

How learning to make (art)

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If we talk about how to learning to make (art) we start from three premises unquestionable: passion, confidence and method. It is impossible for a student who isn't motivated, to develop its own language. Inversely, students who have poor techniques can develop very interesting proposals, if the passion motivates them during practice, through the study of artists and their techniques, concepts and languages, and with critical reflection.

In ancient Greece, two illustrious characters exemplify learning methods almost opposites: Socrates and their questions (maieutics); Aesop and the fables. In the context of learning, the use of the Socratic dialogues shows a teacher who asks, and the student answer to discover their own pre-existing knowledge. In the manner of Aesop, the student reveals his cognitive deficits and the teacher teaches them through stories that try to explain the world and encourage learning imaginatively. For me, this second process is more appropriately suited to the learning of artistic practice, and the method developed in the classroom and workshop.

I understood the classroom as an amorphous space, which varies each year due to personal and intellectual diversity of its components renewed. Since the *Revolution of the University of Papini*¹, no issues or curriculum, or exercises or lessons. The dialogue and experimentation are the basis of a proposal, in which teachers and students share an area where we simulate the workshop, the artist's thought space, the place of the idea. Meetings are held here, the result of experimenting with techniques, languages, and dialogues with peers. The review process is continuous work, based on the questioning of what and how to say.

To explain a little better this process, almost elusive, and inspired by the tradition of Aesop, I use the metaphor of the way, and leaning development in the ten drawings of the ox and the drover² an old Chinese Zen story that illustrated the monk and Shubun painter (1432-1460), as a means of introduction to the practice of Buddhist meditation.

1. The search

1 PAPINI, Giovanni. "La revolución universitaria" en *Maschilità*, Libreria della Voce, Florencia, 1915. Edición en castellano, *Masculinidad*. Mateu Eds., Barcelona, 1961.

2 The illustrations are part of the artistic heritage Shokoku-ji monastery in Kyoto.

Getting started is difficult. The fear of the blank page, the canvas, the pen wanders in the air without settling safely on line. Having an idea, a feeling just, start somewhere, by technology, by a previous work, a passion.

The student who aspires to be an artist wishes to have a thousand things to the world, but the truth is that doing so freezes her/him. Absolute freedom confuses them for the lack of conforming and controlled exercises, as previous subjects. The studente had something to say, but when she/he starts, the words stuck in their mouth. Silence. Just interrupted by a slight lisp. The desire to succeed, to be bright and recognized. The great work. Poorly controlled legitimate desires are imposed, and there are great concepts, abstractions, being, time, space, portrait, landscape... It is difficult to say when you have all the possibilities. Then, almost always, the student is lost in the attempt to find his voice. She/he discovers she/he has lost. It was believed unique and excellent when started three years ago in the university, and now finds that she/he has to start its own search, its specificity, which will make the work so unique. she/he has to find the essence. And only if she/he finds the end of a long journey include the artist begins this journey every day.

Becoming aware that we have to look, we have lost the ox, and complex is the first step. You also have the ability to focus on something, one thing, and all our capabilities dedicate it to get it. Begin the journey. And yet there is no firm foothold.

*caminante no hay camino
se hace camino al andar*³

2. The feeling

At classes I insist on the concept of art as idea, as thought, research and experimentation process. Just say it shows a slow and laborious work. Laziness is imposed (not for lack of interest, usually out of fear), and because we live in a society that imposes immediacy. Few students are hesitant from the beginning to start this way, so that an almost desperate look around. It costs us to learn, we are reluctant to follow directions, and always believe that there is a different and simpler way to that which indicates who has already traveled. Thus, students look and rummage in journals and magazines the latest trends, and return to class with speeches impostos and others, appropriating, claiming his great interest in them, and the inability to address any other issue. This does not work. The student never gets to create an artistic experience on this basis, leading to delays, wasted efforts and frustration.

³ MACHADO, Antonio. "Proverbios y cantares" XXIX, in Oreste Macrì (ed.) Antonio Machado, *Poesías completas I*, Espasa-Calpe, Madrid, 1989, p 575.

During the first steps of an artistic discourse is difficult, impossible, talk about something that is not known. The autobiographical experiences, from the most subtle to the most momentous, give more play: not because it is a fad biographical art in recent decades, but because the personal involvement promotes motivation: I want to say something. From the subjective to the global. And I experience languages and techniques to do it. Other students learned resources cling to either a technique they have acquired some ease, or topic which have come in the past. From the conceptual proposal or from artistic experimentation, in both cases there is an intuition, a strange feeling difficult to name with which to begin a journey, with which to start making.

3. The discovery

The student performs the first test, the first approaches, and provides some references, almost more by intuition than obtained by a systematic search. You can almost count on what is working. In class, share work with classmates and teachers. And among all the languages are discussed, techniques, and propose suggestions for further research are discussed references, techniques discussed and talk about other possibilities or ways of doing things. There is great excitement and confidence at this time, and although the results are still not good, it is to harness the energy and the momentum.

At this time the classroom becomes a space of collective knowledge. If everyone involved is enriched exponentially. But the learning experience is diluted when shame, shyness or insecurity interventions is reduced, and the students try to justify the work, even to justify not working. Here comes a big problem when we can not explain, or the student is not able to understand, that we are only at the beginning of a great journey, in the first minutes of a game, and that will be missed several times by different roads before reaching somewhere interesting. When the student is confident that this is the end of the journey, is not very flexible to changes, to discoveries that experience offers, and repeat again and again the same, without allowing evolve. Study and analyze texts and artists, but not with the intention to see other ways to say, but with the attempt to justify what was done and strengthen their small achievements. Established at this stage generates a lot of frustration and difficult to counteract.

4. The capture

The student who isn't stuck passed to the next stage, and have to start again. When the student revises its initial proposal checks if there are interested ideas or have arisen some nuance to

scan. At issue is the subject and its relation to the techniques used, checking suitability, or whether it would be possible to test by means of other techniques, with which they generate, nuances and variations in the language used.

This is a long stage, where the student have to let her/his imagination and be permeable to different options, and at the same time avoiding the extreme dispersion, which can lead, as in the game of the goose, to square first. Indeed some students occasionally arise again all the work, and decide to find another topic, another idea or another approach. Although this makes the road longer generates consciousness, of the needs and the importance of a practical process to guide us.

Part of the creative process is to find the ways that we are not interested to continue, as it is in any research method. I doubt there is any artist who has dismissed or modified work, despite the insistence of family and friends about your loss. Here the student develop a critical perspective on the work done. The ability to not see it as something that is out of our hands after much work, effort and money, but understand that it is a phase of a process, and you need to let go of that phase to overcome. Here begins to mature awareness of the future artist. And this process is parallel to a deepening perception of the work of others, both classmates and established artists. A class group works when several students arrive at the same time to this stage, and their attitude is understandable for the rest, generating a dynamic active and reflective.

5. The long process

We could make a parallel between this phase and the technical development process. The student already knows a few things of what not interested her/him, and has before it several ways to develop her/his process. They have tested some techniques, but didn't handle with ease, and this is the time to build their knowledge. No matter if the work is made with video, painting, sculpture, drawing or any other technique. Here rehearses definitive sizes and qualities. Explore the art and languages used with a clear intention of what it intends, strength materials and media to bring them to their land.

This is usually one of the most concentrated parts. It's easy to be swayed by simple means, or unexpected results that we accept as achievements, or conversely, did not discover the successes achieved during the process. The continuity in the daily work is essential. Everything changes day to day. And the critical vision takes hold, mature, in a continuous process of choice and discard. If there are several lines of work are defined here.

This is one of the most fun and exciting stages. To do, to redo, to vary. The classroom is transformed into a workshop, and silence is the best proof that we have obtained the desired result.

An art student has to be aware that learning the techniques is long and complex, especially when we can not force them to resist languages for which almost never designed. But a good technical bill is a principle that can not be waived, and one of the best examples of professionalism we can offer. When during this process in the classroom all students are not working, conversations and silence replaced the corridors, and the classroom looks more like a public square a workshop. It is essential to reverse this state as soon as possible to get the motivation and concentration that requires technical development

6. The path of the great return

The return of this creative process, almost a spiritual journey, is abrupt and confusing. The student has been alone. After the struggle between their desires and control over how to translate them feel strong and proud. The student shows others her/his work. But this path is a false ending. It's necessary to go much further. If you controlled the road can move forward. She/he himself is able to select from everything done, only what interests her/him, what has evolved shows that critical judgment, and establishes distance from her/his tasks. This is an essential feature of a professional artist. Moreover, it requires that students develop a dialectic of the work done, as the process of making is a process of thought, and is trained to verbalize it right now, that does not justify it. It is able to talk about abstract concepts and specific technical details.

After experimentation and decision making, after critical judgment and choosing proposals is the time to design the complete work. The student knows how to transit through that path. Know precisely what the benchmarks used, plastics and theorists, following research conducted. The high return is the tour of the same steps that led us to this point.

7. Alone and without memory

The artist and her/his work are, at this point, a kind of entity that you can't define as separate elements. As a Leibniz monad but are a phenomenon unique compound. Everything is under one law. It has established the rules of their game. There is no loss or diversion. Before him stretches a long way and have the tools and power to tread it. This is the longest stage. The performing, after the experiment and research. The process is alive and nuances emerge in its route that extend the work, and that make it complex and interesting. The parts are enriched each other, the ongoing review is inevitable. Borges said he published to cease to correct.

If at this point we approach the student workspace, see different parts development process, sketches, future approaches, open catalogs, photocopies underlined... This is the time in which it is

more difficult to connect from the outside. The student must first come to a new stadium. The energy and enthusiasm so drunk. All is well.

Taming the mind is to stop fighting it. At this time forget everything. Just conscience. His work is more important than fatigue or time.

It only matters the way. No destination. No target. There is nothing more than the dust trail in the footsteps and uncertainty facing the horizon. So it causes a symbiosis between work and the user. Only matter development. When the student reaches this process reaches a new state, a nirvana that can not escape, which inevitably leads to the following phases, and what about the fullness of her/his experience as a professional.

8. Nothing

No more confusion, just serenity. The artist is the master of the game. Dictates its laws. It is who created and knows best her/his creation. Reaches unity with his work, a situation that allows her/him to give up the experience. The emptiness of this picture speaks of a higher plane, different, which is reached after a process, and allows us to abandon the principle of authority. The student, after analyze, dissect and investigate the works and texts of others and themselves, by doing, reaches a cultural layer that allows her/him to refute, from her/his work and that of their teachers. After merging with his work as a superhero reborn, has more power, has come to know, to nothing.

*En los límites de lo pensable, que es donde se sitúa el místico, tenemos que vérnosla con esa conciencia que, en última instancia, confrontada a sí misma, se convierte en puro vértigo y, luego, realiza el vuelco: volver a nacer es entonces volver a moverse entre las cosas, las cosas pequeñas, con una inocencia desmemoriada. ¡Quién pudiera!*⁴

To Moraza "the deconstructive artistic knowledge is knowledge, including an un-know"⁵ understands how Oteiza "DES-SABER" (DES-KNOW), unemployment of knowledge [...] I'm not interested of knowing more than I reached me know. We are each our own unique know, if we get to know something worth telling others."⁶

4 MAILLARD, Chantal. "Desde la ignorancia. Mística y metafísica" in *Contra el arte y otras imposturas*. Pre-Textos. Valencia, 2009. p. 159. "The limits of the thinkable, where lies the mystical, we have to deal with that awareness that ultimately confronted itself becomes pure vertigo and then performs the shift: then is reborn back to move between things, small things, with an innocence forgetful. Who could!"

5 MORAZA, Juan Luis. "A + S. Arte y saber". Zehar # 60-61. July 2007. p. 25.

6 OTEIZA, Jorge. *Ejercicios espirituales en un túnel*. Hordago. Zarauz, 1984. p. 478.

The artist is a thinker, a scientist and a mystic in many cultures, and this is because it is able to reach a zero degree, and that her thought arises from there, from the depths of nowhere. As a thinker, scientist and mystic, shares his ability to invent a new world.

9. Something rather than nothing

We've reached the end. The student has acquired critical consciousness. Look at his work, not as a mother to her son, but becomes a spectator of his own work. It's time to take steps backwards. The monad is opened and dismantled. Look what he has done, listen and contemplate about. In the film we see a landscape Shubun. The artist's work is not just yours, and not his. It is part of a greater whole. It becomes another element of landscape art. It is an element of life, of history, a piece of nature. It is a pebble in the river. A raindrop in the sea.

Yesterday the gold raven sank into the sea.

Today the circle glow of dawn shines as sooner.⁷

It becomes an autonomous and independent from the whole of which it forms part, nothing more and nothing less. He is a creator. But that office does not separate from the world but who joins him. It's easy to boast in this moment, believe special.

However, the task of the learner, the artist, is not complete. It is the moment before leaving the studio. Sometimes the work is stored over time, in others barely have time for packing and transportation. The work already has its own identity, beyond its maker.

10. The exhibition

This is the part that completes the artistic process. The work is not done so that it is stored in the workshop, or receive family praises, but is an act of generosity. The work and effort are offered to the community. The work is not complete until a viewer the experience. The student is prepared to exhibit their work.

(Consideremos) primero dos factores importantes, los dos polos de toda creación de índole artística; por un lado el artista, por otro el espectador que, con el tiempo, llega a ser la posteridad.⁸

⁷ Zekkai Chusin (1336-1405). Texto en prosa y en verso que acompaña la leyenda "El buey y el boyero". Citado en UEDA, Shizuteru. *Zen y filosofía*. Herder. Barcelona, 2004. p. 155.

⁸ DUCHAMP, Marcel. *Escritos*. Gustavo Gili Ed., Barcelona, 1978, p. 162." *(Let us) first consider two important factors, the two poles of all indole artistic creation on the one hand the artist, on the other the spectator who, over*

So Duchamp speaks on *The Creative Process*, convinced of the need for both the artist and the recipient, the maker and the viewer, so that the work is created. Talk about "verdict of the spectator" understanding that the artwork is not finished when the artist concludes, but when the viewer the judges, understands, and sentence:

*el artista no es el único que consume el acto creador, pues el espectador establece el contacto de la obra con el mundo exterior (...) para añadir entonces su propia contribución al proceso creativo*⁹

The artist has a special aura in almost all cultures due to this time, not the economic success or the technical management, but the continuous, arduous and complex by which he generated another way of thinking. If we visit museums or were excited to see the first artistic expressions of other cultures, it isn't for the cult aura that makes tourist consumption, but because he, like the poet, like the scientist, is able to see us. We are known by the artist. We recognized by the artist. Because artists can shape the experience. And offer it to the world

These words seem too big for young people who just take the first steps in a demanding profession, but every artist got her/his start. It is fascinating to be part of this process, and not to forget the reasons why we embark on it. They were never money or recognition, since there are easier ways to get them. Almost any method would be more effective, and this success is not guaranteed. But few roads are as exciting as art.

time, becomes the posteridad"

9 DUCHAMP, Marcel. *op. cit.*, p. 163. "The artist is not the one who consumes the creative act, as the viewer makes contact site with the outside world (...) to then add their own contribution to the process creativo"