

EDITORIAL

ARTS-BASED EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH NO LONGER NEEDS MARTYRS

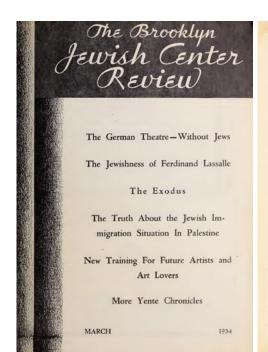
A SMALL TRIBUTE TO MARK ROTHKO'S TEACHING PRACTICE

LA INVESTIGACIÓN EDUCATIVA BASADA EN LAS ARTES YA NO NECESITA MÁRTIRES. UN PEQUEÑO HOMENAJE A LA PRÁCTICA DOCENTE DE MARK ROTHKO

Dr. José María Mesías-Lema

University of A Coruna 💿 https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8278-7115

Ten years ago, when this school started, progressive art methods were looked upon as a suspicious motivation and experiment. Today this method needs no martyrs. The method has extended itself to various public school buildings, which have become distinguished and admittance sought after for this very reason. (Rothko, "Scribble Book", 1934, p. 44)



New Training For Future Artists and Art Lovers

(Lest words a collection of the pointing and ordy result Caster Academy, two reliabilities in the poresult Caster Academy, two reliabilities in the pocount of the Booksham Matsume. They depring a pergendent of the Booksham Matsume and the second academy of the Booksham Matsume and the Matsume of the second reliability of the Second academy of the Second Second Second Second academy of the Second Second Second Second academy of the Second Se

The significance of this achibition sky (1), in it indication of the potentialities of children to us only of the highly glitch, the well-tailed and the eact, and (3), in the value of anch expressions both the development of appreciation of art and in the futucreation of art by those of the children who may be ifitted to construct patients are configure as a major itioned to construct patient or scripture as a major i-

agains usually have a wearg conception of the recombe of natural tacker, training and experience to Of course, no one will deny the benefits of longenterines, discipling, and above all tacket. Yet we amp is at the matter is a different findborn. Our cliffereners are also also also also all tackets are also also the discretion of the second second second second products, numeric events, including in our products, constituents with great feeling and aritigry we do not feel that our expression in this medius hyperbest on our knowledge of gramman, syntax or rules of theteries. Liftering we disg medium, syntax or rules of theteries. Liftering we disg medium and





Breaklyn Jewish Center Re-

wy and construption. Puisting is just as natural gramma as indegen experising. It is a natural of orangenetic production of the same shared of the angenetic colored by use over beelings and resctions singing or speaking. If you do not believe that the three children work, and you will use them pape polying of increasing most of the rules of optical propaging the processing production of the probability polying of increasing most of the rules of optical propaging in the production of the probability of the y are employing them. They do so in the same production of the production of the probability of the y are employing them. They do so in the same production of the production of the production of the proting of the property of the production of the prosent of the production of the production of the proting of the production of the production of the prosent of the production of the production of the prosent of the production of the production of the prosent of the production of the prosent of the production of the product

It is part with that supplicity that we allow the hidden is our class to pairs, and that is why, peehape, heir paintings are so fresh, so vivid and varied. And I is these qualities, which, as matter 'how skilled as trist may be, he must obtain to make his work arresting and provoking of attention.

Let use describe how our childran work. They entry let at record, They paints, paper, brautised, cally, paints -aff the working material is ready. Most of them, if do ideas and its its result, is nonething from the history means, suscettime for its nonething from the history means, suscettime form. However history at other inners, manter thip, on a visibilit to the dicks or at a latexty, or news scene shearved on the interest, often it is a subject but is how mentioned in the strengt, often it is a subject but is how mentioned in the strengt.

By MARCUS ROTHKOWITZ

They proceed to work. Unconscious of any difficults, they dong their way and assessed obtained that again true as a shall prev, and protots' from their data terms and the start of the start of the start of the data is to a difficult. They handle creech, with, assessman, handlenges, portain—every concertable tax with the same can the a more timed person might have a single basis.

tions of difficulties which might prove a suag, and above all to imprive addressflowed to their part, having, however, taking the utmass care not to improve laws which might induce immigativity subgravitors and repetition. Thus, no, the instructor, by approving or disapproving, minimized as attandard as to the amount of realization which the child must attain in his work before it is laid and

As a result of this method, each child works on his own ideas, and actually develops a style of his own whereby his work is distinguishable from veryone else's the archivers a skill and personal technique of representing his ideas. Working side by side, as these children do, yassuher's work. Hence the variety, the skill, the surmentation with here we exhibition

As an example of the community spirit loand in the t chan, the islawing incident any be cided. On the hope was at a loss for a stablect. The instructs is a visit to a factory or other plant. The hop has ever been in such a place, but a glid starding any very case to his austance. She had visited a cost as an a recent trip and was able to describe it to any event the starding of the plant of the plant period of the plant of the starding of the every term plant is starding of the starding of the period of the starding of the starding of the term plant of the starding of the starding of the period beaution.

he as actual works of art. That is, they are complet alizations of a subject that moves us by the beauty its moods, by the futures of its forms, and the excise ent of its design. In short, many of these pirces are pable of moving us errotionally. Without going into i moveled discussion of the subhetics involved that it.



ПП

more or less what free works of art do to us. It is sigmificant, that doesns of artists viewed this exhibition and were anaxed and stirred by it. Thisse children have ideas, often free ones, and the represe them vividity and beautifully, so that they mak us feel what they feel. Hence their efforts are intrinsi

Are critics of art, postry, music, theatra and movie dote flat so many artistis accept themselves with closes themes, such as attl life in painting, decades attraviations in music. They access our artistic of bein attention in music. They access our artistic of bein equations are associated with the second in the life. Well, let these critics view our children's well equilation these controls the second second second manine, laties, farms, cattle, new, vourse, ships, wait verything on entropy the. Here is a social art.

Most of three children will probably lose their in institucions and vioatity as they matter. But a forill not, And it is hoped that in their cases, the or times of eight years will not be forgatize and the II continue to first the same beauty about them. A the others, it is hoped, that their experience will hel at to review their even early articlic pleasants in the star to review their even early articlic pleasants in the

> hundred and fifty works user shown in the Brookly. Discuss more than twice that number could have heve aciency who quark pointification. Only the hindables of the available will spore reduced the selection to the number exhibited. Similarly, partical reasons conford the velections on Bustarning this article to only five subjects. Some of the paint, ings which were ablested could not be well because they would not have as-

Image 1. "New Training for Future Artists and Art Lovers", 1934.

Art history textbooks are full of critical texts on Rothko's remarkable work. It is shocking to discover that one of the most transcendent artists of the twentieth century had a passion that had been fulfilled for more than twenty years: teaching art to children. Hardly anyone, myself included, was aware that Marcus Rothkowitz had made a living as a teacher at the Brooklyn Jewish Center in New York. And not just any teacher, but one of the good ones. In which case, this "earning a living" does not mean "earning a salary" for subsistence in order to be able to paint. Perhaps, we can legitimize this statement because, through the reading of his personal writings, we are overwhelmed by the rigor, ethics, dedication and responsibility in these two facets, never neglected. Painting and teaching converge during a period of twenty years and throughout his life. I have always admired the coherence of such people.

His first article published in 1934, "New Training for Future Artists and Art Lovers", marks the beginning of the artist's thinking based on his observations and experience in the classroom. He focuses his discourse on three axes: 1) art, visual and plastic language for all children, not only for those with talent 2) appreciation of the artistic productions created by children 3) the value of art for creation as a fundamental part of childhood and adult life. Rothko will develop these ideas in several writings that delve into the need for children to narrate, express and argue ideas through artistic language. And to this end, we can summarize his discourse on the teaching-learning of art in four concepts:

- Art as language: it is a method of recording our lived and imagined experience, our personal reactions, with the same simplicity as we do other daily tasks, but through plastic and visual language. Children always have good ideas and express them in such a way that we feel their inner scenery: "If you do not believe this, watch these children work, and you will see them put forms, figures and views into pictorial arrangements, employing of necessity most of the rules of optical perspective and geometry, but without the knowledge that they are employing them. They do so in the same manner as they speak, unconscious that they are using the rules of grammar" (p. 10).
- The classroom as a way of life: The art classroom creates community and alterity, respect for others and for their artistic productions, because the collective aesthetic experience helps them to relive the artistic pleasure in the works of others. When they enter the classroom, all the materials are ready to be used and experienced. All students come full of ideas and, as their experience increases, they become more confident in their lived experience of the artistic processes. Each child works with his or her own idea with a very high level of demand, because they will be part of a collective exhibition: "Well, let these critics view our children's work. Everything is there: factories, docks, streets, crowds, mountains, lakes, farms, cattle, men, women, ships, water –everything conceivable. Here is a social art." (p. 11).
- The importance of creative processes in childhood: All children admire artistic procedures and techniques, therefore, teaching has to increase their sensibility based on experimentation, because it is not our job to create artists. The creative act is a social action. Imagine students on a desert island, inactivity and boredom are necessary to awaken the instinct and enable them to create to their heart's content. Considering that the creative period is usually depleted before the age of 12, and that it is very short, the artistic processes in childhood are of vital importance for adult life. But giving them freedom is not synonymous with students doing whatever they want, for example, Rothko developed an endless list of elements of visual language to address during childhood.

• The role of teacher-artist: Mark Rothko defined this dual role in a 1941 text. He conceptualized this double task, where the teaching function involves stimulating and suggesting concrete solutions to overcome blockages in the artistic process, without imposing rules that stagnate the imagination. "The perfect teacher who will teach a creative artistic activity must have a double profile. First, like any other teacher, he must have sufficient insight and preparation to assess the child's personality, background and potential; his mere presence and demeanor should create an atmosphere of relaxation and confidence; and must share the social approach to the educational process involved in this activity. On the other hand, and this is truly the important requirement of this study, the teacher must possess the sensibility of an artist. Art must provide the teacher with a clear and direct language, capable of inspiring the student's understanding and the inherent excitement that this intrinsically entails. The teacher-artist is usually the one who best accomplishes this mission" (López-Remiro, p. 54).

If only we had been his students! That is the feeling that remains, like turpentine suspended in the air, after reading his personal writings. We can imagine his classes, the space of individual creation that he offered to his students, from the confidence to the mistake, to the failure, to the procedural, to the expository as a way to enhance childhood productions... In short, we cannot say that he conducted Arts-based Educational Research because there was simply no such concept, nor the need to label everything that happened in educational processes. In fact, he was openly critical of the educational fads of the "false theorists, interior decorators of social history and philosophy, who have no relationship with the truth, and who distort the facts to market their fragile machinations" (p. 35). However, his teaching expertise, not as an isolated practice, but deep in time and forms, in his pragmatic and intellectual knowledge, grants coherence to his being a teacherartist and to the artistic research within the teaching practice.

While his first texts focused on his teaching role and the teaching-learning processes of the arts in childhood, when his artistic career began to take off internationally, he continued to work as a university professor at the California School of Fine Arts, at the University of Colorado and Tulane University. His last text, upon his acceptance of an Honorary Doctorate in Fine Arts from Yale University in 1969, would become a prophecy of the future direction of contemporary art:

"When I was young, art was a solitary practice: there were no galleries, no collectors, no critics, no money. However, it was a golden age, because we had nothing to lose and a whole vision to gain. Today this is no longer the case. It is a time of immense abundance of activity and consumption. I do not dare to venture a guess as to which of the two circumstances is better for art. However, I do know that many of those who are driven to this mode of life are desperately seeking pockets of silence in which to root and grow. We all hope they find them" (López-Remiro, p. 219)











Images 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9. "Project with preschool students in the CEIP of Sigüeiro, 2016", Mesías-Lema, 2019, p. 172-173.

His entire discourse, considered from a retrospective of almost 90 years, is still fully valid today to be assumed by teachers and art education professionals. In fact, in 2016, from a preschool classroom, we wanted to pay a small tribute to Rothko as a teacherartist, for his invaluable contribution to art education in childhood. Starting from his ideas, from his works as great atmospheres of color, as a chromatic epidermis that invades the spectator, we decided to mimic them, with movements, feeling the artist's stains and expressing the energy and vitality of the works with the body (Mesías-Lema, 2019). We wanted the students to experience Rothko's work from the inside, as he said in an interview: I paint large canvases because I am inside them. "I conceive my paintings as dramatic works; the forms in the paintings are the actors. They are created from the need to have actors capable of moving and executing gestures with no shame. Neither the action nor the actors are predictable, nor can they be described a priori. They begin an unknown adventure in an equally unknown space" (pp. 100-101).

Arts-based educational research is based on classical references such as Dewey, Pierce, Schön, and is born out of the "pragmatist epistemology: to rescue and work with the lived professional experience as a launching point for the construction of new knowledge through analysis, reflection and criticism." (Mesías-Lema, 2012, p. 233). In the field of arts education, María Jesús Agra (1994), international authority in this field, who initiated this line and laid the theoretical foundations more than thirty years ago. She advocated a teaching role from the praxis of artistic learning based on action plans. This advance contributed significantly to the understanding of practice and research in arts education as a space for the integration of artistic action as a model of educational research. We can consider this thesis as the pioneer of Arts-based Educational Research in our country. Subsequently, Agra (2005) would develop the methodological corpus from the narrative, and it would be expanded from an epistemological and argumentative perspective by Ricardo Marín (2005). The mentorship of senior scientists such as Agra and Marín-Viadel, instilled in a whole generation of researchers, enough confidence to open emerging fields in shifting grounds, always from the intellectual restlessness of wanting to change art teaching in the classroom.

This journal aims to be a loudspeaker for the quality of teaching and learning practices in the arts, but from the perspective of research. Teaching practices devoid of a solid and deep artistic and pedagogical argumentation, detached from rigorous and stable research processes over time, do not build knowledge or help to advance in the scientific field. We agree with Garcés (2021) when he states that the debate in education has been reduced to rivalry and conflict between superficial formulae, with innovation as the backdrop of neoliberal discourse. Therefore, we want to create a scientific space for the community of professionals who simultaneously and inseparably move between art and education, as two close, interconnected and merged worlds. It is our task, as representatives of the scientific community, to respond with our actions, demands and needs to a living, organic and transferable research. We must observe how Arts-based Educational Research is also a regenerating change in arts education practice, that which is constantly in friction with the realities that it addresses. Only in this way can we reconstruct the epistemological field of arts education in cultural, social and educational contexts.

We have spent too much energy trying to explain to professionals outside our field what Arts-based education research was or what it was not. Arts-based educational research no longer needs martyrs. It needs to be given visibility, used by experts in the field and defended by researchers who take risks in this line, based on quality and scientific argumentation. The creation of this journal is a collective attempt to appreciate our field of research, to disseminate it and to feel proud of it. We intend for this scientific space to be a place of dialogue, debate and risk. All beginnings are difficult but exciting. As Rothko said: "art is, for us, an adventure into an unknown world, which can only be explored by those who are willing to take risks" (1943, in López-Remiro, p. 69).

If we don't do it, who will?

REFERENCES

Agra Pardiñas, M. J. (1994). *Planes de acción: una alternativa para la Educación Artística [Action plans: an alternative for art education]*. Editorial Universidad Complutense de Madrid.

Agra Pardiñas, M. J. (2005). "El vuelo de la Mariposa: la investigación artístico-narrativa" ['The flight of the butterfly: artistic-narrative research']. En Marín-Viadel, R. (ed). *Investigación en Educación Artística [Research in Arts Education]*. Editorial Universidad de Granada.

Garcés, M. (2021). Escuela de aprendices [School of apprentices]. Galaxia Gutenberg.

López-Remiro, M. (2007). *Mark Rothko. Escritos sobre arte (1934-1969) [Mark Rothko. Writings about art (1934-1969)].* Paidós.

Marín-Viadel, R. (2005). La "investigación educativa basada en las artes visuales" o "arteinvestigación educativa" *Investigación en Educación Artística [The 'educational research based on visual arts' or 'educational artresearch' Research in Art Education]*. Editorial Universidad de Granada. En Marín-Viadel, R. (ed). *Investigación en Educación Artística*. Editorial Universidad de Granada

Mesías Lema, J. M. (2012). Fotografía y educación de las artes visuales: el fotoactivismo educativo como estrategia docente en la formación del profesorado [Photography and education in visual arts: educational photoactivism as a teaching strategy for teacher training]. Editorial Universidad de Granada.

Mesías Lema, J. M. (2019). Educación artística sensible: cartografía contemporánea para arteducadores [Sensitive art education: contemporary cartography for arteducators]. Graó.

Moreno Montoro, M^a. I. y López-Pelaez, M^a. P. (coords.) (2016). *Reflexiones sobre investigación artística e investigación educativa basada en las artes [Reflections about art research and Art-based educational research]*. Síntesis.

Rothko, M. (1934). "New Training for Future Artists and Art Lovers". *The Brooklyn Jewish Center Review*, pp. 10-11.