

## ACCOMPLISSH 2017: Baschet and social outreach.

This short paper is an update of last year's paper for Accomplissh. On that document and talk, *Public Participation in Baschet Soundsculpture at the UB* [http://diposit.ub.edu/dspace/bitstream/2445/101643/1/ACCOMPLISSH\\_BaschetWorkshop.pdf](http://diposit.ub.edu/dspace/bitstream/2445/101643/1/ACCOMPLISSH_BaschetWorkshop.pdf) you can find a brief introduction to the Baschet Soundsculpture historical work and our contemporary endeavours.

It is a privilege to share some impressions and ideas with you. I hope our bittersweet mood can resonate with your own concerns, and generate some debate. A year after our ACCOMPLISSH meeting here, we could add some considerations and concerns, as well as some more facts, to expand the scope and deepen the perspective, regarding quantification and qualification of Arts, Social sciences and Humanities.

We have continued to work with children and adults; we have opened chances for diverse people to explore sound personally, directly and as a group. We have also worked more with other institutions that seem to be interested in our project and goals. And again we have faced the fact that real public participation is generally a major challenge for their usual ways to operate. Real commitment to attend general audience in a multilevel way is always a scarce pearl!

We should reiterate there are so many chances to study the actual impact of art in society, in any of the ongoing Baschet projects worldwide. It seems clear to us that our project allows for much more scholar activity, in many more fields than what we are now capable of. We can't hide the UB itself, as well as many other institutions that could collaborate, are missing chances every day.



Last year we did not mention about how rewarding it is to see a deaf young man crying out of joy after being able to “listen” to sound through his fingers on one of our glass rod sculptures for the first time! We did not mention how rewarding it is to witness an unexpected gathering around the soundsculptures including ninety year old nuns, children and hipster youngster from an Electronic Music festival, all playing sounds together with no problem because of their different backgrounds. I could go on with particular cases from every activity we had. A part from the studies we would like to carry on, our concern is how to gather all those stories of intangible beneficial outputs from public participation, in a way that it is not just a collection of anecdotes. François' recently reissued book is packed with them. And yet, we can't understand how complicated it is to get certain people involved in something as spectacular and successful, such a great proof of social outreach. But how to turn our social science specialists to commit to something as complex and demanding labours, to join us in

studying the benefits of such activities? Are they the first ones who are probably afraid of the applied interdisciplinary approach?

Besides that, -we hopefully will reach some degree of systematic case studies proposed last year- there are darker concerns on our field. Is there anyone who could nowadays openly admit that cultural policies must not be inclusive? Is there anyone who can openly defend elitism, or openly fight tolerance and respect for diversity? Is there anyone who can actually argue that cultural activities, arts, and even freedom of expression are not needed for a healthy and plural society? In our western world, -a part from some extreme obnoxious people, who actually shout out loud hatred slogans- we must not forget there is a political correctness syndrome that blocks actual good actions to be taken, by not admitting the actual hidden reactionary willings. We constantly hear grandiloquent narratives aiming to improve the world, but few of the ideas and intentions are actually applied. For instance, we hear nice slogans about fighting inequalities, but inequality keeps growing, and so on and so forth... It is in this context of highly refined hypocrisy that we ask ourselves about the value of focusing on certain studies, devote to certain activities or not. Do we personally have that much time to waste?

In my personal view, after the recent terrorist attacks in Barcelona and Cambrils, -as well as in many other places in the world-, and seeing the general unequal situation and the uselessness of global policies, my humble opinion is that there is too much fear of difference and hate, rooted in selfish short term actions, to be fought. Diversity is not appreciated in so many domains, and conflicts are being fed upon that position. How not to engage in projects that foster comprehension, mutual respect, and offer chances to people to listen to each other? How is it that the projects with these goals are not appealing to media, and therefore stay in a perpetual activist underground?



We are not underestimating the value of quantification and qualification of the impact of all our loved cultural fields, devotions and disciplines; we are just trying to point out that generally narratives change nothing, or not much. It feels that we can't afford to build up a scholarly bubble that creates theoretical models that will not be fully applied. Sometimes we feel the decision-makers already know about the potential of some cultural fields but they are not interested in fostering them, and they might be even planning how to cut them, therefore it might be useless to try to keep proving it. It is just a matter to devote to our actual tasks, and admit that some people will not ever be

interested in them. This way, at least, we can put all our energies into the collectives that can really benefit from our work. It probably means less recognition and more real achievement. François himself approached this position the older he got. More academic and policy-makers' recognition would help, but lacking that, at least we are doing some good stuff on our daily basis.

This is why we would like to share yet another story from the Baschet, since their career is packed with rich anecdotes on their struggle to bring some actual meaningful changes:

The Baschet brothers at the Patent Office in 1963, from François's book:

*We had an administrative problem. The US Patent Office was not willing to accept the patent of our glass rods associated to the metal cones, saying that the device could not produce any sound. Bernard and I set up the structure in the Patent Office. The noise in this silent, tomblike building brought people flocking from all the other floors. The "public participation" was total. Photos were taken, we were congratulated, and the patent was granted!*

It is a good example on how real facts can push someone's preconceived ideas. It seems it is a reasonable advice to devote to this kind of experiences that make the difference, real facts that would have a real impact despite there is no actual recognition. This would charge your batteries to keep trying on the harsh job of getting funds and improving policies for the studies; and if not successful on that issue, at least some real achievement has already been accomplished.

Our colleagues from the UNAM in Mexico have successfully restored a historical masterpiece at the MUAC, and our colleagues in Japan –public university professors and artists from Tokyo and Kyoto- have created a Baschet Association and have raised funds to continue restoring the original Baschet pieces and set them back into contemporary cultural context. Our network gradually grows. It seems clear that all the precious international collaborations confirm that the interest of our project could be shared even by many more.

Having reasons such as those ones to be hopeful is as important to us as having air to breathe. We wish to share some of our hope for any real project you have, and invite you again to know more about Baschet and join the network.

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