Youth arts, place and differential becomings of the world

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This article considers the cultural significance of youth arts projects outside dominant, policy-driven and popular cultural discourses of youth arts and creativity. The author takes up Deleuze's concept of creativity as the differential becoming of the world (Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*), in order to argue that within dominant discourses of youth arts, fixed values become bound to the becoming of creativity. This produces a situation in which creativity is given a set worth. Such perspectives have become embedded in dominant discourses of youth arts, in which 'creative' activities are marketed as a means of adding value to young people. This is a radically impoverished approach to thinking about the technologies of self that can be developed through arts practices. Offering a study of youth arts framed within in alternative sensibility of creativity and spatiality, the author explores the work of two UK organizations and one Australian youth arts company, each of which seeks to foster creativity in young people through particular arts projects. These projects also create spaces in which particular processes of subjectivization are actualized. This article considers these aspects of three projects alongside the politics of the arts organizations in question, politics that are also critical of discourses in which financial values are bound to 'creativity'.

Introduction

In this paper I hope to provide some tools with which one might consider the locatedness and the micro-politics of youth arts projects and the processes of subjectivization they effect. In taking up this agenda, I focus on interdisciplinary places of learning that cross boundaries between informal educational sites, communities and creative industries. Such a cross-disciplinary focus is intended to contribute to understanding the educational, social and economic benefits associated with youth arts practices. I advance this project via theoretical means that allow a discursive repositioning of the politics of place-making and fostering creativity in youth. Specifically, I take up Deleuzian concepts of creativity and spatiality to explore the work of two UK arts companies and one Australian youth arts company, each of which 'seek[s] to foster creativity in young people' through arts projects.

Creativity as the differential becoming of the world

Deleuze argues that the context in which creation takes place is problematic, or difficult to 'define' in located terms (1994, 24, 54, 92, 136, 212, 216). In part, this is because his philosophy is highly responsive to environment. For Deleuze, society grows through affirming the fact that the slippery nature of creativity – and life – can leave us 'blind'

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to understanding the central features of situations and places in which creativity happens. We know that environments impact on subjectivity, but our set or 'striated' conscious means of understanding creativity and the world can obscure our chance to see environments as creative triggers. Deleuze and Guattari describe striation as a process: '... which inter-twines fixed *and* variable elements, [and] produces an order and succession of distinct forms' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 478). For the most part, our consciousness occupies a striated space-time relation. In order to counter what could be perceived as a capitalist model in which fixed modes of financial value are bound to the becoming of creativity, social formations must grasp significant aspects of our environments by expressing them in new ways. Expression will also inevitably change these aspects of our environments. (Williams 2000, 202)

Deleuze adopts becoming as a way to affirm the processes of differentiation, or constant change, which are misapprehended in our perception of apparently static things (1994). He puts forward an ontology of becoming, in which 'reality' is in a permanent state of flux, or *continual differentiation*. This 'flux', or the differential becoming of the world, is obscured by the illusions of fixity and identity that become key features of our subjectivity. Aspects of our environment that are necessary to art practice are an inseparable part of these processes of becoming.

A creative endeavour combines an unconscious registering of the reality of flux and change with *a conscious recognition of this process*. Because reality is primarily in flux, a creative affirmation of this becoming is a resistance to our acceptance of a determined world around us. This positive resistance is activated, when, for example, an architect expresses the becomings at play in an actual site through the design of a new building (Williams 2000, 203). Or when an artist actualizes possibilities for new aesthetic vocabularies by painting an image that evades the clichés embedded in a blank canvass (Deleuze 2003, 71, 73, 76). This engagement with potentiality and resistance to unconscious, clichéd perceptions is also referred to by Deleuze as a 'resistance to the present' (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 108). The ontology of becoming turns against 'progress' as development towards an ideal. Instead of progress there is an expression of movement, defined as *variations* or *differentiations*. Reality is a flow of variations that needs no relation to different identities or fixed reference points. It is the constructed human subject that needs reference to identities or fixed points.

Deleuze's ontology – and affirmation – of becoming is justified on the basis of relations between actual movements or processes. He would contend that we are overly occupied with proving our imaginings of 'the way things are' and that, because of this, we lose the capacity to pay attention to *what things are becoming*. For example, if we perceive our identity as embedded in place, we take away from our capacity to understand place and self as actualizing individual potentials. People and places are folded into one another at different points of their constitution, yet they are also part of assemblages in which they are not connected and, rather, become quite separate things. While we need to acknowledge and understand the points at which places fold in to constitute our subjectivity, we should not lose sight of the potentials held within places and ourselves, outside these points of connection.

For example, Australia is a sovereign nation. Yet if one was to fall in line with dominant ideas of Uluru as an 'Australian' tourist attraction, generations of Aboriginal knowledge and connection to country, and the force of these connections, would be discounted. Uluru is a multiplicity. In some social assemblages it is a tourist attraction, where it is connected to ideas of 'authentic Australia' and is positioned as an attractive gem in the crown of our ruling monarch. In other social assemblages, Uluru articulates

knowledges that cannot be understood by whitefellas, let alone the Sovereign Head of State, to whom they claim allegiance.

If creativity is seen, as Deleuze (1994, 130–8, 158–61, 167) presents it, to be an active engagement with the differential becoming of the world and resistance to cliché, then it is this awareness, this resistance to the present that we must nurture through social formations. In order to begin such a venture, I look to open up conceptualizations of youth arts projects as forms of making creative places and youthful subjectivities.

I begin this trajectory with the work of Creative Partnerships; a UK initiative that brokers placements for arts practitioners in socially and economically disadvantaged schools. I focus on a site in Margate, a coastal town in Kent; a place with an ethnically diverse population. The neighbouring town of Dover is a primary entry point for asylum seekers and illegal immigrants to the United Kingdom. Creative Partnerships explore issues of identity, tolerance and equality as articulated in the social fabric of Margate. The project I examine is one in which the public art organization Artangel collaborated with filmmaker Penny Woolcock in staging 'The Margate Exodus'. As a contemporary re-working of the biblical tale, this film explores a community's search for a 'Promised Land' and the social pressures that such journeys can produce. The work offers a mediation of macro- and micro-social movements, as biographies, landscape, culture and traditions are pleated into one text through filming live performance. 'The Margate Exodus' was made in conjunction with the display of a photography project called 'Towards a Promised Land', in which banner photographs hung across the centre of Margate. This involved 22 young people who migrated to the United Kingdom from places affected by war, poverty or political unrest. With photographer Wendy Ewald, the young

Figure 1.   Image from 'Towards a Promised Land' by Wendy Ewald.

people reconceptualized their diverse experiences of moving. The photographs produced were shown on the walls of buildings in public spaces across the city, re-territorializing the de-industrializing architectural space of the town. Buildings became canvasses, and the faces of minoritarian children were accorded new levels of visibility.

Folding this re-inscription of town space into the social politics surrounding migration in Margate, 'The Margate Exodus' became a feature film that screened in cinemas across England. The film was created with, and featured, the people of Margate. Across the film text, the contention that social policy on immigration needs to be rethought is articulated through the moving image and through community voices.

I interviewed Anna Cutler in late 2006, when she was the Artistic Director of Creative Partnerships. I began our conversation by asking her about how social context had been taken up as an inspiration for the 'Exodus' project. Cutler responded that:

> When I came here (and I had come from Belfast) what I knew to do was to … just absorb for a bit and go around and talk to people and find out what was going on, so I could … see what kind of social situation there was and what kind of deprivations were experienced. And probably one of the worst ones here is lack of aspiration and hope – and that is across the whole East Kent coast which, because it is next to the very wealthy rest of Kent, it makes it even worse somehow … so the language that people use to talk about … [Margate] has lack of hope and aspiration associated with it … I thought my whole program should be about place and identity because my feeling is that the place, its geography, helps to shape and what has happened economically, inform the identities of those who live there … And this is key to what we are doing in Creative Partnerships … So we're working with young people … in a geographic place that is run down, things are boarded up, it's physically miserable, there are spikes on the pavement, there is a lot of wiring around, [outsiders] … know that they are not invited.[1]

Cutler is aware of the ways in which the suffering, de-industrializing economy of coastal Margate folds in to constitute a sense of isolation in its residents, many of whom are immigrants. She notes how this isolation is re-articulated geographically by 'things being boarded up … spikes on the pavement … a lot of wiring around'. It was because Cutler was separate enough from these connections between economy, geography and community, having just arrived in Margate from Belfast, that she was able to see these connections so plainly, and to follow the trajectories they form; to enquire as to what it is that these connections *produce*, and what other assemblages they could become. As a way of resisting the inertia of the present, the retelling of 'The Exodus' was taken up by Creative Partnerships to connect people and places in Margate with the global market of media consumption and to argue that the politics of immigration (and located feelings of disenfranchisement) are as meaningful today as they have ever been.

Cutler continues, explaining that:

> You have to inspire the imaginations of people, if you can't imagine an alternative, I don't know how you will ever get there … If you can't see it, if you can't imagine it … you won't ever do it. And people have lost that sense that anything is possible here. In Auston, they have been offered things and they haven't happened, so that is the history of Margate in particular, that offers have been made and they haven't turned out … so there is a lot of frustration here and people feel that they don't deserve anything because it gets reiterated through people's practice.

> As for the architecture of the place, it signals terrible poverty, there is rubbish in the streets; sometimes we don't get our rubbish picked up for … week[s] …

> Three years ago I was having a conversation with Artangel, about starting a project, I'd worked with Michael West from Artangel before, … So Michael came down to have a look at the place to begin with, and I knew he would love it because it is a poor place with lots

of boarded-up buildings, but it is also eerily beautiful. It has the most striking Georgian architecture and fabulous Victorian buildings . . . and the beaches are staggeringly gorgeous. And he really saw that juxtaposition between the mess and the arcades and the flashing lights, and these other . . . beautiful things. And it makes it a[n] . . . interesting place to be and it also has lots of natural theatre space to it . . . he came back and said that what he really wanted to do was to get this filmmaker . . . to come and make a film, and it was about the whole community, and because a lot of refugees and asylum seekers [are here] . . . it seemed like a point of entry and a point of exit . . .

. . . what we have been doing is planning it since then, and gradually bringing in the community and we've been working . . . in schools with 20 local artists . . . on the concept of 'what a plague is'. The kids have been doing plagues of apathy, plagues of exclusion, plagues of cabbage locusts (because we grow cabbages around here), but it has been extraordinary because . . . we've got . . . professional gallery spaces to exhibit the children's work . . . We are looking at bands who are going to join in . . . we are going to have plagues songs that famous writers have written . . . we've got a layer of the international artists . . . working with the community to produce a broadcast film that will be shown . . . [in cinemas and on BBC TV]. So it's . . . high profile, I think that . . . one of the important things is [having] high-stakes, because everybody moves up to them.[2]

After the broken promises, and the disillusionment that comes once opportunities have been lost, such a large invitation, and such a brave act of saying 'stand up now because the nation is looking' certainly proved reason to rise to an occasion. 'The Margate Exodus' was a critically acclaimed success and it brought the community of Margate into the public sphere in a range of ways. Margate, as a community, was pushed to grasp the defining features of its environment – the juxtaposition between the mess and the arcades, the flashing lights and the boarded-up buildings, the Georgian architecture and the beaches. Paradox between possibility and historicity became the creatively significant aspect of this community's context. Expressing these paradoxes in new ways, folding virtual futures into the space of the present, the landscape of Margate was modulated on film and in the

Figure 2.   Exterior of the Stratford Circus building.

imaginations of film viewers. The features of Margate's environment that are necessary to creativity are an inseparable part of these processes.

Articulating the importance of links between place, community and 'creative industries' is what Creative Partnerships does well. The exploration of such connections is socially significant because it generates broader understandings of the importance of interdisciplinary places of learning that cross boundaries between informal educational sites, communities and creative industries. However, it has been, and remains, a source of concern to me that the sustainability of the creative cultures generated by Creative Partnerships is limited. The programs they initiate do involve communities and certainly effect change in communities, yet they are not solely community driven and do not have the capacity to run without expertise brought in from outside the community. A similar critique of the lack of sustainability of the Creative Partnerships programs has been advanced by Hall and Thomson (2007). Certainly, this difficulty with sustainability is an enduring shortcoming of such specialist-run programs.

Now I move on to discuss an institutionalized example of macro- and micro-scales of the social value of youth arts being re-imagined through a place-based aesthetic. I turn to the 'NewVIc', which is the Newham Sixth Form Arts College at Stratford Circus. The Circus is a centre for the performing arts and moving image, managed by NewVIc in collaboration with five professional arts organizations.

The Circus is a thoughtfully designed, well-equipped building in East London. It has a large, circular structure with three floors that circle around an open, central community space. One enters the well-lit community space in the foyer, to see that the ceiling goes up three levels, and one is automatically part of an open café space in the middle. The stairs to different levels run along the outside of this open space. The architecture pays attention to the importance of flexibility – in the respect that many of the regular studio rooms can also be rehearsal and audition rooms, meeting places, and small exhibition spaces, but there are also large performance areas, theatre stages, and a capacity to cater for large-scale events. So proximity and spectacle are both possible.

The Circus is run by an education provider (NewVIc) as a site of arts education, yet it also houses professional dance, music, theatre and new media studios, and facilitates a range of adult education programs. The companies to whom NewVIc leases the building are: East London Dance, a design and urban music firm called Urban Development, Theatre Venture, NewCEYS (which is the performing arts block of Newham's community education and youth service), and the 'Circus Media' Centre. The Circus Media Centre is also affiliated with NewVIc and it supports emerging freelance artists and production companies in delivering broadcast media. Through the Circus, local community members, artists and educators are brought together.

In 2006, in a café on Canary Wharf in London's East End, I spoke to Graham Jeffrey, a lecturer in Creative Industries at the University of East London, about the role that he played in establishing the Circus. Our conversation examined how social policy and political climate informed, and was also affected by, the Arts Centre at Stratford. The project at Stratford has taken on a social context in a comprehensive way, in that it is part of a broader push to redesign London's East End and Docklands. The local student community does not have a history of academic achievement, and the practical training offered by the performing arts and new media programs at the Circus, alongside the links to industry that are part of these programs and a part of the building itself, provide its students with a creative model of education which has been developed in response to their needs. I asked Graham to comment on this responsiveness to context, and he suggested that such reflexivity is:

... Absolutely critical. The idea was always ... that every aspect of our work ought to have a really clearly articulated relationship to the communities that we were working in ... [and] that's partly out of necessity, because we work in a borough like Newham, [so in terms of] the social context, you can't take [any student engagement] as a given because a) the levels of deprivation are really high, [and] b) the level of diversity is ... amazing, so you can't make any assumptions about the young people that you have to work with ... Some of them may have arrived in the UK in the last six weeks, others might come from families who have lived in the East End of London for generations, others might be second generation immigrants, [who are] profoundly religious, some of them might be profoundly ... disadvantaged in all sorts of ways ... that sort of ... diversity leads you to be much more conscious of ... social context than you would be if you just worked in a suburb, where ... there is ... a relatively 'mono-culture' ... [C]ommunity education and around engagement, and certainly further education and UK further education has always been the sector in education that's ... done more than schools or universities to engage with learners that don't fit the traditional mould.[3]

Here, Graham envisages the politics of community as inseparable from his art education practice. Furthermore, it seems that there are certain ideas of creativity associated with working in such a diverse student demographic. I am reminded that for Deleuze, the point of creativity is to break out of the everyday, the 'familiar'. The question of generating creativity is the same question as '*how is difference possible?*' How can we go beyond the coordinates of our constitution? Graham takes up the political utility of creativity in a (perhaps unintentionally) similar manner, musing that:

... The other thing I'm interested in is that creativity ... inevitably, implies deviance, implies breaking the rules, implies criticism, and it implies challenge. It's not about working within the framework of 'what if [this actually]' exists, except to say 'what if?' So, creativity to me is essentially bound up with the notion of social change, with the notion of trying to alter things, and of course that brings it inevitably into conflict with institutions, because that's not what institutions are in the business of doing. On the whole, institutions ... are in the business of regimenting, of disciplining, of ordering, of cataloguing and creating taxonomies and systems which bind people to certain ways of being ... you've got to understand how it works in order to subvert, you can't hack an organization if you don't really get [into] the politics of it ...[4]

Decades before this statement is made, Deleuze quotes Nietzsche in *Difference and Repetition* (1994, 136) as an impetus for his definition of creativity. He describes a situation in which new values and the recognition of established values are both affirmed as having different utilities. In a Deleuzian model of creativity, relationships between the new and the old are fractured and redesigned. In terms of accommodating this fractured and expanding experience of history and spatiality and folding it into the design of the Circus, Graham says:

We wanted to have an awareness of ... [a fractured experience of spatiality] in the work that we were doing, and not hold up school or college as the centre of the universe, but to understand that in fact people have multiple places they identify with, and multiple kind of selves almost in relation to those places, so they've put on one face to do this thing and perform in a different way [and then another face for another thing] ... with somewhere like Stratford Circus, the idea was to create a ... flexible sort of place, but it could be lots of different things, so that for example, Friday evenings are grind night, and it's like the East London masses ... everybody comes down and it's pretty ... noisy and most people are between 16 and 22 ... it's really hardcore grind music, and at an earlier time that day, there might have been a tea dance in the same space, so it's a hybrid space ... it becomes a place where it's possible to bring groups of people together who otherwise would have sod all to do with each other.[5]

Intergenerational contact is difficult to facilitate outside families, hospitals and educational institutions. It seems to me that this is one of the ways in which the Arts Centre at Stratford Circus is exploring what a creative place for young people might be.

In the respect that the Arts Centre fosters exemplary teaching and learning practices that enable diverse groups of people, including young people, to become more innovative in the ways they think about their relationships to community, and it also supports them in producing what might be called 'creative capital'.

Graham explains that:

> one of the more uncomfortable things … [about] the universalisation of creativity discourse, [is] that creativity is just accepted as being a good thing, and it's tied up with capitalist business innovation, creativity–innovation–knowledge society, and then if you are not careful, you're not actually critiquing that whole.[6]

I agree with Graham that capitalist modes of production and consumption can easily become inscribed onto all arts practices, and this robs art practices of their power for political alterity. Deleuze and Guattari describe the relationship between capitalism and striation as a process that is facilitated by state power. They say:

> The physico-social model of Work pertains to the State Apparatus, it is one of its inventions … two reasons. First, because labour only appears with the constitution of a *surplus*, there is no labour that is not devoted to *stockpiling*; in fact, labour (in the strict sense) begins only with what is called *surplus labour*. Second, labour performs a generalized operation of striation of space-time, a subjection of free action, a nullification of smooth spaces, the origin and means of which is in the essential enterprise of the State. (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 490–1)

Taking up this definition of labour as a state striation of space-time, we can see how easily fixed modes of financial value are attached to the becoming of creativity, by means that produce an order, in which creativity is accorded a financial value. In opposition to this notion, I would argue that, after Deleuze, the value of creativity is to allow subjects (and in this instance, youthful subjects) to escape cliché – to de-stratify in new ways.

Across the globe, in a starkly different physical and political environment, I spent some time researching a youth arts hub with parallels to Stratford Circus, namely the Courthouse regional youth arts centre. The Courthouse has been designed specifically to respond to the social and environmental issues that are specific to young people in rural and regional Victoria. I now contextualize my discussion of the two UK projects described above in relation to this regional Victorian case study. The time I spent at the Courthouse was in late 2004 and 2005 – the Howard government had been in power since 1996, arts funding had received unprecedented cuts during this period and rural Victoria was in severe drought. This social context holds in relief the value accorded to, and appreciation of, arts projects that became part of English culture under the late Blair government. This stark difference was brought to my attention recently when I was speaking at a university symposium that brought together arts industry professionals and academics. The symposium was held in Australia and one attendee was a British artist who had travelled to Australia on a UK arts research scholarship. At least four times across the course of two days she made the point that the Australian Arts and Disability scene was 10 years behind Britain. I was never sure quite what the value of making this point was, though I assumed it was her way of expressing frustration and making quite plain the fact that she wasn't feeling overly stimulated or excited to be here. Australian Arts practices have been remarkably under resourced in comparison to the United Kingdom. Yet, in my opinion, this has not led to a poor-quality arts scene but rather an unlikely arts scene: resilient and low budget.

The Courthouse Youth Arts Centre operates on the premise that community is formed through sense: senses of belonging, of being known and recognized. Music and movement are two media through which individual recognition and collective enjoyment are facilitated. Increasingly over the past three decades, street beats: hip-hop, rap, R 'n' B and

movement styles which have evolved with these sounds have brought together communities from a range of ethnic backgrounds and social classes. Wathaurong Koori people, Sudanese refugees, Lebanese, Greek, Italian and Anglo-Australian young people in Geelong come together through street beats and dance styles under the umbrella of youth arts. Here, community isn't about nationality, sexuality or money as much as it is about movement and style.

The Youth Arts Centre occupies a spacious 1950s-style courthouse – hence the name. The Centre's pastel-coloured art deco façade is one of the more eye-catching buildings in the heart of Geelong, as the refurbishment of the building celebrates the old with a contemporary flavour. A sense of place and an understanding of social context are critical when looking at the work of the Courthouse. Local, regional sites are kept in focus through the Centre's outreach programs and through the multidisciplinary focal lens of the Centre, which has been designed to embrace a diverse cross-section of young people living in and around the rural centre of Geelong. The Courthouse runs programs that focus on music, dance, visual arts, film, arts management and theatre making. The Courthouse's theatre-making program currently includes street dance, break dance and MCing – tools of performance making with which young people are particularly keen to engage.

The Courthouse is the heart of an active arts community in Geelong; a town that has changed quite distinctly in some parts since it began as a wool distribution port.

Figure 3.   Exterior, Courthouse Youth Arts Centre, Geelong.

A successful textiles trade built upon the wool distribution at the financial heart of Geelong is still reflected at times in the ways in which young visual artists approach their work. However, the old Geelong wool stores are now campus buildings for Deakin University and while Geelong is still an industrial town the focus of labour has shifted distinctly. Alongside Deakin's growing contribution to the community here, the Ford engine manufacturing plant and local Shell oil refinery have been Geelong's financial sources for decades.

Beyond the smoking refinery chimneys, Geelong enfolds pockets of the 1950s – alive and well in the new millennium – and a broad community demographic. In between the production buildings there are cottages that sell home-made gollywog dolls and potted irises. There are sushi shops, Lebanese restaurants, and schools for Sudanese refugees. Some people take break dance classes a few nights a week. Other people grow their own vegies and have chooks. It's an in between place that feels distinctive in comparison to the grey streets and over-filled trams of Melbourne. There are some pretty funky young people in Geelong. Many of their mums and dads work for Ford, and these young people are living on the cutting edge of a very different kind of cultural production – jamming acrobatics, street dancing and rhymes, sourcing new stories of their own and giving them platforms. These folks are making it pretty clear that while some parts of Geelong tell tales of car engines, petrol and gollywogs, there is another level of cultural production occurring. Again, I could see links to the Deleuzian model of creativity I introduced above, in which relationships between the new and the old are redesigned while they are being affirmed. Deleuze states:

> Nietzsche's distinction between the creation of new values and the recognition of established values should not be understood in a historically relative manner, as though the established values were new in their time and the new values simply needed time to become established. In fact it concerns a difference which is both formal and in kind. The new, with its power of beginning and beginning again, remains forever new, just as the established was always established from the outset, even if a certain amount of empirical time was necessary for this to be recognised. What becomes established with the new is precisely not the new. For the new – in other words, difference – calls forth forces in thought which are not the forces of recognition, today or tomorrow, but the power of a completely other model, from an unrecognised and unrecognisable *terra incognita*. What forces does this new bring to bear upon thought, from what central bad nature and ill does it spring, from what central ungrounding which strips thought of its 'innateness' and treats it every time as something which has not always existed, but begins, forced and under constraint? By contrast, how derisory are the voluntary struggles for recognition. (Deleuze 1994, 136)

The Courthouse embraces and produces *terra incognita* just as much as it re-inscribes dominant discourses of the arts helping youth at risk. The centre publicizes itself as being concerned with engaging marginalized and disenfranchised young people and as offering opportunities for creative types to build their skills and excel. The Courthouse is a community-based organization – the concerns of Geelong's youth community are reflected in its programs and, in turn, the programs produce works that appeal to Geelong's youth.

My first class at the Courthouse was one of the weekly 'HeadSpin' master classes held for eight young emerging visual artists, writers and theatre makers. The HeadSpin master class program had a focus on theatre making and it applied this focus broadly to encompass all aspects of theatre production. The project invited eight emerging artists to work in teams to devise and stage three short performance works, roughly 20 minutes each in duration. These works were then presented as a triple bill in May 2005. HeadSpin consisted of weekly master classes with Naomi Steinborner, the Courthouse coordinator

of the theatre-making program. Naomi mentored HeadSpin recipients until December, at which point specialist mentors in different disciplinary areas came on board the project. These additions to the artistic team individually supported the eight individual young HeadSpin artists through the finalization of their performance concepts, auditions, rehearsals, design, production and presentation.

The HeadSpin class members were a diverse collection of young arts practitioners. A sculptor, a design student, a visual dramaturge, two writers, a sound designer, a puppeteer and two directors made up the team. While I was on board, the community theatre company 'Somebody's Daughter' ran a workshop with HeadSpin that taught strategies for working with disenfranchised young people and sourcing performance material from community participants' lived experiences. The HeadSpin team worked in a very welcoming and engaging way with Somebody's Daughter – a company offering a model of community theatre which has been slipping out of focus a little since the late 1980s. After HeadSpin many of the young artists being mentored in this program wanted to turn their focus to community cultural development work. Indeed, some of the participants were already actively engaged in CCD (Community Cultural Development) work with young mothers in the area. HeadSpin produced some striking and diverse works: a puppetry fantasy about a young boy's journey through a gypsy forest, a contemporary satirical perspective on parlour games and an affective atmosphere, a soundscape of adolescence. These works appealed to a broad cross-section of Geelong's community.

One of the most important things about youth arts work is the ways in which it can include, speak to and be modelled around marginalized community groups, yet theatre work by its very nature is not marginalizing. Making theatre is about getting along with people. It's about working together and *getting out there*. It's also about an irreducible humanness. Whatever the specific difficulties of people's lives, people get along as people and laugh and cry at similar 'human' things. While some contemporary social theorists argue we are now living in an age of post-humanism, I think that collectives like the Courthouse show us otherwise. We are living in the age of a new humanism, a place where your aesthetics are your ethics; where sense, atmosphere and affect take precedence over the binary ruts of identity politics.

Conclusion

My discussion of these three youth arts projects is intended to gesture towards the respective utility and need for a critical reconsideration of the educational work that youth arts programs undertake. While the connections drawn together here span a broad range of discourses, I want to outline some of the force, complexity and cultural significance that lies at the intersection of youth arts work and place-making projects. Deleuzian theories of creativity and place show us that the intersection of youth arts work and place-making projects can be taken up in order to redefine – and speak back to – dominant discourses of place and creativity. As sites of public pedagogy, such youth arts projects promote diverse conceptions of creativity and place. They show up the instability of our everyday uses of these concepts. Perhaps most saliently, they involve many young people who can become imaginatively captured, skilled and inspired.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. Anna Cutler interview, 2006.
2. Anna Cutler interview, 2006.
3. Graham Jeffrey interview, 2006.
4. Graham Jeffrey interview, 2006.
5. Graham Jeffrey interview, 2006.
6. Graham Jeffrey interview, 2006.

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