

Two or three learning processes

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Two kinds of Process

The success of study projects at an academy of art largely depends on whether they are unique solutions to given assignments, thereby contributing something that has not been defined by an introductory assignment or determined by a given method. Their substance exceeds the framework within which their process began. Consequently, from a pedagogical viewpoint the challenge is how to define forms of teaching that apply across the limits of the specific situation, but which ultimately concern the conditions for the creation of a singular project.

In connection with current demands for the development of the structure of teaching to accommodate an increasing degree of clear and communicative learning goals, it is tempting to transfer methods and teaching structures that have been developed within other domains and forms of teaching, which can more easily establish and apply measurable parameters. The humanities are often used more or less directly as a model capable of qualifying both research and pedagogical practice. However, even though this may remove some of the uncertainty among both teachers and students that characterises compliance with and evaluation of given demands, it is vital to define precisely the distinguishing features of the teaching methods arising from the issue outlined above. If we, as architects and artists, fail to define the distinguishing features of the artistic process, the risk is that our teaching will be weakened by pedagogical experiences that have been gained in other fields.

By way of introduction, we should distinguish between two perceptions of method, and in a broader sense between two kinds of process. The aim is to establish a general distinction between processes that pursue a clear goal, and processes that operate without a defined goal. The former involve a realisation methodology that operates with measurable parameters, aiming for symmetry between an initial or general purpose and the result of the process. In other words, the purpose and the result can be evaluated in relation to each other and you can decide whether the result matches expectations. The latter involve an artistic method that is evaluated based not on whether it fulfils a goal, but on whether it produces something new. The artis-

tic process cannot be evaluated in the same way in relation to external parameters, because it will tend to be an exception. It has a special relationship to the immeasurable. As mentioned above, it is typically evaluated based on whether it evades initial goals and exists as a self-referential and unique composition. The two processes and their respective methods should not be seen as an adequate description of the multitude of processes and methods that the architectural practice contains. They are juxtaposed with a view to describing a range of characteristic aspects of artistic work as a learning process, and in order to underline the fundamentally different role played by *the problem* in the artistic process. Obviously, architectural practice spans a wide range of procedures and any concrete working process will contain features representing the entire range between two opposite poles. However, even though it may sometimes seem that it is only at academies of art that the artistic element occupies a leading position, this should not prevent us from trying to define artistic features and their distinguishing characteristics. Without this kind of definition, we will be left to rely on external models or forced to resort to vague expressions involving subjectivity and the ineffability of creation, which can be colonised all too easily by definitions taken from other domains. Consequently, in this connection the aim must be to define the artistic features of architectural practice in their own right without discussing in detail how they are involved in the more pragmatic processes of the field.

The central assumption is that the artistic process cannot be reduced to or absorbed by a problem-solving process description because it basically challenges the idea that the process is measurable. Therefore, it makes no sense to talk about any actual result that can be evaluated in relation to external parameters such as an introductory problem statement, idea or intention. Art is characterised by the fact that it produces for the sake of intensification and differentiation! (Grosz, 2008, p.9). It is only later that the results of the creative process may perhaps be used – unless they fade away and die.

The Loss of Ability

The practitioner always comes after the event. Planning an event is a contradiction in terms because events are fundamentally unknown. Instead, they become apparent as an opening in the familiar. It is not until later that they activate the ways we talk, write or perform our practice. In a broader cultural perspective, events are like clearings or openings in a given field of knowledge, which activate the field in question. Therefore, you

cannot anticipate a difference. A planned difference is simply a variation of something that is familiar. This means that new departures arise not due to the unfolding of a creative ability that pedagogy can identify and develop, but due to the exploration of an uncontrollable and dynamic material (Kwinter, 2001, p.10). And the difference is first and foremost a difference in the material being examined with regard to its potentials. In this connection, material should be understood as the set of drawings, models, documents etc. through which the process is developed. The special focus on the architectural media should be seen as an extension of interest in the role of the academy of art in relation to the artistic practice of architecture.

This understanding of creation can be seen as an extension of the thinking of Gilles Deleuze, avoiding a description of essences and properties and focusing instead on capacities unfolding in a world of productive forces and immanent differences. The fact that the difference is not invented as an idea in the consciousness of the practitioner, but is seen as an external difference, does not reduce the importance or talent of the practitioner, but discusses it from another angle instead. It perceives the relationship between the practitioner and the work as a productive difference and not as an execution. Sensing involves a concrete connection or exchange between the practitioner and the artistic material. It is not just a question of the artistic material being influenced by the practitioner – the practitioner also learns to sense and think in new ways. So, the idea is not to marginalise the importance of the concrete practitioner, but to challenge the constitution of a general and abstract subject. In this case, a creative subject, which is presumed to exist across the concrete practitioners, and whose identity it is the task of pedagogy to define. In this connection, the identification of learning goals and creative abilities is just another way of constituting a creative subject, which is very different from the romantic subject on which the familiar artist mythology is based, in relation to which the artist conceives the project internally and unfolds it (often painfully) through the process and the resistance and inertia of the outside world. Instead, the creative subject is included in the general tendency for self-management, evaluation and self-learning.

Creation is connected, paradoxically, to the loss of ability. Paul Klee says that precision in the thing you are creating can only be achieved if you become weak first (Klee, 1990, p.8). So talent is closely connected to attention and presupposes a willingness to lose ability. This means that it is often in the dead stages of a project that things are left open, released temporarily from intention and as such labile. All we need to do is think of the practical knowledge that is shared by most practitioners, ac-

ording to which the most productive moment in a process almost always occurs when the thing you had prepared appears in a surprising manner and takes the process in a different and unexpected direction. The differentiation process of the material articulates nuances and distributes information, which thoughts cannot manage but are forced to pass through and adjust in connection with the work. The artistic material is an expressive material. It does not express the practitioner, but appears as an arrangement of qualitative marks delimiting the field or territory of the composition. It is a set of territorial marks. These qualitative marks cannot be separated and assessed in isolation from the roles they play in the composition. The expressive material forms rhythmic motifs by whose agency the various components of the material are distributed and connected. It is this repetition of the rhythmic motifs marking the special field or territory of the composition that is the specific style of the work in question (Deleuze, 2005, p.404). Thus, the artistic work actually progresses in the form of a series of concrete manipulations and experiments regarding the immanent relations and rhythms of the expressive material, rather than in the form of the realisation of an initial idea. Thus, the methodical level of a creative process often has a destructive element turning against patterns, repetitions and habits that prevent the practitioner from exploring the relations of the specific material because they blindly repeat existing and general procedures. If method is perceived as a constructive entity that can be developed on an ongoing basis through your practice, leading slowly to increasing mastery of the subject, it also removes you from the thing that is productive in the artistic process. But what does it mean for the teaching of the artistic process that it frames a loss of ability; that it stages the contrast between the external difference and the habits of the practitioner? If dead phases are a necessary part of an artistic process, is there e.g. a form of pedagogy for boredom? Does not pedagogy normally have the problem that it views its contribution as something positive directed at the practitioner instead of the material? However, the goal of the artistic process is not the abilities of the students. The artistic process subordinates the abilities of the practitioner in favour of the consistency of the work. This consistency is strengthened by the network of relations constituted by the work of the rhythmic motifs, as mentioned above. The only goal of the artistic process is the point at which the consistency of the work is of such a degree that it no longer needs the presence of the practitioner in order to be coherent (Deleuze, 1996, p.214). If the abilities of the practitioner become an independent goal, the focus will be removed from the work done on the expressive material of the

composition, and thereby from the very thing that is vital in an artistic process. The process is never a goal in itself. At best it is an amateurish viewpoint that confuses the work with the practitioner; and at worst it is an expression of a way of thinking about competences that translates the characteristics of the artistic process into general abilities. The translation deletes the creative characteristics of the artistic practice.

The Construction of a Problem Field

One vital point in an artistic process, and therefore in the teaching of an artistic process, occurs when you choose the right technique in relation to the problem field arising somewhere in the relationship between the practitioner and the material. The positioning of teacher and students in the classroom is the basis of the illusion that freedom lies in finding a special solution to a given problem. In this understanding of the relationship between problem and solution, the problems tend to be given and defined outside the actual process, which becomes the solution to a problem instead. However, real freedom and creation lie in constructing the problem (Deleuze, 2006, p.15). In this connection, the solution is merely secondary, being derived from the creation of the problem, so to speak. This also means that the problem cannot be abstracted even though it contains traits that can be found in other contexts. It is always situated and must be processed by manipulating a given material. Ronald Bogue illustrates the relationship between the problem and the practitioner by referring to the relationship between the sea and the swimmer (Bogue, 2007, pp. 62-63). Together the singularities of the body and the sea constitute a problem field from which the practice of swimming arises. If the sea is the problem, and swimming is a possible solution, there is no resemblance between the two. Swimming simply constitutes one actualisation of the problem field that does not preclude others. Similarly, the architect explores the virtual differences of the material using the various techniques that are at his disposal. In this sense, the architectural media should primarily be regarded as probes, not as instruments for use in achieving your intentions. Techniques explore differences in the complex material and actualise them in various ways in the course of the process. In this sense, traditional craftsmanship is a good example because its practice is developed as its tools explore the singularities of the given material. All we need to do is think of the practical knowledge of the carpenter with regard to the strength of wood, its flexibility, breaking points etc. Similarly, we can say that learning in the artistic process and

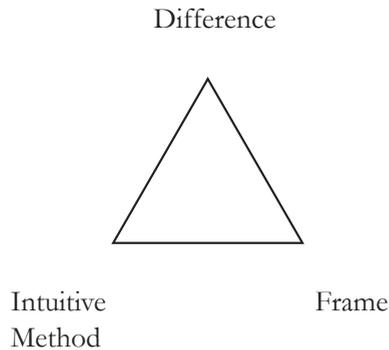
its various techniques produces knowledge of the dynamics of the artistic material. This knowledge is tied to the material in question, whose relations cannot be abstracted. This is why it is often difficult to transfer practical experience directly from one process to another.

Three Aspects of the Architectural Process

If realisation methodology seeks to achieve the repetition and sophistication of existing knowledge or skills, the artistic process focuses on the complexity of a given material, which it explores with a view to creating something that the practitioner cannot imagine initially. The new element comes from this interface, so a creative process involves learning. The productive relationship with an external resistance makes the creative process full of conflict and can never be optimised to the same extent as other learning processes. The first process is connected to the establishment and learning of appropriate habits, while the second operates without a defined goal. As such, the second learning process potentially opens habit up to something it cannot capture: the event. The advantage of contrasting the two processes is that it makes it possible to describe the creative features of the artistic process without using concepts that belong to the problem-solving method. However, the juxtaposition may have a tendency to capture the discussion in a binary logic. The danger of this is that it makes it impossible to describe the factors needed for performing a task without marginalising the artistic element. On the other hand, you risk isolating the artistic features without being able to comment on their connections and possible influence on the pragmatic levels in a process thereby returning to the artist mythology mentioned earlier. Consequently, the final part of this text draws a triangular diagram of the architectural process that distributes the concepts that have already been described in a different way. The strength of this triangular diagram is that it promotes a description of the relations between concepts rather than fixing them in mutual contradictions. The first two concepts have been described above, while the third point was mentioned in connection with the discussion of technique and the construction of the problem field.

The ambition is to draw a diagram of an experimental practice that is developed through concrete situations, thereby refraining from reducing the pragmatic element to a simple realisation. In other words, what is it that characterises an experimental practice turning the practitioner towards the loss of ability while framing its investigations and thereby avoiding the rela-

tivism that inevitably accompanies a far too uncritical worship of immediacy?



The difference is first and foremost a relation in the material, which is given expression through the artistic process. Creation occurs through a sensory encounter with external differences and not through the unfolding of an internal ability. The encounter with the external differences is a learning process. In principle, anything can be included in the artistic process, as long as it strengthens the relational network that produces the consistency of the composition (Deleuze, 1996, p.208). As the material components are loosened, adjusted and incorporated from the context in which they exist, they become an expressive material, which is incorporated into the composition concerned. A Ready made is an obvious example of an artistic practice that makes this basic fact visible in a highly direct manner. And we could claim that something similar applies in an architectural context, since the main part of a building consists of already given components that are arranged and distributed in a specific way. In this sense, architecture does not need to identify its artistic features by considering other art forms. On the contrary: architecture is the basic artistic and territorial interaction with the world that also applies to other art forms (Grosz, 2008, p.13).

If the concept of method is to be used in connection with an artistic process, it must be released from all forms of symmetry between a beginning and an ending, and from the performance of an initial intention. The intuitive method is basically destructive. It turns against the conventions and schemas that prevent the practitioner from encountering the external difference. One way of exemplifying the destructive features of the intuitive method is by considering all the many artistic methods that in one way or another destabilise the practitioner or the context of the work. In this connection, you could suggest a more precise definition of the intuitive method according to

which its task primarily involves inventing new concepts that can release techniques from conventional procedures, thereby releasing their exploration of the complex material (Deleuze, 2006, p.15). Consequently, the intuitive method designates a productive relationship to language and the concepts of architectural practice. The method therefore occupies a special position in relation to the architectural media and their techniques. Defining the intuitive method as a creative relationship to language makes it possible to prevent the task of the method from involving determining the application of techniques. In this connection, language constitutes an independent material domain to which it is necessary to have a creative relationship. To the extent that the goal is to establish practical knowledge about the artistic process, it must be developed at the interface between a linguistic practice and a practice in the architectural media. Together they constitute an experimental architectural practice.

A creative process starts by cutting a field out of the infinite number of options that initially make themselves available. Architecture is the art of the frame. (Deleuze, 1996, pp.234-235). It establishes a frame in the world, thereby delimiting a territory. This territory is developed as the frame is connected to, broken by and intersected by other frames. The beginning of the architectural process is not an idea but rather the way in which the first frame is placed, thereby beginning the arrangement of the material. In essence, it is reasonable to say that the problem of the process is the material. You might say that the problem is not formulated outside the artistic material but invented through its arrangement. In this connection, the role of the frame involves delimiting the problem field rather than defining the problem. In this sense the frame belongs to the techniques, since it is techniques that are used to cut and connect the various components of the artistic material.

The largest framework in this connection may be the academy itself. If so, the academy is not necessarily visible at the institutional level. It is always provisional and produced by human passions rather than by institutional structures. It appears wherever students and teachers forget the task and lose themselves in an interest. In connection with the formation of the academy in Antiquity, the teacher was not only an agent for the city and its interest in educating students to turn them into good citizens. He also operated independently from the city in the free space made available by the framework of the academy. Without this temporary disregard for external demands and the objectives of the institution, it is impossible to pursue the problems in the directions that they themselves propose.

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