documenta 12 Education II

Between Critical Practice and Visitor Services
Results of a Research Project

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and the research team of the documenta 12 education
At a Crossroads of Four Discourses

documenta 12 Gallery Education in Between Affirmation, Reproduction, Deconstruction, and Transformation

Gallery education (Kunstvermittlung) is neither a registered professional title, nor an irrevocably defined term: 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 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 PRODUCTIVE. 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...
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, 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 education, 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 undirectional 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 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 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—to their long isolation and self-referential deficits—to the surrounding world, i.e. their local milieu. 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 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 documents 22 acknowledged this imperative by initiating the documents 22 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 Hufel and Ulrich Klenk, Wissen ohne Bildung? Auf dem Weg in die Lerngesellschaft des 21. Jahrhunderts, Neu-Ulm 2003). Nevertheless, I shall use such terminology because it finds 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 categorial 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.

The four discourses should not be considered in terms of different development levels according to historical 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 22, 2008). 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://epc.net/n/23390728112 (accessed on January 30, 2009).
7 For example, the Offsite Projects of London's Photographers Gallery. See http://www.photonet.org.uk, and Eva Stern, "Kunstvermittlung und Widerstand" in Auf dem Weg. Von der Museumsbildpädagogik zur Kunst- und Kulturvermittlung, Schulweft 71, ed. Josef Seiler (Vienna, 2003), pp. 42ff. The projects of documents 22 gallery education and Gremo 22 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 formative or transformative 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. In 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. 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 prematurely tailored to an expert audience, 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.

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, 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 corresponding 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 educational aims inherent in these discourses: the advancement of critical awareness, agency, and self-empowerment. 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. 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. 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 justifiable) factor in justifying the existence of publicly funded institutions, for it is associated with marketing and quantitative audience increase, as well as with challenging, event-oriented, and “broad audience” programming. 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 “immediacy 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 fragmented, at least with some 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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10 Because this particular notion of education is not examined with self-reflexivity, 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 Stadtemuseum – Spielchen.

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?

13 This presents a pedagogical paradox: precisely the public’s refusal to participate in the work of deconstruction/formation 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.

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 Literaturrezeption (Hamburg, 1985). (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 1990, particularly in the connection with new Labour guide-lines for cultural policies. See Carmen Mönch: „Socially Engaged Economies. Leben von und mit künstlerischen Beteiligungsperspektiven und Kunstvermittlung in England,” in Kunstmarkt 4 (2003), pp. 62–74.
conjectures—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. 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 Schötscher 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. 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 who run in order to nurse their children, wear damp clothing that may have a harmful effect on the artworks. The road to civilizing the "crowd" lay in its contact with cultural artefacts on display in the museum, just as Matthew Arnold envisioned. At the same time, the protection of cultural artefacts demanded that access to these be restricted.

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, 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 human-kind, respectively, and that the developmental stage of both indigenous people and local working class determined their "childlike" status. 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, gallery education in Germany has been developing as a feminized and, in this sense, devalued work sphere, under suspicion for its purported over-simplification 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 caused 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. 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 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-

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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 s, 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. Stellale Rolig, Eva Sturm (Vienna, 2002), pp. 198–211.


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 Schwarznkerers in der parlamentarischen und publizistischen Kolonialdiskussion in Deutschland von den 1870er bis in die 1930er Jahre (Stuttgart, 2001), pp. 48f.

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 Enpass der Werte. Sprechen über moderne und zeitgenössische Kunst (Frankfurt am Main, 1996). Drawing on Jacques Lacan, she analyses speech and silence acts that take place within gallery education.

27 See the paper by Maria do Mar Castro and Nikita Düsing in this volume, p. 337ff.
sive educational programs. 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. This boost in symbolic and (to a certain degree) financial capital is definitely and undeniably valuable for the development of the work field. 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, 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.” Therefore, these are crucial skills that art graduates require for surviving within a flex 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. This ambivalence brings forth a further argument for a critical practice of gallery education (that is, critical of economic, genderiality, and neo-liberal 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 Mörisch, “Socially Engaged Economies” in Kurzwechsel, 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-Turk, 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, 2003); Marion von Osten, Norm der Abweichung (Vienna, 2003); Gerald Raunig and Ulf Wuggenig, Kritik der Kreativität (Vienna, 2007); Alexa Tabet et al., eds., Kreativität, Eine Rückschauaktion (ZPK – Zeitschrift für Kulturwissenschaften 1/2008) (Bielefeld, 2008). This is further elaborated in Luc Boltanski, Eva Chapello, Der Neue Geist des Kapitalismus (Constance, 2003).


33 See the EuroMayDay initiative to which Sandra Ortman refers in her paper, p. 248, footnote 18.

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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, French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu provides a thorough analysis of the function of cultural institutions as “social distinction mechanisms” and the exclusions 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” has become the norm. 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. 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 reconstruction, by drawing on Michel Foucault’s notion of discourse. 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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35 Hilmar Hoffman, Kultur für alle. Perspektiven und Modelle (Frankfurt am Main, 1979).

36 See, for example, Gabriele Stöeger, „Wer schon Platz genommen hat, muss nicht zum Hirtenauflärmert werden,“ in Dürren die dazt, op. cit., p. 184.

In the 1980s, these readings converged in the field of new museology38 under the call to incorporate subject positions and discourses so far excluded and to produce so-called “counter-narratives,”39 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 also incorporated education as a critical reading of the institutions.40 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.41 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.”42 This approach, which 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”43 is the avoidance of theoretical closure, acknowledgment, instead, the inconclusiveness of interpretation processes in the discussion of artworks. Thus speaking about art is conceived as the inevitable, productive, and forcibly convincing handling of a lack, a desire.44 Failing, stuttering, and “speech-gaps”45 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.46 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 social and disruptive potential moments and challenging “normality” at the heart of art and gallery education.

Let us 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 performative, 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.47 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

38 Peter Vergo, The New Museology (London, 1989). For the German context, see Andrea Hauenschmidt, Neue Museologie (Bremen, 1998).
40 See Maria Vincentelli and Colin Grigg, eds., Gallery Education and the New Art History (Lewes, 1992).
44 Ibid.
46 The infallibility of gallery education practice is a recurrent phenomenon, particularly in the practice informed by reproductive discourses. In particular, this infallilizing 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 circle that leads to further restricting on the part of the institution. See Karl-Josef Pazzini, Die Toten bilden. Museum & Psychoanalyse II (Vienna, 2005). As Nora Söllners suggests, this infallilizing is a condition of mid-class, paternalistic educational aims of museum pedagogy. See Nora Söllner, “Der Taufspielertrick. Vermittlung zwischen Selbstregeleung und Selbstmachtigkeit,” in Wer spricht?, op. cit., pp. 15-33.
construstivist make-up of learning processes, as well as the enriching potential of gaps found within language and comprehension. 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 antinest 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. Together with those who participate in gallery education, it attempts to generate counter-narratives and thus to disrupt the dominant narratives of the exhibiting institution. But it avoids turning these counter-narratives into new master narratives fueled by identity politics. Recipients are not regarded as subordinate to institutional order, rather, the focus is directed at their possibilities for agency and self-exchange, in the sense of a "practice of everyday life." 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.

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.


50 Machart develops the notion of gallery education as interruption and counter-canonization in "Die Institution spricht!"; see Wer spricht?, op. cit., pp. 34-56.


54 Andrea Hubin provides a detailed analysis of (ab)sent gallery education in the first documenta; see p. 89ff in this volume.

55 Bazon Brock’s publication Besucher schule zur documenta 7: Die Höslichkeit des Schön is still available for purchase at 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 reprise 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 Pleißer 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 Andt 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," unter http://www.kunstkooperationen.de/pdf/100Tagesprechen.pdf.

59 While actual materials 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
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 intriguing 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 (didactics, academia) and the deep blue sea (commodity fetishism),”64 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.65 For the first time in the history of documenta, a press conference was solely dedicated to discuss gallery education as its main subject.66 And it was also the first time that gallery education was the subject of a research project carried out parallel to its practice. I was assigned to direct the research and develop it conceptually.67 An office for gallery education was set up. Ulrich Schröter 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 structures68—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,70

64 See http://www.documenta12.de/leitmotiv.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 Schröter 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. 31ff.
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 tut? 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 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/hilstream/xmlui/handle/0034-20081127251213/3/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 partially ameliorated by the involvement and supporting collaboration of Catrin Seeffanz, 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 Seeffanz 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://dieriekress.de/ (accessed on December 4, 2008). Sonja Parzefall also developed the concept for the project I will next mention, Die Welt bewohnen (Inhabiting the world).
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. 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. Documenta 12 Halle also became a space for the public to gather informally, hold discussions, or simply take a rest.

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. It was thus a fait accompli that this time around, a gallery education format as easily 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. One of these fields was the extensive children and youth program titled austchecken (hatching ideas) 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 Aze-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 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.

Ulrich Schötzker 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, 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.

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79 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.
78 Claudia Hummel analyzes the project Hatching ideas in volume 5, p. 147ff.
77 All projects, as well as the work at the interface between the Advisory Board and gallery education are extensively documented.
76 On the notion of autonomy in gallery education, see Ulrich Schötzker in volume 5, p. 89.
75 This pluralism had already been a feature of the gallery education team at documenta 11. See Rebert, “Documenta 11 Education,” in Kunstvermittlung zwischen pädagogischen 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.80 The training examined artistic stances at documenta 12 and its three leitmotifs, with special emphasis given to the discussion of positioning, issues, and methods of gallery education.

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.81 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 timeframe, 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.82

Furthermore, the pluralism within the team was also a source of tensions. Those professionals coming from purportedly "art-external" 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 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 political 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.

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 overtaken 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).83 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 Schötelker 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 stances 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.84 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.85 But the scenario was

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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 Piers Gough, Michael Katrochill, and Rudi Schmied. Further contributions included Silke Wenzl’s extensive discussion of the second leitmotif “What is life like?”, 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.


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 Mörch in volume 1, p. 10ff.

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 education 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.

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.87 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 it 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,88 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.89

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 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.89 Each of the individuals involved has their own positioning, which they bring to bear on the research process,90 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 closing 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 pos- tulates.

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...
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. 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.

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—beyond 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.

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. This was particularly valuable because the diversity of individual stances within the research team cut across discursive boundaries within the group, therefore enabling a productive, less fear-based analysis of diverse legitimation strategies and conditions for sovereignty (or less sovereignty) 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. The effects of these interactions reverberate throughout the papers in the present volume.

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 outlining 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 Kulturtheorie, 3, 2010). 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...