

Doing-Nothing and Failing as Non-Teleological Artistic Practices

Abstract:

My aim is to analyse some social subversive artistic practices related to non-actions and failing. The concept of time is the unifying thread for this analysis. As a contextualisation, I first refer to some common experiences: haste and the widespread feeling of lack of time as the effects of an objectivation of human time in a society based on efficiency (Landes 2007, Attali 1985, Heidegger 2011); the models of social success as narratives imposed on the formation of personal identity (Salmon 2007); the acceleration of factual history (Koselleck) and other social spheres (Virilio 2005, H. Rosa, 2005) as the superficial form of a static historical present (Hartog) with no vision of the future (Jameson); last but not least, the degradation of work into labour (Arendt 1958) and the global precarization of human life (Standing 2011, Vilar 2017).

As a subversion of these contemporary experiences, I propose some artistic practices selected through two concepts of aesthetics. I refer first to some antecedents: among others, John Cage's work on silence, *4'33"* (1952); the delegation of the active role to the spectator by Abramovic in *Rhythm 0* (1974) or her mere presentness in *The Artist is Present* (2010); the construction of art-producing machines by Tinguely (50s and 60s); the long-term artistic action of not showing any work of art by Hsieh (1986-1999); the performance of the poem "Waiting" at Womanhouse by Faith Wilding. These cases allow us to recover the Kantian concept of ateleology (purposiveness without purpose) and the Gadamerian one of festival as exemplary contemporary features of an art that can break dominant temporal models of experience and open up a space for creativity.

These concepts weave the thread among some contemporary artworks whose defining characteristic is that they break teleological structures of action: Fetisov's *Installation of Experience*, in which, once inside, the visitor must stay still to be able to leave (2011); Duillard's *Waiting Room* (2014) as a place to study the situation of waiting, and others. I will also present my course "Doing-Nothing and Failing" given at a master's degree in Research in Arts and Design and developed with artist Christina Schultz – who has a project on "Doing-Nothing- in which students are introduced to these theoretical issues and invited to create their own projects in this field. We will see how these practices allow a very active role in defining one's own subjectivity and build new possibilities of social relations.

Index terms (use style: *Index terms*) | *Mention about; aesthetics of failure; contemporary Art; doing-nothing; festival; purposiveness without purpose; temporality; temporal experiences; new modes of sociality; subversion in art*