ABSTRACT

“With cities, it is as with dreams: everything imaginable can be dreamed…” (Calvino, 1972, p.44)

Bryant Alexander describes border pedagogy as a transformative practice that aspires to “engage students in the places and ideological spaces of their own experiences as they try to make sense of culture and curriculum” (p.427). Grounded in theories of performance (Thrift & Dewsbury, 2000), border pedagogies situate knowledge acquisition within an embodied, temporal, dialogical, and spatial experience for the learner. As a critical discourse, border pedagogies challenge hegemonic divisions within design schools, “refiguring the boundaries” (Giroux, 1991b, p.ix) between educator and student, thinking and making, and theory and spatiality. As an experiment in border pedagogy, theory theatre provides students with an opportunity to remap the critical dimensions of theory through a performance-based pedagogy. Working in groups of four, students construct a conversation between a theorist and a designer. The dialogue is theatrically staged within a series of imagined environments each discursively constructed through interpretations of theory. Theory theatre encourages students to act out the social, cultural and political codes embedded in theory, not only critically, but also spatially. Students reconfigure traditional terrains of textuality (Scholes, 1985) through alternative modes of representation, incorporating “play” as a “serious object of politics and analysis” (Giroux, 1991a, p.72). Reflections on the experience of theory theatre discuss the potential of theory as a performative medium which may open a space for “thinking otherwise” (Thrift & Dewsbury, 2000, p.428).