

PART IV

EDUCATION

1. NEWS ARGUMENTS FOR AESTHETIC EDUCATION AND THE EDUCATIONAL DIMENSIONS OF THE ART MUSEUM

Constantin Cucos²⁷¹

Abstract. *Education for aesthetic values has to draw both on classical art, which is based on the cultural tradition as a source of perennial meanings, passed down to us from ancient times, and on novel recent contemporary artistic expressions, which, though possibly perishable, evoke the life experience, the apprehensions and the hopes of the contemporary people. In close connection with these innovations, we aim at re-systematizing and re-formulating new arguments in favor of the institutionalized aesthetic education in accordance with these recent artistic developments. At the same time, we insist on the importance of the objectives of the art museum as a way of didactic cognition and reinterpretation of reality.*

Key words: *aesthetic education, museum pedagogy, museum education, non-formal education, informal education*

1. News arguments in aesthetic education

Any responsible educational project assumes a position in relation to every person's aesthetic and artistic formation. Arts education shows a particular way of seeing the human being, a unique philosophy of life, a vision of what is more precious in order to become a human being. The importance that art appreciation gets within the society gives the measure of value of that society, its sophistication and axiological altitude. Arts education leads to new horizons, for it develops the interrogative and reflexive spirit (Gombrich, 1973). On this occasion, the young man consciously enters art's domain, learning something about himself, and this learning will allow him to solve problems, ask questions and enroll in a reflexive culture of the self and of the surrounding world to which he belongs. Arts education becomes an education of the self in the perspective of integration in humanity (Levinson, 1998). The education for beauty engraves a deep meaning, integrative and above all the other things acquired in school. Artistic training offers students an experience for enlightening and building a path for one's existence.

The education of the senses, of aesthetic taste, forming the attitudes and an aesthetic ideal does not have to be the attribute just of the artistic disciplines. It is more than that, reaching other domains. This is a concern of all disciplines, to the extent that they not only aim for the forming of the intellect, but also of sensibility as well (as knowledge will be passed, equally well, through artistic disciplines, becoming, through this, among others, a form of intellectual education). That is why, whenever necessary, the beauty of the area that the discipline takes into account will be targeted (living nature – biology, physical

²⁷¹ Professor, PhD, "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iași from Romania, cucos@uaic.ro

nature – geography, divine perfection – religion, the human behavior – psychology, the harmony of computations – mathematics etc.). If truth and good, for example, are targeted by a large number of disciplines, why could not the same thing happen to the beautiful?

The value of a work of art is, at times, determined by its context, as a result of playing it on stage, of a representation, of a meaningful investment (Fivaz, 1989). The places where art is present become similar to the “temples” in which the appearance of divinity is officiated, the emergence of value and its embodiment in artifacts or materials with the agreement of witnesses, of those that receive and who trust that the birth of value is celebrated. Value is not given, but built (and re-built) whenever a receiving conscience wishes, projects it, invests in it, builds it.

More than ever, new manifestations of social, cultural and technological praxis bring up new arguments for the foundation of educational efforts in this regard. We bring to your attention the following bases for a programmed aesthetic education, achieved through intentional teaching practices:

1. Axiological basis. The socio-cultural environment in which the individual lives is full of many aesthetic stimuli that need to be integrated or signified by man through affective and intellectual complicity. These instances do not become values if no one takes them into account, if no one receives or enjoys them. However, relating to aesthetic stimuli assumes giving a review to the subjects that relate to these, an introduction to the “grammar of art”, a prior exercise of aesthetic object “usage”. Reporting on these phenomena and practicing aesthetic values become a prerequisite of founding aesthetic values themselves. If these values are not received and internalized, it is like they do not exist at all. The condition of their ontic presence is given by the condition of their axiological validation. Art becomes art only when someone is aesthetically enjoying it.

2. Cultural basis. From the point of view of self-improvement, aesthetic values closure helps its enlightenment, shaping a polymorphic spiritual profile, open and multidimensional. You cannot consider yourself a culturally fulfilled person if you do not know instances of beauty in certain artistic genres, genres that evolve in time, with different stylistic shapes from one art school to another, from author to author. On the one hand, you cannot aspire to the status of culturally “furnished” (ennobled) person if you know nothing about the evolution of art, about the intimacy of the aesthetic phenomenon, about art reception pathology etc. and, of course, you do not have a rich receiving and “consumption” experience of aesthetic goods. On the other hand, the enrichment of this aesthetic culture will precede or stimulate other cultural horizons in the fields of philosophy, science, morals, religion, citizenship etc.

3. The basis related to the self-realization and self-assertion of the individual. Aesthetic training of the individual leads to self-fulfillment, to an existential happiness through valuing an affective “deposit” that has to be “consumed” by emphatic protection and complicity to the materialization of beauty. The human being, by nature, also has an affective dimension that has to reverse through

projectivity and activity. Aesthetic exercise is fundamental and defines the superior consciousness worn by the individual and humanity. Aesthetic joy (selfless, obviously) is specific only to man, who manages to get away from materiality, from the constraints of a physiological existence or a quickly pragmatic one. To do something only for “the love of art” is a sign of existential superiority, of a separation from factuality which only human beings can hope for.

4. Sympathetic basis, of sharing experiences and mutual acceptance. The methodical introduction of the young man into the artistic universe facilitates a connection to the variety of ways of existing, of his fellow's different experiences, leading towards an understanding and tolerance of otherness and different ways of thinking and feeling. We could say that aesthetic education can be converted into a prerequisite for social education in the broad sense, for smoothing living altogether in a context in which everyone can express in one's specific way. In this way, we understand that people have many vibrating shared experiences, but all of them are going to materialize in a different way depending on their prior experience, their community's dominating culture and the age that the man is living in, accidents or all kind of insecurities.

5. The basis of identity structuring and assertion. Aesthetic education leads to the creation and delimitation of an identity, to forming a one of a kind spiritual profile. Art offers the person an opportunity for updating some affective potentials that will make up a physiognomy specific to each subject. We come into this world with certain affective, attitudinal, volitional talents, but they are going to work when getting in touch with a spiritual casuistry delivered by art, with specific “traces” left to the world by other people's spirit. Prolonged contact with the different instances of art is going to bring certain needs, behaviours, habits, both individually and collectively. All of them, while interacting and in its own combinations, are going to define and sketch the person's uniqueness.

6. The basis of positive usage of temporality. Aesthetic experience, both through cognitive relation, but especially affective and participatory, is the attribute of a person who has extra time that needs to be exploited for perfection, for controlling the inner balance, for proper spending of free time. The individual's and mankind's time gain forces and additional responsibility in managing it. Extra time can become a burden or a dismantled factor for interiority if it is not wisely used for covering superior human's needs. This aesthetic goal, together with other objectives (social, material, tourism-related etc.), can overwhelm, in value, a resource surplus that has to be taken into consideration: the extra time of modern man.

7. The basis of the individual's and human's projectivity and transcendence. Art keeps, for man and humanity, a durability and perenniality beyond context, accidents, existential vulnerability or perishability. It extracts and perpetuates the most sublime in us, ignoring all kind of insecurities. Both for creators and contemplators, the artistic universe is a horizon that is the basis for the durability and everlastingness of value. If through corporality and definitive actions, we are limited by time, through artistic creation, we have the possibility to pass the

test of time, to “move” or spirit in a place of axiological perennality in which continuously new spiritual reflexes will be deposited – unique through their individual emergence, but generally valid for humanity.

8. The basis of controlling creativity. Aesthetic initiation since an early age builds and maximizes the individual's creative potential, a huge reservoir to increase cultural capital, for individuals and humanity as well. Certainly, creativity can express itself in numerous fields, but there are a number of broad and specific factors that can be strengthened through aesthetic experience and then transferred to other areas of manifestation (in science, mechanism, social action, sport, etc.). There are some completeness relations regarding human activities, some kind of “communicating vessels principle”, that make a benefit that prove to a certain extent useful to another.

9. The basis of modelling existence in accordance to artistic illustration. Art can be a part of a set of referential values for becoming an individual, in a worthy to follow example. Through itself, on the other hand, art has paidea valences, urging an existential elevation and rectitude. Artistic exemplarity can guide our lives through building high aspirations, through cultivating thirst for perfection, through the need for living near values, through internal mobilization. The history of art is full of a “casuistry” and “portraits” of creators that have overcome their condition of a usual, dull existence through perseverance, trust, self-realization. On the other hand, our existence can become “artistic” through the internalization of equilibrium, harmony, coherency alleged by artistic beauty. Artistic order can be transferred from creation to receiver, can perpetuate or perfect in people's everyday actions. The artistic mimesis can have a different side: not only can art be a copy of reality, but reality – that of man – has to copy art.

All these arguments (to which others may be added) have the purpose of supporting the need for a coherent, responsible and inspired effort, of the pedagogical substantiation of aesthetic education conducted by school. Through the contents of the school curriculum, through setting fair relations between scientific, social, human and artistic disciplines, though specific controlling of explicit and implicit aesthetic objectives, brewed with the non-specific ones, through the way that didactic activities are sized, through didactic tact or grace, children must have, since primary school, a formation in the spirit of beauty, harmony, and coherency of the world that surrounds us.

2. The formal-nonformal-informal relationship in museum education

The museum can become an educational source either as a nonformal environment, or an informal one of learning. The difference between these two occurs depending on the degree of intentionality, the connection with knowledge from school and the degree of involvement of the trainer and the trainee. In the case of the nonformal, museum education becomes a “prolongation” of school education, it is programmed, intentioned, carefully planned, made by pedagogy specialists, but the presence of children to these activities becomes compulsory. In the case of the informal, museum education is left to the trainee, it is optional,

accidental, self-conducted and it can occasionally be fructified at school. It definitely leads to a supplementary culturalization of the educated person, but it is not always ratified, capitalized, evaluated at the level of formal educational activities.

The connection between formal and nonformal museum education is ambivalent, it can vary from continuity, complementarity and mutual strengthening going towards discontinuity, inhibition or opposition between these elements (Lucas, 1987). It is important that these continuities or tensions stimulate each other, leading to broader knowledge or experience, even if sometimes these reports lead to interrogation, problematization, research (see Zbucea, 2006a). Any form of completeness can subsume some sequences that, at least at a specific moment, do not match. If a pupil, for example, finds out at school about a writer and one is told something else or one notices different information in the memorial house of that writer, the only thing left to be done is to research on one's own or with a group of colleagues and find a solution.

The museum as a place or resources can strengthen, extend or constitute a proof for school teaching sequences. It can become a territory for fixing knowledge, for assuring integration, correlations having a conclusive or transdisciplinary character or for stirring interest, diving in the complexity of the phenomenon in order to motivate and arousing the joy for learning. Prolonging „the teaching” of some content elements in the museum is connected to the thematic specificity required by the curriculum (aimed competencies, content elements), to the availability and the offer of the museum (the presence and capitalization of the exhibits), but also to the resourcefulness and didactic talent of the teacher whose responsibility is to know and inventories this potential, to previously inspect or collaborate with the representatives of these cultural spaces. The creation of brotherhood or partnerships between school and museum represents an institutionalized formula of foreshadowing this formative complementarity. Of course, this type of opportunity cannot be identified everywhere (it is one thing to educate in a cultural city, another one in a remote village), but only in the geographic areas where there are museums, their capitalization should be done by the school. To put it differently, inside a museum, other types of activities can take place, implicitly or explicitly, such as the support of some thematic conferences, the creation of some laboratories or research centers, the editing of specialized magazines.

Didactic knowledge does not oppose scholar knowledge, but it is based on it and it derives from it, it is a form of redevelopment in connection to the circumstances of teaching. It is generated by scholar knowledge, but it is re-dimensioned according to psychological, pedagogical, deontological, logical, epistemological, praxiological principles. Furthermore, didactic knowledge should always keep the contact with reality, with the area of emergence or stocking knowledge, it should be open to those fields where knowledge is alive, it pulses, it is produced.

The museum can facilitate the knowledge of our past and present and also of other people and it can be the basis of the development of intercultural types

of behavior. It is polarizing or „detonator” of other and unprecedented spiritual development. The escape from a specificity or a faulty closing does not put its identity in danger, on the contrary. It is the interface between two worlds, becoming a „meeting space between non-specialists and professionalists / artists /scientists. Museums are those that „translate” the academic discourse, making it accessible for a larger public” (Murgoci, 2005). It can play the role of cultural referential and facilitator starting with pre-school children’s education and going to the education of adults. It is not only depositary of cultural goods, but also of significances (cf. Schouten, 1992). The museum pre- or re-interprets the world through the way it focuses on the exhibits, on the way it gathers them, it brings them together, it offers them a significance, it presents them (the interpretations of the visitors will be added). It installs meanings, it concludes, it shows directions – for those capable of perceiving these things. It is a resonator of this world, it is sensitive to the present, but also careful towards the present. People who prepare and exhibition or are managers of museums also need education and also the people who enter them.

References

1. Fivaz, Roland, 1989, *L'ordre et la volupté. Essai sur la dynamique esthétique dans les arts et dans les sciences*, Presses Polytechniques Romandes, Lausanne
2. Gombrich, E., H., 1973, *Artă și iluzie*, Ed. Meridiane, București
3. Levinson, Jerrold, 1998, *L'art, la musique et l'histoire*, Ed. L'Eclat
4. Lucas, A.-M., 1987, «Interactions between Formal and Informal Sources of Learning Science» p. 64-79, în *Communicating Science to the Public*, Londres, Wiley, Evered & O'Connor (éd.)
5. Murgoci, Mihaela, 2005, *Muzeele și educația pentru adulți*, în *Revista Muzeelor*, nr. 4, în http://www.revistamuzeelor.ro/arhpdf/2005_04_01.pdf
6. Schouten, Frans, 1992, *The Paradox of the map. Semiotics and Museum Education*, în *Museum Management and Curatorship*, n. 11
7. Zbucea, Alexandra, 2006, *Educația formală și informală în muzee*, în *RevistaMuzeelor*,nr. 1, în http://www.revistamuzeelor.ro/arhpdf/2006_01_05.pdf