



Open-space Learning in Real World Contexts*

Workshop Practice: Writing Galleries

1. Description

Note-making is a central activity in most classrooms, but turning student writing into a performed task allows a multiplicity of ideas to be considered at one time. When working with literary or theoretical texts, this approach creates a physical environment for the consideration of key passages or central concerns. You should have large pieces of paper or card as well as large felt-tip pens. The activity can also be developed using LX tape or chalk lines to divide the space into different areas.

You should proceed as follows:

- a) ask the students to write out either a line from the text that interests the most, or their own response to the text under investigation;
- b) students should arrange the texts on the floor or wall of the learning space according to specific groupings (either imposed or negotiated);
- c) the students are then invited to 'tour the gallery' and explore the different texts and spatial configurations that have been created;
- d) the writing galleries should then be re-purposed as stimuli for the next activity, e.g. fragments for a presentation, notes for a thesis, or even materials for a physical staging of the textual theory.

2. Learning Possibilities

This activity has multiple uses, but most often it functions as a quick but targeted way for a large group to encounter or revise a textual document. It immediately puts text into space, which allows the groups to read different tensions at play, or even to create an environmental response to the stimulus. It has the additional advantage of engaging visual and kinaesthetic learners in textual study and literary enquiry.

3. Examples

Philosophy and Literature: We have used writing galleries to introduce students to complexity of Kierkegaard's *Either/or*. In this case, the students had to translate the

philosophical text into physical space, by placing their textual fragments into one of four spaces: aesthetic, ethical, personal and editorial.

*A National Teaching Fellowship Scheme project, funded by the Higher Education Academy, 2009-11.

Early Modern Drama: Our workshop exploring *The Changeling* by Middleton and Rowley uses writing galleries and a diagonal dividing line to establish the various divisions and inversions at the heart of the play. These fragments then become the stimuli for tableaux.

Gifted & Talented Youth: As part of sessions for Warwick's IGGY programme, we have used writing galleries to introduce creative approaches (such as devising from text) when working with young people towards performance.

*A National Teaching Fellowship Scheme project, funded by the Higher Education Academy, 2009-11.