

## Re-Thinking and Practicing Critical Pedagogy in Education through Art

**Authors :** Dalya Markovich

**Abstract :** In the last decade art-educators strive to integrate critical pedagogy within the art classroom. Critical pedagogy aims to deconstruct the oppressive social reality and the false consciousness in which learners from both privileged and underprivileged groups are caught. Understanding oppression as a product of socio-political conditions seeks to instigate processes of change anchored in the student's views. Yet, growing empirical evidence show that these efforts often has resulted in art projects in which art teachers play an active role in the process of critical teaching, while the students remain passive listeners. In this common scenario, the teachers/artists become authoritarian moral guides of critical thinking and acting, while the students are often found to be indifferent or play along to satisfy the teachers'/artists aspirations. These responses indicate that the message of critical pedagogy - transforming the students' way of thinking and acting - mostly do not fulfill its emancipation goals. The study analyses the critical praxis embedded in new art projects and their influence on the participants. This type of projects replaces the individual producer with a collaborative work; switch the finite work with an ongoing project; and transforms the passive learner to an engaged co-producer. The research delves into the pedagogical framework of two of these art projects by using qualitative methods. In-depth interviews were conducted with 4 of the projects' initiator and managers, in order to access understandings of the art projects goals and pedagogical methods. Field work included 4 participant observation (two in each project) during social encounters in the project's settings, focusing on how critical thinking is enacted (or not) by the participants. The analysis exposes how the new art projects avoid the prepackaged "critical" assumptions and praxis, thus turning the participants from passive carriers of critical thinking to agents that actively use criticism. Findings invite researchers to explore new avenues for understanding critical pedagogy and developing various ways to implement critical pedagogy during art education, in view of the growing need of critical thinking and acting in school/society.

**Keywords :** critical pedagogy, education through art, collaborative work, agency

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