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## Motivations from Philosophy and Aesthetics to Research, Artistic Creation in Higher Education

Incitações da filosofia e estética à pesquisa da criação  
artística no ensino superior

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## ABSTRACT

The multiple theoretical and practical productions that currently emerge from the perspective of artistic creation research, encourage us to inquire about the nature of a research modality that has been emerging since the late twentieth century. To demarcate the way in which creation research is inserted within contemporary philosophical and aesthetic productions, a triad of ideas composed of historical nihilism, Nietzschean perspectivism and hermeneutics will be exposed, simultaneously revealing the articulation of these theoretical constructs with the dynamics that drive academic artistic creation in higher education. Finally, and in order to land the reflection on a more practical level, a particular experience of training in the arts will be shared from which the capacity of creation research to organize the understanding of artistic activity and the importance of applying its unique methodology in the processes of undergraduate education in arts and humanities is highlighted.

Keywords: Higher education, aesthetics, philosophy, hermeneutics, arts.

## RESUMO

As múltiplas produções teóricas e práticas que atualmente emergem sob a perspectiva da pesquisa de criação artística incentivam a indagação sobre a natureza de uma modalidade de pesquisa que vem moldando desde o final do século XX. Para delimitar o modo como a pesquisa criadora é inserida nas produções filosóficas e estéticas contemporâneas, será exposta uma tríade de idéias compostas de niilismo histórico, perspectivismo nietzschiano e hermenêutica, revelando simultaneamente a articulação desses construtos teóricos com a dinâmica que impulsiona a criação artística acadêmica no ensino superior. Para concluir e de modo a aterrar a reflexão em um nível mais prático, será comparada uma experiência particular de treinamento em artes, a partir da qual a capacidade de criação de pesquisas para organizar o entendimento da atividade artística e a importância de aplicar seus conhecimentos. metodologia única nos processos de graduação em artes e humanidades.

Palavras-chave: Educação superior, estética, filosofia, hermenêutica, artes.

## Introduction

To describe in the first instance and in a general way the topic that this article has decided to address, we will begin by saying that it is a reflection on the meaning and current development of the debate generated in academic environments, around the modality that since the late twentieth century began to be called as the *research artistic creation*. In the following pages, we intend to contrast the theme of art and the recent modality of research production and creation that it proposes, with theoretical productions that have had their origin in contemporary philosophy and aesthetics, landing these inquiries on a more practical level such as that of education in the arts.

Rather than giving a scholarly definition of the term research creation, the primary objective of this text is to share with readers the vicissitudes of a process of assimilation of this modality of research, in the environment of higher education, especially in the field of visual arts. To fulfill this purpose, part of the results that have yielded in a particular way in the last five years will be exposed, the training process at the undergraduate level in Visual Arts that the Universidad del Quindío has been offering, a career that is attached to the Faculty of Human Sciences and Fine Arts of the same institution.

Some theoretical productions of contemporary philosophy and aesthetics of the twentieth century manage to permeate the provocative practices and artistic reflections of recent times, where modalities such as *research artistic creation*, provide motivation for teachers and art students to involve in their creations and educational processes, elements that configure an aesthetic attitude crossed by multiple knowledges that escape the technical terrains accustomed to their own discipline. What we could consider a turn in the ways of conceiving and concretizing the work in our artistic culture, can put in contrast the attitudes that mark "the

transition from an art refined by the strict adherence to formal canons, to a more contingent practice, attuned to the diversity of the human" (Calle, 2006, p.103)

In a first and broad section we will focus our attention on the ideas of contemporary philosophy and aesthetics that can be considered key to elucidate the factors that influenced, so that, in turn, artistic practices took a turn in their modes of production throughout the twentieth century, coming to take the form of current research creation in the arts.

From philosophy one of the first debates to reflect will be that of modernity – post-modernity following the ideas proposed by the Italian philosopher Gianni Vattimo, trying to make visible some risks that a nihilistic treatment of history and art can bring implicit and that can lead to consequences in the field of academic artistic research. The next notion of contemporary philosophy to analyze will be that of *perspectivism*, especially from the line of Nietzschean thought, for which we will rely on the approaches of Princeton University professor Alexander Nehamas. This author presents the artistic and literary foundation of the concept of perspectivism, examining some of the difficulties that its stylistic pluralism has implicit, difficulties that in my opinion also pose challenges to theoretical and practical aesthetic productions, which aim to be disseminated within the framework of artistic creation research within an academic field.

Considering as starting points the debate of postmodernity and the theme of Nietzschean perspective, it is necessary to maintain that henceforth the *hermeneutic philosophy* will then be one of the key lines of thought that is presented as a resource of the investigation artistic creation, to the extent that it promotes liberating an art that is tensioned between the certainties generated by tradition and those of the new customs that the art itself contributes to its transformation. This cannot but evoke

the Gadamerian approach to the reconciliation of old and new forms of art with which the first section will be closed.

It is worth mentioning that in the development of the proposed triad between historical nihilism, Nietzschean perspectivism and hermeneutics, we will be accompanied by a series of authors very close to our national and Latin American regional context among which we have Margarita Calle Guerra, Director of the Master's Degree in Aesthetics and Creation of the Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira; Sandra Johana Silva Cañaverl, Professor at the Universidad del Valle; and Víctor Carreño Professor at the Universidad de Zulia in Venezuela. With the support of his theoretical contributions, we will make visible the way in which the aforementioned contemporary philosophical ideas are articulated, with the problems posed by academic artistic creation in the form of creation research.

In the second and last section we will diagnose the current state of the debate on the research creation, offering some participants of its consolidation in the undergraduate degree in Visual Arts of the Universidad del Quindío. Thus, through an educational experience in the field of Visual Arts, it is desired to end by promoting a discussion that records the importance of implementing the dynamics proposed by creation research, in the processes of undergraduate training in areas related to the arts and the humanities in general.

### **Incidence of Contemporary Philosophical and Aesthetic Ideas in the Field of Artistic Production oriented from Creation Research**

The inescapable and nourished modernity-postmodernity debate can be considered as the terrain in which contemporary artistic practices and their development spring up until reaching the current artistic creation research practiced in the academic scene. As stated, the purpose of this first

section is to present some ideas of contemporary philosophy and aesthetics, which contribute to the understanding of the development of current research artistic creation. To this end we will use as an initial reference of the ideas of the philosopher Gianni Vattimo, especially in his book *Ethics of Interpretation*.

The support that Vattimo's proposals will give us are precisely for the clarification of the term postmodernity, which we can interpret at the beginning as a philosophical attitude and for the purposes of this text also aesthetic, which was presented as an opposition to certain propensities of the modern age. If we directly relate postmodernity to history, we see how it can acquire an apocalyptic nuance, since in some moments it has come to be presented as an end of history, while evoking these ideas such as the death of God that is somehow related to the death of Art.

When taking the work of thinking of postmodernism as an end of history, we must bear in mind that we provoked a great decentralization of a concept of interpreted history as an element from which arose all the legitimations that defined in previous times the ontological and epistemological course of humanity. This leads to consequences in the field of artistic production; but we will only take into account an initial risk and that is the one that refers to the nihilistic effects that can arise from a treatment of history such as that proposed in the theories of postmodernity. It is in this sense that the contributions made by a regular researcher of postmodern culture such as Gianni Vattimo appear.

Without further ado, we will place ourselves directly in chapter one of the book *Ética de la interpretación*, which is entitled *Postmodernidad y fin de la historia*. In this chapter the author recreates two opposing positions on the end of history such as those of the thinkers Jürgen Habermas and Jean Francois Lyotard. For these two authors, postmodernity was interpreted as the fall of

the great meta-narratives that legitimized the historical march of humanity on the path of emancipation. For Habermas this would represent a calamity that would lead humanity away from the path of enlightenment represented in the project of modernity. For Lyotard, on the contrary, following more closely Nietzsche, Heidegger and Foucault, this event represents an advance in the liberation of modern subjectivism and humanism. To round off, what Vattimo makes evident is that the hegemony of the so-called meta-philosophies, which with the help of a scientific philosophy sought absolute legitimation in the metaphysical structure of the historical course, has entered a deep crisis.

The question we must ask ourselves is whether the story of the end of history can be a legitimizing story, capable of pointing out objectives, criteria of choice and evaluation and, therefore, some resource of action still endowed with meaning (Vattimo, 1991, p.18). The author states that in the event that the story of the end of history manages to provide the evaluation criteria that are required, then it should be noted that these criteria will not go in search of settling another meta-story and to avoid this sequence apparently we must abandon all legitimizing action and any ability to point out historical options (Vattimo, 1991).

When I drew attention a moment ago to the risks represented in the nihilistic effects that the postmodern treatment of history brings, it is because I observe that many of the questions raised in that line of thought were inherited into creation research. While Vattimo inquired about the legitimizing status of the story of the end of history, contemporary art wondered if creative experiences are valid for the production and definition of knowledge. This claim of legitimacy and validity is a common space to the postmodern philosophical discourse of the end of history and to the discussion about the artist's investigative work in university environments, a space where at the same time the current creation research takes shape. From this,

it seems that in art "the core issue is much more complex than coexisting in the shadow of the scientific method, as it has been until today, has to do with the question of how do you research and generate knowledge in practice?" (Silva Cañaverl, 2016, p.50).

Both in the reflections of philosophy and contemporary aesthetics, the presence of nihilism persists, generating insecurities around its acceptance as disciplines that are configured outside of modern scientific methods by tradition. If we consider that postmodernity exerts a dissosive effect on human historicity, we must also recognize that behind this phenomenon artistic practices were also transformed, demanding new evaluation criteria as has been happening since the last century with contemporary art.

To illustrate this fact, the approaches of Víctor Carreño, member of the Experimental Faculty of Art of the Universidad de Zulia, Venezuela, are helpful. In one of his articles this professor formulates that the appearance of aesthetic surrealism is the historical prelude to creation research, while as an avant-garde he proposed ways of operating most of the time irrational but that were not confused with unreality itself. For them there was another reality that the conventional reason did not grasp at first sight (Carreño, 2014, p.55). The author says he shares with Arthur C. Danto the opinion that Surrealism poses challenges to the "master narrative of art", thus announcing contemporary art itself. However, he also says he distances himself from Danto when he states that when he arrives at contemporary art, anything can be art and we do not even need a material concreteness. This is valid only up to a certain point. Acceptance without discussion easily leads to nihilism, where in the end there are no problems to be raised (Carreño, 2014, p.55).

Apparently the problems posed by philosophical nihilism contain a binding character with the problems of the aesthetic immaterialism of the

contemporary era. While Vattimo takes care that the new criteria for evaluating history do not end up strengthening another meta-narrative, artistic practices and aesthetic reflections continue their directions being consistent with the fact that their contributions to knowledge do not have much chance of being expressed in the same terms as other traditional sciences or techniques of art, so in no way did they wish to constitute the statute of a univocal and rational sense.

Although in the face of this panorama, the challenges for contemporary philosophy and aesthetics are evident, it is desired to emphasize the way that the discussion is sharpened in the field of art and its practice. For this, let's return to the theme of surrealism as a historical prelude to the creation research proposed by Carreño (2014). Next, let's see how the author nourishes our reflection on the way in which contemporary philosophical and aesthetic discourses begin to be configured outside of traditional scientific methods, while seeking criteria to validate their knowledge productions:

That avant-garde artists were characterized by experimentation is admitted by art historians. That this dialogue with scientific disciplines and turns their findings into new knowledge is a more controversial issue, one that the avant-garde reserved for the future. (p. 55)

To close this topic of the influence of historical nihilism on aesthetics, one of Jiménez's reflections is shared in his book *La querella del arte contemporáneo*, in which he highlights the problem of creation research and contemporary art in general as they liquidate any possibility of valuing or judging. The author is quoted by the creative researcher Silva (2016) as follows:

Are there still criteria for aesthetic appreciation? [...] Is it possible to redefine the conditions for the exercise of aesthetic judgment in the face of contemporary works? Assuming even that the latter were 'anything', can one

sustain an argued and critical discourse on them? [...] How to judge the artistic quality of objects and practices if there are no longer any criteria or standards to refer to? [...] the paradox of the situation created by contemporary art lies not only in the indefiniteness of art, but also in the fact that the word 'art' implies, in spite of everything, despite its indeterminacy, a value judgment. (p.57)

It is in this domain of the indeterminate, from which one wonders about the possibility of meanings and valuations that legitimize the emerging interpretations of history, that contemporary philosophy and aesthetics end up being immersed, transferring problems and perhaps mutually motivating each other to generate new methods and ways of understanding reality and producing knowledge. The paradoxes and methodological challenges faced by both reflections are not unrelated and this is how we enter the second philosophical notion to be addressed, which is that of *perspectivism*, which springs from a line of Nietzschean thought very thoughtfully investigated by the author Alexander Nehamas in his book *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*.

The notion of Nietzschean perspectivism contemplated from the literary turn given by Nehamas, is constituted as an idea that interacts harmoniously with the reflections of aesthetic tone that have been constituted as a primary point of inquiry in this paper. We will therefore begin by unpacking the concept of perspectivism by presenting it as Nietzsche's well-known obsession with emphasizing that every idea is only one among many possible interpretations, including his own ideas and, in particular, this one (Nehamas, 2002). It does not take the author long to warn that such an approach contains the risk that Nietzsche's position ends up being deactivated in itself, since perspectivism generates two problems to be faced: something that must be understood and something that implies that such understanding is perhaps impossible (Nehamas, 2002).

In opening up this dilemma, the challenge arises to know to what degree Nietzsche's philosophy is susceptible of being endowed with the necessary coherence to consider perspectivism as a methodological option for philosophical and artistic creation. The harmonious connection between perspectivism and art that is so useful for the objectives pursued by this reflection, is given insofar as Nehamas evidences an aestheticism in Nietzsche that contributes to the motives of his proposal of perspectivism. This Nietzschean aestheticism is accentuated to the extent that this author understands the world in general as if it were a kind of work of art; specifically, he conceives it as if it were a literary text (Nehamas, 2002).

This is one of the essential themes that Nehamas (2002) presents for the interpretation of Nietzsche in his book and he leaves it open in the introduction by speaking to us as follows:

I accept Nietzsche's principle: there are no facts outside of interpretation and therefore capable of sustaining the common object of which all interpretations are interpretations. I also accept his idea that there are, consequently, no impartial rules that determine in each case which of our interpretations is correct and which is false. But I also think - as I believe and argue that Nietzsche also thinks - that some interpretations are better than others and that sometimes it is given to us to recognize this. (Nehamas, p.19)

What we are interested in understanding now is that Nietzsche's aestheticism, which arises from conceiving the world as a literary text, is one of the faces of his perspectivism, from which he forges his own style as a model that is not susceptible to direct imitation since it is not transmitted in the traditional way. This highlights the *stylistic pluralism* with which the German thinker communicated his ideas, this diversity of styles being a tool he used to distinguish himself from a philosophical tradition of which he was critical, but to which he also wished to open up alternatives. One

must then consider questions that have to do with the inevitably ambiguous relationship between Nietzsche and philosophy; that relationship, which Nehamas (2002) categorizes as *irresolvably equivocal*, is reflected in Nietzsche's attitude toward Socrates, which is neither purely positive nor purely negative, but irreducibly ambivalent (p.20).

In Nietzschean perspectivism, the self is more than a pre-established entity endowed with constancy and stability, it is something that comes to be, in the proportion that one constructs it oneself as one goes along, revealing in each action the existence of a style. The art works, the scientific theories, the religious, moral and political expressions, the philosophical systems, incarnate and express the vision or interpretation of the world of a particular individual, the values and preferences that favor life and the blossoming of that individual (Nehamas, 2002, p.47). Our aim is to expose the way in which these approaches contribute to the understanding of the problems of artistic creation research, a modality in which proximities are generated with other fields of human knowledge:

Referential or not, artistic practices have always been presented to us under a heterogeneity of media and languages that are, if you will, plots of interpretative relationships in which expectations of meaning and cultural matrices emerge, which shape our character and determine our positioning in the world. (Calle, 2006, p.109)

But before examining in detail the implications that the probes of nihilism and perspectivism bring to academic artistic production, it is necessary to insist that both proposals coincide in distancing themselves from the traditional modes of expression of philosophy and aesthetics. This approach of distancing themselves from the valuations of the modern tradition led them to share a space of struggle for the validation of their contributions to knowledge, as could be seen in the question of the legitimizing status of the postmodern

account of the end of history and with the *stylistic pluralism* emerging from a Nietzschean aestheticism that seeks to outline perspectivism as a methodological option for creation.

The above formulation leads us to consider that this space of search for legitimacy is inhabited by a good variety of contemporary philosophical and aesthetic ideas, among which we identify hermeneutics, which was the missing ingredient in the reflective triad proposed for this text. It is curious to observe how such a theoretical disposition considered by Vattimo (1991) as a *koiné* or "common language within philosophy and culture..." (p.55), starting from a more conciliatory mood with the traditions (observed above all in the Gadamerian optic), converges with the intention of not being accepted as a rational philosophical doctrine, in the same way that historical nihilism and Nietzschean perspectivism did not want it either. I find the expression conciliatory spirit with traditions justified when recalling Gadamer's (1998) question about the unification of old and new art forms:

Is it really that a work of art coming from past or alien life-worlds and transferred to our world, historically formed, becomes a mere object of an aesthetic-historical pleasure and says nothing more than what it originally had to say? It is in this question that the theme 'aesthetics and hermeneutics' takes on the dimension of its most proper problematicity. (p.56)

As in perspectivism, aesthetics plays here a fundamental role in the understanding of the whole Gadamerian approach insofar as it illuminates the particularly hermeneutic nature of the experience of art. The only requirement that is made of man under this idea is that he has the disposition to find himself through the work and through the traditions that are his because they preceded him. This lends itself to giving continuity to the ideas of Calle (2006) when he states that these forms of creation and

production of meaning have their true self in the fact that they become an experience that modifies the one who experiences (p.109). The aesthetic theory that flourishes from there can give methodological relevance to the hermeneutic aspect of the experience of art, without referring exclusively to the elements that have to do with the production of a work of art.

What cannot go unnoticed then in this hermeneutic turn, is that after the experience of art we not only find a univocal sense, but we carry out the action of contrasting that sense with ourselves, thus opening numerous perspectives of analysis. This transformation experienced by those who participate in the experience of art, is a fact through which we seek to understand the academic artistic production that is oriented from the research creation, a space in which the understanding of a subjectivity and its multidimensional condition is exhorted, where each compartment is connected to the totality of all the experiences and facets of the human condition, of the imaginary and the rational, of the abstract and the concrete (Silva Cañaverl, 2016, p.56). However, it is in this experience where the creative researcher directs his gaze to himself, to the cultural context that surrounds him and to his object of creation, where it must be taken into account that the work of art itself does not authorize to interpret it in any way, but, with all its openness and all the breadth of play of the possibilities of interpreting it, it allows to establish a pattern of what is appropriate; in fact, it demands it (Gadamer, 1998, p. 56).

To answer the question of what we can consider appropriate, let us remember that for Gadamer (1998) hermeneutics is a linguistic event that presupposes understanding, because it is the art of translating what is said in a foreign language, helping to facilitate its transition to a different language that lends itself to the understanding of others and this is made clear through the remembrance of the myth of Hermes, who played the role of

interpreter-translator of the message of divinity to men. All these truisms are now decisive for the question that concerns us here: the question of the language of art and the legitimacy of the hermeneutic point of view in the face of the experience of art (Gadamer, 1998, p.57). As far as this idea is concerned, the language of art ends up being the opening to an inexhaustibility of meaning that resides in the work of art itself, since it comes to us in step in a tradition that we have preserved in the form of what wants to communicate something to us and how it falls into the scope of the things that we must understand; thus amplified is a concept of tradition that is not as such linguistic, but that is susceptible to linguistic interpretation (Gadamer, 1998).

Hermeneutics enters to claim in this way its action on the experience of art even when it is manifested through expressions that are not necessarily linguistic, as is the case that by tradition corresponds to objectual works of art. What is interesting here is how we are again in the space of legitimation, from which historical nihilism and perspectivism initially claimed their participation as philosophical and aesthetic ideas capable of contributing to the knowledge of reality; it is only that this time ontological aspects are introduced in the interpretation of the work of art, which we take as a spring for the analysis of forms of experience that are configured outside the scope of the tools that modern scientism has. This aspect is illustrated by Amador-Bech (2012) when he follows the definition of interpretation proposed by Ricoeur where the work of it consists in the decipherment of a hidden meaning in an apparent meaning:

If, in the manner of Ricoeur, the symbol is understood as a polysemic and existentially characterized expression, the mere epistemic codification would be insufficient, thus requiring a hermeneutic

approach, that is, an ontological one; moreover, hermeneutics finds its *raison d'être* in the interpretation of symbols: *There is interpretation there where there is multiple meaning, and it is in the interpretation where the plurality of meanings is manifested.* (Amador-Bech, p.45)

Transformative action is therefore inherent in interpretation since it moves the bases of the symbolic and material structures of society, compromising the very place of the subject of interpretation and the place of the world in which it is inserted. In this order of ideas the work that is interpreted is rather itself interpretation, or the fragment of an interpretation of the world that, as such, for hermeneutics, is transmitted linguistically. Here we have a mode of reflection analogous to that used by Michel Foucault in his lecture on *Nietzsche, Freud and Marx* in which he considers that these three authors put us in the presence of a renewed interpretative possibility, while basing a new possibility for modern hermeneutics. Actually, behind these topics, there is a dream: to be able to make one day a kind of general Corpus, of Encyclopedia of all the techniques of interpretation that we have been able to know from the Greek grammarians to the present day (Foucault, 1969, p.15). All this stems from two major suspicions of language that the author in question sees arising in the heart of Indo-European cultures and that for the purposes we are pursuing we will mention only the following one:

On the other hand, language gives rise to this other suspicion: that language overflows, in some way, its properly verbal form, and that there are many other things in the world that speak and that are not language. First of all, it could be said that nature, the sea, the murmur of the trees, the animals, the faces, the masks, the knives in the cross, speak; there are probably languages that are articulated in a non-verbal way. This would be, if you like, and in a very crude way, the *semainon* of the Greeks. (Foucault, 1969, p.15)

From this Foucaultian treatment of hermeneutics and interpretation it will be maintained that there is a language outside the language, which leads us to be attentive to all the possible languages that arise from this event, trying to find behind the words a more essential discourse (Foucault, 1969). The texts of these three philosophers of suspicion that motivate the discourse referred to here, are works that have caused what is called *wounds in Western thought*, to the extent that they propose alternative techniques of interpretation to the established regimes of truth by means of which we have begun to challenge ourselves at the same time. Finally, it is worth noting the risk that Foucault (1969) identifies about the unfinished work of interpretation that leads to it always reflecting on itself:

It is mainly in Nietzsche and Freud and to a lesser degree in Marx, where we see this experience drawn that I think is so important for modern hermeneutics, according to which the further one goes in interpretation, the more one looms, at the same time, to an absolutely dangerous region, where not only will interpretation reach its point of retreat but it will disappear as an interpretation, perhaps causing the disappearance of the interpreter. (Foucault, 1969, p.15)

In this way, from Gadamer and Foucault, an interpretative opening is declared whose irreducibility cannot be denied and from which the same risks that Vattimo observed after the action of completely disintegrating all the meta-narratives emerge, until renouncing the ability to point out some course of action endowed with meaning, falling into a nihilism that leaves history itself without a hold. Risks that Nehamas also warned after a Nietzschean perspective that harbors the possibility of deactivating itself as long as it does not consider the existence of objective facts of which all interpretations are interpretations.

We have thus made a journey through some consequences for academic artistic production in general and for the research of creation in particular, from a triad of philosophical-aesthetic ideas that were circumscribed in contemporaneity and that generated new ways of appropriating the experience of art such as nihilism, perspectivism and hermeneutics. In what is missing from the section, we will weigh the challenges that this brings to higher education in the arts of the XXI century, where it is sought that the work is concretized on theoretical bases taking into account the academic rigor. Today's artists are not just artisans. The present world pushes them to go beyond their work, making an introspection of it, or of themselves; since the educator-artist-researcher can be the subject and object of the work (Barriga, 2011, p.324).

In the references that we have been using to address creation research, we can notice a common denominator that differentiates traditional scientific methods from the dynamics of knowledge production from the arts. For example, Silva (2016) draws attention to the fact that it is necessary to make visible the tensions inherent in this way of producing knowledge that concern rigor: one thing is the rigor of academic and scientific research and another the rigor of creation (p.55). This is a problem of central importance from which it is not intended to mark a breaking point between modern scientism and the practices of artistic creation as some positions can present, while they consider that in the traditional academic world artistic work is not recognized as a generator of knowledge, and much less, creation as research (Silva, 2015, p.2). This is why it is worth considering the questions posed by those who at the moment are dedicated to reflecting on the theory and practice of creation research in academic environments:

How to approach within the academy a process that, on the one hand, demands the rigor of research to provide new knowledge, but on the other, states that

its methodologies underlie the artistic practices, which are changing, unstable and multiform? (Carreño, 2014, p.59)

Philosophy, aesthetics and art in contemporary times are in the dilemma of basing themselves, as we have already shown, outside the traditional epistemological models hegemonized in modernity, persisting in the demanding path of creating methodologies that would have no other way of justifying themselves than through the very practice of their own disciplines. What must be taken care of is that after the action of untying oneself from traditions, there is no guarantee that the right path is being traveled, anarchy can also come to reinforce the common place, sterile confusion and ambiguity, what is already established and hackneyed; in the end it is a self-confrontation that not everyone is willing to assume until the last consequences. (Carreño, 2014, p.60)

The challenge for the academy will consist in the degree of willingness it shows to appropriate creation research, being aware that its methodologies originate from practice, taking a critical distance from pre-established models and that it inherits in theory the series of philosophical-aesthetic problems that we have sought to highlight throughout this article. Creation research must articulate its actions with that of the university, providing contributions so that there is a harmonious formalization of the knowledge of artistic productions from research rigors, but without leaving behind in educational practice the cognitive characteristics of creation. In this spectrum of disjunctions, the stimulating task of giving form and meaning from the academy to the onslaught of diverse methodologies with which knowledge is being transmitted to readers and spectators of art is configured.

This academic commitment has demands analogous to those of the stylistic pluralism propitiated at the time by Nietzschean perspective and aestheticism, where when taking the world as a work of art or

literary creation, opens an overwhelming bundle of expressive possibilities where style, which is what Nietzsche claims and admires, implies a controlled multiplicity and a resolution of the conflict (Nehamas, 2002, p.24). In one way or another in the framework of this debate, we can end up decanting some precisions around the capacity of art to found knowledge and the type of relationship it makes possible with the truth such as those proposed by Calle (2006):

In principle, what we must be clear about is:

- a. That aesthetic experience is not based on the verification of facts in the face of a specific reality;
- b. That there is no package of laws that determine the mode or duty of art and that can be used as a parameter of adequacy of a certain practice or aesthetic form; and
- c. That the artist is more than an officiator and the spectator is more than an observer. (Calle, p.110)

It is good that the actors of higher education in the arts adjust their evaluation criteria to the needs of a student body, which aims to transmit its productions through a very wide range of discursive devices still unconventional for scientific communities. The low acceptance of such devices is due to the scale with which they use hybrid resources to represent their experience in essays, novels, diaries, poems, fragments, words mixed in the text with images, so it is not arbitrary to consider this register creative writing (Carreño, 2014, p.60).

The important thing here is that the artist in training, does not end up sacrificing his communication channels to submit to already known methodological templates, "which differ radically from the way in which the knowledge of creation is organized, produced and communicated" (Silva, 2016, p.51) and that leads them to renounce the adventure that incites creation research, all in order to validate their knowledge before the academic institutions.

In this way, the question is very pertinent: In what way does research-creation deal with organizing the understanding of an activity that by definition is metaphorical, allegorical, symbolic, subjective and aesthetic? (Silva, 2016, p.51). The way in which this question is answered is based on experience, that is, by putting into practice the constructs of creative research in the processes of undergraduate education in the arts and related fields. The experience of the undergraduate program in Visual Arts at the Universidad del Quindío will be a particular case from which we will illustrate, in the following section, one of the ways of facing the challenge of organizing the understanding of artistic activity supported by the emerging research modality that was our main motive of analysis.

However, it should be argued that from the practice of creation research in a university context, it is possible to appreciate the tensions and movements of adequacy between academia and art. In the light of the experience it becomes evident that the plurality of means of expression used by young artists in training to communicate their objects of creation in the format of preliminary projects and degree projects, represents a challenge for professionals who lead the educational processes in art, which can come from very diverse disciplines different from the artistic one itself. The academic community shows an eagerness to agree on categories of analysis and evaluation criteria that help formalize aesthetic experiences that theorize knowledge through languages that exceed those usually accepted.

This phenomenon occurs as a result of the fact that the artistic work is elaborated through gestures, procedures, processes that do not go through the verbal and do not depend on it (Barriga, 2011, p.320). What students seek to translate into the discursive plane in order to concretize their artistic objects, can be examined through categories such as imagination, intuition, intimate experience, sensitivity, the intersubjective, the everyday, among others,

as values proper to the nature of that knowledge" (Silva, 2016, p.54). Those who participate in a creative process of this nature, strive to textualize in a legible way in their research projects, ideas that arise many times from their subjective experiences, trying at the same time to put in their right proportion both the aspects related to the creative object and to the theoretical approach that narrates the process by which it was reached. The artist's talent and creativity are no longer valued according to the romantic model inherited by the avant-garde, but rather the reflection and theoretical analysis behind the piece, the intellectuality of the artist's work (Silva, 2015, p.3).

What we finally want to imply with all this is that creation research as we have examined it, does not cease to imply the creative act itself, while preserving the academic objective of making a theoretical appropriation of the process by which the work of art is achieved. For the correct articulation of this discourse, a contrast was generated with contemporary philosophical and aesthetic ideas, which to a great extent inherited problems and at the same time motivations for research and artistic creation. Through this reflection, it is also desired to positively impact artists in training and trainers in art, so that they promote their unpublished potentialities taking advantage of the multiplicity of forms of expression that creative research opens, whose space of practice par excellence is the university.

**Status of the Debate on Creation Research and its Current Projection in the Visual Arts Program of the Universidad del Quindío:**

Continuing with what has already been announced, in this section the purpose is to share with the readers in a synthetic way, a particular experience of education in the arts such as the one that has been taking place in the undergraduate program in Visual Arts subscribed to the Faculty of Human Sciences and Fine Arts of the Universidad del Quindío. The objective that is assumed when presenting this specific case is to illustrate one of the forms that creation

research takes when it is methodologically articulated with training processes that seek to professionalize students in the field of arts. It is for this reason that it is necessary to publicize part of the history of a program that makes its appearance on the departmental academic scene relatively recently.

The Visual Arts program of the Universidad del Quindío obtains its first qualified registration from the Ministry of National Education in 2013 through resolution No. 713 and begins its training activities in January 2014 with a cohort of 24 students. During its operating time it has carried out two self-evaluation processes, the first of which was initiated in 2015 and coincided with what in turn was an academic-administrative reform, promoted from the same university and from which emerged the institutional documents that traced the route for undergraduate programs to update their curricular designs. Within these documents we find the *Uniquindiano Educational Project 2016 -2025* (PEU, Agreement 028) and the *Curricular Academic Policy* (PAC, Agreement 029). These documents were constituted as conceptual and operational guides so that in turn the different *Faculty Educational Projects* (PEF) and the *Educational Program Projects* (PEP) were reformed.

The second process of self-evaluation of the program begins in 2016, at which time the academic reform proposed by the same higher education institution also entered into full execution. As a result of the academic-administrative processes advanced within the undergraduate and in order to adjust the training purposes to the institutional guidelines, important documents such as the PYP and the Master Document were updated, actions that finally led the Conaces Room to recommend to the Ministry of National Education in 2019 the renewal for the term of 7 years of the qualified registration of the Visual Arts Program, approving in turn the

following amendments made to it: "reduction of the number of total credits, from 160 to 150 and their respective curriculum; and the increase in the number of students entering the first semester from 25 to 30 students (Ministry of National Education, 2019).

Within the updates made to the program within the framework of its academic reform, we can also see the modification of its curricular structure that gives the transition from the notion of Areas and Components to the notion of *Training Nuclei*. Added to this, the names and contents of a large part of the academic spaces that made up its curriculum were also modified, while the modification to institutional academic activities was introduced in response to the guidelines of the Uniquindiano Educational Project (2016), from where the Universidad del Quindío wants to transcend the formal aspects of any structure or program, "hence, the student is conceived as a subject in permanent learning and the University as the place where training is contributed to coexist in, with and for the community, guided by the university organization in charge of the work of student life" (Universidad del Quindío, 2016, p.21).

In the years of academic and institutional administrative reform that passed, the Visual Arts program saw the need to adopt changes that led it to strengthen the modality of artistic creation research that we are interested in. This research modality was considered from the very beginning of the undergraduate program as a fundamental component of its training proposal:

However, from the disciplinary view, the program orients its research axis in two ways: research and research creation in the arts. It is therefore necessary to distinguish between research in the arts, which in the context of the programme is called Creation Research, and research applied to the arts. In the latter, the antecedents speak of historiographical reviews and applied processes

traditionally in the Human and Social Sciences. (Master Document, 2019, p.58)

It can be observed how it is assimilated in higher education in arts, an idea of research creation from which methodological openings are generated that are differentiated from the traditional ones. As contemplated in the articulation with ideas of contemporary philosophy and aesthetics of the first section, creation research takes a critical distance from modern methodologies, this being its way of claiming "a space of development for itself, as a response to the apparent impossibility of consolidating measurable and verifiable methodological structures from positivist thinking applied to the actions of human beings, human relationships or symbolic representations that are characterized by being complex and changing phenomena (Universidad del Quindío, 2017, p.85-86).

It is worth mentioning that in the development of the research path of the program, two lines of research were consolidated, which are *Artistic Creation Research* and *Environmental Aesthetics Population and Territory*. From these lines there is a strong contextual character and an environmental emphasis that sets the mark of the Visual Arts career at the Universidad del Quindío. At present, the undergraduate curricular structure is nuclearized, that is, it is conceived from Training Nuclei and Integrative Thematic Nuclei, through which it is intended to incorporate creation processes susceptible of verification and that generate a high impact in the society in which artistic practice is inserted. This is proposed in total harmony with the Uniquindiano Educational Project (Universidad del Quindío, 2016) whose strategic objective is: Contribute to the construction of a sustainable and resilient society, educating for peace in the post-conflict period, with aesthetic and environmental sensitivity; likewise with culture, academic training to have a leading and influential role in society (p.19). Formative purposes and curricular

structure proposed here are not in consonance with the institutional research policy that is irrigated to the Faculty of Human Sciences and Fine Arts:

Research is a commitment of the Faculty to strengthen the social projection and the impact of the academy in its context, involving the community of research practices. In this way, the context constitutes one of the main elements to consider in the projects developed by the Faculty, not only as a source of research problems, but also as an object of change and transformation, given the social responsibility of the University and, especially, that of the Faculty with the region and knowledge itself. (Universidad del Quindío, 2016, p.24)

The way in which the Visual Arts program specifically orders academic artistic activity from creation research, is expressed in its Educational Project (PEP, 2017) through what we have called the metaphor of the hydrographic *watershed*, in the which the land surface, mountains and valleys represent the epistemological substrates of the program, that is, environmental, systemic and complex thought, which unfolds in the contextual nucleus from knowing-being, knowing-knowing and knowing-thinking (p.52).

When examining the components or nuclei of undergraduate professional training, we see how they constitute the metaphorical watershed proposed to understand academic artistic activity. What we can continue to appreciate in this display is how a nucleus called *Context and Art Theory* configures in the landscape a surface of mountains and valleys that makes the gaze direct towards the sociocultural space in which the artistic training experience is inserted. Through the central part of this watershed, with its mountains and valleys, the main river of artistic creation research extends, which transverses the curriculum and whose flow is naturally fed by disciplinary knowledge that act

as tributaries in the research process. The nuclei of formation that make sense as tributary rivers of artistic creation research are composed of knowledge that arises from the Plastic Arts and from the digital or transmedia media. In addition to these, the nuclei of general training, faculty and staff also offer their influx, which from the institution itself are proposed as an interdisciplinary complement and comprehensive training.

The possibility of mainstreaming the entire curricular structure that artistic creation research has as it is conceived by this particular proposal for university training in visual arts, is what makes that research modality is taken as a strip from the formative criteria of the program that has prerequisites throughout the journey that leads from the third to the ninth semester. In the Educational Program Project (PEP, 2017) it is argued that the reason why there should be prerequisites in this strip is that the Artistic Creation Research is conceived as the main channel of the curriculum, as the core academic in which the other bands flow in the form of flexible tributaries that nourish the training process and finally lead to graduate work (p.35).

Regarding the debate through which the research-creation perspective that characterizes the Visual Arts Program of the Universidad del Quindío was underpinned, it must be recognized that it was given in the broadest and most participatory way possible, through the actions of an interdisciplinary team of part- and full-time professors and with the presence of directors, administratives and students. In this way, maximum advantage was taken of the space opened up by the institutional academic reform, which called for a reflection on the University as an institution belonging to a given context, and the university community, therefore, as an organization with an inherent responsibility with the problematic reality of that context (Universidad del Quindío, 2016, p.7).

In compliance with the institutional decision-making levels and making use of the internal instances intended to provide support, the redesign of the program was carried out through a dynamic of working groups, which were consolidated with the attendance to a series of extended faculty and student representatives' meetings, meetings of Curricular and Faculty Councils, and extended student assemblies. Examining the way in which the curriculum reform process unfolded, we can say that we have the confidence to share a formative proposal that assumes creation research as the essence of its academic artistic practice and that from its very construction had a democratic and participative character.

Finally, this section cannot be closed without stating that the fact of having shared a particular case of training in the arts, obeys the purpose of offering evidence that demonstrates that creation research is a real option for the organization of artistic activities and productions academic within the arts training programs at the undergraduate level. This is how I hope that at some point the reflections that gave life and meaning to this writing, can serve as input for other training proposals beyond whether or not creation research is mainstreamed in their curricula.

## Conclusions

The debate generated throughout these pages about the motivations that contemporary philosophy and aesthetics gave to the practice of artistic creation research in a university context, had a broad development through the triad of ideas constituted by historical nihilism, Nietzschean perspectivism and hermeneutics. In these ideas we find some risks represented in the opening of meanings, styles and endless interpretations in which the experience of art can fall. Although the plurality of vehicles of expression that artists in training use to communicate their experiences seems to pose challenges for art trainers, it must be remembered

that there is a creation research that we can rely on and that marks an alternative procedure that manages to distance itself from the conventions of traditional scientific communities, which allows those who participate in the creative process to reach viewers through other means of expression. However, what we must finally agree on in creation research is that, at least in an academic environment, artistic experience requires a theoretical support that contextualizes the object of creation and adjusts it to criteria that would allow its institutionalized aesthetic formalization.

Finally, it must be understood that although the document shares a particular experience of university training in the field of Visual Arts through description, the overall intentions of the reflection were not directed there, but rather left open the contemporary debate in which the dynamics of artistic creation research rest, so that this writing is an input for the variety of humanistic disciplines that wish to introduce in their formative tasks the research modality that has been the object of consolidation since the end of the 20th century.

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