CHAPTER 7

Art|Education: In the Service of Designer Capitalism

INTRODUCTION

As Florida (2002) writes regarding the ‘creative class,’ “Creativity is now the decisive source of competitive advantage” (5). Creativity has indeed received a ‘new life’ in art education. For a long time, no one was speaking about ‘creativity.’ It seemed to be a forgotten discourse, partly perhaps because art could not claim exclusive rights of its possession. Many other ‘subject’ areas could claim the same territory. Things have changed, mainly due to the new economic realization that creativity is good for business and good for everyone. The Korean Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism has declared the twenty-first century to be that of ‘creativity.’ Jesook Song (2010) has recently edited a number of essays that point to this continued neoliberalism in South Korea. The opening keynote for the Second World Conference on Arts Education held in Seoul on May 24–25, 2010, which I attended and participated in, was delivered by the husband and wife research team of Robert and Michele Root–Bernstein (2001), who specialize in ‘creative practices.’ Their presentation was entitled “arts and science, education and creativity, research and practice.” They made the claim that Noble Prize winners were creative people in the way they crossed the borders

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between art and science, and that these two fields are intimately related. This has certainly been the trajectory, especially with design engaging intimately with various wet and dry technologies. Nevertheless, every art practice is now informed by various technologies of all kinds, what I call the inhuman agents of smart machines (AI), as well as biological engineering when it comes to new explorations of bioart as explored in Chapter 11.

The melding of science and art is an initiative long since begun by the American entrepreneur, author, and literary agent, John Brockman (1995), who is the president of the Edge Foundation. Brockman’s ‘third culture’ meets the demands of the information age where the visual and the literary have come together, i.e., image and text form the new ‘hieroglyphics’ today as company branding of logos and the emergence of an ‘image culture’ make it mandatory that an aesthetics of the ‘glance’ becomes operational. By a ‘glance aesthetics,’ I mean that consumer attention has to take place at the ‘blink of an eye,’ so that the eye/I becomes spellbound for that infinitesimal moment. Entertainment, style, fantasy, play, the body, and the figure are all the new emerging tropes for what is an age of electracy (Ulmer 2002). Museum and art education have turned toward exhibitions that now break down the borders between art, technology, and science so that these fields have become more and more fluid and symbiotically engaged with each other. A neologism should therefore be appropriate, something ridiculous like tech-sci-art.

Peter Weibel, an influential Austrian art critic who was the chairman and CEO of the Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie in Karlsruhe, Germany, has curated many exhibits where art and science have come together: for example, net condition (Weibel and Druckrey 2001) and Iconoclash (Latour and Weibel 2002). Not surprisingly, he too calls this a ‘third culture,’ which he maintains is ‘beyond art’ as we know it. Jenseits von Kunst (1997) literally “the otherside of art” was translated into English as Beyond Art: A Third Culture (2005). This is a thick compendium of the influences of technology on art in the twentieth century. In his own essay, called “Logokultur” (1997: 732–733), he makes the point that we have moved from the symbol to the logo as everything became commodified, the condition that I call ‘designer capitalism.’ In terms of electracy, the figure as the mode of apparatus replaces the narrative of orality (religion) and argument, the mode of print literacy.
The question I ask in this chapter is just what kind of creativity are artists, and teachers of art being called on to perform where not only ‘logocentrism’ dominates (in the two senses that this word implies: a form of reason and rationality that is being ‘branded’ on the body via corporate logos), and an erosion of what are called ‘traditional’ arts that have become more and more forgotten. Every traditional art now must embrace forms outside its usual purview. A whole new set of artistic fundamentals have emerged to make this possible. Olivia Gude (2004) offers a partial list: appropriation, juxtaposition, recontextualization, hybridity, layering, gazing, text and image interaction, and representin’. It seems that there is no time left in the curriculum for traditional studio practice, especially as we approach the end of secondary education where portfolio preparation is very specific and technological innovation is encouraged in International Art Baccalaureate programs. Perhaps the charge of being ‘backwards’ is most often heard regarding traditional arts since a digital aesthetics seems to be sweeping through schools. The globalization of the marketplace though designer capitalism requires a shift in educational curriculum and reform, and that is what is precisely taking place globally as new flexible workers are needed. As Martin Heidegger (1993) once put it, this is the creation of ‘standing reserve’ of laborers for the twenty-first century.

**Designer Capitalism’s Creative Industries**

In the 50th anniversary issue of *Studies in Art Education*, the leading scholarly journal in the field in the United States, Enid Zimmerman (2009), a respected American art professor wrote a comprehensive essay on creativity in art education, examining the various ways in which the field had taken up the concept. It was a useful exercise since it provided the parameters and limitations as to its theorization by those who set policy and leadership. In her conclusions and recommendations, Zimmerman takes note that globally Asia and Europe have embraced creativity and recommends that, as a concept, it should continue to be *leveled*. Creativity should be understood in all-inclusive terms available to everybody, rather than an exclusive endeavor confined to a small coterie of people. Creativity is then beckoned to do yet another task undertaken by classroom teachers. Zimmerman calls on a shift from artistic talent and self-expression to, not surprisingly, reconceptualizing its new role in the twenty-first century in the following way: She writes,
“[I]t is apparent that students need to be prepared for a new information age and that educational interventions in art education for all students that foster creative thinking, imagination, and innovation are important for generating solutions to real life problems both now and in the future. [...] Researchers and practitioners need to conceive of creativity as multidimensional with consideration of how cognitive complexity, affective intensity, technical skills, and interest and motivation all play major roles” (394). Such an agenda seems reasonable. It has so much commonsensical force as it questions what seems like a sacrilege: self-expression, genius, excellence, and the exclusivity of masterpieces. But, perhaps the call for such a paradigm shift is precisely the kind of subject position demanded of the educational system by designer capitalism’s global need for a flexible subject who can problem solve and innovate?

John Hartley’s (2005) edited book, Creative Industries, provides a good account of why ‘creativity’ has become the overwhelming road to economic growth and success. Creative industries refer to the “conceptual and practical convergence of the creative arts (individual talent) with Cultural Industries (mass scale), in the context of new media technologies (ICTs) within a new knowledge economy, for the use of newly interactive citizen consumers” (5, author’s emphasis). Richard Florida (2002) identifies a ‘creative class,’ which is not large numerically as a service class, but provides the dynamics for growth and change, as well as the temper of the times. Richard Latham (2002) has identified the way youth have been seduced into the new media industries (especially video game enterprises) where they have been both exploited and made obscenely rich from their creative passions. The new flexible self is modeled on artists, musicians, professors, and scientists who have always set their own hours, dressed as they pleased and worked in stimulating environments. Never ‘forced’ to work, the difference between play and work disappears. Work is play and play is work. Such a model becomes the new subject position for the no-collar workplace where the hierarchical system of control, at least in the North American context, is replaced by new forms of self-management, peer recognition, and pressure, as well as intrinsic forms of motivation. John Hartley calls this ‘soft control,’ where what looks like independent work, flexible schedules, and bonus incentives shape the workplace. However, job security (tenure, for example) is traded in for autonomy. Incentives are given for more production, and there are opportunities to increase one’s skills, an ability to grow and to shape the content of one’s work. The expectation is that any student graduating today will have several employers throughout their careers;
hence, the portfolio, like the artist, has become a necessity to ‘present’ oneself (a euphemism for ‘selling’ oneself like an itinerant worker).

It should (again) be no surprise why Enid Zimmerman’s call to level creativity for everyone in recognition that in today’s world creativity belongs to the working of global capitalism in its designer mode to encourage technology, lifestyle, and entertainment. When it comes to ‘designer creativity,’ there is really no shortage of it: just open any television channel, or if you want the pure product in North America you can watch Donald Trump’s *The Apprentice* (the celebrity version) where brutal capitalist competition is made into a game, but this is compensated by celebrity players (Hollywood stars, musicians, sports figures, cooking chefs) winning money for their favorite charities. In this game ‘everybody’ wins. Donald Trump’s logo is made more prestigious and the celebrities are not seen as narcissistic and filthy rich, but kind and caring people trying to help the poor and support those with misfortune.

This is an old ploy of capitalist deceit that comes back to the nineteenth century in the Victorian novels of Charles Dickens. It is also a strategy that won Trump the White House in 2016. Entertainment, business, and politics (finally) became indistinguishable and out in the open. Trump showboats, lies, trash talks allies, stages military parades to the economic limits that are possible, golfs, provokes the press and journalists, hosts visiting dignitaries at his resort, Mar-a-Lago, Florida, flies where he needs to on Air Force One (which will soon be redesigned to his satisfaction), eats hamburgers to show he ‘too’ likes fast food, and has many of his staff and trusted employees lunch and dine at the Trump Tower on a regular basis. It is a profile of a millionaire living like a billionaire on taxpayer’s money to make him even more money. In short, the Presidency of the United States has become an Entertainment Factory. His ratings are based on how many eyeballs he can keep glued to his Twitter account, Fox News Network, and right-wing newspapers and Internet sites, as well as his wooed Evangelical Christian communities (estimated roughly to be 25% of the population!), who hypocritically turn a blind eye to all his misdeeds and moral transgressions. They are quite happy making a pact with the devil. Any evangelicals who call this hypocrisy out are seen as a deviant fringe.

If all this is not convincing enough, one should revisit James Cameron’s *Avatar*, the greatest grossing film of all time and watch the way a new post-colonial fantasy is able to reinstate a particular global imaginary. *Avatar* is a cross between the American fantasy of *Pocahontas* and Kevin Costner’s *Dancing with Wolves*. The Natives (the Navi) are
saved by a castrated white savior (he is unable to walk), who learns to tame a dragon so that he can be recognized as their leader. The only choice the Natives have is to be saved by humans or be destroyed by them. The fantasy of hybridity, as ‘going Native’ in the manner of French artist Paul Gauguin, comes full circle as the hero now biologically transforms into a Native to have sex with the chief’s daughter. Now that’s creative! The $2.77 billion dollars of profit upon its release was also the highest grossing film of all time.

**Art Education’s Response to the Creative Mandate**

In the March issue of *Art Education* (2010), edited by Enid Zimmerman on the theme ‘considering creativity,’ the eight articles chosen from the forty submitted provide a confirmation of designer capitalism’s thirst for creativity. Aside from Olivia Gude’s article, which I will mention more below, all of the articles support a redefinition of creativity that will meet designer capitalism’s demand where technology (see Bryant 2010), science/engineering (see Costantino et al. 2010), and digitalization (see Shin 2010) are put to use in art education. These are all well-meaning projects, sincere in their attempt to revamp the art classroom for the twenty-first century. After all, art educators cannot ignore the media, the new technologies, or the ‘frameless’ digital image, which itself requires a re-theorization as to what an image can ‘do,’ one of the themes that run throughout this book. What is does show, however, is that the best creative minds in this field are caught by the ‘pragmatism’ that drives the student consumer mentality around the need to move in the direction of ‘edutainment,’ a sense of gratification to fill any perceived lack. Digitalization heads toward graphic design and creative problem-solving. The breaching of the borders between art and science is a key issue.

As the lead article, through her seven points that characterize the creative persona, Kerry Freedman (2010) articulates the strongest case for revising the meaning of creativity in this special issue of *Art Education*. When followed and sold as a package, it confirms the marketability of creativity. How can I say this about what seems to be such a solid well-thought-out agenda? It is precisely such an agenda that drives (Trieb) corporate global designer capitalism, and unquestionably, if such an agenda (or one closely resembling it) is not followed, then our students will have no jobs and positions. They will not be ready to creatively participate in the economic world. In this sense, we are held accountable
to it, or feel we are letting our students down. I go through her seven points to advertise their urgency and to raise questions:

Creativity Depends on Critical Reflection: ‘Critical’ here refers to self-reflective discontent. Whether its environmentally conscious artists like Chakaia Booker or Korean artist Ji Yong-ho, who both recycle rubber tires: the material becoming both a fetish and a passionate attachment, to make all kinds of strange, grotesque, and ferocious dragons, sharks, minotaurs, unicorns, and beasts in Ji Yong-ho’s case; or public sculptures and personal statements on physical scarring that people go through as they become judged by their class, race, and labor in Booker’s artwork. Freedman mentions both of these artists as being ‘critical.’ We can point to a further example, not mentioned by Freeman, but which makes a similar ‘critical’ statement: the masterminds of FCUK designer clothes, whose economic interests seem to be on the opposite ends. Both exemplars are driven by conflict and controversy. In the environmentalist case, this draws more people into the gallery on the grounds of awareness; in the latter case, wearing FCUK clothing sends the message of being sexy and different out into the public domain. Capitalism’s schizophrenia is driven by creative conflict. This is a tough pill to swallow since a number of artists and educators, myself included, have placed a lot of credibility on the need for critically resistant art.

My point here is to worry precisely how such critically resistant art is part of what drives (in the Freudian sense of ‘drive,’ Trieb) the capitalist machinery as well. FCUK is just one example. Recall Oliviero Toscani’s controversial socio-political photographs to sell Benetton line of clothing discussed in Chapter 2. I found Johanna Drucker’s (2006) Sweet Dreams: Contemporary Art and Complicity to be most revealing in the way that critical self-reflexion is very much part of the art market game. In brief, it is “complicit” in celebrating the exuberance of visual culture. The rhetoric of the avant-garde as being critical of the social order is long past. “Works of fine art are capable of sustaining contradictions, performing oppositional or resistant functions while simultaneously serving mainstream interest. Fine art frequently is also both what it claims to be (independent thought, discrete from the other form of cultural expression, a separate domain of alternative values) and what it pretends not to be (bound up with the values of the status quo and the ideological system that sustains it)” (17). Throughout her book, she questions the legacy of criticism and any claims to moral superiority. Such an ideological stance has already been hijacked by designer capital. Luc Boltanski
and Eve Chiapello (2005) *New Spirit of Capitalism* outline such historical ‘progress,’ where creativity was hijacked and put to capitalist ends. Suhail Malik (2013, 2019), as well, provides a similar claim throughout his three-part lecture series in 2013; namely that contemporary art functions through negation; it is a Hegelian move that avoids any turn to affirmation, which a Deleuzian approach to art would provide.

Pamela Fraser and Roger Rothman’s (2017) *Beyond Critique: Contemporary Art in Theory, Practice, and Instruction* provides a review as to what has happened to ‘critique’ historically since the Frankfurt school. “Post-critique begins with the identification of limitations (subjective, personal, plural [institutional]) and it never ends—because limitations may shrink and shift, but they can never be made to disappear entirely” (5). This assessment is closer to the more affirmative position of Deleuze and Guattari who maintain that it is a ‘problematic’ that is at stake. Sometimes, in visual and media education, the notion of a ‘big Idea’ identifies such a problematic that artists throughout the ages have struggled with since all such ‘problems’ are set by historical, social, political, and ethical limitations. The current problematic has to do with the Anthropocene, for instance, where the question of agential forces by both nonhuman and inhuman (AI) must be considered. This is unprecedented in ‘human’ history.

In sum, Drucker’s focus was on analogue artists in the 1990s caught by visual culture. In the previous chapter, I suggested (following Maurizio Lazarrato’s videophilosophy) that a critical intervention may be possible—but already this involves quite a different understanding of how ‘critique’ might perform in the capitalism of electracy, one where neuro-receptivity of the brain comes into play. Digital and video art turn the axis from traditional arts to modulating the image, its speed and time dimensions requiring interventions that innovate and disrupt technologies of cybernetic control. Lev Manovich (2002) and Mark Hansen (2004), along with Warren Neidich, would support such a direction as they all attempt to rethink the way brain activity and reception are managed by designer capitalism might be disrupted. Such a direction has yet to have any traction of significance in our secondary schools at the time of this writing.

*Creativity is Based on Interests:* This second point hardly needs articulation since the days of small inventors and patent acts have intensified into today’s ‘possessive individual,’ the gaming and computing corporations that guard their patents against the free software
movements (FSM). Tapping into desire is designer capitalism’s greatest asset. To change the orientation of interest here, something that Freedman does not mention would be to recognize creativity based on interests that are not just self-interests, but global interests such as FSM that sets the agenda in a completely different direction, which is against designer capitalism’s greed for empire building. Or, in the case of COVID-19 pandemic, price gouging for indispensable respirators, surgical masks, and personal protective equipment (PPE) could be curbed, and companies federally asked to retool to manufacture such scare resources. In short, interests are obviously, hierarchically, and politically set. Freeman mentions Kevin Warwick’s cyborgian experiments on himself as inspired by the television sci-fi series, Dr. Who as an example of a creative thinker. But this seems pale when compared to the thousands of obsessed Asian students, mostly in Japan, Korea, and Singapore who go penniless and hungry so that they can use up their money to build their own personal robots and compete in robot fairs sponsored by Sony, Mitsubishi, Hyundai, and the global robotic industry in general where contracts and awards are given to the most successful. This is not to deny that game-like activities where youth build robots and learn to operate them are somehow a bad thing. No. My point is simply that such activities are being perverted by a robotic industry controlled by major corporations, which make free access, or the sharing of success of youth robotics unavailable to all. What interests are beings served becomes the ethical qualifier.

Creativity Is a Learning Process: Freedman notes that creativity is autodidactic. While this piggybacks on the notion of self-interest as the previous trait number 2, it identifies what has become the mantra of the most advanced forms of schooling by parents who want their children to succeed in a capitalist environment. It is an agenda pushed by charter and private schools as well as corporations in general—and that is: ‘learning to learn.’ Lifelong learning draws on the rhetoric of the active self-initiated and self-regulated learner exploring in a learning environment where the teacher is a facilitator. ‘Learning to learn’ is meant to enable the student to adapt to the information society. There is no escape from this. Parents feel that there is no other choice in the matter but to make sure that their children get the very latest and best technological ‘toys’ in the school environment. Happiness and well-being are considered part of the permanent communication needed for the social learning process. The old expression for this was “whistle while you work.”
This now means wearing your earplugs attached to your cell phone when you ‘create’ in the workspace or classroom. The Sony Walkman is a distant memory. The fierce competition to enter the best schools and universities to make this happen has already been discussed in previous chapters.

**Creativity Is Functional:** Again, it becomes impossible for art schools and educational departments to think the ‘unthought’ of creativity—that is, creativity that isn’t caught by the framework of economy of functionality. Even what is ‘useless’ must become useful; otherwise, it remains non-productive. It cannot be graded on some established scale to identify achievement. The distinction between what was once a divide between play (capitalist leisure) and work (labor) has blurred, if not vanished. In an information designer society, this has collapsed into edutainment—playful work or workful play (see Colman 2008, 2012). The awkward sound of ‘workful’ indicates that the creative task has to first tap desire (Moore 2010: 27 uses the term “play-bour”). Everything one does today has to be performative: ‘learning to learn’ as playful work that, in the last instance, must be proven to be functional, useful, and effective. Anyone applying for research funding learns this quickly. The invention of a wheel without its functionality cannot be called a ‘wheel’ as was the case in the great Inca, Aztec, and Mayan civilizations.

**Creativity Is a Social Activity:** This rather obvious trait has interesting implications in designer capitalism for it becomes obvious that the lone inventor, patent maker, or ‘da Vinci like’ genius can no longer be functional. Genius is usually co-opted within the corporation. It now takes a marketing team, a production crew, and fan cultures created around some idol or passion to be seen and heard, otherwise forget it. Even so-called indie productions become swallowed up into larger collaborative networks to ensure competition and presence (it’s called market share). When it comes to designer education, creativity as a social activity is cast in environmental terms. The classroom now becomes the designed environment that facilitates learning so that students can pursue their passions independently through technological means such as Internet, game-like curricula, and research via global access to information. The teacher becomes the facilitator. What has emerged from this mentality is the so-called makerspaces spearheaded by a ‘Maker Movement’ where inventive ‘free play’ can go on via new technologies to develop technical literacy.
A great deal has been written on this new movement that finds itself institutionalized mostly in universities, libraries, galleries, and museums that clearly show that these spaces are geared toward the entrepreneurial market (Ratto 2011; Ramsay and Rockwell 2012; Hatch 2013; Rosenfeld-Halverson and Sheridan 2014; Reider and Elam-Handloff 2018). This is largely a do-it-yourself (DIY) movement whose sustainability depends on how regular these spaces are used, maintained, and result in productivity. The bottom line, any major initiative that shows promise is generally scooped up by larger tech-companies, a way to incorporate new talent and keep ideas being fresh. The ‘slave-like’ robotic making mentioned earlier, also a DIY endeavor, is mitigated in these more accommodating places where the technology is available for play. As Paolo Virno (2004) has argued, communication and cooperation have become the very fabric of capitalist production. It is Félix Guattari (1984) who breaks with this kind of organizational thinking through his exploration of the ‘transversal,’ which can produce different forms of (collective) subjectivity that break down the dominant mode of individual and the group. So the question of ‘social activity’ that informs creativity should never remain naively unquestioned.

Creativity Involves Reproduction as well as Production: This is the deal breaker of designer capitalism, the dividing line between economic and non-economic status of creativity. Words like classic, innovative, nostalgic, traditional, and original begin to infest the concept of creativity as it is taken up within knowledge production and functionality. It is a question of how ‘reproduction’ as ‘repetition’ is theorized. Under designer capitalism, repetition and reproduction remain caught by innovation. Economic grounds determine whether the product or any new commodity will succeed or not; thus, some projects are dropped immediately since they are not economically viable. Freedman draws on the Polish philosopher Edward Nęcka, a psychologist at the Jagiellonian University, to make a claim for a number of levels of creativity that range from no conscious employment of knowledge to eminent use of knowledge. Applied to education, the more the knowledge use, the better to achieve accomplishment and satisfaction.

Here, we have the dividing line placed as high as it can go. On the other side of the fence is the non-productive scribble where ‘repetition’ can introduce difference that does not repeat the same. Opposed to the non-sensical scribble is the accounting of cognition at the level of the signifier that guarantees or rather assures the success of completion. The
difference between the ‘figural’ (‘scribble’) and the figurative (signified complex cognition) has been explored extensively by Lyotard (2011) showing just how the ‘line’ at the figural level can be ‘taken for a walk,’ as Paul Klee famously said, allowing for new letters of the alphabet to be developed rather than being confined to alphabetic standardization or to acceptable Chinese characters. Such a grasp of how line communicates affectively has been attributed to neuroaesthetic developments where some people actually ‘feel’ line with their bodies (Marks 2018). The return of repetition bringing with it a true ‘difference’ that breaks with production is a thesis Gilles Deleuze (1994) develops in his complex book, *Difference and Repetition*. Deleuze called this return of repetition with a difference as an event. And, whereas ‘original’ has lost flavor in post-structuralist thought, it is precisely the ‘unprecedented event’ as theorized by Alain Badiou (2005), a contemporary French philosopher, who has revived creativity proper (see jagodzinski 2010).

Finally, Freedman ends with: *Creativity is a Form of Leadership*. Leadership has become a key signifier in designer capitalism. Leadership on Trump’s *Apprenticeship* television program—as project manager—leads to either failure or big profit pay off, being fired or praised for the brilliance of the creative act—that is, the ‘risk taking’ as Freedman praises. Creativity under the leadership signifier is measured by the potential of who and how many followers—that is, people who are influenced by the creative act. We fall back once more on an economic model. Leadership, especially when it comes to CEOs of companies and corporations, is the creative position. The company makes it or breaks it depending on the team assembled. The expectation is that the CEO knows where to take the company ‘forward,’ and is able to keep it as flexible as the individual subject needs to be in a global competitive environment. The leader and the team assembled as measured by some task are the usual formula here.

**There Is Creativity and Then There Is Creativity**

Probably nothing that I say in this chapter can or will change the trajectory of art and the way it is taught as it presses up to designer capitalism’s demands. Enid Zimmerman (2009) in her historical review of the concept points out on several occasions the many disagreements as to just what creativity ‘is.’ This should not be too surprising, since creativity is not a thing, but its reification within different phases of capitalism
is necessary to put it to economic use by making certain that the educational institution will support the fantasy necessary to sustain a nation’s economic growth. Jobs depend on it, the nation’s prosperity, the value of its currency, and so on. The increase in postdoctoral positions and PhDs for artists is yet another indicator that the mantra of ‘learning to learn’ becomes a question of survival in a capitalist world. Parents, students, and professors are not exempt from it, but are held hostage to it. The advancement of chartered schools to promote the flexible, neoliberalist performative subject is well on its way. Multi-tasking is a euphemism that hides the requirement that workers work more efficiently and cost-effectively, often being driven to distraction. Lifelong learning is yet another euphemism. It basically means lifelong career jobs are a thing of the past; expect to lose your job at any time; and be prepared to reskill as companies need to perpetually restructure to remain globally competitive.

We should be reminded that while art education is almost forced to aid and abet designer capitalism to remain viable as a ‘subject’ area in an age of accountability, the marriage between science and capitalism is equally entrenched when it comes to designer drugs. Pharmaceutical scientists are trained and contracted to work, not on drugs for the newly resistant strains of malaria, tuberculosis, and respiratory infections that killed, for instance, 6.1 million people in underdeveloped counties in 2001, but on creating lifestyle drugs for impotence, obesity, baldness, and wrinkles. Of the 1223 new medications introduced in 2001, only one percent was developed for the illnesses in poor countries. Viagra sales totaled more than one billion dollars in the first year alone (Smith 2009). Have things changed since the turn of the century? Hardly. Creativity remains abundant, put always for-profit ends. The jury is still out when it comes to a vaccine for the COVID-19 pandemic. Any mention of an experimental drug that may be helpful to alleviate symptoms is immediately bought up, its price spikes. Trump pushing hydroxychloroquine to ward of the coronavirus despite its dangers and ineffectiveness is a case in point. The research ‘race’ for a vaccine, or vaccines globally will lead to pharmaceutical windfalls.

**Where to Next?**

My key point has been simply to argue the way art and design are taught, by-and-large, supports and abets capitalism. The signifier of creativity has been mobilized to ensure this situation. It requires that education be held hostage when it comes to the pressure to make sure that art (mostly
as design) remains useful so that employment for its graduates can be found. Creativity directed elsewhere seems to be unfashionable, and a total waste of time for students as clients. It is the central paradox of teaching in what is perceived to be a ‘useless’ subject area unless it leads toward and assures a place in the myriad of practical possibilities: interior designer, animator, game industry illustrator, makeup artist, fashion designer, teacher, and so on. The one exceptional essay within the Art Education special on creativity was by Olivia Gude (2010). It was the only essay that dared think the unthinkable—namely the unproductive side of art that targets difference as such, the singularity of the students. As with Freedman, I would like to take each of Gude’s points to show how they potentially offer a redirection from designer capitalism that she has been engaging in.

Anxiety: In her first act of description, Gude reflects on an exchange that took place between student and teacher, wherein the student doesn’t know what to ‘do’ despite the openness of the project. A few weeks later, there is a further reflection by the same teacher on the lackluster paintings that emerged by those same ‘dispirited’ students. “Both teacher and student are feeling anxiety-uneasiness, apprehension, psychic tension” (32). This situation clearly relates to Freedman’s 2nd characteristic regarding interests. Anxiety may not be the best way to define this incident. To be anxious is to have some object, abstract thing, or person just ‘too close’ so that one cannot bear to have in come any nearer or the body will faint/freak in some way. No. I would say here the concern is with the demand of the teacher. What is the teacher’s desire, and why can’t the student somehow match it? And further, why can’t the teacher match the demand of her students? There is a missed exchange. Something is missing between them that I will come back to.

Resistance: In her second act of description, Gude reflects on a number of teenagers refusing to engage in open discussion on what they can project into a ‘multi-branched inkblot.’ Here, Gude gets closer to how anxiety is generated as she maps out the potential hindrances to a response: not wanting to look stupid in front of peers, not wanting to upset the teacher, not knowing just what the teacher expects, thinking that the exercise is too silly in relation to serious art, and so on. Something is missing here as well, but here resistance also relates to Freedman’s 2nd point.

Cultivating Creativity: Act three is Gude’s resolution to the dilemmas presented by the anxieties and resistances students bring into the
classroom. “Immersion, wonder, and not knowing” (33) are the psychological bye-ins achieved when there is trust, empathy, and an atmosphere that is free of immediate judgment in place within the classroom and among the students and their teacher. Gude’s *Spiral Workshop*, held on Saturdays, and hence outside a school setting, sets up an alternative space, which she frames with her own set of themes and experimentations she calls ‘Principles of Possibility.’ Her curriculum, however, is emergent; it begins with many useless activities based on Surrealist games. Put in my terms, these are the *figural* dimensions of arting, what Klee called “taking a line for a walk” mentioned earlier. This is not simply production (Freedman’s 6th point). Only in this way are signifiers unhinged from their moorings. The most difficult part of remaining open to the world is avoiding the cliché, which infests life through habituation and repetition. Gude brings up anxiety once again when discussing students who then begin to really engage in their own personal becoming, overcoming roadblocks, dead ends, and then facing perhaps unbearable anxieties that they must cope with. It is here that a different formation of leadership (Freedman’s 7th characteristic) is raised that speaks to a community of witnessing, including the teacher. This is an engagement that has nothing to do with the usual ‘art critique.’ It is a way the class pulls together to engage in conversation and push onward. Here, different bodies interact in different and unusual combinations so that a new synergy might take place.

**What’s Missing?**

Gude has the advantage of home court, not having to be caught by the school’s institutional constraints through her *Spiral Workshop*, which can be found online. It was stated many years ago by Laura Chapman (1982) that schools tend to produce “instant art” and “instant culture” if there is no attempt made to break the spatial and temporal patterns of the structured classroom. You reproduce institutionalized art. It is always a creative endeavor to rearrange the curriculum, the art projects, and materials and vary one’s approach. However, what I think is missing in the debates on creativity is the profound recognition as to what creativity actually is all about, what Zimmerman, despite her comprehensive review, cannot name. Creativity when not captured as a ‘thing’ or a ‘describable process’ is the *spirit of life itself.* It is the *becoming* of things, the changes that are continually taking place, nonstop. Creative life itself,
without capture, is Zoë, and Zoë is the becoming of things constrained only by the symbiosis of what surrounds them. It is what Deleuze (2001) called A Life or pure immanence. Captured and made functional Zoë becomes bios. The withholding of judgment by Gude in her Spiral Curriculum is what allows her classes to have ‘life.’ Death is allowed in as failure is celebrated. No grades here that appear on a report. The students have not been dispirited. But what if they fail in their creative processes? It is precisely them failing and letting themselves down, not having to listen to the demand of the teacher that opens the potential of creativity. Those students pay attention to such a demand only when the teacher’s voice becomes psychically healthy. They know she is there to help them through life, holding their spirit intact, so to speak. Creativity is really the spirit within one. That is what should be cherished. To the degree it becomes packaged and caught by the demand of the Other (teacher, business, clients, priests), creativity will be repressed through anxiety and resistance. I see Gude’s pursuing a much healthier road for art education than the persistence of designing a creative subject for economic gain. But, hers is not the direction art education is pursuing.

For anyone who has read Agamben’s (1988) updating of Michel Foucault’s biopower will quickly realize how creativity as biopower is manipulated within designer capitalism. The never-ending vitriolic debates on health care in the United States are an obvious example where insurance and pharmaceutical companies and the neoconservative agenda that support them deal in death in the name of life. Creativity that deals with death is all around us. Its necrophilic roots (Lushetich 2018; Mbembe 2019) penetrate within our very being wherever we look, yet we cannot think the ‘unthought’ of creativity that would offer education an escape from the schizophrenic madness of pronouncing judgment, time and time again within the hierarchies of representation that preserves and captures creativity to feed the machinic desire of global designer capitalism. I say as art teachers we should turn our attention to ‘life’ with its failures and ignore the demand made on us by the pressures of capital. It leads our students more to sickness rather than health.

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