

STARTING FROM SCHOOL: CONTEMPORARY ART PROJECTS INVOLVING EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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The article discusses the ways of integrating contemporary art and educational institutions (from children's art schools to universities), asking what an artist can add to existent educational contexts besides teaching as such, and vice versa, what she and her art projects benefit from them. From a brief discussion on the educational turn in arts and both positive and negative approaches towards it among art critics, artists and educators, the article proceeds to analyse several case studies: the art practice by Nomeda and Gediminas Urbonas, Kristina Inčiūraitė's projects with children's art schools, and the Alytus Art School as a phenomenon. All these cases tend to be easily dismissed from the scope of the educational turn, as they use existing educational environments as their starting point and resource, instead of appropriating educational formats into the gallery context; so the article investigates what resources and challenges a permanent educational environment offers to artists in compare to temporary school, workshop, etc.

KEYWORDS: educational institutions, educational turn, artist at school, collaboration, commonality and individuality.

Some children may form a memory in their minds; some may not.

On Kawara, *Instructions for "Pure Consciousness" Exhibition*¹

In 1997, conceptual artist On Kawara exhibited a small part of his *Today* series, paintings depicting dates

from January 1, 1997 to January 7, 1997, in about twenty kindergartens around the world. Seven paintings picturing nothing but the date when each of them had been painted were hung up inside a kindergarten's classroom for a limited audience of 4–6 year-olds, with the artist's instruction forbidding to announce the

¹ Quoted from: Akiko Bernhöf, "On Kawara: *Pure Consciousness*", in: *Skulptur Projekte Münster 2017: Catalogue*, Eds. Kasper König, Britta Peters, Marianne Wagner, LWL-Museum für Kunst und Kultur, Hermann Arnhold, Leipzig: Spector Books, 2017, p. 370.

exhibition, to let in any outside public, and to explain its contents to the children². This “pedagogical” project refused to educate or induce any predetermined knowledge to the kindergarten’s audience except the basic information on numbers and a way of counting time and date.

On Kawara’s gesture, though directly related to educational environments, seems very much different from contemporary art’s recent obsession with education, called by many an educational, or pedagogical, turn³. Instead of appropriating educational formats, such as a lecture, workshop, guided tour or temporary school, Kawara’s project remains in the background of the daily activities of its tiny preschool audience, relying merely upon an undefined possible memory that the paintings might shape. Loosely inspired by On Kawara’s idea of forming a possible memory instead of indoctrinating certain knowledge, this essay aims to investigate the ways of integrating contemporary art and educational environments, and to ask what an artist can add to existent educational contexts besides teaching as such, and vice versa, what she and her art projects benefit from educational environments.

To be precise, several case studies analysed in this article are also completely distinct from Kawara’s subtle approach, as they have clear goals, both a primary and secondary audience, and aim at communicating their aesthetic message instead of blurring it. Yet, they also

differ from the projects most often described by researchers or critics writing on the educational turn with the focus either on temporary schools initiated by artists, or on lecture-performances (realised within the visual or performative arts (theatre, dance) field). Here I mostly analyse how an *existent* educational environment (that of a university or children’s art school) is employed for artistic purposes broader than education per se. Besides that, every case brings forth particular questions, such as: what ethical obstacles art projects implemented within educational institutions might encounter; what is the relationship between individuality and collectivity in education; what benefits a temporary and a permanent educational platform has; etc. The article is built upon several case studies or related to the Lithuanian art scene: the art practice by Nomedas and Gediminas Urbonas⁴, Kristina Inčiūraitė’s projects with children’s art schools, and the ways of extended education of the Alytus Art School and Redas Diržys as its director. These three practices are also the most consistent in the Lithuanian context, in addition to numerous artistic workshops and lectures within curated or individual projects⁵.

EDUCATIONAL TURN: SEVERAL PROS AND CONS

The interest in the relation between education and art among art practitioners and cultural researchers is wide-ranging and largely pertains both to practical interests (many artists and scholars work or teach in art

2 See: Kris Cohen, “Pedagogy without Education”, [online], June 2, 2015, [accessed 07-07-2017], <http://www.open-set.com/krcohen/essays/pedagogy-without-education/>.

3 As Paul O’Neill and Mick Wilson put it: “Discussions, talks, symposia, education programmes, debates and discursive practices have long played a supporting role to the exhibition of contemporary art, <...>. Historically, these discussions have been peripheral to the exhibition, operating in a secondary role in relation to the display of art for public consumption. More recently, these discursive interventions and relays have become central to contemporary practice; they have now become the main event.”; Paul O’Neill & Mick Wilson, “Introduction”, in: *Curating and Educational Turn*, Eds. Paul O’Neill & Mick Wilson, London: Open Editions, Amsterdam: de Appel, 2010, p. 12.

4 As the Urbonas’ practice is international, I relate them here to the Lithuanian art scene mostly due to their Lithuanian origin and their earlier projects that were largely based on local issues and material.

5 E. g. the exhibition guide of the XII Baltic Triennial claimed: “It’s primarily an exhibition at the CAC, but the programme of events – talks, launches, presentations, classes and performances – spanning six weeks will expand behind the scenes.” (*XII Baltic Triennial: Exhibition Guide*, Ed. Virginija Januškevičiūtė, Vilnius: CAC, 2015, back cover). Statements like this around contemporary art exhibitions have become rather common.

schools, academies or universities) and political issues of a broader scale (with the main focus on educational reforms due to the Bologna Process). The so-called educational, or pedagogical, turn in arts is therefore concomitant to the research and publishing on the issues of *education* as such (mostly on the level of higher education), along with artists and curators' concern about the quality and goals of institutionalised arts education. Although I am not going to examine the latter issues, they will nevertheless appear among my references as a necessary context for the analysis of art projects being implemented within or taking off from the sphere of education.

The educational, or pedagogical, turn came under scrutiny in the first decade of this century: the flood of educational formats within art institutions and artists' projects has not remained unnoticed by art critics and theorists. By no accident, the most prominent statements, texts and selections on the issue saw light along with those on participatory art practices with some art projects commonly cited in both contexts (e.g. Joseph Beuys's Bureau for Direct Democracy, 1972)⁶. On the one hand, pedagogical formats (workshops, seminars, debates, schools) seem to be perfect for a more evident engagement and direct contact to art audiences (e.g.

Claire Bishop has argued that pedagogical projects continue participatory tendencies of the 1990s, "giving content to conviviality, while aiming to produce a concrete intervention in the social field."⁷). On the other hand, while blaming official (art) education for the one-way knowledge traffic and top-down relationship between the teacher and the student, artists and curators aspire for an alternative – more engaging and critical formats of education: as noticed by Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson, "in many instances, there is a pronounced impulse to distance these platforms from the established formats of museum education and related official cultural pedagogies" and to adopt "counter-institutional ethos"⁸.

Approaches divide according to the position one is speaking from: curators and artists largely claim that art-educational projects are more open, experimental, independent and liberating in compare with established and long-term educational environments. Employing education as a medium of art-making also allows artists to retrieve the position lost against the growing administrative corps in academia, "where the artist-teacher is merely one element within a matrix of expectations and institutional aims within established educational models"⁹. Yet the other side, that of the "traditional" educational formats, finds many shortcomings in artistic or curatorial education, blaming it for staying within the same art circle: "The many 'academies', 'schools', 'seminars', 'workshops', 'sessions', 'encounters' and 'lessons' initiated in the course of the 'educational turn' are largely attended – at least as far as I have been able to observe – by people who are similar in habits, lifestyle and attitudes to those of the

6 *Curating and Educational Turn* (2010), Ed. Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson, appeared only two years before Claire Bishop's grand oeuvre *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (2012). Bishop's comprehensive research also includes a chapter on pedagogical art projects, which received an impulse from her earlier text "The New Masters of the Liberal Arts: Artists Rewrite the Rules of Pedagogy" from 2007, the same year as Kristina Lee Podesva's trend-delineating essay "A Pedagogical Turn: Brief Notes on Education as Art". Other significant volumes and articles related to the topic (also to (art) education in general) include: *Notes for An Art School* (2006) for the cancelled Manifesta 6, a sequence of articles in the early issues of *e-flux journal*, such as Irit Rogoff's "Turning" (Issue 0, 2008), Tom Holert's "Art in the Knowledge-Based Polis" (Issue 3, 2009), Dieter Lesage's "The Academy is Back" (Issue 4, 2009), and the whole issue dedicated to the Bologna Process, edited by Irit Rogoff (Issue 14, 2010). The famous series *Documents of Contemporary Art* featured both a volume on *Participation*, Ed. Claire Bishop (2006), and on *Education*, Ed. Felicity Allen (2011).

7 Claire Bishop, "The New Masters of the Liberal Arts: Artists Rewrite the Rules of Pedagogy" (2007), republished in: *Education*, Ed. Felicity Allen, London: Whitechapel Gallery, and Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2011, p. 198.

8 Paul O'Neill & Mick Wilson, *op. cit.*, pp. 12–13.

9 Liam Gillick, "Denial & Function: A history of disengagement in relation to teaching", in: *Notes for an Art School*, [online], 2006, [accessed 18-07-2017], <https://manifesta.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/NotesForAnArtSchool.pdf>.

curators.”¹⁰ Despite curatorial velleities to demolish barriers, the art scene is not easy to enter without (or even with) extra mediation, as it has certain rules and language, or “strategies of demarcation” that help distinguish between “insiders” and “outsiders”¹¹. Artists are also criticised for ignoring pedagogical work done in established departments of education, while simultaneously appropriating educational forms into the galleries so as to become “the new pioneers”¹². Certain arguments speak both pro and contra the merging of educational paradigm and artists’ practices: the concept of “artistic research”, which spread in post-Bologna art academies along with the willing or reluctant division between BA and MA studies and the introduction of practice-based doctorate programmes¹³, can be equally understood as putting art students and artist-researchers under the constraint of academic production and, at the same time, as liberating art academies from being meant exclusively for pedagogical rather than artistic production. As Dieter Lesage puts it, “Whereas in pre-Bologna times, art academies had been mainly places of teaching, the Bologna Process opens up a discursive space in which art academies can begin to understand themselves also as laboratories of artistic research.”¹⁴

10 Carmen Maria Moersch, “Alliances for Unlearning: On the Possibility of Future Collaborations between Gallery Education and Institutions of Critique”, in: *Afterall*, [online], Issue 26, spring 2011, [accessed 17-07-2017], <https://www.afterall.org/journal/issue.26/alliances-for-unlearning-on-the-possibility-of-future-collaborations-between-gallery-educa>.

11 Franz Billmeyer, “Mission Fulfilled: Arts Education and Visual Culture”, in: *Arts Education Beyond Art: Teaching Art in Times of Change*, Eds. Barend van Heusden and Pascal Gielen, Amsterdam: Valiz, 2015, p. 82.

12 Jessica Hamlin, “Neoliberalism and Education”, in: *e-flux conversations*, [online], January 23, 2017, [accessed 18-07-2017], <https://conversations.e-flux.com/t/jessica-hamlin-neoliberalism-and-education/5924>.

13 Dieter Lesage, “Art, Research, Entertainment”, in: *Teaching Art in Neoliberal Realm: Realism versus Cynism*, Eds. Pascal Gielen and Paul De Bruyne, Amsterdam: Valiz, 2012, p. 114.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 117.

Several cases I will analyse thereafter make use of educational environments precisely as a site or condition for the artistic production. Artists have long since been educators, working either in the higher education (thus being part of academia) or in a more peripheral zone of children’s education (children’s art schools). Via performance of teaching or giving lectures (either public or behind school doors) an artist not merely shares/interchanges knowledge, but also shows up as a person behind her works and produces herself as an artist-person. No wonder why many essays related to pedagogical tendencies in arts (either visual or performative) start their narratives from Joseph Beuys and his pedagogical and art practices, including his claim that “to be a teacher is my greatest work of art”, his Bureau for Direct Democracy at *documenta 5* (1972) based on a debate with the exhibition’s public, the Free International University of Creativity and Interdisciplinary Research founded in 1974, and, subsequently, 100 Days of the Free International University at *documenta 6* (1977)¹⁵. As Jan Verwoert argues, Beuys staged his persona as a teacher in much the same way as he

15 See e.g.: Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, London, New York: Verso, 2012, pp. 241–274; Kristina Lee Podesva, “A Pedagogical Turn: Brief Notes on Education as Art”, in: *Fillip*, [online], Issue 6, summer 2007, [accessed 13-07-2017], <https://fillip.ca/content/a-pedagogical-turn>; Raphael Vella, “Re-Imagining Classrooms: Educational Environments in Contemporary Art”, in: *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, [online], Vol. 16, No. 12, August 15, 2015, p. 7, [accessed 13-07-2017], <http://www.ijea.org/v16n12/index.html>; Cath Lambert, “Psycho classrooms: teaching as a work of art”, in: *Social & Cultural Geography*, Vol. 12, No. 1, February 2011, p. 31; Grant Kester, “The Noisy Optimism of Immediate Action: Theory, Practice, and Pedagogy in Contemporary Art”, in: *Art Journal*, Vol. 71, No. 2, 2012, p. 87. Jan Verwoert has rather extensively researched on Beuys’ pedagogical activity in the context of his art: Jan Verwoert, “Class Action”, in: *Frieze*, [online], September 2006, [accessed 17-07-2017], <https://frieze.com/article/class-action>; Jan Verwoert, “The Boss: On the Unresolved Question of Authority in Joseph Beuys’ Oeuvre and Public Image”, in: *e-flux journal*, [online], Issue 1, December 2008, [accessed 17-07-2017], <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/01/68485/the-boss-on-the-unresolved-question-of-authority-in-joseph-beuys-oeuvre-and-public-image/>.

did his entire art practice and public appearances¹⁶, and, according to Claire Bishop, “Beuys’s commitment to free education was for the most part dependent on his own charismatic leadership, rendering unclear the line between education and one-man performance.”¹⁷

Although an artist’s charisma is still of big importance for a successful educational project as it has a lot to do with persuading, engaging, interaction etc., the focus of the projects I will discuss here is not on the act of teaching but on the artistic production put out via means of pedagogy. Bishop claims that “today’s artists <...> are less likely to present themselves as the central pedagogic figure. They outsource the work of lecturing and teaching to specialists in the field – in line with the broader tendency in recent performance art to delegate performance to other people”¹⁸. Yet I would propose that the main difference between practices such as Beuys’s and those that are more usual today (be they implemented separately from established educational institutions and frameworks, or within) is not about the distinction between teaching (or similar) and outsourcing the teaching, but about using the educational environment and circumstances as a source of intellect, skills, research, ideas, physical acts and appearances that together make up the body of a *work* of art (both as labour and product), instead of focusing on a particular performance of teaching (lecturing, moderating, mediating)¹⁹.

16 Jan Verwoert, “Class Action”, [online].

17 Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, p. 244.

18 *Ibid.*

19 The latter strategy has evolved into a separate genre of lecture-performances, adopted not only by visual and performance artists (Robert Morris, Joseph Beuys, Andrea Fraser, Tino Sehgal, Hito Steyerl, among many others), but also by choreographers, dancers and theatre directors and actors (Jérôme Bel, Xavier Le Roy, Barbara Matijević & Giuseppe Chico, a.o.). Among writings on this topic: *Lecture Performance: Catalogue*, Eds. Kölnischer Kunstverein and Museum of Contemporary Art Belgrad, Berlin: Revolver Publishing, 2009; Patricia Milder, “Teaching as Art: The Contemporary Lecture-Performance”, in: *PAJ* 97, January 2011, pp. 13–27; Rike Frank, “When Form Starts Talking: On lecture-Performances”, in: *Afterall*,

The artist duo Nomeda and Gediminas Urbonas has a long practice in participatory and collaborative art projects, so a discussion about educational formats in their case seems rather natural considering the strong relation between the pedagogical and the participatory. Yet the artists’ biography makes it clear that the “educational turn” in their practice was concurrent to professional turns, i.e. their engagement with academy. In 2005, Gediminas Urbonas started to teach at the Trondheim Academy of Fine Art, part of the Norway University of Science and Technology (KIT/NTNU), and since 2009, he has been Associate Professor in the Visual Arts Program of the Department of Architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), later on – director of the MIT Program in Art, Culture and Technology. His partner Nomeda has engaged into research activities parallel to Gediminas’s teaching, both in KIT and MIT. Along with the start of the career at the MIT, Nomeda and Gediminas Urbonas founded US: Urbonas Studio (“interdisciplinary research program that advocates for the reclamation of public culture in the face of overwhelming privatization, stimulating cultural and political imagination as tools for social change”²⁰) as a representation of their new artistic identity based on

Issue 33, Summer 2013, pp. 4–15; Vangelis Athanassopoulos, “Language, visibility, and the body. On the return of discourse in contemporary performance”, in: *Journal of Aesthetics & Culture*, [online], Vol. 5, 2013, [accessed 26-07-2017], <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.3402/jac.v5i0.21658>; Mashinka Firunts, “Staging Professionalization: Lecture-performances and para-institutional pedagogies, from the postwar to the present”, in: *Performance Research*, Vol. 21, Issue 6, 2016, pp. 19–25; Lucia Rainer, *On the Threshold of Knowing: Lectures and Performances in Art and Academia*, Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2017.

20 In *US: Urbonas Studio*, [online], [accessed 21-07-2017], <http://www.nugu.lt/us/>.

the notion of *research*²¹. Importantly, the introduction to Urbonas Studio presents its founders as “artists and educators”²² and thus incorporates their new professional identity into the duo’s artistic representation.

The portfolio of Urbonas Studio as represented on their website <http://www.nugu.lt/us/> is divided into two main columns under the headings of Pedagogy and Projects, both including also some preexistent activities and projects. The Pedagogy column covers several topic-specific workshops, and the Project column represents long-term artistic research projects initiated by the Urbonas. Interestingly enough, both separate workshops and longer projects are implemented within educational structures and at least partially a school (university) curriculum, and rely on collaborative work involving art students and other professionals. Extending over a span of several years, these projects consist of workshops and lectures in and beyond university, field trips, meetings and interviews with amateurs and professionals, research and practical work. So it is rather the artists’ decision what to leave to the school curriculum (i.e. pedagogy), and what to subsume under their artistic (research) practice.

21 It is not insignificant that Nomedas and Gediminas Urbonas have long since relied on collective identities that, however, never rendered them anonymous and never replaced their permanent identity as an artist duo. The first one was *jutempus* (<http://www.vilma.cc/jutempus/>), interdisciplinary art projects, or programmes, founded in 1993, at the dawn of Lithuanian independence: it has an official status of NGO and still functions today as a basis for fundraising. Another one, VILMA – Vilnius Interdisciplinary Lab for Media Arts – was founded in 2004 and hosted under its name such projects as *balsas.cc* journal on media culture, RAM6 (Re-Approaching New Media) in 2004, *Pro-test Lab* since 2005, etc. The evolution from one platform to another points to the shifts in identity, interests and artistic trends, with “interdisciplinarity” being a keyword for *jutempus*, “media” – for VILMA, and “research” – for Urbonas Studio. Though the term “inter-“ or “transdisciplinary” migrated via all of the platforms, its use at the very inception of the Urbonas’ career as artists and cultural organizers is not a mere denominator of their personal practice, but indicates significant changes and buzzwords in the Lithuanian art scene of the time.

22 At *US: Urbonas Studio*, [online].

I would like to start from one of the inputs within Pedagogy, which will add several insights to the rest of the Urbonas’ practice. *Drawing Lesson*, implemented in 2007 at *documenta 12* as a performative intervention (off the exhibition’s programme), invited a group of students from the Trondheim Academy of Fine Art (KIT) to engage into a traditional drawing lesson of a “still-life” – an installation *The Zoo Story* by Peter Friedl (2007), of an amateurishly stuffed 3,5 m tall giraffe from a zoo in the West Bank, which had panicked, fallen, and died of its injuries during an Israeli military operation. An entertaining video documenting the interventionist workshop is focused on the clash between the Urbonas and their students, and the *documenta 12*’s staff trying to prevent the students with their large drawing sheets from entering the *documenta Halle* and to interrupt the already started unsanctioned “drawing lesson”. The wish to accept “*documenta 12*’s invitation, which highlighted education as one of the project’s central motifs, and asked audiences not only to visit and observe, but to actively participate”²³, seems rather ironic, as the conflictual course and the “unhappy” ending of such an intervention seems to have been more or less evident from the very beginning. So an educational format – a lesson – serves here as an instrument of critique of another educational environment disclosing its lines of demarcation that protect the territory of gallery education (no matter how much it would aspire for the engagement of audiences) from intruders. The drawing lesson – something much more old-school and based on craft-training than a workshop format characteristic of the contemporary art scene – due to its innocent and “unconceptual” nature points at a certain stagedness of contemporary art education, despite (or precisely because of) itself being staged.

Much like in the *Drawing Lesson*, an educational environment served as a starting point for the follow-up projects by the Urbonas. It is not that a certain

23 “Drawing Lesson”, in: *US: Urbonas Studio*, [online], September 10, 2007, [accessed 21-07-2017], <http://www.nugu.lt/us/?cat=13>.



1. *Drawing Lesson*. Performative intervention at *Documenta 12*, Kassel, Germany, 2007. Participants: students and faculty of Trondheim Academy of Fine Art, KIT, Norway; Documenta 12 staff; visitors to Documenta Halle; two policemen from the Kassel, Germany, Police Department. Photo: Urbonas Studio
Drawing Lesson. Performatyvi intervencija parodoje *Documenta 12*, Kaselis, Vokietija, 2007

project means to establish a platform for education (a workshop, a school, a discussion group), but rather an existing educational format (such as a class given at a university) becomes a (part of a) new project: instead of staying separate, the roles of an artist and an educator merge for a common purpose. Of course, this is never a strict rule applicable to the entire project: for example, the first of the projects discussed further on, *GVS: Guggenheim Visibility Study* (2008–2010), invited both students (of Trondheim Academy of Fine Art (KIT), Vilnius Academy of Arts and Vilnius Gediminas Technical University) and independent participants by

an open call to take part in various constitutive parts (workshops) of the whole project.

The GVS project was the first one that directly and openly integrated the Urbonas' pedagogical work into their art practice, maintaining: "As our practice as artists is based on participatory and collaborative strategies, the organising of the lab (pedagogical work) becomes an integral part of this practice. The material and results of this lab can be used by all its participants – mixed, arranged and cut for the behoof of their own creative work."²⁴ The strategy applied and issues researched in the GVS partly echo their previous project, *Pro-test Lab* (2005–end unclear), which was focused on questions of privatisation,

²⁴ A quote from the project's concept in Lithuanian in the project's blog, "2G: Guggenheimo grupė", in: *GVS: Guggenheim Visibility Study*, [online], June 6th, 2008, [accessed 07-07-2017], <http://www.vilma.cc/2G/?cat=3> (the quote translated from Lithuanian by L. M.).



2. GVS. *Guggenheim Visibility Study*: case studies, field trips, documentation and archive to research and undermine the planned Vilnius Guggenheim Hermitage Museum. Online diary: www.vilma.cc/2G, 2008–2010

Guggenheimo matomumo studija, 2008–2010

public property and public space²⁵. GVS, initiated as 2G: *Guggenheim Group* lab, questioned a widely campaigned proposal to build an Hermitage-Guggenheim museum in the centre of Vilnius, public money involved in the project, an architectural competition featuring expensive stars of architecture (Zaha Hadid, Daniel Libeskind, and Massimiliano Fuks), and a

25 For more elaborate analyses of *Pro-test Lab* see: Lina Michelkevičė, „Pro-testo laboratorija: bendradarbiavimo strategija kaip viešosios erdvės steigtis“, in: *Logos*, Nr. 74, 2013, pp. 199–212; Skaidra Trilupaitytė, „Meninis protestas ir (politikos) kritika: Kai kurie XXI a. pirmojo dešimtmečio Vilniaus pavyzdžiai“, in: *Meno istorija ir kritika*, Nr. 11, 2015, pp. 5–21; Eadem, *Kūrybiškumo galia? Neoliberalistinės kultūros politikos kritika*, Vilnius: Demos, 2015, pp. 130–136.

political campaign around the museum project. The progress of the project, related to the political identity of the former Vilnius mayor Artūras Zuokas who later that year (2008) successfully ran for Parliament, had raised much controversy due to the endless speculation in the local media on immense public investments the project would require and the museum's supposed profitability and representational function as “the new face of Vilnius”. Like the *Pro-test Lab*, the GVS operated under the title of a “lab”, questioned the role and use of public space, public money and public opinion, and consisted of a series of various public actions initiated either by the artists themselves or by other GVS participants. The largest difference between the two projects was that of public communication, as noticed by Skaidra Trilupaitytė: “Guggenheim research and support group’ was not a protest against the museum, rather on the contrary. Self-made models of the global museum, banquets of legendary

Fluxus dumplings, auctions selling statements by the then ex-mayor Zuokas and artists, playful happenings documenting various phenomena of the ‘official Fluxus’ at JMVMC [Jonas Mekas Visual Arts Center], proposals to rethink the architectural structure of the museum and to solve the social housing problem in Vilnius in the same breath <...>. By paraphrasing the obviously simulacrous, that is, senseless vocabulary of the study of possibilities [for a Guggenheim] in Vilnius, the participants of the group expressed their jubilant assent to the Hermitage-Guggenheim dream the media was overrun with <...>”²⁶.

So despite the overall seriousness of the GVS’ goals and the conducted research, the project well developed the humorous and deliberately naïve tactics of the *Drawing Lesson*, employing entertainment for artistic and pedagogical purposes. While irony and parody are fully legitimate artistic strategies, it is not necessary the case in education. Nonetheless, one should agree here with Dieter Lesage’s claim that “<...> we can no longer think of research as such as a guarantee for seriousness, simply because entertainment today is as much, if not more so, based on research as is teaching.”²⁷ The entertaining pedagogy (which is not necessarily the same as edutainment, broadly defined as entertainment with an educational value) characteristic of GVS workshops relied not on simple “fun-making”, but on discursive and practical research into political rhetoric and public relations, media discourse, architectural solutions, Fluxus history, and eventually, craft techniques (as in boneshine model and social housing model making workshops).

Another two large-scale projects within the educational context initiated by the Urbonas and other collaborators, *River Runs* (2010–2012) and especially *Zooetics* (2014–2018), originated from a new interest in the interaction between nature, culture and

technologies, and contemporary ways to handle it. *River Runs*, a collaborative project between Nomedas and Gediminas Urbonas, writer and curator Tracey Warr, and architect and designer Giacomo Castagnola (all under the name of Urbonas Studio), combined the Urbonas’ previous interest in public space with the new “natural” turn – yet this time public issues were less tangible and much less marked by contradiction. Despite this, the artists claimed that the new issues they touched upon were even more complex in regard to the relation between public and private, for they involved bodily experiences, personal and collective bonds with a place, and the use of public goods: “The *River Runs* project investigates movement in artistic practice towards less tangible and more complex spaces of public/private contestation, spaces that challenge the notion of belonging itself.”²⁸ Developed since 2010 as the artists’ continuing interest in rivers and life related to water, the entity of *River Runs* consisted (under various titles) of workshops for diverse groups (including classes for MIT undergraduate and graduate students and workshops for adults and children), meetings and interviews with professionals and amateurs of water²⁹, proposals and embodied solutions for an interaction with a river, etc., and culminated in a short art residency at the Modern Art Oxford project space and a presentation of its resulting structure for an unusual swim/sail in a river – an unpowered pleasure boat – at the Wet Symposium, organised by Tracey Warr. Although the project got its representative title, *River Runs*, only in the last three-week residency with constructed Jellyfish Lilly boats as its face, the artists describe their continuing interest, research

26 Skaidra Trilupaitytė, *Kūrybiškumo galia?*, pp. 141–142 (the quote translated from Lithuanian by L. M.).

27 Dieter Lesage, “Art, Research, Entertainment”, p. 114.

28 *River Runs* project description in the project’s blog, [online], July 21st, 2012, [accessed 25-07-2017], <http://www.vilma.cc/river/?p=1245#more-1245>.

29 “local artist who lives on a boat, river historian, expert in river wildlife/plant life, human geographer, water expert, boat builder, tourist boat operator, leisure rower, climate scientist, group of children, group of teenagers, group of elderly local people, deaf, blind rower and wild swimmer...”; *Ibid*.



3. *River Runs*. Children's workshop: Inventions for the Water Age. 17 children of different ages, various materials, MAO, Oxford, 2012. By Urbonas Studio: artists Nomeda and Gediminas Urbonas, writer/curator Tracey Warr, architect Giacomo Castagnola. Photo: Urbonas Studio

River Runs. Dirbtuvės vaikas, 2012

4. *River Runs*. Jellyfish Lily at Wet Symposium, Oxford 2012. Pleasure structure for the river. Recycled plastic buckets, boxes, pipes, neoprene, various dimensions. By Urbonas Studio: artists Nomeda and Gediminas Urbonas, writer/curator Tracey Warr, architect Giacomo Castagnola. Photo: James Hudson

River Runs. Malonumo konstrukcija upei, Oksfordas, 2012



5, 6. Mycomorph laboratory at the Psychotropic House: Zooetics Pavilion of Ballardian Technologies, 32nd São Paulo biennial, Brazil, 2016. Commission by the Fundação Bienal de São Paulo. Photo: Urbonas Studio

Mikomorfų laboratorija projekte *Psichotropinis namas*: *Ballardo technologijų zooetikos paviljonas*, 32-oji San Paulo bienalė, Brazilija, 2016

and pedagogical work as a constitutive part of the art project giving as much attention to every input and output.

The last and ongoing project *Zooetics*, which was launched in 2014 together with Tracey Warr and curator and researcher Viktorija Šiaulytė in collaboration with the Kaunas University of Technology (KTU), employs artistic thinking for research into biotechnologies and interaction between species with the aim to explore and disseminate contemporary ways to work, create, design and build with nature. *Zooetics* is operating both in the fields of art and science, as it makes a part of *Frontiers in Retreat* programme that unites art residencies for research on art and ecology under the title *Multidisciplinary Approaches to Ecology in Contemporary Art*, and also acts as a pilot platform for a future institute for research of technologies and human-nature interactions to be established at KTU. According to the artists, “*Zooetics* tries to weave together different types of knowledge: human knowledge, the knowledge of other life forms and poetics. It meant to become an educational program. So we collaborated with the university, Technological University in Lithuania, to create kind of a new type of department or even a body within the university, where those three types of knowledge could coexist and be practiced.”³⁰ Similarly to *River Runs*, yet in a much more preplanned and conceptualized way, the project proceeds in time as interchanging events and exhibitionary forms: several series of lectures and seminars for students and researchers at KTU; a creative writing workshop at the Lithuanian National Zoo in Kaunas led by Tracey Warr; *Zooetics* pavilions (*The Psychotropic House: Zooetics Pavilion of Ballardian Technologies*) at the XII Baltic Triennial, 2015–2016 (Vilnius and Krakow), and the 32nd São Paulo Bienale, 2016; Mycomorph Laboratory – workshops for

children and adults (CAC Vilnius and Printscreen Festival, Israel); Future Fictions Summit (Iceland), discussing the body, territory and nonhuman forms of life. Although *Zooetics* does not dispose of exhibitionary formats, the main product of the project is the conducting of research and education: mycelium structures and objects at *Zooetics* pavilions are grown in collaboration with students (of the Kaunas University of Technology in the Vilnius pavilion and MIT in the São Paulo pavilion), so the very construction of an exhibition, which is always under way due to its constant growth, makes part of educational proceedings.

The Urbonas’ projects expose a two-way relation between artwork and pedagogical work. Classes and workshops given for students, children and adults become a basis for an art project and a material for research, exhibitions and public communication. At the same time, every project with its issues and strategies provides a teaching material helping students to develop independent thinking, criticism, research and practical skills. All of the projects briefly discussed here rely on teaching via involvement into certain collaborative activities; however, the participants’ and the teachers’ relation to the project is not always the same. Whereas in the *Drawing Lesson* students were performers playing a more or less clear role, in the case of GVS, the participants of the project collectively proposed and implemented their own ideas. Instead of a charismatic pedagogue performing as a public body as in the case of Beuys, the collective body of project participants (students and teachers) acted here as a public speaker expressing their opinion via performative acts. *River Runs* and *Zooetics* are more focused on research via (pedagogical) practice than on public performance and impact, so the body of participants here is more visible as a labouring body and as products it produces than as a performing body. The labour here is both discursive (teaching, learning, discussing) and practical (making things, like the unpowered pleasure boats in *River Runs* or mycelium structures in *Zooetics*), and

30 “Nomedas & Gediminas Urbonas Talk on the Project *Zooetics*”, [online], 12 09 2016, [accessed 25-07-2017], <http://www.zooetics.net/blog/saundofsaopaulobienial/>.

so its visual representations (documentation in the media and social networks) are much more similar to representations of scientific and academic labour. Discursively as well, the self-identity of *Zooetics* is much more related to the pedagogical sphere in compare to GVS, though the latter involved no less of teaching and learning: “We want to appropriate something that belongs to the experts, like biotechnology, and democratize that process by bringing it to the general audience. But we also want to make it accessible, we want to make this knowledge, if you will, open source. Also through the process of creating a educational space.”³¹

KRISTINA INČIŪRAITĖ:
INVOLVING CHILDREN
AS PROFESSIONALS

Kristina Inčiūraitė's works give a pretty different perspective on pedagogy in the contemporary art context. Inčiūraitė herself works as an educator, yet in the sphere, which contemporary art sees as much more “peripheral” – a children's art school. Unlike in the Urbonas' case, pedagogical work does not make a pronounced part of her artistic identity and is not a demarcation line for her interest in the use of educational contexts in art practice, seeing that she had involved schoolchildren into her projects before she started to teach at Vilnius Justinas Vienožinskis Children's Art School herself. Moreover, Inčiūraitė has never worked with her own students as part of the classes she has taught: her only project with participation of the Vienožinskis school, *Survival*, was implemented in 2009, before her own engagement as a teacher there; all her other projects involving pedagogical structures are done in collaboration with various children's music schools, and one – with a choir of Vilnius University.

In 2006, Inčiūraitė invited students from the Vilnius Balys Dvarionas Music School to create their

own soundtracks for a classical dance scene from the Lithuanian feature film *The Last Day of Holidays* (directed by Arūnas Žebriūnas in 1964). The scene features a young girl dancing at the seaside: her spontaneous dance and related appeal manifests a transitory stage between careless childhood and the adult world. Five young composers of more or less the same age as their protagonist, who at the time may have likely experienced the scale of emotions close to that of the young dancer in the movie, composed different soundtracks that were put together in a single video of five repetitive dance scenes (*Dance*). The next year, in 2007, Inčiūraitė invited two students of a music school in Strobl, Austria, Laura and Stefanie, to perform The Piano Sonata No. 16 by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, which is perhaps his most popular piano sonata, and is also described as a sonata for beginners. With the help of their teacher the girls rehearsed the piece for two weeks, after which the artist recorded the performance by each of them. Through the editing process the two soundtracks were overlapped into the *Double Piano Sonata No. 16*, a sound recording that allows perceiving subtle differences in the quality of performance, tempo, and the performers' temperaments. Although the first artwork explores the creative potentials of students of a music school, and the second one – their performative skills, both of them refer to a possibility of difference within a collective body of a music school.

Inčiūraitė's “pedagogical” projects (which, to make things clear, make a lesser part of her artistic output) start in or from an educational environment, but not with the aim to combine artistic and pedagogical work, but to use the professional potential of educational environments for the sake of her art practice. Thus she takes students of children's art/music schools not as a pedagogical “material” (someone who have to learn and to be taught), but as a source of ideas, professional skills and personal differences under the same curriculum. This approach is even more

³¹ *Ibid.*

evident in Inčiūraitė's much later project *The Fragment as a Proverb* (2014), which involved students of the Liepaitės Choir Singing School in Vilnius and Mariko Takagi, an award-winning whistling virtuoso from Japan. During a performative concert at the Contemporary Art Centre Vilnius, which consisted of two parts – Mariko Takagi's and Liepaitės' performances – the choir members were humming popular tunes of their liking for randomly selected listeners. Here the choir members fulfilled an ambiguous task: while employing the skills they have acquired as part of a collective, they actually performed individually (solo parts chosen by themselves) and in a very intimate relationship to their audience, as every audience member happened to hear (or not hear at all, as all the songs were being hummed rather silently) a different piece. So the choir performers, while outwardly fulfilling their usual task (giving a concert), were actually facing choices they never had: that of the repertoire and that of the audience. And still, it was a collective performance: all the singers were performing in the same space, in the same timeframe and for the same audience (though for different audience members).

In *The Fragment as a Proverb*, the contradiction between individuality and collective knowledge that we acquire via education (whatever it may be) is even more evident than in the previously described projects by the artist. Yet at the same time this contradiction does not necessarily imply conflict; rather, collectivity is at the bottom of individuality, for any process of individuation requires certain generic human competences (as an ability to think, to communicate, to feel, to move, or similar). Founding on Paolo Virno's proposition that "the one is not a promise, it is a *premise*", sociologist and dance researcher Rudi Laermans claims: "Collective labour cannot take off without a collection of diverse competences, ideas, interests and attitudes that must be presupposed as being collective. <...>. *One* for instance speaks or moves: this is the common quality of communicating

or dancing that can never be undone. Yet simultaneously there is this and not that 'I' who says something or gestures in a specific mode: this is the individual subject practicing the generic common."³² According to this, a certain commonality is always prior to individuality, and yet at the same time any collective relies on individual modes and expressions of collectively practiced competences. When setting to work with *a school*, in compare to, e.g., giving a workshop open to anybody or to a certain age group, an artist engages with an established collective body that has a certain identity, set bounds between its members, a certain common expertise and experience. So in addition to generic human abilities, one has a lot of commonalities at hand, which can be put to good use. Inčiūraitė emphasizes this commonality, for example, by referring to the long-term singing practice of the Liepaitės School, or by telling that students of a children's music school start their performing careers pretty early, so it is much easier to apply their competences in an art project³³. However, a task she sets for her collaborators requires individual use of the common faculties: to create own soundtrack for a dance piece or to choose favourite popular songs for a personalised performance. Even in *Double Sonata*, the standard performance of a piece typical of music schools is done in order to search for subtle individualities in the process of learning and the final performing act.

A large group of students of the Vilnius Justinas Vienožinskis Art School collaborated in Inčiūraitė's

32 Rudi Laermans, "‘Being in common’: Theorizing artistic collaboration", in: *Performance Research*, Special issue: *On Labour*, Vol. 17, Issue 6, 2012, p. 96.

33 Interview with Kristina Inčiūraitė, 05 10 2014, quoted from: Lina Michelkevičė, Vita Petrušauskaitė, Kęstutis Šapoka, *Vaikų dailės mokyklų kultūrinis ir sociopolitinis dalyvavimas visuomenėje: atvejų analizė (tyrimo ataskaita)*, [online], 2014, pp. 65–66, [accessed 01-08-2017], https://www.academia.edu/26360708/Lina_Michelkevičė_Vita_Petrušauskaitė_Kęstutis_Šapoka_Vaikų_dailės_mokyklų_kultūrinis_ir_sociopolitinis_dalyvavimas_visuomenėje_atvejų_analizė_tyrimo_ataskaita_Children_Art_Schools_Cultural_and_Sociopolitical_Participation_in_Society_2014_.



7. Kristina Inčiūraitė & students of the Vilnius Justinas Vienožinskis children's art school, *The Days of Anxiety*, creative process, part of the exhibition *Survival*, 2009. Photo: Kristina Inčiūraitė
 Kristina Inčiūraitė ir Vilniaus Justino Vienožinskio dailės mokyklos mokiniai, *Nerimo dienos*, kūrimo procesas, parodos *Išlikimas* dalis, 2009

project and exhibition *Survival* (CAC, 2009) by undertaking two tasks: making individual drawings of their personal heroes, and collectively drawing abstract circles on the exhibition's wall. Both tasks ask for a skill gained in the same art school and, presumably, via much the same processes of teaching and learning (under the guidance of the same teachers, getting similar tasks, using similar methods and tools). So the students here make a collective work, regardless of which of the tasks – individual or collective one – they are undertaking. Just like *The Fragment as a Proverb*, where Liepaitė's perform collectively and individually at the same time, here the collective acquires

individual forms of their hopes, likes, beliefs and aspirations in *The Avenue of Heroes*.

In Inčiūraitė's projects children's art schools are considered as a source of collectively developed professional (rather than amateur) skills and individual modes to use them. What she does could be as well called "pedagogy without education": instead of giving a workshop for children in order to teach them a certain technique or certain ideas, a way which is more customary in gallery education, Inčiūraitė asks them to use the skills they have already gained (without dismissing the work usually done by children's art schools) with an individual approach. However, as the artist claims, for her it is much more difficult to find engaging ways to work with fine art schools in compare to music schools. Working with children raises ethical problems: are they merely employed or even exploited for the sake of an art project or are they equal collaborators? (For instance, art critic Eglė Juocevičiūtė

reproached the *Survival* project for exploiting school students as “an object of social-psychological investigation” and as “free or cheap labour”³⁴.) Independent artistic thinking of students of fine art schools, according to Inčiūraitė, develops much later than performing skills of young musicians, so the latter “enter the competitive adult world early”, whereas for fine art students contemporary art projects often are too sophisticated to engage in them in a meaningful way³⁵.

ALYTUS ART SCHOOL ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE “EDUCATIONAL TURN”

In 2001, artist Redas Diržys was invited by the Contemporary Art Centre Vilnius to take part in the exhibition *Walls for NATO*, organised on the occasion of a plenary NATO meeting, which was to take place at the CAC. As the director and teacher of a children’s art school in Alytus, a medium-sized town in South Lithuania, Diržys developed an idea to invite his students to join him for a trip to Vilnius and to produce an artwork at the CAC along with him. A group of children redrew newspaper clips selected by Czech artist Martin Zet on a CAC wall under the title *Manipulation* (according to Diržys, this work was painted over before the start of the NATO meeting as being too controversial³⁶). It made a part of an event series of the same title meant to disclose the propaganda nature of various competitions and events involving children³⁷. Diržys tells the story of the work: “It seemed unethical for me to take the artistic fee the CAC offered, so

I was thinking of whom I could give it to. <...> I paid for the bus for the children, they were given meals. Everyone signed up her (his) name, surname and took part in the exhibition. Some people were preaching: this is in bad taste, you’re manipulating the children. My answer was: yes, indeed I am, but that’s what I’m talking about with them.”³⁸

In regard to the strategy employed, Diržys’s gesture (inviting students of children’s art school to apply their skills within a framework of an art project) was akin to Inčiūraitė’s *Survival* to be realised thirteen years later. His own approach here, however, has its roots in the pedagogical perspective: he sees students’ direct engagement with a contemporary art institution and participation in a project as a valuable source for their own development and experiential learning. In his words, “[t]his welded them together, in one way or another. The trip, the attention – I think it was important. For me it doesn’t matter if I take part in the CAC once or twice, but for the children, I thought so, it was of big importance. <...> And it makes a difference if you just go to the CAC to see an exhibition, or if you go there and draw on the walls and put your signature.”³⁹

Although Diržys has made his name on the local art scene with various art projects (especially as a curator and organizer) that were not necessarily and directly related to the school as an educational institution (despite the fact that many took place on the school premises), his public identity is inseparable from the Alytus Art School, which he has been the director of since 1995. Several years before this professional turn he started to organise yearly performative events in the

34 Eglė Juocevičiūtė, „Vidutinybė kaip įdomybė. Kristinos Inčiūraitės projektas „Išlikimas“ Šiuolaikinio meno centre“, in: *Artnews.lt*, [online], 2010 01 23, [accessed 01-07-2017], <http://artnews.lt/vidutinybe-kaip-idomybe-kristinos-inciuraites-projektas-islikimas-siuolaikinio-meno-centre-4107> (the quote translated from Lithuanian by L. M.).

35 Interview with Kristina Inčiūraitė, 05 10 2014, quoted from: Lina Michelkevičė et al., *op. cit.*, p. 65.

36 *Alytaus dailės mokykla: 35 pasipriešinimo metai*, sud. Redas Diržys ir Asta Stasionytė, Vilnius: Kitos knygos, 2013, p. 117.

37 *Ibid.*

38 „Abejonės privalo kilti: pokalbis apie dailės mokyklų reikšmę visuomenei“, su Redu Diržiu kalbasi Lina Michelkevičė, *Kešutis Šapoka ir Vita Petrušauskaitė*, in: *7 meno dienos*, [online], Nr. 41 (1102), 2014 11 21, [accessed 01-07-2017], <http://www.7md.lt/daile/2014-11-21/Dailes-mokykla-yra-vieta-kurgali-ir-privalo-kilti-abejone> (the quote translated from Lithuanian by L. M.).

39 Interview with Redas Diržys, 16 10 2014, quoted from: Lina Michelkevičė et al., *op. cit.*, p. 39 (the quote translated from Lithuanian by L. M.).

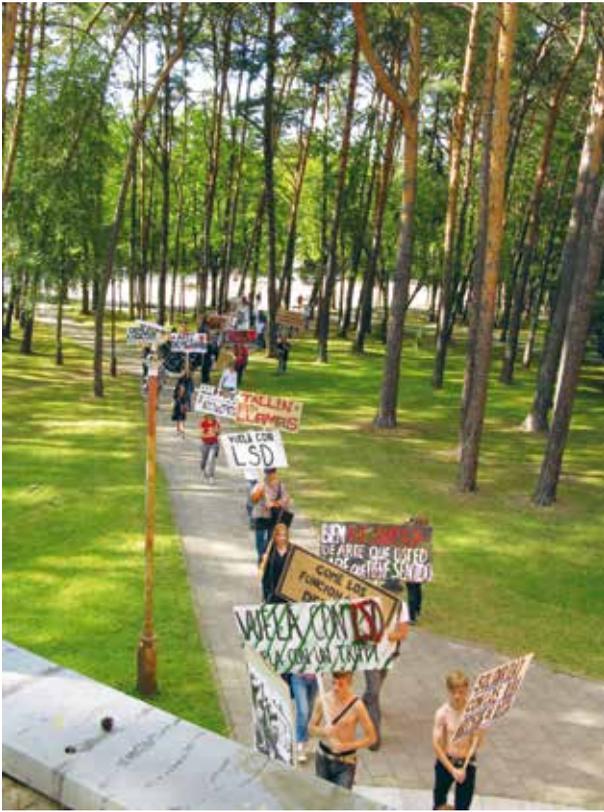


8. Fresco by students of the Alytus children's art school in collaboration with Spart activist group from Belfast, Alytus, 2009

Alytaus dailės mokyklos mokinių freska, atlikta kartu su „Spart“ aktyvistais iš Belfasto, Alytus, 2009

9. Cloudbuster after Wilhelm Reich in the fountain of the Alytus city garden, 2009

Wilhelmo Reicho orgono patranka Alytaus miesto sodo fontane, 2009



10. Alytus Art Strike Biennial, 2009, monstration
 Alytaus meno streiko bialė, 2009, monstracija



11. Three-sided football with a big ball. Symposium of children's art schools in Dreverna, 2017
 Trišalis futbolas dideliu kamuoliu. Dailės mokyklų simpoziumas Drevernoje, 2017

spirit of fluxus *Tiesė. Pjūvis (Straight. Section)*, 1993–1996, that contributed to the revival of the art scene in independent Lithuania. As Diržys noticed himself, his new position as the director of an art school provided him with possibilities (in relation to funding and public permits) he did not have before: “With disregard for my new serious position, I continued to organise the *Straight. Section*. This time it was very easy and simple, as the position of director had opened the door, which was closed for a regular artist and teacher. I was glad to see the school overflowing with artists from all over the world, glad it became a lab of contemporary art, a space bubbling over with things.”⁴⁰ Paradoxically, being the head of an actual art school contributed to the development of his artistic and curatorial career into extreme institutional critique: in 2005 he started to organise the Alytus Biennial, later also known as Alytus Art Strike Biennial, which strictly relied on leftist attitude and confrontation with the established art discourse: Diržys “opposed prestigious art institutions in Vilnius, the great cultural programmes in Lithuania <...>, as well as renowned Lithuanian artists who became actors in the international capitalist art world.”⁴¹ Diržys’s practice includes a necessary dose of self-irony that allows him to avoid the naivety of being an “alternative” and thus to attach historical importance to oneself: “I believe that our highest achievement is the fact that we left almost nothing that could enable somebody to canonize us after some time, turn us into a cultural phenomenon or something like that. I admit that there were times when we could have given in to the temptation... maybe we were simply lucky to not have...”⁴² This approach is characteristic

40 *Alytaus dailės mokykla*, p. 113 (the quote translated from Lithuanian by L. M.).

41 Skaidra Trilupaitytė, *Kūrybiškumo galia?*, p. 135 (the quote translated from Lithuanian by L. M.).

42 Redas Diržys, “Alytus artistic self-consciousness in the 1990s”, in: *(In)dependent Contemporary Art Histories: Artist-run initiatives in Lithuania 1987–2011*, Eds. Vytautas Michelkevičius, Kęstutis Šapoka, translated from Lithuanian by Jurij Dobriakov, Vilnius: LTMKS, 2011, p. 113.

both of the Alytus Biennial, as a mock up of actual art world institutions⁴³, and of Diržys's pedagogical practice as a teacher and director of the art school, when he ridicules educational proceduralism by over-obeying or turning bureaucratic rules (filling papers, conferring yearly distinctions for teachers, organizing competitions for students, etc.) inside out. At the same time he remembers that being a director and a teacher, he himself makes part of the system: "I was told how many and what kind of papers are needed, and since the very first year of my directorship I have been producing more and more of them: in the second half of 1995 I produced as many papers as [my predecessor] R. Kasputis did from the inception of the school [in 1987]."⁴⁴

Although Diržys has never claimed the Alytus Art School to be his *art* project, his extraordinary engagement with the school and Alytus art life in general could be seen as an integral practice: here the distinction between "art" and "educational" practice does not make much difference. Take, for example, the way Diržys narrates about the inception of the Alytus Art School flag that was designed after John Baldessari's artwork "Throwing four balls in the air to get a square (best of 36 tries)" (1973). When asked by local authorities to find a symbol for the school, Diržys, according to himself, accidentally came across the photographs by Baldessari and used one of them as a pattern for the school flag. The free appropriation (a gesture so characteristic of contemporary art) of Baldessari's picture was Diržys's act of resistance against traditional

symbolism in the sphere of education and at the same time a playful way to create a meaningful flag, though in a very open sense, for the school: "<...> I am convinced that imposing a symbol is a means of colonising consciousness <...>. I think that the problem with them [i.e. school flags] is the blending of the main sources of symbolism – nationalism, Sovietism, Masonry, and Christianity – into a mud bath that doesn't have and cannot have any meaning. <...> The goal of throwing [the balls] (so as to get a square) is sort of the goal we have, to teach arts for kids, and the actual result (red balls in the blue Californian sky) is the everyday process."⁴⁵ In their controversial book on the Alytus art scene and activism, Redas Diržys and art critic Kęstutis Šapoka introduce so-called Alytus avant-gardism as "a tight tangle of art practices, and bureaucratic and pedagogic contexts (considering that Diržys has been the head of the Alytus Art School since 1995), which is more or less directly related to the Alytus Art Board and has ties with the municipal authorities of Alytus. All that is concentrated in and around the art school; therefore, Alytus avant-gardism makes a much wider whole, from which any of its constituents cannot be withdrawn without making the others lose part of their meaning."⁴⁶ The extended practice around the Alytus Art School includes: a pedagogical method, which is described by Diržys himself and many teachers as "teaching what one believes"; engaging students into art projects⁴⁷; the organization

43 "Alytus Biennial aims at keeping up with the best ideas of the international art discourse and intends to make two Alytus Biennials in two years, four in four years, and in ten years – thirty-one Alytus Biennials plus one Tirana Biennial... all of them in Alytus." Redas Diržys, „Ar atiduosime Vilnių Baltarusijai? Pirmoji Alytaus bienalė „Atsargiai! Politika!“ in: *7 meno dienos*, [online], Nr. 674, 2005 09 09, [accessed 01-07-2017], https://www.7md.lt/archyvas.php?leid_id=674&str_id=4927 (the quote translated from Lithuanian by L. M.).

44 *Alytaus dailės mokykla*, p. 110 (the quote translated from Lithuanian by L. M.).

45 *Ibid.*, p. 129 (the quote translated from Lithuanian by L. M.).

46 Redas Diržys, Kęstutis Šapoka, *Alytaus avangardizmas: nuo gatvės meno iki visuotinio prischodarbininkų (meno) streiko*, Alytus: Erdvės, 2014, p. 23 (the quote translated from Lithuanian by L. M.).

47 As a previous student, currently a teacher of the Alytus Art School remembers: "At the same time Redas began to invite us to take part in his actions, so we didn't miss a chance to draw in his project *Manipulation* for the exhibition *NATO Walls* in Vilnius, built together the *Barricade* for the project *Būk kaunietis (Be a Kaunas Citizen)* in Kaunas, liberated Martin Zet in Alytus, took part in the shooting of *Different Systems of Chaos* by British artists in Alytus, helped to construct 'sculptures in the Neris river' in Vilnius." Mantas Kazakevičius, „Mokinio

of public events as mentioned above and hosting art-related events organised by others (e.g. performance festival *Diverse/Universe*); activism fighting short-sighted decisions by local authorities (e.g. support campaigns against the planned reorganisation of the Art School in 2004 and its eviction in 2013–2014) that often invites international attention of artists; the public discourse, which includes numerous articles and critical statements in cultural and broad-scale media, and several books⁴⁸.

And yet, being a *permanent* school, the Alytus Art School stands on the other side of the “educational turn”, which mostly refers to artist-run short-time schools and classes within or outside the gallery context. So it underpins well the critique of the educational turn laid out by Jessica Hamlin: “As curators and artists placed socially engaged, pedagogically minded work in the galleries, the work being done with teachers, students, and public audiences through existing and deeply established education departments and local community organizations was largely ignored.”⁴⁹ Regardless of all its peculiarities, the Alytus Art School fully functions in the framework of so-called non-formal children education: the programme spans over a fixed number of years and ends with the issuing of a standard certificate, the teaching mostly takes the form of classes, the curriculum includes many traditional subjects (painting, sculpture, art history, etc.), many students choose simply to attend classes without engaging into extra activities. So, differently from temporary schools and workshops, it is a “monotonous” process merged into everyday life that for the most time stays rather invisible. As such, the school has its merits and shortcomings. Unlike short-run art projects, it most likely

has a continuing impact on its students, community and surroundings. In the small town context, which lacks a more developed cultural scene, it has become not only an educational, but also a cultural space. On the other hand, given that Diržys has been the school’s director for more than twenty years now, it risks to get stuck in the same identity despite or precisely because of the controversial discourse around it. If in the case of temporary projects the controversy is able to stir up the dust and attract public attention, permanent controversy and resistance risks to lose in efficiency by becoming too normal.

CONCLUSIONS

The cases discussed above, though quite different from each other in their range of problems and form, have something in common: they can be easily dismissed when talking about pedagogical projects in contemporary art. Despite its recent passion for education, contemporary art and its institutions often have a rather complicated relation to existent educational environments, understating them as too stiff, bureaucratised, elitist, behindhand in innovation, etc. Although this critique has its reason and one can trace a history of artists-pedagogues trying to fight these institutional shortcomings (as famously quoted Beuys who in 1971 accepted all entrants into his course at Düsseldorf Kunstakademie, which later on led to his dismissal), long-term collaboration with educational institutions of all levels, rather than reciprocal arrogance for artists and museum-like institutions would be a way both to contribute to educational environments and to benefit from the resources they can offer. Projects discussed above employ educational platforms (universities and children’s art schools) as a source of intellectual and practical labour, collaborative force, commonalities and individualities, professional expertise and experience, imagination, and interhuman relationships. Whether they make part of an official school curriculum or offer

žvilgsniu“, in: *Alytaus dailės mokykla*, p. 148 (the quote translated from Lithuanian by L. M.).

⁴⁸ *Alytaus dailės mokykla*, 2013; *Alytaus avangardizmas*, 2014; *Dada ir dailės edukacija*, sud. Redas Diržys, Vilnius: Kitos knygos, 2015.

⁴⁹ Jessica Hamlin, *op. cit.*, [online].

extra activities, they always extend educational practice by providing students (and occasionally other teachers) with experiences besides regular learning.

Despite the presumable mutual benefit, this “af-fair” between artists and schools always faces ethical problems: less in the Urbonas’ case, as they work mostly with higher school students, and much more in the case of Inčiūraitė and Diržys, who involve school-age children. Both Inčiūraitė and Diržys have acknowledged the problem: the first one with concern, and the second one with self-irony. The ethical difference, however, between working with a higher school and a children’s art school is mostly based on the public opinion, for children are commonly seen as a much more vulnerable and intellectually dependent group than university students. Inčiūraitės projects, however, show that students of a children’s art school may be seen as professionals in their own field, and vice versa, the Urbonas’ projects could be criticised for exploiting collaborative force for their own sake. Yet, both critiques dismiss that “pedagogy” and “education” etymologically and semantically include an element of “leading” and “conducting”, and so are by necessity hierarchical (however innovative it may be). Positive hierarchy should be a keyword here, which via engaging a student into art projects opens up various ways of acquiring experience, conducting research, and making relations, without obligatory teaching or indoctrination.

Although education seems to be participatory per se, as it happens in classes so often, teaching and learning in fact can be a very lonely and individual experience. Art projects using educational environments quite often enhance collaboration between students and/or teachers by offering collective activities besides individual learning (like in the Urbonas’ projects, where participants act in common as a performing or labouring body, or in the case of the Alytus Art School, where engaging into extra-curriculum activities for children is a way of collective work different from

individual mastering of certain artistic skills). However, here the relationship between commonality and individuality can come into question as well: Inčiūraitės projects often employ collective learning so as to show individual shades (differences in performance, choices, taste, virtuosity) of commonly acquired competences.

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PRADĖKIME NUO MOKYKLOS: ŠIUOLAIKINIO MENO PROJEKTAI, ĮTRAUKIANTYS EDUKACIJOS TERPES

Lina Michelkevičė

SANTRAUKA

REIKŠMINIAI ŽODŽIAI: edukacijos institucijos, edukacinis posūkis, menininkas mokykloje, bendradarbiavimas, bendrumas ir individualumas.

Straipsnyje analizuojama, kaip į šiuolaikinio meno projektus įtraukiamos edukacijos institucijos (nuo vaikų meno mokyklų iki universitetų ir akademijų), keliant klausimą, kuo menininkas gali papildyti jau egzistuojančias edukacijos terpes greta mokymo (dėstymo) jose, ir atvirkščiai, kokią naudą edukacijos institucijos teikia menininkui ir jo projektams. Pradedama nuo įvado į edukacinį, arba pedagoginį, posūkį mene, trumpai aptariant edukacijos „karštinę“ šiuolaikinio meno lauke ir meno kritikų, menininkų bei edukatorių požiūrį į edukacinius meno projektus. Nuomonės dažniausiai išsiskiria priklausomai nuo kalbančiojo

pozicijos. Kuratoriai ir menininkai teigia, kad edukaciniai meno projektai yra atviresni, išlaisvinantys ir juose daugiau eksperimentuojama lyginant su nuolatinėmis edukacijos institucijomis, kurios dažnai yra sustabarėjusios, nepajėgia sekti naujausių tendencijų ir dūsta administracijos „džiunglėse“. O meno edukatoriai kritikuoja tokį požiūrį, teigdami, kad edukaciniuose meno projektuose nepajėgiama išsiveržti iš uždaro šiuolaikinio meno pasaulio ir dažnai pritraukiama ribota auditorija, kuri savo pomėgiais, gyvenimo būdu ir pasaulėžiūra yra pernelyg artima kuratoriams ir menininkams.

Toliau straipsnyje nagrinėjami keli atvejai: Nomedos ir Gedimino Urbonų meno praktika, Kristinos Inčiūraitės projektai su meno mokyklų mokiniais ir Alytaus dailės mokyklos fenomenas bei Redo Diržio, kaip šios mokyklos direktoriaus, praktika. Visi jie tik iš dalies atspindi edukacinį posūkį, apie kurį kalbant daugiausia minimos arba menininkų inicijuotos laikinos mokyklos (dirbtuvės, paskaitos ir pan.), arba paskaitos-performansai. Tuo tarpu čia aptariamuose atvejuose pradžios tašku ir kūrybos šaltiniu tampa jau egzistuojančios edukacijos institucijos, t. y. straipsniu siekiama iširti, kokius išteklius ir iššūkius menininkui siūlo nuolatinės edukacinės terpės lyginant su laikinomis. Čia analizuojamuose projektuose naudojamosi edukacinėmis platformomis kaip intelektinio ir praktinio darbo, bendradarbiavimo galios, bendrumų ir individualumų, vaizduotės, profesinių žinių bei patirties ir žmogiškų santykių šaltiniu.

Viena iš svarbių problemų, su kuriomis susiduriama, yra etinė: kalbant apie Urbonus, kurie dirba su aukštųjų mokyklų studentais, ji nėra tokia ryški, o Inčiūraitės ir Alytaus dailės mokyklos direktoriaus Diržio atveju jos negalima nepastebėti. Pastarieji menininkai yra sulaukę priekaištų dėl vaikų išnaudojimo projektams. Vis dėlto etinis nerimas yra pagrįstas daugiausia viešąja opinija, esą mokiniai pernelyg nesavarankiška, pažeidžiama, intelektualiai priklausoma grupė, skirtingai nei aukštųjų mokyklų studentai. Tačiau vargu ar pedagoginis projektas gali išvengti hierarchijos – juk „vadovavimo“ elementas yra neatskiriama pedagogikos ir edukacijos etimologinė ir semantinė dalis. Pozityvi hierarchija yra tai, kas leidžia projektams, įtraukiantiems mokinius ir studentus, atverti patirties kaupimo, tyrimo vykdymo ir santykių mezgimo kelius be privalomo mokymo ir žinių diegimo.

Nors edukacija savaime atrodo dalyvaujamoji, kadangi ji taip dažnai vyksta klasėje (t. y. grupėje), iš tiesų mokymas ir mokymasis gali būti labai individuali patirtis. Edukacines aplinkas įtraukiantys meno projektai dažnai stiprina bendradarbiavimo ryšius tarp studentų ir mokytojų (dėstytojų), pavyzdžiui, Urbonų projektuose dalyviai paprastai veikia sykiu kaip performatyvus arba dirbantis kūnas, o Alytaus dailės mokyklos siūlomos veiklos vaikams tampa būdu veikti kartu, kuris skiriasi nuo individualaus įgūdžių įsisavinimo. Tačiau edukacinis menas gali taip pat išryškinti santykį tarp bendrumo ir individualumo edukacinėje aplinkoje: Inčiūraitės projektuose kolektyvinis mokymasis dažnai panaudojamas tam, kad sykiu atskleistų individualius bendrai įgijamų gebėjimų atspalvius (atlikimo, pasirinkimo, skonio, virtuoziškumo).