

Perspective, no. 2026-1: Learning/Teaching

Institut national d'histoire de l'art (INHA), Paris

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Marie Caillat

Call for papers

Perspective: actualité en histoire de l'art:

Learning/Teaching, no. 2026 – 1.

Editor: Thomas Golsenne (INHA).

Guest editors: Déborah Laks (CNRS) and Guy Lambert (École nationale supérieure d'architecture de Paris-Belleville).

Does one learn to become an artist? This question, which traverses the history of contemporary art (DOUAR, WASCHEK, 2004), has never been resolved. It reflects – and confronts – aesthetic, philosophical, cultural and perhaps even religious concepts. From the standpoint of art history, however, the answer can only be positive, given that artistic production is largely a matter of artist-to-artist legacies and transmissions, whether on a daily basis in the studio and the closed circuit of the school or through the study of works and artists over a wide spectrum of time and space.

The predominance of a school-based organisation of art education, inherited from a system introduced by the European academies of the Renaissance, has promoted a particular kind of institutional structure, which has in turn been the subject of the earliest and most numerous studies (PEVSNER, [1940] 1973; BELZER, BIRNBAUM, 2007; POULOT, PIRE, BONNET, 2010; NERLICH, VRATSKIDOU, 2022). However, this western model is only one element in the complex, shifting mosaic of the history of art education. In recent years, there has been an upsurge of research on the ways that art is learned and taught over time and in various regions of the world. The attention paid to the theoretical and practical frameworks of art education, where it takes place, the social relations it generates, the role of different bodies of references, as well as the history of art and forms, thus expands the question far beyond academic education per se. This issue of Perspective is intended to examine recent research on the ways of learning to be an artist from antiquity to the present day, and especially over a wide variety of geographical areas and cultures. Such an approach necessarily draws on a vast multidisciplinary effort, involving contributions from the education sciences, visual arts, history and sociology, ethnology and digital humanities.

Indeed, several databases have recently been developed, including “Transnational Slade, Phase I. Mapping the Diaspora of an Art School” (2013-2014) and “Phase II. Slade, London, Asia” (2019-2021), which examine the London-based Slade School of Fine Art as a hub of cultural transfers. A major forerunner is the Dictionnaire des élèves architectes de l'École des beaux-arts de Paris (1800-1968) (CROSNIER LÉCONTE, 2015), a database published in 2015, as is the research programme on the history of art education from the 19th century to the present that was initiated

by France's École nationale des Chartes in 2016. Other disciplines are also considering this question, as demonstrated by the "EnDansant" project on the history of dance teachers in France since the 17th century to the present day. And exhibitions have addressed the theme as well, including "L'art d'apprendre. Une école de créateurs" [The Art of Learning: A School for Creators] (Centre Pompidou-Metz, 2022), "L'Énigme autodidacte" [The Self-Taught Enigma] (MAMC Saint-Étienne, 2021-2022) and "Souvenirs de jeunesse. Entrer aux Beaux-arts de Paris, 1780-1980" [Youthful Memories: Entering the Beaux-Arts de Paris, 1780-1980] (Beaux-Arts de Paris, 2024-2025). We are thus witnessing a particularly dynamic moment in historiographical terms.

On the other hand, what do we know about transmissions outside the art schools and academies that have been the most thoroughly studied? To what extent can recent investigations of the academies of the modern period (PERRIN KHELISSA, ROFFIDAL, 2024), for example, or on the history of architecture instruction in the 19th and 20th centuries (CHÂTELET, DIENER, DUMONT et al., 2022) be transposed to other cultural contexts, in particular colonialism or postcolonialism (CAVALCANTI SIMIONI, 2008; SANYAL, 2013; YU-TA, 2017; ALIATA, GENTILE, 2022)? If we consider art to be a historically situated concept invented in Europe in the modern era, should we not be looking for other models – studies of craft production, for example – in order to understand art education in broader spatial and chronological terms?

Ethnology has long demonstrated its usefulness in epistemological terms (CHAMOIX, 2010; DOUBLIER, 2017; INGOLD, 2013; JOULIAN, SHIMADA, TAKADA et al., 2021). Sociological approaches have often seemed especially adapted for studying this kind of relationships (SENNETT, 2008; MENGER, 2014; VANDENBUNDER, 2014 and 2015). How do such studies affect art-historical methods and mentalities? Artistic training clearly occupies a place in the learning sciences, especially with regard to the school environment (GAILLOT, [1997] 2012; BONNÉRY, DESLYPER, 2020; ESPINASSY, 2024). How does this field intersect with art history beyond the predictable reference to John Dewey's "learning by doing" (DEWEY, [1916] 2016) and its incarnation in Black Mountain College (DUBERMAN, 1973; COMETTI, GIRAUD, 2014)? The study of teaching and learning processes always poses a methodological challenge, and all the more so in the case of art: how can we grasp what is transmitted or acquired through fleeting gestures or words, and understood through the sense of touch or the gaze, in other words, the informal part of education (FURRER, GABRI, LOUVEAU et al., 2022; MEISEL, 2022; ORLANDO, 2024)? Here, we can only attempt to identify the written and visual sources and other tools now available to art historians studying art learning processes, including those outside the contemporary world and western art schools: policy statements, preparatory documents, notes and student works, as well as individual recollections. From a transhistorical and transnational perspective, developments in the methods and structures of artistic transmission accompany profound changes in the very conception of creation, which continuously fluctuates between the appreciation of reproduction and the encouragement of novelty – learning and unlearning. Over time, the relations between art and craft, history and contemporaneity, the balance between technique and originality, the conception and use of culture, references and the connection with production structures have thus reflected most of the successive changes and reforms in artistic training. How can studies on transmission shed specific light on knowledge about the theories of art proper to each era and culture?

Learning is a political activity and – like the teaching relationship – the places where it occurs, be it the family, the studio, the school or the university, have been and still remain privileged ideological battlegrounds, as expressed through aesthetic or technical choices, activist commitments and so on. How does art history address the place of gender, racism, sexual orientation or social back-

ground in artistic learning processes today (LÉON, 2020; BUTT, 2022; LAGRANGE, SOTROPA, 2022; LAKS, SASSU SUAREZ FERRI, 2023; PROVANSAL, 2023)? In what ways does the export of teaching models throughout the colonial empires and the entire world reflect both geopolitical and intellectual stakes? What is the importance of power relations and dominations in learning?

This issue Learning/Teaching seeks to be transhistorical and international in its scope and methodological approaches alike. To this end, we would like to explore the diverse modes of learning and their evolution in terms of four main themes:

1. Theories and practices of transmission

How is the framework of artistic training defined? It is conceived according to the knowledge and skills to be transmitted but also reflects the representations of resulting practices and future professions, whether this entails producing able hands and minds or nurturing inventive genius. Considering the immersion in a studio where production and training are combined helps to grasp so-called osmotic learning processes. Examining the way didactic inputs, exercises and assessments (class, studio, correcting) interact can lead to a typology of the various pedagogies, in terms of methods and content. Observing the spaces where new forms of creation are being invented allows us to assess the respective weights of the adaptation, assimilation, reinvention or rejection of artistic canons. Their development expresses at once the consciousness of routines and the desire to change paradigms (BONNET, LAVIE, NOIROT et al., 2014). But it also attests to processes of transmission and hybridisation from one geographical area to another, as illustrated by the Beaux-Arts model in the 19th century (ALIATA, GENTILE, 2022; NERLICH, VRATSKIDOU, 2022) or that of the Bauhaus in the 20th century (KENTGENS-CRAIG, 1999). They also reflect interactions between educational spheres addressing themselves to different publics (D'ENFERT, 2003). In this way, the recourse to various educational theories, including teaching methods initially conceived for children, such as those of Maria Montessori in Italy and Célestin Freinet in France, contributed to changes in teaching practices, the relationship to teachers, their authority and expectations. The explicitly alternative methods emerging in the contemporary period draw on a vast theoretical corpus, which raises the question, for example, of how feminist and decolonial thought have inspired educational practices (FREIRE, [1968] 1970; HOOKS, 1994 and 2010; MADOFF, 2009).

2. Participants in the learning/teaching process

With whom do artists learn? What are the roles of school teachers and parents, but also classmates and older siblings? In the past, art historians placed a great deal of emphasis on the idea of a "school", around the name of an artist, a city or a country (MICHEL, 2012) but this model is now called into question in favour of examining the complex reciprocal relationship between master and student, where transmission does not exclude opposition or rejection. Current interest in student populations attests to the changing attitude towards their role in training programmes (cf. the recent publication of the Reg-Arts database, giving access to enrolment registers at the Beaux-Arts de Paris from 1813 to 1968). Rather than focusing on the reproduction of a local style, the focus on cultural transfers now raises the question of the roles of learners such as foreign students or those from minority backgrounds. Within these relationships, the interactions inherent in the learning dynamic help to forge collective representations, an imaginary, or even an "almost tribal or clan bond" (MARTINON, 2003). The positive effects of this bond can be seen in the affiliations or distances maintained by students once they become teachers, or in the construction of support networks, across a given territory or beyond borders. That said, the question of sexist or

sexual violence, inequalities and discrimination in the teaching programmes and relationships between students cannot be overlooked. We are thus particularly interested in studies considering the whole of the actors in the learning process as elements of a continuously changing ecosystem, as well as the ways art history has at times valued qualities such as individual creativity or talent and at others, more collective, hierarchical practices. By extension, the ways that self-education and self-educated artists are considered might also be examined.

3. Material conditions, places and time frames of training

What are the material conditions of art education? What are the “places” (physical places, instruments, artefacts) as defined by historian Christian Jacob (JACOB, 2011)? These places, tied to modes of transmission or precise teaching methods, are characterised by spatial arrangements governing the distribution of the actors through a group of tools and objects which, in addition to their usefulness, constitute a decor that captures the reality of creation on a daily basis. The offshoots of this educational environment are numerous, from the copy of a work in situ or in the museum to summer schools and other study trips recalling the Grand Tour of an aristocratic European education or the apprenticeship system of craft workers making their Tour de France (ICHER, 2007). More recently, studio exhibitions and public presentations of diploma projects also accelerate the learning experience. We are particularly open to proposals that address this wide variety of rituals marking the transmission process, from competitive exams to carnivals (CONTE, 2023) and which offer a complementary view of training places and time frames. And we are interested as well in both the export of western models of educational spaces in the colonial context and art education structures in decolonised countries.

4. Art history for artists

What is the role of art history in learning/teaching the creative process? Young artists sometimes invoke a group of models, a body of references they rely on like a circle of friends allowing them to situate themselves within a history and identify affiliations. What is a history of art created for and by artists? What is the place of history and emotion in what sometimes appears to be a cultural heritage and at other times, an aesthetic tool kit? By extension, collections associated with learning structures not only provide useful artefacts but stimulate immersion in an imaginary. These collections, bringing together copies of antiquities, academic exercises, gifts from workshop heads, student projects, outstanding artworks inspiring new experiments and/or “fetishes”, are veritable melting-pots of knowledge and history that allow a direct, tangible relationship with the artworks of the past. Whether assembled through the accumulation of useful materials for studio practice or carefully selected by the schools, intended for students or based on their work, these collections constitute a particularly rich resource for research (JOLY-PARVEX, 2001). And in turn, we can ask how artists play a role in learning the history of art, how their practices, themes and debates affect its teaching and reception among younger generations (MCLEAN, 2011).

[traduction : Miriam Rosen]

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Perspective : actualité en histoire de l'art

Published by the Institut national d'histoire de l'art (INHA) since 2006, Perspective is a biannual journal which aims to bring out the diversity of current research in art history, highly situated and explicitly aware of its own historicity. It bears witness to the historiographic debates within the

field without forgetting to engage with images and works of art themselves, updating their interpretations as well as fostering intra- and inter-disciplinary reflection between art history and other fields of research, the humanities in particular. In so doing, it also puts into action the “law of the good neighbor” as conceived by Aby Warburg. All geographical areas, periods, and media are welcome.

The journal publishes scholarly texts which offer innovative perspectives on a given theme. Its authors contextualize their arguments; using case studies allows them to interrogate the discipline, its methods, its history, and its limits. Moreover, articles that are proposed to the editorial committee should necessarily include a methodological dimension, provide an epistemological contribution, or offer a significant and original historiographic evaluation. Depending on the subject, related bibliographical considerations and the geographical area and time period under consideration, two types of contributions are possible:

- 1) a study focusing on a specific historiographical question and proposing an original, situated analysis of the key issues, methodology and approach adopted (3,500-4,000 words/20,000-25,000 characters);
- 2) an essay on a more general theme offering a critical assessment based on selected bibliographical references and considering the changes in orientations, approaches and methodologies that have emerged over the past decade (7,000 words/40,000/45,000 characters, excluding bibliographical references).

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Editorial board/ Comité de rédaction members:
<https://journals.openedition.org/perspective/1417>.

Proposal deadline: 10 February 2025. Please send your proposals (a summary of 200-500 words/2,000-3,000 characters, a working title, a short bibliography on the subject and a brief biography) to the editors (revue-perspective@inha.fr).

Proposals will be examined by the editorial board regardless of language (the translation of articles accepted for publication is handled by Perspective).

The authors of the pre-selected projects will be informed of the editorial board's decision before the end of February 2025. The full articles (4,000-7,000 words/25,000-45,000 characters, depending on the nature of the project) must be received by 1st June 2025. These will be accepted in final form after an anonymous peer-review process.

Reference:

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<<https://arthist.net/archive/43667>>.