

Elizabeth Garber  
Ziegfeld Award Acceptance Talk

### Border Crossings and Nomadism

Thanks to Ryan Shin, Mary Stokrocki, John White, Manisha Sharma, and Lisa Hochtritt for their support of my nomination; to Angela LaPorte for all of the work she continues to do to coordinate the USSEA awards; and to the many other wonderful individuals who work hard to keep USSEA a vibrant organization for all of us. I am honored, and truly humbled, to be selected for the Ziegfeld Award: so much so that I couldn't process that the honor for awhile after learning I'd received it.

Edwin Ziegfeld stands for me as one of the mythic figures of art and visual culture education, the person who led the Owatonna Project in the 1930s and brought to life the idea of art as a part of the daily lives of people and of a community, as the person who helped found InSEA and USSEA as well as NAEA, and who brought to Teachers College the values he had implemented in Owatonna as well as many innovative ideas about educating in the arts. He also was deeply committed to the art of children and adolescents and was part of a group of storied educators at TC who developed a doctoral degree called College Teaching of an Academic Subject, that in art combined high level studio work and a written dissertation: something we're still struggling to formulate today in the US although not in Europe. Accompanying my talk are examples from the Ziegfeld Collection of international adolescent art held at Teachers College. These works were exhibited and published in a catalog called *The Ziegfeld Collection* (Burton et. al): many, many thanks to my colleague and friend Lisa Hochtritt who made the catalog that she worked on with Judith Burton available to me.

From Ziegfeld's commitment to international art education and to the diversity of ideas that come to us from thinkers from across the world and from varied disciplines, I will use the words remaining in this short talk to acknowledge some of the many ideas from theory that have helped me understand more deeply my positions on gender, diversity, and social justice.

The first of these is Judith Butler's (1990) ideas surrounding the performativity of gender. Butler argued, as early as 1990, that our expressions about gender rely on linguistic repetition that creates normative categories. She later revised her theory to include social repetition as well as linguistic repetition. A person doesn't perform gender but is interpellated, or hailed, into the social order by them. Butler's theory suggests how identity is constructed normatively in categories that structure how people live their lives. A subject is, at least in large part, constituted by such normative repetitions. All of Butler's work can be argued to unsettle these reiterations and to argue for a proliferation of gender identities.

The idea of the subaltern, explored in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's essay "Can the subaltern speak?" (1988) challenges philosophy and practices in the West about their circumscribed perspectives. Much as the widow who must join her dead husband on the funeral pyre is unknown, the experiences of marginalized populations are usually unknown to those who are well educated, white, middle class, from industrialized countries, and/or male. History, geography, and sex all conspire to reduce knowing marginalized peoples. Spivak argued that, from the perspective of thinkers in the West, the non-Western Other is neither knowable nor even real. These lacks have real consequences. In her book *Outside in the Teaching Machine* (1999), where she critiques postcolonialism as a postcolonial academic herself, she also prompts people in academia to rethink how the margins have become valorized in our circles, resulting in a rush from center to margin.

Gloría Anzaldúa (1987) proposed the "new mestiza" in her book *Borderlands/ la frontera*. The new mestiza occupies the borderlands, a geographic reality and a symbol for many people of Mexican descent who live in the US. Anzaldúa argued that the Chicana/o (which included herself) lives in both places and neither for they are a "mezcla" or a hybridity of both countries. She called particularly on people in the US to work against oppression and to celebrate a border consciousness. Anzaldúa also brought male and female identities into a borderlands in exploring lesbian identities. Her idea of a borderland is also found in performance artist and author Guillermo Gómez-Peña's work. Gómez-Peña invited non-Chicana/os to join the borderlands, an important move to bring allies into the struggle.

Orientalism, Edward Said's (1987) term for the representation of the Middle East in literature through Western eyes, has come to represent how people not from our own milieu are understood as well as represented. Not long before his death he pointed out that the misrepresentations were not merely historical and that they were on the increase. He also suggested that we learn and even imagine is limited by the lack of knowledge and perspectives from cultures across the world. This circumstance means that 'Orientalism' is embedded in our culture and in our learning, much as is racism.

Homi Bhabha (1994) talks about agency in becoming a vernacular cosmopolitan. Agency is contingent and negotiated. He presents the vernacular cosmopolitan as a person who can act on his or her world critically, and argues that critical actions develop from intersubjective experiences. The vernacular cosmopolitan, a proposal, is his hope for a consciousness in people that is committed to equality in diversity, where equality is less about origins and identities that can essentialize a person or a culture than about political and ethical practices and choices.

Rosi Braidotti's (2002) adoption and refiguration of Deleuze's idea of the nomad seems especially important today. Much like Homi Bhabha's vernacular cosmopolitanism, nomadism is positioned to "move against the settled and conventional nature" of other philosophical thinking as well as a reference to anti-logocentric thinking. Nomatic

becomings involve a “quest for a style of thinking that adequately reflects the complexities” (p. 8) of processes and living.

The nomad, the vernacular cosmopolitan, and the border crosser are both kinds of mythic figures in our journey to becoming, figures that bring together these ideas I’ve adumbrated into an ideal in what we’re doing.

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