QUEERING ARTISTIC FEEDBACK

Responses to pedagogical research
into queer artistic feedback

IPOP

2022

PREFACE

"Queering Artistic Feedback" presents texts and responses resulting from a year-long focus on feed backing artistic work from a queer pedagogy perspective. By making it available, we desire to share with students, teachers, artists and art enthusiast experiences and reflections we have gained so far in IPOP activities.

We would like to acknowledge the companionship and generosity of artists participating in our experimental feedback sessions: Joy Brandsma, Toni Kritzer, Noha Ramadan, Ahmed El-Gendy, Antje Nestel, Rising Lai, Alexander Blum Bertelsen and Julius Frodermann. We would like to recognize Das Arts Feedback Method and the environment in which it has been created as a source of inspiration from which we continue to expand our methodological and pedagogical approach to the art of queering feedback. We would also like to acknowledge the important work of Ashton Crawley, from which we draw our name, as well as all the other scholars, activists, and artists whose shoulders we stand on.

ABOUT

In Pursuit of Otherwise Possibilities, Queer Performance Pedagogy and Feedback (IPOP) is an educational, artistic research platform exploring how institutions of higher learning can better foster queer artists and practices. IPOP's mission is to provide queer education, communal think-space and artistic support to LGBTQ+ students, staff, and alumni as well as people from the larger community. IPOP originated in 2021 and operates within The Academy of Theatre and Dance (ATD) in Amsterdam. Artistic coordinators of the platform are Elioa Steffen (she/her; US/NL) and Szymon Adamczak (he/his; PL/NL).

We are dedicated to challenging patriarchal, capitalist and colonial structures within the university by creating spaces to explore radically new performance modes and topics. We believe it is necessary to counter the heteronormative violence at the heart of Western/European higher educational models with thinking and creating otherwise.

IPOP

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14.00 - 17.00

SO YOU WANT TO QUEER YOUR FEEDBACK?

TALK AND DEMONSTRATION

Image from IPOP's Symposium on Queer Performance Pedagogy and Feedback, May 2022, taken by Roman Zotter

EYES WIDE QUEERLY

ANTI-NORMATIVE REFLECTION IN IPOP'S FEEDBACK SESSIONS

Elioa Steffen

Throughout the 20th century, queer artists have been at the heart of many of the most important developments in live art. Yet, performance pedagogies in the West continue to mostly ignore both these histories and the practices and theories that spawned from them. At the same time, as queer issues have become in vogue, LGBTQ+ students continue to be underserved by many institutions of higher education.

In 2021, In Pursuit of Otherwise Possibilities, Queer Performance Pedagogy and Feedback (IPOP) was launched as an educational artistic research project attempting to address some of these issues within the Amsterdam Academy of Theatre and Dance (ATD). Coordinated by Szymon Adamczak and Elioa Steffen, we set out with two main research questions. How can universities better support LGBTQ+ students? Components of this question included how to promote personal well-being, artistic development, and access to specifically queer ways of being together. In tandem with this question of support, was one of curriculum. How can institutions of higher learning incorporate queer performance practices, theories, and histories into their pedagogy and what can queer ways of thinking and being offer to artistic education more broadly? For its pilot year, IPOP focused on artistic feedback. What kinds of techniques and approaches best facilitate useful critique for queer performance? How do spaces, groups, and pedagogies need to be designed to promote the critical development of LGBTQ+ artists? What does it mean to "queer" feedback and how can queer feedbacking principles and techniques support performance pedagogies more broadly?

Several key methodologies were used to conduct this investigation. To begin with, instead of a rigid definition of what it means to be queer or LGBTQ+, IPOP made a commitment to welcome anyone who understands their work as in some way queer and/or dealing

with LGBTQ+ themes. This allowed us to create a space grounded in specifically queer philosophies and LGBTQ+ histories, without having to limit participation to those who fit a narrow range of desires, histories, and relationships to violence as is often the case with many other LGBTQ+ spaces. Furthermore, although IPOP is for the people connected to ATD, a lack of clear definitions created a porous environment that welcomed people from many different communities, providing their unique insights and perspectives, strengthening the research outcomes of the project.

Part of the way we dealt with the very reasonable need for "queer space," with its implied (if imperfect) assumptions of safety from heteronormative violence was to construct the program with varying levels of commitment which came along with various needs to testify to one's connection to queerness. With all our programs, you belonged if you said you did, but with our Research Assemblies people were invited to just show up. Whereas with the Feedback Sessions there was an application that

From these experiments, three ideas emerged as key learnings: draw from everywhere/commit to nowhere, temporary communal ownership, and experimentation.

required people to speak to their interests and questions about queerness within their work. The Practical Workshops were somewhere in the middle with a signup, but no application. These varying levels of commitment and need to frame oneself as queer allowed IPOP to explore our research with a wide variety of people. It also speaks to the need to create safe(r) spaces for marginalized identities without relying on gatekeeping techniques that exclude people or place the decision-making power of who belongs in the hands of institutions.

Another important methodological approach was what we thought of as queer seeing and being, together. This started with the commitment to welcome students, staff, and alumni into spaces that did not operate on the normal hierarchies of these positions. All were equally welcome to participate in programs, get support, and were considered evenly capable of offering value to the research. This offered a unique

opportunity for these groups to meet each other as colleagues and fellow artists. This is not to imply a total dissolution of these power dynamics, but was an expression of our commitment to challenging the normative hierarchies built into institutions of higher learning.

Bearing in mind these program-wide methodologies, I would like to consider the marque program of IPOP's pilot year, the Feedback Sessions. We put out a call in November 2021, for LGBTQ+ artists interested in engaging with a collective exploration of best practices for feedbacking queer work. We asked people to commit to all four sessions in order to create a space where people were engaged with and cared about each other and their work.

IPOP was based on the understanding that all feedback methodologies have underlying ideological assumptions about what constitutes good art and how to achieve it.

For each session, two people showed their work and got feedback. Before their presentation, each artist met with one of the co-coordinators to design their session. We often began by asking what questions the artist had about their work, if there were particular things they were trying to figure out and how they imagined an outside eye could be useful. Then we had a conversation about their experience and training in feedback, asking what they had found useful in the past as well as eliciting their reflections on their ideology when it came to critique. Finally, we discussed what kinds of experiments in feedbacking would they find interesting. Together we would then begin to craft the session, pulling from the artist's experience while suggesting techniques or opportunities to experiment from the co-coordinators' eclectic practices. Although each session followed the same basic format, the specific showings each took different forms. Some incorporated feedback within the artwork, while others created situations for the cohort to remold or play with the material of the work.

From these experiments, three ideas emerged as key learnings: draw from everywhere/commit to nowhere, temporary communal ownership, and experimentation.

IPOP was based on the understanding that all feedback methodologies have underlying ideological assumptions about what constitutes good art and how to achieve it. Approaching various systems we asked what kinds of art, socialities, politics, and practices do these techniques encourage and discourage. What is and is not possible to do or see within these frames? We worked both to identify these axioms and to reject a commitment to any particular method.

We asked people what they needed, how they thought it best to achieve that, and what things they would like to try.

We asked people what they needed, how they thought it best to achieve that, and what things they would like to try. Each element of this was an important thread of building a committed group engaged with each other's work. First off, people knew that their needs would be prioritized. They would not be asked to subjugate their needs to the restrictive, normalizing demands of a particular feedback protocol. Participants had the freedom to need exactly what they needed and to pursue it the way they thought best. When cohort members attended someone's feedback session, they were not only engaging with the work but were also contending with and learning about someone's background and experience about how to make "good" work. This was because people understood that whatever techniques were being used, had been the choice of the presenting artist based on their ideologies and what they thought would best support their work. This invitation for considering the history and perspectives of the cohort was communal both in that presenters were asked to meet with and discuss their ideas with one of the co-coordinators, but also to consider the reciprocity of the moment. How could the group best support your work and how can your session expand or deepen the research the group is collectively engaging with? It is important to point here to the dual motivations of academic knowledge creation on the one hand and the desire to expand the techniques available to the group on the other.

Another thing to draw out is the anti-normative proposition at the heart of this kind of relationship to feedback. To the extent that methodologies come with rigid practices, they create normalizing demands on the artists and their work. They insist that the individual subjugate what they think is important and what they consider effective to the structures of the methodology. This is often the point, to educate through structural confinement and conformity. These systems inevitably create a range of what is possible, possible to make, possible to think, possible ways of responding and supporting. Although certainly IPOP inevitably had our own limits to what presenters could do (mostly created by the limited resources of time and money) our attempt was to constantly question this and find ways to expand what was available within our own structures.

In addition, we sought to find ways to support individual needs and desires without promoting individualism. One important structural element was to instill collective ownership over the research process. We asked what the cohort members would like to try out and what experiments they would like to do with their presentation.

Not only was experimentation aimed at expanding feedback techniques, but also new ways of reflecting on the underlying methodologies as well as alternative means for supporting the artist in addition to their work.

In addition, we utilized or created techniques of temporary collective ownership to find new ways of approaching the work while deprioritizing the vaunted status of the artist-owner common in many feedback techniques. One practice we utilized was "What If…" which had been taught to the coordinators by Edit Kaldor, but had also been being used independently by one of the cohort members Noha Ramadan. The basic idea is to offer the artist new ways of approaching their work by suggesting alternative things that could happen in the art. IPOP utilized this technique both as a quick reflection at the end of a session, offering verbal "What if's" and as a more engaged process of demonstrating the "what if" on our feet. In one session, a cohort participant brought various

material items of their work and asked people to experiment with different ways of presenting these materials and putting them into action. These experiments in temporary collective ownership deprioritized the status of the author while also building collective buy-in through experimentation with the work and imaginative engagement of what the work could become.

While I've already discussed IPOP's relationship to experimentation I think there are a few key points worth pulling out. Not only was experimentation aimed at expanding feedback techniques, but also new ways of reflecting on the underlying methodologies as well as alternative means for supporting the artist in addition to their work. This experimentation happened at several moments of encounter between the artist and other members of the Feedback Sessions.

The first was when the artist met with one of the coordinators to discuss the work and their desires for the showing. These conversations went beyond what the specific work needed to engage with questions of where the artist was in their own development and life. Issues such as being overwhelmed, stressed, and having career doubts were as relevant to our conversations as artistic technique and the experiments that followed took into account the impact they would have on people's personal life as well as artistry and work.

IPOP was able to leverage its lack of coercive mechanisms (due to under-resourcing which has its own problems) in order to generate fields of caring through optional engagement.

Another was the moment of contact between the presenter and their cohort colleagues. Because the Feedback Sessions were extracurricular activities, with only an extremely modest honorarium, it was clear to everyone that those who showed up chose out of personal desire. Although it would be too far-fetched to say this was always motivated out of a desire to care, the effect was a caring one which is often hindered by the forced relationality of most academic feedback systems. In these systems, most often people are required to be there and will

suffer financially or scholastically if they are not present. IPOP was able to leverage its lack of coercive mechanisms (due to under-resourcing which has its own problems) in order to generate fields of caring through optional engagement.

These gatherings were also opportunities to work within different feedback paradigms. For example, moments when feedback is incorporated into the work, suggesting a different relationship between maker and audience-critic. Also, the various explorations of "what if…" discussed above. What is important here, is not only that these were experiments of technique but also of methodology, which is to say theory, lens, and ideology.

IPOP's Feedback Sessions suggested the possibilities and benefits of performance feedback methodologies that were open in form, prioritizing individual needs and desires over rigid structure. To accomplish this, we made use of a wide range of feedback techniques, striving for conscious engagement with their strengths, limitations, and ideologies. IPOP was built around experiments of collective research, and we brought this desire to feedbacking, exploring methods for temporary communal ownership as a process for expanding the potentialities of practices and artwork. Throughout the process, we maintained an ethos and practice of experimentation, willing to try new things and jettisoning what wasn't working, while seeing all of it as a means of learning.

NEW PERSPECTIVES

Joy Brandsma

I just started working at the DAS Graduate School in the Creative Producing department when I had a conversation with Laura Cull Ó Maoilearca, the Director of DAS. We spoke about research and I explained what my graduation work was about. I have a background in visual anthropology and my film Dancing in Captivity was about queerness, dance, performance and social justice. "You should sign up for IPOP," She said. "In Pursuit of Otherwise Possibilities, Queer Performance Pedagogy and Feedback is a bunch of LGBTQI+ artists who are invited to come together to present their work and explore queer feedbacking."

I'm in! Since graduating I have missed interacting with people in an educational setting. Also, I was used to an academic way of feedbacking within the social sciences. Meeting queer artists with dance, performance and theatre backgrounds excited me. A few days later I signed up and I got an email that I may participate.

The first feedback session was really intimidating. Sometimes I felt like I spoke a different language. It took me a while to settle in, but that was okay. One of the first exercises we did was observing an object and naming what's queer about it. 'You don't know where it starts or ends." "There are different ways to connect to it." "How would it work if the area surrounding it is otherwise defined." From the first moment on I knew I was going to learn a lot. In my university, feedbacking was very straightforward. Look at the object, take it in and give your opinion. IPOP was definitely not that. It was abundant, playful and full of imagination. Also, the feedback sessions were catered to the works. Szymon and Elioa designed the type of feedback that would be useful. In one feedback session the feedback was in itself a performance. The participants could for a moment feel how it would be to participate in the performance. We wrote letters, stepped into different roles of the works and imagined changing different elements. What would a dramaturg, photographer, dancer, producer desire? Maybe adding light, more bodies on the ground, a screen in the ceiling or changing positions in the score. One of the questions that came up was, "what are other ways of imagining and relating queerly?" It was humbling and inspiring to participate in IPOP. It's really amazing to see different modalities of telling a story and constructing an experience. It opened up space and ways of thinking about creative works. So I just want to say thank you and hopefully I'll participate in another IPOP in the future.

DESIRE, HOW ARE YOU PERFORMING?

Antje Nestel

IPOP calls for LGBTQ+ artists interested in feedbacking each other's performances queerly. My ears do not require more to gain my full attention. In this case, my interest materializes in, amongst other things, an application. After a few weeks, IPOP responds with the following: "We are unable to invite you to be one of the 6 artists asked to share their work. However, after reading your application we want to invite you to be a feedbacker, to think with us about giving and receiving feedback queerly."
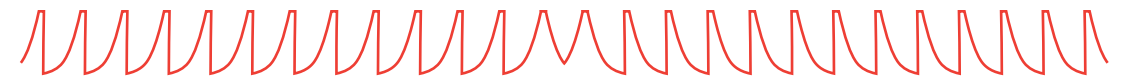
Over the four sessions, internal voices perpetually whispering in my ears reveal that queer feedbacking is unruly; it evades congruity. Nevertheless, queer methodologies surface - fabricated or repurposed from the norm. Certain methodologies even steal the limelight. A few sessions in, IPOP's way of queer feedbacking begins to form around certain methodological resemblances. Namely, the development of uniquely designed discursive feedback events in veneration of an artistic work; an orchestrated queer dialogue about an (queer) artwork becomes a repetitive desire amongst showcasing IPOPers. Without having asked the participating artists, I assume, for the purpose of my interpretation, that IPOPers forged a feedback moment in accordance with a personal desire for discovering novel interpretations and performativities the work can express in relation to human and more-than-human bodies. A continuous difference in the composition of the feedback dialogues elucidates, in practice, IPOPers' queer elusive and heterogeneous desire for making art and its desired purpose (or not).

For the sake of this reflection, I want to ask: What if nothing takes the spotlight? In response to IPOP's methodology described above, my desire impels me to take another direction: What if there is no work/object to give feedback on? Seeing as I didn't have the chance to speculate about my desired feedback form then, IPOP has presented me with this chance. A challenge remains though: How to write/think/practice my elusive desire for feedbacking queerly?

My desire asks: Can introversion lead to feedbacking queerly? If extraversion's normative approach requires an object to give feedback on and a creator/subject to give feedback to, my queer introverted desire wishes instead to experiment with queer artistic celebration as a becoming-together in introversion. Thus, art not as an object or a subject's creation, but rather as a way towards different socialites without a center - an assumption extraverted art and art feedbacking depend on. Feedbacking in my desired speculative world does not separate feedback giver from feedback receiver; it asks rather: what can I bring

to the event - a moving technique, an architectural technique, a writing technique, a sound making technique, a dialoguing technique, etc. - in the wake of celebrating the actual collective event and its virtual - the realm of potentiality for actualisations - undercurrent. My introverted world

What if nothing takes the spotlight?
What if there is no work/object to give feedback on?

always commences from a recognition that the solitary is always formed out of relation: an ecology that presupposes the subject and the object. In response to this realisation, my queer introverted desire apprehends one's contribution to the feedback event not as a subject's possession or origination but as a gesture of care for the event's potential becoming; not a care that celebrates a subject or an object's difference in an outgoing and extroverted manner, but a feedback that continuously asks what can this sociality do when queer introversion leads the way. In other words, queer introverted feedbacking celebrates the virtual by asking how can we invent techniques that actualise different unknown socialities. What if we would develop queer introverted feedbacking sessions? What else could learning and art making become?

My feedback desire stems from an associated desire for queer sociality in introversion and the pursuit of a different queer future where introversion instills the horizon.

BECOMING RESPONSE-ABLE

Toni Kritzer

"Heavenly Blue worried all the time. He worried about the bills and the roof that needed repairing and the strange men who always watched the house and what the neighbors might do next and about Hollyhock's unhappiness. He worried most of all that he would go mad. His worrying got the bills paid and the roof fixed and drove the men away and calmed the neighbors down and helped Hollyhock be happier. And finally his worrying drove him mad. It was the madness of looking inward and being afraid. There had never been enough love and warmth around him and he thought he had gradually dried up inside. He wanted out but he did not know where it was.

Lilac and Pinetree and Moonbeam and Loose Tomato and Hollyhock gathered. They held Heavenly Blue in their arms for days, they let him cry and stare and slobber and scream and be silent. They paid the bills and looked after the roof and watched the street for strange men and talked to the neighbors and Hollyhock kept himself happy. Their house filled up with comfort and routine and gladness until Heavenly Blue could no longer resist and became response-able again."

— Larry Mitchell, "The Faggots and Their Friends Between Revolutions", 1977

I stumbled over the word response-ability in one of the IPOP Research Assemblies, when Elioa shared an excerpt of The Faggots & Their Friends Between Revolutions, a fairytale-esque story of queer community-building, past and pending revolutions and living in resilience. Having read this wordplay before, I thought I had grasped the concept, but only within the following IPOP Feedback Sessions it became tangible, manifesting itself in the emerging relations. What meanings can response-ability hold within a queer (feedback) group? What forms might queer care and community take, if thought through response-ability? And what conditions might cultivate such response-ability, both individually and collectively?

Response, importantly, differs greatly from reaction. Reaction is immediate. For response, something else is required: space/breath/air - or in the case of Heavenly Blue, "comfort, routine and gladness." In reflection, reaction is bent, sometimes softened, sometimes sharpened -it can point towards a further conversation. Rather than immediate reactions, a response can be a beginning for thinking-together: opening spaces, letting air seep through and inviting folks in.

The first invitation, issued by Elioa and Szymon, already opened a carved-out space within the institution. We met in one of the school's studios, and despite the blankness of these rooms, Elioa and Szymon fostered a space of genuine curiosity and play. More invitations followed: invitations to share works, invitations to think with, or to participate in the work directly... The boundaries of artist~work~audience diffused, becoming increasingly permeable. Air was seeping through the space/the work/the words, opening up new perspectives. In all the vulnerability that sharing unfinished work brings along, there was a sense of care within the group that held the piece and the presenting artist. A sense of collective response-ability for the work arose.

Let's dig a little into the etymological roots of response-ability: beginning with "re"- back, implying a sense of reciprocity: when a work is shared with you, you will feed back, and you will be fed for your own works, in a multitude of ways. This is not an economical model, rather, it might be a trust held in future/present care within a group, in a way of giving/taking responsibly. Reciprocity is woven into response-ability - an exchange is happening, back and forth.

The second par then, "spondere", is a delightfully confusing Latin verb, charged with a lot of meanings. Among them: making a vow, promising something, engaging, pledging allegiance to something/someone, making an offering. Making an offering to your peers/to the work, or promising something to another - a generous act of sharing, counting on a good relationship. "Spondere" ties itself around the folks taking part in such an exchange, holding them together closely. And, importantly, offerings, affinities and allegiances are specific and particular, and as such, place value in specific relations rather than in one-size-fits-all methods.

There are no passivities in this form of exchange. All participants - the feedbackers, the initializing artist and even the work itself - enter a potentially enriching relationship. Response-ability is an active term. Here we might also find the crucial difference to responsibility: unlike responsibility, response-ability is not something to take. Taking responsibility holds an option of choice, of taking it - or leaving it. If you have been invited into a specific relation, if someone is working to en-able your response, if this is done genuinely and carefully, taking/not taking responsibility is not so optional anymore - this exchange generously feeds back all participants. Response-ability opens spaces for ongoing exchange, rather than a task you have been obliged to do, or something you can choose to take. So, when Heavenly Blue in the story of Larry Mitchell becomes response-able again, a healthy interdependence with his friends can continue.

Here we might also find the crucial difference to responsibility: unlike responsibility, response-ability is not something to take.

Even deeper into the roots of the words, we find that "able" is derived from the Latin root "habere" - literally: to hold. Enabling, then, is to provide a container in which things can be held: unfinished ideas, vulnerabilities, insecurities, open questions, egos, knowledges, differences, mistakes, even opinions! Holding within the IPOP sessions is what makes responses possible.

Holding each other
holding each other/accountable
holding spaces for each/ (an)/other
holding an/other
holding an/other /world
holding /an/other/wise
holding /???

Response-ability:
Offering to hold (...) + being offered to be held (...)

Becoming response-able with and for each other's works is even only temporarily, to entangle oneself in a reciprocal exchange. It is an ongoing weaving of a container for a work to be held and, all the while, allowing the work to become a container of other offerings as well.

And - for those readers who are willing to get lost in the thick rhizomes of etymology - the pre-indo-european word "ghab" - means to give/to receive at the same time. Of course, Heavenly Blue, Hollyhock, Lilac, Pinetree and Loose Tomato already know all of this: that response-ability is never solitary, but a collective practice of giving and taking. I am happy I have met them through IPOP.

SOURCES:
Larry Mitchell, "The Faggots and Their Friends Between Revolutions", 1977
Max Liboirons and Robin Wall Kimmerers thinking on (more-than-human) relations,
Various online dictionaries.

Images from IPOP's Symposium on Queer Performance Pedagogy and Feedback,
May 2022, taken by Roman Zotter

GIVING YOU THE FEEDBACK THAT *YOU* WANT

Szymon Adamczak

"There's so much that is still in debate, but for me, what's most important is the alternative queerness demands of me, another route. It can't just be 'route 1' or 'route 2'. There has to be another path. And often, I have to make that path myself."

— Ocean Vuong, excerpt from a talk entitled "My vulnerability is my power", September 2022

1. Starting point

It is worth saying at the outset that we give each other feedback all the time, and it's not always the feedback we ask for. My text is conversing with the specific investment with the notion of feedback that is artistic and/or it is given in the artistic context, often in the collective setting. Through IPOP, together with Elioa Steffen we have started to develop an inquiry into possibilities of "queering artistic feedback", taking on another path together. While attempting to contextualize our work, I am going to offer practical observations from the yearlong experiences from the project and I will recall a selection from the key occupations, interests and perspectives of queer pedagogy as a discpline that feeds and animates our ongoing reflection. Lastly, I will offer a number of prompts to consider while organizing a setting for artistic feedback and enlist some of the reading material that inspired me in writing.

A simple yet powerful observation in the first sentence of this text was offered to me by Juul Beeren, a pedagogue at Das Arts/DAS Theatre in Amsterdam. Juul is someone who has witnessed, aided and accompanied generations of theatre and performance makers, including myself and my peers. My initial understanding of giving and receiving feedback as an artist has been largely formed through learning and practicing DasArts Feedback Method, a discursive peer-to-peer tool deploying the *Socratic Dialogue*, to reflect on artistic work. The Das Method offers three constituent modes of engagement, the positions of feedback-giver, of feedback-receiver and of moderator.

While indebted to the richness of DasArts Feedback Method, both my dramaturgical and pedagogical practice have been increasingly dealing with (expliciltly) queer artistic creation. A method I knew from school has not been a universal language other art professionals and educators would speak fluently. At IPOP I have become interested in what happens, when the notion of artistic feedback is to be inquired among fellow LGBTQ+ identifying artists. How have they been experiencing reflexive critique/critical response so far? Do they also find themselves at times limited in educational and professional spaces where they have to explain or even defend their queerness or LGBTQ+ themes they work with? Are the tools, practices and attitudes encountered in the feedback settings nurturing for their work and for themselves? Are any of those limiting? What can come out of drawing meaning from different prompts and ways of giving and receiving feedback? Where, how and from to seek them? What if we seek communal, queer-informed ways of doing so?

2. Queer(ing) pedagogy

Ideas of queer pedagogy, present in a number of seminal essays and articles penned in 1990s, are grounded in the traditions of radical/critical pedagogy and follow queer theory's investment against normalization, in order to challenge compulsory cis-heterosexual and normative/oppressive structures, practices, and curricula. It is instructive here to understand the arrival of "queer" as a political term in the Western context that recovers trans, non-binary, gender non-conforming, among others bodies who were erased/marginalized in the gay and lesbian movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Queer theorists and queer activists have been showing distrust for normalizing tendencies of embracing heterosexual practices such as marriage or adoption of children by gay and lesbian people.

Deborah P. Britzmann in her article *Is There a Queer Pedagogy?* or Stop Reading Straight (1995) pointed out an urgency to bring about pedagogies that call into question a conceptual geography of normalization, in which gay and lesbian subjects are contained and dismissed. The role of queer theory, and thus queer pedagogy, would be to provoke an engagement that recuperate and exceed stereotypes fashioned as "normalcy", while discoursively allowing for something "queer" to take place. Something that disrupts or transgresses seemingly stable representations and does not have to be fixed on identity. As

Britzmann noted, "the >>queer<< like the >>theory<< in Queer theory does not depend on the identity of the theorist or the one who engages with it."

The role of queer pedagogy is to be attentive to social production of what is learned and consider normal. Offering no "correct" method nor "right questions" but instead the very possibility to question our practices or notions of equality and acceptance.

The role of queer pedagogy is to be attentive to social production of what is learned and consider normal. Offering no "correct" method nor "right questions" but instead the very possibility to question our practices or notions of equality and acceptance, as João Nemi Neto gently rephrased Britzmann's work in his article "Queer pedagogy: Approaches to inclusive teaching". Following his reading, "a queer lens for pedagogical practice would mean observing the varied possibilities of expression of sexuality without the necessity of labels or fixed identities." Queer pedagogy potentially accounts for all bodies, having capacity for recognition well beyond queer subjects. This understanding resonates with IPOP assuming a non-identitarian lens when considering what bodies are eligible or not in partaking in the practical queer education offered by us in this research project.

One of the earliest formulations of queer pedagogy phrased by Mary Bryson and Suzanne de Castell in "Queer pedagogy: Praxis Makes Im/Perfect" (1993) is too an inspiring and timely account of working with difference in the classroom. Their work was aimed to critique and deconstruct a monolithic "lesbian identity" through a study course co-tought in the spirit of queer pedagogy as "a radical form of educative praxis implemented deliberately to interfere with, to intervene in, the production of "normalcy" in schooled subjects." One of the concepts that I would like to pick up on, that Bryson and de Castell deployed in their pedagogical space, was the idea of "a right to speak as one". Namely, to test out what does it mean to speak as a "queer" subject in the front of the classroom, not only for themselves as queer teaching subjects. In the case of the curriculum they created, that right was exercised to render

lesbian perspective visible in "flesh and blood", by inviting to present in the classroom, a number of speakers identifying as out lesbians, engaged in creating lesbian-community spaces, involved in activism and cultural production. Educators have marked their hesitance to impose any definition of a "lesbian" or "sexual orientation" on their students and strived to not present "lesbian" in a binary opposition to heteronormative material. While working with students on texts and cultural lesbian lineage they have been as well trying to create awareness of self-identity, especially in relation to "articulated and unexamined purposes of participating in the course". "No consumers and no voyeurs" [in the classroom].

In their rich reflection on the course and its outcomes Bryson and de Castell speak of a subtext of white heterosexual dominance that have permeated over time as "inescapable backdrop". The "lifeless" unimaginative presentations "about lesbians" by white-straight identifying women and a complete refusal of a singular straight-identifying student to engage with proposed educational material and to understand the constructed, hegemonic reality of their heteronormative and middle class identities led Bryson and de Castell to the grim reflection. Of lesbian studies always being marginal, even in the lesbian study course. Another sobering conclusion, offered by the authors on their experience has to deal with the task of queer pedagogy as such being both necessary and impossible. "Queer pedagogy it is indeed, that, after all, in trying to make a difference we seem only able to entrench essentialist boundaries which continue both to define and to divide us." Perhaps, the danger that they try to elucidate here is about an inability to make everyone "stop thinking straight". Wouldn't it be utopian?

In this last paragraph I would like to bring about another idea of what queer pedagogy can be tasked with, through questions Susanne Luhmann poses in "Queering/Querying Pedagogy? Or, Pedagogy is a Pretty Queer Thing" (1998). These questions (as presented below) are to be evoked in the first place from an "inquiry into the conditions that make learning possible or prevent learning and into the conditions for understanding, or refusing, knowledge" across the classroom, through exploration of the teacher/student relationship(s), in the very structure of university or educational institutions. Luhmann's proposal can be thought about as one that wants to make intelligible what hinders and what promotes education. An example of refusal from Bryson and de Castell's

course would serve instead as a productive "teaching moment" that exposes the underlying power dynamic rather than a failure of the whole learning experiment they proposed.

Is a queer pedagogy about and for queer students or queer teachers?

Is a queer pedagogy a question of queer curriculum?

Or, is it about teaching methods adequate for queer content?

Or, about queer learning and teaching - and what would that mean?

Moreover, is a queer pedagogy to become the house pedagogy of queer studies or is it about the queering of pedagogical theory?

"It's important to me not to center criticism in my students. We don't go to the workshop with the assumption that something needs to be fixed. We go into the workshop more with the idea that this is a survey in which we get to know the ambitions and the concerns of the work. For the first two or three weeks nobody is criticizing the work. We name the work."

— Ocean Vuong, excerpt from a talk entitled "My vulnerability is my power", September 2022

3. Queer(ing) artistic feedback

To contextualize IPOP's investment with feedback and what queerness has to do with it, I want to bring forth some observations behind our project. First is concerned with a current, unprecedented momentum in queer and trans representation and visibility across the digital and cultural production that seemingly coincides with Generation Z entering adulthood and being enrolled in higher education and university programs. A generation that, to put it simply, is seemingly more queer-identyfing than ones preeceding it, and is benefiting from activism and visibility fought by prior generations that lived through Stonewall, the AIDS Crisis and saw legalization of gay marriage becoming reality, at least if looking from the Western countries perspective. This reductive account is taken here not to dismiss the unique challenges of living through COVID-pandemic, late neoliberal capitalism and climate change, nor to downplay any achievements of the younger generation of activists thus far. It is mentioned here to account for a perceived change in the public realm and tensions in the educational sphere to accommodate those who expect their pronouns and identities to be respected, who want their deadnames not being weaponized against them.

From the point of view of artistic education today, it means that increasing number of students are entering programs as queer or trans people who will now work on becoming theatre directors, actors, choreographers, and so on. Are we meeting them halfway? Their need to celebrate and exercise their autonomy, follow erotic desire in teaching and learning processes, explore found or brand new lineages, may prove

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existing curricula and canons insufficient or dismissive at best, invisibilizing if not violent, at worst. Accompanying and aiding the emergent bodies in the art academies that resist being disciplined and assimilated, serves as a motivation for developing queer pedagogy projects like as IPOP. Attentiveness and support should be evenly offered and expanded to teachers and staff. Those who hold teaching and accompanying positions can too be taught by the ones who are positioned as subjects who are there/*here* to learn. In a way, multidirectional and crossgenerational queer education has already stepped out of the margins, perhaps closer to the centre of attention. It is now happening on every corridor of the (art) school, in the classroom, studios and in the cafeteria. Whenever queer students "just" live their lives, navigating through their educational experience, and questioning the status quo.

One of the most inspiring voices in the landscape of contemporary practices of queer pedagogy is the one of Kate Morales. With their expansive, decolonial and ecological thinking University becomes Ecoversity that holistically embraces diverse queer lived experiences and its lessons. As Morales writes in "Queerness Taught me That. An Open Letter to the Radical Educators of the Ecoverse and Beyond": "Each individual >>queer<< body within our collective body already knows, on some level, how to reimagine education (a.k.a. life) through a queer pedagogy – not because we've studied it or taken it on as an interesting learning experiment, but as a function of our everyday existence as queer

people. Queer people are in this sense natural political philosophers because we exist in structures that weren't designed for us. Out of necessity and sometimes survival we must invent different structures to live, love and learn within."

Another observation has to deal with queer people and queerness as such garnering a lot of attention nowadays, across many sites of cultural production. Are we witnessing a new culture paradigm where queer presence is increasingly included and normalized? How much of it is informed by capitalist, surveilling forces dwelling on difference and seeking novel markets? To what extend are we going to be really be queer in spaces we never been to before, where we find ourselves walking in? What is the invitation, *actually*? I am becoming concerned to what extend, for example the performing arts academy at which we operate as IPOP, can better prepare its queer students to face professional challenges of the art market, public institutions and entertainment industries, to name some of the areas. How can they resist conformity and the production of "anthropocentric normalcy", to again use Morales' vocabulary? How to operate in the late neoliberal economy that has had queer people as one of the most precarious, exploited group, and retain one's individual and communal values along the way?

Along the lines, I am thinking here of how professional success can be re-defined, how and where we become professionals, as queer artists. Does a (queer) directing student have to direct theatre productions or movies in the first place? Maybe they prefer to organize a project that centers more-than-human collaboration? What if a modern dance student has always wanted to work in the nightlife instead of being a part of a dance company? How can this dream be supported within the academy? Is a gay club valued as a less desired workspace than a renowned production house? While posing these questions, I am reminded of IPOP's workshop led by a dragtivist and art-educator, Taka Taka, who produces performances as director for the House of Hopelezz, Club Church, Amsterdam. Taka shared with the group a manual of sorts, combining drag values, context-specific performance methodology and feedback strategies suitable for the night-kind-of-perfomance, as well as community guidelines that has arisen from the practice of organizing queer performance night Blue and through their work for the House of Hopelezz. In the workshop Taka focused on character-building strategies, inviting queer bodies to play

with their capacity to transform and re-organize themselves otheriwse. Some of our participants have been later on inspired to join the drag king academy facilitated at the club. Taka's methodologies for gender artistic practices are inspiring example when thinking of refining educational offer in order to accommodate and nurter queer sensitivity, collectivity and joy.

As a research project, IPOP is instigating conversations on how queer practices can be supported and fostered in this environment, being engaged in "queering who is doing the teaching and who is doing the learning", as proposed by Kate Morales in their essay "So You Want to Queer Your Pedagogy?" The attention on practices of LGBTQ artists, teachers and stuff and those who see their practice or interests as queer within the academy, steps beyond the usual scope of activities that are falling under the umbrella of diversity and inclusion management. We are dedicated to structure our endevaours to hold on to the complexity - we wish to support respectively "queer" artists as "artists" and "queer artists" as fellow "queers".

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"Queering artistic feedback" is an emerging, collective methodology we have given the most attention this far. As I understand it - is an ethical and pedagogical approach to modes of exchange over artistic work, that takes into its considerations epistemological limits and regimes of power. As Elioa Steffen proposes in her contribution to this publication, the attitude of this inquiry is anti-normative and questioning. It raises awareness on conformity and ideological underpinnings on tools that we use to give each other feedback. Therefore the intention behind bringing into our collective sessions particular tools to play them out was laced with a desire to understand what they allow us to explore and what knowledge they inhibit from us. These sessions were designed as communal frameworks for queer artists and peers to learn from one another, to be

vulnerable, sensitive, curious, and eventually to be empowered by this very experience. Our participants were presenting samples of their work that they imagined to be generously received by other queer identifiying makers. It was a curious finding: some of them brought to our space artworks that waited "in the drawer" or were "on a standby", until the appropriate conditions would arise for them to be shown.

Similarly to the ideas behind queer pedagogy, queer artistic feedback does not constitute a method on its own. It seeks to guide artists to develop their own understanding of feedback tools that nurtures their practice. It invites makers to decide for themselves what types of conversation they want to be having or not having about their work in the first place. Feedback is perhaps best when it is received as nurturing and intentional. Taking active shape in creating appropriate feedback ecology for sustaining one's artistic practice can influence how we digest reflections from others.

In a way, we followed the artist and their curiosity to find out together what kind of feedback suits their needs at the moment. As fellow queer-identifing people, we were giving them communally the feedback they wanted and asked for - and a whole lot more than intended - while prioritizing comfort and joy.

In imagining artistic feedback sessions as mentors (facilitators, partners, peers, coordinators) who are interested in flattening the hierarchies, we strove to lend makers as much agency in the design and dramaturgy of their session. We were trying to listen to the aspirations of the artists and respond to the specificity of the artistic sharing through unorthodox use of duration and performativity of the particular practices of giving feedback. In a way, we followed the artist and their curiosity to find out together what kind of feedback suits their needs at the moment. As fellow queer-identifing people, we were giving them communally the feedback they wanted and asked for - and a whole lot more than intended - while prioritizing comfort and joy.

These notes on queering artistic feedback are just a part of a not-conclusive, growing body of reflection stemming from IPOP's evolving work held among our peers, mentors and friends. There is still much to learn, especially through feedback tools that are not *par excellence* logocentric. As IPOP, we have been collaborating with artists such as Fazle Shairmahomed and raoni muzho saleh, whose somatic practices have been focused on activating the body to give and experience feedback through exchange of movement and sound. Queering artistic feedback may as well be about the resistance and provision of alternative practices than words and language, which as a fundamental expression of an external reality are centering nothing more than a Western, predominantly white tradition.

4. Some prompts for (queering) your feedback session

- Acknowledge wisdom and skills that are already present in the room.

- Take into consideration the aspirations of the artist and communities they inhabit.

- Think of feedback as an ecosystem.

- Tools can be given and tools can be made anew.

- Assume an unassuming perspective.

- For the time of the session consider the authorship fluid.

- Be mindful that digesting feedback can require appropriate aftercare.

- Be as generous as it suits you at the moment.

- Consider the values and mood you're bringing into the room.

- Create feedback environments that empower you and others.

- Feedback sessions are there for everyone to learn something!

- Protocols are not carved in stone.

- Feedback is a gift - when offered in good spirit and sincerely.

5. Referenced & recommended sources to read & listen

- Mary Bryson and Suzanne de Castell, "Queer Pedagogy: Praxis Makes Im/Perfect", 1993

- Deborah P. Britzmann, "Is There a Queer Pedagogy? or Stop Reading Straight", 1995

- Susanne Luhmann, "Queering/Querying Pedagogy? Or, Pedagogy is a Pretty Queer Thing", 1998

- João Nemi Neto, "Queer pedagogy: Approaches to inclusive teaching," 2018

- Kate Morales, "So You Want to Queer Your Pedagogy?" and "Queerness Taught me That. An Open Letter to the Radical Educators of the Ecoverse and Beyond", 2020

- Ocean Vuong, "My vulnerability is my power", Youtube, September 2022

NOTES

"Queering Artistic Feedback" presents texts and responses resulting from a yearlong focus on feed backing artistic work from a queer pedagogy perspective. By making it available, we desire to share with students, teachers, artists and art enthusiast experiences and reflections we have gained so far IPOP activities.

IPOP is an educational, artistic, bi-vocally led research platform exploring how educational institutions can better foster queer artists and practices.

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