

Notes for the Construction of Refutable Theories, Unimportant Pedagogies, and Garage Schools. Or: A Good Name for Love ¹

Mônica Hoff*

Mônica: What does an artist do, Zoé?

Zoé: she paints, she draws, and she thinks.

[...]

Z: Why do schools exist mommy?

M: ...

How to teach what we do not know? How can we invent what we want to learn? How do we operate with the symbols of others? How can we construct refutable theories and unimportant pedagogies? How do we construct an irregular and itinerant knowledge? What would we consider a garage knowledge to be? ²

1 Definition for the free art-school by Brazilian poet Chacal, who created Marginal Poetry movement during the 70s in Parque Lage; consisting on activities and cunning gestures. In: Lagnado, Lisette. *O Que é Uma Escola Livre?* Rio de Janeiro: OCA LAGE, 2015, p. 21.

2 This collection of questions was the departure point for the workshop that I delivered for the Garage School in Aug 2015: *Antes Que se Vuelva Pedagogía*. In this essay, I return to these questions in order to bridge our experiences in that context, and the reflections that came afterwards. This is an opportunity to alert the reader to the fact that this text is not presented in an even way; mirroring the unevenness of its topic. Just like the exercise on the first day for *Antes Que se Vuelva Pedagogía*. Here we have a diagram of art, concepts and histories of art, education, science, and modes of understanding the school; all of them, available for refutation. A Hopscotch that is ready to be accessed from any given point.

x

When the Czech-Brasilian philosopher Vilém Flusser (1920–1991) was interrogated on what he believed was the basis for the creation of reality, his answer would always be unequivocal: *language*. When he was then confronted to say what created language, his answer would be even more vertiginous: poetry. According to Flusser, when facing a problem that seems to be (or is, in fact) unsolvable, we recur to fiction: literary, political, juridical, religious, or artistic.

x

In his book *After Method: Mess in Social Science Research*³, sociologist John Law (1946) proposes chaos, messiness, confusion, and disorder as modalities of knowledge for the description and creation of new realities. Law believes that methods not only serve us in the description of social realities; methods are also involved in generating them.

x

In 1975, the philosopher of science Paul Feyerabend published a book that raised polemics on the field of modern scientific thinking. *Against Method*⁴ fashions an epistemological theory, constructed as a collage of conversations, analyses, and processes; all of which were arranged anachronistically. These processes are thus open and imprecise (at least in appearance). The book operates as a defense of error, mistakes, and anarchy in science. Feyerabend saw no difference knowledge produced by the instituent gazes of science, from the ordinary knowledge that ran aside that specific universe. He also rejected an evolutionary ordering of scientific knowledge. According to the philosopher, science only moves forward when it breaks its own rules; without matching this principle, science could not qualify as science. This is an anarchic pursuit: fallibility is natural to all theories. But, variation applies not only objects of study: methods enjoy the same fate. Scientific knowledge proper would not be able to exist, if methodologies failed on their aspiration to plurality. Which means that: dialectic thinking would be impossible, given that science—along with art and poetry—is an allegory of itself (in a poetic sense) [*The author refers to poetics as poesis, following in its greek meaning as ‘create’/ ‘to-make’]. As Feyerabend would put it: ‘Everything goes’.

3 Law, J. *After Method: Mess in Social Science Research*. New York: Routledge, 2004.

4 Feyerabend, P. *Contra o Método*. Rio de Janeiro: Francisco Alves, 1977.

x

For Brazilian poet Décio Pignatari, science is interested in non-science; thus, education is interested in non-education; and arts are interested in the negation of art ⁵.

x

In 1968, Brazilian artist Hélio Oiticica—self proclaimed provocateur of inventive states—professed that in the future all artists would be proposers, business(wo)men, educators, or agents ⁶. One year later in the summer of 1969, Oiticica proposed the idea of *crelazer* ⁷, a type of reliance/faith on leisure; a latent state of idleness and dilatoriness. A state of ‘in-betweenness’ that needs a reckoning, face to face. Something that, according to the artist, annoying people would never be able to understand. [According to the Brazilian artist Ricardo Basbaum, Oiticica was a creator/technologist of sensorial-thinking; everything for him was a blend of space, time, body, and affect—not necessarily in that order].

x

The theories of pedagogue Paulo Freire defend how alphabetization—as a process of knowledge production—effectively takes place through an affective engagement. This process raises emancipatory processes of relation with the world; something that first touches us as individuals, in singular—and often irregular—ways.

x

According to Brazilian ‘Theatrologist’ Augusto Boal, an educator can do many things, including teaching; an artist can also make lots of things, including making art. For Boal, any pedagogy that is not transitive, fails to be pedagogy.

x

Ricardo Basbaum reflects on the agency AGORA—an autonomous art space created in Rio de Janeiro during the 90s—defining it as an open program with an emphasis on learning; a sort of pedagogy in public.

5 ‘Poema Interessere’ Décio Pignatari. In: Pignatari, Décio. *Poesia Pois é Poesia*: 1950–2000. São Paulo: Ateliê Editorial, 2004.

6 Oiticica, H. ‘Esquema Geral da Nova Objetividade’. In: Oiticica, H. *Aspiro ao Grande Labirinto*. Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 1986, pp. 84–98.

7 Oiticica, H. ‘CRELAZER’, *Aspiro ao Grande Labirinto*. Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 1986, p. 113.

x

In 1987 his notes on the creation of a didactic-cultural project for the Escola de Artes Visuais – Parque Lage, Rio de Janeiro (a free art school founded by the artist Rubens Gerschman in 1975) Federico Morais—the Brazilian art critic and curator who was directing the school during that time—claimed (paraphrasing Jean Geslin, then director of the Dunkirk Fine Arts School in France): ‘I am convinced that an art school will know how to open itself up to the problems of the city, how to integrate with the art market and with the circulation of ideas. An art school can constitute a space where mentalities are set in movement’⁸. Morais defended the idea that all areas should mesh together—teaching and research should generate exhibitions; and exhibitions should in turn propitiate courses and seminars⁹.

x

Michael Craig-Martin: *It seems to me the most important thing about an art school is that it's the creation of a sympathetic ambience in which people feel comfortable and free to act according to their own instincts. You have to make a place where people feel at ease to be who they are and bring what they have, naturally, in themselves to bear. I think that's true of the people teaching: the more students are put into a similar situation where they're at ease, the more successful the experience can be. You can't make it successful, but you can create circumstances where these things can happen.*

John Baldessari: *I totally agree. You have to set up a situation. You can't teach art, that's my premise. You know, when CalArts [California Institute of the Arts] started—I don't know how it was at Goldsmiths—we just eliminated grades. We had pass/fail. You can't use grades as a punishment—you know, to attend class or do this or do that. The students are there of their own free will. We also had no curriculum. In other words, you chose from a menu and made up your own dishes.*

One thing I worked very hard on at CalArts was to try to provide a sort of aesthetic ambience that wasn't already present in Los Angeles. [...] But basically, you're acting like Cupid, trying to make relationships between the artists. [...] It's certainly not just about us as teachers (Craig-Martin and Baldessari, 2009, pp. 42–43)¹⁰.

8 Morais, F. ‘Notas Para a Elaboração de um Projeto Didático-Cultural Para a Escola de Artes Visuais-Parque Lage’. In: Lagnado, L. *O Que é Uma Escola Livre?* Rio de Janeiro: OCA LAGE, 2015.

9 Ibidem.

10 Craig-Martin, M. & Baldessari, J. (2009) ‘Conversation: John Baldessari and Michael Craig-Martin’ in Steven Henry Madoff (ed.) *Art School: (Propositions for the 21st Century)*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press. pp. 41–52.

Along with his art students at the Graduate Studio Program, Columbia University, British artist Liam Gillick produced the report *Nobody Asked You to Do Nothing: A Potential School*. The text compiled predictions on the future of art schools, based on 24 terms for examination. Among these, the following: *historical context; power relationships; infrastructure; architecture; institutional relationships; mapping and location; what does it provide/produce/exclude; requirements and obligations; funding* (Gillick, 2009, p.2).

Here are some of their forecasts: *Things will be out of sync. There will be a large sauna. The edge will be perceived from the inside and outside simultaneously. The idea of boundary pushing will remain. There will be lots more bicycles. Some surprising things will be free. There will be more difference. There will still be a studio problem. There will be big sheds. There will still be a sense that one is forced to find an activity. Delusion will remain. The question will remain, what kind of space are we in? [...] There will be an attack on pragmatism. There will remain a focus upon the idea of students choice. This will remain an incomplete project. There will be many places to sleep. There will be showers on demand. There will be the possibility of collective action. There may well be citizen artists. There will be a free, or progressive tuition scale (increasing expense with duration of attendance). There will definitely be massages from trusted people. There will be new forms of social engineering. This will take place close to fresh springs. There will be a sense that there is less structure. There will be an increasing alienation of labor. There will be an increase in proximity. There will be new protective systems. Some things will be more mobile. Some people will be more migratory. Some effects will remain local. There will still be a feeling that there is a problem of vacuum. Ideas will remain de-territorialized. Some structures will be disintegrated. There will be fewer clear representations of power within the hierarchy of the place. There will be no possibility of an architecture that clearly expresses relationships. There will be an end to the idea that architecture is loaded with connections to the future. There will be bigger dumpsters. There will be an increasing skepticism about architecture as an independent discipline. There will still have to be a building. There will be a sense that we are experiencing an excess of history from the first day. Sometimes it will be necessary to create a parasitical structure in relation to the school. There will be enormous and amazing kitchens. In the manner of pre-schools there will be reading lofts and soft places to rest. There will be a Dacha nearby where one can eat and read and drink. Incomprehensible wealth will circle the school. There will be no equilibrium. Other power structures will be mimicked. There will be an increasing exposure of power and dynamics. Who is them will remain a reasonable question. Some people will wonder how the future be stopped, or hindered. There will be a reduction of appropriateness. There will be an increase in duration.*

Some will explore the potential of every possible resource. There will be large scale 3-dimensional printers, and scanners. Full time computer programmers will be available at all times. Student status will remain unclear. There will be a free pass to every situation that is deemed relevant to the structure of the school. There will be even more examination of the idea of the university as a concept. [...] Concrete, wood and water will be combined in most of the buildings and structures. Large terraces will be covered in plants. The structure will be located near the ocean. Compositing will be used as a method of production. [...] There will be a frustrated desire for consistent knowledge from the beginning of the year. There will be an encouragement of non-directed energy. Attempts will be made to create lots of seemingly arbitrary rules. There will be internal openness combined with public reticence. Friendly qualities will endure. Viewing ports will be suggested but the idea that they are cut into studio walls will be rejected. There will be a well loved swimming pool. There will be an abandoned climbing wall. Water will become the most popular meeting place. Fighting gangsters will still provide a romantic model of masculinity, this will be suppressed. Italian restaurants will no longer exist. The studio will be a location of desire but some people will fight against this. Some people will dream of the creation of an honest nostalgia. There will be many spaces that produce incomprehension. Role playing will be discouraged. Repetition will be impossible. Someone will always doing something every day. There will be designated moments when you are there on your own, and you know it. Clear times when you alone are allowed in the building. There will develop the option of manual labor, students can clean the windows, dig drainage ditches and package chewing gum. A big experimental Greenhouse will be donated to the place by an anonymous benefactor. Animals will roam free and cause problems from time to time. Artisanal food production onsite will go unnoticed over time. Confrontation with past desires will be accepted as a normal part of life. New relationships with service will produce a new understanding of obligations. There will be places to jump around and wrestle. 4-dimensional studies will become a well-loved fable from the past. Personal relationships will multiply. Claustrophobia will not exist. Gaps in between shallowness and repetition will expand and fill the world with a whole new kind of artistic production. Teachers working alongside the students will forget to teach. Ghost towns will proliferate. Students choosing staff choosing students choosing staff will replace each other in perpetuity. Lectures in foreign languages with no translation will become the most popular event of the week. The institution will declare its politics and people will wait for the statements with eager anticipation (Gillick, 2009, pp. 249-251) ¹¹.

11 Gillick, L. (2009) 'Nobody Asked You to Do Nothing/ A Potential School' in Steven Henry Madoff (ed.) *Art School: (Propositions for the 21st Century)*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press. pp. 247-252.

x

Jörg Immendorf created the *LIDL-Akademie* while he was a Joseph Beuys' pupil in the Fine Art Academy of Düsseldorf: an autodidact and anarchist art school within a school. The *LIDL-Akademie* operated within Academia, offering classes for school kids, visitors, and artists; operating in empty spaces of the university campus.

x

Regarding the sense of the school, Beuys would claim, two years after: '[...] school is universal. This means, on the street—when you talk about these things with people at the grocer's, the school is at the grocer's at that moment. That means that the educational process not only takes place in schools, but begins when people talk to people about these things'¹². (Beuys and Bodenmann-Ritter, 2007, p.195) Beuys' motivations for starting a free school were guided—not only by the desire to abolish the bureaucratic character of knowledge production, but—by the fact that 'The basic law offers enough possibilities to found free schools and private schools according to a new model, for example.' (Beuys and Bodenmann-Ritter, 2007, p.192)¹³.

x

In 1966, Fluxus artists George Brecht and Robert Filliou created the *Non-École de Villefranche*, an art school that—was part the University of Leeds—and was based on Villefranche-sur-Mer, on the French littoral. Brecht and Filliou's storefront-school-studio and non-school operated under three premises: (1) an easygoing exchange of information and experience; (2) perfect liberty that included no teachers and no students; (3) a balance between listening and speaking.

x

'There is not one pioneer of Modernist art, [...] who has not been actively involved in the creation of art schools and teaching programmes' (De Duve, 1994, p. 21) 'From Malevich to Kandinsky and Klee, or from Itten and Moholy-Nagy to Albers and Hofmann [...]' (De Duve, 1994, p. 21)—each on his own way—got involved in the foundation of schools; in the creation of disciplines and courses; in the publication of ideas that would serve as postulates for an art education that looked forward to the next

12 Beuys, J. & Bodenmann-Ritter, C. (2007) 'Every Man an Artist: Talks at Documenta X by Joseph Beuys' in Claudia Mesch & Viola Maria Michely (eds.) *Joseph Beuys: the reader*. Cambri, Madrid. Machado Libros, 2015. p. 19–23.

13 Ibidem.

Century¹⁴. The same could be said about contemporary artists in the span of 1960–2016. Wherever they came from (this or that place); formally or informally; in one mode or another: very few artists lived-through without ever giving a lesson, or without attempting to construct a school.

x

École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts (1671) / Drawing School (1751) / Vienna University of Applied Arts (1867) / Académie Julien (1868) / The Flying University (1883) / Gustave Moreau's Paris studio (1892–98) / Ox-Bow (1910) / Ealing Art College (1913) / Merz Akademie (1918) / Vitebsk Art School (1918–1920s) / Bauhaus (1919–1933) / VKhuTeMas School of Architecture (1920) / Black Mountain College (1933–57) / Bard College (1934) / Hans Hoffmann School of Fine Arts (1934–58) / St John's College (1937) / Berlin Free University (1945) / Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture (1946) / Independent Group seminars at the ICA (1947–52) / John Cage at the New School for Social Research (1956–60) / Ray Johnson's New York Correspondence School (1960s) / Intermedia (1960s) / Eksperiment Kunst Skolen (1961) / Escuela Nacional de Arte (Havana, 1961) / Atelier Livre de Porto Alegre (1961–) / Bauhaus Situationniste (1963) / The Free University of New York – FUNY (1965) / John Latham and the Artist Placement Group (1966) / Non-école de Villefranche (Robert Filliou e George Brecht, 1966) / The Munich Academy for Television and Film (1967) / Nova Scotia College of Arts and Design (1882, renamed 1967) / The Free University of Berkeley (1968) / Escola Brasil (José Resende, Carlos Fajardo, Luis Paulo Bravelli e Frederico Nasser, 1968) / The Antiuniversity of London (1968–71) / Whitney ISP Program (1968) / Jörg Immendorff, Chris Reinecke and the LIDL-Akademie (1968–69) at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf / New Marlborough Centre for Arts (George Maciunas, 1968–69) / Image Bank (1969) / Free International University of Creativity and Interdisciplinary Research – FIU (Joseph Beuys, 1974) / Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics (1974 by Allen Ginsberg and Anne Waldman) / Escola de Artes Visuais do Parque Lage (Rubens Gerchman, 1975–) / General Idea (1977) / ASTER (Regina Silveira, Julio Plaza, Walter Zanini, Donato Ferrari, 1978–81) / Ultimate Akademie (Al Hansen e Lisa Cieslik, 1988) / Institut des Hautes Études en Arts Plastiques (Daniel Buren e Pontus Hultén, 1988–1995) / The Vera List Center for Art and Politics at the New School (1992) / DasArts (1994) / Mode2Research—NPO Austria (Eva Maria Kosa, 1997) / Center for Urban Pedagogy (1997) / The Workers

14 De Duve, T. When form has become attitude—and beyond. *The Artist and the Academy: Issues in fine art education and the wider cultural context*, Southampton: John Hansard Gallery. 1994. pp. 19–31.

and Punks University (1998) / Institute of Applied Autonomy (1998) / Milledred's Lane Project (Mark Dion, 1998) / Cittadellarte - University of Ideas (Umberto Eco, 1998) / École Temporaire (Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Philippe Parreno e Pierre Huyghe, 1998-1999) / Proto Academy (Charles Esche, 1998-2002) / The Independent Art School (1999) / School for the History and Theory of Images (Branimir Stojanovic, 1999) / The Real Presence (Biljana Tomic, desde 2000) / Centre for Advanced Study (founded 2000) / L'université Tangente (2001) / Copenhagen Free University (Henriette Heise e Jakob Jakobsen, 2001-07) / Masters in Print and Multimedia, University of Bologna (Umberto Eco, 2001) / ArtSchool Palestine (2001) / Campus 2002 (Marius Babias e Florian Waldvogel) / Gasthof 2002 at Staedelschule, Frankfurt / School of Missing Studies (2002-) / Future Academy (Clementine Deliss, 2002) / University of Openness (2002) / Cátedra Arte de Conducta (Tania Bruguera, Havana, 2002-09) / Escuela Panamericana del Desasosiego (Pablo Helguera, 2003-06) / Manoa Free University (2003-2008) / Informal University in Foundation (2003) / The Paraeducation Department (Sarah Pierce e Annie Fletcher, 2004) / Cork Caucus (2004-05) / Momentary Academy (Ted Purves, 2005) / Mountain School of Art (Piero Golia e Erik Wesley, 2005) / ArtSchool Palestine (2005) / Escuela Móvil de Saberes y Practica Social (2005) / Manifesta 6 School (2006) / Escuela de Arte Belleza y Felicidad de Villa Fiorito (2006) / Brown Mountain College (2006) / Unitednationsplaza (2007) / Potential School (Liam Gillick, 2007) / Islington Mill Art School (2007) / The Public School (2007) / The Independent Art School (2009) / Night School (2009) / Parallel School (2009) / Picketpocket Almanack (Joseph del Pesco, Franck Leibovici, Sébastien Pluot, Vivian Rehberg, Eric Périer e Mathieu Kleyeabe Abonnenc, 2009) / Department 21 (2009) / Institut für Raumexperimente (Olafur Eliasson, 2009) / MASS Alexandria (2010) / Trade School (2010) / Campus (Libia Castro & Ólafur Ólafsson, Renata Lucas, Peter Piller e Adrià Julià, 2011) / DIY Art School (2012) / The Silent University (2012) / School for Wordly Companions (2012) / Wide Open School (2012) / Capacete Summer School (Helmut Batista, 2012-13) / Turps Art School (Marcus Harvey e Peter Ashton, 2012) / Inhotim Escola (2013) / Escola Caseira de Invenções (9a Bienal do Mercosul I Porto Alegre, 2013) / Escola Entrópica (Paulo Miyada, Instituto Tomie Ohtake, 2014) / Free University of Los Angeles / La Universidad Nómada / Facoltà di Fuga / Göteborgs Autonomia Skola / Workers Punk Art School (Hito Steyerl, 2008-09) / Community Art School / The Invisible Academy / Academy sans Toit / Center for Land Use Interpretation (Damon Rich) / Machine Project / The Anhoek School / Université Pirate / Mobile Academy / Centre for Possible Studies (Janna Graham e Sally Talant) / La Ivan Illich (Beta-Local, San Juan, Puerto Rico) / Open School East (2013) / Escola do Olhar (MAR, Rio de Janeiro, 2013) / Bank of Ideas, Tent

City University e The School of Ideas (Occupy London); Free University Berlin / Özgür Üniversite / Radical Education Collective / The Autonomy Project Summer School / Really Free School / United Migrant Workers Education Project / Faculty of Invisibility / Freie Hochschule Stuttgart / Open School / Free University of Liverpool / New York Arts Practicum / Center for Artistic Activism / School of the Damned / Fairfield International Art School (Ryan Gander, 2015) / Escuela de Garaje (Laagencia, Bogotá, 2015) / Amen Foundation (Abdulnasser Ghareem, 2015) / Surf school-etc (Mônica Hoff, 2015) / The School of Kyiv (3rd Kyiv Biennial, 2015) / The Antiuniversity Research Project (Jakob Jakobsen, London, 2015) / Alter Academia (Teorética, 2016).

x

Tactic and Deliberate Self-Institutionalization¹⁵

According to Danish critic Simon Sheikh, 'new' contemporary institutions—such as free universities, autonomous schools and academies—mirror and invert official and traditional educational structures; especially so, after the 90s. For Sheikh, in these institutions' 'discourses are established and circulated not through a negation of publicness, but through a deliberate and tactical self-institutionalization. Societal machines for knowledge production become subjective ones—produced through identity rather than producing identity' (Sheikh, 2004).

x

One crucial element for this process (where the non-production of identities is at stake) is the fact that art schools emerging from these contexts, are often more interested in becoming spaces for public pedagogies, rather than art schools proper. Ricardo Basbaum would say: where rules are not identitarian, irregular, and are constructed on-the-go. A perfect oxymoron, within this deliberate and tactical self-institutionalization: artists who produce art-schools as (if they were) art-projects; but, as art-schools that cannot be considered art in and for themselves. Analogously, there is an interesting

15 Sheikh, S. (2004) The Artist as Public Intellectual. *EIPCP multilingual webjournal*. (Artists as Producers). [online]. Available from: http://republicart.net/disc/aap/sheikh02_en.htm (Accessed 17 July 2016).

measure of civil disobedience (in relation to art); and a high degree of institutional imagination ¹⁶ (in relation to education). And vice-versa.

x

Civil disobedience > institutional imagination > garage schools
Institutional imagination > garage schools > civil disobedience
Garage schools > civil disobedience > institutional imagination

x

In 2015, more than 100 public schools in São Paulo were occupied by students who protested against the reforms imposed—without consultation—by the State government over millions of sophomores, educators, and their families. One of the measures involved the permanent closure of dozens of schools. Due to similar reasons in 2016, at least 200 schools from all over Brazil became part of this list; as a gesture of support to the vindications made by Brazilian educators who were facing dire working conditions. In an unforeseeable way, an irregular, skewed, and garage-like kind of knowledge had emerged ¹⁷. By physically, politically, socially, and conceptually reprogramming their schools, Brazilian sophomores across the country concurrently amassed a vast bulk of civil disobedience and institutional imagination.

x

I would like to think that these students are actually involved in the creation of (our new) art-schools—or garage schools for that matter.

16 Term introduced by educator L'Abbate Kelian, in the context of the masterclass *Tensões da Liberdade nas Práticas Educativas no Seminário Políticas da Mediação—Playgrounds*, organized by Luiza Proença and Thais Olmos, MASP, Apr 2016. Kelian defends a necessary intensification of our institutional imagination for discussions on contemporary education. Kelian underlines the importance of understanding processes of institutional imagination as processes that are inherently shared by everyone; exceeding the property of institutions and their managers. According to the educator, institutional imagination is an attribute of all societies.

17 Pelbart, P. P. (2016) Pelbart: *Tudo O Que Muda Com Os Secundaristas* [online]. Available from: <http://outraspalavras.net/brasil/pelbart-tudo-o-que-muda-com-os-secundaristas/> (Accessed 18 July 2016).