

## **Education as a Pharmakon.**

### **Action Art as Political Pedagogic Device for Enacting Radical**

#### **Democracy.**

Luis Guerra

*University Researcher, Research Institute, University of the Arts Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland.*

[luis.guerra.miranda@uniarts.fi](mailto:luis.guerra.miranda@uniarts.fi)

ORCID number: 0000-0002-4677-0348

#### **Bio**

Luis Guerra (Santiago of Chile, 1974) is a Visual Artist and Philosopher. He is a Senior Researcher at the University of the Arts Research Institute, University of the Arts Helsinki, Finland. Currently, he is developing research on Artist Pedagogy and Artist Thinking, titled ‘Gestural Philosophy: Collective Artistic Practices as Informal Devices of Intentionless Learning, democracy, and Institutional Activism.’ Between 2022 and 2023, he was a Fellow Researcher in the Art & Theory Program at the Künstlerhaus Büchsenhausen, Innsbruck, Austria, and he participates as a Fellow Researcher in the Postfoundational Thinking Research Group (PID2020-117069GB-100) at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Barcelona, Spain.

# **Education as a Pharmakon. Action Art as Political Pedagogic Device for Enacting Radical Democracy.**

By considering the position of education as a pharmakon, highlighting its potential positive and negative effects on societies by its technical unfolding, the article proposes to explore the political and pedagogical role that public and collective performances can have within the public sphere as political devices for promoting and enacting radical democracy. To this end, it analyzes a contemporary collaborative artistic practice, the performance 'Un Violador en Tu Camino' ('A rapist in your path') by the feminist collective LASTESIS from Chile, through two main philosophical perspectives: Bernard Stiegler (1952 - 2020), and his approach to technology, to art, and education in human societies; and Oliver Marchart, coming from his conceptualization of art and activism through the notion of conflictual aesthetics.

Keywords: education; pharmakon; action art; radical democracy, pedagogy.

Subject classification codes: SI

## **Introduction**

### ***Reoccupying the 'savoir vivre.'***

The recent uprising in Chile, known as 'El Estallido Social' (The Social Outburst), began on October 18, 2019, after Santiago's metro price was increased by 30 Chilean pesos, making it the most expensive transport system in Latin America (Urrejola, 2019; France24, 2019; Navarrete & Tricot, 2021). What began as a student protest quickly erupted into widespread demonstrations and often violent unrest against decades of social and economic inequalities. Chileans of all ages and classes took to the streets to denounce the almost complete privatization of public services, including education,

pensions, healthcare, and water. The daily demonstrations in Santiago and other cities and towns nationwide were met with brutal repression from State forces, starting with the state of emergency declared on October 18, 2019, by right-wing President Sebastián Piñera, who decided to deploy the military to enforce the law (Dominguez & Fernandez, 2019; Newman, 2019; Karmy, 2022).

This executive order ignited the conviction of the people who went massively in protest across the country, collectively defying the State law with their bodies. So far, at least 23 people have been killed, and thousands have been injured and imprisoned. The National Human Rights Institute (INDH Instituto Nacional de Derechos Humanos) has filed 106 sexual violence cases against state forces, including rape and being forced to strip naked in detention (INDH, 2019; El Mostrador, 2021).

One month after the beginning of the Estallido Social, in November 2019, LASTESIS, a transdisciplinary collective of four women artists, Paula Cometa Stange, Lea Cáceres, Sibila Sotomayor, and Dafne Valdés, performed publicly in the streets of Valparaíso city. They formed a collective in 2018 in order to disseminate feminist theories and demands by means of different artistic languages (Intermediae, 2021). With a bunch of people, they stopped the traffic and started performing in front of the cars. The action was initially named ‘Un Violador en tu Camino’ (A Rapist in your Path) and referred to an official advertisement for Carabineros (the State police) in Chile that said: ‘Un amigo en tu Camino’ (A friend in your path). Only much later, the performance was finally coined as ‘El Violador eres tú’ (The Rapist is you) to tackle more directly the central issue in their action.

The Estadillo Social led to the beginning of a process of constitutional writing that aimed toward the implementation of a new Constitutional Law in Chile. The Covid pandemic interrupted this political process, emptying the streets. A traditional and

conservative process of political agreements took place, emptying the street-based experiments created during the social outburst. Chile is currently under a new political cycle in which a new body of ‘experts’ has been elected to write the constitution, and traditional and extreme right-wing parties have the majority. While writing these lines, we do not know how the population will vote for this new constitutional project.

The social outburst in Chile exposed a silent accumulation of loss of the feeling that life was worth living and that loss could lead to unbridled madness (Stiegler 2013, 4). In the face of this existential malaise, I would like to propose a careful reading of the art’s capacity, in its material condition, to interrupt this generalized disruption to which we are exposed. As a pharmakon, the art practices, such as the one performed by LASTESIS, fulfill a pedagogical role beyond the parameters of order and surveillance established in a given society. Some art forms can make visible the disruptive elements that fit into the pedagogical structure that a regime may prescribe for maintaining its power structures. Sometimes spontaneously, these practices can compose spaces for resistance, healing, care, secrecy, solidarity, and reparation as transitional objects where the malaise can become visible and initiate a potential process of change.

From a perspective of philosophical and artistic research, this article aims to reflect and explore the potential pedagogical role of public and collective performances within the public space as informal political devices that promote and enact radical democracy. To this end, it convokes two primary philosophical references to analyze the performance ‘A rapist in your path’ by LASTESIS: on the one hand, Bernard Stiegler’s critique of the fundamental relationship between human beings and technology and his approach to the arts and education in contemporary societies; on the other, Oliver Marchart’s conceptualization of art and activism through the notion of conflictual aesthetics.

## **Education as a pharmakon**

Bernard Stiegler initially used the term pharmakon to refer directly to the dual nature of technology, which can be beneficial and harmful to human existence (Stiegler 2012 and 1998; Ortiz 2012). According to Stiegler, technology is a pharmakon because it can be used to cure human problems and improve our lives, but it can also create new problems and new forms of suffering. Stiegler argues that we need to engage in an ongoing critical dialogue about the potential effects of technology in social bodies, individually and collectively, using them as methodologies through which to enable more just and sustainable societies (Stiegler 2010). As communities, we should be aware of the pharmacological nature of technologies in order to make informed decisions about their use in our ways of life. Stiegler's approach to technology as a pharmakon and its effects on the relationship between technologies and human societies has important implications for many areas of contemporary life, including education. This approach is helpful, especially today when we are witnessing accelerated changes in the digital economy and ethical discussions about Artificial Intelligence and its impact on different ambits of society.

The term pharmakon comes from ancient Greek philosophy. It refers to something that is both poison and remedy (Bateson 1978, 317; Derrida 1981; Stiegler 2010). The idea of 'education as a pharmakon' means that education can have both positive and negative effects, depending on how it is used. Education can be a cure for ignorance, narrow-mindedness, and prejudice. It can also broaden our horizons, improve our critical thinking skills, and help us better understand ourselves and the world around us. Education can also provide us with the knowledge and skills we need to succeed in our careers and have fulfilling lives.

On the other hand, education can be poisonous if it reinforces harmful ideologies or perpetuates inequality and social injustice. Education can be used to indoctrinate people with biased views or to reinforce stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes. Education can also be a source of stress, anxiety, and burnout if it is not adequately balanced with other aspects of our lives. Therefore, education should be approached with caution and a critical eye. We should strive to use education as a cure rather than a poison and ensure that it is inclusive, equitable, and empowering for all individuals in a community.

What is the purpose of this bold statement, however? The primary purpose of the phrase is to emphasize the existing general idea of education as something good in society. Education is a *pharmakon*, in the sense of a social technology that can have both conditions: a cure and a poison.

Finnish philosopher Susanna Lindberg signals that in Stiegler, technics is a ‘supplement without which there is no human existence’ (Lindberg 2019, 6). Technics are ‘inorganic organized beings’ (Stiegler 1998, 17). Humans create tools to cope with the uncertainties of their environments, but at the same time, those tools create the human being: ‘As a “process of exteriorization,” technics is the pursuit of life by means other than life’ (Stiegler 1998, 17). It is in that sense that technics is memory because it holds a knowledge that will be available for the human, extending her capacities beyond her biological boundaries. According to Stiegler: ‘the source of these collective retentions is the epiphylogenetic, tertiary retentions – that is to say, technical objects and especially technics of consciousness like works of language and culture’ (Stiegler 2004, 107). This definition highlights the importance of the arts in society. Art practices are technics of consciousness through which societies accumulate knowledge and

spread it, critically engaging with the social and political environmental given conditions. Following Stiegler, we can then understand artworks as tertiary retention techniques that sustain collective memories even beyond the particular necessities of the practitioners. It is in this sense that collective art practices, as in LASTESIS performance, work as educational devices because, in a different manner than a systemic technique of education implemented by a defined figure of power, the art operates as a pharmakon, which enables a critical approach to the existent form of knowledge.

Stiegler identifies three types of memory: ‘genetic memory, epigenetic memory, and epiphylogenetic memory’ (Stiegler 1998,177; Roberts, 2005). Epiphylogenetic memory is the techno-logical memory, a memory of experiences that now accumulate through matter even when the individual human is not there to support that sedimented memory. Language and techniques now externalize those experiences beyond the organic and environmental elements of the previous relationship. Through that exteriorization, technics affect the same memory in the progress of accumulation:

If the individual is organic organized matter, then its relation to its environment (to matter in general, organic or inorganic), when it is a question of a *who* is mediated by the organized but inorganic matter of the organon, the tool with its instructive role (its role *qua* instrument), the *what*. It is in this sense that the what invents the who just as much as it is invented by it. (Stiegler 1998, 177)

Technical objects can no longer be understood as mere tools humans create or use without feedback. The evolution of their forms and the dynamics they form between themselves and their environments break the existent boundaries of relational and

comprehensible life. For Stiegler, this change calls for a new consideration of technicity because technics ‘is woven into the development of humanity’ (Abbinnett 2018, 13). Its influence on the life of humans is fundamental and indispensable, happening in the life of the spirit, in the ambits of the building consciousness of the subject. Technics not only are supplements through which human life can develop improvements, but they compose a non-conscious supplementary field that affects and contributes, directly and indirectly, to the process of individuation. As noticed by Lindberg, ‘technics contributes to the schematization of consciousness or, to put it in other words, it contributes to the composition of the preindividual field’ (Lindberg 2019, 8). This contribution highlights the importance of technics in understanding human life in a world that sees itself disrupted in every way by the development of technologies. This is why education is a crucial element of Stiegler’s philosophical critique. Education is, in fact, the place of technical prostheses at different levels of the life of a human being and of her individuation. And through it, the collective transindividuation of a community.

### **A Rapist in Your Path**

‘A rapist in your path’ emerged as a response to the widespread issue of gender-based violence and systemic oppression against women. The performance by LASTESIS, which was worldily replicated and performed, combines elements of street theater, protest, and collective action to bring attention to the pervasive nature of gender violence and to challenge societal attitudes and structures that perpetuate it. The collective performance consists of a choreographed routine with a chant that denounces the complicity of the institutions, the police, and the justice system. The lyrics confront the potential audience in the streets with the victim-blaming mentality and call for the end of the impunity the perpetrators enjoy. LASTESIS initiated this collective gestural

dispositive through a process of research of different feminist philosophical and theoretical classics. As the members declared in an interview, the first book they, as a collective, engaged with was Silvia Federicci's *Caliban and the Witch*, and then they continued with Rita Segato, especially interested in the factors structuring sexual violence against women and rape as the main patriarchal act in this systemic violence (Huenchumil, 2019). As they named it, they created a song that captured different elements of their readings. The song is the main element through which denouncing and calling out for consciousness. It is this song that was then performed publicly. The song says:

Patriarchy is a judge who judges us for being born, and our punishment is the violence you do not see. It is femicide. Immunity for my killer. It is disappearing. It is rape. And it wasn't my fault where I was or how I was dressed. And it wasn't my fault where I was or how I was dressed. The rapist was you. The rapist is you. The cops. The judges. The State. The president. The oppressive State is a rapist macho, the oppressive State is a rapist macho. The rapist was you; the rapist is you. Sleep calm, little girl, without worrying about the bandit. Because for your dreams, sweet and smiling, watches over your dear policeman. The rapist was you; the rapist is you.<sup>1</sup>

The choreography includes symbolic gestures and movements that convey solidarity, resistance, and collective strength. One of the moments of the choreography involves the gesture of squatting, referring to allegations that women and children have been forced to squat naked while in police detention during the protests in Chile. Police protocols explicitly ban that practice, without any exceptions, according to a recent

---

<sup>1</sup> Colectivo LASTESIS. "LASTESIS. Plaza Sotomayor 29.11.2019. VALPARAÍSO, CHILE." December 5, 2019. Video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ed59v2hQE>.

Human Rights Watch report on Chile's police abuse of power, which called for urgent police reform following grave human rights abuses.<sup>2</sup>

LASTESIS' performance was built as a mechanism in search of engaging with a broader audience. The action and their elements were designed to interrupt the daily affairs, a distinctive feature of performance art. The music, the song, the movements within the choreography, and the fact that it is happening in the streets are techniques LASTESIS use to stress the public sphere and create a space of civic and public education. They built a performative and gestural device of attention and awareness. The action, sustained also by other social media, democratized the message, and the technique became available to others to use. This relational device network operates as the transindividual echoic platform, confirming its pedagogic knowledge transmission potential. A performative act becomes the technic through which others can embody and expand the transmitted knowledge through their own experiences. The repetition of the act produced a solid community of practitioners.

For Stiegler, philosophy is about education: 'Teaching is not simply the first question asked by philosophy; it is philosophy's practice' (Stiegler 2008, 195)<sup>3</sup>. Moreover, this is because philosophy is a system of care. Care for the quest for knowledge, care for the technique of transmission, for what is being transmitted, and through it, care for those

---

<sup>2</sup> Since the first action, and because of its resonance and impact on social media, the performance was rapidly replicated and repeated in different places: Argentina, Colombia, México, Brazil, Spain, France, Greece, Italy, USA, England, and Turkey. In this last country, Las Tesis protest first took place on November 30, 2019, in front of Kadıköy Süreyya Opera, upon a call issued by the Socialist Women's Assembly (SKM- Sosyalist Kadınlar Meclisi). On December 8, 2019, Las Tesis Protests were also in Istanbul's Kuğulu Park, Ankara and Kadıköy Pier Square. The protesters were disbanding while still shouting the slogans 'We will stop femicide' and 'You will never walk alone,' the police arrested six women. Among those arrested were We Will Stop Femicide Platform General Secretary Fidan Ataselim, Platform Representative Ayşen Ece Kavas, and platform member Sevda Yeniköylü (sessizkalma 2022).

<sup>3</sup> 'Et l'enseignement n'est pas simplement la première question de la philosophie : c'est la pratique de la philosophie.' Chapitre 7, Qu'est-ce que la philosophie ? in Bernard Stiegler, *Prendre soin : De la jeunesse et des générations*. Paris: Flammarion. 2008.

who will receive the transmission of knowledge. Because it is in education, as a social technology, that this relationship between technology and human life must be shaped and critically addressed:

Teaching is not simply the transmission of knowledge but of understanding. And this can be reached only on the condition of its being publicly and explicitly transmissible: teaching and understanding are indissociable. Understanding must be teachable, or else it is not understanding. Teaching can only transmit understanding- even if it is often accompanied by an education and, in that, assumes the transmission of life knowledge. This is where understanding breaks with mystagogy: rational knowledge is no longer the fruit of an initiation but of an instruction (Stiegler 2010, 108).

However, what kind of education do we have in mind then? Stiegler recognizes the importance of education as a battleground for the soul of the city and, indeed, for the minds of its citizens:

Education is the transindividuation of individual memories, which are created by individual experiences, which, by being transmitted and developing a patina - that is, by being regulated, forming a body of procedures, and sometimes becoming formal regulations - have led to a collective memory constituted by the attentional forms of knowledge: know-how, life skills, cognitive and theoretical knowledge. (Stiegler 2012, 2).

The notion of transindividuation comes from Gilbert Simondon, who considers that individuation is only achieved through a process of collective and social individuation. What we learn does not come to us in the form of a single unbound

experience but through a series of repeated events that imprint on us a specific knowledge. These series of events are also developed in a constant state of being with others in the community. An example that exposes this capacity of LASTESIS' performance for allowing its pharmacological transmission in-community, even beyond the authority of the device, is the re-enactment known as LASTESIS Senior, performed on December 4, 2019, opposite the Estadio Nacional de Chile (BBC et al., 2019; Huenchumil, 2019). LASTESIS were not those convoking this action. This multitudinous performance, in which more than 10,000 women participated, was re-enacted in a symbolic site as the National Stadium is for the recent history of human rights abuses during Chile's Dictatorship. The act was born as a tweet by academic Marcela Betancourt, who called for staging the performance 'without the physically demanding squats' (Martin & Shaw, 2021). In this re-enactment, we observe a transindividual experience that expresses an experience's reception and recognition in a community. It embodies a collective memory formed by the performance itself, the repetitions that already occurred, and its potential transmission that will pass through others performing it. A new resonance space is being built through this collective artistic gesture. It is an educational space because it communicates a message that aims at an unknown audience of learners and builds an attentional device that interrupts systemic forgottenness.

We learn through singular experiences embedded in the conditions and circumstances of a specific body and collective experiences because they occur in a constant relational exchange that, for Stiegler, composes the educational field. We receive an accumulated collective experience that sediments us, which is then transformed by the singularity of our experiences with others. By occurring within a much larger context, LASTESIS' performance contributes to civic education,

understood as the means of all the processes that affect people's beliefs, commitments, capacities, and actions as members or potential members of communities.

Considering these aspects regarding education, we find ourselves closer to a definition of education as 'ex-ducere' as it has been proposed by Tim Ingold, following in this sense to Jan Masschelein's approach on understanding education not as the induction of knowledge on the other's mind but an education of attention (Ingold 2001; Masschelein 2010 and 2011). Ingold and Masschelein propose the necessity of considering education as a 'time of attention,' of attending to the world more than framing the world from already given conceptual structures. Masschelein will even say that understanding education as this 'free time,' we must articulate education as 'the art and technology that makes' this exploration of the world possible (Masschelein 2011, 534). For Masschelein, this attentional knowledge can be assessed, for example, through the technology of wandering, allowing the otherness to appear and, therefore, an enactive process of mutual transformations. As a performative mechanism, the act of wandering exposes us to attentional forms of knowledge that can be seen as previous to the symbolic order or computation. Ingold comments that, for Masschelein, 'to walk is to be commanded by what is not yet given but on the way to being given' (Ingold 2016, 104; Masschelein 2010, 46). So, knowledge becomes a process of becoming co-conscious with the given environment, more than applying a grid that solves the encounter with the world beforehand.

Nevertheless, Masschelein and Ingold have indeed argued against the notion of transmission in education (Ingold, 2018, 1-20; Pirrie and Day, 2019). That could be seen as antagonizing with Stiegler's approach to education. But Stiegler does not consider transmission as a regularization of the experiences in a community, in the sense Ingold seems to frame his critique: 'What does concern me is an assumption that

runs through virtually all discussion of these matters, namely that education in its broadest sense is about the *transmission of information*' (Ingold, 2018, 2). Stiegler does not consider education as the transmission of an already structured information. On the contrary, and particularly in the case of the arts of the body, it is the performative participation of the body that actualizes the knowledge accumulated by the action as a technique, and it also allows the potential varieties that can extend and nurture a given tradition. The epiphylogenetic memory that the performance carries enables a transmission that does not participate in the systemic order of education. In the case of jazz, for example, the transmission that the performance allows does not consider a piece of finite information. Instead, it will enable the becoming, or creation, of new variances that now increase and transform the knowledge transmitted. The transmission Stiegler proposes, particularly in the case of the arts and through artists, is not a passive reception but rather the active creation of interruptive mechanisms. What is transmitted through the artistic means of the performance pushes for attention that the given order of society has already disrupted.

Those bodies re-embodying LASTESIS' performance through the repetition of the act, in its singular and smallest gestures, in the sound and rhythms, are transmitting a knowledge that enables the construction of a solidary community that does not need to share the same place. Through the re-enaction, it allows a belonging of shared experiences, necessities, and new communications. Here, I argue, lies the importance of Stiegler's approach to artistic technologies and bodies of knowledge production, education, and creative pedagogies as *pharmakon*. In Masschelein, Ingold, and Stiegler, it is possible to find a shared notion of education as a space for opening relational exchanges with the worlds. For Masschelein, *e-ducere* is, in short, the form of displacing our view and becoming attentive (Masschelein 2010, 276-277), the cultural

sphere that we share as participants in societies, and particularly the mechanisms through which we can interrupt the conditions of understanding and learning are especially fruitful in channeling collective forms of becoming attentive to issues that seem irrelevant or invisible. In Stiegler's terms, if culture is 'the intergenerational transmission of attentional forms' through 'psychosocial memory technologically exteriorized and supported,' the interface of that shaping of attention depends on the disrupting effects of the industrial production of mnemotechnic devices: 'As attention forming, education is the modality through which the social being that is always also a psychic individual individuates itself at once psychically and collectively.' (Stiegler 2012, 1) If the public space is generally composed of given forms of attention that replicate and perform those elements already configured in the processes of forming consciousness since we are born, certain artistic practices, such as LASTESIS' performance, can create spaces of exteriorization of critical thinking that can suspend, at least momentarily, the hegemonic discourse in place.

Since the beginning, LASTESIS understood that their practices aimed to build an artwork to engage with much larger audiences than in the institutional art platforms. In that sense, it is possible to highlight that LASTESIS understood their practice as a pedagogical tool to inform people beyond the boundaries of regular cultural production. This collective gestural device becomes a potential event that can initiate moments of disagreement, or what Stiegler ends coining as 'pansé,' care-fully thought (Stiegler 2018, 96).

The struggle for the decision of the educational model has been at the base of the cultural building in Western societies. The souls of the citizens have been at stake between philosophy and the arts since the Greeks (Lodge 2011, 38). Here lies Plato's famous rejection of certain arts, while others were useful in the modeling experience of

souls and their individuation processes (Plato 2000, 313; Badiou 2012, 321-322). The performativity of the educational experience is fundamental in the form of a social being who apprehends the context within which she evolves. The comprehension of the context depends on the formal interface the social being has: the plasticity it considers from its pre-given experiences of attention. Here, I argue, certain artistic practices that I have called undomiciled before (Guerra 2016 and 2017), understood now as collective gestural devices, compose a complex gesture of withdrawal of the given ruled senses. Herein lies their pharmakon nature because these informal educational devices are, at the same time, open to be used by others and to be interpreted as poisonous in the eyes of the systemic powers.

### *Conflictual Aesthetics*

I call collective gestural devices those practices that participate in the public space using artistic means without becoming figures of representation of any given hegemonic context or system. Here, the artistic practice considers the composition of a public gesture outside of institutional boundaries that interrupts the conditions of perception, displacing the conceptual frameworks in place and unfolding conflicting and frictional fissures. In that sense, the collective gestural device that LASTESIS created coincides with the notion of ‘conflictual aesthetics’ proposed by Oliver Marchart. Marchart suggests that art practices have the potential to make visible, and therefore communicate and create public spaces, inherent and invisibilised conflicts within the structure of a society. Critical practices express dissent, radical critique, and alternative visions for repairing, healing, caring, and changing the hegemonic conditions. In other words, conflictual aesthetics refers to art practices that create spaces of political contestation, intervention, and negotiation of power dynamics.

The term conflictual aesthetics is based on a previous philosophical concept coined by Chantal Mouffe: agonistics. Mouffe's notion advocates for a democratic model that acknowledges and engages with conflicts rather than seeking their elimination, either by force or conciliation:

Artistic and cultural practices can offer spaces for resistance that undermine the social imaginary necessary for capitalist reproduction. Nevertheless, to apprehend their political potential, we should visualize forms of artistic resistance as agonistic interventions within the context of counter-hegemonic struggles (Mouffe 2013, 87).

Indeed, in Mouffe and Marchart, the primary condition of these agonistic practices is the public space understood as a manifold of discursive surfaces (Mouffe 2013, 90). Moreover, here lies the agonistics conception: the public space is not that of exposure of the agreed, but the space where 'conflicting points of view are confronted without any possibility of a final reconciliation' (Mouffe 2013, 91). So, critical art practices are those that expose the conflictual dimension hidden by the normative grid in place. In Mouffe's approach, these practices should sustain the critic without supposing the identification of a new hegemonic truth. Marchart advances the notion of 'Radical Democratic Activism,' which denotes a critique of the practice of existing liberal democracies (Marchart 2002, 254). Marchart's idea appears in *Democracy Unrealized* as part of Platform 1 of Documenta 11 (Enwezor et al. 2002). Following a definition of Western Democracies as 'incomplete implementations' of equality and justice proposed by curator Okwui Enwezor, Marchart suggests a reading of democracy as a political signifier, based on Laclau's notion of 'horizon,' in the sense of becoming a terrain 'on which political demands and projects have to be constituted and sets certain limits to that constitution' (Marchart 2002, 256).

Marchart considers a postfoundationalist approach based on the premise that there is no fixed foundation upon which it would be possible to build a society. There is not a given substantial element that constitutes a referential discourse. There is, instead, an absence, or what Mouffe calls 'foyer virtuel' (Mouffe 1993, 114) or what with Derrida can be seen as a 'democracy to come' which corresponds with this unrealizable democratic realization (Derrida 1994). This 'to come' is not a 'not yet' figure but an enactment of democracy. This enactment is the 'performative putting into effect that which nevertheless remains unrealizable' (Marchart 2002, 261). These enactments of the unrealized democracy, visualizing the demands and aiming to enhance and expand the participatory horizon of democracy, are considered radical democratic activism. In LASTESIS' performance, we can observe these features of anticipating a realization of something that needs to be enacted. Their action, and all participants re-actualizing the performance, compose the enactment of radical democracy. As a pharmakon, the performance interrupts the given conditions of order and knowledge, where the democratic horizon is suspended for its enlargement and change through practice. The educational device of LASTESIS enacts democracy in the sense of inviting others to participate in the act of defiance to given powers (State, Judicial system, police, markets, etc.) as well as informing others by appearing suddenly in places that are not expecting the expression of dissensus. As a pharmakon, the performance can increase the frictional common space, triggering unknown responses of organization or disorder.

### *Conclusion, if possible*

Chilean biologist Humberto Maturana<sup>4</sup> defines democracy as a daily artwork that ‘requires acting in the knowledge that one is not the owner of the truth and that the other is as legitimate as oneself’ (Maturana 2001, 36). For Maturana, democracy is a social and collective public artwork because it happens through relational fields based on coexistence and co-creation that involve conscious actions and mostly performative and unconscious gestures produced through singular and collective experiences.

What LASTESIS’ performance proposes is to reclaim the public sphere as a collective creative space where the hegemonic discourse can be questioned and defied. Through an artistic act, by using artistic means, they interrupt the conditions of knowledge and create a potential bifurcation, allowing a different path of critical social thinking. In that sense, LASTESIS’s performance is not only an act of agonistic political friction but an act that assumes a pedagogical role in their unfolding. The performance informs society about an invisibilised situation, violence against women, allowing direct engagement with the potential audience or passersby. That transmission is produced by the act itself through its elements: choreography, rhythms, songs, movements, singular dresses, and forms of bodies. The device in its form allows its repetition as a re-actualization and re-embodiment, and the technologies involved allow its resonance beyond the State frontiers. Its global repetition, anonymously and massively, declares a space of self-sustainability for a community that can constantly expand. It also confirms the receptive network and the device’s capacity to reach shared senses and transmit recognized experiences. Each body, in its singularity and network

---

<sup>4</sup> Humberto Maturana (1928-2021) is known for being one of the leading creators of the concept of autopoiesis, together with Francisco Varela. What is autopoiesis? Autopoiesis is a neologism Maturana coined to account for the characteristic of every living organism, understood as a system of networks of processes and operations that can be reorganized, regenerated, or dismissed by their relationship with the conditions of the environment in which they are inscribed (Maturana 1999, 93).

with others, becomes a participant mechanism in a global scale reverberation that sustains the device in its gestural materiality. Each actualization composes an echoic landscape with others, recovering a ritualistic methodology.

The public intervention in each case involves frictional spaces where conflicts can be exposed. In this sense, this collective gestural device searches to create a space of public attention, and here lies its educational nature. The attentional device that LASTESIS' performance develops also involves other technical apparatuses at our disposal today. Those who participated in the practice did more than repeat the gestures. The gestures were documented and shared immediately through social media. They increased the potentiality of their 'to come': a here and now of this seemingly unrealizable democratic potential.

What challenges exist in using performance art as a pedagogic tool for radical democracy? Collective gestural practices can be a powerful and transformative approach to enhancing civic education, but it also requires careful consideration and addressing certain inner complexities. An important aspect to consider is access and inclusivity, which they may need to improve. These gestural actions require consideration of a greater diversity of participants, including those from marginalized communities, to engage in and contribute to the performance. Similarly, these actions can evoke strong emotions and confront participants with challenging issues. Addressing ethical considerations, such as consent and emotional well-being, will be necessary while encouraging critical engagement. Artists, mediators, activists, and facilitators must be prepared to support participants through potentially intense or triggering experiences that must be considered in organizing and implementation.

LASTESIS' performance confronts power structures and institutions contributing to inequality and violence. By highlighting the complicity of authorities, police, and the

justice system, they encourage critical examination of these institutions and promote a more informed and engaged citizenry. This participatory approach aligns with the principles of radical democracy, which emphasize the importance of active citizen involvement and the collective construction of democratic processes. It also calls for developing performative devices that can be used as educational surfaces of resonance for transmitting critical approaches to hidden issues in contemporary societies.

### **Disclosure statement**

*The author reports that there are no competing interests to declare.*

### **References**

- Abbinnett, Ross. 2018. *The Thought of Bernard Stiegler*. London: Routledge.
- Badiou, Alain. 2012. *Plato's Republic A dialogue in sixteen chapters, with a Prologue and an Epilogue*. Translated by Susan Spitzer. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bateson, Gregory. 1978. *Steps to an ecology of mind*. Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson Inc. ISBN: 978-0-87668-950-9.
- BBC News Mundo. 2019. 'Un violador en tu camino' de Las Tesis: la policía en Turquía reprime una representación del himno feminista chileno que le ha dado la vuelta al mundo. <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-internacional-50715146>.
- Derrida, Jacques. 1981. 'Plato's Pharmacy.' *Dissemination*, translated by Barbara Johnson. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 63–171.
- Derrida, Jacques. 1994. *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, The Work of Mourning, and the New International*. Translated by Peggy Kamuf. New York: Routledge.

Dominguez, Claudia, and Daniel Fernandez. 2019. 'Chile's president declares state of emergency after riots over metro fare hike.' CNN. October 19, 2019.

<https://edition.cnn.com/2019/10/19/americas/chile-protests-intl/index.html>

El Mostrador. 2021. 'INDH ha acreditado a 123 víctimas de violaciones de derechos humanos ocurridas durante el estallido social.' El Mostrador. November 15, 2021.

<https://www.elmostrador.cl/dia/2021/11/15/indh-ha-acreditado-a-123-victimas-de-violaciones-de-derechos-humanos-ocurridas-durante-el-estallido-social/>

France24. 2019. 'Estallido social en Chile, de la rebelión a la revolución por una mejora social.' France24. November 17, 2019. <https://www.france24.com/es/20191117-estallido-social-en-chile-de-la-rebeli%C3%B3n-a-la-revoluci%C3%B3n-por-una-mejora-social>.

Guerra, Luis. 2016. Towards an Anarchistory of Actions. 142–150. *The Imaginary Reader*. Marie Nerland, curator, and editor. ISBN: 978-82-303-2814-9.

Guerra, Luis. 2017. *De la inexistencia del arte (Seminario)*. Madrid: Brumaria Editores.

Huenchumil, Paula. 2019. 'Las mujeres chilenas detrás de la performance Un violador en tu camino'. <https://interferencia.cl/articulos/las-mujeres-chilenas-detras-de-la-performance-un-violador-en-tu-camino>.

INDH. 2019. 'Acciones legales de INDH por violaciones a los DD.HH. en Chile suman 120.' Instituto Nacional de Derechos Humanos. October 28, 2019.

<https://www.indh.cl/acciones-legales-de-indh-por-violaciones-a-los-dd-hh-en-chile-suman-120/>

Ingold, Tim. 2016. The Maze and the Labyrinth. *Psychology and the Conduct of Everyday Life*. Edited by Ernest Schraube and Charlotte Hojholt. London and New York: Routledge.

Ingold, Tim. 2018. *Anthropology and/as Education*. London: Routledge.

Intermediate. 2021. 'The Names of Fear' (Matadero Critical Studies).  
<https://www.intermediae.es/en/agenda/names-fear-matadero-critical-studies>

Karmy, Rodrigo. 2022. *The Future Is Inherited: Fragments of a Chile in Revolt*. Berlin: Errant Bodies Press.

Keep the Volume Up. 'For Rights Defenders in Turkey. 2022. Las Tesis Activists.'  
March 31, 2022. <https://www.sessizkalma.org/en/defender/las-tesis-activists>

Lindberg, Susanna. 2020. Politics of digital learning—Thinking education with Bernard Stiegler. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 52:4, 384–396,  
DOI: 10.1080/00131857.2019.1586531

Marchart, Oliver. 2002. Enacting the Unrealized: Political Theory and the Role of 'Radical Democratic Activism.' *Democracy Unrealized, Documenta 11\_Platform 1*.

Okwui Enwezor, Carlos Basualdo, Ute Meta Bauer, Susanne Ghez, Sarat Maharaj, Mark Nash, Octavio Zaya. Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz.

Marchart, Oliver. 2019. *Conflictual Aesthetics. Artistic Activism and the Public Sphere*. Berlin: Sternberg Press.

Masschelein, Jan. 2010. The Idea of Critical E-ducational Research-E-ducating the Gaze and Inviting to Go Walking. *The Possibility/Impossibility of a New Critical Language in Education*. Vol. 44, 275-291. Ilan Gur-Ze'ev, editor. Leiden: Brill Publishers. DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1163/9789460912726\\_014](https://doi.org/10.1163/9789460912726_014)

Masschelein, Jan. 2010. E-ducating the gaze: the idea of a poor pedagogy. *Ethics and Education*, 5:1, 43-53, DOI: 10.1080/17449641003590621

Masschelein, Jan. 2011. Experimental Scholae: The World Once More ... But Not (Yet) Finished. *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 30 (5): 529-535.

Maturana, Humberto. 1999. *Transformación en la Convivencia*. Santiago de Chile: Dolmen Editores.

- Mouffe, Chantal. 1993. *The Return of the Political*. London: Verso.
- Mouffe, Chantal. 2013. *Agonistics. Thinking the World Politically*. London: Verso.
- Navarrete, Bernardo and Victor Tricot. 2021. *The Social Outburst and Political Representation in Chile*. Berlin: Springer. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-70320-2>.
- Newman, Lucia. 2019. 'Chile protesters: 'The rich and powerful threw the first stone.' *Aljazeera*. December 6, 2019. <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2019/12/6/chile-protesters-the-rich-and-powerful-threw-the-first-stone>
- Löwy, Michael. 2005. *Fire Alarm. Reading Walter Benjamin's 'On the Concept of History.'* Translated by Chris Turner. London: Verso.
- Pirrie, A., and Stephen Day. 2019. Reflective practice and student satisfaction: never the twain shall meet? *European Educational Research Journal*, 18(4), 483–496. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1474904118804423>
- Plato. 2000. *The Republic*. Edited by G. R. F. Ferrari, translated by Tom Griffith, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rimbaud, Arthur. 2005. *Complete Works, Selected Letters*. Wallace Fowlie, translator. Seth Whidden, revised. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Rueda Ortiz, R. 2012. Sociedades de la Información y el Conocimiento: Tecnicidad, Phármakon e Invención Social. *Nómadas* (Col), No. 36, abril, 2012, pp. 43-55 Universidad Central Bogotá, Colombia. <https://www.redalyc.org/pdf/1051/105124264004.pdf>
- Stiegler, Bernard. 1998. *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus*. Translated by R. Beardsworth and G. Collins. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Stiegler, Bernard. 2008. *Prendre soin : De la jeunesse et des générations*. Paris: Flammarion.

Stiegler, Bernard. 2010. *What makes life worth living: On pharmacology*. Cambridge, UK: Polity.

Stiegler, Bernard. 2012. Relational Ecology and the Digital Pharmakon. *Culture Machine*, Vol. 13, 1–19. <https://culturemachine.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/464-1026-1-PB.pdf>

Stiegler, Bernard. 2017. What Is Called Caring? Beyond the Anthropocene. Translated by Daniel Ross. *Techné: Research in Philosophy and Technology* 21:2-3. 2017: 386–404. DOI: 10.5840/techne201712479.

Stiegler, Bernard. 2021. *Bifurcate 'There is no Alternative.'* Translated by Daniel Ross. London: Open Humanities Press.

Urrejola, José. 2019. 'La cronología del estallido social de Chile.' *DW*. November 25, 2019. <https://www.dw.com/es/la-cronolog%C3%ADa-del-estallido-social-de-chile/a-51407726>

## Videos

Festival el Aleph. 2021. 'El Performance como un espacio de sanación colectiva.' <https://www.facebook.com/FestivalElAleph/videos/el-performance-como-un-espacio-de-sanaci%C3%B3n-colectiva/2708099546156080/>

'Intervención Del Colectivo Las Tesis En Santiago #25N.' Es Mi Fiesta TV. Video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yJGE9zqna8>.

'Conferencia: Colectivo Las Tesis.' Centro Gabriela Mistral. April 23, 2021. Video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0dmtsJXZ-uM>.

'LASTESIS. Plaza Sotomayor 29.11.2019. VALPARAÍSO, CHILE.' Colectivo LASTESIS. December 5, 2019. Video, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_0ed59v2hQE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_0ed59v2hQE)

Las Tesis:

[https://www.instagram.com/lastesis/;](https://www.instagram.com/lastesis/)

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCUGCbBjvRMeSks1SAF6wA>