

FORUM

The Open School

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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.

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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.”

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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.”

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.

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 Grzinic, 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?

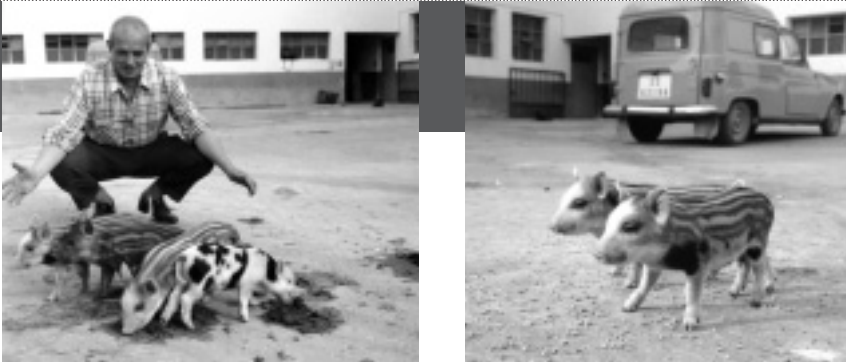
If an 'itself' means an interior and an exterior with which to relate and, therefore, certain limits, perhaps nothing and nobody can be some thing without a familiar context to define it. If this in turn is an indispensable condition of existence, or at least of our way of viewing it, the only possible 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 "Advertència" 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.



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.



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

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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.

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.

PLATONI Q 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).

EDDIE PRÉVOST is a percussionist, drummer and author of two books on the subject of improvisation: *No Sound is Innocent* (1995) and *Minute Particulars* (2004).

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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 gnoseological 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. ■

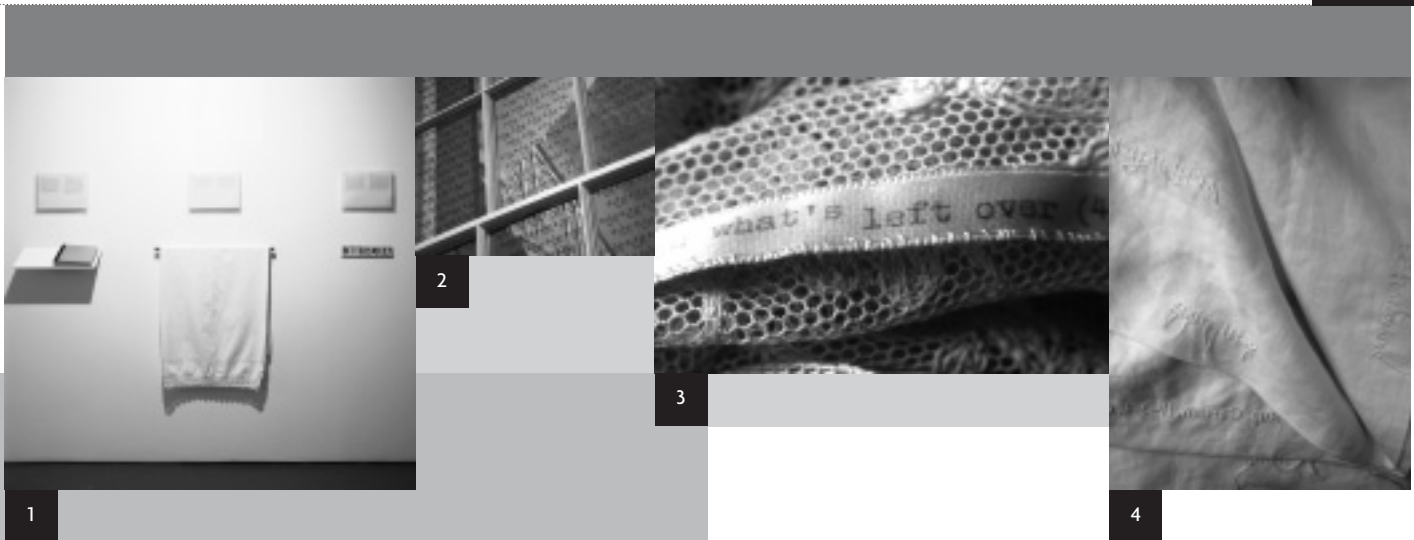
Site-Writing: Critical Spatial Practice

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.

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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



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.

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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. ■