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## **At a Crossroads of Four Discourses**

### **documenta 12 Gallery Education in between Affirmation, Reproduction, Deconstruction, and Transformation<sup>1</sup>**

Gallery education (*Kunstvermittlung*) is neither a registered professional title, nor an irrevocably defined term:<sup>2</sup> in fact it has been used strategically of late. In the present volume, gallery education stands for the practice of inviting the public to use art and its institutions to further educational processes through their analysis and exploration, their deconstruction, and, possibly, change; and to elicit ways of setting these processes forth in other contexts. Thus, this publication specifically inscribes itself in the four institutional discourses of gallery education.

#### **Four discourses of gallery education: viewed from the perspective of institutions**

Currently, the institutional perspective affords a differentiation between four distinct discourses on gallery education. The first one, most prevalent and dominant, is the AFFIRMATIVE discourse. It ascribes to gallery education the function of effective outward communication of the museum's mission in keeping with ICOM<sup>3</sup> standards—collection, research, care, exhibition, and promotion of cultural heritage. Here, art is understood as a specialized domain, which is the concern of a chiefly expert public. Practices most often associated with this function are lectures and other related events and media, such as film programs, docent-led tours, and exhibition catalogues. They are devised by institutionally authorized speakers who address a correspondingly specialized and self-motivated, already interested public sphere.

I would like to denominate the second, similarly dominant discourse as REPRODUCTIVE. Gallery education assumes the function of educating the public of tomorrow and, in the case of individuals who do not come of their own accord, of finding ways to introduce them to art.

Therefore, while exhibition spaces and museums are regarded as institutions that provide access to important cultural heritage, there are still symbolic barriers

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1 I dedicate this paper to my mentor, Dr. Volker Volkholz, who passed away the very same week I finished the text. As sociologist and economist, he came from another context and thus taught me important things: team-based research, to understand theory formation as a practice in the struggle for more justice, and to stay headstrong in the face of constraints.

2 Alexander Henschel is presently writing his dissertation at the Institut für Kulturpolitik, Stiftung Universität Hildesheim, in which he seeks an operative, theoretically based definition of the term, with the working title: *Der Begriff der Vermittlung im Rahmen von Kunst – zwischen politischen Implikationen und kunstspezifischen Anschlussmöglichkeiten* [The notion of gallery education in the art context—between political implications and art-specific possibilities to further inclusion].

3 International Council of Museums.

that the public must overcome to enter these. A broad public must be afforded *access* to this heritage and their assumed apprehensions about entering museums must be reduced. Practices related to this discourse are, for example, workshops for school groups, as well as teacher, children, and family programs or services for people with special needs,<sup>4</sup> in addition to events that draw large audiences, such as *Museum Nights* or National Museum Days. As a rule, these are devised by people who have, at a minimum, a basic pedagogical experience, as well as by museum and gallery educators.

One encounters the third, DECONSTRUCTIVE discourse more rarely; it is closely tied to critical museology and its particular development since the 1960s. The purpose of gallery education here is to critically examine, together with the public, the museum and the art, as well as educational and canonizing processes that take place within this context. In accord with their civilizing and disciplining dimensions, exhibition spaces and museums are primarily understood as mechanisms that produce distinction/exclusion and construct truth. In addition, the inherent deconstructive potential of art is acknowledged. Evincing traits common to artistic strategies, this paradigm of gallery education is conceived as “starting from art.” Practices related to this discourse are, for example, exhibition interventions by/with artists and gallery educators who share these ideas; whereby the public’s participation can be invited or not. We also find programs aimed at groups identified as excluded from or discriminated against by the institutions. Thus, while the programs influenced by this discourse are infused with the call for institutional critique, they take distance from the reproductive discourse’s all too deliberate involvement of such groups, categorizing it as unidirectional paternalism. The deconstructive discourse may also articulate itself in the form of guided tours, as long as they intend to criticize the authorized nature of institutions, to relativize and to render it visible as one voice amongst many others.

The fourth, as of yet most uncommon discourse is TRANSFORMATIVE. Here, gallery education takes up the task of expanding the exhibiting institution and to politically constitute it as an agent of societal change. Exhibition spaces and museums are understood as modifiable organizations, whereby the imperative is less about introducing certain public segments to these than about introducing the institutions—due to their long isolation and self-referential deficits—to the surrounding world, i.e. their local milieu.<sup>5</sup> Transformative discourse questions, amongst other issues, the extent to which the long-term participation of diverse public spheres is required to sustain the institution—not in the quantitative sense, but as a way to satisfy the demands of knowledge-based society<sup>6</sup> and its short-lived, question-

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4 For example, programs tailored to individuals with visual or hearing impairment, limited mobility, learning disabilities, as well as recipients of psychiatric or other social assistance.

5 The artistic direction of documenta 12 acknowledged this imperative by initiating the documenta 12 Advisory Board.

6 The notion of knowledge-based society has been viewed from a critical perspective on neoliberalism and governmentality (see, amongst other references, Klaus-Peter Hufer and Ulrich Klemm, *Wissen ohne Bildung? Auf dem Weg in die Lerngesellschaft des 21. Jahrhunderts*, Neu-Ulm 2002). Nevertheless, I shall use such terminology because I find it too relevant to leave it to the domain of the forces under critique, as it questions the hierarchization of different knowledge, thus enabling at least a further thinking of educational issues. “It will be of decisive importance to select what is useful and to be able to tolerate ambivalences and uncertainty, to decide how to access knowledge and



able, and narrow views of expert knowledge. Practices related to this discourse work against the categorical or hierarchical differentiation between curatorial effort and gallery education. In this practice, gallery educators and the public not only work together to uncover institutional mechanisms, but also to improve and expand them. This encompasses projects aimed at a variety of interest groups, which are carried out independently from exhibition programs, or exhibitions that are devised either specifically by the public or by particular societal actors.<sup>7</sup>

The four discourses should not be considered in terms of different development levels according to hierarchical or strict historical-chronological categories. In practice, various versions of these discourses operate simultaneously throughout gallery education. Thus, there is no deconstructive or transformative practice that does not evince, in one way or another, affirmative and reproductive elements. Conversely, numerous manifestations of the currently dominant, affirmative and

playfully handle un-knowledge.” From <http://www.wissensgesellschaft.org/> (accessed on October 27, 2008) [Our trans.]. For a different discussion of this topic, see “We do not want any ‘market knowledge’! Call for a European mobilization against the Lisbon strategy in higher education and research, <http://eipcp.net/n/1233078852> (accessed on January 30, 2009).

<sup>7</sup> For example, the Offsite Projects of London’s Photographers Gallery. See <http://www.photonet.org.uk>, and Eva Sturm, “Kunstvermittlung und Widerstand” in *Auf dem Weg. Von der Museumspädagogik zur Kunst- und Kulturvermittlung*, Schulheft 111, ed. Josef Seiter (Vienna, 2003), pp. 44ff. The projects of documenta 12 gallery education and *documenta 12 Advisory Board* point to a similar direction, although, as already noted, they can also evidence aspects of affirmative and reproductive discourses.

reproductive discourses show no trace of any transformative or deconstructive dimensions. And it cannot be denied that tension between gallery education and the institution increases, as a rule, when the deconstructive and transformative discourse gains preponderance.<sup>8</sup>

In addition, each of the four discourses carries its respective concepts of education, namely, what it considers education to stand for, how it takes place, and whom it addresses. In the case of affirmative and reproductive discourses, teachers and pupils are statically positioned and educational topics are predetermined.<sup>9</sup> Both of these discourses do not engage in self-critical inquiry of their imparted educational conception, for they do not examine its power structures. However, they have a different way of inquiring after the “how” and “who” of education. In the affirmative discourse, educational programs are preeminently tailored to an expert audience,<sup>10</sup> the players of the field of art. The methods applied in the work of education—rarely denominated as such—draw on the conservative canon of the academic field. The reproductive discourse, by contrast, concentrates on an institutional perspective of the excluded, that is, absent members of the public sphere. Special attention is thereby given to “targeting tomorrow’s audiences.” Accordingly, learning-through-play methods are borrowed from elementary school and kindergarten, as well as institutionalized children and youth recreational programs. Possibly, a good deal of the available literature on the methodology of museum and gallery education is inscribed in this very discourse.<sup>11</sup>

Deconstructive and transformative discourses incorporate a self-critical understanding of education. This means that education itself becomes subject to deconstruction or transformation. The power relations inscribed in its contents, addressees, and methods are critically examined,<sup>12</sup> and this critique is integrated back into educational work with the public. In this working practice, those who teach and those who are taught exchange positions; the educational process is understood as a reciprocal act, although it is structured by the already noted power relations. While there are no predetermined addressees according to this logic, for they change according to context and situation, there is certainly an inquisitive mindset: for what is called for and expected is an openness to critically approach/work with art and its institutions. A public who refuses to fulfill these expectations, thus insisting on the service-oriented imparting of information, evades the

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8 See Oliver Machart, “Die Institution spricht. Kunstvermittlung als Herrschafts- und als Emanzipationstechnologie” in *Wer spricht? Autorität und Autorschaft in Ausstellungen*, eds. Beatrice Jaschke, Charlotte Martinz-Turek, and Nora Sternfeld (Vienna, 2005), pp. 34–38; Eva Sturm, “Kunstvermittlung und Widerstand” in *Auf dem Weg*, op. cit., pp. 44ff.

9 See the “banking” concept of education described by critical educator Paulo Freire in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York, London, 2000), pp. 72ff.

10 Because this particular notion of education is not examined with self-reflectivity, it is rarely rendered explicitly, but articulated instead through discursive practices: the way of addressing the public, the content and setting of programming.

11 It would certainly be instructive to trace the proportional presence of the four discourses in German publications on museum education, e.g. the journal *Standbein—Spielbein*.

12 Concrete questions posed were, for example: Who defines the importance of that which is to be conveyed in gallery education? Who categorizes so-called “target audiences” and to what purpose? How far can gallery education go in its subject matter and methods before the institution or the public deem it inappropriate or threatening? How do certain approaches to teaching/learning implicitly generate teaching and learning subjects?

educational aims inherent in these discourses: the advancement of critical awareness, agency, and self-empowerment.<sup>13</sup> Within the context of the deconstructive discourse, emphasis is laid on the development of analytical capacity. This does not necessarily imply an imperative to change the institution.<sup>14</sup> In a deconstructive understanding of education, critical engagement with art and its institutions takes place within a relatively protected sphere, in which actions are tested under complex circumstances, thus contributing to the development of agency, critical awareness, and inventiveness.<sup>15</sup> Thus, methods that draw on artistic strategies increasingly come into play. On another level, the transformative discourse sees institutional change as a goal inseparable from the fostering of critical awareness and self-empowerment. Hence, the methodologies incorporate, in addition to the above-named strategies, aspects of activism.

By differentiating between four discourses of gallery education anchored in the institutional context, I propose a guiding framework that could prove valuable in the face of the current boom this practice is experiencing. Due to the cultural and political reassessment of gallery education, most artistic directors in Europe face increased pressure to introduce educational programs in their institutions. Thus, gallery education frequently becomes a legitimizing (because appraisable) factor in justifying the existence of publicly funded institutions, for it is associated with marketing and quantitative audience increase, as well as with unchallenging, event-oriented and “broad audience” programming.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, actors in the field of art see this reassessment rather as a confirmation of their previous devaluation: as symptomatic of the ignorance of politicians with respect to the nature of artistic production.

Besides an understandable skepticism toward the purported “imperative of gallery education,” dissatisfaction grows inside the institutions with regard to their societal function. Some of the directors of art institutions—particularly those who see themselves as critical curators—wish to go beyond their elitist role. They find it anachronistic and seek to expand and shift their function. Here, gallery education and its related deconstructive and transformative potentials hold the promise of a qualitative benefit and creation of meaning. Accordingly, curators meet gallery education with increasing and genuine interest, with high expectations, albeit frequently with little expertise. Knowledge about a field that has been excluded and marginalized for decades cannot be—in spite of shifting areas of interest and

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13 This presents a pedagogical paradox: precisely the public’s refusal to participate in the work of deconstruction/transformation and its determination to hold onto its original ideas about gallery education can be considered a self-empowering act. It thus depends on which imperatives predominate.

Landkammer, p. 143

14 Deconstruction is contingent upon the existence of a dominant text, in order to work from within it. “The deconstruction pragmatist works within a thought system, albeit in order to disrupt it.” Jonathan Culler, *Dekonstruktion. Derrida und die poststrukturalistische Literaturtheorie* (Hamburg, 1988). [Our trans.]

15 At least the gallery educators involved here see a transformative potential in their work within the institution, which they also consider a “relevant area of life.”

16 In the field of gallery education, these contradictions have been the subject of ongoing discussion in English-speaking countries since 1998, particularly in connection with New Labour guidelines for cultural policies. See Carmen Mörsch: “Socially Engaged Economies. Leben von und mit künstlerischen Beteiligungsprojekten und Kunstvermittlung in England,” in *Kurswechsel* 4 (2003), pp. 62–74.

conjunctures—appropriated in a short time and alongside other activities, using it for individual purposes. In the best-case scenario, curators realize their deficit in this regard and commission experts to develop gallery education programs.<sup>17</sup> But because perceiving gallery education as an autonomous field of knowledge is new to them, because they also harbor their own desires and ideas about gallery education, and, above all, because the practice of gallery education is a collaborative effort taking place within the curatorial terrain, modifying or possibly changing it, curators also want to have their say about gallery education work. This produces new dynamics that disrupt the traditionally hierarchical order of curatorial work and gallery education. Indeed, some of the accounts and analysis in this volume dwell on the work in between these conflicting interests.

### Gallery education as critical practice: rationales

In November 2006, when Ulrich Schötker<sup>18</sup> and I reviewed the applications for gallery education at documenta 12, we realized that less than 5 percent were male applicants. We did not find this surprising, since it is a commonplace fact that predominantly women feel drawn to this practice. But gallery education has not been a female domain since its inception. In English and French museums of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, learning in museums from their objects and images was highly appreciated: it was an enterprise in the name of national identity, whose educational results were to enhance the quality of national goods produced in the context of colonial strife.<sup>19</sup> A gendered discourse about exclusion and access was already inscribed in the founding of museums. “The crowd” or the mob in the museum was both yearned for and feared by the institutions and, in this sense, it was constructed as female. Thus we find passages in the records of London’s National Gallery board meetings that discuss the presence of proletarian mothers in the museum who, seeking refuge from the rain in order to nurse their children, wear damp clothing that may have a harmful effect on the artworks.<sup>20</sup> The road to civilizing the “crowd” lay in its contact with cultural artefacts on display in the museum, just as Matthew Arnold envisioned.<sup>21</sup> At the same time, the protection of cultural artefacts demanded that access to these be restricted.<sup>22</sup>

17 In the very-best-case scenario, curators remunerate these experts commensurately for their work.

18 His paper “Gallery education and visitor services at documenta 12” in volume 1, p. 83f, presents his perspective on the subject as director of gallery education at documenta 12.

19 See, for example, Eva Sturm, “Woher kommen die KunstvermittlerInnen?” in *Dürfen die das? Kunst als sozialer Raum. Art/Education/Cultural Work/Communities*, eds. Stella Rollig, Eva Sturm (Vienna, 2002), pp. 198–211.

20 Colin Trodd, “Culture, Class, City: The National Gallery. London and the Spaces of Education 1822–57” in *Art Apart: Art Institutions and Ideology across England and North America*, ed. Marcia Pointon (Manchester, 1994), p. 41. See, in connection with this, the project “Talking and breast feeding” by Marvin Altner and Ellen Kobe.

21 See Matthew Arnold (1869): *Culture and Anarchy*, ed. Samuel Lipman (New Haven, London, 1994).

22 See, for example, Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum. History, Theory, Politics* (New York, London, 1995).



Toward the end of the nineteenth century, the first women to work as educators in the realm of gallery and museum education were white and middle-class. In discourse about the “communion of labor,” the division of labor according to God’s or nature’s designs,<sup>23</sup> philanthropy and educational work were a socially tolerated way to partake of public life. Furthermore, there were a growing number of female teachers in the field of design, for dealing with the so-called applied and decorative arts were also socially accepted activities. Having the right “taste” belonged to the realm of informal knowledge, whose rules were both generated and transmitted by women through production and consumption.

This is the period in which discourses on the education of the working class and the civilization of indigenous groups in the colonies converge by virtue of (and establish) a middle-class notion of culture. A popular theory of the time held that different groups among the earth’s population embodied different periods of humankind, respectively, and that the developmental stage of both indigenous people and local working class determined their “childlike” status.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, education was also associated with children in the context of adult education for the working class and hence fell into the sphere of female reproduction. Educational programs for “real adults,” on the contrary, conceived by experts and aimed at a respectively cultured, middle-class, European public, remained a male occupation.

Since 1945,<sup>25</sup> gallery education in Germany has been developing as a feminized and, in this sense, devalued work sphere, under suspicion for its purported oversimplification of “hard” scientific facts and complicity with the public. Most female scholars who work in this field are at an early career stage, or their careers have been hindered by structural violation. This devalued status has curbed theory formation in the field of gallery education as much as it stands in the way of developing a professional self-concept and discussions about pertinent criteria.<sup>26</sup> Thus, the twofold inextricability of gallery education from a history of discourse on female attributes and an understanding of culture and education marked by colonialism<sup>27</sup> prompts the demand for its future practice and theorization to be conceived as critically oriented projects in feminist and radical antiracist terms.

Since the end of the 1990s, cultural-political and institutional decision-makers are showing increased interest in gallery education. Here, the cultural policies of New Labour in England have played a precursory role, providing substantial financial support for “creative industries” and “socially engaged art,” and making the public funding of art institutions contingent upon the presentation of comprehen-

23 Eileen Janes Yeo, “Social motherhood and the sexual communion of labour in British Social Science, 1850–1950” in *Women’s History Review* 1, 1 (1992), pp. 63–87.

24 Anne McClintock has analyzed the convergence of these discourses in the context of the empire; see *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York, 1995). For another view of the same phenomenon in colonial Germany, see Michael Schubert, *Der Schwarze Fremde. Das Bild des Schwarzafrikaners in der parlamentarischen und publizistischen Kolonialdiskussion in Deutschland von den 1870er bis in die 1930er Jahre* (Stuttgart, 2001), pp. 48ff.

25 Indeed, a thorough reappraisal of the ways in which gallery education worked with the public during the period of National-Socialism is still much required.

26 One of the first German publications that attempted to provide a theoretical structure for the practice of gallery education was Eva Sturm’s *Im Engpass der Worte. Sprechen über moderne und zeitgenössische Kunst* (Frankfurt am Main, 1996). Drawing on Jacques Lacan, she analyzes speech and silence acts that take place within gallery education.

27 See the paper by María do Mar Castro and Nikita Dhawan in this volume, p. 317ff.

sive educational programs.<sup>28</sup> Gallery education thus gained relevance in the job market and educational policy. This has set a precedent in Europe, to be noted in the growing number of male protagonists, on both the “acting” and “writing” sides of the field.<sup>29</sup> This boost in symbolic and (to a certain degree) financial capital is definitely and undeniably valuable for the development of the work field.<sup>30</sup> However, this boost should be viewed with ambivalence. On the one hand, it is both cause and effect of an autonomous discourse generated by intense inquiry into activist and academic fields of agency and knowledge. On the other, this growing appreciation is tied to a different tendency. As already elucidated by other authors,<sup>31</sup> there is a visible trend toward neo-liberal appropriation of the creativity concept and thus the educational effects ascribed to gallery education. It is hardly coincidental that it fell upon Tony Blair’s government to (re)discover cultural education as a factor of economic development and the furthering of social cohesion. Already in *The Gendering of Art Education*, published in 2001, British theorist Pen Dalton points to a growing rhetoric of virtues connoted as feminine, such as flexibility, creativity, communication, and teamwork, reinforcing their quality as valuable “competence-output” of art education, but without critically examining the fact that this potential is appropriated by a deregulated financial system. “The aims of the five key skills at Camberwell College of Art ... are the same as those promoted by the Confederation of British Industry (CBI): initiative, self-motivation, creativity, communication and teamwork.”<sup>32</sup> Therefore, these are crucial skills that art graduates require for surviving within a flexible job market. The ongoing precariousness of working conditions in gallery education and its economic marginalization within art institutions proves that the present symbolic reassessment does not reverse the feminization of the field.<sup>33</sup> This ambivalence brings forth a further argument for a critical practice of gallery education (that is, critical of economic, governmentality, and neo-liberalism discourses). And, finally, this endeavor is grounded, as noted above, in a specific understanding of education: if the development of agency and critical awareness are to be considered as educational claims, then it is clear that they must be incorporated as paradigmatic elements to structure an institutional practice constitutive of education.

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28 Delving into the historical antecedents and the connection between this development and activist and academic knowledge would exceed the spatial limits of this paper. See, on this aspect, Carmen Mörsch, “Socially Engaged Economies” in *Kurswechsel*, op. cit. I am currently finishing a historical study on the reappraisal of the Art/Education *dispositif* in England.

29 Take, for example, the compilation by Jaschke, Martinz-Turek, and Sternfeld, *Wer spricht?*, op. cit. Among eleven authors, four are male; two of these are described as directors of gallery education, but only one of them actually works as a gallery educator. The other men are “philosophers” and “cultural theorists.”

30 As a matter of fact, the type of publication advanced here and the choice of publisher are a strategic move toward this reassessment.

31 For example, Pen Dalton, *The Gendering of Art Education* (Maidenhead, 2001); Marion von Osten, *Norm der Abweichung* (Vienna, 2003); Gerald Raunig and Ulf Wuggenig, *Kritik der Kreativität* (Vienna, 2007); Alexa Färber et al, eds., *Kreativität. Eine Rückrufaktion* (ZfK – Zeitschrift für Kulturwissenschaften 1/2008) (Bielefeld, 2008). This is further elaborated in Luc Boltanski, Ève Chiapello, *Der Neue Geist des Kapitalismus* (Constance, 2003).

32 Dalton, *The Gendering of Art Education*, op. cit., p. 111.

33 See the *Euromayday* initiative to which Sandra Ortmann refers in her paper, p. 248, footnote 18.



## Gallery education as critical practice: emergence and criteria

From the 1960s through the 1980s, the democracies of Western Europe implemented educational reforms that revised the societal function of museums and exhibitions. In *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*,<sup>34</sup> French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu provides a thorough analysis of the function of cultural institutions as “social distinction mechanisms” and the inclusions and exclusions they generate. Given that the exclusion of the majority of the population from these institutions proved not to be inevitable, but rather the product of economic and educational policies, the demand for a “culture for everyone”<sup>35</sup> became all the more pressing. In addition to the claim for equal access to education in democratic systems, a case was also made for accessibility to publicly funded institutions for all taxpayers.<sup>36</sup> It has, subsequently, become essential for cultural institutions to reflect on their own exclusion mechanisms and to find ways to disrupt them by implementing, for example, education services. British and American currents of feminist, Marxist, queer and post-colonial oriented aesthetics (*Kunstwissenschaft*) and cultural studies have been and are still influential to a critical gallery education. Since the 1970s, the related fields of cultural studies and new art history, and lately visual culture and cultural analysis, scrutinize the power dynamics at play in the information presented as canonical by museums and the manner in which it is communicated. The ordering of artefacts, but also the spatial configuration of museum rooms and their respective codes of behavior are to be read as texts that are subject to analysis and deconstruction, by drawing on Michel Foucault’s notion of discourse.<sup>37</sup> Their economies, their gender and “ethnifying” codes, as well as the historical and social conditions of their emergence are analyzed. Seen from this perspective, exhibitions and their institutions generate—through an interplay of historical antecedents, behavioral norms, and curatorial staging—rites or so-called “civilizing rituals” that induce subjects to conform, as well as quasi-mythical narratives that adhere to a hegemonic, patriarchal, and colonial historiography.

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34 Pierre Bourdieu, *La Distinction. Critique sociale du jugement* (Paris, 1979); published in English as *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (London, 1984).

35 Hilmar Hoffman, *Kultur für alle. Perspektiven und Modelle* (Frankfurt am Main, 1979).

36 See, for example, Gabriele Stöger, “Wer schon Platz genommen hat, muss nicht zum Hinsetzen aufgefordert werden,” in *Dürfen die das?*, op. cit., p. 184.

37 Here, two groundbreaking studies must be mentioned: *The Birth of the Museum* by Tony Bennett (op. cit.) and *Civilizing Rituals: Inside the Public Art Museum* by Carol Duncan (London, New York, 1995) as well as a more recent German publication: Roswitha Muttenthaler and Regina Wonisch, *Gesten des Zeigens. Zur Repräsentation von Gender und Race in Ausstellungen* (Bielefeld, 2007). Furthermore: Mieke Bal, *Double Exposures, The Subject of Cultural Analysis* (London, New York, 1996); Sharon Macdonald and Gordon Fyfe, eds., *Theorizing Museums: Representing Identity and Diversity in a Changing World*, The Sociological Review (Oxford, Cambridge, 1996); Marcia Pointon, ed., *Art Apart: Art Institutions and Ideology Across England and North America* (Manchester, New York, 1994); Eileen Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge* (London, New York, 1992); Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine, eds., *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display* (Washington, D.C., 1991); Reesa Greenberg et al., eds., *Thinking about Exhibitions* (London, New York, 1996); Daniel J. Sherman and Irit Rogoff, eds., *Museum Culture. Histories. Discourses. Spectacles* (Minneapolis, 1994); Moira G. Simpson, *Making Representations. Museums in the Post-colonial Era* (London, New York, 1996). For further analysis of the approaches elucidated above, see Griselda Pollock and Joyce Zemans, eds., *Museums after Modernism. Strategies of Engagement* (Malden, Oxford, Carlton, 2007).

In the 1980s, these readings converged in the field of *new museology*<sup>38</sup> under the call to incorporate subject positions and discourses so far excluded and to produce so-called “counternarratives,”<sup>39</sup> thereby turning the museum into a space of interaction and exchange. Exhibitions would no longer dwell on, but instead be conceived in collaboration with, the producers of culture—culture understood here as the overarching term for everyday objects, images, and activities. Here, it is clear that the claim articulated in the British and American context and the establishment-critical politicization of “culture” in cultural studies derives from the struggle of feminist and immigrant civil rights groups for access to and visibility within the cultural field. Both were inextricably tied to adult education and informal educational work. As a result, there emerged in some institutions, or at least among some practitioners, an approach tied to emancipatory pedagogy that advanced gallery education as a critical reading of the institutions.<sup>40</sup> Deliberate collaboration with marginalized groups (categorized as such by the exhibiting institutions) was intended to make their voices heard in the museums, and what is more: in an ideal scenario, museums were to transform into active protagonists of their political struggles.

Simultaneously, debates involving the emancipatory content of such experiments were launched. Particularly a Black feminist perspective identified the patronizing dimension in the “Give a voice” gesture associated with traditionally *white* middle-class institutions. This debate was also taken up within German-speaking countries at the start of the 1990s.<sup>41</sup> There are three general issues under discussion, which have contributed to a differentiation of criteria used to gauge a critical practice of gallery education: first, emancipatory and paternalistic components in art and gallery education projects negotiated under the notion of participation; second, the notions of politics and public spheres articulated there; and third, instrumentalism and/or regulation of self-empowerment of the participating audience.

Another relevant, yet distinct strand of theory and practice, brings together contributions toward a “gallery education as artistic practice” [*Künstlerische Kunstvermittlung*] and “gallery education as deconstruction.”<sup>42</sup> This approach, which

38 Peter Vergo, *The New Museology* (London, 1989). For the German context, see Andrea Hauen-schild, *Neue Museologie* (Bremen, 1988).

39 Henry Giroux et al., eds., *Counternarratives: Cultural Studies and Critical Pedagogies in Post-modern Spaces* (London, New York, 1994).

40 See Moira Vincentelli and Colin Grigg, eds., *Gallery Education and the New Art History* (Lewes, 1992).

41 For a good overview of the American debate, albeit not centered on the gallery education field, but rather on qualitative social research, see Alecia Youngblood Jackson, “Rhizovocality,” in *Qualitative Studies in Education*, no. 16/5, September–October 2003. German contributions to this topic include: Eva Sturm, “Give a Voice. Partizipatorische künstlerisch-educative Projekte aus Nordamerika,” in *Seiteneingänge. Museumsidee & Ausstellungsweisen*, eds. Roswitha Muttenthaler, Herbert Posch, and Eva Sturm (Vienna, 2000); Rubia Salgado, “Antirassistische und feministische Kulturarbeit aus der Perspektive einer Migrantinnenorganisation” in *Creating the Change – Beiträge zu Theorie & Praxis von Frauenförder- und Gleichbehandlungsmaßnahmen im Kulturbereich*, based on a two-year study of IG Kultur Vorarlberg (Vienna, 2006) as well as the entire publication by Rollig and Sturm, eds., *Dürfen die das?*, op. cit.

42 The most influential theoretical framework for these approaches is of post-structural provenance: Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Jacques Derrida, and Jacques Lacan. The Kunstcoop© group represents an attempt to document gallery education as artistic practice in Germany, see NGBK, ed., *Kunstcoop©* (Berlin, 2002). See also Pierangelo Maset, *Ästhetische Bildung der Differenz* (Stuttgart,

has surfaced in the German art pedagogical debate since the middle of the 1990s, attempts to orient gallery education methodically and structurally toward its object. Essential to “gallery education as extension of art”<sup>43</sup> is the avoidance of theoretical closure, acknowledging, instead, the inconclusiveness of interpretation processes in the discussion of artworks. Thus speaking about art is conceived as the inevitable, productive, and forcibly inconclusive handling of a lack, a desire.<sup>44</sup> Failing, stuttering, and “speech-gaps”<sup>45</sup> in the confrontation with the limits of language and comprehension and the resulting destabilization of the subject are regarded as constitutive of learning and educational processes.<sup>46</sup> Accordingly, preference is shown for methods with a performative art character, which point to an openness in semiosis and induce self-reflexivity in the pedagogical situation. These approaches seek possible interconnections with realms purportedly outside of the institutions, thereby emphasizing societal and disruptive potential moments and challenging “normality” at the heart of art and gallery education.

Let us thus attempt to summarize some of the criteria to gauge critical gallery education, whose approaches have developed in the last thirty years out of fields as diverse as critical pedagogy, constructivist learning theory, psychoanalysis, theory of performativity, deconstruction, post-structuralism, cultural studies, post-colonial, feminist, and queer theory and practice.

A critical gallery education combines, in particular, elements of the deconstructive and transformative discourses. It conveys knowledge as represented by exhibitions and institutions and examines their established functions while rendering its own position visible. Accordingly, it attaches special importance to providing the necessary conceptual tools to appropriate knowledge and adopts a “reflective” stance toward the educational situation, instead of relying on “individual aptitude” and the striving for “self-fulfillment” on the side of the public. While it seeks to broaden its audience, it does not indulge in conveying the illusion that learning in the exhibition space is solely connected to play and recreation.<sup>47</sup> It makes a point of incorporating the specific knowledge of those partaking in the practice of gallery education, visitors and educators alike. It acknowledges the

Distelberger, p. 91  
Landkammer, p. 146  
Wienand, p. 134  
Ziegenbein, p. 218  
Wiegand, p. 261

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1995); Karl-Josef Pazzini, “Kunst existiert nicht, es sei denn als angewandte,” in Bauhaus-Universität Weimar, Brigitte Wischnack, eds., *Tatort Kunsterziehung. Thesis. Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Bauhaus-Universität Weimar*, vol. 2, 46 (2000), pp. 8–17.

43 Eva Sturm, “Vom Schießen und vom Getroffen-Werden. Kunstpädagogik und Kunstvermittlung ‘Von Kunst aus,’” in Karl-Josef Pazzini et al., eds., *Kunstpädagogische Positionen 7* (Hamburg, 2005).

44 Eva Sturm, *Im Engpass der Worte*, op. cit.

45 Ibid.

46 Karl-Josef Pazzini, “Kunst und Bildung. Lösungen für Ich-starke Persönlichkeiten,” in *Bilden mit Kunst*, ed. Landesverband der Kunstschulen Niedersachsen (Bielefeld, 2004), pp. 31–48.

47 The infantilization of gallery education practice is a recurrent phenomenon, particularly in the practice informed by reproductive discourses. In particular, this infantilizing is directly related to the feminized, devalued practice of the work field and may be read, in this context, as a symptom for the fact that the protagonists do not take themselves seriously, in correspondence with the role assigned to them by the institution. Performed or assumed cheerfulness and playfulness are characteristic of this tendency, which feeds the vicious cycle that leads to further discrediting on the part of the institution. See Karl-Josef Pazzini, *Die Toten bilden. Museum & Psychoanalyse II* (Vienna, 2003). As Nora Sternfeld suggests, this infantilization must be read as a continuation of middle-class, paternalistic educational aims of museum pedagogy. See Nora Sternfeld, “Der Taxispielertrick. Vermittlung zwischen Selbstregulierung und Selbstermächtigung,” in *Wer spricht?*, op. cit., pp. 15–33.

Sato, p. 63  
 Wienand, p. 119  
 Landkammer, p. 139  
 Ortmann, p. 241  
 Wiegand, p. 261

constructivist make-up of learning processes, as well as the enriching potential of gaps found within language and comprehension.<sup>48</sup> That the knowledge of both visitors and educators is considered on equal terms sets this practice apart from mere *service work*: critical gallery education opts for controversy. Its antiracist and antisexist positioning substitutes alleged objectivity and prescribed diplomacy. In theoretical and methodological terms, it works along the lines of a critique of domination. It sets itself the task of not leaving any issues unaddressed, including the production of gender, ethnicity, or class categories in the institution, and the related structural, material, and symbolic devaluation of gallery education. It analyzes the functions of (authorized and unauthorized) speech and the use of different linguistic registers in the exhibition space.<sup>49</sup> Together with those who participate in gallery education, it attempts to generate counternarratives and thus to disrupt the dominant narratives of the exhibiting institution.<sup>50</sup> But it avoids turning these counternarratives into new master narratives fueled by identity politics.<sup>51</sup> Recipients are not regarded as subordinate to institutional order; rather, the focus is directed at their possibilities for agency and code-exchange in the sense of a “practice of everyday life.”<sup>52</sup> It also favors a reading of institutional order that, far from being conceived as static, leaves leeway for work with the gaps, interstices, and contradictions generated by the configuration of rooms and displays within the exhibiting institution.<sup>53</sup>

Furthermore, critical gallery education addresses the ways in which the market influences structure, presentation, perception, and reception of art and thereby counters the middle-class illusion that art is detached from the economy to which it is actually closely tied. It considers the cultural and symbolic capital of art and its institutions as constituents of inclusionary and exclusionary processes in the art field. At the same time, it acknowledges and communicates the fact that symbolic capital gives rise to a desire, and develops both strategic and sensuous ways to appropriate such capital. It seeks to transform the institution into a space in which those who are explicitly not at the center of the art world can produce their own articulations and representations. In this sense, it links institutions to their outside, to their local and geopolitical contexts. Thus, this field derives its complexity from art, the core subject on which part of its methodological repertoire is grounded.

48 Shoshana Felman, “Psychoanalysis and Education: Teaching Terminable and Interminable,” in *Yale French Studies, The Pedagogical Imperative: Teaching as a Literary Genre*, no. 63 (1982), pp. 21–44; Jürgen Oelkers, “Provokation als Bildungsprinzip,” in *Bilden mit Kunst*, op. cit., pp. 105ff.

49 See the course description of “*Wer spricht? Kunstvermittlung als emanzipatorische und feministische Praxis*” [Who gets to speak? Gallery education as emancipatory and feminist practice] taught by Nora Sternfeld in 2004, in conjunction with gender studies at Akademie der bildenden Künste, Vienna (Institut für das künstlerische Lehramt) under [http://www.schnitt.org/artikel.php?Art\\_ID=66](http://www.schnitt.org/artikel.php?Art_ID=66) (accessed on November 9, 2008).

50 Machart develops the notion of gallery education as interruption and counter-canonization in “Die Institution spricht”; see *Wer spricht?*, op. cit., pp. 34–58.

51 See Sturm, “Kunstvermittlung und Widerstand,” in *Auf dem Weg*, op. cit., and Sturm, “Give a Voice,” in *Seiteneingänge*, op. cit.

52 Michel de Certeau (1980): *L’invention du quotidien, les arts de faire* (Paris, 1990); published in English as *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley, 2002).

53 See, on this topic, Irit Rogoff, “Looking Away – Participations in Visual Culture,” in *Art After Criticism*, ed. Gavin Butt (Oxford, 2004) or the current research project “Tate Encounters” at Tate Britain, <http://www.tate.org.uk/research/tateresearch/majorprojects/tate-encounters/> (accessed on November 11, 2008).

## Gallery education at documenta: a brief history

The first documenta was conceived as a direct response to the National-Socialist eradication attempts undertaken under the stigma of “Degenerate Art,” presenting an exhibition that would rehabilitate artistic practices previously devalued in public consciousness. Because the educational content was meant to be sited in the works and the way they were displayed, and a deliberate case was made to leave the artworks unexplained, much less to query them, gallery education as it is conceived in this publication played almost no role in the first and succeeding documenta exhibitions.<sup>54</sup>

Bazon Brock intervened in this status quo with his conception of “*Besucherschule*” (visitor school), which he implemented from documenta 4 to 7.<sup>55</sup> To this day, his efforts and the actions initiated by Joseph Beuys, for example *7000 Eichen* (7000 oaks) and the coordination office of the “Free International University,”<sup>56</sup> prevail as dominant references for German gallery education, although, at least with respect to the latter actions, they did not engage directly with the exhibition. Considering the aforementioned feminization of gallery education, it is not surprising that Brock and Beuys, as male protagonists, have been able to sustain a historical presence, for in spite of their difference, they are the epitome of the solitary master artist. Indeed, their approaches were neither concerned with developing an autonomous discourse, nor with a long-term improvement of the structural conditions of gallery education.

In 1987, when Brock no longer worked for documenta 8, the University of Kassel stepped in to develop gallery education as a guide service,<sup>57</sup> which centered on imparting knowledge about the artworks—along the lines of an affirmative discourse—and targeted an already existing public. This was a conception that was carried out through documenta 9 as well. Accordingly, the training of gallery educators, which took place in the context of university seminars, was chiefly aimed at gaining knowledge of the artists’ work. At documenta 10, the guide service was run by a subcontractor and was thus converted into profitable service work whose extensive service-oriented program profile combined, above all, affirmative and reproductive elements.<sup>58</sup> In correspondence with the curatorial concept of artistic

54 Andrea Hubin provides a detailed analysis of (absent) gallery education in the first documenta; see p. 291ff in this volume.

55 Bazon Brock’s publication *Besucherschule zur documenta 7. Die Hässlichkeit des Schönen* can still be acquired for reasonable prices online in rare book stores.

56 Both at documenta 7, 1982.

57 Up to this point, there is no critical or even descriptive rendering of gallery education activities in the context of documenta exhibitions, in contrast to the large number of publications that reappraise the history of the exhibitions. Dr. Michael Grauer was director of education at documenta 8, and Dr. Klaus Baum at documenta 9. Complementary material was produced to furnish teachers with resources. I would like to thank my colleagues Michael Grauer and Christiane Preißler for their information on gallery education at documenta 8 and 9.

58 This ranged from diverse guided tours and introductory lectures to children’s programs offered by the City of Kassel’s museum education, and VIP-programs. Matthias Arndt of Berlin’s gallery Arndt&Partner was in charge of guide service at documenta 10. For an analysis of guide service at documenta 10, see Carmen Mörsch, “100 Tage sprechen. Als Künstlerin auf der documenta X,” under <http://www.kunstkooperationen.de/pdf/100TageSprechen.pdf>.

While school material focusing on documenta 10 was indeed published, it was a later project by professors of art pedagogy that was not affiliated with documenta as an institution. See Bernhard

director Catherine David, the training of gallery educators involved an introduction to artistic stances and a discussion of the theoretical references to the exhibition concept.

At documenta 11, gallery education made a claim for itself as “interruption” and “counter-canonization.”<sup>59</sup> However, this claim did not incorporate critical engagement with the exhibition. In fact, the director of documenta 11’s “education project” defined the exhibition as a complete three-fold interruption and paradigm shift in the art field. Thus, gallery education would not have to adopt a deconstructive, but rather an affirmative, stance toward the exhibition.<sup>60</sup> The guide service, relabeled as “education program,” was joined by an additional “education project,” conceived as a transformative element in that it expanded the functions of the institution. This project engaged previously selected international scholarship holders who would accompany gallery education at documenta 11 by conceptualizing its activities, and in some cases develop projects on their own initiative.<sup>61</sup> Again, the training of gallery educators, in accordance with the curatorial approach to documenta 11, went along the lines of institutional and canonical critique, engaging thus not only in a discussion of the works, but also introducing the educators to relevant theoretical concepts<sup>62</sup> for an understanding of the exhibition and the previous “platforms.”<sup>63</sup>

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Balkenhol, Heiner Georgsdorf, eds., *x-mal documenta X. Über Kunst und Künstler der Gegenwart. Ein Nachlesebuch zur 10. Documenta*, Kunsthochschule der Universität Gesamthochschule Kassel (Kassel, 1998). Another volume was published on documenta 11, respectively.

59 See, on this subject, the report by the director of gallery education at documenta 11, Oliver Marchart, “Die Institution spricht,” in *Wer spricht?*, op. cit., pp. 34–58.

60 Ibid., pp. 53ff. Oliver Marchart makes recurrent use of this argument in other publications. See Oliver Marchart, “Die Politik, die Theorie und der Westen. Die Documenta 11 im Biennalekontext und ihre Vermittlungsstrategie,” in Claus Volkenandt, ed., *Kunstgeschichte und Weltgegenwartskunst. Konzepte – Methoden – Perspektiven* (Berlin, 2004), pp. 113ff; idem, *Hegemonie im Kunstfeld. Die documenta-Ausstellungen dX, D11, d12 und die Politik der Biennalisierung* (Berlin, 2008).

What appears puzzling, if one is to follow Marchart’s understanding of gallery education as interruption, is the unequivocalness with which this function is rendered unnecessary in the case of documenta 11, thus leaving the hegemonic dimension of this exhibition uncontested and foregoing the imperative to convey it critically. Furthermore, the structurally devalued status of gallery education within the hierarchy of the field of art was left unexamined, and the “education projects” could not change anything in this respect in spite—and because of—the international, handpicked staff. The proto-capitalist working conditions of the “guides,” their lack of possibilities to participate in the decision-making process, their status with respect to the rest of the documenta 11 staff, or, basically, their limited access to the exhibition before its opening are a case in point. However, the postulates devised by the director of gallery education at documenta 11 did not rule out the use of deconstructive components in the tours of individual gallery educators. At least one example of such interventions has been documented. See Eva Sturm, “Kunstvermittlung und Widerstand,” in *Auf dem Weg*, op. cit., pp. 44f.

61 Unfortunately, there is no documentation of the “education project.” A public elucidation of its development, or the possible frictions generated by the hierarchical constellation of “education project” and “education program” did not take place. In fact, because this initiative did not go beyond itself, it was not able to contribute to an expansion of the field of practice, and this certainly does not seem to have been its intention.

62 The concept for the training of gallery educators at documenta 11 is described in detail by Karin Rebbert, director of education at documenta 11. Karin Rebbert, *Documenta 11 Education*, in *Kunstvermittlung zwischen partizipatorischen Kunstprojekten und interaktiven Kunstaktionen*, Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Deutschen Kunstvereine, ed. (Hannover, 2002), pp. 87–93.

63 On the notion of documenta 11 as platforms, see [http://www.documenta12.de/archiv/d11/documenta\\_pink.html](http://www.documenta12.de/archiv/d11/documenta_pink.html) (accessed on November 02, 2008).



## Gallery education at documenta 12: framework and formats

Compared to the previous exhibitions, gallery education at documenta 12 had a stronger point of departure, for it was—in analogy to its inception—considered one of its main components. The third *leitmotif* of the exhibition—the intriguingly banal but all the same historically laden question “*What is to be done?*”, as well as the postulate, “Today, aesthetic education seems to offer one viable alternative to the devil (didacticism, academia) and the deep blue sea (commodity fetishism),”<sup>64</sup> conceived by Roger M. Buerger, artistic director, and Ruth Noack, curator of documenta 12, respectively—raised the question of art’s educational function into the sphere of curatorial discussion.<sup>65</sup> For the first time in the history of documenta, a press conference was solely dedicated to discuss gallery education as its main subject.<sup>66</sup> And it was also the first time that gallery education was the subject of research<sup>67</sup> carried out parallel to its practice. I was assigned to direct the research and develop it conceptually.<sup>68</sup> An office for gallery education was set up. Ulrich Schöttker was engaged as full-time director of education, and due to the limited funding available, only a few other staff members were employed. Thus, the reassessment of gallery education at documenta 12 had some effect on its structures<sup>69</sup>—besides the acknowledgement of the need to assign experienced educational professionals to run gallery education at documenta 12 in conceptual and organizational terms.

Taking up lines of questioning from their curatorial practice prior to documenta,<sup>70</sup>

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64 See <http://www.documenta12.de/leitmotive.html?&L=1> (accessed on December 3, 2008). On the implications of the third leitmotif for the gallery education approach at documenta 12, see the paper by Ulrich Schöttker in volume 1, p. 84.

65 On the curatorial perspective of educational work at documenta 12, see the paper by Ruth Noack in this volume, p. 311ff.

66 It was held on November 21, 2006, at the Neue Nationalgalerie in Berlin. This did little to change the fact that the work of gallery education received little attention from the press. In her dissertation, Florina Limberg undertakes a discourse analysis of the press coverage on gallery education at documenta 12: *‘Was tun?’ Neue Impulse für die Kunstvermittlung durch die documenta 12. Eine diskursanalytische Untersuchung der Medienberichterstattung*, Hildesheim University, 2008. (Her dissertation may be consulted and borrowed from the University Library of Hildesheim University and at the documenta archive in Kassel).

67 Students from the faculty of administrative sciences, Kassel University, with Professor Hellstern as advisor, conducted visitor surveys throughout documenta 9 to 12. Based on these surveys, several dissertations have examined the exhibition from the perspective of administrative sciences. For an overview, go to <https://kobra.bibliothek.uni-kassel.de/bitstream/urn:nbn:de:hebis:34-200811725121/3/HellsternDocumentaAbstracts.pdf> (accessed on December 3, 2008).

68 Thus the choice fell upon a professional from the practice of gallery education who is clearly positioned as an actor within the field under examination and thus is far from claiming to possess any kind of purported objectivity.

69 The department of gallery education was far too small for the scope of its assignment. This imbalance was at least partly ameliorated by the involvement and supporting collaboration of Catrin Seefranz, in charge of communication and press, who provided gallery education with a prominent place within the website of documenta 12. This is most remarkable, for frictions, in particular with the press department, are not uncommon within the institutional system, especially when gallery education assumes a critical practice stance. Therefore I would like to extend special thanks to Catrin Seefranz again for her solidarity with gallery education.

70 Here, I refer to Roger M. Buerger and Ruth Noack’s previous project *The Government*, which they initiated at Kunstraum Lüneburg in 2003. This project has been extensively documented under <http://dieregierung.uni-lueenburg.de/e/home.php> (accessed on December 4, 2008). Sonja Parzefall also developed the concept for the project I will next mention, *Die Welt bewohnen (Inhabiting the*

the artistic director and the curator attempted to emphasize the transformational role that gallery education at documenta 12 could play with regard to the institution. The documenta 12 Advisory Board was a product of their initiative on this level.<sup>71</sup> The board gathered close to forty Kassel professionals active in different disciplines. Prior to the exhibition, they began their activities by addressing the three documenta leitmotifs, out of which they developed their own projects, which later ran parallel to the exhibition at different sites around Kassel. Furthermore, the artistic director commissioned Sonja Parzefall to develop and direct a project that would involve schoolchildren as gallery educators at documenta 12. In *Inhabiting the World*, fifty-four schoolchildren from Kassel and its outskirts developed their own ways of accessing the exhibition, which they discussed with adults in the context of tours. A third transformative element brought about by the artistic director was the documenta 12-Halle, an exhibition venue with free admission. Every day, the venue was home to a series of activities, be it lectures, podium discussions, workshops, thematic discussion events, films, open question sessions, or project presentations organized by the Advisory Board, gallery education, and *documenta 12 magazines*.<sup>72</sup> documenta 12-Halle also became a space for the public to gather informally, hold discussions, or simply take a rest.<sup>73</sup>

Besides the aforementioned formats initiated by the artistic director and the curator, which soon enough developed a dynamic of their own, how to structure the gallery education program was in the hands of its director, the head of research, and ultimately the gallery educators themselves. But their creative leeway was limited. The major restriction was a lack of funding for gallery education, for apart from the office and its infrastructure, only the director of gallery education, the office staff, and the head of research had fixed employment; all the educators were paid per hour and worked on a freelance basis. In previous documenta exhibitions, gallery education had not been a cost factor, but a source of revenue, and this, the way the management saw it, would continue to be the case in documenta 12.<sup>74</sup> It was thus a *fait accompli* that this time around, a gallery education format as eas-

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*World: pupils guide adults through documenta 12*), within the context of *The Government*. For more information on *Inhabiting the World*, see also volume 1, p. 55ff.

DVD/100  
DVD/200  
DVD/400

71 The following projects: *documenta 12 Advisory Board*, *Inhabiting the World* and *aushecken (hatching ideas—a space for children and youth at documenta 12)* were not subjects of research. They are extensively documented in volume 1, and are referenced in the papers of Sara Hossein, Kathrin Nölle, Simone Wiegand, and Henrike Plegge/Stephan Fürstenberg. Thus I will not describe or analyze them in detail here. Eventually, the analysis of the Advisory Board activities led to the creation of guidelines for the interconnection between political and cultural education, which were commissioned by the Federal Center for Political/Civic Education [Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung] in collaboration with Wanda Wieczorek, Ayşe Güleç and Carmen Mörsch.

72 On *documenta magazines*, see [www.documenta12.de](http://www.documenta12.de) (accessed on December 3, 2008).

73 Wanda Wieczorek takes a critical look at the activities in the documenta 12-Halle in volume 1, p. 187ff.

74 Let us compare figures: many English institutions allocate 10 percent of their total budget toward gallery education. In the case of documenta 12, this would imply that out of a total budget of 19 million euro, 1.9 million would correspond to gallery education. One of our proposals was to invest a portion of the exhibition budget in gallery education, which could then be returned by upping the admission fee by an extra “education-euro” (in the case of documenta 12, this would have meant 754,301 euro, but it would have been certainly the riskier variant). The artistic director referred in particular to structural constraints, such as decision-making structures within the documenta corporation, as argument against the realization of this proposal.

ily marketable as the guided tour, for which there was such great demand, would inevitably remain a central instrument. As in the preceding exhibitions, the tours not only covered their expenses through fees, but were also revenue-generating activities. Therefore, all further fields of action of gallery education had to be financed through additional funding procured for that purpose.<sup>75</sup> One of these fields was the extensive children and youth program titled *aushecken (hatching ideas)*<sup>76</sup> aimed at groups from and beyond Kassel, as well as walk-in members of the public at documenta 12. An ongoing project throughout the hundred days of the exhibition, *hatching ideas* took place in its own grounds, which were flanked by the Aue-Pavilion, the largest temporary exhibition venue. Some gallery educators worked as an interface between the local Advisory Board and the exhibition. Through their participation in diverse projects, information events, and tours in coordination with members of the Advisory Board and the users of Advisory Board activities, gallery educators brought these activities back into to the realm of the exhibition. In addition to their exhibition tours, thirty-five gallery educators realized projects in partnership with different public spheres and interest groups, which would otherwise not have been part of the exhibition, but which the gallery educators certainly considered interesting for the specific perspectives they manifested.<sup>77</sup>

Ulrich Schötker and I conceived gallery education at documenta 12 as a self-reflective, critical practice of the exhibition and institution. We were driven by the wish to contribute to the formation, professionalization, and theorization of gallery education along deconstruction and transformation lines. We hoped to set a precedent for ensuing documenta exhibitions after 2007 to become experimental fields: in the future, documenta would be unthinkable without the scope of gallery education. Thus, it would be undertaken with the same measure of attention to specificity, complexity, relative autonomy,<sup>78</sup> and interaction with the local context as its subject: the exhibition. Gallery educators were selected in accordance with these aims. An important criterion was openness to enquiry and an interest in expanding the practice. We were also interested in actors who understood gallery education as independent intervention, rather than as service work. Equally a bonus was an interest in methodological experimentation, as well as previous experience in the work of gallery education. In the end we selected seventy individuals from among many qualified applicants, trying to generate diversity with regard to professional background, language proficiencies, cultural origins, gender, and age. With this pluralistic stance, represented by the variety of different discourses—disciplines—and positionings, we hoped to collectively negotiate the question of authorized speaker stances.<sup>79</sup>

75 Funding was provided by the Federal Ministry for Research and Education, the Federal Center for Political/Civic Education, the Heinrich Böll Foundation and the *Fonds Soziokultur*.

76 Claudia Hummel analyzes the project *hatching ideas* in volume 1, p. 147ff.

77 All projects, as well as the work at the interface between the Advisory Board and gallery education are extensively documented.

78 On the notion of autonomy in gallery education, see Ulrich Schötker in volume 1, p. 89.

79 This pluralism had already been a feature of the gallery education team at documenta 11. See Rebbert, "Documenta 11 Education," in *Kunstvermittlung zwischen partizipatorischen Kunstprojekten und interaktiven Kunstaktionen*, op. cit.

The training of gallery educators started in January 2007 and was divided in three segments of several days, followed by an intensive phase.<sup>80</sup> The training examined artistic stances at documenta 12 and its three leitmotifs, with special emphasis given to the discussion of positionings, issues, and methods of gallery education.<sup>81</sup>

Building on the insights gained during the training, the gallery educators developed their own approaches, both individually and in groups, to conveying and “mediating” the exhibition.<sup>82</sup> In view of the “reflective” approach to gallery education at documenta 12 and the context of the third leitmotif, this seemed a far more coherent approach than to label a mixture of ideas and methodologies as “documenta 12 gallery education.” Grounded precisely on this reflective approach, it became essential for all gallery educators to render their own approaches to gallery education transparent to the public, thus acknowledging them as a subject of the “tours.” Notably, initiating debates would be given preference over the monologue-mode of transmitting authorized knowledge.

### Gallery education at documenta 12: conflicts

These fundamental decisions generated tensions and contradictions that would determine the work of gallery education for the duration of documenta 12, and which many a paper throughout this volume alludes to. Most apparent was the conflict originating in the clash of expectations—between the educators who wanted to practice a critical gallery education, and a public that had paid for a tour, mostly under the assumption it would obtain expert guidance: a service that would provide as much information as possible within the shortest viable time-frame, led by a gallery educator as unassailable, pleasant, and good-looking as possible. Thus, the conflict between “critical practice” versus “service work” had to be constantly renegotiated—that is, if the gallery educator’s shape and energy level would withstand it.<sup>83</sup>

Furthermore, the pluralism within the team was also a source of tensions. Those professionals coming from purportedly “art-extraneous” disciplines experienced the need to be additionally legitimized both within the group and during the tours. Those whose outward appearance did not correspond with mainstream expectations were faced with undermining comments on a daily basis, while those who

Distelberger, p. 94  
Landkammer, p. 140  
Hossain, p. 185

Landkammer, p. 141  
Hossain, p. 183  
Ortmann, p. 245  
Fürstenberg, p. 137

80 The intensive phase took place during the four weeks prior to the start of the exhibition. A collection of wiki web pages was a central medium for the development and discussion of issues.

81 As argued by some gallery educators during the concluding plenary discussions, methodological considerations were given less room than conceptualizing activities. Protagonists from the practice and theory formation of gallery education were invited to expand on the latter through lectures and workshops, including Pierangelo Maset, Karin Schneider, Nora Sternfeld, and Eva Sturm. Further contributions included Silke Wenk’s extensive discussion of the second leitmotif “What is bare life?”, as well as Juliane Rebentisch’s ideas on *aesthetic experience*, which decisively shaped the curators’ conception of it. See Juliane Rebentisch, *Ästhetik der Installation* (Frankfurt am Main, 2003).

82 It is to be gratefully acknowledged that the curators of documenta 12 provided the gallery educators with almost unlimited access to the exhibition during its mounting—a new development that underscores the appreciation they bestowed upon gallery education.

83 This underlying conflict is treated in several papers in this volume and has thus determined the general title of the publication.

Distelberger, p. 92  
Landkammer, p. 139  
Oberleitner, p. 162  
Ortmann, p. 246

spoke German as a second or third language had to cope with routine racism. And finally, the gallery educators as a whole, depending on cultural background, education, attitude, and future plans, were all diversely positioned and had changing approaches to their work at documenta 12. Here, we find a range of all imaginable *modus operandi*: from the satisfaction derived from transmitting authorized exhibition knowledge as routinely as possible to a purportedly difficult group, to actions initiated by gallery educators in collaboration with unusual (to documenta) groups, aimed as performative interventions, to upholding politicized stances in the face of the most reactionary and aggressive groups of art collectors. Gallery educators were to sense the material, symbolic, and social advantages and disadvantages of these approaches within the varying contexts of the gallery education department, visitor service, documenta management, and artistic direction, but above all, among their own colleagues.

Sato, p. 63

Due to the different understandings of gallery education within the team, it was not possible, despite persistent attempts, to arrive at a common programmatic ground during the training period. No “manifesto” was written, for several group members would otherwise have felt their practice to be over-determined by it. This could be seen as a symptom of growing neoliberal individualization tendencies that weaken the analytical capacity of the gallery educators (and that hinder, accordingly, the emergence of self-organized groups).<sup>84</sup> What would have been an alternative? To screen gallery education applicants for their attitudes, and then to select those who shared the same viewpoint with the director of gallery education and the head of research? Given that Ulrich Schötter and I are both skeptical about ideological consonance and do not assume there to be a sole universally valid approach to an exhibition or its critique, preference and room were given to the negotiation of diverse standpoints within the context of documenta 12 gallery education. In fact, I observed that individualization tendencies were far less predominant than the formation of subgroups with varied programmatic approaches and self-conceptions, and whose members would support each other in their work, while being simultaneously involved in a struggle for the power of definition.<sup>85</sup> Further, word had been spread by the media, and it had certainly reached expert circles, that gallery education at documenta 12 was to be “different,” “experimental,” or “performative.” Thus the gallery educators were sometimes faced with disappointed expectations, for example of art pedagogy students who had hoped for a far more experimental move— more than the actual framework enabled the participants to realize or that the gallery educator felt able to carry out.<sup>86</sup> But the scenario was

Distelberger/Landkammer, p. 289  
Nölle, p. 177

84 See Sophie Goltz, “Neo-Kunstvermittlung. Zur Besucherschule der documenta 12” in *Kulturrisse*, IG Kultur Österreich, 4 (2007), pp. 44f.

85 During plenary discussions in the training period, conflicts would often arise over the question of who speaks for whom and how, and which part of the group would try to assert their dominance over the rest by claiming to stand on the right side, to possess the right kind of knowledge and analytical capacity. See the remarks of Mörsch in volume 1, p. 101ff.

86 Parallel research at documenta 12 had four options to gauge public reaction: an e-mail address set up for that purpose, which gallery educators would pass on to those participating in tours; public responses that landed in the gallery education, press, or management departments, and then were transmitted to the pertinent staff; discussion rounds with selected groups, most of these with professionals of art pedagogy and gallery education after specific activities, and organized by the head of research, and, finally, comments voiced by the gallery educators.

still more complex. The transformative and deconstructive claim articulated in the exhibition conception, the introduction of new education formats, and the framework for gallery education at documenta 12 had to be balanced out by the gallery educators with the reproductive discourse of the exhibition management and the affirmative discourse of the curators. The corporate management of documenta maintained an open stance to gallery education and was thus interested in a fresh version of it. Indeed, its openness toward a critical, experimental gallery education is undeniable. However, it had a claim to make about gallery education that was, in keeping with its positioning, primarily a reproductive one: seen from this perspective, the goal was to satisfy as many visitors as possible with as little investment as possible, providing them with the most thorough information about the cultural heritage displayed in the current and future documenta exhibitions.

Ballath, p. 197

The artistic director and the curator were also fundamentally supportive and, just like the management of documenta, interested in the four dimensions of gallery education. At the same time, they nurtured the—hardly surprising—expectation that their conception of aesthetic experience would be transmitted by documenta 12 gallery education. In particular, this concerns the effects of their decision not to provide written information within the exhibition.<sup>87</sup> In this way, visitors were to be encouraged to rely on their own perception in the process of “reading” artworks. Some public segments saw this condition as an authoritarian gesture. The feeling that one was faced with a visual riddle and that those possessing the key to unravel its mystery would consciously restrict access to it provoked anger and reinforced the sentiment that one was being instructed in an uninformative, pedantic way. Thus the situation required that gallery educators become the sole authorized source of the much-desired information,<sup>88</sup> which made it more difficult to make time to examine some artworks in detail with the public and address notions of education. While the claim of critical gallery education afforded gallery educators a more distant stance toward aspects of the exhibition’s conception, this was sometimes taken by the curators, in spite of their unquestionable openness, as an affront to their work. Thus they would undertake “controlling interventions” in the activities of gallery education—either because they had found out through other channels or they had been present and their attention had been caught—when a move by a gallery educator seemed inappropriate.<sup>89</sup>

It follows that gallery education stood at the crossroads of four discourses of institutional gallery education and therefore was also caught between conflicting interests and desires. It is, for this reason, an interesting research subject. The

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87 No other contextual information was provided throughout the whole documenta 12 exhibition; such information would have allowed interested visitors to gain insight as to the contexts of curatorial decisions. One possible avenue could have involved setting up a respective resource room at documenta-Halle.

88 The fact that eventually Roger M. Buergel and Ruth Noack themselves became active as gallery educators or that additional explanatory texts (written by the curators) surfaced at some points in the exhibition could do little to change that.

89 Even if these controlling interventions were significantly minor compared to the experience of gallery educators in other art institutions, nobody really knew when these would take place and therefore they represented a source of additional stress throughout the whole period of the exhibition. A prominent example is discussed in Nanne Buurman’s project documentation, as well as in Bernadett Settele’s paper.



body of research in this volume shows that which takes place within its everyday practice, and what is more: that which becomes possible when the four discourses—affirmative, reproductive, deconstructive, and transformative—traverse one and the same institution simultaneously.

## documenta 12 gallery education: the research project

Twenty-one of the gallery educators at documenta 12 joined a research project geared toward team-based action research. Here, team research takes place in cooperation with the actors of the field under investigation. The working hypotheses are neither defined by the head of research alone, nor commissioned by an outside party. Rather, they are worked out and developed by members of the research team.<sup>90</sup> Each of the individuals involved has their own positioning, which they bring to bear on the research process,<sup>91</sup> thus countering the assumption of objective knowledge production. What is more, the goal is to intertwine research and development: to analyze and theorize the practice—aiming to transfer the knowledge generated in this process into future practice.

During documenta 12, the research group met for three to four hours a week with the head of research—if necessary, in additional individual meetings. During the initial period, shared reflections on daily events crystallized into definite research questions related to the work of gallery education. Here are some of the strands that gallery educators focused on in the context of this project:

Methodological reflections, including: routines—how they build up, what they are valuable for, what they stifle, and how to disrupt them; experimenting with playful elements or poetic language as conceptual opening and closure to speaking about art.

Gallery education and normalization, including: attributions of ethnicity, origin, and gender to gallery educators; educational concepts at documenta 12 and critical whiteness; anti-racist gallery education; gallery education and queer activism.

Performative interventions, including: conveying performance art through the performance of gallery education; the deployment of clothing and linguistic registers, self-reflexivity, and authenticity or the introduction of dance elements into gallery education; the potential for conflict and the productivity of curatorial postulates.

Secondly, the pertinent methods with which to address and investigate the above-mentioned concerns in the daily practice of gallery education were discussed and identified. In the third part of the project, when research was actually carried out, it would be accompanied by discussion and reflection within the group, resulting in its eventual modification, or rather, in the incorporation of new

Nölle, p. 167

Hossein, p. 77

Oberleitner, p. 159

Schürch, p. 105

Sato, p. 63

Fürstenberg/Plegge, p. 55, 277

Landkammer, p. 139

Wienand, p. 119

Hossain, p. 181

Ortmann, p. 241

Wiegand, p. 261

Campaner, p. 229

Ziegenbein, p. 213

Distelberger, p. 89

Sözen, p. 33

Henschel, p. 43, 211

Ballath, p. 197

<sup>90</sup> On the methodology of team research in the field of cultural education, see Carmen Mörsch, "Regierungstechnik und Widerstandspraxis: Vielstimmigkeit und Teamorientierung im Forschungsprozess," in *Körper im Spiel: Wege zur Erforschung theaterpädagogischer Praxen*, ed. Ute Pinkert (Berlin et al., 2008).

<sup>91</sup> Here, the approach to research corresponds with a constructivist understanding of learning processes.

methods/approaches. After documenta 12 ended, the process of writing and conceptualization/planning of the publication ensued. The texts were subject to repeated editing in consultation with the head of research and the research group. In 2008, the latter had convened for two more meetings of two days each,<sup>92</sup> in order to elaborate on and define all relevant aspects of the present publication: the sequence of the articles, structure of the book, title, selection and position of pertinent images, as well as the individual texts, which were always undergoing reexamination.

Nölle, p. 176  
Ortmann, p. 242

The decision to participate in the research project meant additional work pressure and financial loss for the gallery educators, for they would have to trade off up to five hours of paid work for unpaid research activity. It also implied exposing oneself—besides the above-described conflicts—to further destabilization, as in engaging with the self-critical approach established by the research group and employing experimental methods in their work. And, ultimately, this not only involved acknowledging and analyzing purported failures and difficulties, but also publishing them.

Landkammer, p. 75

At the same time, the research project proved productive for those involved in it. Indeed, the work of gallery education was more likely to incorporate a deconstructive approach in the context of this accompanying research. In many cases, the conceptual tools used to examine the research topic were later adopted as methods of practice in gallery education. At the same time, the weekly research forum provided an opportunity for mutual consultation and support, as well as for collective theorization and practice development.<sup>93</sup> This was particularly valuable because the diversity of individual stances within the research team cut across discursive borderlines within the group, therefore enabling a productive, less fear-based analysis of diverse legitimization strategies and conditions for sovereign (or less sovereign) speech. As a result, numerous unlikely encounters took place, in the sense that actors who had hardly articulated themselves previously now articulated their viewpoints, and purportedly disparate positions on gallery education were able to enter into dialogue.<sup>94</sup> The effects of these interactions reverberate throughout the papers in the present volume.<sup>95</sup>

Sato, p. 65  
Henschel, p. 152  
Ziegenbein, p. 214  
Campaner, p. 231  
Distelberger, p. 90

92 Travel costs of the research team were covered by funds available to the research department; one of the meetings was held in Vienna, the other in Berlin. I hereby wish to thank again Nora Landkammer and Annette Schryen for taking care of the organizational details in their respective cities.

93 This was an avenue open to all gallery educators at documenta 12. In addition to the research forum, the head of research offered a weekly project forum for those engaged in the above-described activities, as well as an open forum for those who concentrated solely on the work with tours. Further, the gallery educators reflected on their work in groups that ended up outlasting documenta 12.

94 The research project, in which the head of research adopts the role of a moderator, manifests one viable and positive alternative to the structures of self-organization that Sophie Goltz calls for in such a context. See her article “Neo-Kunstvermittlung” (in *Kulturrisse*, op. cit.). Unfortunately, self-organized groups in the field of art are often constituted by distinctly homogeneous discursive communities. Ultimately, their deliberately simplistic positioning *against* the institution, which elicits a foreseeable radical exclusionary response, is but a strategic attempt to draw increased symbolic profit from it, more than an uncritically institutional stance would ever have afforded. In other words, they do not actually intend to break out of avant-garde conceptions in the field of art, but to use them to serve their purposes. And they work self-referentially, in that they target their own field. The research project was a conscious attempt to work against these kinds of dynamics.

95 Repeated reading of the contributions in this volume allowed me to discern between four dis-

In this sense, the research undertaken at documenta 12 was inscribed in the deconstructive and transformative discourse of gallery education. This made it possible for gallery education to develop as a space of reflection on educational processes in art institutions beyond the limits of actual power relations. It provided documenta as an institution with additional room to work with the necessary intensity—and possibly to send out meaningful impulses beyond its actual frame of action.<sup>96</sup>

The results of the research project documented in the present volume, as in any construction, produce an absence: in this case, it is that of the public. Informed by critical whiteness studies, which call on those in a privileged position to revert upon themselves the gaze with which Others are desired and identified,<sup>97</sup> research at documenta 12 focused on the gallery educators and the institutions in which they operate. This sets it apart from most of the current research on cultural education, which focuses primarily on audience and media impact.<sup>98</sup>

I find it imperative that the gaze be focused on the institution and its practices, because gallery education can neither situate itself outside the system of art nor the art institution.<sup>99</sup> If its self-understanding is primarily deconstructive, it works most likely with critical distance to itself. In case of a more transformative understanding, it attempts to change the art institution into a place—to quote a colleague—“that has a logic of its own, different from that of the hospital, the school, or the prison.”<sup>100</sup> At any rate, whichever discourse is held as most relevant, it can only formulate itself in relation to other institutions. That is why it is necessary to investigate the practices and circumstances that determine this relationship—in order to learn about it and to shape its decision-making in the future.

The publication of this extensive volume bears witness to the hope that it will constitute a relevant contribution to the theorization of the practice of gallery education and thus provide impulses for its further development.

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courses of institutional gallery education, a hypothesis that I publicly state here for the first time. Additionally, I was also able to profit from this project in methodological terms. Never before did I carry out research under such egalitarian conditions and encounter such positive defiance. When power relations manifested within the research group, these were always uncovered and addressed with a great deal of detail. It was thus an enriching venture to engage in intellectual debate with my colleagues, for which I hereby wish to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the whole team.

96 It remains to be seen whether an effect will be felt concretely in the case of documenta. Whether the following documenta exhibitions expand on the work of gallery education undertaken here will rest upon future artistic directors, as long as the documenta management does not invest in a greater institutionalization of gallery education with a corresponding budget. At any rate, gallery education at the Kunsthalle Fridericianum is now structured by the transformative discourse.

97 See Susan Arndt, “‘The Racial Turn.’ Kolonialismus, Weiße Mythen und Critical Whiteness Studies” in *Koloniale und postkoloniale Konstruktionen von Afrika und Menschen afrikanischer Herkunft in der deutschen Alltagskultur*, eds. Marianne Bechhaus-Gerst, Sunna Gieseke, and Reinhard Klein-Arendt (Frankfurt am Main, 2005).

98 For a current example of a publication with wide reception, see Anne Bamford, *The Wow Factor: Global Research Compendium on the Impact of the Arts in Education* (Münster, 2006).

99 And this is not only true of the hegemonic mega-event of documenta 12, but also of smaller, self-organized art spaces, down to the single studio—it pertains to art in all its institutionalized instances.

100 From a lecture by David Dibosa for the M.A. program Exhibition and Gallery Education (Ausstellen und Vermitteln) at Zurich University of the Arts.