

# **Disruptions, Interventions and Liminalities: Reconfiguring the Art Seminar in Response to Daniel Buren's *The Function of the Studio* (1979) as a Site to (Re)Articulate Creative Pedagogic Risk- Taking and Power Relations**

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# **Disruptions, Interventions and Liminalities: Reconfiguring the Art Seminar in Response to Daniel Buren's *The Function of the Studio* (1979) as a Site to (Re)Articulate Creative Pedagogic Risk- Taking and Power Relations**

## **Abstract**

Drawing upon the author's experience of being a performance artist and working directly with an audience as a performer/protagonist, this paper asks: 'What are some of the links between performance (art), peer observation within teaching and exchange of power relation?' By doing so, it makes an original contribution to new knowledge in art pedagogy around power dynamics in *post-studio* environments (Buren, 1979). A three-part framework is employed: *Anticipation, Action and Analysis*. Critical evaluation and personal reflection of one peer observed seminar entitled *Performance and Collaboration* delivered to a group of single honours first year undergraduate Fine Art students at Loughborough University (referred to as LU thereafter) in March 2015, employing a bricolage (Kincheloe, 2008) of digital, performance, fine art and collaboration methodologies, functions as the vehicle to explore the question. It also describes *Anticipation, Action and Analysis* as a structuring device to document events taking place during the seminar in written form. The paper can be read as a benchmark for critical engagement, firstly in its attempt to theorise, articulate and demonstrate the complicated nature of power relations of peer observation within the specified context, with amplified acknowledgement of some of the (psychological) limitations of 'being observed'. Secondly, in its ability to evidence how those relations can be further complexified when disruption, via planned moments of interruption, is employed as a creative pedagogic tool within the art seminar environment to generate practice. The main outcomes of the seminar support, and go beyond, the aims of answering the

question. They define links between performance (art), peer observation within teaching and exchange of power relation in respect to drawing together: 1) the effects of 'being observed'; 2) performative pedagogy and inclusion; 3) the interplay between art in terms of the performative, pedagogic risk-taking and disruption.

### **Introduction: Applying Foucauldian Theories of Power to the Performative and Critical Pedagogy**

Between 2010-2016, I undertook doctoral practice-as-research that responded to Nicolas Bourriaud's (1998) conception of participation and democracy in *Relational Aesthetics*, a curatorial model specifically referring to a set of practices emerging from a promotion for socially engaged art practice, modelled around social conviviality. Critiquing power relations as defined in terms of the relationship between protagonist and audience: **I** (protagonist) do this and **you** (audience) do that, I did not want to alleviate social imbalances of power in participative performance, nor to reinstate them. I simply wished to draw attention to them and use the practice of participative performance as a vehicle in which to initiate discussion of how social power operates in all aspects of our lives (Foucault, 1980).

Power relations were *made visible* by the way participants were instructed to choreograph the actions of their bodies. I construed their participation less as a group of 'participants' and more of an assembly of 'bodies,' one whose exchange—as Michel Foucault asserts—is permeated by an intricate set of power relations, which are intrinsically connected to the body (ibid.). This accentuated the fact that within a collective of people, with varying subjectivities, their body is their commonality; they all have a body, which can be, extending Foucault, controlled and managed.<sup>1</sup> The practice examined participant power relations through an appraisal of the body; as Foucault writes, 'there is nothing more material, physical and corporeal than the exercise of power' (ibid., 58-59).

Foucault's neologism 'governmentality' (Burchell, et al., 1991) refers to the enactment of power over people by government, a version of regulation, a conduct of conducts, or more succinctly, how political power manages to regulate the population

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<sup>1</sup> To expand upon my configuration of audiences as *bodies*, Foucault suggests that power is achieved through techniques of bodily control he calls *biopower*; enacting power through the subjection of the body.

(ibid.). I drew parallels between state power and participative performance: *State is the performer/Subject is the audience*. Foucault's suggests that power is 'tolerable only on condition that it mask a substantial part of itself. Its success is proportional to its ability to hide its own mechanisms' (Foucault, 1980, 56). My performances were a means of planning a situation where the limits of hospitality were explored, in that the situation's hostility was *visible* through the physical actions of the bodies of all participants. For example, *Lost for Words* (2011), produced at South Hill Park, Bracknell, was a lesson in how to influence others (to force them to do what you want them to do) by using a mixture of convivial hospitality and coercive impoliteness to produce a new, or deepened, critical awareness of power uses and abuses in 'ordinary' life.<sup>2</sup>

[...] detectives of new theoretical insights, perpetually searching for new and interconnected ways of understanding power and oppression and the ways they shape everyday life and human experience (Kincheloe, 2008: 49).

Conducting research with a similar curiosity around power plays as Joe. L Kincheloe's description of critical theorists, I have applied Foucault to the performative from my PhD. This is to show how power may be understood in critical pedagogy, in relation to 'the effects of power on shaping and misshaping the pedagogical act' (ibid., 3), as a means of (re)thinking how power relations operate in my teaching practice. Foucault's understanding of social power (1980), my usage of performance as a tool to *make power relations visible* through the choreography of (others) bodies (making performance as mirroring power plays that take place in all forms of daily human existence) link to the 'larger relevance of critical pedagogy involving its capacity to expose (*make visible*) life's permanent conditions of oppression and exploitation' (Kincheloe, 2008, 86).

### **Anticipation, Action and Analysis: Reflective Practice in Action**

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<sup>2</sup> *Lost for Words* supports the difficulties of participation when interruptive processes connected to physical and bodily slapstick are structurally engineered into a live performance. Slapstick is employed as form of bodily interruption to complicate visual and verbal language; what is seen and what is heard:  
<https://www.dropbox.com/s/s4ohem2ql8rdt7i/Lost%20for%20Words%20%282011%29%20.m4v?dl=0>

A write-up of events preceding, during and post one first year Fine Art undergraduate teaching seminar that I devised and delivered at LU in 2015 now follows, evidencing exchange of power relation between a lecturer (me), students, and a peer observer. The narrative structure of the seminar replicates a process I have devised connecting theory and practice: *Anticipation, Action and Analysis*. The write-up structure reflects not only the exact process that I underwent as the lecturer—both in terms of setting up, enacting and then analysing the seminar—but also how the consequent *narrative* of the seminar echoes those stages. These can be broken down into three sections, roughly identical to the three sections of the reflective model. The seminar started with a discussion anticipating events that would take place as part of a forthcoming practical activity (*Anticipation*). The activity then took place (*Action*). It was then analysed and reflected upon (*Analysis*).

### **Stage One: Anticipation**

*Post-studio* practice refers to moving beyond conventional uses of the artist's studio (Buren 1970) to a (re)imagining of how site operates as the location, narrative and eventual critique for art production. The classroom as a 'venue for the construction of knowledge, not merely for its inculcation' (Kincheloe, 2008, 88) aligns with my pedagogic strategy that positions the art seminar environment as a space of liminality (part-laboratory/part-discussion arena). Students move theories beyond abstraction to physical/emotional/practical tangibility.

The aim was to build upon students' theoretical and practical understanding of collaboration as a core issue relating to Fine Art practice (Billing et al., 2007) combining digital, performance, fine art and collaboration methodologies into one activity to create something new by thinking across boundaries and crossing them, effectively generating creative performative works that lie formally *and* conceptually between established media. This practice would help students gain a sophisticated understanding regarding what may constitute the protocols of collaboration, how to encourage potential collectives and embrace differences and similarities. It also required them to think through the following questions: 'What are the problems of collaborative practice?' and 'How can problems (associated with collaboration) be creative?' Assessment of how students had got to grips with the intended learning outcomes would be tested via statement and response, discussion of 'collaboration' in both theory and practice and then subsequent concept checking.

## Stage Two: Action

At the start of the seminar, students began to build a rich critical vocabulary related to collaboration, using 'analogue' media (Post-its/pen and paper) before this was translated digitally using various apps, at the start of the seminar (Figure 1).



Fig. 1: One of the Wordle.net images produced by students during the session

This was followed by students engaging directly in collaborative processes via performative activity where one group of students acted as *interruption-making bricoleurs* (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994) (Figure 2), disrupting the other group's creative response to their set of instructions (Figure 3). From gluing audience members to their seats and purposefully selling the same ticket to more than one person, artists associated with the Historical Avant-Garde often sought to provoke and antagonise by employing disruption via interruptive processes. Students as *interruption-makers* replicated aspects of a collaborative artwork produced as part of my doctoral study, *Contract with a Heckler* (2013). This was a performance about heckling via the act of heckling—a performative response to Claire Bishop's call for more agonism (Bishop, 2006)—by inserting the heckler as both method and object into art performance for reassessing the potential of interruption in democratic exchange, in relation to contemporary theories of art and participation.

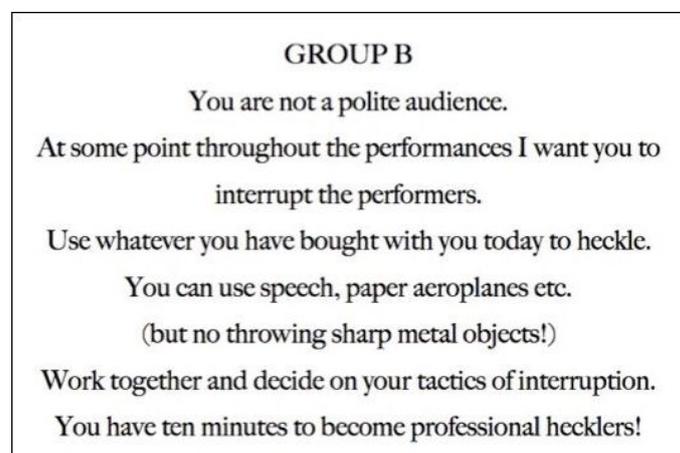


Fig. 2: A PowerPoint slide used during the session

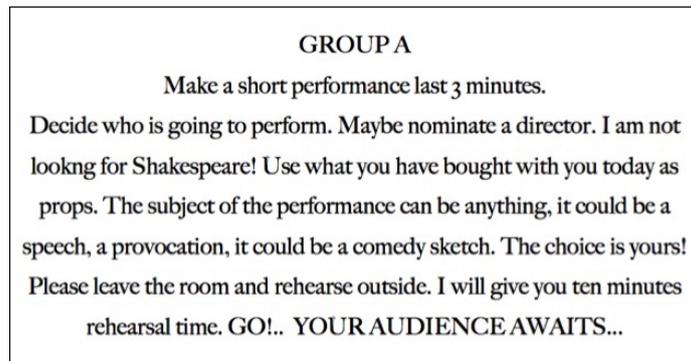


Fig. 3: A PowerPoint slide used during the session

By setting up this activity, I was not only keen to find out how interruption could be effectively used within a pedagogic context, i.e. in the classroom, I was also intrigued to find out what combat strategies or ‘survival tactics’ the students would use (as a group collaboratively or individually) to deal with being faced with interruption (Hound, 2011). Students could then apply this experience directly, in terms of analysing selected examples of contemporary performance practice that contain direct physical and linguistic interruption, a topic to be covered in a subsequent seminar. One of the interruption-makers stripped off to his underpants whilst another picked up her bag, put on her coat and left the room without explanation, returning twenty minutes later. Students used their experience of generating collective and individual performative interruptions to build a further critical vocabulary around the term ‘collaboration’ and to identify emergent concepts including ‘audience’ and ‘participation’ (Figures 4-6).



Fig. 4: Students make further Post-it note contributions to projection wall



Fig. 5: Students make further Post-it note contributions to projection wall



Fig 6: Postings on Textwall by students made during the final reflection stage of the teaching seminar

During a reflective feedback discussion session held towards the end of the seminar, students commented upon what they saw as the benefits of the varying interruptions; for many of the Group A students, the interruptions by Group B helped them to think on their feet, be spontaneous and improvise. Many of the students commented that the time when one of the students temporarily exited was an important moment during the seminar because for them this event was where theory and practice *knit*—a disruptive intervention leading to a critical incident that embodied the power of interruption. In terms of the aims of the seminar, students told me that the session had helped them to further understanding of the key concepts relating to the seminar topic. Resulting from my deployment of Performance-related methods to help the students understand the term ‘collaboration’ in practice, many of them had started to use Performance as one of the major components of their Fine Art practice.

Students said they enjoyed listening to my ‘realia’<sup>3</sup>—my description of the

<sup>3</sup> ‘Realia’ refers to objects from real life used to improve students' understanding of real life situations and is a term most used within the discourse of foreign language teaching (I often used realia as chief teaching tool while working as an English as a Foreign Language teacher prior to my current post as arts lecturer).

usage of a physical written contract to make collaborative work as part of my recollection of *Contract with a Heckler*—after they had enacted the heckling activity. They commented that the stifling formality of the contract, i.e. ‘getting everything in writing’, being told *what* to do and *when* to do it really helped them to think about some of the (uncomfortable) implicit power relations in collaborative work because the contract helped to make explicit those power relations.<sup>4</sup>

Reflective practice relates to transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991), in terms of helping students critically address the implications of their practice, facilitating them to act upon those realisations in the future. Structurally engineering the seminar so that it replicated elements of *Anticipation, Action* and *Analysis*, fostered collegiality between myself and the students as they gained insight into how I devise, execute and reflect upon my own performance practice, as well as giving the students an ‘original, practical and imaginative way of demonstrating reflective practice’ (Newbold, pers. comm., 2015) for developing their own autonomy.<sup>5</sup>

### **Stage Three: Analysis**

Three distinct discussions form the following reflective assessment of the seminar: 1) On-Stage: Liveness and The Effects of 'Being Observed'; 2) Performative Pedagogy and Inclusion; 3) Creative Pedagogic Risk-Taking and Art's Capacity for Disruption. These subheadings, as to be discussed, relate back to the question posed at the beginning of this paper: ‘What are some of the links between performance (art), peer observation within teaching and exchange of power relation?’

#### **1) On-Stage: Liveness and The Effects of 'Being Observed'**

In her report of the seminar the peer observer commented that my overall delivery throughout the session was audible, intelligible and well-paced. She did, however, suggest that the start was somewhat mono-tonal and flat, as well as very

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<sup>4</sup> A copy of this contract can be found here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/a0wkeyj449g1yjm/%20Participation%20Contract%20%28Speaker%3AHeckler%29%20%282013%29.pdf?dl=0>

<sup>5</sup> One student has since told me that using my process and then appropriating it to suit her own practice trajectory has helped her initiate a free flow from theory to practice, an aspect of her learning with which she had previously struggled. Other students have reversed the three stages and found that sequence of actions clearer.

breathy. This was, perhaps, indicative of my nerves at being peer observed. Although I had mentally prepared for the seminar and had briefly run through the contents of the session with the observer a couple of days prior to it taking place, this was the first time that I had delivered the seminar. It may be argued that this was a risk filled strategy and rehearsing the same, or almost identical, session to a different set of students before the observation would have provided the opportunity to 'air out the creases' and 'stamp out' technical glitches.

As a consequence, I was not able to get the seminar room's visualiser to work during the session, which caused me to become agitated in front of the observer. Thanks, however, to the intervention of one of the students, the visualiser began to work and I regained emotional control, relaxed, and improved my tone. With the seminar now underway I proceeded to demonstrate my teaching expertise and 'showcase [my] skills' (O'Leary 2014, 62) in front of the observer. Reading from notes at the commencement of the lesson may well have been down to my nerves. On reflection, it may be useful to learn the beginning of my talk off by heart so I can make and sustain eye contact with the students from the start of the seminar. Once properly into the session, the observer later commented, eye contact was excellent.

The anxiety and trepidation that I felt at the beginning of the seminar was likely to have been caused by my practice as a performer, as I know first-hand some of the psychological and emotional processes that being 'on stage' entails. I understand the emotional investiture required by performers, when in front of an audience—the complexities and problems associated with the act of viewing, witnessing and of *observing/being observed*. How a performer's actions and emotional super-sensitivity are influenced when on-stage by the presence of an 'audience'—'liveness' and 'observation' (Alasuutari, 1996; Freshwater, 2009)—links with the complex relationship between a peer observer and a teacher who is effectively 'on-stage' (Fullerton, 2003; O'Leary, 2014).

'Audience' is paramount to what I do as a performance provocateur either watching me perform, such as comedy, or engaging in direct physical bodily participation, as in the case of *Lost for Words*, previously mentioned. I need the presence of an audience/witnesses to validate that what I am doing is performance in the same way that witnesses are required to legalise a marriage. In this way, I view an audience/the witness as operating as in the case of a performative speech act (Austin, 1976), where a performance needs a witness to validate its existence—

without a witness it didn't happen. Matthew O'Leary's (2005) referral of 'reactivity' in peer observation is worth mentioning here; 'Is a teacher's performance or behaviour in the classroom affected, consciously or not by being observed', O'Leary asks (2005:61), to which he suggests, 'Well, of course it is!' (ibid.) (Figure 7).



**Fig. 7:** Illustration taken from E.C Wragg's *An Introduction to Classroom Observation* (1994,15)

Philip Glenn points to some of the problems of 'being observed': 'observing (even subtly recording) inevitably has some influence on data, however slight it may be' (2003, 40), even referring to an 'Observer's Paradox' (ibid., 14). I argue that the observer/audience member as witness is thus empowered, but that should not be to the extent that she *controls* those person(s) she is observing through her gaze.

The term 'liveness' is often used within the context of Theatre and Performance to describe the relationship between experiencing something 'live' as opposed to a recording/mediatised version of a live moment (Phelan, 1993; Auslander, 1999). Referring to some of the contemporary issues surrounding 'liveness', performance for me is predicated on liveness and the embodied phenomenological experience of 'being there', i.e., being a first-hand witness. As a practitioner who uses performance as a tool, I recognise that I work within a context that is dualistic, a form of creative practice that is composed of two historical traditions (Art and Performance). The trace of an event circulates and becomes new and takes on new forms; its reiteration undermines and challenges the idea that you have to be there. In a pedagogic setting, I propose that the effects of liveness and the embodied phenomenological experience of 'being there' can be linked to debates concerning the reasons why students prefer physically attending teaching sessions, in their real-time delivery, versus experiencing sessions via a form of documentation/recording/ by virtual means.

Relating liveness to 'interruption', I argue that interruption accentuates 'liveness', an important concept for students of art and performance to understand.

Teaching and learning is a *live process* and the teacher needs to be on full alert, ready with tactics such as ‘improvisation’ to deal with its serendipitous nature as a two-way process between teacher and learner. Perhaps it shares similarities with the popularity of stand-up improvisational comedy, in the same way students like to physically attend class in live real-time to see how the performer/teacher can successfully improvise. This is in addition to the benefits of, among other things, learning as part of a collective in a shared physical space, and the affective possibilities of ‘live’ unmediated teaching.

Accepting the serendipitous nature of working with liveness, the question is how do we, as teachers, cope with the chaos of liveness? I argue that the answer is found in a bricolage of improvisation and intuition as methodological survival-tactics. For me, the danger that liveness can engender is half the excitement of teaching and of being a performance artist; ‘coping with the unexpected is an important part of successful teaching’ (Race, 2009, 20). In this light, the performance of interruption is an explicit form of liveness that raises many important questions and points to a politics of surprise. Emphasising consideration of the student experience during the teaching seminar in question, I suggest that students encountered the nature of liveness, albeit in a somewhat artificially constructed setting.

## **2) Performative Pedagogy and Inclusion**

In her appraisal of the session, the peer observer commented that ‘a vibrant and rich learning experience for students’ was achieved and that ‘peer and experiential learning was strongly evident’ (Ingham, pers. comm., May 2015). In terms of my own development as a teacher, the session taught me a great deal about some of the complexities involved when encouraging students to engage in performative pedagogic processes. More urgently, it demonstrated to me the successes (and some of the dangers) of working with interruption; the session forced me to reflect upon issues around inclusion (generating an inclusive learning environment that includes Performance). This was in relation to my emotional state at the time in response to the ambivalent nature surrounding the student temporarily exiting. Zones of demarcation became blurry. It was this uncertainty between whether her act was ‘art’ (a creative response to the task in hand) or ‘life’ (a reaction to the discomfort the student was feeling). When the student in question revealed to the class that her leaving was indeed her means of ‘interrupting’ the performance,

her action (and the momentary uncertainty about its nature) provoked an immediate reaction and call for reflection (Savin-Baden, 2007). As in this paper's earlier discussion of Foucault's conception of power and the body, the student had effectively used her body to interrupt, to complexify, power relations. This teaching session demanded that students be self-assured in using Performance and specifically interruption as a performative technique. I expected students to be confident in using Performance and demonstrate personal feeling with relative ease. Even though the student later revealed that she did in fact feel confident using the technique of interruption, I was unsure whether she had left due to feeling uncomfortable with the activities taking place, at that moment in the session, or whether it was her response to the task—her exit constituting an interruption. In writing that I produced shortly after the session, I conveyed exactly how I was feeling at the time and the questions that I asked myself: 'Bloody hell! Have I set up a teaching activity that has really upset the student, forcing her departure? Gosh. What I have done?'

In her feedback report, the observer noted that to help alleviate anxieties in any performative-collaborative-game-like activities I subsequently set up as part of my teaching sessions, I should try to ensure that I set out clear guidelines to students to enable them to focus on a given task in a manner which advances the learning of all. However, some degree of caution needs to be exercised here in terms of what I refer to as a 'politics of surprise'. Of course, my objective with any teaching activity I set up is one that positively advances students' existing knowledge base, but I need to be careful not to dilute the power of interruptive processes if these form a major component of my pedagogic strategy for a specific class. Indeed, any form of disruption that so underpins Art is a 'transgressive' creative discipline.

It is important to check with students that they are overtly aware of the specific requirements of a task, underlining to them the importance of being responsible in terms of the appropriate nature of their interactions with others. Simultaneously, however, it is vital to be careful not to stifle those students whose creative works contribute to a rich contextual history of artworks (Figure 8), specifically concerned with defining and redefining what we may argue are the limits and boundaries of ethical responsibility, between performer/artist and their respective audience.



**Fig.8:** Marina Abramović and Ulay: *Imponderabilia*, Museum of the Galleria d'Arte, Moderna, Bologna (1977)

Whilst some students in a group may be particularly extrovert and unafraid to express an opinion, others will no doubt be less comfortable in doing so. The inclusivity of and initial guidance for any performance-related activity at the start of a teaching session is key; safe spaces for *all* students to be able to actively engage in experimentation and risk-taking in their practice, in a manner that does not discomfort/upset them.

### **3) Creative Pedagogic Risk-Taking and Art's Capacity for Disruption**

Is interruption an effective form of performative pedagogy in all settings? Is it, for example, more suited to those involving a greater level of critical thinking and collaboration, e.g. the performance art seminar described? Teaching and performance both have aims; they are equally about communication. Art and Performance are all about disruption; they are both forms of dissent, dismantling and deconstructing (Roelstraete, 2012). Parallels can be drawn between Dieter Roelstraete's (2012) insistence that art has the capacity for disruption, the staged interruption taking place during my performance, *Contract with a Heckler*, and subsequent usage of interruptive processes in the art classroom, in order to argue that Performance Art (and Art *per se*) is predicated on rule-breaking and even on discomforting audiences, especially the elitist audiences of Live Art and

Performance. Therefore, it could be argued that interruptive processes are more suited to teaching situations relating to Art and Performance as their potentially disruptive nature *helps* in terms of *communicating* the potential for disruption in art/performance. This is in contrast to other settings, such as English as a Foreign Language where disruption is not a prerequisite for learning how to be fluent and accurate in English.

By one of the students leaving momentarily, she became politicized insofar as her actions affected both me and the other students. When this 'interruption' took place, I was concerned that the student walking out would make me look bad in front of the observer. I was also worried about how the other students would interpret the situation. An (uncomfortable) power relation was set up between myself and the students, the observer and I and the observer and the students. The power relation that exists between a teacher and students may be argued as one where the teacher maintains a higher position of power. However, during this teaching session, this power exchange was disrupted in the first instance by the fact that I was being observed by one of my colleagues (which at times caused me to feel anxious), and in the second, by the student who temporarily exited. Despite my concerns of a loss of power and control in front of both the students and the observer, I enjoyed the discomfort that this situation presented—the 'interruption' provoked immediate reflection and a call for action. The ambivalent nature of the student's exit action (is it 'art' or is it 'life', or an amalgamation of both?) took me by complete surprise. It jolted my senses to such an extent that, in support of Maggi Savin-Baden (2007), the situation forced me to reflect, there and then on my strategy of using performative pedagogy in the form of interruption and its potential impact on student inclusivity/wellbeing.

Issues of inclusivity aside, through her exiting, the student had generated *the perfect interruption* insofar that her actions entirely embodied, what I have described above, art's capacity for disruption. Whilst the peer observer in her appraisal of the session made no mention of this particular student's actions—she did however take issue with the student who decided to strip off to his underpants as his creative response to the interruption activity. She stated: 'some students may be particularly immature' (Ingham, pers. comm., May 2015), and suggested that I, in future, set clear supportive guidelines, at the start of activities, in order for students to develop sound attitudes and professional behaviour in terms of the inclusive nature of

learning collaboration. Some students may have felt uncomfortable about being 'noticed', whilst others deliberately tried to make themselves appear the centre of attention, no matter how far they breached codes of responsibility within the classroom.

This situation does call into question the relationship between art and its capacity for disruption as a form of creative expression and the boundaries of ethical responsibility on the part of both teacher and student. Some may argue that the observer's response to the student, who stripped to his underpants, as 'immature' was unfair—given that that the context was about embracing art's capacity for disruption. Indeed, this situation does prompt important questions concerning subjectivity, values and where one places one's ethical compass.

## **Conclusion**

For many teachers, classroom observation can be a painful interruption/intrusion (Wragg, 1994, 15) in the flow of a lesson's delivery in terms of facilitating a meaningful, creative and enjoyable learning environment that is supportive to both learner and teacher. It may be an 'infringement on their autonomy' (Iqbal, 2013, 558). Despite some of the drawbacks to being observed which I have outlined here, peer observation offers an opportunity to positively engage in a two-way dialogue between observer and observed, to reflect upon individual teaching strategies and methods and their effectiveness at facilitating learning.

The question: 'What are some of the links between performance (art), peer observation within teaching and exchange of power relation?' through research-informed teaching practice (the art seminar in question) has been explored. These links have been defined as relating to how the observer's presence and witness may impact psychologically upon the person(s) they are observing—(in)directly shaping the narrative of events during an observed lesson. Issues surrounding mismatch and incongruity ('immature' attention-seeker/innovative creative risk-taker), in terms of how the observer and I deemed individual student contributions during the class have also arisen.

As part of a guest lecture that I gave on my teaching philosophy and (digital) pedagogic strategy at the Leeds Institute for Teaching Excellence, University of Leeds in November 2017, the chair, Dr. Raphael Hallett asked me 'Does it frustrate

you the kind of conventional criteria we have in place about focus, precision, clarity, coherence, structure?’ and went on to suggest the following:

We tend to value people’s work in terms of that very circumscribed, clean, clear presentation but many of the things you’ve been talking about, disruption, intervention, liminalities etc. are forms of expression that don’t necessarily correspond with that, even collaboration and participation themselves don’t lend themselves to coherence—how do you deal with that in terms of marking/assessing?

The situations with the student leaving and the student taking off his clothes call into question issues at the very heart of creative risk-taking, the type of disruption that Hallett is alluding to here—a kind of creative ‘messiness’ in terms of ethical responsibility, freedom of speech, and censorship. On reflection, rather than worrying about how these students *made me look* in front of the observer, I should have seen their actions as embodying provocative forms of art performance (and a brilliant opportunity to discuss with students all the ethical entanglements that their works seek to question). Nevertheless, the uncertainty (the liminality) surrounding the student leaving would surely concern any tutor *being peer observed or not* to feel trepidation. Remember, at the time I was unsure of her motivations for leaving.

Examining interruption and exploiting its virtues through practice (as a tactic) exposes productive insights into exchange of power relations that go beyond abstract theorization. Interruption can remind us of the implicit power relations at work in social communication processes. The strength of interruption can quickly overturn/switch power relations as demonstrated throughout this paper. Despite teaching activities during my seminar consisting of what may seem quite light-hearted staged interruptions, the *most disruptive* was unplanned by me. The student’s exit provokes important questions not only in terms of what we constitute an interruption to be: ‘Is an interruption an interruption when you know it’s going to happen?’, it also forces consideration of the usage of ‘surprise’ tactics in the classroom: ‘How much should teachers pre-warn students about the possible contents of a teaching session if interruption and disruption structurally underpins the pedagogic processes at play within a teaching session being delivered?’ How does this forewarning potentially effect creativity and room for experimentation? Does it support or does it suffocate?

Previously I have stated that I use performance as a vehicle in which to draw attention and initiate discussion of how social power operates in all aspects of our 'everyday lives' and that I was not looking to alleviate unequal distributions of power in the context of participative art performance. Where my preoccupations with art performance, and now education, align is that in both contexts, I seek to draw attention to inequality in exchange of power relation between a range of participants and institutional forces. Where they differentiate lies in education, where I do in fact, through my teaching philosophy and practice embody a critical pedagogy and seek to *improve inequality*. In other words, I seek to improve the student learning experience for those students who may be deemed as 'marginalised'. In critical pedagogy, 'grounded on a social and educational vision of justice and equality' (Kincheloe, 2008, 6), with aspirations of producing 'sophisticated understandings and engagement in the struggle against inequality' (ibid., 13) I have found an ally and a rich critical community of academics as activists, in which to place my research informed teaching practice that strives to develop inclusive learning environments that are accessible to all.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> My current research/teaching interests have related to improving the lives of students with a vision impairment and developing strategies for students with learning difficulties such as dyslexia to effectively engage with aspects of technology enhanced learning.

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