

## Practice to education. The role of the project?

*Making, making with and debate.*

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**Abstract.** The communication presents how a practice of artistic projects and pedagogy is capable of producing some knowledge. More precisely, it will explain how the act of making can develop critical reflections in particular contexts (here hospitals and psychiatry, war and memory, sensitive neighbourhoods). The passage to the act is specific to the artist and architect, and when it asks questions about meaning, it can become a subject for debate, help decision-making and open up other fields of thinking. In fact, the presentation will consist in showing concrete examples and, analysing them, to understand the relationship between action and debate. Otherwise, my doctorate being a research creation, I will define the method and tools.

**Keywords.** Research creation; Making; Debate; Art; Pedagogy.

### Research creation

After my Master degree in Architecture at the Polytechnic School of Lausanne, I received a Post-Master in the School of Fine Arts, Lyon. In turn my architectural background, fusing with visual arts became the cornerstone of my professional approach. One permits me to understand the construction of the space and the other induces me to go through the representation and meaning that relates to it. My work is blurring identities, creating unforeseen situations that baffle certain thoughts thus giving a different view of reality. The goal and the result are not answers to all the questions but rather to encourage dialogue and questioning. By borrowing the concept of Paul Ricœur on *narrative identity*, my works play a role of adjustment between the mental universe and reality, they are *revealing* and *transforming*. This practice along with the contained questions motivated me to begin a research creation. It is a matter of analysing the creative process of a project in a continuous flow of ideas between theory and practice, and how *making* can promote *creative thinking* (Passeron 1995).

### Practice

To present my artistic approach, the most characteristic example is the *Gen-tiane* work; it began around a true story. After a bombardment, the Gaza Zoo was hit and the zebra disappeared. It was not possible to bring in another. The Palestinians then chose an original solution: after few strokes of paint, donkeys became zebras. When everyday life is dominated by war, solutions, escapes go

through fantastic crafts. This slip is interesting and led me to transform the donkey *Gentiane* into an ephemeral zebra. But it was not a question of simply repeating this subtle anecdote. This transformation was to create mystery and doubt. The video, shot at night in a forest, shows an experience where we discover, step by step, between fascination and fear, the traces of a strange animal. In the zoom of the camera, the video insists that the animal is painted with food paint, of which we can clearly discern the mixed matter with the hairs. This intention emphasizes that there was no question of making a zebra and forgetting the bombardment that annihilated the zoo. The trace of this peeling painting is a link with the past act and the life that is being reconstructed.

Our focus will be on the process of conception which can last several years. And during this time, it can become an occasion of reflection, especially when the subject is complex. One of my artwork was realized in 2010, on the wall of the psychiatric hospital for prisoners of Lyon. The building is located in the wooded park of Vinatier among various houses, at the same time available to local patients and residents. The sponsor wished that the new building is integrated into the hospital center, in spite of the prison wall (6 meters high and 360 meters long). The idea was to create a series of polished stainless steel trees. Its gives a vertical rhythm, reflecting the park with its light, giving bits of blue sky. It brings a profound deepness, building a landscape. The wall is no longer a lifeless mass but living matter which takes colours tones different throughout the day and the seasons. Are we in front of a prison hospital wall or a landscape? This work produced many discussions during the realisation, concerning the representation of the psychiatry and the penitentiary in our society. Inside, I wanted to put a migratory bird flight in polished stainless, a positive image by knowing the relational problems in psychiatry. Some decision-makers told me that it was a bad idea, that I gave the taste of freedom to prisoners. A psychiatrist replied that it's important for their mental health, to want to escape. So, I was able to do it. Another anecdote was a meeting with the members of GIGN (National Gendarmerie Intervention Group). The building is designed to treat patients in detention. Before it opened, a GIGN team had to test its safety. It took them two and a half minutes to get out of the building. They then questioned the fact that I had removed the anti-grapple, concrete puddle located at the top of the surrounding wall. I replied that putting it back would have destroyed the artistic idea that the stainless-steel trees tore the wall. The intention was to transform the representation of psychiatry and penitentiary. Then, GIGN have changed their narrative, blaming the presence of luminaries to which it is easy to climb. And the wall-sky could became reality.

This description presents the process of my artistic work. At first I try to understand the subject in its complexity by analyzing it. Here we fasted several difficulties: between the medical care and the prison, with the representation of this kind of building in our society, plus the condition of confinement for those who are either behind inside or outside the barres. After, I try to develop various proposals, which are not only esthetics but also questions the sense and

the meaning. The project then engenders controversies and debates.



*Figure 1*  
*Chantal Dugave, Gentiane, Food painting on donkey, 2012.*



*Figure 2*  
*Chantal Dugave, UHSA, Unité hospitalière spécialement aménagée, Polished stainless steel, Lyon, 2010.*

## Education

My approach to the educational projects in the same manner as the professional one. Teaching in the Graduate School of Architecture in Lyon, I develop situations where the students are going to work on real problem. Through meetings and exhibitions, we foster a space of reflection to create other points of view, thus encouraging controversies, and eventually leading to debates.

In my Master's Degree that I organized in 2015 and 2016, I gave the students as a subject the extension of University Lyon 3 in the Memorial Prison of Montluc. This place was built in 1921 and then has included different historic events, notably the Second World War and the French-Algerian War. Afterwards it became a detention center for women, closed in 2009. Open to the public in 2010 ; part of the site becomes the Memorial of the prison Montluc. This site is more of an historical than an architectural heritage. The buildings constructed in clinker are in bad condition. So, one of the reasons of this proposal was economic. The possible presence of this new program raises the problem of the proximities. The questions I asked the students was : how to take into account the uses of both programs? What kind of relationship can we build between education and memory? To design their architectural proposals, the students approached the site with visits and they met the institutional actors. So they have been able to understand the complexity of the memory. This studio research has permitted the development of 37 different projects, which were discussed and shown in exhibitions, especially during the European Heritage Days, in 2015 and 2016. To expose all the projects has permitted to show the different approaches, summary tables making easier to understand and compare the proposals. This work has allowed to rethink the space of the Memorial. The different partners understood that the ring road (no man's land) of the prison was a memory space, as important as prisoners cells. Or still, a problem of sound atmosphere was going to arise, how can we have the silence of the memorial within the activities of the university. The work done by the students have open doors for new discussions. The different actors, understanding that this eventual project will change completely the significance of the Memorial. Indeed, today it is no longer question to build the extension of the university near Montluc; the decision-makers understood the difficulties.

Projects and exhibitions attempt to articulate the complexity of reality around memory. When Edgar Morin speaks of *complexity*, he refers to the elementary Latin meaning of the word *complexus*, *that which is woven together* (Morin 2014). This approach leads him to the concept of *reliance* the *stem cell* of complex thought. The studio-research worked on the articulation between a place of memory and a place of pedagogy. It was followed by several partners from different disciplinary fields. If the act of reliance is *to articulate what is separated and to connect what is disjointed* (Morin 1977). Then it developed here according two scales, one physical (between the two buildings) and the other

political, through the proposal of the 37 projects, bringing debates together the various players.

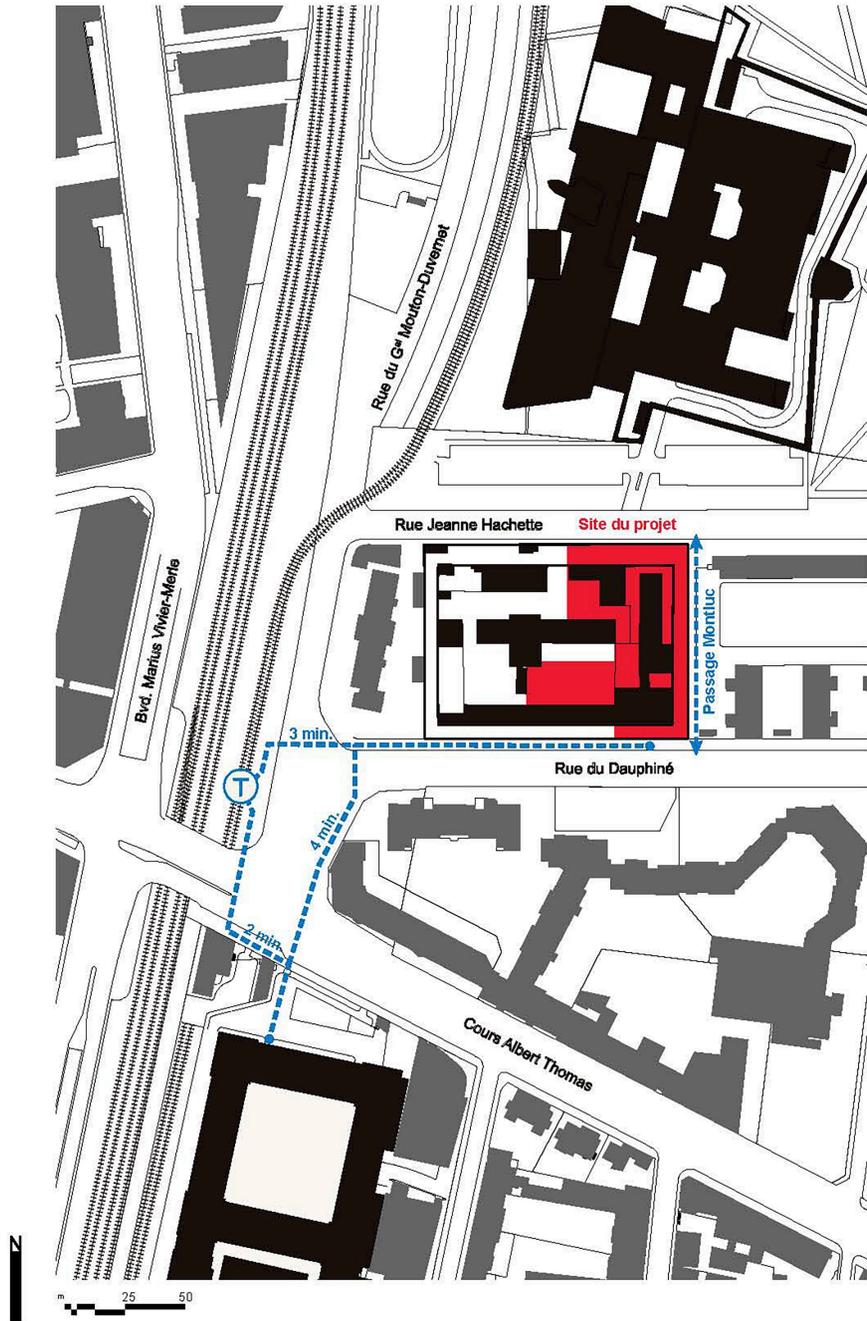


Figure 3  
 Location of the University Lyon 3 extension in the Memorial Prison of Montluc, 2016.

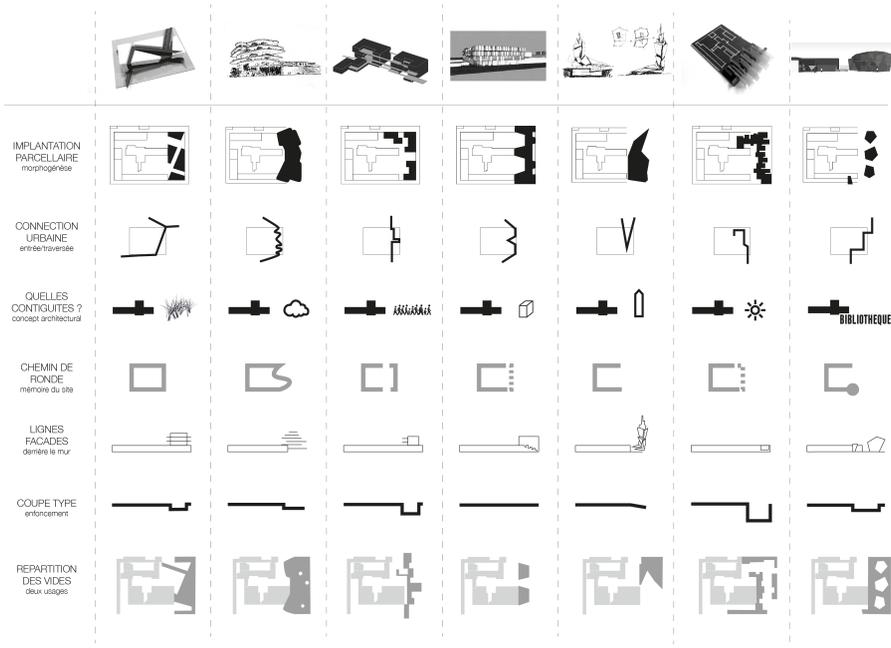


Figure 4  
 Analysis of the University Lyon 3 extension in the Memorial Prison of Montluc, 2016.

## Impact and debate

The presentation of these various cases explains the interest of the project process. More exactly, it is the action of making which produces space of debates. The environment in which the artistic or educational projects intervene themselves are complex. It is so particular that we are sometimes facing the *blank page syndrome*. A feeling of powerlessness can appear. Is the project going to solve the raised questions? Does it bring adapted answers? Is the action overestimated?

At first, it is a question of understanding the context in its entirety and thus of being attentive to what is said, in what is already there. Then, it is important to search what is invisible. As Gilles Deleuze's said, the creation consists to *see something that others do not see* (Deleuze 1995). And for this, it's essential to deconstruct the basic data. To deconstruct consists in laying bare, in defusing implicit oppositions, to question the visible order. But, to undo a system is not to destroy it. To move the oppositions is not to annihilate them. When Derrida speaks about the process of *deconstruction of texts* (Derrida 2002), he rereads, peels, pushes texts to the limit. Bringing to light what they repress. Avoiding the wrong conception of the real meaning. To undo it is to update the unnoticed, to re-question the presuppositions and to open new perspectives.

After this tendency in entropy, comes the necessity to organize. The knowl-

edge operates by selection of significant data, it identifies, associates, ranks. It is a question of finding a new layout of thought to approach the reality differently. In final, we can say that the process making, with its aspect to create and to undo, is always in movement, it is a *making growing* (Ingol 2013). It builds itself according to the experience. We cannot quite anticipate, the thought of *making* is to develop by *making*.

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