

## Art and education<sup>1</sup>

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I would like to start by congratulating the project for its interest, social relevance and pertinence and say how pleased I am to join you at this moment of its presentation. It was suggested that I should talk a little about art and education in this almost final phase of the session and I prepared a text that, in not knowing the project in detail, runs the risk of seeming out of place.

I would roughly highlight two types of discourses and artistic practices that we find in projects of a social nature:

- On the one hand, a discourse that reifies social control, where art appears as a path to adaptation, to the reconduction to the normalized, the standardised;
- On the other hand, a discourse that challenges a hegemonic vision, whereby art is understood as a process for living and imagining alternatives, finding its place in this imaginary and making it a reality, which seems to me to be the case of this project being presented here.

Here, art brings together artists and non-artists, inviting them to participate in collective artistic processes, removing them from their accommodation to a reality that is so often suffered, unfair and castrating.

The art of life that makes of each one an open work under construction, that assumes the matter of pain and joy, of the trivial and circumstantial, of the personal and collective, from the micro to the macro, going through the local contexts we inhabit. An art that uses this matter of life as a resource with which to work, to deepen, recycle, transmute and recreate it.

Art that is an experience, a process, a relational game where affections, ideas and objects dialogue and merge. A collaborative art where the knowledge of life and the knowledge of aesthetics are mingled in the exchange of those who, coming from different worlds, meet and connect.

But this path is not only made of dreams, it is also made of tensions, of pitfalls and stumbling blocks that should not be disregarded, which should be looked at and reflected upon when they happen and before they happen, not to avoid them all at any price, but for the work to be permanently open, listening to itself, reflecting on the difficulty, using the stones in the way as pieces to build not walls but frames, which allow us to see the world in unusual ways, to perceive that in our subjective look an unexpected truth is found, that its possibility is always there, in our look which, by noticing, perceives places where to stop and which, by transforming itself, transforms them. We can, yes, vivify our lives, be more conscious, but nothing guarantees it from the start.

Among other aspects, in this project I dare to bring out, if I understand correctly, and for this reason I return this interpretation to those responsible so that they can correct me, a set of ideas, which I will aggregate around 2 main axes:

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<sup>1</sup> Art-Connection Multiplier event held in Lisbon, by CAI at the Education Institute of the University of Lisbon

- The idea of Being With /Existing With, inhabiting the spaces and creating - connection, c-creation, co-construction, collaboration - Art as a process of connection - between people, between cultures, between artistic domains, between diverse knowledge;
- The Educational dimension, based on critical perspectives, which operates through participatory processes of social and cultural engagement, with emancipatory and empowering purposes, where the power and the voice of all have their place, each one with their knowledge and nonknowledge, sharing and creating together, making visible what is invisible - each one in their singularity and their common life conditions, reducing barriers, questioning borders as we live in them and cross them, Challenging expectations and valuing what society so often devalues, living aesthetic experiences that allow us to live our daily lives in another way - dialoguing, expressing thoughts and emotions, transmuting them, transporting us in a sensitive way into another register, transgressing the limits of the established, of the norms, of what is established, of what is supposed to be art, investigating in art, educating through and with art.

I also raise some questions, not to be answered now, nor because they necessarily have to do with this project, but because they seem to me to be tensions in relation to which we need to remain attentive, vigilant, to maintain the meaning of what we do:

- I identify a double movement of approach: the movement of art that approaches everyday life and the movement of social and educational processes that appropriate artistic processes and logics - a double movement that may be able to generate confluences, but also conflicts;
- The involvement of different professionals, who are often not artists: educators, sociologists, anthropologists, historians, etc. In these encounters of distinct sensibilities, excesses may be tempered and possible and unstable balances may be created;
- The tension between, on the one hand, the fruition of something that is given to us or co-option by artists in a society of the spectacle, and, on the other hand, co-creation and co-production;
- The tension between a popular and communitarian art and an art that intends above all to dialogue with the art of its time, with the risk of something being lost from both under a hypothetical imperative of synthesis and syncretism;
- The aestheticisation of political activism, draining the desire to go against the established;
- The intentionality of projects focused on transformation, but with the risk of getting lost in the logic of institutionalisation and deviating when interests of another nature arise, such as those of their own survival;
- The relevance of a social and educational action, for which it seems relevant, but difficult to reconcile, a research action, which may also have an artistic dimension, which accompanies and extends our understanding and awareness of the barriers and the ways to overcome them with art;

- The importance of developing sustainable communities, more than building tangible objects, spaces where alternative narratives to hegemonic discourses are imagined, created and sustained and which remain or leave seeds that remain open beyond the projects.

It is crucial to inform participants that there will be no aesthetic judgement of their artworks. The arts, in this practice, are a means of expression, not a place to impose the norms of the Academy of Art (capital-A). The art space is stripped of the canons and judgements of (capital-A) Aesthetics. In interpreting the images, participants should be involved in negotiating the meaning of the artworks, and should play a prominent role in the discussion process. Moreover, interpretation remains open-ended (Marxen, 2018, p.52)

- Bringing art closer to everyday life
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Finally, professionals working in other spheres can organise subjective work to maintain the capacity for symbolisation by using artistic techniques such as art therapy or verbal association about art, and the consistency of artistic production and the arts underlying social bonds can be seen, for example, with a form of applied psychoanalysis. Spaces are then created that offer alternative narratives to institutionalised lives and hegemonic discourse (see, for example, Marxen and Rodriguez 2012). Appropriate professional training and continuity are essential as they allow participants' processes to develop (Marxen 2011b, 2013b, 2016).

Claire Bishop (2006, 10) noted "artistic practices since the 1960s that appropriate social forms as a way of bringing art closer to everyday life: intangible experiences such as dancing samba (Helio Oiticica) or funk (Adrian Piper); drinking beer (Tom Marioni); discussing philosophy (Ian Wilson) or politics (Joseph Beuys); organising a garage sale (Martha Rosler); running a café (Allen Ruppersberg; Daniel Spoeri; Gordon Matta-Clark), a hotel (Alighiero Boetti; Ruppersberg) or a travel agency (Christo and Jeanne-Claude). " (Marxen, 2018, pp. 44-45)

## References

Marxen, E. (2018). Artistic Practices and the Artistic Dispositif – A Critical Review. *Antípoda. Revista de Antropología y Arqueología*, 33, 37-60.  
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