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In the flurry of art projects, exhibitions, writings and publications on the "pedagogical turn" of the arts in recent years, we seldom hear the voices of workers for whom art and pedagogy have been connected in practice for many decades - those educators, mediators and interpreters based in galleries.

AMONG THE MANY free schools, night schools, mock research agencies, temporary academies and special thematic issues that make use of the idealistic language of education as art, the distinction between the role of artists, curators and thinkers interested in education and those who perform its daily tasks in galleries and other educational institutions is commonplace. Across these, as Dieter Lesage points out, education is "the buzz word in the art world." (Manifesta 6). Or, as Irit Rogoff suggests, within the "educational turn in curating," it is "less fashionable to go into too much detail about institutions of art education."<sup>1</sup>

This turn to education can be read as simply another in a string of long-term social and political projects that are routinely "discovered" (like Columbus "discovered" America) by the contemporary art world to satiate an endless demand for circulation of the "new." More generously, perhaps, it is also possible to read the distinction of "the pedagogical" from the

other spaces in which education takes place, as a distancing from the instrumentalized processes through which arts and cultural education - whether in the gallery or the university - have become central to the neoliberal project. This opposition is vital at a moment in which the Bologna Process for European Education reform, UNESCO's Road Map to Arts Education and a range of institutional practices assign to arts education the tasks of profit-making, spectacle-enhancement and training for a highly flexible and economically stratified "creative class" of workers. And, with so many within the arts education departments of galleries and universities either uninterested or unable to work against the

force of these mandates, the impulse to invent an alternative universe of "education in art" is understandable.

However, the claim to the autonomy of the artist or intellectual thinking about education or an "educational turn" in distinction from those who work as educators - particularly in the context of exhibitions that pay their way - bears hints of an historical, and by now tedious, art world hierarchy that separates educational functions (the people who work with the people) from those erudite or genius efforts of the artist. It also misses one of the core propositions of most projects of critical education: that knowledge be shaped by collective analysis of the conditions in which we are implicated and through which we might align with the struggles of others.

If the project of an "educational turn" is indeed to find new strategies for opposing, exiting or even surviving these new regimes of arts education, it is necessary then to move beyond professional distinctions, to include those actively engaged in the struggle between the education of a neoliberalized "creative class" and the creation of emancipatory and critical education. It is with this in mind that we might look to a number of recent provocations in which artists and gallery workers on the frontlines of European cultural events have begun to formulate their own turns within the landscape of art and education.

Where the idea of gallery educators might conjure a team of upper class (mainly women) guides wearing cardigans and clinking glasses, picture instead a group of interns in pirate costumes arriving by boat to the 53rd Venice Biennale with signs that read: Give us our money back! This act launched a collective self-inquiry into the working conditions of exhibition interpreters at the Biennial and their differential terms of employment. A collaboration between the by now notorious free knowledge group Pirate Bay and a local squatted social centre, this momentary interruption simultaneously launched a workshop series on free knowledge and a workers' enquiry into the conditions of free labour at the Biennial.

While its opening media grab (which attracted the attention of both hipster magazine *Dazed* and *Confused* and the local police) was anything but subtle, the decision of Pirate Bay to align themselves with S. a. L. E. Docks, a local social center organizing education workers at the biennial, is a lesser known fact. Their stunt linked the Pirate Embassy, a public education project on intellectual property sanctioned by the Internet Pavilion (one of the biennial's collateral projects), to an unsanctioned enquiry into conditions of work at the biennial by the workers themselves. While the Pirate Embassy invited visitors to become ambassadors of a state of "love and freedom of the internet" contra the regulation and capitalization of information, the S.a.L.E. Docks enquiry asked who organizes and derives profit from the exhibition that was its host?

Activists from S.a.L.E. Docks, many of whom were employed as interpreters for the biennial, brought to light the labour conditions that underpin its multi million dollar international tourism and art market love affair. Revealing a multitude of positions - including invigilators, who guard art works and are employed by the outsourced private company Adecco, tour guides employed by the Biennial to be on call at all times for a stipend of 500 euros per month and free labouring "cultural mediation" interns gaining work experience - the group's research highlighted the different conditions and desires of workers. For example, collaborating with a union strike that closed the Biennial on August 4 in order to challenge the Biennial Foundation for violating a new contract that promised to re-employ interpreters in subsequent years, activists also made public the role of the subcontracting company, Adecco, who had recruited and hosted unpaid training days (described by activists as "hoax days") for tour guides who were then called to work only for the preview days of the exhibition.

S.a.L.E.'s investigation also demonstrated that beyond the 110 workers who participated in the strike, there were students and others (paid and unpaid) who did not. For them, job security was not a central issue. Rather, the promise of a job, and indeed the promise of agency within the biennial and the art world in general, were of much more central concern and a primary motivator for working under conditions even lesser than those argued for in the strike.<sup>2</sup>

The complicity of cultural workers in the chain of casualized employment is what activists from Euromayday network describe as the "precarious arrangements we all agree to in our everyday lives." In their campaign "Enough is Enough!" they worked with janitors, trainees, supervisors, security guards,

installation staff, tour guides and, in particular, educators at the 2007 Documenta 12 in Kassel, Germany. Their intention was to reveal both the material conditions of work - such as pay and instability' of employment - and the reasons why people participate in explicitly exploitative cultural work experiences. Part of their analysis - developed through a series of interviews and collaborative editing sessions - revolved around the issue of incorporation. The European megashow incorporates so many "alternatives" that it seems difficult to imagine working outside of them. The willingness of workers to accept precarious conditions was motivated by factors that included fear of losing out on opportunities, the thought that a poorly paid job might lead to a better one, the love of being around artists and the excitement of being part of a vocation called "Art." However, when it came to working conditions, beyond problems of lack of shifts, poor pay and uncompensated work, many quoted "dullness" as a primary disappointment of their work at Documenta 12.

Enquiries at the Venice Biennial and Documenta 12 follow from a number of recent studies into the working conditions of cultural workers in Europe through processes of self-education and investigation. This research is developing at a moment when discourses of "creativity" and cultural education are increasingly becoming integral to the flexibility of European labour markets. "Creativity" here denotes everything from the motivational strategies used by managers to get better results from their workers to the "freedom" to be self-employed (often code for seldomly employed) and the possibility of being identified with the "creative class." The distinction (along with poor labour conditions) of being a "creative" worker, particularly in the circuit of contemporary art exhibitions, sets the bar for both desires and expectations, wherever the term is used. If the contemporary art spectacle extravaganza represents the ultimate carrot in the carrot-and-stick equation that the offer of "creativity" has become, then it is even more crucial to uncover its central myths and contradictions.

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This understanding of self-education on the part of the cultural worker - of exposing the contradictions between the offer and actual working conditions - is different than stating, as some have, that students, cultural and knowledge workers are "the new working class." Rather, it is precisely because those working in the creative sector are not the working class that the creativity carrot offers such a compelling model for restructuring the economy. To discuss conditions of work here at the exhibition is to reveal the unspeakable and unglamorous: that at the heart of the cultural operation there is a plethora of tremendously un-creative tasks and uncompensated labour.

The research of *Intennittents du Spectacle*, seasonal cultural workers in France, was in many ways a precursor to these more recent "militant research" initiatives. This group understood the problem of claiming exceptional or generalized status for the cultural worker. Their enquiry into their own conditions of work in relation to new unemployment regulations notoriously resulted in a series of strike actions throughout the summer of 2003 in which a number of cultural events were interrupted or repurposed for public discussion. Aware that any proclamation of "precarity" from cultural workers risked feeding directly into the production of better rights for a new "creative class," their demands for a social welfare system that allows for the survival of seasonal workers were positioned to include social rights for all, in particular, undocumented migrant groups and the unemployed.

All of these projects go some way in developing a collective critical consciousness of the conditions that produce an art mirage to mask the deterioration of the welfare state, the disproportionate number of educational programs for artists and curators vis-a-vis employment opportunities and the emptiness of promises made for the endless expansion of creative industries. Few, however, have begun to pilot direct interventions into the nature of the work itself, and in particular the nature of the desired interface between gallery workers and patrons, visitors and publics.

Another study at Documenta 12 - this one sanctioned by Documenta - was undertaken by its tour guides. It revealed how workers might inject their own agency into the exhibition by staging performative interventions into one of its central commercial and educational offers: the tour. This study, led by Dr. Cannen Morsch, was recently published in two volumes titled *Documenta 12 Education* (Institute of Arts Education, Zurich, 2009). It suggests a range of ways in which the workers of such exhibitions might pull at their seams and assumptions from within.

Hansel Sato's investigation, *Performing Essentialism at Documenta 12*, for example, takes up the question of touring as a deconstructive project, intervening directly into the desires cultivated among visitors to the spectacular exhibition. Sato, a Peruvian migrant to Austria, was questioned many times by visitors to the exhibition who were skeptical of his ability to conduct a tour in the German language when not of German origin. Against the implicit racism of the question "where are you from," Sato used the tour as a space to problematize essentialist ideas of German whiteness. Treating the tour as a critical performance, Sato introduced himself to each group as emerging from a different cultural background, only to reveal half-way through the exhibition that he had lied. The intervention was used to stage discussions with visitors about the eyes with which they look upon the work of international artists as cultivated by contemporary art spectacles - in his words, to "reflect on the constructions of perceptions in the group." In discussions, visitors to the exhibition revealed their reactions to his various personas, one suggesting that when Sato introduced himself as an Uro native of Peru, he did not appear confident of his knowledge of European art. Small and intimate in scale, such an understanding of research lies not only in an analysis of the desires cultivated by a consumer orientation towards art in an exhibition like Documenta, but in the "educational offer" of such an exhibition and research as the site of intervention.

Sandra Ortmann's *You could have told us right away that the artist is gay: Queer Aspects of Art and Gallery Education at Documenta 12* connects her experiments in dressing up and dressing down at Documenta and "analyzing its impacts" in relation to her broader involvement in queer activism. The antagonisms and ambivalences that she experienced in the exhibition foregrounded a working group titled *Queer Activism and Artistic Strategies*, which inaugurated a network of queer and LGBT activists from Poland and Germany during the period of the exhibition.

Connecting gallery guides and local activists, artist-educator Wanda Wieczorek and local community educator Ayse Güleç initiated a series of working groups to make use of the Documenta marketing machine to facilitate and bring to light initiatives of social justice education, anti-racism, migrant justice and the use of public resources. Operating semi-autonomously from Documenta itself (it did not receive any funding from Documenta apart from the staff time of Wieczorek - a director's assistant not an educator), the working groups used the exhibition locally as a site from which to launch visible campaigns on unemployment, migrant support, anti-racist education, the privatization of public assets such as water and public housing. Where this process began, as Helmut Holzappel points out, as a hierarchical one - i.e. an initiative of the Directors of Documenta to elaborate their own thenatics to the local people of Kassel through the production of an advisory group - its evolution into a non-hierarchical, self-organized and semi-autonomous network suggests that it is possible for the educational arm of such an enterprise to move beyond notions such as access and outreach.

These studies understand the terrain of conditions as inclusive of possibilities whose aims are situated on a path that leads further afield than the questions and concerns of the exhibition itself. This is what Morsch and the tour guides describe as "Critical Gallery Education." Critical Gallery Education shares with the militant research practices of S.a.L.E. Docks and Euromayday Hamburg an interest in revealing the core contradictions within the spaces of art, "... addressing] the ways in which the market influences structure, presentation, perception, and reception of art and therefore counters the middle class illusion that art is detached from economy to which it's actually closely tied. It considers the cultural and symbolic capital of art and its institutions as constituents of inclusionary and exclusionary practices in the art field. At the same time, it acknowledges and communicates the fact that symbolic capital gives rise to a desire, and develops both strategic and sensuous ways to appropriate such capital."<sup>4</sup>

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What does it mean for the curators to stage themes or leitmotifs for Documenta 12 as broad and important as the vulnerability of human existence ("What is Bare Life?"), the time of contemporary practice ("Is Modernity our Antiquity?") and the question of education itself ("What is to Be Done?") in the context of the marketing-driven, mash-up of public/private partnership that is the contemporary form of the spectacular exhibition? Beyond stating these as questions for heady consumption by lines of summer visitors, what kinds of educational actions are possible within and without such a tangled set of commitments? What and who do they support?

There are, of course, limits to the capacity of critical education to produce major shifts in the output of an exhibition that operates on a short term scale. As Sato's interventions showed, the tour as a framework - that is, as a revenue generating source for Documenta - cultivates the desire for expertise and static identities, and limits the amount of time in which an intervention can occur. And the revenue model that supports touring, in which guides are paid by the tour, not for additional planning, reflection, analysis or local engagement, means that interventions such as those of the Documenta 12 Study are undertaken without compensation. The issue of incorporation discussed by Euromayday, is also clearly at play. A critical tour could easily be on offer as part of the next Documenta.

To some extent these limitations are exceeded when they are connected to broader local and translocal social movements, rather than to systems of valorization produced by the art world for itself.

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In this sense we might move beyond the specific roles of gallery educator, researcher, artist and curator to plot an historical and conceptual arc that lines up these recent initiatives in radical education with, say, the Hybrid Workspace of Documenta 10, which convened dozens of social movement players to formulate the *Kein Mensch ist illegal/ No One Is Illegal* manifesto and subsequent campaigning network. Activating many across Europe and North America on the issue of borders and migrant's rights, the group developed an agenda that included "hiding and supporting illegal migrants, squatting churches, organizing public or semi-public debates about illegal bordercrossing and starting actions against deportations." The impact of such a campaign was widespread, including a series of border camps across Europe, a migrant caravan that moved across Germany throughout the late 90s and early 2000s and a shift in support for migrants under attack by new European border regimes.<sup>5</sup>

A more recent example, in which UK-based environmental justice art collective PLATFORM, working at the Arnolfini in Bristol (UK) populated the galleries with ecoactivists working on a range of educational programs with gallery standing visitors, might also be included in such an arc. In exploring the involvement of galleries in accepting sponsorship from gas and oil companies to gain cultural capital and legitimacy from the art world, the collective connected gallery workers and visitors to ecological issues and used the exhibition to recruit and prepare local people to attend (and even blockade) the (X-)PI 5 Summit in Copenhagen. The group understood the pedagogical interfaces of the gallery as its most useful asset.

These acts of radical research and critical gallery education, when aligned with social movements, decentred the gallery as the primary site of change, evoking a pedagogical realm that uses the gallery or exhibition as a mere stopping point along a longer trajectory. Terms such as "squatting," "stealing the limelight," engaging in "parasitic occupation" or "thinking with conditions" of the educational role of the gallery or exhibition, help us understand how the entangled sites in which creative production, emancipatory rhetoric and exploitation meet are also sites in which new alliances and new demands might be produced.

Notes:

1. Lesage, D. (2009). *The Academy is Back: On Education, the Bologna Process, and the Doctorate in the Arts*. In *e-flux journal* for, 03, 2009.
2. See *Pirate Bay heads to Venice at Biennale* <http://www.vanety.com/article/VR1118004606.html?categoryid=i009&cs=1>
3. <http://www.blay.se/files/eop.pdf>. and *STRIKE AT THE BIENNALE OF VENICE! At* <http://carfotworkers.wordpress.com/2009/08/04/strike-at-the-biennale-of-venice/#more-147>
4. p. 20 Documenta 12 Education no. 2
5. Helmut Holzappel. *Local Projects. Global Art. Cross Cultural Cooperation*

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