

Lesson 0

/ ENG /

The Book of Aesthetic Education of the Modern School

Priscila Fernandes

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In 1901, on his return from Paris, Francesc Ferrer i Guàrdia founded the Modern School in Barcelona, a pedagogic project based on a free, rational, secular, holistic and egalitarian education. In an age when education was under the auspices of the Catholic Church, Ferrer i Guàrdia took, as a point of departure, the traditions of Modern Pedagogy and adapted them to the revolutionary message that anarchists and freethinkers were spreading among the new social groups that were created in the wake of the Industrial Revolution. As part of the school, there was also a library, a publishing house, a public lecture room and a series of facilities for extracurricular activities, all aimed at the creation of freethinkers as a reaction to class inequalities and as a struggle to overcome the prejudices of his time.

Although aesthetic education was not part of Ferrer's programmed curriculum, there are several articles published in the monthly newsletter of the School pointing to the role of the artist in society, and the advantages of including artistic activities in the learning processes. At the death of its founder in 1909, the development of the school was stalled and we can now only wonder how its approach to art would have been like: What artists would have been studied? What texts would have been used? What position the Modern School would have taken in relation to the diversity of artistic and discursive practices of the time? We could also ask ourselves: How can we bring these discourses and questions to the present and update such a valuable legacy despite its being forgotten by the official accounts?

To address this and other questions, the proposal of **Priscila Fernandes** (Coimbra, Portugal, 1981) transforms Espai 13 into a classroom. Furniture and the necessary equipment for conducting an educational program, reproductions of works of art and posters, as well as a recently published book, are part of an installation with a double function: they serve as the basis for the exhibition and host the activities related to the project. The book ¿Y el Arte? The Book of Aesthetic Education of the Modern School is the starting point. Its title comes from the last article published in the *Boletín* (the School newsletter), which is also the name of the show. In its pages a series of texts written until 1909 by critics, philosophers, and artists establish a dialogue with reproductions of works of art from the same period. The book sheds light onto the different debates that were held at the time and that could form part of Ferrer's pedagogical doctrine in relation to art. In Espai 13, the book is placed in different parts of the space, and is available for reading, together with other School publications, which are lent on this occasion by the Fundació Ferrer i Guàrdia.

In the exhibition room, the surfaces of tables and chairs are engraved with abstractions that could remind us of works by artists of that period, even though, more than their usually subtle and precious lines, they recall student drawings left on desks during class. This furniture is also used at the programmed activities and their placement changes every time, leaving, on each occasion, different geometries in the space. In that regard, Friction Pedagogies, Lesson 0's educational support program, offers a teacher training course with some sessions open to the public. There, educators, artists and theoreticians will share a debate on initiatives of transformational pedagogy in and around schools, as well as the role of art education and creativity in the context of contemporary forms of cultural production. These activities will be announced in the gallery through a series of posters that will recall the ads of the *newsletter*, and will be distributed throughout the space together with the rest of the elements, such as a clock or a relief drawing made with chewing gum under one of the tables.

Lately, the work of **Priscila Fernandes** has focused on the ways knowledge is transmitted and on how ideology determines various forms of education particularly when, in our contemporary society, they work in association with games, creativity or productivity. This time, the artist begins with Ferrer's legacy, developing other relevant aspects of history and the arts of that period, and questioning gaps in them. She stays away from any hint of celebration,

commemoration or utopian vision to foster a lively space for discussion and debate, a meeting place where the past merges with the latest educational needs, and where the concepts expressed in the show are activated, rehearsed and implemented in a dialogue with participants, the public, the objects and the exhibition space itself.

Lesson 0 is a long-term, wide-ranging project that reflects on today's state of artistic education. Curated by **Azotea (Ane Agirre and Juan Canela)** and developed for the yearly program at Espai 13, Lesson 0 foregrounds proposals that relate to a kind of pedagogy that falls out of the expected in order to explore other forms of conveying knowledge. The program consists of four exhibition projects signed by **Priscila Fernandes, Rita Ponce de León, Anna Craycroft / Marc Vives** (in collaboration with **Rivet**) and **Eva Kotatkova**. They explore, imagine, and try different methods of learning and of establishing relations with the exhibition space. The four projects are set in motion as developments of Friction pedagogies, a teaching support program conceived by **Aida Sánchez de Serdio** and **Cristian Añó (Sinapsis)** together with **Rachel Fendler**.

* Friction Pedagogies aims to build relationships through negotiation with and between various groups from the art proposals that make up the exhibition program. These collaborations aim to foster mutual inquiry among its participants (teachers, artists, students, curators, gallery educators, youth, and cultural and social institutions) on issues related to education and art practices.

Public Sessions at Espai 13 (6 pm to 8 pm)

30.10.14 Panel Discussion 1: Pedagogical Alternatives and the School. With Inter-Accions, Institut Quatre Cantons, Centre de recursos pedagògics llibertaris - Josefa Martín Luengo, and Assembla Grogà

13.11.14 Panel Discussion 2: Art Education, Creativity and Contemporary Working Methods. With Sinapsis, Jaron Rowan, El Martinet and Creadors en Residència

27.11.14 Art Methodologies: Modes of Artistic Research. With Priscila Fernandes

Free-of-charge activity

Enrollment at: confirmacions@fundaciomiro-bcn.org

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Espai 13

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