

Summary

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Humanistic knowledge in a rapidly changing world is not a cumulative one. Unlearning today serves above all to emphasise the aspect of dignity: getting rid of the language that naturalises violence, fruitful in post-dependence, post-colonial or identity studies. However, epistemophilic attitudes most often function in the context of knowledge produced and distributed as an unquestionable economic good. This results, on the one hand, in the reduction of knowledge to pure information with no attention to human relations and respect, and on the other hand, in authoritative explanation as the imposition of one's own point of view and power.

Deflationary strategies, including unlearning and deskilling, used to be connected either with a belief in democratisation (everyone can be an artist and take a photograph, and not necessarily paint a picture) or with breaking the usual patterns of creativity (new media have become a real breakthrough also in the way of thinking). Because fragility, weakness and vulnerability were often negatively characterised in modernity, deflationary strategies could play the role of opening up to others and to difference. Today, it can be considered that all counter-hegemonic strategies have been absorbed by the market and liberal capitalism. What seemed to be associated with collaboration, shared authorship and dialogic exchange turns out to be exploitative, often in relation to the poor periphery: the division of labour makes it possible to hire (for little money) whoever is artisanally proficient and to appropriate their work. In the deflationary tactics recuperated by neoliberalism, the stakes in the game are still power, productivity and brand (authorship).

Today unlearning in the field of art history is no longer just an inspiration to reflect on knowledge about art, but also to imagine and practice a different way of co-existence with this art. Also when art itself is no longer necessarily art we know and got used to.