

An exercise on perspective

Activity

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DESCRIPTION

This activity is very useful to introducing, developing, and studying different types of perspective, ways of framing vision, or points of view that have been used for representation in two and three dimensions (including color, high and low relief, and other support technologies and materials).

As a starting point, begin with some time to converse or to share images (printed or projected) that have been selected previously by the person running the activity. This first part of the activity can last as long necessary, that is, as long as you and/or the participants need or decide (ten minutes, hours, months, years....).

I recommend choosing simple guidelines. In this activity, for instance, the only hard-and-fast instruction is the use of two dimensions, with the possible addition of high or low relief and/or color.

1) A time is allocated for the participants to do the work (half an hour or an hour at most). I recommend unifying the group by using just one material to simplify and optimize the quality of the results.

Once participants have finished, each participant gives their work to a classmate. No one can say anything to others about their own work during the time allocated for production or exchange.

2) Each participant examines their classmate's work and writes down their observations and interpretations according to the following strict protocol:

Observe and describe:

- What material is it made out of?
- What size is it?
- Is there a horizon line?
- Is there a vanishing point? More than one? How many?
- What type of culture can it be connected to?
- What type of cultural artifact or process does it refer to?
- What type of vision technology (lens, camera, mathematic-geometric perspective, etc) is it connected to?
- What intellectual, ideological, spiritual, or ontological context drives its perspective?
- What sort of movement or artistic production is it related to?
- What does it evoke in you?

If there are over fifteen participants, I recommend breaking down into smaller groups (up to five people) where one person will write down the conclusions and another read them out loud to the large group (part 3 of the exercise).

3) Participants or the representative of each group will take turns reading out loud the reactions and conclusions on the work of their colleague. This part of the exercise is essential. The vocabulary used is examined closely (I recommend having a dictionary on hand) and clarifications requested. The rest of the group listens and reflects. What each persons has to say helps everyone.

Everyone has the same amount of time to generate understanding. And now everyone listens and mulls over their own process of learning from interpretation.

4) Once all the reactions have been read, the interpretations should be given time to settle; they should not be remarked on or judged. Debate should be left for later, well after the exercise itself (this facilitates the group's cohesion). It will take a few minutes—in some cases, years—for some of the things said to sink in.

RESOURCES

The recommended materials are pencil and paper, clay, tempera or watercolor (it depends on the size of the studio where the activity takes place and the resources available). The activity can accommodate any number of participants, though, as said above, with over fifteen I recommend breaking down into smaller groups.

GENEALOGY

The perspectives, points of view, and representations of the world around us are what structure and constitute us; they organize our understanding and ways of re-creating ourselves. They shape our politics and behavior. That is why I think it is important to examine and question them, to observe and converse about them and how they operate.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

Curiosity and learning go hand in hand with the transmission of knowledge

I believe that curiosity and learning go hand in hand with the transmission of knowledge. At the age of around five, I started to pretend to give classes to anything in my proximity willing to play along. It is easy for me to give classes and act as a guide to others, perhaps because I have a sense of responsibility, of care for myself and others. My sense of adventure has always led me to peek into unknown worlds and to share them if I find them truly interesting or useful.

I was fortunate enough to have an excellent education in conceptual art in Switzerland, the heart of Europe. It was very open, inclusive, and critical. When I returned to Argentina, I shared my interests, and taught and studied in the private studios, small institutions, and art schools that were beginning to take shape in the eighties, after the dictatorship. I teach in settings that are willing to hire someone without a degree recognized by the Argentine Ministry of Education, since my diploma in three-dimensional expression and knowle-

dge of art from the Geneva University of Visual Arts is not recognized in this country. Since the year 1997, I have given classes at different institutions and as part of different projects in Brazil, Ecuador, Norway, and Argentina. In the late nineties, Inés Katzenstein began putting together the Artists' Program at Universidad Di Tella and I began working there. Throughout this period, I have developed exercises for different genealogies or generations of young artists and curators.

Contemporary art has changed a great deal in these years in terms of labor force, technology, and range of representation perspectives.

When, in the classroom or studio, I have to introduce myself, I say that I am an artist and that I do creativity exercises; anyone who wants to can engage in joint creation. These exercises are designed to create discernment, not works of art; they construct playful situations in which you get to know your peers and expand your sensibility, to understand sensations and shape feelings, among other things. I invent courses and exercises to grapple with form, representation, and color and their symbolic, imaginary, and real dimensions. Something like visual foundations and design but adapted to current times. I cross knowledges, some of them rational and others more intuitive or non-scientific; drawing, color, perspectives, and knowledges born of other sciences or humanistic and artistic fields of knowledge (architecture, semiology, philosophy, anthropology, religion, and various ontologies). I propose different exercises for each moment. I love changing them around and reworking the questions, I love surprising myself and for the group to surprise itself. The exercises are a very vital, as well as demanding, way for participants to share concerns and to stay engaged, to maintain a committed perspective on what is being done and made.

I strive to improve how human beings treat one another, to make artworks or, more broadly, created forms become part of that intimate project. I am interested in investigating art's shifting ethics, and if an artistic product can help us to get to know each other and ourselves better, for instance, to understand diversity, and to expand vision and comprehension.

I also think art can be a place to bring together projects tied to the ideals of a more caring and inclusive, and less violent, life. I have no interest whatsoever in

projects steeped in violence. All of this is quite ambitious and vast, I know, but still—even with awareness of failure—my work in the classroom is tied to trying to hone discernment both in my own sensibility and in that of others.

When asked what emotion is set off in me when I encounter the other in an educational space, I think it is mainly the idea of having a nice time together... of feeling like I have done my duty by sharing—part of my mission on this earth. The possibility of a common search, of "making forms," working toward more joy rather than more despair—all of that interests me. Though one gropes one's way, understanding little, barely brushing up against beauty or happiness, or the feeling of love. A shared search is possible... After all, how will you find or touch a feeling if you can't even envision it? None of this is obvious.

I don't think any sort of education is possible without at least two parties, both of whom learn and teach. I like working in groups because knowledge and discernment is much more generous and richer in a group. The more we are, the more differences there are, and the more we learn from those differences. We have the opportunity to incorporate processes that might lead to antagonisms and moments of intensity born of paradoxes, contradictions, and oppositions. But it is in the meeting of disparate knowledges and joint work that transformation takes place.

I don't know if art is just a means of sublimation, as the Freudians would say; of transformation, as the Jungians would say; of open action as Beuys would say; or a bit of each. In any case, neither education nor art yields any of those in and of itself; you have to work for it. States of relation and of creation, like happiness, love, and beauty are too abstract and timeless for consciousness. So one just does the best one can, in the classroom and outside it, in time and outside of it, in politics and outside of it.

Mónica Giron in interview with Luciana Marino, year 2018.

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Workbook - First-person experiences in art education

Compiled and edited by **Luciana Marino**

Contributors: Ariel Cusnir, Bárbara Kaplan, Catalina León, Cynchia Kampelmacher, Dani Zelko, Delfina Bourse, Diana Aisenberg, Diego Bianchi, Ernesto Ballesteros, Eva Grinstein, Gabriel Baggio, Inés Raiteri, Joaquín Aras, Juliana Ceci, Karina Peisajovich, Leila Tschopp, Leopoldo Estol, Lucas Di Pascuale, Lucrecia Urbano, Luis Terán, Mariana Rodríguez Iglesias, Marina De Caro, Max Gómez Canle, Mónica Girón, Osías Yanov, Paola Vega, Rosana Schoijett, Santiago Villanueva, Silvana Lacarra, Silvia Gurfein, Tulio de Sagastizábal, Verónica Gómez.

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