

UTOPIA AND THE EVERYDAY

27.11.2009—14.02.2010

Opening Thursday 26th November, 6pm – 9pm

Open from Tuesday to Sunday, 11am – 6pm

The exhibition is closed between 24th December 2009 and 1st January 2010

CENTRE D'ART CONTEMPORAIN GENÈVE

10, rue des Vieux-Grenadiers

Case postale 121 – 1211 Genève 8

T +41 22 329 18 42

F +41 22 329 18 86

presse@centre.ch | www.centre.ch

G A Z E T T E # 1

“UTOPIA AND THE EVERYDAY. BETWEEN ART AND PEDAGOGY”

“UTOPIA AND THE EVERYDAY. Between art and pedagogy” is a Centre d'Art Contemporain Genève project, conceived by the *microsilions* collective in collaboration with the Centre's director, Katya García-Antón. This ambitious, experimental project aims to open a debate, in Geneva and Switzerland, about the role of artists in education, both within and outside artistic institutions. It draws on the practice of artists and collectives for whom a reflection about teaching methods lies at the heart of their work, and explores points of contact between art and education.

The exhibition also proposes avenues for reflection on the role of mediation (a practice associated with the educational mission of artistic institutions) as a discursive movement in which constructive criticism

of these institutions can take place: a laboratory on culture and society rather than as a means to reduce misunderstanding between works of art and the audience.

Three artists or collectives were invited to develop projects with local partners, and the fruit of their work will be presented during the exhibition, which takes place from 27 November 2009 to 14 February 2010, on the second floor of the Centre d'Art Contemporain Genève.

The three partnerships were as follows:

– trafo.K (Vienna) and Gabu Heindl (Vienna), in collaboration with 8. Klasse of Deutsche Schule Genf.

– Nils Norman (London) and Tilo Steireif (Lausanne), in collaboration with the HEP (Haute Ecole Pédagogique) of Lausanne

and the CIRA (Centre International de Recherche sur l'Anarchisme).

– Damon Rich (New York) and Oscar Tuazon (Paris), in collaboration with the inhabitants and associations of Le Lignon.

Besides the results of these partnerships, a number of earlier projects undertaken by other artists will be presented in documentary form. They will be structured around a series of questions based on educational theory, which will be brought to life in the space.

GUIDING?

What is the role and position of the teacher towards the learner? Should he be a leader, a guide, or simply one who accompanies, a facilitator? In his analysis of pastoral power, the philosopher Michel

Foucault showed how Christianity had generalised a new style of government, based on pastoral power. The shepherd, or guide, directs a herd of individuals to whom he intends well. To accomplish his goal, he plays, notably, the role of teacher. Even if pastoralism may have been transformed, the traditional perception of the teacher remains close to that of guide. Can other types of teacher-learner relationship be tested through the means of art?

MAKING A PROFIT?

How do artistic practices such as those presented here position themselves with regard to the art market? While some artists see their collaborative work as a means to free themselves from the commercial system of art, others "use" this system to gain financial and institutional support for a project with a teaching dimension. This raises the question of the status of works and their authorship: can an artist alone gain the benefit of a work created as a result of a collaboration? The question of capital also arises, in a different manner, in relation to the position of artists concerning the acquisition of knowledge. The current crisis in the capitalist system offers the opportunity to examine the short-term risks of an education based on accumulating knowledge, the worst means of which is the learning by rote of a maximum of information, to the detriment of full understanding and the critical distance necessary to best employ it. What tools do we need to develop in order to escape from the logic of what Paulo Freire qualified as "bankable education"?

LIBERATING?

Does the practice of art or teaching provide the means to emancipate, liberate and "give power"?

For a militant intellectual such as bell hooks, education should lead to emancipation and the practice of liberty. Other thinkers, in contrast, believe that notions of "empowerment" and "emancipation" are myths which do a disservice to the practice of teaching, notably because they do not clearly define what the learner is to be emancipated from, nor against what or whom he would gain power. The idea of emancipation runs, in varying guises and terms, through numerous artistic projects with a pedagogical dimension.

STANDARDISING?

At a time when the trend to standardisation spares neither education systems nor cultural policies, the question of the standard model is of increased relevance. What value is a standard in the educational and artistic domain? Who produces the models and how are they applied? Is experimentation that has no motive to profit from the reproduction of its results still possible? While the academic model tends to reproduce a structure and impose it from the top down, in a hierarchical system, many artists defend the idea of a ceaselessly renewed experimentation, which responds to situations as they arise.

A group of students from the Masters research programme CCC, of the Haute École d'Art et de Design de Genève, join in this reflection in presenting their research into "Education Nouvelle", a movement born in Geneva, and examining the possibility of a potential "distributive pedagogy".

DESCHOOLING?

And what if schools are not the best forum for "learning"? Looking beyond the idea of a school which applies alternative teaching principles, some have imagined

a society where education takes place through society, in which artistic institutions would be a place of exchange, and the learner-teacher relationship would be repeatedly reviewed, and themes covered going far beyond the usual core subjects taught in school. This is the idea put forward by Ivan Illich in "Deschooling society", in which he makes a very harsh critique of schools, arguing that they reinforce social inequalities. How should an artistic institution position itself with regard to the school system?

This "Gazette", replaces the usual invitation card. The format recalls the importance of the self-produced publications of innovative teaching methods; of the printing press, which occupies a central place in the teachings of Célestin Freinet; of manifesto articles that feature on the internet site of Copenhagen Free University, and of the "Journal of Consciousness" of the Feminist Art Program. During the course of the exhibition, three supplementary gazettes will be produced for visitors, to bring complementary information on the ideas and development of the three collaborative projects.

A second leg of the exhibition, presenting the work of new partnerships, will take place in July 2010 in the Kunstmuseum of Thoune.

A publication on the project is planned for 2010.

Institutional partners:

Kunstmuseum Thun, Research-Based Master Programme CCC – Critical Crosscultural Cybermedia, HEAD – Genève, Deutsche Schule Genf, HEP Lausanne.

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