

# BACK TO THE SANDBOX: ART AND RADICAL PEDAGOGY

## Exhibition Catalog Summary

*...only education is capable of saving our societies from possible collapse whether violent or gradual...* Jean Piaget (1934)

Invoking the above citation of Jean Piaget, the premise of this work is that education and learning represent one of the critical fields of today's society related in many ways to its political, economic, and environmental challenges.

This project has three unique aspects. First, it juxtaposes works by leading artists and scholars who have addressed the critical state of education in contemporary society. Second, it places current efforts to rethink the education system in a broader historical context by showing that many new ideas in education are reiterations of visions and concepts articulated by reform movements in pedagogy. These movements often emphasized the role of art and creativity in education, and thus it comes as no surprise that this legacy is today being rediscovered by contemporary artists. Third, the exhibition and its catalog seek to connect three major narratives associated with the rise of progressive education and reform pedagogy in the 19th and early 20th centuries -- democracy, creativity, and wholeness (i.e. transdisciplinarity in today's terminology) – concepts mostly separated from each other today.

The catalog comprises introductory essays, works of artists complemented with artists' statements, and a timeline of progressive education with a selected bibliography and artists' biographies. The catalog will include original essays on critical pedagogy, creativity, transdisciplinarity, neuroplasticity, and the cognitive role of art in relation to the failures of education as we know it today.

Their authors are leading scholars who have agreed to participate in the project: Professor Henry Giroux is regarded the foremost authority on critical pedagogy and an heir to its founder, Paulo Freire, who advanced the principles of justice and equality in education. Professor Liane Gabora has been widely praised for her innovative research on creativity based on an evolutionary approach. Professor Basarab Nicolescu (the founder of the International Center for Transdisciplinary Research and Studies, a non-profit organization with 163 members from 26 countries) has been in the forefront

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of recognizing transdisciplinarity as a key issue of today's society. Professor Bruce Wexler is the author of *Brain and Culture: Neurobiology, Ideology, and Social Change*, the first monograph on the biological underpinnings of the relationship between the brain and culture. Luis Camnitzer is an internationally renowned artist and educator.

The essays on critical pedagogy, creativity, transdisciplinarity, neuroplasticity, and the cognitive role of art appear together with responses of twenty other leading thinkers on education to the question "What education do we need?"

The catalog will present works by international artists who have addressed the nature and significance of education. Renouncing the confines of specialization, the works help map out some of the connections between the various underpinnings to pedagogical inquiry—neurological, psychological, philosophical, political, social, technological, economic, and historical—, which are too often addressed separately. By transcending institutional boundaries in its radical questioning, art becomes a radical pedagogy in its own right, capable of inspiring mind changing narratives. The catalog will include works by Eva Bakkeslett, Luis Camnitzer, Teddy Cruz and Fonna Forman, Jim Duignan, Priscila Fernandes, Michael Joaquin Grey, Ane Hjort Guttu, Markus Kayser, Eva Kořátková, Graziela Kunsch, Pam Kuntz, James Mollison, Petr Nikl, Renzo Piano, Calvin Seibert, and The Society for a Merrier Present, among others.

A broad historical and theoretical framework is provided in an introductory essay by the curator, Jaroslav Andel. In addition to connecting individual artworks and essays into a larger narrative, Andel presents an overview of the main historical stages of modern education, a survey of today's critical issues and concerns, and suggests actions we need to take.