

## EXHIBITING PERSONAL ART PROJECTS AS A LEARNING ACTIVITY IN FINE ARTS STUDIES. SPECIES OF SPACES

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### ABSTRACT

*Species of Spaces* aims to provide students of the subject Project Methodology. Space of the Fine Arts Degree with the tools they need to have a real experience that will help them to enter the profession and exercise the dynamics of teamwork: to engage in dialogue, take responsibility, fulfill tasks...The procedure consists of the preparation and realization of group exhibitions grouped according to themes in the Fine Art Exhibition Hall. By showing their works to the public (in exhibitions they design, organize, assemble and advertise) the acquired commitment increases, and a realistic view of the profession is facilitated. We verify how motivation and demand increase. Through this experience they put into practice a series of resources that would not be possible to exercise otherwise.

**Keywords:** Exhibition, Work Team, Professionalization, Art

### INTRODUCTION

The cycle of student exhibitions "Especies de Espacios", carried out within the 3<sup>rd</sup> year subject Methodology of Space Projects, began in the 2011-2012 academic year. The title makes reference to the homonymous book of Georges Pérec, *Species of spaces* (Espaces d'espaces, Paris 1973 -1974). In this book, Pérec invites us to travel from one space to another, from the most private (the page, the bed, the room, the apartment, the building, the street and the neighborhood) to the public sphere (the city, the countryside, the country, Europe, the world and space), this approach being very relevant for the contents of the subject of Project Space Methodology, since the students' personal artistic projects vary from one sphere to another, according to their particular interests.

The exhibition cycle is proposed as a proposal that (1) prepares students for the world of work, enabling an experience close to the professional field, (2) poses a motivating challenge both personal and academic, and (3) puts into practice, also, transversal objectives, such as teamwork, having to dialogue and agree among them, assume responsibilities, fulfill tasks, etc.

The exhibition hall of the Fine Art Degree Building is reserved each course on the month of April, so that - at the end of February / beginning of March - a date is established in which ALL the students briefly expose the projects they are working on to others. The students attend to the explanations and characteristics of the projects of all the classmates, acting, each one of them as a curator: distributing the projects of the others in different group exhibitions according to the theme, the concept, the form, etc. A consensus is reached until all the students are satisfied with the group they are in. Thus, being part of a specific group depends on professional criteria and since the groups are formed they function professionally performing all the tasks to culminate in the exhibition (poster design, dissemination, assembly, catalog, etc.).

### Aims

The cycle of exhibitions Spaces of Species has as general objectives that the students of 3<sup>rd</sup> year of

Fine Art Degree, in the subject Project Methodology. Space:

1. Experiment in a real context, closer to a future professionalization, the fact of exposing their artistic projects.
2. To raise a motivational challenge, both personal and academic.

Regarding the **specific objectives**, to implement transversal objectives such as:

1. Stimulate teamwork: have to dialogue and agree among themselves, assume responsibilities, fulfill tasks...
2. That the students listen, know and respect the projects of the classmates. Know how to express and communicate their own.

3. From there, they can act as curators / critics so that the exhibitions have more consistency and the projects strengthen each other.
4. Carry out all the necessary tasks to carry out the exhibitions (choice of title, poster design, dissemination, assembly, etc.).
5. Analyze the development in all its phases, as well as the final result.
6. Keep track of the whole process: interviews with the participants, attention to the public's feedback, the impact on the media, as well as the sharing, before, during and after the exhibitions...

### **Participants and exercise proposal**

The participants are students of the subject Space Project Methodology (third course of the Fine Arts Degree, they are split in two groups).

The professors in charge of the complete development of the activity are Silvia Martí Marí and Rocío Garriga. The teaching action is developed through a follow-up - theoretical classes, workshop and group tutorials and customized.

The proposal of the Cycle of Species of Spaces exhibitions consists in the sharing of the projects in which each student is working from the beginning of the course to the rest of the classmates. From there, exhibition groups are established according to the nature, theme, focus, etc. of each one's personal artistic projects. A calendar of exhibitions is prepared as well as a general poster is designed and from there each group will be in charge of everything related to its exhibition (to determine a title among all, to elaborate the poster, the diffusion, etc.).

The development of the teaching activity in all its phases is analyzed, as well as the final result. There is, therefore, a continuous observation of the whole process.

### **METHOD - ACTIVITY**

The methodology to carry out this proposal begins at the beginning of the course. To direct the personal projects that each student will develop according to their own interests and dynamics, the first thing is to be aware of their previous artistic career; thus, they have to make a dossier of their previous work and write a first artist statement. From there, with the contents that are developed in class (theoretical classes, group projects, readings, etc.) and with the follow-up of personal tutorials, each student develops his/her personal research, in addition to other contents of the course.

As already mentioned, the BBAA ( Fine Art) exhibition hall is reserved each course on the month of April, and at the end of February / beginning of March the students briefly expose the projects in which they are working on the others. Everyone listens and takes notes of the characteristics of the projects of all the classmates.

As a result: they pay attention, they respect the work of the classmates, they have to understand it -without judging it-, understand the underlying topic, the formal approach, the way it will be mounted in the room, etc.

This way students participate in art projects and art analysis in different exhibition groups. The decisions have been discussed and carried out according to professional criteria, that is to say, artistic, according to the theme, the concept, the form, etc. A consensus will be reached until all the students are satisfied with the group in which they are.

The objective of this way of gathering them is for students to listen, know and respect the projects of their classmates; that they know, likewise, to express and communicate their own to others; so that the exhibitions have more consistency and the projects are strengthened among themselves.

As soon as the groups are formed they work professionally performing all the tasks to culminate in the exhibition (choice of title, design of the poster, dissemination of the exhibition, assembly / disassembly, preparation of the catalog, etc.).

The **innovative** features of the project are that:

1. There is no selection by the teachers (although obviously there is a constant guide) except the criterion that the students have been working and there has been a follow-up, so that, in principle, all the students

participate.

2. The topics of the exhibitions are not pre-determined, but grow organically, from the personal projects of the students, which are based on their own interests.

3. The students themselves would curate the exhibitions, having to contemplate the works of others with respect and interest.

4. The important thing is to go through the experience of exhibiting, in the most similar way as it would be to make an individual exhibition; so, although in a month there are between three and seven exhibitions, which sometimes last only three days. This allows, unlike other collective exhibitions of students, where they put some work -which they already have done- (in this sense, it is not the same to "leave" a work for others to assemble it), here there is enough space per person so that it allows to install and assemble the work in a more professional way and it is the students who have to carry it out together.

5. The students help each other and, in addition, they learn that what is important is the overall result of the exhibition (the route, the lighting, etc.), beyond just highlighting the particular work of each one.

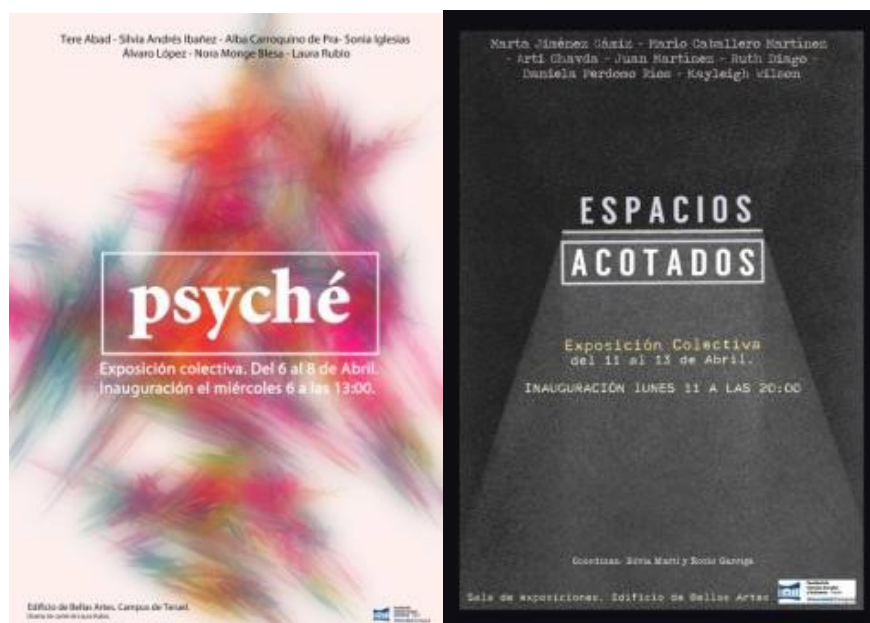
6. At the opening of the exhibition, a *tour* is established in which each student / artist presents his work to the attending public, which can ask anything to the artists themselves. This produces a double communication and enrichment: the students try to explain and synthesize the work they are doing, make it accessible to the spectator and the audience can have a more comprehensive approach to "contemporary" art so that learning takes place in both senses, in a cultural-formative action.

7. The work of the Diario de Teruel (local news paper) is grateful, since from the beginning it has kept track of the exhibitions, allowing the citizens of Teruel to approach the research carried out by the students in the Fine Arts Degree, and that motivates the students, by checking the social impact of their achievements and efforts.

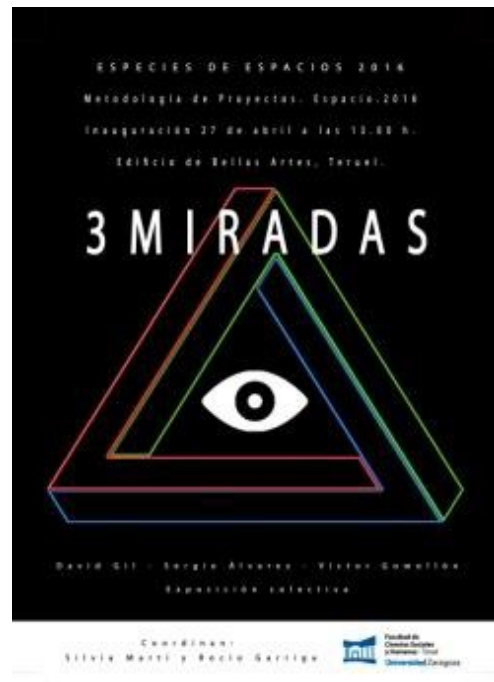
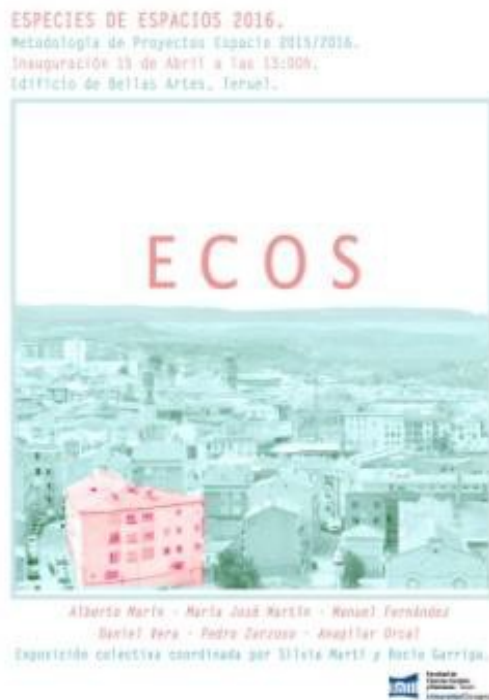
## FINDINGS - RESULTS

By showing their works to the public (in exhibitions that they themselves design, organize, assemble and disseminate) the acquired commitment increases, and a realistic vision of the profession is facilitated, both with the positive effects such as receiving media attention or from peers and public, as negative, such as the stress of the assemblies, the management of the ego / self-esteem, the relationships with the other partners, etc. Thus, the repercussion among the other students, in the press, etc., motivates and confronts them with more real situations such as the nerves of assembly, the situation of being "exposed" that involves doing and exposing work, understanding the repercussion of what one does/makes; to understand the difference between what they think their work "says" and what other people (public, colleagues, press, etc.) say it provokes on them.

The experience introduces them to the professional activity: choosing the title, making the poster, writing the room sheet, placing the posters, the lighting, the type of measurement in the assembly, the diffusion, the dismantling, the realization of the catalogs (write and reflect on the exhibition, on the assembly, make the CV, etc.).



Figures 1, 2: Posters of the different exhibitions *Species of Spaces 2015-2016*.



Figures 3, 4, 5: Posters of the different exhibitions. *Species of Spaces 2015-2016*.



Figure 6: Image of the presentation of each artist during the opening of the exhibition "Bounded Spaces". Species of Spaces 2015-2016. Exhibition hall of the Fine Arts Building. Campus of Teruel. Monday, April 11, 2016.



Figure 7: Image of the opening of the exhibition "ECOS". Species of Spaces 2015-2016. Exhibition hall of the Fine Arts Building. Campus of Teruel. April, 15, 2016.



Figure 8: News published in the Diario de Teruel. Thursday, April 7, 2016.



Figure 9: News published in the Diario de Teruel. Wednesday, April 13, 2016.

**CONCLUSIONS**

We check how motivation and demand increase thanks to this activity. Through experience, a series of resources are put into practice that it would not be possible to exercise in any other way. Even situations of stress that are experienced can become a reason for self-knowledge and maturation. The experience gained in the approach to the professional reality of the artists gives them a more realistic vision.

In the presentations / talks in which they present their works during the openings, a social-formative event is produced by having students from other courses as well as the general public that has direct access to the

explanations of the artists. And also the cultural life of the city is vitalized.

Through personalized monitoring, and the joint analysis of the "post-exhibition" experience in the classroom, the students show a great degree of satisfaction, and even in cases where there may have been frustrating results in various ways, the experience makes them mature, both in their artistic projects, as in the management of their emotional, social processes, etc. since a real experience always teaches irreplaceably.

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