



Educational Projects in the Management of a Contemporary Art Gallery

Liviu NEDELCU*, Tudor IOAN**

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Accepted March 2020

Available online May 2020

JEL Classification

I20, I21

Keywords:

Management, Creative workwrs,
Information, Educational program,
Art exhibition, Performance,
Workshops, Museum

ABSTRACT

In a socio-political and economic context in which there have been changes aimed at management strategies, production processes, redefining work, reformulating the skills of the worker, I aim at arguing the importance of developing educational programs in cultural management projects to develop creativity and knowledge, two vital resources in the current information economy. In constructing this hypothesis, I will turn to new theories about creativity, which emerged in the aesthetics related to the social and pedagogical roles of art, to the aspects and requirements of the current ideological system.

© 2020 EAI. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Given that management strategies have moved from unilateral control to empowerment and enrichment of work experience by giving up levels of supervision and functioning on the principles of trust and responsibility (Fineman, S., 2015), the individual must be stimulated to engage in a creative, spontaneous thinking, to develop interrelation skills since mechanical work and isolation /separation have become obsolete.

An increasing number of social groups – creative workers, freelancers, cognitarians – are basing their work process on a structure similar to that of the artist's creation process. Creative workers resort to the associative thinking of surrealists (brainstorming); furthermore, freelancers have assimilated the specific flexibility specific to the artist's life, that has a flexible work schedule, cognitarians process information to produce goods and services, intersecting working time with free time; thus, when practicing, they improve the qualities needed for their work (Hochschild, A., R., 1983). Capital is reconfigured into semi-capital, bringing together units of information, signs, connecting cognitive activity with psychic energies at a rate of accelerated network productivity (Berardi, F.).

So if the figure of the artist and his way of working become the emblems of the neoliberal cognitive society, I subsequently aim at approaching contemporary art through its social and educational function. I will ask questions and offer answers in relation to the following questions: what is the potential of contemporary art in the development of the individual and in providing the tools necessary for his daily existence; what are the main characteristics of contemporary art from which strategies can be deciphered in order to stimulate creativity, imagination, spontaneity; can contemporary art propose ways of life, principles of self-help and self-management?

2. The proliferation of museums of contemporary art

Contemporary art has been, is and will be a sensitive subject in society. Due to its innovative character, it will challenge most of the categories of art that the public has acquired through its education. Often, in museums of contemporary art or in galleries, even the individual familiar with the art world is sometimes put in situations of questioning the status of the object he is looking at. Let's think of viral images with various objects that were not works of art, but which, placed in an artistic context, aroused interest / attention. Contemporary art becomes a type of art that sometimes poses problems to the individual, both through its conceptual hermeticism (the idea elaborated in unfamiliar words, a curatorial text that follows the same vocabulary), but also through the form it takes, especially when appealing to pre-existing objects or the body as an artistic medium.

So, in a gallery or in a museum of contemporary art, how could we facilitate the friendship with the exhibited works? What interactive way to relate to them would produce an understanding of art? What

*, ** Dunarea de Jos University of Galati, Romania. E-mail addresses: liviu1962@yahoo.com (L. Nedelcu), tudor.ioan@ugal.ro (T. Ioan – Corresponding author).

information should be disseminated to give the individual the freedom to explore the work he encounters without fear, while still avoiding creating another spectacle in a society of the spectacle as Guy Debord denounced it since the 1960s?

Claire Bishop, in her book "Radical Museology", brings into play the premonitory essay of Rosalind Krauss, from the '90s, which announced a proliferation of museums of contemporary art, but also its transformation from a patrician institution of elite culture to a populist temple for relaxation and entertainment (Bishop, C., 2015). So how do we produce an educational program, adapted to the increasingly aggressive logic imposed by governments - stimulating as many visitors as possible? (when offering public funding, because, globally, the sources of financing tend towards the private, corporate ones, which affects the exhibition program) How do we design a program of interest, but also complex, useful in meaningful navigation of a contemporary art exhibition?

The context in which this approach takes place is the presentist one, developed by Bishop in the mentioned book, the presentism being related to the condition of taking the current moment as horizon and destination of our thinking. Referring to the use of the term contemporary in art, as Bishop states, he relies on an inability to understand the present moment in its global totality and on an acceptance of this misunderstanding as a constitutive condition of the current historical epoch (Bishop, C., 2015).

Therefore, the inability to logically map a phenomenon should not inhibit learning, a process that needs to be stimulated to take place in the form of a focused, informal, lifelong game, a game based on dialogue and an exchange of information / opinion between coordinators / teachers and students / workshop participants. Approaching art is a necessity. Aristotle's concepts regarding the social and pedagogical role of art seem to me extremely current and necessary. The contemporary individual is often an alienated individual, absorbed in his daily life. The basic criteria of its existence often become – the useful, necessary, lucrative. He needs art to bring him back with the others, but also to detach himself from the intensive performance, from stress, to find the pleasure of significant relaxation.

The educational program I propose would take place over a year and would be closely linked to temporary exhibitions or to certain works in the collection. To stimulate the understanding of the concept of intermediation and the appeal of contemporary art to various environments, I submit a series of activities involving technology, the human body and sound. The workshops aim to produce an object / experience built in close connection with a work / solo - group show, facilitating the deepening of that exhibition, but also the generic meaning of contemporary art. Also, through informal, free workshops, which have access to a number of participants, of various ages, selected in the order of registration, the public becomes familiar with the space of the museum / gallery.

Often, institutional artistic contexts impose a type of behavior, create the false idea that to access that space you need solid knowledge or that it is populated by people from a certain social class. So, to break these mental barriers - contemporary sound art and dance workshops will be supported by artists working in the field. Thus, the information provided will not only be general, contextual, but also specific, derived from the artistic practices of the coordinators.

The management of the media is extremely important in organizing these interdisciplinary workshops, as the purpose of familiarizing participants with contemporary art is paired with the desire to generate a process of personal development. Contemporary art provides the necessary tools for the individuals to navigate their existence. The art exhibition is at the same time a form of knowledge, communication, conviviality, awareness of socio-political and economic issues, but also a moment of relaxation, detachment from personal life, catharsis. The management of the means of expression used in the works and subsequently revealed to the participants will stimulate an active perception, but also aesthetics.

The features of contemporary art encourage a complex reception. The tendency towards interdisciplinarity and intermediation confronts the viewer with dense information, with an effervescent presentation that will arouse both their interest and attention. Creativity takes on a social side in recent research. This becomes, within the situated aesthetics, the result of a dynamic process of interaction between individuals and between individuals and the environment. Creativity has the role of catalyst for exploration and discovery processes confined to art, but also to science, technology (Verschure, P.F.M.J., 2018). The presentation and explanation of some daring artistic projects, which combine information from different fields, but also from the media, widens the field of knowledge of the participants and encourages a more free thinking, which will connect various knowledge.

The educational project will have a particular focus on interdisciplinarity and intermediality. The project is conceived for teenagers in order to create a context for getting familiar with contemporary art. As long as contemporary art practices draw on different fields and engage different media, an education project should naturally follow the same patterns in order to be proved efficient. So the main workshops will focus on video game, electronic music and sound art and textile art.

3. The creativity and the practices of a collaborative work

The series of workshops aims at encouraging teenagers to join artistic events. The workshop takes place in the gallery in order to make the participants familiar with the space and to break down the

misconception regarding galleries and museums as being elitist. The activities will make contemporary art practices approachable and will also feed the desire to join cultural events. The workshops provide information and skills in order to develop teenagers' knowledge. They will work in groups to produce video games, works, texts, sounds, electronic devices. Their main scope is to build a connection between art and a series of different fields to offer a reading of art through the lenses of other disciplines. The workshops become a series of friendly meetings between experts and a young public with the sole aim of building a deep understanding of contemporary art's characteristics.

The workshops' outcome will be presented in the framework of micro-events: mini-exhibition, a jam session, a game-night. These events will exhibit the works produced during the workshops but will also take the key role of a catalyst for informal sharing of experience and ideas regarding art and the content of the workshops. The program aims at encouraging a process of a lifelong learning, enhancing creativity, imagination, visual and cognitive abilities and widening the perception. The workshops should be focused on exploration and experimentation with the new media, which lie at the core of the contemporary art projects.

First of all, the educational project should pay attention to the creative potential of the participants in order to enhance it, but it should also have in mind to introduce the participants to the variety of careers, interests and hobbies they can pursue afterwards. Second of all, the project should develop the communication abilities, the creativity and the practices of a collaborative work, generating a platform of debates and dialogue focused on sensitive topics regarding the social community. In the educational management the focus should be on the process of reasoning. It is important to develop faculties of children while simultaneously focusing on habits, hobbies, passions. All these aspects should be actively involved in the methods of teaching (Thomlinson, H., 2004).

The project will bring together artists and teenagers in order to create a comfortable context. The trainers will engage the participants in the experimentation with various mediums of artistic expression. The majority of the ongoing educational projects which has as a purpose the connection of the young public to issues linked to contemporary art draws on traditional media (painting, sculpture, engraving). The project provides basic theoretical and practical information in the fields of electronic music, sound art, game design and contemporary dance. The workshops contribute to the enhancement of knowledge, to the apprehension of connection between art and technology, art and the social field.

There is a real need for educational projects whose aim is to approach the interdisciplinary character of art. Bringing together interdisciplinary artists and a young public the project encourages creative thinking and assessment of individual potential. In Romania, there is a fascinating series of workshops dedicated to science and technology, but they are being conceived independently of art or other fields. There is necessity for understanding the means of artistic expression but also for raising the desire to join various forms of cultural activities.

An interdisciplinary educational project aims at making art accessible and at stirring the curiosity and fascination for the cultural field (UNESCO, 2019). It may also stimulate the participants to discover various fields and to take them into consideration as possible future careers but also hobbies. The educational program has as its main public the teenagers who find themselves in the process of exploring and gaining knowledge. They are also engaged in a process of decision making regarding their future. The workshops take into account and transform these aspects into a priority to be followed closely in all the activities proposed. The prolific meetings of artists and participants will have as an outcome a series of events taking place in the gallery space. These micro-events will be open to the general public. During these events, people will get familiar with the works of the participants, with the gallery space, surpassing its conventions. The program wishes to be a catalyst of creativity and conviviality.

The educational system active in Romania poorly answers the needs of teenagers and of those of a tech society. There is compulsion to make the transition from a method of teaching based on accumulation of knowledge to a type of studying focused on reasoning, inquiry and decision making (Gee, J. P., 2003). Even the theories of choice don't pay enough attention to the confusion and complexity surrounding the current process of decision making. The management of technology needs to be developed in order to understand and to adapt to the requirements of the changes that are unfolding (Bush, T., 2002).

Furthermore, it takes a close looking to the general conditions in order to produce a small change. The higher structures play the role of a co-creator of the current situation (Datnow, A., 2005). The structures are not abstract and should not be treated separately as they were in the 20th century. But, we may also pay attention in how we place ourselves in order not to get stuck in a fatalistic attitude. This process should be the first step important in acknowledgment, followed by finding solutions and the way to implement them efficiently.

The decision making is caused on the social level by an ongoing process of restructuring (C. A. J. Dimmock, C.A.J. & Donoghue, T. A., 2005). For example, in contemporary management, the decision making process is delegated to those in charge of peculiar activities as they are closer to the clients' needs and have a better understanding of the situation. If education has a leading role in any society, it has to take into account these changes that occur in the working field. It must introduce in its management's methods the skills and

the knowledge required by the working field. As Plato was suggesting art together with other fields should provide, in the learning process, the useful information for people and for their future role in society.

The educational project offers a series of workshops which follow the new method of teaching. It fosters dialogue, individual research, decision making process and experiment. The project is based on a interdisciplinary working process, connecting, in a witty way, basic information about contemporary art, game design, electronic music and sound art, new media employed in contemporary art practices.

The interdisciplinary educational projects are highly supported in Romania (public institutions, associations, ngos organize interdisciplinary projects linking various fields and mediums of expression). The aim of these projects is to facilitate an understanding of contemporary art in order to create desire and fascination for the cultural field. Presenting basic concepts and the core skills, the project offers the necessary tools in order to stir up interests (professional or personal) for some fields.

4. Management and self-enhancement

Teenagers should have the possibility to meet experts, artists coming from different fields but who are active in a similar cultural, social and educational context. Furthermore, these meetings offer strategies and methods to collaboratively overcome the existing issues. This gathering has the potential to end up in future collaboration between trainers but also between trainers and participants. The educational projects developed in the framework of public institutions or by independent sector have gained prominence during the past years. The artists were invited to hold workshops in order to introduce the general public into issues developed by contemporary art. Though, the interdisciplinary quality of the projects has the potential to be further approached.

The workshops will build a friendly and inclusive medium. The activities will be based on collaborative working practices closely linked to the inner potential of each participant. The project wishes to offer all the necessary tools and resources in order to foster equality in the process of learning. The participants will receive the devices, the knowledge, the guidance needed to develop innovative projects. Pierre Bourdieu was struck by the contradiction between democratic goals and the material outcomes of schooling. He observed that those pupils good at school were the daughters and sons of well-educated people (Smyth J., 2005).

The workshop will be an exercise for self-management and self-enhancement. The participants will be more aware of their abilities, of their potential at the end of the activities. They will also have a deeper understanding of their capacities and what suit them in terms of hobbies or careers. Our official educational system offers little time to reflect on oneself. It is vital to know the potential, the resources and the abilities one has in order to develop in the right direction and to reach the maximum of one's potential. The workshops will also enhance the social skills and the emotional intelligence.

In the process of education, a strong focus should be on the social, political and cultural context. The children and teenagers should be connected to the real world, aware of the problems and also to be engaged in civic actions depending on their inner interests. This is the core of the project we propose. The emphasis on exploration, experiment and dialogue to engender a process of gaining information is coupled with a debate on sensitive issues. The trainers will enhance the acknowledgment. They will start an analysis of these issues, looking for their outer and inner causes. The participants will also think of efficient solutions. This will be an exercise to evaluate ourselves and people around us in order to understand that the most efficient changes start with ourselves and with the community we are part of. The trainers will treat the participants as adults capable of conceiving a management of restructuring leading to small but powerful changes in the first place.

Following this introduction, I will continue to present the workshops we thought to suit well the ideas we developed so far. The game design workshop will stimulate participants to create narratives based on works. To access them freely, to imagine their scenarios that are not delimited by the discourse of the artist / curator. The main idea, however, is to connect technology with art and narrative. Often, they are conceived as excluding each other.

The game design workshop will stimulate participants to create narratives based on works. To access them freely, to imagine their scenarios that are not delimited by the discourse of the artist / curator. The main idea, however, is to connect technology with art and narrative. Often, they are conceived as excluding each other. Video games are a constant in the life of the new generation, integrating them into the art world, bringing together an environment that captivates them with information that will develop their knowledge of the world and stimulate their creativity. Imagination is an important element in the formation of a complex individual, as well as the need for a story that is said to lie at the basis of the human being. Constructing the theme of a game in relation to a work / an artist, it assimilates details about artistic practice, direction in a relaxed, funny way.

The dance workshop will aim not only to corporalize a work, but also to exercise to explore the space, to raise awareness of the body, to relate it to the proportions of the building that houses the museum / gallery. The main idea will be that art is accessed today not only visually, it no longer involves only a static reception, but also an active, bodily one. This workshop of knowledge of the space, of exploration and connection with the artistic work also aims to familiarize oneself with a way to go through a contemporary

art exhibition or a large public work or performance. Familiarity with the space inhibits the individual's behavior in the museum. The corporalization of the work is an interactive, playful method of interacting with the work of art and deepening it in order to be able to reproduce it at the level of the body.

For the sound art workshop, the artists will build together with the participants electronic instruments with the help of which they will produce a performance at the end. Thus, teenagers become familiar with the idea of sound art, but also with this direction of DIY - Do It Yourself. The novelty can often arise from the production of an instrument, be it electronic or classical. Stimulating creativity, but also providing practical information in the field of electronics, this workshop connects technology to contemporary art and offers a brief but significant look at art that does not use classical technical representation skills, but the scientific, technical part.

Due to the main purpose of these interdisciplinary workshops - to stimulate imagination, creative thinking, freedom, spontaneity and adaptability to challenges through the focused game model - I believe that these activities are vital to a cultural management program, having the potential of harmonious training and navigation tools, but also critical of social and economic life.

Our interest is not only to facilitate the understanding of art for a group of teenagers who have family members active in the field or art lovers, but to bring art even closer, to use art as a catalyst for creativity, but also as a unique source of knowledge. Therefore, the next stage will be marked by the possibilities of being able to reach with this program children and adolescents who are part of other groups.

Given that management strategies have moved from unilateral control to empowerment and enrichment of work experience by giving up levels of supervision and functioning on the principles of trust and responsibility (Fineman, S., 2012, the individual must be stimulated to engage in a creative, spontaneous thinking, to develop interrelation skills since mechanical work and isolation /separation have become obsolete.

An increasing number of social groups – creative workers, freelancers, cognitarians – are basing their work process on a structure similar to that of the artist's creation process. Creative workers resort to the associative thinking of surrealists (brainstorming); furthermore, freelancers have assimilated the specific flexibility specific to the artist's life, that has a flexible work schedule, cognitarians process information to produce goods and services, intersecting working time with free time; thus, when practicing, they improve the qualities needed for their work (Hochschild, A., R., 1983). Capital is reconfigured into semi-capital, bringing together units of information, signs, connecting cognitive activity with psychic energies at a rate of accelerated network productivity (Berardi, F.)

So if the figure of the artist and his way of working become the emblems of the neoliberal cognitive society, I subsequently aim at approaching contemporary art through its social and educational function. I will ask questions and offer answers in relation to the following questions: what is the potential of contemporary art in the development of the individual and in providing the tools necessary for his daily existence; what are the main characteristics of contemporary art from which strategies can be deciphered in order to stimulate creativity, imagination, spontaneity; can contemporary art propose ways of life, principles of self-help and self-management?

References

1. Berardi, Franco, „Cognitarian Subjectivation”, *e-flux.com*
2. Bishop, Claire, *Muzeologie radicală*, Vellant, Bucharest, 2015
3. Bush, Tony, Bell, Les, *The Principles and Practice of Educational Management*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, 2002
4. Clark, Margaret, Munn, Pamela, *Education in Scotland: Policy and Practice from Pre-School to Secondary*, Taylor and Francis, 2005
5. *Culture 2030 indicators*, UNESCO, Paris, 2019
6. Datnow, Amanda, Hubbard, Lea, Mehan, Hugh, *Extending Educational Reform: From One School to Many*, Taylor and Francis, 2005
7. Dimmock, C. A. J., Donoghue, T. A., *Innovative School Principals and Restructuring: Life History Portraits of Successful Managers of Change*, Taylor & Francis, 2005
8. Gee, James Paul, *What Video Games Have to Teach Us About Learning and Literacy*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2003
9. Fineman, Stephen, *Work*, Oxford University Press, 2012
10. Ironside, Mike, Seifert, Roger, *Industrial Relations in Schools*, Taylor & Francis, 2005
11. Hochschild, Arlie Russell, *The Managed Heart*, University of California Press, Berkeley,
12. 1983
13. Smyth, John, *A Socially Critical View Of The Self-Managing School*, Taylor and Francis, 2005
14. Tomlinson, Harry, *Educational Management*, Taylor and Francis, 2004.
15. Smyth, John, *Critical Perspectives On Educational Leadership*, Taylor & Francis,
16. 2005
17. Verschure, Paul F. M. J., „The Disappearing Genius and Situated Aesthetics: Explorations at the Border of Science, Art and Reality” in Birnbaum, Daniel; Kuo, Michelle (eds), *More than Real – Art in the Digital Age*, Walther König, Köln, 2018