

Week 8: Postmodern Feminist Punk Rock Art Directive

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This week, I facilitated the postmodern feminist punk rock art directive. For my initial presentation, I covered the history and culture of postmodernism, feminism, and punk rock; and touched on philosophers, theorists, and artists, such as Michel Foucault, Robert Rauschenberg, bell hooks, Pussy Riot, Jessica Masino Drass, and Shepard Fairey. Some of my themes included deconstruction and reconstruction, multiple coexisting truths, questioning dominant narratives, and the DIY (do it yourself) mindset. Afterward, I began the art directive portion by providing a trauma-informed protocol and offering external resources to help my classmates take care of themselves throughout our group process. I designated myself as a helper and advised the class that if anyone felt over-aroused and needed assistance, they could raise their hand and I would offer grounding. Additionally, I explained that it was completely okay for classmates to step out of class and self-regulate if they needed. Before beginning, I impressed upon everyone that utilizing external or internal resources to regulate throughout this art directive would not disrupt the group process.

My art directive was divided into three parts: 1) a written narrative of patriarchal oppression, 2) flipping the script and creating an empowering artwork, and 3) putting together a visual community quilt and holding a popcorn discussion. For the first part, I designated five minutes for the class to sit in silence and write about a time when they experienced patriarchal oppression. My intent for writing in silence was to provide greater attentional space for the class to access their own memories and narratives without imposing any external sensory or affective stimuli. They were allowed to use any writing medium to write down their narratives; however, I provided 12" X 18" sheets of white paper for them to write on because the written narrative

would be the basis for creating the artwork in the second part of my directive. I elaborated that their narratives may involve naming a specific situation or something that someone said to them. Further, I assured everyone that they would not be asked to share this narrative with the class, but that they were free to do so during the discussion portion if they were comfortable. As everyone wrote down their narratives, I held space by taking a seat in front of the classroom and setting my timer. Overall, the class seemed contemplative, focused, and able to process their feelings without overwhelm.

Once the five-minute timer sounded, I advised the class of the prompt for the second part: flipping the script and making an empowering artwork. During the next 15 minutes, they could use any materials and techniques that felt right in order to transform their written narrative into a new artwork. For example, they could cut or tear up their narrative and collage it, draw or paint on top of it, or even fold it into a paper airplane and throw it out the window! Following Jessica Masino Drass' punk rock studio model, I encouraged my classmates to be in full control of deconstructing and reconstructing their narratives.

I also let everyone know that I was going to be playing some punk rock music at a moderate volume and that if anyone felt over-aroused at any time, I could either turn the volume down, switch the song, or turn the music off. By playing punk rock music, I had hoped to imbue the class with the spirit of punk so that they would feel inspired to challenge and transform each of their narratives of patriarchal oppression. The class seemed excited by the prospect of making artwork to punk rock music, so I went ahead and played it on my speaker. As the song "Typical Girls" by the Slits began playing, my classmates rummaged through some general materials that

I had set out on a side table, in addition to other materials that were available in the classroom's art cabinets.

While I continued to hold space with my timer and observe from the front of the room, I noticed an energetic shift from my classmates as they absorbed the musical themes and utilized materials and techniques in the DIY spirit with various affective and symbolic approaches. As Pussy Riot, X-Ray Spex, and Pleasure Venom belted rebellious feminist lyrics from the top of their lungs, I witnessed the narrative papers being vigorously torn up, punctured, crumpled, folded, wrapped, and marked up. Overall, the fifteen-minute group process was very exciting to watch! Throughout part two, I was mindful to provide five- and one-minute warnings so the class could prepare to conclude their artwork. By the one-minute warning, several students needed a few more minutes, so I provided that extra time and then concluded part two.

For part three, I allocated ten minutes for everyone to create a visual community quilt and engage in a popcorn discussion. I advised that part three was optional and that my classmates could participate as much or as little as they preferred. For example, it was totally fine if they'd rather not share their artwork in the visual community quilt or talk about their experience. In providing a range of engagement options, I wanted to create a culture of consent at every level of disclosure in order to maximize safety around these sensitive and vulnerable narratives. My goal was to model a matriarchal (non-authoritarian) structure in order to support our group in its process of empowerment. While everyone ended up placing their artwork on the table in the center of the classroom, several ultimately decided not to talk about their artwork. Whether or not my classmates spoke, I found the most valuable aspect of the visual community quilt was the

opportunity for everyone to bear witness to each other's artwork and process of empowerment. By doing so, we created a brave space woven together by mutual pain and resilience.

While most of the class chose to create mixed-media collages, I noticed that two classmates worked sculpturally; Mattsue folded her narrative paper into a transcendental origami butterfly and Katie erected a phallic form from her crumpled narrative and tied it off with a rope. Interestingly, both artworks confronted father-wounds. Within the collage pieces, a range of materials included aluminum foil, foam and holographic stickers, pipe cleaners, tissue paper, magazine images and text, and glitter glue. Techniques involved using these materials to deconstruct and reconstruct the narrative papers by either obscuring the text or tearing apart and reassembling it within new visual contexts.

For example, Jennifer tore up her narrative paper into little fragments and placed them into a delicate semi-transparent purple tissue paper envelope. Abbey punctured her paper with a red pipe cleaner so that only tiny bits of the narrative were visible, while Anna utilized aluminum foil to selectively reveal only positive narrative elements. The reflective foil served as a mirror for locating herself beyond the negative narrative. There were a few extended moments of silence, in which I held space and encouraged the simple act of witnessing. After a few more brief comments, the group was ready to close and conclude. Altogether, I was deeply moved and inspired by my classmates' approaches and honored to facilitate their journey through this challenging subject matter.