

# ART EDUCATION FOR SOCIAL CHANGE: HUMAN RIGHTS AND SEXUAL DIVERSITY

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## Abstract:

One of the outstanding issues to expand future possibilities for our work as art teachers is to develop a program of actions to make arts education a force for social change. If we do not do, we can run many risks. Among the many risks we should face in the future, the greatest of all would be the disappearance of arts education in the school curriculum. This loss presence in the different educational levels can occur if we continue to rely on what we have traditionally done. We can only hope to continue creating our commitment to creativity or knowledge of the language of images. Today in our environment, social and cultural changes are happening fast and aggressively.

Technologies invade communication modes. Entertainment is a cultural reference of our students. By contrast, among the opportunities offered by the struggle for Human Rights would be the defense of minorities and positive action towards the neediest social support groups. Progressively sexual minorities are becoming more social and cultural presence, so the way we fight for their rights would be to achieve the highest level of hope for

improvement for sexual diversity. For this action, we begin to realize the role played by images and identity systems in the collective context of LGBT groups. If we observe what is happening on social networks we will see that sexual minorities (lesbian, gay, transgender, bisexual) are taking an increasingly extensive and coordinated territory. Also in the grounds of film, television, video games, and even galleries and art museums, the representations of a "gay culture" are increasingly powerful. On the other hand, the achievements to legal and social levels are increasing, highlighting issues such as gay marriage or laws for trans (transgender and transexual) people. Currently in many countries are still punishing loving someone of the same sex, even with death. A part of people suffers prohibitions and harassment for being gay. The form of persecution of people of the LGBT groups is caused by different reasons. Many times this persecution is exacerbated by the application of the laws themselves. Society also creates an environment conducive to homophobia and transphobia. We have to

deal critically unfair bans, and we convey this message passing between all sectors involved in the educational system. It is our obligation to investigate these issues, establish criteria for study, and disseminate achievements. We can promote maximum presence in classrooms of sexual diversity issues, both from a curricular perspective, and through activities. I consider essential to bring arts education to social problems, treating subjects concerning sexual diversity. Get involved from arts education in social issues is extremely positive, allowing openly expose aspects that until recently proved prohibited issues, both on the street and in the classroom. To do this I propose a model inspired by Critical Pedagogy and Arts Based Research.

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## **ART EDUCATION FOR SOCIAL CHANGE: HUMAN RIGHTS AND SEXUAL DIVERSITY**

### **From where I look.**

I am a teacher of art education at a public university. Working in the training of educators from academia involves developing a speech supporting two key points: the art and education. From art attempt to extract the most interesting questions that will help me to contextualize each topic. I review the work and processes of artists and creators that make our encounter with different human and

historical realities. On the other hand, from the educational process, I assume that the education of persons generates a great mechanism, and in that sense, meet their particular means putting into action an extremely complex field of analysis. For all these reasons, and shuffling the responsibility implied to be attentive to minorities and differences, I understand the urgent need to introduce aspects of sexual diversity as a crosscutting and important topic (Stanley 2007). From this initial approach will establish a rethinking of theoretical postulates; new theoretical gears serve to rule out certain issues that are already outdated (Puche & Alamillo-Martínez 2014). We will address those nuances that are located in the field of arts education, although sometimes we get more broad or general educational contexts (Sanders 2004). I am in favor of developing an approach that takes into account the reality of personal and social rights in relation to sexual diversity as a social issue (Cosier & Sanders 2007). In this sense, I think it is a long way to go, and I hope my modest contribution will broaden the view of a society that is moving towards a greater demand in the field of Human Rights (Planella 2006).

### **What are the precedents for what we have now?**

Referring to the limited literature that have until recently on arts education and sexual diversity, we must mention the special issue of the International Journal of Art and Design Education in 2007 dedicated to sexual diversity. This issue of the IJADE journal is a model unit that allowed us to meet various actions undertaken to integrate queer and LGBT issues in classrooms and museums (McIntyre 2007). We refer to this publication because it is essential to check for understanding where we are now. While arts education has always stood for championing creativity and support for the

rights and freedoms, the fact remains that there is still a certain fear that prevents include other important aspects which

however are already integrated socially. We must support and defend the teachers and students who identify from different genders and sexualities (Planella 2014) celebrating their diversity and establishing an innovative and respectful approach (Robinson & alt. 2014). This was the slogan of the special issue of Cuadernos de Pedagogía (an important Spanish journal of education) published in 2010 with the slogan "The affective and sexual diversity". The two special issues of journals cited (IJADE in 2007 and Cuadernos de Pedagogía in 2010) are important examples, as they opened new possibilities and remain essential reference for the subject, which now draw on art education and sexual diversity (Dias 2014).

### **How my proposal is methodologically organized?**

The analysis presented conceived as a structure based on personal narratives (Buzard 2003), and more specifically in the auto-ethnographies (Ellis 2009). This work aims to improve my own educational work, and of course help the teaching staff to review some schemes that are already obsolete (Chung 2007). I will use those theoretical resources from authors who have influenced the question (Talbert & Steinberg 2005). I also make use of feedback from artworks that are difficult to interpret if it ignores the sexual option determined at the time (or currently determines) the lives of their authors. I am based the methodology, therefore, on a purely qualitative schema, using my own evolution as a teaching and assessing such development to achieve it in a case study (Feliu 2007). Birth of a personal narrative (or life story) that helps me rethink my performance and availability to share new scenarios of communication with other teachers (Rivas, Hernández & Sancho

2012). One of the proposals that are integrated in the present study is to introduce examples of artworks and artists from which concepts are incorporated to act upon educationally (Huerta 2013).

### **It is urgent to promote new ideas.**

It is appropriate and necessary to begin to discuss sexual diversity in arts education environments. Include this issue in our curricula will allow us to talk openly about many issues that until recently remained invisible (Rodríguez 2007). If we establish a model of inclusion in what refers to sexual dissidence, we got motivate students promoting respectful attitudes and values of young generations

(Moritz 2003). We are able to strip our classrooms fears and occultations, for which we appeal to the rights of people giving students the opportunity to review and establish debates (Borrillo 2009). We need to promote arts education at the heart of social change (Huerta 2014a), since the territory of art can reflect and act on reality and the present in which we live. From artistic education can take advantage of numerous resources to improve and transform that reality based on criteria such as respect, collaboration, participation and equity (Fone 2008). We can defend Human Rights from the geographies of art and direct our efforts towards greater acceptance of sexual diversity in the classroom (UNESCO 2003). Addressing these issues related to sexuality give visibility to a social and cultural reality that is still absent in most schools (Pichardo 2009). One of the causes leading to this situation is the machismo, a social and cultural concept based on the dominance of Christian white man.

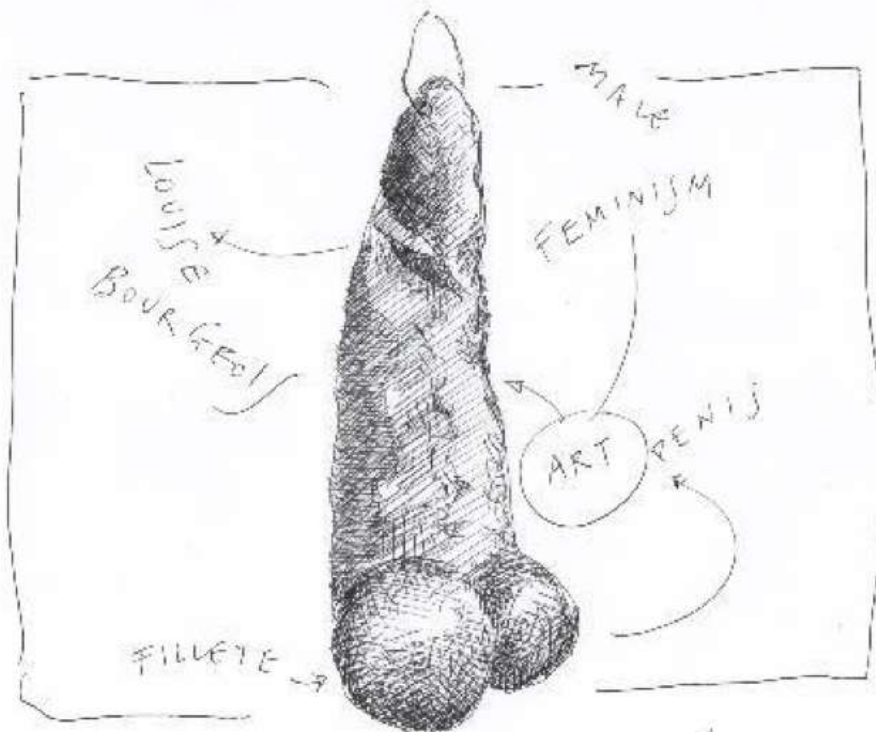


Figure 1. Drawing from the work of Louise Bourgeois Fillette, by Ricard Huerta.

As an example, I want to comment the work Fillette of Louise Bourgeois (1911- 2010), a sculpture made in 1968, part of the collection of the MoMA in New York. The first thing that catches your eye when looking at this piece is the way to what represents: a penis, or rather a large penis. It is a sculpture made of latex, about 60 cm in height. How you present to the public is hanging from the ceiling lit a ring, as a piercing that holds the glans penis. By using the male sexual organ as a reference, the artist introduces actually a form that is not usually present in the works of art, or worse, in some periods of history has consistently disappeared from the

iconography of Western art. Given the role by Louise Bourgeois played in the art of the twentieth century, especially in regards to its strong presence in the territory of women as creators, no less striking than the artist has resorted precisely the organ male sex. The penis is a basic element, which is the representative form of masculinity par excellence. This is a clear allegation of machismo, because the artist positioned from doubt originating feminisms, but is also a provocation from artistic practice, while the piece has an almost offensive texture than usual and dominates in Western representations of the male body canon. The suggestive proposal offered by Louise Bourgeois encourages us to enter several dilemmas, checking the usual representations of Western art since the vast majority of cases were male artists who have represented women in his works, often naked. It is important that we plant in class this dichotomy, which is the male / female pair, as it is the first question that facilitate the understanding of sexual dissidence. The art made by women in recent decades has insisted on these issues to finish with a sexist concept that seemed unbreakable.

### **A thousand ways to punish innocent people.**

Currently, in many parts of the world, people of all ages and social status are subjected to discrimination of legal, cultural, educational and political order because of homophobia and heteronormativity prevailing. This terrible situation faced by many individuals and groups in the world affects their health and well-being negatively (Martel 2013). The students and teachers suffering harassment because of their sexual dissidence is not able to exercise their rights, but is a victim of abuse and harassment (Tin 2012); those who choose to express their feelings as a legitimate personal choice see less chance of conducting an academic and work normally in

this sense (Platero & Gómez 2008). This causes discomfort and hate content that prevents lead a healthy life. This impairment is a symptom of weakness of the education system as it is a question directly related to human rights (with the exercise of democracy), and whose responsibility is social order. This expressed the legal regulations promoted by the Council of Europe (Council of Europe 2011) and UNESCO (UNESCO 2012). There is still much to be done in this area of personal and social freedoms.

Various courses of action open from Art (Aliaga & Cortés 2014), understanding art education as a plural and porous geography attending the relationship between individuals and their environment. Artists from all periods of history had to submit their sexuality to rigorously demanding religious power and diagrams of the dominant masculinity. Artists of all ages have suffered by not being able to freely express their feelings and desires, victims of a highly sophisticated social hypocrisy, although deep brutally rough (Aliaga 2004). Today we can draw unprejudiced reading of the works of many artists, though, over the decades, and especially in this century, have chosen to talk openly about their sexual orientation (Aldrich 2006). Do not forget that in the legal field and in social recognition, at least in Western countries, has advanced much about it, but still latent social stigma that criminalizes the difference, something much more evident in remote areas of cities or in small towns (Eribon 2014).

Hide these realities is anachronistic, just as difficult to understand why in some catalogs, books and exhibitions on many gay artists insists on hiding his choice of life. On hiding these characteristic we lose most of perspective posed in his works, and turn from their potential and enriching readings (Francis Bacon, Robert



Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, Jackson Pollock, Cy Twombly, etc.). If we hide our students these realities on the life and work of great artists, we are perpetuating homophobic and recalcitrant attitudes. David Hockney is a good example to consider. Without having forced to hide their sexual orientation, Hockney has also had a clear involvement in the struggle for LGBT rights, something that appreciated by so much hypocrisy and prudish mentality as had been usual until a few decades ago among the highest levels of influence art.

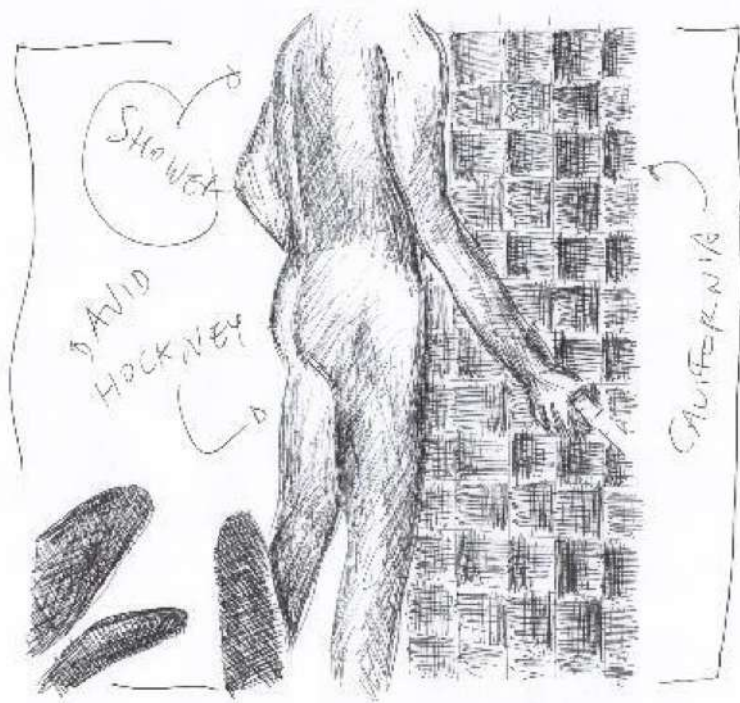


Figure 2.

Drawing from the painting Boy About to Take a Shower of David Hockney, by Ricard Huerta.

We talk about homosexual visibility and representations of the male body from the work Boy About to Take a Shower, a painting of 1964. Hockney was formed as an artist in his native England, but from his trip to the United States when realizes the importance of his works reflect his true interests and desires. In 1963 when Hockney came to New York he realized that the United States was giving a breakthrough in on sexual freedoms. It was especially during his stay in Los Angeles, from 1964, when Hockney began his famous series of male nudes and pools. The impressive quality of the graphic work Hockney, alongside his fame as a young artist, opened the doors of the mansions of much of the cultural environment of California. Contact with people of high society and those responsible for the cultural world allowed the artist to recreate these experiences from themed around the daily lives of its inhabitants. His work has left a good sign of portraits and domestic landscapes through which we can recreate the atmosphere of that time in a very linked to movie stars and music privileged environment. Hockney does not portray celebrities, but that is dedicate to painting and drawing their friends. It is precisely this touch of closeness with their models becomes unique Hockney's work.

In contrast to the piece named Fillette (in French means "little girl") of Louise Bourgeois, to which we referred, and which represents an enormous phallus brutal and ugly, Hockney paints are seductive and complacent. Hockney's works are aesthetically soft. Particular the work titled Boy About to Take a Shower presents a male nude, but is a body we see her back, and therefore cannot appreciate their sexual organs. Hockney maximum stylized representation, and although it was a bit shocking for their sincere manifestation of homosexuality at the time, the truth is that soon became a cult, along with the rest of the series dedicated to naked and swimming

pools Hockney knew that masterfully fit in a tradition that is much more prolific than it initially may seem.

### **The visibility of the gay movement: the gay aesthetic.**

The art world has now a powerful aspect in the treatment of sexual diversity (Lord & Meyer 2013), but in the classroom continues to avoid these kinds of issues. If not talking about this issues we become accomplices of possible "classroom closet", and not give way to concepts and realities as "gay". "LGBT", "homoeroticism", "outing", "double life" or "coming out". If we tried academically these issues would be motivating for students and would allow for interesting discussions in the classroom (Foucault 2011). Beyond the fears and prejudices of the past, art education today offers us the opportunity to approach the powerful media representations, considering the near our students element. In addition, younger generations are attracted by technological images, since students are digital natives for whom the use and enjoyment of video games or social networking is now routine and necessary (Freedman 1994). We cannot go outside these new technological realities also show a strong personal and social component, nor can we stay out of everything that is happening in the struggle for the rights of LGBT groups (Huerta 2014b). If we are not aware of new, we are moving of approaches and current challenges of arts education. We need to educate members on the affective-sexual and gender diversity from visual arts, analyzing artistic and technological productions that help us to know and transit through concepts like cyborg, drag queen, drag king, gay, lesbian, etc., to

contribute to the shaping of identities in a more flexible and enriching way, without complexes or inhibitions (Parral 2011). We

are still far from achieving a certain curricular adjustment to introduce the theme of sexual diversity (Huerta & Alonso 2015).

The territory of art can reflect and act on the reality in which we live. Since art education, and especially since the parameters of visual culture (Duncum 2002) can leverage numerous resources to improve and transform that reality based on criteria such as respect, cooperation and equity (Huerta 2014c). The defense of Human Rights from the geographies of art suggests direct efforts toward greater acceptance of sexual diversity in the classroom (Addison 2007). Despite the constant regressions is suffering arts education within the formal curriculum set of many countries, or precisely for this reason, we maintain a commitment to innovation and development.

The initiatives like Artographies (Irwin 2013) or Arts-Based Research (Barone 2012) are gaining positions, there are a good example of this effort to improve and adapt arts education in new educational environments. Within this spirit of improve we introduce a key to power a future possibility by proposing arts education as an element of social change (Huerta 2014a). One way to interpret this passage from the artistic and educational to social claim is precisely to address sexual diversity through arts education, and making visible different social and cultural realities that remain hidden in the classroom (Robinson & others 2014).

Through reflections and proposes we encourage the creative and artistic development of our students, so that he can live in peace their own sexual diversity. Students and faculty who takes their difference as a legitimate personal choice see less chance to pursue an academic and work normally in this sense, which is a symptom of weakness of the education system as it is a directly

related matter human rights, the exercise of democracy and social responsibility. Various courses of action open from art, art education understood as a geography that looks at the relationship between individuals and their environment. We are creators and users of images, so our eyes and our reaction will be the key to this

openness to knowledge and interaction (Dyer 1977). In any case, what should motivate the matter will be especially our position as teachers.

### **Sebastian.**

He was always there, in the churches and the important cathedrals and museums, as one of the most represented saints throughout history. The last few decades has become a gay icon who represents an entire model. The figure of Saint Sebastien represents homoerotic desire. It is a figure always depicted naked, tied by the arms to a column or a tree, and penetrated by a few bolts that are tangible evidence of his martyrdom. Is an icon. We are talking about a historical figure, a Roman soldier who lived under Emperor Diocletiano. He was tortured to follow the Christian doctrine. The fact that their fellow soldiers who were executed him and tortured him suggests a strong union (and exemplary punishment) component to the story of this saint. Virtually all the great artists of the history of art have a Saint Sebastian in his works. There are famous examples from Il Perugino (in the Louvre) or Sandro Botticelli (now in the Staatliche Museen Berlin) to El Greco (now in the Cathedral of Palencia) and Raphael Sanzio (now in the Accademia Carrara of Bergamo). The strong erotic charge that print these works is strongly linked to the representation of the naked body, in this case a male body being tortured.

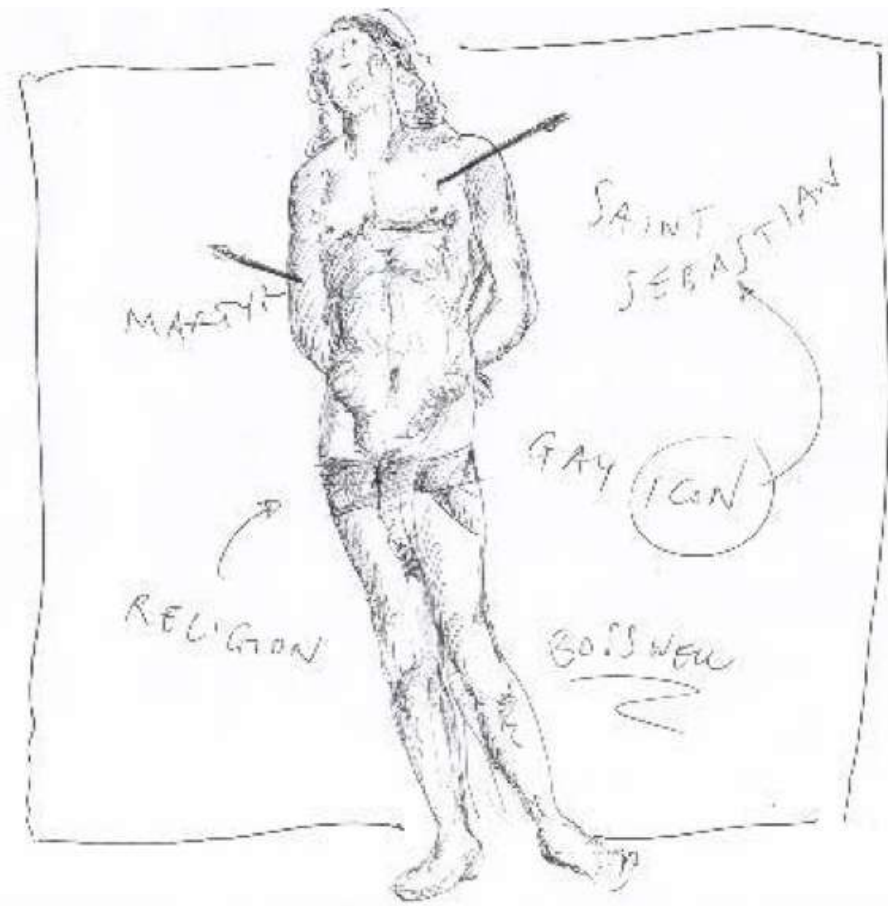


Figure 3. Drawing from the work Saint Sebastian of Il Perugino, by Ricard Huerta.

We can use in our class any of the numerous examples of representations of Saint Sebastian that art history offers us. I think it is appropriate to use a more recent work and less fraught with religious significance, as is the photograph of Pierre et Gilles Saint Sébastien - Bouabdallah Benkamla, a piece made in 1987 now part of Walter Haas collection, Zurich. Pierre Comroy and Gilles Blanchard, known in the art world as Pierre et Gilles, are a couple in real life. They are two French artists who work together as a team on



a professional level. Attention to this idea of homosexual couples who work as artists as a group, as it is common on many occasions. His best-known version of Saint Sebastian meets a colorful and baroque scheme, in which a young man tied to a log showing his muscular body ostensibly they appear embedded two arrows to the chest and ribs. The authenticity of competitive play and textures makes us doubt that there is any kind of bodily suffering. The visual result of the work is of such impact that reminds us of the Indian aesthetics, a model or very representative of this artistic duo kitsch trend. The scenery is studied and bright colors take us to a kind of ceremonial pantomime not walk away from portraits to own use of ceremonies such as weddings or christenings. The irony and excess are the greatest assets of this aesthetic example presented to us Pierre et Gilles, who boast an authentic iconographic bathroom in each of his meritorious compositions.

### **Technology as a space of freedom for the LGBT community.**

We can hide many issues in our classes, but despite that our students will have at its disposal the aesthetic emanating from sexual diversity in other ways outside the classroom. The aesthetics of sexual diversity is available to our students in many elements of popular culture and the media, in addition to a wide dissemination through social networks that control the young people. Video clips of Elton John, Ricky Martin, Lady Gaga, Madonna, Pet Shop Boys, Culture Club, George Michael, Freddie Mercury, and many other examples are a very close reality and have already taken several generations for whom diversity is part of culture (Medina 2014). Why does not approach us well in our classrooms to these examples of popular culture to analyze the images they represent? It is for the same reason that we are not reviewing in class recommended films?

Any examples of LGBT films: Dallas Buyers Club (Jean-Marc Vallée 2013), Philomena (Stephen Frears 2013), Contracorriente (Javier Fuentes-León 2009), Milk (Gus Van Sant 2008), Brokeback Mountain (Ang Lee 2005), C.R.A.Z.Y. (Jean-Marc Vallée 2005), Yossi & Jagger (Eytan Fox 2002), The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert (Stephan Elliott, 1993), The Wedding Banquet (Ang Lee 1993), Fresa y Chocolate (Tomás Gutiérrez Alea & Juan Carlos Tabío 1993) or The Children's Hour (William Wyler 1961). Do not turn us fascinating films by directors like Pedro Almodóvar, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Rainer Werner Fassbinder or Derek Jarman?

We are specialists in visual arts education, and this involves establishing educational criteria taking into account what happens in the field of painting, drawing, sculpture, performance or printing. We should also take account other creative geographies, incorporating into our discourse what is happening in areas such as film, television, music, advertising, design, fashion, video games, and social networks. They are visual spaces. It is very effective confirmed that in movies and popular music constantly are examples that bring us to the visual culture that is generated from the LGBT postulates (Hall 2007). If we analyze these creations and establish a curricular approach to this, we will be better able to address the problems of those facing different situations with regard to gender and sexual identity (Platero 2014). The films of Catalan director Ventura Pons are a unique group to analyze the evolution of certain aesthetic and social aspects specific to our environment, especially his daring documentary Ignasi M.

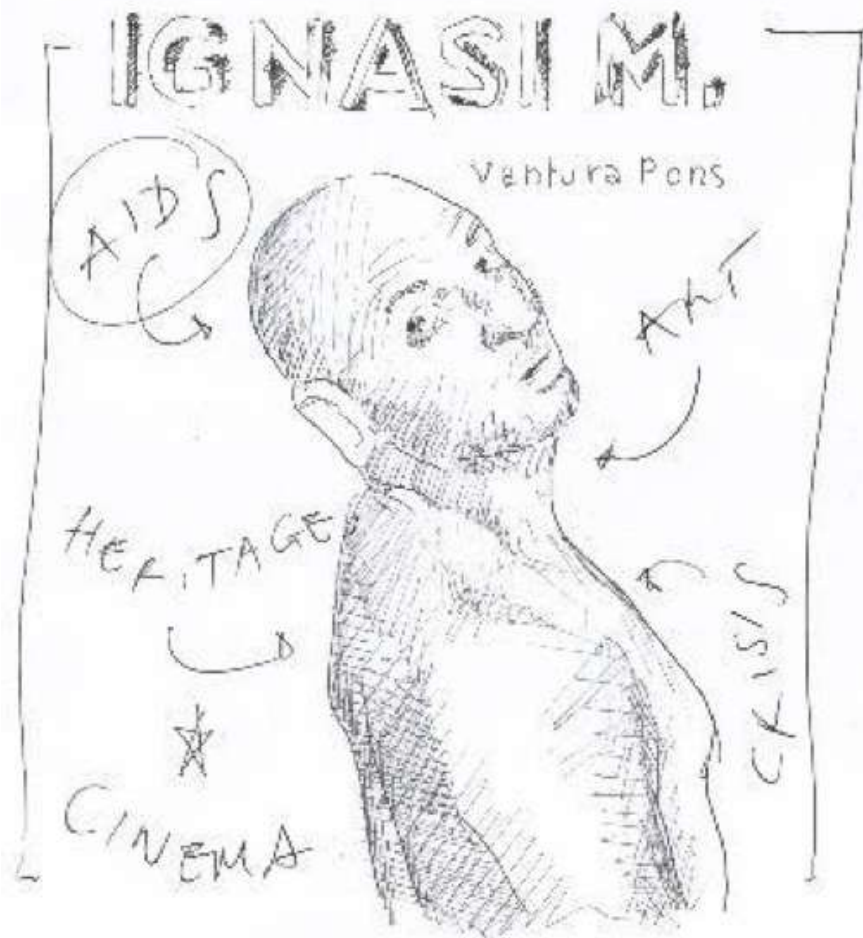


Figure 4. Drawing from Ignasi M movie poster, directed by Ventura Pons. Graphic design work of Arnau Millet. By Ricard Huerta.

I consider the work of Carlos Motta as a good example to analyze the situation of the media regarding LGBT realities and problems. Among the works of Carlos Motta we can choose the piece *We Who Feel Differently*, a show that was shown for the first time at the New Museum in New York. This interesting job has subsequently presented in museums around the world. It is a space with text and images, screens and books wrapped with carpet colors rainbow flag

as representative of LGBT universe. The poster for this show is the text of a Decalogue intended to alert about the persecution that exists in the world against sexual diversity. Motta's work draws on the political and social, generating alternative views based on giving voice to groups marginalized by society (Motta 2013). His *Trilogía Nefanda* gets to question everything that was discussed earlier about sexuality in the historical moment when European arrival to America. By the way, Motta is a teacher, and imparts his teaching at Parsons The New School of Design.

### **The queer formula and the trans universe (undoing gender).**

From queer theories and from successive feminisms have developed new discourses in relation to the body and the spaces through which transits (Butler 2006). We are beginning to question the masculinizing scheme with which our society has articulated for centuries (Butler 1990). The visibility and critique of heteronormative gear that encourages new look without taboos, which has a positive impact on empowerment from the more critical positions and from the postulates bolder (Butler 2002). What is happening in many areas is that we are moving forward to achieve sexual freedoms and to remove old prohibitions. New social behaviors, far from prejudices and more porous, represent a collapse of many limits and postulates that once seemed untouchable (Missé & Coll-Planas 2011). Artists from all periods of history had to submit their sexuality to rigorously demanding religious power and dominant schemes (Navarro 2014), silencing their voices or experiencing the worst calamities because they did not obey the rules imposed (Petry 2007). Today we can draw unprejudiced reading of the works of homosexual or transsexual artists without having to avoid sexual plot. I asked my students if they could explain to me the difference between sex and gender. Initially they did not understand what reasons had to

address these issues in art classes. Then I talked about the work of great artists of all ages, all homosexuals. Continue hiding these realities is anachronistic and impoverishing. If we do that, we are accomplices and we repeat recalcitrant homophobic attitudes (Coll-Planas 2011).

One of the most groundbreaking attempts with the prevailing heteronormative scheme is undoubtedly the trans revolution (Mérida 2009). The gender binarism questioned long before, but must agree to have been influential theoretical texts of American philosopher Judith Butler who have better conveyed the desire for change against a pattern of behavior that is somewhat stifling for times. The strong dichotomy male / female, masculine / feminine, active / passive, virulent / sensitive, and many other options based solely on the duality of opposites, are the brands that has brought us from birth, and even before, since a pregnant woman what is first question is: do you know if is a boy or girl? The great frustration in some cases given by obsession and delirium involving the preparations for the baby's arrival. It still uses a color mark for each gender, so if you have purchased all objects costume of a certain color, having used the pink even for furniture and decoration of spaces, shock occurs when instead of the expected child male (a boy) ends up in the world a child female (a girl). This situation forcing friends and family to change all schemes already planned even before birth.

Pink and blue as color marks obfuscated dichotomous stubbornness reveal a much larger problem, and for more serious then: since we came into the world we qualify, we falls into a specific behavior, something that will forever mark our existence of a so almost histrionic (Godelier 2010). Given this identity label that is

imposed on us at birth, trans challenge advocates a conscious and respected nomadism gender, malleable and elastic concept, a new model to blur the characteristics defined as male and female, sponsoring thus one new way to locate or not locate the spaces of each gender. By breaking with the traditional typologies the new trans model introduce flexible schemes that provide individuals greater freedom to access all the possibilities within the territory marked by respect and creativity are develop. This new more open and generous option allows unmask the border areas that have traditionally divided drastically environments of public space in front of the strict areas of private space (Moreno & Puche 2013). Now new ways to connect and enrichment open, conceptual openings to facilitate the exchange and mix.

The concepts transsexual and transgender are being supplanted by the trans concept. This is a shorter term but also eliminates barriers prevailing binary to reach as risky and motivating as "we are all trans" conclusions, so that everyone is entitled to travel on changing identities. Establish a trans identity means pounce on the problems of economic, social and cyclical order that hinder this porous, permeable and ductile positioning, but also means striving to get ahead by developing original and effective strategies to face the many obstacles that constantly arise (García 2014). I feel a deep admiration and respect for the struggle of the trans collective, which affects a greater interest in their artistic creations and their reflections (Huerta & Alonso 2015). The collective trans claims a responsible position commensurate with their experiences and feelings (BOJA 2014), which requires generating a confrontation with the privileges that define the usual relations of power and oppression (Coll-Planas & Missé 2015).

To illustrate my contribution about this question I will use a work of Barbara Kruger. There is not a queer or trans artist, but I think it is a good example that offers art to illustrate the topic. To approach the universe trans or queer perspective we can use a work by artist Barbara Kruger entitled *Your Body is a Battleground*. The work of Kruger are based on a seemingly simple scheme: black and white photos, usually taken from publications of the 1950s and 1960s, are expanded and above it a text is inscribed in typefaces, white letters on colored frames red. The contrast between what the text says and what the photographic image has apparently helps us to rethink many issues. These pieces become real critical postulates that challenge their own social conventions of patriarchy and capitalist society. "Your body is a battleground" is precisely the slogan that could well serve to highlight something that, although it affects us all as citizens and as individuals, the truth is that parody is one respect in which society is merciless to apply this maximum to the bodies of trans people: fear, pain and rejection. The work of Barbara Kruger, aesthetically appealing, helps us to generate interesting debates involving our students in this shared reflection.

### **Performances from arts for arts education implications.**

Now follow the story narrated by Jim Sanders to refer to the art of his friend the artist Nick Cave (Sanders 2014). Nick Cave is a renowned performance artist who enraptured New York City families with his *I Herd NY Crossing* at Grand Central Terminal in late March 2013. His installation of 30 raffia horse Soundsuits in Vanderbilt Hall was brought to life through the imaginative movement of 60 student performers from the Alvin Ailey School of Dance, with choreographic guidance from William Gill. On the ceiling of Vanderbilt Hall is a painted winged Pegasus, an image both fitting and ironic, given

commuters customarily passing through the halls arrived in iron horses flying along rails laid by the hall's namesake, and in the early years of the terminal's operation travelers also arrived and departed from the terminal in horse-drawn carriages. The reference to Pegasus is also echoed in the crossing of horses in Cave's performance spectacle. The cultural contributions of Vanderbilt, a powerful Baron of industry, shifted public focus from critiques concerning how he rose to power through monopolies and exploitation of low-paid workers, to a public praising his noblesse oblige. What does it mean to willfully ignore or erase pertinent autobiographic or historic data about an artist or historic figure? Might masking an artist's sexuality identifications, themes in their work, ignoring their camp proclivities or discourses of desire not be considered an egregious form of miseducation and a disservice to our fields?

Jim Sanders want to challenge twenty-first century arts educators working with students in pre-k-16 contexts to resist ignoring, oversimplifying or trivializing presentations of Nick's rich and complex artworks. Sanders urge art educators to deeply enter the myriad ways his works grapple with multivalent themes, speak through concrete object associations, ritual references, subjects of dreaming, imagination and play. Nick Cave's works demands we reflect on our own bodies, our commercial participations, and the connections we too often ignore but could make between objects and meaning.

How this work and others created by Nick Cave can be read and taught are matters addresses and hopefully art educators internationally will consider exploring in their classrooms. Nick Cave's works can be considered polyvocal artifactual texts that

challenge deep contemplation. They can also serve as vehicles through which an array of issues can be explored. The work can be examined in the historic contexts of its production, as records of material culture, forms of social commentary, read as autoethnographic reflections, or as artistic expression emerging from fields of anthropology, fashion, fine arts and handcraft traditions. Cave's work is repeatedly reviewed in arts journals and presses with too few writers attending to the skilled handiwork he presents and traditions he references. This work, like all vital works of art cannot exist in a vacuum. Contemplating any work on formal qualities alone would be woefully insufficient.

As viewers if we are to allow an artwork or performance to work on us, we must first be prepared to listen to all it has to say and what others have to say about it. Shy such commitments one risks solipsistic speculation or slipping into superficial screenings in search of pleasing reassurances—disallowing challenging confrontations or disruptive notions to incite new thought. Through dialogue with troubling works of art and communicating that experience with those surrounding us, new meanings can be awakened and narratives an artwork shares about its maker's experiences of life, understandings and affects can more fully come into focus.

Before one can develop a deep grasp of any artist's sensibilities, dreams, missions or passions, one must first be prepared to deeply enter the artwork on its terms, untethering our readings from our own presuppositions, and opening ourselves to the artist's inner life, biography, creative processes, visions, political and social allegiances, entering their world along previously uncharted lines of flight, including those never previously imagined.

Queerly probing a contemporary artwork's meanings may involve an educator addressing not only academic competencies but at times questioning normative sexualities, contextual absences in past art historic representations and technological insistences that have repeatedly misshaped teaching and learning. Accepting this challenge seems a matter of human rights, as are protection of the safety of subaltern subjects in schooled settings, and actions supporting student agency, curiosity and ongoing inquiry. Deeply embracing Nick Cave's work demands one attends to scary subjects, including one's own perceptual (in)capacities, our students' insufficient grasp of history, knowledge of myriad making traditions, or fashions shaping cultural products and experiences today and in history. At times these lines of inquiry may involve students claiming self-determined interest in addressing diverse erotic desires, including interests in relationships not recognized by parents, a nation, church or state interest. Patriarchal gestures toward protecting a student's innocence in that regard infantilizes the student, polices an academic's freedoms, and denies recirculation of knowledge forms for which students may cognitively, psychologically and emotionally hunger (Sanders 2014).

Art educators with steadfast resolve will find ways to support students in developing their self-authorized aesthetic or embodied explorations of Cave's work. As an artist whose works and concerns exceed any singular minority position (concurrently existing within intersecting affinities) it constitutes an ideal subject for student contemplation. Cave's work is in collections of major museums and embassies and can be useful to art educators since its multiple valences allow educators to question repressive social norms, study multiple art forms and material cultures. His complex texts, demand to be approached in ways that allow the artist's multiple concerns to



become intelligible to all students, and not only those presumed other to in the know.

For decades our field has prided itself in teaching student refinement of perceptual skills, contemplative reflections and critical conduct of critiques while engaging in socially responsible forms of research. In further refining such skills by addressing sexuality subjects the art educator offers students safe spaces in which they may reflect on their own lives and others in history. Opening oneself through the interpretive act can illustrate a valuing of engagement with complex concerns that may be embodied in a work of art. In giving ourselves over to such artwork, we become freed to read the world around us anew.

Being aware that conflicts can arise is particularly important for educators working with students under 18 years of age. Nick Cave's art is a strong body of work through which an art educator can broach a broad array of sensitive subjects without didactically lecturing.

### **Education in Sexual Diversity through Film.**

Our proposal raises the urgency to include the defense of sexual diversity in the curriculum of art education. We provide mechanisms visibility to sexual minorities at both the personal and the social order. We propose an approach to the subject, especially in the training of teachers and the training of secondary school teachers. From aesthetic reflection we must foster a new critical look at media education (Fedorov 2013). We should encourage future teachers to address these issues in their classes, appropriating the use and content of the images. A

topical issue such as the promotion of respect for sexual diversity has on films perfect ally (Huerta 2014c). Suggest ideas about educational processes through a series of examples that come from the cinema. From moments of cinema and visual art can introduce reflections to discuss the rights of sexual minorities. We can preserve the health of many people. We involve students in a creative process while we claim the protection of sexual diversity and the welfare of minorities.

We are interested in highlighting those pieces which emphasis on stimulating critical spirit in the public, especially when dealing with training students in all educational courses. On the other hand, the fight for the rights of sexual diversity is currently turning into a significant example of the change towards a greater respect for minority groups. Art and Art Education cannot remain apart from these social advances, expanding rapidly at an international level; these cultural, social and political advances should suppose for us a greater influence in Art Education. This may be one of the best ways to face changing realities, giving pedagogic support from the point of view of identity and the freedom of the individual, encouraging minority groups to decide for themselves their own life options.

The approach of this experience is to introduce the students to the concept of focussing on a single theme. In the case in hand, the proposal is that of sexual diversity, a question covers aspects of personal, social, cultural and, of course, educational order. The traditional lack of clarity on approaching aspects such as same-sex partnerships, sexuality or questions of gender has affected the naturalness with which these themes should be deal in the classroom; this maybe occasionally producing tense situations, due above all to the obscurantism with which certain concepts are dealt

with in specific spheres of discussion. Reaching beyond fears and clichés, we believe that we should speak openly about these questions, because, if not, we become the victims of an obstinate denial of reality. We need to give space in our classes to the Human Rights, not only to the arrival of new cultural and aesthetic concepts, but also to the diversity which new families present. In order to do this cinema may become one of our most valuable allies.

We can select some specific scenes from each film, although we recommend viewing the films complete by all members of the class, thus encouraging debate afterwards. Workshop techniques make up a positive element in Art Education classes. We recommend that students are encouraged to produce their own graphic representation of results (through a poster, collage, photograph or video) in order to set down their results through artistic production, stimulating future teachers to conceive their projects from the point of view of projects (Lee & others 2007). Cinema can become the ideal point of reference as a source of ideas and creative stimulus, making the classroom into a space for negotiation, while permitting the students to participate actively in a collaborative construction of knowledge.

### **My name is Milk, Harvey Milk.**

The film Milk deals with the life of an American gay activist, the first politician to be openly gay man to achieve a public post by democratic vote in the United States. The film by the director Gus van Sant is a Hollywood super-production whose world premier in 2008 was given huge media attention. It received many awards, among these being an academy Oscar for the actor Sean Penn, one of the most emblematic figures of present-day cinema. The first thing worth pointing out with reference to showing and debating the

film is that it is a technically well made and acted film, this being a clear indication that the film will be enthusiastically received by the students as traditionally well laid-out narrative. It is a high quality commercial product. Milk has become a product of the Hollywood cultural industry, and may raise awareness on a large scale on a new question: the image of political activists representing sexual minorities on the public and media scene of democracy. There are any questions addressed by Milk, which we may highlight: the presence of minority leaders in politics; the concept of “coming out” as social activism; the pressure of the power groups to stop personal and collective positions at deviance with certain fixed customs; as well as the visibility and role model of leaders. These themes should be dealt with in Art Education as they address aspects coming from a changing and enriching social reality, but above all because they deal with images with an intense aesthetic message, realities which are identified by the collective imagination which they generate. One could opt for highlighting the compositional qualities of the work: costume design, lighting and sets from the 1970s: the music of the film (the soundtrack by the composer Danny Elfman and other themes from the time); or the role each person is playing. An actor from the cast of the film such as James Franco is well know by students. We can take the aesthetic elements part by part and organize them in order to understand it as an artistic work. After, we can encourage the students to give an opinion on what has most interested them. The debate then serves to choose a moment or theme, which then may be deal graphically (photography, video, painting, etc.).

Harvey Milk dead assassinated in November 1978, a year after his election as a member of the City Hall of the city of San Francisco. The historical figure has become one of the icons for cause of LGBT

rights. In reality Harvey Milk, born in New York in 1930, Democratic Party militant and of Jewish religion, is the fruit of an entire more general movement crystallised in the acts of Stonewall Inn. In this bar in the neighbourhood of Greenwich Village in New York, the disturbances of 1969 gave way to the movement for LGBT rights. The act has had transcendence on world level: the annual celebration of Gay Pride coincide with the disturbances in Stonewall. New York as well as San Francisco, two cities in the cinema industry, have also been mythical cities in the fight for the rights of LGBT groups.

### **Personal and social development, also among sexual minorities.**

Not all real-life stories of gay people turn into dramas, nor do all films with these themes have a horrible or dramatic ending. The freely chosen sexual option should not be an impediment to the development of an enriching and full life. This problem has a social determiner comes from customs supported by stereotypes and prohibitions (Dyer 1977). Conservative positions have traditionally impeded the healthy exercise of sexual differences (Bosswell 1980). From those in power the politics of repression have been stimulated which end up creating a breeding ground of intransigence and negation (Foucault 2011). If there has been a negative response to sexual differences this is because there has been a desire to marginalise certain the life options of individuals and groups. Continuous penalisation and persecution has created a climate of fear and as a result the image of these themes have been biased, this leading to repression, which is then taken up by the group and ends up being assumed tragically in personal lives.

The cultures of difference have necessarily had to assume risks, and this is why on many occasions they have made invisible, especially when it comes to the sphere of educational curriculum. The real prison normally appears convulsively in the individual him or herself who does not accept his or her sexual condition. The lack of acceptance may unleash homophobic behaviour, which obviously damages the individual his or herself, preventing personal and social fulfilment. When faced with these intransigent positions, the Canadian film C.R.A.Z.Y. deals with the positive reencounter of a father and son, after decades of a lack of understanding of the father towards difference his son represents. C.R.A.Z.Y. is an ironic and fun film (as the word game of the title itself suggests), while talking about misunderstandings, rejection, dissatisfaction and prejudice. The weight of family relations is overwhelming in C.R.A.Z.Y. Conventions sacrifice any symptom of normality, obscuring feelings and desires. Silence creates echoes end up infecting the slightest glimmer of visibility. The talent of director Jean-Marc Valée is to achieve an ironic environment creating something stimulating where others would only find pain and sadness.

In the film C.R.A.Z.Y. various different moments appear which invite analysis from the point of view of Art Education. The need to accept one's own sexual condition on the part of the individual. The role institutions such as the church and family play in the repression of certain options of sexual condition. The educational and affective exchanges between the father, mother and brothers. The complexes and taboos of a personal and social nature in relation to forms of behaviour and to self-image. The song "Crazy", by Patsy Cline, is a homage, a gay icon ending up as the title of the film, even though they are really the initials of an amusing word play. Elements in the

rhythm of the film are the constant arguments between the macho father and gay son. We may suggest to the students that they create an artistic project on social conventions as impositions, especially when dealing with sexual minorities. However, among teaching staff resistance to contemplating these realities may still found. From the point of view of art and educational we have the possibility and the obligation to approach this new cultural, legal and social panorama (Motta 2013). Projects carried out in the classroom need to count on identity references for reflexion and analysis (Pavlou 2013).

### **Half-truths, lies, closet, and dire consequences for lesbian students and teachers.**

Hiding, persecution, punishment, and lack of visibility have created from the marginalization of same-sex partnerships have been cornered and hidden systematically. Lesbianism has always been more hidden than masculine homosexuality, but homophobia has affected both cases with the same virulence, determining an identical social incomprehension. (Fone 2008). Relations between women have kept at a different status to those between men. The examples in the cinema are less common, even if we can highlight the presence of great titles such as *Antonia's Line* (Antonia in the Dutch original language, Marleen Gorris 1995), the production from the United States *The Kids Are All Right* (Lisa Cholodenko 2010), and the beautiful film *Luna en Brasil* (Bruno Barreto 2013).



Figure 5. Drawing from the photograph of Tilda Swinton who opens an LGBT flag in Moscow to protest in front of the persecution of homosexuality in Russia. Photo of Christian Hodell. By Ricard Huerta.

Visibility sometimes has a significant side connected to the subject of gender, which in the case of men is visualised through ways of dressing and behaviour understood as feminine, while in the case of women it is conceive as a way of approaching traditionally masculine stereotypes. The film *Orlando* (Sally Potter 1992) talks about this, a British production played by Tilda Swinton based on the novel by Virginia Wolf of the same name, in which the main character passes with ease between not only masculine and feminine genders but also different epochs. This piece is an example of how ambiguity can be the source of inspiration for authors the interplay of insinuations is an interesting source of



material for the creative mind. These roles make up our cultural environment assigns situations for each gender, from extreme characterisations of gender systems. This model institutionalised especially at school, as a curricular extension between student and teaching staff experience, and assume not only in their respective families but also in the media working environments. The opening-up of new integration options and self-acceptance should be also present at school and in all educational environments. For this, we insist, Art Education is a key element in this extension, cinema again being our ally.

The traditional refusal to deal with these themes in educational spaces does not permit us to go forward in the area of minority rights. A social convention prevents us from getting over the prejudices for centuries has negated any unacceptable expression of alternative behaviour (Godelier 2010). Art Education should permit the opening up of paths of dialogue, granting from Art itself a new opening strategy. The work of many professionals is not perceptible, but there it is. An example of this is the work of Sheng Kuan Chung, who observes that “many people are ignorant and fearful of homosexuality and rarely have had an opportunity to discuss or learn about it in school” (Chung 2007). Chung is a supporter of debate and discussion in the classroom using questions, while a habitual attitude may impede getting deeper into a whole range of questions to do with the environment of development of LGBT groups an objective way.

Then if Chung’s educational approach fits the criteria of visual literacy, we can consider questions and exercises from workshop practices through artistic creation. This was defended by Amelia Lee in an attractive photo-essay (Lee and others 2007) created from

students’ work. Women and men from a broad range of sexualities should take on board the richness of diversity, understanding that heteronormativity is an unhelpful stimulus and no valid argument, no matter how established it may be. It is more useful to generate a porous and creative system in the Art classroom. We should feel prepared to introduce real problems in our educational actions. We need to motivate the students by imbibing a critical way of looking in order to establish a system of doubts provoke artistic expression and empowerment processes.

### **Queens and drags in front of the patriarchal heteronormative.**

The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert narrates the travels of two gay men (Anthony and Adam) and the transsexual Bernadette, who cross the Australian desert to perform in a nightclub. This road-movie has as a starting point the bus makes the voyage, baptised Priscilla. The trip is a play of contrasts and a revelation of the different attitudes towards the different characters, played in the film by Terence Stamp, Hugo Weaving and Guy Pearce. Some of the situations show the homophobia in the most remote and least populated places, contrasting with the possibility of anonymity of the urban environment. One of the keys of the story is when Anthony reveals that the real motive of the journey is to meet his son for the first time. On meeting him Anthony tries to be rough and masculine, this being is not necessary because his son already knows that his father is gay, accepting it without question.

The way to integrate this discourse in the Art Education classroom would be take on the problems of no-acceptation in order to transgress it, taking it with visual registers into experimental and creative territory. Here we are looking into the territory of the performance and transvestism, this fun Australian film being a good



example of “drag queen”, a problematic territory where gender roles and the colours of audacity are mixed. A good cinematic example of this symbiosis is *Ed Wood*, directed in 1994 by Tim Burton and lightly played by an extraordinary Johnny Depp and a subtly comic Martin Landau. *Priscilla* is a tale of wandering, extrovert and artistic characters capable of crossing the inhospitable territories of the Australian desert, in search of identities between reasonableness and fragility. The characters take risks and suffer like an artist and his or her work. The discomfort creates a sense of unease, producing a range of unexpected processes. The lack of recognition may suppose a high level of dissatisfaction.

The aesthetic of the film is that of a wide range of textures and colours, a fluid and baroque component contrasting strongly with the extraordinary aridness of the desert landscape. We can bring to the fore these contrasts as a starting point for the students. We can indicate to our students that however strange they may seem, are often real aesthetic achievements that may take years to be recognized. Everyone has the right to make mistakes and take risks. We should also be conscious of the fact that the option to be different is a right established by UNESCO in their education guidelines for integration diversity, defending this approach to differences with close attention on the part of the teaching staff: “looks into how to transform education systems in order to respond to the diversity of learners. It aims to enable both teachers and learners to feel comfortable with diversity and to see it as a challenge and enrichment in the learning environment, rather than a problem” (UNESCO 2003). It is not possible for the majority of teachers to avoid these different realities. Identity does not always mean being judgmental or obeying heterodoxy.

As Nicolas Addison says: “This identity, a co-product of classical citizenry, theological notions of the soul and bourgeois notions of autonomy and self-actualization, coalesces and solidifies into the figure of the unique and self-affirming individual, a concept that even today, in a mature capitalist, liberal democracy, seems to many entirely ‘natural’ and positive” (Addison 2007: 11). *Priscilla* is a good example of this internal and external dissent presupposes the general idea of a complex identity. The institutional systems of oppression evade these diffuse realities, preferring to take the more peaceful stereotyped paths of what is traditionally accepted. Even if we doubt the conventional as socially assumed is positive for those who feel or imagine themselves to be different. In fact, in educational centres where acceptance of diversity has supposedly been established, in reality the notion of identity is still in place, at least in Art classes, by the principles of self-affirmation, under the slogan of what is already established. *Priscilla* represents the otherness, with its brilliant, dense and outrageous characters. Eloquence is the only truth, a truth on which they lay their outrageous feathers and dresses with a delicate and intimate look towards a world which does not know how to understand. We do not find negative or defiant attitude in these heroes, despite highly daring and challenging postures.

From the point of view of visual culture we can assume that a notion like that of identity is constructed from the birth of the person, and as such it is a construction based on social practices, a series of semiotic processes which negotiate and become visible in the actions between individuals. Thus, a celebration of diversity and of identity is impregnated by respect towards multiculturalism and differences. In this way, we welcome diversity in the plural context of Art Education (Foucault 1972).

## Conclusions.

For centuries it has forbidden, hidden and violent reprisals set of expressive forms in which cast doubt on the homogeneity of key concepts like family, gender or sexual orientation (Tin 2012). It is extremely positive talk about sexual diversity in our art classes, as it will allow us to establish an open dialogue on many issues that until recently were practically outside the classroom (Contardo 2011) If we strip away the fears get while driving motivate students respectful attitudes and promoting the values. It is good to keep in our classrooms an environment in which predominates dialogue, avoiding occultations and invisibilizaciones. Also in alternative spaces such as museums of art we can keep this challenging and provocative stance (Frost 2007). As teachers who researche we support the rights of individuals and the various options in the fields of artistic creation or personal identification. We draw constructive criticism surpassing anything that we find it uncomfortable, giving students the opportunity to review and establish debates. Since the territory of technologies is opening a series of communicative and educational opportunities. It is also true that the technologies are causing a new breach of marginalization to which should deal openly. The same technologies that can marginalize people with different sexual orientation can help us to eradicate discrimination and harassment based on sexual diversity. It depends on how we use them.

The marks printed hatred and violence against everything that is not "controllable", or do not enter the established frameworks, any attempt to stifle alternative expression (Foucault 1998). The options for those who may feel different pass by social exclusion, flight, rejection, or by the militant challenge to the unjust situations. It is not

easy to face the topics and the established regulations, let alone when the response of the environment assumed aggressive, uncompromising and hard (Robinson & others 2014). It takes great courage to stand up to a hostile environment that is unwilling to admit any difference. The environment tends to behave belligerently and sharp at what we do not want to understand manner. Anyone must equip itself with high self- esteem and have the courage to pursue an attempt to change when faced with a society that does not allow who you want to be. Despite all this, overcoming endless difficulties, there are people who are struggling every day to defend their rights, creating spaces of freedom, and constructing arguments for diversity and Human Rights (Rodríguez 2007)

In many artistic expressions that come from the trans reality highlights the strength they gain irony and originality as key to overcoming obstacles, and the use of creativity and art to combat social misunderstanding, frustration legislative and economic crisis.

The images are part of the everyday environment. The images generated by different readings with which we construct reality, something that affects so highly addictive to schoolchildren in childhood and youth. In classrooms and museums can make important decisions about (Cuesta 2013). When I say that we are not taking advantage of many of the possibilities that lie arts education is because I believe that from the knowledge and the spaces in which we move we can develop strategies to improve the situation (Ashburn 2007). I propose an arts education that promotes critical appreciation of the personal and the social from the perspective and culture, making visible, respecting and supporting the

diversity, denouncing the abuses of those suffering for their sexuality, eliminating homophobia among our students, and

avoiding and pain that may occur many adolescents (Moreno & Puche 2013). Addressing the queer aesthetic or gender dissidence allows them aware based on human rights and respect for diversity.

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**RISKS AND  
OPPORTUNITIES  
FOR VISUAL ARTS  
EDUCATION  
IN EUROPE**

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# INTRODUCTION

This E-book compiles the papers presented during the InSEA Regional Conference: 'RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR VISUAL ARTS EDUCATION IN EUROPE', held in LISBON, PORTUGAL, during 7-9 JULY 2015. The congress addressed formal, informal and non-formal arts educational contexts through practice informing research. Current problems and alternative models of artistic education and education through the arts in Europe were discussed in relation to theory and praxis. Presenters from Europe and other continents brought diverse ways of thinking and making in visual arts education in university schools, museums and community centres. Their valuable experience helped to construct a high level of discussion about issues in curriculum; assessment; and contemporary art practices. Through presentations, workshops; posters; performances, installations and exhibitions the pressing topic of the survival of art education in a world where little space is left for humanistic learning was widely analysed - current paradigms of arts education in Europe were highlighted - especially those related to ethics and the Politics of arts education.



The 2015 InSEA Lisbon Congress was another attempt, in Europe, to raise issues and build suggestions towards a 2015-2030 Agenda for Arts Education. We firmly believe we need to initiate effective local actions to impact upon global politics in arts and education. But we also understand that alternative formats for presenting, sharing and create contents are utterly needed in the world of visual art education. By starting the congress with the Survival Kit performance in the space of the first keynote we opened up the possibility to use arts based communication process to present research. Performances, installations and exhibitions in the congress were a key axis of the event, having the same value as traditional oral presentation in the programme. We hope other InSEA art education congresses will follow this format, although we understand it is not easy to organize.

The idea of making a Survival Kit for the congress was proposed to the research group C3 from Santiago de Compostela, as a possibility to generate an aesthetic and political action, taking irony and metaphor as tools to inoculate awareness for art education as means to improve well-being of the people and groups in our communities. The kit is conceptual, a strategy for advocacy, research and practice using the language of the arts to talk about arts education. (The kit is available in English, Portuguese and Spanish at [www.insea.org](http://www.insea.org))

By editing this publication we intend to contribute to our network in the International Society for Education Through Art- InSEA, opting by a collaborative vision of knowledge construction and grounded in experiences from many countries. The e-book does not intend to be just one more academic resource, rather we intend to bring up the thinking in process and the voices of each one, entangle plural



opinions, different experiences and hypothesis as nodes for possible new connections. Some of the articles are nothing more than abstracts or extended abstracts; others are full texts intertwining with images and videos of the congress in a collage like organization that may provide new maps for navigation in art education.

The 2015 InSEA Lisbon Congress was also an attempt, to identify problems and build suggestions towards a 2015-2030 Agenda for Arts Education in Europe. We firmly believe we need to initiate effective local actions to impact upon global politics in arts and education.





"Encantamientos", Pilar Perez, Lisbon, July 2015

The congress happened during conflictual times in Europe; non tolerance; wars; economic crisis; forced migration; loss of faith in the existing democratic structures; corruption; monetary control and other issues were challenging our hope for a more peaceful society through education: We were witnessing the failure of long established models; institutional structures and specially continuous loss of rights acquired during the last centuries by our ancestors. We felt and experienced in our countries that the fundamental right for the arts for all in education were at risk. Therefore the congress was a platform for dialogue to make an ontological map of visual art education in Europe. But how to make it? What are its forms, shapes and colours; where are its territories; limits and cracks; where did it come from; how can it be defined? Should it be designed in terms of aims; actions, results and impacts? So many questions emerged during the intense days of the congress! Art educators came from east: central, eastern, southern and northern sites. Participants' ages were between 25 and 76 years old, They came together to think about questions that are more and more involved in the very core of the aesthetic education:

How art education is doing in terms of exploring values?  
How can art teachers, and art educators in cultural institutions help breaking down barriers, reduce ignorance and prejudice and empower learners to engage with and be committed to their community – be it their school, local, national or international community?  
Who Am I who are you art teacher/educator/ artist - teacher; facilitator; provoker?

The great questions and sub questions discussed were more than just words, papers, texts that we easily forget in the references of

some academic paper, they gave raise to this publication and to the Lisbon letter on visual art education. The letter will fulfil its advocacy intents, available for everyone who wants to use it. The open publication will be spread away as far as possible to regain the core of arts in education which is utterly needed in this period for Europe. An attempt to collect our different voices, the voices of those who believe passionately in education through the arts, no matter where, when and how it may be done.



Teresa, Angela, Maria Jesus and Cristina

Porto - Santiago de Compostela, 27-10-2015





# THE 2015 LISBON LETTER FOR VISUAL ART EDUCATION

**FROM:** International Society For Education Through Art  
- InSEA

Website: <http://www.insea.org/> Email: [insea@insea.org](mailto:insea@insea.org)

**TO:** European Parliamentarians: Committee Education  
and Culture [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/  
en/cult/members.html](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/cult/members.html)



As members of InSEA (The International Society for Education through Art), we wish to express our concerns about the right to visual art education for all in European Countries. In addition, we are sending suggestions to the European Parliamentarians in order to raise the status and profile of visual art education status as a core subject in European Education systems.

InSEA is an organization that advocates for art education as a means of “fostering values and disciplines essential for full intellectual, emotional and social development of human beings” Our organization had its genesis in the philosophies of Sir. Herbert Read and other internationally respected philosophers, scholars, and art educators, who, when reflecting upon the horrors of WWII, recognized the importance of nurturing youth to become empathetic human beings. The founders of InSEA understood that through art, young people might come to an appreciation of cultural differences, be guided to think critically and analytically about problematic situations and – in perceiving these issues through the viewpoints of others - identify harmonious solutions to complex intellectual, social, cultural, environmental and geo-political problems.

This letter is a response to official discourses about art education, education through art and art in education (UN Global Education Goals, Education, sustainability and the post-2015 development agenda, OCDE; UNESCO/UNICEF and EU Reports). The letter is one result of the conclusions of the InSEA Regional Conference: 'RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR VISUAL ARTS EDUCATION IN EUROPE', held in LISBON, PORTUGAL, during 7-9 JULY 2015, it was compiled by a special panel of international researchers in art education and European members of InSEA.

The arts remind us of our humanity by exploring aesthetics and ethics. While we believe that art education is particularly important for young people, we also think that every person in a democratic society has the right to lifelong visual art education in different educational and socio-cultural contexts.

Educational policies in Europe must integrate visual art education in the school curricula as a core subject in line with the ONU/UNESCO/ UNICEF seven post 2015 education goals as:

- 1) unique learning experience within Culture and the arts domain: acquisition of creative arts specific knowledge and processes; cultural knowledge; self and community identity and awareness and respect for diversity
- 2) thinking, communication and problem solving process to develop physical well being; intellectual, emotional and social learning; learning and cognition and digital learning; literacies and communication

We have serious concerns about current trends in European educational policies which are fragmenting learning, separating the sciences and technology from the arts and humanities and over emphasizing technology and sciences to the detriment of the arts and humanities. In the last three years, in some European countries, visual art education in schools and time and resources allocated to teacher training (in visual art) in Universities has been reduced. We urge European Parliamentarians to investigate and question such

agendas, because for the sake of the future of Europe we need arts and humanities programmes with appropriate time and resources. We also need expert teacher in our schools to foster a holistic educational experience (cognitional, emotional, physical and spiritual dimensions). Therefore, we need to maintain the arts and humanities in educational policies to achieve the post 2015 goals such as 'Gender Equity and Empowerment'; 'Preserving the Environment and Eco-system'; 'Peaceful and Inclusive Societies are and how Human Rights are Honored'. Visual art education; education through art, artistic/aesthetic education is essential to a well-rounded education. We believe that art education in general has enormous potential in educating people towards such goals.

The arts teach critical thinking, cooperation and encourage creativity. They are essentially interdisciplinary and enable individuals to effectively participate in the socio-cultural life of their communities. Art education brings to the curriculum the important notion that there are often multiple ways to solve any given problem and that there are many potential right answers. Furthermore, art education offers students the option of risk taking, essential to innovation, which is at the heart of art (and craft and design).

We strongly encourage those responsible for education policies in the EU Parliament to think about the importance of visual art in our educational systems. Above all, effective art education fosters creative citizens who can think divergently, solve problems creatively and serve the needs of the knowledge/information society of the 21st century. The creative industries are increasingly recognised as important drivers in the economies of many countries a good art education is the foundation of people who work in such industries. It is important to remember that visual art education

includes a wide range of disciplines related to traditional and new media for example design, craft, architecture, digital art, film, and multimedia.

Education through art is possible at all ages and levels of development. Through well taught regular multifaceted art lessons, students learn about visual thinking, understanding different cultures and essential tools that support full intellectual, emotional, and social development necessary for productive human beings in society (Winner; Goldstein; Vincent-Lancrin, 2013). However, we will only achieve excellence in art education across our European schools by having our art teachers trained in partnerships of Universities and schools working closely together.

Finally, we suggest the following recommendations:

- Visual art education programmes should promote critical thinking together with visual media and digital literacy.
- Governments in Europe should provide visual art education as a curricular subject of study for all with specialized teachers from pre-school to upper secondary schools (from 3 to 18 years old students).
- Educational policies should ensure that schools allocate considerable time for visual art education in the curricula, because good quality art education needs time to explore and foster creativity.
- Ministries of Education in Europe should provide excellent teachers for visual art education by ensuring that appropriate initial and in-service teacher training is in place.

- Educational systems should ensure that valid assessment instruments in visual art education are used (authentic art evaluation and assessment instruments to measure learning outcomes).
- Curriculum developers should ensure that visual art education syllabuses are comprehensive, flexible and can be contextualised to socio-cultural circumstances and contemporary art practices.

We therefore propose to the Education and Culture Committee to create a task force to study art education in Europe, and to invite InSEA experts to dialogue with Members of the European Parliament and discuss these demands.

Lisbon, 17-11-2015

InSEA President Teresa Torres de Eça; InSEA Past President Marie-Françoise Chavanne; InSEA Past President Dr. John Steers; InSEA Past President Diederik Schönau; InSEA Vice President Glen Coutts; InSEA secretary Vedat Oszoy; Chair of the European Council of InSEA Marjan Prevodnik; InSEA World Councillor Peter Gregory; InSEA World Councillor Janeke Wienk; InSEA World Councillor Martina Paatela-Nieminen; InSEA ERC members Buschkühle, Carl-Peter; Fritzsche, Marc; Haanstra, Folkert; Pataky, Gabriella; Schönau, Diederik; Wagner, Ernst.

C3 art educators Maria Jesus Agra Pardiñas; Cristina Trigo; Ana Vida; Guillermo Calvino; Ollala Cortizas; Manuel Miguéns; Carmen Franco; Daniel Vilas León; José María Mesías Lema; Silvia Capelo.

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And 265 more European art educators from Greece; Cyprus; Portugal; Spain; UK; Belgium; Czech Republic; Slovenia; Moldavia; Estonia; Latvia; Finland; Sweden; Germany; Poland; Ireland; Denmark and France who participated in the InSEA European congress in Lisbon, July 2015.



# RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR VISUAL ARTS EDUCATION IN EUROPE