

## On artistic research

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*Curating and the educational turn.* Paul O'Neill & Mick Wilson (Eds.). Open Editions / De Appel, London, 2010

*Desacuerdos, 6.* VV.AA. Arteleku-Diputación Foral de Guipúzkoa, Centro José Guerrero-Diputación de Granada, Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía y UNIA arteypensamient, 2011

*See it Again, Say it Again. The Artist as Researcher.* Janneke Wesseling (Ed.), Valiz, Amsterdam, 2011

In this case I would like to explore a selection of books published in the last two years concerning the educational 'turn', on one hand, the growing interest in the artistic research, on the other hand, as well as the potentialities of education as an independent cultural practice. As teachers, artists and researchers, we participate in new ways of knowledge production that move away from those models based on just transferring knowledge. Thus, in each of our practices we dare to search for new formats from the different places we are obliged to live in due to our impoverished present. The three books I am introducing have been selected among the profuse bibliography published during these last two years because each one of them approaches us, from different places, to the three points mentioned earlier.

Since some artistic events which took place in 2006 made the subject of education the focal point of the exhibition issue, as happened in *Documenta 12* and the failed *Manifesta 6* that derived in *unitednationsplaza* and other exhibitions like *Academy* at the Van Abbe Museum, it seems as if a great deal of the artistic and curating practices had been redirected towards education, while a large part of the academy acted in the same way with the artistic processes. Part of this trend is recorded in the book published last year by Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson *Curating and the Educational Turn*. This book gathers over twenty texts that have been written mostly by artist and curators (rarely any teacher or educator). Reading these texts is interesting although, on some occasions, the topics and references are recurrent because they put into evidence certain lacks of knowledge concerning education (the texts are rich in references to Paolo Freire, Ivan Illich or *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, by Jacques Rancière). The book opens up with "Turning", Irit Rogoff's seminal text where she names and questions this trend. The text was first published in the inaugural issue of the monthly *e-flux* journal, which, on the other hand, has become one of the main forums for the flow of artistic research with the contributions of artist such as Hito Steyerl, Jalal Touffic or Martha Rosler. Of all the texts included in the book it is worth highlighting the text by Peio Aguirre, the only Spanish contributor, Ute Meta Bauer's article and, especially, the text by Janna Graham, where she points out from her practice as educator and militant of the *Ultra red* collective, some of the burning problems posed by the so-called 'educational turn'. With her contributions concerning Felix Guatari's work on institutional critic at the Laborde Clinic, based on the main influence of Freinet and Fernand Oury, she offers us new reference points to set

up a genealogy that differs from the commonly accepted one.

Along this same line we find *Desacuerdos* last issue (nr. 6), which focussed on education. Among all the articles presented in that issue, Manuel Asensis' text under the title "El ignorante del maestro: sobre ignorancia y emancipación" stands out. This text analyzes some of the statements put forwards by Rancière both in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* and in *The Emancipated Spectator*. In the present moment, when public education and research projects are witnessing the drastic reduction of their budgets and the increasing limitation of the probability to obtain other financing means, it seems that the explanation of certain aspects was required in the face of a possible biased reading of Rancière's text, intending to attack the teacher-mediator role. From the afore mentioned issue nr. 6 of *Desacuerdos*, we also want to emphasize the panel discussion that closes the issue, where professionals with deep knowledge in the subject and different backgrounds debate about "the educational turn in the Spanish State" and question its true sense: "We have entered into a cultural market where everything must be covered with the promise of knowledge, cooperation, learning, and of a socialization whose main purpose is to achieve learning and educational exchange. Thus the collective projects, far from being understood as a way of resistance, end up being adopted as subtle ways of government in the foucauldian sense [...]", as Carles Guerra rightly states.

More recent is the book *See it again, say it again. The artist as researcher*, published by Janneke Wesseling, an anthology of texts that focus in the act of research 'in' and 'through' art, dismissing from the very introduction the classical dichotomies related to academic research. This starting point is in my opinion an attempt to flee from the confusions inherent to the label 'artistic research', since what has become so prevailing since Bologna is precisely this 'academic' matter. Among all the contributions, a bit erratic I must say, we highlight Henri Jacobs' contribution with "Surface research", where he describes one of his projects, as well as "The artists as researcher. New roles for new realities", by Graeme Sullivan, who already back in 2005 published *Art Practice as research*, and who proposes on this occasion, as he put forward in that book, to conceive artistic research as a dynamic post-disciplinary practice, which provides it with new insights. This is the case of Aernout Mik's contribution in this book, a collection of images related to his production which breaks the publishing rhythm and lead us straight away to those research models 'in' and 'through' art mentioned in the book introduction, and shows us again the status of epistemic images. Many authors alert us of the problems and dangers implied in the institutionalization and the academicism that can damage the artists' ways of production. In this sense, as culture producers, we can't help regarding distrustfully this growing interest that some institutions show in education. If education is privileged in those spaces with greater visibility as museums and art spaces and, at the same time, we are witnessing how the same powers are promoting the conversion of the high education as proposed in Bologna and the European 2015 Strategy as well as the ongoing precarization of public education, it may be worth to be more critical with everything happening around us in order to avoid becoming a tool at the service of the transformations operated by the capital.



