learning. Through a process of dialogue and debate the focus of the work emerged and was mutually agreed with the students. This approach not only equipped students with analytical skills, cultivating their ability to translate or interpret art, but also provided an opportunity to examine and challenge differences of opinion generated through debate. As a result, I believe this example provides an alternative approach to learning that does not create a perceived form of equality between the students and myself. Neither does it reflect a relationship in which I assume the role of intellectual expert responsible for revealing a false consciousness afflicting the student. Instead the process of conversation is used as a means to challenge opinion and have one's opinions challenged. The differences of opinion that emerged during the project *It's about...* were articulated through the medium of spoken word poetry, performed by me and the students and later documented on video. In other words, this alternative approach to learning through the process of dialogue and debate was not an end in itself but resulted in the production of a physical art object, which could be experienced in a variety of ways.

Although clearly a product of conversation, I believe this outcome was distinct from Bourriaud's emphasis on social exchange for several reasons. Bourriaud considers social exchange as an adequate justification for relational art. This not only fails to address the relationships and differences of those invited to participate but also limits an experience of art by simply focusing on the artist's ability to include others as a means to heal 'the cracks in the social bond' (Bourriaud, 2002, p36). I believe *It's about...* provides an alternative approach to art as a social practice for two reasons. The first is because the spoken word poetry performed and recorded highlighted the relationships and differences that emerged through the participatory process. Secondly the materials and forms used in its production could be experienced in a variety of ways that were not limited by a judgment based purely on its ability to include others or solve social problems.

Conclusion of thesis

This practice-based research contributes a methodology for artists working as teachers within a formal educational setting and provides an alternative approach to learning through art as a social practice. The activity of learning and the context of an educational environment inherently involve social interaction and can, therefore, be understood in relation to other forms of art practice recognised for their social character. An inevitable consequence when artists choose to work with other individuals is the fact that ethical questions emerge. However, an experience of art can be limited if the ethical question of rights becomes a paramount concern. Conversely, an overemphasis on the moral or political intentions of the artist or critic can be equally inhibitive to how one can learn through an experience of art. These questions reflect the competing arguments presented by critics including Bourriaud, Bishop, Kester and Martin. Therefore, when developing this methodology, I have sought to engage in these issues and arguments that constitute the contemporary situation for art as a social practice.

Related to the contemporary situation for art as a social practice it has also been necessary to clarify the associated concepts of performance, participation, and collaboration. However, these concepts understood through the lens of Bourriaud, Bishop and Kester are clearly varied. This is because of the emphasis these critics place upon the question of ethics and how they understand these concepts in relation to their own theoretical models.

For example, Bourriaud's definition of performance, participation, and collaboration must be understood in relation to his broader concept of relational aesthetics. Within relational aesthetics a performance is understood as a social situation organised by the artist within a gallery space. In this situation an audience is automatically deemed to have rights simply because of their contribution through conversation. One might, therefore, assume that this definition appears to express an ethical concern regarding the question of rights. Bourriaud also claims that this type of social situation created by the artist can provide something less artificial than other forms of conviviality, believed to be mediated through consumerism. In other words, this type of social exchange, for Bourriaud, can repair the isolating effects of capitalism. This idea is further articulated within Bourriaud's definition of participation, whereby an audience participates with an artist through an exchange of conversation 'that cannot be regulated by any currency' (Bourriaud, 2002, p42). As a result, social exchange is presented as a means of resistance to capitalist exchange. A similar idea is also presented by

Kester through his concept of dialogical aesthetics, in which the production of a physical art object is relegated in order to emphasise the activity of conversation in order to solve social problems.

However, there are several problems with these arguments. The first is the mere act of inclusivity does not automatically guarantee rights to those invited to perform or participate. Equally Bourriaud's definition of performance, and participation fails to address the issue of who is invited and, therefore, who is excluded. Finally, Bourriaud fails to acknowledge how an overemphasis on inclusivity can inadvertently lead to a neutralisation of difference amongst those invited to participate. Although Bourriaud appears to emphasise the ethical question of rights, on closer inspection this does not appear to be the case. This is particularly evident when considering his definition of collaboration, in which he neglects the collaborator's visibility, which one could assume as a prerequisite. Perhaps a more fundamental problem with relational aesthetics is the overemphasis placed on the ability for the artist to solve social problems. In other words, Bourriaud fails to adequately distinguish relational art from other forms of social intervention. This problem is highlighted by Rancière who critiques relational aesthetics because it limits an experience of relational art to one focused on the artist's ability to heal a fragmented society. In other words, an understanding of art is reduced through a process of consensus that focuses on one common ethical cause. For Rancière, this constitutes an ethical regime for art and reflects a supervision of who or what is visible.

As an artist and teacher these arguments have enabled me to evaluate the progress of my own art practice, particularly when considering my contribution to a community initiative in a residential area of Reading (see appendix 1). Having focused my attention on encouraging local children to participate in a variety of art activities, I later realised that these activities closely resembled a conventional lesson I normally deliver in school. In other words, it proved difficult to distinguish this activity as art. Equally this emphasis on inclusivity subsumed the differences of the children and, therefore, undermined the ethical intentions from which the project emerged. Similar to the problems inherent to relational art, I realised that my own art practice over-prioritised social exchange and the process of conversation with students, whilst neglecting the production of a physical art object.

Questioning this emphasis on social exchange, contra physical object is something also highlighted by Martin when he describes how 'relational aesthetics unconsciously articulates

the radical extension of the heteronomous dimension' (Martin, 2007, p371). Martin highlights the fact that whilst relational and dialogical art focuses on fostering social relations instead of producing physical art objects in order to resist capitalist exchange, it inadvertently reinforces it. This is because of the way Bourriaud and Kester regard a commodity's value to be an inherent quality of the object itself. Therefore, both critics present the idea that social relations, contra art objects provide an effective means to resist capitalist exchange. However, this approach contains a crucial flaw when considering the function of a commodity in relation to the ideas of Marx. For Marx, the real value of a commodity is determined by its usefulness. However, different commodities have different uses and so in order to permit their exchange there is the need for a common denominator. In a capitalist economy the symbolic function of money is used to permit the exchange of different commodities. However, the real common denominator that permits the exchange of commodities is, for Marx, the amount of social labour invested in them. This, however, is obscured by the function of money. As such, a commodity's value is no longer based on its usefulness but on its exchange value. This, therefore, represents a contradiction in that a commodity is valued independent of its use, thus illustrating what Marx describes as a fetishised object. Therefore, when Bourriaud and Kester focus on social exchange, contra physical art objects they are conforming to the assumption that a commodity's value is simply its exchange value, whilst failing to recognise that it is the 'commodification of labour that constitutes the value of 'objective' commodities' (Martin, 2007, p378). In contrast, it is possible to argue that an art object that does not appear to be useful in any obvious sense, occupies a better position to highlight the contradiction inherent to commodity form. In other words, the physical art object can emphasise the fact that it is valued in terms of its exchange value and can thus exaggerate the concept of commodity fetishism established by Marx.

Although I support a desire to resist the art market, Martin's argument enabled me to recognise that it was not necessary to completely abandon the production of a physical art object in favour of social exchange. Not only would this provide an inadequate means to highlight the contradictions inherent to the art market, but it would also prove difficult to distinguish my practice as art from other forms of social exchange.

Whilst Bourriaud and Kester emphasise what appears to be a more egalitarian approach achieved through social exchange, Bishop is less concerned with the ethical question of rights. Instead her definition of performance, participation, and collaboration is characterised through an emphasis on the artist as principle author. This emphasis on the artist is made in

response to art as a social practice being judged primarily against an ethical question of rights or an ability to solve social problems. In order to consider the reasons behind this emphasis, Bishop refers to wider, social, political and economic change. This is particularly evident within her definition of participation, whereby the term has been used by government to encourage social inclusion, supplementing social services, previously the responsibility of the state. As a result, participation, for Bishop, has become increasingly used as a social instrument and predominantly judged against ethical criteria.

This problem was something I recognised when evaluating my contribution towards the community art initiative in Reading (see appendix 1). The aim of the initiative focused primarily on inclusivity and, therefore, determined the direction in which I could proceed. In other words, in finding opportunities to work with children I became bound by the aims of the community art initiative. On reflection I realised that this potential problem could be avoided as I had already established long term relationships with students due to my unique position as an artist and teacher.

Participatory art becoming a vehicle for social policy and, therefore, constrained by external requirements is clearly a valid concern. However, Bishop undermines her argument when defining participation, and collaboration as she conflates both concepts. Although one could assume the concept of collaboration inherently involves the sharing of authorship, Bishop simultaneously overemphasises the intentions of the artist as principle author. Evidence of this can be found when she states how ‘a single artist’s vision-implies the readmittance of a degree of autonomy for art (Bishop, 2004, p77). The other problem inherent to this argument is the fact she misapplies the way in which art is understood as autonomous. In other words, by focusing on the political intentions of the artist, Bishop inadvertently implies that art is autonomous because it is less concerned with ethics. In this respect, her argument appears to reflect what Rancière defines as the representational regime of art. In this regime the focus is on the autonomy of art, which imposes a different order of visibility leading to a hierarchy of art and artistic activity. The representational regime is also defined in relation to the concept of mimesis, which can be understood as something reflecting a direct relationship between the artist’s cause and the effect it has on an audience. Like the ethical regime, the representational regime also places limitations on the way art can be experienced. Therefore, when Bishop emphasises the artist’s singular vision, where social or ethical concerns appear less significant, she also establishes a similar straightforward relationship between cause and effect and, thus, limits an experience of art as a social practice.

In order to avoid this dichotomy in which art is either perceived as something separate from social concerns (autonomy) or judged only in terms of its social efficacy (heteronomy), I establish an argument for art that maintains a relationship between both extremities. This is something emphasised by Rancière through his concept of logos (intended and conscious aspects of thought) and pathos (unconscious or unintended aspects of thought). In other words, art is inevitably the consequence of the artist's intentions, but the artwork will be experienced beyond the artist's control. This autonomous and heteronomous dialectic provides an opportunity in which art can recalibrate one's perception. This in turn leads to a form of intellectual emancipation, reflecting what Rancière defines as an aesthetic regime for art.

This proposal for an autonomous and heteronomous dialectic for art is also expressed by Adorno. In order to go beyond the intentions of the artist there is, for Adorno, something other in which one is experiencing. This other thing can be understood as an experience of the materials, methods and forms used in the production art. In other words, although art is an inevitable product of the artist's intentions the materials and methods employed are, nevertheless, loaded with unintended meaning. Therefore, once the artwork enters public domain it can acquire a life of its own that is not confined to that of the artist, audience or critic. This means that the authorial rights of the artist are, to some extent, destabilised once the artwork becomes public. As a result, an autonomous experience of art inevitably leads to the destabilisation of authorial rights, regardless of whether it has been created through performance, participatory, or collaborative means.

Therefore, the autonomy art is understood in terms of the physical artwork produced being experienced and interpreted in a variety of ways. However, this does not suggest a separation from society as the resonance of art as a social practice will not only reside in a tangible artwork but will also exist in terms of its wider social impact.

Evidence of this can be found when referring to my second practical experiment titled; *Live well for less?* (2014) (see appendix 3). This project culminated in a digital video that recorded students re-enacting various debates with the general public concerning the issue of food poverty in the UK. Although clearly a product of social exchange this re-enactment performed by students functioned as a means to highlight the complexity of the issues examined and could, therefore, be experienced autonomously as art. However, the project also highlighted the necessity for analytical skills when examining such complicated issues.

Therefore, the outcome of this approach also provided an opportunity for students to develop their capacity for analytical thought.

In summary these theoretical arguments and ideas enabled me to recognise that although the process of conversation proved crucial to my approach, in isolation it would not provide a sufficient means in which to judge the work as art. However, what did emerge was an opportunity to address the relationship and differences of those students I had invited to participate. I also realised that it was not necessary to abandon the production of a physical art object as the materials and forms employed in its production could be experienced in a variety of ways, beyond my intentions. Equally, I realised that my approach would also provide an educational opportunity for students based on developing analytical skills.

In order to develop this educational opportunity achieved through my approach to art as a social practice I referred to Lacan's psychoanalytical ideas and Rancière's redefinition of aesthetics and its relationship with politics.

Through Lacan's response to the field of structural linguistics it was possible to demonstrate further support for an autonomous experience of art. Lacan challenged the idea that a signifier (word, sound, image or symbol) functions to simply represent a signified concept within language. Instead the meaning of the signifier can shift. This can be understood in terms of a word image or symbol that can mean different things within different cultural or historical contexts. When applied to art this can be understood in terms of the signifiers (materials and forms) employed by the artist being experienced beyond the artist's intentions or signified concept. Evidence supporting this argument can be found when referring to Lacan's approach to art and literature. In Lacan's own words, he describes how 'the author, the scribe, is only a pen pusher, and he comes second' (Lacan, SE7, 1988, p153). As a result, I believe this demonstrates Lacan's support for an autonomous experience of art. For Lacan, however, the concept of the signifier not only illustrates the often ambiguous and fluid nature of language and art, but also functions as something that can structure one's thoughts, desires and beliefs, including one's use of language. This perceived influential effect of the signifier is further developed through Lacan's theory on discourse, whereby the master discourse is believed to encompass all aspects of human life, including forms of dissent. In many ways this claim can be recognised when considering the way relational art inadvertently contributes towards an extension of capitalist exchange, despite appearing to mount a form of resistance. For Lacan, this all-encompassing effect of the master discourse is facilitated by the university

discourse, which allegedly operates surreptitiously, whilst obscuring the ideological agenda of the master. There are, however, a number of problems with Lacan's claims. The most obvious is the difficulty in providing firm evidence supporting the proposition that all aspects of life are influenced by the ideological agenda of the master discourse. In many ways, this idea reflects the same problem troubling Bourriaud's proposition that all forms of social interaction are mediated through consumerism. As a result, this discourse presents a rather pessimistic situation, whereby all forms of resistance ultimately become absorbed by the ideology of the master. The other problem with this discourse is that it is based on a somewhat hypothetical belief that appearances can be deceptive. However, it is possible to argue that one's opinions and beliefs can be influenced through the persuasive use of language. Recognising the subtle or persuasive use of language is clearly dependent upon one's capacity to analyse or translate. As a result, this discovery enabled me to recognise the need for an approach to learning that would enable one to develop such a capacity for analysis or translation.

When working on *Live well for less?* the participating students had an opportunity to meet people who had experience addressing the issues associated with food poverty. Being exposed to a variety of opinion and information enabled the students to develop a more informed understanding of food poverty. In turn this equipped the students to confidently debate these issues and challenge various opinions expressed by the general public. From this experiment I realised how this process of cultivation could develop the students' analytical skills.

However, this approach based on the artist cultivating the student's capacity for analytical thought is not supported by Rancière because cultivation reflects an unequal pedagogic relationship between master and student. For Rancière, this relationship, understood in relation to the field of art has led to two possible outcomes. The first is based on the artist's intentions being made explicit to an audience. The second outcome is one based on a perceived passive audience being mobilised through a process of participation. In general, these outcomes reflect an unequal pedagogic relationship because the process of learning is focused on a straightforward transmission between cause and effect. In other words, these outcomes, critiqued by Rancière, involve the artist dictating lessons to an audience or participating student.

In response, I was able to recognise how these outcomes were potentially inherent within my own art practice. In many ways my contribution to the community art initiative in Reading sought to mobilise children, encouraging them to celebrate their local area through an approach that appeared to democratise the process of making art. In other words, it could be argued that I adopted the role of an expert who assumed responsibility for educating an audience through an overemphasis on my narration.

Live well for less? was another practical experiment that appeared to reflect Rancière's critique as one could argue this project also focused predominantly on my intentions and, thus, limited an understanding of the work. In many ways my choice to examine the issue of food poverty revealed my own bias position, therefore, undermining any attempts to remain impartial. However, I believe the artwork produced through this project not only avoided an unequal pedagogic relationship between myself and the students but could also be experienced beyond my intentions. This was because my approach based on conversation examined, rather than subsumed, differences of opinion. Through discussion differences of opinion became material for students to re-enact and record via video, resulting in a physical artwork that could be experienced in a variety of ways.

For Rancière, avoiding an unequal pedagogic relationship when learning from an experience of art can be achieved through an aesthetic break between cause and effect. In other words, Rancière emphasises the need for an autonomous experience in which one translates art, free from the intentions of the artist or critic. Whilst I support this proposition, I believe Rancière inadvertently undermines his argument because he fails to adequately explain how one develops a capacity to interpret or translate art. For Rancière, this is simply the result of one's own self-will to independently experience art or what he describes as the 'poetic labour of translation' (Rancière, 2011, p10). This idea is presented through his concept of the ignorant school master, which establishes an assumed equality of intelligence between teacher and student or artist and audience. However, there are several problems with this proposition. The first is the fact that this approach to learning, achieved through self-will alone, elides the fact that opportunities to learn or translate art are rarely equal. In other words, the concept of an equality of intelligence fails to acknowledge that some have more educational opportunities and, thus, occupy a more privileged position than others. The other problem with this approach is that it disregards the process of cultivation that could develop one's critical faculties or capacity for translation. For Rancière, the process of cultivation continues to

reflect an unequal relationship that is based on an intellectual figure who assumes responsibility for educating those perceived as subordinate or incapable.

In order to challenge Rancière's position I believe my final practical experiment demonstrates a process of cultivation that does not establish a domineering or incapacitating relationship with students. In the project and digital video titled; *It's about...* (2018) (see appendix 4), I organised a spoken word poetry workshop in order to equip students with the necessary analytical skills needed when reading, writing and performing poetry. These skills were used as a means for the student to articulate their opinions in contrast to those of my own. In other words, this process did not subsume difference, nor did it attempt to present a perceived form of equality. Conscious of my privileged role as an artist and teacher I sought to provide opportunities in which my intentions or opinions could be interrogated by students.

This practical approach was developed in response to Lacan's ideas concerning the relationship between the analyst and patient. For Lacan the analyst's motivation to cure the patient is partially the result of a desire to acquire a stable sense of self or purpose. In order to satisfy this desire, Lacan believes there is a danger the analyst might force their opinions or view of reality onto the patient, leading to an abuse of power. In some respects, this can be understood in relation to the participatory artist who, in their desire to find a solution to social problems, potentially neutralises those invited to participate. In terms of psychoanalysis this situation, for Lacan, can be avoided through his concept of transference. This involves the analyst recognising their privileged position of authority and reflecting on the cause of their overzealous desire in wanting to cure the patient. To achieve this, Lacan proposes an ongoing process of dialogue and debate, described as a 'dialectical experience' (Lacan, *Écrits*, 2006, p177).

Although this relationship is not directly applicable, as the student does not ask for psychological help, as does a patient, the emphasis on the process of dialogue and debate has proved significant to my approach to art as a social practice. When developing *It's about ...* this method based on conversation provided an opportunity in which the students could challenge my bias opinions. This opportunity for self-reflection applied also to the students, whereby the influences from which their opinions emerged were also examined. These exchanges through dialogue and debate became material for a series of spoken word poems, which were later performed and documented on digital video. Distinct from other forms of social interaction or classroom activity this outcome could, therefore, be experienced as art and, thus, highlighted the issues raised. However, the process also functioned as a means to

encourage analytical skills, developing the students' capacity for translating art. As a result, I believe this approach to learning was one that did not create a perceived form of equality, achieved through self-tuition. Neither did it overemphasise its ability to include others, which only obscures the privileged position of the artist and fails to provide an adequate justification for the work.

In summary this practice- based research has contributed to an alternative approach to art as a social practice for artists who also work as teachers within a formal educational setting. Through practical experiments this approach has focused on establishing a process of conversation between the artist and the students. Through this process the students are able to develop analytical skills, cultivating their capacity for translating art, whilst providing both artist and student with an opportunity for self-reflection. As a result, this constitutes an alternative way of learning through art that is not based on dictating lessons or focused only on the narration or intentions of the artist as teacher. This methodology has been developed in response to the concept and critique of relational aesthetics. However, this approach to art as a social practice differs from relational art because the process of conversation does not present an unrealistic form of equality, nor does it subsume the differences of students invited to participate. Instead this methodology examines the relationships formed when artists work with students. As a result, the process of conversation is not an end in itself but leads to the production of a physical artwork. Therefore, this methodology and its outcomes not only demand to be judged in terms of its heteronomous function or ability to cultivate students, but also in relation to the autonomous experience of the formal qualities of the artwork produced.

C.1. A synopsis of what I have learnt through my practical experiments

Through my own practical experiments, I have learnt several lessons. When working on the community art project with children from the community of Whitley in Reading, I recognised the need to distinguish my methodology as art, rather than simply focusing on providing children with an opportunity to make art beyond school. Although the process of conversation proved integral to my methodology it became apparent that it should be understood as a means to producing art, rather than an end in itself. In other words, I realised that the outcomes of my approach would also need to be judged in terms of their formal qualities, rather than simply focusing on an ability to include others. This is because the materials, methods and forms used in the production of art permit a variety of interpretations.

As a result, I realised the importance of ensuring my approach resulted in the production of a physical art object.

When working on the project titled; *Yes Please TV*, I learnt that although my approach encouraged social interaction, it did not automatically guarantee the rights of students, despite my attempts to achieve a collaborative relationship. In my overly anxious desire to ensure shared authorship with the students, I inadvertently obscured their differing opinions and beliefs. In other words, differences within the group were neglected in favour of presenting an unrealistic form of equality. A consequence of this was that I was also obscuring my own privileged position as an artist and teacher. However, I began to realise that my relationship with students was inevitably unequal as I was ultimately responsible for them within my professional role. I therefore recognised that it was no longer necessary nor desirable to present a perceived model of equality or pursue a collaborative relationship that neglected the production of art or the differences between me and the students. In response I learnt how the process of conversation could provide a means in which to foreground my position of authority and acknowledge and address any potential differences. This examination into my relationship with students could subsequently be articulated through the production of a physical art object.

Creating a physical art object, however, was not the only outcome I sought to achieve through a process of conversation with students. When working on the project titled; *It's about?* I realised this approach could provide an opportunity for learning in several significant ways. When discussing a social issue pertinent to the group, dialogue and debate provided a space in which both artist and student could challenge each other's bias opinions or intentions. However, I realised that the students' ability to debate was largely dependent upon the information made available to them and opportunities to develop analytical skills. In other words, I realised that students needed to be exposed to a variety of information and opinion from several sources in order to develop a more informed and nuanced position. This method of cultivating analytical skill also proved significant when enabling students to acquire a capacity for interpreting art. Rather than providing my understanding of a particular artwork I encouraged the students to discuss the materials, methods and forms used by spoken word poets in order for students to make their own interpretation of the work. In providing a means to interpret art through discussion, students were able to use similar methods to create meaning when producing their own work.

In summary the activity of conversation between the artist and student represents something essential to this practical model. However, the activity of conversation must not be understood as an end in itself as there is no satisfactory way to distinguish it as art from other forms of social interaction, nor does it automatically guarantee the rights of participating students. In order to address this question of rights the process of conversation must be understood as a means in which to examine the relationship and potential differences of those within the group. This enables both artist and student to reflect upon the influences on which their opinions are formed. Equally it provides an opportunity to question the artist's intentions and disclose their privileged position. Through this approach, learning opportunities are also provided for the student, helping them develop an ability to debate, analyse and interpret art beyond the narration of the artist. Through this approach to conversation the production of a physical artwork provides a means to articulate this relationship between artist and student(s). The result of this outcome can, therefore, be distinguished as art because the materials, methods and forms used in its production can be experienced and interpreted by an audience in several ways.

C.2. What does this new methodology for artists consist of? (Research aim 1)

- Stage 1. (Establishing an area for investigation or social issue to be explored).

Specifically, this methodology involves the artist encouraging students to talk about things affecting their lives. This can be achieved by using significant or personal objects to encourage conversation. An advantage of working as a teacher is having the opportunity of knowing the students over a longer period of time, thus building a degree of trust. This can potentially enable a more forthright discussion and issue for investigation to emerge. Once a focus is established, relevant information from a variety of sources must be provide for examination and further discussion. This presentation of information could also include visits to other organisations or inviting guest speakers who represent a particular interest to discuss their experiences.

- Stage 2. (Analysing information that relates to the social issue being explored).

Students are taught skills on how to understand the persuasive use of language, recognise how the origins of information can affect its reception and consider the wider context in which an opinion or argument is given.

- Stage 3. (Developing an argument or position).

Once the information is analysed students will be asked to form an opinion or argument. The students will be expected to defend their opinion and challenge others, including the artist. This can be achieved either verbally or through other platforms including social media.

- Stage 4. (Interpret other related artworks, examine techniques used and consider their impact).

The artist will then introduce several forms of art practice that explore similar themes. A particular medium to articulate student opinion will be chosen, for example, (digital video). Students will be asked to look at the way other artists use different methods or techniques in, for example, (video art), in order to create meaning. Students will need to decide for themselves how the techniques used by video artists create meaning.

- Stage 5. (Experiment with techniques to articulate argument/ position).

Students will then choose specific techniques they feel appropriately articulate their opinions. For example, using a coloured filter when recording a digital video sequence to create a particular mood. Following these initial experiments, students will verbally critique or use notes to evaluate each other's work. Students will then make further attempts to refine their techniques when using a certain medium. At this stage the artist's objective is also focused on creating a physical participatory artwork. Therefore, they will need to decide how they will use the material produced. For example, the artist may select and edit video sequences, but must also acknowledge the contributions made by the participating students.

Included below is a plan demonstrating how this methodology could be adopted and implemented by other artists working as teachers. The plan covers a typical twelve-week period or term within the academic calendar.

| | | | |
|---------------------|------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| TERM: Summer | Art | YEAR GROUP: 9 | TEACHER: |
|---------------------|------------|----------------------|-----------------|

| WEEK | Specific learning objectives | Resources | Activities and teaching strategies | Cross curricular links | Assessment and Homework |
|-------------|---|----------------------------------|--|---|--|
| 1-2 | Explore a particular personal, social, spiritual, | Paper, pencils, digital cameras, | Through classroom discussion artist and student will establish an agreed issue or topic. | English language (critical literacy), PSHE (Personal, | Students to bring in significant or personal |

| | | | | | |
|-----|---|--|---|--|---|
| | moral, or cultural issue affecting young people or adults. | mobile phones, significant or personal objects. | In order to encourage discussion students will be asked to bring in an object (book, image, song) that best reflects how they are, for example, (feeling at present, how they see themselves, or wish others to see them). | Social, Health Education), SMSC (Spiritual, Moral, Social & Cultural). | objects. |
| 3-4 | Develop students' analytical skills. | Paper, pencils, statistics or public information, news articles, video clips, links to websites, laptops, projector. | Once topic or issue has been agreed, for example, (the influence of social media), students will be given materials or information from a variety of sources including the internet, news articles, guest speakers or visits to other organisations beyond school. (This may involve several lessons). This information will present a particular argument that either highlights, for example (the positive or negative effects of social media). | | Research information to support argument or position. |
| 5-6 | Develop students' analytical skills. Develop an ability to debate or argue a particular point of view. | Paper, pencils, statistics or public information, news articles, video clips, links to websites, mobile phones, laptops, | Students will be asked to create a debate or develop an argument which they agree with. This can be achieved either verbally or through other means, such as social media platforms including twitter where opinion can be provided and challenged. The artist as teacher will also express their opinion in order to challenge students. In response students will be invited to challenge the artist's position and provide further material to support their argument. | | |
| 7-8 | Students to develop ability to interpret existing art practice. Recognise how | Paper, pencils, worksheets, technical terminology, vocabulary help sheets. | Discuss suitable medium to develop ideas or articulate opinions. Artist to provide examples of other art practice that explore similar topics. Once a suitable medium | | Ask students watch other examples and make notes about techniques and their |

| | | | | | |
|-------|---|---|---|--|--|
| | other artists use methods and techniques to convey meaning. | Camera, laptops, basic video editing software, tripod, microphone, mobile phones. | has been selected, students will be shown examples of, E.g. (video art). Methods and techniques will be explained to students, but they will be encouraged to evaluate their effect for themselves. (For example, the use of a particular camera angle or lighting effect and the mood this creates). | | effect. |
| 9-10 | Students to experiment with similar methods or techniques to articulate their particular opinion. | Paper, pencils, worksheets, technical terminology, vocabulary help sheets. Video cameras or mobile phones, laptops, basic video editing software, tripod. | Once students are familiar with techniques used by artists to convey meaning when using, for example, (digital video), they will be able asked to create a plan (storyboard) that illustrates what techniques they will use to convey their own opinion regarding influence of social media. E.g close -up shot on subject to create confessional or video blogging effect. | | Create storyboard or plan. Collect appropriate objects or props. |
| 11-12 | Review ideas and refine techniques. | | <p>Evaluation of initial practical experiments. Students encouraged to critique through a peer assessment activity. Students will be asked if the particular technique chosen is appropriate to their intentions.</p> <p>Second attempts will be made in order to refine the individual or collective contributions made towards the participatory artwork. The overall outcome in the form of a physical artwork will be authored by the artist as teacher. However, the students' contribution must be clearly acknowledged as the work is a reflection of their relationship with the artist as teacher.</p> | | |

C.3. How does this methodology provide an alternative approach to learning?

(Research aim 2).

When working on the project titled; *It's about...* I decided to invite students to discuss things affecting their lives, rather than provide a theme I deemed important or necessary in helping them improve their GCSE result. I discovered the students had several things they wanted to express. I realised that the students shared similar experiences and were discussing things they generally felt relevant to their lives. These feelings or experiences were later communicated through poetry, but because the focus was relevant, they appeared motivated to use and enhance their literacy skills. This was also something I recognised when working on the project titled; *Live Well for Less?* in which students commented on how they felt more engaged using practical maths skills when asked to calculate their finances in response to a hypothetical budget. The other significant discovery, particularly when working on *It's about...* was how the students, motivated by the issues being discussed, felt more comfortable and confident questioning my own potentially bias opinions. As a result, this highlighted how I was also learning and being encouraged by students to reflect upon my own decisions and influences when working with them. In other words, the model reflected an alternative approach to learning because it was not predominantly focused on my narration or expertise.

Therefore, this methodology represents an alternative approach to learning because it provides an opportunity for students to have some input into what they are learning, rather than being told to learn something they may feel has less relevance or is predetermined. Equally the artist learns along with the student rather than regarded as an expert or someone infallible.

When attempting to discuss and establish a relevant topic or issue with students there will inevitably be several challenges. Discussions with students are already a common feature in most lessons. Therefore, the educational benefits and time allocated to such activity may be brought into question because of concerns over student attainment or discipline. However, it could be argued that existing classroom discussions are generally used as a means of checking whether the student has understood the curriculum being delivered to them, rather than being used as a means to establish something they might wish to explore. To mitigate these concerns, establishing a curriculum with students could be limited to a few lessons, thus ensuring time is used efficiently. It could also be argued that developing an art curriculum with students could potentially resolve issues with poor student attainment or discipline. This

is particularly the case if the focus for learning has greater relevance to the student than a curriculum prescribed to them. Impassioned by the social issues explored and the desire to make art, I believe the long-term effect of this approach could not only motivate the student but also the artist as teacher.

C.4. How does this methodology enable students to develop analytical skills and an ability to interpret art? (Research aim 3).

When working on the project titled; *Live Well for Less?* I provided students with information about the possible causes of food poverty and the need for food banks in the UK. The information came from news articles and websites covering a wide political spectrum. I also asked students to interview representatives from the debt and welfare department at the local council and a manager at a local food bank charity. Using this variety of information students were asked to develop an argument and then interview the general public about the social issue being explored. What I discovered following this approach was the students' ability to confidently debate these issues with adults. However, I realised that students would have been motivated further if the topic directly related to their lives rather than something I had chosen.

Enabling students to develop analytical skills and interpret art can be summarised as follows. Once a topic or social issue relevant to the students is established and mutually agreed, information can be gathered from a variety of sources. Students are then given a particular piece of information which contains opinion or argument they may or may not agree with. Students will then be asked questions, including how the author has used language persuasively or who is represented or misrepresented in the text. Having analysed several pieces of contrasting information, students will then be asked to establish their own position or argument and debate this either verbally or through other means, such as through social media platforms.

This approach may, therefore, challenge the delivery of an existing art curriculum in school, as the skills required of the student are more akin to those found within language-based subjects in school. In other words, an understanding of so-called fake news or an ability to demonstrate critical literacy skills are abilities currently more specific to English language or citizenship rather than art. As a result, the short-term effect of this methodology may challenge an existing art assessment framework because analysing a text is not something normally presented as evidence of student work. Therefore, in the long-term it would be

necessary for exam moderators of art to become familiar and accommodate this type of student work, which would be submitted as part of their overall assessment. Alternatively, further justification for adopting this methodology in school can be found if one considers the cross-curricular benefits, including motivating students to use and develop their literacy skills as a means to create art. The long-term effect of this approach could, therefore, enhance the delivery of both art and English language and help those students who particularly struggle with their literacy skills. Equally important is the need to equip students with the tools to navigate a world increasingly saturated with information.

Adopting this methodology as a pedagogic approach would inherently involve a degree of risk. Therefore, implementation could be achieved slowly and delivered to a specific class, preferably with fewer numbers, in order to build one’s confidence. If directed at a GCSE or A level group this approach could support current effective teaching methods and student outcomes could be submitted alongside existing coursework. Following initial attempts, necessary practical adjustments could be made before this methodology could be gradually embedded as an approach to creating and teaching art.

Below is a more detailed lesson plan suggesting how this approach could be adopted by other artists in order to help students develop analytical skills.

Lesson Plan

| Student Information | |
|---|--|
| Differentiation details (IPMs/MAT within top sets etc): (Name and brief details) | |
| Provide shorter texts for analysis for students who struggle with literacy. | |
| Texts printed on coloured paper for students with dyslexia and laptops provided for those who touch-type. | |
| Provide extra resources that explain or exemplify concepts such as; stereotype. | |

| Lesson Context | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|
| Teaching Objective: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop students’ analytical/critical literacy skills when referring to a particular text. | |
| Links to previous / future learning | <p>Previous Links</p> <p>Artist as teacher and students established relevant social issue or topic for investigation.</p> | <p>Future Learning</p> <p>Having analysed as much information as possible including extra independently found research from other sources, students will form their own argument which can either be formally presented in a debate or communicated through other platforms, such as, social media or through an online forum.</p> |

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Resources required: | <p><u>Resources</u></p> <p>News articles from various sources (left- and right-wing political emphasis), pencils paper, discussion cards (prompt questions).</p> <p>Further teaching resources can be found at The National Literacy Trust website: https://literacytrust.org.uk/resources/fake-news-and-critical-literacy-resources/</p> <p>Revision advise on literary techniques and helping students understand how language is used persuasively can be found on the BBC Bitesize Website: https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zpr49j6/revision/2</p> |
| Learning Outcomes/ Success Criteria | <p>Learning Outcomes</p> <p>By the end of the lesson students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be able to recognise how authors can use language persuasively. • Recognise how information or text can represent, underrepresent or misrepresent groups of people. |
| Cross Curricular Links: | English language (Critical literacy), Citizenship, Personal, Social, Health Education (PSHE), Spiritual, Moral, Social & Cultural education (SMSC). |

| Break down of lesson content | |
|--|---|
| Starter (including learning outcomes) | Provide students with a variety of short texts that concern the social issue being investigated. The texts should reflect a variety of different opinions or arguments. Ask students to read texts and explain why they agree or disagree with them. |
| Main Part of the lesson (Teacher and student tasks) | <p>Task 1: Ask students to look at the same text, highlight and make notes about how the author may have used literary techniques to persuade an audience. (Provide students with table below copied from BBC Bitesize website: https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zpr49j6/revision/2)</p> |

| | Technique | Examples |
|--|---|---|
| | Flattery - complimenting your audience. | A person of your intelligence deserves much better than this. |
| | Opinion - a personal viewpoint often presented as if fact. | In my view , this is the best thing to have ever happened. |
| | Hyperbole - exaggerated language used for effect. | It is simply out of this world – stunning! |
| | Personal pronouns - 'I', 'you' and 'we'. | You are the key to this entire idea succeeding - we will be with you all the way. I can't thank you enough! |
| | Imperative command - instructional language. | Get on board and join us! |
| | Triples - three points to support an argument. | Safer streets means comfort, reassurance and peace of mind for you, your family and your friends . |
| | Emotive language - vocabulary to make the audience/reader feel a particular emotion. | There are thousands of animals at the mercy of our selfishness and disregard for kindness. |
| | Statistics and figures - factual data used in a persuasive way. | 80% of people agreed that this would change their community for the better. |
| | Rhetorical question - a question which implies its own answer. | Who doesn't want success? |

Task 2: Provide students with a random longer text. Ask them to read text and answer following questions. This can be broken up into one or two questions at a time. Provide discussion card below copied from National Literacy Trust website:
<https://literacytrust.org.uk/resources/fake-news-and-critical-literacy-resources/>

| | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| Whose point of view / voice is heard? Why do you think the author made this choice? | Does the author use any stereotypes? Why do you think the author has done this? | Who doesn't have any power / authority in the text? How do you know this? | Which character do you want to criticise? Why? How has the author made you feel this way? | Do you think this text is trying to change what you think? If so, how? |
| Whose point of view / voice is missing? How would the text change if they were heard? | What do you think the author wants you to believe / feel? How has the author made you feel this way? | Who has the most power / authority in the text? What has the author done to make you think this? | Which character do you want to defend? Why? How has the author made you feel this way? | Are there any views or beliefs in the text that you do not agree with? Why not? How would you change the text to better reflect your views? |

| | |
|---|---|
| Plenary | Ask students to consider whether or not they have changed their opinion with regards to the social issue being investigated and why. |
| Assessment (including lesson outcomes) | (How achievement of the lesson objective will be demonstrated by students) Has the student identified ways in which an author can persuade, represent or misrepresent groups through a text? Evidence will be found in the answers they provide when analysing examples of text. |
| Homework | Student to collect information about the social issue being explored from websites, social media platforms or newspapers. These should include texts the student either agrees with or disagrees with. These will be analysed by student next lesson. |

Once students have developed their argument it is then necessary to find a means of articulating these opinions through art. This involves enabling students to interpret existing artworks and learn how certain methods and techniques create meaning. During the project titled; *It's about...* students attended a workshop where they were asked to examine examples of spoken word poetry. Students were then encouraged to discuss the methods and techniques used by several poets, such as the use of metaphor, in order to establish various interpretations of the work. Having become familiarised with these techniques, students were then asked to create their own examples of poetry. What I discovered about this approach was how I could avoid foisting my interpretation of the artwork onto the student. I also realised that it was possible to teach students how to interpret art rather than simply expect them to find out for themselves without prior support.

This stage in the approach, therefore, involves the artist showing students examples of art, then asking them questions about the techniques used and the impact those techniques might have.

In many ways this approach most likely exists in some schools and is already being practised by certain teachers of art. Encouraging children to analyse artworks is already encouraged by the National Curriculum for art and GCSE/A level examination boards. Therefore, teaching this method of interpretation and evidencing responses made by students could be relatively straightforward and compatible within existing assessment objectives. However, it could also be argued that with an education system driven by targets and accountability, a teacher could be forgiven for being tempted to simply provide students with an interpretation of art. In doing so the student could create a greater quantity of work in less time and gain more chance of securing their predicted grade. However, the long-term effect of this, can mean the student is ill-prepared if they decide to pursue a degree in art. Therefore, I believe this methodology enables the student to progress from compulsory to higher art education with greater confidence, improving their ability to interpret art and develop their own art practice.

Below is a detailed lesson plan suggesting how this approach could be adopted by other artists in order to enable students to interpret art. This plan is for illustrative purposes and based specifically on interpreting examples of video art. However, this could be adapted to suit other media or methods of making.

Lesson Plan

| Student Information | |
|---|--|
| Differentiation details (IPMs/MAT within top sets etc): (Name and brief details) | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vocabulary definition worksheet to aid students when describing how video sequence makes them feel and why. (For students struggling with literacy skills). | |

| Lesson Context | | | | | |
|---|---|----------------|-----------------|---|--|
| Teaching Objective: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To develop interpretational skills when looking at (for example) video art. To understand techniques or methods employed by video artist to influence own ideas when making (for example) a short video sequence. These may include, compositional techniques and camera angles, lighting, various shots (close ups, point of view etc), sound effects or music. | | | | |
| Links to previous / future learning | <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Previous Links</th> <th>Future Learning</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Students developed their own opinions based on the issue of (for example) social media and its influence on young people.</td> <td>Students to consolidate their thoughts and opinions on the issue being explore and articulate opinions through medium of digital video using techniques employed by artists.</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | Previous Links | Future Learning | Students developed their own opinions based on the issue of (for example) social media and its influence on young people. | Students to consolidate their thoughts and opinions on the issue being explore and articulate opinions through medium of digital video using techniques employed by artists. |
| Previous Links | Future Learning | | | | |
| Students developed their own opinions based on the issue of (for example) social media and its influence on young people. | Students to consolidate their thoughts and opinions on the issue being explore and articulate opinions through medium of digital video using techniques employed by artists. | | | | |
| Resources required: | <p>Resources</p> <p>Worksheet with keywords explaining each video technique in simple terms with possible sketches to illustrate. (E. g. Close -up shot=object fills the frame.) Vocabulary definition worksheet for SEN students. Pencils, rubbers, examples of video art, paper, storyboard template.</p> | | | | |
| Learning Outcomes/ Success Criteria | <p>Learning Outcomes</p> <p>By the end of the lesson students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognise various techniques used by video artists as a means to convey meaning. Consider and select similar techniques (camera angles, shots, lighting etc) when developing own idea for video sequence based on particular issue. | | | | |
| Cross Curricular Links: | English language. | | | | |

| Break down of lesson content | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Starter (including learning outcomes) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> On post-it-notes students will be asked to make an anonymous list of things that might make some video sequences appear, (for example) suspenseful or exciting. These notes will be folded and collected. Notes will be read aloud to the group in order to begin discussion about possible techniques used by video artists to convey meaning. |

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>Main Part of the lesson</p> <p>(Teacher and student tasks)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will be given a worksheet that simply states the various video techniques used without any suggestion as to what these techniques might convey to an audience. This will help them become familiarised with the techniques before watching a selection of video sequences by artists. • Task 1: Individually or working within a small group the students will watch several video sequences and make notes on the worksheet provided. Each worksheet will focus on one particular technique such as the camera angles or shot used. Students will then need to attribute a particular adjective that best describes the effect of that particular technique. • Task 2: Students will then be asked to feedback to the group their opinion and why. • Task 3: Students to list the words/adjectives that best describe what they want their video to articulate. • Task 4: Once familiar with the various video techniques the students will choose a particular camera angle, shot, lighting effect that best represents the feeling/mood/message they wish to convey within their own video sequence. They will be asked to make simple notes and sketches to create story board. |
| <p>Plenary</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group critique. Students to present their choice of video techniques and explain why. |
| <p>Assessment</p> <p>(including lesson outcomes)</p> | <p>(How achievement of the lesson objective will be demonstrated by students)</p> <p>Have the students selected various video techniques/ methods they feel are appropriate to their intentions?</p> |
| <p>Homework</p> | <p>Collect objects/props for initial video experiment based on storyboard.</p> |

C.5. Other groups who should also benefit from this methodology

Although this methodology has been designed to benefit students and artists working as teachers in schools, I believe it should also be of benefit to children within other institutions or organisations. This could include organisations responsible for children in care, migrant or refugee children or those excluded or removed from mainstream education including young offenders. The application of this methodology could provide a degree of structure or purpose for children who are otherwise missing educational opportunities. This approach may also give voice to young people and their situation or highlight a particular social issue directly affecting their lives. The long-term effects of this model may encourage young people from diverse social or economic backgrounds to pursue further or higher education, especially within the field of art. This is particularly pertinent, given the fact that university art departments are arguably less diverse, hindered by a sharp increase in student debt and the perception of art education as a more precarious career option, especially for those lacking financial support.

C.6. Challenges and opportunities associated with the future application of this methodology in schools

The artist who also works as a teacher occupies an advantageous position in that they are not necessarily constrained by external demands or a requirement to explicitly demonstrate the social impact of their work. However, this is not to say the artist as teacher is not subject to other institutional requirements or professional responsibilities, such as planning, assessment or fulfilling a pastoral role. Therefore, a significant challenge facing the artist as teacher is how to adopt this methodology, whilst retaining the ability to create art as an outcome. This is not to say the educational or social benefits of this methodology are less important. I believe this approach to art as a social practice can cultivate a student's capacity to interpret or translate art and could, therefore, enhance the delivery of an art curriculum in school. I also believe the process of dialogue and debate within this methodology could be of benefit to a student's 'spiritual, moral, social and cultural development' (Ofsted, 2019, p59). However, I would also urge the artist as teacher to remain vigilant in order to avoid this methodology simply becoming an educational tool to improve academic results or be judged only against predetermined educational aims.

Given these concerns this has meant that when practising this methodology in school I have largely operated beyond the normal curriculum and sought to work with students outside school hours. As a result, the successful application of this methodology is clearly dependent upon the support of the art department and school in providing adequate allocation of time, resources and provision for planning and preparation. Securing such support for this methodology will vary upon the specific school, its ethos and educational priorities. However, I believe support for this methodology can be justified when considering the unprecedented challenges, such as acquiring educational opportunities in art, which students will need to navigate in the future.

These concerns relating to the lives of young people have recently been discussed by the children's commissioner Anne Longfield within her report titled; *Guess How Much We Love You: A Manifesto for Children* (2019). Within the manifesto Longfield describes how schools could support children during the holidays, weekends and afterschool by providing 'a range of activities from sports, arts, drama, to digital citizenship' (Longfield, 2019, p6). This proposal, could, therefore, present an opportunity for my approach to art as a social practice by generating extra resources, prominence and time designated to ensure its successful

implementation in school. However, whilst I welcome extra provision or support, it would be received not without a degree of caution. In many ways Longfield's proposal could be regarded as an economical way to support young people by shifting more responsibility onto schools and teachers. This comes at a time when youth centres have seen a sharp decrease in funding over recent years.

Perhaps a more pertinent question is to what effect this proposal might have upon my approach to art as a social practice if it became policy in schools. In other words, when making art with students, would the outcomes produced be limited as a consequence of receiving extra provision or support? This concern is justified, when Longfield describes her proposal as a means to 'broaden access to subjects being 'squeezed' out of more academic curricula, help parents with childcare and be good for children's mental health and social skills' (Longfield, 2019, p6). To some extent Longfield appears to support a more prominent role for art in school, whilst praising its spiritual, social and educational benefits. However, this statement also discloses a perception of art as a supplementary or extra-curricular activity. In other words, there is a danger this methodology could simply be used as a child-minding activity or as a means to mitigate the slow decline in youth services.

In response I believe the future application of this methodology should not just be used as a means of delivering art outside normal lesson time or to furnish afterschool provision. Instead I believe this methodology could provide a foundation for teaching art during lessons. This is because it provides an opportunity for students to have more influence over their learning. This, in turn, could motivate students to interpret and create art, but could also encourage their use of literacy, whilst supporting a more discerning approach when consuming information or news. As a result, I believe this methodology can inspire students to pursue a degree in art and better prepare them for higher education. Finally, I believe this methodology could also motivate the artist working as a teacher, helping them develop not only their teaching but art practice. It is for these compelling reasons the decision makers within formal education should support and recognise the importance of this alternative approach to learning through art as a social practice.

Endnotes

ⁱ Within his book *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967), Guy Debord describes how life and our social relations have become a mere representation, which is a result of advanced capitalist and consumer society. According to Debord real life has become a false represented one. Life is displayed through images and through this process life is reduced to an appearance of what we have. ‘The spectacle is not a collection of images; rather, it is a social relationship between people that is mediated by images’ (Debord, 1967, Thesis 4).

Debord refers to Marx’s idea of commodity fetishism and suggests that during the industrial revolution people became alienated as a result of being subjected to the demands of capitalism. Whereas the capitalist once focused on the workers labour as a commodity, Debord describes how the emphasis has become focused on the worker as consumer. During the industrial revolution, poverty was the result of exploitation. Capitalism has since nurtured a fear of not having in order to maintain the economy through consumption. Debord describes this illusion as the society of the spectacle. Debord believes that our lives are lived through the appearance of having and this devotion to the spectacle is what isolates us. ‘The real consumer becomes a consumer of illusions. The commodity is this illusion, which is in fact real, and the spectacle is its general form’ (Debord, 1967, Thesis 47).

The spectacle according to Debord is paradoxical because ‘division is presented as unity and unity as division’ (Debord, 1967, Thesis 54). Although we are alienated by the effects of the spectacle we are also, according to Debord, united by participating in its construction. Equally Debord suggests that the spectacle presents the illusion that political divisions exist within society and that decent or rebellion is possible. However, Debord argues that different and conflicting political positions are ultimately subsumed by the single overarching system of capitalism.

By pointing up these differences, while appealing to criteria of quite a different order, the spectacle is able to portray them as markers of radically distinct social systems. But from the standpoint of their actual reality as mere sectors, it is clear that the specificity of each is subsumed under a universal system as functions of a single tendency that has taken the planet for its field of operations. That tendency is capitalism (Debord, 1967, Thesis 47).

Therefore the act of protest can be recuperated by the spectacle as a commodity in itself and inevitably leads to its political impotence. An example of this can be found in the way the fashion industry or advertising has often appropriated the image of political protest or revolutionary icons such as Che Guevara.

Debord also focuses on the value and function of commodities and describes how they are no longer judged on their use. Instead commodities have become valuable in themselves. Evidence of this can be seen in the growing significance of the brand name. Debord describes how consumerism in modern society is fuelled by the continual replacement of products that promise to satisfy needs. For Debord this form of commodity fetishism elicits a form of submission. This form of submission by the consumer has replaced the old form of religious obedience where idol worship once provided the promise of transformation.

A use of the commodity arises that is sufficient unto itself; what this means for the consumer is an outpouring of religious zeal in honour of the commodities sovereign power, waves of enthusiasm for particular products, fuelled and boosted by the communications media are propagated at lightning speed (Debord, 1967, Thesis 67).

For Debord this continual replacement of products reveals the illusory nature of the spectacle. Although each product claims to be the ultimate product it is nevertheless replaced by a newer, better product. This is because the system is founded on continual change in order to maintain further consumption. As Debord explains, ‘each new lie of the advertising industry implicitly acknowledges the one before’ (Debord, 1967, Thesis 70).

ⁱⁱ This argument relates to the philosophical ideas expressed by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri in their book *Empire* (2000), in which they suggest that communication has become increasingly important in the post-industrial world. This is marked by a shift from industrial to service sector or tertiary jobs, which are characterised by the production of information and knowledge.

The passage towards an informational economy necessarily involves a change in the quality and nature of labour. This is the most immediate sociological and anthropological implication of the passage of economic paradigms. Today information and communication have come to play a foundational role in the production processes (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p8).

What this suggests is that the production of goods including information and communication services has become increasingly sensitive to feedback from the market, aided by more responsive forms of communication. This flow of information is something which Hardt and Negri define as the production of ‘immaterial labour’.

Since the production of services results in no material and durable good, we define the labour involved in this production as immaterial labour – that is, labour that produces an immaterial good, such as a service, cultural product, knowledge, or communication (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p8).

Education could also be added to this list outlined by Hardt and Negri as they suggest how immaterial labour inherently involves social interaction and cooperation of workers triggered by the production of intellectual capital. ‘Today productivity, wealth and the creation of social surpluses take the form of cooperative interactivity through linguistic, communicational and affective networks’ (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p11).

These networks have meant that labour is no longer restricted to a fixed location. Hardt and Negri describe this process as the deterritorialization of production. During the regime of imperialist rule, power was centralised. In a new globalised and capitalist world, power and the production of goods is decentralised or deterritorialized. This deterritorialization of production has meant that ‘capital can withdraw from negotiation with a given local population by moving its site to another point in the global network’ (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p13). As a result this has meant that the availability of regular work has become weakened and replaced with non-guaranteed forms of income such as freelance and part-time work leading to a precarious job market.

Related to the concept of immaterial labour are the ideas expressed by Andrew Ross. In his book titled *No Collar: The Humane Workplace and Its Hidden Costs* (2004), Ross focuses his argument on the dot-com industries of the late 1990s. Ross describes how the relaxed approach to hierarchy that has characterised the no-collar ethos of these companies has proved attractive for those from creative backgrounds seeking non-traditional work habits. However, Ross explains how these apparently positive features disguise the fact that employees are often required to demonstrate total commitment to the company, whilst working long hours with little job security. Ross describes how this new form of exploitation in the work place as the ‘industrialisation of bohemia’ (Ross, 2004, p123). Ross goes on to explain how the nature of no-collar work can result in the boundaries between work and leisure being eroded. ‘In knowledge companies that trade in creative ideas, services, and solutions, everything that employees do, think, or say in their waking moments is potential grist for the industrial mill’ (Ross, 2004, p19). In other words this leads to a situation where the employee’s creative output is maximised.

ⁱⁱⁱ In order to illustrate the concept of mimesis Rancière refers to an experience of classical theatre, whereby the ‘virtues and vices’ expressed on stage by fictional characters are understood unambiguously thus provoking a universal reaction from the audience (Rancière, 2008, p6). Put differently classical theatre can be understood as an autonomous art form that is free to imitate the moral dilemmas of people in life. These are recreated by fictional characters, whose actions can be interpreted directly and thus provoke the audience to reflect on the moral messages inherent within the play. Although associated with classical theatre this strategy continues to function in more contemporary art forms.

Most of our ideas about the political efficiency of art still cling to that model. We may not believe anymore that the exhibition of virtues and vices on the stage can mend human behaviours. But we are still prone to believing that the reproduction in resin of a commercial idol will make us resist the empire of the ‘spectacle’ or that the photography of some atrocity will mobilize us against injustice (Rancière, 2008, p6).

Therefore, within the representational regime the autonomy of art is based on a direct link between the artist’s intentions and the effect it has on the audience. This is illustrated through an appraisal of art forms by Rancière that include Brechtian theatre and Martha Rosler’s photomontages. The juxtaposing of two contrasting elements such as the image of consumerism and the image of the Vietnam War continue to reflect the function of mimesis. In other words this represents the straightforward relationship between the artist’s political or moral message and the intended effect it has on an audience.

^{iv} With reference to the play *Oedipus the King* by Sophocles (429BC), Rancière provides an example that reflects the intentional and unintentional aspects of art. Within the play the protagonist, Oedipus, wishes to uncover the person responsible for the murder of his father. This therefore reflects the explicit intentions of Oedipus and thus represents a mode of logos. The fact that Oedipus is unaware that he is responsible for his father’s murder represents the unintended or unconscious circumstances associated with Oedipus. In other words this represents a mode of pathos within the play.

Oedipus is he who knows and does not know, who is absolutely active and absolutely passive. Such an identity of contraries is precisely how the aesthetic revolution defines what is proper to art (Rancière, Trans Keates, 2009, p23).

This emphasis on knowing and not knowing within the Sophocles play can therefore be understood as an allegory of the way in which art is experienced. In other words it is the mode of pathos that permits an autonomous experience of art. This therefore suggests that art acquires an autonomous life of its own beyond what the artist intended.

However, the original Sophocles play has since been adapted by various other writers during the Enlightenment including Pierre Corneille and Voltaire. For Rancière their adaptation of the original play signals the regime of representation in which the meaning of the play should be gained through direct observation and thus reinstates a direct relationship between cause and effect.

This continued influence of a direct interpretation of art reflects an approach toward art and literature that focuses on examining the artist's own life history as a means to understanding the meaning of their work. The psychologist Sigmund Freud is a well-known example who has explained the meaning of art and literature in relation to the perceived psyche of the artist. As Rancière points out;

Freud explains that he is not interested in artworks from a formal perspective but in their "subject matter", in the intention that is expressed and the content that is revealed... This overwhelming preconception has the singular consequence of translating fiction into biography (Rancière, Trans Keates, 2009, p54-55).

Clearly Rancière is against Freud's approach to an interpretation of art and literature that focuses on the work in order to reveal the heteronomous intentions or unconscious desires of the artist. As a result this denies the relationship between the intentional and unintentional aspects of art (logos and pathos) and thus prevents an autonomous sensory experience of form.

v

The usefulness of a thing makes it a use-value. But the usefulness does not dangle in mid-air. It is conditioned by physical properties of the commodity and has no existence apart from the latter...Exchange-value appears first of all as the quantitative relation, the proportion, in which use-values of one kind exchange for use-values of another kind (Marx, trans Fowkes, 1976, p126).

In *Capital*, Marx establishes how a commodity can be understood as something that satisfies the needs of humans and has qualities specific to it. This is what is defined as a commodity's *use-value*. Different commodities have different use-values, (such as a pair of scissors and their ability to cut material). As a result this creates the requirement for a method of comparison between different commodities, thus enabling their exchange. Thus, Marx defines a commodity's worth in relation to other commodities as their *exchange-value*. However, these two terms should not be confused because a commodity's exchange-value is not an intrinsic quality or physical property specific to it, unlike its use-value. As a result Marx therefore asks;

As the *exchangeable values* of commodities are only *social functions* of those things, and have nothing at all to do with the *natural* qualities, we must first ask: What is the common *social substance* of all commodities? It is *labour* (Marx, 1893, p13).

Therefore it is the amount of human labour that is invested in a commodity which represents a common substance permitting its exchange. In other words the amount of human labour is the only thing commodities of different values have in common. However, when Marx describes human labour he is specifically referring to the social nature of that labour.

To produce a commodity, a man must not only produce an article satisfying some social want, but his labour itself must form part and parcel of a total sum of labour expected by society (Marx, 1898, p14).

In other words the labour involved in making something for personal use does not relate to society. This leads not to the production of a commodity but to the production of a product. In contrast the labour involved in the production of a commodity is social because it contributes to the total sum of labour in society and is therefore relative to other forms of labour.

It is however precisely this finished form of the world of commodities-the money form-which conceals the social character of private labour and the social relations between individual workers, by making those relations appear as relations between material objects, instead of revealing them plainly (Marx, trans Fowkes, 1976, p168-169).

Therefore the symbolic function of money not only obscures the social character of labour invested in a commodity but it also obscures the social relations amongst workers. Instead it is the commodity form that appears to acquire a social characteristic. What this suggests is that all commodities inherently reflect a dialectic inversion in that workers become material things because of their labour. The inverse of this is that commodities can 'appear as autonomous figures endowed with a life of their own' and this is something Marx describes as the 'fetishism' of commodities (Marx, trans Fowkes, 1976, p165). This means that rather than a commodity being valued for its use, (the real value of a commodity), it is instead valued according to its exchange-value. In other words a commodity is valued according to some abstract measure, which obscures the labour involved in its production and the social nature of that labour. Commodity fetishism therefore reflects an inversion in which people become things because of their labour and commodities (objects) acquire a social life of their own.

^{vi} Another example that illustrates this argument can also be found when Lacan refers to the play *Antigone* (441BC) written by Sophocles. Antigone being the main protagonist within the play is a sister of two brothers, Eteocles and Polynices. Both brothers kill each other over the right to the throne of Thebes. However, her uncle Creon who later becomes King decrees that one of the brothers, Polynices, should be left unburied on the battlefield. However, acting against the wishes of her uncle, Antigone buries her brother, despite knowing that it will inevitably lead to her own demise. In response, Lacan describes Antigone's action within the play as 'a strange function in tragedy' (Lacan, SE7, 1997, p248). In other words, the motivations that led Antigone to honour her brother and sacrifice her own life do not appear to be explicitly obvious. As a result of this strange or ambiguous action by Antigone the play has since 'vexed critics for the last three centuries' and has denied an 'ability to produce a singular, accountable meaning' (Allen Miller, 2007, p6). In other words, the play's meaning cannot be reduced to either the author's intentions or a univocal interpretation by an audience. As such, this further demonstrates Lacan support that art and literature should be experienced autonomously.

^{vii} Lacan further illustrates this point by providing an anecdote based on two children who arrive at a railway station. In viewing the platform through their own individual carriage windows they both mistakenly read the sign for male and female toilets as their assumed destination. "Look", says the brother, "we're at 'Ladies!'; 'Idiot!' replies his sister, "can't you see we're at Gentlemen" (Lacan, 2001, p167). From this example it is possible to see how a straightforward relation between signifier and signified is disrupted. For the children on the train, the image of either 'Ladies' or 'Gentlemen' failed to signify either male or female toilets but were assumed to mean something entirely different. As a result, this illustrates the arbitrary nature of the signifier in that there is no guarantee that it will automatically represent the signified.

^{viii} However, this is not an opinion shared by Kester who considers Willats' art practice as more collaborative.

While the projects of Willats still run the risk of promulgating an orthopaedic relationship to the participants (who need the artist/theorist to reveal the hidden symbolic assumptions of their life world), this perception is seen less as a gift (made possible by the superior critical faculties of the artist) than as the project of a collaboratively generated insight (Kester, 2001, p95).

In other words Kester does not consider this as an example of the artist revealing to the residents the hidden cause of their situation. Instead it is recognised as a collaborative relationship whereby the artist learns as much from those involved as they do from him. However, Kester fails to justify how this work constitutes a form of collaboration as it remains unclear to what extent the authorial rights of the residents were addressed. As a result, this description by Kester illustrates the problems when conflating the terms participation and collaboration.

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