

Notes for an Art School

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Each One Teach One

Adorno: Thinking is action, theory is a form of practice.

In general terms, the purpose of studying and teaching at an art academy is to establish links between current and historical knowledge. But, since the obsolete relationship between master and pupil derives from a form of teaching dating back to the eighteenth century, it is necessary to set about renewing the content of teaching in European art academies by means of project-based and practical transdisciplinary education. The classical academic disciplines and classes must be discontinued. If European art academies wish to prepare students for the twenty-first century and to push forward new forms of teaching, then we require a complete reform of the education system.

The suspension of traditional forms of presentation and teaching is crucial to contemporary education at European art academies. Contemporary art academies must reflect on processes in changing societies, for without this they will be unable to arrive at a definition of themselves and the issues they address.

In times of crisis, when the old categories of the sublime and the beautiful are losing ground and primary socio-political requirements take centre stage, it becomes clear that the teaching of traditional cultural concepts has nearly nothing to contribute to discussion about our lives, let alone to changing them. This is the point when people start to call on the art world to address socially relevant issues in a new way.

The ‘idea of the universities’, which the reformer Henrik Steffens enthusiastically formulated 190 years ago, was once realised in the ‘organised unity of knowledge’. Instead we now have a veritable bazaar of arbitrary individual disciplines—allegedly so as to do justice to the need for subjectivity—with no consideration of practical issues. In reality, the art academy often provides no more than a forum for professors to tend to their egos, not to mention their pensions.

Back in 1983, Gerhard Richter noted: ‘The most gruesome aspect of our artistic misery is to be found in the so-called art academies, which dupe the entire public with their pompous and resounding names. The word academy merely serves to deceive ministries, local governments and parents, and in the name of the academy young students are deformed and misshaped. [...] The mechanism follows an absolutely classical pattern: the more these professors feel the need to conceal and suppress their true inability and their obvious lack of influence, the more unscrupulously they attempt to wield their power wherever they can—over students in the direct form of arbitrary control, and over their colleagues in the indirect form of intrigue. There can be no doubt that this system is one root of the cultural misery of society, nor that these academies need radical reform.’

The crisis of the European art academies is also a crisis of the authority of those who should be imbuing these institutions with new questions, content and substance. Professors view their work as an onerous duty, and few of them spend more than three or four days a month at their place of work. Politically minded teaching staff now remain increasingly outside the academies and do not even attempt to pursue an academic career; if they do, they are quickly disillusioned.

Marcel Duchamp was quick to recognise that the artist moves from the margins of society to the centre. He always resisted becoming ‘*bête comme un peintre*’—stupid like a painter—and understood art as an attempt to school his intellect. For Duchamp, the artist is highly integrated into society, so that, after his or her emancipation from the commission and the patron, he or

she is positively obliged to pursue the education and expansion of his intellect. Quite rightly, Duchamp insisted on being more than just a chatterer and a thief in an artist's smock, because he saw himself confronted with a society that pursued the exploitative logic of capitalism and therefore dwelled in intellectual homelessness.

To date the usual practice for most professors at art academies has been to age quietly doing unremarkable service whilst watching their salaries increase. It makes no difference if the professors in question are internationally renowned or academic underachievers. To this day, it is simply assumed that professors of art have the necessary teaching skills, and they make their real careers with their success in the art world.

But most students of art are no better. If the student does not like a particular seminar or professor they will just leave the room or find a different one. In 1968 students would have fought against this kind of chaos in the name of education, but their children just accept it in silence.

Revolt, Reform and Vocation

The student revolts in the late 1960s were a rediscovery of the place of education as a central location for the reflection of social and economic problems, taking seriously the ideas of autonomy and political criticism as espoused by Theodor W. Adorno. Adorno saw criticism as an instrument of political correction and he expressed his satisfaction at the fact that massive criticism by the students' movement forced the resignation of politicians and other public figures for the role they played in Nazi Germany.

Universities and other institutions of higher education were the breeding grounds of protest and the most important mover of comprehensive social change, because they brought sections of the population that had hitherto not enjoyed university education into the reformed institutions. The student movement of 1968 demanded more reality in teaching (even in the art academies), and more social commitment, and the protests were aimed at the great political issues of the time, such as the Vietnam War.

Joseph Beuys founded the German Student Party after experiencing the politicisation of society in the late 1960s, especially following the shooting of the student Benno Ohnesorg by a policeman during a demonstration in Berlin in 1967. Beuys was relieved of his duties as a professor at the Düsseldorf Academy of Art in 1972 by Johannes Rau (who was later to become the German head of state) after he refused to implement a university reform that provided for greater regimentation of studies. Beuys' pupil Jörg Immendorf founded a movement for the rights of tenants, and at the *École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts* in Paris art students supported other students in revolt and striking workers on the barricades with their *Atelier Populaire*. Artists' cooperatives were founded, such as *Cityarts Workshop*, with the aim of making 'art for everyone' possible.

The slogans, 'education for everyone' and 'culture for everyone', which summarise social democratic education policy in western Europe in the 1970s and 1980s, contain an echo of the students' movement's demand for reform in the late 1960s. Young people from low-income backgrounds were to have the opportunity to study at university, and to partake in social advancement

and affluence. State promotion schemes and scholarships were introduced. New universities were founded and old ones expanded so as to accommodate the numbers of applicants pushing into the academic market. The student milieus that were established had a lasting influence on politics and society. In particular the universities proved to be autonomous places where—unlike today—social issues were at the forefront and career took second place. Universities sparked developments that affected the whole of society and generated a culture of political participation.

Education for the Market

Since the late 1990s the institution of the university has again been the subject of discussion in society, but now with reversed priorities. Today the talk is of overcrowded lecture theatres, of stale teaching methods, the introduction of students' fees, and simply of a 'state of emergency in education'. Whereas the reformers wish to preserve the achievements made in education and education policy in the face of reduced funding, critics are demanding an 'offensive for education' oriented solely on the market laws of supply and demand. This 'offensive for education' aims at the privatisation of information, knowledge, culture and education. The redistribution of information has fatal consequences for the social and cultural status of those who have no access to the sources of knowledge. The 'equal opportunities' that formed the core of the reforms of the 1970s are understood by the supporters of market-based education above all in economic terms. It is qualification for a job, and no longer the emancipation of the individual, that now forms the core of university study.

Much has been written about 1968, but only seldom has it been recognised that the primary aim of the students' movement has been defeated—in spite of all the visible successes, including the opening up of universities for people from working-class families, opportunities for mature students entering university from a profession, and the democratisation of internal structures. Universities have become a bland playground for too many unmotivated students who merely wish to extend for a few years the comfortable status that they enjoyed at school—the comfort of not having to assume responsibility. And whenever proof of performance or the basic tenets of teaching become an issue, then these people take recourse to the old anti-capitalist sentiment. Where the university becomes a protective workshop, it stifles initiative, instead of demanding and encouraging it. A student who has no idea what he or she aims to achieve will test out any number of odd jobs and postpone serious decisions about the future. Certainly, though, not all students comply with this picture of a trade union mentality.

All this insecurity leads to quite new forms of what have been called patchwork biographies. Today's patchwork youth ridicules the great improvers of the world of the 1960s, the eco-freaks of the 1970s, and the 1980s discoverers of the self. Today's generation has no plan and adheres to no ideology. These people are studying without conviction. Is this perhaps an expression of passive resistance towards the desolate boredom of the academies?

Autonomy

The above brief polemic in fact only serves to distract from the structural problems that our state of intellectual house arrest gives rise to. If the (art) academy is no

longer a site of inspiration then it is no longer possible to fight for its survival, and the policy of intellectual economies will face no serious obstacles. Many members of the universities are simply resigned to their fates, or they do no more than their utmost to preserve the privileges of the status quo. They are afraid of redundancy, of job cuts and unemployment, and of the uselessness of the education they either deliver or partake in. But it is a fact that all relations of power derive their continuity from the continuing existence of human fears.

What we need is practical models for resistance in the fine arts, network culture, politics and the media. Before we begin to discuss existing and potential models for the training of artists, the very profile of the artistic profession must be reformulated. What options are open to art students in the art world anyway? What do existing models of education have to offer—beyond the development of the self? As most professors agree with the premise that art is unteachable, blinding their students with notions of artistic freedom and thrusting them into bohemian fantasies, they stand in the way of critical approaches to political, theoretical and social discourses. In any case, since the advent of project-based art in the early 1990s, the role model of the artist has moved in the direction of that of a cultural worker.

If our view of society and its socio-political change is restricted, then our perspective on art is equally restricted.

Georges Bataille defined art as an act that is controversial by nature and in opposition to the status quo. What would education for this kind of concept of art look like?

Derrida sees the university as a dissident, resistant, critical and deconstructive opposition to state power, to economic powers, and to media, ideological, religious and cultural powers that restrict the advent and the permanent development of democracy. The university should therefore be a post-hierarchical space, a ‘université sans condition’, a university without rank or status. Derrida’s university is a privileged location of the forces of resistance and dissidence, which is why it is entitled to unequivocal freedom. Here everything can be stated in public, and the professors will assume the responsibility for this. The freedom to say everything that one believes is true and feels compelled to say creates an absolute academic space, which has to be symbolically protected by a kind of absolute immunity.

For Immanuel Kant, too, the university was a ‘public institution’ with the task of cultivating all the sciences and protecting them against restrictions. Universitas signifies ‘the whole’ or ‘the world’ and the university embodies the character of wholeness and unity. And if this is true of a university, then it is definitely also true for an art academy.

Leading on from Kant and Derrida, a further contentious social and political issue becomes crucial. This is the question of education policy.

The significance of the university as a social institution will certainly not recede in coming years. This is exemplified by the activities of private corporations, such as Microsoft or Nike, which are focusing their attention more and more on education and research—while the real universities are becoming more and more significant as economic actors, to a degree independent from the state. The importance of education in our society as an ideal and economic good is still beyond question: it is the way in which this is achieved that is changing. This means that the real challenge today is to preserve the autonomy of the universities in terms of the content of what they do. The freedom of teaching and research (but not

the university community's relationship with society) can still flourish within the clearly delimited space of the campus—but this is now no longer a matter of course.

Schools and universities are increasingly losing their socio-political autonomy, as they become the locus of mere vocational qualification. Under these circumstances cultural institutions are acquiring a new field of activity—testing out new models for education that are not restricted entirely to vocational qualification. As these institutions have traditionally been able to react more quickly and flexibly to social change, they may be in a position to work out tomorrow's models of education.

The next Manifesta in Nicosia, Cyprus, will take a transdisciplinary approach to education, training and the production of knowledge.

Due to its history and geopolitical significance at the crossroads of three continents, the Mediterranean island of Cyprus, which has been a member of the European Union since May 2004, is particularly suited for a forward-looking project centred on new approaches and models in knowledge transfer and education. At the Manifesta 6 School in one of the world's two last divided capitals (the other being Jerusalem as designated by the United Nations) a great variety of discursive formats and activities will address the issue of the transition from interdisciplinary to transdisciplinary education in the field of art, producing a critical stocktaking of this process of change. Critical in Adorno's sense of the word, taking criticism as a theoretical endeavour that runs counter to 'blind' practice. The Manifesta 6 School sees itself consciously as a part of the city of Nicosia.

The coming paragraphs outline some hypothetical propositions for what my ideal Manifesta 6 School could entail.

The Manifesta 6 School

A biennial such as Manifesta is a social medium. Even if not every intervention presented there will assume social significance, the form of the exhibition as a whole does exactly that.

I see the Manifesta 6 School as an exhibition or a project (it does not matter which denotation you prefer) devoid of the general misery of the institutions and the typical embalming processes of market aesthetics. The Manifesta 6 School represents an attempt to counter a cultural economy poisoned by optimism and adhering slavishly to a redundant ideology of education with a form of practice that is critical toward institutions and an alternative model of seeing, thinking and acting. I am fundamentally interested in the question of education as an exhibition format, and in discussions, seminars and workshops as a form of practice and its presentation.

In the late eighteenth century, Friedrich Schiller promoted the ennoblement of the status quo by means of culture, as he believed that art and culture would make better and nobler people of us. Fragments of this kind of aesthetic education are still around today, embedded in our belief systems. On the level of visual grammar, works of art generate counter-images and counter-models at specific junctures, or they interrupt the particular kind of image sciences that are provided for us by pop culture.

In the Manifesta 6 School we wish to overcome the separation of theory and practice. The idea that was particularly prevalent in the 1980s, that

theory and practice are two distinct fields of action, has led to a disengagement of criticism from public life. For Adorno the concept of 'criticism' is the theoretical location where the intellectual remains in firm opposition to 'blind' practice that negates theory in favour of a change in social conditions.

I see both art and theory as forms of practice. Seminars, workshops, discussions, etc., are micro-political forms of practice with a high proportion of theory, and the same is just as true of a challenging exhibition of contemporary art. The history of counter-culture since the 1960s has shown that in the 1980s, the generation following the social movements of the late 1970s experienced a significant problem in distinguishing theory and practice. It was not possible to find an overarching theoretical model that did justice to the disintegrating range of interests in practice. This led to a de-politicisation of culture and of political life in general. The Manifesta 6 School will not reduce what appears as practice to a theoretical shell, but will extend it as a critical practice of seeing, thinking and acting.

In my view, the Manifesta 6 School should concentrate on the interactions between artistic practice and theory, and also on the social function and relevance of contemporary art production. With a concept of art that is undergoing permanent transformation and whose historical points of reference are intertwined with socio-political discourses, we need both to continuously redefine the traditional constellation of artist, teacher and public and also to address new fields of practice. So as to counter established social hegemonies, we require critical examination of those political, social and media conditions that to a large degree determine concepts and practices of art.

Programme

My Manifesta 6 School will largely consist of a programme of education that is committed to political cultural production and the struggle for cultural freedoms. This programme implies the necessity of self-organisation, using existing structures creatively, so as to have an influence in political and social issues of the future and to develop models for solutions.

Cultural practice at the Manifesta 6 School will link culture and knowledge production with social action by means of typical methods of critical reading of cultural practices that bestow meaning. The Manifesta 6 School will be a form of intellectual practice with the task of enquiring as to how cultural practices can be employed to give political meaning to the everyday lives of ordinary people.

The Manifesta 6 School will discuss the ways in which people find cultural options and space for individual action within the political and economic structures that determine their lives, and how these options can be utilised. The aim is to examine the cultural mechanisms and structures that facilitate, promote or restrict such action, and also to address concrete political conditions of power within which realities and their means of influence are constructed and experienced.

The Manifesta 6 School will examine cultural practices that produce meanings along with their economic and political contexts. The programme of the Manifesta 6 School sets out to investigate the permanently shifting relationships of representation, discourse and power from a number of perspectives, and also to attempt a critical revision of the concept of culture.

As the concept of culture cannot be enshrined in any one definition, but is rather reflected in the differences between various cultural processes and

practices within specific economic, social and political contexts, the first matter that will be addressed critically at the Manifesta 6 School will be the heterogeneity of meanings and their conditions of production and reception.

The Manifesta 6 School will productively overstep the borders between the individual fields of scientific, artistic, cultural and political practices, so as to interlink the various contexts. Knowledge production and teaching, theoretical and practical resources for the formulation of appropriate questions and the search for answers will be offered and used productively. The historical opposites of art and culture versus science, politics and economics must be abandoned, so as to facilitate a permanent interaction of socio-economic conditions, political relations of power, cultural processes in the production of meaning, and the locations of effective individual human action within these complex relations.

The concept of art and culture at numerous European art academies is still bound up with the notion of the original and unique. Art is seen as serving the purpose of representation, without any questions as to the function that art and culture have to perform within society—or the function that is ascribed to them. In fact, in a social context, other, more complex demands are made of artistic production and producers, but this is generally ignored.

At most art academies the training of the artist takes place completely without any reflection on society. The corrective measure—which is long overdue—would not be to devote attention to the selective quality criteria of high culture, but rather to correct the inadequate image of the artist that is preserved within the unreal and cocooned space of the academy. In the light of completely new social responsibilities for the artist, it is simply no longer acceptable to continue to reproduce stereotypical images of artists, or to see the issue resolved merely by the introduction of new technologies.

What is required is new subject matter and new teaching methods so as to establish a new concept of cultural education. New potential for artistic practice and also for new insights into the field of art in general can be found in particular wherever artistic and social action intersect, and in the free analysis of these points of intersection. Thus it is a matter of an innovative renewal of the mandate to teach, both in relation to the self-image of the art academy and to the subject matter taught and the methods used.

This kind of fundamental renewal of existing subject matter and teaching methods means that art academies must offer new content in addition to the traditional artistic training and the theoretical subjects such as art history and philosophy of culture. These new subjects would include cultural, social and media theories; cultural philosophy and history; psychoanalysis and cultural theory; critical theory; the theory of symbols; the archive of the psychological history of human expression; visual, gender, post-colonial, cultural, critical and curatorial studies; new historicism; cultural poetics; postmodern ethnography; cultural analysis; post-structuralism, deconstruction and discourse theory; issues concerning the political significance of cultural interpretation of research into the history of mentalities; the sociology of art and culture and practices of mediation; cultural policy; cross-cultural issues and popular culture. The Manifesta 6 School should offer subjects in a three-month postgraduate programme, such as: Political displays and participation, bio- and repro-technology, analysis of architecture and new resistance, the politics of knowledge production, and post-

colonial studies and migration.

Prospective Manifesta 6 School students will embark on an experiment with theories, methods and subjects of study that are new to art academies. Until around 1800, culture was understood as a narrow and normative benchmark of the excellence of 'good society', but today culture encompasses anything from classical high culture to various lifestyles to an understanding of nature as a cultural construct. A further aspect in recent developments in science, which is particularly evident in cultural studies, is the realisation that the interesting scientific discoveries are now made where various disciplines meet and cross over into one another. This is accompanied by a trend towards crossing national borders, as culture is identified in the mutual interplay and cross-cultural comparisons between the self and the other.

Following on from ideas that were formulated in the manifesto of the teaching staff of the Collège de France in 1987 on the 'Educational System of the Future', one of this project's general goals is to overcome historically obsolete restrictions to singular disciplines when looking at art.

The investigation of various theoretical discourses within art studies needs urgent support, and a combination of theory and practice in the form of project-based work must become a matter of course. The Manifesta 6 School will use curricula with international bias and also look closely at various concepts of culture as well as employing teachers and recruiting students from various geopolitical backgrounds.

A further qualification in artistic education at the Manifesta 6 School will consist in introducing transdisciplinary postgraduate studies in close international cooperation, so as to establish research activities that have hitherto been neglected at art academies.

The concept of transdisciplinarity was introduced into the debate on the development of research and science in 1972 by Erich Jantsch. Since then it has been used in various contexts, including the following three:

1. In terms of the practice of science, it denotes a treatment of issues independent of single disciplines, in particular those issues that are too complex to be dealt with appropriately within one field.
2. It includes a social understanding of issues, extraneous to science, in the scientific definition of a problem or an issue.
3. It means that the borders of domains of knowledge are broken down and non-scientific sources can be included.

It is important to briefly explain the differences between transdisciplinarity, interdisciplinarity and multidisciplinary, with mutual exchange of ideas and corrections. Whereas 'multidisciplinary' means only that various disciplines work alongside each other on one issue, interdisciplinarity implies the exchange of concepts and methods, which are incorporated into the various complementary disciplines.

Transdisciplinarity is a new approach to research and science which defines and solves problems more independently of specific disciplines, thus transforming disciplines and subjects by removing their traditional borders wherever a single disciplinary definition of an issue is not possible or useful.

Research is then undertaken by a number of groups working on

different aspects. The social responsibility of research increases and researchers are no longer merely accountable to their peers. Knowledge production is spread far beyond the universities, and socially-distributed knowledge production takes place.

Transdisciplinarity therefore denotes a dynamic relationship between society and science. The production of knowledge gains a context of application and a context of implication, which means that human agents and their conditions of action, and their own understanding of their aims all influence a scientific approach to a subject. This leads to innovations in cultural production that become significant for society. Innovation also takes place within social discourses and as a result of pragmatic requirements—and this innovation becomes relevant for culture, which then develops new ideas and forward-looking concepts.

Manifesta 6 School Wireless Enabled

Does the Manifesta 6 School need a physical building, a venue? A campus has an ambivalent character; here local conditions are linked to universal tasks. The place is insignificant in itself, when the world is declared to be the object under investigation.

The Manifesta 6 School addresses the future role of education at art academies, and emphasises the role of new technologies and new media. The Manifesta 6 School will make all course material available online. It is wireless-enabled, and students will be able to work wherever they wish—on the lawn, in a café, or at home. The ideal of the Manifesta 6 School as a location of spontaneous and cursory learning, with students strolling through and exchanging ideas in virtual space, is intended to network the local and international university community much more directly than was hitherto the case. Internet communities demonstrate that networks can often be more easily realised in virtual space than in real space. As Derrida put it, the direct university is not necessarily located within the walls of today's universities. It will take place, and seek out a place, wherever the direct approach is on the agenda. Further arguments in favour of abandoning a fixed physical venue are found in Niklas Luhmann's definition of the university as a milieu made up of administrative and political systems of communication on the one hand, and scientific and educational systems on the other, all with their divergent functions, codifications and programmes.

Manifesta 6 School Radio

The Manifesta 6 School will establish a further knowledge-based model for mediation, an English-language satellite radio channel, which will be received worldwide and committed to the central principles of the School. Manifesta 6 School radio sees itself as a transdisciplinary and democratic medium of communication, which will merge the most varied forms of discourse, contexts and aesthetic procedures, and thereby create discursive listener experiences as a new form of knowledge transfer. In line with the Manifesta 6 School philosophy, the formation of theory and knowledge are understood as ongoing practice, which here will be combined with a productive relationship to the emotional power of subtle and advanced pop culture. The thematic focus of the radio format will facilitate both a wide range of varied, independently produced material (interviews, reports, music features, jingles, sound sculptures, etc.) and the direct

active involvement of listeners on location.

Manifesta 6 School radio will comply with certain basic features of the Manifesta 6 School, so that it will not display an academic and sterile educational radio format with a hierarchical structure, nor will it have a consensual pop format. The aim is to work out and create a media space situated 'in between', which will attempt to gather together in appropriate aesthetic forms the manifold oppositions to and critiques of the cultural status quo without any regard to schematic distinctions between serious high culture and superficial low culture.

Manifesta 6 School Library

The gravitational centre of the Manifesta 6 School is a library with an archive on the above-mentioned topics. The Manifesta 6 School library is a place of research and the accumulation and organisation of knowledge. The Manifesta 6 School library will have a sufficient number of computer work stations, access to global information and networks and will be open round the clock. It will be a library without walls, whose ideology is committed to knowledge and the dynamics of networks. This library will serve the interests of its users and not of the books held there.

Collections and their accessibility have always been an expression of and a litmus test for the structure of a society. Princely and clerical libraries were only open to the nobility and the clergy. As humanism gained momentum and more universities sprang up in the fourteenth century, the first university libraries were founded. In the eighteenth century, the age of Enlightenment, education for all assumed a key role. Shortly after the French Revolution, the 'cult of reason' was founded. Numerous new libraries were established, clerical and aristocratic collections of books were secularised and made publicly accessible. The effects of the French Revolution were felt as far away as the United States, where a half-scale copy of the Pantheon in Rome was erected as a temple of knowledge to be a centrepiece for the University of Virginia.

Students who learn to teach themselves, to organise their own studies within the subjects on offer, and to be responsible for themselves will possess the core artistic skill of researching, working and thinking in transdisciplinary terms. These students are then able to develop their own fields of action within different societies. It is always learners who actively acquire knowledge. This knowledge is primarily their knowledge, for it is the result of a personal and individual learning process.

Artistic knowledge is social knowledge.

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