

Can Creativity be Taught and Learned?

KERRY THOMAS

College of Fine Arts, The University of New South Wales

Abstract

This paper draws on the author's ethnographic study of creativity in the culturally situated context of an art classroom in the final year of schooling as students go about making artworks that will be assessed in the high stakes matriculation examination in Visual Arts. The study is informed by Pierre Bourdieu's concept of misrecognition. This paper proposes that the most likely way of shoring up creativity in the performances of students and the artefacts they produce is through the repression of the evidential truths of practical exchanges. These occur in social transactions between the students and their art teacher that are characterised by their tact: denial, open secrecy and euphemisation. Practical and social reasoning of this kind is dependent on the micro-history of events and the peculiarities of the cultural context. It is irreducible to step wise procedures or logical means ends relations commonly accepted as cornerstones of teaching and learning.

The Dilemma Posed in this Study

Senior art students and their art teachers are caught in a bind. On the one hand students are obliged by their art teachers and the conditions of final year assessment to find creative autonomy inside of their own intentional resources. On the other hand they, with increasing maturity and social awareness, begin to realise that their creativity is rewarded with its conformity to the values of art education convention. Similarly, art teachers are utterly aware that while they need to fulfil the expectations of their students as creative artists they also need to meet their professional obligations to instructional outcomes. How do students and their art teachers overcome the contradictions implicit in teaching and learning creativity? What this study proposes is that certain cultural strategies are efficaciously used to overcome these contradictions. These strategies require profound forms of practical and social reasoning on the part of art teachers and their students.

Theories of Creativity and Applications in Art Education

Examining what has been theorised about creativity should provide a clue to resolving this dilemma. However when we look to the literature drawn from philosophy, art and aesthetics, science and psychology, and art education, theoretical representations of creativity are remarkably diverse. Theories often conflict in their assumptions about the underlying theoretical entities that are seen to be causally responsible for observed regularities in creative endeavours (Gopnick, 1996). To assist us here Rothenberg and Hausman (1976, p. 6), Briskman (1981, pp. 136-137), and Weate (1990, p. 185) propose that the literature on creativity can be categorised in terms of three distinctive objects. These are the creative subject, creative process and creative product. A brief sketch is provided on these and a comment on how art education has adopted and adapted certain theories for its own purposes in the school curriculum.

Theories of the *creative subject*, derived from aesthetics, philosophy and art focus on the creative subject as genius (Kant C18). Creativity acquired its identity as a quality of imagination through Kant in the late eighteenth century. Other creative subject accounts derived from and extending on Kant include the artist as revolutionary (Nietzsche C19th); and identify the unconscious and concealment as causes of creativity (Freud early C20). The importance of experience is also emphasised (Dewey C19-C20).

Creative process theories, often linked with non-cognitive psychological explanations conceive of creativity as an instinctive capacity for self-expression (eg Lowenfeld 1947, Read 1958); and intentionally as a kind of visual thinking (eg Arnheim 1962). More objectively, the creative process has been conceived of as a predictable observable process (eg Wallas 1926; Tomas 1979); a set of divergent psychological traits or behaviours (eg Guilford 1966, Eisner 1966); qualitative problem solving (eg Ecker 1966); and problem finding (eg Getzels and Csikszentmihalyi 1976). Recent iterations of process theories, informed to a considerable extent by developmental and cognitive psychology work with and against previous explanations. They identify how a confluence of factors is more likely to cause creativity and these theories assist us to a degree to resolve the dilemma posed in this study (eg Gruber and Wallace 1989, Schön 1989, Gardner 1993, Csikszentmihalyi 2004, Florida 2005). From this perspective, the inter-relationships between a person, culture, symbol systems of a field and domain along with social institutions have a causal impact (eg, Csikszentmihalyi and Gardner). Under these terms creativity is invested with not only intentional causes and properties but also cultural and semantic ones, some of which will be concealed.

Further theories focus on the *creative product*. These are generally more philosophical in orientation. It is the product that presents itself as novel, intelligible and of cultural and instrumental value to a field of practice, retrospectively encountered by a knowledgeable audience, that anticipates the likelihood of creativity (eg Glickman 1978, Hausman 1981, Best 1983, Brown 1988). From this perspective the intentions of the creator are again insufficient on their own as a predictor of what is valued as a creative performance. Rather, the audience has a function in their assignment of creative value to a performance and the artefacts produced. Once again we see that cultural and semantic causes and properties are relevant. Here we gain further insight as to how our dilemma might be resolved.

Historically, non-cognitive psychological theories that emphasise the creative process, the role of self expression and experience have been appropriated by art education and adapted for the purposes of representing the N.S.W. Visual Arts in syllabuses and in the curriculum (Weate 1990, p. 241). Thus, a recurring orientation in syllabuses through the latter part of the twentieth century, is that performances and artefacts are caused by experiences that result in forms of self-expression that are conceived of as autonomous. Here the experiential and being autonomous is dovetailed with psychological dispositions of the students that are employed, such as their capacities of perception and ability to manipulate materials (Board of Secondary Education 1987). Not surprisingly, this is a highly modernist and subjective account of creativity. But it is a view that has popular appeal, commonly shared by students, their teachers, galleries and museums, education systems and policy makers, and the public alike.

More recent iterations of these Visual Arts syllabuses however, recognise the importance of the how creative performances and the artefacts enacted relate to a range of philosophical positions about art and contemporary artworld interest and practices. Nonetheless these syllabuses remained constrained in their intentions by objective constraints that turn a blind eye to the teacher's agency (in this and other syllabuses) while privileging approaches to assessment that reward external or phenotypical explanations (Board of Studies, 1999).¹ In regard to assessment phenotypical explanations are assumed to occur when behavioural descriptions co-occur with creative performances to a significant degree and where the weight of their association amounts to an explanation. However inter-correlative approaches such these imply the assumption of an invariant, if unexplained, structural relation. Structural explanations overlook the way in which the concealed agencies underlying the semantic properties of creative products are mobilised by their principal enactors. What a creative student knows in how to proceed in making a creative product is far from exhausted by the phenotypes of its two major functions: that is, the behaviour and the product. Explanations are better suited to genotypical accounts (Brown & Thomas, 1999, p. 2).

Vygotsky's genotypical critique alters the way in which the underlying traits of creative ability are conceptualised. He argues that genotypical explanations emerge in the contextual history of the performance with reference to the context in which they are transacted. Under these terms the relation between performer and performance, including the artefacts enacted, is produced as a function of the complex constraints under which they occur (Vygotsky, 1962, p. 84). That is, a contextual micro-history underlies the functional

relations of creative performances in which the creative faculties of performers are transformed by the recruitment of new agencies into the relation over time. Thus rather than the concept of creativity emerging as an invariant function, in which the relation between performance and performer is fixed, the relation varies in the subtlety of its extension as it develops (Brown & Thomas, 1999, p. 2).

This critique has implications for how we might conceive of creativity in the situated context of the art classroom. The genotypical methodology used in this study searches for developmental tendencies in the ways that students' augment the conceptual and material resources they require for the task of making artworks that will be assessed as part of the HSC Examination in Visual Arts. It is suspected that the art teacher has a significant role to play but there may be good social reasons as to why their instrumental agency is repressed.

The Socio-Cognitive Framework of the Ethnographic Study of Creativity

The socio-cognitive framework of the ethnographic study, to which this paper refers, draws on the French Realist philosopher and sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's concept of *misrecognition* nested in his theory of practice and related concepts of social competency: the *habitus* and *symbolic capital*. Bourdieu's theory challenges the assumption that 'the intentional actor is the sole originator of the cognitive resources that people bring to the practices of their lives' (Brown & Thomas, 1999, p. 1). He alerts us to the profound mistake of scientific method in reducing the explanation of cognitive dispositions subtending on the social formations of a practice such as a creative practice to an intentional logic alone (Brown & Thomas, 1999, p. 2).

Bourdieu explains the habitus as a socially constituted 'system of cognitive and motivating structures that generate and organise practices and their representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends' (Bourdieu, 1997a, p. 52). The habitus creates a semblance of certainty. It is full of 'improvisation' like the actions and thoughts of players who have a 'feel for the game' (Bourdieu, 1997a, pp. 57, 67). The habitus tacitly organises actions and choices of the participants without being the product of deliberate strategic intention (pp. 57, 67). The habitus is an 'embodied history' although forgotten as history and an 'accumulated capital' (p. 56). Thus in using the concept of the habitus, Bourdieu offers us a way to understand how practice in the classroom can be conceived of as a 'feel for the game' between the students and their art teacher. Like the game, loaded with desires, it anticipates the interests of the field of the Visual Arts examination without being reducible to a mechanistic plan or a step wise process.

Symbolic capital is explained within Bourdieu's concept of the habitus. It is the currency of exchange in a social economy and is expressed in types of social value underlying the habitus (Brown & Thomas, 1999, p. 2). Bourdieu likens the exchange of symbolic capital to gift exchange and the exchange of goods in an archaic economy, both of which function as symbolic economies (Bourdieu, 1997a, p. 112; 1998, p. 94). In these economies 'economic activity cannot explicitly recognise the economic ends ... to which it is objectively oriented' (Bourdieu, 1997a, p. 113). In other words, it is precisely because symbolic capital's economic value is *misrecognised* in tactful forms of open secretiveness, euphemisation, denial, and repression in these denied economies that its social value is collectively recognised as legitimate. Nonetheless, in these economies reciprocity of transactions entails expectations about the motives of other social agents. To be respectful of others is to possess subtle social reasoning, which reveals the agency of the social order hidden within the agents' actions (Brown & Thomas, 1999, p. 2).

Bourdieu's explanation of misrecognition is demonstrably relevant for understanding how art classrooms can be conceived of as sites for the exchange of symbolic capital. It, along with an understanding of the habitus, assist us to reconcile the paradoxical problem posed in this study. Bourdieu's explanation of misrecognition gives rise to the hypothesis that:

- Transactions between teachers and their students in the habitus of the art classroom will be misrecognised as capital in day-to-day pedagogical exchanges although their advantages will be recognised.
- Students whose dispositions are adjusted to participate in the necessary tactful social exchanges in this denied economy will become the beneficiaries and recognised among the group and more widely.
- Students' artworks will evidence degrees of creativity that vary consistently with the emergent subtlety of misrecognition that they and the teacher are capable of exchanging in transacting symbolic capital.

How Creativity is Shored Up

This part of the paper now focuses on aspects of the results and interpretation of the study, which contribute to a verification of the hypothesis posed above. It uncovers how the practical and social reasoning used by the art teacher and students in the art classroom is motivated by opportunities to take advantage of what is on offer while paradoxically and necessarily the belief in the students' experience and creative autonomy is maintained and fostered. It reveals how the contextual micro-history of events transacted between the teacher and students transfigures the creative possibilities that are available.

To elucidate how this practical and social reasoning takes place in the reality of the art classroom one of the functions ascribed by the investigator is characterised. This is the normative function of *Instilling*, which is further elaborated on in the grounded narrative below. The investigator has also attributed three other functions of *Authoring*, *Provocation* and *Brokering* as having causal purposes in the shaping up of creative possibilities in the classroom, which occur as a result of new agencies being recruited into the relation over time. To date, *Authoring* and *Provocation* have been discussed in other papers (Thomas, 2007, 2006a, 2006b).

The Function of Instilling

As with the other functions identified above, *Instilling* reoccurs as a 'contingent' and 'homeostatic cluster' (Boyd, 1988: 197). It 'co-occur(s) in an important number of cases' and reveals itself in re-occurring networks of symptoms (197). Instilling functions as a 'generative and organising scheme' that orientates the values, purposes and goals of the teacher and students (Bourdieu, 1997a, pp. 53, 56). The presence of its force cannot be either measured in a predictable or prescribed way or can instilling be applied mechanistically as for instance, a way to 'deliver' content (Boyd, 1998: 197). Instilling performs as an embodied and accumulated capital that acts as a cognitive and motivating structure. It seeks to reproduce itself through a gradual but forgotten inculcation to produce more history that is suited to future expectations (Bourdieu, 1997a, pp. 53, 56).

Instilling has a purpose in shoring up the creative performances of the students including the artworks they make. It occurs with all the allure of surprise — an added boost or reward — which is remarkably unexpected but highly desired. Instilling is activated in particular situations and becomes second nature to those who participate. It presents at just the right moment and requires considerable artfulness on the part of the teacher and students. Instilling occurs as an open secret in the classroom. 'Everyone knows but doesn't want to know the true nature of the exchange' (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 192). Along with its open secrets, instilling obliges a tactful repression and euphemisation of the ends to which the students' and teacher's interests are served.

Instilling is motivated by the teacher's desire to impress ideas on the students' minds as well as implanting particular aesthetic values in their artworks. This occurs gradually and persistently, infused

almost imperceptibly but by degrees over time. Thus over time, the students' creative faculties are transformed. The teacher's judgement imported into the students' thinking orientates their future actions with a confidence. When effectively realised, the benefits of this non declared capital seals the goodness of judgment in the performances of the students and the creativity of their artworks. Paradoxically, the teacher and students are not consciously aware of this function although its social, symbolic and material effects are recognised. As Searle explains the agents just know what to do and how to go on within the institutional context without redress to the rules (Searle, 1995, pp. 21, 137).

The teacher chooses his targets with utmost precision and waits for the right moment to secure the uptake he desires. Like the young charioteer Antilochus, whose actions Homer describes in the Iliad, the teacher has his 'eye on the post and is not caught napping when the time comes to use his oxhide reins and stretch his horses; he keeps them firmly in hand and watches the man who is leading' (Homer, 1966, p. 421). Reciprocally and in the most-subtle of ways, the students need to recognise the social and material benefits of waiting as a necessary condition of instilling. This occurs most frequently in their being caught up in what they have been assigned to do, most regularly under the function of authoring where the teacher works like an auteur, taking on the directing the students in how to go on while anticipating the audience for their artworks, which in itself is misrecognised. Ironically, under the force of instilling students need to be prepared to sacrifice their own intentions but these functions nevertheless aggregate in their common purpose.

Ambiguous Conduct

The grounded narrative offers the reader a sense of the uncertainty and attenuating circumstances of classroom transactions when the force of instilling is activated. It provides a way of considering the possibility of cultural meanings of creativity beyond the more orthodox accounts that have historically privileged the experience and autonomy of the student or their uniquely creative dispositions. While certain aspects of these retain a purpose, the grounded narrative shows how their meaning is recast. The intention here is not to dwell on the either the qualitative methods of the study or the results themselves, both of which have been reported elsewhere.² Rather, following Bruner, in using the literary device of the narrative, the purpose is to reveal how the contradictory tendencies of Instilling in the appearances of things and the reality of what occurs work towards similar ends (Bruner, 1990).

The grounded narrative highlights the very necessity of ambiguity in the reasoning between the art teacher and one of the students in the classroom whose motives anticipate one another in this exchange. It suggests how the culture and conduct of the classroom cannot be reduced to step wise procedures or logical means ends relations.

In this grounded narrative the reader is introduced to the teacher and Sian, one of the students in the class. The grounded narrative reveals how the teacher's equivocation contributes to the instilling of aesthetic values in Sian's artwork, which they both desire. This artful strategy masks the teacher's intention to transgress the student's intentions supplanting hers with his own critical judgement. His actions ultimately contribute to the overall aesthetic resolution of her large illuminated photographic installation.

The narrative capitalises on a cascading set of references reported on in the results.³ There is the domain of requesting where the teacher requests certain things of the students because he knows they can do what he requests although they may not of their own accord and by virtue of his authority and expert knowledge. In this case we look at the request the teacher makes of the student to proceed with formatting and arranging of her installation. The domain of advice is also alluded to here. The teacher offers advice to the student about the look and meaning of her artwork. And perhaps most importantly, is the domain of promising in this narrative where the teacher promises and declares his intentions to do certain things for the student in the making of her artwork which he knows she would wish for. This places the teacher under an obligation, which he needs others to recognise. In this case it is an indirect promise that is made which in the longer run

firms up Sian's advantage but which is dependent on her ability to back down from realising her own intentions.

Further analysis of the digital video footage and still images captured in the fieldwork and reanalysed on a number of occasions after the events contribute to the formulation of this grounded narrative. In particular, a re-analysis of the body language used by the teacher and student shows how they attempt to anticipate one another's reasoning. And how the teacher tries to get around the student while the student tries to keep face and favour in order for their objective chances of profit to be maximised.

Sian is elated by the trust that the teacher has bestowed on her in the previous moments where he has assured her through the requests that he makes of her that she is up to the challenge of what is in store. She will calculate the lengths of wire for each panel and solder the wires as part of the final stages in preparing for the illumination of the installation. Buoyed up by the teacher's generosity and assurance. But they are now at the point of anticipating the realisation of the installation, a moment that they have both been waiting for — a culmination; the crowning achievement?

A chance to see what Sian can do regarding where the work will be installed. Excitement brimming over and yet she senses the need to proceed with caution. Not to overstep the mark, conscious of her dreams being realised but keen not to offend. Sian is aware of the teacher's formidable power as well as his kindness. At the same time, she is keen to use at least some of the options that the contemporary artist Christian Boltanski has used in his installations that have inspired her thinking. Now she launches into her ideas. 'Would it be possible' she dares 'to [install the work], ... in Room 10 [the drama room]'.

The teacher is caught in a bind. He could just say no but this might offend Sian and appear too harsh. While he does not want to deflate her enthusiasm and is keen not to appear too confrontational he is aware that what the student has in mind presents a threat to his more imprecise plans (Bourdieu, 1997a, p. 99). But he recognises that this is a work of great occasion. He has over time, proposed innumerable incremental advances to this work, building its structure, meaning and references. The student has excitedly taken these on and made them into her own with the consequence that the work is richer and more creative than may have been anticipated and it is one that they are both passionate about.

The student and the artwork now present him with a challenge that he must control. Much is at stake. Its resolution is close at hand. He needs to ensure that the creativity of the work is maximised and valued by the future audience. This would be of mutual benefit. What Sian proposes will not give them this. And yet he recognises the dilemma they are caught in, in that Sian is entitled to think she can make this decision on her own. It crosses his mind that he has often said to the students 'It's your work, you'll have to decide'. The teacher will need to produce the need in Sian for the product he desires. In order to do this he will need to produce a difficulty that he alone can solve (Bourdieu, 1997b, p. 210). Sian will not be able to proceed as she intends but he must softly recalibrate her thinking in a way that enthralls her. She must grasp the decision that he will make as her own. If he were to fail in this task and the student were to advance with what she intended he would lose out in instilling the crowning aesthetic values that they both wish for. These, he calculates, are so close to being realised. Concealing the dilemma he attempts to dissuade her. 'Not today, not tomorrow because they're doing Drama rehearsals [in there]' he says using his more expert knowledge of local events as a diversion.

Sian, still excited by the prospects, fails to notice his signal. Instead, she launches into her intention to find out from one of her friends in the class when the drama rehearsals will finish while hinting at how they might proceed. 'Cause I was thinking' she says, 'if we did it in there

we could either do.... I was thinking a corner might be...'. She watches him closely and senses his censure; a withdrawal. Pain of a loss of favour. Keen to make amends she changes her tact, immediately compromising her own desires. 'Or do you think just stick...'. she hesitates. She has to repress her own thoughts on the time and energy expended on imagining the placement of the work, as well the intense practical labour that has consumed, she remembers how he has challenged them to make the decisions about their work. She could be infuriated that her creative intentions had been usurped. Spurred on by the benefits that she tacitly anticipates from the teacher she needs to overlook the hardships felt; prepared to surrender her own intentions, perhaps the most difficult of all at this is point. And yet she would do anything for their solidarity to be retained, dependent on his ongoing assurances. Risky work, lost without him. Besides she could not let the teacher down at this stage. Their closeness is critical to how she proceeds. Another student, less capable of recognising the subtlety of his actions might continue on their own. In effect causing him to back down and creating a loss for the student and their work. Cast adrift, but not her.

Attuned to her shift in thinking while playing down her change in attitude, the teacher appeals to her interests. Stirring her to move with him he muses 'Ahhh I don't think the [drama] room is suitable'. Letting her in to his thinking he confides 'it [the Drama room] doesn't have an open space...'. Having her realise the limitations of her own thinking but through a confidence. In the same moment, letting her down and leading her on; the possibility of better options bewitching them.

Then slowing the pace, the teacher appears preoccupied by the weight of what lies before them. She too feels the difficulty, silent, reflective, and waiting. Grateful for the personal investment he is prepared to make for her. He hints at the obligations that he will place himself under on her behalf while anticipating that Sian will want these for herself. 'I'm just trying to think where it would be good' he confides, keeping her in the dark but luring her on through his good intentions, so perfectly synchronised to her interests. 'You just need a good space to put it up' he says, increasing her dependence while maximising his advantage.

Moments later he suggests with a lightness and ease 'we'll see what we can do'. An indirect promise on his part, which reaffirms his commitment to the student and the installation. It fills her with trust, indebtedness and recognition of his intentions. At the same time the obliqueness of his remarks permits him to move in the way that he desires. Firming up the impact of the work and its aesthetic values, and offering benefits to the student and himself. Deceiving everyone and in a sense no one because their deception encounters the complicity of the student and others, including the investigator, who watch on (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 193).

Some time later Sian reflects on the making of the installation. 'It is such an important work to me. I think that's why I put so much effort into it' she says still attempting to make sense of the transformational nature of her experience. And yet the obligations the teacher placed himself under in indirectly taking on the responsibility for finding the site for the installation of the work are forgotten. Not deliberately but outside the scope the inspiration for her creativity which is satisfied by the reconstructed narrative of her belief in her own creative autonomy and personal experience that has meant the world to her.

Discussion

What can be inferred from the teacher and student's actions? We see that in the teacher's sealing of the deal on the aesthetic choices and actions of this student it is the euphemisation evident in his evasion and indirect promise, which builds on the efficacy of previous transactions, that secures the effects he desires. This occurs

at the very moment when the student anticipates a more precise solution to the dilemma that lies before them. In this case the teacher's evasion offers him the time and conceptual space to work on the realisation of better alternatives, and to maximise the benefits of the aesthetic judgement that he alone can offer. An advantage that he can predict will contribute to causing this student a greater advantage in her creative performance and net a more favourable assessment.

Ironically, while the teacher lets the student down with what she wants he actually increases her desire for wanting more. This duplicated action is dependent on the student being able to nuance the teacher's evasion and her apparent readiness to sacrifice what she intends to do of her own accord. The student changes her tact and lets go of what wants for herself, spurred on by her desire to retain her solidarity with the teacher and the benefits on offer at this difficult stage, so close to the artwork's final realisation. The student has the capacity to respect the social order in the classroom and thus her conduct is rewarded with the benefits of what the teacher can offer. The teacher's actions are euphemised and denied and the student retrospectively overlooks the teacher's intervention, assuming the credit for the goodness of the judgement, which is rewarded in her examination assessment.

Conclusion

This paper poses the question of whether creativity can be taught and learned. It concludes by proposing that creativity is not strictly taught or learned. Rather, creativity emerges as a kind of culturally situated apprenticeship in practical and social reasoning which is committed to the production of creative kinds of performances that anticipate the interests and constraints of the field of HSC Visual Arts assessment. It is dependent on the group's ability to infer one another's motives. The function of Instilling provides but one elucidation of how this apprenticeship functions for good purposes in raising the stakes in what is possible.

This commitment to the production of creative performances encompasses 'the intelligent rearrangement of things' (Brown, 2005, pp. 1, 9, 12). With a string of related desires, this commitment acts as a motive in the teacher and students' actions. All the same, precise commitments can change over time as contingencies arise and events unfold in order for the class' collective goals to be realised to the extent that they can. It involves the strategic use of practical logic, which is full of improvisation, invention, strategy, and iterative adjustment (Brown, 2005, p. 7). As Bourdieu explains, practical reasoning of this kind is irreducible to a means-ends rule-governed logic (Bourdieu, 1997a, p. 102).

Ultimately, it is down to how the teacher can manipulate that habitus that makes this ongoing commitment possible along with the denied but valued capital that can be invested in these transactions. This is dependent on the teacher and students' dialectical collaboration, which is inherently political (Brown, 1992, p. 26). The teacher cajoles the students; skills are picked up, rehearsed and modified. Values are caught, adjusted and instilled over time. Artworks are advantaged by the ongoing fine-tunings and modifications that are made with all the necessary tact and recognition of their benefits transforming the performances of the students through the recruitment of this denied but valued capital. The social cohesion of the group is critical to the advantage that this apprenticeship offers.

What might we make of the teacher's conduct? While it may appear ambiguous, ethically, it is the only thing to do. Although it may be viewed, at least in part, to be at odds with current representations of what is seen to constitute a professional teaching practice (Interim Committee of the Institute of Teachers N.S.W, 2003). This does not imply a criticism of the teacher's actions. Rather these standards of professional practice dictate the terms of performance and become not only a prescription in themselves but also a self-fulfilling specification. Practice under this framework is formulaic, stripped of its contextual meaning and the habitus in which it occurs, becoming more a matter of technical compliance. This view of practice is not born out in this study⁴. The teacher's commitment is exemplary. He has no intention to deceive Sian or others in the group as a means of leading them astray. Rather the haziness and flexibility of his actions is an absolute necessity in order to bring out the truth of the students' abilities in their creative performances and

the attributes of their artworks. In this study it is the very ability of the students in the class that heighten the stakes of the teacher's resolve to be even more inventive and masterful in what is proposed and what is subsequently realised.

The teacher's triumphs are real triumphs. Despite the ambiguity surrounding his actions, they can be viewed as a victory made all the more potent by their sheer unexpectedness and rightness. The teacher and students collude in their desire to overturn the limitations of the students' intentions and creative abilities despite their belief in creative autonomy (Taussig, 1999, p. 60). But it is precisely because this ideal of truth is preserved in the social order of the classroom that they can make a virtue of working collectively towards changing what is possible and thereby limit any shortfalls that might emerge (Brown, 1992, p. 58).

The benefits of what is created in regards to the students' performances and the artworks produced are not confined to the immediacy of the classroom or the group's achievements in the examination. Rather they extend into the field of art education and contemporary culture transfiguring the aspirations of many. But this victory can only be realised through the necessary tricks that the teacher plays on the students' world.

Notes

- ¹ This is not uncommon but has a particular poignancy today with the curriculum thrust being positioned as matter of delivery, the outcomes of which, it is asserted should be unambiguously assessed. The author does not support this means-end model of curriculum and assessment recognising the difficulty for practice based subjects that may seriously suffer if reduced to axiomatic knowledge, sequential rules and principles. However the literature of creativity in art education and psychology also reveals a significant gap in the art teacher's role in the making of student art. When art teachers are mentioned at different historical moments they are cast in a notoriously ambiguous role. This is not to imply a criticism but rather to acknowledge that there are very good reasons for maintaining contradictory practices in art education. For instance, Victor Lowenfeld is insistent that art teachers should not impose their adult knowledge of art on a child (Lowenfeld, 1982, p. 12). Whereas Herbert Read, while still committed to the subjectivity of students, recognises how the art teacher provides a relationship of communion with the child in which the selection of a feasible world can be made which educates the child and permits them to be drawn out (Read, 1958, p. 287). In contrast, Neil Brown explains that an art teacher's role is concerned with the 'politic application of knowledge' that is suited to the art classroom and broader context of the field (Brown, 1988). Nonetheless, the legacy of Lowenfeld remains firmly ingrained in popularist accounts of creativity in art education and education more generally. What the art teacher does is commonly thought to be circumscribed by what the child wants. Howard Gardner (1982) and Robert Sternberg (2004) concur with this view. Art teachers themselves often accept this vernacular account.
- ² See for instance, Thomas, K. (2007, 2006a, 2006b).
- ³ Results are retrieved using a modified form of the method of semantic analysis as developed by the sociologist James Spradley. He argues that the meaning of any symbol used in a culture is related to how it is used in relation to other symbols (in the culture). Cultural knowledge is conceived as an intricate pattern of symbol systems made up of different domains of cultural knowledge (Spradley, 1979, p. 97). Domains share at least one feature of cultural meaning and are extremely important unit of analysis on ethnographic research (Spradley, 1979, p. 100). Results also take into account the linguistic force of utterances, in particular in illocutionary utterances, which have a conventional force as described and explained by Austin (1981) and Searle (1984). For further detail of the results see: Thomas, K. (2007).

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