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**From address to outcome, a proposal for
discussing research in the art academia
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From address to outcome, a proposal for discussing research in the art academia towards the idea of a critical landscape

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Abstract:

This text aims to discuss forms of teaching/learning that allow for the understanding of the involvement of students in carrying out actions that pertain to two major areas of intervention: landscape and knowledge, and how research processes may be generated by those actions. Landscape is intended to be approached from a dynamic and critical point of view, beyond its multiple senses and descriptive characters, such as, for example, rural or urban considered as limited descriptions. Knowledge is considered horizontally as a collectively generated process focused on providing tools for research and analysis based on student-centred actions. As a brief open-ended exercise, this text does not aim to respond to a set of challenges involved in the definition of the practices that it will attempt to discuss, such as, firstly, the contradictions inherent in the definitions of trans or post-medial practices, in constant change and often contested from current theory and art itself; and second, the danger of enclosing ourselves in definitive terminologies to describe the practices that occupy us and that often operate precisely in opposition to the propensity to find and stabilise definitions, which is the aspiration of the academia. How is research in the art academia to deal with these contradictions and how to distinguish between practice based and practice led research, will be questions that the text will try to address critically. Is the space of the academia the last space for utopia?

Keywords: · research, teaching and learning, art academia, critical landscape

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The dynamic approach to the idea of landscape supposes interventions that, taking the idea of context in both material and immaterial ways, can intervene in urban or rural environments, they may also act through digital or postal media, thinking about the notion of *transferability and connectivity*. In the case of interventions that favour participatory modes and forms of return, communities – we will see ways to avoid levelling this idea – , communities are called upon to creative processes through workshops and residencies, methodological aspects through which students can work on scenarios outside the academy and actively engage in collective moments of knowledge production and creative experiences.

Transforming places, transforming minds, thus become the two key expressions of educational activities that aim to dynamically develop awareness-raising processes for critical issues in urban or rural landscapes today, without forgetting the intangible spaces, namely cultural and digital, in which social processes take shape. These are activities that can encompass processes that can be converted both into artistic interventions *in situ* and into works of art for exhibition space, addressing social issues, ecological or sustainability issues, mediation and media coverage of the contemporary landscape, heritage issues linked to issues of identity, among others. The notion of critical landscape is important as a way of ensuring that the transmission of knowledge itself takes place through the establishment of a platform of free will and stimulation of the ability to identify, select and deeply advance the information found and shared. We will talk later about procedures that can contribute to this.

Thus, the aspect that concerns knowledge (I'm talking about the production of knowledge rather than simple transmission) takes place not only in the academic environment but also in the social environment, producing a beneficial exchange for both the academy and society. Active involvement through workshops, seminars, lectures, and, mainly, conversations, which promote the discussion of practices linked to landscape and landscape intervention in their multiple aspects, allow students to move to settings outside the academy, getting involved with contexts and communities, enabling them to produce shared aesthetic experiences and implement landscape interventions, urban or rural, relational or individual, designed towards a critical positioning.

Implicit in this approach is the awareness that sustainability in a strictly economic or social sense may not be achieved within the deadlines that academia imposes (or may not be achieved at all, since that should not be the objective). Working with communities and contexts requires investment, in time and also financial, that the academic context rarely offers. However, projects and interventions in a social context often demonstrate that, although the measurement and evaluation of their impact may require a period of time typical of the socio-economic evaluation, such time and resources need to be much larger than those that the academic context offers. Nevertheless, the awareness that 'art does something' to the forms

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and experiences of spaces and situations, socially or individually is there. This experiential dimension, this 'doing something' is what students can pass on to anyone who comes into contact or gets involved with their work. But working just to induce an experience, even if this induction can provoke a few special moments outside the everyday experiential routines, seems insufficient. Undoubtedly, new values are added to less remembered places, new meanings can be discovered in forgotten social practices, some strangeness can be revealed in banal daily routines that begin to acquire the value of a shared and transmitted practice, and this is truly the meaning of heritage, relational or material, becoming something that is created, preserved, transmitted and relocated into a new meaning. But this idea of heritage, which is produced from what I could call critical interventions in context, only makes sense if understood in a conscious dimension of the entire planetary ecosystem, from climate justice to social justice.

As stated above, the impact of this type of intervention is difficult to measure, but its social effects are reflected in several ways. Students can evaluate and incorporate this impact into their projects, by collecting stories and impressions from those who participate or come into contact with their work, sometimes managing to force previously closed institutions to open the doors of their space, and producing platforms for critical debate. This may also be a responsibility of the academy: to intervene in an educational way with institutions that are external to it. There is a necessary symbiosis between social structures – for example local authorities, associations or even museums – and academia, for these processes to be carried out.

From the point of view of the modes of production, it is important to analyse how the intermedia dimension serves these interventions. These are typically approaches in which a plurality of media, from more traditional forms of artistic practice to theatrical and performative forms, seek to express the diversity of encounters. In fact, at first, it is less important to think about the strategies leading to results (that is, to define which materials, which language or visual languages, which forms the artistic work will take) but, in principle, it is more important to think about the challenge, the approach, the initial call to participation, that is, the gesture that calls and touches upon the other(s).

Thus, the work produced can take the form of an event, situation or performance, but it can also be translated into objects that often fulfil an ambiguous function between documentary and work of art, positioning themselves, sometimes and for this very reason, also ambiguously in the art system itself. These forms of activation in specific contexts imply connection with institutions outside the art and the academia systems, such as associations or local power structures. For this reason, educational responsibility expands. Let's see, it is known that participatory art places the observer at the centre of the performances, dismantling the hierarchical position of the artist as the sole creator. In this sense, how can social expectations be incorporated

without compromising the aesthetic experiential function? Post-autonomous art lives well with this ambiguity as long as, first, it remains protected from possible instrumentalisation by the social agencies involved (which frequently represents a burden on artists), and, second, it is able of avoiding romanticising the communities in cause, preventing them from being attributed a fixed and predetermined character in time and space. This assumes a plural and dynamic approach to the idea of community to which it is possible to bring a positive critical meaning, as opposed to the idea of carrying out a social service that generally has a *status quo* of a *do-gooder*, paternalistic, overbearing or imposing nature. A Post-Autonomy aesthetic would imply provoking discursive and thought forms while criticising the hierarchical conditions of art production, the production of history from a colonial, capitalist and neoliberal position, seeking to dismantle these conditions towards a new experiential space.

From the point of view of generating historical and critical knowledge, primarily approached and developed in lecture and workshop environments, it simultaneously presupposes inclusive methodological strategies based on the dismantling of previous models of vertical transmission of knowledge. The main educational strategy is oriented towards the development of research tools, followed by the analytical tool with the primary objective of reaching the critical tool. I will explain in more detail below.

We know that knowledge currently resides on multiple platforms whose access and generative ability are becoming more widespread and rapid every day. Between the library and the search engine (increasingly intelligent and faster, as we know) it is important to generate the capacity for discernment, identification and cataloguing of information in order to, in fact, generate knowledge. It is therefore important to insist on the process of navigating information within a sense of critical awareness mentioned above, and insist on the production of knowledge more than on its pure memorisation, in other words it is important to insist on the development of the ability to compare various pieces of information in order to generate a critical positioning in the face of historical events, social memory and technical knowledge. Memory (particularly in understanding the individual and collective implications for the development of history) is able to emerge much stronger when it is established from that position. We live in times when the anguish that the overcoming of the human by the machine could compromise our own freedom of thought. And in this scenario, how can we guarantee autonomy and free will if not through tools that promote critical consciousness? And we can then ask in what ways can artistic practices contribute to that awareness, whilst still ensuring that they remain outside the limits of pamphleteering? Because it is not art that is 'politics', and, obviously, 'politics' will never be art. What is 'political' is the awareness that art always has social consequences, even more so when it chooses to intervene in context.

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By extension, we become aware of the political dimension of education. Wes Hill in the text for the exhibition catalogue *Shapes of knowledge*¹ asks: "What does it mean for art to be pedagogical?" He continues: " Since the early 2000s, a number of terms such as 'artist educator', 'artist activist', 'socially engaged artist', 'artist researcher' and 'curator artist' have emerged to signal a shift in the direction of critical art practice, revolving around the common question: 'How are we shaped by what we know?'"

From my point of view, it seems important to state that it is not art that is pedagogical or it would quickly become a purely disciplinary exercise. It is rather interesting to think about art as a producer of knowledge and how artistic practice can use educational strategies that are intended to encourage critical tools and the production of aesthetic experiences. And knowledge is produced actively, through confrontations and feedback, through gestures that are performative at their origin and (eventually but not only) discursive at their point of arrival. It is therefore interesting to think about the notion of the performative both in its feminist meaning, which determines that actions (gestures and languages/discourses) form identities, and also in its durational meaning, which assumes time and temporality as dimensions imbued in all activities. In this sense, it is culture, as a dynamic process in constant manufacture, that produces identity and not strictly its opposite, as essentialist cultural currents would have us believe. Each moment generates cultural advancement because each gesture changes who makes it and who is affected by it. For Bruno Latour², this affectation is the key to cultural and social processes: the body (individual and social) is affected and affects, changes and is changed, is transformed and transforms its surroundings.

In a broad concept of artistic practices that intervene in context, we seek to define modes of production that can combine traditional sculptural or drawing practices, for example, with performative reading and interpretation processes and/or what is commonly called *new media*, in central multidisciplinary approaches central to the exercise of creative proposals that can reveal a transformative dimension. The work may take more traditional forms of site-specific practice, but ultimately it creates conditions for the development of what may be called contextual practice, an important achievement that takes the concept of site-specificity forward, as Miwon Kwon³ envisions in her *One place after another* (2002), incorporating the idea of context, the idea of flow between contexts, the notion of a dynamic place within a networked notion of place, the production of knowledge in the process of mediated and shared experience.

1. Hill, Wes, "Education through participation: the contemporary terrain of socio-pedagogic art" in *Shapes of knowledge : Monash University Museum of Art*, Melbourne 9 February – 13 April 2019, pp.15–31, Monash University Museum of Art and Perimeter Editions, 2019.

2. Latour, Bruno (2005) *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor–Network Theory*. Oxford: Oxford UP

3. Kwon, Miwon, *One place after another, Site-specific art and locational identity*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England, 2002

Due to the nature of the scenario of these practices, often dependent on different partners, it is not always easy to implement the necessary proximity strategies. Distance and the logistics of mobility are sometimes difficult to overcome, especially when you want to work in contexts far from urban centres. Furthermore, the academic environment is linked to a very specific time, which is very different from social seasonality, the temporal fixation of work or the availability for leisure. Therefore, navigating this asynchronicity must become part of the approach of working in a context that, ultimately, must also contemplate its own disappearance and/or incorporate the possibility of its eventual failure, even if the objectives have been formulated in a closed manner. Isn't art a place of open possibilities? Isn't it in art that we can transform error into advancement?

Higher education institutions need to be encouraged to take responsibility for providing student exchange opportunities with diverse institutional partners, many of which may not be academic institutions. This allows us to say that working with students is not restricted to the academic environment, on the contrary, it allows students to come into contact with the world of professional artistic practices, and also with social realities with which they may not have had contact, in short, with the real world. This fulfils another very important aspect of our contribution, both as artists and as academics: the connection to the world outside the academy. It assumes that team and collective work is considered a priority.

A collective production of knowledge is fundamental in today's world, a world in which the notion of authorship as an individual achievement no longer seems adequate. Thus, collective participation, both in artistic production and in critical discussion, updates the debates on the conditions of contemporary authorship. Questions of identity, as seen above, are approached not from an angle of confinement and pre-definition of terms, but from the understanding that identity and culture are in a permanent process of formation and transformation, therefore they are never considered completed or predefined, but that the preconditions on which they are based, often weakened by secular processes of incorporation and acculturation, deserve a dedicated and respectful look. This gives the work openness and revelation. Unveiling, because at each stage it reveals a new moment for understanding the found conditions of identity and culture; openness, because it inevitably leaves open a space for a new rearrangement of meaning to take place and be carried forward. Fluidity is thus an operative concept that demonstrates that a dynamic mode of culture and identity will bring a truer sense of a collective experience. Temporary interventions fulfil that sense of fluidity, they give shape, in the practices carried out, to critical questions that have a profound meaning for their own objectives and that are tested and addressed in all the different phases of the practices and experiences produced. We can (we should always) ask how these practices, much of which are participatory in nature, benefit not only those involved, but also students, young artists and artistic communities. Their sense of incompleteness prevents them from becoming an attribute of social change, which

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is the responsibility of social structures to produce. Students or artists are not responsible for eradicating poverty, for example, or solving the climate crisis, but they can both operate in a place of knowledge production that contributes to the advancement of awareness and the transformation of the world, even if on the minimum scale we can aim for.

By challenging the allegedly passive conventional role of spectators, as well as their identity demarcation (male, white and Western), the very role of art, its modernist elitism and social distance, its mercantile link, are reconfigured. By repositioning the idea of an institution – artistic, academic and social – its functions are reformulated, politicising its practices in a sense of citizenship, crucial in the times of social and climatic imbalance that we live in. I reaffirm that art, and consequently education, are not ways of doing politics, but that they can reveal a critical position in the world through the production of what I called in this text a *critical landscape*, a place where a plural humanity can be fulfilled and can advance.

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Filipe Garcia, What's happening, Participative performance with chalk, Avenida dos Aliados, 2010

Carta de Ventura Ventura
Clara
e
Clara

Para creche...
O nosso encontro vai tornar nossa
via ventura,
eu querido o torno mais um
pela
e obrigado pelos
Eu gostava de te oferecer com
vestidos e pelas
mais modernos m.
libres...
auto mores...
que me nao quera isso
te de flor quarto testes
mais auto...
eu quero respeito
garapa de...
e a igualdade de bom pense
aqui o trabalho nunca para
agora soumos mais seu
autente um abraço
foi altura de logo pensamos
para-te
Clara

TROCA
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MEMORIAS
TRANSFUSÃO
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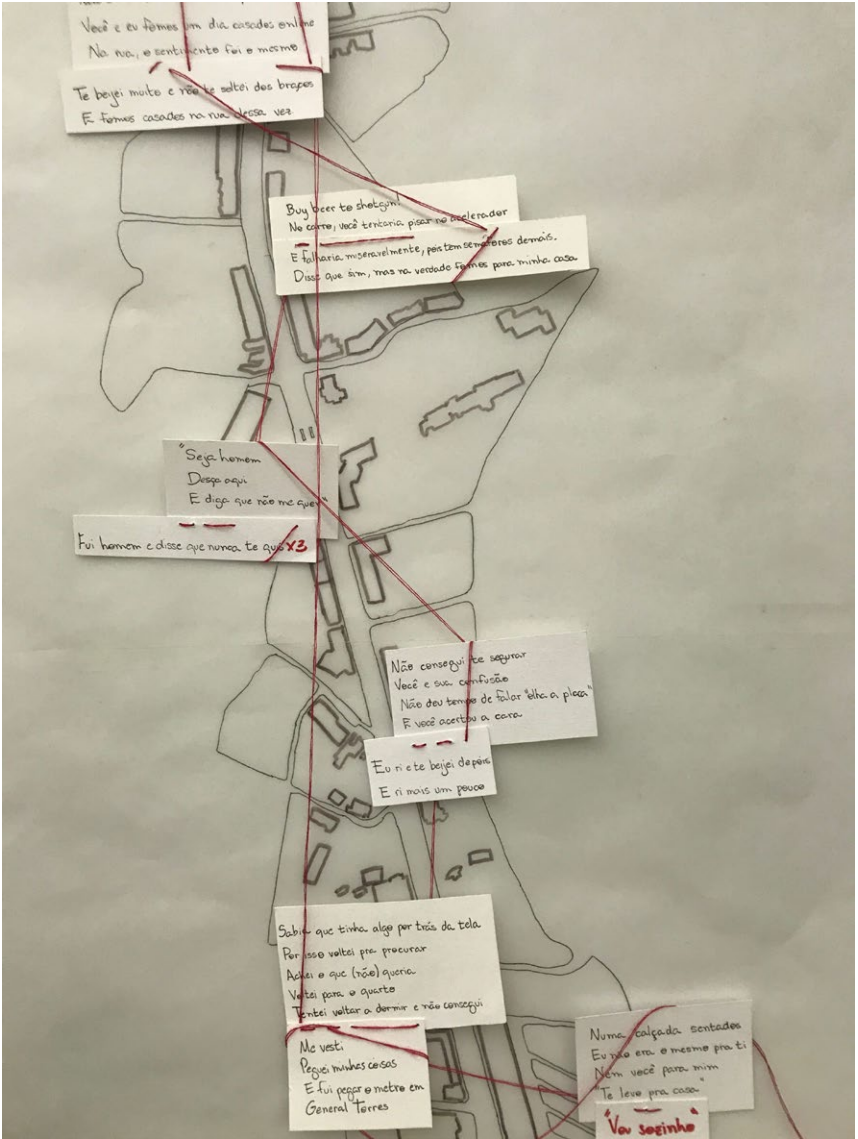
HELLO MY OLD HEART

HOW HAVE YOU BEEN?

are you
still there?

PEÇO LICENÇA
PARA TE OUVIR

the administration and in other branches of government, who are organized
round a particular political project. In this article, political agency refers
specifically to the political actors responsible for designing the United States
of this study



Leonardo Ferreira Vicentin, Eavesdropping. Capturing personal stories in the urban landscape. 2019





Patrícia Azevedo, Desaparecimento colectivo | Collective disappearance.
Participative action in the open land of the old canned fish factory. 2009