

# Everything we call aesthetic training: resonances for teaching\*

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## ABSTRACT

This article seeks to survey the meanings that the word “aesthetics” acquires combined with the training of teachers in Brazilian educational researches. To compose the philosophical landscape which gives this text its outline, we resort to authors such as Foucault and Nietzsche, in addition to Hermann, Frigério, and Pereira, whose writings expand the perspectives allied to aesthetics and training. At first, we present analyses of the survey carried out around researches which combine aesthetic training and teaching, from the theses bank of Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior (CAPES) from 2006 to 2010, in order to grasp the emergence of discussions and authors facing the indeterminacy that it is a kind of training combined with an aesthetic dimension. The last part of the text, we try and give a clearer outline to experiments on training in this context, not only restricted to teachers involved with the artistic field, claiming the urgency that the ideas about aesthetic training contemplates contemporary art productions.

## KEYWORDS

aesthetic training; teaching; contemporary art.

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## *TUDO ISSO QUE CHAMAMOS DE FORMAÇÃO ESTÉTICA: RESSONÂNCIAS PARA A DOCÊNCIA*

### RESUMO

O artigo procura lançar um olhar aos sentidos que a palavra “estética” adquire aliada à formação docente em pesquisas educacionais brasileiras. Para compor a paisagem filosófica que dá contorno a este texto, recorre-se especialmente a autores como Foucault e Nietzsche, além de Hermann, Frigério e Pereira, cujos escritos ampliam as perspectivas aliadas à estética e à formação. Em um primeiro momento, são apresentadas análises iniciais sobre levantamento realizado em torno de pesquisas que associam formação estética e docência, do banco de dados da Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior (CAPES) de 2006 a 2010, a fim de apreender a emergência de discussões diante da indeterminação de que se trata de uma formação aliada a uma dimensão estética. Na última parte do texto, procura-se dar um contorno mais nítido a experimentações de formação nesse âmbito, não apenas restrita aos docentes vinculados às artes, reivindicando a urgência de que o pensamento sobre formação estética docente contemple as produções artísticas contemporâneas.

### PALAVRAS-CHAVE

formação estética; docência; arte contemporânea.

## *TODO ESTO QUE LLAMAMOS FORMACIÓN ESTÉTICA: RESONANCIAS PARA LA DOCENCIA*

### RESUMEN

El artículo pretende lanzar una mirada a los sentidos que la palabra estética adquiere cuando se combina con la formación docente en la investigación educativa brasileña. Para componer el paisaje filosófico de este texto, se recurre sobre todo a autores como Foucault y Nietzsche, además de Hermann, Frigério y Pereira, cuyos escritos amplían las perspectivas aliadas a la estética y a la formación. En un primer momento, se presentan análisis sobre una recopilación realizada en torno a la investigación que combina formación estética y docencia, del banco de tesis de la Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior (CAPES) de 2006-2010, aprehendiendo la emergencia de discusiones frente a la indeterminación de una formación aliada a una dimensión estética. En la última parte del texto, se trata de dar un contorno más claro a experimentaciones de formación en este ámbito, revindicando la urgencia de que el pensamiento sobre formación estética docente contemple las producciones artísticas contemporâneas.

### PALAVRAS-CHAVE

formación estética; docencia; arte contemporâneo.

*Grülp* is an imprecise color, that appears in a brief tale by philosopher Georg Simmel, as Graciela Frigério recalls.<sup>1</sup> *Grülp* is a combination of the German words *Grün* (green), *Grau* (grey) and *Gelb* (yellow) and Frigério associates the word *aesthetics* to *Grülp*'s inability to fit any formula:

The word *aesthetics* also refers, in common language, to a philosophical corpus, to a historicization of art, to methods and objects related to the study of what can be sensed, it refers to a theory about the beautiful and to the production of a discipline that appeared as such in 1750 with the work that Baumgarten designated with this name. *Aesthetics*, like *Grülp*, retains a certain indeterminacy; it is this indeterminacy that interests us (Frigério, 2007, p. 29).

Frigerio then explains that over time the word *aesthetics* became inscribed in various complicities, was used to dress new metaphors, was updated and redefined, while maintaining, however, its complex relationship with sensibility. Nevertheless, the countless meanings of the word create limitations and confusions. The most serious and the most refuted “refers to that which established and supported a supposed cleavage between what the senses and the intelligible” (*idem, ibidem*). The dispute about the separation between the rational and the senses appears with different configurations in Schiller, Nietzsche and others (cf. Jimenez, 1999; Ferry, 1994; Herwitz, 2010). In the field of education, the excessive appreciation of the rational over the sensible is given greater visibility when, for example, curriculum spaces for the arts (supposedly fertile ground for aesthetic experimentation) are under-valued and minimized in school contexts,<sup>2</sup> an inversion that is legitimized by educational policies based on the alleged “objectivity” of evaluation indexes, as found in Brazil. While the IDEB (Basic Education Development Index) is based mainly on factors such as mean grades and the performance of students in Portuguese language and Mathematics,<sup>3</sup> in recent years we have witnessed some Brazilian educational policies that, although timidly, begin to give greater emphasis to the relationship between education and culture, as in the case of the More Culture in Schools Program (*Programa Mais Cultura nas Escolas*).<sup>4</sup>

1 The short story, entitled “Das Märchen von der Farbe”, was originally written in 1904. The full text of the short story in English can be found on the website: <http://cabinetmagazine.org/issues/36/simmel.php>

2 The contradictions in relation to the place occupied by the arts in a society increasingly narrated by images still amazes scholars: “How can we understand, for example, that modern society, placed under the sign of the civilization of the image, grants so little space to art education?” (Jimenez, 1999, p. 9).

3 See <http://portal.inep.gov.br/web/portal-ideb/portal-ideb>

4 The “More Culture in Schools” program is an initiative of the Ministry of Culture, in conjunction with the Ministry of Education, which aims to foster actions that are compatible between the pedagogic project of public schools included in the More Education and the Innovative High School programs of MEC and cultural and artistic experiments underway in local communities. The projects approved in a 2013 public bidding process began in July/August 2014 (more information available at: <http://www.cultura.gov.br/maisculturanasescolas>).

The meaning of *aesthetics* sought in this text is associated with the arts and with the “endless field” of research in education and art (Pereira, 2010). Considering this field, I ponder the possibilities that the word and the experience related to aesthetics can bring to education, in particular, the education of teachers. Nevertheless, influenced by some theoretical partners, I do not restrict the discussion to the study of art and to the aesthetic theories derived from its transformations. Similarly to Hermann (2005, p. 42, my emphasis), my interest lies in “the *aesthetic experience*, because what it provokes to our senses and our imagination has an irresistible force in expanding relations with the world, including with *ethics*”. I consider *aesthetics* “beyond a universe of sensations that shape taste to understand it as a way to know, to distribute and to inscribe” (Frigério, 2007, p. 31). Or, I can align myself with Welsch (1995, p. 12), who says that, beyond current processes of superficial aestheticization, the aesthetics important today is the “aesthetics beyond aesthetics” and that “an updated conceptualization of aesthetics must refer to fields such as the world lived and politics, communication and media, science and epistemology”. What is at stake is the relationship of *aesthetics* with processes broader than art itself (even if they emerge from it), involving ethics and way that we behave in the world, politics, relationships with others and with ourselves, the contagion between art and life, the ways of interpretation of the world we live in.

To compose the philosophical and aesthetic landscape that gives shapes this text, I focus on the possibilities of an “aesthetics of existence” or “life as a work of art,” based on Foucault (2004a, 2004b, 1998) and Nietzsche (2003, 2001), whose writings expand the perspectives related to *aesthetics* and to *education*.

Without an intention to replicate a complex and extensive philosophical discussion about *aesthetics*,<sup>5</sup> which has been accentuated by new contemporary productions in the arts and its not always peaceful relationship with its potential public, in this text I share concerns related to possibilities and initiatives for aesthetic teacher education, conceived from the perspective of a broader spectrum of *aesthetics*, which is not restricted to a specific education related only to teachers of the arts, but extended to the education of any teacher.

I first present an initial analyses of a survey of studies that relate aesthetic education with teaching practice conducted in the database of theses maintained by the Brazilian Coordination of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES) from 2006 to 2010. The objective of the survey was to apprehend the emergence of discussions and authors about the “*grülp*” indetermination upon which education allied to an aesthetic dimension can be considered. In the final portion of the text I present discussions from the study “Contemporary art and aesthetic education for teaching”,<sup>6</sup> to more clearly define educational experimentations in this context.

5 See for example publications such as Jimenez (1999), Ferry (1994), Herwitz (2010) and the more recent publication by Rancière (2013).

6 Research funded with resources from CNPq – The National Council of Scientific and Technological Development.

## AESTHETIC EDUCATION IN DISCOURSE IN THE EDUCATIONAL FIELD

We can observe a greater openness to the subject of aesthetic education in important educational entities such as ANPEd (The National Association of Graduate Studies and Research in Education), mainly after the creation of its Education and Art working group.<sup>7</sup>

Although many of these studies focus on similar issues, such as the need to approximate aesthetics and teacher education, they offer different theoretical and methodological approaches. When these texts concern aesthetic education, what exactly are they talking about? What are the unique positions found in the understandings of different researchers about *aesthetic education*? What sort of teacher education is sought with these discussions? What are the differences in thinking about *aesthetic education* and *cultural education*,<sup>8</sup> or about *aesthetic formation* and *aesthetic education*, for example? Which particularities are inherent in each use of words involving *aesthetics*, *formation* or *education*?

These were the issues that led us to undertake an initial mapping of the main theoretical and methodological approaches involved in the debate about *aesthetic education and teaching practice*, based on the identification, survey and examination of master's and doctoral studies in the Capes thesis data base and in proceedings of events such as meetings of ANPEd and ANPAP (The National Association of Researchers in the Fine Arts) held in the past five years.<sup>9</sup>

We seek to understand how the theme “aesthetic education” enters the discourse in the educational field, in particular when it is linked to teaching practice. This involves questioning in the sense used by Foucault, to strip “the event of the extremely broad drapery that trivializes and rationalizes it” (Veyne, 2011, p. 17). On one hand this article adopts a theoretical and methodological option based on studies by Foucault and Nietzsche about the relations among art, aesthetics and ethics to consider a possible *aesthetic dimension of teacher education*. On the other hand, I understand the need to situate the research in the context of what has already been accomplished, scrutinizing approximations and distancings, and possibilities for theoretical compositions.

Thus, part of this study's theoretical component was a preliminary survey of the current epistemological context in Brazil regarding the theme “art, aesthetics and teacher education”, based on an analysis of its emergence, especially in theses and dissertations and proceedings of events of two important academic research entities (ANPEd and ANPAP), from 2006 to 2010. This admittedly arbitrary

7 The Education and Art study group began activities in ANPEd in 2006, and was consolidated as a working group in 2008.

8 TV Escola's Leap to the Future program (*Programa Salto para o Futuro*) presented, from June 21 to June 25, 2010, the series “Cultural Education for Teachers”, in which many of these subjects were debated. See Newsletter: <http://www.tvbrasil.org.br/fotos/salto/series/10343907-formacaocultural.pdf>

9 For this work, I acknowledge the contribution of undergraduate researchers who participated in the research in recent years: Rodrigo Scheeren, Álvaro Zacarias, Alves Vilaverde and Paloma Pereira Schneider.

chronological period was chosen given the breadth of the search and the results. To enhance the survey we also consulted articles in recently published journals and books that emphasize the theme. In addition, we continued theoretical study mainly of Nietzsche and Foucault's respective approaches to art and aesthetics, to deepen consideration of contemporary visual arts as powerful metaphors for thinking of concepts such as "life as a work of art", "aesthetics of existence", the relationship between art and life and between ethics and aesthetics, and as a sort of trigger for aesthetic teacher education, as discussed later in this text.

Initially, we observed an increase in academic discussions about aesthetic education and about teaching practice, although with a certain dispersion of concepts and authors cited. Our survey indicated that in the period under examination there was a predominance of theoretical discussions involving *aesthetic education* from the perspectives of phenomenology and social psychology, especially based on theorists such as Merleau Ponty, Vygotsky, Adorno, and related thinkers. We observed fewer philosophical discussions involving the Marxist perspective and so-called postmodern thinkers such as Deleuze, Foucault and, in some cases, Nietzsche. The mapping and a closer observation of these theoretical lines provided further material to researchers who are considering this discussion. While it is important to have wide theoretical debate around the subject, we observed a certain conceptual fragility and little theoretical consistency in many works. The meanings attributed to that which is conceptualized as *aesthetic education* are in some cases divergent and even contradictory, which implies equally differentiated educational actions.

If we understand that "language also constitutes practices" (Fischer, 2012, p. 74), the way that we name and conceptualize is closely connected to the choices and decisions about which educational actions involving *aesthetics* we can produce. We could think, as does Ormezzano (2007, p. 35), of types of education that would use art to minimize the needs of children in high-risk groups, to resocialize juvenile delinquents, or to recover the self-esteem of women who are victims of violence. In the context of *aesthetic education*, priority could be given to the "refinement of the senses" and "humanistic sensibilization and education of the subjects involved" (Neitzel *et al.*, 2012). Specifically in relation to *aesthetic teacher education*, it could be expected that, from contact with different artistic languages, teachers could be educated, humanized, and sensitized, and come to see students differently and, "as a consequence, make use of different teaching strategies, enabling all students to learn in a way that is directly connected with their educational context" (Neitzel; Soares, 2012, p. 126).

On the other hand, we find arguments that point to a close relation between aesthetics and ethics, in which the first is seen beyond the superficiality of beautification, but with a deeper dimension, which is able to expand our "moral sensibility" (Hermann, 2005). A confrontation with new narratives and different aesthetic experiences could modify our moral judgments in relation to the other and open a perspective to the world with an "eminently formative sense" (*idem*, p. 110). The expansion of the cultural repertoire and of aesthetic experiences, rather than being an end in itself, would aim at an "expansion of the subjects' capacity for guiding perceptions and understandings of the infinite possibilities of existence

“(Pereira, 2011, p. 119). *Life and art* are the point here of education that can provoke a certain *aesthetic attitude (idem)* not only in relation to that which may be called a “work of art”, but in relation to *life*, with its incongruities and banalities, which may include pedagogical practices, relations with students, or with the teachers’ own field of knowledge.

Given these different perspectives, what could constitute a process of aesthetic teacher education? Would it be enough to provide teachers with opportunities to go to museums, films and concerts as isolated activities, or to complement the educational context? What kind of attitude could a few isolated visits to cultural institutions provide teachers? What is really sought in studies that strengthen initiatives of this type? The improvement of taste? The refinement of certain sensibilities directed only to the self? A pure deciphering of artistic works? Going beyond this investment in *aesthetic education*, which may be easier to adhere to, we could also think of some experiments like those carried out with pedagogy students related to movies as reported by Fischer (2014). Beyond clichés present in film culture and in the form of consuming moving images, they sought to disturb, create discomfort, inspire a shift in perspective:

Differently from the practice of seeking “what the author wanted to say”, when considering works of art (poems, novels, paintings, drawings, films), with the desire to decipher enigmas of artistic creation, maybe what we need is exactly the opposite: a willingness to face enigmas, surrender to them and accept that there is often nothing to decipher; we must live the beauty of that which “does not tell us everything” so clearly. (Fischer, 2014, p. 49).

Nevertheless, many of the ideas about *aesthetic education* in the works analyzed have a prevalence towards a type of education that is strongly connected to the concept of *aesthetics* as contact with “the beautiful” or primarily with the formal learning and reading of works of art. We believe, like Favaretto (2010, p. 232), that “the experience of art and its possible role in education is not in comprehension, nor is it in artistic, formal or perceptive taming, although it may contain all of this”. Thus, we call for a broadening of concepts and beliefs about what we understand as *aesthetics*, distrusting the mode by which we disguise it with that which is understood as “beauty”. The deepening of these issues and an understanding of the differences in the discourse about what we call aesthetic education, certainly provide material for stronger actions in relation to initial and continuous education of teachers involving these themes.

In our survey on *aesthetic education for teachers*, we found several studies published in books or journals that offer statistics about cultural or aesthetic education for teachers, such as Nogueira (2008), Neitzel, Carvalho (2011, 2012), Zanella *et al.* (2007), and Almeida (2010). In general, the surveys carried out by these investigations in different regions of Brazil (the South, Southeast and Midwest) reveal a dismal scenario in relation to the artistic and aesthetic experiences of teachers, which, to some extent, reinforces the broad survey conducted by the Ministry of Culture about the supply and demand for culture among Brazilians (Cultura em



Números, 2010, p. 147). This survey found that broadcast TV is the main *item of cultural consumption* of the majority of the national population living in capital cities (approximately 88%). Concerning surveys of teachers, based on theoretical-methodological matrices with distinct analyses, we observed similar situations, as described below (my emphasis):

The results of the studies mentioned here allow assuming that the cultural experiences of most Brazilian teachers are not different from the experiences of students, since both share the same amorphous culture disseminated by the cultural industry via mass media. Thus, it is worth questioning: *how can teachers broaden the cultural baggage of students if both have similar repertoires of aesthetic experiences?* (Almeida, 2010, p. 17, my emphasis)

After analysis of data from the questionnaires and interviews, I think reflection is required, given their various readings, since there is something that is surprising: *the understanding among the teachers surveyed that art and culture are superfluous articles. Interesting, pleasurable, yet superfluous* (Nogueira, 2008, p. 71-72, my emphasis).

We observed that pedagogical knowledge is not restricted to the initial and continuous education of teachers, and that, beyond them the effective exercise of teaching and their personal experiences are related in the constitution of teacher knowledge. With regard to *aesthetics*, we observed that there are important elements to be discussed and systematized in the spaces of continuous teacher education, in view of the diversity of education and *the fragility of an intentional education in this context* (Neitzel; Carvalho, 2011).

Given this context and considering the relevance of these indicators, we think it is necessary and important to go beyond statistics and surveys on cultural or aesthetic teacher education, to create strategies for *aesthetic education* both in the context of initial education (in Teacher Education Programs in various fields) and in continuous education (in courses for teachers who work in schools). They should preferably relate more with the art of our time or be on the “horizon of contemporary transformations, of criticism of illusions of modernity, of the reorientation of assumptions” (Favaretto, 2010, p. 229). In this sense, and considering different theoretical frameworks and concepts regarding *aesthetics and education*, we must ask: what qualifications do we assign to a type of education designated as *aesthetic*?

## TEACHER EDUCATION AND “AESTHETICS” AS AN ADJECTIVE

During the search of the Capes theses database, and of the proceedings of ANPEd and ANPAP events, we observed several errors in the elaboration of the available abstracts, as well as a failure to clearly present the research objectives or the main theoretical framework used. Thus, this search required more time and



effort than initially planned. For these searches, we covered the years from 2006 to 2010, initially using the following keywords: *aesthetic education*, *cultural education*, *aesthetic experience*, *formation of the senses*, *education of the senses and contemporary art and education*. Since many works appeared that did not address the precise interest of this study, we restricted the search by using the descriptors: *aesthetic education* and *aesthetic experience*, relating them to teacher education, which yielded a lower number of studies. Then, by using abstracts only as an initial shortcut to reach the studies, which were then read more carefully, we initially selected 122 works (theses and dissertations) published from 2006 to 2010, of which 61 studies were left to be analyzed more carefully (49 master's dissertations and 12 doctoral theses). Of this group, 22 could not be accessed in their full version, for various reasons. Our interest in this survey was essentially in the opportunity to identify possible interpretations of the terms *aesthetic education* and *aesthetic experience*, observing how they are configured within a context in which contemporary art is considered as a potential tool in teacher education and teaching practice.

It is important to mention that the “descriptor” most often found was *aesthetic experience*, followed by *aesthetic formation* and *aesthetic education*. These studies were concentrated mainly in Brazil's Southeast and Southern regions, with fewer in the Midwest and Northeast, and no work was found for the North. About 75% of the researchers were female. This distribution of studies by region and gender reflects the context of educational research in Brazil, as can be observed at the work sessions of ANPEd meetings.

It is also observed that the discussion on *aesthetic education* refers to some authors who it seems must be quoted and to books that are not very recent.<sup>10</sup> In general, the most quoted authors are the Brazilians Ana Mae Barbosa (by 24 studies) and João Francisco Duarte Jr. (by 17 studies), with the works: *A imagem no ensino da arte e Arte-educação do Brasil*, by the first author, and *Fundamentos estéticos da educação*, *Por que arte educação e Sentido dos Sentidos*, by the second author. We observed that the discussion in some of these books is more methodological or historical, addressing the theme itself only tangentially. For example, the books quoted written by Ana Mae Barbosa offer a historical retrospective of art education in Brazil and an introduction to methodological approaches to its teaching, with an emphasis on reading works of art and literacy in this context. The defense of art in school curriculums involves a discussion about aesthetics – with an emphasis for example on the “intertwining of aesthetic standards and the judgment of values”

10 The books by Ana Mae Barbosa, *A imagem no ensino da arte: anos oitenta e novos tempos* (São Paulo, Perspectiva; Porto Alegre, Fundação Iochpe, 1991) and *Arte-Educação no Brasil* (São Paulo, Perspectiva, 1985), were originally published, respectively, in 1991 and 1985. The books by João Francisco Duarte Jr., *Fundamentos estéticos da educação* (Campinas, Papirus, 1981), *Por que arte educação* (Campinas, Papirus, 1983) and *Sentido dos sentidos* (Curitiba, Criar, 2001).

(Barbosa, 1991, p. 34) – or the access to “knowledge of art and history”, without which the “awareness of national identity” would not be possible (*idem*, p. 33).<sup>11</sup>

From another perspective, the discussion about *aesthetic education* is more explicit in the books by João Francisco Duarte Jr., although his works have different emphases. Duarte affirms that the essence of an aesthetic dimension of education would be to “lead learners to create the meanings and values that underlie their action in their cultural environment, so there is a coherence, harmony, between the feeling, thinking, and doing.” Here, the word aesthetics is associated with “a certain *harmony*, a certain *balance* of elements” (Duarte Jr., 1988, p. 18, emphasis by the author). Years later, the discussion about aesthetic education combined with that which the author calls “education of the sensitive” or an “education of feelings”, in contrast to what he calls “distortion”/ caused in the school environment, where the effort “has been restricted to the transfer of theoretical information about art, established artists and artistic objects” (Duarte Jr., 2001, p. 13). The author calls for a return to the Greek root of the word *aesthetics*, indicating “the primary human capacity to feel oneself and the world in an integrated whole” (*idem, ibidem*).

What is important to observe is that, although both these authors defend the presence of art in school education, they use different approaches, based on quite different discursive strategies and different approaches to *aesthetic education*. A more detailed analysis of the reception and interpretation of these authors in recent studies about art and education, or more specifically *aesthetic education*, is beyond the intentions of this article.<sup>12</sup> However, it is important to question the content of the arguments concerning an *aesthetic education* that emphasizes, on the one hand, the knowledge of art and, on the other, highlights the importance of the refinement of the senses. Do these concerns really represent positions on opposite poles?

In our survey, we observed little philosophical insertion of researchers who, in general, seek readings that serve to intermediate more complex theoretical discussions, and no direct reading of philosophers who deal with art and aesthetics. The philosophers most often quoted in the theses and dissertations to discuss *aesthetic education* appear, in the following order: Schiller, Vygotsky, Merleau Ponty, and Adorno. Foucault and Nietzsche are much less quoted. We found few references to Foucault’s later works that address the *aesthetics of existence* or the relations between ethics and aesthetics, such as *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* (Foucault, 2004a). The

11 The book *A imagem no ensino da arte: anos oitenta e novos tempos*, by Ana Mae Barbosa, had a revised and updated edition in 2009. In this text, we refer to the original edition, which is often quoted in the studies found in the survey.

12 It is important to point out that in this article we restrict the discussion to the books of those authors most cited in the theses and dissertations analyzed. There are other works by Ana Mae Barbosa that discuss aesthetic education, even if not centrally, such as the book “John Dewey e o ensino da arte no Brasil” (Barbosa, 2001), which addresses the influence of the American author on the concepts of art education in Brazil, especially in the period known as the *Escola Nova*. One of the most important works of John Dewey, *Art as Experience*, originally published in 1934, had its first Portuguese translation published in Brazil only in 2010, and did not significantly influence the studies found in the survey.

most quoted works by this author in the studies surveyed are *Microphysics of Power* (Foucault, 2001), *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault, 2002), and *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (Foucault, 1987).

We also observed that, in relation to the theoretical affiliation, the production is concentrated in certain regions. Foucault was more commonly mentioned in studies from universities in the South and Southeast<sup>13</sup> (Universidade de São Paulo – UNICID; Universidade Estadual de Campinas – UNICAMP; Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul – UFRGS; Universidade de São Paulo – USP; Universidade de Passo Fundo – UPF; Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina – UFSC), similar to Nietzsche (UFSC, Unicamp, UFRGS). Vigostky was most often mentioned in studies from Santa Catarina (Universidade do Vale de Itajaí – UNIVALI – and UFSC), and Universidade Federal de Santa Maria (UFSM), Universidade Metodista da Piracicaba (UNIMEP), Universidade Federal Fluminense (UFF) and USP.

In addition to these data, we found various uses and configurations of the word *aesthetics* in the studies, used either as a noun or as an adjective to describe education. We began to make an interesting collection<sup>14</sup> of these uses that reveals much about the different understandings of what may be called aesthetics: aesthetic literacy, aesthetic appreciations, aesthetic comprehension, aesthetic communication, aesthetic awareness, aesthetic things, aesthetic dimension, aesthetic education, biocosmic aesthetics, aesthetics of existence, formation aesthetics, aesthetic emotion, aesthetic intelligence, aesthetic practices, aesthetic quality, aesthetic reaction, aesthetic reversal, aesthetic sensitivity, aesthetic experience, aesthetic ideologies, aesthetic indicator, aesthetic concern, romantic aesthetics, aesthetic judgment, aesthetic field, bourgeois aesthetics, subjective aestheticization, aesthetic values, aesthetic-cultural imaginary, aesthetic knowledge, aesthetic operations, aesthetic conceptions, aestheticization of life, aestheticization of the industrialized world, aesthetic object, aesthetic satisfaction, aesthetic being, aesthetic theories, aesthetic creation, aesthetic vulgarity, to perceive aesthetically, aesthetic valuation, aesthetic insight, aesthetic art, aesthetic value, mass aesthetics, aesthetic act, aesthetic sense, aesthetic thinking, contemporary aesthetics, aesthetic assessment, aesthetic stages, aesthetic development, aesthetic sentiment, aesthetic point of view, aesthetic skills, aesthetic disgust, aesthetic intentionality, extra-aesthetics, neuroaesthetics, negative aesthetics, aesthetic interchange, aesthetic phenomenon, aesthetic attitude, aesthetic individualism, aesthetic expressiveness, philosophy of aesthetics, aesthetic vocabulary and punk aesthetic.

13 The concentration of Brazilian educational research involving the theoretical contribution of Foucault among researchers from institutions in the extreme South was previously observed in an article by Aquino (2013).

14 This collection was initiated by a student in the Visual Arts Teacher Education Program who is researcher with a scientific initiation grant, Álvaro Vilaverde, and resulted in a presentation at the 2013 UFRGS Undergraduate Research Convention, entitled “O substantivo ‘estética’: adjetivações para a formação docente” [the noun ‘aesthetics’: adjectivations for teacher education].

We have sought to perceive how each linguistic combination adheres to certain discourses about a type of education that is allied to aesthetics and that generates concrete proposals or work projects with teachers. Everything that we call aesthetic education does not always refer to the same thing, and may have very different implications and effects.

We could, thus, preliminarily, for example, associate the combinations “aesthetic emotion” and “aesthetic experience” with the assumptions of Vygotsky; “bourgeois aesthetics” as a Marxist-oriented formulation, or “negative aesthetics”, as an expression from the theoretical discussions of Adorno. Or we can associate the terms “aesthetics of existence” and “life as aesthetic phenomenon” to problematizations raised by Foucault and Nietzsche. More than just a play on words, it is about thinking of the effects that these words, and the concepts to which they refer, have on what we think of as *aesthetic education*. Using Paul Veyne’s (2011) argument about theorizations of Foucault’s discourse, we could say that we are so restricted to certain discourses, “as if in falsely transparent aquariums” (*idem*, p. 25), that we ignore what these aquariums are or even that they exist.

We can extract from these expressions formed by the word aesthetics some recurring themes: the connection between art and life and a strong questioning about how sensitivity is separated from rationality in modern societies. These relations are extremely helpful for considering the teacher education processes. However, it is necessary to perceive the differences in relation to the concept of subject involved in each educational proposal inspired by the discourse of these authors, as well as in relation to the world in which action will be conducted based on these assumptions. “Aesthetics of existence” and “life as aesthetic phenomenon” are different, for example, from “transforming the world”. The subject inscribed in each of these discourses may have greater or lesser openness to the contradictions of existence, be more or less subject to certain regulations and regulatory practices. Political and ethical issues are involved in each of these appropriations of aesthetics, although they are presented differently in relation to the prospects of acting in the world, sustaining educational processes with different purposes.

Without intending to assess the different formulations of what aesthetic education for teachers might mean, we point to expectations and beliefs about educational processes involving the different assumptions that must be considered. What art and aesthetics, after all, are we talking about when we refer to *aesthetic education*?

Much of the discussion about *aesthetic education* refrains from approaching contemporary artistic productions, and does not address the profound transformations that art has undergone since at least the second half of the twentieth century. An excerpt from the opening text of the cultural program of the 36th National Meeting of ANPEd<sup>15</sup>, entitled “Art and Education”, illustrates this point well:

15 The 36th National Meeting of ANPEd took place from September 29 to October 2, 2013, at the Universidade Federal de Goiás, Goiânia, GO.

According to the good old Lukacsian tradition, the great work of art synthesizes not only the past and the present of mankind, but also its prospects for future development. Therefore, the knowledge that it provides is something essential for our individual and collective existence. ‘The effectiveness of high art lies precisely in the fact that the new, the original, the significant obtains victory over the old experiences of the receptive subject’. (ANPEd, Programação Cultural, 2013).

While the emphasis given to arts at events the size of the National Meetings of ANPEd is commendable, when considering that “art educates as much as our texts, our conferences, our theoretical debates” (*idem*), we still observe adherence to modern categories such as “high art” and “originality”, which have been seriously questioned by contemporary modes of producing and conceiving art in our time (Danto, 2006; Belting, 2012). Therefore, how can we think about the conciliation between the need for education in the aesthetic realm with art that more closely expresses life today?

## WHAT IF CONTEMPORARY ARTISTIC PRODUCTIONS PERVADED AESTHETIC EDUCATION? OR: WHAT TEACHERS CAN LEARN FROM CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS?

Aphorism 299 of *The Gay Science*, by Nietzsche, asks us what, after all, we should learn from artists:

*What should we learn from artists* – What are the means we have to make things beautiful, attractive, desirable to us, when they are not? [...] Distance ourselves away from things until we do not see much of them and our eyes have to gather so much *to see them still* – or see things sideways and as in a frame – or arrange them in such a way that they partially obscure each other and allow only glimpses in perspectives – or contemplate them through a colored glass or in the light of the setting sun – or provide them with skin and surface that are not transparent: all of this we should learn from artists, and in the rest be wiser than them. Because in them this subtle ability ends, typically, where art ends and life begins; *we*, however, want to be poets-authors of our lives, beginning by minimum and everyday things. (Nietzsche, 2001, p. 202 - § 299).

The learning to which Nietzsche refers would be an artistic outlet to human suffering considering the “death” of God (Dias, 2011, p. 97). Without the metaphysical consolation of the divine explanation and origin of all things, what is the essence of human existence? The philosopher finds some responses and possibilities in art, which affirms life with all its intensity, with all its power and creative force. Somehow, artists teach us this “artistic distance” in relation to what we see, or this creative attitude in relation to the world and to our own life that could enable us to be “poets-authors of our lives”. The art to which Nietzsche refers does not always

refer to the art of works of art and of artists, but to an “inherently creative activity, an artistic force present not only in man but in all things” (Mosé, 2005, p. 79). Yet artists, and particularly some contemporary artists, offer this kind of aesthetic spark that can turn everyday experiences into art. These are artists who make art so related to ourselves and to everyday things that “it does not even look like art” (Ferverza, 2005). For example, we mention artists such as Sophie Calle, Emily Jacir, Joseph Beuys, William Kentridge, Elida Tessler and Cildo Meireles.

When before the aesthetic experiments these artists provoke, to what extent do we let ourselves be enraptured, involved as we are in a world that demands from us a certain rationality and sobriety? And what opportunities does our education provide us to experience the fascinating and contradictory “madness” provided by art?

Thinking about these issues that directly affect someone deeply involved simultaneously with the world of art and with teacher education (in both continuous education and initial education, in the context of teaching accreditation courses), we see that because teaching is immersed in a prescriptive and sensible pedagogic discourse, it barely allows itself to be influenced by artistic provocations. It is in the context of this discussion that some questions are continuously revised: how can art and aesthetic experience nourish the constitution of teaching? Can art (and especially contemporary art) enhance the creative nature of teaching? Is *artistic teaching* possible? (Loponte, 2005, 2013).

This article addresses these issues, by presenting new elements from recent experiences with research and education. It is in this sense that we address the discussion about teaching as an *expanded field*, to borrow an expression coined by art critic Rosalind Krauss and that has been employed in the arts for some time (Krauss, 2008).

In an article originally published in 1979, Krauss discussed how one of the visual arts, sculpture, can expand its significance in relation to the traditional associations of sculpture to busts, monuments or portraits of personalities. The concept *sculpture* becomes pliable and elastic by including works such as an oversized installation on a mountaintop made of 71 construction beams that were dropped by a crane from a height of 45 meters into a ditch full of wet cement – which was called Beam Drop Inhotim by Chris Burden. It also includes sculptures made of unusual combinations of materials such as lycra tulle, sand or cloves such as ship sculptures by Ernesto Neto, who creates spaces that can be penetrated by the viewer or are objects for contemplation.<sup>16</sup>

Contemporary artistic experiments have increasingly challenged any pretense of universal categorization and rigid categories such as sculpture, painting, drawing and photography. More than so-called universal categories, these words refer to a group of singularities, tearing down conventions, and reinventing and expanding old notions about what is an artistic object or action.

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16 The works cited are part of the collection of the Instituto Inhotim de Arte Contemporânea, located in Brumadinho (MG); more information at: [www.inhotim.org](http://www.inhotim.org)

Krauss' concept has been associated with the curatorial proposal of some exhibitions, such as *Expanded Horizon* in Santander Cultural, Porto Alegre, 2010, which featured works by artists who oscillate the horizons of contemporary artistic creation. More recently, the term "expanded field" was paraphrased by Pablo Helguera, educational curator of the 8th Mercosur Biennial<sup>17</sup>, in his proposal for "pedagogy as an expanded field", conceiving pedagogy as a territory consisting of different regions:

In the expanded field of pedagogy in art, the practice of education is no longer restricted to its traditional activities, which are teaching (for artists), knowledge (for art historians and curators), and interpretation (for the general public). Traditional pedagogy does not recognize three things: first, the creative achievement of educating; second, the fact that the collective construction of an artistic environment, with works of art and ideas, is a collective construction of knowledge; and, third, the fact that knowledge about art does not end in the knowledge of the work of art, it is a tool for understanding the world. (Helguera, 2011, p. 12).

We understand that the approximation between visual arts and, more specifically, between contemporary art and teacher education does not necessarily have to happen only by means of "teaching of", with a focus on methodological strategies to address the theme in art classes.<sup>18</sup> The approach produced here is of another order, an aims to create possibly contagious elements at the core of this education.

## CONTEMPORARY ART, TEACHING, AND BASIC EDUCATION

While the field of education seems somewhat impermeable to the provocations of contemporary artistic productions, the opposite does not seem to be true, as we can observe in some educational proposals of contemporary art exhibitions, such as the latest editions of the Mercosur Biennial and the São Paulo Biennial, which incorporated the role of pedagogical curators,<sup>19</sup> among other actions. Based on these major exhibitions, some artists have performed "pedagogic residences" and other activities of approximation with the public, as we have observed in the artist in residence program known as *Artistas em disponibilidade* [Available Artists]

17 The 8th Mercosur Visual Arts Biennial exhibition had the theme "Geopoetic Experiments" and was held in Porto Alegre, RS, from September 10 to November 15, 2011. See the website: <http://bientalmercosul.siteprofissional.com/>

18 For contemporary and emerging approaches to art education see Barbosa (2005).

19 The role of "educational curator" appeared in Brazil especially in the 6th, 7th, and 8th editions of the Mercosur Biennial, held in Porto Alegre in 2007, 2009, and 2011, and was fulfilled, respectively, by artists Luis Camnitzer, Marina de Caro, and Pablo Helguera. The São Paulo Biennial has adopted the practice since its 29th edition in 2010, with Stela Barbieri in the function. The proposal, according to Camnitzer (2009), is that this "pedagogic curator" or "educational curator" act in conjunction with the main curator of the exhibitions.



held on the occasion of the 7th Mercosur Biennial and in which 14 Spanish and Portuguese speaking artists and social actors were invited to participate in 30-day residencies in Porto Alegre and in nine regions of Rio Grande do Sul state, involving schools, teachers and communities. The program allowed conducting an experiment of participation and production of artistic and community projects, designed and developed by artists in collaboration with the educational system of each region and the Biennial itself (Caro, 2009).

On the contemporary international scene, Claire Bishop (2012) points out that in the first decade of the twenty-first century a growing number of educational projects were undertaken by artists and curators. Bishop emphasizes that both artists and curators have increasingly committed to projects that employ educational methods and forms such as conferences, seminars, libraries, reading rooms, workshops, publications and even schools.<sup>20</sup> She points out:

This has produced, in parallel to the growth of museum education departments, whose activities are no longer restricted to classes and workshops to enhance viewers' understanding of a particular exhibition or collection, but may now include research networks with universities, symposia reflecting on their practice, and interdisciplinary conferences whose scope extends beyond the enhancement of a museum's exhibition program. In museums and art schools throughout Europe (and increasingly in the US), conferences have been held to re-examine the policies and potential of art education, while numerous art magazines have produced special issues examining the intersection of art, education and performance (*idem*, p. 242, tradução minha).

In Brazil, the relation between artistic institutions and school audience has been enhanced by permanent or sporadic educational actions that encompass teacher education about specific themes of the exhibitions, as addressed by authors such as Barbosa, Coutinho and Sales (2005), or through discussions about mediations between art and the public (Martins, 2005). However, I believe that the approximation of contemporary problematizations from the field of the arts is still incipient in the field of teacher education and pedagogical thinking in Brazil.

In this regard, the launching of the project *Mais Cultura nas Escolas* [More Culture in Schools] in 2012, connected with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Culture was very auspicious. It is supported by federal funding for schools that already participated in the projects *Mais Educação* [More Education] and *Ensino Médio Inovador*<sup>21</sup> [Innovative High School] and that would develop Cultural Activity Plans in conjunction with educational projects and with the thematic lines of the *More Culture in the Schools* program. The project website

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20 It is noteworthy that the practice developed by artists in educational spaces outside the contexts of large exhibitions is still controversial among artists themselves, although this is an emerging approach, as pointed out by Bishop (2012).

21 Programs currently conducted by the Ministry of Education. See the description of these projects at: <http://portal.mec.gov.br/>

indicates that the project's goal is to "promote the encounter of cultural initiatives and public schools from across Brazil, democratizing access to culture and broadening the cultural repertoire of students, teachers and school communities of basic education".<sup>22</sup> One of the main themes for the development of the Cultural Activities Plan in schools, as determined by resolution/CD/FNDE No. 30, August 3, 2012, which regulates the allocation of resources to the project, is directly related to the questions developed here:

residency of artists for research and experimentation in schools: proposals with artists from the field of contemporary art in different segments and languages, that through artistic residency promote continuous cultural and aesthetic exchange between the proposing artist and the school. The actions proposed should break the socially determined limits in artistic languages, between consecrated art and popular culture, valuing innovation, while simultaneously making schools spaces for artistic reflection and experimentation (Brasil, 2012).

I emphasize the possibility created for artists to conduct artistic residencies and research activities in schools. As we have seen, daily life and its peculiarities are some of the main raw materials in contemporary artistic production. For artists of the late 20th century, according to Bourriaud, society became "an immense catalog of narrative plots" (Bourriaud, 2009, p. 83). Consider the work *Le grand Troc*, by French artist Nicolas Floch, [entitled a project for collective desires] or the action by Ricardo Basbaum around an object and a proposal: *Would you like to participate in an artistic experiment?*<sup>23</sup> The projects of both artists focus on the experiences and desires of the participants so "that the limits of educational systems and artistic processes become indistinguishable, without knowing if it is in one field or another" (Basbaum, 2009, p. 66).

To inhabit a school is to live with countless and endless narrative plots. Hallways, classrooms, faculty rooms, schoolyards, cafeterias, offices and entrances are scenarios for teachers, students and parents who at times find these spaces hospitable to their desires, will and mutual learning or as places where they do not want to be. They may be spaces of fights, scheming, frustrations, hopes, encounters, dramas, tragedies, joys and epiphanies. Schools are great narrative spaces open to being reinvented and reconsidered through artistic actions.

The experience in supervision of internships in visual arts in public schools of a state capital in Brazil includes a certain shift from current pedagogical practices of teachers, not only in the field of art. Despite progress in research about art and education, evident in the growth in scientific publications and presentations at important entities such as ANPAP and ANPED,<sup>24</sup> we still often find practices that

22 See the website: <http://www.cultura.gov.br/maisculturanascolas>

23 Concerning the work of these artists, see the websites: <http://www.nicolasfloch.net/> and <http://www.nbp.pro.br/>.

24 Especially in the Education and Visual Arts Committee (ANPAP) and Education and Art WG (ANPED).

focus on mechanical exercises of copying, coloring-book drawings or classes based on holiday crafts. As an example of work with art found in schools, we point to an exam in “artistic education” from a 6th grade public school class in Porto Alegre given in May 2013 by a teacher trained in the field of art. The test includes questions such as: “The result of mixing blue and red is \_\_\_\_\_”; “Orange is formed by yellow and \_\_\_\_\_”; “What is the function of body painting for indigenous people?”; “Draw a rectangle that is 5 cm wide and 1.5 cm high”.

In some ways this test synthesizes current school thinking, a limited approach to knowledge, connected to a model of “schooled pedagogical rationality” (Jódar; Gomez, 2004, p. 137). Colors and their infinite possibilities in the arts become elements of a mathematical operation; indigenous body painting, distant from any social, political and anthropological context, serves the need to address a commemorative date (“indigenous people’s day” had been recently celebrated), and not a broader multicultural discussion. Questions such as “what is it for”, “what is it”, “what are the similarities and differences” illustrate stagnant and predetermined relations. Finally, the technical skill of using a ruler is required.

At times, schools “dissect and stuff” knowledge to the point it is no longer recognizable. What is there in this school instrument that relates to the overflowing possibilities of thought offered by the arts? Perhaps the most disheartening aspect, especially for those who have worked in the field for many years, is that these situations are repeated infinitely (going far beyond art classes) and many students – resigned and almost anesthetized by cliché thinking – accept the tasks without second thought, because, in general, similarly to teachers, they have no experiences or opportunities that allow them to reflect and question these practices. We have no intention of blaming the teacher who prepared the test, or the school that legitimizes such practices, but want to highlight and understand a little of the educational landscape in which we operate, by identifying urgent needs in the field of education. Fortunately, more thought-provoking experiments in art education are being conducted, with public recognition,<sup>25</sup> resulting from the work of education professionals who have been engaged in reinventing art actions in schools.

To consider the possibility of schools as “space[s] for artistic experimentation and reflection” can certainly point to new modes of conceiving a decaying school structure. However, we are concerned about how teachers can receive (or reject, or disregard) these proposals, without proper education and adequate preparation. This work requires openness to contemporary artistic expressions, which transcend the specific education of school art teachers or the limited time in the curricular for art (usually one or two 50-minute periods per week – when they exist at all). What is at stake here is precisely the types of teaching practices and extended or expanded education in how to use them – based on new thought processes constituted from contemporary artistic poetics – which are the focus of the discussions on aesthetic education. How can teaching practices (and the processes of initial and continuing

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25 In this regard, see the works xxx highlighted in recent years by the Arte na Escola Cidadã award, of the Instituto Iochpe: <http://artenaescola.org.br/premio/>

teacher education) be conceived as an “expanded field” that can be nourished by provocations from the arts, in particular from contemporary visual arts?

In this sense, we have tried to identify spaces for the aesthetic dimension in the context of teacher education, with increasing emphasis on contemporary perspectives of *aesthetics*, according to which modern notions of “beauty” and aesthetic appreciation are not so central (Hermann, 2005, 2010). Thus, we should go beyond issues that have been pointed out in the recent research found in our survey and seek strategies for aesthetic teacher education that consider the art of our time, particularly contemporary art. Contemporary art is understood here not only as another style or “ism”, but as a mode of thinking that comprises and does not exclude other forms of art, from different times, places, and cultures. We must also emphasize that we do not appropriate the main contemporary artistic concepts that are focused on, in an effort to create teaching methodologies or pedagogic approaches in art classes. On the other hand, we have tried to think *based on* contemporary artistic productions, creating our own “collection of examples” (De Duve, 2009) to foster the *teaching practice as an expanded field*, which is more open to questioning established pedagogical proposals, to the invention of educational practices that are contemporary to the times we live in, to the new relations between schools and the production of knowledge, between teachers and students with whom we work, considering unusual affinities between fields of knowledge, without fearing possible tensions that may exist between art and teaching.

## WHAT AESTHETIC EDUCATION FOR TEACHERS?

Considering the pedagogical context observed, we can identify the emergence of a discussion about *aesthetic education* in educational research in Brazil, although it is indecisive and contradictory. Nevertheless, everything that we call *aesthetic education* can actually point to various teacher education methodologies and indicate different theoretical paths. We observed that, above all, the use of the adjective *aesthetic* to complement education is generally associated with a certain ideal of beauty we inherited long ago, from the earliest uses of the term. If, however, we approach Rancière’s (2013) understanding of aesthetics as the “name of the category that, for two centuries, has designated in the West the sensitive fabric and form of intelligibility of what we call ‘Art’” (Rancière, 2013, p. 9), we can question the imprisonment of a theoretical appropriation linked to aesthetics, to certain standards of beauty, and to an imperviousness to new “forms of intelligibility” instigated by contemporary artistic productions. We could thus claim the liberation of the word *aesthetics* from beauty, to move toward an experience triggered by new modes of producing and looking based on art, which can even include our daily banalities and (why not?) pedagogical practices?

We, as inhabitants of this epoch that is so prolific in images and new and bold aesthetic arrangements, still feel traumatized by the new problematics involving the definition of art, at least since the advent of the readymades of Duchamp. Since then, “a banal or trivial object is miraculously transformed into a ‘work of art’ by the grace of the baptism of the ‘artist’ and the ‘confirmation’ of the institu-

tion. The miracle comes from little: just a shift in the boundaries of art” (Jimenez, 1999, p. 384). Undoubtedly, the demystification and desacralization of that which is considered art poses new challenges to theories about *aesthetics* and, therefore, to our wishes regarding a type of aesthetically-contaminated *teacher education*. As Jimenez affirmed (*idem*, p. 388), the “philosophy of art is forced to renounce its past ambition: that of a general aesthetic theory that embraces the universe of sensitivity, the imaginary, and creation”. Similarly, if we seek a type of education that is associated with that which we understand as *aesthetics*, more than ever we must let go of universal pretensions of beauty and sensitivity and be attentive to the art that is closest to the complexity and dissonance of the time in which we live.

If teacher education is able to expand in other directions that are less rational and prescriptive, perhaps we can more affirmatively address the aridness of many common school practices, allowing schools and classes to become fertile “spaces for experimentation.”

We understand the *grülp indetermination* that *aesthetics* and its theoretical adjectives convey, which can help us, to some extent, perceive beyond the unquestionable need for a type of teacher education that is aesthetically anchored in the distinct effects and possibilities of the various theoretical formulations available for consideration. To adhere to one theoretical formulation or another involves a choice; to think rigorously based on them – and especially based on art produced in our time – is an urgent need.

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