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SPECIAL ISSUE

Zehar

REVISTA DE ARTELEKU MAGAZINE

"Education in the visual arts must offer alternatives for action..."

"A different attitude is appropriate for each occasion..."

"I try to foster the development of a scenario in which knowledge is freely circulated."

"Individuality has run riot..."

"...as the project grows, so too does their knowledge."

"...there is a dilemma in the art school which parallels the very existence of the school..."

"The intransigence and arrogance of those who consider themselves to be experts are of little use..."

The Open School

La escuela abierta

with a collected response on artistic education and situated practice

Nº 60/61 • 2007

Zehar

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FORUM

Dedicated to **The Open School**,
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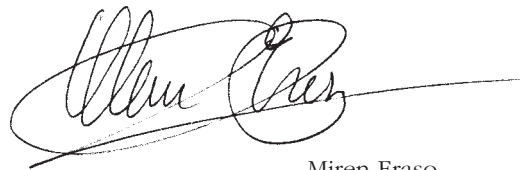
The Open School

Zehar's decision to contribute to the *documenta 12 magazines* project focusing on "Education (The Local Institution)" was motivated by the fact that Arteleku, the institution that publishes the magazine, has many years of experience in the field of education. This exceptional characteristic enabled us to tackle education, first by analysing the activities carried out at Arteleku, and then by transferring these experiences to *Zehar*. We have called this publishing experience, "The Open School".

"The Open School" refers to, on the one hand, the desire to 'open' the magazine to all those who, during the last few years have contributed to *Zehar* and have a direct connection with education and, on the other hand, the intention to create a discourse that will have a multiplying effect. We present here a first paper edition in which each contributor passes on their educational practice so that their experience, individual or collective, may serve to create new ones. A second version will be organised as a debate on the internet. Although we initially thought that the questions posed for Forum may limit the themes for debate, we noticed, to our surprise, that from where each contributor stands (art historian, teacher, artist or curator), as well as their particular experience, condition their response and the approach taken.

The type of education that we are interested in promoting with "The Open School" was based on the idea of what is called the "école mutuelle"; an educational project that stimulates the collaboration between different people and mutual help. In this way, all the contributors, sceptically or optimistically, share the idea that the teaching of art may help to create a more culturally healthy society although they stress that nowadays this is socially devalued.

Leaving publishing assessments aside here, we invite you to read all the contributions and take part in the debate that we are holding in June. We are sure that your ideas and your praxis, in addition to those that we already have, will shape a new educational experience.



Miren Eraso

La escuela abierta

La decisión de *Zehar* de contribuir al proyecto *documenta 12 magazines* con el tema “Educación (La institución local)” estuvo motivada por el hecho de que Arteleku, la institución que edita la revista, tiene una larga trayectoria ligada a la formación. Esta peculiaridad nos permitía abordar la educación desde el análisis de la práctica realizada en Arteleku, y trasladar la experiencia a *Zehar*. A la experiencia editorial la hemos denominado “La escuela abierta”.

“La escuela abierta” nombra, por un lado, el deseo de abrir la revista a todas aquellas personas que durante estos últimos años han colaborado en *Zehar* y tienen una relación directa con la educación, y por otro, la intención de crear una plataforma de discusión que esperamos tenga un efecto multiplicador. Ahora presentamos una primera versión en papel en la que cada colaborador transmite su práctica educativa con el objetivo de que su experiencia pueda servir para crear otras nuevas, y en una segunda versión, se organizará una puesta en común en internet. Y aunque inicialmente pensáramos que las preguntas que formulamos para Forum podrían limitar los temas de debate, hemos observado con sorpresa que la posición desde la que se habla (historiador del arte, profesor, artista o comisario), así como la disciplina y experiencia desde la que se escribe (arquitecto, artista visual, profesor, músico) condicionan las respuestas y el enfoque que se hace de ellas.

El tipo de aprendizaje que nos interesa promover en “La escuela abierta” está basado en la idea de lo que se denomina la “*école mutuelle*”, un proyecto educativo que activa la colaboración entre diferentes, y la ayuda mutua. En este sentido, todos los colaboradores, en tono escéptico u optimista, participan de la idea de que la enseñanza del arte ayudaría a crear una sociedad culturalmente más sana, aunque destaquen que hoy en día ésta está socialmente devaluada.

Dejamos aquí las apreciaciones editoriales y os invitamos a leer las colaboraciones en su totalidad y a participar en el debate que realizaremos en el mes de junio. Estamos seguros de que vuestras ideas y vuestras praxis sumadas a las que ya tenemos conformarán una nueva experiencia educativa.



Miren Eraso

Academy as Potentiality

Right now

Occasionally in class I find myself saying, “I have no Idea”, to my slightly disbelieving students. This is not a false profession of ignorance or an unbecoming modesty but a genuine expression of the fact that I do not know, in terms of structured knowledge, how to get to where I need to be. It seems to me that the urgent questions and the bodies of knowledge I have at my disposal do not tally and produce a route by which issues, arguments and modes of operating, merge seamlessly. And so it would seem that the task of ‘academy’, of education, is not to affect this seamless merger but to understand this productive disjuncture and its creative possibilities. That subjects and knowledges do not live in a simple state of productive harmony, is the unspoken dimension of the contemporary debate on education, unspoken because it counters the aims to uniformly instrumentalise education towards a set of predetermined outcomes. As inhabitants of these spaces and atmospheres of ‘academy’ we are forever caught in a, hopefully productive, tension between knowing where we might want to go, being empowered by the sense that we have every right to embark on this journey and equally being aware that we might lack the tools we need or the strength of spirit demanded by any journey into unknown territory. This “I Can/I Can’t”

dilemma is at the heart of my understanding of ‘Academy as Potentiality’ which I hope to unfold here.

Perhaps for the sake of clarity I should say that throughout this text, I have collapsed notions of learning spaces and exhibiting spaces. While they may belong to different institutional orders, with different funding sources, employing differently trained professionals, with different expected outcomes etc’, the project at hand — ‘academy’— is working to refract them through one another.

It seems everyone today is up in arms about education. Not since the mid 20th century has education reform been so contentious, so invested with drives towards an assumed efficiency on the one hand, countered by drives to safeguard a seeming freedom to speculate on the other. A rather weird war has come about in which those who want to maintain ‘meaning-led education’ engage with those who want to police and invigilate its forms and structures with much regard for its effectiveness and little regard for its content or more importantly, for what it might make possible. Education in general and ‘academy’ in particular are the metaphors being used, and occasionally over used, to wrestle with all that is wrong and all that might be possible, in gaining access to the urgent and important issues of our day. Overall there is much gloom, disappointment and fear, yet here and there, in tiny marginal pockets, there is also an odd kind of optimism surrounding this energetic debate or as Homi Bhabha said a long time ago “*In every emergency, there is also an emergence*”. Were this not the case, were education not imbued with some sense



Geographies and Spatial Practices workshop held in the context of the Venice Architecture Biennale 2006 for the joint group of students from Goldsmiths College and ETH Basle.

of possibility, we would not have so many exhibition initiatives that take up notions of research, of laboratory, of learning and of teaching as their format. In an odd way, the massive initiative of 'Bologna' and the kind of supranational controls it is bringing about, along with the ever-increasing bureaucratic control of education in the UK, have resulted in producing 'academy' as the site of both oppositions and imaginative possibilities. And so, what has languished for some 25 years (since the late 1960s) in a benign bubble of individualist freedoms has suddenly emerged into the front row of political debates, concerned with far more than institutional administration. I have to confess here that despite knowing full well the dangers of this over zealous attention, I am quite pleased to see education actualised to

its full political potential and become the arena in which issues larger than its own internal questions, are being discussed. In particular, education *in* and *of* and *for*, the arts with its flimsy, unstable and non-teleological epistemologies, is becoming an appropriate proving ground for the necessity to distance and problematise the relations between inputs and outputs in education and to insist on the complete impossibility of knowing in advance where thought and practice might lead.

How this impacts on education in the arts is particularly thorny, because here process and investigation are everything and the possibility of establishing hard and fast 'outcomes' that testify to the successful completion of a training or an educational apprenticeship, are virtually impossible to arrive at. One

shudders at the thought of increasingly 'professional' artists, curators, directors, critics, etc.' whose schooling is aimed at producing prescribed museum-quality final exhibitions, performances, exquisitely professionalised displays of cultural resistance, perfectly-honed and critically-positioned texts which are worthy of publication. One shudders not because this is dull, though it certainly is that, but because the idea of being able to foresee the expected outcome of an investigative process, is completely alien to the very notion of what 'education' is about.

At another level tensions have increased between different tendencies surrounding the field of educating 'creativity'; old fashioned notions of inspiration without articulation, slightly less old fashioned notions of the importance of analytical and critical proficiency all vie with contemporary pedagogies of actualisation, embodiment, and criticality as the lived-out consequences of knowing. All these jostle around in the same institutional stew, occasionally producing head-on collisions but most of the time co-existing in the kind of liberal indifference in which the contradictions and con-

tentions of 'difference' are ignored for the sake of some ill-conceived harmony in which all the bases are covered.

I would argue that these factions produce a false set of conflicts and engagements. That the question in education in general and in art education in particular, the question that we have not yet begun to deal with, are not that of specifying what we need to know and how we need to know it, of who determines this and who benefits from it; instead it is a question regarding how we might know what we don't yet know how to know. And it is here, in the aim of accessing this complex aspiration that we need to change our vocabulary — to swap knowledge transfer and knowledge assessment, professionalisation, quantifiable outcomes and marketability for another set of terms and another set of aspirations.

These aspirations might have to do with the lived contemporary realities we experience, with the sense of urgency they might instil in us, with how these lived realities might point us towards the critical tools that allow us to enter the fray and become actors

within it. What I would like to pursue then is a set of alternate emergent terms that operate in the name of this 'not-yet-known knowledge'. Terms such as potentiality, actualisation and access, which for me are the building blocks and navigational vectors for a current pedagogy, a pedagogy at peace with its partiality, a pedagogy not preoccupied with succeeding but with trying.

The sceptics among you will shake your heads and decry my naiveté, will say how can she not acknowledge the demands of bureaucracy and of the market, of the new entrepreneurship in the arts and the all importance of branding and consumption through the academy. Without for a moment denying the overwhelming pressure of all these factors, I would nevertheless argue that we need to learn to live in parallel rather than in conflictual economies; moving sideways, finding the opportune moment, engaging in numerous non-legitimated processes, producing the new subjects that we need for ourselves, always starting from right here and right now and forever searching for what might be *important* rather than *useful*, to know.

Terms such as potentiality, actualisation and access, which for me are the building blocks and navigational vectors for a current pedagogy.

Potentiality

First then to potentiality. Potentiality, following an old Aristotelian argument, is the opposite of actuality, so that it inhabits the realm of the possible without prescribing it as a plan. Giorgio Agamben says he might characterise his subject as an attempt to understand the meaning of the verb ‘can’, “*What do I mean when I say ‘I can, I cannot?’*”

There are, says Agamben following Aristotle, two kinds of potentiality; there is generic potentiality, and this is the one that is meant when we say, for example, that a child has the potential to know, or that he or she can potentially become the head of state. The other sense of potentiality, belongs to someone who has knowledge or an ability. In this sense we say of the architect that he or she has the *potential* to build, of the poet that he or she has the *potential* to write poems. One of the most interesting aspects of potentiality is, that it is as much the potential for not doing as it is for doing, and radical evil is not this or that bad deed but the potentiality for darkness which is at the very same time the potentiality for light. “To be potential”, says Agamben “means to be one’s own lack, *to be in relation to one’s own incapacity*. Beings that exist in the mode of potentiality *are capable of their own impotentiality*; and only in

this way do they become potential. They *can be* because they are in relation to their own non-being.

So thinking ‘academy’ as ‘potentiality’ is to think the possibilities of not doing, not making, not bringing into being at the very centre of acts of thinking, making and doing. It means dismissing much of the instrumentalising that seems to go hand in hand with education, much of the managerialism that is associated with a notion of ‘training’ for this or that profession or market. Letting go of many of the understandings of ‘academy’ as a training ground whose only permitted outcomes are a set of concrete objects or practices. It allows for the inclusions of notions of both fallibility and actualisation into a practice of teaching and learning, which seems to me to be an interesting entry point into thinking creativity in relation to different moments of coming into being.

Most importantly for me is that within the context of ‘academy’ defined by the duality I have sketched out and by which I do not mean an institution but a series of processes and of speculations — we can locate various important shifts that have occurred in our shared culture. Rather than thinking these through a series of increasingly relaxing authorities; of generic divides between media, of authoritative professors, of demands for output and product, of the negation of a concept, of apprenticeship and its requirement to imitate and reproduce — we can think ‘becomings’ that have no originary identity to emulate. “A line of becoming has neither beginning nor end, departure nor arrival, origin nor destination.... A line of becoming has only a middle, a middle is not an average, it

is fast motion, it is the absolute speed of movement”.

What are the shifts to which I refer and that exemplify this inbuilt duality of ‘potentiality’?

One of the most important ones has been the shift from critique to criticality. From a model that says the manifest of culture must yield up some latent values and intentions through endless processes of investigation and uncovering.

Using literary and other texts, images and other forms of artistic practice, Critical Analysis attempts to turn the latent of hidden conditions and unacknowledged desires and power relations into a cultural manifest. Using the vast range of structuralist, post and post post-structuralist tools and models of analysis we have at our disposal, we have been able to unveil, unravel, expose and lay bare the hidden meanings of cultural circulation and the overt and covert interests that these serve. But there is a serious problem here, as there is an assumption that meaning is immanent, that it is always already there and precedes its uncovering.

**Potentiality, following an old Aristotelian argument,
is the opposite of actuality, so that it inhabits the realm of the
possible without prescribing it as a plan.**

Criticality

But as we have moved to engage increasingly with the performative nature of culture, with meaning that TAKES PLACE as events unfold, we need to also move away from notions of immanent meanings that can be investigated, exposed and made obvious. For some time we thought that a teaching practice that exposes what lies beneath the manifest and a learning practice that entails a guided 'seeing through' things, was what was required. That it will somehow counter any inherent naiveté by helping students work against naturalised assumptions by what we conventionally termed in education, 'being critical'. While being able to exercise critical judgement is clearly important, it operates by providing a series of sign posts and warnings but does not actualise people's inherent and often intuitive notions of how to produce criticality through inhabiting a problem rather than by analysing it. This is true across education whether theoretical or practice oriented. It is equally true of experiencing art and other aspects of manifest culture. Within this shift we have had to be aware not only of the extreme limitations of putting work in 'context', or of the false isolation brought about by fields or disciplines, but we have also had to take on board the following;

- The fact that meaning is never produced in isolation or through isolating processes but rather through intricate webs of connectedness.
- The fact that college courses, art works, thematic exhibitions and others forums dedicated to making culture manifest, or work to re-produce them into view, do not have immanent meanings but function as fields of possibilities for different audiences in different cultural circumstances and wildly divergent moods, to produce significances.

- And ultimately on the fact that, in a reflective shift, from the analytical to the performative function of observation and of participation, we can agree that meaning is not excavated for, but rather, that it 'Takes Place' in the present.

The latter exemplifies not just the dynamics of learning from, of looking at and of interacting with works of art in exhibitions and in public spaces, but echoes also the modes by which we have inhabited the critical and the theoretical over the recent past. It seems to me that within the space of a relatively short period we have been able to move from criticism to critique, and to what I am calling at present criticality. That is that we have moved from criticism which is a form of finding fault and of exercising judgement according to a consensus of values, to critique which is examining the underlying assumptions that might allow something to appear as a convincing logic, to criticality which is operating from an uncertain ground of actual embeddedness. By this I mean that criticality while building on critique wants nevertheless to inhabit culture in a relation other than one of critical analysis; other than one of illuminating flaws, locating elisions, allocating blames.

But what comes after the critical analysis of culture? What goes beyond the endless cataloguing of the hidden structures, the invisible powers and the numerous offences we have been preoccupied with for so long? Beyond the processes of marking and making visible those who have been included and those who have been excluded? Beyond being able to point our finger at the master narratives and at the dominant cartographies of the inherited cultural order? Beyond the celebration of emergent minority group identities as an achievement in and of itself?

In Visual Culture some partial responses to the question of what comes after critique can be teased out through a shift of the traditional relations between all that goes into researching as a mode of learning, all that goes into making (practice) and all that goes into viewing (audience) the objects of

visual cultural attention. This of course, builds on that mighty critical apparatus that evolved throughout the 1970s and the 1980s and in which an unravelling of the relations between subjects and objects took place through radical critiques of authorial authorities, of epistemological conceits and perhaps more than anything else, through the ever growing perception of knowledge as an extended wander through fields of intertextual subjectivities. That project is well underway and in its wake comes the permission to approach the study of culture from the most oblique of angles, to occupy ourselves with the constitution of new objects of study that may not have been previously articulated for us by existing fields.

Can the museum be thought of as the site of a 'radical pedagogy', a pedagogy that eschews the simplicity of *accessibility* to information, experience or cultural capital and replaces it with questions about *access*? What, you might ask yourselves, is the great distinction between these two terms? Why hang an entire bid for a radical shift on the slight semantic difference between two related terms. I would say in response, it is a huge difference, one that signals the limit of culture as a readily available cumulation of information and stimuli, and its potential opening towards a re-articulation of the questions we know how to ask. How to translate this notion of 'access' to the site of the museum? How can criticality operate in the museum, turning it into a space of learning in the real sense rather than in one of information transfer, aesthetic satisfaction or cultural edification?

And so 'academy' with its built in exhortation to both make and not make, to learn and not learn, is an embodiment of this form of criticality, of never standing outside while deploying some great analytical apparatus which allows us to 'know' to really, really know what is going on. Instead we are always already embedded in the problematic we are dealing with, living out its conditions, sharing its effects while being able to think it through.

In such a state fallibility becomes possible to incorporate into the larger scheme of things; not only is it possible and likely to fail but it is also possible to examine failure and to inquire as to how does it become a form of knowledge. For it is failure —rather than the triumph of being able to see through something seemingly hidden — that produces the affectual aspect of art — that moment which knocks you out of your territory and on the quest for re-territorialisation. “We are only ever interested in the circumstances” say Deleuze and Guattari and I would add that the “I Can “of potentiality is nothing more than the moment in which we make circumstances our own.

Oddly Enough

Many of the above insights have come through arts practices, instantiating ‘practice driven theory’. This was a term originally evolved to move on from a 1970s/1980s model of arts practice which was highly influenced by and illustrative of, the theoretical insights that blew away the cob webs of expressivity, interiority and rebellious transgression of previous generations. Instead practice can spur one on, not because it is self-consciously informed but because it gives itself a different set of permissions. Permission to not cover all the bases all the time, permission to start in the middle, permission to mix fact and fiction, permission to invent languages, permission to not support every claim by the proof of some prior knowledge, permission to privilege subjectivity as a mode of engaging the world and its woes, permission to be obscure and permission to chart a completely different path of how we got here, at this very moment.

It is this odd space I have been calling ‘academy’ and which is partly university and partly museum, partly theoretical and partly practice-based, a space in which it is unclear whether the materials or the subjects are what make up its manifest, a mode of operating, is emerging which insists that we can learn not just from doing but also from being. ❧

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How can criticality operate in the museum, turning it into a space of learning in the real sense rather than in one of information transfer, aesthetic satisfaction or cultural edification?

La academia como potencialidad

Justo ahora

De vez en cuando, me encuentro en el aula diciendo “no tengo ni idea” a mis estudiantes un tanto incrédulos. Esta no es una falsa declaración de ignorancia ni una modestia impropia, sino una expresión genuina del hecho de que no sé, en términos de conocimiento estructurado, cómo llegar al lugar en el que necesito estar. Me parece que los cuerpos de conocimiento y las cuestiones urgentes que tengo a mi disposición no concuerdan y producen una vía en la que temas, argumentos y modos de funcionamiento se fusionan a la perfección. Y de este modo, parecería que la labor de la “academia”, de la enseñanza, no consiste en afectar a esa fusión sin costuras, sino en comprender esta desunión productiva y sus posibilidades de creación. Los temas y los conocimientos no viven en un estado sencillo de armonía productiva: ésta es la dimensión tácita del debate contemporáneo sobre la enseñanza, tácita debido a que responde a los objetivos de instrumentalizar de forma uniforme la educación hacia un conjunto de resultados predeterminados. Como habitantes de estos espacios y atmósferas de “academia”, estamos atrapados de forma permanente en una tensión (esperemos que productiva) entre el conocimiento del lugar al que podríamos querer ir y el poder provocado por la sensación de que disfrutamos de todos los derechos para embarcarnos

en este viaje, siendo conscientes al mismo tiempo de que podríamos carecer de las herramientas que necesitamos o de la fortaleza de espíritu exigida por cualquier viaje a territorio desconocido. Este dilema “puedo / no puedo” constituye el núcleo de mi noción de “La academia como potencialidad” que espero desarrollar aquí.

Es posible que, en aras de la claridad, deba manifestar que en este texto he acabado con nociones de espacios de aprendizaje y espacios de exposición. Aunque pueden pertenecer a diferentes órdenes institucionales que disponen de fuentes de financiación distintas, que contratan a profesionales con formación diferente y que esperan resultados diversos, etc., el proyecto actual —“academia”— está intentando refractarlos entre sí.

En la actualidad, parece que todo el mundo se opone enfurecidamente a la enseñanza. Desde mediados del siglo XX, jamás la reforma educativa había sido tan conflictiva ni había estado tan imbuida de un feroz dinamismo para lograr una presunta eficiencia por una parte, contrarrestado por campañas para salvaguardar una aparente libertad para especular por la otra. Se ha producido una guerra bastante extraña en la que aquellas personas que desean mantener la “enseñanza dirigida por el significado” chocan con las que quieren vigilar y controlar sus formas y estructuras, prestando mucho énfasis a su efectividad y otorgando poco interés a su contenido o, más importante aún, a lo que podría facilitar. La enseñanza en general y la “academia” en particular son las metáforas que se están utilizando (y, ocasionalmente, utilizando en demasía) para luchar contra todo lo que está mal y todo lo



Taller *Geographies and Spatial Practices* realizado por alumnos de los centros Goldsmiths College de Londres y ETH Basle con motivo de la Bienal de arquitectura de Venecia de 2006.

que podría ser posible, para lograr acceder a los temas urgentes e importantes de nuestros días. En general, existe mucha oscuridad, desencanto y temor; pero, aquí y allá, en pequeñas bolsas de marginalidad, también existe un extraño tipo de optimismo que rodea a este energético debate o, como señaló Homi Bhabha hace mucho tiempo, “In every emergency, there is also an emergence”¹. Si no fuera así, si la educación no estuviera imbuida de cierto sentimiento de posibilidad, no tendríamos de tantas iniciativas para exposiciones que asumen como formato ideas de investigación, de laboratorio, de aprendizaje y de enseñanza. De un modo extraño, la iniciativa a gran escala de “Bologna” y el tipo de controles supranacionales que está produciendo, junto con el

cada vez mayor control burocrático de la enseñanza en Gran Bretaña, han dado lugar a la creación de una “academia” como ámbito tanto de oposiciones como de posibilidades imaginativas. Y, de este modo, lo que ha languidecido durante unos veinticinco años (desde finales de la década de los 60) creando una burbuja benigna de libertades individualistas ha irrumpido repentinamente en la primera fila de los debates políticos, inmerso en algo que va más allá de la administración institucional. Debo confesar aquí que, a pesar de conocer bien los peligros de esta atención demasiado entusiasta, me agrada mucho esta actualización de la enseñanza hasta alcanzar todo su potencial político y convertirse en la arena en la que se debaten temas más amplios que sus propias cuestiones

internas. En especial, la educación en, de y para las artes, con sus epistemologías no teológicas, inestables e inconsistentes, se está convirtiendo en terreno de prueba adecuado para comprobar la necesidad de distanciarse y problematizar las relaciones entre las contribuciones y los resultados en la enseñanza, y de insistir en la imposibilidad total de conocer por anticipado adónde podrían llevar el pensamiento y la práctica.

El modo en que esto influye en la enseñanza artística es especialmente escabroso, puesto que aquí el proceso y la investigación lo son todo y es virtualmente imposible lograr la determinación de “resultados” irrefutables y rápidos que atestigüen la terminación con éxito de una formación o un aprendizaje educativo. Uno se estremece ante la idea de artistas, directores, conservadores, críticos, etc. cada vez más “profesionales”, cuyos estudios están dirigidos a llevar a cabo exposiciones finales con la calidad prescrita por los museos, performances, muestras exquisitamente profesionalizadas de resistencia cultural, textos posicionados críticamente y perfectamente puestos a punto que merecen ser publicados. Uno se estremece, no porque esto sea aburrido, que ciertamente lo es, sino

porque la idea de ser capaz de prever el resultado de un proceso de investigación es completamente ajena a la misma noción de lo que trata la “enseñanza”.

En otro nivel, las tensiones han aumentado entre las diferentes tendencias que rodean el campo de la “creatividad” educativa; nociones anticuadas de inspiración sin articulación, nociones un poco menos anticuadas acerca de la importancia de la competencia analítica y crítica, todo ello compitiendo con las pedagogías contemporáneas de la actualización, la personificación y la criticalidad como las consecuencias duraderas del conocimiento. Todo esto nada en el mismo caldo institucional produciendo, en ocasiones, choques frontales pero coexistiendo la mayor parte del tiempo en un tipo de indiferencia liberal en el que se ignoran las contradicciones y los contenciosos de la “diferencia” en aras de cierta armonía erróneamente concebida en la que se tapan todas las bases.

Diría que estas facciones producen un falso conjunto de conflictos y compromisos. La cuestión de la enseñanza en general y de la enseñanza artística en particular, la cuestión que aún no

hemos comenzado a tratar, no consiste en especificar lo que necesitamos saber y el modo en que necesitamos saberlo ni en quién determina esto y se beneficia de ello; por el contrario, es una cuestión que se refiere al modo en que podríamos saber lo que aún no sabemos cómo saber. Y aquí, en el objetivo de acceder a esta compleja aspiración, radica la necesidad que tenemos de cambiar nuestro vocabulario, de intercambiar la transferencia de conocimientos y la valoración de conocimientos, la profesionalización, los resultados cuantificables y la comerciabilidad por otro conjunto de términos y otro conjunto de aspiraciones. Estas aspiraciones podrían tener relación con las realidades contemporáneas duraderas que experimentamos, con la sensación de urgencia que podrían inculcarnos, con el modo en el que estas realidades duraderas podrían indicarnos las herramientas críticas que nos permitirían entrar en acción y convertirnos en agentes de la misma. Lo que me gustaría lograr, por tanto, es un conjunto de términos emergentes alternativos que se desarrolle en el nombre de ese “conocimiento aún no conocido”. Términos tales como potencialidad, realización y acceso que, para mí, constituyen los bloques de construcción y los vectores de navegación para una pedagogía actual, una pedagogía en paz con su parcialidad, una pedagogía no preocupada por el éxito, sino por el intento.

Los escépticos que me estén escuchando negarán con la cabeza y criticarán mi ingenuidad, se preguntarán cómo no puedo reconocer las exigencias de la burocracia y del mercado, del nuevo empresariado de las artes y toda la importancia y las marcas y el consumo en la academia. Sin negar por un solo momento la presión abrumadora de todos estos factores debo argumentar, sin embargo, que necesitamos aprender a vivir en economías más en paralelo que en conflicto; a movernos lateralmente, a hallar el momento oportuno, a comprometernos en numerosos procesos no legitimados, a elaborar los nuevos temas que necesitamos para nosotros mismos, a comenzar siempre desde este momento y desde este punto, y a buscar siempre lo que podría ser importante en lugar de útil, a saber.

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La potencialidad

Vamos, pues, con la potencialidad. La potencialidad, siguiendo un antiguo razonamiento aristotélico, es lo opuesto a la realidad, de modo que habita en el reino de lo posible sin ordenarlo en forma de plan. Giorgio Agamben afirma que podría caracterizar su tema como un intento de comprensión del significado del verbo “poder”, “¿Qué quiero decir cuando pregunto “¿Puedo, No puedo?””. Existen, afirma Agamben siguiendo la estela de Aristóteles, dos tipos de potencialidad; hay una potencialidad genérica y ésta es a la que nos referimos cuando decimos, por ejemplo, que un niño tiene el potencial de saber o que puede convertirse potencialmente en jefe del estado. El otro sentido de potencialidad pertenece a una persona con un conocimiento o una habilidad. En este sentido, manifestamos que el arquitecto tiene el potencial de construir, que el poeta tiene el potencial de escribir poemas. Uno de los aspectos más interesantes de la potencialidad es que es tanto potencial para no hacer como para hacer, y la malignidad radical no consiste en esta o aquella mala acción, sino en la potencialidad de oscuridad que es, al mismo tiempo, la potencialidad de la luz. “Tener potencial” afirma Agamben “significa ser la incapacidad propia de uno mismo, estar en relación con la

propia incapacidad de cada uno. Los seres que existen en el nivel de la potencialidad son capaces de su propia impotencialidad; y sólo de este modo se convierten en potenciales. Pueden ser debido a que están relacionados con su propio no ser.

Por tanto, pensar en la “academia” como en “potencialidad” es pensar en las posibilidades de no hacer, de no realizar, de no dar lugar a estar en el mismo centro de los actos de pensamiento, acción y realización. Implica rechazar gran parte de la instrumentalización que parece ir pareja con la enseñanza, gran parte del administrativismo que está asociado con una noción de “formación” para esta o aquella profesión o mercado. Despojándose de gran parte de las nociones de “academia” como terreno dedicado a la formación cuyos únicos resultados permitidos son un conjunto de prácticas u objetos concretos. Permite las inclusiones de la noción tanto de falibilidad como de realización en una práctica de enseñanza y aprendizaje, lo que me parece un punto de introducción muy interesante a la creatividad del pensamiento en relación con los diferentes momentos del llegar a ser.

Más importante para mí es que, en el contexto de una “academia” definida por la dualidad que he bosquejado y por lo que no considero como una institución, sino como una serie de procesos y especulaciones, podemos localizar varios cambios importantes que se han producido en nuestra cultura común. En lugar de pensar en ellos a través de una serie de autoridades cada vez más relajadas; de divisiones genéricas entre los medios de comunicación, de profesores acredita-

dos, de exigencias de resultados y productos, de la negación de un concepto, de aprendizaje y su necesidad de imitar y reproducir, podemos pensar en un “llegar a ser” que no tiene una identidad original a la que emular. “El camino para llegar a ser no tiene ni principio ni fin, ni salida ni llegada, ni origen ni destino... El camino para llegar a ser sólo tiene un intermedio; un intermedio no es un promedio, es un movimiento rápido, es la velocidad absoluta del movimiento”².

¿Cuáles son los cambios a los que me refiero y que ejemplifican esta dualidad innata de la “potencialidad”?

Uno de los más destacados ha sido el cambio del antidogmatismo a la criticidad, a partir de un modelo que afirma que la manifestación de la cultura debe producir ciertas intenciones y valores latentes a través de procesos interminables de investigación y descubrimiento.

Utilizando textos literarios y de otro tipo, imágenes y otras formas de práctica artística, el Análisis Crítico intenta convertir los deseos no reconocidos, las condiciones ocultas y las relaciones de poder en una manifestación cultural. Utilizando la amplia gama de herramientas y modelos de análisis del estructuralismo, el post-estructuralismo y el post-post-estructuralismo que tenemos a nuestra disposición, hemos podido desvelar, desenmarañar, exponer y desnudar los significados ocultos de la circulación cultural, y los intereses manifiestos y ocultos a los que sirven. Pero aquí nos encontramos con un grave problema, puesto que existe el supuesto de que el significado es inmanente, es decir, que siempre está ahí y que precede a su descubrimiento.

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Criticalidad

Pero, a medida que nos comprometemos cada vez más con la naturaleza realizativa de la cultura, con significados que se producen a medida que se desarrollan los eventos, también debemos alejarnos de la noción del significado inmanente que puede ser investigado, expuesto y evidenciado. Durante algún tiempo, hemos pensado que lo que necesitábamos era una práctica de enseñanza que expusiera lo que subyace bajo la manifestación y una práctica de aprendizaje que conllevara un “ver a través” de las cosas guiado. Que, de algún modo, contrarrestará cualquier ingenuidad inherente ayudando a los estudiantes a trabajar contra supuestos naturalizados siendo, lo que se ha denominado convencionalmente en enseñanza, “ser críticos”. Aunque ser capaces de ejercer un juicio crítico es, obviamente, importante, esto funciona proporcionando una serie de señales y avisos, pero no actualiza las nociones inherentes y, con frecuencia, intuitivas de las personas acerca del modo de producir criticalidad a través de la vivencia de un problema en lugar de su análisis. Esto resulta cierto en la enseñanza orientada tanto a la teoría como a la práctica. Es igualmente verdadero en la experimentación del arte y otros aspectos de la cultura patente. En este cambio, hemos tenido que ser conscientes no sólo de las limitaciones extremas de situar una obra en su “contexto” o del falso aislamiento provocado por los campos o disciplinas, sino que también hemos tenido que asimilar los elementos siguientes:

- El hecho de que el significado jamás se produce de forma aislada o a través de procesos de aislamiento, sino más bien por medio de intrincadas redes de conexiones.
- El hecho de que los cursos universitarios, las obras de arte, las exposiciones temáticas y otros foros dedicados a manifestaciones culturales o el

trabajo para reproducirlos, no poseen significados inmanentes, sino que funcionan como campos de posibilidades para diferentes públicos en circunstancias culturales distintas y modos totalmente divergentes, con el fin de producir elementos significativos.

- Y, por último, acerca del hecho de que, en un cambio reflexivo, de la función analítica a la función realizativa de la observación y la participación, podamos llegar al acuerdo de que no hay que excavar en busca del significado, sino que “se produce” en el presente.

Este último apartado ejemplifica no sólo la dinámica del aprendizaje, de la observación y de la interacción con las obras de arte en las exposiciones y en los espacios públicos, sino que también se hace eco de los modos mediante los que hemos vivido la crítica y la teórica en el pasado reciente. Me parece que en el espacio de un plazo de tiempo relativamente breve, hemos sido capaces de cambiar de la crítica al antidogmatismo y a lo que denomino actualmente criticalidad. Es decir, hemos cambiado de la crítica, que es una forma de hallar fallos y de ejercer una valoración conforme a un consenso de valores, al antidogmatismo, que consiste en examinar los supuestos subyacentes que podrían permitir que surgiera algo en forma de lógica convincente, a la criticalidad, que se basa en un conjunto indeterminado de integraciones reales. Con esto quiero decir que la criticalidad, aunque se basa en el antidogmatismo, sin embargo desea habitar la cultura con una relación diferente a la del análisis crítico; diferente a la de visualizar defectos, localizar elisiones, asignar culpas.

Pero, ¿qué viene después del análisis crítico de la cultura? ¿Qué va más allá de la catalogación interminable de las estructuras ocultas, los poderes invisibles y las numerosas ofensas por los que nos hemos preocupado durante tanto tiempo? ¿Más allá de los procesos consistentes en señalar y hacer visibles a los que han sido incluidos y a los que han sido excluidos? ¿Más allá de ser capaces de señalar con el dedo las narrativas maestras y las cartografías dominantes del orden cultural heredado? ¿Más allá de la celebración de identidades de grupos minoritarios emergentes como un logro en y de sí mismas?

En la Cultura visual, se pueden sondear algunas respuestas parciales a la pregunta de qué viene después del antidogmatismo a través de un cambio de las relaciones tradicionales entre todo lo que integra la investigación como modo de aprendizaje, todo lo que integra la realización (práctica) y todo lo que integra la visualización (audiencia) de los objetos que atraen la atención de la cultura visual. Esto, por supuesto, se basa en el aparato crítico poderoso que ha evolucionado desde las décadas de 1970 y 1980, y en el que se ha producido un desembarajamiento de las relaciones entre los contenidos y los objetos a través de antidogmatismos radicales contra las autoridades, la vanidad epistemológica y, quizá más que ningún otro elemento, a través de la percepción en constante crecimiento del conocimiento como una deambulación por los campos de las subjetividades intertextuales. Este proyecto ya está en marcha y en su estela conlleva el permiso para plantear el estudio de la cultura desde el ángulo más oblicuo, para ocuparnos de la constitución de nuevos objetos de estudio que pueden no haber sido articulados previamente para nosotros por los campos ya existentes.

¿Puede pensarse en el museo como en el lugar de una “pedagogía radical”, una pedagogía que evita la simplicidad de la accesibilidad a la información, la experiencia o el capital cultural y la sustituye por preguntas acerca del acceso? ¿Cuál, podríamos preguntarnos, es la gran diferencia entre estos dos términos? ¿Por qué apostar todo a un cambio radical basándose en una leve diferencia semántica entre estos dos términos relacionados? Como respuesta, diría que existe una gran diferencia, una diferencia que señala el límite de la cultura como una acumulación de información y estímulos fácilmente disponibles, y su potencial apertura hacia una rearticulación de las preguntas que sabemos cómo realizar. ¿Cómo se traduce esta noción de “acceso” a un museo? ¿Cómo puede la criticalidad funcionar en el museo, convirtiéndolo en un espacio de aprendizaje en un sentido real más que en una transferencia de información, una satisfacción estética o una edificación cultural?

Y, por tanto, la “academia”, con su exhortación implícita tanto a hacer

como a no hacer, a aprender y a no aprender, es una encarnación de esta forma de criticalidad, de no quedarse nunca fuera al tiempo que se despliega un gran aparato analítico que nos permite “conocer” realmente, saber realmente que está pasando. En cambio, siempre estamos inmersos en la problemática que estamos tratando, viviendo sus condiciones, compartiendo sus efectos al tiempo que somos capaces de considerarlo detenidamente.

En un estado de este tipo, es posible que la falibilidad se incorpore en un esquema superior; no sólo es posible y es probable que se produzca el fallo, sino que también es posible examinar el fallo y estudiar el modo en que se convierte en una forma de conocimiento. Porque es el fallo —más que el triunfo de ser capaces de ver a través de algo aparentemente oculto— lo que produce el aspecto afectivo del arte —ese momento que te obliga a salir de tu territorio y te hace buscar la reterritorialización. “Sólo estamos interesados por las circunstancias” afirman Deleuze y Guattari, y me permitiría añadir que el “puedo” de la potencialidad no es nada más que el momento en que hacemos nuestras las circunstancias.

Suficientemente extraño

Gran parte de las ideas previamente expuestas han penetrado en las prácticas artísticas, definiendo la “teoría dirigida por la práctica”. Éste fue un término que evolucionó originariamente para cambiar de un modelo de la práctica artística de las décadas de 1970/1980 que estaba ligeramente influenciado por (y era ilustrativo de) las teorías que barrieron las intrincadas redes de la expresividad, la interioridad y la trasgresión rebelde de las generaciones anteriores. En cambio, la práctica puede espolear, no porque esté informada de forma autoconsciente, sino porque se otorga a sí misma un conjunto de permisos diferentes. El permiso para no tapar todas las bases en todo momento, el permiso para comenzar por el medio, el permiso para mezclar realidad y ficción, el permiso para inventar lenguajes, el permiso para no respaldar todas las demandas con la prueba de algún conocimiento previo, el permiso para otorgar privilegios a la subjetividad como modo de comprometerse con el mundo y sus aflicciones, el permiso para ser oscuro y el permiso para representar una vía totalmente distinta del modo en que hemos llegado aquí, en este mismo momento.

Es este espacio extraño lo que he estado denominando “academia” y lo que está constituido parcialmente por la universidad y parcialmente por el museo, lo que está basado parcialmente en la teoría y parcialmente en la práctica, un espacio en el que no está claro si los materiales o los temas son lo que constituyen su manifestación, un modo de funcionamiento que está surgiendo y que insiste en que podemos aprender no sólo del acto sino también del ser. ❧

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NOTAS Y REFERENCIAS

1 N. de la T.: Juego de palabras entre “emergency” (situación de peligro que requiere una acción inmediata) y “emergence” (acción y efecto de emerger). La frase podría traducirse del siguiente modo: “En todas las emergencias, siempre hay un surgimiento”.

2 DELEUZE, G. y GUATTARI, F. *A Thousand Plateaus*, New York: Continuum Pub. Group, 2002, p. 293.

¿Cómo puede la criticalidad funcionar en el museo, convirtiéndolo en un espacio de aprendizaje en un sentido real más que en una transferencia de información, una satisfacción estética o una edificación cultural?

M U R I E L A N D R I N

For an educational syncretism

“The evolution of art, as an entity, is expressed in the permanent swings between isolation (differentiation) and fusion. Each art taken individually exists and is developed in comparison with others, as individual species and as a variety. Depending on the eras, either one art or another tends to be an art of the masses and, inspired by the spirit of syncretism, aims to include elements of the other arts. In the history of arts, differentiation and syncretization, are permanent and equally important processes that evolve correlatively. The syncretic forms are not at all the exclusive attribute of primitive art or of the “people”, as was previously believed. Their tendency to reappear is a constant of artistic culture”. In 1926, Boris Eichenbaum, the Russian Formalist, in his article entitled “Problems of Film Stylistics”, started a debate about a subject that had already stirred up and fascinated thousands of critics right from the earliest films. The subject: cinema as a pure art or as an impure art, as André Bazin would say several decades later. Right at the peak of French impressionists and the European avant-garde, Eichenbaum established the cinema as a syncretic art form.

The syncretic nature of the cinema (of which there are currently several versions around a multi-disciplinary concept), along with the specificity of its language that it has created, no longer have to be demonstrated.. Quite to the contrary, the phenomenon has multiplied and systematically ignored the limits and contingencies of its techniques. Quotations, loans, assimilations, references, allusions, reminiscences, the film intertextuality combines every tone and every geometric. Constantly being refined, it is no longer defined simply from within, by the multiple influences of all art forms (literature, sculpture, painting, photography, etc.), but also by extensions, external repercussions, in museums, as it leaves its mark on the works of contemporary artists, and thus invades the artistic universe through the impact of its images, its plots, its aesthetic innovations, but above all, of its imagination.

Courtesy of Album Archivo Fotográfico, S.L.



Alfred Hitchcock *Psycho* 1960

Mamoru Oshii *Ghost in the Shell* 1995

This intrinsic multi-disciplinary aspect of films is the basis of how I believe this art should be taught. But the aim of this teaching is always based on two aspects. Initially, to explain the specific nature of the subject, but also, at a latter stage, to confront these specific aspects with those of other mediums. Painting, sculpture, photography, literary and theoretical texts or even installations, television and multimedia come together to form individual hybrids. What is unique about films has to be envisaged, then its opening up, as a constantly circulating object that feeds off its cultural context while nourishing it, and finally the economic, political or social sphere that must be considered at the same time to perfectly make out the source and impact of these new forms.

Yet I believe that the approach would not be as effective if the opening up, the syncretisation, was not also situat-

ed at the level of the objects and tools of the teaching. The examples chosen to be analysed must belong as much to the classical forms as to the more popular or less well-known, a need to approach both the high/low culture that directly echoes the outbreak of theoretical approaches in the post theory sphere of influence and spirit. The methodological critiques (linguistic, sociological, psychoanalytical, historical) have been replaced by a post-modern theoretical collage, which must nonetheless remain clear and conserve its relevance. In this educational philosophy, there is therefore a refusal to retreat into unique perspectives and a need to present the plurality of approaches without a priori rejecting any in order to find the most appropriate means to further analysis, but also to engender new thoughts, to offer extensions targeted at the critical elaboration in line with the subjects or works explored.

THE DEMOCRATISATION OF THE TOOLS TO VIEW THE IMAGES AND
ALSO TO CREATE VISUALS HAS CHANGED THE WORLD,
CREATED OTHER FORMS OF LANGUAGE, AND THEREFORE HAS RAISED
QUESTIONS ABOUT HOW THEY ARE TAUGHT.

The omnipresence of film images and particular and moving images in general require systematic learning. The democratisation of the tools to view the images and also to create visuals has changed the world, created other forms of language, and therefore has raised questions about how they are taught. This upheaval is at two levels. It has resulted in incalculable and unprecedented freedom in film use and analysis — video then DVD, dv cameras and other technological wonders allow us to construct and pull apart films at whim, in perfect autonomy. But it has also caused a whiplash effect where creative and critical indecision prevail. I believe that the teaching principles should be seen as tools for reflection, but also instruments likely to be immediately applied, without any delay, in situ. The idea is to create links, constant questions, in the teaching world, whether it be at the university or secondary level, where writing

and directing is emphasised, but also, and above all, in an everyday life saturated with moving images. Learning to see, revealing the specific vision that we may have lost in the flow.

In this new universe, Stanley Kubrick's twins in *The Shining* recall those photographed by Diane Arbus; Douglas Gordon talks to Alfred Hitchcock beyond the grave to deconstruct the 24 pictures/second and the film soul of his *Psychose* in an installation, *24 Hour Psycho* ; the post-human creature of *Ghost in the Shell* revisits the Futura of Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* that is likewise based on the Eve Future of Villers de l'Isle-Adam ; Akira Kurosawa's *Rashomon* is rethashed and its narration redefined by a visual suture in *Papillon d'Amour* by Nicolas Provost, the young Belgian film maker. The movement is perpetual and ad infinitum, but the global village has not included images. They still exist by and for themselves. They are still our, despite being multiplied in infinite networks. Understanding how they have been created makes them unique, and also, perhaps, for us to create them. «

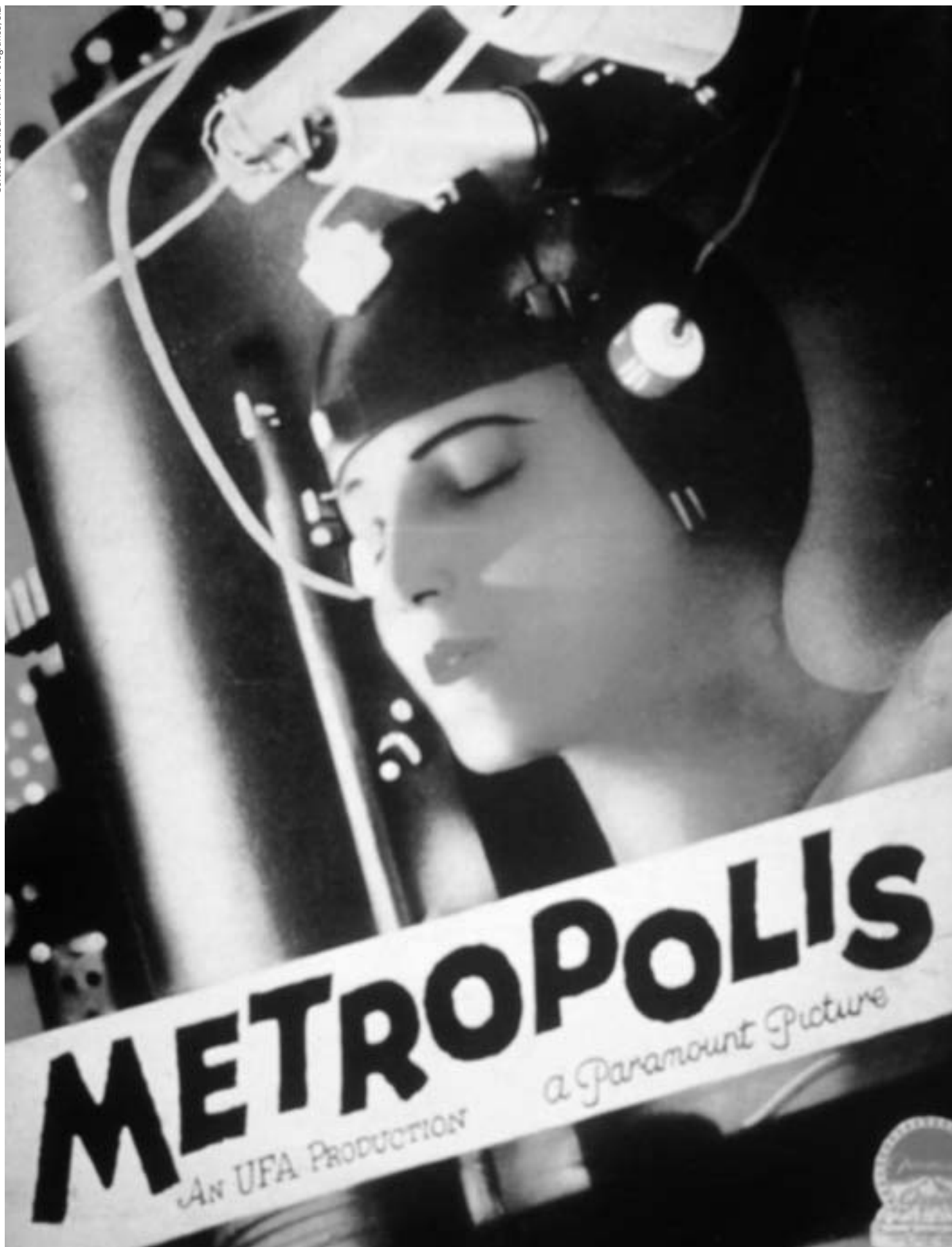
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Por un sincretismo educacional

La evolución del arte, en tanto que entidad, se manifiesta a través de oscilaciones permanentes entre aislamiento (diferenciación) y fusión. Cada arte, abordado de forma aislada, existe y se desarrolla con relación a los demás, como especie única y como variedad. En función de las épocas, ya sea uno, ya sea otro, tiende a ser un arte de masa e, inspirado por la influencia del sincretismo, pretende englobar los elementos de las demás artes. La diferenciación y la sincretización son, en la historia de las artes, procesos permanentes e igualmente importantes que evolucionan correlativamente. Las formas sincréticas no son, de ninguna manera, un rasgo exclusivo del arte de los salvajes o del “pueblo”, como se creía antes; su tendencia a resurgir es una constante de la cultura artística. En 1926, el formalista ruso Boris Eichenbaum, en su artículo “Problemas de la cine-estilística”, abre un debate en torno a un tema que anima y encrespa los medios críticos desde los comienzos del cine. El objeto; el cine como arte puro, o como arte impuro, tal y como lo llamará André Bazin algunas décadas más tarde. En plena efervescencia de los impresionistas franceses y de las vanguardias europeas, Eichenbaum declara al cine arte sincrético.

Tanto la naturaleza sincrética del cine (que se declinaría hoy en día en torno a un concepto de pluridisciplinariedad), como por otra parte, la especificidad del lenguaje que ha forjado, no necesitan ser probados. Al contrario, el fenómeno se desmultiplica, rechazando sistemáticamente los límites y las contingencias de sus procedimientos; citas, préstamos, asimilaciones, referencias, alusiones, evocaciones —la intertextualidad fílmica se conjuga en todos sus tonos y en todas las geometrías—. En constante redefinición, se declina no sólo desde el interior, a través de las múltiples influencias de todas las formas de arte (literatura, escultura, pintura, fotografía, etc.), sino también a través de extensiones, de prolongaciones exteriores, en los museos, dejando su impronta en las obras de los artistas contemporáneos, invadiendo el universo artístico mediante el impacto de sus imágenes, sus relatos, sus innovaciones estéticas, pero sobre todo de su imaginario.

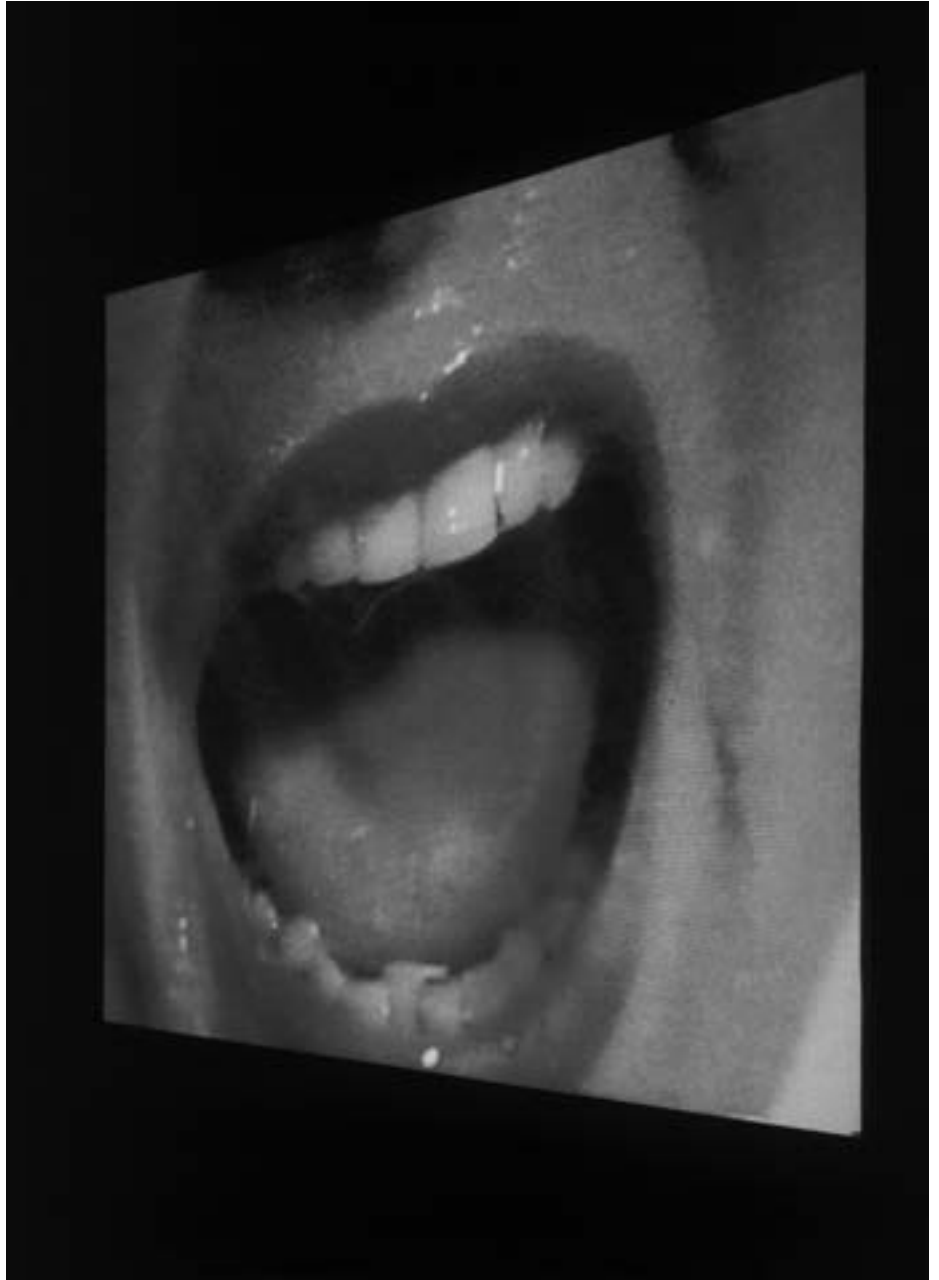
Cortesía de Album Archivo Fotográfico, S.L.



Fritz Lang *Metropolis* 1927

Mi visión de la enseñanza de este arte se asienta en esta pluridisciplinariedad intrínseca del cine. Pero la ambición de esta enseñanza se basa en una doble articulación; la de, inicialmente, aclarar la especificidad de la materia, pero también, en un segundo momento, de comparar estas especificidades con las de otros medios; pintura, escultura, fotografía, textos literarios, teóricos o incluso instalaciones, televisión, multimedia, se mezclan para generar formas híbridas, especiales. Abordar el cine desde lo que tiene de único, después desde sus descompartmentalizaciones, como objeto constante en circulación que se alimenta de su contexto cultural y que se ve alimentado por éste, en sus entornos sociales, políticos o económicos que deben estudiarse de forma paralela, para delimitar el origen y el impacto de estas nuevas formas.

Pero para mí, el enfoque no resultaría eficaz si la descompartmentalización, la sincretización no impregnara los objetos y herramientas de la enseñanza. Los ejemplos elegidos para el análisis deben provenir tanto de las formas clásicas, como de las formas más populares o menos balizadas; la necesidad de abordar tanto la cultura *high/low* que nos lleva directamente a la explosión de los enfoques teóricos en movimiento, como el espíritu de *post theory*; las críticas metodológicas (lingüísticas, sociológicas, psicoanalíticas, históricas) han dado paso a un colage teórico postmoderno que debe permanecer puro, preservando toda su pertinencia. Existe así, en esta filosofía educativa, un rechazo a encerrarse en



Douglas Gordon *24 Hour Psycho* 1993

LA DEMOCRATIZACIÓN DE LAS HERRAMIENTAS DE VISIONADO DE IMÁGENES, PERO TAMBIÉN DE CREACIÓN VISUAL, HA TRASTORNADO EL MUNDO, CREANDO OTRAS FORMAS DE LENGUAJE, Y POR EXTENSIÓN, CUESTIONANDO LOS USOS DE SU ENSEÑANZA.

perspectivas únicas, y una necesidad de presentar la pluralidad de los enfoques, sin rechazo a priori, con objeto de encontrar los medios más apropiados para el análisis, pero que permitan, igualmente, generar nuevas reflexiones, ofrecer prolongaciones destinadas a la elaboración crítica en concordancia con las materias o las obras que se exploran.

La omnipresencia de las imágenes cinematográficas en particular, y de las imágenes en movimiento en general, impone un aprendizaje sistemático. La democratización de las herramientas de visionado de imágenes, pero también de creación visual, ha trastornado el mundo, creando otras formas de lenguaje, y por extensión, cuestionando los usos de su enseñanza. Esta convulsión es de doble sentido. Ha introducido una libertad inestimable e inaudita en el análisis y la práctica cinematográficos; el vídeo, más adelante el DVD, las cámaras DV y otras maravillas tecnológicas, nos han dado la oportunidad de montar y desmontar las películas a voluntad, con total autonomía. Pero, igualmente, ha generado un maremoto donde predomina la indeterminación crítica y creativa. Creo que hay que diseñar los principios de la enseñanza como si fueran herramientas de reflexión, aunque también instrumentos susceptibles de ser aplicados inmediatamente, tal cual, e in situ. La idea consiste en crear lazos, introducir interrogantes constantes en el espacio de la enseñanza, ya sea universitaria o secundaria, en una práctica de escritura o de realización, pero tam-

bién y antes de nada, en un día a día saturado de imágenes en movimiento. Aprender a ver, revelar la visión específica que tal vez hemos perdido con el movimiento.

En este nuevo universo, las gemelas de Stanley Kubrick, en *The Shining*, nos hacen pensar en aquellas que fotografió Diana Arbus; Douglas Gordon, en una instalación, *24 Hour Psycho*, entabla un diálogo de ultratumba con Alfred Hitchcock para desmontar las 24 imágenes/segundo y el alma fílmico de su Psicosis; la criatura post-humana de *Ghost in the Shell* está presente en la Futura de *Metropolis* de Fritz Lang, basada ella misma en la Eva Future de Villers d'Isle-Adam; el *Rashomon* de Akira Kurosawa se ve trabajado y redefinido narrativamente a través de una sutura visual en *Mariposa de Amor*, del joven cineasta belga Nicolas Provost. El movimiento es perpetuo e infinito, pero la aldea global no ha incluido las imágenes; éstas existen por y para ellas mismas. Nos queda, a pesar de su desmultiplicación en infinitas redes, entender cómo han sido creadas, devolverles su condición de únicas, con objeto, tal vez, de que podamos crear algunas. ❧

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When photographs begin to be evidence in the historical trial

Benjamin is one of the rare philosophers whose writing emerges from the visual. Most of his writings, including those who do not deal directly with visual questions, contain traces of a gaze and of images or objects. However, almost all of Benjamin's texts were published without the images to which Benjamin referred or those quoted in his writing. This is true for earlier as well as for later editions, for journals as well as for books. In other words, most of the visual quotes have been erased. Even the texts Benjamin published during his lifetime, including those that explicitly grew out of visual materials or were directly related to them, usually appeared in a regular textual format without the accompaniment of photos. This, I believe, amounts to a publication of a piece of literary criticism without the quotes from the interpreted text. And in most cases the interpreters are not even aware of the fact that the text in front of them is actually incomplete.

I would like to demonstrate how a reading of Benjamin that does take into account the visual dimension of his texts may look like. I will do this mainly in the context of the essay on the work of art in the age of reproducibility. But let me start first with the relation between text and image.

In some of his essays Benjamin pointed to this separation between text and picture as a clear mechanism of control that should be resisted and overcome. Benjamin never constructed the visual as a separate realm, but weaved it into the textual in a way that obliges his readers—or better: his readers/spectators—to look “for” the visual, to look “at” the visual, “and” then to go back and forth between the visual and the textual.

In the supplement for the XVII thesis of his essay on history Benjamin looked at the locomotive about which Marx had written. Marx “thought” of a train locomotive and saw in it the revolution that plows world history. Benjamin “observed” the train locomotive and his gaze ran into something else: “Marx says that revolutions are the locomotive of world history. But perhaps it is quiet otherwise. Perhaps revolutions are an attempt by the passengers on this train, the human race – to activate the emergency brake”¹. Perhaps there were no emergency handles in train engines in Marx's time, but even if there were, it is doubtful that Marx would have noticed them. In his thinking, Marx rushed from the concrete material reality to the general noun “train” and from there, through the concept, on to the historical

Courtesy of George Eastman House



Eugene Atget *Boulevard Massena* Paris 1912



Eugene Atget *Le 10 de la Rue Mazet* 1925

process. Benjamin reached history as well, but not before pausing on the minute details of the actual experience. It was neither the general noun —a train, or a handle— nor the concept (of the revolution, of world history) but rather the image of a concrete object, the emergency handle, which mediates for him concrete experience and speculative thought. In the framework of this text on history, that has later been recognized as an ontological-epistemological analysis of catastrophe, his gaze laid on an emergency handle, and what he saw in it was its potential to make “the continuum of history explode”².

Examples like this one abound in Benjamin’s oeuvre. Think, for example, about the automaton chess player or the grain of rice on which a whole chapter of the Psalm is written

(both examples are from *The Concept of History*). As time passed, it has become almost impossible to reconstruct accurately in a comprehensive and systematic manner the visual paragraphs that were cut from his writings. One day an editor in a good publishing house might decide to publish a new and improved edition of his complete writings, including postcards, pictures, newspaper cutouts, sketches, documentation of objects and places. In the meantime, it rests upon the contemporary readers to follow the textual traces of this lost visual archive, to retrieve what can be retrieved and to reconstruct the Benjaminian text while paying close attention to the pictures which left their mark in it. These pictures speak from within the texts — though not verbally— and they are numerous.

The photograph as an object, a piece of material, can change hands and be preserved by the first tradition. But no tradition can appropriate the photographed image. The photographic image can only be transmitted. In Benjamin's discussion of the camera in the *Passages Work*, he refers to it as a producer of pictures that, with each shot, produces another unique picture. This is not the picture that portrays a man and a machine, but an image that results from their encounter, or in Benjamin's own words: "What makes

the first photographs uniquely one of their kind is perhaps this: they are the first image from the encounter between man and machine"³. It's not the "first" encounter between man and machine that is important, but the fact that these are the first images to be produced by such an encounter. Such an image presents the encounter neither from the perspective of the photographer nor from that of the photographed person; it is an image obtained from the encounter itself. Since the encounter usually brings together not only a person and a machine, also a photographing and a photographed person, and these two are then joined by a third, the spectator, we may conclude by saying that the image of the encounter can never be fully appropriated by any of the partners; it always lies in between and is shared among them. This is where transmission can start.

In the essay on the Work of Art Benjamin discusses the work of the French photographer of Eugene Atget: around 1900, "Atget... took photographs of deserted Paris streets. It has justly been said that he photographed them like scenes of crimes. A crime scene, too, is deserted; it is photographed for the purpose of establishing evidence. With Atget, photographic records begin to be evidence in the historical trial"⁴.

All the nine published editions of Benjamin's text which I know include no visual reference to Atget. In the meantime, those few lines which Benjamin wrote on Atget became noto-

BUT NO TRADITION CAN APPROPRIATE THE PHOTOGRAPHED IMAGE.

THE PHOTOGRAPHIC IMAGE CAN ONLY BE TRANSMITTED.

THEIR BODIES, ON WHICH NEW URBAN
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COMPLETELY BEHIND THE BUILDING WALLS.

rious and almost everybody repeats blindly the statement that Atget depicted empty Paris as a scene of crime. The corpus of Atget consists mainly of thousands images of deserted Paris, and many of them, hazardously chosen, became an abstract visual synonym for that phrase “scene of crime”. What is exactly the scene of crime depicted by Atget’s camera? Referred to by Benjamin? What is the crime that these photos bear testimony to? I don’t know which of Atget’s images Benjamin saw or remembered when he was writing these lines. But following the last part of his text on Atget — talking about these photos as evidence in a trial— I think we can’t limit ourselves to the main corpus of Atget’s photos. At its margins some records for a historical trial can be found indeed.

Among the thousands of photographs of the city there are a few frames in which figures appear. These evidential photos candidly show city dwellers who were banned from it, and whose banishment should be considered as what rendered the city’s streets into a crime scene: prostitutes, tramps and vagabonds. In two photos from the beginning of the 20’s where “public girls” appear, they are not shown in the street itself but on its margin, at the doors of certain houses. Their bodies, on which new urban regulations were written at the time, were removed from the city’s public spaces, but could not be hidden completely behind the building walls. The women are standing on the doorstep of the house they belong to —their home? The brothel?— but slide a bit out of it. One woman is standing on the doorstep, leaning forward a bit; the other is sitting on a chair at the entrance to the house, her elbow is slightly inserted through the opening —or so it seems, due to the

angle of photography chosen by Atget— perhaps to leave an opening for negotiation with the policeman or the supervisor who will come to arrest her for showing herself in public.

Benjamin was the master of many drafts, and fragments of his ideas are reiterated, but always with slight variations in the many versions of each text. I have chosen to read these photographs by Atget with the help of a certain passage from the Passages Work. It is a fragment of a text he copied from the new regulations of prostitution in Paris written in the 19th century. According to these regulations, prostitutes should have been removed from the streets of Paris, shoved behind doors and locks, thus cleansing the public domain of their provocative presence. These regulations imposed on “the public girls” (*filles publiques*) constraints and restrictions related to their freedom of movement and speech. Policemen were given the authority to expel women who walked alone publicly from the street of the city, to stamp them with the shaming sign ‘whore’ and to ban them.⁵ Going back and forth between the regulations copied into Benjamin’s text and the images in Atget’s corpus, between Benjamin’s description of Atget’s photographs and the photographs themselves, one may gain this different understanding of the scene of crime Benjamin might have had in mind. Viewing the photographs of women, one may even declare, together with Benjamin “a state of sexual emergency” and look for the emergency brake. Finally, one may ask whether it is not the case that banning prostitution by police regulations is not a case of blurring the distinction between law preserving and law instituting violence on which Benjamin

wrote in his “Critic of violence”, and whether the elimination of the prostitutes from the public sphere, the act that renders them almost invisible is not reminiscent of other acts of violence in which people suddenly disappear as a result of sovereign intervention. ❧

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1 BENJAMIN, W. *Selected Writings: Volume 4: 1938-1940*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003, p. 402

2 Ibidem p. 395

3 BENJAMIN, W. *Passages: Paris – Capitale du XIXeme Siècle*, Les Editions du CERF, 1989, p. 692

4 BENJAMIN, W. *Selected Writings: Volume 4: 1938-1940*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003, p. 258

5 In 1804, when Napoleon published his book of laws (*Code Napoléon*), women were actually banned. Married women were not allowed to go out and work or to study without the permission of their husbands. Prostitution was regulated but did not contaminate the law. See also (Roberts, Nickie, 1992. *Whores in History*, Harper Collins Publishers) and my article on the status of women regarding the *Declaration of human and civil rights* (forthcoming, *The Civil Contract of Photography*, Zone Books).

THESE REGULATIONS IMPOSED ON “THE PUBLIC GIRLS” (FILLES PUBLIQUES) CONSTRAINTS AND RESTRICTIONS RELATED TO THEIR FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT AND SPEECH.

Cuando las fotografías empiezan a convertirse en pruebas dentro del proceso histórico

Benjamin es uno de los pocos filósofos cuya obra surge de lo visual. La mayoría de sus obras, incluidas aquellas que no tratan directamente con cuestiones visuales, contienen trazos de una mirada y de imágenes u objetos. Sin embargo, prácticamente todos los textos de Benjamin se publicaron sin las imágenes a las que hacía referencia Benjamin o sin las citadas en sus escritos. Esto es cierto tanto en el caso de las primeras como de las últimas ediciones, así como de periódicos y libros. En otras palabras, la mayoría de las citas visuales han sido borradas. Incluso los textos que Benjamin publicó en vida, incluyendo aquellos que explícitamente surgieron de materiales visuales o estaban directamente relacionados con ellos, normalmente aparecían en un formato textual normal, sin el acompañamiento de fotografías. Esto, creo yo, equivale a la publicación de una pieza de crítica literaria sin las citas del texto interpretado. Y, en la mayoría de los casos, los intérpretes ni siquiera son conscientes del hecho de que el texto que tienen delante realmente está incompleto.

Me gustaría demostrar el aspecto que podría tener una lectura de Benjamin que realmente tuviera en cuenta la dimensión visual de sus textos. Lo voy a hacer principalmente en el contexto del ensayo sobre la obra de arte en la era de su reproductibilidad. Pero permítanme empezar primero por la relación entre texto e imagen.

En algunos de sus ensayos, Benjamin señaló esta separación entre texto e imagen como un claro mecanismo de control que debería resistirse y superarse. Benjamin nunca interpretó lo visual como un reino por separado, sino que lo intercaló en lo textual de un modo que obliga a sus lectores, o mejor dicho a sus lectores/espectadores, a “buscar” lo visual, a “mirar a” lo visual y, después, a moverse entre lo visual y lo textual.

En el suplemento de la tesis XVII de su ensayo sobre historia, Benjamin miró a la locomotora sobre la cual había escrito Marx. Marx “pensó” en la locomotora de un tren y la vio en la revolución que abre paso a la historia

Cortesia de George Eastman House



Eugene Atget *Cour de Rouen-passage du Commerce* 1908



Eugene Atget Rue Asseline 1924

universal. Benjamin “observó” la locomotora del tren y su mirada se encontró con otra cosa: “Marx dice que las revoluciones son la locomotora de la historia universal. Pero tal vez ocurre con esto algo enteramente distinto. Tal vez las revoluciones son el gesto de agarrar el freno de emergencia que hace el género humano que viaja en ese tren”¹. Quizá en la época de Marx no había frenos de emergencia en las máquinas de los trenes pero, incluso si los había, es dudoso que Marx se hubiese percatado de ello. En su pensamiento, Marx iba de la realidad del material concreto al nombre genérico “tren” y, desde allí, a través del con-

cepto, hasta el proceso histórico. Benjamin también llegó a la historia, pero no antes de hacer una pausa en los detalles mínimos de la experiencia real. No era ni el nombre genérico — un tren o un freno— ni el concepto (de revolución, de historia del mundo), sino la imagen del objeto concreto, el freno de emergencia, lo que para él mediaba entre la experiencia concreta y el pensamiento especulativo. En el marco de este texto sobre historia, que posteriormente ha sido reconocido como un análisis ontológico-epistemológico de catástrofe, su mirada se posó en un freno de emergencia y lo que vio en él fue su potencial para hacer “saltar el *continuum* de la historia”².

Ejemplos como este abundan en la obra de Benjamin. Pensemos, por ejemplo, en el jugador de ajedrez automático o en el grano de arroz, sobre los que se ha escrito un capítulo completo del Salmo (ambos ejemplos son de *El concepto sobre historia*). Con el paso del tiempo, se ha hecho casi imposible reconstruir con precisión de un modo completo y sistemático los párrafos visuales que fueron cortados de sus obras. Algún día, un editor de una buena casa editorial puede decidir publicar una nueva edición mejorada de sus obras completas, incluyendo postales, imágenes, recortes de periódico, dibujos, documentación de objetos y lugares. Mientras tanto, depende de los lectores contemporáneos el seguir los trazos textuales de su archivo visual perdido para recuperar lo que pueda ser recuperado y para reconstruir el texto benjaminiano, al mismo tiempo que se presta gran aten-

ción a las imágenes que dejaron su marca en él. Estas imágenes hablan desde dentro de los textos —aunque no verbalmente— y son numerosas.

La fotografía como objeto, trozo de material, puede cambiar de manos y ser preservada por la primera tradición. Pero ninguna tradición se puede apropiarse de la imagen fotografiada. La imagen fotográfica sólo se puede transmitir. En el discurso de la cámara de Benjamin, en el *Libro de los Pasajes*, se refiere a ella como a una productora de imágenes que, con cada disparo, produce otra fotografía única. No se trata de la fotografía que retrata a un hombre y una máquina, sino de una imagen que resulta de su encuentro, o según las propias palabras de Benjamin: “Lo que hace que las primeras fotografías sean únicas en su especie es quizá esto: son la primera imagen del encuentro entre el hombre y la máquina”³. No es el “primer” encuentro entre el hombre y la máquina lo que importa, sino el hecho de que éstas son las primeras imágenes producidas por tal encuentro. Dicha imagen representa el encuentro, pero no lo hace ni desde la perspectiva del fotógrafo ni desde la de la persona fotografiada; es una imagen obtenida del propio encuentro. Como el encuentro normalmente no sólo reúne a una persona y una máquina, sino

también a una persona que fotografía y a otra fotografiada, y éstas se vuelven a unir mediante una tercera, el espectador, podemos concluir diciendo que ninguno de los socios podrá nunca apropiarse totalmente de la imagen del encuentro; siempre se queda en medio y es compartida entre ellos. Es aquí donde puede empezar la transmisión. En el ensayo sobre la obra de arte, Benjamin analiza la obra del fotógrafo francés Eugene Atget: hacia 1900, “Atget... fotografió las calles de París desiertas. Con mucha razón, se ha dicho de él que las fotografió como si fuesen escenas del crimen. La escena de un crimen también está desierta; se fotografía con el fin de establecer indicios. Con Atget comienzan a convertirse las placas fotográficas en pruebas del proceso histórico”⁴.

Las nueve ediciones publicadas del texto de Benjamin que yo conozco no incluyen ninguna referencia visual a Atget. Entretanto, esas cuatro líneas que Benjamin escribió sobre Atget se hicieron notorias, y prácticamente todo el mundo repite ciegamente la afirmación de que Atget fotografió París vacío como la escena de un crimen. El cadáver de Atget consiste fundamentalmente en miles de imágenes de París desierto, y muchas de ellas, arriesgadamente elegidas, se convirtieron en un sinónimo visual abstracto de la frase

SUS CUERPOS, SOBRE LOS CUALES SE ESCRIBIERON
EN AQUEL TIEMPO LAS NUEVAS REGLAMENTACIONES URBANAS,
SE RETIRARON DE LOS ESPACIOS PÚBLICOS DE LA CIUDAD.

“escena del crimen”. ¿Cuál es exactamente la escena del crimen fotografiada por la cámara de Atget? ¿A la que hace referencia Benjamin? ¿Cuál es el crimen del que dan testimonio esas fotos? Yo no sé cuáles son las imágenes de Atget que Benjamin vio o recordaba mientras escribía esas líneas. Pero siguiendo la última parte de su texto sobre Atget —hablando de estas fotos como pruebas en un proceso— creo que no nos podemos limitar al cuerpo principal de las fotos de Atget. De hecho, en sus márgenes se pueden encontrar algunos registros para un proceso histórico.

Entre las miles de fotografías de la ciudad, hay unas cuantas en las que aparecen figuras. Estas fotos en calidad de pruebas, muestran con franqueza a habitantes de la ciudad que fueron excluidos de ella y cuyo destierro debería considerarse como lo que convierte a las calles de la ciudad en la escena de un crimen: prostitutas, mendigos y vagabundos. En dos fotos de principios de los años veinte en las que aparecen “mujeres públicas”, éstas no aparecen exactamente en la calle, sino en su margen, a la puerta de ciertas casas. Sus cuerpos, sobre los cuales se escribieron en aquel tiempo las nuevas reglamentaciones urbanas, se retiraron de los espacios públicos de la

ciudad, aunque no se pudieron llegar a esconder completamente tras las paredes del edificio. Las mujeres están de pie en el umbral de la puerta de la casa a la que pertenecen —¿su hogar? ¿el burdel?— aunque un poco apartadas de ella. Hay una mujer de pie en el umbral de la puerta, un poco inclinada hacia delante; la otra está sentada en una silla a la entrada de la casa, con el codo ligeramente metido por la abertura —o eso parece, debido al ángulo de la fotografía elegido por Atget— quizá para dejar una abertura para la negociación con el policía o el supervisor que irá a arrestarla por mostrarse en público.

Benjamin fue el maestro de muchos borradores, y los fragmentos de sus ideas se reiteran, pero siempre con ligeras variaciones en las muchas versiones de cada texto. He elegido leer estas fotografías de Atget con la ayuda de cierto pasaje de la *Obra de los Pasajes*. Es el fragmento de un texto que copió de las nuevas reglamentaciones de la prostitución en París escrito en el siglo XIX. Según dichas reglamentaciones, las prostitutas deberían haber sido sacadas de las calles de París, escondiéndolas detrás de puertas y cerrojos, limpiando así el dominio público de su provocativa presencia. Estas reglamentaciones

ESTAS REGLAMENTACIONES IMPUSIERON A “LAS MUJERES PÚBLICAS” (FILLES PUBLIQUES) COACCIONES Y RESTRICCIONES RELATIVAS A SU LIBERTAD DE MOVIMIENTO Y DE EXPRESIÓN.

impusieron a “las mujeres públicas” (*filles publiques*) coacciones y restricciones relativas a su libertad de movimiento y de expresión. A los policías se les otorgó autoridad para expulsar de las calles de la ciudad a las mujeres que caminaban solas públicamente, para colocarles el vergonzoso cartel de “puta” y para prohibirlas⁵. Moviéndonos entre las reglamentaciones copiadas al texto de Benjamin y las imágenes del cuerpo de Atget, y entre la descripción hecha por Benjamin de las fotografías de Atget y las propias fotografías, uno puede obtener esa comprensión diferente de la escena del crimen que quizá Benjamin podría haber tenido en mente. Viendo las fotografías de mujeres, uno incluso puede declarar, junto con Benjamin, “un estado de emergencia sexual” y buscar el freno de emergencia. Finalmente, uno puede preguntarse si no es el caso de prohibir la prostitución mediante reglamentaciones policiales un caso de tratar de difuminar la distinción entre la ley que preserva y la ley que insta a la violencia, sobre lo que Benjamin escribió en su *Crítica de violencia*, y si no es la eliminación de las prostitutas de la esfera pública, el acto que las vuelve casi invisibles, una reminiscencia de otros actos de violencia en los que la gente desaparece repentinamente como resultado de la intervención soberana. ❖

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VIENDO LAS FOTOGRAFÍAS DE
MUJERES, UNO INCLUSO PUEDE
DECLARAR, JUNTO CON BENJAMIN,
“UN ESTADO DE EMERGENCIA
SEXUAL” Y BUSCAR EL FRENO DE
EMERGENCIA.

NOTAS Y REFERENCIAS

1 BENJAMIN, W. *Selected Writings: Volume 4: 1938-1940*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003, p. 402

2 Ibidem, p. 395

3 BENJAMIN, W. *Passages: Paris – Capitale du XIXeme Siècle*, Les Editions du CERF, 1989, p. 692

4 BENJAMIN, W. *Selected Writings: Volume 4: 1938-1940*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003, p. 258

5 En 1804, cuando Napoleón publicó su libro sobre leyes (*Código de Napoleón*), las mujeres estaban realmente prohibidas. A las mujeres casadas no se les permitía salir solas a la calle ni trabajar, o estudiar sin el permiso de sus maridos. La prostitución estaba regulada pero no contaminaba la ley. Véase también (Roberts, Nickie, 1992. *Whores in History*, Harper Collins Publishers) y mi artículo sobre el estado de las mujeres en relación con la *Declaración de derechos humanos y civiles (The Civil Contract of Photography*, Zone Books).

Art as Education

Fourteen. What could anyone ever hope to know at fourteen? At that age, I remember, it was all climbing trees and scuffed knees, and the only knowledge we tried to intercept was the meaning behind the pop songs that reached our rural ears. In those days—and we're only talking about twenty years ago—if I wanted to know anything that constituted serious information, I would ask around and, when the answer inevitably failed to resolve itself conclusively on the lips of family elders, I would turn to the volumes of a children's encyclopaedia that rested their broken spines against the bay window of our study room.

Dusty anachronisms, their blue cloth covers discoloured by the harsher light of better days, they proudly puffed out their golden typographic plumage. Finding the Roman numbers that corresponded to my area of investigation, I would ease one of the books away from its compatriots, opening its hard covers ajar to savour the sweet musk that drifted upwards like camphor on the wings of moths. More often than not, the section I sought would be missing, excised by a sibling assigned to research the same subject three, five or seven years earlier, which left me

with one option: to stay in town after school, filling the three hours until the next bus left for our village with a trip to the municipal library. Just down from the fish and chip shop, in a period building with all trace of its heritage removed, I would scour shelves sparsely stacked with the desires and donations of the local farming community, hoping a member of teaching staff would have credited their students with enough initiative to warrant the surreptitious inclusion of the relevant title.

Two short decades later and everything has changed. Teenagers these days have access to more information than we ever knew existed, and can find anything they need by typing a few keywords and clicking a button. Centuries of history, and more books than anyone could ever read in a lifetime, have been distilled into pixelated paragraphs, waiting to be discovered. But, sometimes I wonder what young people do with these fragmentary facts, these partial histories and received opinions which only hint at knowledge or understanding. How do they know what to look for, what to accept and what to reject? How can they develop a perspective on the world by assembling a jigsaw of soundbites? Well, I found some of the answers to these questions last Wednesday morning.

The gallery's normally deserted on weekdays, with those few people who know about it tending to co-ordinate visits around their other leisure activities at weekends. So, the arrival of this delegation—which at first sight seemed to be part of an organised trip from one of the nearby Colleges—prompted my curiosity. The group, of a dozen or so fourteen-year-olds,

Courtesy of the artist

Katie Barlow *Visit Palestine* 2005

entered serenely, exhibiting none of the raucousness that my contemporaries would have shown on being released from formal education, and none of the gaucheness that would have dogged us in a sophisticated environment. I studied the young students as they filed past my desk and, in their un-uniform dress, could find no trace of the logos that laced the blazer pockets of institutions established to preserve official knowledge.

Without wishing to imply distrust, I followed them on their deliberate trajectory towards the gallery and took a seat against the wall, observing from the sidelines as they coagulated in the first two rows of tiered seating, happy in each other's proximity. Almost as soon as they were settled, the first shaky documentary spooled into view, and immersed envoys of the TV generation in image and sound. The silent projector spewed its digital beams onto

the screen and a boy no older than his witnesses gambolled through the rubble of his ruined town. From my place adjacent to their seats, I could see their small faces cascading with light and shadow, as unaware of being watched as the object of their attention. A soft voice introduced us to young Anwar's plight; orphaned in the conflict that had ravaged his home, he daily risked his life to scavenge for food. And, in the half-light, I could discern the shuffling of notebooks as this parallel narrative was decanted without gazes being broken.

The artist responsible for this film had been in the gallery a few weeks before, perfecting the seating arrangement and testing the saturation of colour and sound. She had spoken about her motivations while she worked, spitting vitriol at the mainstream media, its partiality and politics. A modest woman, far removed from the vainglory of others who have exhibited there, she seemed to regard herself as no more than a conduit for the information she was relaying. Concerned only with honesty, with reporting exactly what she saw, she considered it her duty to bring the truth back home to us as vividly as if

A modest woman, far removed from the vainglory of others who have exhibited there, she seemed to regard herself as no more than a conduit for the information she was relaying.

we had experienced it ourselves. And, as her messages transmitted themselves to this willing audience, I understood her project to have been a success.

As I was thinking this, a loud crack ricocheted around the confined space of the gallery, which forced us to investigate collectively. On screen, at close range, a steel-tipped projectile had seared into young flesh to leave a pocket like the crater of a meteorite, a repository for swirling sand. An abstract fissure until the blood began, we widened our forensics and understood the bullet to have embedded itself just below Anwar's jutting ribs. In the darkness, eyes blackened with sadness as a veil of horror descended and, for the first time, I became conscious of their youthful sensibilities and felt implicated, irresponsible. Unflinching faces inhabited Anwar's reality, monitoring his condition from within, and chests rose in relief as his breath returned. Less in need of protection than capable of offering it, the bones of their growing skulls set into expressions which hinted at the dissenting adults their owners would become, and my concerns for them evaporated.

When the film finished, abruptly and without resolution, the visitors were left visibly bereft. I straightened my body, preparing to join them in the exodus to reception, but there was no sign of movement. The clustered group remained in the none-too-comfortable gallery seats and the disc stopped whirring in the machine, leaving the projector to cast a rectangle of purest blue. Shifting focal lengths to lose myself in its depths, I tried to decide between Jarman and Klein. Leaning back in my chair, I rested my head against the gallery wall, waiting to see what would happen, thinking of Turrell.

After several minutes, the youngsters in the front row swivelled around in their seats to face the row behind them. A girl in the centre was the first to speak, her quizzical features set beneath a sleek curtain of hair. 'So?' she demanded of her colleagues, glowing in the blue light.

A few of the others nodded, reticent at first, then two began to speak at once, a boy and a girl, their voices meeting at the same pitch to cancel each other out. After a small skirmish of politeness, the girl agreed to speak, 'We have to do something to help.' There was no uncertainty in her words and they were greeted with assent. The boy, who had demurred to allow her to speak, concurred, 'Why don't we go and find him?'

His proposal was met with general agreement and several of the others contributed logistics and swapped the names of people they thought could help them with their plans. They wanted to meet Anwar, to talk to him and to heal him. But, more than this, they did not just want to ameliorate his individual suffering. Determined to prevent his fate being replicated, they understood with absolute clarity that the root cause underlying this injustice had to be addressed. In the discussion that followed, laden with the passion of youth, they never doubted that they could make a difference with their diminutive presences.

Silent and unacknowledged, I was assimilated into the context of their epiphany, as neutral as the watery blue that framed their discussion. But, I was far from neutral in the opinions I formulated. As I listened, I became convinced that this education they were receiving in the gallery was every bit as important as anything they would learn at school. Without mediation, the film had exposed them to subjective truths and sharpened their critical faculties. Beyond formal constraints, this work of art had opened their eyes to a world beyond their own. It had taught them humility and empathy, and it had braced them to act. If there is hope, I thought, it lies with the young. «

REBECCA GORDON NESBITT Having established salon3 (with Maria Lind and Hans Ulrich Obrist) as a space for international exchange in London, Rebecca Gordon Nesbitt was appointed as a curator at the Nordic Institute for Contemporary Art (NIFCA) in Helsinki, where she initiated projects with artists from the Nordic region, the UK and Ireland. Increasingly disturbed by the 'new world order', she receded from direct participation to concentrate on research into the infrastructure of the art world, its institutions and economies. In parallel to these investigations, she has been developing a body of fiction which has been published in art catalogues and (under a pseudonym) in literary publications.

El arte como educación

Catorce. ¿Qué podría saber cualquiera a los catorce años? Me acuerdo que a esa edad todo era subirse a los árboles y rodillas arañadas, y el único conocimiento que intentábamos interceptar era el significado escondido tras las canciones de música pop que llegaban hasta nuestros oídos rurales. En aquel tiempo —y sólo estamos hablando de hace veinte años— si quería saber alguna cosa que constituyera una información seria, preguntaba a mi alrededor y, cuando inevitablemente la respuesta de labios de los más mayores de la familia no conseguía resolverse de manera concluyente, me dirigía a los volúmenes de una enciclopedia para niños cuyos rotos lomos descansaban contra la ventana en voladizo de nuestra habitación de estudio.

Anacronismos polvorientos, con sus forros de tela azul descolorida por la fuerza de la luz de días mejores, inflaban orgullosamente su dorado plumaje

topográfico. Al encontrar los números romanos correspondientes a mi área de investigación, separaba uno de los tomos de sus compatriotas, entreabriendo sus duras tapas para saborear el dulce almizcle que ascendía como alcanfor en las alas de las polillas. La mayoría de las veces, faltaba la sección que buscaba, extirpada por un hermano al que se le había encomendado la investigación del mismo tema tres, cinco o siete años antes, lo que me dejaba sólo una opción: quedarme en el pueblo después de clase, llenando las tres horas que faltaban para el siguiente autobús a nuestro pueblo con un viaje a la biblioteca municipal. Justo al lado de la tienda de pescado frito y patatas fritas, un edificio de época sin ningún rastro de su herencia, buscaría entre estanterías poco pobladas con los deseos y donaciones de la comunidad local de agricultores, esperando que algún miembro del personal educativo hubiera atribuido a sus alumnos la suficiente iniciativa como para garantizar la inclusión subrepticia del título correspondiente.

Dos cortas décadas después y todo ha cambiado. Los adolescentes de hoy en día tienen acceso a más información de la que nosotros nunca imaginamos que pudiera existir, y pueden encontrar cualquier cosa que necesiten con sólo teclear unas cuantas palabras clave y hacer clic en un botón. Siglos de historia y más libros de los que nadie pueda leer durante una vida han sido destilados en párrafos pixelados, esperando a ser descubiertos. Sin embargo, algunas veces me pregunto qué hace la juventud con estos hechos fragmentarios, estas historias parciales y opiniones recibidas que solamente hacen alusión al conocimiento o la comprensión. ¿Cómo saben qué buscar, qué aceptar y qué rechazar? ¿Cómo pueden desarrollar una perspectiva del

Derek Jarman *Blue* 1993

mundo montando un rompecabezas de mensajes breves? Pues bien, el miércoles pasado por la mañana encontré algunas de las respuestas a estas preguntas.

Normalmente la galería está desierta entre semana, con esas pocas personas que lo saben e intentan coordinar las visitas con sus otras actividades de ocio los fines de semana. Por eso, la llegada de esta delegación —que a primera vista parecía formar parte de una salida organizada de uno de los colegios de los alrededores— despertó mi curiosidad. El grupo de unos doce,

más o menos de alrededor de catorce años, entró serenamente, sin exhibir el tono estridente que mis contemporáneos hubiesen mostrado al ser liberados de la educación formal, y sin ningún signo de la cohibición que nos hubiera producido a nosotros un entorno sofisticado. Estudié a los jóvenes estudiantes según iban desfilando por delante de mi escritorio, y como no llevaban uniforme, no pude encontrar ningún indicio de los logotipos que normalmente llevan en los bolsillos de las chaquetas de instituciones establecidas para preservar el conocimiento oficial.

Sin querer mostrarme desconfiada, los seguí en su deliberada trayectoria hacia la galería y me senté contra la pared, observando desde la banda cómo se iban coagulando en las primeras dos filas de las gradas de asientos, disfrutando de la proximidad entre ellos. Casi tan pronto como estuvieron asentados, empezó a emitirse el primer documental tembloroso, sumergiendo a los mensajeros de la generación de la TV en imágenes y sonido. El silencioso proyector vomitaba sus rayos digitales en la pantalla y un chico, no mayor que sus testigos, brincaba a través de los escombros de su pueblo en ruinas.

En la oscuridad, los ojos ennegrecidos por la tristeza al descender un velo de horror, fui consciente por primera vez de sus jóvenes sensibilidades y me sentí implicada, irresponsable.

Desde mi sitio, próximo a sus asientos, podía ver sus pequeñas caras en las que se reflejaban la luz y las sombras, tan poco conscientes de estar siendo observados como el objeto de su atención. Una voz suave nos presentó la situación del joven Anwar; huérfano en el conflicto que había hecho estragos en su hogar, que diariamente arriesgaba su vida para buscar comida entre las basuras. Y a media luz, pude discernir el ruido de cuadernos mientras se decantaba esta narración paralela, sin que las miradas se apartasen de la pantalla.

La artista responsable de la película había estado en la galería unas semanas antes, perfeccionando la organización de los asientos y probando la saturación de color y sonido. Mientras trabajaba, había hablado de sus motivaciones, echando fuego por la boca contra los medios de comunicación dominantes, su parcialidad y políticas. Una mujer modesta, que distaba mucho de vanagloriarse como otros de los que habían expuesto allí, parecía considerarse a sí misma simplemente como un conducto para la información que estaba transmitiendo. Preocupada únicamente por la honestidad, por informar exactamente de lo que había visto, creía que tenía la obligación de traernos a casa la verdad tan gráficamente como si nosotros mismos la hubiésemos experimentado. Y al ver como sus mensajes se transmitían por sí solos a esta entusiasta audiencia, comprendí que su proyecto había sido un éxito.

Según estaba pensando en ello, se oyó un fuerte crujido que rebotó por todo el espacio confinado de la galería y que nos obligó a investigar colectivamente. En la pantalla, a corta distancia, un proyectil con punta de acero había penetrado en carne joven, dejando un agujero como el cráter de un meteorito, un depósito para remolinos de arena. Una fisura abstracta hasta que empezó a sangrar; nosotros agudizamos nuestro instinto forense y comprendimos que la bala se había incrustado justo debajo de las costillas sobresalientes de Anwar. En la oscuridad, los ojos ennegrecidos por la tristeza al descender un velo de horror, fui consciente por primera vez de sus jóvenes sensibilidades y me sentí implicada, irresponsable. Caras impávidas habitaban la realidad de Anwar,

supervisando su estado desde el interior, y los pechos se hincharon de alivio al ver que volvía a respirar. Con menos necesidad de protección que capacidad para ofrecerla, los huesos en fase de crecimiento de sus cráneos se afianzaron en expresiones que insinuaban los adultos discrepantes en los que se convertirían sus dueños, y mis preocupaciones por ellos se evaporaron.

Cuando la película terminó, abruptamente y sin resolución, los visitantes se quedaron visiblemente afligidos. Me enderecé, preparándome para unirme a ellos en el éxodo hacia la recepción, pero no hubo ningún signo de movimiento. El grupo reunido permaneció en los no demasiado cómodos asientos de la galería y el disco dejó de rechinar en la máquina, permitiendo que el proyector proyectara un rectángulo del azul más puro. Cambiando las distancias focales para perderme en sus profundidades, intenté decidir entre Jarman y Klein. Recostándome en la silla, apoyé la cabeza contra la pared de la galería, esperando a ver lo que pasaría, pensando en Turrell. Después de unos minutos, los jóvenes de la fila de delante se giraron en sus asientos para volverse hacia la fila que tenían detrás. Una chica situada en el centro fue la primera que habló, sus facciones socarronas ocultas bajo una cortina de pelo liso. “¿Y, qué?” exigió a sus colegas, en el resplandor de la luz azul.

Algunos de los demás asintieron con la cabeza, reticentes al principio; después, dos, un chico y una chica, empezaron a hablar al mismo tiempo, sus voces encontrándose en el mismo tono para anularse el uno al otro. Tras una pequeña escaramuza de educación, la chica estuvo de acuerdo en hablar, “Tenemos que hacer algo para ayudar”. No había ninguna inseguridad en sus palabras, que fueron acogidas con aprobación. El chico, que no había puesto objeción en dejarla hablar, estuvo de acuerdo, “¿Por qué no vamos a buscarle?”

Su propuesta fue recibida con un acuerdo general y algunos de los otros contribuyeron aportando logística e intercambiaron los nombres de personas que pensaban que podían ayudarles. Querían conocer a Anwar, hablar con él y curarle. Pero, sobre todo, no se conformaban con aminorar su sufrimiento individual.

Determinados a evitar que su suerte volviese a repetirse, comprendieron con absoluta claridad que había que ir a la raíz que subyacía bajo esa injusticia. En la discusión que siguió, impregnada por la pasión de la juventud, nunca pusieron en duda que podían marcar una diferencia con sus diminutas presencias.

Silenciosa y desapercibida, fui asimilada en el contexto de su epifanía, tan neutral como el azul acuoso que enmarcaba su discusión. Pero yo estaba mucho de ser neutral en las opiniones que formulé. Según escuchaba, me convencí de que esta educación que estaban recibiendo en la galería era tan importante como cualquier otra cosa que aprendieran en la escuela. Sin mediación alguna, la película les había expuesto a verdades subjetivas y había afilado sus facultades críticas. Más allá de las restricciones formales, este trabajo artístico les había abierto los ojos a un mundo más allá del suyo. Les había dado una lección de humildad y empatía, y les había preparado para actuar. Si hay esperanza, pensé, está en los jóvenes. ❖

REBECCA GORDON NESBITT Después de establecer salon3 (con Maria Lind y Hans Ulrich Obrist) como un espacio de intercambio internacional en Londres, Rebecca Gordon Nesbitt fue nombrada conservadora del Instituto Nórdico de Arte Contemporáneo (NIFCA por sus siglas en inglés) de Helsinki, donde puso en marcha proyectos con artistas de la región Nórdica, del Reino Unido e Irlanda. Cada vez más afectada por el “nuevo orden mundial”, dejó de participar directamente para concentrarse en la investigación dentro de la infraestructura del mundo del arte, sus instituciones y economías. Paralelamente a estas investigaciones, ha estado desarrollando un cuerpo de ficción que ha sido publicado en catálogos de arte y (bajo un seudónimo) en publicaciones literarias.

The Experience of the Us

Espai en Blanc is the name of a project created in Barcelona in 2002. The goal, as we said at the time, was to “make thinking passionate again”. By “passionate” we meant that we put our lives into it. And that happens when thinking becomes collective, when it affects our very way of living and challenges the clichés on which our everyday reality is founded.

A project like this has to have a broader aim than simply creating a critical discourse to hold up to the world. From the outset, we felt there was a need to experiment with the conditions of such production: the places, relationships and tools of its creation, communication, education and intervention. As well as creating a collective author, we also wanted to set in motion a whole machine of thought; a device which, by altering the recognisable maps of theoretical production, would lead to a new politicisation of thought. The crisis in the traditional forms of political affiliation and organisation have invalidated the old idea that politicisation requires consciousness and the transmission of a proper discourse. In a globalised world, everything is visible (injustice, lies, cruelty, exploitation, etc.), yet nothing hap-

pens. Disclosure and denunciation is valuable in the ambit of information but not in that of social transformation. The enlightened proposition of illuminating consciousness—subsequently taken up by the worker’s movement as class consciousness—has thus lost its subversive potential. What then does the production of critical and shared thinking consist of? How do political transmission and formation occur today?

Espai en Blanc has tackled these questions head on, staging a very wide-ranging series of projects. These include the *Symposia on the War-State* (September 2002), the folder “Programmes of Subversion” (*Archipiélago* magazine No. 53), the *Barcelona Report 2004: postmodern fascism* (Ed. Bellaterra 2004), collaboration with the film *El taxista ful* (Jo Sol, 2005), the investigation *The Autonomous Struggles in Spain* (in progress) and publication of the magazine *Espai en Blanc* offering “materials for the subversion of life”, first published in October 2006. All of these mark experiences of situational thinking, associated with our own practices and the groups we form part of. They are practices of self-interrogation, in which the subject and object of the discourse are not clearly separable.

Thinking means imagining (thinking up) ourselves. Addressing the problem of the world means jointly involving ourselves in it. The world is what globalisation has stolen from us; what it has placed in front of us as a mirror of the



Jo Sol *El taxista ful* poster from the film 2005

impotence, whereby we are reduced to mere spectators, consumers or victims. In this threefold condition, criticism is neutralised by using three ways of sterilising the discourse: the aesthetic way (a game of positions), the moral way (judgement) and the psychological way (wellbeing/discontent). The three leave us in a depoliticised relationship with the world. Politicising thought therefore means re-appropriating the world. Or to put it another way: learning to see the world that exists among us. What other teaching could be more urgent in today's world?

It was this approach that led us to organise a series of meetings or gather-

ings between January and May 2006, under the title *No-Man's Land in the Network of Names*. This initiative is an example of how critical thought occurs *between us*; in other words, that the elaboration of critical thought involves breaking down the thinker-audience hierarchy to constitute a thinking Us, a collective word capable of making progress on real problems. In this piece, we want to concentrate on this experience and what it can contribute to a reflection on the challenges currently posed by an open education.

On the last Thursday of every month, over a five-month period, Espai en Blanc organised meetings in a bar in Barcelona

(the Horiginal). Each gathering looked at a specific problem (Social Discontent; Civic-mindedness against Politics; the Frontier Space; the Experience of the Us; and Speaking Up) and was based on a series of questions and materials, launched through a blog. These gatherings were open to everyone. There were no advertised speakers, no coordinating committee and no question-and-answer session. Over the five months, more than a hundred people, mostly unknown to each other, met up to think together. This anonymous self-organisation opened up a space for politicisation of the word and life itself. What are the key features of this experience and why do we consider it to be both formative and transforming?

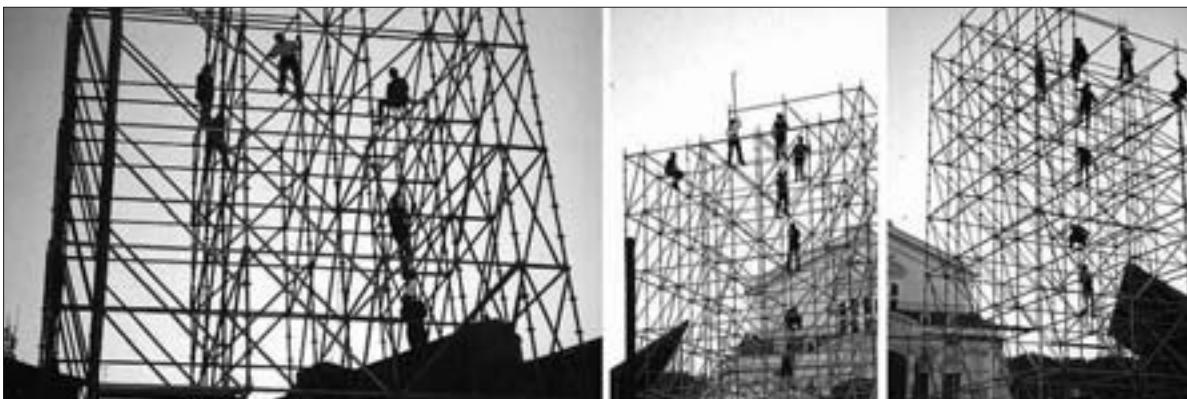
Our assessment is that at these encounters we managed to begin breaking down the dynamic by which critical thought is neutralised. And we did so in two main aspects: on the one hand, by making the collective event self-organising and on the other, going from formulating criticism to embodying criticism. It is worth looking more closely at these two issues to reflect on the possibilities of a (self)educational action today.

When a collective event becomes self-organising, it is the *Us* that gives meaning to the event. There are plenty of collective events in today's metropolitan life. Indeed, most events are collective; the difficult thing is to be alone. However, the city has lost all power of

Each of us goes home with
our dose of knowledge, fun, emotion,
but none of us has stepped out
of our singular persons,
our experience-consuming I.

self-organisation because these events are empty of *Us*. Whether it's a lecture, a football match, a concert, a demonstration or a popular festival, we go as spectators, as an audience, as participants, customers, etc. Each of us goes home with our dose of knowledge, fun, emotion, but none of us has stepped out of our singular persons, our experience-consuming I. We know that knowing [*saber*] and knowledge [*conocimiento*] are being subjected to a strong process of privatisation, in the form of dissemination and transmission through increasingly closed institutions, and patenting. But closer to the root of this, it should be remembered that not only knowledge but also experience has been privatised. Social ghettoization goes hand in hand with ghettoization in life and experience, which is one of the key problems that any educational project must face today.

How do we break down the walls of self-referentiality which, paradoxically, organise and compartmentalise the information and communication society? At the Espai en Blanc meetings, we did it by leaving the place of enunciation of the word empty. That empty place was not the neutral space of opinion. It was a space of tension in which a specific problem could be tackled—or not. The questions Espai en Blanc had posed through the short presentation we posted on the blog might affect us or not, they might trigger a word which would take on a meaning for us or leave us indifferent, drawn into our accustomed individuality. In that space of tension the only thing that made sense was a word capable of sustaining itself, a word which would advance from person to person in an exercise of collective and anonymous thinking. The word can be justified from many angles (academic, cultural, police, prestige, authority, etc.) but when does it tell us anything? When does it do something with us? Precisely when it moves the walls of our self-referentiality, when it sets us in motion. Not when it allows us to say what we think, but when it forces us to think what we do not know.



Images from *No-man's Land in the Network of Names* Barcelona 2006

And because of what happened at the gatherings and based on the assessment of the people who took part, we believe this landslide did actually take place. We didn't go home, then, with our private dose of knowledge and recognition, but instead with the vacuum of a breach which, having pierced us all, had become our common dimension. When the call to the meeting ceases to be just another offer on the stage of the metropolis which has to be met by a certain amount of demand, and becomes the true self-organisation of a thinking us.

In that collective exercise the critical potential of thinking departs from its habitual anaesthesia because—as we said—we go from formulating criticism to embodying it. When we approach common problems in that space of tension in which the word sustains itself, not only is the I torn from its self-referentiality, but the theory is torn from its legitimated spaces of circulation: the academic discourse with its referenced author, the channels of information and the forums of opinion. In them, criticism, when it does exist, can only be formulated. That is its limit, the threshold of impotence against which we must measure ourselves every day, and beyond which any commitment to a transforming education must aim. We said before that the problem of politicisation has traditionally been a problem of consciousness. Today one might say that it is a problem of body. How should one embody critique? How do we make critical thinking take a body of its own?

In our experience, putting the body on that space of tension that we have so far portrayed as a space of the word took on an importance which not even we could have imagined. While the blog that went with the gatherings never went beyond its “transmitting” function—in other words, it served merely for sending out invitations, reminders and associated material, and did not at any point enter an interactive dynamic that might extend our previous conversations, the act of *going to the gathering* became the central action of each gathering. *Being there*, even without speaking, became the key moment and the most transforming part of the experience. Why? Because the effects of critique cannot be measured only by what is said but

by what is happening (to us). And, as we have said that possibility of thinking together opened up an experience of the Us based through which each person could be something more than themselves. Is this not the key experience of education? Does being educated not involve coming out of oneself to enter a no-man's land in which a common world can be created? That “no-man's land”, as we called it in the title of our meetings, is the one that sabotages “the network of names”, the order of that world which is seized from us and in which each person has to occupy their own node of connectivity and availability.

At the end of *El taxista ful*, the film in which Espai en Blanc participated, the main character asks: “How can we drill holes in reality?”. These gatherings have marked an attempt to do just that. It is an unexhausted attempt: the experience—which we began blindly, our stomachs knotted with questions—has convinced us that, to some extent and in its fragility, we have managed to drill a few holes in reality and we have done it together. We can continue trying to do it, extending this experience and inventing other ones yet to come. With them we will not create a new consciousness, nor will we disseminate any new truth. You do not educate anyone that way. But exercising ourselves in this experience of the Us we will perhaps have a body that is more prepared to fight fear, more exposed and less isolated: a body that knows that its life is not only its own, and that it stakes everything on that which goes beyond itself. ❧

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La experiencia del nosotros

Espai en Blanc es el nombre de un proyecto que nació en Barcelona en 2002 con el objetivo, como dijimos entonces, de “hacer de nuevo apasionante el pensamiento”. Apasionante quiere decir que nos vaya la vida en ello, y eso ocurre cuando el pensamiento se hace colectivo, afecta nuestra propia manera de vivir y se alza como un desafío a las obviedades sobre las que se asienta nuestra realidad.

Un proyecto como éste no podía tener como objetivo la mera producción de un discurso crítico frente al mundo. Desde un inicio, nos planteamos la necesidad de experimentar con las condiciones de esta producción: los lugares, relaciones y herramientas de su creación, comunicación, pedagogía e intervención. No sólo queríamos constituir un autor colectivo, sino poner en marcha una verdadera máquina de pensar. Un dispositivo que, alterando los mapas reconocibles de la producción teórica, produjera una nueva politización del pensamiento. La crisis de las formas tradicionales de militancia y de organización políticas han invalidado la vieja idea de que la politización pasa por la conciencia y por la transmisión de un discurso verdadero. En el mundo global todo está

a la vista (la injusticia, la mentira, la crueldad, la explotación, etc.) y no pasa nada. Desvelar y denunciar tiene valor en el plano de la información, pero no en el de la transformación social. El presupuesto ilustrado de la iluminación de las conciencias, retomado después por el movimiento obrero como conciencia de clase, ha perdido así su potencial subversivo. ¿En qué consiste entonces producir un pensamiento crítico y compartirlo? ¿Cómo se dan hoy la transmisión y la formación políticas?

Desde estas preguntas, asumidas como problemas propios, Espai en Blanc ha llevado a cabo proyectos muy diversos: entre otros, las *Jornadas sobre el estado-guerra* (septiembre 2002), la carpeta “Programas de subversión” (Revista *Archipiélago* nº53), el *Informe Barcelona 2004: el fascismo postmoderno* (Ed. Bellaterra 2004), la colaboración con la película *El taxista ful* (Jo Sol, 2005), la investigación *Las luchas autónomas en España* (en curso) o la edición de la revista *Espai en Blanc* de “materiales para la subversión de la vida”, que empieza a salir en octubre de 2006. Todos ellos son experiencias de un pensamiento en situación, ligado a nuestras propias prácticas, a los colectivos de los que formamos parte. Son prácticas de autointerrogación, en las que no es posible separar de manera clara el sujeto y el objeto del discurso.

Pensar es pensarnos. Abordar el problema del mundo es inscribirnos en él

LA TIERRA DE NADIE EN LA RED DE LOS NOMBRES

Bar Horiginal
C/ Ferlandina 29 (davant del Macba)
20.00h.

Estos encuentros son una propuesta de trabajo colectivo y una invitación a la discusión. Proponemos abrir un espacio en el que exponeremos juntos: ir al límite de lo que sabemos para poder pensar de otra manera. Los encuentros estarán acompañados de un trabajo de preparación que publicaremos en la web de Espai en Blanc y en el que os animamos a colaborar. www.espaienblanc.net

26 de gener | El malestar social

La nostra societat és la de l'estress, la de les baixes per depressió, la dels líders d'autoajuda, la de l'evolució i sorprenent índex de suïcidi, la del Prozac, la de — com diu la cançó — "Construïm y Creix". Des de la Sociologia hem sentit parlar de "sofriment social". Però més enllà dels ritorns que donen torn al mateix temps que malenem, en fa necessari buscar la creença d'aquesta malaltat que resulta silenciada un dia darrere l'altre, i enfrontar-se a aquest malestar social, a aquest malestar, donant-les la lectura política que els presentem com el que realment són: símptomes de la malaltia que ha resultat ser el funcionament de la societat nostra, que ens obliga a buscar solucions biogràfiques a problemes sistèmics. La vida s'ha convertit en un camp de batalla. Davant d'aquest malestar són diversos els dispositius que s'inten posar en marxa per a neutralitzar-lo, per a silenciar-lo: entre ells, el de canalitzar-lo cap a l'àmbit de la vida privada en resulta psicològic, patològic. Però no és l'únic: quins són els dispositius que impedeixen donar sortida política a aquest malestar? Quina relació té aquest malestar amb la violència? En quin sentit pot polititzar-se aquest malestar?

23 de febrer | El civisme contra la política

El civisme s'ha convertit últimament en un front d'acció prioritari per a diverses administracions. Es discuteix sobre el civisme als mitjans i als plens municipals, es fan campanyes públiques per promoure'l, s'identifiquen conductes incíviques, es dissenyen normatives específiques per combatre-les i fins i tot es crea un nou voluntariat encarregat de vetllar per l'ordre cívic. Ara bé, fins a quin punt s'ha convertit el civisme en un element central de la governació de la ciutat? Com es conjuga l'Estat penal amb aquesta nova creuada cívica? Conviem els mecanismes clàssics dels poder, mitjançant instruments de control i de vigilància, però en quin tipus de dispositius es recolza el discurs en favor del civisme i com es pensa en marxa? I per últim, donat que aquest civisme no sembla voler allançar un sentit més fort del comú, quin tipus d'individus intenta construir? Es tracta, en últim terme, d'una altra manera entre tantes de neutralitzar el polític?

30 de març | L'espai fronterer

Les fronteres s'esborren. Entre el dins i fora, entre la guerra i la pau, entre l'Estat-nació i l'economia mundial han caigut els límits. I no obstant això, sabem que les fronteres es multipliquen a l'infinit. Per una banda, l'experiència diària és la d'una privatització de l'espai, per l'altra, les fronteres claven les terres penyes sobre els cossos dels immigrants. La identitat que s'inc està definida per les fronteres que poc creuar. No seria més adient parlar d'espais fronterers que de frontera, d'un espai fronterer que resoldria tota la terra i en el qual vivim? A l'espai fronterer coexisteixen les zones duty free i els centres d'interament, el supermercat i la comissaria. Pensar aquesta nova espacialitat és la condició per a poder foradar-la. Com es gestiona els límits legals? Quins són les periferies de l'espai fronterer? I quins nous conflictes són esperables?

27 d'abril | L'experiència del nosaltres

En aquesta societat sense cadavre i que juga sol la seva relació amb el món. Som individus connectats, comunicats però aïllats. Tancats en una vida privada, moltes vegades privada de vida, hem de fer front a la guerra quotidiana per no caure fora del món. La hipoteca, la precarietat, etc són amenaces que ens posen en perill a cadavre en la seva soledat. On trobem avui complimers? Quins espais col·lectius se'ns ofereixen? Quina forma adopta el nosaltres? Per una banda, el refugi identitari en grups ètnics i culturals és creixent. Per una altra, la societat consumista i clientelar ens apropa en la defensa d'interessos particulars. Però sabem que l'experiència del nosaltres no té a veure amb res de tot això. ¿On buscar aleshores els espais col·lectius i comuns?

25 de maig | Prendre la paraula

Els bucs de la crítica s'han multiplicat i a l'hora fragmentat. L'antiglobalització ha estat l'únic intent recent de plantejar una crítica global al capitalisme, però les pràctiques de contestació seguien sent, moltes vegades, parciais i aïllades entre si. Per això a la societat de la informació es fa una altra vegada necessari plantejar què significa "prendre" la paraula. Com parlar quan no sabem a qui ens dirigim? Quin és el nosaltres que enuncia la crítica? Com evitar l'especialització i l'autoreferencialitat dels nostres discursos? Tenim mitjans: revistes, xarxes, recursos audiovisuals... Tenim capacitat de moviment. Com donar un salt i construir dispositius eficaces per a la transformació social?

de manera conjunta. El mundo es lo que la globalización nos ha robado. Lo ha puesto enfrente de nosotros como espejo de la impotencia por la que nos vemos reducidos a meros espectadores, consumidores o víctimas. Desde esta triple condición, la crítica se neutraliza en tres formas esterilizadoras del discurso: la estética (juego de posiciones), la moral (juicio) o la psicología (bienestar-malestar). Las tres nos dejan frente al mundo, en una relación despolitizada con él. Politizar el pensamiento significa entonces reapropiarnos del mundo. Dicho de otra manera: aprender a ver el mundo que hay entre nosotros. ¿Qué pedagogía puede ser hoy más urgente que ésta?

Este planteamiento es que el que nos condujo a convocar unos encuentros que, bajo el título *La tierra de nadie en la red de los nombres*, tuvieron lugar entre enero y mayo de 2006. Esta iniciativa es una muestra de cómo el pensamiento crítico se produce *entre nosotros*, es decir, que la elaboración de un pensamiento crítico pasa por romper la jerarquía pensador-audiencia para constituir un nosotros pensante, una palabra colectiva capaz de avanzar en los problemas que verdaderamente lo son. Por eso, en este escrito nos centraremos en esta experiencia y en lo que puede aportar a una reflexión sobre los retos actuales de una educación abierta.

A lo largo de cinco meses, Espai en Blanc convocó un encuentro cada último jueves de mes en un local-bar (concretamente, en el bar Horiginal de Barcelona). Cada encuentro planteaba una problemática (El malestar social, El civismo contra la política, El espacio fronterizo, La experiencia del nosotros y Tomar la palabra), y partía de una serie de preguntas y de materiales que eran lanzados a través de un blog. Acudía quien quería: sin conferenciantes anunciados, sin mesa de coordinación, sin turnos de palabra ni de réplica. A lo largo de cinco meses, más de cien personas, en gran parte desconocidas entre sí, se estuvieron encontrando para pensar juntas. Esta autoconvocatoria anónima abrió un espacio de politización de la palabra y de la propia vida. ¿Cuáles son las claves de esta experiencia y por qué podemos considerarla formativa y transformadora a la vez?

Per a materials i informació:
www.espaienblanc.net



Jo Sol *El taxista* jul 2005

Cada uno vuelve a casa con su dosis de conocimiento, diversión, emoción, pero nadie ha salido de su persona singular, de su yo consumidor de experiencias.

Nuestra valoración es que con estos encuentros conseguimos empezar a romper las dinámicas a través de las cuales queda neutralizado el pensamiento crítico. Y lo hicimos en dos aspectos principales: por un lado, hacer del acontecimiento colectivo una autoconvocatoria y por otro, pasar de enunciar la crítica a encarnar la crítica. Vale la pena entrar más a fondo en estas dos cuestiones para reflexionar sobre las posibilidades de una acción (auto)educativa hoy.

Cuando un acontecimiento colectivo se convierte en una autoconvocatoria, significa que el *nosotros* es lo que da sentido al acontecimiento. En la vida metropolitana actual hay muchos acontecimientos colectivos. Podríamos decir que la mayoría lo son y que lo difícil es estar solo. Sin embargo, la ciudad ha perdido todo poder de autoconvocatoria, porque estos acontecimientos están vaciados de *nosotros*. Acudimos a ellos, ya sea una conferencia, un partido de fútbol, un concierto, una manifestación o una fiesta popular, en tanto que público, audiencia, participantes, clientes, etc. Cada uno vuelve a casa con su dosis de conocimiento, diversión, emoción, pero nadie ha salido de su persona singular, de su yo consumidor de experiencias. Es sabido que el saber y el conocimiento están sufriendo un fuerte proceso de privatización, ya sea en sus formas de difusión y transmisión a través de instituciones cada vez más cerradas, ya sea a través de su patentización. Pero yendo a la raíz de ello, hay que tener en cuenta que no sólo el conocimiento, sino que tam-

bién la experiencia ha sido privatizada. La guetización social va de la mano de una guetización vital y experiencial, que es uno de los problemas clave que cualquier proyecto educativo debe afrontar hoy.

¿Cómo romper los muros de autorreferencialidad que de manera paradójica organizan y compartimentan la sociedad de la información y la comunicación? En los encuentros de Espai en Blanc lo hicimos dejando vacío el lugar de enunciación de la palabra. Ese lugar vacío no era el espacio neutro de la opinión. Era un espacio de tensión en el que un determinado problema podía ser abordado o no. Las preguntas que desde Espai en Blanc habíamos lanzado a través del blog y de la breve presentación que reproducíamos allí podían afectarnos o no, podían desencadenar una palabra que adquiriera un sentido para nosotros o dejarnos indiferentes, replegados en nuestra acostumbrada individualidad. En ese espacio de tensión sólo tenía sentido una palabra que pudiera sostenerse a sí misma, que avanzara de unos a otros en un ejercicio de pensamiento colectivo y anónimo. La palabra puede justificarse desde muchas instancias (académicas, culturales, policiales, de prestigio, de autoridad...), pero, ¿cuándo nos dice algo? ¿Cuándo hace algo con nosotros? Precisamente cuando desplaza los muros de nuestra autorreferencialidad, cuando nos pone en movimiento. No cuando nos permite decir lo que pensamos, sino cuando nos obliga a pensar lo que no sabemos.

Creemos, por lo que ocurrió en los encuentros y por las valoraciones de quienes tomaron parte en ellos, que este corrimiento de tierras tuvo lugar.

No volvíamos a casa, entonces, con nuestra dosis particular de conocimiento y de reconocimiento, sino con el vacío de una brecha que habiéndonos atravesado a todos, se había convertido en nuestra dimensión común. En ese momento la convocatoria al encuentro deja de ser una oferta más en el escenario de la metrópolis a la que debe responder una determinada cantidad de demanda, y se convierte en la verdadera autoconvocatoria de un nosotros pensante.

En ese ejercicio colectivo la potencialidad crítica del pensamiento sale de su anestesia habitual porque, como decíamos, pasamos de enunciar la crítica a encarnarla. Al abordar problemas comunes en ese espacio de tensión en el que la palabra que se sostiene a sí misma, no sólo el yo es arrancado de su autorreferencialidad, sino que la teoría es arrancada de sus espacios de circulación legitimados: el discurso académico con su autor referenciado, los canales de información y los foros de opinión. En ellos, la crítica, cuando la hay, sólo puede ser enunciada. Éste es su límite, el umbral de impotencia con el que debemos medirnos todos los días y más allá del cual tiene que apuntar una apuesta de educación que sea transformadora. Decíamos antes que el problema de la politización ha sido tradicionalmente un problema de la conciencia. Hoy podríamos decir que es un problema de cuerpo. ¿Cómo encarnar la crítica? ¿Cómo hacer que el pensamiento crítico tome cuerpo?

En nuestra experiencia, poner el cuerpo en ese espacio de tensión que hasta aquí hemos dibujado como un espacio de la palabra tomó una importancia que ni siquiera nosotros habíamos

imaginado. Mientras que el blog que acompañaba los encuentros no pasó de su función “emisora”, es decir, sólo nos sirvió para lanzar las convocatorias, recordatorios y materiales asociados, pero en ningún momento entró en una dinámica interactiva que prolongara las conversaciones mantenidas anteriormente, *ir al encuentro* se convirtió en la acción central de cada una de nuestras reuniones. *Estar ahí*, aun sin tomar la palabra, se convirtió en el momento clave y más transformador de la experiencia. ¿Por qué? Porque los efectos de la crítica no pueden medirse únicamente por lo que se dice, sino por lo que (nos) está pasando. Y, como hemos descrito, lo que se abrió con esa posibilidad de pensar juntos fue una experiencia del nosotros, a partir de la cual cada uno pudo ser algo más que sí mismo. ¿No es ésta la experiencia clave de la educación? ¿Educarse no es acaso salir de sí para adentrarse en una tierra de nadie en la que crear un mundo común? Esa “tierra de nadie”, como recogíamos en el título de nuestros encuentros, es la que sabotea “la red de los nombres”, el orden de ese mundo que nos es secuestrado y en el que cada uno tiene que ocupar su nodo de conectividad y disponibilidad.

El protagonista del largometraje *El taxista ful*, en el que Espai en Blanc participó, cierra la película preguntando: “¿Cómo agujerear la realidad?”. Estos encuentros han sido un intento de hacerlo, un intento no agotado puesto que la experiencia, que iniciamos a ciegas y con un nudo de interrogantes en el estómago, nos ha convencido de que, en su medida y en su fragilidad, sí hemos agujereado un poco la realidad y lo hemos hecho juntos. Podemos seguir intentándolo, prolongando esta experiencia e inventando todas las que están por venir. Con ellas no crearemos una nueva conciencia ni difundiremos una nueva verdad. Así ya no se educa a nadie. Pero ejercitándonos en esta experiencia del nosotros dispondremos quizá de un cuerpo más preparado para combatir el miedo, más expuesto y menos aislado. Un cuerpo que sabe que su vida no es solo suya y que en eso que va más allá de sí mismo se juega todo. ❧

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C A T H E R I N E W A L S H

The geopolitics of knowledge and the coloniality of power

An interview with Walter Mignolo

CW:
WHAT ARE THE CENTRAL ISSUES POSED BY
THE GEOPOLITICS OF KNOWLEDGE
IN TERMS OF THE LATIN AMERICAN/ANDEAN
UNIVERSITY AND OURSELVES, THE ACADEMICS?

WM:

The first part of your question refers to the institutional dimension and thus points towards economic and political foundations in the production of knowledge. Let us again take the Cold War years and, most recently, the post-Cold War years, as a reference point. But let us remember, however, that the Uni-versity was and is a part of the global designs of the modern-colonial world. By this I do not mean that the major civilisations already in existence when Europe was still a weak and semi-barbaric community still in the process of formation had no educational institutions. What I mean is that the educational institution of University was consubstantial in the epistemic conceptualisation that we now know as uni-vers(al)ity. Western religious and economic expansion ran parallel to expansion of the University. As a result, the University's situation should in this sense be thought of in relation to the global distribution of economic wealth. However, it should also be viewed in relation to the devaluation of education in neo-liberal global designs, in parallel to the devaluation of human life. Argentina's second Finance Minister in two years in the De la Rúa government, Ricardo López Murphy, was "educated" in the free market economy. The first thing he did was to cut the budget, and he did this in the least "necessary" area – education. However, we already know all this. I am merely trying to view things in terms of the framework of the double-sided concept of modernity/coloniality and of local histories and global designs.

Those phenomena undoubtedly also occur in the European Union and in the United States. However, and this is particularly the case in the United States, the University no longer relies on state funding, but on private capital in areas such as



Courtesy of Mujeres Creando collective

 Mujeres Creando *Nos vamos al altar* 2005

medical research, engineering, physical sciences etc., and on “donors”, particularly in humanities. Who are these “donors”? They are ex-students of prestigious Universities, both state-run and private, who have had successful careers in terms of earnings. So, for example, Melinda Gates, the daughter of the Microsoft magnate Bill Gates, was a student at Duke and is now a member of the University’s Higher Council (these Councils at major Universities are always composed of influential individuals from the world of politics and economics — bankers, senators, businessmen and women. Melinda Gates recently donated 20 million dollars to Duke, and both she and Bill Gates have also donated money towards special undergraduate education programmes. There are other cases, one example being a Chinese millionaire who donated 100 million to Princeton University to help foster the quality and quantity of study of Chinese in the United States. The French and Spanish governments have been funding Universities in order to increase the study of Spanish and French in the United States. Of course, in countries such as Bolivia and Ecuador, for example, this is not a possibility. This situation has its advantages insofar as resources are readily available,

libraries are well stocked, and there are plenty of computers. On the other hand, the role to be played by humanities and critical thought in Universities in which research is sponsored by private capital and which are becoming more corporate day by day, is becoming a major focus of debate.

Let us return to the ex-Third World. For some time now, social scientists in Africa, and recently also in Latin America, have been discussing university working conditions in these regions. In Latin America, institutions such as the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) or the University of São Paulo (USP) in Brazil are exceptional cases. The chancellor of each of these Universities has the same power, both political and eco-



Mujeres Creando *Es preciosa mi sangre* 2000

conomic, or more so, than the governor of an Argentinian or Ecuadorian province. This is not the case with Universities in Argentina, Bolivia or Peru; here I refer to state universities, where conditions are increasingly precarious (recently, in January/February 2000, the North American Congress on Latin America (NACLA) published a special report on *The crisis of the Latin American University*. On the other hand, private Universities with extremely high standards of research and teaching are emerging. Examples include Torcuato di Tella and the University of San Andrés in Buenos Aires, the ARCI University in Chile and, among those which are already well known and respected – the Javeriana in Bogotá. Finally, to all of this we would have to add institutions such as the Latin American Social Sciences Council (CLACSO) and the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO). What is important, however, is that although leading centres of research and education exist, be they private or state-run universities, or

politically robust entities such as UNAM and USP, the difference which interests us here is that which exists between local histories in which global designs are put forward and distributed, and local histories which must negotiate these global designs. In short, what interests us here is the architecture of the colonial difference within the institutional educational framework.

Now, all this is useful in addressing the final part of the question, that of “ourselves, the academics”. I think it is necessary here to present the problem in wider terms, without neglecting, of course, the economic and political factors to which I referred earlier. In order to simplify a complex issue, and at the risk of oversimplifying it, the question here is that of “the role of the intellectual”. To begin to consider the question, three key points occur to me:

The notion of the organic intellectual, as put forward by Antonio Gramsci, now seems insufficient. Above all, this is true of the ex-Third World, and particularly due to the emergence of a strong indigenous intellectuality which, as Freya Schiwiy argues, questions the concept of the intellectual as

created in the notion of modernity/coloniality: indigenous peoples, by definition, cannot be intellectuals, given that the intellectual is defined in terms of the power of letters (the 19th century intellectual is the transformation of the lettered person of the 16th century) and indigenous peoples were not “people of letters” — in other words, they were not “learned”. However, aside from letters, the intellectual is also defined in terms of “intellect”, and indigenous peoples, according to prevailing global designs, were not people of letters, and as a result, intellect had to “develop” through civilisation.

The notion of the academic, or “scholar”, raises the question of the formation of “academic cultures”, the role of research and education, and the relations and distinctions between the academic and the intellectual. In this regard it is necessary not just to rethink, but to fundamentally reorientate the principles and objectives of research and education. To begin with, I would say that there are three key issues to explore in this area:

What type of knowledge/understanding (epistemology and hermeneutics) do we wish/need to produce and transmit? To whom and for what reason?

Which methods/theories are relevant to the knowledge/understanding that we wish/need to produce and transmit?

For what reasons do we wish/need to produce and transmit such types of knowledge/understanding?

The critical thought process which responds to these questions should be an ongoing venture (the publication of an article or book would constitute a specific moment in the process, but would not transcend it); it will require interventions and the adoption of particular stances in such politically diverse positions such as that of the Ecuadorian and US universities, as I said earlier. Economic and technical excess in the United States makes the exercise of critical thought more difficult, given that its society values and prefers “efficiency”. In this sense, those who work in Latin America (or in Asia or Africa) have a fundamental contribution to make. In an opposing sense, those of us who work in the United States and who benefit from critical thought produced in Africa, Asia or Latin America also have a considerable back-up role —political as well as material and intellectual— towards critical thought produced outside Europe and the United States. Future critical thought can no longer take the form of a continuous update of European and US critical thought, or that produced by Third World intellectuals in Europe and the United States. In other words, if criticism of the globalisation of the right is serious, in the sense that globalisation tends towards homogenisation, then this criticism is also valid for the left. The idea that Marxism should be universal differs in content, but is the same in terms of logic, as the idea that Christianity and liberalism should be universal. So, to answer the final part of the question, I would say that the intellectual task of the academic in the United States, Latin America and indeed anywhere, is to produce critical thought, and critical thought cannot consist of replacing the Bible with Marx, or Hegel with Heidegger, or Fukuyama with Žižek, etc. Critical thought must come from the perspective of coloniality, from decolonisation both economic and intellectual, from both the right and the left. Critical thought is, ultimately, that of a critique with no guarantees.

Critical thought must come from the perspective of coloniality, from decolonisation both economic and intellectual, from both the right and the left.

Therefore, to conclude, cultural or postcolonial studies are useful and necessary, but also serve to preserve the limits of academia and, above all, of modern epistemology which thinks of knowledge as the “study” of something. In this precise sense, cultural studies are no different from sociological, historical or anthropological studies. That is why cultural studies are celebrated so, since they are interdisciplinary. This is an important aspect of the University as an institution, in that it allows the creation of spaces beyond disciplinary norms and therefore provides those who feel stifled by the tyranny of disciplines which invoke “scientific rigour” over critical thought with an outlet in which to produce their research and study. Nevertheless, “critical thought” is very different to “cultural studies” or “postcolonial studies”. The objective of critical thought is not knowledge or understanding of that which is studied. It is rather that knowledge and understanding are the necessary steps towards “something else”, and that “something else” is summarised in the three questions I set out earlier. In *Local Histories/Global Designs*, my intention was not to “study”. What concerned me, and still concerns me, was to “reflect on certain problems” and not “to study certain objects or spheres or areas or fields or texts”, as with cultural or postcolonial studies. In conclusion, the task of the academic/intellectual should be reformulated in terms more epistemic, ethical and political than methodological. A border epistemology which will contribute to conceptualisations and knowledge practices which Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui in Bolivia formulated as “the epistemological and theoretical potential of oral history”, and whose aim is the

“decolonisation of Andean social sciences” (and, I would add, social sciences in general). Critical thought in the global society should be a continuous process of intellectual decolonisation, which should aid decolonisation in other ethical, economic and political areas.

However, as I said earlier, I feel that the Intercultural University project is the most radical in terms of the geopolitics of knowledge and for possible future means of implementing transformations which are radical, epistemic and, therefore, ethical and political. I would like to end this interview by addressing this (in my opinion, radical) project of the Intercultural University, by citing some paragraphs regarding the project as put forward in the *Boletín ICCI-Rimai* (monthly publication of the Institute for Indigenous Sciences and Cultures):

Until now modern science has been absorbed in a series of soliloquies from which it took the fundamentals of truth from the parameters of western modernity. Its founding categories were always self-referential, i.e., in order to criticise modernity it was necessary to adopt the concepts put forward by modernity itself, and in order to acquire knowledge of the otherness and difference of other peoples, it was also necessary to adopt concepts created by modernity.

It is for this reason that, in order to understand other peoples, nations and tribes from outside modernity, sciences such as ethnology and anthropology were created, in which those who observed and studied could not allow themselves to be compromised or contaminated by the object being studied. Indigenous peoples were transformed into objects of study, description and analysis. The study and understanding of indigenous peoples shared the same experiential and epistemological attitude with which one studies dolphins, whales and bacteria, for example. This distancing, supposedly determined by the conditions of knowledge, eliminated the possibility of self-understanding for indigenous peoples.

CW:

IF MODERN SCIENCE HAS BEEN ABSORBED IN A SOLILOQUY AND IF THE CONDITIONS OF KNOWLEDGE ARE ALWAYS RELATED TO THE CONDITIONS OF POWER, THEN HOW CAN THE CONDITIONS FOR DIALOGUE BE GENERATED?

HOW CAN INTERCULTURALITY BE FORMULATED WITHIN THE LIMITS OF EPISTEMOLOGY AND THE PRODUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE?

HOW CAN THE HUMAN QUEST FOR KNOWLEDGE BE ENHANCED FROM NEW SOURCES?

WM:

The Intercultural University is, in fact, designed towards that theoretical dimension, but it also has a deontological and ethical dimension, in which the core issue is the notion of interculturality, as a proposal to accept radical differences and construct a fairer, more equitable and tolerant world. Returning to the concept of “interculturality” in Betancourt’s argument, I have no doubt that here we are facing a radical proposition which, as you say, is gradually dismantling internal colonialism and validating knowledge and power from the internal colonial difference. The progressive projects implemented in state and private Universities (such as the Andina and the Javeriana respectively) can no longer ignore these propositions. With regard to US Universities, both the private such as Duke and the state-run such as Michigan, with projects such as the Intercultural University they will encounter a powerful instrument with which to neutralise the coloniality of power implied by area studies, in “Latin American Studies” in the United States. These studies, although well-intentioned and emanating from the left, still maintain the belief that knowledge is situated elsewhere but not, specifically, where it is formulated and implemented by the Intercultural University. As and when “the Indians” have

The indigenous intellectuals themselves are today already correcting the historical mistakes made down through the centuries and implemented by the coloniality of power and knowledge.

their own University in which self-understanding and the study of modern and Western epistemology are practised, what need will there then be to “study the Indians” as formulated by the Intercultural University’s own project?

The Intercultural University is, perhaps, the most radical proposition faced not just by academics, but also by the State and civil society. And, as such, it is one that we, either as professionals or citizens, of single or dual nationality, should adopt. One of the greatest challenges is that of contributing to projects such as the Intercultural University via works which advance the decolonisation of knowledge, fundamentally at the legal and economic level. These ideas figure among those which have already been produced in the research and arguments put forward by Aníbal Quijano over the past ten years. The coloniality of power implied the coloniality of knowledge, and the coloniality of knowledge contributed to the (sometimes well-intentioned) dismantling of indigenous legal systems and also to the (never well-intentioned) dismantling of indigenous philosophy and economic organization. Moreover, the indigenous intellectuals themselves are today already correcting the historical mistakes made down through the centuries and implemented by the coloniality of power and knowledge; works such as those by the Aymara intellectuals Marcelo Fernández and Simón Yampara Huarachi on “Ayllu law” and on the “economy”, respectively. To me it seems that we need to take this radical step and construct new conceptual genealogies, given that the Huntingtons (for the right) and the Zizeks, the Laclaus, the Bourdieus (or even better, the Giddens who advise Blair and the Becks who advise

Schroeder) can no longer be those who guide critical thought from the “other side” of colonial difference. Hence the importance of considering the geopolitics of knowledge within them. That is to say, the geopolitics of knowledge should not be treated as an object of study and seen from a perspective “outside” geopolitics. There is no outside to the geopolitics of knowledge because there is no outside to imperial difference or colonial difference! The central issue of the geopolitics of knowledge is, firstly, to understand, although it may be critical, what type of knowledge is produced “from the side of colonial difference” and what type of knowledge is produced “from the other side of colonial difference” (these will be different in Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia, Africa and in Europe or North America in the case of Afro-Americans, Latinos, Pakistanis, Maghrebians etc.). By this I mean knowledge from the subaltern experience of colonial difference, such as that produced by, for example, Marcelo Fernández and Simón Yampara Huarachi in the Andes, Lewis Gordon and Paget Henry in the Caribbean, Gloria Anzaldúa among the Chicanos, Rigoberta Menchú in Guatemala, the Zapatistas in southern Mexico, al-Jabri in Morocco and Ali Shariati in Iran, or Vandan Shiva and Ashis Nandy in India. I know that certain “progressive” and “post-modern” intellectuals in Europe and the United States are wary of these names and mistrust them from the perspective of national or fundamental credibility, and who prefer to adhere to the hegemonic genealogies of modern Western thought. Indeed, that is the area in which future debate lies, the true debate on interculturality, and on the geopolitics of knowledge and epistemic colonial difference. ❧

Full interview in Spanish at www.oei.es/salactsi/walsh.htm

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CATHERINE WALSH

Las geopolíticas del conocimiento y colonialidad del poder

Entrevista a Walter Mignolo

CW:

¿CUÁLES SON LAS CUESTIONES CENTRALES QUE LAS GEOPOLÍTICAS DEL CONOCIMIENTO PLANTEAN A LA UNIVERSIDAD LATINOAMERICANA/ANDINA, Y A NOSOTROS, LOS ACADÉMICOS?

WM:

La primera parte de tu pregunta alude a la dimensión institucional y, en consecuencia, apunta hacia la fundación económica y política en la producción del conocimiento. Tomemos como marco los años de la Guerra Fría y los más recientes, los años de las post-Guerra Fría. Pero recordemos, sin embargo, que la universidad fue y es parte de los diseños globales del mundo moderno-colonial. Con ello no quiero decir que en las grandes civilizaciones que ya existían cuando Europa era todavía una comunidad a formarse, débil y semi-bárbara, no tuvieran instituciones educativas. Quiero decir que a la institución educativa que se concibió en términos de universidad le fue consubstancial en la conceptualización epistémica que hoy conocemos como uni-vers(al)idad. La expansión religiosa y económica de Occidente fue paralela a la expansión de la universidad. En consecuencia, la situación de la universidad, en este plano, debe pensarse en relación a la distribución planetaria de las riquezas económicas. Pero, además, debe verse también en relación a la desvalorización de la educación en los diseños globales neoliberales, paralelos a la desvalorización de la vida humana. El segundo ministro de economía que tuvo Argentina en dos años del gobierno de De la Rúa, Ricardo López Murphy, “educado” en la economía del mercado libre, lo primero que hizo fue cortar el presupuesto, y cortar en lo menos “necesario”, la educación. En fin, todo eso lo sabemos. Sólo estoy tratando de ponerlo en el marco de la doble cara modernidad/colonialidad y de las historias locales y de los diseños globales.

Mujeres Creando *Dictadura* 2000

Sin duda que esos fenómenos también ocurren en la Unión Europea y en Estados Unidos. No obstante, y particularmente en Estados Unidos, la universidad no depende ya de los fondos del Estado, sino de la financiación del capital privado en el área de las investigaciones médicas, de la ingeniería, de las ciencias físicas, etc., y de los “donantes”, sobre todo en el área de las humanidades. ¿Quiénes son los “donantes”? Los “donantes” son ex-alumnos de universidades de prestigio, tanto estatales como privadas, que han tenido carreras exitosas en términos de dinero. Así, por ejemplo, Melinda Gates, la hija del magnate de Microsoft Bill Gates, fue estudiante en Duke y ahora es miembro del Consejo Superior de la universidad (los Consejos Superiores de las grandes universidades están siempre formados por personas de influencia en el medio político y económico, por ejemplo, banqueros, senadores, hombres y mujeres de negocios). Melinda Gates donó hace poco 20 millones de dólares a Duke y ambos, Melinda y Bill Gates, han donado también dinero para programas especiales en la educación de pre-grado. Hay otros casos. Por ejemplo, un millonario chino que dona 100 millones a la Universidad de Princeton, por ejemplo, para patrocinar el incremento de la calidad y cantidad de los estudios de China en los Estados Unidos. El gobierno francés y el español han estado alimentando con dinero a las universidades para incrementar el estudio del español y del francés en Estados Unidos. Claro, esta posibilidad les está negada a Bolivia y a Ecuador, por ejemplo. Esta situación tiene sus ventajas, en la medida en que se dispone de medios, las

bibliotecas están bien surtidas, y las computadoras abundan. Por otro lado, es notable y está siendo tema de discusión cuál será el rol de las humanidades y del pensamiento crítico en las universidades que son día a día más corporativas, en las cuales la investigación está patrocinada por el capital privado.

Volvamos al ex-Tercer Mundo. Hace tiempo que los científicos sociales en África, y últimamente también en América Latina, se han estado refiriendo a las condiciones de trabajo de las universidades de estas regiones. En América Latina instituciones como la UNAM en México o la USP en Brasil son casos excepcionales. El rector de cada una de estas universidades tiene tanto o más poder, político y económico, que el gobernador de una provincia argentina o ecuatoriana. Este no es el caso de la universidad en Argentina, en Bolivia o en Perú; me refiero a las universidades estatales, donde las condiciones son cada vez más precarias (NACLA publicó recientemente,



Mujeres Creando *Nos vamos al altar* 2005

enero-febrero de 2000, un informe especial sobre “La crisis de la universidad de América Latina”). Por otro lado, están surgiendo universidades privadas de muy alto nivel en investigación y enseñanza, como la Torcuato Di Tella y la Universidad de San Andrés en Buenos Aires, la universidad ARCI, en Chile y, dentro de las ya consagradas, la Javeriana en Bogotá. En fin, a esto habría que añadir instituciones como CLACSO y FLACSO. Lo que importa, no obstante, es que si bien se encuentran centros de investigación y enseñanza de primera línea, la universidad sea privada o estatal, sea económica y políticamente fuerte como la UNAM y la USP, la diferencia que nos interesa aquí es aquella que existe entre las historias locales, en las que se piensan y se distribuyen diseños globales, y aquellas historias locales que tienen que negociar tales diseños globales. En suma, lo que nos interesa aquí es la configuración de la diferencia colonial en el plano institucional de la educación.

Ahora bien, todo este recorrido es útil para referirme al último aspecto de la pregunta, al “nosotros académicos”. Creo que aquí es necesario plantearse el problema en términos más amplios, sin dejar de tener en cuenta, por cierto, los factores económicos y políticos a los que aludí en el párrafo anterior. Para simplificar una cuestión compleja, y con el riesgo de simplificarla demasiado, “el rol del/de la intelectual” es aquí la cuestión. Se me ocurren tres ejes para comenzar a pensar la cuestión:

La idea de intelectual orgánico, que había planteado Antonio Gramsci, hoy es insuficiente, sobre todo en el ex-Tercer Mundo y en particular debido a la emergencia de una intelectualidad indígena fuerte, una intelectualidad que, como argumenta Freya Schiwy, cuestiona el concepto de intelectual forjado en el imaginario de la modernidad/colonialidad: los indígenas, por definición, no podrían ser intelectuales puesto que el intelectual se define en relación al poder de la letra (el intelectual del siglo XIX es la transformación del letrado del siglo XVI) y los indígenas no tenían “letras”, es decir, no tenían “luces.” Pero, además de la letra, el intelectual se define por el “intelecto” y los indígenas, según los diseños globales triunfantes, no tenían letras y, por lo tanto, el intelecto debía “desarrollarse” mediante la civilización.

La idea del académico, o “scholar”, nos lleva a preguntarnos sobre la formación de las “culturas académicas”, el rol de la investigación y de la enseñanza, y las relaciones y diferencias entre académico-a e intelectual. En este terreno es necesario no sólo repensar, sino fundamentalmente re-orientar los principios y objetivos de la investigación y de la enseñanza.

Diría, para empezar, que hay tres preguntas claves que explorar en este terreno:

- 1 ¿Qué tipo de conocimiento/comprensión (epistemología y hermenéutica) queremos/ necesitamos producir y transmitir? ¿A quiénes, y para qué?
- 2 ¿Qué métodos/teorías son relevantes para el conocimiento/comprensión que queremos/necesitamos producir y transmitir?
- 3 ¿Con qué fines queremos/necesitamos producir y transmitir tal tipo de conocimiento/comprensión?

El proceso de pensamiento crítico que responda a estas preguntas deberá ser un trabajo continuo (publicar un artículo o un libro será un momento particular, pero no trascendente en este proceso); requerirá esfuerzos y toma de posiciones particulares en situaciones políticas tan distintas como puede ser la de la universidad en Ecuador o en Estados Unidos, como señalé más arriba. El exceso económico y técnico en Estados Unidos dificulta el ejercicio de un pensamiento crítico puesto que la sociedad valora y prefiere la “eficiencia”. En este sentido, quienes trabajan en América Latina (o en Asia o África) tienen una contribución fundamental que hacer. En sentido contrario, quienes trabajamos en Estados Unidos y nos beneficiamos del pensamiento crítico producido en África, Asia o América Latina tenemos también un papel importante de apoyo tanto político como material e intelectual al pensamiento crítico que se produce fuera de Europa o de Estados Unidos. El pensamiento crítico del futuro ya no podrá ser una constante actualización del pensamiento crítico europeo o estadounidense, ni aquel que están produciendo hoy los intelectuales del Tercer Mundo en Europa y en Estados Unidos. Esto es, si la crítica a la globalización de derecha es seria, en el sentido en que la globalización tiende a la homogeneización, también esta crítica es válida para la izquierda. Pensar que el marxismo debe ser universal tiene un contenido distinto, pero la misma lógica que el pensar que el cristianismo y el liberalismo deben ser universales. Así diría que “la tarea intelectual del académico/a, para responder a la última parte de la pregunta, en Estados Unidos, en América Latina y donde fuera, es producir pensamiento crítico, y el pensamiento crítico no podrá ser el reemplazar la Biblia por Marx o Hegel por Heidegger, o Fukuyama por Zizek, etc. El pensamiento crítico tendrá que ser desde la colonialidad, por la descolonización tanto económica como intelectual, tanto de derecha como de izquierda. El pensamiento crítico es, en última instancia, el de una crítica sin garantías.

Por eso, para terminar, los estudios culturales o los estudios postcoloniales son útiles y necesarios pero mantienen los límites de la academia y, sobre todo, de la epistemología moderna que piensa el conocimiento como “estudio” de algo. En este preciso sentido, los estudios culturales no son distintos a los estudios sociológicos, históricos o antropológicos. Por eso se celebran los estudios culturales, por ser interdisciplinarios. Éste es un aspecto importante en la institución universitaria puesto que permite la creación de espacios más

allá de las normas disciplinarias y, así, permite que quienes se sientan asfixiados por la tiranía de las disciplinas que invocan “rigor científico” más que pensamiento crítico tengan un lugar para proseguir sus investigaciones y enseñanzas. No obstante, “pensamiento crítico” quiere decir algo muy distinto a “estudios culturales” o “estudios postcoloniales”. El pensamiento crítico no tiene como fin el conocimiento o comprensión del objeto que se estudia, sino que el conocimiento y la comprensión son los peldaños necesarios para “otra cosa” y esa “otra cosa” está resumida en las tres preguntas que enuncie un poco más arriba. En *Local Histories/Global Designs* mi propósito no fue “estudiar”. Me interesó y me interesa más “reflexionar sobre ciertos problemas” y no “estudiar ciertos objetos o dominios o áreas o campos o textos”, como en los estudios culturales o postcoloniales. En fin, para terminar, la tarea académica/intelectual deberá reformularse en términos epistémicos, éticos y políticos, más que metodológicos. La epistemología fronteriza que contribuirá a conceptualizaciones y prácticas de conocimiento que Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, en Bolivia, formuló “el potencial epistemológico y teórico de la historia oral” para una tarea de “descolonización de las ciencias sociales andinas (y agregó, en general).” El pensamiento crítico en la sociedad global deberá ser un constante proceso de descolonización intelectual que deberá contribuir a la descolonización en otras áreas, ética, económica y política.

Creo, sin embargo, como dije más arriba, que el proyecto de la Universidad Intercultural es el proyecto más radical en cuanto a la geopolítica del conocimiento y a las posibles vías futuras de implementar transformaciones epistémicas radicales y, por lo tanto, también éticas y políticas. Y quisiera terminar esta entrevista invocando el

proyecto, para mi radical, de la Universidad Intercultural, citando algunos párrafos del proyecto tal como está presentado en el *Boletín ICCI-Rimai*:

Hasta ahora la ciencia moderna se ha sumido en unos soliloquios en los cuales ella misma se concedía los fundamentos de la verdad desde los parámetros de la modernidad occidental. Sus categorías de base eran siempre autoreferenciales, es decir, para criticar a la modernidad era necesario adoptar los conceptos hechos por la misma modernidad, y para conocer la alteridad y la diferencia de otros pueblos, era también necesario adoptar conceptos hechos desde la matriz de la modernidad.

Es por ello que para la comprensión de los pueblos, naciones o tribus que estaban fuera de la modernidad se hayan creado ciencias como la etnología, la antropología, en las cuales el sujeto que observaba y estudiaba no podía comprometerse ni a contaminarse con el objeto estudiado. Los pueblos indígenas fueron transformados en objetos de estudio, descripción y análisis. Conocer y estudiar a los indígenas compartía la misma actitud vivencial y epistemológica con la cual se deberían estudiar, por ejemplo, los delfines, las ballenas o las bacterias. Este distanciamiento supuestamente determinado por las condiciones de saber, excluía la posibilidad de autocomprensión de los pueblos indígenas.

CW:

SI LA CIENCIA MODERNA SE HA SUMIDO EN UN SOLILOQUIO Y SI LAS CONDICIONES DE SABER SIEMPRE ESTÁN IMPLICADAS EN LAS CONDICIONES DE PODER, ENTONCES ¿CÓMO GENERAR LAS CONDICIONES PARA UN DIÁLOGO?

¿CÓMO ARTICULAR LA INTERCULTURALIDAD DENTRO DE LOS LÍMITES DE LA EPISTEMOLOGÍA Y DE LA PRODUCCIÓN DE CONOCIMIENTOS?

¿CÓMO APORTAR A LA AVENTURA HUMANA DEL CONOCIMIENTO DESDE NUEVAS FUENTES?

WM:

La Universidad Intercultural está pensada justamente en esa dimensión teórica, pero también tiene una dimensión deontológica y ética, en la cual el eje vertebrador es la noción de interculturalidad, como propuesta para aceptar las diferencias radicales y construir un mundo más justo, equitativo y tolerante.

Volviendo al concepto de “interculturalidad” en el argumento de Betancourt, no me cabe duda de que estamos aquí frente a un planteamiento radical que, como tú dices, comienza a dismantelar el colonialismo interno y a afirmar el saber y el poder desde la diferencia colonial interna. Los proyectos progresistas que se implementen en las Universidades Estatales (como la Andina) y privadas (como La Javeriana) no podrán ya ignorar estas propuestas. En cuanto a las Universidades en Estados Unidos, tanto privadas, como Duke y estatales, como Michigan, encontrarán en proyectos como el de la Universidad Intercultural un instrumento potente para deshacer la colonialidad del poder implicada en los estudios de área, en los “Estudios Latinoamericanos” en Estados Unidos los cuales, muchas veces con buenas intenciones y desde la izquierda, mantienen todavía la creencia de que el saber está en otras partes pero no ahí, precisamente, donde la Universidad Intercultural lo formula e implementa. Desde el momento en que “los indios” tienen su propia universidad donde se ejerce la autocomprensión y el estudio de la epistemología moderna, occidental, ¿qué necesidad habrá ya de “estudiar a los indios”, como lo formula el propio proyecto de la Universidad Intercultural?

Los propios intelectuales indígenas hoy están ya corrigiendo los errores históricos perpetuados a través de los siglos, e implementados por la colonialidad del poder y del saber.

La Universidad Intercultural es, quizá, el planteamiento más radical al que nos enfrentamos no sólo los académicos, sino también el Estado y la sociedad civil. Y, como tal, en tanto profesionales y ciudadanos, con simple o doble nacionalidad, debemos asumirlo. Uno de los mayores desafíos es el de contribuir a proyectos como los de la Universidad Intercultural, mediante trabajos que adelanten la descolonización del saber, fundamentalmente a nivel de la economía y de la ley. Estos principios se encuentran ya formulados en las investigaciones y argumentos adelantados por Aníbal Quijano en los últimos diez años. La colonialidad del poder implicó la colonialidad del saber, y la colonialidad del saber contribuyó a dismantelar (a veces con buenas intenciones) los sistemas legales indígenas y también (nunca con buenas intenciones) a dismantelar la filosofía y la organización económica indígenas. Por otra parte, los propios intelectuales indígenas hoy están ya corrigiendo los errores históricos perpetuados a través de los siglos, e implementados por la colonialidad del poder y del saber; trabajos como los del intelectual aymara Marcelo Fernández sobre “la ley del Ayllu” y el intelectual también aymara, Simón Yampara Huarachi sobre la “economía”. Me parece que hay que dar este giro y construir nuevas genealogías conceptuales puesto que los Huntingtons (para la derecha) y los Zizeks, los Laclaus, los Bourdieus (o aún mejor, los Giddens que asesoran a Blair y los Becks que asesoran a Schroeder) ya no pueden ser quienes guíen el pensamiento crítico del “otro lado” de la diferencia colonial. De ahí la importancia que tiene pensar las geopolíticas del conocimiento involucrados en ellas. Esto es, no tomar las geopolíticas del conocimiento como un objeto de estudio y hacerlo desde una perspectiva

que esté “fuera” de ellas. ¡No hay afuera de la geopolítica del conocimiento porque no hay afuera de la diferencia imperial y de la diferencia colonial! La cuestión central de las geopolíticas del conocimiento es, primero, entender qué tipo de conocimiento se produce “del lado de la diferencia colonial”, aunque sea crítico, y qué tipo de conocimiento se produce “del otro lado de la diferencia colonial” (que serán distintas en América Latina, el Caribe, Asia, África y en Europa o América del Norte cuando se trata de los afroamericanos, latinos, pakistaníes, magrebíes, etc.), esto es, desde la experiencia subalterna de la diferencia colonial, como lo hacen, por ejemplo, Marcelo Fernández y Simon Yampara Huarachi en los Andes o Lewis Gordon y Paget Henry en el Caribe, o Gloria Anzaldúa entre los chicanos-as o Rigoberta Menchú en Guatemala o los Zapatistas en el sur de México, o al-Jabri en Marruecos y Ali Shariáti en Irán o Vandana Shiva y Ashis Nandy en la India. Soy consciente que hay intelectuales “progresistas” y “posmodernos” en Europa y en Estados Unidos que toman estos nombres con pinzas y desconfianzas de autenticidades nacionales o fundamentales, y prefieren enlistarse en las genealogías hegemónicas del pensamiento moderno de Occidente. Pues, ahí está el debate futuro, el verdadero debate de la interculturalidad, de la geopolítica del conocimiento y de la diferencia epistémica colonial. ❧

Entrevista completa en <http://www.oei.es/salactsi/walsb.htm>

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 JOSÉ ANTONIO SÁNCHEZ
 JOOST SMIRS
 BEGOÑA VICARIO
 GABRIEL VILLOTA TOYOS

Who's talking about art today?

When we considered organising a debate on the teaching of art, on the one hand, we wanted to include the educational memory built up at Arteleku, which like a rolling stone seemed to us to be alive, and on the other, to open up a discussion on the current teaching of art (music, architecture and so on), based on the comments and accounts of people with experience in education who have worked together with Arteleku and/or *Zehar*.

By taking an analysis of the various educational practices and experiences that we have been familiar with as a starting point and, as we are aware of how important education is becoming in modern society, we decided to issue a call for contributions and raise a series of questions that would help discover and disseminate the ideas that the agents involved in teaching art are working on:

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To what extent have the socio-economic, political and technological changes of the last few decades influenced the visual arts?

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It seems to be accepted that the audio-visualisation of society has led to a shift in the teaching of the visual arts and that cultural studies has been the educational proposal on which the most far-reaching consensus has been reached over the last few years. But how can we relate theoretical learning with the context that we live in, and with what some have called 'situated practice'?

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How do you organise the production of knowledge and shared experience as far as your own educational practice is concerned?

“The intransigence and arrogance of those who consider themselves to be experts are of little use...”



AS HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE CASE throughout history, in recent decades the economic, political, social and cultural conditions have had a major influence on education. It is well known, for example, that the space race had an impact on the way studies were streamed in the American school system.

Political and social changes have also left their mark on the way education has developed in Spain. The modernising dream of the political transition (to democracy) led art education to believe that the beneficial character of expressive freedom and creativity should now occupy the position previously reserved for the rule and the professorial dictate, and that the practice of copying would be banished from the classrooms.

As had previously happened elsewhere in Europe, it soon became clear that this model was unsuitable for a generation of Europeans surrounded by audiovisual gadgets capable of reproducing music and images with a previously unimaginable quality and speed. In Northern Europe, the solution was to introduce the visual as a sister component of the artistic, so that art education responded to the growing power of the image in the modern world and took over the entire apparatus of

meaning which the visual generates. The echoes of this concept reached Spanish art education in the 1990s, after the 1990 Education Act introduced the specific subject of “Educación Artística” in primary education and another known as “Educación Plástica y Visual” in secondary school. But political and social changes are now taking place ever more quickly, and for several reasons they are having a considerable effect on the future of art education. On the one hand, there is increasing recognition of the need and value for today’s societies, characterised as they are by multiculturalism, transformation and change, of an education of this kind. Several reports published by international bodies have recognised the importance of these studies in training critical citizens capable of ethical and aesthetic reflection. From another more utilitarian perspective, more and more countries in the so-called first world are coming to see that their economic future no longer depends on training skilled labour that is incapable of competing with other developing countries, and they are therefore beginning to stress other skills such as inventiveness in product design, or creativity.

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In this context, the emergence of new fields of knowledge, such as cultural studies, which offer perspectives that are more anthropological than disciplinary, are having a great influence on the emergence of new educational paradigms from which art education does not stand aloof. The most categorical example of such a position is that of the proposal for rethinking art education as “education for understanding visual culture”. As Paul Duncum, one of the proposal’s inspirers says, it constitutes the greatest revolution this academic discipline has seen since it abandoned academicism in favour of free expression. Moreover, it is in this new context, that the most interesting debates on the theorisation and development of multicultural and gender perspectives in art education are taking place. These debates include all kinds of proposals tied in to the diversity of ideological perspectives and policies that feed them.

Technological changes are also having major repercussions on the future of art education. The emergence of de-objectualised forms of art, where both the product and the authorship are dissolved, involve a reappraisal of the object of study of art education —nearly always the canonical arts. Net.art. and cyber-art proposals are echoed by some researchers from our field of work and from them emerge educational proposals which seek to exploit the new artistic artefacts to the maximum. They do so not only in an instrumental sense—by using these media—but also by assuming in the task all the potential for transforming the very conceptions of art and of the cultural usages involved in this type of proposal.

○○

THIS IS PRECISELY one of the greatest challenges now facing education. Like any institution that depends on political will, schools are comprised of a slow and weighty machinery which, at times of change (and these are dizzying changes), prevent professionals on the classroom floor from smoothly assimilating what is being proposed by research or the most professionalised sectors of art. My experience in lifetime teacher training has taught me that there are two essential issues in this task of implementing new knowledge and new

forms of working in education. The first is flexibility and patience. The intransigence and arrogance of those who consider themselves to be experts are of little use when they are faced with teachers with difficulties understanding certain artistic proposals.

It is also essential—and this is the second issue I want to highlight—that there is clarity in the way the ideas are set out and demonstrated through direct experience. Because it is also all too frequent for cryptic forms of language to be used, sometimes the jargon of those who are previously acquainted with the art world, place more obstacles than bridges in the way of the discourses of researchers and classroom situations.

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IN MY CASE, trying to act consistently with the attitude I have just sketched out, I try to structure art education around or through conceiving art as an experience. This allows me to include in the studio any of the forms of art which has existed at any time or place and, together with them, any other type or vehicle of aesthetic experience, such as the vehicles of visual culture. The aesthetic artefacts generated in any of these areas, if they are viewed as condensates of human experience, can be addressed from various disciplinary areas and thus be made accessible, to art educators and educatees alike. However, to examine in detail how this can be done would take up far more space and resources than the format of this interview allows. ■

“The visual culture in which we now live, in an era of overwhelming capitalism of information and rapid communication does little to favour unhurried reflection.”



THE LEADING TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS of recent decades (video, DVD, computers, etc) have enabled university art education to diversify, becoming more flexible and less monotonous. Students will always prefer a classroom projection to a lecture. Theory, unfortunately, has not had a particularly good press, even when teaching methods seek to escape traditional patterns and encourage debate. Greater availability of technical resources (until recently restricted almost entirely to slides and tape recordings) has made it possible to provide greater immediacy, especially with an internet connection in the classroom, as well as helping to solve in situ any doubts that might arise on any subject.

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Nonetheless, there are drawbacks as well: one perverse effect of the information circulating on the internet has been to encourage lazier students to ‘copy and paste’. The result is that the search for information and interpretation of texts (which should, I believe, serve as a way of learning how to organise one’s own discourse) is limited to routine imitation, which the students do not even acknowledge. It is therefore dishonest and de-legitimises the culture of effort. Students must learn to filter and weigh up the information they obtain from search engines.

The visual culture in which we now live, in an era of overwhelming capitalism of information and rapid communication does little to favour unhurried reflection. Accumulating information obtained from a website is not the same thing as discerning and understanding a text or image. I am in no way opposed to new technologies; I believe they give access to a vast range of possibilities, but I am repulsed by cheap glitter and merely technical (and ultimately depoliticised) imbecility.



UNFORTUNATELY, in a faculty such as mine, in the Polytechnic University of Valencia, cultural studies sound like a label on the shelves of some trendy specialist bookshop, or perhaps some foreign invention of little real use. With a few exceptions, arts teachers in Valencia are relatively undocumented and not known for their cultural education and their critical contribution in the different fields of artistic reflection. Having said this, I believe it is essential that students should be capable of establishing an association between generic, theoretical, and practical concepts related to the very terrain they inhabit, i.e., the city they live in. I personally make it a priority to encourage them to learn more about the different artistic and cultural realities of the city: to start with it is a good idea to locate and understand the functioning of the different infrastructures that operate in Valencia (museums, galleries, libraries, production centres, etc.). It is also important to know what art work is being carried out both at an individual level and among groups of artists (there are not many), and where they are being expressed, in what exhibition spaces (alternative venues, galleries, institutional spaces, the internet, etc.). They may also find it interesting to access the different artistic and cultural publications (*Mono*, *Lars*, *Debats*, *Pasajes*, etc.), in order to get a more in-depth look at the production of thought at a local level, and also nationally and internationally. A good understanding of what is being generated in the city—and by extension in

the rest of the Valencia region—necessitates keeping abreast of cultural and political life through Internet debate forums (for example, the much quoted e-valencia.org), the local press, radio and television. Obviously, all the knowledge acquired is used in classroom tasks, which foster an association between the student and the city as a way of tying in the theoretical and the practical, the global and the local.

○○○ **CASE**, my teaching practice is organised around different spheres of knowledge and issues of study: one of these is related to the issues of curating, the history of exhibition production and its social impact. Also in this regard, we look at different schools of art criticism and theories about visual culture. Another of the issues dealt with relates to the overlap between art and politics, with particular emphasis on matters of gender, sexuality (feminist, gay, lesbian and queer studies). One of the subjects taught explores artistic production in the postcolonial area. Throughout the course, we also analyse different depictions of violence in art from a contextualized, historical and political perspective. Taking into account all of these different subjects taught, I try to conduct specific activities to encourage shared experience. One of them involves designing exhibition projects. After choosing a number of concepts proposed by different groups of students, we lay out all the problems that might arise in preparing an exhibition (in this case a virtual one). I encourage debate, discussion, consensus and dissent on the chosen subject using PowerPoint presentations and models that

enable students to visualise the space in which they have to operate, with the arrangement of the different works in miniature. To do this we use plans of several real venues in the city of Valencia and other towns. I also organise short seminars, run by the pupils themselves on a rotating basis. These deal with key texts, related to the themes proposed in the course, allowing real critical intervention by the students. Team-based collaboration and a critique of individualism are two central pillars, helping students to learn to share knowledge, to carry out different tasks and to question their own work and that of others. Thus the public presentation (to accustom students to using words after they have written an organised systematic script on a chosen subject) is an important experience, which is always subjected to respectful questioning from the others. We also organise other activities such as guided tours of exhibitions, libraries, artists' workshops, etc. ■

“This conceptualisation of life itself as a film is a symbol of the educating power of the cinematographic.”

○ **EVERY ERA REDEFINES** the agents and elements in play based on the transformations it experiences. The fact that we form part of the era of the Internet society implies major transformations at every layer of society, including education. Education in the visual arts in Spanish universities has been decisively conditioned by technological changes—as a direct consequence of socio-economic and political changes—and has translated into greater access to information and a certain de-hierarchisation with the emergence of group networks, openings towards external collaborations, and essential research into the day-to-day realities of emerging practices.

However, this new reality has in turn created new demands which university academia, with its characteristic sluggishness, has found it difficult to respond to at a national level. As a result, the situations experienced by different Spanish centres may vary greatly because ultimately they depend on synergies that arise among the teachers themselves. I will therefore speak about the context I know best and my personal experience in the arts school of the University of Barcelona.

One of the main changes is a shift in the work of the lecturer from lecture to mediation: continuous technological innovations have swamped our capacity for specialist learning and the lecturer no longer necessarily wields more information than the student; rather than providing theoretical data or offering previously unknown information, they have to try to be valid interlocutors throughout the work process. This involves parallel work of constant research which to allow different areas of knowledge to be interconnected.

As a direct result of students' fascination with all things technological, in this faculty there has also been a progressive shift in interest from the more traditional disciplines (painting, sculpture) towards artistic practices related to new media, with consequent overcrowding in the lecture halls of the departments that teach these subjects.

This situation has not necessarily led to greater quality in the works produced (that often-used justification which demonstrates our society's lack of critical culture with regard to technological devices) but it does make students more autonomous when it comes to making quality work at a low budget. As a result, some work has passed directly to both alternative and institutional circuits of art—a situation which a very short time ago would have been inconceivable.

Finally, one of the greatest handicaps continues to be a lack of sufficient technological infrastructure to adequately teach subjects which inescapably require such resources.

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FIRSTLY, I BELIEVE audio-visualisation should not be presented as a driving force of change, but as a constituent force of what we are, since “it has made us like this”. Television, as the bastard child of the audio-visual, has allowed it to enter the domestic space and change our vision/conception of our own lives (and incidentally, did we dream in aerial shots before the coming of the cinema?). This conceptualisation of life itself as a film is a symbol of the educating power of the cinematographic.

In any case, it would be absurd to think that the audio-visual is going to put an end to written culture, given that the two are superimposed and hybridised: It may be true that fewer books are now being sold, but people are reading more than ever before (blogs, wikis, forums, and items in general on the internet). Perhaps the true change lies in the possibilities the internet offers, whereby the transmitter stands at the same level as the receiver, and they can even exchange roles. And this de-hierarchisation can also (circumstantially) be extrapolated to the classroom.

At the same time, the teacher’s work of transmitting a series of theoretical areas of knowledge in this field inevitably proceeds from a “situated practice”, given that audio-visual specialisation has definitively broken out into life and is no longer confined to a traditional and watertight academic context. The trend is now to incorporate resources and knowledge extracted from everyday practice. Perhaps the clearest example is to be seen in the internet, which in recent years has become an essential resource in the classroom. My lectures (I do give some) and the students’ presentations are both structured around the internet, in the inescapable case of net.art and also in the case of video and new media, where information—and on many occasions the assignments too—are permanently accessible on line (moreover, Google queries during a session are now the order of the day).



THE CHANGES I HAVE INCORPORATED over 13 years of teaching are related to an attempt to redefine traditional roles in the classroom (the shift from lectures to mediation I have already mentioned) particularly during the final year and in PhDs and master’s courses, where interlocution is a priority.

As well as the use of these resources, there are also specific initiatives intended to promote this idea, such as the sharing of experiences with and among the students themselves, who on occasions play a relevant role in very specialist areas such as robotics, radio, video games, etc. I also try to open up channels of exchange with agents outside the faculty: an increasing number of professionals and artists come to share their experiences in the classroom and I encourage ever more students to attend events staged in the different cultural venues in the city.

The baseline is the concept of learning as a period of training oriented towards the students’ departure into the outside world. With a constant emphasis on the processual development of the work, my teaching includes both an encouragement of theoretical research (a reflective/critical vision) and practical research (trial and error), and the development of a whole range of skills related to the promotion and dissemination of the work itself, or to vocational and professional guidance. ■

Transitional Utopia

WE DO NOT YET KNOW what a significant and particularly important period of time the 1980s and the first half of the 1990s may have been to development of world art. For Armenia, however, the last few years have been of colossal social, moral, psychological and culture value (...) Following its experience of great upheavals, Armenia today has been taking larger steps than possible, but our country is unable to completely free itself from the legacy of the decades of total cultural violence in order to make the huge break required.¹

The origins of the name of our association² and our incessant evocation of utopia go back to the discovery of an 18th century map showing terrestrial paradise in Armenia³. This was linked to imaginations of a marvellous Orient of ancient and prodigious civilisations. The 20th century, however, was a period of dispersion and isolation. The loss or ultimate corruption of the universal, the common, and certain forms of modernity after the fall of the USSR gave way to radical questioning of utopia, since it is acknowledged that utopia has also generated totalitarian ideologies.

If criticism of utopia leads to a kind of impotence, to a indifference vis-à-vis any emancipating engagement, this must be surpassed. It is therefore justified in relation to the totalitarian usage of utopia in the annals of history, and such criticism must not, under any circumstances, rule out the need to reflect on the collective stakes. Thus, by crediting globalisation alone with the reason for ongoing radical changes, we insert a buffer which paralyses economic, political and socio-cultural innovation. In this 'post' period, which still has to find its own name, there is always the fear that the historical opportunity for independence will be ruined by the weakness of public structures and the weakness of civil society.

Armenia is an accumulation of incoherent images, a raw material which has not yet made history. We seek out the master images, the relationships between them, their order. Jean-Luc Godard once explained that 'film editing is the resurrection of life. It is this feeling of utopia, of a possible resurrection, that I find in my film edits'. On the basis of this experience, we are engaged in our own particular editing of time and space. In space, evoking a paradise on earth conjures up representations concerning Armenia—this country was for the West what California is for Armenia in the present day. The present attraction for the West is therefore reversible. In the sense of time, the act of reappropriating this mythical representation of Armenia constitutes the first step towards picking up the past, and thus a necessary step to surmount discontinuities. Our *à la carte* reference of paradise is a strategy to reappropriate this location within a framework which opens up with a hearty welcome, where concern for the development⁴ of *this* country joins forces with an ethical and political perspective in terms of culture.

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It is for this reason that we must become aware of the socio-political conditions of artistic creation, and encourage art which draws on the very source of reality. By this we mean an art form which has signed up to social processes, which opens up perspectives where all would seem to be immobilised, where there is no fear of the taboos inherited from the past. This, in our opinion, is the path on offer to contemporary Armenia creators, if we wish the field of culture to escape the trap of nationalism, and thus subjection to the new powers-that-be.

We could sum up by saying that internationalisation is simultaneously an 'opportunity' and a threat for contemporary Armenian culture. An opportunity, because it means opening up frontiers and thus introducing the hope of evading stiflement. A threat, because it is defenceless against these challenges, because its structures have not been adapted, and because its isolation drives it to accept influences with no discernment. In this context, resistance tends to be confused with nationalism.

After five years of sporadic projects in which we have touched on themes which are, in our view, relevant to Armenian society (utopia, urban spaces, equality of the sexes, relations with the centre and peripheral areas, the politics of desire), Utopiana founded the SteghsaGortsaran, which means creation factory: a laboratory for training, production and research.

We feel it is essential to promote and develop the use of numeric media within local artistic practices via implementation of a space for transdisciplinary education. This structure develops cooperation with the Architecture Institute, Fine Arts (visual arts, films) and research structures in art and technology abroad.

In each of these artistic disciplines, the seminars will explore the relations between historic and current procedures within architecture, audiovisual art, cultural studies and new media, not only from the philosophical viewpoint, but also by initiation in practices. Our target is a deeper understanding of numerics, not only as a privileged tool in several forms of expression, but also as a link to encourage intersections between a number of artistic disciplines.

Certain historical experiences may put the brakes on the fertility of the imagination, the mould of creativity. How can a culture free itself from the trauma of catastrophe and totalitarianism to produce new directions? We must have a better understanding of the social, political and cultural disruptions within a country which is still undergoing transition. Problems relating to urban and technological transformations are the most relevant to take up Soviet and post-Soviet cultural identities. ■

1 Paraphrase of Hakob Movses' introduction to the *Contemporary Art of Armenia 1980-1995* catalogue, Yerevan, 1995.

2 The Utopiana Internet site, www.utopiana.am, contains information and images on all our projects since 2001.

3 The model for this map can be found in the *Dictionnaire historique et littéral de la Bible*, by Dom Augustin Calmet, a Dominican monk. It was published in Paris in 1723.

4 The term 'development' is understood here in a broad sense, and particularly within the context of a society whose industry was destroyed by events surrounding the fall of the USSR. The idea is to give a new sense to social and economic progress, rather than to focus blindly on accumulation of wealth. In this regard, there is little difference between Soviet productivism and the neo-liberal necessity of economic growth.

“I try to foster the development of a scenario in which knowledge is freely circulated.”

O I BELIEVE THAT the greatest real influence has been the strengthening of the chain of (retro)transmission between an ever more gigantic show business and an increase in pressure from the labour market on the educational institutions to provide specialists in imaginarium production.

Sadly, I fear that other changes which might and should have occurred, changes which would have promoted a critical spirit through a more solid and consistent education have failed to do so. These might include changes that would—in the process of educating such ‘specialists’—foster the students’ capacity for rigorously analysing those forms of the imaginarium in whose social management they would end up participating, either as active producers or as agents or consciously committed citizens with all the consequences that management of the public imaginarium involves.

OO SAYING THAT “it seems to be taken for granted” seems to imply that the penetration of cultural studies and their applied developments for analysing culture and the visual arts has actually taken place. In my opinion, however, nothing could be further from the truth (at least if we are referring to Spain—and I believe we need to do so, if we are to discuss ‘situated practice’). If the scenario of our discussion is indeed located in this country, then this supposed “consensus” is nowhere to be found. We have not seen the contents that should be characteristic

of what you describe as “the educational proposition in which the broadest-possible consensus has been reached” effectively incorporated in the syllabi of any of the educational institutions in this country.

Perhaps this is a kind of ‘phantom’ consensus, of the sort often proclaimed precisely by those who have the greatest interest in identifying as ‘dissent’ anything which, in contrast, merely corroborates the existing status quo. This is the kind of characteristic confederacy of dunces in which false neo-progressives and old-conservatives always unite in a pact of continuity, in the style of the celebrated slogan from Lampedusa’s *Gatopardo*: Everything must appear to change, so that everything can remain the same. And in effect, here everything remains the same and the pact that ensures that it will continue to do so contains no loopholes, especially given that the whole supposed ‘alternative scene’ has become definitively institutionalised that nothing will change.

Whatever the reason, I think that, effectively, that type of analysis so characteristic of the cultural critique—particularly in its references to visuality,

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insofar as it interests us—is what really gives (or would give) critical power to the analytical tools we use to highlight dependencies of all kinds (including geo-strategic ones) which affect the processes of imaginarium transfer, and therefore to ‘situate’ practices, to make them self-aware and self-critical with regard to the place from which they speak. Other than that, the fact that practices are self-styled ‘situated’ does not, in my opinion, mean little more than that what they really do is a pure continuism of that movement in which it is internationally dominant, fulfilling, in order to merit their recognition, all the necessary superficial stereotypes and guidelines. And at heart this makes them the exact opposite of what they preach; they are practices that are completely emptied of any ‘situationism’— they are, in other words ‘replica’ practices of the commandment of the dominant *mainstream* on the international scene (in other words, completely unsituated practices, each echoing an infinite number of identical ones anywhere in the globalised world).



WELL, THIS STRIKES ME as being a rather personalised question. I am not sure that as a ‘particular case’ mine is of any particular interest. In general terms, though, I would say that as a university lecturer I orient my regular teaching towards bringing my students into contact with the most rigorous and critical tools that aesthetics and the theory of art provide, from Nietzsche, Marx and Freud (as the founding trilogy of the school of suspicion) to present-day thought, repeatedly intersecting French poststructuralism and the Frankfurt school, which is of where my own training was mostly fed from (particularly Deleuze and Derrida).

In any case, I also try to get closer and bring the students closer to the most recent conceptual and theoretical materials (for example I am currently holding two seminars in my university, the first on *cultural capitalism* and the second on the *new humanities and the university of knowledge*). Above all I try to examine those questions and debates that I see as being most open and which help untangle the complexities

of our time. As for the devices I use, for years now I have been using electronic participation tools with my students, ranging from forums and mailing lists to blogs. As far as possible (and always respecting the rights of authorship of third parties) I try to foster the development of a scenario in which knowledge is freely circulated.

Finally, I feel it is worth mentioning my own work as an essayist and critic, because I do think that it is part of my way of viewing my educational practice, beyond ‘formal’ formats. Since 1998, I have been publishing all my production under a system of free distribution, even before GNU and Creative Commons licences came into existence. *Acción Paralela* was the first magazine in Spain to be published entirely on the website, with all contents freely downloadable. The same is also true of *aleph*, a public reflection on the impact of new technologies on artistic creation. My own books since then—*La era postmedia* and *El tercer umbral*—have also been published in electronic format, and are downloadable free of charge. Finally, projects such as *Agencia Crítica* and *salonKritik*, both developed as large format e-zines, were also, as far as I know, pioneers in facilitating production of an independent and participative public sphere around the art critic and the critic of institutional and artistic policies. ■

Critical Practice recognizes that, as artists, curators, designers or theorists, our practices, or their interpretation, or how they are theorized, historicized or administered, are no longer separate concerns, or indeed the prerogative of different disciplines. **It's clear to us that artworks and artists exist within an ecology**— an ecology built from an interrelated web of exhibitions, museums and galleries, places of education, communities of enthusiasts, forms of funding, friendships, catalogues, bodies of knowledge, theorists, critics, advertising and so on.

Critical Practice intends therefore, to engage with the various forces that are implicated in the making of art and the increasingly devolved experience of art made available through art institutions to their audiences. **We will explore new models for creative practice, and look to engage those models in appropriate public forums, both nationally and internationally;** we envisage participation in exhibitions and the institutions of exhibition, seminar and conferences, film, concert and other event programmes. We will work with archives and collections, publication, broadcast, web cast media and funders; while actively seeking to collaborate.

The questions posed by *Zehar* were answered collaboratively by Critical Practice. **CRITICAL PRACTICE** is a cluster of artists, researchers and academics, hosted by Chelsea College of Art and Design in London.

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THE SOCIAL CHANGES affecting visual art teaching have been various over the last few decades. Within Critical Practice we have identified two in particular. The first is the threat of the instrumentalization of the artistic field by a wholesale internalization of corporate values, methods and models. This threat can be seen everywhere: in public museums and galleries, even in the studios and practices of artists, but especially in British art schools. The teaching of art, previously state funded in Britain, has become a fee driven market replete with the language and practices of business and management. While profit for profit's sake might not be the first goal of our University, it's clear that students and staff have been re-imagined: the latter as customers or clients and the former as 'service providers'. This corporate model is enforced and reproduced through management technologies — including monitoring, and 'self' assessment, through annual reports, peer-review and quality assurance, by obeying terms and conditions, codes of practice, disciplinary procedures, and through protocols such as 'risk assessment'.

The second would be the return of a near hysterical 'market' as a disciplinary force within visual art education. Critical Practice encourages and supports creative practices that mix research, consultancy, employment, un(der)-employment, collaboration, enterprise, generosity, volunteerism, and continuous study; practices that exceeded traditional patronage models of financial remuneration. And yet the models of creative practice generally reproduced within art schools are predicated on artefact production, art gallery distribution, and the 'Darwinian' market as the arbiter of value. ("Every day there's a new gallery': how Tate and *Frieze* fuel London art boom. As collectors and curators stream into the capital, UK market estimated to be worth £500m." <http://arts.guardian.co.uk/news/story/0,,1889822,00.html>)



"Open Organisation" workshop, London 2006

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CRITICAL PRACTICE WOULD AGREE that the broadly termed 'Cultural Studies' was able to break the stifling grip that Art History and Philosophical Aesthetics had over the production of visual arts. We would also see a link from the theoretical study of the whole of 'culture'—rather than merely some of its products—to 'site specific', 'institutional critique', 'contextual' or 'situated' creative practice. We are currently pursuing a range of 'situated' creative projects. These include collaborating with Tate on an 'open' Artists Placement Group archive; developing a range of 'Knowledge Transfer Partnerships' with NGOs within a government scheme aimed at business; working with Casco (The Office for Art, Design and Theory) in Utrecht, researching the relationship between art practice, technology, and art education; and an ongoing series of hybrid events entitled *Thinking Through Practice*, which explores the relationship between aesthetic practice and current philosophical questions.

However, none of these projects merely instrumentalize 'theoretical learning'—not the least, because if they did, they would miss the point of practice. But also, because 'theory' (in its widest sense as texts, ideas, beliefs, discussions etc.) is not yet institutionalized or 'learned' by Critical Practice. On the contrary, much of the theory that informs our work is emergent from within the contexts of our practice; e.g. 1960s 'cybernetic' art pedagogy; 'open-organisational' guidelines, and cultural 'policy'. When this is the case, we would like to think that, to quote artist Terry Atkinson, 'practice re-theorizes the theory'. Critical Practice is therefore contesting the reification of 'theoretical learning' within the art-school curriculum as a specific, 'learnable' (and therefore commodifiable) body of knowledge.

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FIRST, IT SHOULD BE NOTED that our 'educational practice' takes several forms. Many of us have connections with art schools and other educational establishments involved in providing art, media, and cultural education more generally. Some of us work as academic staff for Chelsea College of Art and Design, London; some for other institutions in the UK and beyond; a number of us have recently graduated from Chelsea College; some of us are current students, including undergraduates and research students. As such, we are keen that Critical Practice's production of knowledge and experience actively informs education (and we understand education in the broadest possible sense). Aim 1. of our Aims and Objectives states 'We will explore the field of cultural production as a site of resistance to the logic, power and values of the ideology of a competitive market.' This has meant practicing creatively, wherever possible, by engaging with public institutions, public funding, and implementing Free Libre and Open Source (FLOSS) methodologies—as our ideological compass, in our organizational and administrative structure and our use of open-content licenses. We try and publish, exhibit, document, archive and broadcast our work, specifically via our website <http://www.criticalpractice-chelsea.org> using these guidelines. This is to ensure we are returning publicly funded research to the public domain, available as an 'educational' resource for others—within Chelsea and without—to contribute too. ■

“...fragmentation is very much in effect, whether in the transmission of “theoretical” knowledge or the practice itself.”

I HAD ALREADY ALMOST FINISHED this article when a student of mine showed me the notes he had taken in my class this morning. The class was about the history of modern architecture (is there a contradiction in terms between ‘history’ and ‘modern?’), and specifically about what Walter Benjamin had to say about the early modern movement through his concept of ‘new barbarism’. The notebook was no bigger than the palm of one’s hand, and the student had written just one sentence on each page — apparently he has a separate notebook for every class and this is how he has always taken notes in my class. Each phrase written on each

paper was completely disconnected from the one after it; things like “transience and instability rather than permanence and rootedness”, or “transparent time: moveable days of leisure”, “a humanity that proves itself by destruction”, or even things about the divine sparks (Sefirot) written when I was explaining about the influence of Cabbala on Benjamin’s thought. When I saw the notebook I knew I had to rewrite this article. In my previous attempts I was struggling with pin-pointing one topic in the vast web of relations established by the category

‘education’, and that day I was hit with the following idea: the poverty of experience that we all suffer from in today’s world has also struck the communication of knowledge, and instead of communicating a system of thought — was that ever possible? — all we succeed in communicating are fragments, star-phrases inscribed hastily on small notebooks, which only act as archaeological evidence of a lost civilisation. This is a global problematic, of course, in the sense that it is shared by all modern societies. But I want to complexify it further by adding this clarification: the fragmentation discussed above is further amplified in non-western societies by the fact that the total pre-modern architectural system (or systems, depending on the society) was replaced, from the start, by a haphazard combination of bits of theoretical efforts and fragmented practices that was retrospectively identified (the combination) as ‘non-western modern architecture’ (a harsh statement no doubt, but this is as subtle as one can get in the limited space of such a small article written in haste). The above is not meant as a derogatory attack on modern architectural practices in the ‘third world’; not at all, especially not in a city like Beirut where these practices which date from as early as the beginning of the 20th century are worthy of a lot of attention. My point is that the fragmentation that we are witnessing on a global scale has ‘equalised’ all modern soci-

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eties (which should read: all societies on this planet) and, if in Renaissance Europe an effort was made to replace one total architectural system by another, giving Europe an 'edge' on non-European countries, that attempt failed miserably in the 20th century, leaving all societies with the debris of a humanistic architectural language that long ago has ceased to have significance. Failing to recognise this has, is and will produce practices which ridiculously and wholeheartedly strive to 'reconcile' tradition and modernity, or the debris of tradition with that of modernity, or to paraphrase Adorno, to reconcile two halves that would never add up to a whole. What applies to architectural practices necessarily applies to the communication of architectural knowledge. The acquisition of this specific knowledge has some very interesting particularities which oblige the alert observer to acknowledge the weight of history, or at least a vague continuity of tradition. Even to this day, it is still heavily dependent on the old (dare I say 'pre-modern?') system of the workshop, or the *atelier*, where the relationship between 'student' and 'teacher' is still a one-to-one relationship; I am very tempted to say that this dependency on an 'archaic' system for the transmission of knowledge makes this *métier* (architecture) somewhat impervious to the excessive fragmentation resulting from an increasing specialisation (and hence from the incredible division of knowledge that we are witnessing). But my experience proves otherwise: the fragmentation is very much in effect, whether in the transmission of 'theoretical' knowledge or the practice itself. Instead, I will opt for a different path: is there a possibility nowadays to rehabilitate the fragment, so to speak, not in order to make fragments whole again, but rather to consider them as monadic stations that could aid us to rediscover our world, the world of things, stations that would aid us to illuminate and remember, thus saving us from the implacable state of the forgetfulness of being? I will leave this as an open question and refer the reader back to my student's notebooks: do they still merely contain a conglomeration of truncated ideas or are these able of functioning differently from a mere collection of fragments?

I will conclude on a more sombre and melancholic note, so that the reader does not forget where this text is coming from: the fragmented ideas in the notebooks are also evidence of something other than the state of distraction in the reception of knowledge; they are evidence of my student's readiness to leave, leave the country; to move not from the periphery to the centre, but rather to move to a place which is not in perpetual crisis, like Lebanon is (little does he know, though, that 'perpetual crisis' spells like 'addiction'; one can physically leave Lebanon but he will always remain here). This readiness to leave was always present, transforming Lebanon into a huge airport departure lounge where we bid our friends farewell, and it was only exacerbated after the Israeli aggression on Lebanon in July. In that sense, why do we, or should we, keep doing architecture or art and keep rethinking them — let alone teaching them, if all what has been done since 1990, the official date for the end of the Lebanonized wars, was not able to stop one bomb from falling or one man from being killed? It is true that this is not exactly what architecture and art are supposed to do, but what *are* they supposed to do? To create fields of debate, is that it? If this is their 'mission', then how come they have failed so miserably? ■

“...there is a dilemma in the art school which parallels the very existence of the school...”

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WE ARE ALL AWARE that the best moments in art education come when the artists of a particular generation confront the art critics and the means of art production of their time; when artists teaching in the schools live their times to the full. Artists/teachers are better when they recognise that what they do in the workshop with the students is not only to pass the trade on from one generation to other, but that their own work is also prepared in the same locus of education. In this two-way dialogue with the students, it would be appropriate—albeit somewhat out of the way—to mention David in the late 18th century. This is what has happened at the finest points in history to artists from the Bauhaus and Vkhutemas, from the Black Mountain College and the London art schools of the 1960s and 1970s. We always cite the same examples, but the fact is that in the history of art education, there are not too many to choose from.

Schools of art do not always confront the reality of art production; they are not always places in which students are recognised as students/producers of art works, with whom it is worth holding a dialogue in an open public situation. The reasons are not all bad ones. Sometimes there are good reasons; for example when there is a recognition that what happens in an art school is experimental, and that these unfinished, silent and self-enclosed experimentations do not always concern the general public.

If anything has changed in these places today, it is that the art public, the artists, the critics and especially the curators, are showing a renewed interest in workshops and seminars, which is often jealously concealed—and with a strong sentiment of liberty—in the workshops and seminars of an art school. I presume this interest is largely based on the fact that for over a decade there has been a real passion

for art work in progress, and a considerable amount of energy has gone into revising some of the principles that dominated art in the 1960s and 1970s, in understanding the principles that govern these works and looking for and recognising forgotten figures: what is of interest is the work being made, developing in its own time, in the moment of its production. As a result, there is a real inclination towards the ups and downs of production and its transience. This, video and temporary works have managed to earn a place in the public's eye they could only have dreamed of in the 1970s or 1980s.

And surely there can be no more eloquent comment on the transience of an art work, its emergence, its passing and its different passages, than what takes place in the workshops of an art school. In these places there are numerous students, and frequent tangible examples of these emergences and crossings. This experience has therefore been pre-constituted in artistic manifestations of great strategic importance in recent years. I use the term ‘pre-constitution’, because the curators are well aware of the issues at stake: the mise-en-scene of art education, which is certainly important for a public that is passionate about everything that goes on in the private/public binome. But it is also important for schools, which were direly in need of being able to look at themselves from outside.

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But education, especially art education, plays no part; it has no need for consistency, for the *mise-en-scène*, which is intrinsic to any re-constitution and public observation. The changing fate of art students lacks visibility, and often interpretation: that is where the true capacity for duration lies, the necessary resistance without which any art work is impossible. I hope this is well understood, and above all that nobody is deceived.



THE CULTURAL STUDIES offered to students at an art school in the form of seminars are as old as the world itself. It is funny, because in France, they have been called general culture studies since the 1980s. The term is just as hideous as *estudios culturales*—no more than a literal translation of the cultural studies popularised—and exported—by American universities. Indeed cultural studies was a British concept before it reached America. In the 1970s, it simply meant getting up to date in a number of areas of knowledge which the university did not include in its programmes: philology, particular linguistics (semiology, psychoanalysis), new history (the Paris movement), feminism and queer-studies (strikingly Anglo-Saxon), etc. But this has not the slightest importance.

The important thing is to know that there is a dilemma in the art school which parallels the very existence of the school: it has often been expressed using the following question: which comes first, the artist's experience of production which precedes a theoretical reflection... or the theoretical thought which precedes the production of a work of art? When we live our daily lives in an art school, one of the last things we learn is that for artists the two things are simultaneous—indeed they are probably even the same thing; that an artist's knowing—his or her psychic thought, for example—has no temporality, and it therefore cannot easily be assimilated into a programme of rational and theoretical studies, which progress over time.



Art students and their teachers, all artists from different generations, often complain about the tedium and de-motivating influence of theoretical studies, which often end up breaking down all the efforts for a good studies programme; they end up becoming a whole life in the workshop, dragging down pure practice.

The question, therefore, really begs another one: Which comes first: the image or the word? The answer is probably the same: it all amounts to the same thing. And this is despite what Wittgenstein's devotees might say—whispering that when something can't be said, we put up a picture; which to some extent is true, although it is in fact garbage.

In fact a brand-new cultural studies seminar is enormously effective for introducing new subjects in a workshop and in art schools. Indeed, this is what they have been used for over the last twenty years. They have prevented teaching artists from getting too annoyed thinking that some younger member of their trade with more success on the market might take their place from them.

Theme (or 'cultural') seminars have introduced theoretical and historical issues (although unordered in time) which had been gradually removed from the lecture rooms by students and teachers of previous generations. The seminars have revisited old problems, revised for today's interests, with the result that art schools sometimes resemble schools of higher studies or postgrad seminars (although in more untidy venues, with unmatched chairs and stains on the floor). Indeed art schools have served as an incentive to generations of PhD students in theses on disparate themes (somewhat in the Anglo-Saxon fashion) to which other faculties (especially universities elsewhere in Europe) can offer little. This situation has considerably improved the level of knowledge of students and teachers; we often see artists and other creators appearing in those places which were previously reserved for the inner circle of knowing—as was the case at key points in the twentieth century.

This general situation has been extremely useful for upgrading the methods of executing the projects of students/artists/producers, who have been greatly inspired by architects, for example, by designers, by sociologists and by philosophers, although reinventing them, naturally. Not to mention what this opening has meant for other disciplines of knowledge which had failed to get a toehold in the door of the art schools, such as music, theatre, literature and dance, all of which have now been able to introduce their knowledge.

We might ask: how long will this situation—which we might qualify as linkmaking—last? Is it a passing phase? Is it a bird of passage? Today I can no longer see the slightest difference between a workshop and a seminar. They are as alike as two peas in a pod, and consequently these places of knowing, production and experience will probably see new reinventions in the future. ■

“Education in the visual arts must offer alternatives for action...”

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION technology, and the consequences of globalisation have unquestionably had a transforming influence, dismantling old ways of thinking and operating. There can be no doubt that this represents a reformulation of the processes of production, transmission and appropriation of symbolic goods, which forces us to re-examine the models of construction of subjectivity and social organisation. We can see a clear break in the linear guidelines of experimentation of time and space, as well as concepts such as authorship or intellectual and industrial property. We are witnessing a re-examination of individual

and collective identities, based on the new multicultural context and the context of diversity, resulting in a crisis in the classical systems of representation and the model of cultural reproduction associated with the nation-state. In effect, the development of ‘new technologies’ has given us the capacity to formulate things in a different way, offering new media for the production processes and systems of different cultural goods and services, and the ways in which information is distributed and transmitted. We have seen a change in certain processes of collective working and learning, with the emergence of a kind of meritocratic hierarchy based on individual effort working for the collective good and person-to-person relations which are helping create one of the greatest collective areas for exchange, innovation and creation ever seen in the history of humankind, outside the sphere of the public institutions. We are seeing processes of structural change and fundamental transformation that are irremediably moulding social action, human experience and—inevitably— influencing the individual and collective working process of artists, as has happened in practically all fields of our society. Here, education is no exception.

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I AM NO EXPERT in subjects related to formal education; I have personally never studied at university nor have I received a specific formal education in visual arts; as a result I am quite sceptical about these educational contexts. Right now, I find it quite hard—to say the least—to speak about an entirely autonomous cultural sector. But this is unquestionably one of the great unknowns that needs to be resolved. For most analysts, digital contexts will form the educational environment of the near future, however suitable or unsuitable they may be, precisely because of the clear preference younger generations are showing for such environments. Solving this problem will involve, precisely, resolving a difficult dichotomy: the generations of ‘analog adults’ seek to impose a way of life, an education system, a hierarchical system, institutions and standards of coexistence which the ‘digital natives’, the new generations, cannot understand. The adaptation of the educational sector (and here we could be talking about broader sectors of society) to these new uses and customs, challenges and transformations poses a challenge both for the educator and for the various institutions involved. It is a challenge we need to face up to if we

are to facilitate the development of a new concept of art education, with an infrastructure of research developed through an innovative and enterprising attitude for an intangible labour force, highlighting the emergence of producers of new educational tools which are currently far removed from the traditional educational world. It is a challenge which is not without its own paradoxes and even contradictions. The paradox consists of building new strategies to promote cultural and technological initiatives which have an increasingly diffuse framework of representation. The contradiction is of a cultural process which is necessarily slow to change, contrasting with a frenzied pace of technological and social development. It will be increasingly difficult to accept the concept of the permanent, of the physical, the presential or the particular, and more probably, the concept of hybrid and temporary zones. Education in the visual arts must offer alternatives for action; it must open spaces of confrontation and criticism; it must avoid a hidebound vision of the art world, with a one-dimensional, instrumentalised and remote-controlled conception of the world around us.

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FOR ME, ARTISTIC PRACTICE and the processes involved in generating knowledge are very closely entwined with processes of information transmission, as part of a single collective cultural process. A tremendously complex world like the one which now faces us, but intensely connected, requires complex procedures of collaboration and education in the collective concept. Our society, economy and culture are built on interests, values, institutions and systems of representation which generally limit creativity, confiscate and manipulate the artist's work and divert its energy towards sterile confrontation and discouragement. Interested in high-

lighting these configurations of power, art practice must establish mechanisms of social relationship that help guarantee its long term impact and allow its discourse to be transferred beyond the restricted confines of the art public and the institution itself. It cannot simply restrict itself to airing the great questions of the human and the divine (or to obeying purely aesthetic or market-based strategies); instead it must commit itself to a social and political process that seeks to change the rules of the game, by discovering methods of work and collaboration—often in combination with other individuals or social groups—to demand that long-awaited change. That change must begin with a redefinition of the artist's role in society, and even within his or her specific circumstances. I believe this process has to be communicated and shared and as a result I do not understand the idea of an artistic practice whose formal aspects can be distinguished from supposedly educational ones. The original concept must form part of a single idea of whole, where the *workshop* and the public exhibition are part of a single goal. The artist's working space is in turn a set of spaces, not necessarily physical or joined, where he or she works, investigates, celebrates, listens, visits, consults and exchanges, meets and/or argues as part of a complex system. A process prevails which breaks down the classical concept of artistic education, ushering in another concept which is processual, analytical, informative, critical and activist in a reality and a logic which respond to the situation we now live in. An open experience where we share, learn or contribute, where the idea of open social space and collective experience is possible, with a special emphasis on that horizontal idea of exchange, collaboration and de-hierarchalised experience. Access to information is fundamental for generating knowledge. ■

Education is a strictly political affair

LET'S THINK ABOUT educational institutions, professors, teachers and students and, last but not least, about knowledge in strictly political terms, categories and processes. In such a way no tool (if we think about technology) and no paradigm (if we think about theory, the visual, etc.) can be seen as a tool, or as a category that can be simply applied to a certain innocent communal process of production and distribution of knowledge. In such a way, not only the institutions of knowledge can escape the connection to power, capital and economic 'rationalization,' but, besides, methodologies and technologies that are used in the process of production and distribution of knowledge are not simply seen as prepolitical categories that can be bound only and solely to ideas and discourses of skills, improvement, facilitation and upgrading. Even more, using such *Grammatik* (skills, improvement, facilitation and upgrading) to describe different relations with the institutions of education is demonstrating that a precise political process sustains theory, the visual, knowledge and the institution of education in remaining prepolitical.

Global capitalism functions with installing the iron law of sameness everywhere in the world, and this is why we talk about the global world! (Capital is global!) But that capital can obscenely globalize, everything else must but localized! Global capitalism means precisely that only capital is universal and freely moving everywhere, that it is the only fully global citizen of the world. Therefore Alain Badiou's *The logic of the world* (2006) —rewriting a world that is no one, but 'worldless'—is precisely pointing to the fact that not only is capital the only universal citizen, but that 'the world' is really defragmented in numerous (sub)worlds, to the point to be seen as worldless. Capital transforms processes of thinking into skills, depriving those who study, therefore 'the future citizens of the world without a world', of any sustainable political and acting coordinates. The system of education becomes unified and so to speak easily understandable and, what is even more important, easily exchangeable; education becomes a transparent machine for production and circulation of skills.

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Today the proposals to develop (through the European Union under USA influence) an upgraded knowledge system in order to produce a multi-skilled artist personality is a pure fake. What is going on can be precisely caught through Kirsten Forkert's thoughts on the contradictions of post-studio practices in relation to the academy in the present political climate. For Forkert the changes that are taking place "have to do a lot with art's commodity value as well as with the role of the artist in relation to another figure, the white collar professional. They are both symptom of and response to certain political and economic shifts."¹

Therefore the described interventions on the level of production, distribution and institutionalization of knowledge are the last effort of capital to also transform Universities and Academies into managerial institutions that will produce skilled students. The end aim of this intervention, already exercised by capital at every other level of contemporary society—public spaces, agency, civil rights and art—is depoliticization. Everything from economy to education is today transformed into an apolitical form and agency.

I was teaching just sporadically (being guest professor at Hisk in Antwerp, etc), before I was appointed Professor at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna in 2003, teaching at the Post Conceptual Art Practices Department/Class. To accept a professor position is a political decision. I think it's very difficult to dismantle the power of hierarchy, because it exists—this is one of the basic functions of the institution. All our good intentions as professors are not enough, because universities, academies are possessed by capital iron law—the law of surplus value through drastic rationalizations.

At the Post Conceptual Art Practices Department/Class at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna we are into theory, but it's not just the students getting know-how in the study of art,

the visual or culture. What happens in the classroom is the contextualization of artwork with theory and the reflection on what is the context behind and in which way art practices and politics are mutually inserted and contaminated. What are we trying to do is to radically open a platform for discussion and conceptualization of topics as formulated by Kirsten Forkert's thinking on post-studio practice: "Post-studio practices challenge the assumptions that art is about technical virtuosity or mute creative expression, and that what happens in the studio or classroom is separate from the rest of our lives. Certain aspects of post-studio practice also question the definition of the artist as a romantic, heroic individual (also imagined as white and male)—one who does not consider the political or economic context of his work. On the other hand, how much do post-studio practices, as they are taught within the academy, really challenge conventional definitions of authorship or signature style?"²

We can transform this context into a new content. ■

¹ Cf. Kirsten Forkert, "Can Post-Studio Art School Function as a Place of Resistance in an Immaterial Economy?" in Marina Grzanic, Guenther Heeg and Veronika Darian, eds. *Mind the Map! — History Is Not Given* (Irwin, Ljubljana, relations, Berlin, University of Leipzig and Revolver, Frankfurt, 2006).

² Ibidem

Pig/Boar. Art Education and Its Contexts

We must become ruthless censors of ourselves. —Alain Badiou

WHEN WE ARE CHILDREN, we are told that the pig and the wild boar come from the same family. And so we interiorise the idea that one is a stupid, dirty animal which has not managed to defend its freedom, while the other is a kind of heroic outlaw, an animal avenger who may at some point in the future free the pusillanimous pig from its yoke. The notion of family (the script built between the pig and the wild boar) allows a whole series of absurd convictions. Removing the script would mean starting to see each of the terms of the relationship in itself. But, is their really an 'itself' to be seen or, on the contrary, is everything around us simply and inevitably a series of indissoluble family bonds? What would a pig be in itself, with no relationship to the boar or any other animal? What would a wild boar be?

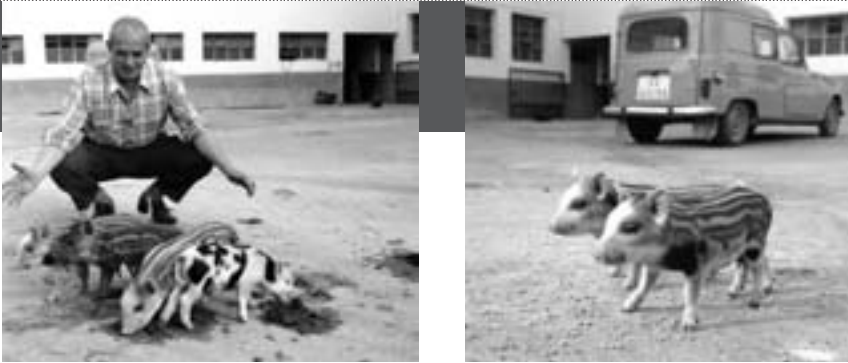
If an 'itself' means an interior and an exterior with which to relate and, therefore, certain limits, perhaps nothing and nobody can be some thing without a familiar context to define it. If this in turn is an indispensable condition of existence, or at least of our way of viewing it, the only possible way of overcoming the received legacy and creating something that goes beyond self-communication would be to try to distance oneself from the parental home and move towards new environments of relationship.

This means that the true liberation for the pig would consist neither of trying to be a 'real' pig or of tending towards the boar but to be able to form new sets, such as pig-cat, pig-spider or, even, pig-oak. In the case of the wild boar, its emancipatory potential would surely be realised when it abandoned its imaginary condition as an individual

liberator and have the possibility of becoming, for example, an ant or a sheep, gregarious beings par excellence in which it is difficult to find nearly any epic quality with which to identify.

In education, perhaps we should start to stop worrying about the family script that ties us to our students. They are not the supreme example of innocence, of freshness, of freedom, of ignorance, of irresponsibility, of illusion, or of creative openness. And neither are we the figure of experience, the rule, the academy, the knowledge, the disinterested help, resignation or imposition. A Babylonian brick tablet, dating back at least 3000 years, reads as follows: "Young people today are utterly corrupt. They are bad, they do not believe in the gods and they are indolent. They will never be what youth should be nor will they ever be capable of conserving our culture". The relational stereotypes which we have interiorised form a key difficulty in education.

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Beyond a simple transmission of information, the true experiences of knowledge do not generally occur when we persist in maintaining certain norms of relationship, but precisely when there is some type of deviation which fosters new associations. The methodology that generates disorder in the education system or established relational model in some context will foment a sea change in the technical evolution and comprehensive development of individuals. I am not referring exclusively to formal education, but to any type of situation in which the transmission of knowledge follows the one-way lecturer-student channel (the only channel I have known). The idea of the educational institution as essentially being repressive, anchored in the past and unmoving (a common view of the university, at least in our immediate environment) does not free the other centres of education, of whatever type, from the fundamental danger of institutionalisation. I am referring to the risk of building contexts on the basis of an excessive idealisation of its members and of the context itself. Universities are not pigs, and neither are there any wild boars in this story. I believe the problem lies elsewhere.

When we talk about art education, what we are ultimately seeking as teachers is to help people to produce 'better' work—where 'better' means transcending the 'self' to become desirable for others. In trying to do something 'well', what we are really pursuing, more than any specific thing or image, is for our desire to become the desire of the Other, for what we want to be precisely and coincidentally what others want too. All the ideas we use about 'good', 'correct', 'up-to-date', etc., are no more than our way of appealing to a higher instance that will free us from the feeling of vulnerability which it itself creates in us. We want our desire to be registered and recognised in the symbolic network in which we live. We try to make our dignity worth something, we desire in some way to be devoured, to go from being subjects to objects, to dissolve ourselves in the world, in the community of which, although being part, we never feel entirely integrated. We could say that trying to work well means, perhaps, desiring desire itself, and that

this is a symptom of vitality, since the opposite would mean no less than the end of all experience. Seeking to work well is, then, like loving. And to a great extent, loving means desiring to be loved, desiring to be the object of desire, desiring to be what the other person lacks, desiring to be precisely what they do not have and giving them the same in exchange, what we do not have, our desire of them.

Therefore, as teachers, we try to help the student to develop their own technique so that they transcend their 'self' and become something else, so that they manage to be loved without being trampled upon, so that they manage to break those ideal relations, those scripts that link them to non-existent models and condemn them to the use of repetitive techniques, lacking all interest. We seek to liberate the pig from the wild boar and vice versa, because one represents no more than the ideal of the other, and this in turn is no more than a psychological stratagem for pleasing that higher power that encompasses all the possible scripts. By teaching people how to erase the script, trying to preach through example (trying to renew that other script that is supposedly the only possible one between masters and apprentices), we seek an awareness and a consequent relativisation of the solutions both objectual and relational, that are being tried out at any given time. We try to show how to generate contexts that provoke the need for new objects and techniques (nearer to the truth of personal desire) rather than objects and techniques for pre-existing contexts. If knowledge is produced, then it occurs when scripts are displaced and new relationships are created, when the reality becomes jumbled.

But of course, this liberating role we take on as teachers is also ideal. Because we are aware of it, we can say that any type of context is potentially suitable for effective art education, and that what matters is that we are capable of always holding it up to doubt. This is especially true on those occasions when we run the risk that the context may become transparent because we consider it as the only one or the best possible one. ■

Decalogue-wish for an art of teaching (of the arts)

What we can aspire to is being excellent ancestors.

Laurie Anderson *The End of the Moon* 2006

ANY TEACHING SYSTEM SHOULD be based on an evolutionary principle, whereby any student is a more evolved human being than the teacher (who may in any case aspire to learning something of the present within the student, which is now only the future for the teacher); on a principle of complicity internal to the knowledge community, as a condition of possibility for any effect of transmission; and on a principle of superfluity or non-necessity, based on the aspiration which all teachers should have to make themselves useless to the student, and this is what happens when the student has digested the resources which teaching would make present.

IT IS FOR THIS REASON that I suggest that art be taught as an art of teaching, which could be as follows:

1. CURRENT (IMMERSED IN THE PRESENT). Consideration of art as immersed in a present (social, political, technological, scientific, economic, cultural etc.) which is its inescapable environment. An open school must offer a certain amount of resistance to “transcending” the present.

2. AUTONOMOUS. Despite its immersion in the present, in view of its critical nature, it must keep a certain distance with respect to specific, disciplinary, industrial, institutional, technological or categorial demands. Thus it must defer all immediate demands of “applicability” (in opposition to skill for mimesis of the standardised, of the doxa), for the sake of an honest relationship with knowledge.

3. CRITICAL. Capable of overcoming any “epistemological resistance”:

3.1. DIALECTIC. Its contents can only be dialectic— confrontation between different methods of categorial organisation.

3.2. DIALOGIC. This would destabilise the uniqueness of the logos, which would then be open to another towards the outside, and discontinuous, divided, open, towards the inside.

3.3. DECONSTRUCTIVE. Relating to and opposing dogmatic, historical or Adamite practices/theories.

3.4. ANTI-ANTIRELATIVIST. Critical with respect to exempt theories/practices (of the present); critical with respect to any anti-relativism.

3.5. EPISTEMOLOGICALLY RESPONSIBLE. Internally critical, capable of replying to questions posed as to its congruency, its conditions of possibility, its ways of arguing and falsation.

4. DIVERSE. Capable of availing itself of the most useful aspects of each practice/theory, searching for the way in which each dogmatic principle can prove effective to a certain extent, in a certain way, in a certain context.

5. COMPLEX (TRANSVERSAL). Complexity is an objective. It should be compatible with “clarity”, and able to produce interaction between the various levels of education.

6. AMUSING. As a “significant” form of teaching (sensitive to the worlds in which students live), it must use all effective transmission and communication techniques.

7. PRODUCTIVE. Productive in cognitive terms. A space for production, and not merely for the transmission of supposed sapiential truths which have been vaguely updated. This entails rejection of any categorial system based on false dichotomies as theory/practice, form/contents etc.

8. CREATIVE (PERFORMATIVE). It must not be merely analytical, but must design, generate, propitiate alternatives. It is “doing”.

9. RENEWABLE (ADAPTATIVE). It must be willing to undergo substantial transformation whenever this is deemed necessary. It must have contextual sensitivity and structural flexibility.

10. AUTOPIETIC. It will have capacity for self-organisation, the ability to seek out its own form.

10.1. PLASTIC ARTS. Neurology has shown that a brain is transformed organically and structurally when knowledge is acquired; and that this transformation and the contents of knowledge are determined by the way in which the knowledge is acquired. Productive teaching must adopt plastic arts methods suited to the nature of the thing being studied... ■

“...images have been brutally imposed, almost to the point of becoming an instrument of absolute knowledge.”



EDUCATION IS A REFLECTION of events in the social sphere, although the changes that occur inside it are sometimes difficult to see; some are subtle, difficult to evaluate and have a different pace. This slow dissemination gradually transforms everyday educational life, and in some cases the very contents of what is taught in the classroom. Its clearest effects are the hyper-fragmentation of knowledge, combined with an excessive technification and computerisation; however, there are many others, such as the growing privatisation of knowledge combined with a corporate elitism, excessive bureaucratization and a lack of ethical commitment.

Art education has always been a rather shapeless subject, vacillating between the needs of the market and the non-determination and systemisation of the contents it deals with. In the present context, institutional academic models and experimental proposals coexist, making the search for meaning in this type of education problematic, especially in a society based almost exclusively on commercialism. Thus it fluctuates between the impetus of professionalism and experimentation, creativity and personal commitment, valuing the former over all others.

It is related to the permanent crisis of the current academic model, which can be seen not only in the contents but also in the methodologies and in the forms of assessment, marked by an urgent need to be assimilated onto the market or to retain a certain independence from it. This means that positive changes—or the acceptance of experimentation or other alternative forms to traditional models as valid means of learning—are very complex and slow in coming, and the debate on how to achieve a rigorous education involving a clearer commitment by all its protagonists has been postponed.



IT SEEMS TO BE taken for granted that the audio-visualisation of society has caused a change in direction in the teaching of the visual arts and that cultural studies have been the educational proposition in which the broadest-possible consensus has been reached during the last few years, however, how can we relate theoretical learning to the context that we live in, and to what some have called ‘situated practice’?

We live in a time in which images have been brutally imposed, almost to the point of becoming an instrument of absolute knowledge. Because of this, we need discursive tools that will help us to understand the medium. I believe it is necessary to champion that area of knowledge as a legitimate political and critical stance as well as an epistemological one. The battle against theory in art schools is ancestral; it has led to one of the most serious problems, a trivialisation of the significance of its practices, through an over technification and the non-creation of meaning, combined with an indifference towards the

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contexts in which they operate. One of its effects is hyper-information— isolated from its context, standing as a reality in itself, not interwoven with discourse, or with the reality in which it operates. And the use of ‘new’ technologies only serves to make matters worse. Its mechanisms of hyper-seduction enable it to compete successfully against other forms of knowledge, and the result is a greater simplification of knowledge as opposed to a greater complexity of reality. Technological tools cannot replace the learning provided in the classroom, or in other areas, the face-to-face, with its community confrontation, conflictivity and even antagonism in the process of communication and inter-relation between individuals. Machines do not substitute individuals, but they can be useful if the preconditions are recognised, and if they can be used to question established cultural codes. Art education has nearly always been a mere passive transmission of knowledge and ideology, simply reinforcing the social structures of the capitalist and patriarchal society we live in. It is doubtful whether cultural studies will penetrate into art education; we know the problems and difficulties there have always been in posing issues related to feminism. It would have to be done through the collective and creative use of discourses, meanings, materials, practices and group processes, in order to creatively understand and occupy certain spaces, which promote the production of responsible and challenging artistic practices, capable of mobilising symbols—in this sense acting as real producers and distributors of cultural codes.



I CONSIDER INTELLECTUAL WORK based on practice and theory to be a necessity. For this purpose we need to commit ourselves to clarity and accessibility, and I try to promote this through a critical interpretation of the materials raised in class, whether they be images or texts. An active and collective participation in the classroom, through debate and the personal involvement of all.

I am interested in approaching the subjects as a process, rather than as a quantification of results. Processes of creation meaning, alternative knowledge and a dose of creativity which is fixed in the real.

I also try to introduce other subjects, other subjectivities, other objects of study and work, which are generally excluded from the general contents.

Knowledge and experience should be viewed as processes of signification which are constantly being redefined. This relational perspective means distancing oneself from an ontologisation of both of them and from the subjects involved in the process. ■

“...as the project grows,
so too does their knowledge.”

THE CHANGES THAT HAVE OCCURRED in Spain over the last three decades (31 years since the death of Franco and 24 since the first left-wing government came to power in 1982, the transition from a dictatorship to a democracy and the introduction of the rule of law), have, I believe, been quantitatively great but unfortunately, qualitatively few. I should briefly explain why I make this distinction, concentrating on the specific framework of visual arts education.

Quantitatively there have indeed been many changes: a really important amount of infrastructures have been created, reformed, extended, upgraded, etc. I refer to public and private initiatives, the university framework, the specific case of art schools and the provision of classrooms and material in formal education. A clear example can be seen in the growth in the number of computer classrooms and the presence of computers in workshops and practical classrooms between 1995 (when the internet first began to be used widely) and the present day.

Unfortunately, as I said, this progressive change in the material space is not matched by a similar rate of change in the epistemological structure of this educational area and—in the specific area of the teaching and educational framework—in the changes and realities that have affected the artistic context of the last sixty years. In general, the traditional imaginarium of art education in Spain appears to suffer from a permanent congenital state of protectionism. This places it in an anachronistic area, with an outmoded language and structure, which is not open to dialogue with the contemporary artistic and cultural context; rarely has it been capable of entering into dialogue with the changes happening all around it, sheltering instead behind a kind of

imposition, or mimicry, of models created by an Anglo-Saxon [English-speaking] rooted modernity and a post-modernism developed in Francophone areas of influence... and at times, in the silence of ignorance. This unevolving attitude, typical of autarchic systems that develop authoritarian attitudes and means of operation with a subaltern conscience, has been accompanied by a series of reforms to the different stages of the education system (the Education Act of 1990, the Right to Education Act of 1985, reforms in the university system, etc.). To date, the result in our area has been a disconnection between the different phases in the education system, which is repeated with its agents of dissemination, collection, ownership, etc., and a lack of definition of roles for areas with sufficiently demarcated methodologies: it is not the same to work for creation as to work for heritage conservation or to express a critical discourse—though we should not lose sight of that fact that this is a single area of knowledge, repeatedly instrumentalised by political powers to give external examples and visibility to a false and above all accelerated and premature process of modernisation.

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Working committee during the "Advertèncie" project. Set up by students from the Art School in Olot in collaboration with the Regional Museum of la Garrotxa de Olot, it was developed during the 2001-2002 school year and presented in Spring 2002.

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THE PROGRESSIVE AWARENESS that western society is experiencing an uncontrollable process of audio-visualisation has had important, and varying, consequences for the processes of life in 'post-modern' societies. In this context, the problem with art is that it cannot remove itself/escape from trends that mark and define a new era, in which the image constructs consciences on a mistaken premise that identifies 'information' with 'history' and it is transformed into another mistaken premise, 'the virtual' and 'the real'. In the 1960s, the Canadian writer Herbert Marshall McLuhan warned of this in several texts, most notably in his phrase "The Medium is the Message: An Inventory of Effects" (1967). A decade later, the Catalan artist Antoni Muntadas wrote: "Power is imposed through campaigns, posters, radio and television; not by arms, but by sound and image". These and many other reflective and critical voices helped bring about a progressive transformation in visual art education. The current situation can be divided into two predominant trends: on the one hand, there are the so-called cultural studies/visual studies, which in building their discourse, pursue a common terrain, designed to be an alternative to the "aesthetic of denial" and which they see as involving a creative moment central to the goal of the modern project. At its base lie the theories of French post-structuralism and its methodology is interdisciplinary. Others consider the transformation and adaptation of the modern project, taking into account the paradigm shift that took place from the 1960s and in this context, seek to articulate parameters of analysis for addressing the new situation.

The debate between these trends has been staged within the context of a predominantly English-speaking [Anglo-Saxon] culture and its area of influence; incipiently, both have followers in Spain. In the substratum of both positions—from differentiated ideological areas and the construction of their own methodologies—there lies a negotiating, non-authoritarian, process of intervention in the context, which un-narcissistically accepts difference as the basis for intervention by situated practice.

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WHEN I BEGAN THIS WORK ten years ago, there was a sense in one sector of wanting to avoid confrontation in the sphere of artistic education, between traditional models and new forms of knowledge and artistic action. In many sectors and congenial aspects, this attitude has brought with it inherited values, already referenced in a biased manner in the first question, through a past which it seeks to forget but which is constantly present, because it has not been revised. This constant fear of confrontation is not only present in the epistemological area of the discipline itself but in the authorship of the continuous reforms carried out under the banner of modernisation. For an educational area, it was an unstimulating panorama, which continues to be dominated by the traditional values of the genius artist, far removed from everyday work. It was a profile which contrasted with many of the groups who had already been operating since the paradigm shift of the mid-1960s to late 1970s, the point at which the linguistic structure of art was recognised. These concerns underlay the work I began a decade ago in a school of art and design, in a peripheral area and in an experimental subject whose conceptual base is the methodology of the artistic project (it is still an experimental work; although the students acquire the knowledge, their academic record lists another curriculum; this is one of the anachronisms of some of the curricula of art education in this country today). The teaching takes situated practice into account, reproducing it in several areas of education throughout the syllabus as I shall briefly try to explain.

The ideological framework is removed from the model of the artistic genius, using instead a vision of a person working with artistic language. The idea is that the student should no longer view the artistic process as a mere production of objects and progressively recognise its discursive nature, discovering the many different venues for intervention. The work is addressed through learning a methodology of creation which each student internalises; as the project grows, so too does their knowledge. They do not work on a proposed theme but on some personal concern, trying to turn their gaze on their most immediate surroundings to learn to see and discover possible reflections of the great themes in the globalised everyday. The contents are developed transversally between practical and theoretical subjects which benefit the precision and growth of the project, without prioritising traditional media or new technologies; each student chooses according to their interests and those of their own discourse. A further extension of this contact with the context comes with the transformation of the project's language to make it possible to speak to external interlocutors, who will give it visibility: the media, sponsors, graphic images, public institutions. Finally the presented work is revised and an explanatory dossier is prepared, while a critical evaluation is made of the experience and the project itself. ■

Opening Spaces with Words

IN 1978, PIERRE BOULEZ INVITED MUSICIANS, writers and philosophers to an open debate on the notion of musical time. In that memorable session, Michel Foucault asked a question which continues to underpin thinking on music today. Foucault asked: “how can we speak *of* music and not *on* music?” What he meant was, how can we speak of music without turning it into an object; how can we build a discourse that does not reduce it to a mere projection of a silencing saying. To speak of music, we need to return to Foucault’s question and ask: what type of treatment, friction or contact should the word establish with the musical?; how do we forge tools for a territory of sound?

A territory of sound is made up of a multitude of sound practices which can be entirely diverse. It therefore necessitates polyvalent and malleable tools.

If we concentrate on the sound territories that have grown up in recent decades—rather than examining the rupture that followed the breakdown of tonal music, as a system of signs that established a hierarchy of composition and delimited means for the transmission of so-called musical expressivity—we need to look at technological, social and economic changes as well as political ones.

However, in the debate on the musical it has been the emergence of new technologies that has aroused the greatest attention; only in recent years has there been a renewed interest in examining these changes in relation to events in politics and the economy. The progressive blurring of the frontier between ‘concert’ music and ‘popular’ music, the ill-named ‘democratisation’ supposedly brought by the internet—which allows anyone to compose their own music—and the industry of sound production and dissemination; all of these are certainly linked to the formation of that sound territory. In addition, we see the effective and continued use of sound by institutional bodies and, at the very heart of the sound organisation itself, we find exercises that perpetuate modes that may reflect a given social order or which, on the contrary, invite us through their example to establish anarchic relations.

To speak of music and not on music we need to view sound organisation as an experience which is not constructed

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through preliminary discursive practice. When we speak or write on music with previously prepared discursive practices and, particularly by examining our contemporary sound territories, then we are crediting those outmoded discourses that still seek to turn music into the worst of spurs for the metaphysics of the unnameable.

Foucault's question has the added virtue of being set in an area in which the duality between theoretical discourse and social practice, existential or otherwise, is diluted. If his question still poses a challenge today, it is not only because of the aforementioned changes in the arena of sound, socio-economics and politics but, essentially, because it opens a large space of not-knowing. This not-knowing is precisely the motor of learning as an internal process, but never an external one. For this reason, the philosopher's question still underpins our thinking on sound.

Based on this presupposition, writing or speaking of music is an exercise akin to groping around in the dark. But the darkness is never total. We always have a dialogue with other texts speaking on music, and a few *of* music; we can look at the ways in which sound forms hybrids with other arts, at its presence in everyday life and above all, we can listen to sound and to that which we often seek to silence with sound. And so, answering the philosopher's questions becomes an experience, an operation in which saying ceases to be merely part of a system of signs that appear on the

page to become first and foremost a process of depositing multiple small steps, minute experiences which settle into layers in that act of saying. When the word arises through crossing the void of the not-knowing, with ignorance becoming useful, then theory and practice become one.

Later, transmitting that process takes the form of a peculiar conversation which includes the learnt, the captured, but also—insofar as it is possible—the not-knowing that is always mixed in with the knowing. In this debate of and with the area of sound, there is an attempt to distract the reader or listener; in other words to take them away from the course of their everyday lives and carry them to the word, to the sound, to create in them a state that will make it possible in turn, to open another space. From time to time, then, it is possible to recreate and dramatise the experience that leads to a speaking of and to open up spaces in the other. Michel Foucault's question thus leads us to the original awe from which thinking is said to have originated; in order to think, we need to be astonished, to recognise ourselves groping around in a darkness which, for the musician, is full of sounds. ■

Nobody frees anybody else. Nobody frees themselves alone. We men (and women) free ourselves in communion (with machines?)

WE HAD OUR FIRST EXPERIENCE of working with digital tools between 1997 and 1999. The result today, is what William Gibson might call *dead storage* (i.e., off-line storage, recorded on a CD-ROM). At the time, the idea was to explore the practices of *teaching the oppressed* (dialogic and problematising education v. 'bank' education; themes that generate v. the univocal production of the programme, collective construction of knowledge) using a hypertext which was collectively generated—and at that time on-line—containing the course work of a class of approximately 150 students. The work was rhizomatically distributed in a map of four main fields: 1. Education for liberty, 2. Anarchist urban planning (town planning starting from the inhabitants of the city, habitually ignored in decision-making on the areas in which they lead their lives), 3. Metropolitan ecology and 4. Marginality (as a real or imaginary condition where practices arise that transgress and question the hegemonic order). The experience, intended to complement other more 'tangible' practices, such as presentations and debates, videos and installations which were *squatted* by the school, proved rewarding for students and teachers alike; some of the most important projects in those years included the work of familiarisation with the then emerging world wide web and an exploration of the potential of the non-linear thinking of hypertext. At the eme3 festival, held in Barcelona in 1999, a collective installation, which included a machine containing that hypertext, which could be browsed by visitors, won a prize from the Higher Technical School of Architecture of Barcelona.

In 2004, back in formal education, we set up a self-managing tikiwiki within the university with the collaboration of Sergio Moreno of hackitectura.net, as a working space for the classes (<http://hackitectura.net/escuelas>). Here we have been trying to conduct practical experiments into ways of extending cooperative forms of production, based on the collective intelligence of free software communities, to research and education in the field of architecture and urban planning. Our application of this tool has been based on our own use of it for professional and artistic research and production over a number of years (<http://mcs.hackitectura.net>). The tikiwiki is a variation on the family of wiki tools. It is a modular development of free software. In addition to the characteristic website format of wikis, it also includes a *shoutbox* for quick messages, picture galleries, files, links, RSS feeds, forums, blogs, etc., which can all be activated by users, depending on their needs. It also allows different areas to be organised for different users or groups of users. The interest of the tikiwiki lies in the

JOSÉ PÉREZ DE LAMA (aka osfa)/hackitectura.net is an architect, videographer and activist.



La Rábida, Spain, 2003

fact that the different users, students and teachers collectively build a common working area. Any changes are filed and immediately appear on-line, where they can be viewed by the class, and if they want, by the entire www community. The working space becomes, in real time, a global space. More than users, we see ourselves as inhabitants of a commonly-constructed space, which forms an extension of our minds, homes and studios into cyborg territory. This work has become much more effective since a WiFi network was installed at the school. As Mitchell (2003) put it, this allows a continuous field of presence of/in this extended space.

The medium has been operating for two and a half academic years now, and is used by students as an optional supplement. It acts as a support for class presentations, an archive for course materials (of teachers and students) and a space for communication between students and teachers. However, what I like most about it is that it has been used by several groups of students to develop and disseminate their own work. The most important of these groups is *urbanlabca22*, a group of very young students who have won a number of prizes and received invitations to conduct projects outside the school. They have also attracted a certain degree of attention in the media and earned a level of respect in the local community. With the support the tikiwiki provides the different classes and the different autonomous groups, small networks of thought and connected practices are emerging which we consider to be of great interest.

Among the limitations of the tikiwiki at its current state of development, is the lack of interactivity in the production of visual materials (particularly relevant for architecture). While it is possible to build texts or hypertext databases cooperatively, on-line and in real time, it is still impossible to produce an image or architectural blueprint—let alone a 3D model—in the same way, on this support. Some of my colleagues (Yves Degoyon, in collaboration with Sergio Moreno, among others) have been working on developing wiki-maps, which would mark a first step in this direction (<http://mapo-matix.sourceforge.net>). Watch this space. Vale. ■

“We try to make use of any public format to turn it into a production of shared knowledge...”

THERE ARE A GREAT MANY FACTORS that lead us to believe that education in the visual arts is migrating towards the training of users and creators of software. Art expression through computer tools—the field that has come to be known as ‘digital graphic arts’—is becoming largely associated with the audiovisual media, industry and trade, and a whole new labour market has grown up in this field. Job opportunities now take first place in the precarious and often ‘de-contextualised’ industry of the visual arts. At an economic level too, distribution of the visual arts is no longer so much based on trade in the object, as on a model closer to music and cinema which, based on the public dissemination of intangible contents and control of rights of access to these productions. Analog media are being replaced by digital ones, and this dematerialisation—combined with the spread of the internet—is enabling digital work to be distributed cheaply, quickly, globally and uncontrollably.

In this context, with intangible economies struggling to remain afloat, new demands are emerging. A former emphasis on rights to protect territory, education or language, is giving way to a new, more modern popular demand for a right to access to culture, to communication, to information. Evidently, these so-called ‘connection rights’ clash with traditional legislation on intellectual property. Although this aspect tends to be seen in principle by authors as a threat, it is nonetheless important to stress that it can work to their advantage if seen from the perspective of the promotion, dissemination and globalisation offered by combining technological strategies to free access to contents. To return to the area of education, even if we are more consistent with the context in which

we live, we believe that investment in systems that optimise access to and distribution of today’s arts, together with studies, manuals or resources, could provide a fertile field for devising a new model of education that qualifies and allows pupils to acquire useful learning procedures which can be constantly brought up to date throughout their lives. Rapid changes in the economy and technology make even a career-oriented education useless, given that the very mutation of companies and the development of knowledge make any information transmitted in academic centres obsolete. It used to be said that knowing was remembering, and learning was understanding, but now knowing means knowing how to search and choose, knowing the mechanisms required to penetrate abundance instead of continuing to increase it.

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IN OUR OPINION, a situated and experiential education is vital for significant learning. In achieving this, instead of basing ourselves on theory and on keeping a distance from real phenomena, especially in such a socially disconnected area as visual arts, it would be more effective if we were to educate through the resolution of genuine problems or at least through productive investigation with experienced communities. We believe this approach encourages students to reflect on the action and facilitates the development of adaptive and extrapolable strategies among students.

PLATONIQ is a group of cultural producers and software developers which has been based in Barcelona since 2001.



Common Bank of Applied Knowledge, Barcelona, 2006

Students can better appropriate cultural practices and tools through interaction with experienced members and in specific contexts. This change in approach will improve their understanding and their capacity to interpret any related theory using their own criteria.

Within society, art and the arts are widely viewed as pretexts for favouring leisure. This is probably a result of the large-scale industrialisation of culture. The main problem is that the creative aspects of research and knowledge in the visual arts have become increasingly socially undervalued and are not sufficiently attended to in the institutional educational ambit. Innovation, for instance, should be one of the goals of academic work: if it were, we would probably achieve more categorical experimental relations with areas of the sciences, education, urban planning and architecture, or social work. Moreover, the development of these relations would certainly improve or transform the elitist and insignificant image that the visual arts often offer.

If we were to be more aware of the impact of cultural industries and the visual arts on a highly audio-visualised society, we would be led to ask what we are *failing* to do that means that visual artists do not play a basic role in our context. The benefits of culture are evident, both at an economic level and insofar as they play a key function in civil growth or the re-composition of the social fabric; we believe it is vital for cultural health, especially in art education, to recover this potential which has been declining through both a lack of purpose and innovative skill and through a more general trend in education to reproduce methods and stereotypes that may have been valid in previous eras, but which have now become de-contextualised.

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AS PLATONIQ, WE TRY TO MAKE USE of any public format to turn it into a production of shared knowledge, either by developing tools or through collective research, generated in workshops and actions. We do not separate what are habitually seen as different areas or phases: the production can be intrinsically related to its communication, and the context of distribution can be ideal for teaching. In all cases, we see our activities as contextualized pilot schemes, and they are meant to offer an alternative to the idea of knowledge as the domain of academic or scientific communities—a notion that has been imposed as being the only true path. Through our cultural practice, we have seen the importance of social interactions between people acting in certain contexts. Starting from this base, we have organised temporary areas for meeting and for exchanging information and experiences. In most cases, these have ended up being structured as a public strategy, a media action and a common archive of the results.

Detecting current needs or problems in order to devise solutions (however utopian or even erroneous they may be) with the groups affected, tends to lead to results which can be used for the students or researchers, and for communities lacking resources, time or creativity. Nonetheless, we try not to lose sight of the perspective and ethic of exchange. Just as the activity forms a nexus between the individual and the community, communities legitimise individual practices, and these are vital for learning and a continuity in the transmission of experience. ■

“Individuality has run riot...”



Eddie Prévoſt performing in Arteleku 2003

THERE IS, OF COURSE, a vast burgeoning market in music. Classical music, pop culture, re-formulated folk genres of times integrated (homogenised?) into ‘world musics’ and jazz flourish in ever spiralling and deceptive profusion.

This market-driven phenomenon demands servicing. And, there is a rich source of educational and training procedures available to provide much of the artistic/technocratic workforce necessary for the continuation of this market-led demand. Thus far, we note that many music schools openly acknowledge that they provide this kind of training to enable students to become successful in this highly competitive commercial arena. Many of the traditional (i.e. classical) instrumental training techniques are appropriate for this task—even if they have to be modified slightly to meet the new demands. And, of course, the introduction of music technology modules in music establishments further indicates how much music ‘education’ is in thrall to the market.

Alongside this general development in music consumption, and its need for trained technologists to serve it, advanced, (mostly) electronic and computer-led techniques are being constantly developed. These, to some extent, serve to make traditionally trained musicians redundant and surplus to requirements (and thus adds a further twist of competitiveness into this hyper-market). Sampling and electronic treatments remove many of the demands of traditional instrumental techniques. In this respect they become agents of deskilling.

Thus, in general, the teaching of music has lost any moral persuasion that it might have had, e.g. as a civilising force. This might be said now of every facet of our western capitalist educational system. There is not even much of a pretence of music being of value in or for itself. Neither is it thought to reflect any moral perspective. So much so that it is truly the last bastion of the rich amateur or the dilettante. (Except, of course, that the power of ‘music for the consumer’ resides in the hidden fact that it is a commodity).

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WHAT IS THE PURPOSE of learning? It has long been my own experience that scholars at music schools (for example) are generally consumed with the development of technique almost to the point of being for technique's sake. Whereas there is still a slightly anarchic tendency amongst students of the so-called plastic arts to be more self-willed in their technical practice.

However, this is not necessarily all good news. In many cases the absence of any craft skills in the production of art has become normal and even fetishised. Individuality has run riot and has often become essentially solipsistic. All of this reveals the intellectual and moral muddle we are in regarding the tools that we need for a life that allows for more reflection and creative interface rather than mere consumption.

A corollary to the technological and capitalist development outlined above is the, albeit unintended, use of the new techniques and their attendant machines as creative vehicles in their own right. These non-commercial developments reveal that the human spirit can confound (in less economically critical moments) even the most urgent of capitalist diktats. This, and the developing community of improvising musicians (most of whom live comfortably above subsistence level), suggests that all is not so well as our capitalist masters would have us believe. For some, albeit a minority of people, retail therapy has been found most wanting. However, we should also heed the warning signs that the leisure end of the capitalist market—becoming daily more apparent in our 'art' market places—is trying hard to

find new material for non-essential consumption. In terms of musical practice and technique and to avoid the magnetic pull of capitalist supply and demand (and surplus profit by way of commodities) what is wanted is not technique but meaning. And, when a post-capitalist meaning has been established then surely a commensurate range of new techniques for living will emerge.

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IT IS THUS AN UNDERSTANDING of a potential post-capitalist meaning in music that we strive to attain. And, maybe towards imagining its practice.

Thus, within the context of making music, two things are suggested within the discourse I propose:

1. An appreciation that the experience of music—as well as its making—is essentially a social experience. [If it is not, then for the listener it remains wedded to its commodity status and can be viewed mostly as a consumable which assuages some (multi-specified) 'consumer' need. Whereas for the musician, 'music as a commodity' rarely transcends being a means of income and self-replication.]
2. That a musician's engagement with the elements of sound-making should be regarded as an open (and a generous) relationship. Thus, an attitude of enquiry and exploration supersedes any notion of command or control over concomitant materials and attending parties. In practice, musicians are encouraged to look afresh at their instruments. And, each time during any performance, be looking for new things that may occur through practice (and even through the imperfections of practice). This increased level of awareness and interactivity is essentially a practice of 'self invention'. It is also suggested that musicians constantly examine the responses they perceive as being attached to the sounds, and configurations of sounds.

In this way we may, I believe, begin to detach music from its bourgeois role of celebration of wealth, social hegemony and its subsequent development (and confinement) into (all-be-the-playful) commodities. And, with the methods outlined above we begin to re-attach the practice of music to more creative human responses to the physical world together with a free association and discourse that can lead us to consider a range of possible social futures—i.e. the practice of 'social invention'. ■

“A different attitude is appropriate for each occasion..”

IT IS TRUE THAT WE ARE SEEING major changes which affect the political and the social sphere and also the means of art production. In practice, the much-trumpeted process of globalisation is leading to the downward levelling of many social advances, which are either disappearing or are being devalued in regions where they previously looked to be well consolidated, and are failing to gain a toehold in regions of the world where the structures of the welfare state were lacking. However, this demoralising situation has been obscured by

a universal extension of the peculiar technological paraphernalia of globalised capitalism: the same computers, cars and operating theatres for the rich can be found in India, Nigeria, Chile or the US, and it is all too easy to mistake this phenomenon for the effective democratisation of the benefits of ‘progress’. I believe that education in the visual arts is a victim of this globalising mirage: given that the most widely promoted creative paradigms involve new technological media, which are reasonably accessible (who, for example, cannot afford a digital camera?), it would be easy to believe that they are becoming extendable to all of humankind; that not only language, but resources too are being globalised. To put it another way: one might think that it is feasible for anyone to learn what they need to be an artist, wherever they come from and whatever their educational background. Philosophers or engineers, bankers or writers... they can all reinvent themselves as visual artists. The necessary process will be entirely different to that their counterparts in the past might have pursued: today’s wannabe Gauguins no longer have to wield paintbrush; if they do go to the South Seas, at most it will be for a fortnight’s trip to conduct some anthropological report. In these circumstances, it is inevitable that art education should become devalued.

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STRANGELY ENOUGH, the audio-visualisation of society seems to be encouraging the gnosological pap of cultural studies. We believe that the logical thing would be to champion the autonomy and power of visuality, and recognise the value of intellectual instruments developed for analysing past or present creative work. That should be the great contribution of 'visual studies' to the contemporary debate. But exactly the opposite seems to be happening: the specific nature of the iconic media is being dissolved in a territory which resembles an amusement park of knowledge—with a pinch of sociology, a pinch of anthropology, a bit of cultural history, psychoanalysis (American-Lacanian, of course), 'gender' banalities, literature, philosophy, Foucauldian dissemination, computer forecasts, etc. The result is specifically intended to be interdisciplinary, but because it is built out of disconnected and superficial fragments from very different scientific areas, it runs the risk of being, simply, adisciplinary. It often becomes an erratic potpourri, lacking the rigour of the disciplines it has looted—or 'visited'—a by-product of the cultural tourism which does not become involved in a true colonisation (a cultivation) of the knowledge in question. The problem lies in the scandalous degree to which we are subject to the models and fashions emanating from the areas of the dominant power: it is suspect that the very countries that have troops stationed in Iraq, and which are feeding the current international instability, should be the ones who are dictating to others what their 'critical' thought should be. Perhaps it would be easier if we each concerned ourselves with the real problems of the places we live in, without trying so hard to imitate the rulers of the political or cultural scene. We will conduct good 'situated practice' if we do not forget the specifics of our own media and instruments and if we stop trying to hide our ignorance behind the empty rhetoric of theories that seem to be designed to mask reality and impede constructive action.

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I TRY TO ENSURE A CONSISTENCY between my activities as a teacher, a lecturer, an art writer and an editorial consultant. I believe all these things have a logical relationship: research and discourse on artistic phenomena operate at different levels, and they all need one another. There would be little point in encouraging high-quality PhD theses, for example, if we did not try to provide some way of disseminating that work at a public level. I believe we need to get involved at every stage of the process. This tends to blur the line between what some call teaching or educational activity and research in itself: intellectual creativity, analytical talent and expositional quality can exist (or not) at any phase, so what is really at stake is actually to combine artistic knowledge with the different sub-sectors of the public. A different attitude is appropriate for each occasion: it is not the same thing to give a lecture to an arbitrary audience in a generic arts centre, as to present a paper at a specialist conference. Although a 'creation of knowledge' exists in all cases, I tend to reserve my most innovative and most daring research for some of my university courses where knowledge is processed in a context of assumed complicities or open collaboration. And it is in this intellectual laboratory, amidst discussion and debate, that ideas are refined before being finally readied for publication in books and articles. And sometimes, of course, the process works the other way round: some of the theses set out in magazines or lectures later make their way into classes and debates at seminars. Clearly knowledge makes sense when it is shared. It is always collective. ■

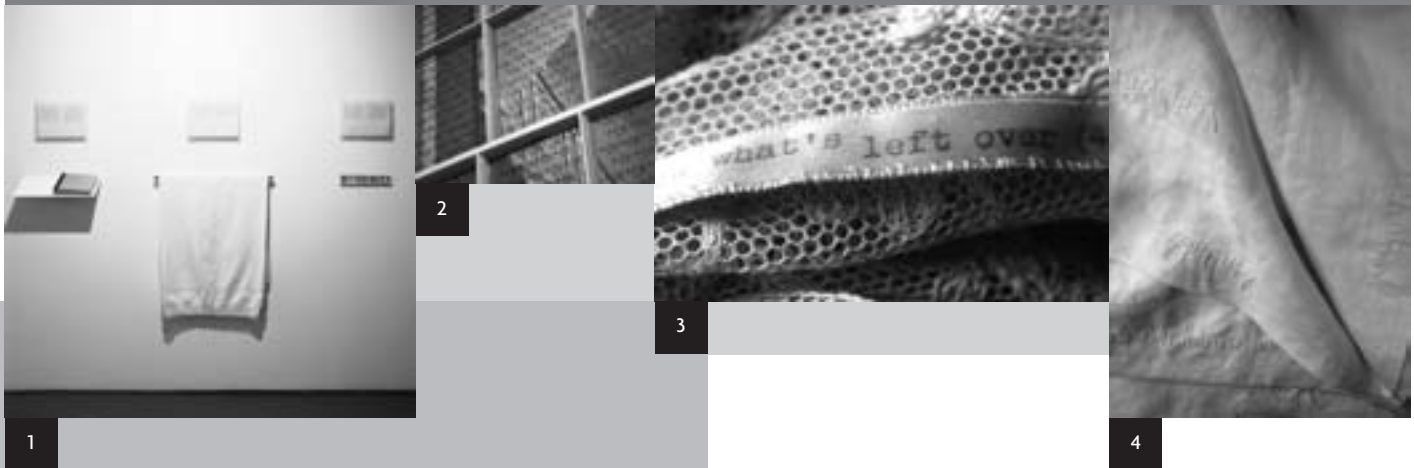
Site-Writing: Critical Spatial Practice

THE TEACHING AND PRACTICE OF ART and architecture is set within a social and political context that has seen, in recent years, acknowledgement of the disastrous changes to the earth's climate caused by carbon dioxide emissions along with the intensification of imperialist aggression by oil dependant nations as demand outstrips supply. In the same period, in academic institutions in the United Kingdom, there has been a rise in the number of international students who bring differing cultural backgrounds and experiences to the theory and practice of art and architecture. Older Marxist strategies for resisting the ills of capitalism have in this same time scale seemingly lost their ability to inspire a younger generation, and appear at times inadequate in the face of the complex set of forces that comprise the workings of late global capital. Many still view education as a potential site for political activism and critical resistance, and have developed an approach to teaching which engages theory and practice, and includes a diverse range of literary genres from philosophy to poetry, drawing on the writings of feminists, postcolonialists, psychoanalysts and others who specialise in ethics in order to understand the current political climate in terms which acknowledge questions of difference—subjectivity and positionality.

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In the past ten years, my own research and teaching—through individual and collaborative research projects—has focused on exploring the relationship between disciplines: feminist theory and architectural history, conceptual art and architectural design, spatial theory and critical spatial practice. I have taught studio and history/theory/critical studies in art and architecture schools and found that practices such as textile art and public art, positioned on the cusp of disciplines, are more open to reflecting critically upon their own modes of operation. Interdisciplinary activity calls into question the ideological apparatus that structures the terms and methods of a specific disciplinary practice and aims to critique, resist and question dominant processes and produce new forms and modes of knowledge and understanding.

During my time at Chelsea College of Art and Design, I discovered that public art was such an interdisciplinary practice, which refused to settle as fine art or as community art, nor as art, craft or design, and where a focus on site allowed theory and practice to constantly rethink one another. Some students started out by identifying a



theoretical interest and developed this through the location of a site and an appropriate medium. But the majority preferred to initiate projects by first choosing a specific site, then developing their critique of this site through context-based research, and later distinguishing the medium appropriate for carrying the work to its final outcome. The role of the brief was central. Unlike design, where concepts usually spring from a response to a brief, fine art practice rarely involves the use of a brief. In public art, briefs are prevalent and conceptual thinking and critical skills can be used to discover problems and oversights inherent in their construction. This exploration can become the ground for a project, inviting the practitioner to encompass the skills expected of both artist and designer.

Teaching public art suggested to me different ways in which theoretical ideas could become manifest in the making of objects and spaces, something I had found almost impossible to achieve in the sphere of architectural design. In architectural education there has been (and this is currently being reinforced by those who 'represent' the profession and the consumer) great pressure to design 'buildable' buildings. Unlike history, which tends to be understood as a non-biased discipline whose role is to provide a contextual backdrop, theory is often understood in opposition to design, as an abstract and non-practical discipline and therefore useless. When I returned to architecture, to the University of Nottingham, to see if there was a way in which I could bring the insights I had learnt in art teaching into the architecture design studio, it was through developing a critique of the brief that it was possible to make a transition between theory and practice. Critical thinking was used to generate imaginative contexts and invent briefs.

Currently based at the Bartlett School of Architecture, I have been developing a new area of research that works between history/theory/criticism and design, exploring the creative

potential of writing as a form of critical spatial practice in its own right, bringing processes from fine art practice and architectural design to inform theoretical production through a mode of operation I call site-writing. A more traditional model of research for history and theory expects certain questions to be identified at the outset and then explored over the research period and structured into a linear essay in which an argument is laid out progressively. However, practitioners do not necessarily work this way, instead intuitive instincts are acted upon, and questions only emerge through engagement with material processes of production, becoming manifest in a knowledge that is spatial and patterned.

My own work as an art critic, generating pieces of site-writing, (see Figures 1 and 2) has informed a programme of study at Diploma, MA and PhD level, where students are asked to choose a site of investigation and to produce a piece of writing that researches, critiques and responds physically to this site, through the material qualities of a textual work that may intervene into the site itself. (See Figures 3 and 4) Such an approach brings the writing subject into direct relation with their subject matter, allowing personal reflections and private imaginings to intervene or draw out issues of cultural and social significance that pertain to a certain space, place or site, and which operate on a more public scale in anticipation of an audience, an 'other'. ■

Art for All, but without Art (in school)

LOOKING AT THE CAREER OF OTHERS working in the field of art education, I assume my own experience is fairly typical. However, I think it may be worth recounting a feeling which has remained with me during almost 15 years teaching work, and which now strikes me even more clearly with the benefit of hindsight. It is quite a bitter perception and it strikes me whenever I feel, on the one hand, that education is undergoing constant change (sorry, reform!) and at the same time, that art-related teaching is reaffirming itself through constant—and increasingly irreversible—retreat. Contrasting with the appealing notion of the Open School we have been invited to participate in, I want to take this opportunity to highlight this process of impoverishment of art education, and specifically on the context I know best—the educational policies implemented in the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country (ACBC). I should make it clear that I am speaking about formal or academic education, and not that other area which also merits analysis—unofficial teaching, the education departments of museums, etc.

As I have already said, my career has been filled with “reforms”: if I remember correctly, I have taught students under the system of General Basic Education (GBE), aged 12 to 14; the Reform of Medium-Level Education (REM) aged 14 to 16; Compulsory Secondary Education (CSE), aged 12 to 16 and, finally, university students. Some of these educational models operated simultaneously; others were consecutive. I certainly do not want to suggest that these changes are in themselves harmful; although the weight—and the work—of these reforms tends to fall on teachers in most cases. What is detrimental, particularly in the specific case of art education, is the treatment received over successive reforms. In one reform after another, art has lost ground in the school timetable. To make matters worse, art education had already been allocated less time in the Basque Country than in other regions. The current situation at secondary (CSE) level is dramatic; art classes have practically disappeared from the syllabus for some years and in others only account for an hour a week.

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The second problem is that there are no specialist teachers in primary education (6 to 12) with the result that any teacher is qualified to give art classes. Among students studying for their primary school teachers' qualification, art education accounts for just 10.5 credits out of a possible 200 over the three-year diploma course. At the next level, CSE, all teachers do have a degree in art, but given the small ratio, they have a very limited margin of work.

We could look at other aspects, such as the introduction of the art *bachillerato* (high school diploma) in the region and issues such as the lack of teaching materials, the abolition of the post of advisors on plastic education, etc., but I would like to take a moment to examine the overall context. It is, to put it mildly, paradoxical, that this situation should be happening precisely in this region, where a museum of contemporary art [the Guggenheim Bilbao Museum] has been held up as the great force for change of an entire society. Since the so-called transition to democracy, the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country has undergone the difficult process of constructing its own government, identity and culture, against the backdrop of a severe economic and industrial crisis in the 1980s and marked by a traumatic political conflict. To some extent the Guggenheim Museum, opened in 1997, was a perfect emblem of a new turning point; symbolically combining the real process of economic and social recovery. It was a radical change, reflected in the government's slogan 'A Country on the Move'. Clearly, any region which seeks to found its external image—and in part its internal driving force—on a museum of contemporary art, two television channels, cinema festivals and major cultural centres, should look after such vital aspects as the cultural education of its citizens. Indeed this is reflected in official documents: "It is important to stress our conviction that the comprehensive formation of students' personality will be incomplete if visual education is relegated to a position of inferiority. A good visual education helps not only to overcome a receptive dependency and passivity (a phenomenon which has been widely discussed), but, also the training of agile and productive, rational and imaginative thinking, accompanied by a fecund sentimental and emotional sensitivity." However, the real situation on the ground is quite different: government neglect has pushed art education into continuous decline, in which it can never cast off its eternal status as one of the easy subjects.

Finally, as the last stage in academic education, we should take a look at what is happening in the university. Needless to say, the sensation we referred to at the beginning of this text is also applicable here. Reform is coming, with new syllabi aimed at producing university-level convergence in what is known as the European area for higher education and research. It is early days yet to arrive at any definite diagnosis of this process—let alone to tell how it will affect art education. However, there are already certain features which should arouse our suspicions, especially in the area of financing, which will apparently depend on the number of graduates in employment, results in business, and other similar indicators. It is difficult to imagine any university governed by the laws of the labour market—or any other market—but especially if we try to relate humanities and art to industry. ■

“Structures of criticality — critical culture in general — have been swamped by hegemonic commodity-celebrity-military culture...”

PROFESSIONAL FINE ARTS TRAINING IN THE US entered the university system only in the 1960s. Before then, artists were more likely to study in academies or ateliers. The change occurred as the widely celebrated model of liberal education for citizenship was being refashioned toward the instrumentalized production of new technological elites (a fact not lost on student vanguards). The development of art education away from a type of elite art appreciation or leisure pursuit toward normalization as a university discipline took two forms: as a recreational dimension of the education of students in disciplines more useful to corporate and military sectors, such as engineering, or as a catch basin for students unable to succeed in those areas. New master's programs in visual arts (MFA) helped legitimize art itself for a wider public by disseminating master discourses and by creating a credentialing system (both for employment in higher education as professionals in the field). Graduates were trained to teach art to undergraduates, now entering higher education by the millions. Changes in artistic practice of the 60s and 70s affected the content of art education, thanks to the 'experimentalism' of the era. Interdisciplinarity and multimedia work, photography, conceptualism, performance, experimental video and audio found a place in departments of fine arts where maintaining a distance from the market

remained important to the discipline. Critical studies and theory, as befitting institutionalization within higher education, were incorporated into degree requirements at university art departments, emulated by art schools. Scholars and critics followed new disciplines, such as visual culture and cultural studies, encompassing new practices, and their publications provided interpretation, dissemination, and further legitimacy.

The consensus that art education should follow curricular models of other disciplines had weakened by the early 1980s, when art education's long vacation from market concerns drew to a close. Even up to the 1970s, an artist was "young" until age 40, when serious work could begin. Since the 1960s, artists had been developing new (non-painting, nonsculptural) forms, often produced outside the studio, and exhibiting and circulating work at younger ages in more public venues, including magazines and billboards, but mostly in the newly created sector of government-supported (thus market-independent) 'artists' spaces'. The field of operations expanded, as did the number of people declaring themselves artists, and the culture audience grew as well, but dealers bemoaned the undisciplined multiplicity of styles and the proliferation of unmarked-worthy non-object-based practices (even video was unsalable because collectors lacked interest).

MARTHA ROSLER was born in New York, where she once again lives today. Since 1980, Martha Rosler has been teaching at Rutgers University.

By about 1980, European dealers were doing a brisk business in painting, inspiring New York dealers to try the same. After relying on European imports, New York dealers began to show the work of recent MFA graduates, as the market became feverishly active (despite a crash in the late 1980s). The line between the schools and the marketplace was being erased just as it was becoming apparent that MFA graduates were part of a vast pyramid scheme: there were many MFA graduates and fewer and fewer teaching positions. More and more of those jobs were casual labor: adjunct positions drawing low pay, no benefits, and no prospects for job security. A tiny number of graduates would succeed in the art world, but the MFA programs had to promise more than a lottery ticket; a new rationale was necessary to attract students to pay increasingly high tuition costs. Market exposure (through close relations with dealers and art writers) was the answer.

Beginning in the 1990s a few schools outside New York (mostly in California but also in London) were suggesting to students that they could speed their entry into gallery representation as they graduated. Now, everything seems salable, and the increasing fortunes of the international rich in a time of stock-market uncertainty makes the work of young artists seem like a very good investment, with various side benefits, from inclusion in an elite social circle to tax reductions. Market orientation (not only gallery shows and museum project spaces but the ever-increasing rounds of international exhibitions and magazine features) was intensified by the withdrawal of government support for independent art-run spaces, so that those remaining have aligned their goals and practices with the rest of the art world as they seek corporate or individual sponsors. Structures of criticality — critical culture in general — have been swamped by hegemonic commodity-celebrity-military culture, exacerbated by a loss of faith in alternative models of governance after the fall of the East Block. But, alongside the continued search for organizing and theorizing in relation to international demands for social justice, there is a continued series of initiatives by

artists' initiatives for investigating and intervening in social life. The acceleration of spectacle culture has increased interest in creating oppositional practices while increasing their legibility. Digital and web-based work has taken over much of the clearly countering practice formerly offered by video, although such work, rather than leaning on visuality, may rely far more on textuality, complexity, and interactivity, with the pace of movement often controlled by the viewer. Other practices, situated in community or public spaces, can develop a coherence of disjunctive elements and weave together disparate publics.

As an educator, I find it helpful to organize group meetings around readings, discussions, and viewing of professional work rather than around studio visits and individual critiques. I have worked with students on group projects whose intensive educational labor is not always visible to viewers. As an artist, I am also a teacher, and I consider most of my work as an 'as if' proposition, implicitly inviting the viewer to complete or confute the work and to suggest to younger artists in particular that it is their job to carry on. ■

Inside Out and Vice Versa (ART3 and the ‘art3ists’)

For the last five years I have played a very active role in setting up a laboratory for artistic transmission and creation in a higher school of art in France¹: the ART3 group.

The group is somewhat unusual, and arouses both passion and anger in the institution. It is made up of approximately 30 students from different levels (from the second year to the fifth) and is run by three artists: Eléonore Hellio, Pierre Mercier and myself. For the three of us, our work in the school is a creative act, akin to any other we carry out in other areas of creation: we believe that transmission (in the form of public events, lectures, courses, publications, workshops, etc.) is an integral part of the artist’s work, and we know empirically that this type of task of a communicative or educational nature can be tackled in an entirely experimental way, consistently with the nature of each of our artistic personalities².

We also believe that the steam that builds up in the pressure cooker of an art school contains some of the most interesting substances of truly experimental artistic reflection and action (those that impertinently question all the fields of research involved in what we call Art).

It would take a long time to explain the context of each of our working methods and describe where our ways of inventing fertile terrain for creation and analysis come from. However, in introduction, I can say that in the general education offered by our school (and some others in France) we still try to allow students to move freely between two apparently contradictory polarities: immersion in a work group—of teachers and students—which generates ideological islands that are at times highly contradictory, and circulation between the different groups formed in the school (and not only in art³). Another important characteristic is the real sense of collegiality—the fact that a number of teachers work together with a group of students in order to explicitly feed concordant or discordant points of view.

WHAT IS THE ART3 GROUP?

In the ART3 group, we start from the idea that “the complexity of a set of parameters is unquestionably born out of the overabundance of variables”; we also feel we are being pertinent when we question what we call “AOF” (Arts Outside Format; in other words, art that is difficult to measure, weigh, hang or store, art which uses time,

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space, image and sound as malleable materials, works in which the presence of the spectator is often a substantial element of the project, etc.). Evidently, in ART3 we know that the artistic activity is a fascinating and dangerous weapon from any point of view (social, political, aesthetic, moral, economic, etc.) and one which must be used purposefully. In our reflections, texts, words and acts, some of the tics of language are explicitly put to the test. For example, in communicating our education methods in the student's guide, we clearly set out the idea that the words 'education' and 'manipulation' are related, and that what we do as artists/teachers in a school is not so much to form*, but to deform or transform (because we know that the students/young artists with whom we work already have their own form or shape before they come in contact with ART3).

From a practical point of view: we are a group of around 30 people who work together and in parallel, intensely sharing one day a week, at least 12 hours non-stop (from 2 pm to 2 am), and who keep in fluid contact over the internet (individually and/or collectively).

Each 'ART3 day' is very dense: a 'space-time object'. It is important to understand that we view this 'object' entirely as an act of creation. Each day has its own evolutionary rules related to the selection of issues and the organisation of events. To a certain extent (and this is no accident), the way each day is organised mimics the techniques used to form a *TV schedule*⁶. So we have different slots with variable geometries (dense, short, light, thick, commercial, cooking, information, sports, etc.), coming one after another, applying a range of broadcast methods (debate, lecture, performance, projection, exam, dialogue, gossip, game, etc.), without losing sight of the idea that the goal is to transmit art and the different ways of tackling this, without removing ourselves from the art that we are making.

The *menu du jour* and each person's responsibilities are written up the week before and it is then inhabited, constituted or even sabotaged, by the students and by the teach-

ers. As a result, once the ART3 day gets underway, there is a great tension in the heads and hands of the many different *actors* and the energy is ready to be deployed.

If I were to try to summarise the way we do things at the school, I would say that we have experimented and tested out the creative power (short, medium and long term) of the formation of networks (of communication, of curiosity, of affinities, of criticism, of mutual help, etc.).

- We continue to critically patrol the dangerous frontier between documentary and fictional vision, as the driving force behind the critical perception of the world—near and far.
- We seek to arouse an awareness that in art (and in life) it is important to be always managing: conception, production, construction, contextualization, analysis, dissemination, relations of power and dialogue.

We achieve this by inventing and reinventing (starting from each one's changing interests), a common language, which is built around certain axes which we name within the time schedule using our own particular dialect⁵. ■

1 L'École Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs de Strasbourg (ESAD). Without making any comment on the term 'Décoratifs' in the name of our school, let me just say here that in France the current trend is for the term "Ecole Supérieure" to be replaced by that of 'Faculté', since in the European comparison, French schools (like German ones) are considered to be on a par with university schools in other countries. Obviously, this shift in terminology involves many more changes than might first meet the eye (statute, financing, ministerial dependence, teaching possibilities, etc.)

2 Indeed, in my installations and films, the notions of transmission, initiation rite, learning, and their mirrors of transmission errors, game of false clues, corruption... are recurring ones.

3 Although in the ESAD there are four specialities (options): Design, Object, Art and Communication, which constantly enrich reflection into the meaning of the "creative act", the "notion of author", the idea of the "commission", etc. In the "art option" we are still resisting the separation of the cursus into "specialities" of space, image, painting, audio-visual, etc. This is one of the reasons why we divide into different teaching teams with highly differentiated transmission methods, which we simply and deliberately call Groups 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5).

4 We base ourselves on the caustic idea that by mimicking a television schedule, we reproduce (or impose) the items of greatest interest to the population (sociologists, economists and politicians know this well). In ART3, instead of remaining outside these smart organisations of space, time and contents, we have for some years decided to analyse them by testing them out and reorienting the ideologies that drive them (the importance of the presenter/guide, intermittent spectacularity, sliding polysemy, etc.)

5 At ART3 we pay great attention to this aspect of naming and defining each act. This makes it possible to reinforce the group's identity and common base to an even greater extent, while at the same time it serves to constantly remind us that language is not innocent.

* Translator's Note: In Spanish (and French), form=train, educate.

“Teaching centres only make sense insofar as they create the lab conditions...”

NEW METHODS FOR SOCIAL INSCRIPTION of artists, marked out by the dispersal of their work over a generous spectrum, from socio-political intervention to contributions to technological research projects, or from religious-therapeutic activities to involvement in the production chain (advertising and design), have vastly unsettled university education in Spain. One of the negative results of the confusion is the emergence of a new formalism: fine arts academies (concerned with still-lives, modelling and charcoal) have been replaced with new academies working on audiovisual production and design, with a number of peripheral teaching systems which, in accordance with personal interests, cover the various spaces of artistic work. This has also been produced by the trend (quasi-institutional pressure) of jurisdictional teaching and counter-current maintenance of demand: the need to train professionals (who are, in some cases, only technicians) has inevitably brought about a certain amount of deterioration in discursive expectations.

Beyond the negative consequences, we must focus on a number of factors which are forcing profound structural changes:

- a) The difficulty of retaining the traditional divisions between areas of knowledge and the need to focus teaching on discursive proposals which avoid disciplinary or merely technical conditioning (without, however, abandoning a certain amount of rigour).
- b) The trend of specialisation in certain areas (video, digital art, on-line art) is compatible with collective organisation of work. In fact, specialisation requires multi-disciplinary cooperation with external motivation. The new version of the lone artist (sitting at a computer screen) is therefore offset by the need to generate shared projects effectively becoming public property.
- c) Interpenetration of verbal, visual and performative aspects, a progressive trend in the last decades of the 20th century, has found in digital media a method for effective development not only at the experimental level, but also at the social or didactic level.



The piece is entitled *Colonizadores-diego de almagro*; with this title it left the door open to other work with the same subject matter. The material used on this occasion is: tinfoil, wooden sticks, rope and red paint. Intervention carried out on the equestrian sculpture that represents the coloniser Diego de Almagro (Plaza Mayor), for APARTES, Multidisciplinary Contemporary Art Programme included in the International Classical Theatre Festival in Almagro, Ciudad Real, July 2005.

JOSÉ ANTONIO SÁNCHEZ lectures at the Fine Arts Faculty in Cuenca, Spain.

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SOCIETY'S AUDIOVISUALISATION PROCESS has found a direct replica in the audiovisualisation of teaching: not only is audiovisual material increasingly replacing hours of actual teaching, but it is also an increasingly generalised format for presentation or exhibition of exercises and projects, which in certain cases have been drawn up in other formats. The risk of the replacement of discourse by mastery of publishing programmes is today's version of the academicism of schools teaching painting, sculpture and drawing. This risk, however, is offset by extensions to media and references which are again available to students. In the first place, the guarantee of communications efficiency allows media which have been progressively abandoned to be retrieved: from painting to corporal action. Secondly, this facilitates interaction with the surroundings, particularly with areas external to the teaching centre.

The dichotomy which, even a few years ago, could become rather problematic between mediatic construction and direct action, has now been overcome thanks to simplification of registering, publishing and distribution. The same is true of the dichotomy posed by lab practice and situated practice: the lab can be transferred to the public sphere in the same way as the public sphere can go into the lab. Some of these extremely interesting proposals by students in recent years most accurately relate to the transfer of procedures tested in the quasi-aseptic ambience of lecture theatres to other contexts, unprotected in the institutional or aesthetic sense, where the former have been reviewed for the sake of dual effectiveness: socially and artistically. A few examples: work on a colonial past monumentalised in Almagro, the ephemeral reconfiguration of a historical building restored by a women's workshop in San Clemente, or work with the Association for Recovery of Historical Memory in Uclés.

Skills from many different disciplines proved useful in these projects: the collective organisation of the work involved in scenic art, attention to other social sciences (contributions from patrimony experts, social workers, journalists, city planners and anthropologists), skills in audiovisual techniques and languages (particularly documental videos and photos), plastic arts (particularly public sculptures and installations), and sound art (editing, composing and generating ambiences), and neat editing and distribution of the contents generated in digital format.

However, in a context where the teachings of humanities (among which is the arts) have ultimately been marginalised to the benefit of engineering and quick-profitability courses, it is essential to continue to call for a capacity in artistic practices to generate autonomous discourse, and prevent it being transformed into instruments at the service of other disciplines.



Isis Saz *Memoria*, video, 10' 17" Cuenca, 2006



San Clemente Collective project directed by Rolf Abderhalden. Aranzazu Baquero, María Domínguez, Jesús Jara, Carmen Martín, Carolina Martínez, Bartomeu Pascual, Isis Saz. San Clemente, Spain 2006

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TEACHING THE HISTORY OF ART in an arts faculty makes sense only insofar as it makes a critical contribution to the generation of new productive discourses. The transmission of information, one of the objectives of traditional education, has become obsolete in view of the ease with which we can access it, and what is important now is to propose guides to searches in archives, libraries and mediathèques (physical or virtual), interpretation and preparation and, in particular, incentivise discussion and group work. The tendency of the visual arts student to work alone, accentuated by the possibility of a virtual hyperconnection, also creates a need to share which must be channelled and made productive.

The creative paralysis brought about by enormous amounts of immediately available references may be solved only by the detection of urgent needs for communication arising from analysis of the immediate present: any community, whether physical or virtual, requires a number of means for symbolic preparation of its reality, the relevance of which cannot be judged in accordance with the values of modern aesthetics, but rather in accordance with a number of effectiveness criteria, one of which must necessarily be the criterion of artistic effectiveness (and not aesthetic), but must receive other criteria in relation to society, micro-politics, education, science etc.

Individual accumulation of knowledge is useless if it does not generate new knowledge, in the form of an artistic experience or of a social activity. Teaching centres only make sense insofar as they create the lab conditions suited to tests conducted on practices which must be validated in the public sphere. The practices may be many and varied, but they must be practical. If they are also critical and carry a general gain in knowledge, so much the better. ■

An aesthetic catastrophe

Architecture since modernism

ARE WE BLIND? What has happened to our eyes? Don't we see that present-day architecture, since modernism came our way, is a void? Have we lost our inherent instinct to make things beautiful? Why are we not generous to the people walking in our streets, on our squares, in the outskirts of our cities and towns? What is the reason that we do not any longer present them the pleasure of seeing buildings that stimulate fantasy, and that have aspects that you see only under a specific light? What is wrong with the concept of beauty? Who has the right to make the public space so austere? Why do we have to live surrounded by nothing? What is the reason that we hate our

students in architecture so much that we tell them that it is forbidden to use ornaments, decorations and symbols in their creations? Why are the people who commission the construction of a house, a whole neighbourhood, an office, a shop, a factory, or a mega supermarket not sure anymore of their own tastes and artistic preferences and follow blindly the ideas that nihilism proposes to architects? Why don't those commissioners and patrons like to tell the world about their identity through the shape of their material and concrete addition to the public space? Why they don't wish this identity to be expressed in architecturally rich forms? What happened in history that the architectural materialization of the public space became a field in which it became disallowed to tell about who you are, and what pleasure, eminence or philosophy you wish to communicate with passers-by? Why do we distrust the taste of our fellow-citizens? Is there any reason to think that they

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cannot contribute to the reflection on what a building in the public space should and could represent? Isn't there a good chance that they would like to have, of course, a comfortable and affordable house, but also a place that stimulates the imagination with ornaments, colours, small towers, richly decorated balconies, doors with sculptures, bricks that are not just piled up in a straight line, and a variety of sizes of different layers and floors? Why have we declared our fellow citizens to be aesthetically incompetent concerning the surrounding where they live, work, or shop? Isn't it cynical that we impose on construction workers doing only dull work instead of being the performers of an aesthetic plan to which the quality of their contribution matters, like the performers in an orchestra? Why do we not train the pupils in our school to be aesthetically competent, and to see the differences between a richly decorated building and a house where the straight lines

govern? What does this tell them? What would be their desire? Why do we not stimulate their aesthetic courage? Why do we suggest to them that sentiments should not be shown in the public space—certainly not in buildings that will outlive them? What is the reason that we are so cruel to our children that we rob them of their capacity to explore their fantasies? ■

The effects of changes

ALL MY LIFE I HAVE FELT LIKE I was at a kind of crossroads, every now and then as if each moment were a historical moment of inflection: a few years ago, heavily involved in art studies, and later, nowadays, from the fully-blown perspective of a teacher of animation films. Although this feeling that my professional life has been at a constant critical point has left traces of supreme egocentrism, it is also based on a certain amount of rationale. I am 44 years old, and from a television-less childhood spent outside the home to the present day—it would have been hard for me to work without helping fill the coffers of the electricity company, Endesa—I have seen technology transform into the day-to-day, to the extent that it has become mere child's play.

Throughout that short trajectory, there have been dozens of changes when I look back now. When I was younger, I helped my photographer father develop his photos in the lab, and more recently, overawed with digital cameras, we have been seeing the images produced on computer. Some time ago I used the 8 mm shots in one of my 35 mm films; later, 6 years ago, I recorded a broadcast or large-format film on video tapes, and these are no good to sell your products to television in the modern age.

My colleagues and I have recently been transforming the office into a classroom, we have had to empty out files and cupboards, and I must admit we became a little nostalgic when we found our 'Amiga' computer programmes and the configuration diskettes and had to throw them out, since this and other equipment have brought back to us the events of ten years ago, a totally different period in the world of education. At that time we had a tiny workshop, each of us sitting at a desk, each with our own VHS if we wanted to record the images we had created.

Only one of the students had access to a computer in his parents' house, and we could often find and buy cheap 1960s cameras—*tomavistas*, as they were called then—in second-hand shops, because in one photographic shop in our town they were still selling the thick 8 mm film. We had good fun with these, although the takes were quite short and restricted since they only lasted three minutes, and for development we had to wait some two months for a Swiss lab to send back the results. The students spent hours and hours in the workshop, and we showed them large projects in VHS and the odd film by various artists sent by post, and we slowly examined the use of film technique and language. We saw films at the cinema, and these gave us plenty to talk about; in comparison to nowadays, students at that time often went to the museum cinemathèque, or they also had comparable low prices at the cinema. The workshop was a must for them if they wanted to experiment with images, and the information we gave them or the equipment they could take home were also essential for their work. The long hours spent together had a much more noticeable effect: more often than not we would work together, since joining forces meant quicker and better results. It was also much easier for us as teachers to pass on our experience to the students, and help them find their original personal space.

BEGOÑA VICARIO is a lecturer at the University of the Basque Country's Fine Arts Faculty, where she teaches Technological Image and Graphic Animation. She has produced many animated projects, of which four in professional films, for which she has won several international awards.

Over the last few years, however, technology has taken us over. On many occasions, students have better computers than those in the workshop or the teachers' equipment. Their equipment is bigger, very often too big, I would say, for them to produce their work. An art faculty is an increasingly virtual space—it is not necessary to actually be there to produce the work required, and the workshop reference has become distorted since students have had better places to meet up with their friends. Information is more easily available to us without going to libraries and video archives, on a virtual network, of course, and it is much harder for all concerned to share, study the material, or listen to the opinions of others. Not being physically together, however, does not dent their eagerness to work together. While it would rarely occur to students to carry out a project together, they willingly take up the teacher's group work suggestions, and they are capable of showing the same energy as students in my time.

On the subject of this, however, I feel one factor is rarely touched on, and it is quite important: the extent to which the simplicity and ability to work in first-rate conditions of quality afforded by new technology for young artists preparing work represent a charge of responsibility. The days of the typical handwritten documents, the photos stuck with glue, reports stapled together, are over, the *sleazy* age is out, and the illumination of the pseudo-cleanliness of digital work is in. No mistakes can be made, therefore, and this is becoming much more noticeable in the work produced, in comparison with the eras of analog technology. Likewise, students have the theoretical capacity to work more cheaply and swiftly thanks to technology, and this is also what is requested of them, since syllabus and subject time have become much shorter, but one must take up the challenge of digestion to be satisfied with one's work, the information received must improve and be sifted personally. If this proves impossible, students perform extensive mental censorship. As the years go by I see this with increasing frequency, from the point of view of both technology and creativity. I find this rather

paradoxical: they have the chance to play around with a computer mouse from a very early age, but year in, year out, and at all levels of education, the numbers of technophobe students studying informatics never decreases and, as in the age of the first computers, we hear "I never have any luck with these awful machines", "computers just don't like me", and "you'll see—I can't do it", and many other similar complaints. This is frank reality, and it is not just a few students complaining, either—if they cannot cope with the equipment, these days they will find it difficult to do anything at all. Society and a wave of propaganda from government and software companies ignore this type of educational failure and turn a deaf ear to a great extent, since it would eventually imply a serious failure in their design.

Another facet of mental censorship concerns creativity. We find new technology useful to produce quality professional work, theoretically at least, and the smallest rough drafts take on this appearance and manage to look a little pretentious. This makes a student's experiments and simple amusement much harder: an artistic search would have to be much more random, to become increasingly empirical as a young artist finds his or her place. From the outset it takes on the appearance of secure definitive work, and the student must justify and argue in words that this is just a draft, a mere approximation, playing around.

Perhaps this short text is too short to show abrupt reflections on my experience. I wrote it as a basis for deeper reflection, since the evolution and flaws of society can clearly be observed in the teaching of art production. ■

Three answers (and two practical proposals)

THE ANSWER TO THE FIRST QUESTION would appear to be obvious: radically so, because first and foremost I believe it can be no other way. Teaching, as a basic portion of social life, can never remain isolated from events in such key fields as those mentioned (the economy, politics, technology). Secondly, because it is becoming increasingly clear that changes in those fields in recent years are universal and pro-civilisation, particularly concerning everything which can be lumped around the idea of the 'information society' and which implies certain aspects which are relative, at least, to the three areas.

More specifically, in relation to visual arts, we might say two processes are running—sometimes in parallel, and concomitant on other occasions, but differentiated in any case, and these are key factors in connection with the changes which have occurred in teaching.

On the one hand, we are now actually witnessing the transformation of an analog culture to a digital culture although, as Donald Kuspit rightly demonstrates, this was already implicit in the code's noticeable emergence in Seurat's post-impressionist painting, it has radically transformed educational habits and methods by the flamboyant arrival of laptops in art rooms, along with other increasingly common devices such as the use of internet, etc. in the 1990s and the beginning of the 21st century. One simple but revealing example to illustrate this change is the fact that thousands of teachers have now abandoned the transparency pro-

jector and the slide projector (classic analog devices) in favour of the systematic use of programmes such as PowerPoint, with all the changes this entails, for example, in relation to the traditionally hypertextual complexisation of teaching scenarios.

On the other hand, however, some mention must also be made of the influence of the unstoppable audiovisualisation process in our society on the transformation of teaching habits and methods: increasing numbers of computer screens in classrooms, cinema references (the increasingly indisputable visual memory of the 20th century), or the constantly tense relationship with the truly great educational device of our time—television—it cannot be denied that these are all crucial factors in today's teaching of visual arts (and I would also say, by extension, of teaching in general, with no need for any additional adjectives).

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I FEEL THIS IS THE REAL challenge we all face, since it is obvious that if something is experiencing crisis in the world of teaching, it is the old idea of the separation between 'theory' and 'praxis': the problem as I see it is that the solution put forward in an attempt to deal with this crisis depends more on changes in the market (in this specific case, the audiovisual market) than on other more complex matters which should emerge from the consideration of what praxis is in the modern age.

I do feel that in the modern age there is no other possible ethical position than exercising Donna Haraway's 'situated knowledge', taking up the position from which one speaks or teaches in a transparent and explicit fashion, and that the 'situation' must be inextricably linked to 'what is done' – in other words, to a certain conception of the performativity of knowledge.

Someone who spoke in a more thought-provoking manner on this issue was Jacques Derrida, in his treatise "University without condition" in which, in apparent opposition to the '(technical-scientific) sign of the times', he called for a central role of Humanities studies in the articulation of what must be a university adapted to the necessities of the present day. However, not content with this, Derrida's treatise also called for reflection on devising a teaching method which would ultimately incorporate performative practices in simple discourse, from a deconstructive perspective—of course—and, the most interesting component from our point of view, which would be able to 'cause events'. It is interesting to note in this sense that what Derrida eventually wanted for teachers was something like production not only of knowledge, but also of 'works', as is common for artists.

From this point of view, I feel that the effort which should be made by those of us teaching in areas which are concomitant to or fully immersed in artistic production is particularly important, to see whether we are capable of (in an approach which is, it must be said, fairly akin to the ideas of artists such as Joseph Beuys or Jorge Oteiza) understanding our daily work within the framework of education as a prolongation of actual artistic, creative and reflexive practices, or any kind of practice, in which we find the same preoccupations with no solution in terms of continuity, and in which a search is conducted, with the essential cooperation of those who are the real protagonists, i.e. the students, for a new method to complexise discourse by means of this very praxis.

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I WOULD LIKE TO THINK that my educational practices are organised to the method set out here (production of knowledge and common experiences), although it must be said that the current configuration of syllabuses and, in general, the entire university education system, does not propitiate such approaches, at least in faculties such as my own (Social Sciences and Communication). Perhaps certain postgraduate or master's courses have been the best opportunities so far to make an attempt at such experiences, as distinct from other types of workshop such as those traditionally run at Arteleku which, free of academic obligation and rules, have enabled us to blur up the frontiers between teachers and students, theory and practice, individual works and collective works etc. much more freely.

However, I have certainly been thinking recently of formulae which allow us to work in this way, and so since the end of last year I have been informally immersed, like my colleague in the Department of Sociology, Iñaki Martínez de Albéniz, in a project in which we intend to attempt to examine the area of research common to our respective disciplines (Audiovisual Communication, Sociology), using the video tool to examine the daily lives of teenagers and their leisure time spent in shopping centres: in some way, this will constitute a 'performative' extension of our respective lectures and research work and, at the same time, any events in this sphere occurring as caused events must also spread, like a pool of oil, to our daily teaching work.

There are other projects in which a number of teachers, artists and other groups in Bilbao are currently involved; we understand open education as precisely the central problem, and we hope these will produce their first fruits in the course of 2007. ■

SHORTS

Identity is always a problem

Label in & out

Bastero Kulturgunea, Andoain
12 January - 17 February 2007

Identity is always a problem. You go somewhere and straightaway the awful question pops up: where are you from? And the answer always contains the prefabricated cliché. The old Basque saying *euskalduna, fededuna*—Basque-speaking, faith-holding; Basque-speaking, beret-wearing; Basque-speaking, weapon-wielding. So you aren't yourself at all, you're what the other person wants, you have an identity which is a way of fitting a cliché. But that's not the worst of it. It's understandable that people from other places have a certain point of view on your country. The clichés are created inside and have already spread, that's what's horrible about it. And this still happens. In many places people dress up in farmhouse costumes for the fiestas.

In opposition to these clichés, and as a sample of modern identity, the Commissary Ainara Martín has chosen four artists to exhibit their work at the Bastero Kulturgunea in Andoain. Since the four are

very different, they all talked about identity, or about the problem of identity. Borja Uriona (Gernika, 1976) is no newcomer to the design world, and lives in Barcelona. The load we bear on our shoulders also moulds and explains our identity. This is why, along with his designs, he displays four traditional Basque costumes, adapted for the exhibition. This conveys an odd sensation to the spectator: the costumes have an innovated look about them, they want to break with tradition, but still want to be traditional costumes. Who knows if somebody will be wearing them at the next round of Basque fiestas.

Tytti Thusberg (Mikkeli, Finland, 1969) has also been active in design, and the pieces she has brought to the exhibition are half design, half sculpture. These are designs which nobody would wear - designs nobody *can* wear, in fact. Her pieces are made from the common-or-garden materials we generally throw out—little infusion sachets, for example—and in this way

she expresses beautifully and elegantly the false identity which advertising in the modern age imposes on women (and men).

Aitor Larrañaga *Peli* (Zarautz, 1975) has produced a daring colourful installation. To date most of his work has been painting, and this is the case here too, but he has added several other objects, glasses painted blue and red, and a cylinder of butane gas, for example. We observe landscapes on his paintings, but they do not fill the entire canvas—they are cut off, and these interferences mean the observer cannot completely identify with the scenes, as if the intention is to state we cannot fully identify with our surroundings.

It is Saioa Olmo (Bilbao, 1976) who has most directly pinpointed the subject matter of the exhibition, and her material here is the town of Andoain. She has used the Andoain coat-of-arms in particular, the town's official symbol. On the one hand, she has talked to the local people, asking for their opinions on the coat-of-arms and on the town. On the other, she has changed the coat-of-arms—she has turned it into a mirror, and taken photographs of what the mirror showed; on another, she has removed the inner image and set another three images into it: the image of Andoain on Google Earth, the hierarchy of social organisations, and the locations appearing in the interviews with local people.

Basque art would have an official label on it, if there were such a thing. Xabier Garzarain



Saioa Olmo 2007



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