

WORKSHOP FORMATS

1. *WORKSHOPS involving creative practitioners*

a) Aims and background:

Affection-images and the 'imaginary texture of the real': imagining the world through non-images

Creative practice, although still largely considered an elite activity, conceals the imaginative power that characterises human nature. Yet today, little attention has been paid to people's capacity to engage with creative practice on an everyday basis. An exception makes Professor Nato Fasca's life-long exploration of the doodle as an introspective tool testifying to the human creative capacity. Following on this path and accompanied by the thoughts of philosophers in relation to productive imagination, I would like to engage in an experiment that explores creative practice as a common activity able to develop new knowledge, that cancels the dualisms individual-collective, subjective-objective and sensation-reasoning.

To this purpose, I propose to work with affection-images as results of creative gesture. Affection-images should be understood as forms of resonance between the object of our perceptions and our own selves. They are neither the reflection of our emotions (internal), nor responses to perceptual stimuli (external) but rather an intertwining of both, modulations of the same matter (Deleuze), giving rise to the imaginary texture of the real (Merleau-Ponty).

The experiment is organised as an experimental workshop, combining discussions of core philosophical concepts (P1:15min) with a creative practice exercise (P2:20min) and reflection on results and their implications (P3:25min). For P2 participants will be presented with a short extract from home movie footage, to which they will need to relate through the creation of affection-images. Among proposed creative practice methods for P2 are: re-filming the scene by using a smartphone, adding subtitles or sound, video-editing, analogue manipulation (printed frames). Together with participants we will discuss the single projects and look at what knowledge was generated through creative practice, the way the chosen medium impacted on the final output and how individual results can make sense in the context of collective thought.

b) Structure:

The lab is designed for a maximum of 10 participants, to be able to discuss individual projects. The activity needs to be held in a separate room with a projector, as participants need to focus on individual projects and then share results with the entire group. The total duration of the Lab is about 1 hour,

which includes the introductory talk, the practical exercise and the final discussion. Some equipment will be needed for the exercise: it is recommended that each participant brings his|her personal laptop to work in autonomy, as well as access to a printer (for printing frames of the shown video). I will provide a sound recorder for those who want to work with sound in their project.

Phase 1 (15 min):

- Concept of artistic practice as a **tool** for everyone, as an exercise of everyday life. (e.g. Nato Frasca's work on the doodle as an expression of man's innate and intuitive ability to mould reality):
 - artistic research: latent sign and the abyss of the invisible (internal gaze of art). Psychonology: psychology of the icon. Doodle as a 'freed sign'- automatized writing of a profound being (able to bring forth this pre-memory of memory)
 - 'all that we don't know but we perceive through intuition, first in a confused manner, then more and more lucidly: (is) in this case the manifestation of the sign pertaining to that basic and radical energy of art expressed in its visibility: the doodle'
- This is somehow not a new idea: Deleuze positioned arts, sciences, and philosophy on the same level of knowledge. Yet to some degree it offers a new approach to artistic & imaginative practice: the gesture that holds a meaning by 'becoming', and not as an end, a closed process (final work)
- This perspective of art as a knowledge-generating field experiments with different ways of thinking about what we are 'able of becoming', it represents 'thought in action' / emphasis is placed on the process and not on the result.

What kind of knowledge does creative practice generate and how does it do it?

- HOW: We need to know first how creative practice operates, get to know it as a 'process': a small exercise together with the public where the organiser reads aloud a piece from a poem and each person can draw, write a word or represent this piece in any way he or she likes (try through dialogue to write down the concepts that emerge from this process and make a link to the following concepts):
 - On the wool of sound some object of silence one so immense.
 - The issue is love, its turning towards solicitous shop windows.
 - Who stops who gazes? Here thought arranges the display of rags, and charm lingers on and on.
 - There, giant cats scratch the earth, the steel of silence and faith with no object.
- Representation – how was the imagined object represented? Pure and empirical concepts (finite number of representations)
- Intuition – where did the suggestion of representation come from? form of intuition is not a form of representation but of a potential representation (contributes to the actual representation)
- Spontaneity – exercise of the mind or of spirit? Can we make a difference? How does it activate imagination? 2 kinds of exercises of spontaneity: judgement (structure is predicative) and prod. Imagination (strict logical homogeneity)
- Imagination – try to clarify what is for the audience: productive imagination | sensible synthesis

- Conclusion: Contribution of productive imagination to shaping a non-dualistic world that promotes the thought of mobilising forces (not questioning their origin), of being made of the same nature (Spinoza), modulations of the same material (Ponty).

- WHAT: What forms of expression does the non-dualistic worldview acquire through creative practice?

'If the **imaginary** carries us from thinking about this world to thinking about the universe, we can conceive that **aesthetics**, by means of which we make our imaginary concrete, with the opposite intention, always brings us back from the infinities of the universe to the definable poetics of our world. This is the world from which all norms are eliminated, and also it is this world that serves as our inspiration to approach the reality of our time and our place. Thus, we go the open circle of our relayed aesthetics, our unflagging politics.' Glissant

- Think about 'image' as a potential form or shape (here images are not thought as faint copies of sensory perceptions (Hume) but as intuitive forms (potential)) through which we experience the world, weaving together present and absent (see quote from M. Ponty)
- Think about affection as the ability to affect and be affected (see M. Ponty on 'touching' and 'being touched'), as a manifold of intuitions (synthesis)
- Affection-image: a manifold of intuitions, acquiring always and already an organised form
- E.g. how an affection image is created in cinematic terms: Deleuze categorises it under the action image (perception, affection and motion) and connects it to the emotional expressivity (e.g. the face and the close-up as cinematic strategies for developing affection-images); Face as a subtle emotion organ – communicates affect in a way that other body parts cannot – 2 modes of manifestation: reflection (quality), intensity (powers) - communicates singularities (virtual rather than actual) - senses|meanings (distinct from physical objects) belong to virtuality rather than actuality, it includes memory, expression of affect through the face

Conclusion: Can we affirm that affection-images give rise to the imaginary texture of the real (Ponty)?

Phase 2: creating affection-images (25 min)

Show to participants the selected scene that serves as an exercise for creating affection-images. Briefly present different creative and imaginative and possibilities for generating affection-images taking the scene as a starting point:

- digital methods (re-filming scenes, post-production | editing)
- manual manipulation (process consisting in: printing frames, manual intervention, re-scanning frames and recomposing the scene)
- other interventions: adding sound, creative writing.

Encourage participants to propose their own method or their combination of methods.

Phase 3: discussion (20 min)

Main aspects to discuss:

- Each participant tries to describe in few words his or her own project. (what they did and why they did it) I try to write down: Why they chose a particular method? What they felt it was necessary? Did something change through this process?
- Engage in a collective debate (main aspects to address):

- Looking at the projects in their singularity vs. looking at the projects as a collective exercise (of sensible intuition? - 'to sense something is to be sensitive to something, to feel a contact with it, to be affected by it' (Lingis))
- What 'intuitions' (sensory impressions) emerged which cannot be contained within any concept but can be only implicit in the gesture performed during the exercise?
- Aesthetical vs. ethical implications of our gesture ("Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind." (Kant))

For the poetics of relatedness, supposes that each one must face the density, opacity of the other. The more the other resists in his thickness or fluidity, without being confined to this, the more expressive his reality and the more fruitful the inter-relating. I can change through exchange with the other, without either losing or distorting myself. (Glissant)

2. Workshops involving social scientists

Workshop context: the workshop operates through home movie archives, as an important part of audio-visual heritage of communities. It makes use of this material to foster collective thinking through specific exercises that look at home movies not as a passive reflection on community history and identity, but rather as an active tool for stimulating intuition and generating new concepts and ideas around identity formation. This is why home movies represent important material for the activation of the individual and collective conscience around identity in the urban context. The aim is to rethink identity through the use of home movies as a creative commons map that can guide us through new spaces of identity and their formation processes.

Methodology:

The methodology deploys creative and imaginative practice as a way to engage with the topic of identity. The material we will work on is a scene taken from Sicilian home movie archives. We will use these tools (productive imagination, creative forgetfulness and affection-images) to guide us through three brief exercises that stimulate individual and collective conscience in relation to the concept of identity formation. The selected scene will be printed out as single stills and will be made available to participants in different formats during the exercises (on paper and on textile).

Work Sessions:

Intro: Brief intro of the PhD project I am conducting on home movie archives and its objectives. Projection of a creatively elaborated scene and explanation of the process for obtaining the results. Potential of the creative process to open up new meanings of the home movie archive through the process of re-appropriating the concept of identity inherent in these images.

Session 1 (15 min): 'creative forgetfulness'

Concept intro: Friedrich Nietzsche first coined the concept of creative forgetfulness. It is not strictly understood as a process opposed to remembering, but rather as a positive, active and essential gesture to much part of life and thinking. Only through forgetfulness can human being entertain the illusion that they possess truth and develop abstract thought (forgetting the differences is important to abstract thinking). Forgetting transmutes into a creative force when it pushes itself to extremes and therefore voids the ability of memory to go against the passage of time.

Objectives: The passage from concrete to the abstract, through the deconstruction of meaning (representations of objects and people are deconstructed to forms and colours) enables the formation of new connections and relations. An exercise of creative forgetfulness is therefore not important only for the capacity of abstraction but also for the formulation of new concepts that emerge from the historical roots of identity.

Method: Participants select an image of the scene from those made available, on which only parts of the entire image are visible. They then imagine how to complete the image through the methods they find appropriate (drawing, cutting, sticking etc). The aim is to re-build the connection between elements transferred on the paper (participants can work in any way they wish, cutting out pieces from between elements, connecting elements through lines and shapes ...the sky is the limit). All the

stills will be then gathered and photographed in order to recompose the scene (in digital format), through the lens of creative forgetfulness.

Session 2 (15min): 'productive imagination'

Concept intro: Productive Imagination (PI) works through representation, intuition (form of potential representation), spontaneity (an exercise of the mind or of spirit? Can we make a difference? How does it activate imagination? 2 kinds of exercises of spontaneity: judgement where structure is predicative and PI that has a strict logical homogeneity) and imagination. For this reasons PI contributes to shaping a non-dualistic world that promotes the thought of mobilising forces (not questioning their origin), of being made of the same nature (Spinoza), modulations of the same material (Ponty). PI cancels the dualisms individual-collective, subjective-objective and sensation-reasoning.

Objective: the aim is to use PI to 'go to the roots' of creative thought through spontaneous tools like the doodle. The representations are not only subjective interpretations but also imaginary textures of the real. The aim is thus not to reinterpret but to give new consistence to thought and feeling, a process which can have important effects on our imagination.

Method: For this exercise 2 people will work together. Select one image that was produced in the previous exercise, look at it for 30 seconds, then briefly close your eyes. Open your eyes and take a tool of your choice (pen, pencil, charcoal). Try to draw in a very spontaneous manner the your representation of the image you have seen while having your eyes closed. Try to give a name to what you have drawn on the back of your drawing. Give your drawing to your partner who does not turn the image around but writes a word on the bottom corner of it, representing his|her view of your drawing. Talk with your neighbour to find a connection between the two written words (write down your findings). All the images that have been produced during this exercise will be assembled into a new scene, which is a product of productive imagination.

Session 3 (15min): 'Affection-images'

Concept intro: 'image' as a potential form or shape (here images are not thought as faint copies of sensory perceptions (Hume) but as intuitive, potential forms) through which we experience the world + 'affection' as the ability to affect and be affected (see M Ponty on 'touching' and 'being touched'), as a manifold of intuitions (synthesis) weaving together present and absent. Affection-images are a manifold of intuitions, acquiring always and already an organised form.

Objectives: the aim is to go beyond the pure visual aspect of the scene and step into a multisensory area by paying attention to sensations (what participants feel, think and hear while watching the scene). Participants will be presented with the complete scene they have been working on during the first two exercises but now in a complete form. They will need to relate to it through the creation of affection-images. The aim is to create a resonance between the object of our perceptions and our own selves through the generation of affection-images.

Method: Participants receive a piece of textile with some few elements of the home movie scene printed on them. They look at the scene repeated times (I will project it), paying attention to their reactions\interactions and doing small exercises after they watch:

1st visualisation: pay attention to the first thing you noted in the scene – represent it on your piece of textile

2nd visualisation: pay attention to how the scene 'feels' to you - write, draw, cut, stick, anything you feel like doing on the textile

3rd visualisation: pay attention to what you 'think' about the scene - write, draw, cut, stick, anything you feel like doing on the textile

4th visualisation: do not think at anything while watching. Complete the image on your piece of fabric the way you consider appropriate.

The results of each exercise will be assembled to form the entire scene but perceived from different angles. There is the possibility to show the results of the co-creative sessions after the closing speech of the conference, by projecting the results of the first exercise in final format (5 min approx. duration).

1. look at the image, close your eyes and reopen them, draw instinctively what is still vivid to you
2. affect and be affected – complete the image after the indications
3. free work with the scene