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Creating Artist Citizens: Transformative Movements in Art Education and Programming
Créer des citoyennes et citoyens artistes : mouvements transformationnels en éducation et programmation artistiques

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Article abstract

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Creating Artist Citizens: Transformative Movements in Art Education and Programming

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Abstract: Increased professionalism, a powerful art market, and the technological revolution are begging for an overhaul in arts education and museum programming. This paper provides insights into alternative approaches that have emerged over the last fifty years and hints at the urgency for future iterations. During my time as an art professor, I implemented alternatives to today's art schools, such as field schools, free schools, and ek-stitutions. From fourteen years working in Mexico, I learned of social and cultural movements like rural boarding schools, the Free School of Sculpture, and the Intercultural Documentation Centre. Back in Canada, when I was working as a museum educator, my programs were influenced by concepts such as educational turns, participatory programs, museum hacking, and the social work of museums. This paper presents transformative movements in arts education and programming, each with the goal of creating artist citizens ready to participate in a global society.

Keywords: artist citizens, fourth places, action pedagogy, escuelas normales rurales, free school, field school, *Tusovka*, ekstitution, educational turn

Fourth Places' and Free Schools

Futurist Elizabeth Merritt predicted a new educational era in her 2012 Trends Watch publication (Merritt, 2012). With accreditation in Future Studies, she was one of the founding members of the Center for the Future of Museums. The Center publishes an annual forecasting report, and in 2012, she foresaw the end of an era in formal learning due to the emergence of non-traditional forms of schooling, dissatisfaction with the system, funding challenges, gender imbalance in higher education, and the rise of digital content. Merritt pointed to alternatives such as open learning systems, online content, self-paced virtual classes, flipped classrooms, hybrid approaches, MOOCs, webinars, micro-credentialing, digital badges, and instructional videos, to mention a few.

Merritt writes that much of tomorrow's work is being invented in real time, with predictions indicating that 20 percent of the jobs that will exist in 2060 have yet to be invented. Furthermore, she believes that museums can empower people to anticipate and even invent these new roles (Merritt, 2012, pp. 23-25). Adam Rozan of the Smithsonian Institution sees museums as "fourth places" (2017, p. 21) where people come to work, learn, and teach each other. In an era of unaffordable and impractical higher education, museums can serve as sources of continuing education. Indeed, he defines a museum as a collection of physical objects used to engage artists and innovators in preparation for the 22nd century.

However, other alternative approaches have been emerging since the sixties and seventies, almost fifty years prior to Merritt and Rozan's (2012 and 2017) predictions. Each proposal hinted at the urgency for future iterations of today's art school, such as field schools (Pujol, 2009), free schools (Rogoff, 2010a), *tusovka* meetings (Misiano, 2002), and ek-stitutions (Schneider, 2020). From fourteen years working in Mexico, I learned of social and cultural movements like rural boarding schools (Camacho & Hernandez, 2008), *tapelewi* gatherings (Gonzalez, 2008), the Free School of Sculpture, and Ivan Illich's Intercultural Documentation Centre (Smith, 2010). Back in Canada and working as a museum educator, my programs were influenced by concepts such as educational turns (Rogoff, 2010b), participatory programs (Simon, 2010), museum hacking (Nick Gray), and the social work of museums (Silverman, 2010). This paper shares these transformative movements in arts education and programming, each with the goal of creating artist citizens ready to participate in a global society.

'La Esmeralda'

My interest in alternative learning was formed during my tenure as an art instructor between 1999 and 2007 at Mexico City's National School for Painting, Sculpture and Printmaking' La Esmeralda.' As a result of revolutionary unrest during the early twentieth century, the institution was formed in 1927 as the Free School of Sculpture and Carving (Morales, 2015). It rose out of a handful of centres in working-class neighbourhoods that sought to end academicism and promote nationalism. Experimental and intuitive, it was open to all regardless of gender, age (even children could join), or economic, political, and social circumstances. When it opened in 1927 in the Ex-Convent of Mercy on Esmeralda Street (saving the latter from demolition), 350 students enrolled—most of them indigenous—seeking formation in the trades. They learned casting, stone carving, ceramics, carpentry and carving, and blacksmithing. It later became the Central School of Plastic Arts for Workers (1939) and finally the School of Painting, Sculpture, and Printmaking (1943). It has been nicknamed 'La Esmeralda' after the street it initiated on. Even today, the school is governed by the National Institute of Fine Arts, and admission is free, although entry is highly competitive, with 500 applicants vying for 50 spots annually.

I taught under the directorship of Arturo Rodríguez Döring (1998-2004) and then Othón Téllez (2005-2009). During his time there, Döring was finally able to implement the new curriculum passed by the Institute in 1994 but not implemented until his tenure began in 1998, one that freed it from traditional figurative painting to include conceptual contemporary art (Rodríguez,

2015). Then, in 2007, Téllez was tasked with updating the curriculum, and I was a member of the committee that got it successfully passed by the National Institute for the Arts.

Figure 1

Guillermo Ruiz (Centre left) and students working in the Free School of Sculpture and Direct Carving, Casasola Collection, c. 1927-1942. Photo courtesy of the Museo Nacional de Arte, Mexico City.

Figure 2

National School of Painting, Sculpture, and Printmaking La Esmeralda, National Centre for the Arts, Mexico City, 2015. Sculptures shown are by students from the Free School of Sculpture and Direct Carving. Photo by Dianne Pearce.

Action Pedagogy

There is a notable history of socialist government educational institutions in Mexico. My mother-in-law tells of life as a thirteen-year-old at La Vanguardia, a rural boarding school for campesinos (*escuelas normales rurales*) in Tamazulapan, Oaxaca, between 1944 and 1947, followed by two years at a similar all-female boarded Teacher's College (El Internado Palmira Escuela Normal Rural para Mujeres) in Cuernavaca, Morelos from 1948 to 1949. The Federation of Socialist Rural Students of Mexico (FECSM, founded in 1934) is the oldest student organisation in the country and supports theories by Marx, Lenin, and Engels. The *normales* have been scrutinised since they were founded in 1922: governments have always eyed them with suspicion, often referring to them as greenhouses for guerrilla activity. However, FECSM maintains that they teach critical, analytical, and reflexive thinking by revealing injustice and teaching the disadvantaged about their rights (Camacho & Hernández, 2008). Many of the *normales* were closed after the student uprisings in 1968, so as of 2008, only seventeen continue today.

Rural boarding schools emphasise learning by doing or action pedagogy (Padilla, 2021). They are self-sufficient farms with orchards, carpentry and metal workshops, cultural clubs, and sports activities. They seek to be sustainable, self-sufficient cooperatives, each having about sixty students who perform the work. Students obtain bachelor's and teaching degrees with an emphasis on preserving culture and tradition but from a socialist framework, including economics, problems facing the impoverished, and worker-labourer legislation. However, when students leave as certified teachers, they are not merely teachers; rather, they also act as doctors, handy people, farmers, carpenters, metalsmiths and so on, depending on the needs of the community. The prerequisite for admission is simple: you must be poor and come from a family that works in agriculture. Selection is carried out by provincial and federal educational authorities along with the students themselves, many of whom are indigenous or mestizo. There are no assessors nor assessments; instead, older students mentor new ones in the spirit of community learning.

For the students, the *normales* are not just schools but their "home, family and educational opportunity; and more than that: an opportunity at life" (Camacho & Hernández, 2008). My mother-in-law does not idealise her time there (she speaks of long hours, hard work, and intermittent hunger), but she went on to teach history for thirty years at a government elementary school in Mexico City. She and her family saw the schools in Tamazulapan and Palmira—boarding schools complete with full scholarships—as an opportunity for a better life.

Figure 3

Escuela Normal Rural Vanguardia, Tamazulápan, Oaxaca. March 2020. Photo by Marlene Aldeco Reyes-Retana, LLM.

The boarding schools recall the polemical ideas of Ivan Illich, who lived in Mexico for some time: he advocated for deinstitutionalisation in favour of more convivial forms of education where celebration, open-endedness and egalitarianism were paramount for lifelong learning (Smith, 2010). His life was dedicated to showing how institutionalised education has come to obscure and undermine the value of everyday forms. Similar to the *normales*, Illich's answer was action over consumption, a convivial alternative where modern systems would serve politically interrelated individuals rather than the elite.

Illich began as a priest in one of the poorest neighbourhoods of New York, home to many Puerto Ricans. He then worked in Puerto Rico before moving to Cuernavaca, Mexico, in 1961 to establish the Intercultural Documentation Centre (*Centro Intercultural de Documentación*), which was essentially part of a research centre offering language courses to missionaries and part of a free university for intellectual hippies from across the Americas. Although dispatched by the Vatican, Illich soon began teaching missionaries not to impose their cultural values but instead to identify themselves as guests in the host country. After ten years of critical analysis of the Church's

actions, the Centre found itself in conflict with the Vatican and closed in 1976 to avoid formal academics and institutionalisation. Although the Centre closed and Illich left the priesthood, he continued to be popular among leftist intellectuals.

Illich conceived of four Education or Learning Webs long before the World Wide Web appeared: reference services available 24/7 not only in libraries but also rental agencies, laboratories, showrooms, factories, airports, and farms; a skill exchange in which people list their skills, working conditions, and address for people to contact them; a peer-matching network that lists courses and mentors available for training; and a directory where professionals list their qualifications and references, from which they can be hired to teach. Interestingly, all of Illich's Learning Webs are in existence today, thanks to the internet. His ideas align with non-formal education, which encourages dialogical forms—the creation of relationships between human beings and their environment. Such relationships reference the notion of social capital in which the importance of convivial institutions is recognised as sustaining communities.

Figure 4

Ivan Illich led the seminar at the Intercultural Documentation Centre, Cuernavaca, Mexico, in 1971. Photo by James S. Roberts. Courtesy of Northwestern University Libraries.

Tusovka and the Informal Public Sphere

Indeed, the sixties and seventies witnessed ruptures in artistic education around the world. The Russian concept of *tusovka* refers to the anarchist artistic and intellectual community of the mid-twentieth century, forced underground to avoid persecution from the Communist Party (Misiano, 2002). Although *tusovka* literally means to shuffle, today, it is used as slang for hanging out. The Café Saigon in Leningrad (1964 to December 1991) is one of the best-known *tusovka* cafés where intellectuals were able to create conceptual art and share Western writings that were not authorised by official culture and were, as such, illegal. They were places where banned European books would be translated: pages would be written by hand in Russian and passed around, or a reader would translate live (Misiano, 2002).

Elena Zdravomyslova calls this the "informal-public sphere" (2003, p. 143): the cafes were symbolic locales for the urban intelligentsia whose everyday practices represented an (illegal) alternative to officially sanctioned life. The meetings were convivial and included drinking sessions, informal and absurdist humour, and the creation of events and performances—a meeting at the café was regarded as the starting point for a night of conviviality.

Figure 5

Restaurant Moscow (nicknamed Café Saigon), 49 Nevsky Prospect corner of Vladimirsky, Leningrad (now St. Petersburg), 1973. Photo by Viktor Gorbachev. Archive of Dimitry Konrandt. Appreciation to Dr. Elena Zdravomyslova.

The Art of the Art Assignment

Meanwhile, in New York, artist educator Paul Thek generated his teaching notes for a 4-D Sculpture class, which he taught between 1978 and 1981 at Cooper Union. Using forty questions and instructions, Thek approaches art as a process of self-discovery, interrogation, and dialogue with others—he challenges students to treat the classroom not as a space for theories but as part of their everyday reality. The list begins with biographical questions but quickly moves to thought-provoking topics that require research or doing small projects. The Teaching Notes re-appeared in 2006 when artist Harrell Fletcher was hired to teach the same course at Cooper Union: as a performative act, he revived the list for his studio class where Thek himself had taught twenty-five years earlier.

Art teachers have since passed around the now famous list for the past few decades. Indeed, as young profs at La Esmeralda under Rodríguez Döring (1998-2004) and then Téllez (2005-2009), we embraced it wholeheartedly. In 1994, La Esmeralda moved to the new Centro Nacional de las Artes, a cultural, artistic, and educational centre consisting of a massive grouping of buildings, each designed by a distinct prominent architect. The Centro includes schools for film, visual arts, dance, theatre, and music, and houses an arts research building, library, gallery, media centre, art store, café, and, more recently, a twelve-room cinematheque. Spearheaded by the Ministry of Culture, the objective behind this project launched in the nineties was interdisciplinarity: to create academic and artistic cooperation between institutions both in Mexico and abroad.

This same year, La Esmeralda adopted a new curriculum, one that sought to offset the current emphasis on plastic arts with added theoretical and conceptual components. Although launched in 1994, this new curriculum was resisted until 1998, when Rodríguez Döring took the helm and hired docents to flesh out the existing roster. So we worked alongside our colleagues who specialised in materials and techniques, which now included theory, visiting artists, contemporary art, and apprenticeships. We were up-and-coming artists, and many of my colleagues have gone on to have prominent national and international careers. Several of them embraced Thek's Teaching Notes in their sculpture and three-dimensional classes. At the same time, I developed entire courses based on concepts of *tusovka*, participatory aesthetics, and service aesthetics, which aligned with my research and art production. I began inviting artist friends to critiques, taking my classes to visit artists' studios, and doing end-of-year interventions in empty buildings loaned by students or friends. We were reimagining art as transformation by shifting disciplinary boundaries.

Years later, in 2012, Thek's Teaching Notes were published in "*Draw It With Your Eyes Closed: The Art of the Art Assignment* (Petrovich & White, 2012). The editors asked numerous artists and teachers to share the best art assignments they've given, received, or heard of, which resulted in an informal investigation into the task of teaching art after postmodernism. The book suggests a model that erodes the boundaries between art school and the world—dissatisfied with the theoretical focus of current art education. The editors break out of the everyday confines of the

classroom experience. Since La Esmeralda of the early 2000s was a hot spot for Thek's Teaching Notes in Latin America, my former student Sofía Olascoaga was invited to contribute to this very publication, providing insight into how the Notes were applied to art pedagogy in Mexico City at the time. The longevity of Thek's list can be attributed to its adaptability: instructors freely modify the assignments so they remain relevant as contexts evolve over the decades.

Tapalewi, Artist Citizens, and Field Schools

In 2006, the same year Fletcher was reviving Thek's Teaching Notes at New York's Cooper Union, Cuban-American artist Ernesto Pujol founded The Field School while teaching at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. As a mobile "ephemeral classroom with legs walking around the city" (Sweeny, 2013, p. 3), it shifted the boundaries between art school and the world. The Field School was the result of seven years of working with visiting artists and artists-in-residence who, in turn, provided on-site field training for students. During the seven years prior, Pujol invited locals and students to participate in his production process. Piqued by this, the students themselves requested unique working and learning experiences via involvement in projects, and the Field School was established (Sweeny, 2013).

Pujol has degrees in art, art history, and philosophy and then studied theology (as did Illich) before pursuing graduate studies in education, art therapy, and communication. He fuses performance with instruction by way of student retreats akin to field schooling in temporal classroom settings. Much like Mexico's Free School of Sculpture, the *normales*, Illich's Centre, and *tusovka*, he says art students need access to training in other disciplines because being an artist is a lifelong journey of creative, critical thinking that must play a social role in democracy. In his essay for *Art School: Propositions for the 21st century*, he shares that his objective is to generate "public intellectuals, visual scholars, and artist citizens … who participate in global society" (2009, pp. 6-9).

Pujol also suggests that students volunteer via placements or internships because the issue of the audience is not raised enough, and it is usually assumed that the work is being done for a gallery context. He feels that educators need to guide students to help viewers through their work's complexity. To do so, he advocates for having community-based pedagogical experiences integrated into the curriculum so that long-term partnerships can be established with communities whose leaders are willing to participate in the education of artists. Thus, the emphasis is now on problem-solving through culture rather than on the purity of mediums. La Esmeralda—and indeed many universities in Mexico—requires students to carry out 480 volunteer social service hours to graduate. As a practising artist myself, students were able to assist me in my studio, so for the nine years I taught there, I had a thriving production and exhibition schedule. This schedule is a far cry from the visual arts department at local universities, where internships are optional and require only 100 hours. However, while working as Curator of Public Programs at a regional museum in Southwestern Ontario between 2008 and 2016, I welcomed many students who were keen to gain experience within the gallery sector. Indeed, as a department of one, I was indebted to these committed interns who helped carry out innovative programming.

The idea of how a community can drive social change harkens back to the *normales* and *tusovka*. Still, I propose it goes even further back to the concept of *tapalewi,* widely used by the Nahua people just prior to the arrival of the Spaniards and still in use in some communities today. The Nahuatl word *tapalewi* refers to the act of mutually helping one another, which was typically implemented when communities united to build thatched palm houses, harvest corn, and do seasonal fishing or when they celebrated weddings, births, and funerals. It refers to forming interdisciplinary teams that strengthen processes through dialogue and the sharing of knowledge and skills (González Martínez, 2019, pp. 275-288).

But beyond performing these specific tasks, *tapalewi* involves the concepts of identity developed through a collective construction that allows the individual to develop a sense of belonging by sharing common cultural goals. *Tapalewi* is developed through interaction and reciprocity between inhabitants and the common desire to share history and culture as a life philosophy. It remains an integral part of a harmonious society in some regions of Mexico, even today.

Figure 6

Tapalewi *or mutual aid while building a traditional mud and palm structure, 2021. San Isidro de Zaragoza, State of Veracruz, Mexico. Photo by Erasto Antonio Candelario.*

The Educational Turn

Educational changes in the nineties affected museums as well: they witnessed a second era, as it is called, one that turned from a focus on collections to that of education and programming. In 2006, Goldsmiths professor Irit Rogoff produced a project called Academy: Learning from Art, Learning from the Museum, which consisted of collaborative exhibitions in various European museums (Rogoff, 2010, Turning). The project asked what audiences could learn from museums beyond their displays—how museums help us think differently, how they provide principles applicable outside their walls, and how they promote lifelong learning. Rogoff called this the educational turn: turning to education as an operating model that can transform museums. In this sense, curatorial practice becomes the art itself through social encounters, interactions, discussions, and knowledge. Museums rushed to create education departments. I returned to Canada in 2007 and the following year was offered a position as Curator of Public Programs at a regional museum in Southwestern Ontario. It was a new position that had been created eighteen months prior to my hire.

Art educator and filmmaker Florian Schneider worked with Rogoff on the Academy project and others. Schneider says that digital technologies and networks have triggered the process of deregulation. He proposed a term that parallels the earlier concept of *tusovka*: the ekstitution, as defined as deinstitutionalised spaces such as informal networks, free universities, open academies, squatted universities, night schools, and even museums. He writes that this began in the eighties when students questioned discipline-oriented post-secondary institutions, their segregation of knowledge, and the lack of other points of view. It was a realisation that "learning could suddenly take place anywhere: in the streets, in bars or clubs, in self-organised seminars, in the office spaces of so-called social movements, in soccer stadiums, through subcultural fanzines, in squatted houses or even science shops" (Schneider, 2010, p. 2).

Whereas in a formal institution, there is an inequality between those who know and those who don't, the ekstitution is indifferent: it doesn't matter who possesses knowledge because there is instant access to it everywhere. Ekstitutions proliferate today, especially with widespread technology; they remain outside the institutional framework, and instead of progress, they are based on temporality (Schneider, 2010). They are not antagonistic to institutions but rather complement them and compensate for the deficits of institutional frameworks. Whereas the challenge for institutions is how to remain flexible and innovative, that of the ekstitution is mere survival.

In 2010, a few years after Rogoff's Academy project, she envisioned Goldsmiths Free at the University of London (Rogoff, 2010, Free)—free of fees and previous qualifications, free of exams and state monitoring, and non-degree based. Production, disciplines, or conventions would not frame knowledge; rather, it would be presented in relation to issues in the contemporary world and would combine the known and the imagined, the analytical and the experiential. Rogoff advocated for free tuition to shift it from the Ivory Towers of knowledge to spaces of dialogue where the new paradigm would be one of participation and social relatedness. In short, a British reimagining of Mexico's Free School of Sculpture, the *normales,* and the Intercultural

Documentation Centre, as well as Russia's *tusovka* cafés and Pujol's Field School.

Rogoff says that "thinking through the free is not one of liberation from confinement, but rather one of undoing … containment" (Rogoff, 2010, Free, p. 9). For her, knowledge should not be geared towards production but rather posing questions that combine the analytical and experiential, so the terrain of knowledge is increased to just beyond what can be conceptualized. And how do you do this financially? Like Schneider, she points to models offered by the internet: first, a cross-subsidy model in which you get something for free if you buy another; second, the cost of circulating something lowers significantly the more it proliferates until the cost is no longer the primary indication of its value; and third, a shift from a focus on buyers and sellers to a tripartite model in which the third element enters based on an interest in the exchange taking place (i.e. advertisers). The likeness of Rogoff's suggestions to Illich's pre-internet Learning Webs discussed earlier is not surprising: in 2010, Rogoff participated in a conference hosted by the Serpentine Gallery in the United Kingdom called Deschooling Society. The name is taken directly from Illich's radical book of 1971, which critiques the Western educational system.

Figure 7

Art cart, Queen Elizabeth Park Cultural Centre, Oakville, 2017. Designed and photographed by Dianne Pearce. Built by technicians in the QEPCCC woodworking studio.

The Social Work of Museums

The educational turn and the second era of museums had a profound effect on exhibiting institutions. Nina Simon was director of the Santa Cruz Museum in California between 2012 and 2020, turning it from a sinking ship to a million-dollar cultural hub in a few short years. As a museum worker, she was able to take Pujol, Rogoff, and Schneider's notable theoretical ideas and put them into action through participatory programming that included relational and service aesthetics.

Before taking the helm at Santa Cruz, she was an exhibit designer and museum consultant who took the world by storm with her blog called Museum 2.0 (2006) and then self-published two books called *The Participatory Museum* (2010) and *The Art of Relevance* (2016): all are dedicated to working with community members and visitors to make cultural institutions more dynamic, relevant, and essential. She dissects the process of participatory change, showing how to augment a museum's programs or mission by inviting people to engage as active cultural participants, not passive consumers. Again, she points to technology: it has ushered in a set of tools that make participation more accessible, so much so that visitors now expect the ability to discuss, share, and remix what they consume. Her book is based on three fundamental theories: the idea of the audience-centred institution that is as accessible as a shopping mall or train station, the idea that visitors construct their meaning from cultural experiences, and the idea that users' voices can inform and invigorate both project design and public-facing programs. All while furthering the mission and core values of the institution.

She elaborated on the role of technology in her blog post "Khan Academy and the Revolution in Online Free Choice Learning" (Simon, 2012). This Academy is a free, non-profit online source for educational multilingual videos, which have been accessed by 100 million viewers annually since launching in 2006. Its mission is serious: world-class education for anyone, anywhere. In the early years, Salman Khan added new faculty Drs. Beth Harris and Steven Zucker, both formerly of the Museum of Modern Art, who are known for their *Smarthistory* website and podcasts (Beth Harris was Director of Digital Learning at the MoMA). The switch to working for a start-up like the Khan Academy allowed them to produce a staggering ninety videos in four months.

Both Harris and Zucker affirmed that we were leaving behind the eighteenth-century model of education where groups of students are expected to learn at a standard pace. Although we often talk about museums as alternatives to formal schooling, both feel museums rarely pursue this in innovative ways—in fact, both Harris and Zucker lament that museums are notoriously slow ships to turn (Simon, 2012, pp. 2-3). Although my eight years at a large regional museum (between 2008 and 2016) were exciting ones full of films, events, symposia, tours, classes, camps, guests, bands, theatre, and many rewarding partnerships, I was an underpaid department of one and thus a passenger on the slow-moving ship that Harris and Zucker speak of.

Furthermore, Harris and Zucker mention that while "the principles of digital publishing—which is iterative, personal, prolific, and collaborative—could unleash museums as active centres of learning and engagement … they produce relatively little content for public consumption on the

web. The focus remains on the high status, expensive and little-read exhibition catalogue, instead of developing web-based content that will draw more visitors" (Simon, 2012, p. 3). The catalogue is a valuable archival record for both artists and museums, but still, today, the tangible printed object trumps digital versions. Artists arduously negotiate for printed catalogues, many accepting a lower exhibition fee in exchange for hard-copy documentation of their exhibition. A catalogue can cost up to ten thousand dollars depending on fees for the writer, photographer, designer, and printer—and ironically, these individuals receive higher fees than the artist does for the exhibition itself. Publications are heavily subsidised by funding bodies but then often stored away in the dark recesses of institutions. I have known storage rooms filled with boxes of gorgeous books published years ago—the artist would receive a dozen or so (depending on what they could negotiate), another fifty would be mailed to organisations participating in a catalogue exchange, others would settle in museum shops, and the remaining would be in storage for years.

Another young visionary, Nick Gray, played a big role in transforming museums in the early 2000s. Gray detested museums until a date invited him to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, and he became obsessed with researching pieces online, returning weekly to view more. He then organised his thirtieth birthday at the Met, where he showed friends a few of his favourite pieces and three things he would steal. Before he knew it, he was giving fun free tours to dozens of twenty-something friends and acquaintances, so he formed Museum Hack, a company of tour guides and consultants who provide fun, fast, story-based tours in American museums. Then, working with museums, he began giving tours to millennials where they would sit on the floor, do selfie challenges, pose with sculptures, hand out candy, gossip about the artist's life, choose pieces they'd like to steal, and then visit the restaurant. When a blog wrote about these experiences, he had over a thousand emails the next day. In a year, he was hitting $1 million in sales, and a few years ago, he sold the business for seven figures. Gray believes that audiences need to be entertained before they can be educated: museums have the power not only to inspire but to help us unwind.

Hailed as visionaries, Simon and Gray have both crossed the border to speak at various Canadian conferences over the last decade. Public programmers across the country, myself included, flocked to listen to them and rushed back to our institutions, inspired to implement all manner of participatory experiences. Many institutions, staffed predominantly with baby boomers and older, even launched sub-committees of their boards, which were comprised of millennials who were tasked with engaging the next generation of supporters through events that catered to their demographic. Between 2011 and 2017, the museum where I worked created a volunteer committee called Museum Underground. Having autonomy from programming, education, and curatorial departments, they were granted carte blanche to create their programming. Called First Fridays, Third Thursdays, Museum After Dark, Night at the Museum, or similar, they hosted wildly successful parties that included music, performance, film, fashion, costume, art, and, of course, a bar and dancing. In 2018, Museum Underground changed its name to Special Events Committee, which may be the result of millenni

als aging out as well as the fickleness of trends.

Social worker and museum scholar Lois Silverman (2010) agrees with Gray that museums can help us unwind: we have moved away from the second era of museums (education) into the third one, that of social service. Museums have long been institutions that benefit society through collecting and education. But now museums are using their resources to benefit human relationships and repair the world; they have become spaces for meaning-making, social well-being, and even transcendence. Silverman feels that "it is from the field of social work that museums have garnered essential approaches and practical guidance to inform their social service efforts" (2010, p. 23).

In her book *The Social Work of Museums* (2010), Silverman speaks about how museums affect people's lives, their relationships, and society at large. Museums are under financial and social pressure to justify their existence and relevance today. Silverman's research indicates that with their unique resources, museums have a powerful role to play as agents of social service. She believes there is a lot of transformative work to be done in this area. In concordance with Pujol, she vies for profoundly democratic museums, a way of seeing them as welcoming places that are instruments of social transformation rather than shrines of elitism.

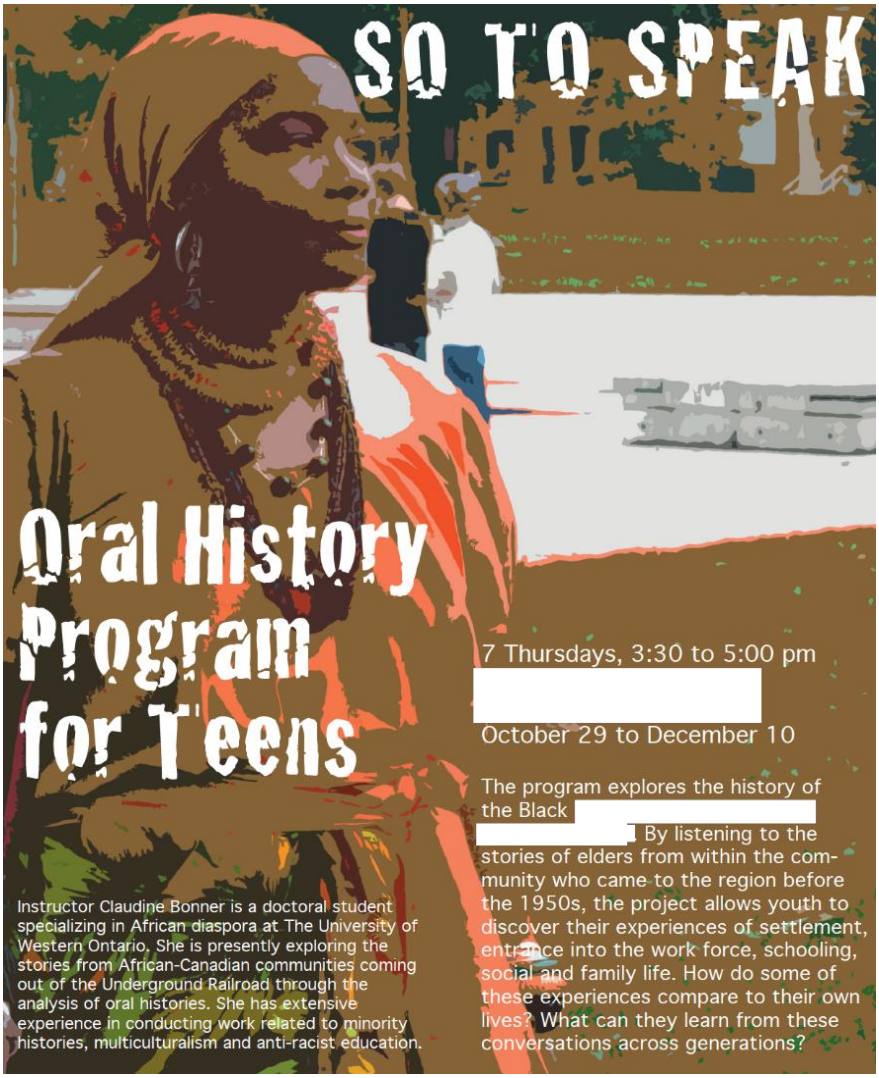
Closer to home, a great example of this is Halton Healthcare, which includes Georgetown, Milton, and Oakville Hospitals. Believing in the power of art to reach audiences with a need for relief from their current circumstances, they launched the Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital Art Council in 2015. They hired a curator to help grow the collection and create exhibitions throughout the new building. Many hospitals have since done the same, but this was one of the first to formalise contemporary art curation in a medical institution.

In keeping with this, in 2017, the Montreal Museum of Fine Art founded their Art and Health Committee, dedicated to studying the effects of art on patients suffering from health issues. Chaired by the chief scientist of Quebec and including the first-ever full-time museum art therapist, they participated in various clinical trials showing that when visiting a museum, we secrete serotonin and cortisol, which have a similar effect as exercise. The next year, the MMFA was the first in the world to offer patients free admission prescribed by a doctor. And yet another year later, in 2019, a report by the World Health Organisation—twenty years in the making—proved that art has a marked impact on both mental and physical health, that it provides a holistic approach, especially for conditions for which no physical treatment is available, and that it results in economic benefits and cost-effectiveness (Fancourt & Finn, 2019).

In 2008, a report called *The Arts Ripple Affect* was released by the Fine Arts Fund of Cincinnati (now ArtsWave) that sought to answer the question: What's the value of our institutions? The Fund wanted to find the most effective ways to promote public action for the arts in their city. The conclusion was that a thriving arts sector creates ripple effects and benefits throughout the community. First, it creates a vibrant, thriving economy: lively neighbourhoods and revitalised communities that attract tourists and residents to the area. And second, it creates a more connected population: diverse groups share experiences, hear perspectives, and understand each other better. Such is the social work of museums.

Figure 8

Public program for youth, Regional Museum Southwestern Ontario, 2009. Dianne Pearce and Claudine Bonner, Althouse College, Western University, designed the program. Graphics by Robert Ballantine.



In Conclusion, You Have Permission to Fail

In these second and third eras (education and social services, respectively), there have been many responses to the changing perspectives in art education and programming. Despite the period of a hundred years and the geographical distance between the movements and countries cited, themes of convivial learning, action pedagogy, lifelong learning, and social relatedness form the cornerstone of these movements, from educational to exhibiting institutions alike. This paper shares alternative approaches that have emerged over the last century, but more importantly, it hints at the urgency for future iterations. The proposals herein are united in their commitment to redressing the inequities of access and producing artist citizens who create a conscious culture urgently needed for the future.

Given the similarities between the Nahua concept of *tapalewi*, the Free School of Sculpture, and the rural boarding schools of early twentieth-century Mexico, Illich's Intercultural Documentation Centre seems well located in Cuernavaca. In 1974, twenty-five people from fourteen countries met at the Centre to create the Cuernavaca Manifesto called The Price of Lifelong Education (Dauber, 1975). The intent was not to abolish schools themselves but rather compulsory schooling: they did not seek the removal of the process of education but rather envisioned society becoming such that it wouldn't need this process at all. Similarly, Pujol's field schools (2009), Rogoff's free schools (2010a), and Schneider's ek-stitutions (2020) carried these concepts into the post-modern era. And as noted, museums were not exempt from these changes. Rogoff's educational turn (2010b), Simon's participatory museum (2010), Gray's museum hacking, and Silverman's social work of museums (2010) all contributed to transformative movements in arts programming.

As Pujol mentions, the goal is to create artist citizens who are ready to participate in a global society. We have permission to fail along the way: to venture into the unknown, explore, and flounder because this will lead to unpredictable yet humane experiences (Schor, 2012). Pujol asks, "What if the point of being a multi-disciplinary artist is that sometimes you make art … but then sometimes you craft a bridge that does not pretend to be a sculpture, but simply a way of getting from A to Z?" (2022, p. 1) The point of being an artist is not to make art but to create a culture of consciousness, for which art is merely a tool. Whether or not you view the piece as a bridge or a sculpture is up to you.

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