For what I really wish to work out is a science of singularity, that is to say, a science of the relationship that links everyday pursuits to particular circumstances. And only in the local network of labor and recreation can one grasp how, within a grid of socio-economic constraints, these pursuits unfailingly establish relational tactics (a struggle for life), artistic creations (an aesthetic) and autonomous initiatives (an ethic). The characteristically subtle logic of these ‘ordinary’ activities comes to light only in the details.

—Michel de Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life, I-ix

In 2006 I proposed the term “transpedagogy” to describe a series of projects by artists and collectives around the world that blend educational processes and art making in ways that are clearly different from the more conventional functions of art academies and other varieties of formal art education. The term emerged not with the pretense of defining a “movement”, but out of the necessity to describe characteristics that appeared in the work of a number of artists and which escaped the usual definitions of participatory art.

Over the last decade, I had been incorporating aspects of interpretation and audience dialogue into my own work in ways that, in my view, fell neither within the easy categories of “art education” or “museum education” nor within the fashionable categories of “institutional critique” or “relational aesthetics.”1 As someone who has worked in museums for decades, I was aware of and indebted to both the tools of museum and art education and also twentieth century conceptual and performance traditions that have questioned the institutions and political parameters of art. But I felt that many contemporary works were moving in a distinctly different direction, responding to their own time and circumstances. This essay is an initial attempt to articulate those distinctions.

In recent years, art projects with a pedagogical twist have become almost ubiquitous. Buzzwords such as “radical pedagogy” and

"ignorant schoolmaster" have entered the language of contemporary art magazines, and debates around pedagogy now range from earnest utopian political gestures to outright satire and light-hearted critique. Interestingly, the term "pedagogy" figures prominently in artist statements, critical texts and exhibition essays, while the more common term "education" appears to be absent. Furthermore, "pedagogy" is employed in a vague and ambiguous way, without much clarification as to what we refer to when we use it in this new mainstream context. While not pedagogues themselves, artists have become increasingly curious about the history of learning and teaching inside and outside art. The critical reading, mimicking, or misunderstanding of that history - deliberate or not - has produced a rich multi-disciplinary way of working. These projects have become an "art school of everyday life," to draw on De Certeau - that is, alternatives to more conventional learning and artmaking environments.

In contrast to the discipline of art education, which mostly focuses on the interpretation of art or the teaching of skills to make art, transpedagogies focuses on the pedagogical process as the literal core of the artwork. Projects that focus on teaching art or forming an insider art community are of less interest since that is an activity that has been true of every art period in the past. While I will try to pinpoint examples of some of those projects, what I will primarily focus on here, and what I consider of greater interest is precisely the "misuse" of educational structures to create interactive and hybrid environments that exist somewhere between formal and informal experiential learning.

I will argue that contemporary art has adopted, in a selective and unorthodox way, some basic notions and principles of education to produce a tactical and diversional modality that implicates audiences and criticism in a particularly tangled way. The two main questions I will try to address here is how this practice differs from previous equations of art and education or pedagogical practices in general, and how (and why) it is possible and necessary to create a re-invigorated version of these practices with a built-in critical framework from which to analyze and understand them. Finally, I will try to argue that the value of the "misuse" of these disciplines lies in our ability to understand how we are misusing them and how we can create "productive misinterpretations."

REFERENCES

Two of the most influential art schools in the twentieth century - the Bauhaus and Black Mountain College - were places where education and art practice often merged, helping develop the notions of collaboration and interdisciplinarity that have been so important for art practice. When we look at the writings of the Bauhaus masters like Klee, Itten, Kandinsky, and Albers, we see their art precepts and teaching philosophies were to their work what manifestos were to the avant-garde movements. Similarly, Black Mountain College, a product of the progressive education movement, created a generation of artists for whom collaboration and interdisciplinarity were a central aspect of their work.

However, these all artists made a distinction between their individual artistic practice and their teaching. So, while it would be worthwhile to make a closer analysis of the history of art schools and the way these practices emerged, I will take them as a given. In order to better situate the origin of the transpedagogical, it is important to briefly establish the relationship between artists working along these lines with the complex legacies of artists who emerged in the 60s such as Joseph Beuys and Marcel Broothen, as well as those who have been associated with institutional critique, identity politics, new media, and relational aesthetics.

While there is no written history of pedagogy as art, any serious study of pedagogical practices today has to take the impact of the 1960s and its influence in the creation of an art with a social consciousness into account as a possible starting point. Artists like Jef Geys at that time started incorporating pedagogical components
into his works, intermixing performative and conceptual projects with education, while the participatory performances of Fluxus artists (e.g. Alison Knowles' instructional performance entitled "Make a Salad,") and articulation of concepts such as "intermedia" (Dick Higgins) helped pave the way for practices that would emphasize experience and a mixture of disciplines.

But perhaps Joseph Beuys' name looms largest when we speak of pedagogy and post-war art. His free universities, his notion of "social sculpture," and his performative role as shaman-public figure-town-hall discussion leader make him perhaps the most prominent artist-pedagogue of the last half of the 20th century. Whatever ambivalence one may have toward Beuys' legacy, he championed pedagogy as wed to the social mission of the artist and saw the possibility of using art processes to infiltrate politics and knowledge, opening up a variety of avenues for future artists to mine. The problematic issue with Beuys, acknowledged by admirers and critics alike — Benjamin Buchloh, especially — was the positioning of his own persona at the center of his philosophy, in a way that often was described by the press as messianism or cult of personality, and even today appears so much at odds with his democratic philosophy of "everyone is an artist."

In this aspect, Beuys contrasts with another greatly influential figure of that time, Marcel Broodthaers. While both artists centered their work on the social dynamics of art, Broodthaers directed his attention to the existing institutional frameworks of art. As Irving Sandler notes, the main difference between Beuys and Broodthaers was that Beuys "believed optimistically that art could transform all of life and society; he was utterly lacking in irony. Broodthaers was pessimistic, having no faith in the higher claims of art."

Broodthaers, who came from poetry and famously declared that he had turned to visual art because he saw in it the opportunity of making "insincere objects," ended up outlining some of the basic rules of the game of institutional critique through his ephemeral museums and appropriation of museum language — a series of ideas whose impact is well-known. To me what remains most vital of Broodthaers' legacy is precisely that sense of irony. It is perhaps an unfair reality, but the ironist of any generation always appears more contemporary than those who embraced the ideas of the time with full conviction, and this is the case when comparing Broodthaers to Beuys. And yet, it is possible to conceive ways of operating that honor both of their legacies. One might say transpedagogy borrows from the utopian Beuys, wishing to change society, while also retaining the essential dose of humor which is at the core of Broodthaers' style.

Similar to how Broodthaers adopted a mock pedagogical tone in the labels and communiqués of his Musée d'Art Moderne, most artists associated with institutional critique in the late 80s and early 90s engaged the subject of pedagogy through the appropriation of museum education techniques (e.g. Andrea Fraser's mock museum tours or Fred Wilson's manipulations of museum labels). Artists like David Wilson and Goran Djorjovic created their own museums (the Museum of Jurassic Technology in Los Angeles and Salon de Fleurus in New York respectively). Sometime later in the 90s, however, it became clear that in order to move forward with institutional critique it was necessary for artists to do two things: first, move beyond the traditional artist/museum opposition (which amidst the increasing global growth of the art market started to feel dated), and second, assume

2. For fuller background on Joseph Beuys as educator, see Cornelia Lau's dissertation Joseph Beuys: The Pedagogue as Persona. Columbia University, New York, 1992

their own institutionality, acknowledging their implication in the social and economic fabric of the art world. In other words, the discourse shifted from an antagonistic stance to a more propositive one, where artists explored their ability to generate independent communities and networks with their own agenda and interests. The result of this shift was also that the organizations, collectives, and small enterprises that artists started launching (mostly at the beginning of this decade) did not have to confine themselves to the subject of art. Most importantly, they did not have to be art groups, but they could operate under conceptual art guidelines while at the same time engaging other fields of knowledge, like geography, commerce, science, and pedagogy. This new generation of artists and collectives appeared to adopt and embrace their own institutionality in a direct, and often disarming way, referring back to Broodthaers' light rhetoric (think of Machine Project's, Instant Coffee's and Christine Hill's use of humor in their press releases, website, etc.) This unassuming approach proves highly effective, as it doesn't carry the weight of the critical tone that has now made a lot of political art feel didactic or alienating. By eliminating or satirizing impersonality, and taking a Brechtian approach to sharing the transparency of a particular process, these tech-savvy artists now speak to "users", and not to a faceless public.

The generation of artists that emerged during the 1980s and early 90s and engaged mostly with identity politics (feminism, multiculturalism, etc.) furthered the idea that art, through performance, had agency in pedagogy. Adrian Piper's Funk Lessons from 1982 ironically played with the structure of education to teach white people how to dance; Suzanne Lacy's Crystal Quilt (1987) involved working with more than 500 volunteers in the production of a community quilt. Mexican performance artist Guillermo Gómez-Peña has been one of the artists most continuously dedicated to reflect on the relationship between performance and pedagogy. It is important to stress that, with perhaps the exception of Piper's Funk Lessons, the kind of performing pedagogy that emerges in this period is, as Charles R. Garoian has argued, an art of politics—that is, an art where the pedagogical experience is not the end, but the means, to articulate a political consciousness in a community.

When considering the artists usually (and sometimes simplistically) tagged with the "relational aesthetics" label, one might say the aspect of their work that is most shared by artists working in the 'pedagogical turn' is the creation of a space of sociability as described by Bourriaud ("art is the space that produces a specific kind of sociability") and in the experiential nature of exchanges with audiences—and here I am thinking very specifically of the work of Rirkrit Tiravanija. Participation in this instance allows the viewer to share in the performance, in the same way that Felix Gonzalez-Torres would make viewers partial owners of a work of his by dispensing candy or endless prints. One attains an "experience" in the most expansive sense of the word, where the artwork may encourage the formation of an ephemeral community—a life experience without any other agenda than to merge the artwork into daily life, purposely ambiguous and open to any reading.

The contrast between the type of participatory work Tiravanija is known for and the kind of projects that involve pedagogy lies mostly, I believe, in the way in which the notion of 'experience' is redefined. While participation remains central, it is usually structured so as to create a type of experience in the Deweyan sense—an experience that specifically leads to the construction of knowledge, or, in a larger sense, to the production of culture. It is true that many, if not most, education artworks are produced precisely with the goal of undermining the traditional conventions of educational structures and refuse to commit to anything remotely resembling "learning outcomes" or

"goals" due to the fear of appearing doctrinaire or didactic. But his concern, I think, comes not only from the need to distance oneself as an artist from what is perceived as conventional education but also to make sure that the resulting artwork retains an aura of ambiguity, something I would define as "abstract education."

Many have suggested that the cultural climate of post-Berlin Wall Europe, as well as the theory that emerged from it, has played a role in influencing artists working today in pedagogy. This may be true particularly in Eastern Europe and Asia, where artist groups were energized into exploring new modes of production (around this time the Slovenian collective IRWIN initiated the project East Art Map, both an art project and a historiography project of art making in Eastern Europe, and Chinese artists like Zhijie started questioning their own classical academy training and pushing the boundaries of education in a performative fashion.

In Latin America, the end of the cold war may not have been as significant to artistic production as the need to assimilate the violent legacy of the military dictatorships and civil conflicts of their recent past. Tania Bruguera’s Catedra Arte Conducta, for instance, is a project that directly responds to the political and social context in Cuba, opening a space of thought and art production for younger artists. Paulo Freire’s ideas on pedagogy and the theater experiments of Augusto Boal were key in establishing education as a creative tool for constructing collective identities and resolving conflict. Mexican performer Jesusa Rodriguez used Boal-type approaches while developing theater workshops for indigenous women throughout all of Mexico, with the objective of empowering them to gain hold of their social situation in their communities. Puerto Rican artist Beatriz Santiago Muñoz has also employed similar techniques with local communities, such as creating theater activities for factory workers or working with people from a particular neighborhood in San Juan to film re-enactments of local anecdotes about their changing locality, in order to both rescue the micro-history of the place and to raise awareness of the fragility of memory. Other approaches to pedagogy in this period by artists in Latin America include the writings and work of Luis Camnitzer, the creation by Colombian artist Oscar Muñoz of Lugaradudas in Cali and many others.

Aside from local and global politics, it is perhaps the shifts in the art world itself that have impacted artists the most. During the years of the latest art boom (roughly 2000-2008), a tangible dichotomy developed between art produced for the consumption of collecting museums and individuals and art produced for the consumption of biennials and academia. The term “festivalist”, referring to artists who exhibit in the biennial circuit, emerged around this time. In contrast to previous decades, a greater number of artists than ever before became globe-trotters, exhibiting in international art fairs and major art capitals. Site-specificity became a commonplace activity in the mainstream art world, at times creating incongruous circumstances where international artists were invited to create works in collaboration with local communities with whom they had little previous interaction or knowledge, turning artists into little more than accidental anthropologists. When one contrasts the artworld of the beginning of this decade and the artworld of the late 60s/early 70s, one notes a surge in the “professionalization” of the artist, which involves more fluid networks and a huge incremental increase in exhibitions, publications and events, but also a more impersonal character and, because of the sheer quantity of what is being made, a devaluation of the single relevance of a given exhibition, publication, or event.

By embracing art as pedagogy, artists can by contrast promote the creation of communities with interests that are outside of commerce and traditional art world hierarchies, and at the same time make

7. Panel discussion during the Transpedagogy symposium at the Museum of Modern Art, May 15, 2009, with Claire Bishop, Grant Kester, Sally Tallant and Adam Lerner.
a kind of art that can contain personal meaning and circumvent the problem of the artwork as an object of pure consumption. In these works, what is consumed if anything is presumably a type of knowledge. Whether it is an effective or productive knowledge is not that important—it is, in the end, an artwork.

Transpedagogy is a practice particularly in sync with two significant cultural developments in the public realm as well. First is the emergence of social networks and user-generated content on the web. In contrast to the traditional channels of production, presentation and collecting in the visual arts, the spaces that have emerged on the web over the last three years have become real alternatives for communities wishing to bypass those hierarchies. Similarly, the proliferation of websites with user-generated content such as Wikipedia and Youtube have helped change a culture of the cult of the author to a culture of collective authorship. The second development is the burgeoning global awareness of the need for sustainability in environments and local communities. If the nineties were about globalization, this decade has marked the return to the local, out of a true realization that it is our immediate surroundings that we need to ensure in order to self-sustain. In recent years, issues of global warming have finally entered the mainstream, and art is required to contribute to the conversation, led primarily by architects and designers. Such interest has informed projects like Ted Purves’ Temescal Amity Works in San Francisco, and Fritz Haeg’s Edible Estates as well.

These two concepts—collective learning and the emphasis on the local—are the philosophical pillars of transpedagogical practices. The degree to which an art practice can influence its local community and effect lasting change from within has become a central concern for many artists. Pedagogy, in the sense that it is an instrument of self-empowerment or emancipation is a natural avenue for artists to employ (hence the popularity of Rancière’s The Ignorant Schoolmaster). More importantly, the pro-active, constructive approach of sustainability marks a break with both the practice of institutional critique (which is more focused on deconstruction and less on propositional models), and with the more traditional mechanisms of confrontation employed by the political art of previous decades. And even if most of the projects of a transpedagogical nature do not occur online—in fact, most of them are characterized by face-to-face encounters—I would posit that the generational democratization of platforms that social networks and the web in general offer have made it much easier to conceive of new models of interaction that go beyond the four walls of a kunsthalle or the alternative space.

DEMOCRATIC LEARNING AND CONCEPTUAL ROADBLOCKS

One of the common claims that seem to emerge every time there is a discussion regarding “education as art” projects is that these projects “question” or “challenge” conventional notions of pedagogy. Two of the writers that are most cited when such claims are made are Rancière and Freire. The attraction to Rancière’s work for visual artists lies, I believe, in the fact that it provides philosophical justification for artists to act as non-specialists and still shed light on a new subject. In other words, artmaking that is engaged in pedagogic practices is able to emancipate the spectator by circumventing the rigid structures and hierarchies of traditional explication that lead to stultification. Similarly, Freire’s idea that education is a political process that should allow students to gain critical consciousness of their condition inspires many artist-activists to create works that may make a difference in a particular community.

Nonetheless, if we were to follow through on both Freire and Rancière’s ideas of what the role of a teacher is, the picture goes essentially against the way in which most artists operate today in two fundamental ways. First, the image of the artist-star never disappears; while it is well disguised at some points as a fictional institution or collective, the symbolic capital of the transaction—that is, the authorship of the work—usually remains with the artist. This is a necessary
compromise that activist-artists have to make in order to still remain as players of the global art scene; if one were to make anonymous good gestures one would never be noticed, and naturally no one expects artists to operate this way. Nonetheless, there usually is an uneasy tension, to say the least, between embracing a radical pedagogy where the power is given to the students and maintaining the position of ignorant schoolmaster, a visionary in the Beysian spirit. As a result, the issue of authorship in transpedagogy remains ambiguous and unresolved.

The second contrast has to do with the ways in which a community of learners is formed. The idea behind the methodology of Jacocot (the nineteenth century educator in Ranciere’s book) is that all have equal intelligences. In our contemporary era, this notion akin to Howard Gardners’ multiple intelligence theory. Following this reasoning, education is only a means of dialogue through which these multiple intelligences are manifested. In the contemporary art realm, however, a radically democratic approach goes against the structure of its highly hierarchical system. This hierarchy is hard to escape for some artists, who in the end create works that appear to cater to these democratic ideals while at the same time maintaining a structure that is ultimately selective.

Actually, it could be argued that the participatory pedagogic projects created by artists follow more closely Dewey’s “learning by doing” principles (as seen in the activities of Machine Project or Sundown Salon), or even Friedrich Froebel’s Kindergarten Gift lessons, which, as Norman Brosterman has suggested, influenced the pedagogical thinking of many modernists who were the first generation to attend Kindergarten. Furthermore, the kind of sociability that emerges in school-like, artist-run spaces appears to have closer historical precedents to places like Jane Addams’ Hull House than with art schools or art academies, and the dialogue-based dynamics in these projects borrow elements from existing formats in the corporate world such as Open Space Technology, or informal dialogue groups such as the ones generated by Christopher Phillips’ Socrates Café or the Pecha Kucha gatherings, originated by Tokio-based architects Mark Dytham and Astrid Klein.

The Feast of the Ass

In medieval France there was a popular celebration known as the Feast of the Ass, held on January 14th to celebrate the flight into Egypt and inspired by the donkey-related stories found in the Bible. A donkey would be led into the church to preside over the mass. Similar in nature to the Feast of Fools, the Feast of the Ass was based on a temporary change of social roles, where those in subordinate positions could act as authorities, where the old could act young and men would act as women and so forth, culminating with the lowly beast becoming the highest power. Contemporary art theory draws on the work of literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin to describe this cultural practice, known as the “carnivalesque,” where hierarchies and social structures are temporarily broken through satire, celebration and chaos.

Because of the strengths of the communities created through transpedagogical experiments, authorship becomes tenuous at best, and the process of exchange becomes so important that the visible

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8. In Anton Vidokle’s Night School, for example, there were programs open to the public, but to join the full program participants had to apply and participate in an interview process. The lecture series, which was college-level, required a degree of understanding of art history and contemporary art that was in itself selective.

outcome to an outside observer—"the product", in an art market sense—may never be that relevant or even materialize. Finally, the boundaries between artwork and experience are blurred, in the same way in which authorship and collectivity are blended, documentation and literature are one, and fiction is turned into real experience and vice versa. All components of a traditional structure of production and interpretation are turned around and resignified. Nonetheless, this resignification rarely is done for the sake of itself—we could call it a Feast of the Ass with an agenda. Because of the very insertion of the pedagogic element, the kind of exchanges that take place in these experiences become constructive in a direct or indirect fashion. Once more drawing on De Certeau, one might say artists make their "tactic" the replication of institutional structures, but allow carnivalesque interactions that both validate the experience as an artwork and still manage to remain constructive. The transpedagogic feast of the ass is not only a reversion of social roles but of meanings and interpretations of disciplines, including art and pedagogy, conflating them together, at times canceling one another, and at times joining them in progressive ways, constructing models of interactions that other disciplines are too shy or reluctant to try. What artmaking has to offer today is not to represent accurately, but rather to misrepresent, so that we can discover new questions. It is when we position ourselves in those tentative locations, and persist in making them into concrete experiences, that interstices become locations of meaning.