
4 The arts, education and the politics of multiculturalism

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The past two years have witnessed numerous initiatives designed to develop policies that seek to institutionalise the notion of arts for a multicultural Australia. The most comprehensive of these has been the joint initiative of the Office of Multicultural Affairs (1993) and the Australia Council for the Arts to develop a policy framework, titled *The Big Picture*. It provides a set of principles and strategies to enable the creative talents in the ethnic communities to be identified, informed, developed and promoted. The framework rests on the belief that cultural production in Australia needs to reflect the nation's cultural diversity and dynamism. It problematises the notion of Australian identity, and argues for the need 'to extend and enliven the Australian cultural world, by promoting and supporting broader aesthetic perceptions and practices'. To achieve this, the framework underlines the importance of education. It highlights, among other things, the role of schools in promoting critical awareness of the heterogeneity of artistic traditions, and in challenging narrowly defined conceptions of identity and culture.

As an educational objective, this aspiration is not new. For almost two decades, schools in Australia have espoused a commitment to multicultural education, stressing, in rhetoric at least, the need for curriculum and pedagogy to reflect the values of pluralism and equality of opportunity. But the successes they are able to claim are at best limited. In this chapter, I want to describe how schools have responded to the challenges of arts education in a multicultural Australia; discuss how the few initiatives which they have attempted have largely remained trapped within the prevailing assimilatory logic

of Australian schools; that is, much of what goes on in schools is based on a set of cultural assumptions that are antagonistic to diversity (see Rizvi, 1993; Kalantzis and Cope, 1990); and explore a range of theoretical and political issues relevant to the development of more effective practices in arts education for a multicultural Australia.

Even a cursory examination of the current practices of arts education reveals how little schools in Australia have done to address the issues of cultural difference. While multiculturalism has made some inroads into the teaching of social studies and other humanities, the arts have continued to be regarded by most teachers in a culturally blind manner, neutral with respect to particular values they might embody or express. While the rhetoric of arts education recognises the close association between culture and the arts, most teachers of the arts remain reluctant to enter debates about what diversity might mean for curriculum and pedagogy. Limited by their training, most primary school teachers view the arts as peripheral to what they see as their main responsibility—the teaching of literacy and numeracy. Secondary school teachers, on the other hand, are also constrained by their training but, in their case, the lack of resources and administrative support forces them back into a conservative curriculum.

This general account should not be taken to mean, however, that multiculturalism has had no impact on teachers of the arts. On the contrary, arts teachers are constantly 'stumbling' upon issues related to teaching about art objects created in different cultural contexts to students from different backgrounds. Because of the demographic realities in their classrooms, many have been forced to look at questions concerning relevant representations of art objects produced in non-Western traditions and to develop culturally sensitive learning environments and appropriate teaching strategies in culturally diverse schools. But the theoretical and political resources upon which they have been able to draw have been at best limited, if not misguided. The liberal theory of multiculturalism has, for example, produced effects that have either been ineffective or contradictory. Ineffective because it has been possible for the language of diversity to be co-opted within the prevailing logic of assimilation and contradictory because it has led to consequences that have conflicted with its aspirations.

Practices of arts education in Australian schools are mostly embedded within two distinct traditions. The first of these, the neo-classical tradition, is based on the view that the arts embody a certain cultural heritage into which every student should be initiated. The arts are seen as a disciplined way of knowing that imply the institution of structures of cultural authority against which excellence

can be judged and developed. One of the leading theorists of this tradition, Ralph Smith (1986), suggests that it is possible to identify a distinctive set of concepts, skills and values that constitute artistic excellence. The notion of excellence itself is held to be universal, essential for the development of both the human intellect and aesthetic sensibilities, and also for the preservation of what is thought to be the best the West has been able to produce. To be educated, according to this view, is to be initiated into those canons which define cultural excellence, and to develop certain dispositions towards a shared set of signs, symbols and narratives.

In contrast, the expressivist tradition—based partly on the educational theories of Rousseau and Dewey—views arts education less in terms of securing access to certain canons of excellence than as the cultivation of an innate aesthetic capacity possessed by every student. The emphasis is not so much on cultural universals as individual development and maturation. The pedagogic focus is on the importance of using students' first-hand experiences and natural interests in helping them acquire and develop knowledge and skills. The teachers' authority derives less from their role as the guardians of aesthetic traditions as from their performance as guides and confidantes who are able to elicit the various desired student outcomes. Their task is to create an appropriate learning environment in which students can explore issues and concepts important for them. Students are expected, on the other hand, to take responsibility for the formation of their own judgments and development, often in dialogue with their teachers.

Errington (1992) has shown how these two traditions dominate the field of drama education in Australian schools. He suggests that the neo-classical tradition seeks to develop specific attitudes and approaches to drama in education. Its purpose is the transmission of certain worthwhile knowledge and skills which are selected from well-established cultural, social and political texts. In so far as drama education is also concerned with cultural development, it is with the refinement of skills and knowledge, with the aim of pursuing 'excellence'. The purposes of both the content and form of drama education are assumed to be self-evident, by those who are already initiated—the 'experts' in the field. Their priority is clearly in the reproduction of the dominant culture, expressed recently in the language of cultural literacy (Hirsch, 1988). This priority is less evident in the expressivist tradition in the teaching of drama, where the individual is assumed to be the key unit of attention. It is argued that drama education should not be about advancing specific subject matter but with developing the 'whole child', with providing students with opportunities to pursue their own interests. But, as Errington (1992) maintains, teachers still have to make decisions about the

direction student development ought to take. These are culturally specific decisions which are masked by the use of such taken-for-granted phrases as 'self-expression', 'self-discovery' and 'self-confidence', to justify particular learning activities. The expressivist tradition thus implies that it is different from the neo-classical tradition in its pedagogy, but not its curriculum. In drama classes, there is an emphasis on spontaneous dialogue, and a naturalism that is believed to enable students to express their inner-felt emotions.

A major difficulty with the expressivist tradition is that it assumes artistic experience to be an individual capacity, a function of innate qualities that each child possesses. It overlooks the fact that these qualities may be culturally formed and that they may play an important role in the organisation of social relations and public life. The neo-classical tradition, on the other hand, mistakenly converts the recognition of the public nature of knowledge to a desire for universality and community. In identifying the knowledge and skills to be transmitted to the young, it simplifies the nature of the political processes of selection by which excellence is judged, obscuring the patterns of difference and discrimination involved. But what the multiculturalists have been able to show is that such selection is never neutral and that it is informed by patterns of power and privilege. Attempts to naturalise the arts curriculum in terms of either certain presumed canons of excellence or self-expression conceal the fact that the exercise of power is nevertheless present in both traditions of arts education. For, while the neo-classical tradition simply assumes a universalist system of evaluation, the expressivist tradition is predicated upon the assumptions of what Donald (1992, p. 58) has called 'the pastoral mode of power', through which students take on a key role in their own supervision. What is regarded as an appropriate aesthetic response from the student is still assessed by the teacher within an ideological framework which is itself not subjected to any kind of scrutiny. A consequence of this pedagogy is that by misrecognising *social* norms as innate capacities, the expressivist tradition 'establishes a pathological model of those who do not conform to that pattern' (Donald, 1992, p. 159). So, if the neo-classical program is unacceptable because it 'misconceives unequal relations of power as a body of socially neutral information', the expressivist view can also be criticised for reducing 'the social' to issues of interpersonal relations. Indeed, as Donald argues, the insistence that schools should value children's experiences and natural interests entails a moral relativism that could be culturally quite conservative.

From a multiculturalist point of view, then, both the neo-classical and expressivist traditions of arts education are seriously flawed. Yet,

it is within these traditions that many teachers have sought to revise the arts curricula to meet the challenges of a multicultural society. They have thus left the central ideological assumptions underpinning the current practices of arts education in schools undisturbed. Revised curricula now include examples of aesthetic traditions of different cultural groups, but only in an additive and marginalised manner, leaving the questions of the relationship between these examples and the mainstream traditions of arts education unexplored.

While we do not have a full catalogue of the range of activities with which schools have attempted to implement the principles of multiculturalism, it is possible to identify a number of key innovations. Perhaps the most common of these has been the attempts by some teachers to introduce students to arts and craft practices of different cultures. Students have been introduced to such works of art as Indonesian prints and batiks, Japanese kites and West African textiles. Performances by visiting Indian dancers, Chinese musicians and Maori singers have also been labelled 'multicultural'. In literature, the teaching of haiku has been similarly identified. Schools have also employed non-European artists in residence as a way of promoting intercultural understanding. But, significantly, most of these activities have been marginal to the systematic study of the arts which continues to be carried out in the usual ethnocentric manner. Indeed, in some instances the so-called multicultural activities may have done more harm than good—in reinforcing stereotypical racist representations, for example. A clear example of this racism can be found in an instructional pack, *Words and Faces*, developed in Britain by the Afro-Caribbean Resource Project but widely available and presumably used in Australian schools. One of the activities in the pack invites students to observe, draw and discuss similarities and differences in people's physical appearance. Masquerading as 'multicultural arts', it simply reproduces the now discredited nineteenth-century 'scientific' racist views which had sought to categorise the entire humanity in terms of presumed phenotypical and cultural differences (see Miles, 1989).

But perhaps a most promising development in arts education is the growing realisation that the arts cannot be understood apart from the cultural context in which they are produced. This is an idea that has, in recent years, been incorporated into mainstream educational thinking, most significantly in 'Discipline Based Art Education' (DBAE), developed with the considerable financial backing of the J. Paul Getty Center for Education in the Arts in the United States, but finding significant support among Australian teachers as well. One of DBAE's most articulate and influential advocates, Elliot Eisner, has highlighted the social and cultural functions of the arts. Eisner

(1988) rejects the dualism associated with the two dominant traditions in arts education. He argues that for an aesthetic experience to have educational significance, it should be able to provide students with the cultural resources which they can use to address intelligently the problems they will invariably encounter in the world. Arts education should therefore be concerned not only with giving students a structured understanding of its forms, but it should also provide them with opportunities to draw upon their emotions to unfold their cultural imagination. This pragmatic view of arts education leads DBAE to highlight four operations: arts production, art criticism, art history and aesthetics.

The notion of cultural context, argues Eisner, is central to DBAE: students need to 'understand that art does not emerge in the proverbial vacuum. All art is part of a culture'. Moreover, he suggests:

Just as culture shapes art, art shapes culture. Our convictions, our technology, and our imagination shape our images, and our images, in turn, shape our perception of the world. One major aim of discipline-based arts education is to help students understand these relationships by examining the interaction between art and culture over time. (Eisner, 1987, p. 20)

In Australia, the National Statement and Profiles on Arts Education, released in 1992 and currently being trialled in schools, demonstrates considerable affinity with this analysis of the nature of the relationship between art and culture. The National Statement insists that the arts in Australia need to be understood in their pluralistic context and that learning 'should emphasise the need for students to gain an understanding of how culture is constructed, reconstructed and represented through the arts'. The arts, it suggests, 'play a critical role in shaping culture by defining, expressing, celebrating and preserving the qualities and attitudes *we value*' (emphasis added).

Apart from the ambiguity surrounding the use of 'we', a major problem with this formulation of the relationship between the arts and culture is that it is predicated upon a very narrow anthropological view of the idea of culture. It encourages teachers and students to refer to the 'ethnographic' in order to interpret 'the cultural context' in which diverse arts practices are to be located. It separates issues of cultural formation and difference from social and political considerations. It treats cultures as if they were hermetically sealed off from one another, giving rise to what Gilroy (1987) has referred to as 'cultural insiderism'. Cultures are assumed to be *the given* upon which pedagogy must be constructed. Within the framework of this set of assumptions, the issues of difference are treated more as a fact to be taken into account rather than as constitutive of curricular and

pedagogic relations. Teachers are, moreover, assumed to hold a position of neutrality in the formation of such relations, as somehow external to the more general processes -of cultural articulation in society. Thus, while multiculturalism may be viewed as intrinsically oppositional in nature, all cultural practices are thought to be valid within their own terms. These culturalist presuppositions support a rationalist pedagogy that is both ahistorical and depoliticised. Ahistorical because it treats culture as something fixed, finished or final and depoliticised because it obscures the inherently political character of pedagogical practices.

The view of multiculturalism based on these assumptions embraces a notion of culture which is inherently naturalistic and anthropological, conceptualised as it is as a 'way of life' (Sachs, 1989). Not surprisingly, therefore, in arts education, this focus on 'way of life' is reduced to cultural forms made visible in language, habits and customs and objects. This reduction both appeals to, and lends itself to, cultural essentialism and by ignoring and obscuring its historical and political construction, it reifies culture, according it autonomous status. The version of multicultural education it supports involves learning about 'other' cultures as a way of breaking down stereotypes and thus promoting greater tolerance of diversity in society. A major problem with this approach is, however, that it does not define 'the other' in relational terms, in a way that might refer to the speaking position. Rather, it naturalises 'the other' in representations that are assumed to be objective. It obscures the issues of disadvantage and discrimination, and of the politics of ethnic formation.

This view of multiculturalism has serious implications for the work of teachers. In a significant sense, it sets them up for failure, for the contradictions of its culturalist assumptions are such that, by focusing on cultures which have been reified in particular histories, it often reinforces the very racist representations that multiculturalism seeks to eradicate.

Furthermore, in treating culture simply as a variable to be taken into account in curriculum planning, teachers are forced to assume either that learners do not have their own distinctive histories, or else that they are able to 'empty themselves' of their histories, suspend any references to their own cultural identity, so that, presumably, all students can receive the curriculum in the same way. Various traditions in arts education thus seem trapped within this homogenising tendency of Australian schooling which seeks to 'disembody' the student. Rosaldo (1989) refers to this process as 'cultural stripping' wherein individuals are stripped of their cultures in order to assume a homogenised identity. Where difference is acknowledged it is essentialised in the language of anthropology, as

somehow disconnected from the wider economics of power and privilege.

The liberal view of multiculturalism is also based on the assumption that society is fundamentally constituted by an uninterrupted accord between diverse cultural traditions and that, as a consensual social site, schools can accommodate differences in an impartial manner. But as a number of critics have pointed out, this pluralism ignores the workings of power and privilege. It presupposes harmony and agreement as a natural state within which differences can coexist without disturbing the prevailing structural norms. Against this functionalist view, Mohanty (1990, p. 180) has argued that difference cannot be formulated as negotiations among culturally diverse groups against a backdrop of presumed cultural homogeneity. Rather, difference is the recognition that knowledges are forged in histories that are characterised by differentially constituted relations of power; that is knowledges, subjectivities and social practice—including the practices of cultural negotiation—are established within 'asymmetrical and incommensurate cultural spaces' (Mohanty, 1990, p. 181).

A focus on these material relations of power can help us to avoid viewing multiculturalism either simply as a matter of attitudes and temperament or, indeed, as the fashionable postmodernism might suggest, as a case of textual disagreement and discourse represented in a form of detotalised micropolitics in which the contextual specificity of difference is set up against the totalising regimes of dominations. While an examination of the local and the specific practices of oppression is important, what is often overlooked in this latter formulation is the necessity to analyse these practices in relation to the larger dominating structures of oppression. As McLaren (1993) maintains, we need to take:

... into account both the macropolitical level of structural organisation and the micropolitical level of different and contradictory manifestations of oppression as a means of analysing global relations of power. (McLaren 1993, p. 124)

This discussion has revealed the complexities inherent in theorising the relationship between ethnic identity and difference. As Stuart Hall (1991, p. 18) has argued, ethnicity needs to be understood in terms of a politics of location, positionality and enunciation—not so much as a process of discovery of lost 'roots' but of construction of a 'new' or 'emergent' ethnicity, linked to contemporary social relations and to relations of power. While marginalised people clearly need to honour many of the overt aspects of their traditions and history, Hall (1991, p. 15) suggests that they also need to:

... understand the languages which they've been not taught to

speak. They need to understand and revalue the traditions and inheritances of cultural expression and creativity. And, in that sense, the past is not only a position from which to speak, but it is also a necessary resource in what one has to say. . . . So the relationship of the kind of ethnicity I am talking about to the past is not a simple one—it is a constructed one. It is constructed in history, and it is constructed politically in part. It is part of a narrative. We tell ourselves the stories of the parts of our roots in order to come into contact, creatively, with it.

Hall thus presents a dynamic view of ethnic identity and difference which needs to be recognised historically and politically; and which is both expressive of traditions and which creates new possibilities.

It may be useful here to consider the distinction Homi Bhabha (1990) has drawn between 'difference' and 'diversity'. Bhabha is critical of the notion of diversity which is used in liberal discourse to give an illusion of pluralistic harmony. He argues that this supposed harmony is only achieved on the tacit terms of social *norms* constructed and administered by the dominant group to create an illusion of consensus. It is an ideological notion that obscures the exercise of power. The social norms within the framework of which diversity is valued serve only to contain expressions of cultural difference. As Bhabha argues, the 'universalism that paradoxically permits diversity masks ethnocentric norms' (1990, p. 208). The concept of difference, on the other hand, does not assume such a consensual logic. It seeks to make problematic the very norms which are used to identify difference. Differences, then, do not constitute either clearly marked areas of experience and practice or a unity of identity, as is so often assumed by teachers seeking to implement multiculturalism. Rather, differences are understood through a politics of signification—that is, through practices which are both reflective and constitutive of prevailing economic and political relations. There is no such thing as a self-evident permanent cultural obviousness which defines cultural boundaries that can be administered by the state in the interest of social harmony.

This view of ethnicity serves to underline the importance of problematising the politics of both exclusion and inclusion, and not simply accepting a pluralist rhetoric of inclusiveness. Hall, too, emphasises a politics of difference which theorises a place *from* where marginalised groups can speak. But he also stresses the need to move *beyond* an essentialised and narrow view of ethnic identity, linking it to emergent forms of local and global power. Ethnicity, from this perspective, is always a contingent and a temporary mark of identification and meaning, relevant only to specific historical sites and particular political projects.

Homi Bhabha's analysis suggests that cultures cannot simply be

reduced to unregulatable textual play; but neither do they exist in some essential naturalised form 'a totalised prior moment of being or meaning in an essence' (1990, p. 290). Bhabha speaks of culture as a form of 'hybridity', within which exists a 'third space' that permits the emergence of new discursive positions. This 'third space' opens up the possibilities for new structures of authority, and for new politics of resistance to be created.

What implications do these insights have for rethinking arts education for a multicultural society? Demographic diversity is a fact that few Australian schools can now overlook. As we have seen in this chapter, schools have sought to respond to this diversity in a variety of ways, which, in recent years, have been predicated mostly upon the assumptions of liberal multiculturalism. Schools have talked about building a common culture—a harmonious multicultural society in which all cultural traditions can be maintained. But the critical analyses put forward by such theorists as Bhabha and Hall have indicated how this kind of multiculturalism is really about a politics of assimilation concerned with domesticating egalitarian demands. By invoking the universalist ideal of a society governed by a set of social principles for a common humanity, in which we can all participate happily without reference to class, ethnicity, race or gender, multiculturalism obscures the issues of power and privilege. An arts curriculum based on these assumptions can only deal with differences by making them marginal; by being tokenistic.

Bhabha and Hall have also stressed the need to attend to the issues of the speaking position in analysing issues of cultural formation. In the case of schooling, this implies looking at the positions from which arts teachers might conceptualise and engage with differences in their classrooms. What is evidently clear is that those advocating reforms to Australian education often place unrealistic demands on teachers. They assume that, by and large, teachers already have the appropriate inclination, background, ability and commitment to work towards their reforming agendas. Apart from the fact that teaching remains a predominantly Anglo-Australian profession (only 8.5 per cent are from non-English speaking backgrounds), there is also the issue of the structural conditions under which teachers work. Despite their educational rhetoric of democracy, creativity and co-operation, schools have been shown to embody a contradictory set of values—those of obedience, compliance, routine, conformity and homogeneity. Unless these conditions are challenged, teachers cannot provide a social space within which to resist the hegemony of a monocultural arts curriculum. Critical views of arts education in relation to multiculturalism may advocate a contrasting view of teacher's authority, but they cannot avoid the

issues of the structural conditions within which this authority resides, is exercised and is accorded legitimacy.

The analyses presented by Hall and Bhabha also indicate the importance of challenging the myth of teacher neutrality. Teachers cannot presume a neutrality with respect to the manner in which their own social histories intersect with those of their students, even when they claim impartiality. As Martin and Mohanty (1986) have pointed out:

. . . the claim to a lack of identity or positionality is itself based on privilege, on the refusal to accept responsibility for one's implication in actual historical and social relations, or a denial that personalities exist or that they matter, the denial of one's own personal history and the claim to a total separation from it. (Martin and Mohanty, 1986, p. 208)

This separation has the consequence of 'disembodying' the teacher and of creating a dualism between knower and known. But it is not possible to live as human subjects without, in a sense, taking on the history of that subjectivity. Teachers come to their work against the background of already formed subjectivities which are linked to different histories, privilege, power and oppression. They are, moreover, socially situated actors who are caught up in power relations of gender, ethnicity and class in ways which are not arbitrary, but are historically constituted, and may not necessarily be understood by them.

It has to be acknowledged also that most teaching takes place in a context of schooling that does not permit radical reform. Teachers, no matter how well-intentioned, work in a context that is inherently conservative. As Carby (1980) points out, a major weakness in the current versions of multiculturalism lies in the location of what might otherwise be positive practices in a context of discipline and control. The school is a site for containing the effects of marginalisation and oppression by promoting a fiction of tolerance between social groups in order to produce a society in which a certain truce exists between ethnic groupings and classes. But schools are not generally tolerant of differences; and, as Connell (1985, p. 147) argues, the formal structures of supervision and accountability in schools tends to reinforce uniformity and conservatism.

The various ways in which schools attempt to socialise students into the dominant social orders are now widely recognised. Schools seek to legitimate the dominant social ideologies by fostering among students a form of compliant thinking which often prevents the formation of a critical understanding of social biases. But it is also recognised that the social ideologies which schools promote are not entirely coherent and complete. They contain numerous contradic-

tions, and the authority upon which they once rested has become profoundly unstable. For many students, brought up on doses of MTV and TV soaps, schools have lost their credibility, making it difficult for them to achieve student compliance. As Willis (1990) has suggested, we live in an era in which 'high' culture has lost its dominance. It is no longer able to colonise, dominate or contain the everyday aspects of life. According to Willis, formal aesthetics has been replaced by a grounded aesthetics which is based on the commercial provision of cultural commodities. What is clear, then, is that schools are places where there is a constant struggle over the conditions, production and consumption of symbolic resources. While schools seek to defend their historical patterns of power, students have developed sophisticated techniques of resistance, sometimes with the covert help of teachers.

It is within this contradictory space that schools now have to create new possibilities of reform—to work with emergent ethnicities within a context of a global commodity culture.

What has become abundantly clear is that schools are not the only site where cultural formations are negotiated. They are not the only place where students encounter difference and where they develop a sense of their identity. Not only the local institutions, such as families and peers, but also increasingly, the global institutions, such as the media in its various forms, now have the capacity to morally and politically steer students' sense of identity, in ways that are often contradictory. At the same time, students do not receive the hegemonic constructions of identity in the same way. In any case, hegemonic discourses are often contradictory. Their epistemic authority is ambiguous and tentative, allowing a space for imagining an alternative understanding of social relations, and of possible futures.

It is this space that arts teachers can seek to occupy in order to challenge not only the prevailing ethnocentric attitudes and beliefs but, more importantly, the epistemic authority that sustains monocultural images of identity and culture. However, as Cohen (1987) argues, ethnocentricity:

. . . cannot be tackled by simply giving students access to alternative sources of experience, or new means of intellectual authority; rather it is a question of articulating their lived cultures to *new practices of representation*, which make it possible to sustain an imaginative sense of social identity and discourse without recourse to racist constructions. (Cohen, 1987, p. 2)

In my view, the arts, much more than any other school subject, can contribute to the development of the imaginative critical faculties that are required for this task. This is so because the arts are already

committed to the methodological virtues of imagination, creativity, aesthetic and cultural sensitivities and social criticism.

The pivotal idea of critical imagination can be used to develop a new way of looking at arts education. In an important sense, the arts have always attached considerable importance to imagination: to the critical scrutiny of existing institutions; to 'seeing new aspects'; and to the speculative construction of alternatives. In this way, the arts can legitimately be both disturbing and subversive. They can be about practices of representation that disrupt and rupture the existing way of looking at things. The arts allow a social space in which it is legitimate to ask how things might be otherwise. Artistic creativity demands as much. Arts can make problematic the very structures and practices of representation. Published initially some 25 years ago, Alex Buzo's play *Norm and Ahmad* (1976) did much to disturb the racist assumptions that guided commonsense understandings of Asia-Australia relations. It showed many Australians to be ambivalent towards Asia in ways that are only now becoming apparent. Similarly, Gordon Bennett's paintings have made problematic the history of colonialism in this country. What these works seek to do is to undertake a critical scrutiny of the institutions in which representations of our cultural formations are currently embedded.

It is these methodological virtues which need to be exploited and extended into the arts curriculum and pedagogy concerned with issues of difference. We need to teach for those forms of artistic imagination that problematise cultural formation and acknowledge that a politics of difference involves a dialogue with others who speak from different traditions, locations and experiences. Arts education needs to combine a practical understanding of the various traditions with a reflective awareness of how they are historically constructed and how they might be replaced by different ones. This focus on critical imagination implies that students develop a capacity to represent to themselves how things might be different, and perhaps better. But it also implies that it is a faculty that cannot be exercised and developed in isolation, but only within organic groupings of persons committed to a common mode of activity.

Schools are, of course, not the only site where this might happen. Given that many teachers, themselves, occupy contradictory positions in relation to racism and are often complicit in such discriminatory practices as grading according to norms which rest on assimilationist assumptions, it is necessary for school-based initiatives to link up with the struggle taking place on other sites. It is important therefore not only to equip students with the general critical skills of imagination that might help them to deconstruct hegemonic representations, but it is also essential for teachers, ethnic communities and the communities of artists to work together to unsettle the ideologies

that sustain the practices of exclusion, marginalisation and oppression.

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