

Public Art as a Means of Social Interaction: From Civic Participation to Community Involvement

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It is a sorry misconception of freedom — that of the being who would fain be free in loneliness. The impulse to loose one's self from commonalty, to be free and independent for individual self alone, can only lead to the direct antithesis of the state so arbitrarily striven after: namely to utmost lack of self-dependence.

Richard Wagner, *The Artwork of the Future*

While the perspective I adopt in this essay is that of public art as a catalyst for social interaction, first of all we must ask ourselves what we mean when we speak of public art. To this end, I begin by presenting two definitions of public art.

The first, emanating from the International Symposium 'Quel destin pour l'Art Public?' [What Fate for Public Art?] organised by the UNESCO World Heritage Centre and the Community of Cergy-Pontoise on 19-20 May 2011, is as follows:

Public Art refers to original works of art that use all kinds of artistic media, in temporary or permanent installation, in an outdoor or indoor environment. Accessible to all, public art seeks to enrich a community by providing a unique meaning to public realm.¹

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1. UNESCO, 'Colloque international "Quel destin pour l'Art Public ?"', Centre du patrimoine mondial de l'UNESCO and Communauté de Cergy-Pontoise, 19 and 20 May 2011: < <http://whc.unesco.org/fr/actualites/746/> > (accessed 19 March 2018).

*Public art is not actually an artform, but a principle. A principle of improving. It is a principle of improving the changing environment through the arts, utilizing the arts to assist those involved in increasing quality in the environment.*²

The conflict between these definitions demonstrates the wider theoretical disparity surrounding public art. In the first case, we have a very broad definition that emphasises as defining criteria the production of original works, the guarantee of access to all, the contribution to the community and the qualification of the public realm.

In the second case, the definition is more restrictive and based mainly on a programmatic understanding. Public art ceases to be a mere mode of artistic production in order to equip itself with a spirit of mission, so to speak, placing the arts at the service of the improvement of communal life.

This conflict of conceptions — and we could obviously cite many more — serves to demonstrate that we cannot speak of public art as if it were a unitary conceptual and operative territory, but rather as a conceptual complex made up by a set of tendencies.

This text identifies *grosso modo* with the second conception in that it recognises the arts as a gift of valuing the environment and of giving meaning to life. However, it also recognises the necessity to catalyse community involvement to help eliminate the separation of the sphere of the arts from the sphere of everyday life and to ensure the pursuit of art itself.

In summary, the following premises are those I consider critical to my conception of integral public art:

- Public art, *a priori*, does not exist... it manages to become.
- For this conversion to take place, the work of art must *be appropriated*.
- In order to *be appropriated*, the work of art must be registered in the *public sphere*.
- In order to enter the *public sphere*, the work of art must involve the *community*.

Based on these premises, I outline the following Model of Integral Public Art (Fig. 1).

According to the diagram, the overlap of the *public space sphere* with the *work of art sphere* defines the *art in public space model*, which corresponds to the *public museum model*.

2. Lorraine Cox, 'Public Art Forum' (1996), quoted in Alison Hems and Marion Blockey, *Heritage Interpretation* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 124.

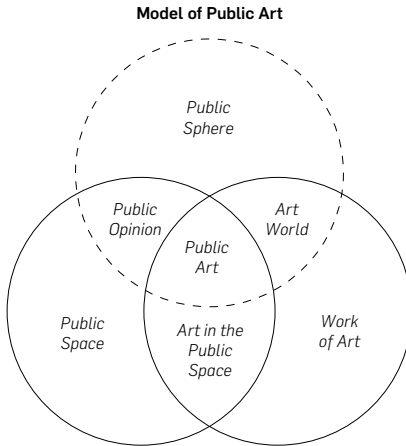


Fig. 1. Modelo de Arte Pública Integral

Together with the spheres of public space and the work of art, we introduce the *public sphere*, which in the diagram is drawn in broken lines to highlight the diffuse character of its borders. Its overlap with public space defines the *domain of public opinion*, while the overlap of the work of art with the public sphere defines the *art world*, as understood by Howard Becker (Becker 1982).

Finally, the simultaneous overlap of the public sphere with the public space sphere and the work of art sphere defines what we mean by *Integral Public Art*, an art which aims to catalyse social or community interaction.

Intervention in the public sphere by the artist and programmers is, in my view, the most persuasive and consequential feature that defines public art.

The notion of the *public sphere* is a concept formulated by Jürgen Habermas as follows:

By 'public sphere' we mean first of all a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed. Access is guaranteed to all citizens. A portion of the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body.³

Intervention in the public sphere, therefore, is the branch of public art that aims to open a path capable of mobilising and promoting community involvement.

It is important to clarify that all human activity is capable of being reflected in the public sphere, including artistic activity, whether it is oriented towards interaction with the public or not.

3. Jürgen Habermas, Sara Lennox and Frank Lennox, 'The Public Sphere: An Encyclopaedia Article' (1964), *New German Critique* 3 (Autumn 1974), 49-55.

Thus, when I consider the inclusion of the public sphere to be the criterion that differentiates 'public art' from 'art in public space,' I refer to artistic programmes which, from the outset, consider the public sphere as a constituent element of the work itself, materialising this inclusion through community involvement.

While we are unable to go into much detail here, there is a clear contradiction between the desire to link art with life (which is the central theme of contemporary art) and the distance between contemporary aesthetics and the socially predominant 'taste'.

Promoting community involvement, without betraying the values involved, can therefore become a thankless task, giving rise to conflict, misunderstanding and frustration on all sides.

Nonetheless, and this is the point I am most interested in highlighting, it should be noted that community involvement is not itself a recent artistic strategy; nor is it, depending on the nuances of its orientation, the exclusive domain of advanced, avant-garde or postmodern art.

Through theoretical research and practice, I have been able to ascertain four modes of community involvement associated with public art interventions, and two modes of interventions in the public sphere, which I will go on to describe here.

1. Civic Festivities

These represent the simplest and most widespread level of involvement and emerged fundamentally as a social rite during the nineteenth century, typically clustering around statues dedicated to notable and celebrated national figures.

While certainly not the earliest case, an example is the civic celebrations of the tercentenary of the birth of Camões held in Lisbon in 1880, celebrations which are well documented both iconographically and otherwise.

It should be kept in mind that the tercentenary celebrations of Camões in Lisbon lasted three days and included light shows, music, fireworks, conferences, exhibitions, theatrical performances and a civic procession through the streets of the capital culminating in a gathering next to the monument to the poet, the dimensions of which are made clear in the engraving reproduced in the magazine *O Occidente*.⁴

In and of themselves, these festivities constitute public art. Public art, insofar as it has a performative character, is intended for all citizens and is itself usually promoted by citizens that are associated with particular institutions.⁵

4. See 'O Tricentenário de Camões' (1880), in *O Occidente*, Year 3, vol. 3, no. 61: < http://hemeroteca-digital.cm-lisboa.pt/OBRAS/Ocidente/1880/N61/N61_item1/index.html > (accessed 19 March 2018).

5. In this case, the Sociedade de Geografia and Luciano Cordeiro, its founder and perpetual secretary, were especially relevant.

Interestingly, in a demonstration of the ongoing relevance of these behaviours, the monument to Camões also served as the hub for a gathering in solidarity with the people of East Timor in 1999 following Indonesia's violent reaction to the results of the successful referendum for independence.

2. Citizen Initiative

Most nineteenth-century monuments were erected and financed by public initiative according to a formula of public subscription, as occurred in the case of the monument to Prince Henry the Navigator in Porto and with the statue of the Count of S. Bento in Santo Tirso, which represents an exemplary model of increased civic participation.

One of the cases that has been studied in more detail is the monument to Prince Henry erected to mark the Fifth Centenary of his birth, an initiative 'promoted [...] by the citizen of German descent Eduard von Hafe, in a proposal dated 4 March 1882 and presented before the Scientific Council of the Society of Instruction of Porto' (Abreu 2012, 82).

The 'programme of festivities' comprised multiple initiatives, beginning with a soirée on 3 April 1889 held at Theatro Gil Vicente (Palácio de Cristal), featuring a poignant address by councillor António Cândido, in which he observed that 'public monuments have a soul and a voice, they speak, they instruct, and they educate' (Pereira 1894, 27).

On 24 August 1893, in the aftermath of the British Ultimatum and the Conspiracy of 31 January, a competition was announced with the proviso that 'entries can be seen and examined in the Porto City Hall,' (Pereira 1894, 56) indicating the concern of the Executive Committee to keep the public informed about the progress and outcome of the competition.

In terms of civic participation, the ceremony of the laying of the first stone, scheduled for 4 March 1894, the quincentenary of the birth of Prince Henry, was preceded by a lavish 'civic procession' and the unloading at the Cais da Ribeira of the foundation stone, which was taken from the cliff at the Sagres Promontory and recorded in the photograph of Emílio Biel.⁶

Extrapolating to other programmes relating to the establishment of monuments, it is possible to say that celebrations of historical figures and events arise as a result of civic mobilisation, part of a broader agenda to promote and enact positivist values (Comte 1852).

6. See Emílio Biel, *Album Phototypico dos festejos ao Vcentenário do Infante D. Henrique no Porto*, 1894.

The next level of participation involves a broadening and intensification of the role of citizens in determining the nature of commemoration initiatives, the nature of proposals selected and their execution and in the celebration rites enacted around a programme of public art.

By community involvement we mean intervention, cooperation and consensus negotiated around a programme developed jointly within the public sphere.

Not many public art programmes with these characteristics have been implemented, insofar as they presuppose a degree of experimentalism that was not normally facilitated by legislation regulating the establishment of monuments in public space.

A case relevant to this discussion was studied closely in my doctoral thesis: the monument to the 'General sem Medo' [Fearless General], erected at the initiative of the population of the village of Cela Velha, where the family of General Humberto Delgado's wife owns a rural estate. It was in this place that the General used to spend his summer holidays, becoming an admired and beloved figure of the local population.

It is not necessary here to describe the process that led to the erection of what was (and remains) one of the most remarkable commemorative monuments of contemporary public art in Portugal.⁷

As the first monument erected after the Carnation Revolution following a national public competition, it should be noted that this initiative was the fruit of civic determination, independent of official and state resolutions, and that, as Prime Minister Mário Soares himself pointed out at the inauguration ceremony, it was a 'monument not built with money from the state, not erected by one or several political parties, but by the people of this region alone, the emigrants, under the sign of anti-fascist unity.'⁸

Apart from the period at the end of the Constitutional Monarchy and the First Republic, long since passed, when monuments were erected with public initiative and subscription, very few such initiatives were undertaken at the time.⁹

In August 1974, the Executive Committee created for the purposes of erecting this monument issued a communiqué calling for public contributions to the financing of a *statue*, thus initiating a public subscription.

7. For more detailed information, please see my doctoral thesis, available at < <http://dspace.universia.net/handle/2024/931> > (accessed 23-24 October 2015). The chapter dealing with the case at hand appears between pages 589-610.

8. *Diário de Notícias*, 23 August 1976, 1.

9. One such case is the Monument to the Dead of Tarrafal erected in 1978 at the Alto de São João Cemetery in Lisbon.

However, an article published in the newspaper *Diário de Lisboa* on 14 October criticised the moulds on which the initiative was being carried out, raising a number of questions. Referring to 'direct contacts between the sculptor Joaquim Correia and the Municipal Council of Alcobaça,' the newspaper reported that 'in cultural circles and especially in student circles linked to the Fine Arts, the initiative, which has yet to be officially confirmed, was received with perplexity and has been the subject of increasing concern.' The text refers to a letter sent by the Democratic Movement of Visual Artists (MDAP) to the Chairman of the Administrative Commission of the Alcobaça City Council, in which the signatories expressed their 'apprehension about the consequences of this project,' citing among other arguments, the lack of 'coherence in an interpretation of the Fearless General by a sculptor whom we consider closely identified with the environment and style of the deposed regime.'¹⁰

In light of the facts, it seems obvious that the MDAP letter (Fig. 2) should be seen as an intervention in the public sphere, which was actively involved in the process of organising the remembrance desired by the population of Cella Velha.

Moreover, there was more to this intervention than the letter, with the entrance of another protagonist, the National Society of Fine Arts (SNBA), which was officially contacted by the Chairman of the Administrative Commission of the Alcobaça City Council on 14 November 1974, requesting their collaboration in the organisation of a competition for the erection of a monument to General Humberto Delgado.

This step is significant, as it shows a tacit recognition of the public sphere as an active element in the organisation of the process, therefore validating the initial intervention by the MDAP.

Requesting the SNBA to intervene in the organisation of the competition reinforces the role of the public sphere, as the SNBA is defined as a cultural association obliged by its statutes to 'promote and assist the progress of art in all its manifestations, to defend the interests of the artists and especially of their associates, seeking to assist them, both morally and materially; to cooperate with the State and other competent authorities in all matters of national art.'¹¹ For this reason, and also because it is a democratically organised institution, we consider the SNBA to fall fully within the definition of Jürgen Habermas referred to above.

Assuming that the interventions of the MDAP and the SNBA meet the conditions of the Habermasian notion of the public sphere, this case presents a clearly different level of civic participation than those described above. Indeed, in previous cases, civic participation was carried out within a model of an executive committee launching and managing public subscriptions, while here the classic model

10. *Diário de Lisboa*, 14 October 1974.

11. See *Estatutos da Sociedade Nacional de Belas-Artes* (Lisbon: SNBA, 1962).

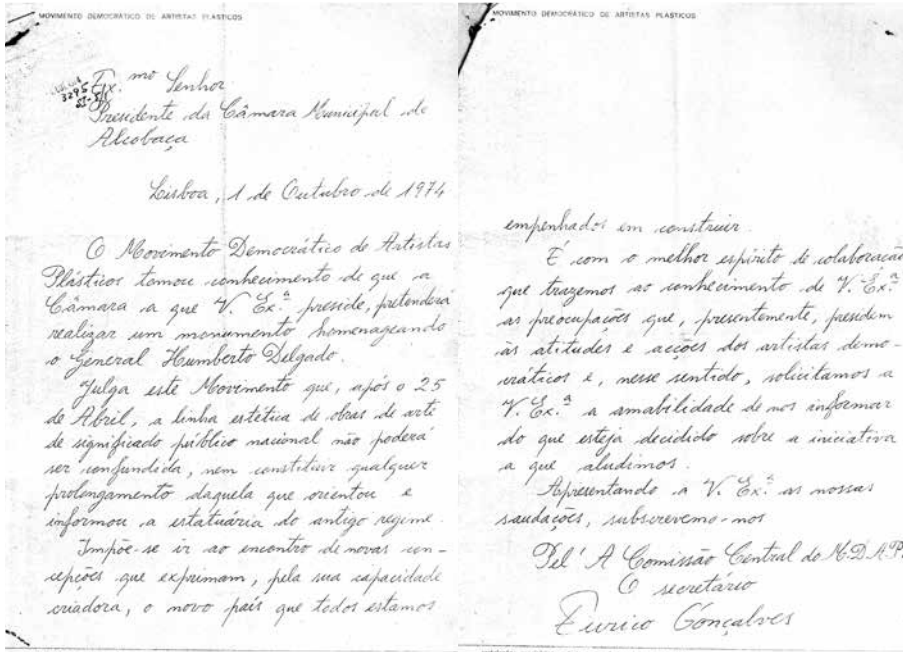


Fig. 2. Letter from the Democratic Movement of Visual Artists

of civic participation is overturned through the direct intervention of a segment of the public sphere, demonstrating the power to change the model of public subscription (for the erection of a statue) and introducing new variables into the process, such as organising a public contest taking place outside state institutions.

Something similar occurred with the Mausoleum for the Victims of Tarrafal by Jorge Vieira and Victor Palla, for which a competition was held by the National Society of Fine Arts, in what was one of the first (and rare) occasions when citizens and artists worked together, with the SNBA offering their facilities to receive the ashes of the Tarrafal victims before they were taken to the Mausoleum of the Alto de São João Cemetery.

4. Community Involvement

The final level of citizen participation is that which results from the involvement of citizens in the accomplishment of artistic interventions in the context of community art programmes.

The model we present here shares with the previous model the fact that citizens involved cross the barrier between the administrative organisation and artistic decision-making, taking the initiative to decide on the artistic programmes themselves.

At the same time, the present mode differs from the previous one insofar as the public intervention does not only operate at the level of decision-making, but also includes the artistic intervention itself, with the public becoming a co-author of the artistic production.

Finally, and this is the most relevant aspect, unlike the previous mode in which the intervention of the public sphere at the level of decision-making was not initially foreseen and somewhat haphazard in nature, it is now not only foreseen but constitutes one of the central premises of the artistic programme.

This was the case, for example, with the Paredes Public Art Circuit (CAPP), an initiative of the Paredes City Council completed in 2013, which provided the city with a set of artworks to create an urban walking circuit illustrating the diversity of contemporary art while simultaneously expressing possibilities for community involvement.

With the aim of promoting community involvement, a team was created — the Public Art Laboratory — which was responsible for organising a wide range of initiatives that brought together citizens, collectives, companies and local institutions.

The Public Art Laboratory (LAP) coordinated the operation of the programme on the ground, with all decisions being taken by consensus, and outlined a plan for 2012 which was made up of a set of initiatives grouped in different programmes.¹²

In addition to these activities, after the completion of the Paredes Public Art Circuit (CAPP), the LAP also organised a theoretical and practical mini-training course in Public Art for technicians of the Paredes City Council. This project resulted in the creation of a route within the CAPP, culminating in the publication of a small low-cost bilingual brochure, which was intended for sale at the CAPP Interpretation Centre and featured succinct descriptions of each art work (Abreu e Castro 2013).

To this wide range of informative and critical material must also be added a set of interviews and testimonies that can be publicly accessed through the Vimeo website¹³ and on a DVD attached to the catalogue, which features a documentary on each permanent piece of the CAPP and statements from the respective artists.

With regard to community involvement, and beyond what has already been mentioned, the CAPP programme culminated in artistic interventions where specific sectors of the community became involved as co-authors. This was the case of the temporary intervention *Contos de Paredes* [Stories of Paredes] which was initially proposed by Amanda Midori and developed under the auspices of the

12. Some of the programmes included the following: Free Talks about the Open Circuit; Public Art Days; Shopfront Art Displays; Land Art; An International Colloquium on Public Art. See José Guilherme Abreu, 'Processo e Instrumentos do CAPP. Laboratório e Envolvimento Comunitário', in José Guilherme Abreu and Laura Castro (coord.), *Public Art Open Circuit of Paredes* (Paredes: Câmara Municipal de Paredes, 2013), 131-33.

13. < <http://vimeo.com/album/1890091> > (accessed 23-24 October 2015).

Master of Art and Design for the Public Space (MADEP) programme in the Faculty of Fine Arts at the University of Porto, at the express invitation from the LAP to its director, suggesting that artistic proposals to be developed by the Masters students be dedicated to the public space in Paredes, where they would be registered as temporary and/or community interventions.

In all, nine artistic interventions were developed in this context, and they were described by Gabriela Vaz-Pinheiro, director of MADEP, in the following terms:

There are various strategies employed in these interventions, ranging from the simple provocation of immediate and playful gestures, to more complex constructions of collective processes, to the installation of almost always ambiguous objects that intend to re-evaluate social practices and make critical contributions to crucial questions in contemporary life.¹⁴

Contos de Paredes, the intervention coordinated by Amanda Midori, is described as follows:

A proposal of a playful nature that intends to involve the local population in the creation of stories about the origin of Paredes, involving three steps or 'actions': Instig(ação), Cont(ação) e Publicit(ação) [Instigation, Story-telling and Promotion]. The first is to raise awareness and interest people in the possible origins of Paredes. The second involves people finding the artist and telling their stories about the origins of Paredes. Finally, the stories created about the origins of Paredes are published one by one in each issue of the local newspaper over several months.¹⁵

Contos de Paredes presents itself as an artistic intervention unfolding in two strands: the conceptual component that creates the operative model of the project, and its realisation, which produces contents for the same through the interaction of the artist with a given participant (Fig. 3).

It is therefore as a producer of poetic and/or imaginary and/or critical and/or affective contents that an anonymous citizen acquires the capacity to become an 'aesthetic (co-)operator', depending on the mediation capacity and empathic power of the artist and the degree of interpersonal involvement that the project is capable of generating. As such, beyond the creative virtues of the concept itself, this mode of public art also requires adequate communication skills and even empathy on the part of the artist.

Another example requiring the aesthetic intervention of members of the local community was the piece *Exploratório visual* [Visual Exploratory] that was

14. Gabriela Vaz-Pinheiro, 'Breves palavras sobre as intervenções dos estudantes do MADEP da FBAUP no CAPP,' in *Intervenções efêmeras e instalações temporárias. Caderno do catálogo do Circuito de Arte Pública de Paredes* (Paredes: Câmara Municipal de Paredes, 2013), n.p. (5).

15. Amanda Midori (2013), 'Contos de Paredes,' in *ibid.* n.p. (7).



Fig. 3. Amanda Midori, *Contos de Paredes*

created by a team of teachers and students of the Paredes Secondary School (ESP), coordinated by the teacher Moisés Duarte.¹⁶

Amazingly, when the ESP was invited to suggest a temporary intervention, this collective of two visual arts teachers and their 11th grade students proposed the piece *Exploratório visual*, which became a permanent and evolving work, presented in the *Roteiro/Road Map* in the following terms:

Our proposal consists of a set of standardised and modular elements with a high chromatic intensity, which are randomly distributed to form larger or smaller sets of modules developed around a centralising object.

Intended to symbolise a cocoon or an incubator, objects equal to the modules which will later be found in the ground will regularly appear inside.

The character of the piece is not only one that celebrates playfulness, but also presents itself as a functional sculpture in that the set of small scale objects on the ground are endowed with characteristics that reference urban furniture and can in some cases be used as such. (Abreu e Castro 2013, 3)

Structured around a black rhombic octahedron formed by laser-cut metal faces with the motif of a tulip arranged in multiple modular combinations, the *Exploratório visual* has a cocoon-tree structure in whose interior strongly-coloured pieces appear periodically and which are then replicated on a larger and materially denser scale on the surrounding exterior. These objects, in turn, may even be used as playful and festive garden benches (Fig. 4).

16. It should be noted that the coordinators of LAP did not know the teachers of this school, and it was only after the first coordination meeting held at Paredes Secondary School that the coordinators realised that Moisés Duarte and Rui Espírito Santo developed curricula and artistic and research activity in parallel with the teaching.



Fig. 4. *Exploratório visual 0.1.*

More than a mere sculpture or object, the *Exploratório visual* is a dynamic and evolving project that aims to generate other objects, functioning as an evolutionary art work that suggests the purpose of giving continuity to an intervention process. As explained by Moisés Duarte:

The participation of Paredes Secondary School in the CAPP fulfils a shared desire to involve and share experiences between the school and the community. In this sense, we also intend to increase participation in our project among the educational community of the local area through joint and interactive actions with a marked interpersonal component. As such, we wish to create an environment favourable to creativity, experimentation and the implementation of new ideas and materials in the visual arts.¹⁷

The participation of Paredes Secondary School is an illustrative case of the possible interventions that can arise from the involvement of the community in the processes of aesthetic enhancement of a shared social environment, clearly demonstrating Joseph Beuys's conviction that every man is an artist.

But more than just a notable case of active community involvement in the aesthetic improvement of a shared social environment, the *Exploratório visual*, as mentioned above, aims to extend this methodology to the educational community of Paredes, aiming to involve other schools from the local area in subsequent stages of the intervention. As such, more than a collective production of a sculptural piece, this intervention was conceived as an evolving and participatory project, which integrated and extended the artistic programming of the CAPP and so ensuring its vitality and continuity.

17. Moisés Duarte (coord.), 'O Projeto Exploratório Visual,' in *Intervenções efémeras...*, n.p. (13).

Artistic programming (a term we prefer to *curating*) is therefore a particularly suitable means of promoting community involvement in public art.

By including artists, institutions and citizens, this mode is able to mediate the powers involved in the organisation of artistic programmes in order to gather a diverse representation of the population. In short, it forms a unity from the triumvirate of institutional powers, artistic skills and the public sphere.

Artistic programming thus appears to be a mode of promotion of public art that, in the present post-modern condition, corresponds to citizens' initiatives that reached their height at the end of the nineteenth century, managing to fill the void left by the deficit of collective creativity that characterises post-industrial society.

5. Stimulation of the Public Sphere

In a broader creative sense, however, the modes of artistic intervention in the public sphere are not confined strictly to the realm of visual artistic creation.

Akin to this premise is the idea of *Social Sculpture* proposed and put into practice by Joseph Beuys, in which society as a whole is conceived as a great work of art to which all citizens contribute. Indeed, this is exactly what Beuys created in 1972 and maintained during the Documenta 5 exhibition in Kassel with his *Büro für Direkte Demokratie durch Volksabstimmung* [Organisation for Direct Democracy Through Referendum].

Though distant from each other in nature, the following programme of actions organised within the scope of LAP for different social segments is based on the same assumption as Beuys's project:

- A. Free Talks about the Open Circuit
- B. Public Art Days
- C. Shopfront Art Displays
- D. Land Art Workshops

6. Community Involvement and Pedagogy

Before concluding, it is important to mention what is probably the most relevant and valuable mode of all: education through public art, a subject that in itself merits a separate analysis.

Education through art is a goal which has long been sought after. From the methodologies of Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746–1827) to Jean Piaget (1896–1980) and especially those of Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925), contact with artistic

experience is understood to play a central role in the formation and development of personality.

In addition to pedagogical methodology, other scholarly efforts to give artistic experience a central position at the service of the development of children and young people include the work of Sir Herbert Read (1893–1968) and his classic work *Education Through Art*, whose first edition dates back to 1943.

While artistic expression and cultural formation is mainly developed within schools, artistic education often fails to provide students direct experience with works of art as any contact with art provided in museums is always conditioned by the contingencies of that same institution.

And indeed, this is the main reason why since 2006 I have conducted Pedagogical Paths in the International Contemporary Sculpture Museum of Santo Tirso (MIEC-ST),¹⁸ with 10th and 11th grade students taking History of Culture and Art and Philosophy classes at the Secondary School of D. Dinis (ESDD), where I also teach.

Preceded by a preparatory class at the School, or alternatively an informative session at the Abade Pedrosa Museum with its Director, the courses have usually been carried out over an hour and a half, including two or three areas of the MIEC-ST.

During the course, students have to photograph (or draw) each work so as to be able to evaluate it according to their preferences more easily, and then select three favourite and three least favourite works from the collection.

The aim here is to facilitate the appropriation of works (by photography or drawing) and to then promote aesthetic judgement by getting students to rank them.

Later in class after completing the course on the ground, students write a comment about the work (or works) that they had found most moving.

After receiving these documents from the students, a course report is written which describes the pedagogical action and presents the final results of the classification of art works and an analysis of students' comments.

In 2011, to mark the 20th anniversary of the International Symposium of Contemporary Sculpture in Santo Tirso, included in the Annual Plan of Activities of the ESDD, an exhibition of the MIEC Pedagogical Paths programme was held in the Municipal Library of Santo Tirso, where students presented photographs and other work from the course of the previous school year.

Finally, to follow up and complement the exhibition, the *MIEC-ST Days: Idea/Project/Execution/Future* were organised before an audience full of art students from the ESDD at the Municipal Library of Santo Tirso on 4 April 2011, which

18. I ran the Pedagogical Paths programme in 2006, 2008, 2009 and 2011 as part of an interdisciplinary collaboration with philosophy teachers, thus involving all 10th and 11th grade students, though I have refrained from doing so in recent years due to the difficulties involved in organising large open air guided visits.

were attended by sculptor Alberto Carneiro and Professor Laura Castro from the School of Arts at the Catholic University of Portugal.

The session was recorded on video and photographs were taken.

Briefly, these were the most relevant actions that resulted from the MIEC-ST Pedagogical Paths programme and here too we can see the result of Nathalie Heinich's *Le Triple Jeu de l'art contemporain* [The Threefold Play of Contemporary Art], by which ruptures by artists and rejections by the public can be solved by the mediation of experts (critics, lecturers, curators, etc.).

7. In Closing:

When an artistic intervention located in public space and within the public realm manages to promote community involvement, it can be said we are dealing with community public art.

What distinguishes Public Art from other artistic production, then, is its defence of an ideology, which, as Siah Armajani states in point 7 of his manifesto, 'attempts to fill the gap that comes about between art and public to make art public and artists citizens again' (Armajani 1995, 111-14).

The very ideology of Public Art aims to enliven the territory of social interaction, an interaction which is highly creative in terms of its invention of new forms of intervention and conviviality, and which aims to establish art in life and enliven life through art.

A utopian idea, no doubt, but inspiring and potentially mobilising nonetheless.

This is the ultimate goal, which entails a programme with a vision of 'art-life', or in the words of Marcuse:

This means one of the oldest dreams of all radical theory and practice. It means that the creative imagination, and not only the rationality of the performance principle, would become a productive force applied to the transformation of the social and natural universe. [...]

And now I throw in the terrible concept: it would mean an 'aesthetic' reality – society as a work of art. This is the most Utopian, the most radical possibility of liberation today.¹⁹

19. Herbert Marcuse, 'Liberation from the Affluent Society' (Lecture in London, 1967), quoted in David Cooper *The Dialectics of Liberation* (Harmondsworth, Baltimore: Penguin, 1968), 186.

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