



# voices with critical wings

~

A project by Carla Padró

Carla Padró and Paola Villanueva (coords.)



*To all the powerful transitions we are going through.*

Introduction

CARLA PADRÓ AND PAOLA VILLANUEVA

p. 8

~

From the intersection: thoughts and experiences of a museum  
education professional

ENERITZ LÓPEZ

p. 14

~

Inhabiting the third landscape

AMPARO MOROÑO

p. 24

~

Entry (and) exit: autobiographic visit from a prematurely  
“retired” museum educator

AMAIA URZAIN

p. 36

~

From the educational turn as a new mask or how  
Žižek’s chocolate laxatives stir me up

IRENE AMENGUAL

p. 46

~

Museum educators: a profession at ground level

EVA ALCAIDE

p. 56



Education, cultural mediation and variations

ARTAZIAK

p. 64

~

Museum mediation: reflections from practice

KATIA MARTORELL

p. 78

~

A letter

LES SALONNIÈRES

p. 87

~

Critical wings

CARLA PADRÓ

p. 90

~

References

p. 108

~

Contributors

p. 114



NATURALEZA MUERTA (STILL LIFE) - 06.05.2014 - Barcelona

UNEARTH (1970-72)

25

Nomad...  
till nowhere, blooming  
in the prison of your mouth, becomes  
wherever you are: you  
read the fable  
that was written in the eyes  
of dice: (it was  
the meteor- the word, scrawled by light  
between us, yet we, in the end,  
had no evidence, we  
could not produce  
the stone). The die-and-the-die  
now own your name. As if to say,  
wherever you are  
the desert with you. As if,  
wherever you move, the desert  
is new,  
is moving with you

PAUL AUSTER (2012). *Poesía completa*. Barcelona: Seix Barral, p. 81.

# introduction

**Text** by *Carla Padró and Paola Villanueva*

The texts featured in this publication have emerged from a working process that took place within the European Project Museum Mediators, which came about with the aim to transfer a training program geared to museum mediators through a collaborative, networked effort spanning five European countries (Portugal, Italy, Spain, Estonia and Denmark)<sup>1</sup>. This working process, which lasted two years, consisted of gathering several ideas of museum mediation through open and/or semi-structured interviews that generated a number of stories based on the respondents' unique experiences in different contexts in the area of museum education. In some cases -Amaia, Amparo, Artaziak, Irene and Les Salonnieres- the interviews were shot on video<sup>2</sup>, while others -Eneritz, Eva and Katia-, consisted of written or audio-recorded videos, and later transcribed.

Nearly one year after conducting these interviews, and with the goal of further shaping all of the stories that had been generated and were still being generated, we contacted the educators with the proposal that they write a text based on their interview; that way, they would be able to broaden the references to the recommendations or concepts that were important to them.

The women who make up this publication were not selected haphazardly. Rather, I (Carla) selected them with a view to paying homage to all those who have contributed to this area, and that represent a non-conventional version of it. They all have training beyond their university degrees, and have specialized in areas associated with museum education

<sup>1</sup> Museum Mediators Europe. Lifelong Learning Programme. Transfer of Innovation, Multilateral Projects, Leonardo da Vinci. <http://museummediators.eu/>

<sup>2</sup> [http://museummediators.eu/?page\\_id=463](http://museummediators.eu/?page_id=463)

- Photo diary -



A TRAIN TRAVEL - 18.02.2014 - Barcelona > Granollers

studies, visual culture, gender, contemporary art and post-critical pedagogies. With the aid of these women, we have attempted to gain perspective on other positions and teachings in the Spanish context.

In addition to the texts proposed by the educators, we have included a number of concepts that emerged over the course of the conversational interviews and that, once grouped together, and configured a possible alphabet that accompanies the women's voices. I (Carla) put this alphabet together by always recovering words from the interviews and emphasizing how they spoke, and things that may not have come across in their discourses; a vocabulary that, in the form of small samples, seemed especially significant to me when, in the first conversations, I listened to the knowings and favors arising from each experience. The parts of this alphabet that appear disseminated throughout each text are therefore, excerpts from my (Carla's) travel journal, and not quotes from the conversations I had with the educators. The reason we decided to include this alphabet into the text of each educator is to remain loyal to a dialogical discourse that has permeated our entire working process, in addition to highlighting the different voices that, in different planes, weave together the experiences that give meaning to this publication. Last, I (Carla) selected fewer concepts than had been taken out of a creative synthesis exercise.

What is more, there are included a number of photographs that I (Paola) have taken throughout the entire process. They portray both the travels/stays with some of the educators (Barcelona, Bilbao, Palma de Majorca, Plasencia or San Sebastián), and our own (Carla and Paola) meetings in different cafes of Barcelona, where this publication has gestated. Other times, these photographs show my daily life.

Last, I (Carla) have selected a number of poems that I find relevant at this time. These poems help us to group together, in one of the possible ways, the texts of Amaia, Amparo, Artaziak, Eneritz, Eva, Irene, Katia, Les Salonnieres and my own, while also building a new plane of meaning as we present them. These poems, along with the alphabet, the photos or the text that closes this project, are conceived as one of the voices that shapes the story, inviting the reader to relate with it in the way and order they deem most appropriate.

We hope you will find it interesting, and that in it you find reasons for refection, whatever the reason that encourages you to do so.





- Photo diary -



MIGDIA (NOON) - 21.03.2014 - Barcelona

## BLACK BIRDS LIBERATE THE WIND

Black birds liberate the wind  
while softly diving  
silent and blind  
toward the shafts of the underground

I stand staring  
from a broken window  
ruins far from life and noise  
where eyes grow bat wings  
over endless landscapes  
smelling of soot and ashes

Lonely my thought follows  
the last glimpse of my presence  
into the alleys of dreams beyond  
bridges of glass and pollen  
between miracles and wonders  
all places that do not exist  
and can never be destroyed

PATRICK FRIESEN, PETER BASK (eds.) (2001). *A Sudden Sky. Selected Poems by Ulrikka S. Gernes*. London, Ontario: Brick Books.

# from the intersection: thoughts and experiences of a museum education professional

**Text** by *Eneritz López*

(...) educators ought to be considered thoughtful professionals, both within the structures of museums, as well as in their public projection, and not instructors, disseminators or managers of information, as they are often portrayed.

PADRÓ (2006: 57)

- Photo diary -



THE KING'S GARDEN - 07.05.2014 - Copenhagen

Lately, answering questions such as, “What is it that you do for a living?”, “What are your duties in a museum?” or “What exactly do you teach in your classes?” has become quite a challenge. My professional situation, somewhere between the design and implementation of educational programs in museums and exhibitions at a business level, and university teaching in the field of art education, gives me an overarching—and most likely distorted—view of the inherently multifaceted and complex task of museum educators. Furthermore, my path to working as one has been somewhat peculiar. After earning my doctorate in art education, and accumulating professional experience as a trainer and researcher, different circumstances led me to education in museums and galleries, to daily contact with all kinds of visitors, to the prolific design of different educational programs and the creation and implementation of visit programs, workshops and other activities traditionally associated with this work. All of this, combined with a diverse array of missions such as holding training courses, drafting educational guides or sharing presentations in seminars and conferences, among other things, has given me the consciousness of a versatile and flexible professional, of a culture worker with a stake in the struggle to improve the occupational conditions of the sector, from a position of instability that appears practically endemic (Sánchez de Serdio and López, 2011). But mine is not an especially singular or unusual story. In general, museum education professionals are frontier people; we tend to have hybrid profiles, that place us in a strange middle ground: we are not teachers, or museologists per se, nor socio-cultural instructors, artists, or tour guides. But in practice, we must take a bit from each of those professions. In truth, it has already been established that education in museums is an occupational realm situated on the edges of museological professions, and that therefore, the establishment of links and connections has been intrinsic to it for reasons of its own legitimization and survival.

In museums, educational matters are seen as fundamental and marginal at the same time. Though it seems impossible on the surface, the truth is that many museum institution directors or administrators run their mu-

seums regularly alluding to the importance of educational activity, placing it at the center of their messages. But when the time comes to budget the educational departments, they tend to be the weakest and their professionals, those who work in the worst conditions. (López, 2012b:36).

Our day-to-day activity requires us to navigate through knowledge inherent to different disciplines, and we naturally take strategies and approaches from other fields of knowledge, interpreting them and adapting them to suit our needs, with a cross-disciplinary mentality—at the methodological and conceptual levels— as one of the core characteristics associated with our work. Additionally, it is not unusual for educators to complain about always dealing with an excessive workload and consequently, having no time to think about our work (López and Alcaide, 2011a). But these situations are hard to solve due to the invisibility of educational work in museums, still considered a “semi-profession” (López and Alcaide, 2011b) and the generalized misconception that it is a job learned by mere repetition.

Of course my daily work requires a lot of reading and a great deal of study, not just on art, artists and other museum contents, but also educational strategies, manners of approaching new art practices and ways of working with different groups. By mentioning this I seek recognition of the fact that the profession of museum educator is not something that can only be based on practice, trial and error, or daily experimentation, but that it also requires study, a search for reference resources and ongoing updates. This is not always understood from institutions or companies, nor are we always given the time and space necessary for it. (López, 2012a:55).

This multi-disciplinary picture of museum educators that I portray becomes especially important in work as multi-faceted and dynamic as ours, which resides at a cross-roads, a dense intersection of disciplines, something of a no-man’s-land that can, nonetheless, be a very favorable work environment. In this way, I like to think that this intersectionality is

very positive, as it can make for a major advantage. For example, if museum educators have multiple, widely-varying loves and interests, in addition to the fact that we usually have parallel occupations and we acquire specialized academic baggage, why not apply all of these learnings to our daily practice as museum educators? Why not bring all of that accumulated knowledge forth to interconnect it with the design or implementation of educational activities?

In my case, I can “contaminate” my educational work with knowledge on music or art, interconnect them with my love of film or television series (which I can use to underscore the importance of narrative), join it with what feminist theories have taught me about the need to visibilize roles and stereotypes, or mix it with my writing and story-telling skills. Imagine how much knowledge and ability we all accumulate—picked up in our parallel roles—that, in one way or another, we can include in our projects! At the end of the day, each of us takes the strategies, ideas or inspiration from what we know the best, what we have closest at hand, what most interests or excites us, giving way to just that kind of variety and dynamic so characteristic of the educational methodologies used in museums, often so difficult to classify because of their inherently heterogeneous nature.

Obviously, there are many roles and duties that we educators habitually take on, and in this regard, I think it is essential to have a clear idea that carrying out education is not just organizing visits for school children, but that it also has to do with other aspects of activity programming and design, as well as other skills, such as writing reports, drafting publications, documenting, researching, evaluating and communicating. In fact, it is important to remember that working as an educator in a museum may mean taking responsibility for other duties, such as designing interpretative materials, creating learning spaces in galleries themselves or establishing dialogues between some works and others (working as what in many places is called “curator-educator”). It can also mean taking other types of roles associated with management, with special value attached to the abilities to take an overarching view, be proactive and innovate.



This elastic and multidisciplinary approach is what I see reflected in my day-to-day, where it is necessary to show great ability to adapt and react quickly to new situations (designing a project for an art exhibition while holding an archeology workshop and writing the script for an interactive game, for example, could make up a typical day's activity), while also being able to deploy repurposed and recovered strategies from fields other than my own, be they from the world of theater, literature or popular visual culture. In fact, in a context such as today's, and considering the complexity of the art world, I suspect that it would be quite sensible to base one's work on this type of borrowed methodological strategies that are mixed and promiscuous, and lead us to multiple, surprising, contextualized interpretations, that leave behind predetermined, airtight readings, that are neither stimulating or meaningful.

Images do not fall from the sky, but are created in contexts that are interacting, historic, institutional or discursive, among others. The stories that serve as vehicles for the images and visual narratives are social artifacts that tell us stories about society and culture as well as a person and a group (...). Images do not speak on their own, but are configured into contexts that are nourished and produce meanings that are later completed, expanded, transformed and revised by practices of visibility (cultural looks) of the visualizers. (Hernández, 2010: 49).

Personally, since I heard professor Imanol Aguirre (2006) speak of art educators as researchers, entanglers, provocateurs of interferences and relations, I have been fascinated by the idea of building my practice without the fear of crossing certain ideas with others. I was encouraged to find resources in different areas, to seek inspiration in realms far from "high culture". In parallel, this drove me to place a priority, in every activity I perform, on each person being able to speak in their own voice and connect what they already know with what they are seeing, especially focusing on the fact that understanding works of art consists of re-describing them, in connecting them with our own experiences, and doing away with the

belief that analyzing a work consists of revealing some supposed hidden truth in it. That is also why one of the anchoring points in my educational work has always been to think that art and museums must be “used” by the public. In other words, educators have to offer tools, prepare messages or implement devices—whatever the type—for visitors to feel more like users, able to relate, meaningfully and comfortably, to the esthetic artifacts they have before them. Oftentimes, to achieve this goal, much of our work in education with artistic realities must be based on showing relationships, making analogies, playing, criticizing, story-telling, etc. For that reason, for a museum educator it is important to be up to date on current events and thus be able to establish these links, maintain a reflective attitude and furthermore, know how to work with images; for example, knowing the mechanisms needed to build visual stories, which can be very useful to delve into the construction of group meanings based on an artwork. In order for this to happen, it is also important that institutions allow their visitors to make connections between what they are seeing and what they already know, thus contributing to our work as educators acquiring its full meaning. This way, I think we would be better supported, and we could make possible a scenario in which no one felt incapable or was afraid to speak in front of any aesthetic artifact, as they would know that to interpret it they could resort to any background, idea or knowledge they had, based on the fact that as spectators they also play a key role in the construction of meanings of a work, which could be many and diverse. I firmly believe that our work as art educators—understood as cultural producers—takes on its full meaning and importance, with our job consisting of provoking that type of knowledge building processes, which may take place discussing an image, holding a plastic art creation workshop, listening to a song or running a group activity with a showy bent.

Based on my experience, I think it is useful to believe that theory and practice always go hand and hand in my work, boosting my intellectual role and tasks as a critic. I try to manifest this in my interest in publishing or sharing projects and experiences through meetings, social media or other resources within my reach, trying to develop a systema-

tic, conscientious effort of investigation, refection and dissemination, that brings forth and legitimizes the value of the work done. I think that this attitude of knowledge dissemination creates solid learning communities with other professionals of the sector with whom links can be established. I want to conclude this story by stating that in a world where uncertainty, changes, complexity and multiplicity of relations are the norm, I find it fundamental to professionally build using methodological elasticity, mental openness, creative attitudes and a willingness to establish vertices of relationships. On a strategic level, it is important to take a philosophical position that includes problematization, doubt and constant refection. In my opinion, this is indispensable to give my experience meaning and generate useful, meaningful knowledge. As a result of these strategies, I try to be a professional creator of knowledge, an interpreter and a transforming intellectual (Giroux, 1990), with the responsibility and agency to develop my own discourses. How they see me from the outside is another matter altogether.



- Photo diary -



FRAMES - 05.06.2014 - Barcelona

“

**D-** Degree. No sort of degree is required to start working as a mediator/educator. It is not required anywhere.

**M-** Mediators work on a team in institutional contexts.

**M-** Multipurpose. Multipurpose profession.

**RES-** Research. It would be interesting to research educational practices in museums, as it would generate legitimacy in this field, and would enable sharing of knowledge with other professionals.

”

# inhabiting the third landscape

**Text** *by Amparo Morono*

If we stopped looking at the landscape as if it were an object of industry, we could suddenly discover a vast number of indecisive spaces, stripped of function, that are difficult to name. These spaces do not belong to the domain of shadow or light. They are around their margins: at the edges of the forests, along highways and rivers, in the most forgotten corners of culture, beyond the reach of machines.

GILLES CLÉMENT (2007: 9)

INSIDE OR OUT OF THE MUSEUM'S BOUNDARIES ~.

Nowadays, any discussion on mediation in museums must necessarily refer to substantial changes in the quality of practice, professionalization and theorization of this area. It must also refer to a certain recognition. But, at the same time, this profession is increasingly associated with situations of conflict, confrontation and precariousness. Over recent years, education in museums has taken a paradoxical turn in Spain. The upsurge in the cultural industry of the 1990's and the proliferation of public museums and art centers with generous budgets brought about the possibility for educational activity and mediation to make a more or less solid place for themselves in these facilities. At the same time, the work from universities





TERCEROS PAISAJES (THIRD LANDSCAPES) - 12.06.2014 - Barcelona > Granollers



as relates to art education and education in museums was enriching (and it is still is today) and strengthening the field. Highly valuable studies were contributed, and a generation of perfectly prepared professionals was trained to transform museums into true spaces for learning, criticism, and the questioning of cultural policies.

I belong to a generation of museum educators who have lived through the process of legitimization and professionalization of the sector and, at the same time, witnessed its rapid decline and the beginnings of what appears to be its disappearance. Over the years in which we have worked as educators in different museums, we have struggled to conceive museum mediation in a different way; to introduce long-term learning policies into the centers; work dynamics based on collaboration with communities; critical approaches to museology; new pedagogic methods, etc. We have also fought to dignify and claim for the profession the status as an intellectual job and the occupational stability that other work areas had within these institutions.

Not long ago, my colleagues in the education department and I were dismissed from the museum where we worked for claiming our labor rights. Ours is not an isolated case, and we probably would have been let go anyway, even without lodging any complaint. These centers' budgets are dwindling to new lows, and efforts to save and cut costs are affecting education departments first and foremost.

Now I form part of a large group of museum educators without a museum. We have lost our jobs inside the institutions at a historic time in which they are crumbling from within. Public budgets are no longer so generous with art museums, and under the premise of cutting costs, their education departments are disappearing. Our profession does not exist as we had known it up to now, and the scenarios (museums) will probably never again be the place for us to work, or at least, as they had been up to now.

This is the place from which I write about museum mediation today. I write from a place of change, from the need to think of this profession in a different way. From the question of whether it is possible to be a museum educator without working in a museum, or whether it is possible for museums to ever be a place to work in again.

I also speak from the learnings acquired over these years. From the knowledge accumulated, from the open questions and unresolved conflicts with regard to mediation. And also, as could not be otherwise, from the fragility of trying to reorient and reinvent this job outside the institutions that, up to now, had legitimized and financed our work as mediators.

LIVING IN CONFLICT INSIDE THE INSTITUTION: TRAVELING THROUGH PLOWED FIELDS ~.

Implementing educational work inside a museum is, in most situations, like trying to convince a farmer who, day after day, plows his field so that all of the furrows are perfectly aligned, to allow that field to be invaded by living processes beyond his control, with the risk that the furrows become different, chaotic, and wind up growing another type of crop, or growing nothing at all.

Theoretically, from its very beginning, the educational task has been one of museums' main purposes, as long as it is agreed that teaching about the works of art they house is an educational act in itself. But the changes in the "ways of doing" educational practices in museums have shown their capacity to question and transform their foundational pillars.

For educators, the experience of working in museums has been laden with a great conflict around the ways and means by which these institutions operate. Any reference to the relations between education and the institutions often involves conflict, in languages where the ideas of struggle, confrontation and disagreement are recurrent. These conflicting points reside in the difficulty of fitting in certain ways of understanding the cultural pedagogy in the logic of institutions that operate with work dynamics and goals that are distant from educational concerns, but that, nonetheless, need the educational activity to exist to justify their pedagogical function.

The general trend, as it is a relationship of power in which educational activity occupies a lower hierarchical rung than the museum's administration, to which it is subordinated, is that the institution try to modify the practices and adapt them to its needs, time frames, structures, etc. It is an attempt to mold and fit educational experiences into exhibition

periods, into media-based languages or populist policies that turn museum mediation into another of the institution's tools to justify its social role in society, and tone down its elitist image.

But educational experiences are living beings; they are organic and they are built by people (including the mediators) who make them their own, and are the ones who set the pace, define the languages and shapes, and it is there where the conflict and the resistances in both directions is born.

The new place occupied by educational practices in cultural policies is a symbolic middle ground, difficult to manage in the day to day. A place of constant negotiation between institutional pressures (which claim visibility for educational projects in the name of symbolic gains) and our place as active agents in the work processes in which we participate. Knowing how to manage our role as educators in that middle ground through dialog among the different actors is one of the challenges inherent to the educational direction of museums.

Along these lines, we have tried to fight against the inertia of museums as they attempt to reap symbolic credit from educational work. This leads to the practice, the day-to-day practices, being modified and conditioned depending on the interests of the institution itself. We have learned that the silent work, with people, is not as important as the terms in which that work is explained, the languages in which it is told about or the places where the story is told (conventions, press conferences, etc.). This means that educators have at times had to put ourselves in a belligerent position against the institution itself, into something of a contest, in which educators constantly claim ground for pedagogic affairs, at the same time the institution is claiming the pedagogic affairs as its own.

For a few years now, ever since talk began about the *educational turn* museums were taking and the importance of this change of direction for the cultural realm, there have been those who, from less *fortunate* and celebratory positions, have called attention to the risks of this new direction in the interests of museums for the quality of the practices as well as their use as objects of symbolic and economic value. For this reason, educational experiences that take place in cultural institutions are already involved in

processes of capitalization of their meanings, which turn them into usage assets in themselves, and in their different contexts. Social, local and community-based approaches have become a safe strategy for institutions that have borne since their inception the weight of elitism and frivolity. Education has become an added value in the dynamics of cultural industries.

The symbolic benefits of working with the local context or with *marginalized communities* are not out of place in the decisions that shape cultural policies, which gradually incorporate these practices into their discourses in the name of image, and as a means of justifying their own existence or the budgetary items they manage. Education sells. And above all, it justifies the expense. The massive budgetary allocations for art institutions become more justifiable if the messages around them are given a pedagogic aura. But these quandaries are difficult to approach in a theoretical analysis. In educational practice, every situation, every experience, begets a web of interests, power plays, negotiations and resistances that determine the ways of acting in each case. These factors also form part of the experiences and should be present in their processes as well as the stories generated around them. The complexity of articulating an educational policy that is serious and responsible with its context and subjects resides, partially, in the capacity to establish a productive dialog between the educational micro-experiences (projects, workshops, etc.) and the political and economic macro-context in which they are conducted.

It is fundamental to incorporate this complexity into the work processes themselves, as it forms part of them. One of the challenges of critical pedagogies has to do with the idea of transformation, not just of the subjects, but also the institutions, discourses and policies in which they are immersed. Being aware of the symbolic value of education for museums takes us to realities in which, more than ever, conducting education in a cultural institution becomes a political matter.

THE THIRD LANDSCAPES: SPACES OF POSSIBILITY ~.

One of the most important learnings we have taken from our work inside museums is that the experiences that manage to conserve their spa-

ce of liberty within institutions are those that do not receive too much attention from them, because the institutions do not find them interesting or profitable. As mediators, we have developed a special ability to work invisibly, to try for educational experiences to go unnoticed, to keep them from being swallowed up by the institutional media machine as it attempts to symbolically benefit from them. This learning is very useful for us today when it comes to conceiving our work from the outside. Invisibility brings with it the difficulty of inhabiting, as mediators, a third landscape, a space that escapes from the logic of cultural capitalism.

The “Manifesto of the Third Landscape” was written by French landscape artist Gilles Clément in 2004. This book is not about museums, the art system, pedagogies or mediation. It speaks of what he calls third landscapes, and he outlines them in terms of possibility, of spaces of possibility.

For Clément, a third landscape is, for example, the space that remains between a field sown with grain and a highway, in the understanding that both the highway and the sown field are places that human beings have made their own. People have designed, used and channeled them to make them economically productive. Between one and the other—between the highway and the field of grain—there is a space out of the tractors’ or plows’ reach, and that therefore, is abandoned as unproductive. Our experience tells us that when we are stripped of the term or the idea of productivity, an immense space of freedom is opened because within it, processes can occur without supervision or guidance by higher authorities.

The third landscape is a space where chaos and diversity reign. Many species are present, no person has determined which species (of plant or animal) is supposed to inhabit it. This often occurs in museums with policies related with publics and programs and depending on the image meant to be conveyed. To us, the third landscape can be a synthesis of many ideas we piece together in relation to the pedagogies. Our current situation outside museums, and our experience inside them with relation to the invisible and the “non-productive” leads us to think that perhaps it was necessary to seek out new spaces in which to perform our work. Spaces that are not previously designed from the logics of high culture

or cultural capitalism. These are spaces that are distant from culture and art, from organized or systematized culture. Inhabiting third landscapes means traveling in the opposite direction: going toward. This is a “going toward” while staying aware of the risk of interloping that arises when you work with a community imposing, modifying or attempting to exercise the oft-referred to “social transformation”.

#### PEDAGOGIES OF THE THIRD LANDSCAPE ~.

This journey in reverse makes it necessary to exercise another type of pedagogies, other ways of thinking and understanding the educational practices in relation to art and culture, and chiefly, another way of thinking of ourselves as mediators in these new scenarios. Inhabiting the third landscape leads us to activate pedagogies of listening, observation and respect. It leads us to the “*being in*” and the “*being with*”. To think out pedagogies in their contexts.

Inhabiting the *third landscapes* involves understanding that there is no such thing as recipes that can be applied anywhere with any group of people. It involves thinking of each experience from its place, uninhibitedly using the tools (methodologies, languages, work dynamics) that each group of people negotiates in a specific situation.

Inhabiting the *third landscapes* involves respecting the forms of culture and relationships with the cultural that occur in a community, and freeing ourselves from the desire to fit educational experiences into tendencies marked from policies born in high culture or academic realms.

Inhabiting the *third landscapes* means learning to observe and listen, that is, to move away from the role of educators who have the control over processes and the keys for them to be developed *successfully*. In short, conscious, well-situated pedagogies involve group negotiation of the work methods in each case in dialogue with the surroundings where they are put in place (a town, a city, a natural setting, an institution, or a group) and the people who inhabit it.

Making this journey in reverse *outside the museums* is a matter of abandoning our role as peons who contribute with their practices to sow

a field previously conceived and designed by others to learn to “be” and “do” in these places. It is a matter of leaving behind the utilitarian nature of our profession, which has served to fill museums with “diverse and heterogeneous” publics, and learning to be mediators again in other contexts, in dialogue with them, and allowing ourselves to be swept up in their realities and their ways of doing and being.





“

**AG-** Attracting groups for them to visit the museum.

**EA-** Excluded areas: towns, rural areas...

**HC-** High culture, organized and systematized.

**IN-** Inertia, or how art museums try to reap symbolic credit from educational work.

”



GEOMETRÍAS (GEOMETRIES) - 06.03.2014 - Granollers

ACTION  
symmetries

7

And then they were finally there  
And then they drink sugar and snow  
And some start to weep and wonder  
And some start to laugh and to know

And then with their bodies together  
They decide to try out what could be  
And some go completely crazy  
And some are beginning to see

INGER CHRISTENSEN (2007). *It*. Exeter: Carcanet Press Ltd, translation by Susanna  
Nied, p.99.

# entry (and) exit: autobiographic visit from a prematurely "re- tired" museum educator

**Text** by *Amaia Urzain*

ENTRY: HOW DID I BECOME A MUSEUM EDUCATOR, AND WHERE AM I TODAY? ~.

In the fall of this 2013-14 school year, I held a gathering between my group of Elementary Education undergraduates and Bilbao artist Mabi Revuelta<sup>1</sup>. The goal behind this initiative<sup>2</sup> was for the students to discover the professional career and working process of an artist (a living, female,

<sup>1</sup> Mabi Revuelta (Bilbao, 1967). Her recent projects are: Abeceda and PLAY TIME, in which I cooperated.

<sup>2</sup> Initiative conducted in the third year of the Elementary and Primary Education Bachelor's Degree Program in the subject: Fundamentals of Artistic Education at the Mondragon Unibertsitatea, Faculty of Humanities and Education Sciences, where I now form part of the interdisciplinary docent staff.



AFTER RAINING - 24.03.2014 - Barcelona

local and active one). It was more a meeting of “warm bodies” than “exhibited works”. This is a goal I took from my days as a museum educator, when children would ask me: “Is this your artwork?”, as they granted me a two-fold role of artist and educator. Playing that game was as exciting as it was exhausting, but every “lived tour”, as opposed to an “explained tour”, made it worthwhile. There can be no doubt that the experience is different when you have the creator in front of you; the creator of the work or the creator of the tour, ready to talk. But not only bodies have weight; so does context. That is why I wanted the gathering to be held off campus. Mabi ushered us into BilbaoArte<sup>3</sup>. The experience exceeded my expectations. First, thanks to the Mabi’s brilliant presentation of two of her projects (*Abeceda* and *PlayTime*). Second, because of center director Juan Zapater’s excellent tour of the facilities. Third, the students were taken aback by the artist’s tasks of documentation, research and production. They were surprised to discover the space; with one part situated between a formative and a professional facility (artists in residence), a space for creation (set, engraving, library and carpentry workshops) and an exhibition area (Mireya Martín Larumbe<sup>4</sup>). I watched as new doors opened in their artistic imaginations. One student, who arrived late, told us that, when asking how to get to BilbaoArte, the first pedestrian had given him directions to the Guggenheim, and a few others had no idea what it was. After a good bit of wandering, he had ended up in the Bilbao La Vieja district by pure chance. Nonetheless, his first look seemed to interrogate me: “Where have you brought us?”, only to conclude: “No one knows this place!”. In truth, as Juan Zapater told us, BilbaoArte was born in 1998, one year after the opening of Bilbao’s Guggenheim Museum, not unlike the PS1 and the MoMA, *mutatis mutandis*. BilbaoArte and the PS1 are housed in former school buildings that have been adapted to their new purpose. They are located in outlying districts, while the MoMA and the Guggenheim occupy privileged sites in their city centers, and are indispensable visits for

3 BilbaoArte. Art production center. [http://bilbaoarte.org/?page\\_id=54](http://bilbaoarte.org/?page_id=54)

4 We visited the Mireya Martín Larumbe exhibition “El otoño que tengo es el que he perdido” (The Autumn I Have is the One I’ve Lost). 31-10-13 / 22-11-13.



tourists who come to New York or Bilbao, respectively. I relocated to the city in 1998 to study Fine Art.

Terms like “museum”, “gentrification”, “cultural capital”, “post-industrial reconversion”, “Guggenheim effect”, “white cube”, “critical pedagogy” or “visitor” did not form part of my vocabulary at that time. I was 18 years old. The education I was getting at the faculty was academicist by nature, and the epicenter of my life were my roommates, not modern and contemporary art. I had a certain curiosity about education, and I could more readily see myself in a teacher’s than an artist’s role. By chance, a substitute who came to give us class at the faculty spoke to us about internships at the Guggenheim and without a second thought I applied for them in my third year. It was more common to try to get an internship at a *company* in your final year, with the hope of *being hired, acquiring qualified experience, building a résumé and making contacts*. Among the areas in which it was possible to intern (conservation, exhibition display, general visits, etc.) I only applied for an opening in the Education Department, oriented to the elementary and primary school public: it was my opportunity to get close to formal education through a non-formal channel, leisure and art.<sup>5</sup> Following a face-to-face interview, I was paired with an excellent co-worker, Susana Fermín. For four months, we ran workshop-visits with elementary and primary schools, and families on the weekends. I lived in constant euphoria those months. I forgot all about my university classes as I dove deep into this experience. When it ended, the telephone came to life unexpectedly: ring, ring! They offered us the chance to keep working (by hours through a temporary agency) in the department, and that is where I consider that my professionalization began.

(AND): HOW TO BECOME PROFESSIONAL IN A NON-PROFESSIONALIZED FIELD? ~.

This brief interlude was exciting and decisive; I returned to the university very motivated. I wanted to keep discovering the profession of museum educator, and the Guggenheim experience or intuition would not

<sup>5</sup> There were collections and exhibitions that ran from a collective show of minimalist art, to a retrospective on Nam June Paik and the suits of Giorgio Armani.

do; I wanted to know more. What should I know about? Art education? Pedagogy? Modern art? And where could I go? During the internship, we received training on the institution, and I got to know the “typical” activities of museum mediation: general, family, and school visits... The only program that could be called “innovative” was Learning Through the Art (LTA), imported in its entirety from the Solomon R. Guggenheim. I could put what I learned about art history to use in different courses, but the Fine Arts degree program did not offer any Museum Education or Institutions pathway in which these topics were discussed or explored in any detail (which is ironic, considering that many students end up as docents). Fortunately, two elective courses, Pedagogy and Didactics of the Arts with Rubén Arozena and Edurne Uría as professors, encouraged me to keep exploring a path that was emerging in the Basque Country, while pointing out certain reference points I would visit later on. Specifically, they showed me the path to the doctorate or post-graduate program “Arts and Education: a Constructionist View” at the University of Barcelona as a possible route of specialization. But there was a five-year interval between my undergraduate and master’s degrees. During that time I combined my ongoing work as an educator in the Artium Museum with a *succession of courses*, a collage of mini-courses, D.I.Y. self-teaching or what we could call: a fragmented education.

My profile in 2002.

Fine Arts major, bilingual (Basque and Spanish), internship completed in the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao followed by additional work, temporary summer jobs at different companies and a deep interest in art education.

I applied to Artium with this profile, wishing to form part of the first team of DEAC (Dept. of Education and Cultural Activity) educators, and they hired me. The center was about to open in 2002 and some 20 educators were called to the first meeting. There I saw that my résumé was very modest in comparison to the other educators who held one or two degrees, knew foreign languages, had post-graduate studies and extensive



professional experience or were themselves recognized artists. My strong suit was my conformism laced with the joy of forming part of a new project. I never questioned the salary or the contractual arrangements, and having just turned 22, I was the youngest in the group. I think the youth, or average age, of a DEAC is a symptom to be considered, as is the fact that most of us were women.

A possible *composite*.

Female, young, university student, bilingual or trilingual, with training and experience in the art and/or education fields, creative, available... in addition to other “feminine traits” such as: flexibility, cooperation, capability to work in a group, and good social skills”. (Dalton, 2011:113 ).

I think it was in this period that I became aware of the need for educators to be professionalized, while having the chance to observe and know from within the operations and mission or discourse of different DEAC's. My job mostly consisted of giving general visits or workshop-visits. I took active part in the school program “A tu medida” (Just Your Size) or the family program “Mini-Artium” and I was assigned certain special activities held around the Christmas holidays or in the summer. The daily work and variety of visitors made for very beneficial training that I shared and analyzed with my complicit co-workers, with whom I learned in and from practice.

It is true that the methodological formats and suggestions (Visual Thinking Curriculum, open questions, etc.) were given to us by the DEAC, mainly determining the duration, segment of public aimed at and preselecting museum content (permanent collection, architecture of the building or temporary exhibition). Nevertheless, the final design, selection of content and articulation of the methodology, as well as the workshop activities (whether doing crafts or engaging in performance) remained in the hands of the educator. An educator who had to decide between adhering to the rigid framework and reproducing the discourse of the organizer, or developing organic experiences with the public. You have to have a strong

commitment to yourself, as it is easy to fall into temptations and conditions imposed from the museum, which gives you freedom of decision or action, but without remunerating or valuing that effort.

Doing, doing and doing... This seems to be a museum educator's core activity. In my experience, the records or evaluations made of the activities are more geared toward supervision and measuring the public's level of satisfaction than studying and researching them. These matters also define the profile of the educator, who is able to conduct professional work in the field but without possibilities to transform or alter the traditional formats that guide current practices in museums. You can be a hacker inside the system but the system remains unaffected. Another detail to emphasize is the difference between program and project. While the programs are conducted by the usual DEAC staff, occasionally, external projects are presented that introduce perspectives that disrupt the monotony of doing, doing, doing. I advocate doing, doing well, and doing much, continuing to do and doing with others... My profile has been enhanced by doing, but it depends on whether the context guarantees dignified conditions for it, and that the projects be part of the programs, so that they are not just a one-day fireworks display, and to ensure that what is special resides in that day-to-day act of doing.

EXIT: HOW DO YOU LEAVE A PROFESSION THAT YOU LIKE, AND THAT YOU ENJOY DOING? ~.

In 2010, I led my last visit in San Sebastián's Kubo-Kutxa gallery, a space and an experience that bring back fond memories. A memory that is different because of the treatment and the post. A direct professional position, negotiated without intermediaries with a treatment equivalent to the rest of the professions that worked for the gallery, who met at the beginning of every catalog, acknowledging their participation in each exhibition. This acknowledgment seemed strange to me, as in previous contexts I was accustomed to, the authorship was not publicly reflected, and the conditions were set unilaterally. On another note, the mediation approach that I implemented was also fully accepted. What was more, it

replaced a company that worked in a manner that was as automated as an audio-guide.

I designed strategies that transgressed the usual formats, and surprised visitors who looked at them, such as letting them choose the work to create micro-stories that were alternatives to the official curatorial narration, contrasting them later on; or inviting them to share their biographies, proving that everyone is an expert in something. The size of the gallery also helped us create a cozier atmosphere, something which is reverential and distant in museums conceived as temples. We came up against a certain resistance among those who longed for the traditional guided tour, but in general, the feedback was that they had been surprised and felt more involved; put another way, like co-authors of a collective experience. I conducted these experiments with adults and children, always negotiating their preferences, but also inviting them to reflect on their role as spectators. Speaking of spectators, this is a free-admission gallery on Paseo de la Zurriola street, with heavy traffic, where visitors tended to go through with no more mediation than what they could read from the labels on the walls. Groups only visited on occasion, which diminished the possibilities of maintaining a stable level of work. Therefore, we had to go back to combining this activity with others in different institutions to complete a full-time salary.

Despite being able to develop your own project, work in a profession that you had trained for and continued to enjoy and live out passionately, market opportunities were few and precarious. Due to this precariousness, and the scarce offering, I decided to “retire” prematurely, maybe at a time when I felt I was in my “prime”. Here we also face a glass ceiling, one we may be able to break through and legitimize with official education that would regulate this profession, which still lacks professional consideration at the administrative level. This situation makes us vulnerable before offers: you either take it or leave it. I haven’t completely renounced an ongoing association with education in museums despite the difficulties. I work, offering my experience, when the opportunity arises. I recently worked with María Acaso to design the VACA Project for the Centro Huarte in

Navarre, and take part in Congresses<sup>6</sup> or participating in this research project.

I was happy to begin working at the university, but it was as if I had resigned from my “life’s profession”. I can ease this feeling by looking at the present-day landscape, which instead of improving is worsening with all the cutbacks. This does not mean that I do not sympathize with my co-workers, or that I do not believe in this profession.

The conditions and offers have gotten worse over this decade. Programs that stood out for going beyond the typical trip to the museum (*A tu medida* - Artium) are disappearing, and new spaces have emerged that, in my opinion, operate more as showcases than as educational activities (*El córner del arte* - Guggenheim Bilbao). What or who defines quality in museum mediation? Visitors have few chances of re-encountering the same educator, but there is a high probability that a new one will be attending to them on their next visit. I worry about being a commodity that is restocked like the products on a supermarket shelf, a commodity that is presented to the public as something sophisticated, but that the museum does not attach any real value to. But, like resigning from your “life’s profession”, giving something its proper value does not seem like an easy task. Let’s find a solution to this situation to be able to recover our enthusiasm and hope.



<sup>6</sup> 2nd International Congress “Museums in Education: From action to reflection” held November 21-23, 2012 in the Thyssen Bornemisza Museum, Madrid.

“

**A-** Abandoning traditional formats if they do not transform into something else. The

“I’m the encyclopedia and you’re ignorant” paradigm can no longer be; we live in the era of Internet.

**B-** Blackmail. This is how the system works: they tell you that there is a public tender, and that if you want to present an offer, you can only do so as a company; you won’t be eligible as a freelancer because you’ve exceeded the legal hours limit.

**C-** Cleaning lady.

**D-** Documentation. Documenting is not the same thing as describing the activities.

Describing the activities is torture and mountains of paperwork. Documenting could be done with visible formats, narrative formats, or with the visitors

themselves helping in its development.

**G-** Glory of the public and gratitude of the public.

**P-** Permission from your superior.

**P-** Presupposing.

**P-** Puppy. Change of flowers. The flowers are changed twice a year. Puppy workshops are held in which the children stick flowers to a piece of Styrofoam, while the gardener changes the flowers of the Jeff Koons sculpture. T- Time to explain the artwork is limited.

**VIP-** “How can you be so young and speak so well?” An adult couple: an investor and a collector on a VIP visit.

”

# from the educational turn as a new mask or how Žižek's chocolate laxatives stir me up

**Text** by Irene Amengual

I have been invited to write a short text in which I recover some of the ideas that came up in the interview and video that was shot of me for the project *Museum Mediators*, on which I would like to go into more detail. In the video, I told five stories based actual events to demonstrate the residual pedagogies I find myself involved in throughout my daily practice as a museum educator. The last of those stories was entitled *Schizo-educator*, referencing the term of Deleuze and Guattari (1997). In it, I sought to make clear our fragmentary and multi-faceted, sometimes even poignantly contradictory, condition. At the end of the story, I deemed that “schizo” condition





OLD GREENHOUSE - 25.05.2014 - El Prat de Llobregat, Barcelona

to be a masquerade and drew a parallel with a project that artists Laurie Jo Reynolds and Scott MacFarland had produced in an institute where Afro-Americans had once been tortured to force them into false confessions. Artists and students explored the history of the place and issues such as torture, the use of masks, and the roles of torturer and tortured. In the video, I concluded the story by saying that museum educators should do something similar; scrutinize the history of the institutions where we work to better understand the masks we put on, and the way we position ourselves. In fact, seen through that prism, the previous stories in the video could be interpreted as masks or roles that I adopt as an educator. The fourth story reflected the difficulty of working collaboratively with communities, as of the basic level of negotiation with the representatives of the groups. When this happens, we pretend (it is “as if” we were working together) although sometimes the pedagogic projects that we develop are actually the product of a dialogue of the deaf. In this text, I would like to continue working on the intuition aroused in me by the project of Laurie Jo Reynolds and Scott MacFarland, and I will address the mask of the “as if” with respect to the work with different groups of public in a broader dimension, something I began to outline in Carla’s interview of me.

In the interview, I said that museum visitors have traditionally been conceived as passive subjects, mere consumers of something prearranged. I told Carla that there was an increasing number of us who conceived visitors differently, as people with capacity to decide, and generate responses to what the institution proposes to them. There are more and more of us who think of our work with groups of public as something that has to do with the creation of exchange strategies, more than the transfer of information. Even so, words are ambiguous, and their meanings, lax. How many different practices can fit into a single discourse? As we interrogate the positioning of our cultural institutions with regard to the work with their groups of public, it would be worthwhile to stop questioning them and focus on observing their practices (both the visible as well as those that are not so evident). Oftentimes, the limit of what is allowed is the place



where the discourse collapses; that they not recite certain terms back to us, but that they tell us to what extent their structure is permeable.

In the United Kingdom, they have been working to have more porous cultural institutions for some time, and the way they are conceived has had its evolution. Caroline Lang, John Reeve and Vicky Woollard (2006) emphasize the effort made by the British government in the 1990's to promote museums' working for education, accessibility and social inclusion. In the document *Centres for Social Change: Museums, Galleries and Archives for All: Policy Guidance on Social Inclusion* (2000) the following strategies were outlined as key for museums to tackle social exclusion: a) the implementation of programs outside the museum and in cooperation with local organizations, b) the organization of consultancies with persons at risk of social exclusion and c) the promotion of collections and exhibitions that reflect the social and cultural diversity of the current and potential audiences of the museum.

As regards the latter path, Sandell (2007) observed that much work remains to be done. Because despite the numerous criticisms of the way in which museums have unfairly portrayed other cultures, most of the criticism has been from the standpoint of exhibitions' "production" processes, instead of their "consumption" processes. Audiences are too often understood to be passive recipients of the content. Sandell advocates museums being a place to "(re)frame, enable and inform society's conversations about difference" (Sandell, 2007: 4). Others have already identified the change demanded by this author. According to Amalia Mesa-Bains (1992) at first, to work with communities was to "educate" them, but that we have evolved from an educational model based on collections and exhibitions, to another more oriented toward the needs of communities in a broader sense, and in which it is understood that "power" is the ability to define ourselves. And if we aim to balance relations of power between the cultural institutions and their people, to make museums more inclusive, matters such as decision-making, curatorial authority and distinctions between expert and non-expert knowledge, which are in play in the exchanges between the two parties, must be reformulated.

In the past, curatorial authority, scholarship and professional judgment have been the drivers of the museum; today the driving position is shared with... the educator, the marketing officer, the interpretive planner and the outreach officer... (Hooper-Greenhil, as quoted in Reeve, 2006: 184).

There are cultural institutions in the United Kingdom where educational teams work horizontally with the other departments, and where curatorial projects are conducted with the participation of communities from the outset, making them form part of the institution's core. Although everything that glitters is not gold, and obviously, these practices have their impurities and pitfalls, the Spanish scene is still at quite a distance from this scenario. We have seen how some of the museums that most boasted of having adopted the so-called "educational turn", even holding conferences on the topic, have wound up adopting denigrating and destructuring occupational policies for their education workers. Because our institutions have always been plagued by contradictions.

Even when the "new museology" current came into effect, it was broadly criticized by authors such as Carla Padró (2006) or Lisa Roberts (1997), who alluded to the inherent contradiction in the fact that a sensationalist model, supported by the number of visitors attracted, co-existed alongside a continued promotion of the academic, hegemonic discourse on the museum's contents. This paradox also has been pointed out by Díaz Balerdi:

The museum transmutes its nature as a function of monument. If it was once a storehouse for heritage objects, now it has become a mixed institution where conservationist concerns and their educational activity must co-exist with their characterization as a space for entertainment and leisure time. (Díaz Barlerdi, 2008: 152).

Now, in the new era of the educational turn, when supposedly the needs and interests of the different museum publics and the long-term

work with communities have taken high priority, contradictions are taking on new shapes. Those of us who work with different types of public are told that we have to generate mediation resources to activate visitors and “bring to life” the exhibition space; and yet, normally no resource can be made visible in the curators’ galleries. We are instigated to go beyond the generation of programs such as visits and workshops, to create educational spaces; and yet, these spaces of “interaction” are conceived almost like separate annexes that are to compliment the main spaces, which are still untouchable. The rhetoric around the importance of strengthening museum publics is strong, but it is belittled when it collides with the powerful images of the white cube (O’Doherty, 1999), in such supposedly high demand by tourists. This “yes but no” approach is permeable even in inter-departmental work structures, where we often find education departments (or however you want to call them) inserted in transversal projects, but to which information always arrives late. In fact, it is no coincidence that the training courses that are promoted are on educational curating, and not the other way around. And so, we find ourselves submerged in this indefinite and *undefining* “as if”.

The situation recalls what Žižek (2004) called the post-modern logic of the chocolate laxative. According to this author, we live in a paradoxical world that lets us obtain any product we want without its malignant or harmful properties: decaffeinated coffee, alcohol-free beer, caffeine-free Coca-Cola, etc. This contradiction operates not only on the plane of product properties but also in ethical and political matters. For example, when certain brands promote themselves through charity causes, hiding the exploitation their employees are subjected to. As Žižek states, the logic of the chocolate laxative has broadly impregnated the current ideological landscape:

The structure of the “chocolate laxative”, of a product containing the agent of its own containment, can be discerned throughout today’s ideological landscape. There are two topics which determine today’s liberal tolerant attitude towards Others: the respect to Otherness, openness towards it, AND the obsessive fear of harassment –in short, the Other

is OK insofar as its presence is not intrusive, insofar as the Other is not really Other... This is what is more and more emerging as the central “human right” in late-capitalist society: the right not to be harassed, i.e., to be kept at a safe distance from the others. (Žižek, 2004).

It seems that the recurrently adopted “educational turn” is the new chocolate laxative of the cultural realm. We want the museum to include the Other—its publics—but oftentimes, the institution is still afraid of being affected beyond a superficial level.



“

**C-** Changes are always small but powerful. That is what we believe in.

**G-** Generating numbers of visitors.

**INS-** The institution wants to supervise the discourses that are generated—especially yours—and that generates a high level of conflict.

**N-** Nurturing a great deal, thinking about what we are doing. Thinking about the meaning of the project and developing personalized projects.

**NEF-** No External Financing. If there is no external financing, it is just us, and what we are.

**O-** Opening doors, depending on the agenda of various groups.

**S-** Shortcomings. No one wants to talk about shortcomings because it is too complex.

”

- Photo diary -



PRESENTS - 15.04.2013 - Barcelona

THE GIFT

I speak of the extremity of night  
I speak of the extremity of darkness  
and of the extremity of night.

If you come to my house, I kind one, bring me a lamp  
and a window through which to look upon  
the happy and swarming street.

FOROUGH FARROKHZAD (2010). *Another Birth and other poems*. Washington, DC: Mage Publishers, Translated by Hasan Javadi & Susan Sallé, p. 81.

# museum educators: a profession at ground level

**Text** by *Eva Alcaide*

...and no, I'm neither a guide nor a monitor. I'm an educator...

(A RANK AND FLED MUSEUM EDUCATOR THAT IS NEITHER A GUIDE NOR A MONITOR)

For years now, I have shared with other museum educators our beginnings in education. We all have more or less the same starting point. It's funny. No one wanted to be a museum educator from the beginning. How can one choose a profession, like this one, when even today most people don't know what your work entails? How can one choose a profession, like this one, when even today most people refer to you as a guide or monitor?

All beginnings are uncertain. Everyone already knows that. It's nothing new. But no one says that uncertainty forms part of the development of our profession in almost every area: economic, situation, profile, appraisal and occupational prestige. This is mainly due to the fact that our profession, in detriment of others, is generally seen as dull, unimportant, and above all, temporary.





BEAUTY IN RUBBISH - 03.04.2014 - Barcelona

This is a profession in which you are continuously in a no-man's-land, along the borders, on a pitching sea or a semi-desert island. It is a place where, to survive, you must generate your own networks to constantly land on your feet. You should never let your guard down, or cease to be alert. Instability forms part of your day-to-day. It's like an extreme situation. Paradoxically, everyone cares about education, but seen and assumed from the outside, not the inside, not where the work of action resides, because that would mean having to analyze the sets of problems and resistances that this field and its professionals face on a daily basis. And that's not easy. No one likes to see the most bitter face of the real situation. And these are not just words, it's reality.

The truth is that nowadays, more than ever, I ask myself how I began, and why. But a few minutes later, I think that it doesn't matter anymore. What truly matters is the current situation of the profession and its still unmapped, and therefore ambiguous, situation. I am concerned about the difficulties of access to and then maintenance in, the profession. Above all, I am concerned about its non-visibility. Every day I am shaken by the overpowering reality of how we are, of how we do our work, and how we are seen. In other words, how the institutions generate the non-visibility of our work. And above all, I am concerned about how our educational experiences are received by those who participate in them, accustomed as I am to years of studies, libraries, handbooks, authors, methods, courses and conferences.

I suppose it's not easy to talk about oneself. Nor is it easy to talk about the work that occupies one's time, and from which one has to live/survive. Or at least, a job that one has been training for over a decade, and that obviously cannot be separated from one's actual experiences.

Readers may find this text chaotic. It's the least you could expect. And they probably think that this is one of my ideas for this text. It is. Very much in step with the times. Is the profession of/from which I wish to speak any less chaotic? Only those on the inside know what some of my longings may be. The others, perhaps, will see it as just another claim, but always from positions far away from the practice and performance of my job.

Critically resituated, I speak from frustration, from trauma and precariousness. To do so, I use a text of critical language, and my words, which carries my voice and position as an educator, as a feminist activist, as a citizen, friend, co-worker and comrade, and above all, as someone vulnerable. Someone vulnerable, yes; but also empowered. A vulnerable person who uses her position as a subordinate to revert it; who uses her marginalized position, knowing what the strategies of those oppressions are. These are oppressions that will make us strong if we know how they impact our day-to-day, our work. If we are capable of positioning them within the power relationships, in how they are generated, in how they are built and how they affect us, we will have covered much ground.

But I also speak from a situation of performance, of hope, of effort, in the constant struggle and the ambitious idea of generating tiny spaces for significant learning, to share stories, to help to think that for every problem there is more than one solution and many ways to solve situations. I work with the hope of expanding experiences and thinking that other worlds are possible and that our lives can be transformed at any time if we want them to be.

If I had to situate my practice, I would do so in the education departments of some museums and galleries. Those departments are still the black sheep on the organization chart. And it would not be derogatory because the black sheep was different, but because they should not be subordinated to other departments and educators should be competent professionals within them. But we aren't. We aren't because intellectually developing ourselves would require an extraordinary effort not everyone is willing to accept, and because there is not an established guild of museum educators in which we could make visible the shortcomings to strengthen ourselves as a community.

Since in general, educational affairs are considered a second step in the service that the museum renders to society, the department devoted to such work always has a deficit when it comes to specialized staff members. To a greater degree than other departments, trainees or interns

are resorted to. What is more, these staffers are assigned responsibilities directly related with attending the public. (Díaz Balerdi, 2008: 144-145).

Furthermore, the false belief that one learns to be a museum educator only from experience, from one's own practice, is quite widespread, which saps our efforts to make occupational claims. Nonetheless, we are aware that our profession cannot only be learned from practice. Or the timeworn fallacy that to be a museum educator you can only come from the field of art history, a degree that does not include any pedagogy, psychology, or education contents, thus barring a broad range of sensitive professions from which this field can be accessed to enrich our work.

My work is valuable.

Educators have played an indispensable role in museums, making them more sensitive to the interests and needs of the public, while also being in charge of interpreting the collections, also allowing visitors to contribute their own views. (Roberts, 1997).

Throughout all my years in this profession, I've observed that all that is learned in formal education are certainties. Playing with uncertainties, frustration, variable conditions, that which is outside the rules, creativity and imagination are a constant in my educational challenges. And it's very costly.

In formal education, there is no place for ambiguities. Breaking down these barriers and other deeply rooted resistances is part of my daily work. I attempt to provide the tools necessary to build meanings before artistic realities, thus generating new narrative realities that distance us from the hegemonic, and the universal.

I don't believe in affirmative discourses or the neutrality of intentions. This is despite the fact that in our society, everything seems to indicate that there is nothing "aproblematic". Furthermore, it would appear that others think for us, and this is evidently also taken up in education. That is why I think that everything must be analyzed critically to make us

thinking, responsible individuals with our own ideas to share with others. The superhuman effort that I make on a cross-cutting basis in my work is for our students to be autonomous citizens with creative, critical minds.

Everything matters, anything goes, anything that can be learned can be unlearned, and begun again.

Oftentimes our work is reduced to performance. That is why many think we are guides or monitors. But as Padró (2005) reminds us, museum educators are considered functional professionals, sometimes devoted to doing, others to knowing strategies for training and psychology, marketing and public relations. But I insist: our work is much more than that. Some are fortunate, like me, as we are thinkers, designers and storytellers, and we implement our own programs.

There are aspects of my work that I consider very positive: “On the one hand, the honesty of teaching different ways of thinking, of awakening the desire to learn and to generate knowledge. On the other, the continuous work and training process in which I find myself immersed by my own initiative as I try to always be at my best to meet the circumstances that surround my work and my interests. Although all of this is sometimes a part of my dream, of my desire to improve and above all, my instinct for survival in a field like this one where motivation and the desire to work can be continuously castrated.” (López and Alcaide, 2011: 7).

Being a free-lance professional and not a hired staff member entails some very positive aspects, and others that are not so positive. One of the positive things is that I can work for different clients, making my work heterogeneous. But, on another note, I don’t have the same rights or privileges that I would have with a work contract. This reality complicates our profile and places us in a no-man’s-land. I regret that there is no outer awareness about museum educators that would bring relevance to our work and that furthermore, we as a group, have yet to generate a hiring policy that would consolidate us as a community of intellectual workers.

I quit going to courses and conferences on art education several years ago. This really surprises my professional colleagues. The reason is very simple. I fee from that veneer of romanticism that they try to apply to

our educational work, leading many to believe that in the field of museum education things are being done quite well, without any fissure, without any self-critical thought process. Sometimes, the institutions generate an “aproblematic” vision of our work, and no one wants to talk about their resistances and fears. It seems that when we talk about education, it’s all frills, harmony and good vibrations. We are all supposed to love small children, and cooperate in a friendly, always-smiling manner with all types of public.

That’s why we’re educators, and all of us women—because it is an overwhelmingly feminized profession— are bound by the feminine archetypes of care, respect, absolute admiration, tenderness, love, meticulousness and dedication. And I distance myself from that profile, from feminist, critical and reflective positions. One cannot be an educator if they are not politically resituated and in constant transformation of their position, distancing themselves from *good vibe* and affirmative positions.

I conclude these lines underscoring the courage, struggle, integrity and discursive coherence of those museum educators who, for some years now, have been claiming their occupational rights in the courts despite this meaning their dismissal from the institutions where they worked. To me, they are the perfect example that other worlds are possible.



“

***DE-*** We are denied the intellectuality in our profession as museum educators.

***IP-*** Invisibilized Profession, which means that it is feminized in this invisibility that leads to permanent ostracism.

***M-*** Mediation like a bridge between what we believe, what we are and how we relate with the context and with others.

”



# education, cultural me- diation and variations

**Text** by *Artaziak*

How can one talk about this when, to begin with, it is so difficult to “define” what education/cultural mediation consists of?<sup>1</sup> What we said a few months ago when Carla Padró interviewed Artaziak on museum mediation, now seems somewhat distant. Our current experience places us in another space, another context, where our relationship with the practice itself has changed, also transforming our relationship with cultural practices (cultural actors, institution, etc.) as well as the relationship with the different groups that we work with.

At that time, we spoke of our work in terms of approaches, bridges, relationships between publics and art productions within a specific space, normally presented as a museum. We will recover from that interview a word or two with which we tried to define what our practice as museum educators consisted of.

<sup>1</sup> Variation of the text *Install-action*. Esther Ferrer. Text published in Volume 74 of the Journal *Inter Art Actuel*, Quebec (Canada).





TRAIN WINDOW IN A RAINY DAY - 03.04.2014 - Barcelona > Granollers

Offering keys that allow an approach to contemporary art and that the activities be adapted to the different publics. (...) The goal is to facilitate a context, related with social, historical and cultural events that allow visitors to elaborate a reasoned critical discourse.

Montehermoso Kulturunea Cultural Center. 2008 Educational Program.

We will now repeat another phrase taken from our practice at the current time.

The program is focused on generating relationships, dialogues and projects in the long term, between the center's creation project and the different actors and contexts. We understand mediation as a source of research and production of knowledge, and focus the program development policies situated in collaboration with the multiple forms of creation and modes of citizen relationships. To do so, mediation will be inserted in the synergies, places and knowledges of each center and project that we work with, thinking of the network's methods of work and production of collective knowledge.

Tabakalera. Contemporary Culture Creation Center. Mediation Project 2013.

One of the important changes that this transformation has brought about is the decentralization of our practice from museum spaces. These are spaces that are still one of the main focal points of our project as a group devoted to art and education, but no longer the only one. This means that we can be beset by doubts if we continue to see ourselves as museum educators. How to define ourselves, then? Art educators? Cultural mediators? Does the setting where we carry out our activity really matter when it comes to defining it? At times, it so happens that it is precisely the setting, its meaning, the relations among the people who make it up, its structure, etc., that condition and define our practice. Other times, we hardly think about it.

Once we have confirmed the difficulty of reaching a definition, we will propose in this text an exercise of self-reflection on what Artaziak is as a group of educators and from where we approach our activity.

We introduce ourselves as “nomad educators”, who go from place to place (with all of their pluralities) without a base camp, and who, on these travels, transform their proposals and adapt their activity to the different contexts. In these changes, adaptations, we see that one of the topics that often comes up in our conversations, and that we also reiterate from the interview with Carla, is the idea of repetition. The idea, if adjusted somewhat further, of the impossibility of repeating a practice or a project in the different spaces. It is somewhat logical when it is understood that dialog, and the relationship with the people with whom and places where it is proposed, is a fundamental part of these processes.

One of the terms that repeats itself most often in recent days, pursuing and often revisiting us is “variation”. It is a term we have swiped from other areas, such as plastic arts or dance, and that we transfer to our educational practice. We recently read an interesting quote from Esther Ferrer on the concepts of repetition and variation.

Inevitable and at the same time impossible, repetition appears before us like a contradiction in itself. But repetition is a false concept, which in fact, is not really possible. In order to avoid the term repetition, as it is considered boring, uncreative, and uninteresting, the term “variation” is used. In art and music. But what appears to be a repetition, rarely is one. The perception of things makes it impossible for two things to be equal; neither in execution nor in experience. Although we are always repeating ourselves, repetition is impossible.

Esther Ferrer. *En cuatro movimientos (In Four Movements)*. Artium, Sala Norte. October-January 2012. Gallery label.

And so, speaking of variations, of thoughts that vary, of varying currents and looks that are impossible to repeat, we find ourselves addressing the difficult proposition of putting our experiences and thoughts about

Artaziak and our practice into words. And for a change, instead of sitting around the same table, trying to reach consensus on our thoughts, we will attempt it (this time) *in three dimensions, two movements and six variations*.

- *Three dimensions* that evoke the three people/looks/identities that make up Artaziak.
- *Two movements* that make up what we are trying to talk about. Artaziak, as a group of educators and mediation as a cultural practice.
- *Six variations* are the result of trying to repeat the definitions of the movements from each of the three dimensions.

#### 1ST MOVEMENT. DEFINING ARTAZIAK

##### VARIATION 1 ~.

Artaziak is a project that works in the area of education and cultural mediation. We use artistic-cultural productions as a tool for individual and group learning and development. We understand education as a common exchange, construction and learning. Our work has a social bent; it begins with cultural diversity and difference, and contributes to promoting people's critical sense, with the aim of producing social, political and cultural changes.<sup>2</sup>

##### VARIATION 2 ~.

Artaziak is Ana, Maider and Andrea. Three women who work as a team based on hope, instability and care. Based on doubt, conviction and effort. Based on courage, learning and refection. Based on tears and laughter.

Ana is a people person who likes modern dance and discovering new places. Andrea is more absentminded. She likes to accompany her texts with sketches and has just taken up boxing. Maider, on the other hand, is all about performance. She keeps track of the figures and balance sheets, but her most natural habitat is the stage. She likes rabbits and top hats.

<sup>2</sup> [www.artaziak.com](http://www.artaziak.com)

VARIATION 3 ~.

Artaziak are three free-lancers who now make up one civil society. We live in three different places; two in Biscay and one in Gipuzkoa. We work here and there, in the middle ground, at two co-working sites where we rarely go. At 9.66€ worth of toll roads' distance, we come and go physically and virtually, from screen to screen in an average of three "hangouts" per week and 180€ in phone bills per month.

This year we have prepared 2014 postcards and put their respective 2014 stamps on them (the Posthariak project), we have visited seven schools in Biscay, five in Gipuzkoa and two university faculties, two portals, 14 flats, nine theaters and one festival of contemporary performing arts. We have met with five artists and three agents from the world of audiovisual production. With an even higher number of groups, people, organizations of neighbors, musicians, women, persons with functional diversity, immigrants, storytellers, architects, etc. We have co-organized education seminars, given five courses and taken part in two gatherings of the cultural sector and 14 assemblies of the co-creation space.

2ND MOVEMENT. SPEAKING OF CULTURAL MEDIATION PRACTICES

VARIATION 4 ~.

Before forming the group, each of us worked as self-employed museum educators. In spite of that, our work was conceived and directed by a person responsible for the museum's education department (DEAC). Added to this was the condition of precariousness in which our work was carried out. The idea of forming a group of educators that works as an independent and really autonomous group emerged with the desire to create new models of operation/work/practices around cultural education and mediation.

In principle, the change seemed clear. It would be a matter of building a group that allowed us to work "freely" as we designed our proposals, in the way we organized ourselves and that would ensure we had decision-making capacity in any aspect of our activity.

The key to developing the educational program at the art center where we worked for five years was a project developed by us and selected by a jury. This was what we, in our naïveté, thought would come with the opportunity, the right and the obligation to develop that which we had proposed, and on another, the autonomy when it came to deciding on the organization and management of the work.

But reality was different. The project stayed in the envelope and became a detector for those who were capable of developing what was required within a pre-defined organization chart. A way to have people performing the work in the same conditions as the rest of the team (schedules, timetables, responsibilities, assuming orders, etc.) in addition to everything that it involved for us (the sum of tasks and expenses) as well as the institution (savings of expenses and responsibilities) when they sub-contract an outside company instead of adding staff members. Assuming the expenses of social security, bureaucratic red tape, insurance policies, etc.

The center where we worked was defined as a space where art, culture and contemporary thought were generated. Suddenly, we found ourselves facing one clear question: where does that idea go when we speak of education? It seems that the contemporary idea of education is still subjected to precariousness, invisibility and lack of recognition as more of a knowledge-producing agent. It is difficult to fulfil this task when, as an educator, one has to take responsibility for conveying the ideas of certain people, increasing visitor traffic, and turn those visitors' experience into something entertaining.

VARIATION 5 ~.

A few months ago, our activity was immersed in a deep process of construction and definition of a new project related with creation, art and contemporary thought. We developed the line of mediation of this project, with a two-fold character. On one hand, it is like a cross-cutting strand to the rest of the project's lines, as it develops its relationships with other actors; and on the other, an independent line on which activities and contents typical of mediation are generated. It is on this second line

where we are finding a new framework in which we have begun to situate our practice and that we believe, at this time, forms an idea of what we understand as cultural mediation and/or education in museums.

We approach educational practices as long-term processes. They begin with the detection of actors with which the center can establish a relationship; knowing who they are, knowing their activity, interests, proposals and including the center in that network as another agent. A fundamental part of this process is the respect for the pace of each participant, and the search for these synergies on which common lines of work can be established. It is an open mediation process, in which our work as mediators/educators is defined depending on the needs and agreements with the agents we work with. In this process, we ask ourselves several questions, some of which are as follows:

*What role do mediation and education have in these policies that attempt to generate different forms of relating citizens, creation and education? What are the models necessary to give space to sustainable, non-invasive relationships among cultural centers, local entities and diverse producers and creators?*

VARIATION 6 ~.

Because of our training in the languages of contemporary movement, from the beginning of our project as Artaziak we saw the need to incorporate the body into our educational proposals. Therefore, one of the lines of work we have been developing in Artaziak addresses the body and movement as a learning tool. We have named this line of activity “Cuerpos Transversales” (Transversal Bodies)<sup>3</sup>.

In the development of this type of practices we find ourselves before a new reality and a unique set of problems. The idea of including education in the proposals of these actors is a relatively recent one. In many cases this initiative comes about through the aforementioned need to increase the number of visitors, or to “facilitate the understanding” of

<sup>3</sup> We believe that all learning includes bodies and that, at the same time, working from corporal pedagogy works as a vehicle for knowledge and social and personal transformation. ([www.artaziak.com](http://www.artaziak.com)).



the proposals. Therefore, in this case, our practices are defined in other parameters. The awareness-raising work of these persons and/or actors on the importance of education in this type of practices, the struggle for that recognition, is the first step, where we still find ourselves.

We are still in an initial stage of research and reflection on this type of practices. These are a few of the questions that we have started with, and some of the challenges that we have set as a beginning of relationships among the different participants.

*Why don't we include the living arts within the art education framework of action? What stage are we in as regards living arts and education? How can we design educational practices, around the body, with a critical and reflective sensibility?*

*Establishing a negotiation framework.* (From listening and transparency, which addresses the interests and needs of all involved parties).

*Establishing a common language.* (What are we talking about? Differences between education, mediation, sensitization, recruitment, seduction, etc.).

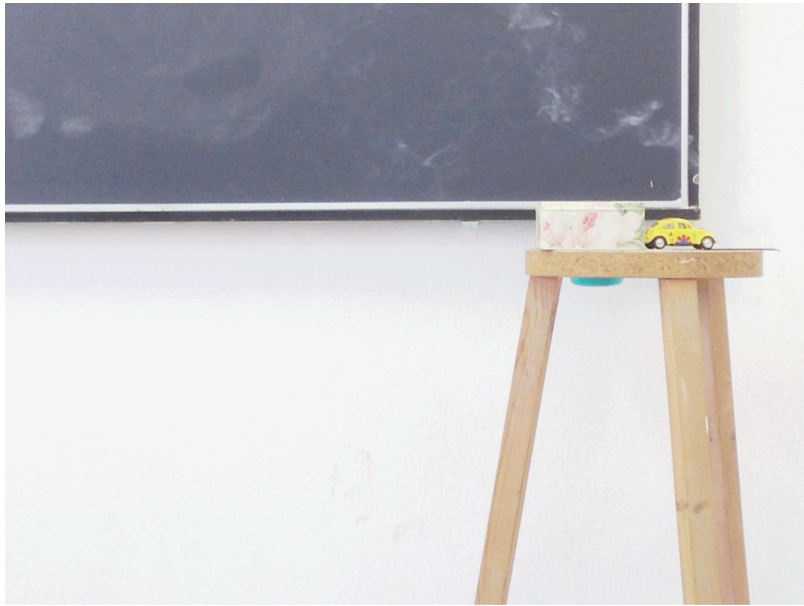
*Recognition of the profession (education).* (Visibility of projects, participation in production/programming processes, recognition of authorships, work understood as a production of knowledge -not translation/conveyance of ideas- dignified and not precarious occupational status).

As in the other lines of work, we understand that this too should be designed as a long-term process. A process that is in its early stages, and that depends on achieving the challenges set out without forgetting the people who make it up. An attempt to build a new community, from the knowledge of each person and from mutual care. For us, it means a new field of battle and construction, a new and interesting variation on our practice as educators.





- Photo diary -



ART SCHOOL - 28.03.2014 - Barcelona

“

**A-** Authorship. When the director of education, and not the people who have designed it, is acknowledged.

**B-** Basement.

**D-** Decisions made by the museum in the past that you don't know about.

**D-** Drippy. Oh, aren't they cute! Oh, don't you just love kids!

**D-** Disappointment. It is exasperating to see how, inside the spaces where certain discourses in play, our task is always the same.

**F-** Freelance professional. Activity + VAT + invoice.

**M-** Mediator. Resolving conflicts. Being the person in the middle. Cultural production on one side and people on the other. Making this encounter possible.

**O-** Oasis. Very occasionally... They give you a reward. They acknowledge your work and it is extraordinary because you break the routine.

**O-** Obstacle. The person who was supposed to defend us did not do it as we thought they would. They made it seem like they were our representative, but they were not.

**O-** Outside. You are outside, foreign, and physically in the **B**.

**P-** Perverse. With the working conditions. Your being a freelancer is a way for them to bind you, and never hire you.

**P-** Potolo. Big. Like a chassis. In a development phase.

**R-** Routine. Wheel. References. From a book of theories to practical examples that do not always have to be from the same discipline, but that are ways of doing things.

**R-** Surreal. Something that you do outside of your context that you cannot do at home.

**S-** Suspending the activity because another company comes and for less money continues the project we began. No value is attached to what we have done.

**V-** Vomiting information.

”



SILENT CHOIR - 25.02.2014 - Granollers

ACTION  
continuities

7

There are feverish manifestos  
offering flowers and wine

white-clad doves in cages  
virgins hidden in coffins

migratory anecdotes carried on  
from high to high

grass that turns brains green  
blithering beauty

the original political initiative

INGER CHRISTENSEN (2007). *It.*. Exeter: Carcanet Press Ltd, translation by Susanna  
Nied, p. 115.

# museum mediation: re- flections from practice

**Text** by *Katia Martorell*

When I read the transcript of the interview, the first thing that came to my mind was how the day-to-day of a museum leaves little space for reflection. My answers were honest and spontaneous, but not very reflective. I had spoken from practice and very specific examples, but there was little theory. In some cases, I had not answered what I had been asked. I believe that the main reason was the place from which I was listening, and therefore, responding. I was doing it immersed in my own experience and from my daily practice. Now, with a little more perspective and time, I have been given the opportunity to delve deeper into, or clarify, some of my answers. And so I have been able to see that some “spontaneous reflections” have been somewhat interesting to me, and therefore I think they may also be so for other people.

So, the first thing I would like to do is express gratitude for my participation in this publication for the opportunity that it has given me to stop, think, reflect and revise my words.





My COUNTRYSIDE - 27.04.2014 - Seville

Having said that, the responses from the interview that I would like to underscore and think more about are those that refer to the definition of museum mediation, to what is necessary to be a good mediator, and to the small strategies that we use to achieve this.

One of the first difficulties I encountered was defining “museum mediation” as in the department, we had always referred to our work as “art education”. Are these two concepts the same?

I believe that museum mediation is a specific form of performing art education. There are many ways to conduct educational activities in the context of a museum, and mediation would be one of them. Museum mediation involves creating areas of relation between what the visitor knows and what the museum knows. It is a matter of building bridges between these two knowledges, creating areas of exchange, of doubts and conflicts.

The activities of museum mediation are those that begin from the encounter between visitor and the museum and that are focused on that meeting.

To achieve it, it is necessary to give museum visitors the “category” of “knowers”, not so much of the work of Miró (in the case of our museum), but knowers of their own experience, owners of their curiosities, intuitions and values. It is a matter of taking their knowledge into account, and from there on, connecting and talking; it is a matter of them telling something, and then mediators also sharing their stories. And from that encounter, from that middle ground, progressively advancing, discovering, learning and thinking. It is not a matter of conveying information, but of a dialogue, of establishing a dialogue between the museum (personalized in the figure of the mediator) and the people who visit it.

This, so apparently easy, is very difficult in daily practice. Normally, visitors come to the museum for an “expert” in the work of the artist in question enlighten them as to the artist’s work, lives, anecdotes, etc. in order to make the visitor understand why the artist’s work is so important. When they realize that this is not the museum’s approach, and that our way of mediating/educating is not that of “listen to me carefully and in silence as I, the great expert, will tell you all you need to know”, it di-



sorients them. It is very difficult to get them to come out of their stance as listeners/learners to take an active role on their trip through the museum. At the end of the day it's logical, as we "take them out" of their place: we make them go from their seat in the auditorium to the stage, and that can be very uncomfortable for some people, especially if they are older; it is usually much easier to mediate with children. It is with the passage of time that people adopt the role of passive listener, more than active petitioners. And when you ask them what they really think and ask them to share it, they can get defensive; they can feel misled, because theoretically they didn't come to the museum to talk, but to listen.

They do not tend to believe that they also have something to teach, and that we are interested in their sharing it with us. I believe that it is important to resituate this starting point. In a museum, we all have something to say: the artist, the curator, the mediators, the visitors... and all of those looks are important and enriching.

Sometimes we find great incomprehension, especially in very short activities like weekend workshops that last a few hours, in which there is a visual arts component. Some people complain that their expectations have not been met, because they thought they were going to be more guided, that we would explain to them exactly what they had to do to follow a model. Nonetheless, I think that this is just stopping at handicrafts, which are very nice when they help to think of something, express something, or reach a destination. Still, as an activity in itself, I do not think that the museum is the most appropriate place to perform them. There are on-line tutorials by the thousands, just as there is biographic or artistic information. What is important is to value what they are capable of doing and thinking, give them the tools and the space to create their own learning. To trust their capabilities and respect them. Not giving immediate responses is a form of respect. And creating "uncomfortable" practices in museum mediations, such as making them choose to write, sketch or photograph without a clear model can be disconcerting, but that discomfort is what makes you move, learn, reflect and progress. Without doubts or questions, there is no learning or evolution.

So, what is necessary to be a good museum mediator? Of course, they must have knowledge on the museum and what it contains, know the different educational theories, and always have curiosity for lifelong learning, both in art (in our case) as well as education. But the human part is the most important.

A mediator has to know how to facilitate that middle ground between one and the other, create a pleasant atmosphere in which people do not feel judged or observed, but listened to with attention and interest; valued. They must be capable of creating relaxed environments where people feel comfortable and are able to talk openly.

It is not easy, mediators have to be very respectful people, with genuine curiosity about others; They have to be sociable, know how to listen leave their prejudices (which we all carry inside) at the door and of course, have a great willingness to learn, being aware that knowledge can come from anywhere. To achieve this, the mediator is the first person who must get over their embarrassment, not feel absurd, be able to put on a bit of a “show” if necessary, gesticulate, raise their voice, whisper, move, perform the same activities that you propose to participants, etc.

And of course, continuously engage in self-criticism; stop and analyze what has gone well and what has not. They must analyze what is working and what cannot be made to “come together” under any circumstances; they must be able to change everything necessary even if it means leaving the plan set out and designed previously in the project. They must never forget that in any mediation practice, whether they be visits, family workshops or long-term projects with specific groups, we are also learning.

Lastly, what are the strategies that we should use in an institution like a museum to perform this task? There are many. We can use tools like photos, videos, post-its, phrases, cards, exhibitions of processes as well as outcomes, etc.

To start to break down that barrier between museum and visitor, we usually ask them to relate something very typical of each person who

visits us with something in the museum. It is a matter of making real that area of exchange that previously was only symbolic. For example, placing one's own photo someplace in the museum, explaining (provided they want to) the reason that site was chosen.

Sometimes it is easy to perform these dynamics and everything flows. Other times, we can find certain resistance from professionals (from inside and outside the museum) who do not share this view of education, and do not feel comfortable with the idea of a participant in one of our activities placing an object next to a Miró sculpture, or giving their conclusions on one of the museum's main galleries. When this happens, we have to seek out different strategies; we have to sneak into the empty spaces and interstices that the system leaves us. It comes down to doing things as pragmatic as getting around an obstacle by asking permission from a person who you know will grant it to you, or conducting the intervention in the galleries very quickly (set up and take-down in one hour) or holding it on a day that you know this pressure does not exist, either because the museum is closed to the public or because the person who will feel uncomfortable is not there.

In the end, these are the little tricks for the day-to-day that allow us to keep progressing and building learnings, following this way of understanding museum mediation.



- Photo diary -



WELCOMING THE DAY - 15.03.2014 - Barcelona

“

**C-** Crisis. We did a lot more prior to 2013. We had a program for teachers.

**E-** We have managed to get the museum to call us Educators.

**IR-** We are something of an Independent Republic with an independent project or two.

**M-** Mediating between what the visitor knows and what the museum knows. Mediating between these two knowledges and providing a middle ground, where the two can engage in dialogue.

**R-** Reality: tourists and school-children

**R-** Regulating, regulating school visits and workshops. School year. Saint John's Feast. Open house. Training for Teachers. Scholarships for an educational project.

**S-** Saturday is our day.

**S-** People sought who know or have Studied humanities, art history, Fine Arts, philology, history or who are social educators.

”



GRANDMA'S ARTWORKS - 03.04.2014 - Barcelona

Hello, performance,

How are you? We've been meaning to write you for some time, but with so much performing, we don't even have time to think! Or rather, to stop and write you...

Things have changed a lot since we last wrote you. Do you remember the story "Salón Tesina", that we dedicated to you? Times change, resources diminish, interests mutate, spaces close, struggles continue, and we remain here, with you. The truth is, we don't know what you have that gives us so much. We can't live without you! You're like a drug; you give us highs and lows, you open the doors of perception, you make us connect with new dimensions and trip out with the things you make us see and do. You are a box of surprises! The paths you take us down are strange, cathartic, unusual, sensual... but even so you are a forest, healthy and natural, fresh and organic, leafy and green.

Performance, we may have never told you this, but you are the most important thing about us! Perhaps we would not exist without you. Perhaps we knew you without knowing you. Why didn't they introduce us before? We knew you existed in other places, we know that you take on multiple identities. Performance, did we discover you? Sometimes we think that we created you as you are, and that is why you are tailor-made to us.

With you we feel like everything is freer, that we can decide what we want to do, that we can make up new games, that we can make the rules and break them all at once. It's as if you were a visitor from outer space. As if with you, there were another possible reality that is out there, on another planet, the other planet Earth. With its other different doings and thinkings. Variable and unique, mutating. Other physics, chemistries, metaphysics... Other conceptual thoughts, emotional nuances, spiritual states... Other social, relational or ritual moments. Other logics. With you, we take off the masks of the commonplace, of the normalized, the standardized, the prohibited and the dull. We would never stop telling you things, and with each story you would give us another performance with which to situate ourselves in another place, and reformulate what happens to us.

Performance, please be there always. We remember you in body and mind.

With love,

Les Salonnieres



MONFRAGÜE - 30.04.2013 - Plasencia, Cáceres



I will plant my hands in the garden  
I will grow green, I know, I know, I know  
and in the hollows of my ink-stained fingers  
swallows will lay eggs

FOROUGH FARROKHZAD (2010) *Another Birth and other poems*. Washington, DC: Mage Publishers, Translated by Hasan Javadi & Susan Sallé, p. 81, p. 226.

# critical wings

**Text** by *Carla Padró*<sup>1</sup>

This is a farewell article. I would like share some of the references that I have worked with over the past years of my work as an educator in art education—now renamed cultural pedagogies—and museum education—now renamed museum mediation—that have given me so many challenges and pleasures, and also generated many mirages. I would like to express gratitude for my experience in the field to all of my students, who have been and still are my teachers, and my co-workers, who have been rivers, waterfalls, storms, lakes and light rain that can refresh any field, on any day, even if it is not spring-like.

I have organized this article based on a number of concepts that I am recovering from critical and feminist pedagogies, and that I arrange in a dialog with museum studies. The order of the concepts does not matter: ‘being surprised’, ‘being emancipated’, and ‘transforming from within’ can be modified depending on the experience that one gathers, drags with them or releases. It depends, as everyone knows...

(...)

## BEING SURPRISED

I still resort to Maxine Greene’s notion of a “teacher as stranger” (1995) when I begin a class, whether it is in the fall, February or summer. It suits me. It makes me feel as if I could fly and positions me at an intersection between myself, and the dialogic aspect of a profession I have exercised for 18 years, that is now concluding with an unexpected turn.

<sup>1</sup> Version of the text: Padró, Carla (2011). “Retos de la museología crítica desde la pedagogía crítica y otras intersecciones”. Museo y Territorio 4, pp.102-115.

- Photo diary -



SWEET ENDING - 10.05.2014 - Copenhagen

Maxine Greene is an octogenarian who continues to inspire many generations of docents. Her passion for the arts and literature and her pragmatic and critical outlook enable students to connect with her directly. Her personal experience, her journey through different disciplines and her deep commitment to social justice through education and the arts, truly resonate. The teacher as a stranger is the one who sees the routine process of education and classes from the outside, as if every time they began a class they were returning from a long trip. It is as if they distanced themselves, and in doing so, by immersing themselves in a different setting, they realized they could go beyond the conventional and repetitive. It is a matter of facilitating changes in the conventions, the rules, the laws and the routines. A matter of approaching things from a position that is uncomfortable, and at the same time, productive; from interrogation, the unforeseeable and what seems out of place. It is a matter of being aware of the timings and structures of the schools that, on occasion, do not allow debate nor the time needed to build more dialogic classes. Therefore, the figure of an educator is not compact, nor does it comply with the stipulations of a curriculum. Rather, the curriculum or the figure of an educator also has a biography, a body and a history that they contribute to the classes, and that build, or rather, produce statements that also influence their version of teaching and learning.

To take a stranger's vantage point on everyday reality is to look inquiringly and wonderingly on the world in which one lives. It is like returning home from a long stay in some other place. The homecomer notices details and patterns in his environment he never saw before: he finds that he has to think about local rituals and customs to make sense of them once more. (Greene, 1995:83).

What is critical about Maxine Greene is also associated with the idea of "releasing the imagination" or taking a position in other places from which to interrogate yourself and dare to see things in a different way. If necessary, beginning from arts and literature as drivers for invention (Greene, 2005). Releasing the imagination to "produce empathy" and continue thinking to create, to keep creating...

It is what enables us to cross the empty spaces between ourselves and those we teachers have called ‘other’ over the years. If those others are willing to give us clues, we can look in some manner through strangers’ eyes and hear through their ears. That is because, of all our cognitive capacities, imagination is the one that permits us to give credence to alternative realities. It allows us to break with the taken for granted, to set aside familiar distinctions and definitions. (Greene, 2005:14).

Her reference points are the civil rights and the anti-war movements of the 1960’s, the philosophy of Hannah Arendt, existentialism, critical pedagogy, neo-Marxism and second-wave feminism. After all, Maxine Greene speaks to us of people who are committed to themselves and to social change by cultivating critical thinking. Using literature as a means of rethinking the curriculum and the relations between educator and student in the classroom.

If the teacher wishes to present himself as a person actively engaged in critical thinking and authentic choosing, he cannot accept any ‘readymade standardized scheme’ at face value. He cannot even take for granted the value of intelligence, rationality or education. (Greene, 1995:84).

In museum exhibitions, sometimes I miss this ‘subjective and contingent’ dimension of those who organize them, at least in my context. I refer to knowing more about their interests and subjectivities in relation with what is being exhibited. To showing it from a dimension of communities that share / disagree when it comes to deciding what / how they are going to exhibit it, or to showing the decision-making processes. In other words, to concern themselves with why / what has happened to reach a certain version of the exhibition and what has happened for other premises to be abandoned.

*Why do these loves and phobias exist? Do they have to do with entering different discourses? Or with the position they hold in the exhibition storyline? With how the way to organize an exhibition has been learned? Because of the protocols*

*that have been made into routines? Because of the convenience or the comfort zone of holding an exhibition from the same premises? Or because of something referred to as experimental?*

Oftentimes, exhibitions are treated like this teacher that Maxine Greene spoke of, who is not vulnerable, and who is a rational being (sometimes emotional in the interactive), but who avoids the social context. In the critical museological discourse, from the position of cultural theory and cultural studies, since the 1980's, the open, hybrid character of exhibitions is emphasized. According to Michelle Henning (2006), museological *displays* no longer follow an evolutionary or teleological modernist logic of that which is framed, but are instead based on narrative techniques that are hybrid, thematic, or that resort to the "irrationality" of curiosities (in reference to the new facilities as an example of the Natural History and Ethnographic Museums' recovering cabinets of curiosities). Another matter that museology tackles from cultural studies is the policy of the difference and post-modern relativism, as the cultural analysis focuses more on the differences than similarities. Museums mark the cultural differences in the act of conducting an exhibition.

If the teacher can think about what he is doing in the concrete situations of his life, he must be aware of the conventions used to organize reality. (Greene, 1985:88).

The position of strangeness where Maxine Greene positions herself is not the same as that of Júlia Cabaleiro (2005), teacher of secondary school social studies, who is devoted to revising education and history from women's studies and cultural feminism. Júlia Cabaleiro's astonishment has to do with questions about the curriculum. In other words, what and how she learned when she was a history student and how she would like to be an educator. Júlia Cabaleiro asks herself how she learned art history to deconstruct the neutral and general (as in generalized) positivist discourse that was in effect in the classrooms, and where she felt excluded, when she saw that there was no connection whatsoever with the subjectivity of

young women like her (and like me in the late 80's) who studied their degrees, but did not see themselves reflected there. There was no alternative to that homogeneous rhetoric and, even less connection with the body; in other words, with experience and life. You had to 'take it on faith' even though there was not a single reference to women's history. You had to learn it mimetically, without seeing that any discursive act is a political act; it is personal. It concerns you or is related with you and it is not only an objective of something that is objectivized and, therefore, outside the individual and social you and I (from a positivist perspective).

It is a matter, of finding a method that does not cancel the "I" of the historian, while restoring the objects'—the women of the story—complexity. In short, it is a matter of elaborating a knowing that makes it possible to know oneself, because any historiographical approach that does not assume one's own subjectivity produces a false history. (Cabaleiro, 2005:53).

This has a number of implications in the exhibition realm: plus responses on specific actions of visitors in the exhibition. Care must be taken with the order of truth and with the use of language, as they "create symbolic order and create reality" (Cabaleiro, 2005:40). Debating how to combine the universal neutral with other forms of writing, such as, for example, the processes, and not only the 'end product' exhibited, from the double code, or reporting on the collective and the individual, also recognizing the authority of women, using different narratives from affection as something that affects you as well, with other narratives such as the evocative, the resonant, the lyrical (*and that it not be 'an artist's thing'*). And this can be done not just through Blank Notebooks at the end of the exhibition, but with other resources like writing letters, using blackboards or walls to hang post-its on the processes in education laboratories, as they do at the *Salisbury Center of Art*; or inundating galleries with the collective processes, as in the *Transductores* (Transducers) project. And of course, why not lend visibility to visitors' also building their versions of the exhibitions, and engaging in a self-interrogation process on them? Naturally, here the conception of the visitor as a user changes to that of visitor as another agent.

Heads of Museum Education Departments like Judith Mastai (2006)<sup>2</sup> state that “there is no such thing as a visitor” because visitors are built according to how the exhibition, program, activity, etc. are formulated. Judith Mastai, who takes her approach from the critical history of the modern museum, from conceptual art, institutional criticism, feminist theory and pedagogy and post-colonial practice<sup>3</sup> is against defining education in museums from the paradigm of marketing and privatization policies of Canadian museums (since the 1980’s) and governments’ meager support of museums and education. As they are in the hands of private capital and the structure of ‘accountability’ to those who finance the museum, Judith Mastai denounces the premise that the visitor as consumer is always right, and considers that museums with an educational mission should be conceived in terms of their curricula; in other words of learning and teaching. Personally, I don’t think it is just a matter of thinking in curricular terms, but of knowing the different conceptions around what is decided to be taught/learned, and on the relationships of those who teach-learn, on the discourses, strategies and practices that are prioritized and those that are abandoned, hidden or forgotten. In other words, it is a matter of power, knowledge and desire.

Therefore, if the educator’s practice incorporates the marketing paradigm, the educational approach begins and ends with following the paths of the visitor’s desire, finding so-called “sexy” content, using current, popular, or “accessible” themes to sell the museum experience. If the educator’s philosophical orientation, however, is that the museum is an educational resource for lifelong learning, the task changes in order to identify multiple points of entry for visitors of many sorts and kinds, based on differences in age, gender, race, ethnicity, levels of knowledge about history, about art history, and so on. (Mastai, 2006:175).

Judith Mastai was the director of museum education for years, and (until her death in 2005) created an education program that *stratified* vi-

<sup>2</sup> Who had worked at the Art Gallery of Ontario.

<sup>3</sup> As defined by Griselda Pollock in the introduction to her text. See Pollock, G.; Zemans, J. (eds.) (2008). *Museums after Modernism. Strategies of Engagement*. Oxford, England, Victoria: Australia: Blackwell Publishing, pp. 172-176.



sitors, not by ages or if they were neophytes or experts, but according to communities of interests, for example: students, schoolchildren outside school hours, children and their parents, people with a lot, or very little, art knowledge, adult visitors who visit the museum over a day, who work during the day. Breaking molds and starting from the assumption that all individual visitors “bring their own narratives to the museum”. Therefore, she thought it relevant to use “the hypertext metaphor, their paths of interest” (Mastai, 2006:175) to create dialogic spaces. It was a matter of generating educational gestures from the idea of cultural difference, more than celebrating equality or the universality among subjects of different generations, genders and geographies. We refuse to echo what has been done before. Echoes are empty. Access by all in equal terms is a fallacy.

There is no such thing as a visitor. The people who visit museums bear differences of many sorts. Our task is to talk to them in person, through comment cards, and over the world wide web, and to design multiple possible entry points for their interests. Of course, within our own experimentation, some projects do this more successfully than others. In that sense, the museum is a laboratory for constant experimentation. The points of inquiry, the learning tasks, the personal narratives, and the insecurities that people bring to the environment of the Art Gallery of Ontario are all of interest to us, and we seek to provide as many opportunities as possible to hear from and respond to our various publics. (Mastai, 2006: 176).

She accepts that the act of exhibiting is always simultaneously one of definition, and attribution of value that can be actively debated and contested (Mason, 2008).

(...)

#### BEING EMANCIPATED

Oftentimes, in texts on critical pedagogies, this term is used to designate the teacher’s capacity to give their students voice or authority. In the critical pedagogies of authors such as Giroux, Maclaren and Freire

there is a certain trust in social transformation thanks to the teacher's "gift". They advocate pedagogy's need to make the educational more political; in other words, understanding education as a "problematizer", which does not point to one specific methodology, but to a social theory with the goal of liberating individuals and groups as historic subjects (Freire, 1998). Post-structuralist feminists such as Jennifer Gore (1996), Elizabeth Ellsworth (1989) and Katherine Weiler (2001) criticize teachers' "liberating" position. Both bell hooks and Elizabeth Ellsworth believe that emancipating oneself is a discourse to be able to do more, as the teacher (man) is the person with the tools to "achieve it".

One of the first criticisms that Elizabeth Ellsworth (1989) made of critical pedagogy is the markedly abstract and rationalistic nature of its discourse. According to Jennifer Gore (1996:124), such an approach "leaves little space to tentativeness, openness and uncertainties." Criticism is also levied against social experiences of teachers with their students who form part of different contexts and that, therefore, do not have to always be repeated if attention is paid to specific cases. Jennifer Gore considered that Giroux failed himself when he advocated the idea of the teacher's emancipating authority to achieve justice and emancipation, given that the idea is about a generalized, and therefore, idealized, "teacher" who is not real and is always in the same "authority" position; which is who invests or institutes the students with power without changing their own position in the pedagogical relationship. This emancipating authority "acts in the benefit of the teacher capable of exercising a relevant power when it comes to deciding who has 'to have a voice', what voices favor democracy, etc." (Gore, 1996:122). For Giroux, "emancipating authority" means that teachers are aware of their role as transforming intellectuals, and indeed, the educator's work goes from being that of a mere guide, something vocational, or from being a civil servant or technician, to the job of being an intellectual (Giroux 1988). In the pedagogic discourse, Jennifer Gore positions the teacher in a central position "as an agent of professional reinforcement who uses emancipating authority, even though they are not considered transformative intellectuals," (Gore, 1996:122) Criticism

is based on everything beginning with the teacher, as the teacher is the one ‘who frees’, who “has the most practice in the critical examination, and who is more committed to the political dream of social change than students are,” (Shor, 1980:95) Freire also “recognizes certain intrinsic inequalities between the positions occupied by teacher and student, which justify the former’s directivity”. (Gore, 1996:123).

Post-structural feminists also recognize these differences, but they consider that these positions are under constant negotiation, as subjectivity is never unitary, but rather provisional and changing depending on how it fits into the discourse, and meaning is also provisional, as it depends on the social context where it has been inserted, and who negotiates it.

(The) generalized and globalized insight ... seems to double as (the author’s) oversight when it comes to the particular and personal of his own work as a theoretician or teacher, consequently straining themselves so that others will have to carry out the professional reinforcement or transformation work. (Gore, 1996:125).

Another concept of critical pedagogy, which has to do with progressive pedagogies in general, is that “every teacher is always a student, and every student a teacher,” to quote Antonio Gramsci (Giroux, 2003). The starting point is the student and not the teacher. The idea being advocated is that the learning process is a knowing process toward oneself. And that means liberation. In education, the awareness that the learner already has must be developed and disciplined. If the teacher is a learner, the classroom relationships are not hierarchical. Teachers must help students to critically approach their own stories, but also look critically at their role as public opposition intellectuals, positioned in cultural training and specific relationships of power. Therefore, knowledge is not something sacred, and teaching does not have to be authoritarian (Giroux, 2003). The students will be the ones who produce the texts and the resources. The working style will be collective and cooperative (Gore, 1996), with co-evaluation, or evaluation by the students, and the teacher “must be willing to take on a number of roles: initiator / coordinator, interlocutor / co-worker, mode-

rator, facilitator, adversary, teacher, secretary, mediator, librarian,” (Shor, 1980, quoting Gore, 1996:127). Nonetheless, as Jennifer Gore (1996) states, students are not always in a position to engage in dialogic practice, and therefore it is also legitimate to ask: to what extent should they be forced (without falling into the authoritarianism being criticized)? To what degree should exchange be forced?

Another of Jennifer Gore’s criticisms of Giroux and Maclaren is that they do not study the way in which “specific pedagogic practices” are contemplated, but rather, they often make remarks on the area of study or on content that is generally abstract. Further, this is done under the headings of power, language, culture and history (Gore, 1996). This way, the paradoxes and contradictions that also exist behind notions such as the cooperative or the dialogic cannot be examined. Consequently, it would be interesting to base oneself more on the act of presenting specific practices, on how something is taught in a given context, on the dilemmas and contradictions between students-teachers from the contingent, and thus, stop prescribing what the teacher “should or should not” do at a general level.

Something parallel to this discourse in critical museology would be the idea that education was a teaching machine (Henning, 2006). Here there is a specification of the intentions in the exhibition order devoted to certain visitors, but not their effects or conditions of production, and how this is materialized in specific cases of specific visitors, or learning communities. Or how these *scripts* work in different visit and visitor circumstances. This leads me to ask myself to what extent the focus on micro-practices is not being taken into account, and the museum becomes this teacher in capital letters, who provides and appoints, but does not take into account its effects and conditions. The weight may fall on the shoulders of the educator-mediator, but there is no exploration of who to teach and learn from the difference of this attributed context<sup>4</sup>. It should come as no

<sup>4</sup> Since 2006, the concept of the educational turn in curating has been defined (Rogoff, 2006) as a way of generating curatorial projects that go beyond the exhibition as something central, and with the pretense of generating programs and projects that involve different publics or communities, and from the artistic. The educational turn has been revised from education by authors such as Carmen Mörsch (2001); Nora Sternfeld (2011) or Javier Rodrigo and Antonio Collados (2009).

surprise that it is written in a manner distanced from that of experience. Even when referring to critical pedagogy in the museum, as in the case of Margaret Lindauer (2005), one also falls into the prescriptive and abstract discourse, although Margaret's questions suggest how to visit a museum from a perspective of critical thinking.

Margaret Lindauer (2005:204) states that most museums organize their exhibitions based on projection of either a typified visitor, or an ideal one. The former "represents the average of all visitors in terms of education, socio-economic status, racial or ethnic identity and previous museum experience". The second, "is one who would be ideologically and culturally at home in the exhibition or politically comfortable with the information that is presented". Both of them are still a reaffirmation of a museum that seems uncomfortable with those who bring other perspectives to it. For Margaret Lindauer, the visitor who is critical is one who "studies how the visual, written and spatial features of an exhibition collectively implicate an ideal visitor".

To me, more than referring to a critical visitor, I would highlight the importance of an education that is critical with the museum as an ideological apparatus, and that not only knows the ways to verify certain truths, but also ways to take on or transform a certain museological didacticism that presupposes that what is said is true just because it is formulated in this context. This does not mean that I am not interested in Lindauer's questions:

*Who decides? Based on what? For whom? With what research processes? With what exhibition devices? What is emphasized and what is ignored? Why is the information presented in a given way? Who does it favor? What questions on museological theory does it present? How can you detect them? (Lindauer, 2005). To which I would add: Are there other versions aside from that of the exhibition (i.e. education)? What voices are heard in the background?*

Is it a monotonic story, in which it is not known who the author is, that is partially positioned, polyvocal, contrasted, that shows the selection process and its dilemmas, like a mosaic, that does it in "DYI" fashion, that presents opposition, is rational, experiential, or that may use different ways

of narrating? How does all of this link up with your experiences, not what the museum expects of you but what you see of yourself in the museum? What does educating mean at this museum? How do you know it? Here the issue is rooted in the authority of the person talking. There must be acknowledgment of the privileged place from whence the museum speaks to be able to speak of the others or of the voices of the others; knowing where you are looking from to question your own position.

bell hooks (2003) puts forth the idea of 'radical opening' as a way to open new perspectives on learning and knowledges, to explore different vantage points and change ways of thinking. She quotes Judith Simmer-Brown to say that one way to resist authoritarian pedagogy (in which learning is understood from finiteness and stability) is to begin to learn from uncertainty and ambiguity, not taking certain theories or concepts as solid. It is about basing yourself more on investigating the process and getting swept away by what is not known, without falling into the fallacy of 'control' (sometimes in silence).

Patti Lather (2007) revised the difference between critical pedagogy and post-structuralist feminist pedagogy organized around a dichotomy. In other words, the critical pedagogies as the 'boys' field and post-structuralist feminist pedagogy as that of the 'girls'. The fact that the latter's criticism of the former has been seen by the 'boys' as a place of opposition, and not as another discourse where confrontation is not as important as thinking from uncertainty and multiplicity, places critical pedagogy under suspicion (in that it aims to be finite). Jennifer Gore is suspicious of its logocentrism. According to Gore, the use of language, which "with its concepts borrowed from Neo-Marxism, the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School and oppositional politics generally, can operate to assert the authority of the theorist in a way that is not emancipatory, but rather separatist, in its inaccessibility to people who are not familiar with that language" (Gore, 1996:131).

Feminism has long been suspicious of emancipatory agendas because of their coercion, rationalism and universalism. (Lather, 2007).

(...)

#### TRANSFORMING FROM WITHIN

Nothing is lost, everything is transformed.

JORGE DREXLER, SINGER

The problem is not that everything is transformed, as Jorge Drexler would say, but how we relate to these changes. What do we incorporate into our museological structures and into our daily practices? Many museums tend to resort to critical themes. They exhibit artists, photographers, etc. whose production is critical, or they organize exhibitions on design, conflict, paradoxes among different discourses, or they let educators devote their work to making visible other topics outside the frameworks chosen for the exhibition. But how many of them incorporate the discourses they exhibit into their day-to-day activity? How many of them continue with hierarchical or fixed structures even though they exhibit critical subject matter? Or how does this influence their internal decision-making process? Or their internal gender relations? Carmen Mörsch, director of the Education in Museums and Arts of the University of Zurich, and coordinator of the education actions of Documenta 12, defines museum education in art museums as:

The practice of inviting the public to use art and its institutions to further educational processes through their analysis and exploration, their deconstruction, and, possibly, change; and to elicit ways of setting these processes forth in other contexts. (Mörsch, 2009).

She defined four ways of understanding art education in museums and art centers: affirmative, reproductive, deconstructive and transformative. I am interested in focusing on transformative practice, as it is the one that lets gallery education incorporate the “task of expanding

the exhibiting institution and to politically constitute it as an agent of societal change,” (Mörsch, 2009). In other words, it is not so much about “introducing public segments into (exhibition spaces and museums)”, but rather, introducing the institutions “to the surrounding world,” and therefore questioning, building public participation, working in a collaborative way without supporting the difference between curatorial and education work, that work together for institutional mechanisms to be uncovered, improved and expanded (Mörsch, 2009). It elaborates research in action, and produces projects with different interest groups who work independently from the exhibiting programs, examine the power structures, negotiate meanings instead of them remaining fixed, and they incorporate, “a self-critical understanding of education” (Mörsch, 2009) and that change according to “context and situation”. Assuming the conflicts that may trigger an action different from that expected. This occurred in Documenta 12 where oftentimes, visitors’ expectations were not the same as those of the organizers of the educational, cultural work, as they existed in different frameworks: one critical, the other explanatory, or the conflicts of interest between curators and educators when the first group realized that the second was contributing interpretations and assuming their autonomy, and that furthermore, did not coincide with what the curators had established (Mörsch, 2009).

Experience has a clear narrative content: it plays out over time, reflects experiences lived and the subjective involvement of its protagonists. Normally, it expresses events, that is, something that has happened that is told because of its novelty or unpredictability, something that is worth telling and also usually, as occurs in stories, makes it possible to understand, at least in the manner portrayed to us, in the way it does, and doesn’t fit with us and we remember what it expressly says about possible meanings and interpretations. (Contreras; Pérez de Lara, 2010:80).

(...)



As concerns everything else, I hope that you can continue to cultivate your ideas and activities in these fields, without being sidelined by the inertia in its different forms, as sometimes occurs in university teaching, and from the degree level. At least, that is my feeling toward it.



CERÁMICAS DE MALLORCA (MALLORCA CERAMICS) - 03.04.2013 - Palma de Mallorca

There are moments when a kind of clarity comes over you, and suddenly you can see through walls to another dimension that you'd forgotten or chosen to ignore in order to continue living with the various illusions that make life, particularly life with other people, possible. And that's where I'd arrived, Your Honor. [...]

NICOLE KRAUSS (2011) *Great House*. London. Penguin Books.

ENERITZ LÓPEZ. From the intersection: thoughts and experiences of a museum education professional ~

AGUIRRE, IMANOL (2006). “Hacia un imaginario para el futuro en educación artística”, in: Actas del Congreso Internacional de Educación Artística y Visual. Sevilla.

HERNÁNDEZ, FERNANDO (2010). “Direccionalidad y análisis dialógico-performativo frente a los discursos sobre la infancia”, in: Actas del I Congreso Internacional Arte, Ilustración y Cultura Visual en Educación Infantil y Primaria: construcción de identidades. Granada.

GIROUX, HENRY (1990). *Los profesores como intelectuales. Hacia una pedagogía crítica del aprendizaje*. Barcelona: Paidós.

LÓPEZ, ENERITZ (2012a). “¿Quién planeó ser de mayor educadora de museos?: Desafíos de una carrera profesional en construcción”, in: Actas de las IX Jornadas de pedagogía del arte y museos. Confluencias del arte y la educación (MAMT, Tarragona). [Available for free download at: [http://sae.altanet.org/houmuni/web/mamtpedagogic/media/upload/pdf//llibre\\_plus\\_programa\\_CONFLUENCIE\\_S\\_EN\\_ART\\_I\\_EDUCACIO\\_web\\_EDITORA8444EDITORIA\\_61.pdf](http://sae.altanet.org/houmuni/web/mamtpedagogic/media/upload/pdf//llibre_plus_programa_CONFLUENCIE_S_EN_ART_I_EDUCACIO_web_EDITORA8444EDITORIA_61.pdf)].

LÓPEZ, ENERITZ (2012b). *Profesionalidad y formación frente a Invisibilidad y recortes: cómo (querer) seguir siendo educadora de museos en tiempos de precarización*. Her&Mus, IV, 3, pp. 33-44.

LÓPEZ, ENERITZ; ALCAIDE, EVA (2011a). “Una historia sobre los departamentos de educación y las educadoras en los museos españoles: mirando atrás para poder seguir adelante”, in: María Acaso (2011) (coord.). *Perspectivas. Situación actual de la educación en museos de artes visuales*. Madrid: Ariel y Fundación Telefónica, pp. 13-30. [Available for free download (following registration) at: [http://www.fundacion.telefonica.com/es/que\\_hacemos/conocimiento/publicaciones/detalle/98](http://www.fundacion.telefonica.com/es/que_hacemos/conocimiento/publicaciones/detalle/98)].

LÓPEZ, ENERITZ; ALCAIDE, EVA (2011b). “A solas con una educadora de museos: una conversación sobre su trabajo, situación y visión de la educación artística contemporánea”. Revista digital do LAV, 6 (4), Ramal: UFSM, pp. 1-12. [Available for free download at: <http://cascavel.ufsm.br/revistas/ojs-2.2.2/index.php/revislav/article/viewFile/2645/1561>].

PADRÓ, CARLA (2006). “Repensar los museos, la educación y la historia del arte”, in: Cristóbal Belda and María Teresa Marín Torres (2006). *La museología y la historia del arte*. Murcia: Universidad de Murcia, pp. 51-74.

SÁNCHEZ DE SERDIO, AIDA; LÓPEZ, ENERITZ (2011). “Políticas educativas en los museos de arte españoles. Los departamentos de educación y acción cultural”, in: Desacuerdos 6. Arteleku, Centro José Guerrero, MACBA and UNIA. [Available for free download at: [http://ayp.unia.es/dmdocuments/desacuerdos\\_6.pdf](http://ayp.unia.es/dmdocuments/desacuerdos_6.pdf)].

AMPARO MOROÑO. Inhabiting the third landscape ~

CLEMENT, GILLES (2007). *Manifiesto del Tercer Paisaje*. Barcelona: Gustavo Gili Mínima.

AMAIA URZAIN. Entry (and) exit: autobiographic visit from a prematurely “retired” museum educator ~

DALTON, PEN (2001). *The Gendering of Art Education*. New York: Routledge.

GUASCH, ANNA MARÍA; ZULAIKA, JOSEBA (2007). *Aprendiendo del Guggenheim Bilbao*. Madrid: Akal.

PADRÓ, CARLA (ed.) (2011). *El aprendizaje de lo inesperado*. Madrid: Catarata.

IRENE AMENGUAL. From the educational turn as a new mask or how Zizek’s chocolate laxatives stir me up ~

DCMS (Department of Culture, Media and Sport) (2000). *Centres for Social Change: Museums, Libraries and Archives for All*. London: DCMS.

DELEUZE, GILLES; GUATTARI, FÉLIX (1997). *Mil Mesetas: capitalismo y esquizofrenia*. Valencia: Pre-textos.

DÍAZ BALERDI, IÑAKI (2008). “Paradojas conceptuales”. *La memoria fragmentada. El museo y sus paradojas*. Gijón: Trea.

LANG, CAROLINE; REEVE, JOHN; WOOLLARD, VICKY (2006). “The Impact of Government Policy”. *The Responsive Museum. Working with audiences in the Twenty-First Century*. Aldershot, Hants: Ashgate Press.

O'DOHERTY, BRIAN (1999). "Notes on the gallery space". *Inside the White Cube: the ideology of the gallery space*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press.

PADRÓ, CARLA (2006). "Educación en museos: Representaciones y Discursos", in: Alice Semedo and João Teixeira (2006). *Museos, representaciones y discursos*. Oporto: Afrontamento

ROBERTS, LISA (1997). *From knowledge to Narrative. Educators and the Changing Museum*. Washington DC and Londres: Smithsonian Institution Press.

SANDELL, RICHARD (2007). "Museums and the good society". *Museums, Prejudice and the Re-framing of Difference*. Londres and Nueva York: Routledge.

ZIZEK, SLAVOJ (2004). "Passion In The Era of Decaffeinated Belief". *The Symptom*. 5, winter. [Online]. [Accessible from: <http://www.lacan.com/passionf.htm>]. Accessed: February 11, 2014.

EVA ALCAIDE. Museum educators a profession at ground level ~

DÍAZ BALERDI, IÑAKI (2008). *La memoria fragmentada. El museo y sus paradojas*. Gijón: Trea.

LÓPEZ, ENERTIZ; ALCAIDE, EVA (2011). "A solas con una educadora de museos: una conversación sobre su trabajo, situación y visión de la educación artística contemporánea". Revista digital do LAV, 6 (4), Ramal: UFSM, pp. 1-12. [Available for free download at: <http://cascavel.ufsm.br/revistas/ojs-2.2.2/index.php/revislav/article/viewFile/2645/1561>].

PADRÓ, CARLA (2005). "Educación en museos: representaciones y discursos", in: Alice Semedo and João Teixeira (coords.) (2005). *Museus, discursos, representações*. Oporto: Afrontamento, pp. 49-60.

ROBERTS, LISA (1997). *From Knowledge to Narrative. Educators and the changing museum*. Washington DC and Londres: Smithsonian Institution Press.

KATIA MARTORELL. Museum mediation: reflections from practice ~

AAVV (2007). *Pràctiques dialògiques. Interseccions de la pedagogia crítica i la museologia crítica*. Palma de Mallorca: Fundació Es Baluard d'Art Modern i Contemporani.

AGUIRRE, IMANOL (2005). *Teorías y prácticas en educación artística*. Barcelona: Octaedro-EUB.

FERNÁNDEZ, OLGA; DEL RÍO, VÍCTOR (2007). *Estrategias críticas para una práctica educativa en el arte contemporáneo*. Valladolid: Museo Patio Herreriano.

GÓMEZ, PILAR (2003). *La educación, un rompecabezas*. Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva. Diván el Terrible Collection.

HUERTA, RICARD; DE LA CALLE, ROMÁN (2005). *La mirada inquieta. Educación artística y museos*. Valencia: Universitat de València.

LIDÓN, CARMEN (2005). *Educación como mediación en centros de arte contemporáneo*. Salamanca: Universidad de Salamanca.

WILD, REBECA (2006). *Educación para ser. Vivencias de una escuela activa*. Barcelona: Herder Editorial.

CARLA PADRÓ. Critical wings ~

APPLE, MICHAEL W. (2000). *Teoría crítica y educación*. Madrid: Miño y Dávila Editores.

APPLE, MICHAEL W. (1987). *Educación y poder*. Madrid: Paidós-MEC.

COLLADOS, ANTONIO; RODRIGO, JAVIER (2009). *Transductores. Pedagogías colectivas y políticas espaciales*. Granada: Centro de Arte Guerrero.

CONTRERAS, JOSÉ; PÉREZ DE LARA, NURIA (coords.) (2010). *Investigar la experiencia educativa*. Madrid: Morata.

ELLSWORTH, ELIZABETH (1989). "Why Doesn't This Feel Empowering? Working Through the Repressive Myths of Critical Pedagogy". *Harvard Educational Review*, 59:9, 297-324.

FREIRE, PAULO (1998). *Pedagogy of Freedom*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

GIROUX, HENRY A. (1990). *Los profesores como intelectuales. Hacia una pedagogía crítica del aprendizaje*. Barcelona: Paidós/Madrid: M.E.C.

GIROUX, HENRY A. (2001). *Cultura, política y práctica educativa*. Barcelona: Graó.

GIROUX, HENRY A. (2001). *El ratoncito feroz. Disney o el fin de la inocencia*. Madrid: Fundación Ruipérez.

GIROUX, HENRY A. (2003). *La inocencia robada. Juventud, multinacionales y política cultural*. Madrid: Morata.

GREENE, MAXINE (1995). "El profesor como extranjero", in: Jorge Larrosa (ed.) (1995). *Déjame que te cuente*. Barcelona: Laertes.

GREENE, MAXINE (2005). *Liberar la imaginación. Ensayos sobre educación, arte y cambio social*. Barcelona: Graó. Micro-macro referencias.

GORE, JENNIFER (1996). *Controversias entre las pedagogías*. Madrid: Morata.

HENNING, MICHELLE (2006). "Display". *Museums, Media and Cultural Theory*. Berkshire, UK: Open University Press, pp. 37-69.

HOOKS, BELL (2003). *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope*. Nueva York and Londres: Routledge.

KINCHELOE, JOE; MACLAREN, PETER (2008). *Pedagogía crítica. De qué hablamos. Dónde estamos*. Barcelona: Graó.

LATHER, PAITI (2007). *Getting Lost. Feminist Efforts Towards a Double(d) Science*. Nueva York: State of University New York Press.

LINDAUER, MARGARET (2005). "The Critical Museum Visitor". Janet Marstine. *New Museum Theory and Practice: An Introduction*. Londres: Blackwell.

MACLAREN, PETER (2007). *Pedagogía crítica y cultura depredadora*. Barcelona: Paidós, 2007.

MASTAI, JUDITH (2006). "There is not such Thing as a Visitor", in: Griselda Pollock; Joice Zemans (eds.). *Museums after Modernism. Strategies of Engagement*. Oxford, Inglaterra, Victoria, Australia: Blackwell Publishing.

MÖRSCH, CARMEN (2009). "At Crossroads of Four Discourses. Documenta 12 Gallery Education in Between Affirmation, Reproduction, Deconstruction and Transformation". *Documenta 12 Education*. Zurich-Berlin: Diaphanes, pp. 9-31.



MÖRSCH, CARMEN (2011). "Alliances for Unlearning: On the Possibility of Future Collaborations Between Gallery Education and Institutions of Critique". *Contexts: Gallery Education*, 13.

ROGOFF, IRIT (2006). "Turning". *E-flux*, 0, pp. 1-10.

STERNFELD, NORA (2011). "Unglamorous Tasks: What Can Education Learn from its Political Traditions?". *E-flux*, 14, pp. 1-12.

WEILER, KATHY (2001). *Feminist Engagements: reading, resisting and revisioning male theorists in education and cultural studies*. Londres and Nueva York: Routledge.

**Eva Alcaide.** I am a Feminist and an Art Educator. I have a B.A. in Art History, University of Valladolid. I have a Certificate in Museum Education, University of Zaragoza. I have been working as a museum educator form the past 13 years in different museums. I design and implement educational programs of different kinds. Besides, having an interest in the Museum Education field, I study Art and Feminism.  
> [eva.alcaide77@gmail.com](mailto:eva.alcaide77@gmail.com)

**Irene Amengual.** As a Museum Educator, I am interested in exploring the possibilities of working through the arts in order to develop collaborative and interdisciplinary projects. I think it is very important to combine both theory and practice, and this lead me to write my PhD Thesis on Pedagogical Experiences and Day-to-Day Practice.  
> [ireneame@yahoo.es](mailto:ireneame@yahoo.es)

**Artaziak. We** are a group of educators and from where we approach our activity. We are Ana Revuelta, Andrea Arrizabalaba and Maider Urrutia. We introduce ourselves as “nomad educators”, who go from place to place (with all of their pluralities) without a base camp, and who, on these travels, transform their proposals and adapt their activity to the different contexts. We are currently in charge of the Mediation Program at Tabakalera Center of Contemporary Culture in San Sebastián.  
> [info@artaziak.com](mailto:info@artaziak.com)

**Eneritz López.** Traveler, researcher and professor. I have a B.A. in Art History and a PhD in Art Education with several publications and conferences on training and the professional knowing of Museum Educators. I work in between a private cultural company and the university, where besides teaching I enjoy writing new contents for courses and Masters.  
> [eneritz.lopez@gmail.com](mailto:eneritz.lopez@gmail.com)

**Katia Martorell.** I am the Director of the Educational Department at Joan Miró's Foundation in Mallorca and CO-founder of la Nau, an Elementary School. After my B.A. in Art History, I worked as a Museum Educator as well as a Teacher, which made me realize the incredible connections between art and education. Since then, I have always worked in Art Education and nowadays I combine my job at the Miro's Foundation with my new maternity and with the incredible adventure of creating an alternative School where Art is core in the School Curriculum.  
> [kmartorell@fpjmiro.org](mailto:kmartorell@fpjmiro.org)

**Amparo Morono.** After having worked in Art Institutions as a Museum Educator and Program Coordinator, I currently work for a National Park in Extremadura and have founded a Group where we focus on Collaborative Projects in Rural Areas.  
> [amparomdiaz@gmail.com](mailto:amparomdiaz@gmail.com)

**Carla Padró.** I have worked in the Museum field for twenty-four years, both in the coordination of educational programs in Spanish and Northamerican Museums and the academic field. I am currently working in a Creative Writing Project.  
> [libroscarla@gmail.com](mailto:libroscarla@gmail.com)

**Les Salonnières.** We are a group of Performance and Feminism. We have worked for several Art, Education and Cultural Institutions such as the Contemporary Museum of Art in Barcelona, Arts Santa Mònica in Barcelona and in other places of Europe and Latin America.  
> [salonnieres@gmail.com](mailto:salonnieres@gmail.com)

**Amaia Urzain.** I teach at Primary Education Bachelor's Degree Program in Mondragon Unibertsitatea, Faculty of Humanities and Education Sciences, where I now form part of the interdisciplinary docent staff in Art Education.

> [amaiaurzain@hotmail.com](mailto:amaiaurzain@hotmail.com)

**Paola Villanueva.** I come from the Fine Art field, where I started my professional career obtaining different prizes and scholarships in institutions such as the Frans Masereel Centrum (Antwerpen, Belgium), the Pilar and Joan Miró's Foundation in Mallorca or the University of Seville. I am currently working on the field of production and artistic research, as well as in education through the arts, where I have participated in different interdisciplinary projects. Besides, I combine this activity with a doctorate in the Art Education Program at the University of Barcelona.

> [paolavillanuevaglez@gmail.com](mailto:paolavillanuevaglez@gmail.com)



Texts:

EVA ALCAIDE, IRENE AMENGUAL, ARTAZIAK, ENERITZ  
LÓPEZ, KATIA MARTORELL, AMPARO MOROÑO, LES  
SALONNIÈRES, AMAIA URZAIN AND CARLA PADRÓ.

~

Year:

2014

~

Translation:

PATRICK H. BONES

~

Editors:

CARLA PADRÓ AND PAOLA VILLANUEVA

~

Photography and design:

PAOLA VILLANUEVA

~

ISBN:

978-972-99863-9-0

This publication is part of the project "Museum Mediators Europe. Lifelong Learning Programme. Transfer of Innovation, Multilateral Projects, Leonardo da Vinci", 2012-2014.

~

The Museum Mediators Transfer of Innovation project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This communication reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

The Museum Mediators project partners do not assume any responsibility for the accuracy, completeness, or quality of the information provided by any article published. The information and opinion contained in the publications are solely those of the individual authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the editors or the publisher. Therefore, we exclude any claims against the author for the damage caused by use of any kind of the information provided herein, whether incorrect or incomplete.





