

5.5.3 Process Above All: Shadrach Woods' NonSchool of Villefranche

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ABSTRACT

Used in the context of architecture and urbanism, the term 'anarchism' often proves ambiguous and overly-abstract. Focusing on the design process of Shadrach Woods, this paper intends to ground the term concretely in the history of twentieth-century architecture and theory.

In 2000, former Team X member Giancarlo De Carlo noted that the anarchist thought of two late nineteenth-century polymaths, Patrick Geddes and Piotr Kropotkin, had significantly influenced his own work. He also pondered whether Team X, a diffuse assortment of architects organized into a horizontal hierarchy, could be considered anarchist. He asserted that "in Team X many positions and many attitudes were similar to the anarchist movement", and that some members of Team X viewed the means as more important than the ends. In particular, he explained, Shadrach Woods and the Smithsons favored design process over formal results.

Using this measure of process versus formal result as a starting point, my paper explores the relationship between anarchism and Team X, particularly in the work and ideas of Shadrach Woods. In 1966 Woods proposed a radical experiment that he termed "non-school" that was centered on the abolition of degrees and traditional academic curricula, replacing these antiquated requirements with a new system that integrated education with the urban community and expanded its access to people of all ages. Many of his ideas were in part inspired by his encounter with artists from the Fluxus movement, with whom he collaborated at the Non-School of Villefranche in 1966, and again later at the Triennale in Milan in 1968. As I link Woods' theories to the Team X and to the Fluxus thought, I suggest that we might call the non-school approach a "school without walls for architects and artists".

KEYWORDS

Shadrach woods, Team X, Fluxus, NonSchool, process, Berlin Free University

INTRODUCTION

During the last decade of his life, the architect Shadrach Woods theorized and proposed a process-centered and interdisciplinary model of university education that was derived from the practices with which he and his circle of artists and architects – most prominently Fluxus and Team X – were experimenting during the 1960s. This paper analyzes Woods' theoretical discourse on education, and then turns to the application of these theories in the case of the Nonschool of Villefranche, a radical experiment conceived in 1966 by Woods and his friend and colleague, Robert Filliou, a French American Fluxus artist. It concludes by situating the Berlin Free University, Woods' bestknown work, in the discourse of the NonSchool/ and the broader cultural and intellectual projects associated with Fluxus and Team X. While these movements have attracted the attention of many historians, Woods' interest in expanding their experimental practices far beyond elite arts production has, to my knowledge, never been published or presented. This lacuna proves all the more surprising in light of the broad acceptance of many of Woods' once radical positions in today's pedagogical discourses.

FROM THEORIES OF THE ARCHITECTURE OF EDUCATION TO THE NONSCHOOL

A major preoccupation of Shadrach Woods for the last eleven years of his life, from 1962 to 1973, was what he called 'the architecture of education', through which he sought to reformulate ideas of how universities should function and how they should be designed.¹ Woods' interest in universities can be tied to his professional endeavours in the early 1960s. An important theoretician,² partner in the firm Candilis-Josic-Woods (CJW)³ (1955-68) and a core member of Team X (1953-81)⁴. Woods collaborated with George Candilis and Alexis Josic on the designs of Bochum University (1962) and Dublin University College (1964), and with Manfred Schiedhelm on the Free University of Berlin (1963) and Brussels Free University (1971). In addition, he taught architecture design studios and lectured at Yale (1962-67), Cornell (1970-1), Harvard (1968-73) and Rice Universities (1970).

In common with many intellectuals who taught at universities in the 1960s, Shadrach Woods found himself caught up in a vortex of change in education. Like architecture, the field of education was searching for new models; thinkers sought to reformulate the basic problems of education, rather than simply seeking new solutions to old questions. The student revolts of the late 1960s and the early 1970s profoundly altered society's political and cultural attitudes, particularly in the academic world. The Cuban Missile



NonSchool in Villefranche, stationery. In: Shadrach Woods Collection, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York City (Feld box 09, folder 9.17)

During the 1968 student occupation of University Hall, Harvard's main administrative headquarters, part of an anti-Vietnam war protest, there had been debates on education. Woods gave a series of lectures exploring these ideas,⁶ the most important of which was "The Education Bazaar," where he outlined many of his thoughts about architectural education. The article began as a lecture at Harvard's Graduate School of Design (GSD) in 1969, and it was soon after published in the *Harvard Educational Review*.⁷ In the same issue of this journal, Aldo Van Eyck, Giancarlo De Carlo, Herman Hertzberger, Peter Prangnell and others published significant articles on education in schools of architecture too. These authors were all part of Team X, or influenced by this group's work and thought, and they proposed in these writings a pluralistic approach to education.⁸ One can especially see ties between Woods' article and Giancarlo De Carlo's: both focused on the idea of the integration of the city and the school, shared a commitment of the architect to society, and showed sympathy to student protesters.

In "The Education Bazaar," Woods describes his concept of a school without walls that is physically integrated into the city, because he sees the city and

Crisis (1962), the Vietnam War (1963-75), the Civil Rights movement (1968), the Watergate Scandals of the Nixon administration (1972), and the global oil crisis (1973) led students to denounce the poorly functioning political, economical, social and educational systems. They demanded radical institutional change, and many intellectuals and educators, like Shadrach Woods, listened.⁵

Central to these changes was an emphasis on collaborative efforts and an educational model grounded in pluralism – that is, the acceptance of divergent values and multiple perspectives. During the 1968 student occupation of University

its streets as places for learning.⁹ He summarizes this concept as 'the idea of an Educational Bazaar, of the City as Education.'¹⁰ In four sections entitled 'the gap', 'the removal of barriers', 'the city as a school; the school as the city', and 'man or animal?' he pairs text and image to explain how his theoretical ideas might be translated into university designs, noting especially his work in the Dublin University College design competition (1964) and an outline for the competition on the expansion of the city of Caen in 1961. In developing this idea that the university must be integrated into the city and that the educational process needs to overcome the barriers of the past, he introduces an alternative model of education, which he calls the NonSchool.¹¹

In analyzing Woods' writings, we turn to another version of the same lecture, signed, undated, and never published, which can be found in Shadrach Woods Collection at Avery Drawings and Archives at Columbia University in New York City. This second version was probably written sometime between November 1968 and early 1970.¹² Through it, we see the evolution of Woods' concept of the NonSchool through his experience with the 'Non-School of Villefranche', a radical experiment in the field of education conceived by Shadrach Woods and the French-American Fluxus artist Robert Filliou.

While difficult to classify in traditional art historical terms, Fluxus, following John Hendricks's definition in his 1988 book *Fluxus Codex*, might be portrayed as an informal neo-dada group of artists active in many different artistic disciplines from the beginning of the 1960s.¹³

This second version of "The Education Bazaar," while structurally similar to the published version, differs in content and manner of expression, showing a more open attitude, and revealing close intellectual bonds to the French Fluxus 'movement', especially to Robert Filliou, whose own ideas on education influenced Woods' approach. Indeed, the text includes excerpts of conversations between the artists Allan Kaprow and Robert Filliou, and between Filliou and John Cage. It is clear that this unpublished Shadrach Woods' essay owes a great deal to Filliou's extraordinary book 'Teaching and Learning as Performing Arts.'¹⁴ Woods got to know Robert Filliou through the American architect-tartist Joachim Pfeufer,¹⁵ who first met Woods in 1959 at CIAM XI, worked with Candilis-Josic-Woods from 1960 to 1968, and began collaborating with Robert Filliou on the Poipoidrom project in 1963.¹⁶ The personal and intellectual relationship of the three men can be traced to Villefranche-sur-Mer, a small village in the French Cote d'Azur, where Fluxus artists from around the world gathered between 1965 and 1968. Those artists were part of a movement which 'challenged preconceived notions about art, the function of art, and the role of the artist in society,' promoting a 'nonart'.¹⁷

In Villefranche-sur-Mer, Fluxus members Robert Filliou and George Brecht¹⁸ established 'La Cédille Qui Sourit', an experimental space or shop, an art laboratory, where Fluxus artists came together to showcase their works in an unusual exhibition-sale in which they sold various creations, such as jewellery and musical instruments. Conceived first as an English bookshop, the site became, in practice, a combination of workshop and shop, or maybe, appropriating Fluxus' terms, a 'nonshop'. 'La Cédille' was created inside of two Filliou's projects, and are all interconnected: 'The Eternal Network'¹⁹ and 'The centre of Permanent Creation.'²⁰

Woods travelled frequently to Villefranche during the non-shop's short three-year life from September 1965 to October 1968.²¹ He was fascinated by, and influenced by the ideas of Filliou, a prominent figure in Fluxus.²² While Woods encountered the Fluxus world first at Villefranche, he maintained his relationship with the movement in Paris, and it fundamentally shaped his ideas and theoretical approach to architectural education. In particular, Woods drew upon Fluxus' emphasis on the importance of the arts in the educational process, and also their radical approach to reformulating the relationship between school, city, and world.

The basic idea of 'NonÉcole de Villefranche', or NonSchool, was to refuse any predetermined program, and to create a school that was free, fair, and, most importantly, open to all an anti-school that rejected any relationship with the scholastic institution and broke with past institutions of school. A central characteristic of the NonSchool, as described in 'Teaching and Learning as Performing Arts', was, as Filliou asserted, 'to show how some of the problems inherent to teaching and learning can be solved – or let's say eased – through an application of the participation techniques developed by artists in such fields as: happenings, event, action poetry, environments, visual poetry, films, street performances, non-instrumental music, games, correspondence, etc...'²³ In other words, the arts must have a core role in the educational process: they would enrich it and give it new perspective.

Woods applied the ideas of the 'NonSchool of Villefranche' to the world of college-level architecture, drawing on these notions in the development of his own NonSchool. There are very few primary sources for the NonSchool project. Some documents related to this project are held in Shadrach Woods Collection at Columbia University; these include NonSchool stationery, a statement of NonSchool philosophy, and a description of the program of the Villefranche workshop.²⁴ Robert Filliou also discusses the subject briefly in his 1970 book 'Teaching and Learning as Performing Arts,' an accessible and poetic book that puts forth on existential problems and seeks to interpret and reinterpret contemporary life.²⁵ Woods wanted the NonSchool to replace traditional ways of learning at the college level, particularly by intro-

ducing a new teaching method, the abolition of grades, and the intervention of the artists. Although Woods' NonSchool was never realized in the field of education, the concepts and ideas influenced the curriculum at Harvard and other architecture schools where he taught. Indeed, in a recent interview, Eric Pfeufer, Joachim Pfeufer's younger brother and a former student of Woods at Harvard, insisted that the NonSchool did exist at Harvard under Woods in the personal and anti-academic way that he conducted his design studios.²⁶

Another important principle of the nonschool was the idea of non-specialization, which would open students to various disciplines and help them adapt to shifts to the changing market conditions. Filliou and Woods believed excessive specialization prevented cultural adoptions and also hindered an individual's ability in a continuously changing world and job market. Furthermore, the NonSchool sought to revise modes of teaching. Borrowing from Marxist ideology, Fluxus called for the abolition of classes and applied this to the classroom setting: they wanted to end the fixed rules of the student-teacher relationship and cultivate a new model where teaching and learning were part of a two-way, continuously flowing process. Learning at the NonSchool was not to be based on the transmission of information, but instead students would be given endless ways to analyse problems then would be guided in the direction of their own interests and personal inclinations. Applying these ideas to the architecture school, Woods called for the 'total revision' of the system of architectural education based on principles of the NonSchool. He explained that

the urban structures which we know no longer contain our needs, nor do they correspond to the evolving goals which we can occasionally perceive. [...] We shall develop non-structures to organize our various activities in ways, places and buildings that relate more directly to a society which is in a state of becoming, that is, in ways that exhibit great potential to change.²⁷

He envisioned the administrative management of the NonSchool as constantly changing, with the theoretical direction framed by persons of international standing who would be brought in on a temporary basis.

While Fluxus provided one model for Woods, he also was heavily influenced by Team X.²⁸ Whereas Fluxus emphasized the role of artists in bringing about social change, Team X believed that students would be the centre of the future society. Unlike CIAM, which would organize through quasi-annual international congresses, Team X's meetings were held in ateliers where real problems and projects could be discussed by many in a common vision

of architecture and urban planning. In thinking about the physical space of the architectural school, Woods drew upon ideas from Team X member and Italian architect and educator, Giancarlo De Carlo. De Carlo argued for the integration of a project with its context, seeing geographical, cultural, and temporal circumstances as essential for the design of a university. This attitude was contrary to the traditional Anglo-Saxon concept of the campus, with its customary extra-urban siting in autonomous isolation. De Carlo developed and implemented his concept in Urbino (1956-94), where he designed an extension of the university in a way that would integrate into the historic city.²⁹ De Carlo's influence is clearly seen in the section of Woods' lecture titled 'the city as a school; the school as a city', in which he refers to De Carlo's *Harvard Educational Review* essay:

The school should not be an island, but a part of the physical environment, and – at best – the physical environment should itself be considered and conceived as a whole, according to educational needs: it should not be a finished device, but a structure that branches out into the fabric of social activities, able to adapt to their constant changes [...].³⁰

In addition to engagement with the city, Woods insisted that the university should draw upon the knowledge and experience of the larger populace. He explains:

With the revision of academic structures, where the entire system becomes adaptable to the needs of the entire world and where the global viewpoint can be reflected in the education process, urbanism and education come together. Education will become a necessary part of the physical milieu.³¹

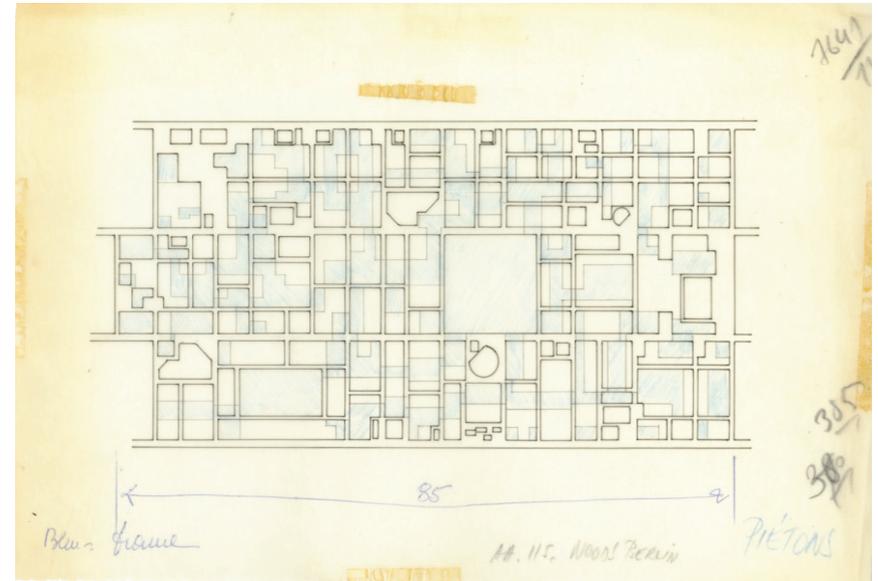
Moreover, in thinking about the city itself as a space of education, he argued 'The cities represent the future of Western society, and schools represent the future of cities. City and school intertwine to an inextricable degree.'³² The experiment thus aimed to dismantle traditional school hierarchies, and in an engagement with the city, Woods insisted that the university should draw upon the knowledge and experience of the larger populace. He explains:

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Moreover, in thinking about the city itself as a space of education, he argued 'The cities represent the future of Western society, and schools represent the future of cities. City and school intertwine to an inextricable degree.'³⁴ The experiment aimed to dismantle traditional school hierarchies and to integrate the school with the city.

FREE UNIVERSITY BERLIN: CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Woods tried to give form to this theoretical experiment in his design of the Free University of Berlin. In collaboration with Manfred Schiedhelm, a young talented German architect who was working Candilis-Josic-Woods in Paris, Woods won a competition for a university design in West Berlin in 1963. Their proposal reflects the ideas he would later express in the lecture "The Education Bazaar": the oneness of the school, the integration process with the city, the flexibility of spaces and ideas. Described by historian Stanley Abercrombie as 'one of the most radical architectures of the last century,' the Berlin Free University might be read as Woods' manifesto.³⁵ It was also his last built project, with the first construction phase completed in 1973, the year he passed away. It is based on his process-centred *web* concept,



Berlin Free University. Pedestrian paths grid overlapping open spaces grid. In: Shadrach Woods Collection, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York City (Feld box 05)

which he presented in 1962 in the journal *Le Carré Bleu*.³⁶ Later defined as a 'mat-building' or 'ground-scraper',³⁷ this architecture was conceived as a platform or slab that would facilitate encounters among students and teachers, helping to overcome the differences between them. In the first years of its life, the school was always left open, but it was soon brutally vandalized. Later, some restrictions were introduced. In the first phase of the project, the young Manfred Schiedhelm strongly insisted on leaving the corridors open, to recall best the idea of a city with its blocks and its streets, and to stress the concept of the school as a city and the city as a school. Furthermore, Jean Prouvé collaborated with Woods in designing its famous Corten façade with the goal of producing a light, modular, steel structure that would allow for a high level of flexibility and adaptability. And indeed, the structure was able to accommodate numerous changes and renovations, the most notable of which was Norman Foster's new library of 1997.

Towards the end of his life Woods seems to have grown more and more convinced that architecture did not in itself hold the tools to realize his idealistic aspirations. But rather than growing disillusioned, he initiated a deployment not of his architecture, but of its methods of operation, including open collaboration, non-specialization, challenges to hierarchy, and the utilization of existing urban networks. These he sought to embed in a new 'architecture of education' that, more than any building, design strategy, or disciplinary movement, might produce profound, long-lasting cultural betterment.

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1 Shadrach Woods, "The Education Bazaar," *Harvard Educational Review, Architecture and Education* 4 (1969).

2 Shadrach Woods is mostly known for his articles: Shadrach Woods, "Stem," *Architectural Design* 5 (1960), and Id., "Web," *Le Carré Bleu* 3 (1962).

3 Candilis/Josic/Woods is a successful partnership of architects (the Greek Georges Candilis, the Yugoslavian Alexis Josic, the American Shadrach Woods), founded in Paris in 1955, and mainly active till 1969 in the European scene of the reconstruction after the Second World War.

4 Team X (1953-81) was an international group of architects born from the ashes of CIAMs (International Congress of Modern Architecture). Among the 'core group' there were: the English Alison and Peter Smithson, the Dutch Aldo Van Eyck and Jaap Bakema, the Italian Giancarlo De Carlo, the French Georges Candilis, the American Shadrach Woods. They met regularly (once a year or twice a year) from 1953 to 1981. The inner circle became a bigger family during some meetings. Each meeting had a subject, and all the members came to discuss projects about this topic.

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5 This culture of protest and response can be seen at the Harvard Graduate School of Design. See Antony Alofsin, *The Struggle for Modernism, Architecture, Landscape Architecture and City Planning at Harvard* (New York, London: Norton & Company, 2002).

6 Among Shadrach Woods' lectures we mention: "Dwellings, Ways and Places" (1962), "Discovery of Architecture" (1963), "The Technicosociological hangup" (1967), "Notes on Architectural Education" (1967), "The Incompatible Butterfly", "The Eight Gropius Lecture" (1968), "The future of..." (1968), "The crowded crystal ball" (1969), "The Educational Bazaar" (1969).

7 Woods, "The Education Bazaar," 116-25.

8 Alofsin, *The Struggle for Modernism*, 260.

9 Woods, "The Education Bazaar," 124.

10 Ibidem, 117.

11 Ibidem, 118.

12 Woods was probably working on this lecture writing before April 1969 when he presented it at Harvard GSD. The text contains quotes from November 1968. The final version draws heavily on ideas published in 1970 in Robert Filliou, *Teaching and Learning as Performing Arts* (Koeln, New York: Verlag Gebr. Koenig, 1970).

13 Jon Hendricks, *Fluxus Codex* (New York: Harry N. Abrams Inc. Publishers, 1988).

14 Filliou, *Teaching and Learning as Performance Arts*.

15 Joachim Pfeufer (Boston, 1935) is an architect, urbanist, and artist who worked with Candilis-Josic-Woods from 1960 to 1968. He collaborated with Robert Filliou on the Poipoidrom project beginning in 1963. He lived variously in Boston, Providence, Ulm, Paris, New York and Nantes, and taught at the École des Beaux arts in Nantes. Shadrach Woods and Joachim Pfeufer met for the first time in Otterlo in 1959, at the Congress of International Modern Architecture.

16 Joachim Pfeufer wrote in 1972: 'The Poipoidrom is the functional relation of thinking, activity, and communication. A chair, a workbench, or an open mind can be a minimal Poipoidrom. The combination of a great number of minimums is not simply many chairs or many workbenches a great calm. The Poipoidrom is an expression of this. And it is, at the same time, the matrix of two different routes: that of activity and that of thinking which corresponds to the different dispositions of the co-constructors, Robert Filliou and Joachim Pfeufer. The optimal Poipoidrom is an instantly realizable building of the size of 24x24 meters. What should be put inside, and how it should be built up became clear during ten years of research. The co-urbanists are now working on the designation of the building's site and they welcome any suggestions coming from anyone'. This information comes from a website created to represent the Fluxus movement. See www.artpool.hu/Fluxus/Filliou/Poipoi3e.html (accessed 1 March 2014).

17 Hendricks, *Fluxus Codex*, 21.

18 George Brecht (1926-2008) was an American artist who was part of the Fluxus experiment.

19 It was a large network of artists, introduced by Filliou: 'The artist must realize also he is part of a wider network, [...] going on around him all the time in all parts of the world'. In, Robert Filliou, *Teaching and Learning as Performance Arts*, 24.

20 Filliou wrote: 'To be young is to be creative,

we may find it worth our while to acquire the knack of permanent creation'. Ibidem, 42.

21 See Woods' calendars and notebooks in Shadrach Woods Collection, Avery Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York City – Avery Box 06, Folder 2.

22 The influence of Filliou on Woods can also be seen in the subtitles of the unpublished version of *The Education Bazaar*: 'Doing it ourselves' and 'La Cédille Qui Sourit'.

23 Filliou, *Teaching and Learning as Performing Arts*, 12.

24 Shadrach Woods Collection, Avery Drawings and Archives, Columbia University, New York City – Feld Box 09, Folder 9.17 (Non-School stationary); Feld Box 08, Folder 8.55 (workshop in Villefranche document).

25 There might be other documents related to this project in Filliou's archive.

26 Interview by Federica Doglio, Manhattan, January 2012.

27 Woods, "The Education Bazaar," 121.

28 For chronology see also the most complete anthology about Team X: Max Risselada and Dirk Van Der Hauvel (eds.), *TEAM 10. 1953-1981: In search of a utopia of the present* (Rotterdam: Nai, 2005).

29 Giancarlo De Carlo, "Why/How to Build School Buildings," *Harvard Educational Review, Architecture and Education* 4 (1969), 12-34. I have used here the Italian translation: Giancarlo De Carlo, "Ordine-Istituzione Educazione-disordine," *Casabella – Continuità* 3689 (1972).

30 De Carlo, "Ordine-Istituzione," 65-71.

31 Woods, "The Education Bazaar", 119.

32 Shadrach Woods, *The man in the street. A polemic on urbanism* (Middlesex/Baltimore/Victoria: Penguin, 1975).

33 Woods, "The Education Bazaar", 119.

34 Woods, *The man in the street*.

35 Stanley Abercrombie, "Berlin Free University," *Architecture Plus* (1974).

36 Shadrach Woods, "Web", 23.

37 Alison Smithson, "How to recognize and read a MatBuilding. Mainstream architecture as it has developed towards a mat-building," *Architectural Design* 9 (1974), and Manfred Schiedhelm et al., *Free University Berlin* (London: Architectural Association, 1999).