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WEBERIAN LESSONS: ART, PEDAGOGY AND MANAGERIALISM

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Artists are turning to education, borrowing its techniques, social settings, tools, aims, furniture, characters and so on. Janet Cardiff produces 'audio walks',⁽¹⁾ similar to the audio guides provided by museums to assist tourists to navigate the collection. Tim Brennan's 'manoeuvres'⁽²⁾ do a similar job but without the technology, recasting the artist as a critical escort through history, politics and place. Andrea Fraser's performances often take their forms from the institution's own techniques of mediating between works and the public in an attempt to inform and educate.⁽³⁾ In *Wig Therapy*, Barby Asante invited participants to make appointments to see her individually so that she could help them to understand the relationship between self-image and happiness.⁽⁴⁾ Goll & Nielsen replicated an educational institution within a gallery in *Evening School*, enacting a series of 'teaching' events, conducted by a number of invited artists, researchers and musicians, to address questions of race, nationality and identity at the border between Sweden and Denmark.⁽⁵⁾ Mark Leckey delivers roaming lectures and the Copenhagen Free University constructed an artist-run space as an entire institution of critical and marginal knowledge.⁽⁶⁾

We need to consider this turn to pedagogy within the immediate context of other artists turning to cuisine, clubbing, sport, business, therapy, leisure, spectacle, retail and communication in the pursuit of an 'art of encounter'. Then again, this context needs to be seen in the broader context of what John Roberts has called 'post-Cartesian' art,⁽⁷⁾ as well as in a wider cultural context in which expertise plays such a conspicuous role. And this, in turn, needs to be addressed within an over-arching UK political context in which New Labour felt it necessary and expedient to announce its top three priorities in government as 'education, education, education'.⁽⁸⁾ So, in one sense, the turn to education in contemporary art

1. See [<http://www.cardiffmiller.com/artworks/walks/index.html>].

2. Tim Brennan, *Guidebook: Three Manoeuvres by Tim Brennan in London E1/E2*. Camerawork. 1999.

3. See Alexander Alberro (ed.), *Museum Highlights: The Writings of Andrea Fraser*. MIT Press. 2005.

4. This work was part of a residency and exhibition project, 'I Accept Your Image. I Am You' at 198, Brixton, London in 2001. See [<http://www.198.org.uk/pages/archive%202001.htm>].

5. This took place at Signal in Malmö, Sweden, 2001. For a review of this project, see Annette Brodersen, 'Living it up'. *NU: The Nordic Art Review*. Vol. 3. No.6. 2001. pp.8–10.

6. See [<http://www.copenhagenfreeuniversity.dk/>].

7. John Roberts, *The Intangibilities of Form*. Verso. 2007. p. 125.

8. Tony Blair in his Labour Party Conference Speech, Blackpool, 1 October 1996. See Paul Richards (ed.), *Tony Blair: In His Own Words*. Politico's Publishing. 2004. p. 165.

needs to be played down, to recognise that it is no more significant than any number of competing and equivalent formats in the repertoire of the art of encounter. And yet, at the same time, the turn to education carries a unique charge that deserves to be analysed in all its specificity rather than being reduced to the generic category of social encounter.

A detailed and expansive debate has been taking place over the past several years about the relative merits of various categories of social encounter for art. Nicolas Bourriaud has put his weight behind 'conviviality', providing a sophisticated theoretical defence — based on a postmodernist micropolitics — of such social events as Rirkrit Tiravanija's Thai soup installations and Carsten Höller's scientific tricks, games and amusement rides.⁽⁹⁾ Educational events are not singled out for special praise in Bourriaud's thesis; conviviality is exemplified more by Andrea Zittel's furniture-as-meeting-place.⁽¹⁰⁾ On the face of it, then, relational art seems to be an art of the generic social encounter, the programmatically unspecified event, the boundlessly open exchange. Relational art is one of the key examples of the art of encounter, within which the turn to pedagogy belongs; but relational art can only explain the motivation for merging art and education in generic terms.

Claire Bishop takes issue with Bourriaud's emphasis on conviviality and 'immanent togetherness', instead emphasising an art that reveals real antagonisms within its social and cultural exchanges.⁽¹¹⁾ Bishop is right to ask questions about 'the quality of the relationships in relational aesthetics'. In particular, she seeks to contrast the 'informal chattiness' of a typical relational artwork with the inherent friction that Chantal Mouffe argues is necessary for any genuine democratic process or political dialogue. For this reason, Bishop highlights projects 'marked by sensations of unease and discomfort rather than belonging, because the work acknowledges the impossibility of a 'microtopia' and instead sustains a tension among viewers, participants, and context'. She cites the work of Santiago Sierra and Thomas Hirschhorn as examples of work that is disruptive and destabilising through friction, awkwardness and discomfort.

9. Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*. Presses du Réel. 2002.

10. See [<http://www.zittel.org/>].

11. Claire Bishop, 'Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics'. *October*. 2004. No. 110. p. 67.

Bishop's main argument — that Bourriaud's conviviality is not adequately antagonistic to count as democratic — provides a strong corrective to Bourriaud's ethics of inter-subjectivity. Bishop's critique of Bourriaud opens up questions of the political substance of relational art by asking for an antagonistic (i.e. political) rather than convivial (i.e. ethical) account of art's social relations. Nevertheless, Bishop's account turns on its own structural absence. She promotes antagonism and censures conviviality insofar as they are present in the work itself. In other words, she presupposes that the politics of the encounter has to be resolved formally within the work. This is why she praises Sierra and Hirschhorn for the structure of their works; she seeks works that are marked by antagonism. However, it remains unclear why the antagonism has to appear in the work. Even if her political analysis is germane, Bishop neglects the variety of possible ways in which hegemony can be challenged and the variety of ways in which art can contribute to that process. Grant Kester has offered a third model, which neither limits its social encounters to convivial ones nor restricts its political antagonisms to ones that are markedly present in the work (as stipulated by Bishop). In his book, *Conversation Pieces*, Kester tracks projects that operate 'between art and the broader social and political world'.⁽¹²⁾ Kester's model is, in other words, a politically spiced-up 'new genre public art', which develops an ethics for artists out of the contrast between a 'patronizing form of tourism' and 'a more reciprocal process of dialogue and mutual education'. Kester thus proposes 'a very different image of the artist, one defined in terms of openness, of listening [...] intersubjective vulnerability relative to the viewer or collaborator'. However, by focussing on the conduct of the artist in relation to the communities he encounters, Kester's argument can default into a moralising analysis.

The social models and techniques that Kester's dialogical artists use, however, tend to be derived from political contexts. WochenKlausur,⁽¹³⁾ for instance, intervene directly in the social fabric, providing medium-term infrastructural, institutional and strategic solutions to perennial social problems such as prostitution, care for the elderly and medical provision for the homeless. Even if we want to defend this work, we need to be careful not to let its particular methodologies limit our theory of the art of encounter. A political interrogation of the art of encounter surely

12. Grant Kester, *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art*. University of California Press. 2004.

13. See [<http://www.wochenklausur.at/index1.php?lang=en>].

does not require that artworks take their models of encounter from the political field. One of the lessons of modern emancipatory political movements is that politics cannot be restricted to the field of professional and official political conduct. Žižek puts this point abstractly when he says that 'politics is the antagonism between politics proper and the apolitical attitude',⁽¹⁴⁾ by which he means that politics needs to be understood as the struggle over what counts as political, including the highly political assertion that something is non-political and the highly charged demand that some politically neglected element of our private life must be brought into the sphere of politics.

Where does this leave us? We now have three theories of the art of encounter, each of which has been subjected to critique. Together they map a context, albeit incomplete, into which the turn to pedagogy has recently been made. They also provide a set of debates through which we might begin to evaluate the turn to pedagogy, especially in terms of its relative ethics, politics and social relations. My suggestion is that we understand the turn to pedagogy better if we locate it within this discursive field of relational, antagonistic and dialogical practice, but also, and of no lesser importance, that an analysis of the turn to pedagogy can contribute to our understanding of this field. I want to suggest something else too, though, which is that this entire field needs to be contextualised in terms of broader changes, which I will call the emergence of a new social ontology of art.

In *The Intangibilities of Form*, John Roberts identifies within this development what he calls the emergence of the 'post-Cartesian artist': 'Too often the discussion of the readymade languishes in the realm of stylistic analysis, the philosophical discussion of art and anti-art, or, more recently, the Institutional Theory of Art', Roberts says, and 'not as a technical category'.⁽¹⁵⁾ In his view, the key transformation of the readymade is that it 'brings the link between artistic technique and general social technique in the modern period into inescapable view'.⁽¹⁶⁾

Harry Braverman's classic analysis of the historical advent of 'deskilling' provides Roberts with a framework for thinking through the complex and mediated ways in which art intersects with the division of labour.⁽¹⁷⁾ Braverman explains how the degradation of work under Fordism

14. Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject*. 1999. Verso. p. 233.

15. Op. cit. p. 22.

16. Op. cit. p. 53.

17. Harry Braverman, *Labour and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century*. Monthly Review Press. 1974.

and Taylorism — which converts crafts and skills into manageable units of manual labour — goes hand in hand with the massive expansion of management and administration, whereby experts, planners and managers replace the knowledge that is sucked out of labour. Taylorism systematically divorces intellectual and manual labour, based on the argument that ‘all possible brain work should be removed from the shop and centered in the planning or laying-out department’.⁽¹⁸⁾ There is a basic economic motive for Taylorism (the more management can deskill labour, the cheaper the labour is), but there is an ideological one too. It gives management the aura of truth and persuades us that for every task, every aspect of life, every anxiety, feeling and problem, there is an expert. Taylorism did not restrict itself to industry; it has permeated culture, society, politics and everyday life. Agribusiness would not be able to convert farming into industry without Taylorism. Similarly, the shift from the large Victorian kitchen to the small modern kitchen was largely determined by Taylorist principles of the scientific management of bodily movement and the efficient engineering of labour. Automation, which is one of the key aspects of deskilling, has colonised everything from microwave cooking and predictive text to photography in which every decision is pre-programmed into the camera.

Roberts does not translate Braverman into art in any unmediated, mechanical way — by, for example, latching onto moments of deskilling such as the introduction of digital technology or the various waves of appropriative art. Instead, he argues, that Duchamp inaugurated a shift away from handcraft and representation that ushered in ‘a discourse on the diffusion of authorship through the social division of labour’.⁽¹⁹⁾ So, it is not so much that art is deskilled, but rather that, through a double movement of ‘diffusion’, art sheds its old techniques and absorbs the whole gamut of techniques at large. Often, these go hand in hand, as in the case of conceptualism which conspicuously abolished artistic skills from art while simultaneously drawing on linguistic philosophy, science, and so on. The reception of Mary Kelly’s *Post Partum Document* was typical in this respect. For all its prominent discursive complexity, Kelly’s work was remarkable, in the eyes of its opponents, for its technical barbarity. The absence of artistic skill was seen as an annulment of art itself.

18. F. W. Taylor, *Shop Management*. Kessinger Publishing, 2004. p. 51. (Original 1911.) See also [http://www.gutenberg.org/catalog/world/readfile?fk_files=12672&pageno=1].

19. Op. cit. p. 53.

Amateurism and incompetence have critical promise within modern and avant-garde art because they shake the hegemony of what has been authorised as skill in any antecedent settlement of art. In other words, amateurism and incompetence test the limits of what is proper, good, acceptable and virtuous. T.J. Clark develops this line of argument in his conception of ‘practices of negation’, by which he means those techniques through which modern artists ‘deliberately avoided or travestied [a] previously established set of skills or frame of reference — skills and references which up till then had been taken as essential to art-making of any seriousness’.⁽²⁰⁾ Working on the basis of Clark’s analysis, Art & Language assert that ‘changes in criteria of technical competence [...] act very directly to signal intentional changes of position in relations of production’. In fact, it would be impossible to imagine a significant shift in culture without such a change in the criteria of technical competence. This position was radicalised and extended by Terry Atkinson in the 1980s who argued for a ‘disaffirmative practice’, shot through with mistakes, anomalies, feints and incompetence — a ‘botched’ art. Atkinson thus constructed a cognitive bridge between Clark’s critical modernism and Adorno’s dissonant, mute, mangled aesthetic.⁽²¹⁾ Disaffirmation is art’s critique of the social and cultural world expressed as the immanent critique of art.

Roberts extends this debate considerably by thinking of the critique of skill in art not in terms of the various ‘incompetences’ of early modernist painting, but in terms of the division of labour implied by Duchamp’s readymades. His new reading of Duchamp is also a new reading of art after Duchamp. The result is an ontology of art in which there are no longer any specifically artistic skills or techniques, such as painting or sculpture, that define art (what Thierry de Duve calls ‘generic art’), rather art draws its techniques from industry, politics, entertainment, philosophy, science and so on, without limit. And this means, among other things, that the artist goes through the same kind of expansive transformation and can no longer be identified or conceptualised in the old ways. This is the birth of the post-Cartesian artist.

What Roberts calls the ‘aggressive Cartesianism and asocial aestheticism of modernism’, is radically undermined by Duchamp and

20. T. J. Clark, ‘Clement Greenberg’s Theory of Art’ in Francis Frascina (ed.), *Pollock and After: The Critical Debate*. Routledge, 2000. Author’s Note. p. 79.

21. Terry Atkinson, ‘Phantoms of the Studio’. *Oxford Art Journal*. Vol. 13. No. 1. 1990. pp. 49–62.

then redoubled by Warhol's Factory, but it is only fully jettisoned by Conceptualism, when art's preoccupation with crafting a unique object is replaced with a repertoire of techniques borrowed from anywhere and everywhere.⁽²²⁾ 'The displacement of the first person singular discourages the author to think of himself or herself as a unified subject bounded intellectually and conversationally as art historical'. An example that suggests itself in this regard is Alex Farquharson's list of Carsten Höller's practices: 'zoologist, botanist, paediatrician, physiologist, psychologist, occupational therapist, pharmacist, optician, architect, vehicle designer, evolutionary theorist and political activist'.⁽²³⁾ Thus, for Roberts, 'the artist's voice becomes subordinate to the forces of reproducibility and general social technique'.⁽²⁴⁾ And this subordination, crucially for our discussion here, opens the artist up to a multitude of previously unavailable roles, discourses and modes of address.

We used to have three heroically singular elements of art: the artist, the art object and the viewer. All of these have been opened up to 'general social technique', creating a lot of anxiety and excitement and a handful of theories, each promoting one possible way of being post-Cartesian. We need to see that the critique and transformation of the gallery, which has occurred at roughly the same time, is fundamentally related to the emergence of the art of encounter; the gallery is the institution of those three singularities and cannot, therefore, survive their demise. Thus, the gallery, which has begun to mimic or host other institutions, has itself been opened up to general social technique.

Recent interest in interactivity, participation and dialogue in contemporary art is, at least in part, a critique of the viewer who was once the default subject of art's reception. It would be going too far to say that the viewer is dead, but the gallery is now occupied by new, more diverse, subjects and rival bodies, so that very little of the new art is made with that customary aesthetic subject — the viewer — in mind. That is to say, it is not just that the art community has been faced with different works and different situations; the very subjectivities and experiences that can be had in the name of art have been transformed. The new art of encounter cannot help but propose a far-reaching amendment of art's ontology; the art object is dislodged as the primary focus of the encounter with art. Art's addressee, no longer necessarily even a gallery-goer, is

22. Op. cit. p.128.

23. Alex Farquharson, 'Before and After Science', *frieze*. No. 85. 2004. p.93.

24. Op. cit. p.115.

reconfigured as a participant, interlocutor, guest, peer, comrade and so on; the white box institutions in which we encounter art have adapted by mimicking libraries, cafés, laboratories, school rooms and other social spaces.

There is no viewer for the art of encounter and if, by chance, a viewer turned up then their activity would probably be seen as a troubling social presence affecting the inter-human action that it views. As such, any objects that are included within these inter-human relational artworks are generally used rather than viewed. Liam Gillick's work, for instance, is always visual, but always within a social framework of the visual. He is interested, he has said, in how the visual environment structures behaviour. His work, therefore, can be understood as a politicisation of the visual in art and culture. Hence, even when his work looks well designed or even beautiful, it 'is better as a backdrop to activity [...] If some people just stand with their backs to the work and talk to each other then that's good'. Gillick thus expresses a vital element of the new social ontology of art, jettisoning the viewer, transmuting the art object in the process and establishing a new set of social criteria by which the art is judged. But how exactly are we to understand this shift? To answer this, we are required to extend our terms of reference.

Among the non-artistic discourses that the artist turns to within the post-Duchampian ontology of art is a set of techniques derived from pedagogy. Although the art of encounter is not necessarily Duchampian in its style or approach, we can detect a Duchampian legacy within its very conception of art. The readymade, we can say, inaugurates a transformation of the ontology of art, without which the development of the art of encounter and the turn to pedagogy would be impossible. But, again, pedagogy should not be singled out here as especially useful or promising. It is simply one of the social forms to which the post-Cartesian artist has turned. Roberts is quite clear about this: 'Collective authorship represents the promissory social space of the organization of art's ensemble of skills and competences beyond their privatization in "first person" expression, aesthetics, and the whole panoply of possessive individualism inherent in the Cartesian Theatre'.⁽²⁵⁾

This is not yet the full story of art's turn to pedagogy. The immediate social and cultural context for it is the emergence of educational formats within factual and entertainment television programming. We

25. Op. cit. p.125.

can list the genres without too much effort — programmes about cookery, wine, antiques, gardening, survival, technology and medicine, as well as a profusion of programmes to help you decorate your home, to dress better, to buy and sell property better and to bring up children better. Celebrity chefs are a prominent symptom of this development of educational television. According to Demos, these ‘mentoring formats’ should be adopted by Teachers TV to aid teachers in the classroom: ‘*What Not to Wear* and *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* are both examples of popular reality TV programmes where style experts critique a person’s dress sense or etiquette, suggest new approaches — in some cases “tell them what not to wear” — and then watch them applying their new-found knowledge in practice. This coaching model of observation and reflective dialogue is both an effective learning model and a successful entertainment model’.⁽²⁶⁾ To others, however, these programmes have a dangerous agenda; for example, *What Not to Wear* has attracted critical analysis from Angela McRobbie for its post-feminist symbolic violence.⁽²⁷⁾ What I want to do, though, is to look at why education is expedient for entertainment TV and how education-as-entertainment addresses its audience.

Education-as-entertainment on TV is part of a vast proliferation of factual programming that developed in the 1980s and 1990s. The TV landscape changed over this period, at first with the arrival of Channel 4 in the 1980s and then with the Broadcasting Act 1990,⁽²⁸⁾ which put pressure on the BBC to deliver cheaper popular programming. As Annette Hill has observed, ‘It is no coincidence that the BBC was the major developer of popular factual programming during the 1990s, and paved the way for the dominance of reality genres in peak time schedules in the 1990s’.⁽²⁹⁾ One of the overlooked reasons for the proliferation of education-as-entertainment, though, is that, as a form of address, educational formats place the consumer in a familiar subjective position. Not only are consumers happy to adopt the role of student, learning to cook and shop better or finding out about distant lands and top-drawer cars, but they are also happy to watch others learning something or being put through their paces. This

26. John Craig, Susan Tipping and Matthew Horne, *Switched On*. Demos. 2004. See [<http://www.demos.co.uk/publications/switchedon>].

27. Angela McRobbie, *The Aftermath of Feminism*. SAGE. 2008.

28. Broadcasting Act 1990. [http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1990/Ukpga_19900042_en_1.htm].

29. Annette Hill, *Restyling Factual TV: Audiences and News, Documentary and Reality Genres*. Routledge. 2006. p.32.

is not simply a matter of some possible warmth being drawn from the nostalgia that we might feel for having been to school or taught things by our parents; I am thinking here more about what Christopher Lasch has called ‘the abdication of authority’.⁽³⁰⁾

The embedding of education in entertainment, I want to argue, is a contemporary articulation of the rise of the expert in culture. Education-as-entertainment can only cast the consumer or audience as student or spectator of other students within an economy of knowledge and knowledge-acquisition in which others are cast as experts, professionals, insiders and so on. Within the pleasures of education-as-entertainment, of course, the presence of the expert is neither alarming nor remarkable; some people simply know things that the rest of us don’t know. Against the idea that the expert is nothing but the bearer of specialist knowledge, experience and authority, however, we can raise fundamental questions about why we want to devolve truth to experts. Therefore, the social history of expertise explains something hidden and crucial here; the rise of the expert as an unremarkable social presence can be seen as following the pattern of an increasingly rationalised, bureaucratic, managerial and administered society.

The most influential thinker on the bureaucratisation of society is Max Weber who argued not only that the expansion of bureaucracy is inevitable within a society as complex as ours; it is, moreover, the only way of administering large-scale social systems.⁽³¹⁾ Bureaucracy, in Weber’s description, is not the regime of experts but officials and pen-pushers whose tasks are routine and procedural. Administrators are not experts in the full sense; they are trained to be competent in a limited set of duties. For this reason, they take advice from experts, consulting them, commissioning reports from them and so on. Bureaucracy is not the rule of experts but it establishes the structural need for them. Weber described this process as the rationalisation and disenchantment of society. This increased bureaucratisation of society corresponds with the historical trend in which traditional or value-orientated behaviour is superseded by goal-orientated behaviour. Practices that were once run on tradition, superstition, custom, religious code, spiritual inspiration or mysterious forces would be liberated from irrationalisms and anach-

30. Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism: American life in an age of diminishing expectations*. Norton. 1978.

31. Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*. A.M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons (trans.). Collier Macmillan Publishers. 1947.

ronisms in a clean-sweep kicked off by the Enlightenment. Sometimes, this supposedly liberating confrontation with the enchanted world is just called modernity. For this reason, bureaucracy is the signature style of modern authority. Indeed, Marshall Berman's analysis of the experience of modernity, *All That is Solid Melts into Air*, can be seen to chart the effects of Weberian rationalisation on culture and everyday life.⁽³²⁾

Experts and expertise are no longer restricted to business and management; they have colonised the everyday, the family and private life. Here, the skills of citizens are alienated from them in the same way that they are alienated from workers under Taylorism. In modern culture, rather than turning to traditions within the family and community, professional experts are relied upon for advice on parenting, marriage, cookery and other domestic concerns. In true Weberian style, Taylorist management science rationalises, modernises and controls, submitting practices that were once run on tradition to scientific and economic scrutiny. And it is from this analysis that Adorno and Horkheimer developed the idea of the 'totally administered society'.⁽³³⁾

This line of argument is not an attempt to transplant the whole Frankfurt critique of the social totality onto contemporary art's turn to pedagogy. Educational formats enter the world of contemporary art in the context of Weberian modernity, but not within this alone and not in any mechanical or inevitable fashion. These developments are also linked to the development of the art of encounter after the emergence of the post-Cartesian artist and the post-Duchampian ontology of art. There is a need to integrate an analysis of the rise of the Weberian expert into that of the specific historical development of deskilling in order to provide the full social context of recent art's turn to pedagogy. Finally, as I have argued, it is more helpful to see art's specific turn to pedagogy as connected with the proliferation of educational formats in entertainment. What I have attempted to show is that the turn to pedagogy can be read in terms of any of these historical developments but, more importantly, that it is a result of the combination of these various separate developments. However, I want to finish by suggesting that this broad analysis shouldn't be taken as a condemnation of the turn to pedagogy in contemporary art, but as a constellation within which decisions need to be made.

32. Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity*. Penguin. 1988.

33. Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Edmund Jephcott (trans.) Stanford University Press. 2002. (Original 1947)

I want to propose that we approach the question of pedagogy in much the same way as Mark Hutchinson, alerted to the dangers of expertise, has thought through the question of the curator as an expert on art.⁽³⁴⁾ Hutchinson draws heavily on Adam Phillips' incisive challenge to the convention of regarding the psychoanalyst as an expert given that psychoanalysis cannot tell us what we want or what frightens us. 'Freud's account of obsessional neurosis', Phillips says, 'is a critique of knowledge as privilege, and of the privileging of knowledge. The obsessional exposes the violence, the narrow-mindedness, of a certain kind of expertise about the self'. It is the task of the analyst, he concludes, to 'facilitate the patient's capacity not to know themselves'.⁽³⁵⁾ Either the psychoanalyst is an expert in this resistance to self-knowledge or psychoanalysis 'becomes merely another way of setting limits to the self'. Phillips, thus, subverts the expertise of the psychoanalyst by formulating it paradoxically, as an expertise in uncertainty, ignorance, forbidden knowledge, secrecy.

Hutchinson applies this principle to the contemporary curator, the half-manager, half-author that has, over the past few years, come to occupy art's centre stage. Psychoanalysis is a good model for thinking about the curator-as-expert, Hutchinson argues, because it is 'a conversation about what cannot be solved by knowledge'.⁽³⁶⁾ In this way, he hopes, psychoanalysis can shed light on the problems of expertise in general, perhaps even help cure us of our need for experts. Expertise in any discipline, he says, protects 'against the absences, ills, lacks, divisions, exclusions, negations, contradictions and silence upon which that discipline exists'. Hutchinson proposes that the antidote to the expertise of the curator is to learn to manage without the guarantees that expertise promises, ultimately to be left with nothing, a nothing that would be very welcome – even critical – within the deskilled, unitised, standardised and degraded Weberian world in which the expert thrives.

My suggestion, then, is that the turn to pedagogy in contemporary art, like the turn to education-as-entertainment in TV, is tied up with the role of experts, expertise and managerialism within our Weberian modernity. In saying this, though, I don't mean to imply some sort of reductive

34. Mark Hutchinson, 'On Expertise, Curation & the Possibility of the Public'. *The first condition*. No. 4. 2005. [http://www.thefirstcondition.com/issue_04/issue04_frameset_hutchinson.html].

35. Adam Phillips, *Terrors and Experts*. Harvard University Press. 1997. p. 104

36. Op. cit.

reading of pedagogical techniques as symptoms of modern bureaucratic society. This is why it is important to see the turn to pedagogy as a turn to a specific mode of address and a corresponding mode of subjectivisation. In other words, artists, curators and other art professionals are using teaching techniques, settings and skills in large part because they offer a particular coded style of social encounter, with its own set of familiar characters, roles and subjects. In this respect, the turn to pedagogy is clearly not merely a mechanical reflection of Weberian society, but rather it is highly mediated by, and dependent upon, the post-Duchampian development of the art of encounter. However, insofar as the modes of address, and modes of subjectivisation, of pedagogy, are caught up within Weberian themes of expertise, rationalisation and managerialism, they cannot satisfactorily be read uncritically as an affirmative, enhancing, hospitable exchange of knowledge, information and experience.

The turn to pedagogy must also involve the turn to the controversies, hierarchies, tensions and troubles that characterise pedagogy at large. Education is a fraught social process that leads systemically to an uneven distribution of cultural capital. Given that art as an institution benefits from the profits of cultural capital, art and education are already in cahoots before they even turn to pedagogy. But, in this context, surely we must be very suspicious of the turn to pedagogy within contemporary art as a set of techniques for reinforcing and underlining art's enjoyment and requirement of cultural capital, its complicity with managerialism and its investment in the culture of expertise. Before embarking on any pedagogical artistic projects or any defence of them, we need to go back to school and learn some Weberian lessons.

AN AESTHETIC EDUCATION AGAINST AESTHETIC EDUCATION

Stewart Martin

Documenta 12's commitment to the question of what is to be done in education is to be welcomed from an institution that has sought to sustain itself as an autonomous cultural realm, a public sphere, in the face of its fabulous state sponsorship and relationship to the art market. The articulation of the question in terms of the self-education of artists and audiences and a globalised cultural translation of localised forms of self-organisation broadens its address. In the context of the uneven globalisation of cultural centres — as manifested in the blossoming of biennials from Istanbul to Johannesburg and Seoul — the old school of international art exhibitions is obliged to respond not only to one or other of these newcomers, but to the fact of their profusion and their representation as the authentically subaltern. In this respect, *Documenta 12*'s positing of itself as the stage for exchanging local, self-organised projects is a way of sustaining its global significance as an organisational centre in an art world that has become increasingly decentred. Its benevolence is thus liable to a quasi-imperial perversion, the irony of multitude and empire.

The conservative reaction to *Documenta11*'s commitment to postcoloniality was more parochial and short-sighted, and '*Documenta*' has subsequently become an answer in Germany's citizenship test for immigrants. *Documenta 12*'s project of a 'journal of journals' is itself liable to this colonising function. Journals were invited to take part in a global exchange and translation of their 'position', hosted in a virtual, but no less codified, space. But, an intranet site and copyfree rights are hardly enough to retain the dream of a republic of letters here. Participation, in line with the best intentions of this project, therefore needs to question its terms of exchange. Having been offered citizenship of *Documenta 12*, one is perhaps obliged to try to fail its test and answer its question⁽¹⁾ by criticising it.

The Devil in the Deep Blue Sea

To say that education is a constitutive issue of contemporary culture is to risk tautology, especially in German. The implicit claim that 'culture is education' only rings true when it is heard not as a translation

1. *Documenta 12* employed a series of questions to structure the programme. The question under consideration in this piece is 'Education: what is to be done?' See [http://www.documenta.de/fileadmin/pdf/Pressemappe_en.pdf].

but as a speculative proposition, determined by an antagonism between the terms that are also inherent in each of them. These antagonisms have become familiar within modernism, the culture of the new. The dissolution of traditional, dogmatic or externally imposed authority problematises the idea of education — how can freedom be taught? — orientating it towards autonomy and self-organisation. But the contradictions harboured by the idea of an education in freedom manifest themselves in the ironic formation of new modes of dogmatism, above all the neo-dogmatism of the law of value. These issues have not become antiquated by the globalised scenario emphasised by *Documenta*, except in so far as one might characterise the present as a classicism of antagonism. The artistic director of *Documenta 12* claims: 'Today, education seems to offer one viable alternative to the devil (didacticism, academia) and the deep blue sea (commodity fetishism)'.⁽²⁾ This is wishful thinking. It is difficult not to be struck by a certain educationalisation of contemporary culture that is characterised above by the fusion of didacticism and commodification.

Meritocracy — certainly across the neoliberalised social democracies of Europe — is among the preferred means of mediating democracy and capitalism, exemplified in former British prime minister, Tony Blair's trinity of education, education, education. 'Life-long learning' is a phrase that oscillates between the dream of fulfilling self-transformation, beyond the privileges of youth, and the nightmare of indiscriminate de-skilling and re-skilling according to the dictates of a flexible labour market. Many are left dumbfounded by the breathless, exponential pace at which education at all levels is being commodified. The liberation of 'choice' and 'opportunity' is the carrot; the threat of self-incurred poverty, whether of the nation or the individual, is the stick. This threat infuses the political discipline of states seeking technological sovereignty, but the de-nationalisation of labour markets has added a further dictate: your nationality will no longer save you from poverty, only your education will. The expansion of postgraduate degrees — note the contradiction in terms — is fraught with tensions between widened accessibility to more self-directed study and the instrumentalisation of higher education into training or research guided by state or corporate-funded interests, if not its indiscriminate commodification as a leisure industry, often misrecognised by those

2. See Fouad Asfour *et al.* 'Editorial', *Education. Documenta Magazine*. No.3. 2007. unp.

seeking a job in academia. Qualification is a receding horizon; its promise of maturity takes the form of infantilisation.

Art education is not exempt from these phenomena, despite its exemplary resistance to them in many ways. Often, art education is an exception and derided as such, as not 'an education', or as an 'education for failures', the uneducated and the ineducable. But, what appears to be infantile to the schoolmarmish can, at its best, be an assumption of autonomy, rather than its deferral or evasion; one begins already an artist in a way that few other disciplines can even comprehend, let alone match. This fact infuses the auto-didacticism of the art school intellectual and, while it might be difficult to recognise among the fat-and-felt mythology, Beuys' thesis that 'everyone is an artist' remains a pivotal contention of modern art education, central to the self-critical and even self-negating task of the art school. Of course, the irony of this educational radicalism has frequently been an undisciplined demagoguery. Few manifest this more powerfully than Beuys himself. And, while the public fascination with, and scandal of, contemporary art is infused by the idea that 'I could do that', the art world remains dominated by graduates from select academies. Art schools are certainly brand names in the market for young artists.

The dismantling of academicism within the art academy — the undermining of the strict observance of genres and art, of artistic competence and authorship, indeed, of what art should be — mimics, albeit at times critically, the nominalism of new processes of the commodification of labour and their protocols. A neo-academic tendency is also apparent in the pervasive critique of the supposedly 'uneducated' capacities of taste and genius — and their actual formation by social class, ethnicity, gender, sexuality or other determinations — a tendency which is indifferent to how taste and genius contribute to the cultivation of non-dogmatic forms of authority and self-determination. If the capacities of taste and genius can be seen as effects of commodity fetishism, their dissolution into the determinability of social space and identity is no less symptomatic of the calculation of consumer markets. The theoreticisation of art practice and education that has accompanied this sociologically reductive tendency is frequently entranced with academicism. 'Theory' has proven to make just as good packaging as the connoisseurial puff. Criticism is the antidote to both.

According to a similarly ambivalent pedagogy, exhibition space has been widely transformed over the recent period, with various 'aids' to mediate the audience's experience of the artwork, from ubiquitous and

expanded catalogues, to orientating wall texts and audio guides, audience-response forms and posting boards. The whitewashing of art space to prime the unaided exercise of taste is being reversed. Even where art is sold as an experience, an encounter with something unknown, there is usually a guide on hand. Within under-resourced public spaces, education offers a respectable merchandising opportunity.

Documenta 12's appeal to self-organised educational projects offering an alternative to academicism/didacticism and commodity fetishism suppresses the extent to which the modern idea of education is embedded within these terms. Indeed, the very idea of education as emancipation is infused with the contradictions of these terms. Commitment to this idea thus requires its immanent critique. How else could an injunction to education today be formulated?

Lessons in Autonomy

It was, perhaps above all, the modern political-philosophical idea of autonomy, codified by the French Revolution and its German *philosophes*, which induced the crisis and reinvention of the idea of education that continues to the present. The French Revolution grounded freedom on equality, as an inalienable right, introduced in the form or guise of 'man'. Equality is not derived from freedom in the manner of the aristocratic democracies of antiquity, in which equality is a category of distinction, of an elite. Rather, the modern idea of autonomy requires a coincidence of freedom and equality: equality without freedom is subordination; freedom without equality is privileged, particular and, therefore, constrained. This mediation is infused with a non-dogmatic idea of law; freedom must be subject to universal law as a guarantor of its equality, but law must also be subject to freedom; it cannot be unchallengeable by the individual. The idea of autonomy resolves this tension into the idea of individuals determining themselves, according to universal laws to which they subject themselves, with the inalienable or natural capacity they have as subjects. Thus, Kant argues that the moral law expresses nothing other than the autonomy of pure practical reason — that is, freedom. One is not subjected to dogmatic or externally imposed rules — heteronomy — but to the rules one gives to oneself as a subject. Autonomy is, therefore, a unity of subjection and subjectivity.

This idea of autonomy produces a crisis and reinvention of the idea of education. For, if education is essentially a relation of subjection — of student by master — then it is incompatible with the constitution of autonomy. Even if education means merely the transmission of something from those who have it to those who do not, how can there be an education in autonomy? Autonomy is not owned or understood by certain beings such that it can be transmitted to others who do not possess it. Rather, it is the egalitarian presupposition of any such exchange. As such, education is best left behind in the seminary or reduced to a minor, or subordinate, cultural function incidental to forging a culture of autonomy. These problems justify various forms of anti-education, attached to the natural, the naïve and the untrained, or perhaps self-trained, for which Rousseau provides the slogan: 'Man was born free, and yet everywhere he is in chains'. And yet, this idea of anti-education also induced ideas of an education against education, proposals for the paradoxical task of an education in autonomy. Rousseau's *Émile, or On Education*, sees his Savoyard vicar professing a faith in 'common reason' to his young companion rather than conducting 'learned speeches or profound reasonings': 'I do not want to argue with you or even convince you. [...] Reason is common to us, and we have the same interest in listening to it'.⁽³⁾ Famously enthused by this peculiar education, Kant conceived of enlightenment as a matter of courage: 'Have courage to use your own understanding!'⁽⁴⁾ Finally, Joseph Jacotot's universal teaching, cited by Rancière in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, articulates the paradoxical principle of an education against education most succinctly: 'I must teach you that I have nothing to teach you'.⁽⁵⁾

Socrates' insistence that he knew nothing more than his interlocutors and that they should enter into the search for truth together, as equals, established a pedagogic precedent for education in autonomy to become essential to the idea of philosophy, opposed not only to sophistry but also to the inculcation of doctrine. But Socrates remains the master, followed and admired, contradicted by his pupils on pain of misleading themselves, the hero or sovereign of Plato's dialogues. His

3. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile, or On Education*. Allan Bloom (trans.). Basic Books. 1979. p. 266. [Orig. 1762]

4. Immanuel Kant, 'An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?' *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*. Ted Humphrey (trans.). Hackett. 1983. p. 41. [Orig. 1784]

5. Jacques Rancière. *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*. Kristin Ross (trans.). Stanford University Press. 1991. p. 15.

students remain students. Meno's slave is brought to know what is forgotten within him, what appears to be a capacity above his rank, but, in being brought to that point, he remains subjected in reaching it. He remains a slave. The lesson to Socrates' select pupils, certainly to Plato, is to establish themselves in their superiority, as those 'golden' boys, philosophers, and thereby rulers, of the serried ranks beneath them. It is the promise of sovereignty through subjection. But subjection remains subjection, if not to Socrates then to 'the forms'. Sovereignty is reduced to compensation for one's subjection by the subjection of others. If the idea of philosophy is intrinsically tied to this education in subjection, then we need to think of an education in autonomy as forging an alternative discipline or anti-discipline.

The contradictoriness of an education in autonomy should not be overstated, insofar as freedom is subject to equality — albeit as much as equality is to freedom — then the subjecting function of education might be conceived according to the discipline required of freedom. But this only extends the crisis of education to the idea of autonomy itself, exposing an essentially disciplinary sense of autonomy as a concept of rule or domination. Freedom is conceived as the domination of oneself. One becomes free through subjecting oneself to oneself, as if two subjections emancipate a subject. The educational hero of autonomy names this well: the autodidact. Thus, the unity of equality and freedom is rendered essentially and necessarily antagonistic, as the unity of competing rules. It is as an alternative to this dominative and antagonistic conception of autonomy, and its education, that the idea of an aesthetic education acquires a decisive significance. The rule-like but non-ruling character of various features of making and experiencing art renders them exemplary for thinking of a non-dominative, non-antagonistic unity of freedom and equality — for instance, the extent to which taste can be agreed upon despite not resulting from obedience to a rule. Schiller's *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* is the most conspicuous attempt to draw out the significance of 18th century discourse on taste and the beautiful for an education in autonomy.

Freedom With Sense

Schiller maintains the idea that freedom cannot be learnt. Aesthetic education teaches the already free, although what is at issue

here is not courage but the 'realisation' of freedom in another sense, its actualisation. This involves a disciplining of sorts, but through beauty, not law, and through harmony or affinity rather than domination. An education in autonomy is re-orientated towards that which follows no rules and gives no rules and yet is not antagonistic or chaotic: the beautiful artwork. Autonomy is thought not in terms of self-government or self-ruling, as much as in the suspension of rules. The inculcation or giving of rules, indeed the whole ethos of discipline, is displaced by play. The modern anthropology of autonomy becomes a discourse of play: 'man only plays when he is in the fullest sense of the word a human being, and he is only fully a human being when he plays'. *Homo ludens*. It is as such that the beautiful provides a model for a free community, the 'aesthetic state'. Aesthetic education is conceived as an antidote to the pathologies of the neo-dogmatism of reason and its idea of freedom, principally its abstractness or indifference to sensuous particularity, and the splits and alienations this generates — in short, the formalism, mechanism and alienating specialisation of the modern state, as opposed to the polypoid state that Schiller derives from Greek antiquity, in which 'every individual enjoyed an independent existence but could, when need arose, grow into the whole organism'.⁶ Objections to Schiller's bourgeois classicism are familiar but reductive. Schiller does not propose that the 'aesthetic state' simply returns the 'moral state' to a 'natural state', but that it realises a free community by overcoming the opposition of morality to nature. Nor does Schiller abandon a commitment to equality in his insistence on the mediation of freedom with sense. Rather, the sensuous manifold becomes a radicalisation of the determination of freedom by equality: that all are free in their particularity rather than just in their universality. Schiller emphasises a latent dogmatism in freedom's domination of nature, sensibility, felt at the heart of self-determination. Despite the consensual impression of this politics of beauty, the category of the beautiful proposes a far more challenging unity of freedom and sensibility than does the sublime, which — at least in Kant — is the experience of freedom from sense.

With Schiller, the modern political ontology of autonomy comes to rest on an education in beautiful, or fine, art. He provides a manifesto for the historical avant-gardes, not only with respect to what they seek

6. Friedrich Schiller. *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*. E.M. Wilkinson and L.A. Willoughby (trans.). Clarendon Press. 1982. pp. 107–35. [Orig. 1795]

to overcome, and, through them, such an education is extended into the terms of contemporary art. But our distance from Schiller is measured by his naivety with respect to the commodification of culture. Nonetheless, the idea of aesthetic education permeates the critique of capitalism. Indeed, Marx's critique of the value form — its abstraction from the particularity of use — can be understood as a transposition of Schiller's critique of the dominance of form over sense. Marx's recovery of living labour from capital, as dead labour, reiterates Schiller's conception of the beautiful as living form, as opposed to the lifeless form of 'modern man'. Communism is an aesthetic state for Marx, also modelled in the artwork. Capitalism is a pathological rationalism, a dominative mode of autonomy, in which humanity's autonomy is alienated. The law of value is precisely a neo-dogmatic authority, emerging from within the project to overcome natural or feudal forms of subjection, to which aesthetic education offers an alternative model.

But the attempt to conceive of the critique of capitalism in terms of an aesthetic education is complicated in so far as capitalist culture itself has affinities with the 'aesthetic state'. The value form may abstract from the particularity of labour and its products, but, in so doing, it also forms them according to the accumulation of surplus value, generating not only value or money, or even an economy, but a capitalist society — capitalism as a whole way of life. This induces a new anthropology of autonomy. The supersensuous sensibility of beauty is reproduced in the supersensuous sensibility of the commodity fetish together with its apprehension through taste. For Schiller, beauty is sense apprehended from the standpoint of the moral law; for Marx, commodity fetishism is sense apprehended from the standpoint of the law of value. The idea of aesthetic education appears to have turned against itself, as if it were an antidote that produced its own poison.

The contention here is not that Schiller or Marx offers a forgotten answer to the question of education today, but rather that they introduce the problem that still needs to be addressed — namely, the constitution of aesthetic education as both the critique and the embodiment of a neo-dogmatism of the law of value. More or less consciously, this problem pervades current debates about the ontology of art, in particular the conflict between the anti-aestheticism generated by conceptualism and the neo-aestheticism that has emerged in reaction to it. Being constituted by this conflict over aesthetics enables contemporary art to reflect the profound ambivalence of an aesthetic education in a way that it could

not do if it were limited to the aesthetic or, for that matter, to taste and the beautiful. As such, art becomes the locus of an immanent critique of aesthetic education — an aesthetic education against aesthetic education. This would form a lesson in emancipation.

EXHIBITION TO SCHOOL: UNITEDNATIONSPLAZA

Anton Vidokle

It is self-evident that nothing concerning art is self-evident anymore.⁽¹⁾

Theodor Adorno

unitednationsplaza, ‘the exhibition as school’ — I realise that this sounds somewhat paradoxical, yet it’s the only way to describe a project that was originally intended as a biennial (*Manifesta 6*, scheduled to take place in Nicosia, Cyprus, in the autumn of 2006); but instead, after much turmoil, was realised as an independent temporary school in Berlin and then later crossed the Atlantic to continue under the name Night School at the New Museum in New York.⁽²⁾

Despite being an artist, I was invited to join the curatorial team developing the concept for *Manifesta 6*.⁽³⁾ Our thinking at the time was: Why do another biennial? We felt that the incredible proliferation and homogeneity of such events had rendered them largely meaningless. Once offering an alternative to the conservatism of art museums, in more recent years, biennials had begun to resemble white elephant type government projects, which drain local budgets for cultural production while offering a rather formulaic digest of participants and content from the international contemporary art field. We decided instead to use the budget, resources and network of the biennial to start a temporary art school. There were several reasons why we were interested in the model of an art school rather than an exhibition. Perhaps a rehearsal of this rationale will shed some light on the possibilities of both exhibitions and art schools for now and for the future.

It is sufficient to give the titles of some recent large-scale international art exhibitions — ‘The Production of Cultural Difference’ (*3rd Istanbul Biennial*) or ‘Critical Confrontation with the Present’, (*Documenta X*) — to demonstrate that there is a strong desire on the part of organisers and participants to see their work as transformative social projects rather than as merely symbolic gestures. Such rhetoric and positioning has become the norm, and it now seems that artistic practice is automatically expected to play an active part as a transformative agent in contemporary society. But is an exhibition, no matter how ambitious, the most effective vehicle for such engagement?

1. Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*. G. Adorno and R. Tiedemann (eds.) C. Lenhardt (trans.). Routledge Kegan Paul. 1984.

2. See [<http://www.unitednationsplaza.org/>]. See also [<http://museumashub.org/node/48>].

3. The curatorial team included Florian Waldvogel and Mai Abu EIDahab.

In 1937, it is believed André Breton and Leon Trotsky wrote the manifesto, *For an Independent Revolutionary Art*, although this was also signed by Diego Rivera.⁽⁴⁾ They called for a ‘true art, which is not content to play variations on ready-made models, but rather insists on expressing the inner needs of man and mankind in its time — true art is unable not to be revolutionary, not to aspire to a complete and radical reconstruction of society’. What may appear to be a naïve call for all-or-nothing revolution includes a subtle and important justification of that demand — that we, as artists, curators, writers need to engage with society in order to create certain freedoms, to produce the conditions necessary for creative activity to take place at all. But what precisely does it mean, this desire that art and artists should engage with all aspects of social life? Is it merely a democratic impulse to open up the places of art, a desire to bring art out of rarefied and privileged spaces and into more ‘real’ contexts, or is it a move towards the further instrumentalisation of art practice by assigning to it a concrete social use value?

Public exhibitions of art started at the time of the French Revolution. What actually happened was that the King of France was evicted from his home, the Louvre, and executed along with his Queen. Shortly thereafter, a part of the palace, the Salon Carré, was used for the first fully public exhibition of painting and sculpture by contemporary artists.⁽⁵⁾ The audience for this salon show was, in a sense, the first real ‘public’: a group comprised of citizen-subjects who had just violently gained political power and instituted the First Republic. The works in this exhibition did not contain any explicitly politically or socially engaged artworks, but rather traditional paintings of landscapes, nudes, mythological and religious motifs. Yet the actual experience of being able to enter the royal palace to view art was surely ‘political’; it was intimately connected to the revolutionary process taking place at the time. Perhaps attending the exhibition was no different from voting or going to a public hospital or visiting a state ministry for the first time — experienced as an integral part

4. The text of the manifesto is available in Mary Ann Caws (ed.), *Manifesto: A Century of isms*. University of Nebraska Press. 2000. pp.472–476. For a discussion of Trotsky’s authorship, see Robin Adèle Greeley, ‘For an Independent Revolutionary Art: Breton, Trotsky and Mexico’. Raymond Spiteri (ed.), *Surrealism, Politics and Culture*. Ashgate. 2003. p.206. See also [http://www.marxists.org/subject/art/lit_crit/works/rivera/manifesto.htm].

5. See Andrew McClellan, *Inventing the Louvre: Art, Politics, and the Origins of the Modern Museum in Eighteenth-Century Paris*. University of California Press. 1999. p.15.

of the new political agency that citizens experienced, which allowed them to truly shape their communities and change them via political means.

What is of real importance here is that this situation perhaps simultaneously created unprecedented positions and opportunities for both artistic practice and art institutions. For the first time, the presence of a ‘public’ offered artists the potential to transform their community through art’s critical function, to engage groups and influence public opinion, which can, in turn, result (and has resulted) in tangible social and political change. It is in no way accidental that, several decades later, we see the emergence of such figures as Courbet, Manet and others, who helped to institute the paradigm of critically engaged art practice that we are still pursuing today.

For art institutions, the move away from private collections and the emergence of an art-viewing public implies a transition to a much more meaningful social function. In this way, both the artist and the art institution suddenly manage to obtain a very ‘sovereign’ position. Interestingly, this was possible through a process of mere spectatorship: looking at art objects and representations. However, there is a catch; the spectators of art have largely lost their political agency as such. In the early 1980s, Martha Rosler observed that the public — in the sense of groups of engaged citizen-subjects — was being replaced by audiences. The difference between these two terms — ‘public’ and ‘audience’ — is easily imagined if you think of a situation like an opera house or a cinema, in which audiences sit passively in a darkened room, rather than situations allowing people to participate in a more active way. In this sense, audiences are groups of consumers of leisure and spectacle; they have no political agency and no necessary means or particular interest in affecting social change. Arguably, what Rosler had begun to observe in the 1980s has now become *a fait accompli*; while the audiences for art have become enormous, there is no ‘public’ as such among them.

Consequently, while it is still possible to produce a critical art object, there would seem to be no public that could complete its transformative function, rendering the very premise of critical contemporary art practice effectively untenable or, at the very least, severely reducing its agency. If the transformative function is what we are after, an exhibition may not be the best place to start. Perhaps the school as a model can point the way to restoring the agency of art in the absence of an effective public.

Art schools are one of the few places left where experimentation is, to some degree, encouraged, where emphasis is supposedly on process and learning rather than on product. Art schools are also multidisciplinary institutions by nature, where discourse, practice and presentation can co-exist without necessarily privileging one over the other. The actual activities that typically take place in an art school – experimentation, scholarship, research, discussion, criticism, collaboration, friendship – contribute to a continuous process of seeking out and redefining the potential in practice and theory. An art school is not concerned solely with the process of learning but it can be, and often is, a super-active site of cultural production: books and magazines, exhibitions, new works, seminars and symposia, film screenings, concerts, performances, theatre productions, new fashion and product designs, architectural projects, resources such as libraries and archives of all kinds, outreach and organisation – these and many other activities and projects can all be triggered here.

However, unlike exhibitions, schools are most often closed to the public, with much of their programming and content available only to the body of registered students. Furthermore, with their insistence on compliance with previously established rules and standards, educational institutions often ensure that, for all their promise of experimentation and innovation, each successive generation of students evolves into a replica of the preceding generation – something which could be bypassed if the school was temporary. If the two models – temporary and publicly accessible exhibition; and potentially innovative and experimental but publicly restricted school – were combined, perhaps a new, radically open school could provide a viable alternative to exhibitions of contemporary art and could reinstate the agency of art by creating and educating a new public.

This, then, outlines some of the reasoning that led us to propose the substitution of a biennial exhibition with a temporary school. Initially, the proposal was met with much enthusiasm, both locally on Cyprus and internationally. The *Manifesta* school in Nicosia was intended to be structured into three departments, each semi-autonomous and deploying a different educational model, ranging from a largely online, independent study programme to a nomadic school with constantly shifting locations that would use existing spaces in the city from film theatres to bars. Nicosia, the capital of Cyprus, is a divided city. The southern part is populated mainly by Greek Cypriots, while the north is largely Turkish Cypriot. Following the end of Cyprus' colonisation by Great Britain and

a period of bloody ethnic tensions between the two groups, including a failed coup initiated by the military junta in Athens, Turkey moved its troops into the northern part of the island to protect ethnic Turkish Cypriots. The northern side declared independence from the Republic of Cyprus in the early 1980s and the two sides have since been separated by a UN administered buffer zone, which runs through the centre of the city.⁶ When we entered this complex political situation with our project in 2004, there was much talk about the unification of the island, but it did not come to pass. *Manifesta 6* was to take place throughout the city and involve participation from both sides of the ethnic divide.

My part of the project, Department 2, was to take place in an old hotel building in the Turkish Cypriot neighbourhood, which would combine living quarters for participants with more public production/presentation spaces. Several thousand artists, curators, film makers, musicians, architects, designers and others from all parts of the world applied to take part in the school and approximately one hundred were selected to join the core group of the programme and stay on Cyprus for the one hundred days of the biennial. The school was intended to be free of charge and selected participants were to be offered financial assistance and modest production budgets from the biennial's budget. This part of the programme was to be situated in the Turkish side of the city, which in itself was not meant to be controversial. However, as we moved closer to the opening of the biennial, despite assurances and agreements made with local officials, the progress stalled. Demands were made that the entire project be situated solely in the Greek Cypriot side of the city. Naturally, we refused, as it was inconceivable to us that a whole community be excluded from involvement in an international cultural event. After numerous attempts to negotiate a solution, when it became clear that our efforts were being blocked, we spoke to the local press and were immediately dismissed by the Greek municipality that had commissioned the project. The biennial was cancelled three months before the opening, numerous lawsuits ensued and any possibility of realising the project under the auspices of *Manifesta* dissolved into thin air.

For me, this was a very important turning point. The confrontation with the Cypriot officials left everyone involved completely exhausted

6. For a discussion of Cyprus and its political history, see Andrew Borowiec, *Cyprus, a Troubled Island*. Praeger. 2000. For a shorter introduction see Suha Bolukbasi, 'The Cyprus Dispute and the United Nations: Peaceful Non-Settlement between 1954 and 1996'. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. Vol. 30. No. 3. 1998. pp.411–434

and demoralised. Furthermore, the mere threat of legal action scared away virtually all the international funding institutions and other partners. However, I was really reluctant to let go of the project without finding out whether an experimental 'exhibition as school' would actually work. All of the artists and writers who had worked closely with me on developing this idea — Boris Groys, Martha Rosler, Liam Gillick, Walid Raad, Jalal Toufic, Nicolaus Hirsch, and Tirdad Zolghadr — were equally curious and so, after some discussion, we decided to attempt to realise this project independently as a self-organised initiative in Berlin.

I have found it increasingly important to find ways of doing things that do not involve complete reliance on existing institutions for audiences, funding or legitimacy. It is not at all coincidental that many of the most important art schools — such as the Bauhaus and Black Mountain College — were self-organised by groups of artists. Sometimes, I feel that it's almost impossible to realise truly innovative ideas within a framework of already established institutions and networks, a framework of which an international biennial is, of course, a part. Some people have pointed out to me that, even if *Manifesta 6* hadn't been censored by local officials, the experimental nature of the project could well have led to last-minute opposition from the contemporary art market and establishment. After all, there are very specific expectations for what an international art show should offer — not least the spectacle of national representation and new commodities, neither of which would have been offered by our school. So, if we are interested in the kind of art projects that are not merely 'variations on ready-made models', it is urgent to think of situations in which the work can exist and circulate on its own, framed — in a sense — by itself.

After half a century of isolation and division, Berlin was a particularly interesting location for our school-in-exile. After the fall of the wall, many artists from Germany and Europe settled in the eastern part of the city. This huge migration of cultural producers moved and organised much faster than the development of any official art institutions. The result has been an incredible proliferation of self-organised exhibition spaces, collective venues and small independent institutions, which have dominated the cultural landscape of Berlin for nearly two decades now. In effect, these self-organised projects enjoy the same and sometimes an even greater degree of cultural legitimacy than the official institutional culture of the city.

I came to Berlin and quickly found a small building on United Nations Plaza (formerly Lenin Platz) in the city's eastern section. To avoid additional legal problems with Cyprus, and to reflect the radical transformation of the project, we decided to name the school after the address of the building: *unitednationsplaza*. The structure of the school project was very simple: a free, informal, university-type series of seminars, conferences, lectures, film screenings, and occasional performances. The focus was on contemporary art; the length of the project was one year. It was open to all who came and it disseminated its content through publications, a radio station, and an online presence. The project also operated the Salon Aleman, a functioning bar in the basement of the building put together by several of the artists involved in the project, and open for business sporadically. The programme was duration-based, which is to say that it was effectively meaningless to come to the school only once.

Repeated visits were necessary to gain any value from the discussions, for, unlike a normal artist's talk or a lecture, the seminars were lengthy; sometimes they stretched for several weeks, bringing people together every night including weekends. In total, there were six of these seminars throughout the year. The topics ranged from the role of religion in a post-Communist situation to the history of video art as a social medium; from the viability of a discursive frame to the possibilities of art in the context of war; and from the production of images in a post-Enlightenment era to many other themes. *unitednationsplaza* also presented various film screenings and performances, hosted the Martha Rosler Library during the summer months and produced a film, entitled *A Crime Against Art*, based on an unusual conference staged in Madrid.⁽⁷⁾

Importantly, *unitednationsplaza* functioned very much as an artwork in its own setting: an art project that did not need anyone to display it or promote and bring audiences to it — it did all that for itself. Furthermore, *unitednationsplaza* demonstrated that this mode of practice can travel as it did to New York and Mexico City; this mode of critical practice can also engage effectively and integrally with an institution, as this particular project did with the New Museum in the form of the Night School, yet it does not completely depend on institutions to manifest itself. Of course, *unitednationsplaza* is not a unique example of such a practice; it fits within a long tradition of extra-institutional projects

7. Hila Peleg (Dir.) *A Crime Against Art*. Bureau des Videos: JRP Ringer. 2007.

from Tina Girouard, Caroline Goodden and Gordon Matta-Clark's *Food*⁽⁸⁾ (an informal cultural centre in the form of a pay-what-you-wish restaurant in New York's SoHo, which lasted, in various incarnations, for more than a decade) to more recent examples, such as *The Land Foundation* in Chiang Mai.⁽⁹⁾

Inevitably, the programme of *unitednationsplaza* demanded a lot of time from the audience and, even more importantly, it forced some members of the audience to articulate a position in relation to the project. Reciprocally, it offered all those who attended a stake in the project — a certain kind of ownership of the situation — in that everyone who came along could participate to the degree that they wished. I would argue that this enabled the kind of productive engagement that is still possible if spectatorship is bypassed and the traditional roles of institution/curator/artist/public are encouraged to take on a more hybrid complexity. For me, this means that given some changes to how art experience is conceived and constructed, the idea of 'the public' can be resurrected and the modality of critical art practice can be preserved.

8. *Food* was located at the corner of Prince and Wooster Streets in NYC. For a discussion of this project, see the catalogue of Gordon Matta-Clark's first retrospective and catalogue raisonne: Mary Jane Jacob, *Gordon Matta-Clark: A Retrospective*. Chicago Museum of Contemporary Art. 1985. The *Food* project was more recently the subject of a *New York Times* article coinciding with the opening of a retrospective of Gordon Matta-Clark's work in 2007 at the Whitney Museum. See Randy Kennedy, 'When Meals Played the Muse'. 21 February 2001. See [<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/21/dining/21soho.html?ex=1329714000&en=e26ca7c24c540d61&ei=5090&partner=rssuserland&emc=rss>].

9. See [http://www.thelandfoundation.org/?About_the_land].

EDUCATION WITH INNOVATIONS: BEYOND ART-PEDAGOGICAL PROJECTS

Peio Aguirre

Education! Education! Education! This cry is heard, again and again, as a social need or as a vindicated right. The fact that educational and pedagogical programmes within art structures are in demand these days cannot conceal the fact that, at the same time, some old institutions committed to art education (such as universities and art schools) are undergoing a state of emergency, not only due to the Bologna Declaration and its various implications, but also because of a shift in the traditional teacher-student transference that provided the whole basis for the previous model of education.

Rather than consider the replacement of, let's say, traditional art teaching with these new art-educational projects, what seems urgent is a re-assessment of both situations focusing simultaneously on their convergences and differences. We cannot look solely to the current range of art-educational projects without analysing and monitoring the educational system of art as a whole. To do so would be to risk remaining stuck in a self-absorbed conversation without exits, in which curators talk endlessly about their own and other curators' practices.

The undeniably legitimate claim that there has been a displacement from the regular sites of art teaching to museums, art centres and related institutions still leaves ample room for an examination of the causes or reasons for such a shift. Facts speak for themselves; almost every cultural institution has incorporated an educational strand into its programme and has put resources in place to secure its continued operation. Very often within these educational programmes, cultural institutions search for collaboration with art schools, creating hybrid formats of lectures, seminars, etc.

Education has become one of the cornerstones of current curating, which pretends to a certain status as 'critical curating'. Some of the earliest and strongest education-orientated initiatives have taken place (at least in Spain) within official structures and institutions, such as the Bilbao Guggenheim Museum, where education is a requirement created by new mass-scale art audiences and where the emphasis is placed on all that surrounds and contextualises the exhibitions (communication, mediation, branding and so on). These developments have had a collateral effect in the strengthening of educational and pedagogical departments within these institutions.

Considering these issues at another level, we recognise that university programmes have been launched within museums of contemporary art, such as the Independent Studies Program (PEI) at the

Museum of Contemporary Art in Barcelona (MACBA). In an international context, there is great demand for postgraduate courses and there is an expanding industry based on a global educational market. The city of Barcelona itself provides a good example of this global market and boom in educational services, with a thriving educational economy which draws students from all around the world.

If we are to speak of curating in general, and the turn to educational models in particular, the real novelty lies in those new models that attempt to cross the boundaries between education and critical, theoretical discourse, in order to disclose the economic dynamics of education (as an industry) within the art system. These models bring education and outreach systems to critical account, along with the other prevailing economic dynamics and sub-systems of the art world (the market and its galleries and dealers and economies of museums and institutions of all kinds).

Within these developments, a gap appears to open up between, on the one hand, those artists who combine their artistic practice with regular, permanent or visiting positions in art schools, and, on the other hand, a profound paradigm shift with respect to education as the result of curatorial innovation and re-positioning. Inevitably, the relationship between these two positions is organic, and it is difficult to establish a radical division between artists, on the one side, and curators on the other. However, the effects of change are most clearly visible in the field of curating; the insistence on education, as subject matter and theme, is clearly a key resource within recent curatorial discourse.

A significant distinction emerges here at the level of representation between a practice of talking about education and another practice, which sets education at its centre of action and engagement; this is the recognition that when someone actually starts talking about making a project *on* education then it ceases to *be* education and becomes something else, namely, discourse. Therefore, talk of 'educational art', or the so-called educational turn, operates as a discursive formation; viewed from another angle, this becomes a figure of speech and risks becoming mere rhetoric. In this sense, we all run the risk of making this emergent rhetoric more consistent (or making it ready for packaging and consumption), or just offering this discursive formation as yet another subject matter for the art world's thematisation strategies. Such rhetorical strategies operate within art structures as engines of argumentation divorced from action and actual consequence in the world. In this sense,

the dialectical turns of *art as education or education as art* are of little help because this dialectic remains one-dimensional meta-rhetoric without real consequence. Rather, what we should seek here is to draw a subtle distinction between the idea of art as experience and that of art as knowledge (and here I am not referring to widespread notions of 'artistic research' or 'knowledge production'). In a similar way, there is a need to recognise the distance between education simply for the sake of educating (as a social responsibility or as an accepted social imperative) and those other educational 'projects' that have recently emerged onto the scene. The scare quotes around the term 'projects' are apposite because it is as if, in this context, the terms education and project are mutually exclusive. For my part, I cannot see these two terms working together in harmony. Project suggests a purpose or goal and, while it seems untenable (or at least curious), in our time, to talk of 'art for art's sake', is it still possible to imagine education for education's sake, for the pleasure of doing it, i.e. without a means-ends rationale, without taking any benefit from it? Obviously, what this seemingly simple question hides is the issue of economic profit and I do not mean the salary or the fees transacted from the art-education operation itself but the profitability of these projects in the symbolic economy of the cultural field, as art projects and not as education.

And if project and education seem, in this way, to mutually exclude each other, how should we approach the idea of education or the art school as an exhibitionary device? An exhibition on, or about, education is a ticklish issue; when, why, how and in what circumstances have learning, teaching or educational activity become submitted to the historically determined form of the exhibition? Thematisation always undermines the latent potential of critical concepts. In an exhibition, for instance, some works could *talk* about education, thereby making even more palpable the breach between education and *talk* about education. There is potential for misunderstanding here, in as much as this line of enquiry may appear to be yearning for a return to forms of territorial autonomy in education, but this is far from my intention. Rather, what is at stake is a questioning of some curatorial practices, rooted within contemporary discourse, which have become norms for the curatorial field to the point of making it difficult to make nuanced distinctions across a range of practices and models subsumed under the heading 'educational'.

One of the problems here lies in the shift in contemporary art in recent decades, whereby the concept of 'project' is ubiquitous. Therefore,

instead of lecture series we have ‘discursive projects’, because the former is now construed as boring; instead of exhibitions, we have ‘multi-faceted’ events, because the former is now deemed visually hierarchical and one-dimensional; and now there are ‘readers’ instead of exhibition catalogues, since these latter are too bound up with the traditional role of exhibitions. To avoid a series of clichés, to avoid using what appear to be non-progressive formats — this, in itself, becomes a new cliché and these, in turn, have become established formulas that are now well digested and accepted.

Beyond these strategies, what one finds is the canonisation of discourse, or the enthronement of speech, as the sacred place from which everything is directed — via the commodification of theory or via the inevitable misappropriation and distortion of critical theory in the hands of various operational agents. Art always involves a system of mediations — a series of distances and gaps open up in the representation and mediation of art, and the term ‘project’ is there to fill these gaps. It is not a question of insincerity but, then again, nobody wishes to appear in this game as discursively weak. We are afraid of the kind of impoverishment that appears to arise whenever one attempts to avoid the discursive in order to focus on the experiential or the phenomenological or the affective or the cognitive. But, then, we also urgently need well developed and astutely applied critical theory in the arts.

The problem is that we might use the term ‘ignorance’, or even promote it, but, at the same time, we are extremely alert to the fact that, with this term, we refer to Jacques Rancière’s concept and we are anxious not to appear innocent of this theoretical nuance, not to be mistaken for the ignorant. A gap opens here between theory and practice, a void between what we extol and what we do. This, in itself, could serve as a good example of the institutionalisation of education and, indeed, of many other institutionalisations, from critical theory to institutional critique. Of course, the misapplication of critical theory will always be something to count on; examples are frequently to be observed in the habits practised within the arts. One such example is provided by the interpretation of theories of production and the role of the press in Walter Benjamin’s ‘The Author as Producer’. This text has prompted art centres and institutions to publish their own newsletters and newspapers as a feigned bridging of the presumed distance between the institution and its audience by means of these publications when, in fact, the motivation for the operation is nothing other than institutional self-promotion and advertising. There is

no authentic correlation between theory (Benjamin’s) and the institution’s communication practice (70 years after the text was written) here. There is simply an instrumental deployment of an excuse, or pretext, which enables self-justification for courting public exposure; and this is all done in the name of education.

Art colonises everything. Its appetite is voracious. However, education resists the production of its own representation; you cannot represent education, since education is, in itself, an act of communication between several people in the process of exchanging their own skills, disabilities and dysfunctionalities. When a photographic camera is inserted into an educational setting, or when someone takes a step back to portray a learning scene, then all the invisible architecture that supports communication, transference, the corporality of the voice, or even just silence, is suddenly eradicated. (But, at the same time, it might be useful to focus on Bertolt Brecht’s didactic strategies, in which he didn’t only stress the pedagogical process but also made visible the gesture of showing, teaching and, in the same way, learning.) Of course, we can say that all art is educational or pedagogical or, in order to avoid these considerations, we can say that art is, in itself, education; however, these pronouncements operate differently once education is subjected to a confrontation with the problem of its own *representability*.⁽¹⁾

It is not so long ago that artists sought to actively and thoroughly reject what they thought of as the academic, the received education, the traditional education system and its teachers. They pursued this variously through the construction of ‘un-learning’ experiences, through auto-didacticism and through ‘aculturisation’. So, what is the ultimate reason for the current re-entry into the academy, this return to school? Is it too odd, in this context, to use, instead of the simple term, ‘education’, the Maoist term, ‘re-education’?

1. An interesting exception to this is offered in the film *Chronique d'un été* (Chronicle of a Summer), 1961, by Jean Rouch and Edgard Morin, where the cinematographic device and the relationship between camera and object (the young students) is made invisible to the point that its methodology is reflective of its education, and where the pedagogics remains in its own form as an ethnographic documentary or a film.

Forms and Methods of the Pedagogical

In autumn 2005, I co-directed a workshop-seminar in conjunction with Leire Vergara⁽²⁾ under the generic title of ‘We Rule the School: Conversations and Research’ at the art centre Arteleku, Donostia-San Sebastián. For a period of 15 days, a group of young, international artists and researchers were brought together within a programme of visits by a number of leading artists and critics. As a coincidence (or, rather, as an unconscious intuition of some forthcoming major projects using the word ‘school’), the workshop avoided worldwide communication in order to prioritise the immediate context.

Questions of method determined the adoption of a three-phase structure for the programme — educational, situational and discursive. However, we were reluctant to formulate a defined and precise theoretical framework within which to organise the workshop, beyond an introductory letter which called for improvisation and speculation while also inviting the participants to become active in the construction of meaning and to assume the slogan, ‘We Rule’.⁽³⁾ But, this lack of precise theoretical framework was partly intentional as well. The presence of all the participants — speakers and visitors — the process of selecting films to see together, the scheduling of activities to be undertaken by the group and others — all these elements combined to make the situation clearly provisional rather than pre-scripted. The slogan, ‘We Rule the School’, functioned rather as a declaration of intent or a motto.

We also tried to implement a method that could be described as the postponement of content. This required us to ‘forecast’ teaching

2. My curatorial partner for some years in the self-organised curatorial structure, Donostiako Arte Ekinbideak (DAE).

3. Some months before the realisation of ‘We Rule the School’, we were asked for a contribution to a poster entitled ‘Manifesto for an Independent Art Arena’, a project by the Norwegian artist and curator, Tone Hansen. We contributed a short statement, which is an early iteration of our educational proposal. We wrote a short fictional text:

‘We rule the school. Yes, we do. Don’t you believe us? It began as a game and now it’s getting serious. Earlier it was something in between; half high-school, half university. A kind of institute that we used to call ‘universitate’. But a new and modern institute was required from new emergent social forces. We are aware of that, yes, because we spent years going to the summer academy and to the winter school. But we realized from our earliest notebooks that we needed to destroy to start building again, as in an endless loop. That is why we like poetry. Then there was a melodic pop song by Belle and Sebastian with the same title. On a bus stop in town ‘We rule the school’ is written for everyone to see and read. Right now this is becoming a reality. We go there every day, and be sure; there is lots of fun. Come and see, let’s go dancing tonight. Peio Aguirre and Leire Vergara. 2005.’

and learning scenes, i.e. to project teaching scenes as possible ways of meeting, conversations, conflicts and other inputs and outputs. The workshop-seminar was primarily an opportunity for innovations in form rather than in content. This meant that we needed to imagine and shape a ‘space’. We needed to imagine its relationship with the autonomy of the site and in relation to other structures, to stay alert and to wait for knowledge to emerge as the product of an exchange process and not as something that existed *a priori*. Approached in this way, a seminar or workshop is a time-space that needs to be filled, an open structure in which the unexpected can suddenly happen. This involves encouraging self-consciousness among the participants to question both passive and active roles. What comes from this situation is the reconsideration of discourse as something that arises spontaneously from the very educational experience, something which focuses on the forms of education or, in other words, on the methods of teaching.

The synthesis between enunciation and pedagogy can also be traced in different types of artistic practice. Ways of suturing the divisions between the artistic and the pedagogical are not new — consider the way in which Brecht found, in the Chinese parable, a mode to link both.⁽⁴⁾ In another text, Brecht’s call to revolutionise opera and radio as media gave rise to a heated polemic around innovations in form, as against speculations on possible content. His statement on the renovation of opera may meaningfully be transposed onto the current state of art education as an institution. Brecht wrote: ‘For some time past there has been a move to renovate the opera. Opera is to have its form modernised and its content brought up to date, but without its culinary character being changed’.⁽⁵⁾ In 1929, he argued that ‘only a new purpose can lead to a new art. The new purpose is called pedagogics’.⁽⁶⁾ For Brecht, ‘pedagogics’ concerns attention to the content and form of a play (or artwork) but, even more urgently, to the play’s dialectical relationship to the productive apparatus.

A sub-heading near the conclusion of the text, ‘The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre’, stridently proclaims: ‘For Innovations —

4. Bertolt Brecht, *Me-ti Buch der Wendungen*. Suhrkamp Verlag. 1983. *Me-ti Book of Turning Ways, or Book of Twists and Turns* is a compilation of aphorisms using the name of the ancient Chinese philosopher, Me-ti or Mo-tzu. The style of writing is based somewhat on the Chinese moral and pedagogical parable-like form of dialogues between masters and apprentices. The book was written over a long period and first published posthumously in the 1960s.

5. Bertolt Brecht, ‘The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre’. John Willet (ed.), *Writings on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*. Hill and Wang. p.33.

6. Bertolt Brecht, ‘On Form and Subject-Matter’. *Ibid.* p.30.

Against Renovation!’⁽⁷⁾ What might he have meant by this? Whereas renovation simply means locally limited aesthetic variations, designed to update the ‘culinary’ value of the artwork or any other revival, ‘real innovations attack the roots’ of entrenched conservative social hegemony. In short, the innovations seek ‘to convert institutions from places of entertainment into organs of mass communication’.⁽⁸⁾ These claims for innovation were nothing less than strategies to re-function drama, to serve the purpose of a pedagogics aiming to change not only art but also society itself. Previously, with respect to the pedagogic component of an artwork, Brecht had enquired: ‘Why can’t *Der Flug der Linberghs* be used as an object of instruction and the radio be changed?’⁽⁹⁾ For him, if education had a final goal this might be found in the revolution of the apparatus of production, in subverting these structures from within, by means of the educational process. What we can learn from all this is that, however much theoretical discourse is brought to bear within an educational structure (in terms of content), without a transformation of things at higher levels, including the level of form, then all that happens is the reproduction of the educational apparatus, whatever that may be.

Brecht’s advocacy of rethinking educational spaces is far removed from the reductive formalism frequently encountered in educational art projects, which equate the disordering of the chairs in a classroom or re-arranging them in informal groupings or in small circles with the production of more direct and transparent communication between participants. Any attempt at transforming hierarchies is in vain when structures remain unchanged at higher levels (both in terms of consciousness and aims) — that is, a change in both subject positions and objective forms. There is often a tendency towards circularity in these educational spaces, in which a tautological process keeps a discussion ‘live’ but entails revolving around its own conditions of possibility. Within education, there is always a danger of creating obstacles to transformative critical processes, even where one least expects such obstacles because — despite the flexibilisation of forms, the ‘soft side’ of informality and the pretended absence of prescription — there is always a move to define and delimit the roles, on one or other side of a table, in terms of who speaks and who listens.

7. Ibid. p.41.

8. Ibid. p.42.

9. Bertolt Brecht, ‘A Model of Pedagogics’. John Willet (ed.), *Writings on Theatre*. op. cit. p.32.

One of the problems with the currently dominant models of the symposium and seminar is precisely that all weight and significance is placed on the speaker and not on the audience that listens. In this regard, the formats of these discursive events are fully correlated with the construction of the art ‘project’.⁽¹⁰⁾ In certain circumstances, there is also a demand that listeners, despite being anonymous, should participate — their function no longer being merely that of passive observers of a monologue or dialogue but rather of subjects incited to speak in order to increase the sheer quantity of the discourse produced.⁽¹¹⁾ The discursive format itself complies with the demands of publicity so that communication about the project transforms any information on the content and nature of the seminars or symposia into ‘the struggle for publicity’.⁽¹²⁾ This potential for communication, within educational initiatives transformed into publicity, relocates this discourse within the established economy of the entire art structure.

I am deeply grateful to one of the visitors to ‘We Rule the School’, the artist and professor at the Manchester Metropolitan University, Pavel Büchler, who, after our encounter, sent me a Roland Barthes text which confirmed some intuitions in this area and helped to clarify the basis for the establishment of an ethics in education. In contrast to the current format of seminars, based on systems of communication and self-advertisement, Barthes conceived of the seminar as a place from which to build a community of listeners, rather than a community of speakers. The recognition that the classroom creates a space in which communities can be created was not new for Barthes, who gleaned the

10. One example here would be the conference called ‘The Madrid Trial’, which took place at the ARCO Art Fair in 2007 and was the basis for the documentary *A Crime Against Art* (directed by Hila Peleg. JRP/Ringier. 2007). This is a good example of self-parody, and indeed irony, with respect to the sophisticated discursivity of contemporary art. In this case, the instrumentalisation of the symposium format demonstrated the representational boundaries of public speech, in a sort of ‘anti-pedagogical turn’.

11. See again *A Crime Against Art* and particularly the role of the audience in relation to this event. Of special interest in this context are the audience’s interventions and the apparent ‘public’ contributions. An ambiguity prevails as to whether these are scripted or spontaneous.

12. The ‘struggle for publicity’ refers to the growing conflict of interests and competition among various art agents as clearly manifested in the ‘e-fluxification’ of the art world. This ‘e-fluxification’ extends to all operational agencies (curators, artists, critics, galleries and so on). These terms — ‘struggle for publicity’ and ‘e-fluxification’ — refer specifically to the current situation of art criticism in the public sphere as a field crossed by two major forces: on the one hand, the publishing industry (mainly national and international art magazines) needing to generate copy and, on the other hand, galleries, institutions and museums needing to achieve exposure and publicity in the magazines and journals either through advertisement or through critical reviews.

best from Brechtian pedagogical models. For Barthes, however, it is the inevitability of the seminar which shapes the content and not the other way round. He wrote:

Is this a real site or an imaginary one? Neither. An institution is treated in the utopian mode: I outline a space and call it: *seminar*. It is quite true that the gathering in question is held weekly in Paris, i.e. *here and now*; but these adverbs are also those of fantasy. Thus, no guarantee of reality, but also nothing gratuitous about the anecdote. One might put things differently: that the (real) seminar is for me the object of a (minor) delirium, and that my relations with this object are, literally, *amorous*.⁽¹³⁾

Barthes presents the seminar as a corporeal and experiential situation. He also distinguishes at least three spaces. The first of these spaces is institutional (location, timing and schedule). The second is transferential — the space between the director of the seminar and its members. What matters here, he says, is the relationship between the members themselves and not the relationship between the teacher and the class: ‘Our gathering is small, to safeguard not its intimacy but its complexity: it is necessary that the crude geometry of big public lectures give way to a subtle topology of corporeal relations, of which knowledge is only the *pre-text*’.⁽¹⁴⁾ The third space is textual and should seek ‘the rarest text, one which does not appear in writing’. Here are writers without books (*sans livres*), he says, where texts are not products but practices; ‘it might even be said that the “glorious” text will someday be a pure practice’.⁽¹⁵⁾ The insights from Barthes text sheds light on ‘We Rule the School’, viewed retrospectively. It all starts with the inevitability of the seminar but it doesn’t end there, as the effects of the seminar or workshop entail duration.

What Barthes advocates is a reorientation of desire in education. He proposed a method of education that goes beyond the demands made by the student upon the teacher, and the impositions produced by the teacher upon the student, to generate a formation of desire that operates across a multiple field. The examples of Brecht and Barthes are key resources to attend to in the consideration of how educational

13. Roland Barthes, ‘To the Seminar’. *The Rustle of Language*. University of California Press. 1989. p.332. [Italics in original].

14. *Ibid.* [Italics in original]

15. *Ibid.* p.333.

formats within contemporary art could, and should, reflect upon their own forms of self-representation and how pedagogy can be embedded in art practices without the inevitability of merely producing statements ‘about’ education or pedagogy. Paraphrasing Godard’s dictum on cinema and politics — rather than making educational projects, as such, it may be more useful to make projects or exhibitions *pedagogically* and, in so doing, make visible the border that separates a project or an exhibition from education. Furthermore, the pre-eminence of speech within pedagogical settings should be diminished and, with it, the anxiety as to the profitability of education in terms of information richness or in terms of symbolic art market priorities: instead, we should refocus on the embodiment of experience and encounter.

There is no more fitting way to conclude this text than to cite Barthes’ sentence with respect to the seminar and those who are engaged in the ongoing process of research: ‘just as, for Brecht, reason is never anything but the sum total of reasonable people, for us, seminary people, research is never anything but the sum total of people who, in fact, *search* (for themselves?) [...]’⁽¹⁶⁾

16. *Ibid.* p.341. [Italics in original]

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TEACHING WITHOUT TEACHING

Daniel Buren & Wouter Davidts

French artist, Daniel Buren, gained prominence as one of the protagonists of what is now commonly known as ‘institutional critique’ — a form of artistic practice that critically questioned and exposed the conditions of production, distribution and reception of art. One of the many subjects of Buren’s vigilant works and writings has been the rise of the curator in the field of exhibition-making and the latter’s increasing profile as an educator of the larger public. Between 1988 and 1995, Buren associated himself with Pontus Hultén, arguably one of the most important curators of the second half of the 20th century, in setting up and running the *Institut des Hautes Études en Arts Plastiques*, an experimental art school after the model of Black Mountain College in Asheville and the Bauhaus in Weimar.

In the margins of the conference ‘Functions of the Museum: Art, Exhibitions and Audience Today’⁽¹⁾ — the title of which refers to Buren’s famous essay of 1970⁽²⁾ — I asked Buren about the edifying vocation of the curator, the didactic impulse of institutionally critical art practice and the distinct challenges of art schooling.

WOUTER DAVIDTS You have been active as an artist in the art world for more than four decades now. In that period of time, you have witnessed from close at hand how the art world has changed in many ways and on many levels. Often, you have responded very critically to particular developments. One of these certainly was the rise of the curator, with Harald Szeemann at *Documenta 5* in Kassel in 1972 as a first clear manifestation. At that time, you reacted fiercely to the didactic fashion in which Szeemann had organised and installed the exhibition. At the last *Documenta*, in 2007, the curators might not have forced themselves as visibly upon the organisation of the artworks, but the didactic returned in the guise of an elaborate pedagogical programme that accompanied the show. Given your experiences, how do you look at this shift in the position of the curator as a figure who wants to communicate his ideas on art to the general public, even to ‘teach’ them something? Do you think that it is possible to distance curating from any kind of pedagogical programme?

1. *Functions of the Museum: Art, Exhibitions and Audience Today*, International conference at Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Rome. 3-4 April 2009. The conference was the first in a series of events prior to the opening of the MAXXI — National Museum of the 21st Century Arts in Rome. See [<http://www.maxxisymposium.it/>].

2. Daniel Buren, *The Function of the Museum*. Museum of Modern Art, Oxford. 1973.

DANIEL BUREN The first thing that comes to my mind is the immediate danger that an artwork that is supposed to be presented in a didactic fashion refuses by itself any kind of didacticism. I guess many artworks are not marked at all by any kind of didacticism in their production. Some artists might even be theoretically against the idea of producing a work that is supposed to teach something — which is not to say, of course, that an artwork is not teaching you anything. There simply is a big gap between those artists, for example, who want to teach something or try to make a demonstration of something to the public and the ones who don’t care for one second about this. This position lies, of course, at the beginning of every consideration, since it harks back to artistic production and you cannot make a show without the latter. It implies that those people who want to make a didactic exhibition but decide to present an artwork with respect to the intentions of the artist might need to choose between two paths. The first is to force the work to be didactic within one’s own way of looking, thus opening up the possibility of conflict. The second, however, requires consistency and thus might force one to refuse to show the work, because the work would be antagonistic to the purpose of the show. There is also a big difference between a solo and a group show, even if both are organised by a curator. In a solo show, the artist has, of necessity, a much bigger place. In a group show, however, it is really the curator who is there to fabricate the exhibition. I have the feeling that the curator, in that case, is by definition doing something didactic, either by explaining his or her own point of view, or by communicating something that everyone more or less knows which has received a new and special shape, or by thematising something the curator believes to have been more or less discovered within the work of fifteen different artists. Both huge group exhibitions — like *Documenta* or the *Venice Biennale* — and more restricted shows elsewhere become didactic by the mere fact that they receive a title, regardless of the actual quality. So, maybe your question deals more precisely with shape. In other words, your question deals with the ambition to offer something that comes closer to a pedagogical model such as the university, let’s say, with the attempt to present and approach artworks not only by juxtaposing them but by installing a room and explaining why it is like this instead of like that — similar to the kind of things that can be taught at the university. So, it involves the objective to more or less transfer such an attitude into the museum, which is, of course, a different context.

WD But where is the gain in replacing one ‘institution’ with another, in replacing the spatio-temporal format and procedures of an exhibition with those of a school? It was indeed what Bazon Brock and Harald Szeemann tried to achieve by thinking of *Documenta 5* as a school of 100 days in 1972, or what Mai Abu Eidahab, Anton Vidokle and Florian Waldvogel meant to accomplish by transforming

Manifesta 6 into an experimental art school in 2006. I find it curious that the teaching model seems to remain interesting, even glamorous, for curators. Could it be that it grants their work some required legitimisation and credibility?

DB Funnily enough, that's in a way what reinforced my very first reaction to your question. I think it has always been like that, even if it was not said or supposed to be like that. It is part of the job of a curator. When you select more than two people to make a show, you base that choice upon a specific idea — even if it's stupid. Then you present this idea publicly and try to share it with other people. This is *a priori* an extremely didactic enterprise, since it involves the motivation or the ambition to offer people something they don't know, something they have to learn in order to go further. What else are you doing when you are teaching? If we think of the necessity and meaning of teaching, it is definitely about sharing an experience and that logic is more or less present in the roots of any group exhibition.

WD When Harald Szeemann gave *Documenta 5* the subtitle of 'Bilderwelten', you didn't exactly critique him for the fact that he acted like a teacher. In the text 'Exposition d'une Exposition', published in the catalogue,⁽³⁾ you write that he became the master-artist who forced all the artworks into artificial categories and degraded them to postage stamps or mere illustrations of his particular story.

DB At that time, I noticed, albeit completely intuitively, something that was at its best. Many of the things I pinpointed were not yet really negative in that particular exhibition. From that point on, however, they became more and more visible in almost any group exhibition. The paradox is that I took that exhibition and Harald Szeemann as the object of my criticism, while, in fact, he was the best in that genre. What we came to see afterwards were all more or less imitators and pupils of Szeemann, who in fact never did as well as he did. Szeemann was certainly not only close to the sensibility of his time but also, first and foremost, close to the sensibility of the artists of his time — and I'm not saying that because, as you know, he started out as an artist himself. But he himself was engaged in a certain creativity, not only in the selection of the people he liked but also — which, to my opinion, is certainly one of the best positions a curator can take — in his taking control of the situation like an orchestra conductor. As a conductor, one occupies a clear position,

3. Originally published in French and in German, 'Exposition d'une exposition - Ausstellung einer Ausstellung', *Catalogue B Documenta 5*. Kassel. Section 17. 1972. p. 29. For an English version of this text see Daniel Buren, 'Exhibition of an exhibition, 1972'. Riet de Leeuw and Evelyn Beer, *L'Exposition imaginaire, the art of exhibiting in the eighties*. SDU Uitgeverij and Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst. 1989. pp. 62–66.

since what one selects already entails a story in itself. Then it's only a matter of conducting that thing as best as one can. But Szeemann already was doing more. He was at once advancing a set of categories and establishing within *Documenta 5* how not to confuse an abstract painter with a figurative painter when, even at that time, it was already a retrograde phrase. In that respect, *Documenta 5* was indeed very didactic. But, at the time, I neither used that term nor spoke about it. It would certainly serve as a good example of the truism that group shows are, by definition, didactic. The curator not only took control of the full exhibition, which is more or less normal since it depends on what you do with this power, but he was also trying to teach a large public about different tendencies in contemporary art, from hyperrealism, through conceptual art, to minimalism and so on. He framed everything so well that there was no way of getting out of this frame. Within a curatorial way of thinking, everything was trapped into a category, and when it was not possible to trap it too well he called it '*mythologie personelle*'.

The things I wrote in 1972, which were then very timely, have become something that everyone can see today. While I remember very well that when I spoke with Szeemann at that time, he told me that 'your text' — because I first wrote a text for the catalogue and then later did a full book on the topic, entitled *Rebondissements* [Reboundings]⁽⁴⁾ — was 'very interesting and I agree with almost everything. But I am just against the fact you took it out on me, because my way of thinking is absolutely different and I am not at all behaving as if I was anything except someone who distributes the work'. But the funny thing is that, fifteen years later, as you know, Harald Szeemann no longer called himself a curator or director or whatever, but *auteur d'exposition*. So, let's say I saw something that I think was already in existence. I did not invent anything. I was maybe touched by it more than any other people in the show at that time.

WD In *Rebondissements* you write about '*le silence général*' or the 'universal silence' that the work met at the time of the exhibition. The silence you regretted, however, was not so much on behalf of the critics and curators, but of your own colleagues, the artists. Thus, not only did you put responsibility onto critics and curators but onto artists as well.

DB Absolutely, although, once again, it was not meant to be antagonistic. I always thought and I still think — since we are speaking about the art world, how it changes, how it moves, etcetera — that we have to realise that, for better or for worse, things are moving because artistic production *does* something. There are

4. Daniel Buren, *Rebondissements*. Daled and Gevaert. 1977.

hundreds of examples of when a production — since it comes from the artist to start with — pushes the institution by force to change itself. The institution is completely flexible, and not so much a monolith which has to be destroyed. No, the institution has to be flexible in order to survive. If not, it cannot even survive. But if artistic production in general, or the general fashion or mood, is, let's say, reactionary, even — for lack of a better word — 'regressive', the institution will be regressive. So, there's never one single person responsible while everyone else is not, but artists certainly have a priority. If the production of an artwork demands — to use a common metaphor — knocking down the walls of the institution, the latter will have to find a way to demolish its walls. Either the institution cannot resist and the artist will win and they will have to destroy the wall, or it resists and the *producteur* will give in and the institution will be able to keep the walls and so contain a lot of things inside itself. Over the short period of the last thirty or forty years, we witnessed the tendency that artworks either reinforce or question the institution, and subsequently a similar process has happened with the position of curators, critics, collectors and so on.

WD I'd like to return to your starting remark, that some works might have a pedagogical intention while others don't. I would like to know how you relate to the work of more recent generations of what is commonly called 'institutional critique'. What do you, as one of the widely acknowledged protagonists of institutionally critical art practice, think of those many contemporary artists who, for the nth time and most often in a highly didactic fashion, aim to 'reveal' the institutional conditions and frameworks once again?

DB First of all, I would like to point out that usually, today, when people use the term 'institutional critique' — which, as you know, was not used when we, the artists of my generation, were critically relating to institutions, albeit all in a very different way — it is mostly in a critical — i.e. judgemental — fashion. By default almost, it implies a grave judgement on those artists who instigated the critique, as if everything that was done in the late 1960s and 1970s did not change anything in the end. I totally disagree with this implication because, for better or worse, that work did change the institution. Moreover, as I have pointed out already many times, the multiplication of museums, the multiplication of artists and the multiplication of the public has produced a situation that you cannot compare with the one we knew at the end of the 1960s. I am part of a generation that became more or less well known and — I know the word is stupid — 'famous', but never broke through the system into the market. When any earlier kind of avant-garde became successful, it immediately became economically successful as well. None of my generation, apart from one or two exceptions, really broke through. But we really caused a fantastic perturbation in the heads of many artists. And,

most curiously, we produced a kind of antagonism with some others. When you look back at what has been written by some people, even very famous artists, it remains rather surprising. I am thinking, for example, of Antoni Tàpies, who argued in a full-page manifesto that we were forever destroying the work of a painter.

WD Yet what I've always appreciated about your work, apart from the recurring characterisation of it as 'institutional critique', is that it has always been driven by truly formal preoccupations, in particular by a painterly concern that is often electively discarded or neglected in contemporary criticism. Isn't it precisely this kind of material and formal concern which, if combined with the knowledge and understanding of a system, would make many contemporary artworks less didactic?

DB Exactly. It's an understanding that also lies at the basis of the distinction between my works and my writings. I have always stressed that, although one and the same person does them, they are different. There's a big difference between what I can write and what I can do. Not to say that it is completely different in terms of feeling, but what I am writing is sometimes either a little in advance of what I can do or part of the experience I get from doing. So, what I am writing is never the work and it is never what the work can do. In my view the work is, let's say, successful if it really does something other than the text, since the latter is, in essence, didactic.

WD But how can you dissociate your writings from your work? Isn't the parallel activity of producing material work and writing texts one of the exceptional qualities of your practice? It forcefully contradicts the romantic idea that an artist only creates and remains silent. Your position has always been that the artist must speak his mind and formulate. So, if you say that your essays are didactic, aren't you degrading them in some way?

DB You can indeed not dissociate the writings from my work, but it is nevertheless for the public to decide whether the texts are coherent with the work or not, whether the texts are saying something other than the work or not. This is open and I am not going to claim that they are the same. What is theoretical is my physical work itself and not what I try to explain — sometimes didactically — about it by writing.

WD So it's about a matter of different urgencies then?

DB As an artist you can have a brilliant idea and write it down in black and white. Maybe, some day, another artist will use it and translate it into a sculpture or a painting. It's only then that this idea will gain some substance. Before that, it will only remain a good,

brilliant idea. It can serve as a reference or as a matter of hope but it has no existence. I am speaking about the art world, of course, and not about philosophy. I am aware that if I now read my own work, for example a text like 'Mise en Garde' (Beware) of 1969–70,⁵ I see that it is both prospective and didactic. And you know why? Because I was trying to explain something and, by default, I then succumbed to the teaching mode, albeit not to impose but to describe something that did not yet exist. Especially at the beginning, I was trying in a certain way to convince people about the many ideas I was having about my work but which I knew were not yet visible. And, for that reason, I also recognised that, without wanting to sound pretentious, it was impossible for either art critics or art historians to speak about these ideas. I spoke about my work merely in terms of hope. To take an easy example, everything on the notion of context and working *in situ*, was formulated as a possibility way before I was actually doing it. I knew that it would need at least ten more years of active work to show and convince people about what I was really speaking. But my way of thinking about it was already very strong and precise back then, long before I was making the work itself. I was aware of both the interest and the consequences of working *in situ*, such as the fragile, the ephemeral, and the unsaleable nature of the work. But I knew that it would take another ten years, which amounted to some 200 or 300 works, in order for people to see whether the aims were coherent or contradictory, whether the works did what the texts promised, and what the impact would be for me and perhaps also for other artists.

WD This way of formulating things fundamentally changes the common critical perception of your work. Often, the very early works, such as the *Affichages Sauvages* in the city of Paris or in Bern at the time of the exhibition *When Attitudes Become Form* in 1969, are looked upon as your most critical works, given their audacious nature and the literality of the gesture — being plainly outside the institutional framework. But the way you formulate it now, you seem to suggest that the criticality of your work lies in the overall aggregate of the works?

DB I knew from the beginning that I could only go so far, if I was to be able to play inside as well as outside the institution. When I started, I was not immediately invited by an institution, of course, and thus I had to operate outside. I could have remained outside forever — which means a few years and maybe then I would have been obliged to do something else. But when the institution did start

5. Daniel Buren, 'Beware!' *Studio International*. Vol. 179. 1970. No. 920. pp. 100–104. For the original French version, see Daniel Buren, *Mise en garde*. Daniel Buren and Jean-Marc Poinot (eds.), *Daniel Buren. Les Écrits (1965–1990). Tome I: 1965–1976*. CAPC Musée d'art contemporain de Bordeaux. 1991. pp. 85–97. (Original 1969.)

to invite me, I kept the same discourse. But then I had this very strong tool in addition which helped me to prove my position and to state it: writing. But such a thing was only possible because some people invited me.

WD I would now like to relate your understanding of the critical capacity of the artwork to your teaching experience. You have been teaching throughout your whole career, but in a very different fashion than, let's say, someone like Michael Asher, an artist of your generation who you also know very well. There is somehow a very precise — and sometimes an annoyingly clear — legacy from the teaching of Michael Asher. You can point out quite a few students who work in his fashion, albeit in a sort of slimmed-down version.

DB Something you can read, you mean? He is indeed much better known as a teacher than I am. He's not the only one to be a full-time teacher, but he is exceptional in the sense that he devoted all his life to teaching. I think that, for him, there is almost no disconnection between the teaching and his work.

WD Precisely. And, for that reason, Asher's work somehow troubles me. I've always thought that it has a certain didactic quality. Many of his works can almost be read as an essay, as a manual for critically dismantling an institution or a building. I have always wondered what kind of effect the close bond between his work and his teaching has had on his students, many of whom seem to have made this critical dismantling into a mantra. In your case, however, things seem to be different. Can you say that you have a certain teaching legacy? For example, I am thinking of the institution that you founded together with Pontus Hultén in Paris in 1983, the famous — and yet rather little known about — *Institut des Hautes Études en Arts Plastiques*.⁶ Many of the institute's students became very famous afterwards, but there's not a single one that you can point out as 'a student of Buren'.

DB It's impossible, yes.

WD But how is that? What made your teaching or the school in Paris so different?

DB Pontus Hultén and I more or less wrote the plan of the Institut des Hautes Études en Arts Plastiques. When he asked me to help him develop his ideas, he first of all enquired whether I wished

6. *The Institut des Hautes Études en Arts Plastiques* was a small postgraduate art academy in Paris that Daniel Buren and Pontus Hultén founded, working with friends Serge Fauchereau and Sarkis. In the 1990s, the school, a one-year programme with just 20 students, attracted young artists, including Absalon, Ghada Amer, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Philippe Parreno and Xavier Veilhan.

to collaborate. I replied that I didn't know if I would be able to do anything like that with all my travelling. I didn't want to just show my nose every once in a while. But we resolved that problem and, when the school existed, I was there almost all the time. There are two things that we can be really proud of, and I am not saying such a thing very often. The first thing to be proud of is the fact that we worked in an extremely concentrated manner. We had very few teachers. The stable consisted of Pontus Hultén and three people,⁽⁷⁾ so it was very small. But we invited almost a hundred different personalities from the art world, or people who were connected in one way or another to the art world, even if they were scientists or something like that. It certainly gave a lot to the people who were attending. It is rather incredible that so many artists from among this group belong today to the group of really active people that everyone speaks about. It's very positive that they are not completely lost or doing something else besides art. It's something not one of us could have ever dreamed of, or believed in, at the time. This is all the more unexpected given that we were only taking approximately 20 young people each year, which is a very small number. We only survived for seven years, so it's not that thousands of young artists graduated; it's actually a very short list. The second thing to be proud of is that you cannot find a trace of any teacher in the work of any of these people, or at least not in the work of those ones that everyone recognises today. Not a single one.

WD But what was there to teach then?

DB Maybe it's because we did not want to teach anything. It somehow corresponded with my own experience. I have never been teaching in the same place for years and years, unlike someone like Michael Asher. I did a lot of things for one week, ten days or two weeks. Not only because I was absolutely against the idea of becoming fixed as a teacher at a particular place but also because I thought, and I still think, that, especially in teaching young artists, it is better to give them something like an electrical shock. I prefer to go to a place and really take my time, even if it's only for four days, and work very intensively with the young people who are there. Then you really offer them a lot of things. In the case of the *Institut des Hautes Études en Arts Plastiques*, I was very impressed by the fact that if you have the possibility to invite as many people as possible to sit together for one or several days within the same group, you present them a fantastic thing without saying one word. They can encounter artists that are maybe well known but then appear to be not so different from them. Then they also start to understand that artists are completely at odds with each other. But it's something you don't have to explain. They can judge for themselves. So, in very

7. Serge Fauchereau, Sarkis and Buren himself.

little time, you give some kind of *matière première* to young people, right like that. I think that when, over a few weeks, some six or seven different artists from different backgrounds come and speak about their work, the students learn much more than they do in the many years that they spend at the academy of *beaux-arts*.

WD Was there any methodology behind this *modus operandi*?

DB Well, I would say it was more of a programme. But this programme, if you accept it and you can carry it out, has a fantastically positive effect because you are teaching without teaching. You don't have to say, 'look they are different'. I mean, the students already start to be puzzled after two visiting speakers, especially when they respond differently to the same question. If artists are antagonistic, they can make their own judgement. They start to notice this for themselves, which means that you don't have to be the teacher who advises them (and they may not even believe you anyway). You know, you have to take care with these young artists. They are all different, and they do things that are good or bad. They understand very quickly what a young person cannot yet have. When you are twenty or even a little older, you know everything through the magazines and through your own experiences, but you know strictly nothing about who these people are. But even if you stay close to the people of your own generation, it takes a lot of time to connect with others artists, even with those one generation older, not to mention those who are already considered as 'old masters', or who are even forgotten. That is the opportunity we gave these people and it was very intense. It mostly lasted for three or four days a week, we met at least three times during these four days and we invited people as different as Michael Asher, Jean-François Lyotard, Benjamin Buchloh or Jean Nouvel. We really invited a lot of people; first the ones we were interested in, or the ones who were simply passing by in Paris — which allowed us to reduce the expenses — but then we also invited people that were suggested by the students themselves.

WD Did the student produce anything themselves? Were they obliged to?

DB We helped the students to find a place to stay and a studio in Paris. But the rule was that we never went to see what they were doing in their studio. Never. But we invited every participant to show their work in whatever way they wanted — photo, film, or directly — for a full day and under the critical eyes of all the others, including the teachers. Once a week, we had a session in which one of these young people had to defend their work against the challenges of all the others.

WD Where did that happen? Not in the studio, I suppose?

DB No, not in the studio, but at the Institut. Everyone had to present under the same conditions, but they were free to invent. Some came with incredible pieces, while others came with more traditional pieces and showed pictures, etcetera. But it was completely open to do that. It was the same situation that we were inviting the artists or philosophers to speak within. We were pushing them to be polite and respectful but not to be ashamed to ask questions when they discovered, even with the philosophers, a contradiction between what they had written and what they had said an hour earlier. There was no need to be afraid; one could just look and speak as long as one stayed polite, since we were not there to have a stupid fight. While for some artists, philosophers or musicians it was really beautiful, for others it was rather difficult.

WD How did the selection of the students go?

DB People were selected beforehand. They came from all over the world. We selected 40 to 50 people from the files that we received. These people were then invited for an interview. Out of these we selected the final 20 that we paid to be with us for one year or, in fact, for four months. But all of them had finished their studies at a *beaux-arts* academy or something similar, so the term 'student' did not really apply. For us, they were young, engaged artists. A big part of the group became really professional — in both good and bad senses — while another part is certainly doing something else today. They were free to do that, since they were not 'studying' anymore. As you know, in any art school you have a large number of people who will never become artists; they don't even know why they are there. So, my teaching experience at the Institut was really different to my experience at the Kunstakademie in Düsseldorf, for example, although there I worked with people in their final year, i.e. with students who were already more or less young artists. But when you work with people who are a little younger than this, you cannot use this method. I don't even know what kind of method you can use with them. Somehow it doesn't even interest me, since you can't treat them like young artists; they are still beginners. So, you can't push them into the practice of criticism. There are certain things you cannot speak about yet, since they have no idea and they still need to learn the basics.

WD But what, then, do you personally think about the current wave of the so-called 'academicisation' of art education, the modelling of art education after the academic model of the university? What do you think of the fact that graduating artists need to write a Masters thesis and that some might even start to obtain PhDs?

DB It's not a very interesting thing to say, but I am not only rather distant from but also somewhat afraid of this 'academicisation', since I don't think that it can really bring something about, even at the end of one's study. There will certainly be exceptions — someone who will have gone through all these things and will then become a great artist — but I think, for the majority, it's finished already. Because I think it's not the way to set your mind. Again, it goes back to this idea of didacticism or 'demonstration'. Perhaps this is very personal and perhaps I'm wrong, but I don't think that 'demonstration' in art can bring you to something very innovative.