

Week 5 | Educational Turn Redux

You will return to work on the 'Turning' marginalia you produced in Welcome Week.

This time, you will work as a group. You've since learned more about the Educational settings and debates that the educational turn has taken place within.

This week, you will meet in your Basho (Thursday, 10am) and complete this exercise:

Week 5: Q&A

There are three questions below that you can work through in more detail in your Basho.

Each question should take 20-30 minutes to complete.

Use your Basho's Miro board to create a mindmap and share the link so you can all add to it and edit the board.

Then work on the following, in turn....

1. Map out some key examples of the 'Educational Turn' in Contemporary Art

Task (up to 30mins in a group):

Each member of your group should have some examples to offer (they can be exhibitions, schools, artworks, artists, etc.)

Call them out and write them down in your Miro e-Whiteboard.

This will start to create a 'survey' of a scene – you are starting to map out the Educational Turn in Contemporary Art.

As a group, you might decide that you want to map out where the canonised examples are situated globally. Are they emerging from one part of the world more than another? Or are we simply hearing more about some examples than others?

A useful exercise here, is to consider what's being added to this canon and, just as importantly, what's being left out.

A little context:

To put this in context, I will quickly a few ideas of how your Basho might pursue the broad patterns and threads that Rugoff identifies, placing them back in the context of how art is taught here in the art school.

Literature Review as Collaborative Inquiry (link)

- Kennedy, J. (2011). "School's in: contemporary art and the educational turn." *C Magazine*(109): 16-23. *The author explores innovative ways to produce new forms of knowledge within exisiting institutions. She discusses the project class; (2010; col. illus.), an installation by American artists Jennifer Dalton (1967-) and William Powhida (1976-) in the Winkelman Gallery in New York (19 February – 20 March 2010), in which the gallery was transformed into an art school classroom where visitors were invited to participate in examining the way art is made. Considers the significant number of artists in places such as the Copenhagen Free University, Anton Vidokle unitednationsplaza in Berlin, Night School at the New Museum in New York and the Malmö Free University for Women in Sweden, who have pursued the possibilities of working between art and school and who have formulated the mode of production known as art-as-school.*

Kennedy here shows that there is a counterpoint between **works that have an educational aesthetic** and **exhibitions that have been curated around an educational theme** or subtext. There are

numerous exhibitions that we could list that push beyond this to create programmes that are, to some extent, indistinguishable from art schools:

The cancelled 2006 Cypriot edition of *Manifesta 6* (link)

A.C.A.D.E.M.Y (Rogoff co-organised this) (link)

'Night School' at the New Museum in New York (link)

Hayward Gallery's 'Wide Open School', (London) wherein over 80 artists ran workshops (link)

Then there are much smaller scale examples of artists establishing schools of their own, sometimes as their practice, sometimes for more educational ends:

e.g.

Jakob Jakobsen's Copenhagen Free University (2001–07) is frequently cited. <http://cfu.antipool.org/> (link)

MSA – Piero Golia and Eric Wesley's *The Mountain School of Arts* – is frequently cited too. <http://www.themountainschoolofarts.org> (link)

For more, see:

Sam Thorne's 'New Schools' in *frieze* 2012 <https://www.frieze.com/article/new-schools> (link) and his book Thorne, S. (2017). ***School: A Recent History of Self-Organized Art Education***. Berlin, Sternberg Press.

2. Origin Stories & Causality

Task (up to 30mins in a group):

Origins: This leads us to another focus that you might

consider for reviewing purposes. Wilson, in this paper, roots the educational aesthetic in art schooling itself:

- Wilson, M., et al. (2010). "Curatorial counter-rhetorics and the educational turn." *Journal of Visual Art Practice* 9(2): 177-193. *This essay will seek to introduce the broad context of this 'educational turn' in recent curatorial production. It will give particular attention to the associated curatorial counter-rhetorics, which seek to resist both a newly dominant economic instrumentalism and an older romantic humanism and their shared emphasis on heroic individualism. The discussion moves in three stages. It begins with an overview of experimental arts pedagogies within the academy that provide a backdrop against which to identify the recent emergence of an 'educational turn' within curating. The discussion then moves to a consideration of the counter-rhetorics set in play by the 'educational turn'. Finally, the discussion concludes by identifying the challenge presented by the attempt to rhetorically construct collective agency within the highly contested reputational economies of contemporary culture.*

Most authors, when writing about the educational turn, are at pains to explain its origins, or to suggest reasons for its existence.

What is *the* catalyst that's encouraged the turn?

Is there one over-riding factor **or** are there *many* factors to consider?

Do some factors take on more importance than other depending on where we look in the world?

Q. Quickly note what your group thinks about this using Miro.

'Causes'

As a group, you might now set out specifically to look for causes that authors cite for the turn...

e.g. Here are some tropes that I know are repeated as motivational *catalysts* for the educational turn:

- Cost-benefit-analysis: The high cost of the MFA (an American degree) in the USA, and the rising cost of Higher Education in general (indie school as alt MFA) is prohibitive. Investment isn't met with returns.
- Access: Education is becoming harder to access; it's not open enough, it's inflexible, it is/becoming an elite activity...
- Kinship: Educational turn as a way of extending 'safe space' of school post-graduation. This is sometimes characterised as infantilism (refusal to enter adult life).
- Instrumentalist educational reform: argument that (art) education is being impoverished within higher education *because it is part of higher education* (e.g. Bologna Process / regulation as bogey man)
- Radical pedagogy: argument that all institutionalised education is impoverished *because it is conflated with schooling per se*
- Exceptionalism: art schooling is *different*; this isn't recognised by the education system (push for declaration of independence)
- Dynamism: Educational institutions such as art academies are too old and inflexible. This is grounds to collectivise educational alternatives in curating and practice. We mustn't fall into the same trap and become old and inflexible so, fleeting collectives are good (lasting collectives are *bad*).
- Curatorial conspiracy: Educational turn is the final, much heralded, annexation of artistic practice by the educational remit of curators (Hey! why don't we just make make the art the educational programme!)

- Participation: Educational turn as an extension of the social turn / participatory turn – artists are developing what's come immediately before (e.g. it's still a form of social practice)

This list of hypotheses is just for starters (not exhaustive).

Q. Can you add more?

Q. Can you refine or revoke some of those listed above?

Q. Are there sub-hypotheses you could add?

What are the problems with adopting such an approach? (Such "causal explanation is based on assumption that by finding and explaining the cause of a phenomenon we explain the phenomenon.")

It has to be said that all of these causal arguments assume two things:

- a) that something has actually happened, that *there is* a 'turn'
- b) that 'turns' (effects) always have causes.

We might counter a) by invoking one of the arguments in my list (educational turn is actually just the social turn / participatory turn, so it doesn't really exist); we can counter b) 'Logic is a-temporal.'

See: Seebohm T.M. (2015) Causal Explanations in History. In: *History as a Science and the System of the Sciences. Contributions To Phenomenology* (In Cooperation with The Center for Advanced Research in Phenomenology), vol 77. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-13587-8_6

3. Educational Aesthetics?

Task (up to 30mins in your group):

Such causal explanations can proliferate wildly. So we need to also focus on the phenomena themselves – the schools, artworks and the exhibitions. This might enable us to learn more about what forms the turn takes and what it might be aiming to do. It will also allow us to start to sub-categorise the turn and, in so doing, build a critical method for discerning what's vital, or otherwise, within the turn.

For example, Rugoff identifies an educational aesthetic in work produced since the end of the 20th century; she notes that often this sort of work is *representational*. It isn't an educational process or institution in its own right. This is frequently reflected in a number of articles on the educational turn in art practice. e.g. Both Wilson, M., et al. (2010) and Kennedy, J. (2011) cited above make this point.

This morphological argument is really just an observation. It tells us what this work looks/feels like. It doesn't attempt to explain *why* it looks/feels this way or *how* the work is attempting to make us feel. Some authors are skeptical of work that falls into this aesthetic. Rugoff, for one thinks some examples of the turn are mere *style*; that we often see affirmations of 'school' appear as (nothing more than) a meme or trope. The turn, in Rugoff's sense here, is an environment, an architecture (the platform, the social pod, the reading circle).

But, equally, it can be a less tangible 'structure of feeling', something we might allude to or dramatise. Jeremy Shaw's speculative fiction *Liminals* looks and feels a little like entering an experimental school in the 1970s.

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=opfmjXfcZLA>

What we might call the educational aesthetic is much harder to map in causal terms; it is harder also to relate it directly to a realpolitik. The literature on the educational turn is either dismissive of such work or is befuddled by it. Education seems so rooted in the prosaic (the base matter of career politics – health, education, jobs) that poetics appears as an inappropriate and unwelcome incursion.

It's worth attempting to map this out within your Basho. Try to answer the following questions in your Basho's Miro page:

Q. Why is it such a sticking point?

Q. Who is un/supportive and why? Are they justified in being suspicious in this way?

Q. What other *non-causal* critical discussion of the turn can you identify?

Add your Basho's Miro notes (link) to MS Teams to show that you've completed this.