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Creation's all about mediators. Without them nothing happens

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"Creations' all about mediators. Without them nothing happens". Gilles Deleuze

A*STUDY is a study programme intended as an introduction to, and for professional development within the field of contemporary art. The third edition of A*STUDY will take place in Barcelona from November 2012 to June 2013 at A*DESK's central office. The course directed by Oriol Fontdevila, art critic and curator

The question of mediation is proposed as the central thread, that will trace the panorama of projects, agents and institutions that are involved within contemporary art practices. The programme counts on the collaboration of an elevated number of professionals with diverse profiles, and involves a series of visits to different spaces in Barcelona and workshops with the participation of internationally recognised figures within the art world. A practical laboratory will also be established for the development of projects for creation, research and mediation with the participants of the program.

The program is aimed at people interested in understanding and reflecting upon the discourses and processes that arise within the practice of contemporary art. It stems from the consideration that the practice of art is developed out of the collaboration of a wide range of social agents, as well as that innovative production is only conceivable when experimentation is considered in relation to processes of cultural mediation, such as curating, art criticism or education.

ITINERARY 1: Emergent cultures. Attitudes and procedures within artistic research

How is artistic and cultural emergence produced? How can moments of cultural transformation be investigated and how can they be influenced through the practices of art, education, curating or critical theory?

The first itinerary in the Barcelona Study Programme of A*DESK 2012-2013 incorporates 2 workshops, 7 seminar sessions with invited agents and 9 laboratory sessions for the tutored production of projects. As well as the possibility of realizing the whole itinerary, it is also possible to realize each one of the workshops, laboratory sessions and seminar programmes separately.

The itinerary has the aim of unfolding the whole range of attitudes and procedures by which one understands research today and relates it to artistic practices, as well as providing tools and resources with which to analyse processes of emergence and cultural innovation, in relation to artistic creation as much as to curating, education, collaborative working practices, new technologies and the media.

The component of research is a key aspect in the development of production processes based on innovation. In this sense just as the changing status of art requires the continuous opening up of new perspectives for analysis, research is also currently understand to be indispensable with regards to generating these very processes of emergence and transformation. In this sense a symbiosis is proposed between creative practice and research that has given rise to new attitudes and procedures, while also establishing a debate surrounding the new paradigms related to the practice of art, as well as to mediation and research.

Seminar Programme with Octavi Rofes; Andrés Hispano; Manuel Segade; Tere Badia; Oriol Vilanova; Cristian Añó (Sinapsis); and Mery Cuesta.

Workshop with Eloy Fernández Porta: "You know how you ought to feel". Cultural transit in the era of media implosion

Alienated or sensitive, abject or relational: behind recent discourse about the arts there always throbs the question of emotion. What is the emotional code prioritized by artistic discourse? What type of culture does it call upon and how does it generate a work? In this workshop, from a perspective of the sociology of the arts, we will try to identify some of the contemporary politics around sentiment and their trans-media embodiment, developing practical exercises aimed at creators, curators and critics.

Workshop with Tirdad Zolghadr: Can I talk to the manager? The politics and mythologies of mediation and curating

This workshop addresses the politics, tropes and mythologies of "mediation" in curatorial practice. Curators elaborate on art for a variety of reasons – pedagogical aspiration, institutional accountability, professional anxieties. But rarely are these motives considered as such. The means and methods are just as varied, from a faux-naïve embrace of empirical description to a paranoid sheltering of art from contamination by language. Some curators believe in the capacity of language to innocently describe the work, others claim too much descriptive language can actually damage the art's potential. Our workshop will compare a variety of approaches, and include models from other disciplines. It will further examine the specificities of speech as compared to writing, particularly in light of current discursive practices in the field. Finally, the module will explore notions of referentiality beyond speech and writing altogether.

ITINERARY 2: Scenarios for mediation. Crossovers between creative, curatorial and educational processes

To what extent does the effectiveness of an art proposal depend on its corresponding process of mediation? To what extent can cultural mediation also be considered an experimental, creative practice?

Curating and education, like all mechanisms for cultural management and mediation, nowadays have to be conceived as active elements for obtaining innovative environments. While from the perspective of modern formalism art tended to be considered an autonomous device, today the communicatory and transformative effectiveness of art is no longer believed be possible if it doesn't also influence, albeit anticipating, mechanisms of mediation. One of the challenges of contemporary art is therefore to rethink questions such as curating and education from an experimental perspective, as processes that actually generate the processes of dialogue and hybridisation necessary for cultural innovation.

The second itinerary of the Study Programme at *DESK 2012-2013 proposes 2 workshops, 9 seminar sessions with invited agents and 11 laboratory sessions, for the tutored production of projects. Aside from the possibility of participating in the whole itinerary, it is also possible to participate separately in each one of the workshops and programmed seminars and laboratory sessions.

The itinerary will therefore establish environment in which to consider the different proposals that are currently arising within curatorial, education and creative practices, and also the processes of exchange that arise between these areas and the implications they have on cultural policies, collaborative working practices, institutional critique and the production of new cultural hybrids.

Seminar programme with Jorge Luís Marzo; María Mur; Laurence Rassel; Antoni Abad; Sílvia Dauder; LaFundició; Marcelo Expósito; Pep Agut and Quico Peinado; Latitudes (Mariana Canepa and Max Andrews).

Workshop with Javier Rodrigo and Aida Sánchez de Serdio: Crossovers and frictions between curating and education

Workshop exploring the museographic and pedagogical implications of collaborative practices, as well as the possibilities of articulating prototypes for action that would make museum structures more permeable to social dialogue. The objective is to propose ways for transforming current modes of cultural administration and management of artistic practices.

Taking a series of real institutional contexts as examples the group will be invited to develop an intervention proposal. One of the key features of the workshop is the desire to bear in mind existing conditions, or likely ones, for the curatorial-educational intervention. Consequently the group will be given a specific framework and orientation regarding the organisational dimensions of the project to be designed, within which they will have to situate their project.

Workshop with Paul O'Neill: Did Somebody Say Curating, Again? Recent Turns in Curatorial Practice

This workshop will look at recent turns in contemporary curatorial practice. In doing so it will explore certain concepts of the discursive, the durational and the educational turns in contemporary curating. Given that the group exhibition has become the primary site and medium for curatorial experimentation it still represents a relatively new discursive space around artistic and curatorial practice.

This workshop will explore how different group exhibition-forms have investigated how the curatorial is made manifest, through cohesive and co-operative exhibition-making structures applied through close involvement of all those involved, where multiple actors and agencies are at work during different stages of exhibition production.

It will begin by exploring how exhibitions create certain social and spatial relations for the viewer, and how the an understanding of the exhibition-as-medium, and the exhibition-as-form, and their different durational dimensions are being contested. This workshop will continue to address the on-going "discursive turn" in contemporary curating to the more recent "educational turn" in a way that seeks a critical reconstruction of "the exhibition" and "the school" in curating and discursive practices. Key terms to be explored will be the curatorial, collaboration, duration, participation, ritual, citizenship, sociality, relationality, publicness, attentiveness, and the discursive.

ITINERARY 3: Doing, undoing, redoing. Performativity and narrativity in contemporary art praxis

How does art produce reality? To what extent does the praxis of art intervene in the articulation of social conventions and to what extent is it capable of transforming it?

The notions of "performativity" and "narrativity" currently articulate a series of discourses that situate language and symbolic interactions as central aspects within the production of reality. According to this point of view, the construction of societies and identities can be described as being the fruit of a series of specific cultural processes, with artistic practice also being implicated within this framework.

With the third itinerary in the A*DESK study programme we focus on how audio-visual productions, theatre, texts and

exhibitions, affect the construction of how we see and experience the world; while placing a special emphasis on the analysis of the processes explored within contemporary art praxis aimed at altering prefixed cultural norms.

The itinerary is made up of a programme of 10 seminars with invited agents, 2 workshops and 13 laboratory sessions for the development of tutored projects. Aside from the option of participating in whole itinerary, there is also the possibility of carrying out each one of the individual workshops, the seminar programme and the laboratory sessions.

Seminar programme with David G. Torres; Judit Vidiella; Oscar Abril Ascaso; Roger Bernat; María Ruido; Quim Pujol; Martí Manen; Carles Guerra.

Workshop with Dora García: The radical in the social and the experimental in the artistic

Even thought the swing of the pendulum between heterodox and orthodox art, between art for art's sake and engaged art, has occurred with a rhythmic continuity since the first avant-gardes, over the last few years, it has been hard to ignore art with a strong commitment to the social, that reflects structures of the seventies and eighties. And that is despite the limited disposition the majority of museums feel for this type of art. The question, "What is art?" has been completely abandoned out of a lack of interest and now the really important one is, "Is it possible for art to blend in so much with other discourses that it becomes indistinguishable from them?". The idea of "useful art" coined by Tania Bruguera is quite a challenge to the Kantian concept of "pure disinterested satisfaction". What does art sacrifice in this process? Are the formal and the ethical really so distant? Or can we say along with Fassbinder that the radical in the political necessarily translates into experimentation with the form? .

Workshop with Asier Mendizabal: Front and Back. Four works

This encounter will endeavour to identify or refute as the symptoms of an era, some general standards in artistic practices that turn to historiography, narrativity and referentiality as more or less central tools within their working method.

The role assigned to criticism of comparing contemporary work with the ideal draft of what contemporaneity might demand of it, identifying what is lacking in the work once it is compared with the totalizing narrative that is expected at each present moment, is essentially the wrong role. This, however, is still the way that much criticism is presented, revealing and valuing the recourses that art puts into practice. In this sense it seems appropriate to submit to an examination the double accusation, in principle rightly aimed, that the most interesting criticism currently exposes: first, whether it is true that the recourse to referenciality and historical material, even historiography as a method, are hegemonic procedures peculiar to our time, revealing a neglect of the need to write the present; and secondly if its analysis necessarily confronts us with an unproductive fascination with history as a fetish.

As a procedural condition we will limit the proposed examples to four works and texts that form part of Asier Mendizabal's practice, that will be presented at the beginning of each session. We will confront these with critical and artistic material by other authors and from other times as the workshop develops.