

## **Exile in Action: educational practices in a performative dimension**

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**ABSTRACT – Exile in Action: educational practices in a performative dimension.** This article proposes to establish a zone of indiscernibility between the domains of art and education. To do so, it confronts documents related to both legislation and educational research, with some gestures performed by the artist Nelson Leirner in a situation of pedagogical ambience, highlighting the problem of the demand for meaning. It evokes analytical procedures operated in three texts by Michel Foucault. His company allows taking representation as an operation that would go beyond the mere act of representing as re-presenting the truth. Such way of taking representation, in a performative one, leads to the forge of the exile as a methodological strategy for investigating practices, in their unique modes of operation and effects.

**Keywords: Pedagogical Practices. Artistic Practices. Michel Foucault. Analytical Procedures. Representation.**

**RESUMO – Desterro em Ato: práticas educacionais em dimensão performativa.** Este artigo propõe instaurar uma zona de indiscernibilidade entre os domínios da arte e da educação. Para tanto, confronta documentos relativos tanto à legislação como à pesquisa educacional, com alguns gestos executados pelo artista Nelson Leirner em uma situação de ambiência pedagógica, dando vulto ao problema da demanda por sentido. Evoca procedimentos analíticos operados em três textos de Michel Foucault. Sua companhia permite tomar a representação como uma operação que ultrapassaria o mero ato de representar como re-apresentar a verdade. Tal modo de tomar a representação, em viés performativo, conduz à forja do desterro como estratégia metodológica de investigação de práticas, em seus modos singulares de funcionamento e efeitos.

**Palavras-chave: Práticas Pedagógicas. Práticas Artísticas. Michel Foucault. Procedimentos Analíticos. Representação.**

## Introduction

By refusing the redeeming promises of art and thought, in short of representation, perhaps a bet can be made: that of not surrendering to the temptation of filling the void. Inventing, thinking, making art perhaps means, more and more, that we have to work in the interstices of the void, in the flaws and gaps. Both in language, thought and art, it is perhaps a matter of assuming things in their singularity, which is often in literality, before interpretation (Favaretto, 2014, p. 26).

This article focuses on ways of thinking that are constitutive of procedures related to educational practices. Therefore, it seeks to establish an open border zone between the domains of art and education, taking as a vertebral discussion the thought operation of representation, which is precious to the traditional functioning of both domains.

Affiliated to the ambience of the so-called post-structuralism, it strives to focus on the way that made it possible for Michel Foucault to make a set of categories from the architecture of thought considered modern, such as subject, work and meaning, waver. Besides situating the historically contingent character of such categories, his research is characterized by showing, in action, the analytical procedures that would lead to this kind of theoretical-conceptual balance. In this sense, this text is inspired by concerns as well as reservations and methodological questions presented by a certain segment of Foucauldian research in education, such as Aquino and Val (2018), Aquino (2013; 2018), Veiga-Neto and Rech (2014), Fischer (2003) and Zanetti (2017), among others.

Analytical procedures operated by Michel Foucault *in loco* are prioritized here, that is, in their detailed realization, and less the conceptual contributions derived therefrom. The Foucauldian approach will help us to deal with these thought expedients in a way that will allow us to shuffle the pedagogical and artistic domains, in order to problematize their boundaries.

Regarding the method, this article is guided by the following procedures: from the start, artistic and pedagogical practices in operation are put in relation, in order to analyze the transit of their specificities. Such a movement will allow us to focus on the theme of education, which will be circumscribed by two fronts. On the first one, we will evoke some writings concerning the encounter between art and education, namely: official documents as well as a study of academic productions. On the other, we shall explore a scene in which an artist participates as a central character in a situation of pedagogical ambience. We will bring both the writings and the scene, starting from an expanded meaning of the idea of performance. This meaning, defended by studies such as that of Marvin Carlson (2010), aims to spread its uses through discursive domains that go beyond that of art.

As we will try to scrutinize, this endeavor invests in a qualitative tampering in the way of mobilizing the representation expedient, through the implication of the idea of performance. Once expanded from the exclusive territory of the arts, that idea can be taken as a way of thinking, allowing us to approach any practices emphasizing their very doing as well as their effects.

## The Documents in their Acts

In 1996, the Federal Government enforced a new Law on Brazilian Education Guidelines and Bases, identified by No. 9,394 (Brasil, 1996), replacing the Law 5,692, in force since 1971, that is, still concerning the military dictatorship period. Specifically in relation to art teaching, there was a very exuberant jump between the previous legislation and the one currently in force.

In the 1971's Law, the subject of Artistic Education was instituted in a laconic 7<sup>th</sup> article (Brasil, 1971) and nothing else there was guaranteed in this regard – it was even considered that the inclusion of Artistic Education in the curriculum by Law 5,692, given its characteristics, or their absence, was oriented towards “hiding a little its domesticating character” (Duarte Jr., 1991, p. 78).

Already in a political openness regime, the 1996's Law emerged as a detailed outline of the Brazilian education's new content. If the 1971's Law was responsible for minimally guaranteeing the presence of artistic education as a constant discipline in the curriculum, in 1996, in its turn, the Legislative Branch devoted a more surgical attention to the preparation of the current official document.

Together with the legal support gained with the advent of the new Law on Brazilian Education Guidelines and Bases, the art education configuration was consolidated with the release of another official document, entitled *National Curriculum Parameters: art* (Brasil, 1997). If the mentioned Law was responsible for ensuring that artistic education became effective as a curricular discipline present in school life, the Parameters (PCN) were responsible for ensuring the functioning of this pedagogical modality. Already in the introductory text, the document stipulates that:

Art education promotes the development of artistic thinking, which characterizes a particular way of *giving meaning* to people's experiences: through it, the student expands sensibility, perception, reflection and imagination. Learning art basically involves making artwork, appreciating and *reflecting on* it. It also involves knowing, appreciating and reflecting on the forms of nature and on individual and collective artistic productions from different cultures and times.

The Art document exposes an understanding of the *meaning* of art in education, explaining content, objectives and specificities, both in terms of teaching and learning, and in terms of art as a human manifestation (Brasil, 1997, p. 15, our highlights).

There are some points in these first moments of the document whose emphasis is strategic here, mainly because they seem to be very evident from the point of view of certain cultural naturalizations. By scaling these evidences<sup>1</sup>, it is possible to glimpse the assumption of the need to attribute meaning to people's experiences, as well as the idea that learning art would presuppose reflecting on it, since it would constitute one of the knowledges aimed at human formation.

Regarding the question of meaning, it should be noted that we have highlighted the referred term from the aforementioned excerpt. The reiteration of this idea in the course of the document suggests something of the order of the necessary, which must be achieved, conquered, produced or created, and which must become a beacon of the entire perimeter of existence.

In relation to the point about learning art, the tripod that supports the doing, the appreciation and, finally, the historical contextualization, rests on the Triangular Proposal, created by Ana Mae Barbosa (Brasil, 1997). This approach, also present in what is understood by non-formal education – non-school spaces, such as museums and cultural centers –, gains force of law in the event of its insertion in the Parameters.

This way of approaching the presence of art in education is the result of a series of struggles for the democratization of the access to art – struggles carried out by characters who believe that art is a modality of culture necessary to give meaning to a lifetime's experience. Furthermore, it is essential to highlight that the strategic path assumed for such an undertaking was the pedagogical one. This articulation between art and education, which is legitimized due to an insistent claim for meaning, makes use of a procedure in its turn used by a professional category from the art field, the art criticism, when encountering the works: the interpretation. According to Giulio Carlo Argan (1988), this procedure would be used from the base of an artistic truth of the work, whose discovery would be up to the critic.

We observe, therefore, how the imperative of meaning and the procedure of interpretation transit between the artistic and educational territories, seeking to ground human life, explaining the character of truth from its multiple manifestations. But the defense of the attribution of meaning to existence, through the encounter with artistic practices, would not be restricted to the perimeter of educational legislation. The investigation conducted by Fernando Luiz Zanetti (2017; 2018; 2021), based on academic articles dealing with the encounter between education and art, demonstrates how this discussion takes place in the very field of academic research.

Specifically in one of his works, in which he brought together a series of academic articles published between 1995 and 2013, Zanetti (2018) allows us to glimpse how meaning gains importance as one of the expedients mobilized in the production of a certain type of subject, as a result of the link between education and art. His research problem is based on the suspicion that there would be, between these two dis-

cursive realms, “evidence of a practice of art pedagogization” (Zanetti, 2018, p. 256). The researcher considers as pedagogization

[...] the dissemination of statements from certain fields of knowledge (art, philosophy, science, etc.) to other areas of human life, in order to improve or educate the person, according to imperatives of the social, economic and political agenda of their time (Zanetti, 2018, p. 256).

Particularly with regard to the encounter between art and education, the author points out that “[...] the pedagogization of art would imply cleaning up other effects that art may have, only to highlight its educational function” (Zanetti, 2021, p. 8). Thus, based on his research findings, we could envision the recurrence of an imperative according to which meaning would consist of the amalgam that would tie the subject to life on an exclusive basis. That said, we propose here to exercise a suspicion in relation to meaning as an *a priori* category of thought, considering that this proposal could give rise to other possible effects regarding educational practices.

### **Bodies on the scene**

In the early evening of May 8, 2012, Nelson Leirner<sup>2</sup> attended the amphitheater of the University of São Paulo’s Museum of Contemporary Art (MAC USP)<sup>3</sup>. Invited to talk about his work, this artist would count on the projection of his pieces through slides, provided by MAC USP director at that time, Tadeu Chiarelli.

In addition to this technical apparatus, the resources provided by the place also consisted of a chair, a microphone, some water and, finally, a table, on which the artist could rest the second and third items of the described list, while he himself would rest on the first. If all of that weren’t enough, he would still count on the contiguous presence of Chiarelli – author of a book about his work, indeed –, sitting faithfully to his right.

To complete the scenario, both the artist and the director, seated side by side, were in front of an audience, whose arrangement through the space was more or less the following: the prevailing part was accommodated on the available seats, and perhaps one or another seat, in the link between two occupied ones, would remain vacant; some single listeners, in their turn, remained standing, sometimes leaning against the walls; a fortuitous coming and going would briefly generate some movement at the door to the left of the audience. The guest for that night, it should be noted, had a career spanning more than half a century as an artist, having experimented with various languages, such as painting, sculpture, installation, performance and happening.

It can be said, therefore, that nothing was missing for another lecture at the weekly event MAC Meets the Artists to take place presumably: the conditions of possibility for its realization were in order, and the artist did actually attend the amphitheater, committing himself to

remain inside that space during the interval of an hour and a half. Everything seemed to tend to go as planned, except for one detail.

In the very first moments of his presentation, Nelson Leirner communicated to the audience how that hour and a half would follow, which was configured as a scheme used in his lectures: a kind of game rule. The reason for conducting the speech in a certain way, that is, speaking slowly, speaking of something else, was explicitly justified by the need, not other, than to kill time.

As already suggested in his introduction, what followed were movements made up of dribbles, refusals and what he would call grafts. There was an occasional moment in which he let slip some statement closer to what was supposed for the lecture occasion, however as an exception. In general, the artist maintained, during the period, certain coherence, internal to that scheme.

Therefore, he told stories either related or not to his work: from the story about a false tooth missed inside a crowded hall which would give him the opportunity for a performance, in Campinas, to the anecdote about a Brazilian woman he saw lost inside the French department store Galeries Lafayette. Both stories were told under the motto that such peculiarities served to graft, helping to fill the time of the lecture.

It also happened of Leirner to refuse at first to speak of a certain work whose image was projected onto the screen, and to even deny the authorship of another one, for then recognizing it, surprised, as of his own authorship. He also complained about the time that wasn't passing, as well as he asked for cooperation from those present there, on the grounds that without their help he would have nothing left to say. When there was effectively neither help nor topic, there were regular moments of silence.

It couldn't be said that he didn't know what he was doing. In addition to his experience in the artistic production field, he worked as a professor at Armando Álvares Penteado Foundation (FAAP), in São Paulo, for more than two decades. He later moved to Rio de Janeiro to take up another teaching position, then at Parque Lage.

In an interview published in the debut edition of *Celeuma*, Maria Antônia University Center magazine, Leirner (2013) exposed one of his procedures when working as a teacher at FAAP: on the first art class, he asked which students would be interested in passing the semester without attending the course. When a student declared such an interest, the teacher explained the rules of a game, laying out four playing cards. Depending on the chosen card, the student could pass immediately with a full grade or be summarily failed.

In the two scenes brought here by Nelson Leirner, it is possible to identify the ritualized form of pedagogical situations. We could say, however, that the procedure he set in motion, within pedagogical practices horizon, both in the Museum of Contemporary Art and in the undergraduate course classroom, is far from what the culture would tend

to consider as familiar, known or thinkable in relation to the situation of a class. It is this strangeness that now allows us to bring into conversation the two previously mentioned fronts: those relating to the documents' acts and the artist.

Let us return to the first situation concerning the 1996's Brazilian Education Law, the PCN and the academic writings: when it comes to legitimizing the articulation between education and art, the presupposed procedure there makes use of interpretation, taking in account meaning as its prevalent expedient. However, this mechanism of interpretation and explanation of meaning seems to find obstacles to its effectiveness in the scene that took place at MAC USP, insofar as the culturally expected correspondence between a gesture and the ambience within which it takes place is broken there.

Thus, both gestures, those of the documents and that of Leirner, seem to go against each other. Would it be possible to treat them in terms of an eventually given opposition between the educational and the artistic domains? Would art, in Leirner's gesture, be refusing education? On the other hand, would it be possible to approach this relationship in non-categorically antagonistic terms? What theoretical-methodological tools would we need to use to face the practices described so far in their singularity and, from this movement, to make appear a contribution to the educational field?

In view of the questions above, we resorted to the company of a thinker who was ready to rethink his own way of working whenever the sources he studied forced him to do so. According to considerations by Gilles Deleuze, referring to him:

[...] the moment one takes a step out of what has already been thought, when one ventures out of the recognizable and the reassuring, when one has to invent new concepts for unknown lands, the methods and morals collapse, and thinking becomes, as [Michel] Foucault says, a "risky act", a violence that one exerts firstly on oneself. The objections made to a thinker, or even the questions put to him, always come from the shore, and are like buoys thrown in his direction, but more to confuse him and prevent him from moving forward than to help him (Deleuze, 2013, p. 128).

From this excerpt, it matters to think about what would it consist of taking *a step out of what has already been thought*, venturing *out of the recognizable*? What kind of violence would the act of thinking imply first on the one who performs it? What about the strong image of buoys which, once thrown from the shore, get in the way? Finally, what methods would be these ones that fall? Keeping the horizon in this relation of terms constitutes our task here.



## Foucaultian paths: the representational and the emergence of a performative analytical mode

The summons to Michel Foucault interests us because of the analytical procedures that the thinker mobilizes in his ways of doing. We highlight here three of his studies, without prejudice to others that are equally fruitful: the conference *What is an author?* (Foucault, 2013) and the essays *Las Meninas* (Foucault, 1999) and *This is not a pipe* (Foucault, 2008). In all these cases, an analogous procedural path is evidenced.

These texts start from a common ground in relation to the tradition of thought. Such ground is constituted by a certain way of treating representation, one which considers that *representing* – that is, re-presenting, making it present again – would constitute itself as the only, or the main, operation of representation, to the detriment of other acts or possible effects. We can say that the Foucauldian procedure distances itself from this representational bias, in the name of an analytical procedure with a performative dimension.

Firstly coined by language philosopher John Longshaw Austin (1990), the term *performative* refers to a condition in which, when uttering a certain statement, one is neither narrating, reporting, describing nor affirming, but rather performing an action that does not concern the act of speaking. In his words:

When I say, in front of the judge or at the altar, 'I do', I am not reporting a marriage, I am getting married. What name would we give to a sentence or an utterance of this kind? I propose to call it performative sentence or performative utterance, or for short, 'a performative'. [...] Evidently, this name is derived from the English verb *to perform*, a verb correlated to the noun 'action', and indicates that when the utterance is made, an action is being performed, not being, consequently, considered a mere equivalent to say something (Austin, 1990, p. 25, author's highlight).

Once borrowed by post-structuralist approaches, to which the present article is affiliated, the term *performative* extrapolates the scope of the immediate effects of speech acts, heretofore identified and structured within the domain of Linguistic Pragmatics. From now on, it starts to consider modes – no longer immediately identifiable, but neither invisible – of the functioning of any practices.

In this way, taking performative as a mode of analytical treatment of practices implies, with Michel Foucault, privileging the ways practices operate beyond games of meaning grounded in a correspondence between surface and depth.

As we can already see in the approach to the conference *What is an author?* (Foucault, 2013), representational notions show how useful and convenient they are in principle, until they reach a point where they break down. What is precisely at stake here is to capture and dilate this moment as well as its effects.



The aforementioned conference mobilizes an operator coined by the French thinker as author function. Such mobilization occurs on two levels. The first one takes place from an environment of representational thinking, insofar as Foucault evokes the categories of author, work and writing. In a representational sense, these categories would configure the common ground shared between him and his listeners.

Although they constitute representational notions, Foucault outlines their concrete effects in the world. From them, thus, it is possible to enumerate that the author function has a legal function; it is not universal and constant; it confers credibility and status; it gives rise to a particular way of apprehending texts; it doesn't refer to a real individual; and it operates as a principle of writing unit (Foucault, 2013). In concluding this more empathetic exposition in relation to representational premises, Foucault capitulates all the above, claiming "[...] to have given the term 'author' an overly restricted meaning. I limited myself to the *author considered as the author of a text*, a book or a work to which the production can legitimately be attributed" (Foucault, 2013, p. 284, our highlight).

As we can see, even though one assumes representational notions from an analytical procedure of performative bias, that is, one that investigates their productive character, the persistence in the mobilization of these notions still tends to imply a limit. Such a limit would be given by the effect of rebounding between the notions of author and work, author and book, author and text.

In view of the above mentioned observation, Foucault removes the author function from these categories, in order to bring up the problem at stake in the conference: the economy of discursivity itself. Now based on the idea of "establishment of discursivity" (Foucault, 2013, p. 286), it gives rise to another treatment level of the author function.

Insofar as it points to the mode of production and circulation of discourses, the establishment of discursivity would no longer take into account something like a procedure or a style that would refer to an author *subject*. Instead, it starts to consider the effects that go beyond the text itself, that is, "the possibility and the rule of formulating *other* texts" (Foucault, 2013, p. 284, our highlight). Taking Marx and Freud as emblematic examples, Foucault (2013, p. 286) considers that

[...] they not only made possible a certain number of analogies, they made possible (and just as much) a certain number of differences. They opened the space for something else different from them and which, however, belongs to what they founded.

This analytical shift allows the French thinker to suggest that the way in which discourses "[...] are articulated in social relations is deciphered [...] more directly in the game of the author function and in its modifications than in themes or concepts that they operate" (Foucault, 2013, p. 291). In this sense, a kind of methodological desacralization of themes and concepts should be considered, in favor of an analytical

procedure that intends to be suspicious about the assumption that representations only represent. The consequence of that would be a suspicion regarding identification and recognition procedures.

Once this performative setting of thought was presented, let us now look at some analytical strategies mobilized in the company of two pictorial works.

First published in 1968 in honor of René Magritte, on the occasion of his death the previous year, the essay *This is not a pipe* is woven from the homonymous artist's painting, arbitrarily evoking elements that allow Foucault (2008) to elaborate another treatment of the relationship, traditionally of correspondence, between words and images.

In the painting, the phrase *This is not a pipe* is written next to an engraving of a pipe. The radicality of Magritte's gesture, therefore, would consist in positioning linguistic and visual signs in a relationship of mere contiguity, as a "[...] smooth stone, which brings figures and words" (Foucault, 2008, p. 54), showing, thus, their inequality. From an irreverent gesture in relation to the representational way of addressing representation, radicality would emerge from the procedure, that is, from the way of doing, and not from the form alone: "Painting of the 'Same', freed from the 'as if'" (Foucault, 2008, p. 59).

The idea that painting is not synonymous with affirming emerges as an effect of the encounter between the Foucauldian procedure and the painting *This is not a pipe*, whose procedure, in turn, reveals the elision of a commonplace between words and images. Indeed, Michel Foucault's entire analytical journey in *This is not a pipe* culminates in a take on painting by a performative aspect, focused on its operative mode. This one doesn't say, doesn't mean, doesn't represent; it produces effects that touch the most general scope of modes of thought, and the supposed pretensions of the person who made it are no longer at stake.

As we have seen, the performative effect related to Magritte's painting could be circumscribed as an impediment, that is, an action that compromises the conditions for carrying out another one; in this case, the impediment would affect the very gesture of taking the work in a representational key. Also in the introductory essay from the originally published in 1966 *The order of things*, Foucault (1999) draws attention to a certain action over actions in the company of the painting *Las Meninas*, by Diego Velázquez. Unlike an impediment, however, in this case the performative effect would be of the order of an obligation.

In a movement that considers the two-dimensional materiality of the painting, Michel Foucault circulates through some aesthetic premises of the classic episteme, with which *Las Meninas* is contemporary. Cutting the canvas with imaginary lines, he evokes principles of painting such as golden ratio and perspective.

In the following movement, he traces lines that overtake the two-dimensional area of the canvas, lines that connect it to any spectator. From what is portrayed there, he draws attention to what the painting

does, that is, to a performative dimension. The painter's frontal gaze, holding a brush, in front of a canvas of which the spectator can only see the back side, serves as a trigger for Foucault to shed light on the notion, not classical, but modern, of subject.

The moment they place the spectator in the field of their gaze, the painter's eyes capture him, constrain him to enter the painting, assign him a place at once privileged and obligatory, appropriate his luminous and visible species and project it onto the inaccessible surface of the over-turned screen. He sees his invisibility made visible to the painter and transposed into an image that is definitely invisible to himself (Foucault, 1999, p. 6).

By considering a performative dimension in the painting, Foucault sets up a dramaturgy through which is evidenced how we are entangled: as spectators, we are forced to the screen. However, there is no place for us in its pictorial game, not even in the reflection of the mirror that is portrayed precisely in the center of the canvas, since there is already the image of other characters reflected on it.

It is worth pointing out that the interpellation once operated – it should be stressed: via Foucault – by the canvas is impersonal, because what is at stake, in the philosopher's onslaught, is the very category of thought with which we have been urged to deal with since the establishment of the modern episteme. In other words, Velázquez's painting displays itself completed, integrated, perfectly functioning without depending on a subject positioned in relation to it. Hence the author concludes by stating that, freed from the relationship with the subject, "[...] representation can take place as pure representation" (Foucault, 1999, p. 21).

The introductory essay of *The order of things* allows us to suggest that, not so long ago, people actually thought without the notion of subject; moreover, the essay also made it noticed by the strategic company of the painting *Las meninas*. Such a feat was only possible to the extent that Michel Foucault operated a disjunction between classical representation, formalized on the canvas, and the act of representing, substituting the latter for the act of questioning, of constraining.

The evocation of the three texts shows that the procedures mentioned above make a shift in the way of approaching the problem of representation. Thus, representation would no longer be circumscribed as an operation of transcendence – that is, as an expression of an enigmatic meaning to be revealed, interpreted or translated.

In other words, unlike rejecting representations, Foucault simply renounces to consider them from an exclusively representational dimension, taking them in their dynamics and their performative effects. We could say that, instead of dialectically opposing the notion of representation, the Foucauldian procedure investigates singular practices in their effective constitution, in their details. This requires him to distance himself from the thematic circumscriptions as well as the alleged

contents underlying them. This distancing of representation in relation to the exclusive horizon of meaning allows another approach to such an operation, giving rise to affirming the very notion of *practice*. Through the understanding of Paul Veyne:

Foucault has not discovered a new instance, called 'practice', that was unknown until then: he strives to see people's practice *as it really is*, he does not say something different from what any historian talks about, namely, what people do: simply, he decides to talk about it *exactly*, to describe its sharp contours, instead of speaking in vague and noble terms (Veyne, 2008, p. 323, author's highlights).

In Michel Foucault's company, it is proposed here to forge an exile condition as a methodological assumption for the purposes of a performative mode of analysis. It is, therefore, a matter of exiling a practice in relation to the discursive territory within which it is situated. Such a movement requires that the singularity of a practice be affirmed as it is contingent on its surface, to the detriment of that territory's abstract generality.

### **Between the pedagogical and the artistic: a zone of indiscernibility**

After the contact with Foucauldian theorization, let us return to the episode in which an artist found himself in a situation of pedagogical ambience. Nelson Leirner had been invited to give a lecture. However, as already mentioned, he made use of a presentation scheme basically composed of dribbles, refusals and grafts.

Interestingly, Leirner didn't abandon the lecture's *mise-en-scène*, that is, he didn't refuse its ritualized form, remaining in the same chair for the due period. Notwithstanding the artist's diligence in his procedure, however, it is the audience who is responsible for endowing the picturesque atmosphere engendered there with a more familiar air, not to say a school one: it's at the time of formulating questions to the master that a certain pedagogical disposition of the audience imposes itself, making appear what the artist's scheme had kept silent until then.

We find ourselves, therefore, in a zone of indistinction in which certain recognizably pedagogical and artistic modes intermingle, thus shuffling the universe of meanings that has historically organized each of these territories.

Considering a certain pedagogical prerogative, through which a close connection between the meaning of art and the meaning of life is affirmed, we can assert that Nelson Leirner's performance, in the event, consisted basically in compromising this order of meanings, resisting the task of illuminating pedagogically the audience from his legitimacy as a specialist. His resistance could be seen when he showed certain discomfort in having to talk about supposed meanings of his creation gestures, especially regarding his own artistic productions.

In this way, it would be possible to say that the artist bypassed the task of setting in motion some pedagogical rituals, specifically those that refer to traditional ways of approaching teaching and learning (Silva, 2002). Just him: artist and teacher.

Suggested by the ritualized form, we could tend to affiliate ourselves with the idea that what happened on that May 8 was, indeed, a lecture, like so many others promoted at MAC Meets the Artists. In the same way, we could be tempted to identify the aforementioned event with the stamp of the artistic practice known as performance. The demand for identification would lead us to designate Nelson Leirner's experience either as a pedagogical or as an artistic event; however, even if we took any sides, the hesitation would linger.

It is not by chance that precisely this ambiguous gesture of the artist interests us here strategically. Thus, we prefer the company of Nelson Leirner over that of Paul Valéry, for instance, whose essay *The problem of museums* (Valéry, 2008) also points to a barely evident relationship between the artistic and pedagogical domains<sup>4</sup>, although not in the same way as the experience which is being addressed here.

By specifically approaching the museums' pedagogical function, Valéry is motivated by an uncomfortable relationship with what could be taken as a pedagogical trait in operation during a visit to the Louvre museum in France. In its first moments, the author announces: "At the first step I take in the direction of beautiful things, my cane is taken away, a warning forbids me to smoke" (Valéry, 2008, p. 31). This first step is followed by a succession of more elements that erect an obstacle to the realization of his aesthetic experience, configuring "a cold confusion" (Valéry, 2008, p. 31).

In this case, it would be very easy to differentiate the domains at stake, and the artistic seems to be losing a battle in relation to the pedagogical: "Goodbye [...]; I will not go further" (Valéry, 2008, p. 33). It's important to note here that, in Valéry, the non-harmonious relationship established between the artistic and the pedagogical is on the order of antagonism.

Our interest in the company of the Brazilian visual artist, in turn, is of a different order. First, we haven't been able to comfortably address the issue in the same polarization or opposition key. The problem of having to speak for an hour and a half is not resolved through a radical refusal to such an occasion, but through a radical presence in the scene, that is, through the act of putting on the agenda the very problem of having to speak – and above all, of having to speak about his own work, as he states at MAC USP –, making use of the speech itself. In a word, the relationship between the artistic and the pedagogical in Nelson Leirner's lecture is thus given by an agonistic condition, that is, a type of "[...] relationship that is, at the same time, one of reciprocal incitement and of struggle; it is, therefore, less an opposition of terms that block each other than a permanent provocation" (Foucault, 1995, p. 245).

The effect of the pedagogical ambience situation conducted by this artist is to blur borders, to compromise culturally agreed meanings: one cannot easily say that such a situation is constituted as a lecture nor as a performance; even if we tried, we wouldn't be able to capture the precision of this act, because something fatally insists on escaping us. We can only say with less hesitation that a zone of indiscernibility is established there. Such indiscernibility would occur between the pedagogical form of the lecture and the artistic form of the performance. Furthermore, we refer more specifically to indiscernibility between artistic and pedagogical procedures and effects. The specificities of the domains of knowledge at stake, Art and Education, finally face their limits, pushing us to explore new modalities of relationships and implications between practices that seem disparate in principle.

On the horizon of artistic practices, the reported situation has absolutely nothing strange or unforeseen. In 1968, for example, the Polish artist and Fluxus member, Bazon Brock, installed a *visitor school* in the fourth edition of dOCUMENTA, a five-year art exhibition based in the German city of Kassel, putting into operation a device called *action teaching* (Schmitt, 2011).

Forty-eight years after that, in São Paulo, a room at the Museum of Modern Art (MAM), in São Paulo, was reserved for an exhibition entitled *Education as raw material*. Along the room walls, there were several plates similar to those that usually accompany artworks in exhibition spaces. However, instead of captions containing data such as title, author, year and materials used, these plates presented statements similar to those found in textbooks, bringing problem propositions to be worked on by visitors; around each of these plates, there were the respective productions by the public. The latter were mixed with previously installed works by artists such as Graziela Kunsch, Amílcar Packer and Jorge Menna Barreto, among others.

In addition to not being new, these shuffling relationships have already been probed by scholars both in the arts and in education. Edmilson Vasconcelos (2007), for example, does so based on the concept coined by Ricardo Basbaum: *artist-etc.* According to the former, the latter considers as an *artist-artist* the one who would be an artist all the time; on the other hand, the condition of *artist-etc.* refers to the moment when the artist questions his function and role, getting involved in non-artistic practices in principle. From the various possible derivations of this concept, Vasconcelos settles in the category of artist-teacher, and, with it, investigates a certain hybridity which can be evidenced in the two following situations set up by different artists.

In the first one, the author describes a situation occurred in 1966 in the academic environment of the traditional St. Martin School of Art. There, as an adjunct professor, the English artist John Lathan invited students and artists to chew pages from a book by Clement Greenberg, during a class. As he says, the artist collected the pages once spit out in a container for later addition of chemical products, and the *distilled* version of the copy was returned to the local library from where it had

been borrowed, which would lead to the professor's dismissal. Decades later, a suitcase containing the experience ingredients would enter the collection of the Museum of Modern Art in New York (MoMA).

The author refers the second case to the occasion when the Brazilian artist Jorge Menna Barreto forged a site with a pedagogical ambience inside a São Paulo Cultural Center (CCSP) exhibition space in 2004, teaching eight classes. Once granted for the purpose of holding a solo exhibition, the room was used by Barreto for the creation of a project called *Matter: intervention workshop*; therefore, the workshop would be confused with the artwork.

Besides these practices carried out by artists, we also find a certain shuffling in the order of the exhibition spaces. Cayo Honorato (2007) discusses this singular investment in pedagogical practices by three major periodical art exhibitions, namely: the sixth edition of the Mercosul Biennial, the dOCUMENTA #12 and the sixth edition of *Manifesta*.

At the sixth Mercosul Biennial, held in the Brazilian city of Porto Alegre, a pedagogical curatorship was proposed, as well as the Biennial's institutional presence in Rio Grande do Sul and Santa Catarina schools, and finally meetings between mediators and students months before the exhibition opening. In its turn, in the 12<sup>th</sup> edition of Kassel's dOCUMENTA, education would play the strategic role of "art advocate and the public's counterpoint" (Honorato, 2007, p. 118). In *Manifesta*, itinerant European contemporary art biennial, the curatorial team had proposed the realization of an *art school* instead of an art exhibition, which ended up not being accomplished.

Let us consider the different ways in which both Vasconcelos' and Honorato's studies circumscribe the practices evoked. Both cuts have specific ways of configuring the data, in correspondence to their respective analytical needs. Therefore, the data are presented in a gradient of dilation that ranges from brief general mention to focused description.

As in these two cases, here we have no need to present data in their entirety, in order to ensure the truth of an analysis. We consider that the very way of presenting the data also composes an analytical procedure. In other words, these or those data are exposed one way or another in view of what is intended to make appear.

In this sense, as presented here, Nelson Leirner's gestures imply an impediment to the operation of recognition of art and education territories, dissolving both in a discrete event. From the interior either of the pedagogical, or the artistic, or even both and, above all, at the same time, from a corporeality that has been made through action, the author and work units were suspended for a moment in Nelson Leirner's company.

For this very reason, a precious analytical procedure, according to tradition both of artistic and pedagogical discursivity, of seeking meaning or foundation in Leirner's gesture, as if such a gesture 1) expressed a truth 2) of an aesthetic nature, 3) about the act of creation, 4)



which could or should be evidenced and transmitted to the other, from an incitement to the infinite speech of a master, was constrained.

In the end, it would be possible to extract a common point between Nelson Leirner's procedure and that of Michel Foucault: each in his own way and within the context of each one's action, they both problematized the operation of representation and made the gesture of interpreting difficult. In company of Gilles Deleuze (2013, p. 109):

Precisely in Foucault, the surface essentially becomes surface of inscription: it is the whole theme of the utterance "at the same time not visible and not hidden". Archeology is the constitution of an inscription surface. If you do not constitute an inscription surface, the non-hidden will remain non-visible. The surface is not opposed to depth (we are back to the surface), but to interpretation. Foucault's method has always been opposed to methods of interpretation.

In his gesture before the audience at the MAC USP amphitheater, Leirner distanced himself from an encounter with both education and art as discursive realms. In doing so, he freed himself from the obligation to collaborate with an experience based on the already thought. Once determined both in relation to the domain of art and education, his gesture faced the exclusively representational mode of functioning of representation. With this, he faced the belief in the possibility of apprehending the truth – that is, of a supposed meaning already given – through cognitive strategies of mirroring the real.

This usual way of functioning of representation, supported by the principle that the truth would reside in something to be discovered, and thus reverberating a presumed horizon of meanings, tends to constitute the procedural contribution mobilized both within the discursive realm of education and of art. Differently from that, in the company of Michel Foucault, the true, as a production vector of any practices, interests in the very measure of its fiction, that is, it can be investigated not as a reserve of meanings, but as an effect of these same practices.

## **Final considerations**

The previous discussions point to inevitable implications in the field of educational practices. The core of such discussions resides in the attention to the procedures linked to the operations of representation.

In company with Michel Foucault, we emphasize the possibility of affirming that representations operate, make people act, since they produce effects in the games in which they are inscribed. Here, we have approached representation in terms of an operation that goes beyond the mere expression mechanism of a supposed truth. With this, we sought to show the need to mobilize another analytical mode, one of an eminently performative bias.

The treatment of relations between the artistic and the pedagogical in an agonistic approach, investing in the indiscernibility character of the relations arising between these two fields, allowed us to glimpse a performative force in representation. With this, another way of approaching the practices, and here more specifically, the educational ones, is made possible.

Since the first movement of our discussion, we saw that practices refuse to conform to the determination of the disciplinary domains given by culture – in the case of this article, the pedagogical linked to education and the artistic to art. Now, if it becomes possible to admit the pedagogical in art and the artistic in education, our way of thinking is forced to displace. This is justified once suspicion in relation to well-demarcated disciplinary fields requires suspending the horizon of meanings that would legitimize the presumed identities of these practices. Therefore, it is sought to glimpse analytically in what ways whatever happens in the very vortex of the educational domain can disturb the discursive order of pedagogization. Occasionally here, we seek to do so by catching simple gestures which took place in a situation of pedagogical ambience.

It is precisely the affirmation of relevance in relation to the singular character of practices that invites us to investigate them in detail, in order to make appear noises, dissonances, resistances, sabotages, discreet desertions, impurities, constraints in action, in relation to the discursive realm within which they are situated.

With this, it is necessary to shift the discussions about themes and contents supposedly pertaining to education and art, in favor of an attention to the very ways of functioning by singular practices fortuitously at stake in a given situation.

Advocating for the performative mode of thinking, this article makes seen an analysis strategy that can be called an exile operation. It is about exiling a practice from within the discursive realm in which it is inserted, investing in a fatal attention to the very dramaturgy of its forces in action.

Received on 11 March 2021  
Accepted on 15 December 2021

## Notes

- 1 Regarding the methodological character of drawing attention to evidence, which is important to this work: “One thing is evident when it imposes its presence on the eye with such clarity that all doubt is impossible. Are you what you don’t see?! Yes, there it is, look, that’s how it is, there you have it... it’s obvious! Only a madman or a blind man would not see it! Great, undoubtedly, is the power of evidence. But Foucault endeavored to show the contingency of evidence and the complexity of the operations of its manufacture. What everyone sees hasn’t always been seen like this. What is evident, moreover, is nothing but the result of a certain arrangement of space, of a particular exposition of things and a certain constitution of the place of the view” (Larrosa, 1994, p. 83).

- 2 On March 7th, 2020, Nelson Leirner passed away. We dedicate this text *in memoriam* to him, to whom we inscribe here a posthumous acknowledgment.
- 3 The audiovisual record of the occasion, witnessed *in loco* and reported here, is available for public access on the website of the Museum of Contemporary Art of the University of São Paulo: [http://www.mac.usp.br/mac/conteudo/corsoseventos/mac\\_encontra/2012\\_1/nelsonleirner\\_vd.asp](http://www.mac.usp.br/mac/conteudo/corsoseventos/mac_encontra/2012_1/nelsonleirner_vd.asp). Access in: Aug. 31st, 2021.
- 4 In this regard, see Pereira (2013), an approach triggered by the aforementioned essay by Paul Valéry, more specifically in relation to the pedagogical function of museums.

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Editor in charge: Lodenir Karnopp

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