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Rancièrian aesthetic education as an intervention

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In a multicultural society, art education needs theoretical tools to understand pluralism found in society. I argue that the work of philosopher Jacques Rancière, in acknowledging the agonistic or polemical nature of all communities, helps in this task.

In Rancière's political philosophy, politics is not about a collection of institutions, the administration of the "common" nor an allocation of roles to everyone in a society. Instead, politics is the disruption of this order by an egalitarian claim.

For Rancière, politics intertwines intimately with the realm of the sensible. The status quo inscribes itself into the sensible world all around us, since everyone is given a place in it. Therefore, politics is actually a rupture in this distribution of the sensible: who has been left out by the established order?

We find the concept of aesthetic community from Rancière's writings on art. These kinds of communities acknowledge the polemical nature at the core of their own being. Works of art can bring about these aesthetic communities. In other words, something similar to politics may be enabled via works of art.

In this paper, I rework these ideas from different parts of Rancière's work and present a conception of Rancièrian aesthetic education. I aim to show that through this reconceptualization of art education, we gain better understanding of the pluralism of contemporary societies. In better understanding the nature of society, we can hope to develop art education practices that acknowledge the agonistic or polemical nature of society and work as egalitarian interventions.