

## **Queering Ourselves: Performance as a Site for Learning**

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### Abstract Summary

The following study examines learning communities that are involved with art. It is an investigation of culture in action and community as interactivity. Here learning and culture are both examined "as" performance, as a happening only understood in hindsight, as an event that becomes known through experience. By employing queer criticism, I engage in a process of re-considering, re-investigating, and re-examining what I thought was familiar about the cultures that are near me. In this study I ask how various performances of my art classroom are and are not related to one another.

In this report queer theory is combined with performance theory to articulate alternative notions of subjectivity. The combination of queer and performance theory is useful because it forces knowledge to be understood as activity. On the one hand queering is about the use of direct address to gain insight through the inclusion of the other. And, on the other hand, performance theory is about the development of subjectivity through critical reflections on what has been done. In the space of performance art new meanings for the relationships between subjects can erupt. This work with queering and performance is an attempt to understand how experiences of difference can be used as sites for learning in the art classroom. The intention of this paper is to push us to find those queered points of engagements between ourselves and the students, the curriculum and our experiences in the world. It must be understood however that knowing is always difficult because it is the learned application of a particular relationship to a subject. There is nothing that we just "know."

All of the events cited in this writing come from performance works done in and around my university art classes. This dissertation explores how performance art undertakes the process of decontextualizing concepts, ideas, or observations in order to recombine them into new ways of perceiving and including the other in the body of the self. Here it is argued that with the use of performance, the artist and audience, teacher and student, or author and reader can be queerly re-positioned so that they both feel as though their presence matters in conversation .

Specifically, this study mixes ideas from critical theory, race criticism, and feminist pedagogy with practices of performance pedagogy. (Abstract shortened by UMI.)

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