

## **Queering (next) Art Education – Art/Education and Shifting the Dominant Systems of Belonging**

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What we would like to propose next (very soon in fact, that is, actually just about now) is a ‘Queer Art Education’. It links artistic and educational approaches that share an anti-racist and anti-sexist agenda.

It calls itself ‘queer’ and not (just) ‘critical’ because, in the development and realisation of its emancipatory artistic and educational concerns, it attaches importance to not taking affects, desires, vulnerability, ambiguity and contradictions merely into consideration, but to making these central. A (dis)solution orientation or, also, affiliation, solidarity and life orientations could generate affective forms of articulation and agency. Queering Art Education means maintaining the tension between a claim to autonomy in the sense of a critical un-digestibility, un-controllability and un-planability on the one hand and pedagogical operability or the beauty of the step-by-step, by the one forward and one back, and by the back and forth of learning processes on the other hand.

It is about the hopefully productive squaring of the circle. It is a paradoxical venture realisation of which is, at least part of the time, enjoyable. Because it seems necessary and meaningful. Because it is a serious matter. Because in it humour and masquerade play a leading role.

Queering Art Education represents an attempt to view different social questions from a minorised perspective and to engage with these using artistic-educational means. We believe that art/education is predestined for this: It positions itself in the visual field; it is concerned with symbolisations and the work on representations<sup>1</sup>. In Queering Art Education, accordingly, we are concerned with a utilisation of art for educational purposes, which engages with the shifting of dominant systems of belonging. In addition, it has always been

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<sup>1</sup> Hall, Stuart. "The Work of Representation," in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed. Stuart Hall (London: Sage, 1997), pp. 1-74.

positioned in the 'inbetween', in the 'both...and'. Attempts to structure it in a binary oppositionality and to allot it either to education or art as a dominant main discipline have, over the years, proven to be a waste of time.

Queering Art Education can offer itself to different recipients and educational contexts: it can, for example, be conceived as part of art tuition in schools, further education of teachers and artists, art education at universities and outside of schools. Depending on the context, it would assume different registers of language and aesthetics. Fundamentally, it can be conceived as strengthening and empowering the positions of deviant subject positions and, at the same time, as sensitising and productively destabilising the majority positions, which intersect in individuals and collectives respectively. It could have an influence on artistic and pedagogical knowledge and competence, as well as on political consciousness (such as e.g. the analytical capability to think critically about authority), or on the psychological dispositions of teachers and learners. We understand these possibilities to have an influence as potentialities and not as absolutely necessary model outcomes for the legitimising of Queering Art Education.

Queering Art Education is – as the case may be – perhaps exceptionally good when it does not want to have a particular effect.

Queering Art Education is an intervention in at least two dominant and, we believe, interdependent discourses in the German speaking regions: one of these is the discourse on optimising cultural education, which situates the self-motivated, individual and competitive adaptability of the subjects within the framework of a capitalist, white, heteronormative order as the principal educational objective and subordinates aspects like 'critical capability', 'the capacity to reflect', 'creativity' or 'ego-strength' as sub-goals to this educational objective.<sup>2</sup> The appropriation of vocabulary originally used in an emancipatory sense goes so far that views that are *critical* of authority are labelled as 'ideological'.<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, Queering Art Education intervenes in the autonomy discourse on art by asserting that artistic methods and positions are fundamentally neither learnable nor teachable,

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<sup>2</sup> See, for example, UNESCO *Roadmap for Arts Education* (Lisbon 2006 and Seoul 2010).

<sup>3</sup> Gayatri Spivak has defined ideology referring to Norton Wise as "an unquestioningly accepted system of ideas that takes material shape in social action". Cf. *Selected Works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak*, ed. by Donny Landry and Gerald MacLean, New York / London 1996, p. 40.

and by placing itself in opposition to pedagogical work as the devalued 'other', which sullies it, or corrupts, simplifies, robs it of its autonomy and resistance.

In contrast, autonomy could be claimed for Queering Art Education as long as it does not act in accordance with the rules and standards of the art system, nor with those of the educational system, but instead incorporates both for its own purposes.

In the queering of art/education, at present, we would like to consider the following task areas: Since queer concerns in education have increasingly been taken up and represented by politicians in the last years, they are communicated to the public, become part of being governed and meet with, at times, violent rejection, such as on the occasion of a passage in the draft of a new curriculum plan early 2014 in Baden-Württemberg. Basically, **protests and awareness raising** continue to be needed. **Analysis, work on concepts and criticism of ideology** are necessary towards making the inter-sectional power and force relations describable and the – by the majority – disregarded perspectives perceptible.

**Information and teaching materials or professional development formats<sup>4</sup>** can increase the course of action options available to everyone with teaching responsibilities. In addition, empowerment, identification offers for minorised pupils, students, teachers, art educators, relations and friends are needed.

In the following artistic positions we see different models, which, with a view to the mentioned necessities, can fulfil an educational function. The Haitian-American artist **Jean-Ulrick Désert** appropriates national and folkloric objects (e.g. flags, beer coasters, Lederhosen) or artistic motifs and techniques in his multimedia works and exposes these to a

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<sup>4</sup> Here some of the research materials we used (with a focus on the German speaking regions):

Büro Trafo.k: flic flac. Feminist, interdisciplinary workshops for vocational schools.

[<http://www.trafo-k.at/projekte/flicflac-workshops/>]

Roz Mortimer, *Gender Trouble* (2003), an experimental documentary and educational film about complex themes which cover more than the physiological conditions of intersexuality. [<http://www.wonder-dog.co.uk/films/gender-trouble/>]

Imke Schmidt & Ka Schmitz, *Ich sehe was, was du nicht siehst, oder: Wer sieht hier wen?*,

a comic relating to the work of the GenderKompetenzZentrum, [<http://gender-queer.de/projekte/comic.html>]

Anna Schürch & Nora Landkammer, *Raufbrechen - ein Kommentar zum Thema Repräsentationskritik*, Institute for Art Education, Zurich University of the Arts, [<http://iae-raufbrechen.zhdk.ch/representation/>]

Bernadett Settele (ed.), *QUEER UND DIY IM KUNSTUNTERRICHT*, in Art Education Research °3. eJournal of the Institute for Art Education of the Zurich University of the Arts, ed. by Carmen Mörsch [<http://iae-journal.zhdk.ch/no-3/>]

Elke Zobl et al., grassroots feminism. Transnational archives, resources and communities. [<http://www.grassrootsfeminism.net/cms/node/760>]

an encompassing resource on zines and related activities around the world. Currently didactic materials for zine workshops are being designed for girls and youth employment as well as for multipliers and adult education.

Further education/Workshops:

Jessica Aman, *Kunst und Queer Empowerment*, 3-8 June 2013

Further education at TRIQ e.V. Berlin [<http://www.transinterqueer.org/aktuell/queer-empowerment-by-art/>]

Emma Haugh, *READING TROUPE workshops* (since 2013) [<http://www.emmahaugh.com>]

Josch Hoenes & Nanna Lüth, *Queering the Wild Sky*, Searching for queer readings of the exhibition "Wild Sky" (27 May – 14 August 2011) at Edith-Russ-Haus for Media Art, Oldenburg [<http://www.edith-russ-haus.de/kunstvermittlung/kunstvermittlung/archiv.html>]

Evan Ifekoya & Raju Rage, *(E)merging identity and creative practice*, Talk & Workshop in the context of the exhibition 'What is Queer Today is Not Queer Tomorrow', nGbK Berlin (13 June - 10 August 14) [<http://www.heidyngbk.blogspot.de>]

Nanna Lüth, *Papa, ich bin schwul / Deutschland braucht mehr Ausländer*,

Tour/Workshop/Action on the occasion of the 7th International Photo Triennial in Esslingen (2007).

[<http://www.nannalueth.de/papaichbinschwul-doku.html>]

Ulrich Schötter & Michael Wilhelm, *Schmutzig und Stinkend*. Workshops for children and youths in the context of the program plotting the documenta 12 art education (2007)

[<http://www.documenta11.de/index.php?id=1152>]

Wiebke Trunk & Reet Varblane: *The Personal is Political. Hannah Höch and the interpretation of her art*

Workshop in the context of the Höch exhibition at Kunstihoone in Tallinn, Estonia, September 2010

[[http://www.wiebketrunk.de/kunstvermittlung\\_workshops.htm](http://www.wiebketrunk.de/kunstvermittlung_workshops.htm)]

In addition, at trans and inter\*conferences or LaD.I.Y.-fests various workshops for dance, choir singing, zine or comics production take place on a regular basis.

radical queering revision. Frequently, *whiteness* and *blackness* designations are switched. For example when he reproduces Robert Mapplethorpe's controversial black & white photograph of a black model *Man in a Polyester Suite* (1980), but in colour and with a white man in Lederhosen, whereby the Lederhosen have red-green-black appliqués as a reference to the Black Power movement. Critical counter-information, depictions of personal desire and more converge.

A broad-based research project by **Carlos Motta**, which materialises itself as a website, a book and in the form of spatial installations or events, consists of 50 interviews conducted in Columbia, Norway, South Korea and USA. Knowledge about the history and development of LGBTIQQ<sup>5</sup>-activism (the second Q stands for 'Questioning') is generated under the title *We Who Feel Differently* (since 2009). Five virulent themes resulted from the responses of the interview partners, representing a radical and, at the same time, differentiated – partly as a consequence of the described exchange – political statement by the artist. By using the rainbow spectrum as the main design element, Motta refers to a classical symbol of the gay movement and recharges it, for example, through the parallel formulation of an explicit rejection of gay marriage.

In *The Alphabet of Feeling Bad* (2012) by **Karin Michalski** the queer-feminist theorist Ann Cvetkovich sits on a rumpled bed and, while looking into the camera, recites an alphabetic series of negative affects. She does, however, not appear distressed during this, but rather pensive and composed. The staging of her report to a virtual listener has the effect that depressing experiences are shared and, with this, her aimed for solidarity and political awareness based on similarly minorised life situations are set in motion.

**Sokee**, self-designated Quing of Berlin, raps against the discrimination of women and queers, also in the left scene, in which she is actively involved. She uses rap songs and workshops as means to express herself poetically-politically. She makes ubiquitous 'un-heard-ofs' (about anti-sexism, homophobia, lesbian desire) hearable. And with equal fervour she rhymes discomfiting questions addressed to the education system.

*My gender workbook* (1998) by **Kate Bornstein** offers self-help. Through a stylistic hacking

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<sup>5</sup> Abbreviation for "Lesbian-Gay-Bi-Trans\*-Inter\*-Queer-Questioning"

of so-called hands-on books, gender variance is applied also to heteros, and demanded from them, while crossword puzzles evidence the monotonous hegemony of the binary gender system. Here, those who are otherwise called into question have the advantage when it comes to answering the questions and solving the puzzles.<sup>6</sup>

With *Labor Dr. \_\_\_\_\_ Trans\* Homo* (2012), **Ins A Kromminga and Jannik Franzen** also represent a place of constructive obfuscation in which sexual theories about trans and intersexuality are exaggerated. The installation consisted of a publicly accessible medical examination room in which pseudo-medical works and an absurd motion study featuring the performer Coco Lorès were to be seen. A one-way glass window separated the space from the remaining exhibition. Art viewers automatically became part of the spectacle and quasi turned into metaphors for objects of natural science experiments, into the guinea-pigs which filled the room in the form of patterns on lovingly designed wallpaper.

Such examples of artistic-activist exaggeration and self-empowering ironizing can – within the framework of Queering Art Education – help get static systems of classification to oscillate, with delight create cracks, and make the clear-as-glass level of normativity burst with a loud laugh.

Since we are here concerned with fundamental ‘[racist] orders, [...] which early in a biography have a structuring affect on experience, manners of understanding, and forms of praxis’ (Brodén and Mecheril, 2010: 17), resistant fantasies and effective counter-measures in the field of emancipatory education – besides laughter – are needed. We are, thus, making a start and look forward to the development of an artistic-educational practice that wishes to refer to the existence of a queer-feminist art/education/history, explicitly and unceasingly. And also to a nice portion of theory formation and good recipes for the practice of a still to be determined ‘Queering Art Education’; one to which others can refer back to in order to work with it and to develop it further, such as has been (and continues to be) the case for ‘artistic art education’. It is all very exciting.

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (London, 2004).