



Elena Cogni with Paul Connerton

Abstract

This session, including a practical element, will retain the informal approach and open the discussion to participants. Can we learn to listen? Or allow silence to speak to us? Can we visualize the space among us and inhabit it with our memories? these are among the questions raised by, and embedded in, Cogni's participatory art project 'lo scarto' (2015), which evolved through the relational dynamics within the group. It was informed by the Reciprocal Maieutics Approach (RMA Dolci, 1973), a pedagogic process based on collective exploration of individuals' experience and intuition. This enabled inter-subjective exchange, the activation of history and memories, and the construction of a narrative related to the mass migration phenomenon and the related current intercultural process taking place in South of Italy. This form of engagement, of prelinguistic dialogue, is a reciprocal dynamic of question and response. A 'question' already implies an openness towards the other's background and differences (cultural, gender). In particular, in the encounter the question informs the blank space between hands, which has been inhabited. The distance between two people, a materialized topography, a 'place memory' (Connerton 2009), acts as point of contact, exchange and separation. Participants feel and listen in order to respond, a necessary condition for the Reciprocal Maieutic Approach (Dolci 1988, Cogni 2016) as a way of sharing one's own experience to inform the other's. This is also how "communicative memory works, through the integration of different traditions, an aspect of which will be lost or discarded along the way... 'lo scarto', offcut, scrap, residue of culture..." (Cogni 2016). Paul Connerton will respond to Cogni's participatory practical exercise and explore some aspects of the relationship between the inside and the outside in society and with respect of the human body.

Bio

Elena Cogni has a PhD in Fine Art from University of the Arts, London Central Saint Martins College, 2004 (CSM). Her academic positions as artist include a Post-Doctorate Fellowship at CSM (Arts and Humanities Research Council UK 2004/06), a Research Fellowship at York Saint John's University (Arts Council of England, 2007/09), she contributes to the Creativities in Intercultural Arts Network (University of Cambridge). Process is central to her 'research as art practice' approach, which is also intrinsically interdisciplinary, and she often collaborates with academics and professionals from other disciplines. Her work include dialogic undertakings resulting in drawings, sculptures, video and text, and has been exhibited in the US, Europe and the UK.

Paul Connerton is a research associate in the Department of Social Anthropology at the University of Cambridge. His books include *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge University Press, 1989), *How Modernity Forgets* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), and *The Spirit of Mourning: History, Memory and the Body* (Cambridge University Press, 2011). Connerton's first book, *How Societies Remember* (1989), opened the discussion of collective memory (per Maurice Halbwachs and others) to include bodily gestures, finding in clothing, manners, musical performance, and other socially negotiated practices locii where memory is "silted" (to use his verb) into human corporeal consciousness and praxis. Connerton followed up this work with *How Modernity Forgets* (2009), which emphasizes what Connerton calls "place memory," or memory that is dependent upon topography and particularly upon topography as it relates to the human body.