

The Nicolas Bourriaud Approach Applied to Remida

The Center for Creative Recycling within the Discourses of Contemporary
Aesthetics and Pedagogy

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Summary

In this thesis, I will apply the aesthetic theories of Nicholas Bourriaud, a French artist, curator, and art critic, to a case study of Remida, a creative recycling center in Trondheim, Norway.

In 1998, Nicolas Bourriaud published a book entitled *Esthétique relationnelle* in which he introduced a theory relating to certain, very visible trends in contemporary art. Bourriaud suggested that interhuman relationships and artistic processes had become equally important as artistic products (what he called “representational art”). Using financial support from the French government, Bourriaud established a centre for contemporary art (a “laboratory”) in Palais de Tokyo in Paris. Bourriaud developed his ideas further in a 2002 book, *Postproduction* and was recently appointed director of École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris.

In the spring of 2009, after years of planning, the Remida center opened in Trondheim, Norway. Remida was inspired by similar centers in Italy which were inspired, in turn, by an educational philosophy known as the Reggio Emilia approach to pedagogy. Evolving in the Italian town of Reggio Emilia after World War II, the Reggio Emilia approach represented a response to the fascist ideology and totalitarian thinking of the previous decades. In the Reggio Emilia approach, education was considered a dynamic, intersubjective process. Dialogue, “free thought,” a sense of community, and mutual respect were considered key. Special attention was paid to developing a child’s aesthetic sense. In the late 1960s, ateliers were introduced into infant-toddler centers and preschools in the town of Reggio Emilia. Later, inspired by these school-ateliers and in collaboration with the town’s environmental organization, the first Remida center opened.

Since the 1990s, a distinct and visible trend in contemporary art has become known as “an educational turn.” “Artists are turning to education, borrowing its techniques, social settings, tools, aims, furniture, characters and so on.”¹ The art of the encounter has become a common aesthetic practice –or even the “main event” at contemporary art exhibitions.

Nicolas Bourriaud’s theories of relational aesthetics are associated here with this “educational turn”, a trend now seen as critical within the field of contemporary aesthetics.

¹ Dave Beech, “Weberian lessons: art, pedagogy, managerialism”, in: O’Neill, P. and Wilson, M. (Eds.) *Curating and the educational turn*, (London: Open Editions / de Appel, 2010): 40.

At the same time, pedagogical methods which stress aesthetic values and exploration, methods such as Reggio Emilia pedagogy, are regarded as equally important within the field of education.

In this thesis, I use the theories of Nicholas Bourriaud to place Remida, a creative recycling center in Trondheim, in the context of these current trends. I will explore the ways in which contemporary aesthetics is influenced by educational principles and vice versa: the ways in which educational thinking is influenced by aesthetic values.

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Chapter One

Introduction

... having spent some time thinking about people making things,

and people connecting with others – making *and* connecting –

I realized that it was meaningful... to note

that these are one and the same process: making *is* connecting.

David Gauntlett²

1.1. Justification of the Topic Choice

This thesis represents an interdisciplinary study involving the fields of art theory and pedagogy. I will apply the aesthetic theories of Nicholas Bourriaud, a French artist, curator, and art critic, to a case study of Remida, a creative recycling center in Trondheim, Norway.

In 1998, Nicolas Bourriaud published a book entitled *Esthétique relationnelle* in which he introduced a theory relating to certain, very visible trends in contemporary art. Bourriaud suggested that interhuman relationships and artistic processes had become equally important during the creation of artistic products. Nicolas Bourriaud's theories of relational aesthetics have become associated with this "educational turn", a trend now seen as critical within the field of contemporary aesthetics.

Since the 1990s, a distinct and visible trend in contemporary art has become known as "an educational turn". The term "educational turn" describes a trend in which contemporary curators and artists have turned to the field of education and borrowed pedagogical methods, models, programs, and processes. Curating "... increasingly operates as an expanded educational praxis."³ Pedagogical working models have invaded contemporary art practices: "...discussions, talks, symposia, education programs, debates and discursive practices have long played a supporting role to the exhibition of contemporary art... Historically, these discussions have been peripheral to the exhibition... More recently, these discursive

² Gauntlett, D. *Making is connecting. The social meaning of creativity, from DIY and knitting to Youtube and Web 2.0.* (Cambridge: Polity, 2011): 2. David Gauntlett is Professor of Media and Communication at University of Westminster, UK, and author of several books including *Creative Explorations*.

³ O'Neill, P. and Wilson, M. (Eds.) *Curating and the educational turn*, (London, Open Editions / de Appel, 2010): 12.

interventions and relays have become central to contemporary practice; *they have now become the main event.*”⁴ In her article “Pedagogical paradigms: Documenta’s reinvention” in *Art and Education*, Denise Frimer says:

In the last decade education has occupied a primary place in numerous international contemporary art projects and exhibitions within museums and biennials. Common rituals of pedagogy, characterized by critical learning and innovation, are appropriated in socially engaged exhibitions and intersect to blur the line between education and art.⁵

Several decades earlier, Joseph Beuys identified a link between teaching and art. Recently, Beuys’s ideas have become increasingly relevant as interactive experiences have become an artistic focus in themselves. This trend has been especially visible in the field of curating. Documenta is a case in point. One of the most important events in contemporary art, Documenta is an exhibition of modern and contemporary art which takes place every five years in the German town of Kassel. After the legendary curator Harald Szeemann made changes in the Documenta’s agenda, curatorial role has gradually changed its status. Exhibitions have become more dynamic and interactive. In other exhibitions – Manifesta Biennial, Venice Biennial, and the smaller Taipei Biennial – similar trends are visible. Interactive performances and installations appear alongside more traditional, representational works. “Entering the hall... on the ground floor, it feels like entering a cooking class or some kind of workshop, because you see boilers, electric stoves, and measuring cups on the table, while *instructors* stand in front to guide the participants,”⁶ a journalist writes about Taipei Biennial 2010. In this setting, the artist seems to function as an instructor or a tutor. These are the sort of trends which have been described as an “educational turn” in contemporary art. I will discuss this “educational turn” in detail in Chapter Two.

It seems paradoxical, however, that contemporary art, given all its democratic attempts to include the public, still remains relatively elitist and exclusive. Contemporary art seems to be

⁴ Ibid. My italics.

⁵ Frimer, D. “Pedagogical paradigms: Documenta’s reinvention”. *Art and Education*. <http://www.artandeducation.net/paper/pedagogical-paradigms-documenta%e2%80%99s-reinvention/> (25.10.2012).

⁶ Tang, E. “Taipei Biennial 2010”. *Taiwan Culture Portal*, 27.09.2010. http://www.culture.tw/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1880&Itemid=157 (30.01.2012). My italics.

unavailable to participants⁷ with little or no competence in contemporary art. This means – unavailable for the majority of citizens lacking a high quality art education during their school time. The reasons for this are poorly qualified teachers in schools and a limited focus on contemporary art. These problems were discussed in detail at the convention of the National Art Education Association in New York in March 2012, a meeting I attended.⁸ Seven thousand art professionals, researchers, and students discussed issues surrounding art curricula, especially how contemporary art methods and strategies might be most effectively implemented. Some argued that art education was an art form in itself, echoing Joseph Beuys’ idea that every person is an artist. In her presentation, conference-participant and professional artist Olivia Gude stressed that art education is “an art form in itself.”⁹

Remida, a creative recycling center in Trondheim, and the subject of this study, was created by environmental municipal organizations, artists and teachers schooled in a certain pedagogical technique. Seeing Remida from positions of art theory is new, and this fact makes my task both challenging and exciting. To my knowledge, no one has studied it yet from the perspective of art theory. However, the “educational turn” which is taking place in the recent years gives a theoretical ground for this fascinating study.

1.2. Remida, a Center of Creative Recycling: a Brief Presentation

In the spring of 2009, the Remida creative recycling center opened in Trondheim, Norway. Years in the planning, Remida was a collaborative effort among environmental organizations and local artists and teachers. At Remida, discarded materials are collected from local industries, sorted and offered to educational professionals, families, centers, etc. By using recycled materials, participants are inspired to think about ethical, environmental and

⁷ I prefer using the term “participant” in the thesis, instead of “a gallery-goer”, “a seer” etc., as I focus on the potential *response* from “the goer” and “the seer”. This is also more logical for the thesis devoted to relational aesthetics.

⁸ The National Art Education Association was founded in 1947 in USA, and is the leading professional membership organization for visual arts educators in USA and around the world. Members include elementary, middle and high school visual arts educators, college and university professors, researchers and scholars, teaching artists, administrators and supervisors, and art museum educators, as well as more than 45,000 students who are members of the National Art Honor Society or are university students. Convention of the NAEA is an annual event, where art educators, researchers, artists, art historians from all the US and twenty-five countries discuss academic and practical issues of the field. Mission of the NAEA is to “advance visual arts education to fulfill human potential and promote global understanding”. The website of the NAEA is <http://www.arteducators.org/>.

⁹ Gude, O. “Evocative and provocative pedagogy.” Presentation for the NAEA Convention in New York. https://naea.digication.com/omg/Evocative_Provocative_Pedagogy_NEW_in_2012 (23.04.2012)

aesthetic issues. Instead of purchasing materials for art projects, schools can acquire materials at the center free of charge:

The center mainly addresses children of all public and private kindergartens and schools. But we want to stay open to others who wish to use the opportunities the project gives. Teachers can obtain free materials to their building and construction projects. It is also possible to visit the center with groups of children to be inspired to further exploration in projects, or to find materials for their own school projects. We also arrange courses and networking meeting for teachers and parents in kindergartens and schools. We arrange guided tours and collaborate with school, kindergarten, environment and art networks. Remida presents inspiring and innovative workshops for children, educators, parents, and artists.¹⁰

Remida was influenced by similar centers in Italy which were inspired, in turn, by an educational philosophy known as the Reggio Emilia approach to pedagogy. The Reggio Emilia approach stresses dialogue, communication, developing a sense of community. Special attention is paid to developing a child's creativity, critical thinking and aesthetic sense.

1.3. Justification of the Theory Choice

In *Esthétique relationnelle* (1998), Nicolas Bourriaud claims that the engineering of social relationships has become an important trend in contemporary art. Artistic processes represent “a play where forms, modalities and functions develop according to time periods and social circumstances, and not according to any unchangeable ‘essence.’”¹¹ The critical backdrop for contemporary art is the urbanized landscape of recent decades and all the realities that has produced. The twentieth century witnessed a significant increase in human mobility as well as the development of technology, transportation systems and the Internet. In the beginning of the twenty-first century, the pace of advancement has quickened -- with further development of Internet, the establishment of social networks and new communication opportunities with smart phones and iPads. “Art is a state of meeting,”¹² Bourriaud claims. The urban

¹⁰ Remida Senter. *Hvem kan bruke senteret*. 11.06.2010.

<http://www.trondheim.kommune.no/content/1117692355/Hvem-kan-bruke-senteret> (20.10.2011). Translated from Norwegian.

¹¹ Bourriaud, N. *Relational aesthetics*. (Les Presses du Reel, 2002): 13.

¹² *Ibid.*: 23.

environment can be the source of intensive human encounters – but information overload makes individuals filter what they see. Bourriaud, who focuses upon art in institutional settings, suggests that art works in galleries or public spaces make those encounters possible.

The issues of communication in a changing world were broached by Lev Vygotsky, a Soviet psychologist who wrote extensively on a diverse range of topics, including childhood development, education and the psychology of art. In recent decades, Vygotsky has gained international recognition. To Vygotsky, social skills are essential for development of a child. The nourishing of creativity has an important impact upon a child's development as well. Vygotsky believes that creativity is an essential human characteristic – not one reserved solely for “chosen ones”. He believes creativity is in a constant state of development throughout a person's life, and that creativity is essential for scientific and artistic creation – for social development generally. Education should be more participatory; it should activate fantasy, imaginary vision and stimulate a student's critical thinking.

A very important question in child psychology and pedagogy is child's creativity, development of this creativity and the meaning of creative work for the general development a maturation of a child.¹³

Communication and creativity are cornerstones of the Reggio Emilia pedagogy – from where the Remida project developed.

Evolving in the Italian town of Reggio Emilia after World War II, the Reggio Emilia approach represented a response to the fascist ideology and totalitarian thinking of the previous decades. In the Reggio Emilia approach, education was considered a dynamic, intersubjective process. Dialogue, “free thought,” a sense of community, and mutual respect were considered key. Special attention was paid to developing a child's aesthetic sense. In the late 1960s, ateliers were introduced into infant-toddler centers and preschools in the town of Reggio Emilia. Later, inspired by these school-ateliers and in collaboration with the town's environmental organizations, the first Remida center – a creative recycling center -- opened.

If aesthetics fosters sensibility and the ability of connection things far removed from each other, and if learning takes place through new connection between disparate elements, then aesthetics can be considered as an important activator for learning.¹⁴

¹³ Vygotskij, L. *Fantasi och kreativitet i barndomen* (Göteborg, Daidalos, 1995): 15. Translated from Swedish.

If we approach the cited phrase in the context of Nicolas Bourriaud's theses on "postproduction art" where the artist takes "already produced forms" and gives them a new meaning, we can see clear connections between the Bourriaud's mode of thinking and ideas of Vea Vecchi, an atelierista at the Diana municipal pre-school with thirty years of experience. *Postproduction* (2002) is another theoretical work of Bourriaud which I use in the thesis. The book refers to the same artistic practices he referred to in *Relational Aesthetics*, and is a development of the previous theory. Both the first and the second books refer to the new mode of seeing and thinking "which usher in computing,"¹⁵ a collective sensibility and a "changing mental space that has been opened for thought by the Internet."¹⁶ I will discuss theoretical aspects of *Postproduction* in Chapter Four.

In his writings, Bourriaud, a Marxist, views technological changes as the engines which power change in the "superstructure" of society. The Internet has created changes in thinking – which have, in turn, influenced the methods by which art is produced. The contemporary artist recycles objects and ideas and imbues them with new meanings. This method of handling/filtering/re-configuring information is similar to the way an Internet user sorts and uses information:

It is no longer matter of starting with a "blank state" or creating meaning on the basis of virgin material but of finding a means of intersection into the innumerable flows of production... The artistic question is no longer: "what can we make that is new" but "how can we make do with what we have?" In other words, how can we produce singularity and meaning from this chaotic mass of objects, names, and references that constitute our daily life?¹⁷

The purpose of creative recycling is to give a participant or an artist the opportunity to rework objects originally created by other people, to give these objects new functions and meanings, and place them in different contexts. Bourriaud calls these participants or artists *semionauts*. I will discuss *Relational Aesthetics* in details in Chapter Three.

¹⁴ Vecchi, V. *Art and creativity in Reggio Emilia. Exploring the role and potential of ateliers in early childhood education* (London, Routledge, 2010): 15.

¹⁵ Bourriaud, *Relational aesthetics*: 71.

¹⁶ Bourriaud, N. *Postproduction. Culture as screenplay: how art reprograms the world*. (New York, Lukas and Sternberg, 2010): 13.

¹⁷ Bourriaud, *Postproduction*: 17. Although the book was published several years before Facebook was launched in February 2004, blogging was already a relatively widespread phenomenon in the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s. These changes in the base (if we use the terminology of K. Marx) were a backdrop for his writings.

Following Jean Baudrillard, writer and researcher Irmgard Emmelhainz suggests that “art has fulfilled its avant-garde potential, having morphed everywhere to become embedded into everyday life.”¹⁸ Art can now use everything for its own purposes, “from recycling garbage, to forming communities, to investigating political issues and perfumes, to playing with television, anthropology, biology and technology.”¹⁹ It is striking that contemporary art discourse seems reminiscent of aesthetic education²⁰ strategies – such as in the case of Remida. This is the basis of the hypothesis of similarities between relational art and art of postproduction and activity of the center of creative recycling which I put in the thesis.

1.4. Method, Sources, Terminology

As relational aesthetics approaches art making as a dynamic, mutual sharing between participants, I considered action research method to be most relevant for this research. During my fieldwork, I took part in workshops as both an observer and a collaborator. My task here is to define how participants, artists, and teachers acted in specific situations and to analyze these actions using my chosen theoretical approach – theories of Nicolas Bourriaud. I combine it with other methods of qualitative research, such as interview, observation, and document analysis.²¹

My first meeting with Remida was in May 2009. I had several days free then and decided to make a self-organized study trip to Reggio Emilia to learn more about the approach. During 2009-2012, I used the pedagogy in my own practice as a preschool teacher and an art teacher. In February and in March in 2012, I visited the center in Trondheim to work specifically with my research question. I took part in workshops, made observation notes and interviewed Pål Bøyesen, artistic director of the center. Written sources – reports, archive materials, media publications – were essential along with the action research. For the sake of limitation of material, I focus on the center’s activity in 2010 and 2011. Another reason for this choice is

¹⁸ Emmelhainz, I. “Art under the new world order”, *Art and Education*. <http://www.artandeducation.net/paper/art-under-the-new-world-order/> (10.01.2012).

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ It is important to clarify usage of terms “art education” and “aesthetic education”. In professional literature, the term “art education” is widely used, and often is exchanged with “aesthetic education”. A. Bamford prefers using the term “art education” in her research. Usage of the term “aesthetic education” is preferable for my thesis, as I operate within the expanded field of aesthetics, in the sense of G. Böhme.

²¹ I was using the following book to learn more about methods of qualitative research: #Brinckmann S., Tanggaard, L. (eds.) *Kvalitative metoder. En grundbok*. København, Hans Retzels forlag, 2010.

that reports for these years were available. The findings and their analysis are presented in Chapter Six and Chapter Seven.

The terms that I use in the thesis are clarified in the attached glossary (see Appendix I).

1.5. Research Question

This thesis discusses art theoretical problems connected to the idea of sustainable art education seeing it in the context of contemporary aesthetics. In contemporary education there is a clear tendency to focus on creativity and its potential. Innovative pedagogical systems such as Montessori Approach, Steiner Pedagogy, and Reggio Emilia Approach put development of creativity and independent thinking as their goals. At the same time, contemporary art often offers individual artistic opportunities, that is, to become involved into the process of creation. In this thesis, I will place the phenomenon of Remida, a creative recycling center, in the theoretical frame of contemporary aesthetics and analyze it in the context of the “educational turn” in contemporary art and curating. In order to do that, I will apply distinctive factors essential for relational art and postproduction art onto the Remida case.

The research questions posed here are:

I. How can the case of Remida be interpreted in the light of contemporary aesthetic theories, as they are described by Bourriaud in his books *Relational Aesthetics* and *Postproduction*, seen in the context of the “educational turn”?

I discuss the “crossover” between the fields²² of contemporary aesthetics and contemporary, innovative pedagogy in the thesis in order to answer this question. The following sub-question makes my task more precise and constitutes a starting point for analysis of empirical data, before I can make more general conclusions for answering the first question.

Ia. What features of theory and practice of the Remida center in Trondheim correspond to the characteristics of the contemporary art scene, as described by Nicolas Bourriaud in his books *Relational aesthetics* and *Postproduction*? What features do not correspond with these characteristics?

²² The term is used here in the sense of the approach of Pierre Bourdieu.

The second question posed in the thesis makes the thesis more applicable.

II. How can collaboration practices between contemporary art professionals and education professionals in Norway on the example of Remida be described?

Requirements to a master thesis in art history at the University of Oslo are defined as follows: “The thesis can consist of discussion and interpretation of own collected material, which can comprise works or chosen texts, or be a historical or theoretical analysis.”²³ Despite the fact that I refer to certain events in the history of art, and analyse contemporary art situation from a diachronic viewpoint, this thesis could be interpreted as a theoretical-empirical reflection about borders of the expanded field of aesthetics.

²³ A description of requirements to a master thesis in art history at the University of Oslo. <http://www.uio.no/studier/emner/hf/ifikk/KUN4090/index.xml> (10.04.2012). Translated from Norwegian.

Chapter 2

An “Educational Turn” in Contemporary Art and Curating

As I have emphasized in the previous chapter, this thesis is an interdisciplinary research, where the case study relates to fields of pedagogy and aesthetics. Aesthetics of the expanded field is the relevant field for the study. As I will discuss further, there are trends in contemporary art and aesthetics which link it to pedagogy. Although Bourriaud does not give a direct attention to the educational value of art in his writings, I consider important to note that this tendency exists.

In order to analyze contemporary art, we should place ourselves in the context of the contemporary social, political, and economic situation:

How are we to understand the types of artistic behaviour shown in exhibitions held in the 1990s, and the lines of thinking behind them, if we do not start out from the same *situation* as the artists?²⁴

In this chapter, I would like to prepare the basis for the further discussion on education by focusing on *knowledge*. The concept of “knowledge” has changed within both the fields of education and art as a response to the development of the global economy that unfolded during the post-industrial age.

2.1. Knowledge Production in the Postmodern Condition

In 1979, Jean-François Lyotard wrote an important book discussing relationship between the post-industrial age and concepts of knowledge. *The Postmodern Condition* was published twenty years before the Bologna Process was initiated. In 1999, the declaration now known as Bologna Process, was signed by Education Ministers from 29 European countries; the

²⁴ Bourriaud, *Relational aesthetics*: 11. Italics by Bourriaud.

declaration called for “quantifiable and comparable outcomes” in education. Two decades earlier, Lyotard had foreseen this development:

The relationship of the suppliers and users of knowledge to the knowledge they supply and use is now tending, and will increasingly tend, to assume that the form already taken by the relationship to commodity producers and consumers to the commodities they produce and consume – that is, the form of value.²⁵

In the post-industrial age, learning has become valued primarily for its future financial reward, its “educational” value or democratic importance seems to have diminished. In other words, learning increasingly plays a role of an informational commodity. For instance, the study period of an average university student in Norway is counted in economic terms: it is a financial investment into future career earnings. A scholarship is a governmental loan, in which a student effectively purchases an opportunity to acquire knowledge, knowledge which will later be used to “repay” the state. The purpose of the system is effectiveness, “...the reason it programs itself like a computer is the optimization of the global relationship between input and output – in other words, performativity.”²⁶

However, Lyotard argues that knowledge (*savoir*) can neither be reduced to science, nor to learning (*connaissance*). Learning means to “denote and describe objects and may be declared true or false,”²⁷ science is composed of denotative elements as well. However, if we use terminology of semiotics, it seems clear that knowledge spreads further than to the denotation level. Knowledge is much more than the learning or collection of facts. True knowledge must include critical thinking. A need for measurable results which post-industrial age brings to education (illustrated for instance, by the Bologna Process in Europe) are not applicable to this value.

In his works, Lyotard employs a methodological approach to the analysis of social situations. Focusing on language, it is a kind of a “language game” through which to view the “postmodern condition”. Lyotard’s idea of how knowledge is transmitted is directly relevant to the topic of this thesis:

Each language partner, when a “move” pertaining to him is made, undergoes a “displacement”, an alteration of some kind that not only affects him in his capacity as

²⁵ Lyotard, J.-F. *The postmodern condition: a report on knowledge*. Trans. by Bennington, G. and Massumi, B. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984): 4.

²⁶ Lyotard, *The postmodern condition: a report on knowledge*: 4.

²⁷ *Ibid.*: 18.

addressee and referent, but also as sender. These “moves” necessarily provoke “countermoves” – and everyone knows that a countermove that is merely reactionary is not a “good” move. Reactional countermoves are no more than programmed effects in the opponent’s strategy; they play into his hands and thus have no effect on the balance of power. That is why it is important to increase displacement in the games, and even to disorient it, in such a way as to make an unexpected “move” (a new statement).²⁸

“Unexpected moves” between language partners inspire newness and inventiveness between or among the players. This, in turn, can provide an element of social “disruption” which can prove valuable for the development of a society. For those societies affected by bureaucratic paralysis, another way of inspiring this disruption or inventiveness could lie in new or innovative paradigms of education/knowledge transmission. The structure of existing social institutions has a stabilizing effect upon the innovation game.

We know today that the limits the institution imposes on potential language “moves” are never established once and for all (even if they have been formally defined). Rather, the limits are themselves the stakes and provisional results of language strategies... Examples: Does the university have a place for language experiments (poetics)? Can you tell stories in a cabinet meeting? Advocate a cause in the barracks? The answers are clear: yes, if the university opens creative workshops; yes, if the cabinet works with prospective scenarios; yes, if the limits of old institution are displaced...

This, I think, is the appropriate approach to contemporary institutions of knowledge.²⁹

Lyotard argues that a creative pedagogical approach is “appropriate” for the postmodern condition. His thinking has provided a basis for those who have argued for more innovative contemporary pedagogies (such as the Reggio Emilia Approach) as well as for artists and curators in the context of the “educational turn”.

²⁸Ibid.: 16.

²⁹Ibid.: 17.

2.2. An “Educational Turn” in Contemporary Art and Curating

Since the 1990-s, a notable trend in contemporary art has become known as “an educational turn”. Curators “are turning to education, borrowing its techniques, social settings, tools, aims, furniture, characters and so on.”³⁰ Contemporary art and curating have seen the widespread adoption of pedagogical models. The convergence of art and education seems to reflect changes in the field of both art and academia. “‘New Institutional’ practice, a curatorial trend developed in the late 1990s as ‘part a community center, part laboratory and part academy’, as artist-curator Jonas Ekeberg defined it, demonstrates a paradigmatic shift in the institution of education since the mid 1950s away from the dominant orthodoxies of the educational establishment.”³¹ In her article in *Art and Education*, Denise Frimer argues that education within contemporary art has fostered an institutional practice “which is more globally representational and open.”³²

In *Curating and the Educational Turn*, the authors go even further. Paul O’Neill and Mick Wilson suggest that education has become “*the main event*” in contemporary art exhibitions:

Discussions, talks, symposia, educational programmes, debates and discursive practices have long played a supporting role to the exhibition of contemporary art, especially in the context of museums, biennials and, more recently, art fairs. Historically, these discussions have been *peripheral* to the exhibition, operating in a secondary role in relation to the display of art for public consumption. More recently, these discursive interventions and relays have become *central* in contemporary practice; they have now become the main event.³³

In 2011, when picking an entry for the Venice Biennale, The Norwegian Office of Contemporary Art (OCA) made a choice which illustrates this point. A group of artists and theorists were chosen to offer a series of lectures at the event. This precedent-setting choice provoked heated discussion among art professionals in Norway:

Marthe Tveitan from OCA explains that the lectures reflect a discursive shift in the field of contemporary art, in which many artists are interested in knowledge

³⁰ Dave Beech, “Weberian lessons: art, pedagogy, managerialism”, in: O’Neill, P. and Wilson, M. (Eds.) *Curating and the educational turn*, (London: Open Editions / de Appel, 2010): 40.

³¹ Frimer, D. “Pedagogical paradigms: Documenta’s reinvention”. *Art and Education*. <http://www.artandeducation.net/paper/pedagogical-paradigms-documenta%e2%80%99s-reinvention/> (25.10.2011).

³² Ibid.

³³ O’Neill, P. and Wilson, M. (Eds.) *Curating and the educational turn*, (London: Open Editions / de Appel, 2010): 12. My italics.

production, and other fields, rather than in art. It does not mean, however, that art made by artists should be downgraded in such an important arena as the Venice Biennale.³⁴

These counterarguments are understandable, as both verbal message and visual image can have an educational value. But what are these values?

Irit Rogoff, professor at Goldsmiths, University of London, and a founder of the Department of Visual Cultures lists some of them. In her article³⁵ published in the named book *Curating and the Educational Turn* she analyses this shift from the viewpoint of a critic, teacher and practitioner. As I have discussed in the very beginning of this chapter referring to Lyotard, development of neoliberal economies influences education. Since the second part of the XX century, commodification, over-bureaucratisation and emphasis on predictable outcomes have become key issues.

Rogoff expresses her desire to refurbish the field of education with the following terms:

1. Potentiality and actualisation, where the idea of an endless possibility inherited by every student/participant is out there. However stating her liberation from “the arena of strong, redemptive and missionary education”, Rogoff accepts both “I can”-s and “I can’t”-s of educational process without considering the last being paralysing. Taking in account these two ideas, it is possible to realise what is it in the ‘academy’ which can serve as a model of ‘being in the world’.
2. Education should shift the focus from emergency to urgency. Instead of reacting to state prescriptions, the educator can use the possibility of providing ourselves an understanding “of what the crucial issues are, so that they become driving forces”³⁶. The example Rogoff is giving is about a discussion in her class of why electoral forums are not the arena of political participation and what these might be – the next day after G.W. Bush was elected president.
3. Education has to be accessible – “to give a quick and easy entry point to whatever complexity we might talk about”³⁷. Under accessibility she means also an ability to formulate your own questions instead of dealing with those which are posed on you in

³⁴ Henmo, I. “OCA på akademisk sidespor”, *Billedkunst*, 21.06.2011, N 4: 4. Translated from Norwegian.

³⁵ At the first time appeared in *e-flux* magazine in 2008.

³⁶ Irit Rogoff, “Turning”, in: O’Neill, P. and Wilson, M. (Eds.) *Curating and the educational turn*, (London: Open Editions / de Appel, 2010): 40.

³⁷ Ibid.: 40-41.

the name of “an open and participatory democratic process”, as the same people also “produce the playing field.”³⁸

4. Education has to be an arena for a *challenge* written in the daily activity – where you see an option of another viewpoint, of a different way of thinking which is done in a consensus, non-conflictual way that the participants do not lose their energies to negating and rather put them into search for new opportunities.

The idea of an art work as a dialogue is hardly new – it has been named by, for instance, Mikhail Bakhtin. Education by origin has a conversational nature; a Socratic dialogue has shown to function as a resulting developmental effort. “I would not wish to give up the notion of conversation, which, to my mind, has been the most significant shift within the art world over the past decade”, Rogoff states.³⁹

Openness of the system (according to synergy laws), Rogoff’s focus on the opportunity to use everyday situations in the educational process (urgency), her idea of actualisation echo ideas of Reggio Emilia pedagogy which is a basis for the idea of Remida. In Reggio, every child is born capable and the task of an educator is to open up his or her abilities, “to actualise”, if we use Rogoff’s term. Usage of everyday situations as a starting point for analysis and reflecting over those provides motivation for participants.

2.3. The Art of Social Engagement

The “educational turn” which I have just discussed, corresponds with the idea of social engagement, as it is possible to observe from Rogoff’s statements. The art of social engagement originates back to establishing of the state as a form of social organization. In Ancient Greece Aristophanes produced a social satire on Athenian politics and Peloponnesian war. The idea of social encounter has been challenged by the Kantian idea about art’s “uselessness”.

In the newer European art history a bright example of artistic social engagement could be activity of Joseph Beuys. “To be a teacher is my greatest work of art”, said Joseph Beuys in 1969.⁴⁰ By his political activism, by teaching at the Dusseldorf academy, by establishing of

³⁸ Ibid.: 41.

³⁹ Ibid.: 43.

⁴⁰ Verwoert, J. ”Class action”, *Frieze*, September 2006, N101. http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/class_action/ (10.10. 2011).

the Free International University in the artist's studio in April 1973 and so on, he shown an impressive ability to combine roles of artist and educator. Beuys considered education as being a form of art. Concept of Social Sculpture developed by Beuys implies the idea of art as an evolution, a flux, constant change:

My objects are to be seen as stimulants for the transformation of the idea of sculpture, or of art in general. They should provoke thoughts about what sculpture **can** be and how the concept of sculpting can be extended to the invisible materials used by everyone:

Thinking Forms – how we mould our thoughts or

Spoken Forms - how we shape our thoughts into words or

SOCIAL SCULPTURE how we mould and shape the world in which we live:
Sculpture as an evolutionary process; everyone is artist.⁴¹

Olivia Gude⁴² considered ideas of Beuys as an important source of inspiration. This artist and researcher presented her “Super-Session” at the annual convention of the National Art Education Association in New York. Her approach to art education is based on an idea that education should reflect social changes and use methods of contemporary art, in order to achieve its goals of preparing students to unpredictable future life. Gude emphasizes that students should work as professional artists, and exploration and investigation should be the most essential in educational/creative process. Main ideas expressed at the session at the convention of NAEA can be summed up in the following way:

1. Children should work as professional artists.
2. The art created in a classroom should be a living cultural form in the context. Social situations, fluxus-experiments, recycled art have richer meaning-making potential than copying painting techniques.
3. Art should be both poetical and practical.
4. We need a paradigm shift in contemporary art education.

⁴¹ Beuys, J. *What is art?* Edited with essays by Volker Harlan. UK, Clairview Books, 2004.

⁴² Olivia Gude is an associate professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago and founding director of Spiral Workshop. The Spiral Art Education Web site shares innovative projects for use in public school settings. Olivia is also a senior artist of Chicago Public Art Group and is the editor of its on-line Community Public Art Guide. She has received many awards and commissions for her public artwork—creating large-scale collaborative murals and mosaics - and has published many articles and book chapters on art education and on community public art.

5. We need exploration of media.
6. Aesthetic investigation is the most important part of the art making.⁴³

These suggestions correspond with development in contemporary art. New media such as fat and furniture (Beuys), a urinal (Duchamp), mass produced objects (Warhol), earth materials and landscapes (R. Smith) are included into the scope of art.

An artist named Jeffrey Lew⁴⁴ turned the ground floor of his building at 112 Greene Street into a first-come-first-served studio and exhibition space. People came, working with scrap metal, cast-off wood and cloth, industrial paint, rope, string, dirt, lights, mirrors, video. New genres — installation, performance — were invented. Most of the work was made on site and ephemeral: there one day, gone the next.⁴⁵

This description of creative process reminds activities, which take place at the Remida center in Trondheim, where invited children and grown-ups take in use various industrial rests for their own creative production. The works made at the center have a transient nature: it is presupposed that they can be divided into elements again and these elements can be used in further productions. However, the purposes of both spaces are different: in the case of the NYC artist collective, the lack of materials between 1970 and 1980 was the reason why the artist moved to 112 Greene Street, that was the method of survival. In Norway, the activity has first and foremost a pedagogical value.

Recycled art is a choice by Vic Muniz, a Brooklyn-based artist originated from Brazil. “Waste Land” is an art project which was documented with a movie by documentary director Lucy Walker which got a comprehensive critical response and commercial success. Impoverished garbage pickers working daily at Jardim de Gramacho were invited to participate in the project. Muniz took well-known visual schemes from European art history and reworked these by photographing the pickers which became performers, having obtained dresses as dying Marat and Madonna – visual topoi. The enlarged pictures were projected on a floor where the pickers, under the guidance of Muniz, were putting their everyday work objects into the lines and the shades of the photographic composition. Then the “garbage picture” was

⁴³ Gude, O. “Evocative and provocative pedagogy: toward a culture-changing curriculum”, lecture. Convention of the National Art Education Association. New York, Hilton hotel. 03.03.2012.

⁴⁴ Blog about the exhibition guided by Jeffrey Lew is to be found at <http://112greene.wordpress.com/>.

⁴⁵ Cotter, H. “The boom is over. Long life the art!” *New York Times*, 12.02.2009
http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/15/arts/design/15cott.html?_r=1 (15.10.2011)

completed, the final photography of the image was done. The photos were sold on an auction in London, and the income was all donated to the workers of the Jardim de Gramacho.

2.4. Conclusions

In the recent two decades a phenomenon called “educational turn” takes an important place in the global art scene. “Common rituals of pedagogy, characterized by critical learning and innovation, are appropriated in socially engaged exhibitions and intersect to blur the line between education and art,”⁴⁶ Denise Frimer says in her article about Documenta’s reinvention. In Chapter Five, I will see if it is the case in Norway.

Knowledge can neither be reduced to science or learning. Knowledge includes critical thinking, and art gives the opportunity to develop this quality. Jean-François Lyotard argues that creative approach is “appropriate” for education in the postmodern condition.

Paul O’Neill and Mick Wilson suggest that education has become “the main event” in contemporary art exhibitions, which is a debatable question. However, including methods of contemporary art into art education could be fruitful, as example of professional activity of O. Gude shows. Collaboration between contemporary artists and education professionals could provide a networking precedent, important for both artists and educators.

⁴⁶ Frimer, D. “Pedagogical paradigms: Documenta’s reinvention”. *Art and Education*. <http://www.artandeducation.net/paper/pedagogical-paradigms-documenta%e2%80%99s-reinvention/> (25.10.2012)

Chapter 3

Relational Aesthetics within the “Education Turn”

Since my intention is to apply the theory of Nicolas Bourriaud onto a case study of Remida, the center of creative recycling in Norway (emanated from the Reggio Emilia pedagogy), I will present the theory in order to legitimate applying it in this context, before I am going to analyze the case study. In fact, the concept of Relational Aesthetics has become a key reference within the art field for the practices dealing with communication rather than producing objects.

Relational aesthetics is an approach developed by a French artist, curator and art critic Nicolas Bourriaud. The French edition his work, entitled *Esthétique Relationnelle*, was published in 1998 and was a direct reaction to the art produced in the 1990s: “work that is open-ended, interactive, and resistant to closure, often appearing to be ‘work-in-progress’ rather than a completed object.”⁴⁷ As Bourriaud states, the field of relational aesthetics does not represent a theory of art, as “this would imply the statement of an origin and a destination,”⁴⁸ but a theory of form. Bourriaud reflects in the so-called expanded field of aesthetics which Rosalind Krauss described in her well-known article “Sculpture in the expanded field”. In particular, she points out in this article that “... categories like sculpture and painting have been kneaded and stretched and twisted in an extraordinary demonstration of elasticity, a display of the way a cultural term can be extended to include just about anything.”⁴⁹ There is a number of related approaches in contemporary aesthetics, for instance, Aesthetics of Everyday Life (Yuriko Saito, A. Light and J. Smith) or a concept of aesthetics as Aisthethik by Gernot Böhme.

3.1. Laboratory Concept within Relational Aesthetics

Bourriaud was one of the co-directors and curators of the Palais de Tokyo (opened in 2002 and financed by the French state), a contemporary art venue which functioned as an

⁴⁷ Bishop, C. “Antagonism and relational aesthetics”, *October*, Fall 2004: 52.

⁴⁸ Bourriaud, *Relational aesthetics*: 19.

⁴⁹ Krauss, R. “Sculpture in the expanded field”, *October*, Spring 1979: 30.

experimental laboratory. The laboratory paradigm that was promoted by Nicolas Bourriaud and his colleagues, Hans Ulrich Obrist, Hou Hanru, Maria Lind, challenged exhibition conventions and resulted from the open-endedness and interactivity in the art after the 1990s. However, Claire Bishop argues that this kind of work “seems to derive from a creative misreading of poststructuralist theory: rather than the *interpretations* of a work of art being open to continual reassessment, the work of art *itself* is argued to be in perpetual flux.”⁵⁰ The word “mis-reading” that Bishop used in this context implies an exegesis of a mis-take of the artist, seemingly assuming that there are right and wrong ways to interpret a theory. I believe that this postulate could be open to debate.

As I have discussed in the previous chapter, contemporary artists and curators borrow educational techniques for their projects. However, the idea of art having a didactic function is not new. Art could have didactic functions being representative, when it fulfilled tasks from the church or from the state. Roman emperor sculpture, Classicist painting by David, Social Realist art are some historical examples of art which served the moral imperative of the civil order, which did not necessarily have a negative effect on their aesthetic qualities. Being relational, art is also potentially didactic. Contemporary art developed concurrently with other social forms, and pedagogy was one of those. Democratization of art was moving along the same trajectory as democratization of pedagogical approaches, methods, and forms. In the last two decades, art reconfigured its addressee, who is “no longer necessarily even a gallery-goer”, but “a participant, interlocutor, guest, peer, comrade and so on.”⁵¹ However, as Claire Bishop emphasizes it, it is not always the case. In practice, those who attend exhibitions of contemporary art, belong to a group of gallery-goers. In fact, contemporary art is not democratic. But in theory of relational aesthetics, *the participant* in relational art became a collaborator of *the artist*. The cooperative dialogue constitutes the structure of the work/exhibition of relational art: “... art is made in the gallery, the same way that Tristan Tzara thought that ‘thought is made in the mouth.’”⁵²

As examples of the interactive nature of relational aesthetics, consider the following: Rirkrit Tiravanija arranged a dinner at an art collector’s locale providing all necessary ingredients for cooking a Thai soup, Philip Parreno invited participants to do their favorite hobby on May 1, Maurizio Catellan exhibited a money box which had just been robbed, Christine Hill started

⁵⁰ Ibid. Italics by Bishop.

⁵¹ Dave Beech, “Weberian lessons: art, pedagogy, managerialism”, in: O’Neill, P. and Wilson, M. (Eds.) *Curating and the educational turn*, (London: Open Editions/ de Appel, 2010): 55.

⁵² Bourriaud. *Relational aesthetics*: 40.

working in a supermarket and organized a weekly training studio in a gallery. All of these artists constructed an interactive space, where participants were invited to collaborate and co-produce art works.

The spaces constructed by these artists and their curators resemble a laboratory. Hans Ulrich Obrist argues that

[t]he truly contemporary exhibition should express connective possibilities and make propositions. And, perhaps surprisingly, such an exhibition should reconnect with the laboratory years of twentieth-century exhibition practice... The truly contemporary exhibition with its striking quality of unfinishedness and incompleteness would trigger *pars pro toto* participation.⁵³

The concept of a laboratory is in contrast to the institution phenomenon (being, however, an institution in itself) and the traditional museum model, which is collection-based and research-oriented. When speaking about his show at the Arnolfini in Bristol, Liam Gillick, one of the artists featured in Bourriaud's writing, mentions that it "is a laboratory or workshop situation where there is the opportunity to test out some ideas in combination, to exercise relational and comparative critical processes."⁵⁴ The laboratory is a dynamic and public-oriented space, where conditions presuppose research in situ – also in collaboration with participants/public. It is viewed as a project-based space, where the curator plays an important role.

3.2. Interactivity, Communication and Social Competence

As I will mention later in the text, changes in the field of art happened concurrently with the paradigm shift in pedagogy. It seems that inclusiveness and open-endedness are characteristic of both pedagogy and art at this period of time. The most essential challenges for an educator in the twenty-first century are to teach social skills, or social competence.

In Chapter Two of the thesis, I discussed the "educational turn" taking place in contemporary art, and changes in the field -of pedagogy will be discusses in detail in Chapter Five.

⁵³ H. U. Obrist, cited in Bishop, C. "Antagonism and relational aesthetics", *October*, Fall 2004: 51.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

Bourriaud claims that contemporary art deals with interpersonal relations and their social context, instead of the singularity of a private microcosm: “an art taking as its theoretical horizon the realm of human interactions and its social context, rather than the assertion of an independent and private symbolic space.”⁵⁵ In the overwhelming presence of signs and objects, the interactive relations between the two – the artist(s) and the participant(s) – turns to be the most important, he says. Bourriaud adds that art has always been relational in a certain way, being “... a factor of sociability and a founding principle of dialogue.”⁵⁶

In the last decades, with the spread of the effects from globalization, inter-human relationships have become a part of the global market. Selling one’s work force involves performative strategies, which require certain behavioral patterns, scenography, and dress codes (costumes). Marketing strategies using inter-human relations (love and friendship, rather than a particular product, is to be sold, and not just a particular product) undermine the uniqueness and fullness of experiences. An emotion in a market context becomes a simulacrum, an artificial fiction. In the “Society of the Spectacle” where human relations are no longer directly experienced, artistic praxis “appears... to be a rich loam for social experiments, like a space partly protected from the uniformity of behavioral patterns.”⁵⁷ Artistic activity is now defined by communication and human contact.

As I have claimed, the paradigm shift in aesthetics in the last two decades, as described by Bourriaud, is taking place concurrently with the paradigm change in education. In order to be able to solve contemporary global challenges, and to be prepared for a future which is unexpected and difficult to predict, one must develop the so-called twenty-first century skills. Named at the Convention of the National Art Education Conference, they include the following four “C”s:

- Communication;
- Creativity and innovation;
- Critical thinking, problem solving;

⁵⁵ Bourriaud. *Relational aesthetics*:14.

⁵⁶ Ibid.: 15.

⁵⁷ Ibid.: 9.

- Collaboration.⁵⁸

These skills (communication, collaboration, creativity and critical thinking) can be developed through art projects, in case of successful collaboration between contemporary art initiatives and educational initiatives. Those gallery-goers who regularly attend exhibitions of contemporary art have developed their gaze through education. It does not mean, however, that it is not possible to increase cultural competence of potential attendees, who are now set out of the context.

The “gaze” is a concept of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. If consumption of the cultural production is a modal part of communication, then a cultural institution provides a space for dialogue and interchange of meanings, he says. In order to decode contemporary art, a participant has to possess a developed “gaze”, or a degree of cultural competence:

Consumption is, in this case, a stage in a process of communication, that is, an act of deciphering, decoding, which presupposes practical or explicit mastery of a cipher or code. In a sense, one can say that the capacity to see (voir) is a function of the knowledge (savoir), or concepts, that is, the words, that are available to name visible things, and which are, as it were, programmes for perception. A work of art has meaning and interest only for someone who possesses the cultural competence, that is, the code, into which it is encoded.⁵⁹

However, as Bishops points it out, those who attend exhibitions of the relational artists named by Bourriaud, are gallery-goers, a social group who is acquainted to the codes these artists use. In case of Tiravanija’s project in Kölnischer Kunstverein, *Untitled (Tomorrow is Another Day)*, where the artist built a wooden reconstruction of his apartment in New York, which was open for public use, the art space was turned into a social space. Those who attended this project represented a certain group of art dealers, artists and art lovers. The public is universal in theory, as Bourriaud argued, but is it really universal? “The Kölnischer Stadt-Anzeiger concurred that the work offered “a kind of ‘asylum’ for everyone”. But who is the “everyone” here? This may be a microtopia, but – like utopia – it is still predicated on the exclusion of those who hinder or prevent its realisation. (It is tempting to consider what might have

⁵⁸ Scott, E., Modler, D. “The visual journal as paradigm shifter: pulling together traditional and contemporary pedagogical practices”. Convention of the National Art Education Association. New York, Hilton Hotel, 01.03.2012.

⁵⁹ Bourdieu, P. “Introduction” from: *Distinction: a social critique of the judgement of taste*. 1984. <http://performingtext.qwriting.org/files/2010/08/Bourdieu.pdf> (20.03.2012)

happened if Tiravanija's space had been invaded by those seeking genuine "asylum").⁶⁰ The problem that Bishop mentions is essential for contemporary art in general. Those who have developed the "gaze" come to the exhibitions and have an opportunity to reflect over it. Those who haven't got an opportunity for sufficient education, are left as an audience for disruptive efforts of contemporary artists – such as art group "Voina" ("War")⁶¹ in Russia or Santiago Serra named by Claire Bishop. These artists use public with little cultural competence and citizen awareness as a soil for their own brand growth and international success. Similarly, curators of contemporary art exhibitions produce extensive catalogues rich with professional jargon. For potential participants who haven't obtained a necessary cultural competence because of lack of a quality art education their content is not available. These catalogues remind descriptions accompanying pharmaceutical products in USSR: a person with no medical education could hardly understand terminology written on the medicine packages. Tailoring educational programmes for public with various levels of cultural competence could be not only a way to attract more visitors to an exhibition of contemporary art, but also making it more available. However, I accept that there are other viewpoints on this question.

Defining contemporary art is probably one of the most challenging tasks, not only for those without necessary competence, but also for an art professional. Bourriaud attempts to do that. He sees communication as an exchange of signs that are theoretically universal. Art in this "expanded field" is defined as "a process of non-verbal semiotization."⁶² In the glossary attached to the edition of *Relational Aesthetics*, Art is defined as follows:

1. General term describing a set of objects presented as part of a narrative known as *art history*. This narrative draws up the critical genealogy and discusses the issues raised by these objects, by way of three sub-sets: *painting, sculpture, architecture*.
2. Nowadays, the word "art" seems to be no more than a semantic leftover of this narrative, whose more accurate definition would read as follows: Art is an activity

⁶⁰ Bishop, C. "Antagonism and relational aesthetics", *October*, Fall 2004: 68.

⁶¹ Art group "Voina" was invited to co-curate the 7th Berlin Biennale. They became famous mostly outside Russia for their disruptive political performances such as "Fuck for the Teddy-Bear's Descendant" and "Penis captured by FSB". During the last performance, a 65 meter penis was painted on one of the bridges in St. Petersburg. When the bridge was raised, the giant picture appeared just in front of the office of FSB St. Petersburg. However, their performances got generally negative responses from the citizens who, unlike curators at Berlin Biennale, haven't attained the "gaze" required for a reflected analysis of the "Voina"'s work.

⁶² Bourriaud, *Relational aesthetics*: 88.

consisting in producing relationships with the world with the help of signs, forms, actions and objects.⁶³

The last definition does not seem satisfactory enough because of its generality. Obviously, any human action involves producing the described relationships. Remarkably, Bourriaud himself adds that “[t]he issue no longer resides in broadening the boundaries of art, but in experiencing art’s capacities of resistance within the overall social arena.”⁶⁴ Guy Debord, in the final analysis of the “constructed situations”, denied them any artistic character. “For in them, quite to the contrary, he saw ‘art being exceeded’ by a revolution in day-to-day life.”⁶⁵ “The expanded field” of contemporary aesthetics makes it challenging to mark borders between what art is and what art is not even for the most experienced art professionals. At the same time, this open-endedness provides a platform for discussions on contemporary art.

3.3. Theory of Form Put in the Urban Context

As Bourriaud argues, “relational aesthetics does not represent a theory of art”, which would “imply the statement of an origin and a destination”. Instead, art is “a theory of form.”⁶⁶ By form Bourriaud means an autonomous structure where elements are interdependent. The artwork represents one of the subsets of multiple existing forms. Citing Greek atomists, Bourriaud exemplifies the form through atomic movement in space. When an atom randomly encounters the next atom by deviating from its trajectory, the collision gives birth to a new form. The form can thus be defined as a “lasting encounter”. When interpreting the given case from the perspective of semiotics, one can translate this atomic meeting into an encounter of signs. The form of relational art, in order to be deciphered, has to be put into the context of a world-wide urban culture. A city model, with people-atoms, may be considered as an extension of many phenomena in contemporary culture. Art seem to tighten the space of inter-human relations in the urban setting.

⁶³ More terms clarifying the approach of Bourriaud and which I use in the thesis, such as behavior, inhabiting, and co-existence criterion, are provided in Appendix I. Italics in the citation are by Bourriaud.

⁶⁴ Bourriaud. *Relational aesthetics*: 31.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*: 19.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

3.4. The Concept of “Semionaut”

The subject in relational aesthetics seems to be elusive, unstable and thereby challenging to reflect upon. Artists produce works that are not connected by any particular style, topic, or iconography. They navigate between signs and connect them. Semionaut is the term used by Bourriaud in *Relational Aesthetics*. “The contemporary artist is a semionaut, he invents trajectories between signs.”⁶⁷ The term has a root deriving from a Greek word “sēmeion” - “a sign, a mark”. The affix “naut” (from the Greek “nautēs”, which meant “a sailor”) defines a traveler or a voyager and was used in English in words “Argonaut”, “astronaut”, “cosmonaut”, and finally, “cybernaut.”⁶⁸ So, the contemporary artist is a traveler on a field of multiple crossovers of signs. The traveler looks for the Golden Fleece.

The “trajectory” which Bourriaud names in his definition at the Glossary of *Relational Aesthetics* will be considered as a postproduction chain in the later book:

The activities of DJs, Web surfers, and postproduction artists imply similar configurations of knowledge, which is characterized by the invention of paths through culture. All three are “semionauts” who produce original pathways through signs. Every work is issued from a script that the artist projects onto culture, considered the framework of a narrative that in turn projects new possible scripts, endlessly.⁶⁹

This description is an “update” of the previous definition of the term, where he includes DJs and Web surfers and examples of semionauts.

3.5. Relational Projects as “Minor Modifications”

Modernity project rooted in ideas from the Enlightenment with its emancipating vision seems now to be over. In the XXI century, secondary education is mandatory in the majority of European countries. The percentage of people with a higher education has significantly increased. International laws attempt to regulate global economic and political life. However, the rationalized and enlightened mind could not prevent the major economic crises of the century, two world wars, exploitation of the South, the atomic bomb, and modern slavery.

⁶⁷ Ibid.: 113.

⁶⁸ Quinion, M. *Affixes, the building blocks of English*. An online dictionary. <http://www.affixes.org/n/-naut.html> (23.04.2012) The dictionary is based on *Ologies and Isms: Word Beginnings and Endings*, a book by the same author published by Oxford University Press in 2002.

⁶⁹ Bourriaud. *Relational aesthetics*: 18.

The emancipation of the human consciousness from an immature state of ignorance and error, planned by Enlightenment has not resulted in a “bright future” (topos of the USSR propaganda) or a utopia. Bourriaud explains that “[t]he modern emancipation plan has been substituted by countless forms of melancholy.”⁷⁰

Consequently, contemporary artists had to face the destruction of the grand narrative during the twentieth century and multiple examples of dystopia. The artist, instead, has an opportunity for “learning to inhabit the world in a better way,”⁷¹ to construct projects on a local scale, which can be a historical chance, as Bourriaud puts it, or a minor modification, as Lyotard describes it. In the provided citation the word “learning” is relevant to my research question. With relational aesthetics, art seems to have become a platform for educational projects per se.⁷²

3.6. Conclusions

In summation, I identify the following as key characteristics of relational aesthetics:

1. Bourriaud presents relational aesthetics as a theory of *form*, and not art.
2. Relational art is defined by the process of *human interaction and communication*, which is an essence of art works per se.
3. The artists create a space for collaborative projects, where participants (who are, according to Bourriaud, *theoretically universal*) are invited as *co-producers* of the work, which is not necessarily a completed object.
4. The work is *transitive and elusive*, which makes challenging its analysis problematic.
5. The backdrop of relational art is an *urban culture*.
6. Relational art seems to be primarily *functional*. Bishop criticizes Bourriaud for promoting the idea that function prevails over contemplation and open-endedness over aesthetics resolution – which, in turn, heightens the status of curator, who originally had management functions.
7. Artists aim to create *micro-efforts* instead of creating grand narratives.
8. In the theory of relational aesthetics public is universal. However, it is not the case. Even though Dave Beech claims that the addressee of contemporary art is “no longer

⁷⁰ Bourriaud. Relational aesthetics: 12.

⁷¹ Ibid.: 13.

⁷² See a detailed analysis of the educational turn in contemporary art at the chapter 4.

necessarily even a gallery-goer”, but “a participant, interlocutor, guest, peer, comrade and so on,”⁷³ it does not mean that the participant, the guest and the comrade are not the same gallery-goers from the same milieu. This is one of the points of Claire Bishop’s critique of relational aesthetics. Contemporary art still remains relatively elitist and exclusive.

I have distinguished these principles for the theory of relational aesthetics. Based on this interpretation, I will work with the case study of Remida in Chapter Six. Before that, I will discuss another book of Bourriaud, which is important for this thesis, *Postproduction*.

⁷³ Dave Beech, “Weberian lessons: art, pedagogy, managerialism”, in: O’Neill, P. and Wilson, M. (Eds.) *Curating and the educational turn*, (London: Open Editions/ de Appel, 2010): 55.

Chapter 4

Art as Postproduction

In *Postproduction*,⁷⁴ Bourriaud continues and reformulates some of the postulates of *Relational Aesthetics* (which focused primarily on the art of the 1990s) and points out tendencies in the 2000s art and Internet era. The book was not considered by the author as a sequel to *Relational Aesthetics* except insofar the both books describe the same artistic scene, in which Bourriaud was involved in during his extensive curatorial experience (Vanessa Beecroft, Maurizio Cattelan, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Liam Gillick, Pierre Huyghe, Miltos Manetas and Rirkrit Tiravanija).

“Postproduction” is a term from technical and audiovisual vocabulary used in professional language of cultural products makers (firstly, those who work with TV, music and video). The term signifies manipulation processes of the “raw” filmed or recorded material, montage, adding of extra visual or audio elements, et cetera. As opposed to the agricultural and industrial sectors, postproduction belongs to the tertiary sector, along with the service industry and recycling. In art of the 1990s and the 2000s, recycling of visual, audio images and forms takes place, which “implies incessant navigation within the meanderings of cultural history, navigation which itself becomes the subject of artistic practice.”⁷⁵ The artist, according to Bourriaud, consumes and reworks visual, audial, tangible and other information (signs), in order to produce a new sign mosaic. However, relations between production and consumption in Bourriaud’s writings seem to be problematic. At the same time, relationships between the first and the second books do not seem to be clear to Bourriaud himself. On page eight of *Postproduction*, he claims that the book “is not a “sequel” to *Relational Aesthetics* except insofar as the two books essentially describe the same artistic scene. In terms of method, the link between them is simple: both present an analysis of today’s art in relation to social changes, whether technological, economic, or sociological.”⁷⁶ On page thirteen of the same book, he claims that “*Relational Aesthetics*, of which this book is a continuation, described

⁷⁴ Full title of the book is *Postproduction. Culture as Screenplay: How Art Reprograms the World*. First published in English in 2002.

⁷⁵ Bourriaud, *Postproduction*: 18.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*: 8.

the collective sensibility within which new forms of art have been inscribed. Both take their point of departure in the changing mental space that has been opened for thought by the Internet, the central tool of the information age we have entered”. Relations of the first book to the second do not seem to be clear enough. However, in both citations provided here, Bourriaud emphasizes technological changes (“base”) as a precondition to an analysis of contemporary art – its superstructure.

4.1. The Production - Consumption Dichotomy

Problems of the relationship between production and consumption in art are central in *Postproduction*. Bourriaud refers to *German Ideology* by Karl Marx where differences between natural tools of production (such as working the earth) and tools of production made by civilization are discussed. In the first case, “individuals are subordinate to nature.” In the second, “they are dealing with a “product of labor”, that is, capital, and a mixture of accumulated labor and tools of production.”⁷⁷ They are kept together by an inter-human transaction where the third term – money – is involved. According to Bourriaud, commerce is one of the forms of human relations, and the artist has “kinship with the merchant, content to move products from one place to another.”⁷⁸ Marcel Duchamp demonstrated the capitalist production process within the art field when he exhibited his first ready-mades in the 1910s contemplating over the idea of consumption being a certain mode of production. Structuralist Michel de Certeau brings this idea to life again in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, where he shows that the Production – Consumption pair, which is traditionally seen as a dichotomy, is a scheme of production involving two actions similar to the two sides of one coin. Making a choice is also an act of production, as soon as for using an object it is necessary to interpret it. “By listening to music or reading a book, we produce new material, we become producers. And each day we benefit from more ways in which we organize this production: remote controls, VCRs computers, MP3s, tools that allow us to select, reconstruct, and edit. Postproduction artists are agents of this evolution, the special workers of cultural reappropriation.”⁷⁹ In his book *The Open Work* (1962) Umberto Eco discusses a similar position. Eco argues that firstly, “‘open’ works, insofar as they are *in movement*, are characterized by the invitation to *make the work* together with the author”, and, secondly, “on

⁷⁷Ibid.: 23.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.: 24- 25.

a wider level (as a *subgenus* to the *species* “work in movement”) there exist works which, though organically completed, are “open” to a continuous generation of internal relations which the addressee must uncover and select in his act of perceiving the totality of incoming stimuli”. Thirdly, every work of art, even though it is produced by following an explicit or implicit poetics of necessity, is effectively open to a virtually unlimited range of possible readings, each of which causes the work to acquire new vitality in terms of one particular taste, or perspective, or personal *performance*.”⁸⁰

However, contributions of “a producer” making a design for an MP3 player or developing a new computer program, and “a producer” choosing a song to be played at this player, seem to be different. In case of overestimating the role of consumer, a serious risk of underestimating a creative maker exists. This claim by Bourriaud reminds a position of the contemporary minister of education in Russia Andrey Fursenko (which was highly criticized in social media). Namely, the minister claimed the following, “The problem of the Soviet educational system was in focusing on the forming of a Creator, while at the moment we have to educate qualified consumers.”⁸¹ Fursenko makes this statement in the context of post-industrial society and during ongoing shift from the product-oriented economy to the service-oriented economy. Bourriaud is conscious about these changes. According to *Postproduction*, elimination of the distinction between consumption and production is taking place. However, if every individual, regardless his or her background in art production, can participate in the postproduction process, the question about copyright and art market arises. If the means of production have become more accessible, what has happened to the status of the producer/artist? The challenge is that a “copy-paste” reproductional activity is more difficult to recognize, and the represented form can turn into a mosaic of “copy-pastes” where no any idea holds these parts together. It seems that creativity is not paid enough attention in the Bourriaud’s reflections.

In the postproduction process, reproduced elements do not constitute a primary source – they are also parts of the chain of citations and consequent reproduction. In his later work, *Radical* (2009), Bourriaud cites Craig Owens, Benjamin Buchloh, and Jacques Derrida in order to justify his ideas which were expressed already in *Postproduction*.

⁸⁰ Eco, U. *The open work*. Translated by Anna Cancogni. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989): 21.

⁸¹ Sokolova, V. “Serye kardinaly obrazovaniya”. *Sovershenno sekretno*, Date of the publication not provided. <http://www.sovsekretno.ru/magazines/article/2758> (01.04.2012). Translated from Russian.

In 1980, in a text entitled *The Allegorical Impulse*, Craig Owens describes this fragmentation as the basis of an allegorical language, in contrast to modernism distinguished by its symbolism. He associates this allegorical language with the “decentering” of language identified by Jacques Derrida as a key figure of postmodernity. Signs are no longer anything more than cultural references, no longer linked to reality. It is the decayed ruins of history, which, according to Owens, appear in postmodern artworks in the early 1980s. Benjamin Buchloh is not so far removed from this view when he evokes, at the same time, artistic strategies of “fragmentation and dialectical juxtaposition of fragments, and separation of signifier and signified.”⁸²

The artist is a navigator among signs. Production is the process of the so-called “deejaying of visual forms,”⁸³ montage and detourage. An example of using the methods of “visual deejaying” is the Brooklyn-based project titled “Reanimation Library”. The project is a part of Print Studio made in conjunction with the ongoing exhibition *Print/Out* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.⁸⁴ It serves as an interactive resource for ongoing workshops and projects at the museum. Through the Reanimation Library project, outdated library books are offered as a resource for artists, writers and other visitors, thus obtaining a new life and functions. There are no age limits for users of the Print Studio. Participants use scanners, computers, and photocopiers to work with and manipulate material found within the books and to engage in other drop-in activities. This workshop illustrates the Bourriaud contemplations about postproduction, where participants develop their idea expressed in the deejayed visual forms.

4.2. Expanded Public Space. Flea Market Aesthetics

The Internet era provided new platforms for communication and information distribution such as cyber-communities, blogs, and social networks. These platforms expanded the public space as a potential exhibition site for artists.

It is the *socius*, i.e. all the channels that distribute information and products, that is the true exhibition site for artists of the current generation. The art center and the gallery

⁸² Bourriaud, N. *The radicanet*. (New York: Lukas and Sternberg, 2009): 49.

⁸³ Bourriaud, *Postproduction*: 45.

⁸⁴ The link to the Print Studio site: <http://www.moma.org/visit/calendar/events/14431>. I observed its branch at MoMA during my visit to New York to participate at the NAEA conference, which I was referring to in the previous chapters.

are particular cases but form an integral part of a vaster ensemble: public space. Thus Pflumm exhibits his work indiscriminately in galleries, clubs, and any other structure of diffusion, from T-shirts to records that appear in the catalog of his label Elektro Music Dept... The gallery is a place like any other, a space imbricated within a global mechanism, a base camp without which no expedition would be possible. A club, a school, or a street are not “better places”, but simply other places.⁸⁵

For Bourriaud and the artists he cites in *Postproduction*, the exhibition space consists of “all the channels that distributes information and products”, be it a gallery or a club, a shop or any “structure of diffusion”. The artist is hereby also a *producer*, in the meaning the term was used by Walter Benjamin. In his essay “Author as a Producer” (1934), Benjamin points out that artists should be actively involved in managing the means of production. The artists can enable distribution to a mass audience rather than passively delivering art works as goods for circulation on the market. In this Marxist approach, the artist is presented as a responsible producer, aware of her/his function in the chain of production, distribution and reception.⁸⁶

Postproduction was published before the social networking service Facebook was launched in 2004 and Twitter in 2006. However, the blogosphere was emerging already in the end of the 1990-s, and with its linkbacks, backlinks, blogrolls users cite and re-worked other’s citations. Guy Debord in his *Methods of Detournement* (1956) said:

The literary and artistic heritage of humanity should be used for partisan propaganda purposes. ... Any elements, no matter where they are taken from, can serve in making new combinations. ... Anything can be used. It goes without saying that one is not limited to correcting a work or integrating diverse fragments of out-of-date works into a new one; one can also alter the meaning of these fragments in any appropriate way, leaving the imbeciles to their slavish preservation of “citations”.⁸⁷

Originality (innovation) still remains the criteria, according to which an information source would be ranked. Reposts in social networks, Internet folk art (images manipulated with the Photoshop, demotivators, cartoons, animation) recycle visual and verbal information in countless variants. Some bloggers just reproduce information by a copy-paste activity, and some create their own information units, be it visual, textual, or audio information. In the

⁸⁵ Bourriaud, *Postproduction*: 71.

⁸⁶ Benjamin, W, “The author as producer”. In: *Understanding Brecht*, trans. Anna Bostock (London: Verso, 1983): 85-103.

⁸⁷ Cited after: Bourriaud, *Postproduction*: 35.

recent decades, the view of a contemporary self was analyzed in terms of the dissolved social bonds, disintegration of the “molecular” social system into a mass of “atomic” individual selves. On the other hand, arguments in this polemic are based on that individual in society are connected by the mutual communicative interdependence: “A self does not amount to much, but no self is an island; each exists in a fabric of relations that is now more complex and mobile than ever before. Young or old, man or woman, rich or poor, a person is always located at ‘nodal points’ of specific communication circuits, however tiny these may be,”⁸⁸ In the reality of the postmodern condition, one can hardly avoid being a part in the *semiotic chain*, or in constant dialogue. Nowadays, an average user of Facebook reposts visual or textual information (an anecdote, news or a satirical picture) which is not necessarily connected with any particular name of a person who produced. The user has an opportunity to add his or her ideas on this information, to reinterpret it. Postproduction is, in fact, a process of recycling, repeating of production cycles, a chain consisting of edited meaning blocks. In case of computer-based art, the chain consists of recycled bites of information.

Social network of the 2000-s and 2010-s functions consists of multiple individual signs which constitute an informational “flea market”. Also during the 1990s, the flea market was the dominant visual model of art of the 1990s, according to Bourriaud:

From Jeff Koons to Rirkrit Tiravanija, from Haim Steinbach to Jason Rhoades, one formal system has been substituted for another: since the early nineties, the dominant visual model is closer to an open-air market, the bazaar, the souk, a temporary and nomadic gathering of precarious materials and products of various provenances.⁸⁹

Facebook is a form of a virtual information market and a center of recycling, where multiple information units are collected, placed, and replaced, where the objects can lose their previous functions and values and obtain new ones. According to Bourriaud, the Internet mode of thinking corresponds with how we approach the world of tangible objects.

4.3. The Quality Problem

While in *Relational Aesthetics* Bourriaud deals with relations, inter-human sphere and “collective sensibility” in art, in *Postproduction* he discusses changes in production modes.

⁸⁸ Lyotard, J.-F. *The postmodern condition: a report of knowledge*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984): 15.

⁸⁹ Bourriaud, *Postproduction*: 28.

“In short, the two books show the same scene from two different angles, and the more recent is more centered on form,”⁹⁰ the author says. However, he claimed already that relational aesthetics is not a theory of art, but a theory of form. It seems that in *Postproduction* his formalist approach became more evident. This problem is central for Bishop’s critic of the Bourriaud’s theories:

The interactivity of relational art is... superior to optical contemplation of an object, which is assumed to be passive and disengaged, because the work of art is a “social form” capable of producing positive human relationships. As a consequence, the work is automatically political in implication and emancipatory in effect.⁹¹

This problem of contemplation I will work with in the chapters devoted to empirical analysis of the data. Bourriaud does not express a precise notion about *the quality problem* in the postproduction times. Despite the artistic freedom made possible by the postproduction era, it provides the basis for relativist approach to the art work. It becomes a part in the chain of these possible changes.

In her master’s thesis, Ragnhild Ingridsdotter Hoem discusses the problem of defining quality in political-cultural documentation issued by the Norwegian Parliament. She concludes that the authors of the documentation do not necessarily follow a single definition of the term *aesthetics*:

The cultural-political documents, which I have investigated, partly include an expanded concept of aesthetics. The meaning, which the aesthetic quality should have, and the relationships between aesthetics, environment, identity, and the sense of belonging which the documents set out, suggest it. At the same time, this expanded concept is not integrated in all parts of the initiative. In the law, and partly, in the guidelines, the aesthetic quality is reduced to physical and visual qualities. However, the overall perspective, which the documents make up together, extends further a physical beautifying up to topics of growth conditions, quality of life, and environmental considerations in the broadest sense. The main documents show that the initiative frames something more than “aestheticising”. As for Böhme, when he wants to identify specific characteristics that help to create a certain atmosphere, it becomes

⁹⁰ Ibid: 8.

⁹¹ Bishop, C. “Antagonism and relational aesthetics”, *October 110*, Fall 2004: 62.

very difficult to translate a descriptive term into the practical guidelines that will provide a right aesthetic quality.⁹²

This citation is taken to illustrate various interpretations of the term “aesthetic quality” and its application in an administrative context. A repost of information in a social network and writing a novel do obviously not have similar aesthetic qualifications. To define the quality of an art work in the context of the expanded concept of aesthetics has become a challenging issue for art specialists. Hal Foster in *Recodings: Art, Spectacle, Cultural Politics* argues that “art of many sorts is made to seem more or less equal – equally (un)important”.⁹³ This skeptic and anti-pluralist viewpoint is important to have in mind when discussing applicability of Bourriaud’s theories for the case of the recycled art center.

4.4. The Signature and the Art Market

The leitmotif in postproduction art has been re-oriented from innovation to putting order at the overwhelming amounts of information in our age. Instead of “what can we make that is new?” the artist asks “how can we make do with what we have?” Bourriaud says. It seems to be relevant to both objective and virtual information. Having access to these sources does not necessarily bring independent thinking, a critical approach, meaning, and freedom.

The USSR-born Ilya Kabakov, Brazilian-American Vic Muniz and Ghanian-Nigerian El Anatsui all use discarded materials in their art. Remarkably, both Kabakov, Muniz, and El Anatsui can have their works deeply originated in their national identities. Simultaneously, these specific works are successful products on the global art market. The Kabakov’s installation *The Man Who Never Threw Anything Away* gives allusions to the life in a Soviet communal flat. Vic Muniz in his *Pictures of Garbage Series* (fig. 1 in Appendix II) collaborates during the art making process with pickers from one of the world’s largest garbage dumps, Jardim Gramacho in Rio de Janeiro. El Anatsui’s media constitute metal fragments, wire and bottle cups (fig.2 in Appendix II). These objects are widely used and reused in East African societies. However, the art products which these artists develop are

⁹² Hoem, R. I. “Omgivelser som kulturpolitikk. Om begrepet estetisk kvalitet i Stortingsmeldingen *Kultur i tiden*”. (Masteroppgave, University of Oslo, 2010): 70. Translated from Norwegian.

⁹³ Foster, H. *Recodings: Art, Spectacle, Cultural Politics* (Seattle/Washington: Bay Press, 1985): 15.

marked by their *signature*. Bourriaud claims that “when Duchamp exhibits a manufactured object (a bottle rack, a urinal, a snow shovel) as a work of the mind, he shifts the problematic of the ‘creative process’, emphasizing *the artist’s gaze* brought to bear on an object instead of manual skill.”⁹⁴ In *Relational Aesthetics*, the process was highlighted. In *Postproduction*, it seems that the artist’s gaze is the factor which defines the object as “a work of art.” “To give a new idea to an object is already production”,⁹⁵ Bourriaud claims. Inserting an object into a new context, reinterpreting it means creation of a new object. In this process, the gaze of the artist and his or her personality becomes essential. In the art market reality the signature of the artist gets a brand status.

Individual interests in earning not only cultural, but also material capital, define profile of the artist. Commercial interests and educating interests do not always go together. In this thesis, my task is to discuss the case study in the context of contemporary aesthetics, to reason and argument. Roughly speaking, branding and the rules of the art market are not significantly different from whatever other market. Art criticism plays role of taste-maker and value-producer in this context. Like Foster puts it, “art (at least at the United States) is today the plaything of (corporate) patrons whose manipulation – of art as a sign of power, prestige, publicity”.⁹⁶ I have to articulate this tendency in order to point out approaches to art different from Bourriaud’s and see the subject of the thesis from different viewpoints. As I emphasize from the very beginning of the thesis (Introduction), my task is to apply the theory of Bourriaud to a microtopic case study, and the problem of brand or a signature is essential in this context.

The task of the contemporary educator is not to transmit information, but rather to teach participants how to make meaning out of the available information and to sort it by relevance. The task of the artist seems similar to the teacher’s task: produce meaning out of the information, recycle the information for a new – innovative! – meaning. In his writings he does not comment the copyright problem, and questions of artist’s survival in terms of the all-and-everything sharing art world. Daniella Dangoor, art collector, she tells the following to the *Kunst* magazine’s journalist:

I started to collect Minimalist art in the 1960-s, by Sol LeWitt and Donald Judd. The scene had been so small that the artists, the collectors and the critics, who were

⁹⁴ Bourriaud, *Postproduction*: 25. My italics.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Foster, *Recodings*: 4.

involved in the movement, all knew each other. There was no big money in circulation on that time. Artists were determined to develop their art. Another position dominates among today's artists. The individual's expression is considered being a method of creating recognizable signature products, so that one can thereby strengthen himself or herself as a brand. Their leading stars are Andy Warhol, Gilbert & George and Damien Hirst.⁹⁷

This viewpoint shows a polar tendency in the contemporary art world, which is not discussed in Bourriaud's work.

4.5. Conclusions

Changes within contemporary art follow the changes within the forces and relations of production in society. The most important change had taken place in the field of knowledge, which is now generated in *Internet*. Development of technology influenced our mode of thinking.

Instead of being an owner of forms, the artist moves towards the culture of *use of forms*, which is based on the idea of *sharing*, according to Bourriaud. Sharing, deejaying with meanings, visual forms, objects, and reproduction seem to be relevant characteristics of the recycled art center where objects are replaced, reorganized and provided a new meaning. Art seems to be considered as such in case an artist has developed his or her specific *signature style*. The signature is interconnected with an issue of the artist's *gaze*.

All the *channels that distribute information and products are exhibition sites* for artists of the current generation. "The art center and the gallery are particular cases but form an integral part of a vaster ensemble: public space."⁹⁸ That means that shopping centers, parks, social networks, blogs and other spaces where information and products are distributed are potential exhibition spaces for contemporary art projects.

Artists, as described by Bourriaud in *Postproduction*, become responsible for not only production of their work, but also distribution. Hereby, he is reminiscent of the ideas of

⁹⁷ Dee, M. "Kunstsamlernes makt". *Kunst*, N 6. 2011: 84. Translated from Norwegian.

⁹⁸ Bourriaud, *Postproduction*: 71.

Walter Benjamin about the author as a producer. Contemporary artists do not just deliver their products to the market, but take an active part in the distribution process.

Bourriaud's writings seem to be predetermined of a certain political agenda. Whatever his final goal would be, I consider some of his viewpoints challenging. Especially the misbalance in the dichotomy of consumption and production seems to be problematic and worth further discussion.

Chapter 5

Aesthetic Education and Democracy

Art teachers,

As you travel back to your home, identify your mission and your metaphor.

Write your manifesto.

Olivia Gude⁹⁹

In Chapter Two, I discussed the “educational turn” in contemporary aesthetics. In this chapter, I will concentrate on changes in contemporary pedagogy and place them in the context of changes in contemporary art. My purpose here is to provide a background for a discussion, in Chapters Six and Seven, of Remida, the case study at the center of this thesis.

5.1. Emancipatory Education: Rancière and the Reggio Emilia Approach

Roland Barthes’s claim about the death of the author and Umberto Eco’s reflection on “the open work”, which I discussed in the Chapter Three, foreshadowed subsequent changes in the role of artist and participant in contemporary art. What happened to the role of teacher in the meantime? In his work *Le Maître ignorant* (1991), Jacques Rancière discusses the critical ability of the human being to make responsible choices and to change existing reality. The essential idea of Rancière’s philosophy of education is that equality is a starting point and not the final purpose (unlike it has been told by philosophy of Enlightenment). This point echoed in the ideas which formed the basis of the Reggio Emilia approach to pedagogy. Reggio Emilia pedagogical approach evolved in the Italian town of Reggio Emilia after World War II as a response to the fascist ideology. Educators and all community attempted to understand how the totalitarian mentality in Mussolini’s Italy had developed and had been propagated.

⁹⁹ Gude, O. “Evocative and provocative pedagogy: toward a culture-changing curriculum”. National Convention of NAEA. New York, Sheraton hotel, 03.03.2012. I provide this citation here in order to show a reflected attitude to art education different from a “now-let-us-paint-a-bit” approach you still meet in many educational institutions. Gude focuses on “why” along with “what” and “how”. Reflection over a goal and results define quality education.

Cognizant of the dangers of the totalitarian thinking, the community turned their focus to the issue of schooling/education targeting the problem how to seek ways to encourage independent ideas and critical thought. In the 1960s, the mayor of Reggio Emilia claimed that his nation's fascist experience had "... taught them that people who conformed and obeyed were dangerous, and that in building a new society it was an imperative to safeguard and communicate that lesson, and nurture and maintain visions of children who can think and act for themselves."¹⁰⁰ The initiative of building new pre-schools came from parents and educators, and the first school was built with proceeds from the sale of a tank, trucks and horses left behind by the German army. Parental participation has remained essential. In the Reggio Emilia approach, every child is competent, inventive and rich in resources; he or she has not simply needs, but rights as well. Dialogue, mutual respect, a sense of community, and critical thinking became the cornerstones of the community's approach to education, an approach which later evolved into the Reggio Emilia approach to pedagogy. The interdependence between individual and social learning, as well as the role of culture in understanding this interdependence are essential for the Reggio Emilia approach which is also a theoretical base for the idea of Remida.

Vea Vecchi, a former atelierista at the Diana pre-school in Reggio Emilia and a researcher and consultant for 'Reggio Children', argues that given the increasing emphasis upon measurable outcomes in education it is important to have an alternative. Creativity is unlikely to be successfully measured by schemes. She contests an idea of teaching that chooses to transmit these circumscribed truths and argues that it is essential "to stand by children's sides together constructing contexts in which they can explore their own ideas and hypotheses individually or in groups and discuss them with friends or teachers."¹⁰¹ It is essential to give a space for an independent thinking in a classroom, "without rushing to restrict it with predetermined schemes that define what is correct according to a school culture."¹⁰² She is convinced that "greater attention to processes, rather than only the final product, would help us to feel greater respect for the independent thinking and strategies of children and teenagers."¹⁰³ The processual and the space of the inter-human relations are central also for relational aesthetics.

¹⁰⁰ Cited by: Fraser, S. Gestwicki, C. *Authentic childhood. Exploring Reggio Emilia to the classroom.* (NY: Delmar/Thomson Learning, 2002): 20.

¹⁰¹ Vecchi, *Art and creativity in Reggio Emilia.* xvii.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

Reggio Emilia, apart from its focus on dialogue and collaboration between teachers, atelieristas, students and parents, pays significant attention to the aesthetic dimension in learning and education through the aesthetic. Vecchi contemplates over aesthetics as a meta-structure. Every discipline is built up of rationality, imagination, emotion and aesthetics for a Reggio Emilia educator. “Cultures which rigidly separate these qualities and processes of thinking”, Vecchi says, “inevitably tend to subtract part of the processes from the various disciplines or languages. They recognize the rational part of an engineer, the imaginative part of an architect, the cognitive part of a mathematician, the expressive part of an artist and so on, in simple categories.”¹⁰⁴ However, as she states, “[r]ationality without feeling and empathy, like imagination without cognition and rationality, build up a partial, incomplete human knowledge.”¹⁰⁵ This idea echoes the famous citation by Loris Malaguzzi who is considered as a founder of the Reggio Emilia approach. He said that children have one hundred languages which an educator must develop. Not only the customary spoken linguistic forms are meant with the “language” here, but also all kind of other semiotic systems which have a potential to serve as communication media. Every of these languages has its own grammar and morphology, and when a Reggio Emilia specialist says “a child speaks a hundred languages”, he or she means the multiplicity of communicative possibilities. These possibilities are especially important to have in mind when working with infants and toddlers who haven’t developed a verbal language yet. However, seen in more general context, it is relevant for every learner and every human being.

I started this chapter with discussing Rancière’s idea of the ignorant schoolmaster. For his part, Rancière’s schoolmaster approaches students as competent individuals possessing a strong potential.

The ignorant schoolmaster – that is to say one who is ignorant of inequality – addresses him or herself to the ignorant person not from the point of view of the person’s ignorance but of the person’s knowledge; the one who is supposedly ignorant in fact already understands innumerable things.¹⁰⁶

For Rancière, every student possesses the potential to learn. Because of this, a schoolmaster can be “ignorant”, i.e. his or her task is not to transfer information, but to motivate and

¹⁰⁴ Vecchi, *Art and creativity in Reggio Emilia*: 7.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ranciere, J. “On ignorant schoolmasters”, in: Bingham, Ch., Biesta G., Ranciere J. *Jacques Ranciere: Education, truth, emancipation*, (London: Continuum, 2010): 5.

organize an autodidactic process. A pupil is not a “tabula rasa”, but a resourceful individual who can learn by his- or herself.

According to Rancière, the project of building an “organic modern society” includes making certain necessary educational changes. The task is twofold:

... on one hand developing ‘practical abilities’, that is to say forms of rationalized, useful knowledge that permit people to leave their present circumstances, and to improve their conditions without actually leaving those conditions behind or denouncing them; on the other, enriching everyday life by allowing participation, in measured ways, in the pleasure of art while developing a sense of community: the ‘aesthetic’ education of the people modelled after the foundation of choral societies.¹⁰⁷

In curriculum of Norwegian school, however, the pendulum between “the practical” and “the aesthetic” has been displaced sideways after the education reform Kunnskapsløftet (2006). With introducing this reform, the percentage of art related subjects at school significantly decreased:

A retrospect of the aesthetic subjects’ scope in the earlier curricula shows that while Music and Art (now Arts and Crafts) in the M-74 accounted for nearly 20% of the study hours per year, at present the same subjects make up only 12.3% of the study hours per year.¹⁰⁸

I will discuss challenges of art education in Norway in one of subsequent sub-chapters, with main focus on the research of Anne Bamford. Before that, I want to focus on research of a Soviet psychologist of great importance for Reggio Emilia Approach, Lev Vygotsky.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.: 7.

¹⁰⁸ Espeland, M., Allern, T.H., Carlsen, K. And Kalsnes, S. *Praktiske og estetiske fag og lærerutdanning*. En utredning fra en arbeidsgruppe nedsatt av Kunnskapsdepartementet i samarbeid med høgskolene i Nesna, Telemark og Stord/Haugesund, 2011. Here cited after *Allern, T.-H. ”Er det plass for kunstfag i skolen etter PISA?”* 29.05.2011. *Kunstløftet*, http://www.kunstloftet.no/index.php?filnavn=artikler11/maitekst/310511_Allern.php (05.10.2011). Translated from Norwegian.

5.2. Creativity And “Art as a Delayed Reaction”

Those who see a relationship between pedagogy and art find their view unexpectedly supported by psychological analysis.

Lev Vygotsky. *Psychology of Art*

Reggio Emilia pedagogy was influenced by theories of Lev Vygotsky (1896 – 1934). Along with Jean Piaget, he is important theorist of cognitive development. Unlike Piaget’s, Vygotsky’s approach is relevant nowadays. The work of this Soviet psychologist focused upon investigating the creative life of the human mind, and his theories emphasize the social origins of individual development and the arts. Vygotsky’s research about the social sources of human development is deeply relevant to this thesis and provides a basis for the case study of Remida.

In his doctoral thesis *Psychology of Art* (1925), Vygotsky explored the psychology of creativity. He puts emotion at the center of the creative process, thus breaking with the scholarly traditions of his time. During the creative process, the artist appropriates the legacy of his or her art including the implicit cultural-historical canon into the art work. An individual’s certain socio-cultural heritage interacts with “the artist’s unique problem-solving process and its further transformed by the reproductive forces, economic conditions, and sociopolitical constructs that impact the artist’s psychological processes.”¹⁰⁹

According to Vygotsky, an art work is not only a physical object, but a result of a cognitive-affective process. A common thread in his writings is the social origins of psychological processes and the formulative power of cultural interactions. Human beings are mutually dependent. In our psychological development, we are heavily influenced by our interactions with parents, teachers as well as our social and cultural environments. In this context, artistic impulse and creation represent a response to the socio-cultural life of the artist. Through his study of aesthetics and human creativity, Vygotsky developed dialectical syntheses of intellect/emotion, thought/sign and individual/society. He defined cathartic purification caused by art as a way to release tension in the context of physical work or labor work.

¹⁰⁹ Cited by Connery, C. M., John-Steiner, V.P., Marjanovic-Shane, A. (ed.) *Vygotsky and creativity. A cultural-historical approach to play, meaning masking, and the arts*, (New York, Peter Lang, 2010): 18.

In “Imagination and creativity in childhood”, an essay published after *The Psychology of Art*, Vygotsky wrote, “... every inventor, even a genius, is always the outgrowth of his time and environment. His creativity stems from those needs that were created before him, and rests upon those possibilities that, again, exist outside of him.”¹¹⁰ To Vygotsky, art is contextual (i.e. it exists in the context of a social dialogue and can, as such, be transformational).

Vygotsky calls art a “delayed reaction” – this long effect which it gives allows consider it being transformational. A fairly long period exists between a moment of perception and the effect of this perception. Art is therefore “the organization of our future behaviour.”¹¹¹ (Several decades before Joseph Beuys developed an idea of an artist as social educator, Vygotsky points out the educational effect of art). Art organizes the future behaviour of an individual and transcends necessities of a given situation.

M. Cathrene Connery, Vera P. John-Steiner and Ana Marjanovic-Shane, editors of the fifth book in the series *Educational Psychology* (New York, 2010) which I worked with in this chapter, share Vygotsky’s view of learning as a creative process deeply rooted in the human need to explore and communicate individual experiences.

We argue that, in order for reform and progress to occur in all educational ventures, we must expand our definitions of learning.

We assert that the very nature of learning is creative. In order for authentic, long-lasting, and meaningful learning to take place, we must understand education as a cultural, systemic form of meaning making. In many schools today, learning and creativity are dichotomized. Ironically, creativity among students and teachers is often suppressed.¹¹²

Observations of American specialists do not always correspond with the situation in the aesthetic education in Norway, which I am going to discuss in the following sub-chapter.

¹¹⁰ Vygotsky, L. “Imagination and creativity in childhood”. Here cited by Connery, John-Steiner, Marjanovic-Shane (ed.), *Vygotsky and creativity*: 10.

¹¹¹ Vygotsky, L. *Psychology of art*. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971): 253.

¹¹² Connery, John-Steiner, Marjanovic-Shane (ed.), *Vygotsky and creativity* : 215.

5.3. Aesthetic Education in Norway

In the curriculum for the school subject Arts and Crafts (Kunst og håndverk) published by The Norwegian Directorate in Education and Training, the following comment is provided on the subject's important for development:

The subject Arts and Crafts takes a central place in cultural development. The subject is preparatory to a number of educations and jobs. Aesthetic competence is a source for development on several levels, from personal development through influence on own environment to creative thinking in a broader societal perspective.¹¹³

Art education in the historical perspective developed from being practically oriented where pupils were getting skills necessary for their future social roles to focusing on the development of creativity and its importance in education process. The change which has taken place is rooted in the change of the social needs. In the era of industrialization and mass production, women achieved an extended opportunity to take part in social life. Sexual revolution and change of the female role in society resulted in increasing employment of women. In a democratic society, independent thinking and ability to analyze are essential issues to focus on in the educational process. In order to be able to create new values, an individual has to be inventive and to be able to think independently.

Despite the fact that the named Directorate in documentation pays significant attention to aesthetic subjects, art education in Norway has been neglected among other disciplines at school. Educational programs for preparing allmenlærer, a teacher in a Norwegian school, do not include subjects of arts and crafts. In contrast, educational program for art educators in New York University's Steinhardt School of Culture, Education and Human Development sounds as follows:

NYU's program in art education combines a foundation in critical theory with a solid grounding in practice. With a special focus on contemporary art and its social context, the program conceptualizes the artist-teacher as cultural producer, intellectual, and activist. Through a sequence of core courses that incorporate a progressive,

¹¹³Læreplan i kunst og håndverk for grunnskolen. Utdanningsdirektoratet.
<http://www.udir.no/Lareplaner/Grep/Modul/?gmid=0&gmi=5623> (15.10.2011). Translated from Norwegian.

multicultural approach, students examine the making and teaching of art as a social act, considering it within philosophical, historical, political, and sociological contexts.¹¹⁴

By definition, the act of teaching is a social act. Art can be a strong educational resource, in case high competent professionals are involved in the education. In 2004-2009, a comprehensive research about pedagogical work in Nordic art museums took place. *Konsten som läranderesurs* is a report prepared by Venke Aure (Norway), Helene Illeris (Denmark) and Hans Örtegren (Sweden). In this report, pedagogical work in several chosen Nordic museums had been presented and analyzed. Primarily, researchers worked with empirical data and pedagogical praxis, instead of working with educational documentation. The research shown differences in art pedagogical goals and competences in these museums:

In the biggest museums, they are most uncertain about museums' general pedagogical goals, especially it is the case with Nasjonalmuseet in Norway. This is probably due to the fact of very different traditions of pedagogical work at these museums. Art teachers from the former Museet for Samtidskunst and Riksstillingen have a long tradition of seeking and developing *relationally oriented* pedagogical strategies, while art teachers from the old Nasjonalgalleriet apply *art-oriented* pedagogical strategies.¹¹⁵

Being more flexible, smaller museums provide opportunities for relational experiments, dialogue-based and inclusive education. However, traditional view of the museum as a collecting and preserving institution dominates in Norway. This is shown in economical praxis as well. Despite the rhetoric about importance of the pedagogical work at the museums, experimental projects are typically financed through funding which is specified and limited in time.¹¹⁶

The act of teaching can have a huge influence on student's development in case when qualified specialists teach art, and when the importance of aesthetic education is understood by politicians and lobby-makers. This is not the case in Norway, as a research of an invited Australian scholar Anne Bamford has shown.

¹¹⁴ Description of the education program MA in Art Education. Steinhardt School of Culture, Education and Human Development. NYU. <http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/art/education> (23.02.2012).

¹¹⁵ Aure, V., Illeris, H., Örtegren, H. *Konsten som läranderesurs. Syn på lärande, pedagogiska strategier och social inclusion på nordiska konstmuseer.* (Skärhamn: Nordiska Akvarelmuseet, 2009): 20. My italics. Translated from Danish.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

Professor Anne Bamford¹¹⁷ in collaboration with The Norwegian National Center for Arts and Culture in Education (Nasjonalt senter for kunst og kultur i opplæringen) undertook a research about art education in Norwegian schools in 2010-2011. Findings of the survey are that education in art and culture has an overall meaning for child's learning in school, and that Norway has a development potential here. Bamford suggests that increasing the number of arts- and culture-related subjects in schools and introducing policies ensuring the competence of art teachers will improve academic results in all subjects.

The report written by Bamford has been published online and is available both in English and Norwegian. She concludes that "It is particularly noted that creative, cultural, and arts education skills and knowledge for the general teachers is an issue of vital concern."¹¹⁸ It is known that in secondary schools in Norway no any formal qualifications are required of art teachers, and often the lack of adequate competence negatively impacts the quality of art education. According to Bamford, sub-standard art education causes students to lose interest in the arts and lose faith, as well, in their own creativity. Without a qualified teacher, it is better not to teach art at all.

The outstanding advantage of Norwegian art education, however, is The Cultural Rucksack (Den Kulturelle Skolesekken). This state-supported program gives students from even the most remote schools an opportunity to enjoy art exhibitions, theatre shows and musical concerts of high quality. However, art experiences offered by Den Kulturelle Skolesekken could be considered by students as "weird" and "odd". This attitude show the lack of time used for reflection over these experiences. The lack of qualified specialists could increase the problem that art become more remote for students: "Knowledge and skills of evaluation, research, and reflection necessary for implementing creative learning programmes and arts

¹¹⁷ Anne Bamford is a professor at the University of Arts in London and World Scholar for UNESCO. Bamford's and her team's earlier research project, *The Wow Factor. Global Research Compendium on the Impact of Arts in Education* (2006) is considered ground-breaking in the field of art education. In that project, Finland and Sweden represented Northern Europe. A problematic inconsistency between educational policy and classroom practices was documented in almost all the countries surveyed by Bamford and her team in the last decade. National policy statements emphasized the importance of arts- and culture-related subjects in schools, encouraging policies aimed at stimulating creativity among children and youth – but practices show differently. More often, when Bamford turned her attention to Norway, an overall focus on academic and technical education "... places arts in the periphery of the curricula encouraging polarity between the arts and the sciences".

¹¹⁸ Bamford, A. *Arts and cultural education in Norway*. Report. Nasjonalt Senter for Kunst og Kultur i Opplæringen, 2010-2011.
<http://kunstkultursenteret.no/sites/k/kunstkultursenteret.no/files/62ed747d4d6b252cdadf1a1f1dfc6f33.pdf>
(05.04.2012)

education are lacking in teacher education.”¹¹⁹ Another challenge is that arts in Norway are considered as “cosy and fun”, and talents do not get a follow-up. That is one of the reasons why Norwegian natives tend to be underrepresented at the Norwegian Music Academy. There are suggestions about introducing quotas for Norwegian students entering the Academy. However, it is possible to direct the efforts to increasing quality of aesthetic education in schools and culture schools.

Bamford argues that education in art and culture has an overall meaning significant for child’s learning in school:

Having acquired knowledge through art and culture, students achieve better school results than students without such experience. She denies that the East Asian countries’ top rankings in PISA 2009 take place only due to drill and cram.

- I am impressed by the fact of how much these countries focus on culture in the school.¹²⁰

The solution for Norway, according to Bamford, could be to modify the percentage of subjects related to arts and culture and initiate measures to increase art teacher’s competence. She recommends also networking and sharing of professional experience as measures, which can increase the level of the art pedagogical offer at schools. At Kulturskolenes Lederkonferanse held in Oslo on April 12-13, this report was presented to leaders of culture schools from all the country and to representatives from Stortinget. Hopefully, the situation with making quality arts available to everyone will change after this meeting.

5.4. Conclusions

A student has an innate ability to act and make decisions. He or she is a resourceful individual able to autodidactic processes under a motivating guidance of a schoolmaster. Learning is social, and a social environment could encourage the child’s cognitive development. Social experiences of a child develop his or her ability to reason, understand and remember. An art work is a result of cognitive processes, formed during years of maturation. Education is a life-long process which does not stop with leaving educational

¹¹⁹ Bamford, *Arts and cultural education in Norway*: 152.

¹²⁰ Tessem, L.-B. “Kunst gir bedre karakterer”, *Aftenposten*, 13.03.2011, <http://www.aftenposten.no/nyheter/iriks/article4059767.ece> (29.10.2011). Translated from Norwegian.

institutions. There are multiple languages for the dialogue through which participants are able to learn every day all their life.

During the last years, the time given to the aesthetic education in Norwegian schools has been reduced. It seems that importance of creative efforts is underestimated, and lack of networking is present.

As I discussed in Chapter Two, in contemporary art and curating there is a tendency to include pedagogical methods and strategies into exhibitions. In this chapter, I have shown that aesthetic education plays an important role in upbringing citizens who can “think and act for themselves” and prevents development and propagation of totalitarian mentality. In Norway, contemporary art exhibitions seem to be attended by a limited group of gallery-goers, and educational institutions are reluctant to collaborate with artists directly,¹²¹ unlike it is the case in, for instance, UK where the Creative Partnerships have been established. Better networking between educational and art institutions could lead to increasing availability of contemporary art.

¹²¹ Bamford, *Arts and cultural education in Norway*: 72.

Chapter 6

Remida as a Relational Space

The role of artworks is no longer to form imaginary and utopian realities, but to actually be ways of living and models of action within the existing real, whatever scale chosen by the artist.

Nicolas Bourriaud. *Relational Aesthetics*

Chapters Six and Seven of this thesis are based upon empirical work conducted during visits to the Remida center in Trondheim, interviews with the center's artistic director Pål Bøyesen, as well as work with reports and project catalogues. In the present chapter, I will apply the principles of relational aesthetics distinguished in the Chapter Three onto the case study. In order to do this, I must first describe the history of Remida. My intention here is to keep a critical distance to the empirical material. In the following chapter my intention is to discuss to what extent the principles of relational aesthetics are relevant to Remida, which principles are not relevant, and why.

6.1. A Concept of an Atelier within the Reggio Emilia Pedagogy

The idea of Remida emerged from the atelier concept in a Reggio Emilia school. In the Reggio Emilia approach, special attention is given to the development of the child's aesthetic sense. In the late 1960s, ateliers were introduced into municipal infant-toddler centers and preschools in the town of Reggio Emilia; professional artists were recruited to work in Reggio Emilia schools. These artists were called *atelieristas* and work with professional teachers (*pedagogistas*) collaboratively. Veà Vecchi, an atelierista in a Reggio Emilia preschool and an international consultant for an international organization known as Reggio Children, calls this

development "... a brave cultural (and economic) choice, and certainly an unusual one."¹²² Putting professional artists at schools "...connects the work of artists to that which is done in the ateliers of the schools."¹²³ The goal of these artists/teachers is to help children to explore the world around them. One of the ways they do this is to invite children to "treasure hunts", as it were. Students are taken out into the community to explore and collect media (such as plastic, natural materials, metal, glass, etc.). Items are returned to school's atelier and explored creatively. These media can be used along with paint, pencils, chalk, and other materials. This concept of the atelier in the Reggio Emilia approach to pedagogy provided the inspiration for the Remida center which was established in December, 1996 in Reggio Emilia, Italy.

6.2. Remida in Italy – Remida in Trondheim

The title of the environmental-pedagogical project, namely "ReMida", refers to Greek mythology. The center was named after King Midas, whose touch turned objects into gold. In Remida, one can turn discarded materials into new valuable objects. Remida was not only developed as a center for the re-use of waste materials, but it also implemented the development of pedagogical concept based on environmental-friendly thinking. Remida's vision is to create a shift in cultural perspectives on waste, from disregard of its potential value towards lifelong awareness and responsibility for recycling. The focus is to restore value to discarded materials, imperfect products, and seemingly worthless objects in order to reinvent their use and provide new opportunities for creativity and communication.¹²⁴

The Remida center in Reggio Emilia was a collaborative venture supported by Azienda Gas-Acqua Consorziale (AGAC), a gas, water, and garbage collection utility, and the Friends of Reggio Children's Association. Because of the nature of its sponsors, recycling emerged early on as a focus of the center. Materials are collected from local industries, sorted, and then offered to institutions and private individuals. Additionally, and most importantly for the purposes of this thesis, the center also offers prepares and implements educational and art

¹²² Vecchi, V. and Giudici, C. (eds.) *Children, art, artists. The expressive languages of children, the artistic language of Alberto Burri.* (Reggio Children: Reggio Emilia, 2008): 138.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Remida Perth: Philosophy of the organisation. http://www.remidawa.com/wordpress/?page_id=52 (10.12.2011)

projects using the collected materials. In recent decades, the Remida network has expanded significantly, and now includes centers in Finland, Denmark, Australia, USA, and Norway.

In 2009, the first Remida center in Norway was established in Trondheim. It was located in the part of the city known as Svartlamon, a town district long known for its unemployment and poverty. A Svartlamon Culture and Industry Foundation had been created; the district was to be a place dedicated to innovation and experimentation with housing alternatives, local business projects, and projects dedicated to environment, culture, and art.¹²⁵ Remida became a part of this.¹²⁶

The center had been years in planning. In a 2006 *Report Project* published by the Communal Environmental Unit, the goal of the Trondheim center was described as the following:

A Remida center has a purpose to make the younger generation more conscious about society development, solidarity between people and environment, and recycling of what is usually considered as a waste. The idea of a Remida center is that schools and kindergartens in Trondheim can obtain recycled materials and “useless” objects for educational purposes and creative artistic activities. A Remida center should become a project common for artists, designers, those who provide materials for the center, and for children in schools and kindergartens, as well as their parents.¹²⁷

The center represented a collaborative effort between the municipal environmental organization, artists, and teachers familiar with the Reggio Emilia Approach. Its originators were assisted by colleagues in Italy and Denmark. The Italian approach fused fairly easily with Scandinavian pedagogy. Local/national differences were primarily ones of differing emphasis:

While we in Scandinavia talk about free play, in Reggio they emphasize the free thought: Every child learns in his or her own way, but always together with others.¹²⁸

¹²⁵ Vedtekter for Svartlamon Kultur- og næringsstiftelse. Trondheim Bystyre, 2005. <http://www.svartlamon.org/portal/index.php?action=view&id=24&module=resourcesmodule&src=%40random45be7fd9a0f9d>, (20.03.2012)

¹²⁶ This effort put for the development of the disadvantaged district seems to be an example of the *historical chance* of “learning to inhabit the world in a better way” discussed by Bourriaud in *Relational Aesthetics* which I discussed in Chapter Three.

¹²⁷ Pettersen, N. *Remida. Senter for kreativ gjenbruk. Prosjektplan for utredning*. (Trondheim kommune: Miljøenheten, 2006): 3. Translated from Norwegian.

¹²⁸ Wallin, K. *Reggio Emilia og de hundrede sprog*. (Frederikshavn: Dafolo forlag, 1997): 63. Translated from Danish.

As I discussed in Chapter Five, the sense of togetherness which is a part of the relational aspect is of primary importance in Reggio Emilia pedagogy, which, in turn, is a key idea of Remida.

Early on, the relationship between pedagogy and art was explored by, among others, Rita Willum, an original proponent of the Reggio Emilia approach in Denmark.

Like many others, who have been fascinated by Reggio Emilia, Rita Willum was primarily interested in children's art. But then it became clear for her how much pedagogy is involved in the approach, and art occupies the second place there. Pedagogy and the vision of the children comes first.¹²⁹

This description appears to be similar to the goals of the Remida Trondheim. It seems that the general idea of "art" among professionals working within the Reggio Emilia approach in both Denmark and Norway involves the meaning of "a ready product", "a fixed result", and not the process how Nicolas Bourriaud describes it. This understanding of art differs from how proponents of the "educational turn" describe it. The professionals in Scandinavia were educated in art academies where relational aesthetics were not yet taught. That is why the artistic director of Remida found an idea of relational aesthetics surprising – but interesting. Lack of collaboration between artists and teachers seems to be evident here. Art teachers are not always updated with tendencies of contemporary art. This problem was emphasized by Olivia Gude at the convention of the National Art Education Association:

Survey your current curriculum. Identify a project which is not an authentic vehicle of aesthetic investigation. Drop it from your repertoire. Instead, try a project based on contemporary art practice. Risk failure to embrace EVOCATIVE and PROVOCATIVE pedagogy.¹³⁰

As I have observed, the relational principles are important for Remida, but relational aesthetics and the "educational turn" in contemporary art and curating were not known to the specialists yet. These relational principles I will discuss in the following sub-chapter.

¹²⁹ Bye Jensen, V. "Pædagogik for alle sanser", *Børn og unge*, Nr. 13, 26.03.2004. Translated from Danish.

¹³⁰ Gude, O. "Evocative and provocative pedagogy." Presentation for the convention of the National Art Education Association in New York.

https://naea.digication.com/omg/Evocative_Provocative_Pedagogy_NEW_in_2012 (23.04.2012)

6.3. Remida as a Space for Relational Art?

Art is a game between all people of all periods.

Marcel Duchamp¹³¹

According to the report of the Remida center for the year 2010, 1026 adults and 854 children visited the center.¹³² In 2011, 1173 children and 1114 grown-ups visited the center.¹³³ At first sight, this statistics could confirm that the center is for both children and adults. However, if we look closer, preschool and schoolchildren remain major uses of the center.

Report for 2010 does not provide a detailed statistics of the visitors. We find out, however, information about projects with invited artists at the center. The first project, to which artists were invited to collaborate, was entitled *Nytt Liv* (New Life). Artists Mona Nordaas and Per Jonas Lindstrøm work with recycled materials in their art. They implied the techniques they usually work with into this project, where fifty children were working in the Remida center and Galleri Babel for three days. Per Jonas Lindstrøm developed a project in the Remida center, where children produced 60 sculptures. Mona Nordaas in collaboration with the children produced a three-dimensional installation consisting of more than 2000 parts in Galleri Babel in Trondheim (see fig. 9 in Appendix II). The gallery usually exhibits contemporary art. *Nytt Liv* was supported by Arts Council Norway.

Trondheim Youth Philarmehcnic Orchestra was the title of another project with invited artists during 2010. The Orchestra was a part of the Art and Technology Biennale Metamorph in Trondheim. Children produced musical instruments using old vacuum cleaners and kitchen appliances. After that, the Orchestra made a performance at the musical club Blæst. Another project during the Biennale Metamorph was *Acoustic Laptops* (see fig. 7 in Appendix II). Tore Bø, a sound artist, suggested participants to discover various sounds by amplifying them by contact microphones. All participants were to bring wooden boxes, which would provide resonance. These boxes were filled up with bobby pins, clasp pins, tiny pieces of wire, abrasives, combs, and so on. These elements (signs) were used for the sound production. The participants in the project were only adults.

¹³¹ From: Bourriaud, N. *Relational Aesthetics*. (Dijon: Les Presses du Reel, 2002): 19.

¹³² Bøyesen, P., Olsen, A.S. *Aktiviteter 2010*. Report. (Remida: Trondheim kommune, 2011): 2.

¹³³ Bøyesen, P. *Aktiviteter 2011*. Report. (Remida: Trondheim kommune, 2012): 2.

Concerning the year 2011, more detailed statistics is available. In 2011, groups from kindergartens visited the center 95 times, groups from Trondheim schools, SFO and universities did it 28 times. Education and art professionals from all the country visited the center 17 times for learning purposes.¹³⁴ Festivals Mini UKA, Stafett, Pstereofestival and theatre projects took place during 2011. Several times workshops and events led by professional artists took place. Rangoli project was a collaborative effort between Trondheim International School (THIS), the Remida center and an Indian artist Pulak Dutta. Inspired by the Indian traditional Rangoli (Mandala), children in Trondheim made their own expressions in three different locations. This was part of a festival India 2011 that took place in October.

It is possible to divide activities at the Remida center which took place in 2010 and 2011 in three groups:

1. The first group.

Materials from the Remida center are taken by representatives of educational institutions. Workshops are led by teachers at these institutions (*grunnskoler, barnehager, kulturskoler, SFO*). This group of activities does not represent the target group for the thesis, as the teachers do not necessarily have a professional education in arts.

2. The second group.

Daily visits at the Remida center. Groups of children from educational institutions accompanied by their teachers come to the center. The workshops are led by the artistic director Pål Bøyesen. Teachers assist him during the workshops. (I made observations of this type of workshops).

3. The third group.

Projects led by invited professional artists (the project Nytt liv, the Rangoli workshop, projects at the Metamorph biennale – Acoustic laptops, Trondheim Youth Philharmonic Orchestra). These projects are placed in a gallery (Nytt liv); in public space – a shopping center, a university, a square in front of the Nidarosdomen cathedral in Trondheim; they can be a part of a biennale (Acoustic laptops, Trondheim Youth Philharmonic Orchestra).

¹³⁴ Ibid.: 24-25.

The second group of activities was mainly devoted to exploration of materials. According to the artistic director, processes of exploration and development of creativity are essential at the center. Participants could explore materials and try various configurations of their new products. A significant part of the exploration process was given to communication between the participants. They were divided into groups with 3-4 participants and were invited to collaborate on a project: to articulate its concept and to contribute during the construction process. The process was led by a teacher, and all the workshops were coordinated by the artistic director.

The majority of the center's users are children. Art produced by children is not included into the art historical canon. Instead, it is a study object of development psychology and art education. Studying children's drawing started in the second half of the nineteenth century. The purpose of the study was to find the evolutionary pattern through which a child progressed.¹³⁵ However, art produced by children was recently exhibited in "adult" galleries. For instance, pictures of the two-year old Aelita Andre were presented to a director of Brunswick Street Gallery in Melbourne, Mark Jamison, as works by an unknown author. The child's parents argued that they did not want the artist's age to influence the decision of the director. Instead, he would pay attention to artistic values of paintings. "Robert Nelson, *The Age* art critic, compared Aelita's paintings to paintings of Oriental artists. Now the pictures of Aelita Andre are estimated between three hundred and two thousand dollars."¹³⁶ However, many other art critics considered this commercial effort of the director of not well-known gallery as "ridiculous".¹³⁷ Due to the fact that main participants at the Remida daily workshops are children, discussing the center in the context of contemporary art is problematic.

However, the third group of activities seems to be most relevant to the research question of the study and seem to illustrate a successful collaboration between educators and professional artists. First, artists produce their projects as part of their *own* artistic work. They used materials provided by the center, and the overall concepts of the projects were of their own. The second group of projects used the pedagogical project of Remida Reggio Emilia as a basis of their work.

¹³⁵ Richards, A. "History of developmental stages of child art: 1857 to 1921". *Drawing, psychology of children's art*. [Ball State University faculty lecture series, 1974-1975.](http://libx.bsu.edu/cdm4/document.php?CISOROOT=/FacLectures&CISOPTR=1695&REC=1) <http://libx.bsu.edu/cdm4/document.php?CISOROOT=/FacLectures&CISOPTR=1695&REC=1> (15.04.2012)

¹³⁶ Unknown journalist. "Four year old artist has a solo show in New York." 07.06.2011. *The Periscope Post*. <http://www.periscopepost.com/2011/06/4-year-old-artist-has-solo-show-in-new-york/> (15.04.2012)

¹³⁷ Ibid.

6.4. Laboratory for Reflection

Connections between relational aesthetics and pedagogical activity were emphasized by Dr. Kristine Sunday at the convention of the National Art Education Association of USA, which I have already discussed. Sunday emphasizes relational nature of the contemporary art education processes – if they are open-ended, process-oriented and not product-oriented. Simplistic educational schemes, where participants make Easter eggs, or draw a house, or a flower, with limited media and teacher-directed results, are still alive both in Norway and in USA. However, the “moments of social exchange where interactivity between maker and viewer are linked together to create communicative processes in tangible dimensions” seem to be central in these processes.¹³⁸ This seems to be the case in Remida project work:

A group of children from a Steiner preschool are visiting the Remida center. After a short introduction to the center’s history, the artistic director asks the children if they are interested in building an object of the materials available at the center. The boys expressed a wish to build a spaceship. The group was divided into smaller groups, where boys and girls were working with making objects (spaceships). The goal of the exercise was for each group of children to produce one work in collaboration.¹³⁹

However, the most essential part of the contemporary art process – *reflection* – was not always present while I was observing the activity in the center, and the omission was confirmed by the artistic director in the dialogue which we had after the workshop’s end.

The children were moving freely around the center space choosing materials to work with. Children are dynamic; sometimes they were choosing too many materials and seem to have had difficulties to handle them. The process is improvisational and open-ended. However, I haven’t observed a dialogue or a period of reflection about “what”, “how”, and “why” the participants are working together to create an object so far. It seems that the children haven’t been provided time for reflection and analysis of the process they were doing and the final product.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ Sunday, K. “Relational making, relational knowing. Aesthetic events in children’s art making.” Convention of the National Art Education Association. Hilton Hotel, New York, 03.03.2012.

¹³⁹ Observation notes from the field work. 27.03.2012

¹⁴⁰ Observation notes from the field work. 14.02.2012.

It is worth noticing, however, that Claire Bishop criticizes relational art for the lack of contemplation and primacy of a form. The observed process in the Remida center contradicted the purposes of Reggio Emilia pedagogy where reflection and analysis are prioritized. In Reggio Emilia Approach planning and evaluation makes children's learning visible, and informs flexible planning ("progettazione").¹⁴¹

The work produced in Remida, both led by the artistic director and guest artists, is open-ended, and is in a perpetual flux. Participants create their works from the collected objects with no usage of glue or other binding materials. The constructed works have a certain future of being deconstructed after the workshop has been completed and the participants have left the center. Providing opportunities for the development of creative processes is one of the major goals at the center, as the artistic director states:

The processes which go on here, the ways one works with projects, are similar to artistic processes, but we do not concentrate on that here at the center. Creative process is primary.¹⁴²

This concentration on a process and not on a final product or a "passively representative image"¹⁴³ resembles processes taking place in relational art as described by Bourriaud. Majorstuen kindergarten, a close collaborator and user of the Remida center in Trondheim, also emphasizes importance of *the relational* in their pedagogical activity in their rapport:

The teachers have focused at what we call the relational in learning processes over a long period of time. We see something important in the way children are to each other and grown-ups and in the community we build up here in the kindergarten.¹⁴⁴

This institution working according to Reggio Emilia pedagogical principles seems to follow the instructions of Veà Vecchi (which I discussed in Chapter Five): "...greater attention to processes, rather than only the final product, would help us to feel greater respect for the independent thinking and strategies of children and teenagers."¹⁴⁵ As observations revealed, group work is the major work form at the Remida center. Participants are divided into groups

¹⁴¹ Vecchi, V. and Giudici, C. (eds.) *Children, art, artists. The expressive languages of children, the artistic language of Alberto Burri*. (Reggio Children: Reggio Emilia, 2008).

¹⁴² Interview with Pål Bøyesen. 28.03.2012.

¹⁴³ Bourriaud. *Relational Aesthetics*: 99.

¹⁴⁴ *Hundre måter å tenke sammen på*. Report 2010-2011. (Majorstuen barnehage: Trondheim kommune, 2011): 5. Translated from Norwegian.

¹⁴⁵ Vecchi, *Art and creativity in Reggio Emilia*: xvii.

and investigate materials, and suggest formal and conceptual solutions to the tasks in collaboration with each other.

Based on the observations which have been made in the center and working with documentation, Remida can be interpreted as a laboratory where endless quantities of materials are collected and sorted. It is a total concept, where both materials used for constructing its building and those ones from the collection constitute a whole where the space for deliberation about the “micro-narrative” is provided.

6.5. Participants as Semionauts

Remida center can be interpreted as a collection of signs. These signs have in common the fact that they all are tangible (unlike the signs discussed in *Postproduction*). At workshops, participants are suggested to choose materials which they intend to use in their future products.

After the children have been divided into groups, they begin to walk around the center and explore the materials, which are stored in the boxes around the center. They bring it onto their working areas. These areas are defined by white boards fixed on the floor. The process of exploration seems to be a chaotic movement between multiple boxes, picking up “interesting” materials and moving to the next box. This activity reminds behaviour of a shopper on sales. Movement is quick; it seems that there is little reflection during the process. Some other mechanisms “are working” when they are choosing elements that attract them. The process of choosing materials is impetuous and emotional.¹⁴⁶

Movement of participants during the Remida workshop created improvised trajectories between the signs. As I have observed, the choices were made spontaneously and were verbally discussed with other participants:

One of the boys picks up a bobbin. He gets himself seated at it, placing it vertically. “This is a chair”, he claims. After some observation of the material and subsequent considerations, he decides to turn the bobbin. Placing it horizontally, in the way that you

¹⁴⁶ Observation notes made during the field work. 14.02.2012.

can roll the bobbin on the floor with help of the feet, he announces loudly to others in the group: “This is a wheel-chair!”

This case can satisfactorily describe the spontaneous nature of the “navigation”, exploring and naming objects. Communication and dissemination of the verbal message illustrated by an action become essential in the creative process. To name an unfamiliar object means to interpret it.

6.6. Conclusions

Working methods at the Remida center in Trondheim show similarities with relational art projects as described by Nicolas Bourriaud.

1. The artist functions as the leader of a team of people without necessarily having an aesthetic education/formal artistic competence.
2. Remida can be interpreted as a project-based *laboratory*.
3. Work produced in the laboratory is largely based on *verbal and non-verbal communication* among the artistic director, invited artists, teachers, children and other participants.
4. Activity at the Remida center is distinguished by an ethical agenda. The center seems an example of “*minor modification*”, “the historical chance” of “learning to inhabit the world in a better way” (Lyotard/Bourriaud).¹⁴⁷
5. *The urban landscape/urban culture* form the backdrop for the center’s activity and are sources of the materials collected and used at the center.
6. During the research process, I have discovered that Bishop’s critique of Bourriaud’s theory (*function over contemplation*) might well be relevant to the Remida center in Trondheim. This is not the case, however, for the Remida center in Reggio Emilia, where pedagogical documentation and reflection are emphasized and are considered part of the pedagogical and creative process. In Trondheim, the center’s activities take a form resembling the relational art process, as described by Bourriaud. However, on the level of content there are differences between his theory and the center’s activity.

¹⁴⁷ Bourriaud. *Relational aesthetics*: 13.

The original intention of making art is not present, as art is still considered representational, and not relational.

After studying the center's documents, having interviews with the artistic director Pål Bøyesen, and taking part in the center's activities, I conclude that these activities have *formal* similarities with relational art practices. However, it is not necessarily the case about the *content*. I considered little knowledge of such tendencies in contemporary art as the theory of relational aesthetics and the "educational turn" in the Norwegian case as the main reason for this. In the United States, where networking between professional artists, art educators (from the level of preschool to the level of university), museum educators, and policy makers is strong, the situation is different. The National Art Education Association unites thousands of representatives from the state associations into an organization playing a significant role in lobbying interests of art professionals on the political level. In the United States, art educators were conscious about these changes in contemporary art scene, and used them actively in their work with students.¹⁴⁸ In Norway, it seems that significant efforts on education of educators, networking and collaboration between professionals are needed to include contemporary art practices into education.

¹⁴⁸ Gude, O. "Evocative and provocative pedagogy." Presentation for the National Art Education Convention in New York. https://naea.digication.com/omg/Evocative_Provocative_Pedagogy_NEW_in_2012 (23.04.2012)

Chapter 7

Remida as a Postproduction Space

All contents are good, provided they do not consist of interpretations but concern the use of the book, that they multiply its use, that they make another language within its language.

Gilles Deleuze¹⁴⁹

In this chapter, I continue working with the empirical findings on the case study, and will apply principles of postproduction art, as defined by Bourriaud, to Remida. The social context of the phenomenon discussed in previous chapters, and especially the “educational turn” in contemporary art, is a background for the analysis. I discuss challenges of Bourriaud’s approach defined in Chapter Four and conclude with thoughts about a potential creative recycling could have for collaborative efforts between art specialists and education professionals.

7.1. “How Can We Make Do With What We Have?” The Postproduction Chain

The exhibition of contemporary art is “no longer the end result of a process, its “happy ending” (Parreno) but a place of production,”¹⁵⁰ Bourriaud claims. Contemporary exhibition is a space where visitors (participants) are invited to co-create works together with artists and curators by recycling signs and creating a new meaning of these signs.

Having entered the Remida center in Trondheim, the visitor finds her- or himself in a space filled with a variety of materials: Plexiglas, CDs, cardboard tubes, plastic shapes and other industrial rests of plastic, metal, wood, fabric of all possible colors, sizes and texture. Visitors are offered watercourse pipes, paperboard bobbins and reels, bowls, multiple brass and iron accessories, pieces of natural stone, laths and lags, old car mirrors, furniture details, pans, electric cables of different lengths and colors, boxes, heels from women’s shoes, soles, and tin cans of all possible sizes. “Her er det mykje rart,”¹⁵¹ said a two-year old girl about the variety

¹⁴⁹ Cited after: Bourriaud, *Postproduction*: 69.

¹⁵⁰ Bourriaud, *Postproduction*: 69.

¹⁵¹ “There are lots of strange and funny things here.” Translated from Norwegian, a Trøndelag dialect.

of materials collected at the center. The visitor is invited to create new products using the offered media, shape a new meaning with the use of the elements which are primarily disconnected. The user navigates in the network of signs, rearranges them during the creative process, and makes a “finished product” which can be re-divided into the elements, which can be used again for another work, and so on. The formal principles of the production in Remida resemble postproduction art works. Objects produced in the Remida center resemble artistic practices by Rirkrit Tiravanija which “have in common the recourse to already produced forms”.¹⁵²

Replacing, putting in new contexts, interpretation in these contexts are the tasks of the contemporary educator. However, still many of the educators limit their media to traditional paint and pencil (as the report of Anne Bamford has shown). At a session at the convention of the National Art Education Association Connie Stewart argued, “Do we limit art-making in our classrooms by limiting the media available? Should we include:

- Fog machines,
- Theatrical lighting,
- Toy tanks,
- Gym equipment (or gymnasts),
- Chunks of bees wax and paraffin,
- Tubs of water,
- Live animals,
- Music/sound/movement,
- Movie clips,
- Clocks?”¹⁵³

This citation illustrates the richness of the media used in contemporary art and in education. Remida center offers an extended range of media for art-making, which expand drastically from the classical “paint/draw/sculpt” materials scheme, based on traditional approach to arts going back to Lessing. Discarded “treasures” provide a rich media alternative for an art educator, an artist, and participants. Bourriaud claims that in the twenty-first century, the artistic focus has changed from “what can we make that is new?” to “how can we make do

¹⁵² Bourriaud, *Postproduction*: 14.

¹⁵³ Stewart, Connie and Nelson, Kris Heintz. New perspectives on art education from the artists featured at the 2011 Venice Biennale (University of Northern Colorado). Convention of the National Art Education Association, USA. 03.03.2012. Hilton hotel, New York.

with what we have.”¹⁵⁴ In Remida, the participant makes new objects of available discarded materials.

According to Pål Bøyese, artistic director at Remida, the major attention of the center’s activities is given to development of creativity and not to the finished product as such.¹⁵⁵ I discovered that the importance of the process in Remida workshops was similar to the focus on the processual in relational art. I discussed this correlation in the previous chapter. The process, in which participants are involved, includes a chain of certain activities which consist of constant re-making and re-production, where the same materials are used over and over again. In *Postproduction* Bourriaud states that “the contemporary work of art does not position itself as the termination point of the ‘creative process’ (a ‘finished product’ to be contemplated), but as a site of navigation, portal, generator of activities.”¹⁵⁶ At the Remida’s workshops, the objects are collected and exposed for reuse. They can be interpreted as signs which are supposed to constitute a new construction, a new sign mosaic: let it be a spaceship made with use of colorful plastic tubes and lids, used CDs, computer details, metal wire, and wood bricks. Any visitor of the center has numerous signs at his or her disposal. Unlike bites of information used for the online information exchange, these are tangible. However, the visitor manipulates/deejays these bricks in the same way he or she could construct a manipulated virtual image. Ready-mades produced in the center are often recycled; the semiotic bricks are divided and put back to the original boxes where they are available to the next user. Methods used at the center where group work is an often used as a pedagogical tool, contribute to increasing social competence and collaboration skills, which, as I have remarked in the Chapter Five, are two of the four skills of the twenty-first century education (as it was claimed at the NAEA convention). The processual method creates opportunities for a constructive dialogue, collaboration, and meaning making.

7.2. Remida as a Flea Market

As I have discussed already in the previous chapter, participants of the workshops at the Remida center can be called “semionauts”. They navigate between multiple signs collected at the center. Materials are not fixed to each other, and can be reused in other workshops by other participants. Glue is not used at the center during daily activities (the second group of

¹⁵⁴ Bourriaud, *Postproduction*: 17.

¹⁵⁵ Interview with Pål Bøyese, 28.03.2012.

¹⁵⁶ Bourriaud, *Postproduction*: 19.

activities), and the objects from the constructed works are sorted again into respective boxes. These objects/signs can then be used in later activities. A flea market as a recycling phenomenon can be a relevant metaphor for description of this activity. Pål Bøyesen comments that the refusal to use fixing materials (glue, screws, and so on) makes participants to spend more time on working on one project:

One of the reasons that we do not use glue is an opportunity to reuse the same materials for other workshops. Another reason is that if you use glue, the children make a fixed object quickly, and there are no further opportunities for re-making and reconstruction, even for themselves. But if we do not use glue, there are more opportunities for reflective process of construction. On another hand, without glue our visitors can also experiment with weight and balance (important point according to Rammeplanen and training of technology skills). These questions are especially relevant in the start of a research process with materials. When they have been working with the research over some time, they can apply glue.¹⁵⁷

This comment shows focus on form and process of re-making and reconstruction/deejaying of the forms. Reflection is named here. However, is it enough room for reflection in the center?

7.3. Reflection and “Thinking as Making”

John Maeda, President of the Rhode Island School of Design, says that “...art is not only about making, but thinking as making.”¹⁵⁸ Quality of pedagogical, artistic or other creative activity depends on the measure of the *idea* supporting this activity.

In Italy, the Reggio atelier tradition has strong roots, and the reflecting component and preparation to the making itself takes a significant part of the process. Children draw models of a product they wish to make, prepare models in 3D, and discuss possible solutions for better functioning of the product. After the work has been accomplished, a significant portion of discussions, analysis and documentation is pursued.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ Interview with Pål Bøyesen, 28.03.2012.

¹⁵⁸ Maeda, J. “STEM to STEAM. The Meaning of Innovation”, National Art Education Association Convention. Hilton Hotel, New York. March 2, 2012.

¹⁵⁹ Vecchi, V. and Giudici, C. (ed.) *Children, art, artists. The expressive languages of children, the artistic language of Alberto Burri*. Reggio Children: Reggio Emilia, 2008.

As far as I have observed, it is not always the case in Remida Trondheim. Italian educators cite children in their reports, but the voice of the children was not always present in the Norwegian reports. During my observations in February and March, the process could have been defined as an improvised collaborative activity of sign reconstruction. The reflection and analysis made a small part of the workshops, and seems to be a goal for the future development.

7.4. Conclusion

Bourriaud is less concentrated on the relational aspect in the latest book and more on the formal one. Postproduction is a theory of forms, where works of art have become a network of interconnected elements. Artists create his or her own unique trajectory between these elements, recycling images and objects. This process resembles form of activities in the Remida center. Despite the fact that the theory of postproduction was a new approach for the center, I have found a number of similarities between the theory of contemporary aesthetics and the practice of the center of creative recycling.

1. Collected objects can be interpreted as *signs/units in the postproduction chain*, which are used and reused. In the new context these units/meaning bricks obtain also a new meaning. The center of creative recycling can be interpreted as a *flea market*, “a temporary and nomadic gathering of precarious materials and products of various provenances.”¹⁶⁰
2. Users of the center *rearrange and relocate* existing materials (*signs/units of information*), in order to produce new works with other meanings.
3. It is challenging to put the works produced in the center into the context of contemporary art, while it is possible to interpret them in terms of contemporary aesthetics as an expanded field.
4. The works are not “*signature products*”. Signature of the artist, his/her status, or his/her ranking in the brand ladder, is of defining importance, if the produced work will be called as “art”. Existing art critics can function as marketing professionals.

¹⁶⁰ Bourriaud, *Postproduction*: 28.

5. Status of *children art* is problematic. Children's art is approached through development pedagogy, and not art history. The "gaze" is in the process of establishing.
6. Workshop led by invited artists show different interpretation of the works produced.

I started this chapter with the citation of Gilles Deleuze, "All contents are good, provided they do not consist of interpretations but concern the use of the book, that they multiply its use, that they make another language within its language." The "use" is the key word here. Bourriaud divided *Postproduction* in several chapters where the accent is made on consumption and learning to use object, forms and the world. The chapters were called "The Use of Objects", "The Use of Forms", "The Use of the World". Bourriaud discusses through learning how to use objects and forms one can learn how to use the world. As I have discussed in this chapter, in Remida, participants manipulate tangible objects and forms. Through this process, they learn how to "use the world", or "how to inhabit the world in a better way".

Conclusion

The purpose of the thesis has been to apply theories about relational aesthetics and postproduction by Nicolas Bourriaud to the case study of the creative recycling center Remida in Trondheim. Through this process I wanted to approach the problem of collaboration between art professionals and education professionals in Norway. I have discussed discursive changes in the field of contemporary aesthetics and pedagogy in order to clarify the background for the analysis. The “discursive shift” in contemporary art and curating has been taking place along with changes in the “field” of education, if we use the term of Pierre Bourdieu. I have covered this question in the chapter devoted to the “educational turn” in contemporary art and curating. At the same time, I have discussed importance of art education in the schooling process. According to Lev Vygotsky, art is “a delayed reaction”, which has a transformational effect on a personality. Importance of creativity and innovation in the educational context, as well as in the context of society, were discussed by Professor Anne Bamford. I have shown with this argumentation that fields of pedagogy and art develop in a centripetal way.

Activities at the center of creative recycling Remida in Trondheim have certain similarities with contemporary art practices. After studying the center’s documents, having interviews with the artistic director Pål Bøyesen, and taking part in the center’s activities, I conclude that these activities have *formal* similarities with relational art practices. However, it is not necessarily the case about the *content*. Workshops have relational nature; the process in these workshops is more important than a final product. However, the intention to produce *art* is not present. Through analysis of interviews, observations, and working with documentation, I have observed that “art” is considered by Scandinavian Remida professionals as a representational activity and a “finished product”, and the relational aspects of contemporary art are mainly not discussed. It seems that educational professionals are not updated about recent changes in contemporary art theory and practice.

The Remida center in Trondheim can be interpreted as a project-based *laboratory*. However, as the research has shown, the management of the center does not seem to be conscious about the laboratory concept in contemporary art. Work produced in the center is largely based on *verbal and non-verbal communication* among the artistic director, invited artists, teachers,

children and other participants. “Making is connecting” strategy is a consciously used in the center, when participants are offered an activity, where through the process of communication they are involved in a production process.

Activity at the Remida center is distinguished by an ethical agenda. As it comes from the analysis, the center can be interpreted as an example of “*minor modification*”, “the historical chance” of “learning to inhabit the world in a better way” (Lyotard/Bourriaud).¹⁶¹ *The urban landscape/urban culture* form the backdrop for the center’s activity and are sources of the materials collected and used at the center. Objects from this landscape are brought into the space of the center and are offered as *a network of signs*. Participants navigate between these signs and construct new meanings in collaboration with each other.

In theory, participants of Remida center in Trondheim are a heterogenic group. In relational aesthetics, public is also “theoretically universal”¹⁶². The research has shown that, in practice, children remain main users of the center’s offer. Despite the fact that there were almost as many grown-up visitors at the center as children, as the report for 2011 shows, the central user group includes participants from 1 to 12 years old. The reason for this is that the preschool pedagogy of Reggio Emilia is a grounding principle of the center’s approach. The status of children as art producers remains problematic. International Museum of Children’s Art in Oslo defines children’s art as a part of the folk art tradition.¹⁶³ The “gaze” which is necessary for a quality cultural production and reception, is in the mode of establishing. Art of children is not considered as part of art history, but of developmental psychology.

Art is “the organization of our future behaviour”,¹⁶⁴ and the lack of attention to arts in schools results in little availability of contemporary art to future generations. Some of contemporary art institutions seem to be anti-democratic and elitist, and those who attend exhibitions are gallery-goers who are already acquainted to the codes of contemporary art. In May 2012, Erlend Høyesteren, a director of Kunstmuseene i Bergen, argues in his article for *Aftenposten* that

¹⁶¹ Bourriaud, *Relational aesthetics*: 13.

¹⁶² Bourriaud, *Relational aesthetics*: 29.

¹⁶³ Jonathan Fineberg, curator and a Gutsell Professor of art history, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, is a collaborator of the Museum. In his book *When we were young, New perspectives on the art of the child*, he discusses the nature of creative thinking and of the artistic process. Agnes Gund, President Emerita of MoMA, claimed that the book is “important”.

¹⁶⁴ Vygotsky, *Psychology of art*: 253.

public is important for a museum, not only because it is measurable and generates an income... Art means a lot for many, but could have meant much more for more people. Art can do something with the way we see and think, realize relations and contexts, and not least challenges the usual thinking.¹⁶⁵

In order to attract more visitors to art institutions, to expand target groups of these institutions, to generate interest to contemporary art among broader public, excellent knowledge of pedagogic and communication techniques are necessary. In his recent publication, Noam Chomsky states the following:

Karl Marx famously said that the task is not just to understand the world, but to change it. A variant to keep in mind is that if you want to change the world you'd better try to understand it. That doesn't mean just listening to a talk or reading a book, though that's helpful sometimes. *You learn from participating. You learn from others*¹⁶⁶.

In order to learn how to “use the world” you have to learn how to establish relationship with others, how to *produce* new connections between signs and reflect over the process of this production. Irit Rogoff, whose article I discussed in Chapter Two, emphasizes that visitors at art institutions should be provided a space for doing and participating echoing this idea of Chomsky:

When we say that these institutions of ours could be so much more than they are, we don't imply that they should be larger, or more efficient, or more progressive, or more fun (though they certainly should be more fun). Instead, we wish to say that their reach could be wider, that *they might provide sites for doing so much more than they ever thought they could.*¹⁶⁷

Høyersten, Chomsky, and Rogoff repeat the ideas about art expressed by Vygotsky. Art organizes the future behaviour of an individual and transcends necessities of a given situation. The very nature of learning is creative – which means, participatory and relational.

Remida center *has a potential* of being a platform for artistic and pedagogical innovation. In order to become one, competent art theoreticians and practitioners should be involved in

¹⁶⁵ Høyersten, E. “Publikum svikter kunsten – i Oslo”. *Aftenposten*, 07.05.2012. Translated from Norwegian.

¹⁶⁶ Chomsky, N. *Making the future. Occupations, interventions, Empire and Resistance*. (London: Penguin Books, 2012): 305. My italics.

¹⁶⁷ Rogoff, I. “Turning”. *E-flux*, 10/2008. My italics.

realization of the project. Hopefully, this thesis made a parallax reading of the Remida practice possible. Despite the fact that little financing decreases opportunities of hiring more relevant specialists in art theory and pedagogy, I outline here that employing specialists in aesthetics and pedagogy, as well as strengthening collaboration with artists and educational institutions can provide a basis for significant development of the field. However, the problem of interconnectedness between pedagogy and art instances is a common problem in Norway.

At the National Conference of Culture School Leaders,¹⁶⁸ where Anne Bamford presented the results of her Norwegian survey, the main challenges include a lack of connection between actors in education and arts and insufficient competence of art teachers,¹⁶⁹ and misunderstandings from politic's part of important of aesthetic education after the "PISA-panic", which I referred to in the introduction. At the same time, the field of Norwegian art education seems to be segmented: culture schools just initiate their collaboration with secondary schools, whereas preschool art education, university art education and museum pedagogy were not discussed at the named event, unlike it was a case at the Convention of National Art Education Association, which I had attended a month before. This backdrop defines the context of the Remida's work.

There are many possibilities in case of Remida's opening up for collaboration with art educational institutions around Norway, Scandinavia and other countries. There is also room for development in the context of the lifelong pedagogy.

Exchanging the subjectivities seems to be central in the artistic process. Art needs being communicated. With the growth of the effects of globalization, the language of the art and historical discourses becomes more heterogeneous, instead of a dominating view. The heterogeneity requires an ability to multitask and exchange. Gavin Jantjes, curator at the National Museum of Art, Architecture, and Design (Oslo), taking part at the seminar "Globalization in Contemporary Art" at the Oslo Art Academy said the following:

¹⁶⁸ Kulturskolenes Lederkonferanse. Arranged by the Norwegian Culture School Council in Oslo, April 12-13, 2012.

¹⁶⁹ "The survey results for the grunnskole shows that while the satisfaction with the specialist teachers was quite high (82.62 % thought specialist teachers were good or very good at teaching the arts subjects), only 47% felt that general teachers were good or very good at teaching the arts subjects. Teachers education was particularly "blamed" for the lack of capacity with only 14.4% of respondents thinking teacher education gave good or very good preparation in the arts for general teachers. Even for specialist teachers, teacher education was still only seen to be good or very good by 39.4% of respondents". Bamford, A. Report for the National Conference of Culture School Leaders (Kulturskolenes Lederkonferanse). Oslo, Norwegian Academy of Music, 13.04.2012.

In a global art world there is no mother tongue, and that means you are involved in translation or learning a form of visual Esperanto. One can no longer demand that others speak your language. You have to translate your own ideas.¹⁷⁰

Relational artists, in collaboration with educational professionals, seem to have a chance of investing into the learning of the language and ways of transmitting it - a “historical chance”, if we use the language by Bourriaud.

In the context of globalization, the economic crisis, the environmental challenges, the hunger problem of the first decades of the 21st century, educational projects seem to be an example of the microtopia theorists of contemporary aesthetics are talking about. Remida as an example of an ecological and ethical project illustrates this point. Including contemporary art methods and techniques in educational practices and vice versa can contribute in changing the view of contemporary art as elitist and closed. Collaboration between pedagogical institutions and art institutions or freelance professionals seems to be a promising effort in that direction.

* * *

Vea Vecchi, an international consultant and an atelierista in Reggio Emilia, claimed in her presentation of the Reggio Emilia pedagogical project,

Though important studies and reflections have been made on the subject, these need to be constantly updated and, in particular, discussed from different viewpoints. I believe this kind of discussion would bring a wealth of new elements and develop our points of view.¹⁷¹

Hopefully, in this thesis I have brought some new viewpoints to the subject of creative recycling, applying theories of contemporary aesthetics to a case study of the Remida center.

¹⁷⁰ Gavin Jantjes. Presentation at the seminar Globalization in Contemporary Art. 12.04.2012. Oslo Art Academy.

¹⁷¹ Vecchi, V. and Giudici, C. (ed.) *Children, art, artists. The expressive languages of children, the artistic language of Alberto Burri*. (Reggio Children: Reggio Emilia, 2008): 141.

The format of a master's thesis does not provide a sufficient space to discuss a role of creative recycling as a possible arena of connecting art and education institutions exhaustively. A further interdisciplinary work can be needed in order to define the "points of connection".

The main contribution in this thesis has been highlighting the crossover between contemporary art and innovative pedagogy in the context of the "educational turn" in contemporary art scene. I consider this an important achievement of the work which I have been doing for these months. I have shown the ways in which contemporary aesthetics is influenced by educational principles and vice versa: the ways in which educational thinking is influenced by aesthetic values.

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Appendix I

Glossary

Atelierista (It.)

Professional artist at the Reggio Emilia school working in collaboration with pedagogistas (professional teachers) on creative in the kindergarten. Atelierista come into school through a public examination, is not necessarily a qualified teacher. He or she is responsible for aesthetic part of the education, plans, holds, reflects and documents artistic activity at school.

Pedagogista (It.)

A teacher position at the Reggio Emilia school. Pedagogista provides a curriculum structure that enables children to investigate their interests, answer their questions, and to test out their theories. Pedagogista develops relationship with families and works with documentation which are both essential in Reggio Emilia pedagogy.

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) – the term introduced by Lev Vygotsky, the zone of achievements a pupil can master himself with assistance of a tutor, a zone of potentiality and possibilities.

Creativity

A quality of being able to search for new solutions of a problem, inventiveness. The quality is inherent in every human.

Aesthetics¹⁷²

An idea that sets humankind apart from other animal species. In the end of the day, burying the dead, laughter, and suicide are just the corollaries of a deep-seated hunch, the hunch that life is an aesthetic, ritualised, shaped form.

Art

1. General term describing a set of objects presented as part of narrative known as *art history*. This narrative draws up the critical genealogy and discusses the issues raised by these objects, by way of three sub-sets: *painting, sculpture, architecture*¹⁷³.
2. Nowadays, the word “art” seems to be no more than a semantic leftover of this narrative, whose more accurate definition would read as follows: Art is an activity consisting in producing relationships with the world with the help of signs, forms, actions and objects.

Behavior

1. Besides those two established genres, the history of things and the history of forms, we still need to come up with a history of artistic behavior. It would be naïve to think that the history of art represents a *whole* capable of perennially replacing these three sub-groups. An artist’s *microbiography* would point up the things he has achieved within his oeuvre.
2. Artist, producer of time.

All totalitarian ideologies show a distinctive wish to control the time in which they exist. They replace the versatility of time invented by the individual by the fantasy of a central place where it might be possible to acquire the overall meaning of society. Totalitarianism systematically tries to set up a form of temporal motionlessness, and rendering the time in which it exists uniform and collective, a fantasy of eternity aimed first and foremost at standardising and monitoring patterns of behaviour. Foucault thus rightly stressed the fact that the art of living clashed with “all forms of fascism, be they already there or lurking”.

¹⁷² From here and further the definitions by Nicolas Bourriaud. At Bourriaud, N. *Relational aesthetics*. Dijon: Les Presses du Réel, 2002, pp. 107-114.

¹⁷³ All italics in the definitions are by Bourriaud.

Co-existence criterion

All works of art produce a model of sociability, which transposes reality or might be conveyed with it. So there is a question we are entitled to ask in front of any aesthetic production: “Does this work permit me to enter into dialogue? Could I exist, and how, in the space it defines?” A form is more or less democratic. May I simply remind you, for the record, that the forms produced by the art of totalitarian regimes are peremptory and closed in themselves (particularly through their stress on symmetry). Otherwise put, they do not give the viewer a chance to complement them.

(see: Relational (aesthetics)).

Inhabiting

Having imagined architecture and art of the future, the artist is now proposing solutions for inhabiting them. The contemporary form of modernity is ecological, haunted by the occupancy of forms and the use of images.

Ready-made

Artistic figure contemporary with the invention of film. The artist takes his camera-subjectivity into the real, defining himself as a cameraman; the museum plays the part of the film, he records. For the first time, with Duchamp, art no longer consists in translating the real with the help of signs, but in presenting this same real as it is (Duchamp, the Lumiere brothers...).

Relational (aesthetics)

Aesthetic theory consisting in judging artworks on the basis of the inter-human relations which they represent, produce or prompt.

(see: Co-existence criterion).

Relational (art)

A set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space.

Semionaut

The contemporary artist is a *semionaut*, he invents trajectories between signs.