

when PhD becomes an art work...

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Recently, Paula Roush obtained her Ph.D. as an artwork in order to enter into the debate on the industrialisation of knowledge or the 'knowledge industry'. It involved contacting a number of institutions, where it is possible to receive a Ph.D. without going through routine procedures such as writing dissertations and the other traditional activities connected to it.

It is now a common interest for many individuals wanting to pursue their further careers in any areas of work to obtain a Ph.D. in order to become successful and accredited 'knowledge workers'. In fact the term 'knowledge worker' or 'knowledge producer', is a new term coined by most of the institutions where theoretical work involves some kind of 'punching theory into the real'. It is not alien to artistic work itself, which is increasingly dependent on such a qualification. Most of the time the work of artist is in fact 'done' by curators, who, in their own words, are able to articulate administrative and creative functions. The cultural managerialisms involved in the field of overgrowing artifacts and ideas are becoming increasingly visible. The recognition of this fact the ideological apparatuses of political and governmental power, has been analyzed in the work of Pierre Bourdieu among others. By calling it, the 'field of cultural capital', Bourdieu is not alone in his critical

work of instrumentalised reason. He is one among many who have committed themselves to the critique of Enlightenment ideals which has been continuously made since Marx via Frankfurt School and by Foucault and his contemporaries. We find this critique alive and well in its most engaging form today in the work of the likes of Giorgio Agamben, Paulo Virno and others.

What is the 'knowledge industry' and what does it have to do with industry? There are number of theoreticians, as well as activists such as Debord, who more or less problematised this fact as a spectacle. Spectacle is the normal human communication become commodity. In this sense it is the production of the form of knowledge which is also known as a 'common sense' knowledge. Because of the industrial revolutions and the division of labor into managers and proletariat, this distinction became ever more strict and already Marx notices, in his (posthumously published) work *The Grundrisse*, the process of 'intellectualization of work'. This process of 'intellectualization' and its relation to the machinality of human work, has since then been the focus of much critical work. Some, like Adorno, saw it as a threat to the 'high' forms of knowledge and it's dangerous transformation of everyday experience, others, such as Foucault via Deleuze-Guattari, saw in this process a still hopeful moment of heterogeneous strategy, which would still allow intellectuals and alike play their role within the institutions. In Gramsci and Althusser this function is taken up as the moment when subjects are

to find their ways depending on their deeper engagement.

The last few decades of thinking with these modules, other theories, such as British cultural studies, feminism, third world struggles, produced the political recognition of equal education and social emancipation as closely connected forms.

The fact is that this has led to a state of affairs in which, anyone who wants to get good job within the Academia, or to make successful gallery careers has to have a certain vocabulary of terminology's such as 'semiosis', 'deconstruction', 'gender policy', 'language game', 'public space' and with the recent adventures of globalisation 'migration' 'immaterial labor' and so on. Since the middle of 1980s all these terminological deformations have been developed into the anthologies marketed to art colleges and continuously gave rise to institutions, which deal with this, that, or another issue, separately with 'their' own 'expert'. The denial of 'conventional' approaches in artistic work, such as 'form' 'content' 'hard working' and other such illuminations give way to the 'experts' with their diplomas and PhDs and their engagement with this or another concept in order to 'clarify' them and then to move onto 'new ones'.

If in 1970s artists like Robert Smithson, who is now commonly considered as a heroic figure in art, could make his astonishing career without any degree, but built his own educational edifice, by the hard work of

reading, writing, and making art (he hardly graduated from secondary school), today it is completely unimaginable for a such a thing to happen. The first question in facing the curator : 'which school did you attend?' is almost the most common case.

As we noted earlier the 'industrialisation of knowledge has to do with the growth of cultural and informational capital. The complex moment of life/work dichotomy, its inevitable transformation leading to biopower and the spectacularised subjects, which are, 'working by themselves', to put it in Althusser's precise phrase, is the very product of creating 'loyal subjects' by means of 'aesthetic' and moral ideals. This process is begun in school education, where certain philosophical and political ideas are identified with the everyday existence, status, prestige, position, and encouraged to be attracted to them as 'bread lines'. In the work of recent postmodern thinkers, notably by Lyotard, one notices the consideration of the basic principles of the work done by electronic industry as a certain form of translating philosophical ideas of 'computability in mathematical logic and language games'. Others, like Stuart Hall who saw potential for the moment when 'teenagers inhabiting in their head postmodernity, without being able to spell the word 'postmodern''.

We shouldn't forget that the process is very long one and it is only very recently, with the coming of 'global discourse' that it became part and parcel of our reality. Earlier on, obtaining the Ph.D. was only accessible and

an option to those 'who are exceptionally clever'. Today this function has very little to do with an intellect and more or less belongs to well-doing and being able to pay for it. This so-called popularization of knowledge has stood in direct opposition to the work made by 'real' intellectuals marginalising them to a certain degree. But the process did not come to its limits here. This corollary, in its turn, produced the 'intellectual star industry phenomenon', paradoxically out of the most critical figures, some of them named above.

The second aspect is an artistic strategy of diversity, i.e. 'artist as a producer, artist as a filmmaker', artist as an activist', which derives 'of course' from modernism's binary approach to becoming. Becoming, is in fact an interesting notion that deserves to be carefully understood. Becoming doesn't mean to throw away artistic recognition and to get engaged in another work. It is mostly the articulation of different activities and managing them that makes an artist become 'the Other' and relation to alterity which she/he want to show as a sign of the contemporary phenomenon. When Benjamin speaks about 'the artist as a producer' he means precisely this power of altering, mis-identifying, and by doing so, gaining back the artistic power, instead of saying-I have started as an artist, but now I am a producer. In this case the problem isn't the profession, but the means that are employed in the work one needs to do. Carefully considering the distracted vision and the new techniques that would be able to demonstrate it,

Benjamin therefore says: artist -as -producer' rather than artist-is producer. Some decades later Deleuze and Guattari consider this kind of role playing as a challenge to the 'one dimensional society' and introduced the term 'multidimensionality of the one'.

The third moment is about the dream of different societies, throughout the historical formation, to build the model of art that would make Art and reality seem as one for the better life. Starting from very early primitive societies up to our days it remained a dream. Already Plato introduces the notion of 'simulacrum ' as an ideal form of aesthetic life. Later on the Renaissance and Romanticism found creating harmony and symmetry a way of giving reality another form and shape, which will save the social functionings. During the revolutions 'art has become as something which will teach subjects to enjoy the 'good life'. Baudrillard registered it in the late decade of 20th century as the complete project of simulacrum.

During the history of these transformations, one detail was very crucial to this process: it is only the privileged who can enjoy the beauty and wealth brought by the pleasure of being an artist. Therefore, the question posed here is that the non-equality of subjects is still a very critical issue. Perhaps the project of more or less renowned intellectuals from Gramsci to Agamben is still true: the project of critique and pleasure, criticality and clinicality. The art in the age

of the Ph.D. however more or less escapes these functions by evading this political problem.

The project of Paula Roush offers a number of critical questions. On the one hand, it is the strategy for an artist to survive by obtaining a higher degree. On the other hand, the challenge that one may or may not notice: it is the transgression of the prestigious functioning of art itself. Paula Roush has proposed a position of becoming critical and clinical at the same time from within the system of established forms. It is trying to bring into prominence the very well forgotten problem of our days: non-equal exchange, which marginalises one, privileges another, something what has been at the heart of many societies in the tension of social existence: the symbolic exchange and aesthetic values bought and sold through the 'interactively' well organized and managed institutions.

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