

Inspirations and References

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Stephanie Endter, Nora Landkammer and Karin Schneider (eds.): The Museum as a Site of Unlearning: Materials and Reflections on Museum Education at the Weltkulturen Museum.
<http://www.traces.polimi.it/2018/10/08/issue-06-the-museum-as-a-site-of-unlearning/>

Here we provide some quotations and references that have proved inspirational for individual members of the team in their everyday work and reflections. We see this annotated collection of quotations as the first step in a process of »changing our mentors« – that is, collectively reflecting upon who we are inspired by, and how new frames of reference can help us to promote forms of solidarity and non-Eurocentric, anti-racist modes of thought and action. Taking a closer look at who we are getting our inspiration from, and with whom we are communicating virtually (and whom we overlook in the process) also implies being able to rethink well-established, often unquestioned practices in our everyday work in the museum, thereby allowing them to evolve. This process is something that we want to illustrate with the following collection of quotations, and even more so, with our personal commentaries.



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BELL HOOKS – TEACHING TO TRANSGRESS. EDUCATION AS THE PRACTICE OF FREEDOM

New York/London: Routledge, 1994.

»Teaching is a performative act. And it is the aspect of our work that offers the space for change, invention, spontaneous shifts, that can serve as a catalyst drawing out the unique elements in each classroom. To embrace the performative aspect of teaching we are compelled to engage “audiences”, to consider issues of reciprocity. Teachers are not performers in the traditional sense of the word in that our work is not meant to be a spectacle. Yet it is meant to serve as a catalyst that calls everyone to become active participants in learning«(p.11)

»Excitement in higher education was viewed as potentially disruptive of the atmosphere of seriousness assumed to be essential to the learning process. To enter classroom settings in colleges and universities with the will to share the desire to encourage excitement, was to transgress. [...] Agendas had to be flexible, had to allow for spontaneous shifts in direction.« (p. 7)

»To emphasize that the pleasure of teaching is an act of resistance countering the overwhelming boredom, uninterest, and apathy that so often characterize the way professors

»Last year, I finally read bell hooks’ Teaching to Transgress, having heard her name many times, and found that years ago, she had already laid the foundation for a critical decolonising pedagogy, which she developed out of her own work. Even though this quotation by bell hooks was tailored to the classroom context in schools or universities, its essence, which bell hooks describes as <excitement>, can be easily abstracted and adapted to the context of museum and gallery education.«

and students feel about teaching and learning, about the classroom experience.« (p. 10)

ADETTY PÉREZ MILES – >SILENCING< THE POWERFUL AND >GIVING< VOICE TO THE DISEMPOWERED: ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF A DIALOGIC PEDAGOGY

In: The Journal of Social Theory in Art Education, 32, 2012, pp. 112-127.

»[...]part of my commitment to socially responsible teaching, I select course content that both focuses on issues inhering in diversity and difference and offers ways to critically analyze the power structures that create social inequality.«(p. 116)

»In essence, these are questions regarding the role and function of pedagogy. For me, these are also questions about the limits of dialogue. As I work to fulfill the idea of socially responsible teaching, a central question arises: As part of my commitment to democratic dialogue, do I have the responsibility to passively listen to voices in the classroom that manifest oppressive ideology? [...] I hold the opinion that any expression of racism, sexism, homophobia, or ableism in the classroom, must undergo critical analysis within the classroom. [...] In fact, giving priority to social justice over dialogue, whether to ›give‹ voice to or ›silence‹ certain opinions can create serious pedagogical, ethical, and political problems«. (pp. 117-118)

»The struggle to center and decenter one ideology over another refracts different ways in which power relations are produced and reproduced. The production of power that leads to transformation is a complex phenomenon that cannot easily be explained or readily measured, especially because dominant ideology is often used to rationalize abuse of pow-

»At first I thought that the text would confirm my growing conviction that we should be ›silencing‹ the powerful and ›giving‹ voice to the disempowered. Adetty Pérez Miles writes from her personal experience as a teacher and analyses her own work. She speaks of the moment when dialogue reaches its limits, and can even become counterproductive (as well as the moment when she reached her own limits). In her position as a teacher she has the authority to silence people and their ability to express their opinions, which enables her to establish and validate her worldview; but, what would be the consequences of that?

She incorporates Mikhail Bakhtin's ideas on »mutual interillumination« and the theory of »dialogism«, which I find exciting and very useful for museum and gallery education. In her text she takes a close look at what happens in practice, and analyses the different reaction models of her students, thus revealing the contradictions and examining the comfort zone of a binary moral system of social values. She also emphasises the need to include gender identities in the discussion of cultural inclusion and exclusion.«

er and structural and systemic oppression (e.g., sexism, racism, poverty, and homophobia).« (p. 116)

AUTHOR COLLECTIVE – »AUTONOMY OF THE WORKING CLASS AND LANGUAGE CONFUSION: YOUR LANGUAGE, MY LANGUAGE, OUR LANGUAGE?«

In: *Ästhetik & Kommunikation*, 11, 1973, pp. 38-58.

»From there they exposed the ambiguity of the Socratic concept of ›dialogue‹ (which Freire also continues ...). The outcome of the discussion was that ›whoever asks the questions is in charge of the situation.‹ There was no shortage of evidence supporting this thesis. It suffices to observe, for example, what the police do: questions and interrogation; or what the forms issued by public authorities are: infinite series of questions ... The transition from recognising this fact to implementing it was immediate: ›We ask the questions: never answer, answer every question with a counter-question‹« (p. 49).

»I often imagine I'm already in a dialogue with the participants in a learning setting, simply because I replace statements with questions. In regards to asking questions, I've learned a lot from this text. The author collective had a real impact on me because it shows that in Frankfurt, as far back as 1973, migrants and members of the majority culture were already articulating the main criticisms of the discourse of integration in education, and proposed a »multi-national culture« as an alternative model, while remaining sceptical about the emancipatory promises of critical pedagogy.«

LISA DELPIT – THE SILENCED DIALOGUE: POWER AND PEDAGOGY IN EDUCATING OTHER PEOPLE'S CHILDREN

In: *Harvard Educational Review*, 58, 3 August 1988.

»To do so takes a very special kind of listening, listening that requires not only open eyes and ears, but open hearts and minds. [...] To put our beliefs on hold is to cease to exist as ourselves for a moment – and that is not easy. It is painful as well, because it means turning yourself inside out, giving up your own sense of who you are, and being willing to see yourself in the unflattering light of another's angry gaze. [...]

And finally, we must learn to be vulnerable enough to allow our world to turn upside down in order to allow the realities of others to edge themselves into our consciousness. In other words, we must become ethnographers in the true sense.« (p.297)

»Delpit advocates for realistic and conscious reflection upon power relations. She speaks as an experienced teacher and theorist who draws her analysis from her own practice. Listening also implies listening to those voices that are silenced by different systems. It is a type of listening that not only requires open ears, but also open minds and hearts. At first glance, the text seems to be very specific to American educational institutions and programmes, but it can be applied to issues that are long overdue in German educational institutions, such as: where are the »multi-national«, »minority« teachers in German schools?

Some questions that are relevant for museum and gallery education and can be triggered by this text are: What value system am I conveying when I speak? How do I pass it on?«

**BONAVENTURE SOH BEJENG NDIKUNG – UNLEARNING THE GIVEN.
EXERCISES IN DEMODERNITY AND DECOLONIALITY OF IDEAS AND
KNOWLEDGE**

Long Night of Ideas, 14 April 2016, SAVVY Contemporary, Berlin, Germany, available at <https://savvy-contemporary.com/en/events/2016/unlearning-the-given/> (last accessed 03.07.2018).

»Unlearning is not forgetting, it is neither deletion, cancellation nor burning off. It is writing bolder and writing anew. It is commenting and questioning. It is giving new footnotes to old and other narratives. It is the wiping off of the dust, clearing of the grass, and cracking off the plaster that lays above the erased. Unlearning is flipping the coin and awakening the ghosts. Unlearning is looking in the mirror and seeing the world, rather than a concept of universalism that indeed purports a hegemony of knowledge.«

»People often ask me what unlearning means. When I use this quotation, with its poetic simplicity, the concept seems both clear and motivating.«

Reference

Research team TRACES/Museum Education at the Weltkulturen Museum: ›Inspirations and References‹. In: Stephanie Endter, Nora Landkammer, and Karin Schneider (eds.): *The Museum as a Site of Unlearning: Materials and Reflections on Museum Education at the Weltkulturen Museum*, 2018, online at <http://www.traces.polimi.it/2018/10/08/issue-06-the-museum-as-a-site-of-unlearning/>.

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