

DOCUMENTATION SECTION



GUIDING?

“This power is a power of religious origin, one which aims to guide and direct men through their entire lives (...), a power that consists in wanting to take charge of the existence of men in all of its detail and activity from birth to death, in order to constrain them to behave in a certain manner, and ensure their salvation. This is what we could call pastoral power. Etymologically (...) pastoral power is the power that a shepherd exercises over his flock.”

“The Christian pastor teaches (...) He teaches truth, he teaches writing, he teaches morality, he teaches the commandments of God and the commandments of the Church.”

Michel Foucault, “Dits et écrits III“, 1976-1979.

In 1818, Jacotot is a French teacher who has emigrated to the Netherlands. His Dutch students want to learn French, but he cannot speak Dutch. He has nothing but a bilingual version of Archbishop Fénelon’s *Télémaque*, and so decides to ask them to learn French by studying the translation. (...) He is very surprised by the quality of their work (...) The learning process is not a process in which the ignorance of the pupil is replaced with the knowledge of the master, but in which the pupil develops knowledge himself.

Jacques Rancière, interview with Anne Lamalle et Guy Dreux on the subject of “Le Maître ignorant“, 2004.

What is the role and the position of the teacher towards a pupil? Should he be a leader, a guide, or could he simply be a facilitator, accompanying the learner? Can a teacher guide or accompany his students in learning something of which he himself is ignorant, as Jacotot argued?

In his analysis of pastoral power, Michel Foucault showed how Christianity has generalised a new form of rule, through the application of pastoral power. The shepherd, as guide, directs a flock of individuals to whom he intends well. To accomplish his goal, he plays, notably, the role of teacher. Still today, even though pastoralism has evolved, the traditional perception of the teacher remains close to that of guide. As for the artist, is he, when developing strategies for teaching, equally obliged to be the one who points out which path to take, or can he develop more horizontal teaching models?

The works of Joseph Beuys, Thomas Hirschhorn and Oda Projesi, in their own way, each address the issue of the role of the artist as guide. Beuys presented his free university as a calling into question of artistic institutions’ power structures, while at the same time, in paradoxical style, himself playing the role of a charismatic leader, shaman, and central figure in his work. Hirschhorn, when he runs joint projects, insists on the notion of collegiality and does not hesitate to step back, momentarily, to allow greater visibility for the other people involved. However, he directs participants in the realisation of projects that he alone conceives and that bear his name alone. Oda Projesi adopts a different working style, attempting to create spaces for exchange in which the very conception of their projects may be shared, and where projects other than those initiated by the collective may develop.

JOSEPH BEUYS

“The isolated concept of art education must be done away with, and the artistic element must be embodied in every subject, whether it is our mother tongue, geography, mathematics or gymnastics. I am pleading for a gradual realization that there is no other way except that people should be artistically educated. This artistic education alone provides a sound base for an efficient society.”

Joseph Beuys, “Not Just a Few Are Called But Everyone“, 1972.

Throughout his career, Joseph Beuys mixed art and life, and drew on his teaching work and his politics to create ‘social sculptures’. “To be a teacher is my greatest work of art,” he stated. Professor at the Fine Arts Academy of Düsseldorf, Beuys was dismissed in 1972 for opening his classes to any student who wished to attend, arguing the case for free and accessible education. Following his dismissal, he encouraged a series of student protests.

FREE INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY, 1974-1986

In 1973, Beuys and writer Heinrich Böll write a manifesto for a Free International University for Creativity and Interdisciplinary Research, a centre for creative and democratic studies. The university is designed to foster recognition of everyone’s potential for creativity and development (including outside the realm of art), as well as an end to the divide between professionals and amateurs, artists and non-artists, teachers and students. One of the high-points of the Free International University is its participation in Documenta 6 in Kassel in 1977. Thirteen consecutive workshops take place, with trade unionists, lawyers, economists, politicians, journalists, social workers, teachers, sociologists, actors, musicians and artists. The programme is organised around the relating of stories based on experience and covers themes in which it is felt that there is an urgent need for a radical and creative new thinking. The idea is to promote interdisciplinary debate, which is normally impossible. The paradox of the project – which forms an integral part of Beuys’ work – resides in the tension between its democratic intentions and the very considerable figure of authority embodied by the artist, whose shadow is cast over the whole enterprise:

“On the one hand, the artist sought to secure education and equality for all. But on the other, this mission (...) hinged upon his persona (...). Beuys simultaneously challenged and reinforced the patriarchal power structure of the academy and the authority of the artist (...)”

Kristina Lee Podesva, “A Pedagogical Turn: Brief Notes on Education as Art“, 2007.

Benjamin Buchloh – who is especially critical of Beuys’ messianic approach – writes an article in 1980 which draws an unfavourable assessment of the social dimension of the artist’s works.

“No other artist also tried and succeeded so systematically in aligning himself at a given time with aesthetic and political currents, absorbing them into his myth and work thereby neutralizing and aestheticizing them (...) Nobody who understands any contemporary science, politics or aesthetics, (...) could want to see in Beuys’s proposal (...) anything more than simple-minded Utopian drivel lacking elementary political and educational practicality.”

Benjamin Buchloh, “Beuys: The Twilight of the Idol“, 1980.

ODA PROJESI, 1997-2007

Oda Projesi (Turkish for 'space' and 'project') is an artists' collective which, between 1997 and 2006, used a three-room apartment in Galata, then a working-class district of Istanbul, as a base for their projects. The collective organised workshops and events, sometimes with invited artists, together with the residents of the neighbourhood, especially children. The apartment was not only the place where the collective's projects came to life, it was also a space that the local residents could use to meet, play or hold celebrations. For the artists, the aim of the activities was not to change society, but simply to exchange experiences (Oda Projesi uses the slogan "exchange not change").

The aim of its three members is to use art as a means to create "blank spaces" in the midst of a society that they consider overly bureaucratic, as well as to bring together groups of people who ordinarily do not meet each other. The collective also takes care to leave nothing behind after a project ends that could be considered a work of art, merely producing brief textual documentation.

UNTITLED NEIGHBOURHOOD, 2006

Besides its work in Galata, Oda Projesi also participated in several joint exhibitions, including "Cities from Below" at the Teseco Foundation in 2006. As part of this, the collective organised Untitled Neighbourhood, a workshop with a class of primary school children from Pisa. The aim of the workshop was to try to take a different look at the place where they live, finding mini-stories and mini-relations in the town's 'ready-made' spaces (schools, metro trains, shopping centres, restaurants and offices). The approach was defined as a form of resistance to the authoritarian control of space imposed by maps and urban planning, and which takes no account of the inhabitants' needs, movement and aspirations.

In the first phase, the students guided members of Oda Projesi by telling them stories – true or supposedly so – about the places where they lived. The collective then helped the children write up real and fictional stories about their neighbourhoods. Through these stories, the children then drew up narrative maps and together created a model of their district.

THOMAS HIRSCHHORN

In several of his projects, Thomas Hirschhorn has worked with residents of working-class neighbourhoods, carrying out ambitious projects at the heart of their districts. In his Deleuze Monument in Avignon, His Bataille Monument in Kassel during documenta 11 and his Musée Précaire Albinet in Aubervilliers, Hirschhorn has repeatedly evoked his interest in the Beuysian notion of 'Social Sculpture'. The artist defends the idea that art can change life, because it addresses the individual directly, and believes that "hope is not possible without action" (Musée Précaire Albinet catalogue, 2005).

MUSÉE PRÉCAIRE ALBINET, 2004

The central idea of the Musée Précaire Albinet is to construct a temporary building on wasteland beside the Albinet housing estate (in the Parisian suburbs in Aubervilliers, where Thomas Hirschhorn's studio is located), where a succession of original artworks would be displayed, "by artists whose utopia was to change the world": Malevitch, Mondrian, Duchamp, Le Corbusier, Beuys and Dali.

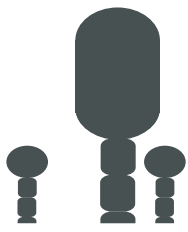
Youths from the neighbourhood participated in the project, including a dozen who followed a paid training course – in the Lyon Biennial and at the Centre Pompidou, in particular – to learn how to handle works of art, ensure their security and display them to the public. Following this, there was a building effort, setting up exhibitions, and holding workshops and events. In total, around 40 young people were involved with the project. As if to underline the importance of their work by letting the project exist on its own, Hirschhorn organised the press conference only during the third week of the project.

The training was designed not simply as a way of preparing young people to manage the Musée Précaire, but also as a way of presenting alternative career options. As if to illustrate the statement of "changing life through art", newspaper articles included in the project catalogue bear witness to the way in which the Musée Précaire served as a professional springboard for several of the youths involved. The artist, however, would state that he was never particularly interested in the training issue and had included it in the project more due to a demand by the project partner the Centre Pompidou than out of any necessity for the running of the Musée Précaire.

Although it functioned on several levels as a social catalyst, the Musée Précaire Albinet remains – like Hirschhorn's other projects – an work by one man, signed by the artist alone, raising the question of the relationship between artist and participants. Some critics see this relationship as very problematic. As Maria Lind wrote about "Bataille Monument":

"(...) he had an already prepared, and in part also executed, plan which he needed help to carry out. For example some of the younger unemployed residents of the district produced the work in the library and a TV studio and were paid for it. Their role was that of the 'executor' and not 'co-creator'. (...) Hirschhorn's work has therefore understandably been criticised for 'exhibiting' and making exotic marginalised groups and thereby contributing to a form of a social pornography."

Maria Lind, "Actualisation of Space: The Case of Oda Projesi", 2004.



TO DE-SCHOOL?

“Deschooling education should increase—rather than stifle—the search for men with practical wisdom who would be willing to sustain the newcomer in his educational adventure. (...) Neither would curriculum-making, textbook-purchasing, the maintenance of grounds and facilities, or the supervision of interschool athletic competition. Nor would child custody, lesson-planning, and record-keeping, which now take up so much of the time of teachers, figure in the operation of educational networks. Instead, the operation of learning webs would require some of the skills and attitudes now expected from the staff of a museum, a library, an executive employment agency, or a maître d’hôtel.”

Ivan Illich, “Une société sans école“, 1971.

“My residence (in the woods) was more favorable, not only to thought, but to serious reading, than a university; and though I was beyond the range of the ordinary circulating library, I had more than ever come within the influence of those books which circulate round the world, whose sentences were first written on bark, and are now merely copied from time to time on to linen paper.”

Henry David Thoreau, “Walden ou la vie dans les bois“, 1854.

And what if school is not the best place to learn, to develop a curious and critical mind, and to become an enlightened citizen? Some have gone beyond the idea of ‘alternative’ schooling to imagine an education without school at all, which would take place within a society and its institutions where the learner-teacher relationship would be repeatedly redrawn and the subjects covered would go far beyond the disciplines judged to be core subjects by schools.

This is the idea proposed in particular by Ivan Illich in “A society without school”, published in 1971. The author offers a harsh criticism of the school system, accusing it, as did Pierre Bourdieu at the same period, of reproducing social inequalities.

A century earlier, essayist and philosopher Henry David Thoreau called for a return to nature as teaching source and strongly criticised Western society, while making the case for another type of life, education and relationship with the world.

In the field that interests us here, the question is whether art spaces (institutional or not) can function as educational centres that offer an alternative to school, either in dialogue with the latter or not.

The past ten years have seen a number of artistic ventures labelling themselves as ‘schools’: the aborted Manifesta project for a school-biennial in summer 2006; curator Clémentine Deliss’s Future Academy, which began in 2002; L’Ecole de Stéphanie, conceived by Stéphanie Moisdon, also a curator; and the United Nations Plaza project by curator Anton Vidokle. These projects show the level of interest among artists and curators in educational systems, even though the means by which knowledge is transmitted or shared has rarely been seriously questioned. The three measures outlined below, following on from Thoreau and Illich, could be defined as ‘truancies’. Without intending to replace school, they draw on artistic means to open new horizontal, inclusive and non-elitist zones for cultural exchange.

Pedagogical Factory, a project created by the Stockyard Institute, sets up a mutually supportive relationship with school. It does not present itself as a potential substitute, but rather as a teaching laboratory that is complementary to the school system. The group REPOhistory transforms the urban landscape into an anti-history book, recounting ‘parallel’ stories and reviews gathered from specific communities. Georges Maciunas conceives of tools that are capable of linking fields of study that are traditionally separate and which would allow a transversal, cross-disciplinary approach to education.

REPO HISTORY, 1989-2000

Founded in New York in 1989, REPOhistory is a collective of artists, researchers, historians and authors who question the relationship between contemporary society and history. Named after the idea of 'repossessing history', the group questions the way in which history is constructed, in order to demystify official versions and re-insert narratives about people and events that have been forgotten, in some cases on purpose. The group's activities take the form of anti-monuments, publications and events that propose a re-reading of history that pays particular attention to the issues of culture, gender, class, "race" and sexuality.

Its decision to work in the public arena enables the group to address a broad audience and reach beyond the confines of a cultural institution. And its conviction that art can be relevant to all aspects of society, as well as the strong current of social commentary in its work, places REPOhistory in the tradition of the Berlin Dadaists, Russian constructivists, the New York Photo League and collectives such as PAD/D (Political Art Documentation/Distribution), Group Material and Grand Fury.

VOICES OF RENEWAL, 1996

'Voices of Renewal' is a project run by REPOhistory in 1996 in the Old Fourth Ward district of Atlanta. It took place a few months after a first joint project with the same community. This also ensured that the cooperation between the collective and the local inhabitants was cemented over time, accompanying their efforts to construct their own history.

The project was a collaboration between REPO, artist Tom Klem and the Iris neighbourhood community. Working directly with locals, six panels were created which illustrated public history through private stories. The panels were then fixed permanently within the private property of the residents whose personal stories had been unveiled and celebrated.

STOCKYARD INSTITUTE, PEDAGOGICAL FACTORY / AREA CHICAGO, HOW WE LEARN, 2007

"This issue (of How we Learn) is not saying experimental or informal is better or more important than what goes on in the schools. The intention is to celebrate and ask questions of both—to suggest that there are ideas that classroom education might find useful from these other spaces of knowledge production, and vice-versa—but not to be unrealistic about what needs to happen now for the vast majority of people to access critical thinking skills and information through a reformed and equitable free public education system."

Daniel Tucker, "How we Learn", 2007.

The Stockyard Institute is an artistic organisation that has been based in Chicago since 1995. It takes an experimental approach to education and teaching via contemporary art. Its works are conceived according to a democratic process, open dialogue and the commitment of each individual to everybody else in the group, while each project concentrates on issues that are relevant to life in the city.

Founded in 2005, AREA Chicago (Art, Research, Education, Activism) is a hybrid project which operates at multiple levels: it is a magazine, an events organisation, a platform for exchange and a teaching tool. The publications and events are designed to conduct research into the links between art, education and activism, as well as creating and reinforcing networks between community workers, and organisations and individuals concerned about social justice.

The project "Pedagogical Factory: Exploring Strategies for an Educated City" took place for three months from July to September 2007, initiated by the Stockyard Institute. A temporary, public laboratory was created in the Hyde Park Art Center to implement experimental ideas and processes at the frontier between art and teaching. The structure was composed of a mobile research unit, a convertible rest area, a radical library, a space for the exchange of school equipment, a mobile sound studio, a lecture room and an exhibition space. Based on an extensive research programme and compilation of projects as well as on a network of organisations, individuals and local groups, the project looked at the relationship between life in the city and a learning process outside the usual institutional framework.

In parallel with "Pedagogical Factory", AREA produced its fifth edition — entitled "How We Learn" — focusing on the same questions, and participated in the programming of the project's public events. "How We Learn" presented the work and the motivations of a wide variety of artists, educators and activists who wanted to create links between lived experience and education. It also testified to the large number of informal classes, round-tables, reading groups and public education programmes that take place in Chicago, aimed at promoting a critical understanding of the world.

GEORGE MACIUNAS

Like other artists affiliated with the Fluxus movement, such as George Brecht and Robert Filliou, George Maciunas incorporates a reflection on learning methods in his artistic work. Preferring the forms of diagrams and tables, Maciunas uses his work to organise a large amount of information, sources from his different areas of interest, and to make them comprehensible. The artist, who studied disciplines as varied as art, graphic design, architecture, musicology, art history, language, logic, psychology and physiology, over 11 years spent in various universities or higher education colleges, condemns the inefficiency of the American education system, in which he sees a fragmentation of knowledge, and an overly early specialisation. His works function as counter-arguments to this system.

In contrast with the linear, disciplinary approach of traditional education, his Learning Machine provides an immediate and simultaneous overview of all fields of knowledge, favouring cross-reading and the drawing of rapid links between different areas of existing research. Just like Mendeleev's Periodic Table in chemistry, the Learning Machine does not offer simply a panoramic view of knowledge, but is also designed to make it possible to predict non-existent or yet-to-be-discovered data.

Maciunas creates a large number of tables that group together and organise vast quantities of information, making it easier to learn specific subjects. To a certain degree, these works would seem – due to their non-linear organisation – to predate hypertext.

Maciunas sought, with Fluxus, to achieve the gradual eradication of fine arts, understood as the place for commercial object-works. He defended the notion, taken from Russian avant-gardists and the Cuban revolution, of a socially active artist who earns his living through doing work that is useful to the community.



MAKING A PROFIT?

“With the school diploma, what is being designated are certain conditions of existence, those that constitute the conditions for acquiring the diploma and also of aesthetic aptitude, the most rigorously demanded of all the costs of admission imposed, always tacitly, by the universe of the legitimate culture.”

Pierre Bourdieu, “La distinction“, 1978.

“Narration (with the teacher as narrator) leads the students to memorize mechanically the narrated content. Worse yet, it turns them into “containers“, into “receptacles“ to be “filled“ by the teacher. The more completely she fills the receptacles, the better a teacher she is. The more meekly the receptacles permit themselves to be filled, the better students they are. (...) This is the “banking“ concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits.”

Paolo Freire, “Pedagogy of the Oppressed“, 1969.

Brazilian pedagogue Paulo Freire, in his description of what he defined as “banking education“, criticised the manner in which the classical school system makes the student into a controlled and passive being, a receptacle which must acquire knowledge that will be of subsequent use in the labour market. Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu’s theories, which were developed around the same period, demonstrate that it is the process of acquiring knowledge defined by the school and validated by the diploma that permits access to a social position and a specific cultural system. These analyses remain pertinent today, when the European higher education landscape has been “harmonised” by the Bologna Process. In this new system, which is based on the accumulation of credits, called ECTS (European Credits Transfer System), the student becomes the manager of a portfolio of knowledge sanctioned by the State, capital on which he can build in order later to enter the world of work. Such an accumulation of knowledge risks taking place to the detriment of any real understanding and the critical distance necessary to use it well.

In the projects presented here, the crucial question of the transformation of a symbolic value into a tradable value is also raised. There is a paradoxical tendency in all this: in the conception and development of an artistic project, monetary logic is generally far from anyone’s mind, as values of exchange and sharing are defended, without concern for “profitability” or validation. But in a second phase, this same project may find itself engaged in another system, where symbolic value is transformed into commercial value: the art market.

How can artistic practices such as those presented in this exhibition position themselves in relation to the art market? If some artists see collaborative work as a means to overcome the commercial art system, others “use” the existing system to gain economic and institutional support for a project with a pedagogical dimension. This raises the question of the status of works and their authorship: can the artist be the only person to benefit from the symbolic capital of a work developed in a collaborative manner? Do these projects need to gain legitimacy from the art market in order to be worthy pieces of art, in order to prove to the art world that they are not merely educational or social projects?

RAINER GANAHL

At the beginning of the 1990s, Austrian artist Rainer Ganahl began to learn several foreign languages, defining the exercise as an artistic process. Following the same idea, he then organised Reading Seminars. He defined his role as artist like that of a “camouflaged post-grad” or a “strategic dilettante”. Starting in 1995, Rainer Ganahl produced a series of photographs, S/L (Seminars/Lectures), which form an ensemble that shows cultural critics addressing seminars and lecture halls. In 1997, he developed the project “Educational Complex” at the Generali Foundation, based on the theme of education.

READING MARX, 1998-2000

“(…) if we want to change the world and the art world, and not just interpret it, we need to do something : communal reading and social discussions are already such actions that will hopefully have consequences for our personal and interpersonal lives.”

Rainer Ganahl, “Reading Karl Marx“, 2001.

In the 1990s, lecture/seminar groups are one of Rainer Ganahl’s principal forms of artistic production. He is frequently invited by museums and art galleries to conduct this work with groups, many of them from art schools. It is in this context that he organises Reading Marx, a series of seminars on the writings of Karl Marx. Most of the seminar participants have never read a Marx text and so the reading groups involve a collective reading, line by line, of the author’s texts. This makes it possible to hold a more detailed discussion, which is open to varied interpretations. The artist, in his discussions with the participants, professes that he too is continuing to learn from these texts.

The seminar has been held in Kiel, Innsbruck, Oslo, Frankfurt, Toulouse, Arnhem, New York and in England. It is accompanied by an internet site: HYPERLINK «<http://www.ganahlmarx.com/>»www.ganahlmarx.com. In 2000, an exhibition at the Baumgartner Gallery in New York retraced the story of the project. Framed photos were shown, along with a collection of video-cassettes showing participants attending the seminars. These materials are produced in a limited series and become “derived products” which supply the art market. While this practice may seem questionable – all the more so in the context of a piece of work regarding Marx – some prefer to see it as an attempt to protect a space for artistic freedom:

“Rather than to coagulate in some sterile radicalism that would not allow for any art work in a pedagogical institution and that would exclude him from any art context, Rainer Ganahl, thus, takes the example of the entertainment industry and anticipates for a demand by the art world in offering what is expected: by-products. It is not about fighting against the market that structures the system of the art world, but to neutralize it in order to protect the space where the work is really done.”
Maria Wutz, “Rainer Ganahl“, 1996.

TIM ROLLINS and K.O.S., starting in 1981

“The making of the work is the pedagogy (...) The art is a means to knowledge of the world. That’s why our project is so different from regular school – the kids are immersed in production – cultural production.”

Tim Rollins, cité par Michele Wallace, dans : “Amerika. Tim Rollins + K.O.S.“, 1989.

At the beginning of the 1980s, Tim Rollins, a founder member of the New York collective Group Material, is teaching art in a school in the South Bronx, where 40% of households live on social benefits. He looks after children who have dropped out of the state school system. In 1984, he sets up the Art and Knowledge Workshop, working with a group of students aged 16-19, after school. At this point he takes a radical decision: to merge artistic work and teaching in one and the same activity. Based on the idea that their work is linked to their survival both as individuals and as a collective, the participants decide to call themselves K.O.S. for “Kids of Survival” and start to produce collective works, which they sign jointly with Tim Rollins. The group defines its work as an act of resistance to a system that marginalises them.

In an activity that is part-homage, part-vandalism, Tim Rollins and K.O.S. dismantle (physically) books of literary classics and past their pages onto canvases. They then use this surface to produce graphic illustrations linked to the content of the texts. Different collaborative, educational strategies are developed, such as “jammin”, which consists of painting while one of the members reads passages from the text being studied.

This cross-disciplinary process, which blends art, literature, popular culture and questions about society, gives birth to a practical and critical pedagogy that is fundamentally different from that of the state school curriculum.

The works created by Tim Rollins + K.O.S. quickly achieved success on the art market. The income was reinvested into the K.O.S. Foundation, which enabled the studio to free itself from the constraints associated with state funding, as well as from the bureaucracy of the state school system. The decision to participate in the art market is described by Tim Rollins as a way of using the most effective channels to gain legitimacy and to allow the voice of the participants, all from ethnic minorities, be heard. Nevertheless, it should be remembered that, despite the collective nature of the work, it is only Rollins, a white teacher with an art school qualification, who has a genuine individual identity in the art world.

AMERIKA, 1984-1989

In autumn 1984, Tim Rollins and K.O.S. start working on paintings based on the reading of Kafka’s Amerika. Taking inspiration from images developed by Kafka, they create a series of drawings, including the golden trumpets of the last chapter, symbolising the new life and freedom of Karl, a 16-year-old immigrant to New York who is in search of glory and fortune. Within the Amerika series, Amerika: For Thoreau is a homage to the essayist-philosopher Henry David Thoreau, one of Tim Rollins’s heroes. The painting, created as part of an exhibition at the Boston ICA, is the result of a partnership between Tim Rollins + K.O.S. and eight students from a high school in the same city.



STANDARDISING?

In an era when it seems that we want to standardise all areas of human activity, including education systems and cultural institutions, the question of examples is especially relevant. Is it pertinent to want to apply models in the field of education or of art? Who produces the models and how are they implemented? Can the contemporary art world be a place of free experimentation, with no thought for profitability or for a quest for standards?

While the academic model can be defined as an imposed structure, reproduced by a hierarchical system, teachers and artists such as the founders of the Copenhagen Free University defend the need for experimentation and endlessly renewed adaptation, based on fieldwork.

The Bauhaus and Imaginist Bauhaus movements were also concerned with this question: rejecting existing academic models, Bauhaus nevertheless accorded great importance to a study programme and a precise definition of the aims and methods of teaching, whose central principles were reproduced at different phases of its history. Imaginist Bauhaus, on the other hand, rejected all models (starting with that of its illustrious predecessor), and based the entirety of its activities on a single principle: experimentation.

Also presented here is a project run by a group of students from the CCC Masters research programme (Haute Ecole d'Art et de Design – Genève), who undertook research into Education Nouvelle and who have developed – in counterpoint to the curriculum's recommendations, exported throughout the world by the ambassadors of Education Nouvelle – a reflection for distributive education, informed by the changes in our current era.

COPENHAGEN FREE UNIVERSITY, 2001-2007

The Copenhagen Free University was opened in 2001 by artists Henriette Heise and Jakob Jakobsen, in part of their apartment. This self-teaching institution, which rapidly attracted several students and researchers, dedicated its efforts to producing critical consciousness and poetic language, and refusing to address education as part of “the economy of knowledge” or to reproduce society's power structures. It encouraged the production of forms of collective knowledge that are floating, fluid, schizophrenic, non-economic, non-capitalist and without hierarchy (cooking practice takes place alongside philosophical debates). It championed the possibility to experiment, to make mistakes or to escape to an educational institution, demonstrating that a university can promote social evolution rather than reproducing isolated individuals.

Activities at the Copenhagen Free University – critical texts, exhibitions, television programmes, posters, classes in public spaces, internet articles – and restore knowledge to the context of daily life, outside the ivory towers. Following a logic of experimentation and adaptation of situations, the CFU accepts that it inspires other projects, but is wary of being seen as a model.

In 2007, in line with its desire to reject any fixed identity, the university ceases its activities. After having seized power and played with it, its founders decided to abolish it.

The development of the Copenhagen Free University coincided with other projects that were taking place in the art world concerning education and the academe, at the same time as the Bologna Process was starting to be implemented, with its goal of standardising the European higher education sector. Among these projects was ‘Summit, non-aligned initiatives in education culture’, a conference organised in Berlin and the preparatory phase of the exhibition, Academy. Learning from Art / Learning from the Museum, at Antwerp's MuHKA and the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven in 2006, and the publication The Academy and The Corporate Public, by German artist Stephan Dilleuth, in 2002.

BAUHAUS, Weimar 1919-1925 (Weimar), 1925-1932 (Dessau), 1932-1933 (Berlin)

In 1919, Bauhaus emerges from the mutual integration of an academy and an applied arts school. It is marked, from the start, by an anti-academic attitude. In its founding manifesto of 1919, architect Walter Gropius writes:

“The ultimate aim of all creative activity is a building! (...) Architects, painters, and sculptors must once again come to know and comprehend the composite character of a building (...) Then their work will be filled with that true architectonic spirit which, as «salon art», it has lost. The old art schools were unable to produce this unity; and how, indeed, should they have done so, since art cannot be taught? “

Walter Gropius, “Bauhaus Manifesto“, 1919.

The creation of standardised objects destined for mass production, as well as work to do with architecture quickly takes a primordial position in the school directed by artists and architects themselves (among them Walter Gropius, Joseph Albers, Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee and Laszlo Moholy-Nagy).

“ (...) The experience gained in dabbling with materials is often communicated more easily from student to student than by the older, further removed teacher. “

Josef Albers, “Creative Education“, 1928, reprint in : “Le Bauhaus“.

The Bauhaus structure promotes an innovative educational model, in which, rather than attempting to learn art, considered to be unteachable, the horizontal exchange of skills is favoured:

Throughout its turbulent European history, Bauhaus never stops questioning traditional methods for teaching art. It sets out clearly defined study curricula paying particular attention to questions of teaching practice, and develops an educational model that not only provides the structure for its own teaching, but which will equally be a source of inspiration for numerous schools to come.

INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT FOR AN IMAGINIST BAUHAUS, 1953-1957

In 1950, Max Bill founds a neo-Bauhaus in Ulm, with a curriculum based on functionalist trends (art for the purposes of construction) and their predecessors. As a direct response to this project, in 1953 Asger Jorn creates the International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus (a movement that will merge, four years later, with the Letterist International to form the Situationist International). Contrary to the Bauhaus interest in industrial production, Jorn insists on the need for art that is opposed to standardisation:

“Technique is the standardisation of a process obtained through identical repetitions. It is the reduction of an action to its economic limit. Art, on the contrary, is the variation and diversification of a process in order to develop it towards the greatest sensational importance.”

Asger Jorn, “Instruction against initiation”, in: “Pour la forme“, 1957.

The movement’s activities take the form of congresses and creative experiences centred on tapestry-work and pottery, in particular, as well as publications which detail its activities and set out its viewpoint. This viewpoint rejects all educational models inherited from the past and any standardisation of a work of art for functional ends.

“The leaders of the old Bauhaus were great masters with exceptional talents, but they were poor teachers. The pupils’ works were only pious imitations of their masters.

(...)

The direct transfer of artistic gifts is impossible (...) Our practical conclusion is the following: We are abandoning all efforts at pedagogical action and moving toward experimental activity.”

Asger Jorn, “Notes on the formation of an Imaginist Bauhaus”, in : “Pour la forme“, 1957.

If Bauhaus had already expressed reservations about the possibility of teaching art, the Imaginist Bauhaus went a step further, rejecting any attempt at teaching in favour of total experimentation. In 1955, during the first experiments of the International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus in Abissola, a group of children are invited to decorate freely a hundred items of crockery. The conclusion drawn follows the thinking that any teaching effort in the field of art is pointless:

“The results (...) seems to demonstrate that any pre-school child is more capable of using modern techniques to make a surface embellished with images homogeneous and lively than all the professionals of artistic, craft, architectural or industrial decoration.”

Asger Jorn, “Structure and change” in: “Pour la forme“, 1957.

COLLABORATION WITH CCC STUDENTS, HEAD-GENEVE.

The 19th century was favourable in Europe to the development of progressive educational movements, which were grouped together under the heading of New Education (Education Nouvelle or Reformpädagogik). This developed particularly in Geneva at the start of the 20th century, before spreading worldwide up to the end of the Second World War. The creation of an “exportable” educational model made it easier to establish and circulate new educational methods, some of whose principles – at times intentionally provocative – are displayed here in bubbles (extracts from Thirty Criteria for the New School). The legacy of New Education has survived under other names and in educational reforms over the second half of the 20th century.



EMPOWERING?

“While we work to resolve those issues that are most pressing in daily life, we engage in a critical process of theorizing that enables and empowers.”

bell hooks, “Teaching to Transgress“, 1994.

“I want to argue (...) that key assumptions, goals, and pedagogical practices fundamental to the literature on critical pedagogy – namely, “empowerment” , “student voice” , “dialogue” , and even the term “critical” – are repressive myths that perpetuate relations of domination.”

Elizabeth Ellsworth, “Why Doesn’t This Feel Empowering?“, 1989.

To what extent do artistic practices or teaching activities have the means to liberate, emancipate or endow with power?

Those who believe in the idea of a liberating education, as defended by Paulo Freire, think education must lead to emancipation; while others dismiss this notion as a myth that actually harms everyday teaching, principally because it is never clearly defined exactly from what the learner is supposed to be emancipated.

The idea of emancipation and endowing with power can be seen, in varying forms and expressions, in numerous artistic projects that have an educational dimension.

The work of Huit Facettes Interaction, for example, aims to prompt members of rural communities in Senegal to use creativity to solve their daily problems. The Feminist Art Program defended the position that its students could, through art, reach self-realisation, achieving awareness of their identity as both women and artists. The Gran Fury collective sought to give voice to those living with AIDS, at a time when the US government preferred to turn a blind eye to the problem, and to draw attention to the urgency of the situation. In this context, the idea of giving people a voice to assert their existence is of a vital importance.

HUIT FACETTES – INTERACTION, 1996-2002

Huit Facettes – Interaction is a group of artists that draws on artistic resources for use in society. At the heart of its work lies a direct involvement in the lives of its fellow Senegalese citizens, stimulating those who take part to rediscover their creative ability and cultural identity.

“ What we are interested in is concrete action that is of practical application in our environment, as a response to the international situation which has attacked us for so long (...) In our opinion, it is urgent to lead people to rethink who they are and what would be really good for them. We need to reframe the representations that we have of ourselves, first of all, and this will forcibly influence the perception that others have always had of us!”

Kan-Si (Huit Facettes) “Voyages croisés“, 2005.

Between 1996 and 2002, the artists collective sets up workshops in rural areas of Senegal, to exchange creative know-how and to reflect on questions of cultural identity and representation. The workshops are aimed at closing the gap between art and craft, rural and urban, and Western and ‘Third’ world. The guiding principle of Huit Facettes is to take into account the aspirations of the participants, and approach creativity through a connection with their immediate basic needs. That means making artistic know-how accessible to people living in rural areas, so that they may use this in their search for solutions to their daily problems.

This quest for a concrete improvement in villagers’ lives through art has led to the work of Huit Facettes – which works with non-governmental organisations on many of its projects – being viewed as existing on the border between art and development. This has opened a debate on the role that art can play in this sort of context. Is art a means to rethink what we understand by ‘development’ and to propose a radically different approach to that of the ‘outstretched hand’.

WORKSHOPS IN HAMDALLAYE, 1996

In 1996, the collective set up a ‘Sociocultural Creativity Centre’ in the village of Hamdallaye Samba M’baye, 400km south of Dakar. The village was home to Maat Mbay, a self-taught fresco painter, and subsistence farmer, who painted only in his private home. For him, the centre offered an opportunity; his family and friends started to view his artistic work as an activity that was of value to the community. Drawing on his lexicon of signs and shapes, a graphic alphabet was developed for the village, and all the activities in the workshops were centred around this idea. The approach sought to reaffirm the villagers’ confidence in the fact that the best use of their creative potential could have a positive impact on their environment. The alphabet was used to decorate the huts and buildings of the village.

GRAN FURY, 1988-1994

“It would provoke them, cause a reaction, make them think, and hopefully educate them. Our projects should have the effect that a demonstration by ACT UP has.”

Michael Nesline (Gran Fury), “Aids Riot“, 2003.

“Such information and mobilization (art projects...) can save lives ; indeed, until a cure for AIDS is developed, only information and mobilization can save lives.”

Douglas Crimp, “AIDS: Cultural Analysis/Cultural Activism“, 1987.

Gran Fury came into being in 1988 as a sub-group of ACT UP, and subsequently became independent. The collective set itself a mission to work on graphic communication that could play a didactic role on the subject of AIDS, at a period when the US government refused to communicate about the epidemic, its spread and means of prevention. Gran Fury’s strategy consists in speaking out via the stage offered through the art world, in order to convey a message with educational force.

Gran Fury’s varied communication tactics - both official and unofficial – include the creation of posters and artistic installations to amended road signs and satirical newspapers. Throughout its existence, from 1988 to 1994, Gran Fury never ceases to question the pertinence and effectiveness of its own action in the art world, and refused to become a purely artistic product. Already, in a catalogue for an exhibition in 1988, Gran Fury designs a key poster which questions the role of art in the ‘AIDS crisis’, claiming: “With 47,524 dead, art is not enough.”

NEW YORK CRIMES, 1989

As part of an ACT UP demonstration on 28 March 1989, Gran Fury produced a ‘fake’ New York Times. Six thousand copies of the New York Crimes were distributed through automatic vending machines in Manhattan, folded over the original newspapers. They contained several vindictive articles and parody advertisements.

FEMINIST ART PROGRAM, 1970-1975

“(...) I was as uncomfortable with the rigid student/teacher interaction as I was with the standard male/female role. I wanted real interaction, and (...) when there was no response (...) I was prepared to sit through the entire class time in silence (...)”

Judy Chicago, “Through the Flower“, 1975.

“(...) most of the students (...) worked directly, often autobiographically, on pieces whose content was vital to their lives. (...) There were also many collaborations among students (...)”

Faith Wilding, “By our own hands“, 1977.

Created in 1970, the Feminist Art Program is a militant feminist teaching programme. Set up by Judy Chicago as a workshop at the Cal State University in Fresno, it moved in 1971 to the California Institute of the Arts in Los Angeles, where Judy Chicago worked with Miriam Schapiro. In its various guises, the programme existed until 1975.

The programme created the means to question the existing educational system and provided women with access to an education created by and for them. In a women-only setting offering female artistic references and role-models, the Feminist Art Program challenged the master-pupil relationship in favour of setting a higher value on personal narrative within a community of learners.

WOMANHOUSE, 1972

Womanhouse is the programme's first project after its move to Los Angeles. The aim (which was amply fulfilled, since it was seen by thousands of people and featured in national media) was to provide greater access to and a better understanding of the work of women artists, in an art scene dominated by men. The programme's students moved into a derelict house in Los Angeles which they converted into a space for exhibitions, meetings and public events. The project began with a long year of building works, which was both physically and mentally taxing, and which was said to be an integral part of the teaching process. Each space within the house then became an experimental area where “women's” themes were explored through art. The project celebrated all aspects of a woman's experience and denounced the confinement of women in an exclusively domestic role.