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**COME2ART: Introducing a collaborative scheme between artists & community members fostering
life skills development and resilience through creative placemaking**

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“A life skills curriculum through arts
in the context of creative placemaking”



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Module 6

The social role of artist as a leader in sustaining creative activities at community level

Introduction

The role of the artist, following the development of relational art, has become the one who acts in a community context, of the common space, and following this approach he has seen himself as the bearer of practices that involve citizens. The artist thus assumes a social role and takes care of the community place and the involvement of those who live it. The artist becomes that "heterotopic" figure who is therefore able to generate meeting spaces that are different from the routine of the city, leading those who live there to relate in a new and different way to their own self and to the other. In this module we will look at the best practices of these actions and we will try to provide a methodology that perpetuates their dissemination. This module consists of 2 units.

Unit 6.1: Relational Art: different artistic approaches towards community

This unit introduces learners to the birth of a relational art of the last decades.

This unit includes:

- What is Relational Art (as Nicolas Bourriaud theorized)
- Different approaches to Relational Art and case studies (difference between Participatory Art, Relational Art and Shared artwork)
- How art can be therapeutic?

Unit 6.2: practical simulation

This unit introduces learners to exercise with the design of a hypothetical art workshop providing a project method.

This unit includes:





- Introduction to the task (define the audience to which the workshop is aimed, identify the needs, define the objectives to be achieved, define the space for action and the setting.
- Teamwork simulation
- Sharing speech and final summary

The main learning objectives of this Module are:

- Distinguish the artistic operations that can be carried out in relation to the public
- Showing the role of artist as a leader in a community
- Satisfies the educational methodology of learning by doing
- Understand and apply artist leadership exercises in various contexts

Assessment

The level of achievement of the learning objectives will be assessed through:

- Questionnaire (at the beginning and at the end)
- Group evaluation after simulation





Unit 6.1

Relational Art: different artistic approaches towards community

This unit introduces learners to the birth of a relational art of the last decades as Nicolas Bourriaud theorized. Showing the difference between the multiple approaches that the artist could have towards the community. Highlight the objectives that the artist must achieve to become therapeutic towards the users.

Key words: Relational art, Multiple approaches towards the community, Role of artist in relation to a beneficiary

Upon completion of this unit, the learners will be able to:

- Identify when and how a relational art developed
- Distinguish the artistic operations that can be carried out in relation to the public
- Recognize the objectives the artist must achieve to become a leader in sustaining creative activities at community level.
- Understand their own appropriate attitudes to the community





The social role of artist as a leader in sustaining creative activities at community level

In this module we will talk about the artist's role and in particular how his way of doing art can affect the community.

In the theoretical part we will introduce you to three different approaches that the artist can use to create a connection with the public.

The first example is the relational art:

1. Relational Aesthetics - Nicolas Bourriaud

2. Félix Gonzàles-Torres: like an example of Relational Aesthetics

Franco Vaccari works in a different way with the public, with his way of doing participatory art. The artist actively involves the public for the work of art creation, the public by following the artist directions became the main character in the creation process.

3. Franco Vaccari - participatory art

The third methodology is about the creation of a work of art that consists of the creation of a work of art by involving people, as a community, with the objective of creating a shared artwork.

Unlike two previous examples, this way of approaching allows people to participate in an active way, bringing in the moment of creation their feelings, emotion and personal history and sharing all these contents.

A person interacts with others and everyone interacts with the group by putting all the single creations in a sort of communicating relationship and consequently





at the same time by being influenced by others.

In the end, the work of art has its meaning only by the union of the single piece of art made by a single participant, becoming a concrete proof of community experience.

4. Opera Condivisa (shared artwork)

5. “Legarsi alla Montagna” (Binding to the mountain) by Maria Lai: like an example of a work made by the community

Talking about community involvement, the shared artwork represents another way to communicate, different from relational aesthetics and participatory art because it consists of simultaneously and agreed working, in a place that has to be different from everyday surroundings: heterotopic place. The beneficiary needs to be involved by the artist in a correct way, with consciousness, that’s why the artist has to make correct choices in order to skillfully reach the final artwork production.

In this situation the artist became a heterotopic artist.

Our goal is to give you all the requirements and conditions to permit the planning and correct development of this kind of process.

1. Relational Aesthetics - Nicolas Bourriaud

The French curator Nicolas Bourriaud published a book called Relational Aesthetics in 1998 which laid out a thesis for art's turn toward participation, experience, and the whole of human relations.



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He defined the term as:

A set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space.

He saw artists as facilitators rather than makers and regarded art as information exchanged between the artist and the viewers. The artist, in this sense, gives audiences access to power and the means to change their perspective. The artist can be viewed as the catalyst in relational art, rather than being at the center.

Where does our current obsession for interactivity stem from? After the consumer society and the communication era, does art still contribute to the emergence of a rational society? Nicolas Bourriaud attempts to renew our approach to contemporary art by getting as close as possible to the artists' works, and by revealing the principles that structure their thoughts: an aesthetic of the interhuman, of the encounter, of proximity, of resisting social formatting.

The aim of Relational Aesthetics is to produce the tools that enable us to understand the evolution of today's art. Some artists analyzed from this perspective are Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Louis Althusser, Rirkrit Tiravanija, and Félix Guattari.

Deepening:

<https://somethingcurated.com/2018/02/14/a-guide-to-relational-aesthetics/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uunzjLbSX4>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4cqyg7Oder0&t=686s>





2. Félix Gonzàles-Torres: like an example of Relational Aesthetics

Félix Gonzàlez-Torres was born in Cuba in 1957. His entire artistic output is a vast autobiographical project that he wanted to share with the public. Gonzàlez-Torres often deals with profound themes such as social injustices, economic inequalities, homophobia, illness and death. He handles these issues with a delicacy and beauty that is both visually and morally rich. His works do not assault the eye and feelings; everything is implicit, discreet and fluid. His art is based on the power of simple evocation, which transforms ordinary objects into instruments of poetry, and based on the power of participation because without public the work doesn't have the same meaning.

His work doesn't only represent the disease and its depletion on the body, but it represents the love between the person suffering from the disease and the person who is there to support them and suffer with them. It's always about the connection between people, their feelings and emotions.

In several of his works he uses sweet candy as a representation of love: if you think about giving candy to a loved one on valentine's day, sweets in a box with flowers on mother's day, candy has long been tied to affection and love. While the candy is eaten, while the body begins to disappear, the love remains.

Félix Gonzàles-Torres engages the audience in this personal feeling of love and invites them to enjoy it.

He involves the audience by evoking, in those who eat the candy, a memory, a feeling, an emotion that evokes that love felt by the artist.



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Deepening:

<https://www.felixgonzalez-torresfoundation.org/works/c/candy-works>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=37bSb-aQ4BM>

3. Franco Vaccari - Relational art

Since the beginning of his artistic career, in the second half of the 1960s, Franco Vaccari focused his research on three major themes: the dissolution of the modernist aesthetic object; the use of photography, film, and video in order to engage the spectator in process of participation and critique of the media; the accent on the spatial, physical and temporal conditions of perception, with particular reference to public urban space.

These elements situate Vaccari's artistic production within a particular area of Conceptual Art characterized by the emergence of practices based on the direct participation of the spectator/viewer in the production of often ephemeral and temporary works. The artist no longer acts as an original and autonomous author, but triggers an event of which he/she does not control the results. As a consequence, the work is generated "in real time". It develops in relation to the way in which the viewer perceives it and reacts to it, strongly contributing to the shaping of its meaning.

"Exposition in real time number 4"

"The difference between happenings, performances and real-time exhibitions is a difference in structure. While, in fact, the former develop linearly and in the various phases obey precise predetermined programs, real-time exhibitions have as a characterizing element the possibility of retro-action, that is, of feedback" (Franco Vaccari, 1978).





So, the environment is not the "space of exposure" or even "of action", on the contrary it is "space of relationship"; the work is not a "data designed by the artist," on the contrary it is a "process triggered by the artist."

Exhibition in Real Time, known as Leave a Photographic Trace of Your Passing, set a simple photo kiosk into the gallery with a sign asking visitors to add a picture to the wall. It was and remains both an ideal conceptualist work and an emblem of the artist's interest in causing an event without controlling its results-revealing. People are free to leave their trace as they want, in their own way without restriction.

"[...] I displayed a Photomatic booth (one of those photo booths you find in big cities) and a sign in four languages urging visitors to leave a photographic trace of their passage. I merely triggered the process by taking the first photostrip, on the day of the opening and I did not intervene after that. By the end of the exhibition the accumulated strips were over 6,000"

Franco Vaccari, 2007

Deepening:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xVpoTG1xg4k>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KS4yutgnYpl&t=469s>

4. Opera Condivisa (shared artwork)

The literal translation of this item is "shared artwork" but this definition doesn't completely represent the deep meaning of this creation process.

While creating this artwork everybody is the creator of a single piece of the art in its complete form.





The artwork only has a great value if all the parts are together and united.

This methodology is theorized and practiced by “Terapeutica Artistica”(literal translation is therapeutic art, but the meaning it’s a little bit different): it’s an academic course held in Brera (Milan)- Italy.

At the base of this course there is a thought: what the artistic experience can bring in people’s life, it’s a phenomenological research that is focused on what’s underneath, on what is the beneficial effect of doing art for a single person or a group involved in the creating process.

“Terapeutica Artistica” it’s the practice of an art with therapeutic power, capable of rehabilitating, regenerating, by which it is possible to take care of yourself in a creative, deep and unique way.

Follow the link:

<https://terapeuticartista.it/>

Examples of Opera Condivisa :

- with children - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yIK1onJv4QY&t=207s>
- adults beneficiary
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=xD6jdhKJwxA>
- people with disabilities <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=05sQXdDRc5s>
- one exhibition
<https://terapeuticartista.it/giardini-segreti-dedicato-a-laura-tonani/>

In "Opera condivisa" you can clearly notice the features of every participant and his style in creating something, in this process the artist is coprotagonist and , if he want, he can take part in the art session.





The process of creation is based on deep sharing every sensation, feeling and idea, without melting participants' features because everyone maintains its peculiarity.

5. “Legarsi alla Montagna” (Binding to the mountain) by Maria Lai: like an example of a work made by the community

Maria Lai was an Italian artist who is known for her multimedia artworks that explore the craft traditions and folklore of her native island, Sardinia.

Her practice combined weaving, embroidery, writing, and drawing and employed domestic materials like textiles, thread, and books.

The Art Informel and Arte Povera movements deeply influenced Lai's artistic developments.

“Legarsi alla Montagna” (Binding to the mountain)

“Legarsi alla montagna” was an event starting on September 8, 1981, the collective action would last three days, involve almost all of the town's 1,000 inhabitants, and require nearly 17 miles of light blue denim ribbon. The ribbon snaked up side streets, draped between balconies, climbed church spires, and finally sailed to the top of Mount Gedili, which towers above the remote, rocky town. The event combined elements of land art, performance, and installation. But the ribbon also forged a symbolic and physical coming together in a place where family feuds and even violence had spanned generations.

To see the full collective action:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0rVoN64Fz-o>

Deepening:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UY8INLwBivU&t=22s>



Unit 6.2: Workshop on the proposed methodology

Introduction

This unit introduces learners to exercise with the design of hypothetical art workshop providing a project method. At the beginning a vademecum with the project method will be shared with the participants. After this will be introduced a task with those points: define the audience to which the workshop is aimed, identify the needs, define the objectives to be achieved, define the space for action and the setting. The artists will be divided into working groups in which they will have to plan a simulation for a hypothetical laboratory. Participants fill a shared digital document that respect the points of the vademecum. This document will be the tool to confront with in the final sharing. Indeed each group will have to do a brief presentation that will be commented by others.

Key words: project method, working groups, learning by doing, shared speech

Learning outcomes:

Upon completion of this unit, the learners will be able to:

- Experiment a methodology that allows the artist to organize creative activities for the community
- Developing teamwork skills
- Organize a project
- Explain a personal project
- Compare ideas
- Communication and collaboration with digital technologies
- Listens to others artist in the work team with respect
- Share ideas and motivation in group





WORKSHOP

According to the gained knowledge, the participants of the training will be asked to design a project according to the following characteristics and instructions:

1. Split in groups
2. Create a project
3. Purpose of the project:

Participation of a community of almost 20 people (aged 18-40) and its relationship with the land

4. Schedule to be followed for the project:

- Users
 - Characteristics
 - Needs

(If the users have a physical or mental pathology, explain their difficulties or disabilities. If the users live in a marginalized reality, describe the situation in question and the problems related to social exclusion).

- Ability to work in groups
- Place
 - Description of the place where the project takes place
 - Advice on transforming a common place into a heterotopic space
 - Scenery
- Program
- Materials
 - Characteristics





- Explanation of the choice of materials (not a description of their characteristics, but a reference to their latent meanings) and their effects
- Goals
 - About people
 - Regarding the dynamics of society
 - About the place
 - Regarding the artwork
- Sustainability of the project
 - Environmental
 - Possibility of continuing the project independently, in the future, thanks to the participation of the users / the company / those who have worked / the volunteers and thanks to other partners who support the said project

5. Brief description of the workshop

6. Feedback and discussion about the subject of the workshop, the objectives achieved and the expression of feelings and emotions

