

Teacher as conceptual artist

6 modes to integrate artistic and teaching practices

Mexican-American artist and scholar Jorge Lucero argues that the perceived gap between teacher/artist identities could be reconciled through an understanding of how these identities overlap and integrate into each other. Building on developments in conceptual and social art, Lucero proposes that a teacher's practice – in and out of the classroom – can simultaneously be their creative practice.

This tool presents Jorge Lucero's six modes of exploration and experimentation within the frame of conceptual art in order to help arts educators identify and embrace the overlap between their own teacher and artist identities.

Read the article [School as Material](#).

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TEACHER AS CONCEPTUAL ARTIST:

6 modes to integrate artistic and teachers practice

MODE 1: Consider the institution as material

Think about how to make the institution the material of what you are making. Here you need not just think about the objects of the institution. What are the norms and dynamics of the space that you're in? What is the special, philosophical, physical, and economic infrastructure of the institution and how can those things become your work? For example, what are the most bureaucratic things that happen in your school and how can those things become artworks? Not through destroying them or being cynical about them, but through reframing how you think about them. How are parent-teacher conferences art? How are teacher in-services art? How is grading your students' work art? How is taking attendance art? How is lesson planning art? How is cleaning your classroom art? And so on and so forth.

MODE 2: Attain energy via accumulation

With the passage of time – at the very least – seconds are accumulating. Breaths, interactions, gestures, movements, sounds, voices, acts of labor, commerce, etcetera. All accumulate with the mere passage of time. How many things and activities are repeated daily? How many piles exist? What does it mean to do something two times? Ten times? One hundred times? Countless times? Well, in the case of breaths, we can make the argument that the repetition of that mere banality produces a lifetime's worth of passion, joy, sadness, purpose, sensation, generosity and dreams. Accumulation needs to begin at the number one: one gesture, number one of the collection, the first time. One though, is frequently ignored, but accumulation calls attention. It's what makes the answers to prayers miraculous, what makes atoms life, what makes the everyday, art.

MODE 3: Use closeness

Even within the apparent sterility and policing of the institution there are relationships. The relationship can be intimate and they can be daily renewed. Relationships can be between people, objects, and spaces. They can be whispered in secret or pronounced publically. Closeness doesn't always have to be about physical bodies. Closeness can be one sided, if you know how to do it right. Some things can only be experienced through closeness. Some things can only be re-presented through closeness. Closeness doesn't always have to do with proximity or size. Sometimes closeness is driven by attitude and/or intention.

MODE 4: Co-construct

You may need a partner; someone to carry the majority of the weight. Someone to bring something to the table that you could never bring. This partner might be another person; they might be an object; they might be a location; or a time of day. Find this partner and let them give you parameters. Follow their parameters. Life is a partner. When in doubt, forget art and live life.

MODE 5: Embrace invisibility

Some works will never be seen. You may not see them come to fruition. They might only exist in your mind. You might make these works in secret and never tell anybody about them. They might never be documented. They might fade away into memory, time, or material. You may find that no one cares. You might find that you don't even care. Indeed, you may think that this whole thing is a waste of time and energy. Even in this thought, you may have achieved something!

MODE 6: Present narratives

Learn how to tell the story and get comfortable with it. As a teacher you already know how to make the undocumentable presentable. As teachers we're constantly being asked to distill all the nuance of learning and being in relation with our students into summaries and deliverables. With conceptual art this task is the same. Hyper-document everything, write about it, steer the narrative, produce images, books, exhibitions, websites, social media posts or merely tell the story of what you've done to someone else. Or – even better – tell no one, just yourself; but learn to really tell yourself the story of what you've done.