

PROFESSIONALIZATION AND TRANSMISSION OF VALUES IN FINE ARTS: RECYCLE PROJECT

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ABSTRACT

Recycle Project is carried out with the participation of the students of the subjects of Volume I (1st year) and Design and Management of the Exhibition Space (3rd and 4th year). The 3rd and 4th graders are in charge of designing, managing and coordinating the start-up of the activity. The students of Volume I, make molds of recyclable objects (bottles, cans, bricks ...) to obtain several reproductions. They work their surface using an aesthetic related to Pop-Art. The activity culminates with the exhibition of these pieces in the public space. The people who approach the place will be able to take an artistic piece in exchange for two recyclable objects. Through this experience the quality of their training increases as they put into practice a series of resources that they could not have obtained other ways.

Keywords: Recycling, Awareness, Professionalization, Art

INTRODUCTION

It is not easy in a society like the current one, in which the practical / instrumental sense seems -once- to surpass certain ethical values, to present from university artistic education actions close to professionalization that promote relationships of commitment, companionship and generosity. The importance of the relationship in art, of experience as learning (Dewey, 2008) are, from our point of view, two of the basic premises that are part of the university education in Fine Arts.

At the beginning of the academic year 2016-2017 I received the teaching assignment, among other subjects, of the subjects *Design and Management of the Exhibition Space* (3rd and 4th courses) and *Volume I* (1st course). At the time of drawing up the programs and designing the exercises to be carried out, I found two issues that could be related. On the one hand, in the subject of *Design and Management* I wanted to propose a management dynamic that was not only projected but actually carried out, so that the students had a real experience. On the other hand, in *Volume I* I also wanted to propose an activity that would involve external public —out the University community— and that would be related to the contents to be taught and traced in the teaching guide of the subject.

The motivation and genesis of *Recycle Project* began to arise laterally, thanks to one of the sections of the subject *Volume I*, which includes the introduction of constructive techniques or *assemblage*, a procedure that admits and invites the use of material found or recycling. The preparation of the theoretical class that gave way to the practice included a historical review of this technique, historical references and contemporary artists who have made of the construction procedure a constant in their work (Seitz, 1965, Wescher, 1980; Krauss, 1996). Among the numerous artists that make use of this technique, Louise Nevelson uses —unlike others— only leftovers, found and recycled materials for the realization of her pieces. Her works are in many occasions modular. She creates large installations with them, as can be seen in the catalog edited by Brook Kamin Rapaport (2009) on the occasion of the artist's monographic exhibition held at the Jewish Museum in New York.

I found interesting to translate this artist's way of proceeding to the classroom and carry out an exercise inspired by her work. I looked for information about it, I found that other teachers had also contemplated Nevelson's work in this sense and that they had obtained good results in the exercises they presented. I designed this practice based on proposals made by others in a similar spirit: the company Dick Blick Art Materials (2009), the teacher Marie Max (2010), who titled his exercise *Assemblage Art: Transforming Trash into Treasure*, the teacher Catherine Phelps, who published the dynamics and results of her exercise in the journal *Schoolarts Magazine - Ecology* (2013).

The exercise that I raised consisted finally of two parts, one individual and the other by groups. The individual work consisted in the realization of, at least, three constructive pieces (modules) inspired by the work and procedures of the artist Louise Nevelson, using only recycled materials, with the exception of the paint that would be used to finish the surface of the assembled composition. The second part of the exercise was carried out in a group -very numerous, since it was configured by all the students enrolled in the subject. All together had to realize, at least, three different installations using all the pieces created by them individually.

The realization of this exercise was another incentive to design the dynamics of *Recycle Project*, since having a large amount of recyclable material was one of the basic requirements to carry it out. In this sense, I asked myself how I could facilitate or simplify this for the students and I thought it could be done through the collaboration of other people ... And more questions came up: How to manage such collaboration? In what way to involve other people outside the University? And most importantly, how become this in a real experience? How to set up a collective exhibition of students in their 1st year?

As Bourriaud (2008) indicates, "artistic practice is always in relation to the other, at the same time as it constitutes a relationship with the world" (p.106). The first response was to create a dynamic of double direction, to stimulate participation: that those who contributed with objects or recyclable material could receive something in return, something that somehow reminded them of that gesture, something that stimulated in them the habit of recycling or reusing which, in principle, no longer has utility.

As stated, given that the collection of material involved a process of management and coordination, I decided to move this issue to the subject of *Design and Management of Exhibition Space*, a subject that includes among its contents, the preparation of students to be able to carry out own initiatives of artistic intervention, of coordination, of creation of events, of artistic workshops, design of expository routes, of management of personal artistic projects.

Aims

The *Recycle Project* activity arose then, with the general objective of stimulating the use of recycled material among the students of the Fine Arts Degree, and also in order to extend this option for the care of the environment to others.

Specific objectives focused on the following for the students of the subject *Design and Management of the Exhibition Space*:

1. Learning to create ephemeral artistic events that involve society actively.
2. Practicing research, both formal and theoretically, to solve such events in order to create proposals linked to the environment and life.
3. Designing the dynamics of the event taking into account all participants: arrange a work schedule, propose the actions to be carried out, manage the necessary permits, logistics...
4. Creating the image of the event: poster and informational leaflets and carry out the dissemination of them.
5. Experiencing first hand, as creators and responsible for the dynamics designed, the real practice of the activity.

Regarding the specific objectives for the students of *Volume I*:

1. Learning to make basic molds of symmetrical objects.
2. Knowing the sculptural techniques of positive pressure and direct positive.
3. Acquiring skills in the surface treatment of volumetric forms.
4. Assuming commitments and perform the pieces respecting the calendar.
5. Experiencing first hand, as creators, the exhibition of their results dealing directly with the viewers / participants of their work.

Participants and the exercise proposal

In general terms *Recycle Project* is carried out with the participation of the subjects of *Volume I* (1st course, two groups) and of *Design and Management of the Exhibition Space* (3rd and 4th courses).

The professors in charge of the complete development of the activity are Silvia Martí Marí and Rocío Garriga. The activity is monitored through classes and practices, also with the support of personalized tutoring.

The 3rd and 4th grade students are responsible for designing, managing and coordinating the start-up of the event, as well as presenting the proposal to the first-year students. For their part, *Volume I* students must make molds of recyclable objects (bottles, cans, bricks ...) to obtain several reproductions. Once the objects have been obtained, they must finish the surface using an aesthetic related to Pop-Art including the sentence *Recycle and Period*.

The activity culminates with the exhibition of these pieces in the public space, where the exchange finally takes place: the people who approach may take one of the artistic pieces made by them in exchange for two recyclable objects.

METHOD - ACTIVITY

On the one hand, recyclable material is obtained for the next academic year, material that is stored at the University for the realization of the exercise of introduction to constructive techniques inspired by the work of Luise Nevelson that we referred in the first instance: thus, this waste material comes back to life, in an artistic way. On the other hand, recycling is encouraged in the city of Teruel, each participant tells the experience lived at the time, and also treasures an artistic object to remember that moment. It is like a *souvenir*, because all the objects have in their surface the phrase *Recycle and Period*.

The exercise proposed in the 3rd and 4th course consisted of the management and production of the *Recycle Project* event in all its phases, this being a real experience. For this I made four work teams in class, with which the tasks were distributed. The curator team was responsible for looking for information on recycling and its impact on the environment, on the recycling points in the city of Teruel and its location, they also looked after the aesthetic coherence of the project and had to propose different locations in the public space for the realization of the event. The organization / production team was in charge of the internal management of the equipment, that is, to collect and distribute the information, as well as to solve any related contingency. They also established delivery dates for the different tasks, to comply little by little with the objectives set for the final delivery / presentation of the proposal. On the other hand, once selected the most appropriate place to carry out the event (Plaza Square in the city of Teruel), they are responsible for managing and ensuring the availability of space by requesting the necessary permits in the area of culture of the City Council.

The graphic design team took care of creating the image of the event. Professor Silvia Martí Marí suggested that general aesthetics should focus on Pop-Art, something that we ended up deciding together, since it reinforced the coherence of the proposed dynamic, by the use of everyday objects and also by the serial production. The people who were part of this team devised the poster, made simulations of the final objects to show them to the students of *Volume I*, designed an informative brochure to distribute among the citizens, and prepared the necessary graphic documentation for the diffusion team: they created a related web page, they created an event on *Facebook*, and distributed the posters and the brochures.

FINDINGS - RESULTS

The activity is still in development, however some of the results can already be seen. Below are some of the images created by the *Design and Management* students:



Figure 1 and 2: Brochure design (in process).



Figure 3: Screenshot of the web space created by the students of *Design and Management*.

Link to the proposal – website: <https://recicloypunto.wordpress.com/>

For the students of *Design and Management*, the evaluation of this exercise consisted of the presentation of the project to the students of the subject *Volume I*, an action that had to have visual support and last between 30 and 45 minutes.



Figures 4, 5, 6: Slides of the presentation made by the students of *Design and Management*.

In this presentation they had to let the students know their work process, the results obtained, and also explain what their role was and what work they should do to contribute to *Recycle Project*.

Once the presentation of the event was done, the students of *Volume I* saw defined the guidelines of the exercise that they had to carry out. Each of them must make a plaster mold of a symmetrical recyclable object (plastic bottles, soda cans, glass jars ...). After that, the mold must be used to reproduce at least three objects, it will be done with clay, by pressure. Once the reproductions have been obtained, plus those made by direct printing of other objects (filling plastic bottles or other containers with plaster), there is an exchange between all the students in order to get rid of their creations; share, and that each student obtain different objects on which to perform the final surface finish: as indicated, with artistic referents of Pop-Art and including the phrase *Recycle and Period* in them.

The work dynamics with the students of *Volume I* also ended up involving the creation of the tables / exhibitors of their pieces in the public space. This part of the project is being carried out voluntarily. With the exception of painting, all the material used is also recycled: remains of wood, panels and slats.



Figures 7, 8, 9: Realization of the tables. The panels have been painted with white, as uniform background yellow dots. The motifs have been drawn afterwards.



Figure 10: Some pieces finished.

CONCLUSIONS

Experiential learning accommodates the development of a series of competencies that could not be developed unless it was in this way. In addition, experience sets the knowledge, increases the transformations and stays with more vividness in the memory. As indicated by Ernesto Yturralde (2010), experiential learning is "the process by which new skills, knowledge, behaviors and eventually values are acquired as a result of study, observation and experience. These changes may be stable or not and they occur as a result of stimuli and responses. The learning of the human being from an individual point of view can be converted into organizational learning, insofar as they are guided and shared by taking them towards collective learning".

These impressions about the impact of the proposal on student learning are based on their comments in both subjects, also in their acts and exchanges of common impressions. The experience with the students of *Design and Management of the Exhibition Space* has been very positive. Being an exercise that exceeds the walls of the classroom and that is carried out really, it has been possible to see how motivation and enthusiasm increased thanks to those factors. In this sense, it has been fundamental to convey to the students that a very important part of the project depended completely on them, that they had the option of choosing and directing the steps that were taken. On the other hand, the students were expected to come up with a commitment to the exercise and this also happened naturally: something they

said themselves, at the time of the evaluation, in front of the students of the two groups of *Volume I*.

Regarding the first-year students, the experience is also very positive. It has been important to let them know and make them feel that it is a mutual project, that the project involves more people, people that are not part of the University will participate. Another noteworthy aspect is that the students have had the opportunity to see in their first year, through the work of their classmates in the last years of Degree, how a project is gestated, what are the steps that are taken and in what way it is shown this to others, something they know, they will learn to do in higher courses.

Finally indicate that when groups are very numerous, decision making is more complicated and laborious, also avoid misunderstandings and maintain a fluid communication. In this sense, the exercise of initiation to constructive techniques inspired by the work of Louise Nevelson was a valuable contribution: it was they themselves who experienced these issues when they had to agree and carry out, among 30 people, three different installation proposals (the second part of the exercise). In addition to understanding the complexity of this type of work and generating a more comprehensive and resolute view of possible conflicts, this activity also served to unite the class group: and this is having a positive effect on the day-to-day of the classroom and also in exercises that require their disposition towards others, as in the case of *Recycle and Period*.

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