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Divisões espaciais do trabalho. O caso da mediação cultural em museus e instituições de arte europeus

Spatial Divisions of Labor. The Case of Education in European Art Museums and Institutions

División espacial del trabajo. El caso de la mediación cultural en museos e instituciones artísticas en Europa

Divisions spatiales du travail. Le cas de la médiation culturelle dans les musées et institutions d'art européens

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Resumo

Este artigo adota uma abordagem espacial feminista crítica para analisar a organização do trabalho no campo da arte e a sua hierarquia patriarcalmente estruturada. Baseando-se nas relações sociais de género como um eixo significativo na formação de estruturas espaciais de produção/reprodução, argumenta-se que a marginalização física do trabalho de mediação no museu pode ser vista como a enunciação espacial de uma divisão de trabalho de género. Esta marginalização é recontextualizada no âmbito de processos mais amplos de divisão do trabalho, que refletem as desigualdades estruturais de raça, classe e género que persistem nas instituições culturais europeias. Propõe-se, então, uma genealogia alternativa e repolitizada da mediação museológica como tentativa de instituir de forma diferente, que restitua este campo de prática no âmbito das relações de poder e das tensões que

atravessam os museus e as instituições de arte, frequentemente apresentados como espaços neutros em que as relações são normalizadas e pacificadas.

Palavras-chave: Mediação artística e cultural, museus, trabalho reprodutivo, feminismo marxista, estudos espaciais críticos

Abstract

This paper takes a feminist critical spatial approach to analyze the organization of labor in the art field and its hierarchy structured in a patriarchal way. Drawing on the social relations of gender as a significant axis in the formation of spatial structures of production/reproduction, it is argued that the physical peripheralization of education work in the museum can be seen as a spatial enunciation of a gender division of labor. This peripheralization is recontextualized within broader processes of labor division, which reflects the structural inequalities of race, class and gender that persist among European cultural institutions. An alternative repoliticized genealogy of gallery and museum education as attempts to instituting otherwise is then proposed, which resituates this field of practice within the power relations and tensions that cross museum, galleries, and art institutions, often presented as neutral spaces in which relations are normalized and pacified.

Keywords: Museum and gallery education, reproductive labor, Marxist feminism, critical spatial studies

Resumen

Este artículo adopta un enfoque espacial feminista crítico para analizar la organización del trabajo en el campo del arte y su jerarquía estructurada patriarcalmente. Partiendo de las relaciones sociales de género como eje significativo en la formación de estructuras espaciales de producción/reproducción, se argumenta que la marginación física del trabajo de mediación en el museo puede verse como la enunciación espacial de una división del trabajo en función del género. Esta marginación se recontextualiza dentro de procesos más amplios de división del trabajo, que reflejan las desigualdades estructurales de raza, clase y género que persisten en las instituciones culturales europeas. A continuación, se propone una genealogía

alternativa y repolitizada de la mediación museística como intento de instituir de otro modo, que resitúa este campo de práctica dentro de las relaciones de poder y las tensiones que atraviesan los museos y las instituciones artísticas, presentados a menudo como espacios neutrales en los que las relaciones se normalizan y pacifican.

Palabras clave: Mediación artística y cultural, museos, trabajo reproductivo, feminismo marxista, estudios espaciales críticos.

Résumé

Cet article adopte une approche spatiale critique féministe pour analyser l'organisation du travail dans le champ de l'art et sa hiérarchie structurée de manière patriarcale. En s'appuyant sur les relations sociales de genre comme axe significatif dans la formation des structures spatiales de production/reproduction, il est soutenu que la marginalisation physique du travail de médiation dans le musée peut être considérée comme l'énonciation spatiale d'une division genrée du travail. Cette marginalisation est recontextualisée dans des processus plus larges de division du travail, qui reflètent les inégalités structurelles de race, de classe et de genre qui persistent dans les institutions culturelles européennes. Une généalogie alternative repolitisée de la médiation muséale en tant que tentatives d'instituer autrement est alors proposée, qui resitue ce champ de pratique dans les relations de pouvoir et les tensions qui traversent les musées et les institutions artistiques, souvent présentés comme des espaces neutres dans lesquels les relations sont normalisées et pacifiées.

Mots-clés: Médiation culturelle des arts, musées, travail reproductif, féminisme marxiste, études spatiales critiques

Introduction

Peripherality and marginality are persistent features of the physical spaces dedicated to education in art museums and galleries. While the institution's architecture is centered on exhibitions, as an enunciation of the curators' vision, the rooms devoted to education, as well as educators' offices, are often located in basements or are relegated to hallways, small sides, or end rooms (Wild Czajkowski & Hudson Hill, 2008). Taking into consideration that the built environment is a facilitative milieu in which relations are formed (Frichot, Gabrielsson, & Runting, 2018), and that the museum field is an embodiment of a particular social world with complex underlying organizing principles, these locative politics can be explained by the fact that exhibitions are what museums are publicly identified with, and thus are not only the focus of traditional programming and financing, but also of spatial organization. The physical relegation of spaces assigned to educational work can thus be seen as a materialization of the specificities of art museums' internal prioritization, which reflects the conflicting multiple agenda that are embodied and enacted across them and negotiated by their workers (Pringle, 2022). This stance can however be enriched by the critical knowledge produced by museum and gallery educators across Europe,[1] who, observing empirically that they were overwhelmingly women,[2] historicized and analyzed their field of practice by introducing a perspective drawn from feminist epistemologies.

[1] In this text, I use the term museum or gallery education quite indifferently to refer to the institutional positionality of a specific professional field. I must underline that I am aware of the various and conflicting schools of thought and practices within this field. For instance, Felicity Allen (2008; 2017) has theorized the distinction between gallery education, as a critical and radical practice which started to develop in the UK in the 1980s, and American and British "traditional" museum education. In Central and Western continental Europe, the practice of education in art institutions since the late 1980s has been developed and analyzed as "mediation" (*Kulturvermittlung* in German), which does not have an exact equivalent in the English-speaking world. One exception is the institutionalized use of the term "art mediation" in international English by Manifesta, a nomadic European biennial of contemporary art, which has exported the term and its related practices to regions where it had no historical anchoring, such as Russia, where the biennial took place in 2014.

[2] In the United States, Dana Carlisle Kletchka's (2021) essential survey demonstrates that most art museum educators are heterosexual, white, cisgender women who are married and are not primary caregivers to children, parents, or a spouse/partner. To my knowledge, there is no such available gathered data at the level of the European Union.

For instance, completing the description operated by the researcher Kaija Kaitavuori (2013) who examines the institutional separation of museum professions between the curator, who historically took care of the collections and is now devising exhibitions, and the educator, who is mainly in charge of taking care of visitors, Nora Sternfeld (2010) observes that in the institutional hierarchy of art, the peripheral work of education, often considered a side effect of exhibitions, is subordinated within the museum's hierarchy of prestige and legitimacy. Referring to the Marxist feminist concept of "reproductive labor", central to an analysis of the gendered division of labor and gender inequality, that describes the reproduction of human beings – in other words, the maintenance of social and family structures, mainly confined to women, on which productive labor depends (Federici, 2012) – she argues that the organization of labor in the art field reproduces a hierarchy structured in a patriarchal way, which places production (focused on artworks and exhibitions) above reproduction (engaging in the exhibition's broad public reception). This organization corresponds to the symbolic and practical separation between the prestigious space of exhibitions, dedicated to theoretical and creative knowledge production, and the invisibilized "unglamorous" tasks of education, associated with knowledge transmission and social work. Interestingly, Sternfeld's proposal finds an echo in critical spatial studies that have looked at the way the spatial ordering of people and things reflects and enacts power and politics to produce/reproduce gender and its implicit system of valorization and localization of labor (Massey, 1995 [1984]). From a feminist critical spatial perspective, which considers the variety of ways in which the social relations of gender are a significant axis in the formation of spatial structures of production/reproduction, the physical peripheralization of education work in the museum can arguably be seen as a spatial enunciation of the gender division of labor. Articulated to the knowledge and institutional analysis produced by feminist gallery and museum educators, who have long noted that their practice is typically situated at the edge, not only spatially, but also at the edge of art and other disciplines, and of the lives of the people with whom it engages (Allen, 2008; Mörsch, 2011), the critical spatial approach allows to look at locative politics in the museum as both actively implicated in, and as an effect of, the process of the gendering of education work. Drawing on this premise,

the following paper is an attempt to analyze the interrelation of the historical construction of museum education as a “feminized” practice, its subordination in the museum’s hierarchy of prestige and its spatial peripheralization within the museum. Thanks to sociologist Mignon Duffy’s (2005) analysis of the hierarchies existing in conceptualizations of care work, which tendentially privilege the experiences of white women and excludes large numbers of very-low-wage workers from consideration, it also problematizes Sternfeld’s reduction of reproductive labor to education in the museum and its subsequent separation from other even more marginalized and invisible type of reproductive labor such as maintenance.

The article develops via institutional ethnographic practice a nuanced approach to explaining the interplay of gender, race, class, and space that shape social inequality in art institutions. Through in-depth interviews with art museum workers and participant observations, with a particular focus on people’s everyday working lives, the following empirical analysis is therefore devoted to exploring and explicating the social and spatial relations that organize experiences in art institutional settings. Since embodied knowledge – or ways of knowing, doing, and being – are internalized through “processes of socialization” (Sullivan & Middleton, 2020, p.23), particular attention is given to embodied experience in practice, as a primary source to study the naturalization of constructed patterns of professional behavior in the art museum environment. This analysis arguably allows to denaturalize implicit professional habits that have been institutionalized over time, becoming unconscious routines (Ahmed, 2012). Since one of the results of these institutional routines, anchored in the museum’s environment, is the internalization of the divide between reproduction and production, and the devaluation of reproductive labor, this paper also considers imaginative initiatives that take the process of denaturalization evoked above as a starting point to go beyond critical feminist analyses of education’s peripherality in the museum. Disrupting traditional (patriarchal) operating modes, these initiatives stem from embodied experiences in the museum or gallery with the aim to unlearn implicit routines and create spaces for communal bonding. In a time of far-reaching crisis of museums’ legitimacy, troubled by conflicting

interpretations of their roles for the 21st century (Brulon Soares, 2020), these initiatives pave the way for timely and meaningful alternatives.

Museum Education's Historical Subordination

In her study of museum education in France, the sociologist Aurélie Peyrin (2010) historicizes the profession's "feminization" process. Noting that the implementation of guided tours for visitors resulted from an initiative of the professors at the École du Louvre, she underlines that museum educators' positions were considered subsidiary from the outset since they were thought to provide students with a source of temporary income in the context of labor shortage in the 1920s. While men constituted a majority of the École du Louvre's student community, the school had welcomed women among its students since its opening in 1882. This policy meant that educated women would be competing with men for prestigious positions in the museum. However, as Peyrin notes, when accompanying services [*services d'accompagnement*] were set up in national museums, museum education was considered an ideal position for mothers and women graduates of the École du Louvre. Thus, women were primarily enrolled as museum tour guides, prioritizing men to occupy power positions while relegating women to a less prestigious function, which depended on the prerogatives of museum directors, curators, and conservators. Indeed, according to Peyrin, the first women tour guides were not allowed to define and develop the content and strategy of their visits, despite being hired after an extremely specialized training. They rather had to act under supervision and were instructed to exclusively provide information written by the curators in the form of visit sheets. This gender distribution of roles was to prevent women from being in direct competition with men. In these circumstances, educative work in the museum was subordinated as it was first and foremost defined by its lack of agency. Until this day, while museum education remains a function that justifies the social relevance of the museum and is thus necessary to the maintenance of the museum apparatus, it is rarely accepted that it defines its specific ambitions other than that of supporting and transmitting to the public

the legitimate knowledge primarily produced through the exhibition medium (Dehail, 2021).

The distribution of roles in French museums described by Peyrin and the "feminization" of the social work involving visitors echo the analysis of the modern gender division of labor provided by Marxist feminists. Indeed, while productive labor, since it corresponds to the capitalist criteria for what constitutes work, is visible and valorized, reproductive labor as "care work" is invisibilized and devaluated. As Silvia Federici (2012) reminds us, reproductive labor mainly involves women's exploitation in which women work with people, not things. This is well illustrated in the museum tasks distribution depicted by Peyrin, where men oversaw the domain of collections and display, while women tour guides were expected to carry social duties such as educating visitors about collections and display, as framed by their colleagues. This labor division had also a spatial and temporal component: while men's productive labor was attached to the centrality and permanence at the heart of museums and their collections, women's reproductive labor, since education and social work have no tangible outcome, was decentered and temporary. From a feminist critical spatial perspective, which considers the dialectical relationship between the materiality of space and social organization, this distribution is telling. Looking at the way disciplinary practices and the products of architecture produce and reproduce material and spatial relations of power in designed environments, this perspective allows to articulate spatial distinctions in the museum with the gender division of labor and the social assignations it entails. For instance, the architectural historian Beatriz Colomina (1992) supports an understanding of architecture as a context preceding and framing the occupant. She suggests looking at architecture not simply as "a platform that accommodates the viewing subject", but rather as "a viewing mechanism that produces the subject" (p. 83). Through this lens, not only the history, underpinning ideology and rationale of spatial conventions are not neutral, but they also have determining effects on the bodies that occupy them. Colomina's performative and relational approach to architecture allows to conceptualize space in terms of complex power-filled social relations, rather than simply as spatial patterns. Contrary to most architecture theories, which presume that the body and class, gender, and racial identities are given, that they exist before

architecture practice starts, Colomina's perspective is an invitation to consider the way the materiality of the body is reconfigured, produced, and reproduced through spatial conventions and architectural regimes. In this sense, the museum environment, which was initially defined as a sanctuary whose mission was to conserve the material heritage of humanity - often looted during colonial wars - and which therefore evolves around spaces dedicated to the display and storage of collections, can be seen as a modern device for the subjectivation not only of visitors, but also of its workers. Therefore, through the architectural durability of museums, even if practices have obviously evolved and other types of museums have been built since the late 18th and 19th centuries, there is arguably a continuity between their spatial policies, historical analyses of the "feminization" of education and social work, and the organization of labor in museums and galleries today. For instance, education is still peripheralized within most European art museums' and institutions' hierarchy, and there are still a majority of women, whose status remains precarious, working in education departments (Peyrin, 2010; Mörsch, 2011; Allen, 2017; Dehail, 2021; Kletchka, 2021). Hence, an approach of museum education that considers the interrelatedness of space, gender and labor allows to articulate its spatial peripheralization, its historical "feminization", and its acknowledged precariousness. It also denaturalizes, and thus problematizes, the tacit assignment of museum educators to subordinate, service roles in museum hierarchies. Finally, it is an invitation to question certain implicit aspects of the museum or gallery educator's profession.

Significantly, despite the progressive professionalization and legitimization of museum and gallery education as a specific field of practice, the professional expertise of educators is not recognized as such. Indeed, in the interviews she conducted with museum educators in France, Peyrin (2010) demonstrates that not only the qualities necessary to the profession are regularly considered as innate, but they are also often described as "feminine". While performative gender theory provides the tools to establish that doing housework or caring for others are neither vocations nor the fruit of feminine instinct but are rather skills acquired through learning and socialization (Butler, 1990), many museum educators continue to consider that they possess qualities essential to their work, such as empathy or being a good listener, "by nature". And because the

naturalization of competences, which is a constant feature of "female professions", result in their invisibility in wage power relations, the skills of museum educators are generally not recognized nor valued institutionally. In this way, the invisibilization of "feminine" competences, spatial/hierarchical peripheralization, and precariousness are all intertwined.

What's more, the naturalization of the skills of educators deemed "feminine" crucially underpins the construction of relationships between them and the museum's potential audience, which are primarily conceived through a depoliticized approach to care. As museum education is often confined to the role of welcoming visitors and discreetly disseminating the creative output of curators and artists, it often contributes to the reproduction of a "benevolent" or "humanitarian" approach to the public. These implicit notions limit museum education to a "maternal humanitarianism", which plays a role in the frequent institutional strategies of conflict avoidance and claims of museum neutrality, presented as autonomous from political realities, and leaving intact the ideological background that underlie such an approach (Lynch, 2019; Dehail, 2021). Arguably, this "maternal humanitarianism" between museum educators and the public goes back to the creation of the category "women" in the process of citizenship formation in nascent Western nation-states. As explained by Denise Riley (1988), the proximity between "women" and the "social" constructed in the second half of the 19th century evoked a very specific type of work that made women both agents and objects of reform. Refined and guaranteed by philanthropic associations, social work, dislocated from politics, offered certain educated white women the opportunity to undertake the work of "repairing" other women perceived as disadvantaged, such as working-class women. Thus, social work, as defined in relation to the elaboration of the category "women" in the context of the formation of modern citizenship, is made up of upper and middle-class women acting upon other lower-class and/or non-white women, with the consequent moralization of all. This historical perspective resonates strongly with the dynamics at work in museum education today, led by a majority of highly educated, heterosexual and married white women (Kletchka, 2021) who, in addition to schools, collaborate with social, health and migrant aid centers. Echoes of this "maternal humanitarianism" are found in the curriculums and narratives provided by

some of my research's interviewees. For example, to a question regarding what led her to work in the museum, one of them answered that she initially wanted to do humanitarian work in Africa, but instead became an educator in a modern art museum since it was another way to be helpful to society. As underlined by Judith Dehail (2021), museum education is often presented as a link that bridges the gap between the culture exhibited in museums and the audiences to whom this culture must be transmitted, thus denying them any form of agency, including the right to resist the museum itself. Hence, situated in a system of distinct spaces and assigned roles, museum education finds itself in a paradoxical position, since it is both subordinate in the patriarchal hierarchy of museums and reproduces inequalities with its "maternal" model of relations with the public.

An Alternative Genealogy

The lack of prestige accompanying the field of museum and gallery education partly explains that the knowledge produced by educators who understand their work as an independent critical practice with its own history and controversial discourses remains overlooked (Mörsch, 2011). According to the artist and gallery educator Felicity Allen (2017), it is the strong association with reproductive labor that feeds the obscuring of gallery education and negates it as a potential space of radical disruption and institutional critique. She observes that contemporary museums and galleries operate in a status-obsessed economy in which press and critical attention for exhibitions and building projects are essential for ticket income and attracting investment, which engenders the overshadowing of critical gallery and museum education work. Therefore, educators share a sense of being hidden within an infrastructure which is based on ideas of promotion, power lists and honoring achievement. Engendering ambiguous relations to recognition, this infrastructure of visibility is challenged by the approach suggested by the educator and theoretician Carmen Mörsch (2011), who conceives gallery and museum education as a semi-visible practice, which positionality enables to partly escape control and regulation and, thus, presents specific potentials and opportunities for institutional critique and, sometimes, transformation. Noting that museum and

gallery educators' focus has mainly been on activity at the expense of recording, analysis, and developing theoretical critique, Felicity Allen (2008; 2017) and Janna Graham (2017; 2020) in Great Britain, Carmen Mörsch (2011) and Nora Sternfeld (2010) in the Germanophone space, or Javier Rodrigo (2016) in Spain, among others, have contributed to the creation of a theorized history of the development of critical and radical museum and gallery education that questions and proposes alternatives to the "maternal" model evoked above. For example, Allen (2008; 2017) traces the genealogy of gallery education in England back to 1970s radical artistic practices linked to the values disseminated and explored in liberation movements, and in particular the women's liberation movement that, among other things, targeted art institutions with demands relating to the democratization of governance; accessibility; race, class and gender inequalities; and the redistribution of artworld resources. She analyzes how practitioners with feminist and collectivist values infiltrated cultural institutions throughout the 1980s and 1990s, where they developed a hybrid practice at the intersection of art, curating, and critical pedagogy. In this sense, gallery education was the antithesis of the narcissistic, individualized space of the art school, the authoritarian model of public education or the artistic/curatorial hierarchies of exhibition production. It offered opportunities to experiment with artistic processes as well as social and political projects that were developed in community contexts and to provoke and reshape cultural funding and institutions. Allen proposes that these practices, which resist disciplinary distinctions, be considered "maintenance", referring to the work of feminist artist Mierle Laderman Ukeles, who, in parallel with the Black and Chicano art movements in the US, the Art Workers Coalition, and many others, challenged the radical nature of the art field by questioning its relationship to reproductive labor, with a potentially more lasting impact on the institution than the visible but ephemeral and often heroic interventions of artists.

The historicization of gallery and museum education from a feminist perspective has enabled a redefinition of practices and their analysis, with the implication of a return of agency. With the four functions theorized by Carmen Mörsch (2011), many educators, including myself, have found a way out of "maternal humanitarianism". Indeed, Mörsch suggests that gallery and

museum education can fulfill various institutional functions: an affirmative function, which takes for granted the existence of the aesthetic regime of art and its infrastructure as they are; a reproductive function, designed to transmit the love of art to a young audience; and two functions requiring a self-critical, action-oriented attitude, the deconstructive and transformative functions. The deconstructive function describes initiatives in which educators collaborate with groups to disrupt narratives of injustice in the museum. Facilitating critical literacy of artworks or display, this approach aims at enabling participants to understand and critique the institutional decisions and power structures that underlie the artworks' content, presence, or absence. The transformative function refers to projects based on strategic power relations aimed at modifying the operating modes of the cultural institution in which they take place, for the interests of the groups involved. By engaging in conflictuality on an institutional scale, these functions of gallery education constitute a radical alternative to a service approach for managing the public, or to a compensatory gesture aimed at diversifying the audiences of exclusive institutions.

The multilayered practices depicted above trouble familiar categories of the aesthetic regime of art. For instance, while she is not considering gallery education projects at the intersection of art, critical pedagogy and curating, but rather artistic practices that claim to be educational, the art historian Claire Bishop (2012) shares the conflicting criteria crossing her mind when she has to analyze such practices since "art is given to be seen by others, while education has no image" (p. 522). Evoking the centrality of visual outcome as the primary object of focus of the art historical discipline, and of the museum infrastructure, her remark implies a classification between the visible and the invisible. While the visible (art and the exhibition) is the center of attention of the art field's legitimate discourse, the invisible (in this case, education) is separated from it. This distinction has concrete impacts on the consideration and recognition of artworks. In a footnote, Bishop admits indeed that "educational projects are not discussed in the art press, even if these projects are by the same artists who exhibit in the gallery" (p. 731). This differential consideration (even when the artist is the same!), depending upon the "artistic" or "educational" status of a project, corresponds to the distribution of power in the museum, which also defines budget attribution and programming space (Sholette, 2017). It reflects

the institutional prioritization of exhibition production over education, as the main museum tool for democratic participation, and sheds light on the way regimes of knowledge production maintain the dominance of certain ways of being and working over others. As seen earlier, these ways of being and working and their hierarchization are not natural but rather the complex product of gender, racial, class, but also spatial processes.

This differential consideration, crucially, also results from the need to keep artistic autonomy in place. Indeed, in their analysis of the relationship between autonomy and reproduction as conditions for art production, the writer Marina Vishmidt and the art historian Kerstin Stakemeier (2016) have examined the relationship between reproductive labor and artistic autonomy understood as the de-historicized and essentialized separation of art from the relations of capitalist production. They argue that the relationship between reproduction and autonomy is structural rather than thematic for art, and that the preservation of the fiction of art's autonomy, as the condition of possibility of the existence of the art field, relies upon its separation from reproductive work. As they write: "while art has often been identified with and has recognized itself in the image of a liberated, world creating labor, it recedes before the unglamorous and uncreative work of maintenance (unless of course this can be thematized as part of the aesthetic substance itself)" (pp. 84-85). From this point of view, education cannot be the space for legitimate artistic production since it is associated with the "unglamorous" work of reproduction in the museum's hierarchy. On the contrary, it must be exteriorized to sustain art's autonomy. Thus, because they often take place simultaneously inside and outside legitimate art spaces (museums, galleries), resist visible/invisible disciplinary categories and distinctions of productive/reproductive work, the hybrid practices of critical gallery education disrupt the status of artistic autonomy on which the modern aesthetic regime of art rests. By bringing aesthetics and politics into closer proximity with the operational discourses of art institutions, they also underline the blind spots in the discursive separation between "artistic" and "social" approaches. In fact, there are always porosities between the two since aesthetic and representational concerns are always at play in pedagogical work, as are political concerns and the question of agency in exhibition production. The little conscious recognition of the relation

between the two, and the fact that this dichotomy is part of institutionalized routines, sustains social hierarchy and exclusion (Graham, 2017). Underlying the genealogy of critical gallery education is the struggle to ensure the continuities of the radical artistic, curatorial, and educational trajectories that informed this practice. It is deemed necessary since, while some artists, educators and exhibition curators are aware of the porosities between their practices and critically collaborate, respecting each other's labor, hierarchization, condescension, often resulting in "sanctioned ignorance",[3] continue to prevail. The spatial division of labor in the modern art museums that are part of my study plays a crucial role in this (mainly unintentional) process: while curators and managers spend most of their days in offices and only occasionally go to the exhibition space for specific reasons (such as meeting a group of sponsors or art professionals), the invigilators and educators are responsible for the day-to-day public life of the museum. As one of the interviewees analyzed, this organization can be seen as a metaphor for the separation between theory and practice.

In this context, a repoliticized genealogy of gallery education is essential as it resituates this field of practice within the tensions and conflicts that cross museum, galleries, and art institutions, often presented as neutral spaces in which relations are normalized and pacified. In this genealogy, tensions are understood as dynamic since they generate possibilities for alternative relationships inside and outside the museum that creatively challenge the production and reproduction of political and cultural categories. In this sense, critical gallery education also problematizes the subjectivities that conform art institutions since it reconsiders the relations between production and reproduction, and trouble the categories (such as visitors, artists, curators, educators) contained in the museum infrastructure (Rodrigo, 2016). Moreover, by paying attention to radical practices that have exposed and politicized the continuity between reproductive labor, education, culture and leisure, the

[3] Carmen Mörsch (2011) borrows Gayatri Spivak's concept of "sanctioned ignorance", as the purposeful silencing through the dismissing of a particular field of knowledge as being irrelevant, to describe the displayed lack of knowledge about the history and discourses of gallery education by some art curators and critics.

stories of liberation movements that have inspired and become principles for critical gallery education inevitably result in decentering the field of art as a primary site of public discourse and social innovation, in favor of a multidimensional range of practices situated among the more complex histories of social justice. Co-emerging with struggles for liberation, the most wide-reaching theories of education embedded in critical pedagogy were conceived not as themes to be explored in museums' and galleries' programming, but as instruments to respond to specific forms of inequality and domination. Hence, the repoliticized genealogy of critical gallery education positions arts and pedagogy within the wider project of living otherwise, inventing practices of social reproduction alongside those of art and education.

Instituting Otherwise

The reappropriation of museum and gallery educators' own history of practice, through a repoliticized genealogy embedded in feminist epistemologies, created the conditions for the theorization and implementation of various strategies as seen with Mörsch's four functions. Crucially, this alternative genealogy analyzes art institutions as workplaces, where the division of labor reflects structural inequalities in a patriarchal capitalist society. Pushed further, this perspective allows to note that subordination and precariousness is not confined to the "feminized" field of museum and gallery education, since outsourcing policies first hit the cleaning and security staff in cultural institutions, who are mostly negatively racialized,[4] before affecting education departments. This chronology of the evolution of the division of labor reflects the structural inequalities of race, class and gender that exist and persist within European cultural institutions, which are themselves part of a global system. Indeed, in her description of racial capitalism, Gargi Bhattacharyya (2018) explains that one of its fundamental aspects is the processes that provides

[4] See for example the report by the association Décoloniser les arts (Leïla Cukierman, Gerty Dambury, Jalil Leclaire, Léonce Henri Nlend, Pascale Obolo, Charlotte Tsang King Sang, Françoise Vergès*), Racisme et Exclusions. Des travailleur.se.s racisé.e.s du monde des arts et de la culture (artistes et employé.e.s) s'expriment sur la politique du confinement et ses conséquences*, June 2020

differential treatment to workers and non-workers and the social relations that emerge from these differentiations. This perspective crucially problematizes the apprehension of education as reproductive labor in the museum, since this risks to reduce the analysis of labor subordination in the museum to the experiences of white middle-class women. As numerous critiques of Western feminist theory and political practice emphasize, the consideration of gender in isolation and the universalization of the experiences of white women have led to significant theoretical and political shortcomings (hooks 1984; Vergès, 2019). Feminist understandings of reproductive labor have been at the center of this critique since a tendency of theories of social reproduction has increasingly focused on a depoliticized approach of paid care. This approach operates a distinction between a conceptualization on care as relationship, which privileges the experiences of white women, and reproductive labor as both relational and nonrelational jobs that maintain and reproduce the labor force, which is the fact of large numbers of negatively racialized very-low-wage workers, hence excluded from feminists' consideration (Duffy, 2005). This critical perspective complexifies the productive/reproductive hierarchization of labor identified by feminists, as it shows the existence of a division of reproductive labor between women along racial lines: with an emphasis on visibility rather than location, reproductive labor as "back room" work is separated from the more relational and public work mainly performed by white women, such as museum education.

The analysis of the hierarchization and differentiation of labor in art institutions proposed by critical museum and gallery educators, complexified by that of anti-racist thinkers and activists, establishes that the artworld apparatus relies on the externalization of reproductive labor – a complex category that contains real differences in prestige and economic status - and the unequal social relations that constitute its material conditions of possibility. Considering the contested feminist legacy of the division between productive and reproductive labor, as well as the extent to which aspects of reproduction pervade all labor, Kerstin Stakemeier and Marina Vishmidt (2016) identify the disconnection between the conditions of art's production and the criticality of art institutions in the concealment of labor, for example through outsourcing gender, racialized, migration-related invisibility of workers, or degraded working

conditions. Looking at the way ideal criticality in the arts stands in a determined non-relation to its conditions of reproduction, they underline that "just as fair trade doesn't subvert production for value, knowing who is cleaning your Kunsthalle has no bearing on their conditions" (p. 77). Subverting the accepted productivist meaning of artistic autonomy, be it that of the genius artist or the agitating collective, by referring to Silvia Federici's insistence that autonomy must be sought in reproduction, the authors suggest an approach of art labor that is inseparable from its preconditions. Combined with the perspective of critical gallery educators, which stems from the fundamental contradictions of the spaces of art, and critical approaches to racial capitalism, which insist that our reading of the value of work and the conception of some activity as non-work must be reconsidered (Bhattacharyya, 2018), they problematize the social relations that divide production and reproduction, art and labor, and open for practices of critical autonomy in art that consist of troubling those divisions.

Many museums and galleries are neglecting lived conditions, privileging staged discussions on emancipation over the long and labored work of addressing their own precarious and exclusionary governing structures, and ties to global oppressors. Given the little recognition of the social struggles of the conditions that shape the lives of communities including museum workers, visitors, and neighbors, and the systematic ignorance of museums and galleries' own labor practices and the differential relations it creates between white women, who perform most of reproductive – increasingly outsourced - cultural labor, and negatively racialized communities, who are often working in the outsourced and precarious roles like cleaning and security, some critical gallery educators and organizers like Janna Graham (2016) have opted for a para-sitic strategy, using their position to redistribute capacity. The para-sitic strategy consist of conscious attempts to redistribute cultural institutions' material resources and symbolic capital, basically to reallocate cultural resources towards progressive social and political outcomes. Refusing the spectacular terms of involvement set out by museums, galleries, and other types of art institutions, it stems from the observation that workers often disagree with the general functioning and discursive positioning of the institution's they are working for. Hence, the para-site is not presented as an ideal type in the figure of change but offers a sense of what is possible in cultural environments that are highly compromised. Para-

sites are those who support work within cultural institutions through ongoing, integrated relationships with those at the helm of hegemonic processes, while being engaged in social justice processes elsewhere, in direct contact and negotiation with critical social actors. Their para-site location is at once external, adjacent and internal, as they resist being framed by the language and concerns of the art institutions from which they draw resources, and instead organize social change that is situated in other sites, in concrete struggles with responsibilities beyond the art world's often hermetic focus on itself or its ghostly reflection of social processes. Their practice and concerns are therefore experienced as both interior and profoundly exterior. At best, para-site strategies articulate criticism of the absence of sustained interrogation of the living and working conditions that surround arts and cultural organizations with their inability to generate contexts that link declared emancipatory intentions to broader-based social movement building (Graham, 2020).

Evoking Felix Guattari's institutional analysis among other sources of inspiration, Graham's para-sitic strategy, as a strategy of institutional indiscipline, can be read in continuity with 1970s impulses that refused discipline and aimed at the reappropriation not only of the means of production, but of the meaning of what was produced. This emphasis on the relationship between emancipatory methods and the production of emancipatory life conditions is also considered in critical approaches of space and its effects on the subject that occupies it. Looking at the large-scale transformation affecting the production of life in late capitalism, and the way feminist, homosexual, transexual, disability and civil rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s, followed by queer, crip, and decolonial movements, collectively resisted disciplinary techniques of the production of differentiation, Paul B. Preciado (2012) provides a loaded reading of contemporary spaces. In his study of the way architecture contributes to the production of gender, racial, sexual, and able/disabled subjectivities as the effects of a set of spatializing power/capital/knowledge techniques, he defines architecture not as a building practice, but as a system of visual and spatial regimes of political representation, and a technique of social production and reproduction. Departing from the question "how can architectural practice produce subjectivity and life otherwise?" (p. 132), he lies the basis for a new grammar

of political action and critical intervention that draws inspiration from the ongoing processes of deconstructing technologies of normalization. He invites readers to conduct a Guattarian transversal analysis of control and normalization techniques, able to intertwine processes of production and the subjugation of gender, sex, race, body, class, and age. Challenging architecture's relationship with capital and colonial techniques, the aim of this, as he names it, "transfeminist and queer theory for architecture" (p. 134) is to undo the spatialization of knowledge and power techniques that have contributed to the performative construction of political subjectivities.

A strategy that arguably echoes Preciado's call for architectural disobedience and museum and gallery educators' concerns, even if the critical knowledge produced by gallery educators did not serve as its direct source of inspiration, are the long term "living research" projects organized on an institutional scale by the Casco Art Institute based in Utrecht in the Netherlands. One of such projects was *The Grand Domestic Revolution GOES ON* (2009-2011) which placed reproduction at the center of institutional concerns as a means to institute otherwise. Developed in partnership with Utrecht Manifest: Biennial for Social Design, it explored the potential of the domestic sphere as a locus for creating "the commons", a self-organized form of sharing both material and immaterial resources, by means of artistic, organizational and spatial design operations. It borrowed its title from a book by architectural historian Dolores Hayden, who studied the late 19th century material feminist design movement in the United States that communalized the spaces of isolated domestic work by building public kitchens, communal apartments, cooperative childcare facilities, organizing their own working and living cooperatives and were even involved with town planning. *The Grand Domestic Revolution GOES ON* explored this multidimensional social movement, and by means of action research, artistic investigation, theory, and design/architectural practice, searched for other forms of cohabitation that subvert the capitalist organizations of society on the scale of an artistic institution and its direct environment. By placing reproductive labor, considerations of who performs work taken for granted in an organization, and the effect of its devaluation and depoliticization at the center of its operations, the Casco Art Institute engaged in "commoning" practices. These practices, which continue to this day, aim to

compose the commons by applying the same ethics in the invisible backstage and visible frontstage of the institution (Allan & van der Heide, 2018). Under the patronage of the fictitious character Nina bell F., echoing collective authorship and shared admiration for the artistic, Black, feminist and political engagements of Nina Simone, bell hooks, and Silvia Federici, the Casco Art Institute initiates long-term collective endeavors on an institutional scale, such as *Art Organizations as Sites for Unlearning* (2013-2018), in collaboration with the artist Annette Krauss, with a collection of exercises, inter-organizational conversations, and theoretical texts that identify and protest the challenges faced by art institutions, and especially those institutions dedicated to the commons and to building alternatives. Collectively resisting the regime of productivity, as the mantra of capitalist business and growth, the project evolved around the idea "to institute as you (re)present!". It explored the relationship between an art institution's declarative vision, that shapes the content of its cultural production, and the institutional routines that inform administrative and managerial ethics. Proposing a total approach in which reproduction is at the heart of instituting practices, Casco transforms relations to art inherited from the modern Western regime of art and its apparatus, such as the museum, as it relativizes art by treating it as a "technique", a tool, an approach and an ongoing practice for (un)learning and engaging with the world (Sky Rehberg, Choi, & van der Heide, 2017). It is a way to create more space for communal bonding – also through collective cleaning - that is not delegated or outsourced, which fluidifies relations between visible and invisible practices and the social assignments they engender. It is clear, however, that this total approach to art institutions is so far only possible on a small scale and seems difficult to implement at the level of larger, more bureaucratized, institutions. However, since small visual arts organizations play a crucial and inspiring role in the arts ecosystem (Thelwall, 2011), the operating methods proposed at the Casco Art Institute, which challenge the implicit consensuses and funders' standard performance measurements, are an essential practical example of instituting otherwise.

Conclusion

In their article “Transformation and Interpretation: What Is the Museums Educator’s Role?”, Jennifer Wild Czajkowski and Shiralee Hudson Hill (2008) refer to the writings of bell hooks on marginality as a site of resistance to argue that museum educators perform work situated at the margins of their institutions and hierarchical organization, and that this marginal position is fundamental to transforming said institutions. As presented in this article, marginality and peripherality are redundant themes in the body of knowledge produced by critical museum and gallery educators across Western Europe, but also the United States and Canada. This understanding of museum and gallery education as a marginalized and semi-visible practice is the result of a repoliticized genealogy born of feminist consciousness and the structural reading it enables. This reading is essential to denaturalize the subordinated position of educators in the museum or the gallery, as it establishes the interrelatedness between the precariousness of education and the historical “feminization” of this professional field. Hence, it problematizes the assignment of educators to subordinate, service roles in the hierarchies of museums and other institutions. It also calls into question some of the implicit professional routines of museum and gallery educators, not least their insistence on the “innate” qualities associated with the “feminine” deemed essential in the exercise of this function, and the way in which these implicit notions confine education to a depoliticized concept of care, helping to reproduce a “maternal” approach to the public that contributes to frequent institutional conflict-avoidance strategies that underpin the museum’s declared neutrality and sustains unequal relations with the public. In this critical perspective, marginality is reappropriated by some professionals of the field as a prerequisite for implementing strategies of disobedience, at a time when the knowledge and expertise of critical gallery and museum educators are essential to the transformation of art institutions facing a crisis of legitimacy. This crisis of legitimacy is well illustrated by the competing discourses that formed the debates around the 2018 decision by ICOM (the International Council of Museums) to modify its definition in light of the complex and urgent challenges of the 21st century, resulting in the preservation of the existing definition focused on the collection, its documentation and research in the service of

society and its development (Brulon Soares, 2020). The resistance to change shown by the response to the ICOM's redefinition demonstrates the entrenched hierarchies of current museum discourses, with the discourse of community action losing ground to other collection-focused agendas. As Emily Pringle puts it (2022), this raises the question: "for those continuing to advocate for more socially responsible and engaged institutions, what options are available, not least because challenging the dominant discourse of collection care and growth is undoubtedly a formidable undertaking?" (p. 84).

Parallel to the ICOM debates, general tendencies in exhibition development have drastically changed in recent decades, providing an expanded role for museum education. Re-framed as a collaborative, visitor-centered alternative to the exhibition-focused curatorial model, this hybrid process has even been termed "edu-curation" (Rowson Love & Villeneuve, 2017). While I understand the struggle to recognize the important semi-visible practice of museum educators, the promotion to a position of "edu-curator" and the integration of museum educators in the upper-levels of the museum work hierarchy can also be analyzed as an attempt to distinguish museum education from less glamorous reproductive labor in the museum, or the "backroom" cleaning and maintenance work disproportionately performed by negatively racialized women, as opposed to the more relational work performed by a majority of very educated white women. The proposed hybridization with the prestigious position of curator arguably reproduces class and racial inequalities in the distribution of care work, since it promotes and focuses attention on the most professionalized group of jobs and externalizes the very low-paid workers who do the "dirty work" of social reproduction (Duffy, 2005). At a time when museums are reflecting on their elitist and colonial historical legacies, seeking to build trust and repair broken relationships with many communities, some critical museum workers have rather turned their attention to alternative genealogies. Stemming from anti-racist and feminist approaches of social reproduction that resist existing models from within, these alternative genealogies disrupt the separation between productive and reproductive labor and the complex hierarchizations within reproductive labor itself. Without excessively heroicizing these initiatives, many draw lessons from their attempts to repoliticize the art and museum fields from below.

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