

# THE ARCHIVES: LEARNING FROM OTHERS

## 1) Showing the work of other artists as a pedagogic tool

### a – Invitation to become curious, waking the desire to react!

Starting an artistic project could be sometimes difficult, especially when it tackles a sensitive political issue. If the octopus has many arms, which arm should we start with? Looking at an artistic work, can be a primer, an incentive to take action. The shorter your workshops will be, the more references you will have to share to work quickly! These will provide a framework for your participants.

Looking at the work of others can also help to better understand what militant art is in its different forms - material and immaterial! Perhaps the same work will propose philosophy, social sciences, journalism, writing, a moving body ... and why not mathematics! The exploration of examples helps participants to open their representations on the artistic and political creation and to arouse their curiosity.

### b - Learn to master the messages of one's own work

*Watching, observing and learning to talk about the work of others also allows participants to create or reinforce their visual arts culture. They can get acquainted with the aesthetic codes of militant art, and perhaps later master them.* Talking about the work of others also allows participants to realize that behind each art work there are many implicit messages and multiple interpretations. Thus, our creation can convey messages that escape us! Participants will then learn how to decode the implicit messages that are hidden in a work, and they will be able to master the implicit messages and interpretations of their own creation. The knowledge learned through the analysis of other works will allow participants to take a step back and acquire a critical perspective about their own work. **It will allow them to share their intention by mastering visible and invisible messages to the best.**

### c – Learn to move from a message with a meaning to a sensitive message

The artistic reference allows also to understand how a militant idea can be articulated with an artistic desire. Indeed, expressing these ideas through art is less easy than it seems, especially in an activist project! **Indeed, the choices are not merely determined by the desire to paint, draw, model or photocopy ... nor only by that of passing a political message, but mixing the two aspects.** When our message takes an artistic form, it becomes transformed and takes other paths. How to be sure that during this movement between the idea (the meaning) and the creation (the sensorial work) the one and the other do not get lost but meet? **This movement back and forth between your intention / idea and your artistic desire is not automatic, it has to be developed. Seeing how other artists have taken up these challenges can help you!**

**The militant art demands a coherence between your message and your tools.** For example, in her work “Faces and Phases”, Zanele Muholi offered two hundred portraits of people from the LGBT community. The artist wants to offer positive representations of the community, often invisible in society: the choice of the artistic tools, photography, makes sense. His message takes shape through photography, and photography becomes artistic in part because of the political message it conveys. The one and the other **complete each other!**

During the creation of an activist project, we can consider that the very process of creation is political: for example, which tools will you choose? What is the symbolic meaning of these tools? How will you expose your work? Which aesthetic will you choose? Which symbolic ideology will be transmitted through the aesthetics that you choose?

For example: engraving print on beautiful paper, will not have the same meaning as risograph printing on a paper! Would you propose your work on a tool that meets ecological concerns? Or will you choose the cheapest possible support to make your work as accessible as possible? Thus, the choice of the tool may be political. The same is true for



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the place of distribution of your work: will you offer it for free download on the internet or do you prefer an occasional face to face meeting? The choices you will have to should make during your creative process may (or may not) respond to your message but also to your political concerns.

**Get Inspired!..But copying, re-using, diverting the work of others: is it really about creativity?**

***a –Inspiration and copying as a springboard to creation***

Existing works do not hold back your creativity, on the contrary! They will help you enter a creative process and support you to shape your desires. Today, our collective imagination is nourished by the myth of the artist, a creative genius who re-invents art through each of his/her works. The work then becomes the expression of his/her individuality and singularity. However, this vision of art and the artist is very cultural! For centuries artists have been trained by copying masters. Art (and especially politics) can be understood as a collective creation: we feed on each other and it is this mix that makes it regenerate and transform! Any artistic practice is a referenced practice.

Through artistic and educational references, you will be able to learn how to manage your own kitchen: keep the tools that you have observed as useful tools for you, and set aside those that are not. The artistic reference can also inspire you, and push you to react, to resist. It is a gateway to a creative process: it can give structure to your idea, open up avenues to explore!

***– Some practical advices***

Copying an artistic work is not forbidden but you should know that this work cannot be commercialized. Also, it is better to respect the will of its author. If you are inspired by an artist, you can quote the work or link your work to his/her or work. If there is any doubt, contact the artist directly!

***b– Will you become a reference yourself?***

Are you also going to become a reference for the activists? Do you want to share your experience and work with others? The question of copyrights arises in a work of public utility. Will your work be accessible to all and re-usable?

**For example: Will you allow associations to use your posters without your permission? And if your work has been re-used by people who do not share your value, see the worst hijacked? You will have to learn to define what is your priority and what copyrights you want to give to your work.**

After these preliminary reflections, the activities bellow give you some concrete guidelines on how you can transform the exploration of the archives into a learning opportunity, and into the first step of the participants’ own activist projects.

<b>What’s in an art work?</b>	
<b>Artistis / facilitators</b>	Eloise Dubrana
<b>Duration</b>	15 minutes
<b>Number of the participants</b>	6-20



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<b>(from-till, ideal)</b>	
<b>Material</b>	Projector, computer connected to the activist archives or having a set of archives downloaded.
<b>Aims</b>	Becoming aware of the multiplicity and diversity of messages – and readings from an art work
<b>Steps/Instructions</b>	<p>1. Associations Project an art work and invite participants to say the first word that comes to their mind when they see the work.</p> <p>2. Feelings In a second step invite participants to name the emotions that the art works make them feel.</p> <p>3. Details In the third round invite participants to name a detail that they find interesting in the works projected.</p>
<b>Hints/tips for facilitators</b>	<p>This is particularly useful if participants don't have much training in the reception of (contemporary) art.</p> <p>To keep a good rhythm what when participants get tired of an art work and project a next piece.</p> <p>Ensure participants that there are no good answers bad answers, what is important is that they are able to say what is true for them.</p>
<b>Evaluation method (if applicable)</b>	Observation: are people able to react? Does everyone participate?
<b>Presentation, follow-up</b>	This activity can precede the deeper engagement with the activist archives (see following activity)



## Playing with the archives

<b>Artists / facilitators</b>	Eloise Dubrana
<b>Duration</b>	2 hours
<b>Number of the participants (from-till, ideal)</b>	6-20
<b>Material</b>	<p>Printing a dozen of archives or arranging for participants having a look at them prior to the session, making a choice and printing the archive they chose.</p> <p>A4 or A3 papers (2 per participant)</p> <p>Markers</p> <p>The 2 set of questions printed on two different coloured cards.</p>
<b>Aims</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Learning to express yourself (alone and in front of others) during an artistic project</li> <li>▪ Learning to feel (to welcome and identify emotions triggered by art works)</li> <li>▪ Learning to give a personal vision, develop a critical mind (reflection)</li> <li>▪ Understanding the artist's approach, the coherence between the intention and the form of the work</li> <li>▪ Identifying one's own project</li> <li>▪ Re-appropriating the work by indicating what can be re-used for one's own work and feeding it with personal references.</li> </ul>
<b>Steps/Instructions</b>	<p>1) Invite each participant to choose an art work amongst the archives which they find appealing. Offer them the two A3 sheets, invite them to write on one of them the name of the art work (archive) – and on the second the words "What I wish".</p> <p>In the following ask participants to answer a number of questions. The "blue" questions are for the first sheet and the "red" questions for the second sheet.</p> <p>1. What does the artist denounce?</p> <p>2. Is it a subject that you want to speak about? If not, about what would you deal with?</p> <p>3. The artist is directly concerned by the subject matter s/he chose? (Is s/he member of the group s/he talks about?)</p> <p>4. Are you directly concerned by the cause you are defending? What issues does this bring?</p> <p>5. What is the artistic tool used by the artist?</p>



	<p>6. Which artistic tool would you like to learn more?</p> <p>7. Does the tool help the message of the artist ? why?</p> <p>8. Which artistic tool would work for your message?</p> <p>9. How does the artist transmit his message? Positively, negatively? (denunciation, valorization of a minority, violence, aggressiveness, humor) (to be written on the first paperboard)</p> <p>10. How would you transmit your message?</p> <p>11. What is the emotion felt by the viewer / yourself? (Sadness, joy, pride, guilt, etc.)</p> <p>12. What is the emotion that you would like your viewer to feel when looking at your project?</p> <p>13. What reaction is this art-work likely to trigger? What reaction does it trigger from you? (Does it motivate you to take any action? If so, what?)</p> <p>14. What reaction would you like your project to have?</p> <p>Once participants answered all the questions, ask them to make a presentation of both sheets. Invite the group to think about other art works that could help to build the participant's project? Consider going beyond the reference field of the plastic arts to embrace other artistic fields and other disciplines (eg philosophy, literature, cinema, science, etc.) The new inputs can be written on the second paperboard.</p>
<p><b>Hints/tips for facilitators</b></p>	<p>The questions should not be felt like a quiz or a test, rather a means to enter in dialogue with the selected art work and use it to inspire and identify one's own project.</p>
<p><b>Evaluation method (if applicable)</b></p>	<p>Observation: how easy is it to participants to answer "blue" and "red" questions? To what extent are they able to identify their own project?</p> <p>A round of feedbacks: invite everyone to answer quickly what they take from the session.</p>
<p><b>Presentation, follow-up</b></p>	<p>This activity can precede the hands-on work on the campaign.</p>

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