Priscila Fernandes

The Book of Aesthetic Education of the Modern School





The Book of Aesthetic Education of the Modern School

In 1901, on his return from Paris, Francesc Ferrer i Guàrdia founded the La Escuela Moderna in Barcelona, a pedagogical project based on a free, rational, secular, holistic, and egalitarian education. At a time when education was under the auspices of the Catholic Church, Ferrer i Guàrdia took as a starting point the traditions of modern pedagogy and adapted them to the revolutionary message that anarchists and freethinkers were spreading among the new social groups created in the wake of the Industrial Revolution. In addition to the school, there was also a library, a printing shop, a public lecture room, and a series of extracurricular facilities, all aimed at the creation of freethinkers in reaction to class inequalities and to the struggle to overcome the dogmatisms of the time.

Although art education did not figure in Ferrer's pedagogical program, several articles published in the school's monthly newsletter point to the role of the artist in society and the advantages of including artistic activities in the learning process. The school ceased to develop after the death of its founder in 1909, and today we can only ask ourselves what its approach to art would have been: What artists would they have studied? What texts would have been used? What position would the school have taken with respect to the diversity of artistic and discursive practices of the time? But we can also ask ourselves: How can we bring these discourses and questions into the present and update such a valuable legacy despite it being left out of official narratives?

To address this and other questions, the project by Priscila Fernandes (Coimbra, Portugal, 1981) transforms Espai 13 into a classroom. Furniture and all necessary equipment for conducting an educational program, reproductions of artworks and posters, and a recently published book all form part of an installation with a double function: they form the foundation of the exhibition and also host the activities related to the project. The starting point is the book <u>¿Y el Arte? The Book of Aesthetic Education of the Modern School</u>, the title of which is taken from the last article pub-

75



Priscila Fernandes

<u>The Book of Aesthetic Education of</u> <u>the Modern School</u>, 2014 Original publications of La Escuela Moderna, on Ioan from the Fundació Francesc Ferrer i Guàrdia lished in the *Boletín*, the school's newsletter, and which is also the title of the exhibition. Within the book are a series of texts written up until 1909 by critics, philosophers, and artists that establish a dialogue with reproductions of artworks from the same period. The book provides a glimpse at the different debates at the time, ideas which could very well have formed part of Ferrer's educational doctrine with respect to art. Within Espai 13 the book can be found in different areas of the space, and is available for consultation together with other publications from La Escuela Moderna on loan from the Fundació Ferrer i Guàrdia for the exhibition.

In the gallery space, the surfaces of tables and chairs are engraved with abstractions reminiscent of works by artists of that period, though rather than the subtle and sophisticated lines one would expect, they recall the drawings that students make on their desks during class. This furniture is also used in the parallel activities and their arrangement varies with each occasion, creating different geometries within the space. In that regard, <u>Friction Pedagogies</u>, <u>Lesson O</u>'s pedagogical mediation program, offers a teacher training course with certain sessions open to the public. These activities are publicized in the gallery in a series of posters that take up the style of the advertisements in the Boletín and are arranged throughout the space alongside the other elements, such as a clock or a relief drawing made with chewing gum under one of the tables.

The work of Priscila Fernandes has of late focused on the ways in which knowledge is transmitted and on how ideologies dictate various forms of education, particularly in contemporary society when they are associated with play, creativity, or productivity. On this occasion, the artist uses the legacy of Ferrer I Guàrdia in order to explore other relevant aspects of the history and art of that period and to question certain gaps within them. She steers clear of any hint of celebration, commemoration, or utopian vision to foster a lively space for discussion and debate, a meeting place where the past converges with the demands of today's educational environment, and where the ideas of the exhibition are activated, practiced, and implemented in a dialogue with participants, the public, the objects, and the exhibition space itself.

Friction Pedagogies: Teachers' Course

In connection with the exhibition by Priscila Fernandes, and elaborated on the basis of the key ideas of her art project (pedagogical alternatives and art education), <u>Friction Pedagogies</u> began its journey challenging an essential collective, teachers, with a course entitled <u>Seminar of Practical</u>

/ ESP /

Thinking on Pedagogical Innovation and Renewal through Art Education: Debates, Tools, Methodologies, and Educational Proposals),¹ developed in coordination with Barcelona's board of education, the Consorci d'Educació. This was also a way of, from the outset, focusing the debate on education and how it relates to school, which, without minimizing its own important role in such a debate, pointed to the transformations needed in educational institutions. It was moreover essential that the course was also open to other interested educational agents, such as artists, curators, and art critics.

The course's main themes were: (1) pedagogical alternatives and school; (2) art education, creativity, and forms of contemporary work; and (3) methodologies of art research in relation to pedagogical processes. The working method was based on the participants sharing their past experiences, knowledge, and expectations, which led to the creation of work groups composed of different profiles with the ultimate goal of intervening in a particular educational context. Far from trying to provide universally applicable recipes, the course sought to incorporate the complexity involved in the collective creation of forms of pedagogical relationships. Thus in eight sessions held approximately every fifteen days, a diverse group of individuals participated in roundtable discussions, which were open to the general public and featuring invited guests,² of internal brainstorming and mentoring sessions that led to the development of interdisciplinary education projects. During this process that brought together teachers and other professionals, from different generations and with different viewpoints on the topics discussed, there emerged multiple points of contact, but also differences. Therefore the most important aspect of the sessions was the group's ability to maintain the debates open until the end and, notwithstanding, generate proposals, some of which were ultimately implemented.

> Priscila Fernandes ¿Y el arte?The Book of Aesthetic Education of the Modern School 2014



¹ https://pedagogiesdefriccio.wordpress.com/curs-de-professorat.

² The guests were Assemblea Groga (Oscar Simó), the project Inter-Accions (Sergi Selvas and Marta Carrasco), Institut Quatre Cantons, Centre de Recursos Pedagògics Llibertaris Josefa Martín Luengo, Adrià Rodríguez de Alòs-Moner, the project EN RESIDENCIA (Carles Giner), Escola Serralavella (Marisol Anguita), the collective Sinapsis (Cristian Añó), Priscila Fernandes, and Rachel Fendler.



Priscila Fernandes <u>The Book of Aesthetic Education of</u> <u>the Modern School</u>, 2014 Installation view

78



Priscila Fernandes <u>The Book of Aesthetic Education of</u> <u>the Modern School</u>, 2014 Installation view





Priscila Fernandes <u>The Book of Aesthetic Education of</u> <u>the Modern School</u>, 2014 Original publications of La Escuela Moderna, on Ioan from the Fundació Francesc Ferrer i Guàrdia





Priscila Fernandes <u>The Book of Aesthetic Education of</u> <u>the Modern School</u>, 2014 Installation view

82



Priscila Fernandes <u>The Book of Aesthetic Education of</u> <u>the Modern School</u>, 2014 Installation view



Priscila Fernandes The Book of Aesthetic Education of the Modern School, 2014 Posters

87





<u>Friction Pedagogies</u> Introductory session of the *Teachers' Course* [October 16, 2014]



Friction Pedagogies

Session 2: Roundtable [October 30, 2014]: Pedagogical Alternatives and the School. Assemblea Groga (Oscar Simó), Inter-Accions (Sergi Selvas and Marta Carrasco), Escuela Quatre Cantons, and Centre de Recursos Pedagògics Llibertaris Josefa Martín Luengo





Friction Pedagogies

Session 3: Roundtable [November 13, 2014]: Art Education, Creativity, and Contemporary Working Methods. Adrià Rodríguez de Alòs-Moner, EN RESiDÈNCiA (Carles Giner), Escuela Serralavella (Marisol Anguita), and Sinapsis (Cristian Añó)

<u>Friction Pedagogies Session 4:</u> <u>Conversation with the artist Priscila</u> <u>Fernandes</u> [November 27, 2014]: *Methodologies of Artistic Research*