

'the art school as a space of conflict'

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Let's start with the question that will guide us in this presentation.

How can art – faced as an intrinsic field of discomfort and irreverence with its time, be inserted in a school – a secular institutional apparatus of power and hegemonization?

Inside the school as well as in art there are strong tensions that help us understand the fields of conflict present in the singular space of an art school.

Copying, imitating and repeting have a strong weight well anchored in the relations between parents and children, apprentices and masters,

and even between representation and reality. In the relation between parents and children, as well as between teachers and students, the former are usually encouraged to imitate;

the latter ones tend to appreciate or evaluate the repeated gestures of the former.

Guided by the desire of generational continuity they value that attitude with their ways of doing,

without giving the possibility for education to free itself from acquired knowledge, ignoring what is different in the student.

Also in art history learning has been, for a long time, anchored in the exercise of the mimetic representation of reality, reproducing the one who is legitimate, master, artist, and teacher.

The exercise of copying the masters has left us an indelible mark in the conviction that this would be the right act to ascend to knowledge, and, in the cases of modernist minds, to ascend to geniality.

Today, when teaching art, we look for “knowing to think and do”, inherent to contemporanean art, instead of the value of “knowing how to do”.

But a big tension remains between the **exercise of power of the master/teacher** and the need to **suspend that power**, opening up other spaces to the student (not apprentice anymore).

We oscillate between inserting the student in the cultural tradition and allowing him or her to build a personal and precise understanding of the contemporaneous, and produce its own space of “thinking/doing”, and not reproducing established forms in the hegemonic space of art.

The intended identitarian subjectivation of the student, of which we speak, will not be free of reality, or of the fallacies of new paradigms,

but it will be able, as we will see, to create its own field of conflict and resistance. In art it is therefore insufficient to reject the works of the masters and be alienated by universalizing codifications of the work of art, or to force its direct communicability, and lastly the democratization of the work itself. We reserve the possibility of giving space to open, critical and renovator understandings.

We argue for positions that assume that we could promote education in the sense that the student is **critical and agonistic** towards the legitimate authority,

building him/herself inside a coherence between what he says and what he does, creating tools so that he/she can position in the inherent conflict of the contemporaneous.

But, aren't we also transmitting the ideal we want for ourselves, revolutionary educators? Aren't we projecting too much the ideal of rebellion, critic? Shouldn't the student receive that with a little more **freedom**?

We need to test the ideas we have about the student, how he/she takes the word, how he/she thinks and makes a decision, clarifying what is intrinsic to his/her voice, instead of intending to determine when and how he is ready to exercise his/her power.

Frequently we, students, teachers, artists and educators, do not take the time to listen. Asking critically in the sense of assuming a position of pause, going out of the real time, **listening, and listening to what is not even asked**, and not simply repeating the questions that we were taught that we should ask, study and spread.

School sustains the hegemonic system and is subject to the ideological apparatus of the State. Also pedagogy manages the interests of the State.

But can education, in its political potential, interrupt the school normality and provoke a free thinking through equality and difference?

Art, legitimated as such, lacks openness and "hides" its own tensions and inconsistencies. There is a conflict between the need to transmit an understanding of art and its openness to transcend itself.

Some understandings and practices are perpetuated and become hegemonic, imposing and homogeneizing, a bit like globalization.

And the same question is asked again. Are we positioned to graft irreverences in time and ourselves, our practice of art and education?

And can that be a **practice**? It would also be important to question if that practice should be appropriated by the school or by the art school, taking the risk of institutionalizing that sense of free thinking?

To this respect I quote Paiva (2016):

“The prolonged illusion, in too many situations, of the attempt to attenuate the shameless exaggerations of the hegemonic power, burns out and provokes the softening of the critic. Even the simulation of interference that the system allows in its power devices, created to reproduce and revive the established political system, (...)

making it difficult to understand the need to determine an attitude of agonistic inscription to the critical discourse and an action of radical opposition that recognizing the burnout of politics and ideology with which capitalism suffocates optimism, persist in the creation of popular perspectives to possibilite another exercise of the common.”

It will be in the awareness of the fields of conflict that are opened to the manifestation of irreverence where we can best understand the possibilities of learning in an art school.

We want to emphasise some.

a school is always a power device, a place of collapse and conflict, it builds the subjects that the social fabric demands, which means that the school organizes itself to provide confort and effectiveness to the social system that supports it.

School is always a power device, amplifying the hegemonic values of a certain time.

the school organizes itself in that sense, establishing study plans, contents, curriculum goals, evaluation processes, hierarchical relations, bureaucracies, etc.

of course each school can be more progressive, can look for pedagogical models that promote critical learning and democratic practices that gradate the exercise of power, but a school is inevitably a school, the power device I have referred.

Yet it happens that

art projects itself as a space of discomfort with its time, it occupies a space of reflection and critical intervention, a field of irreverence about itself and about what is around it.

Art that does not promote reproduction, art that produces knowledge and event, art that adds the **possibility of thinking the new, the open** here resides the main **ground of conflict** intrinsic to an art school.

tension between the becoming of a school that sustains the hegemonic system and serves it, and reproduces it and a field of human activity, art, that seeks irreverence with time and with itself.

school places the present in the preparation of its occupation

art distances itself from the present to place itself in the **contemporanean**

In a distancing from the present art demands its interpretation, its knowledge

but times are bitter the optimism of western society, spread to urban centres in the whole world, and to the clouds of globalization, is dead.

the flags of permanent progress, of “freedom, equality, fraternity”, of security, of growing well-being and general possibilities of realising the “social aspirations” are frozen.

and if school promotes knowledge to “better deal with the present”, art promotes irreverence towards it.

and this small difference feeds a second ground of conflict.

another question, that we must never hide:

school promotes learning, it allows students to understand what is around them and what they do not know. school works for the students and their becoming, we defend an agonistic understanding with their nature, that is creating conditions to access knowledge and possibilities of producing other knowledges and immanent knowledges of new and transitory truths.

And we need courage to destroy the myth that an art school works with the goal of forming artists. What happens to non artists? Exclude them from learning? Do we promote the construction of each student's identity, wether it will materialize in the artistic field, pre-configured, or in the understanding determined by each one?

an **art school** provides the learning of the artistical, of citizenship,

but, mainly, the way it allows the **construction in each student**, from him/her, of his/her ideals and interests, of the singular sensitivity of each one, the relation that each one has with their own body, how each one manages their anxieties and wishes, how each one deals with their memories,

it is about the construction of authorial identity, which is singular, particular.

an art school does not train artists, it promotes the learning of the artistic in a process that promotes in each student their own subjective identity.

thus, between the becoming of a **school** that faces the **students** as a whole and the singularity of the educational relations that an art school should assume

there is a conflictual, agonistic space

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between what “someone, the system” considers should be the “necessary learning” and the “significant learning” for each student, in this particular space of artistic education.

learning is not a comfortable ground, it is a conflictual ground

learning is not confined to “what is taught” in and by the school, but it is the result of what is incorporated, constructed by the student

it is the nature of this conflict that should feed our fights, inside ourselves and in the fights to dignify and to respect artistic teaching.