RE-INVENTING THE ART SCHOOL 21ST CENTURY

Reinventing the art school, 21st Century

Essay #1 /Reflections on Art Education

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Introduction

This essay examines the recent curriculum reform of the Rotterdam University's Willem de Kooning Academy within a tradition of Western art education. It is quite clear to us that the professions related to Western art education programmes are currently undergoing major transformations; perhaps for the first time in history, there is no obvious path toward a new professional practice with its own clear rules and visual conventions. Art education has always been linked to prevailing norms within the professional practice; therefore art schools were able to establish institutional and educational practices which in turn had a stabilising influence on the professions. This is clearly no longer the case in the 21st century.

During the past few decades, Western art education has been unable or unwilling to adapt sufficiently to shifting economic and cultural realities on one hand, and on the other hand to the new technological requirements

which its graduates must face. Thus these graduates have often been insufficiently prepared to face market conditions, and ill-equipped to contribute in a meaningful way to the rapid developments in the communications industry. Other education programmes outside the field of art education have emerged to fill this void, but they have done so without the critical-artistic perspective characteristic of art education, which is necessary in order to arrive at a meaningful design practice. Thus, mass communication and internet technologies have come to be dominated by technical formats and standards. Furthermore, shifting social relationships have changed the nature (even the very definition) of the public, and of the need for artistic production. The consumer is increasingly co-creator; do-it-yourself attitudes and methods are challenging the traditional role of the expert, as well as the cult of the unique; meanwhile, service design is becoming as important as product innovation.

Art education will have to embrace a radical transformation if it is to go on playing a meaningful role in this changing world. The new curriculum of the Willem de Kooning Academy (WdKA), Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences, implemented in all of its education programmes from September 1, 2013 onwards, is a major step in this direction. Within the community of art education programmes, the WdKA's new curriculum stands out as one which

specifically addresses contemporary challenges facing art education.

This essay begins with a brief historical overview of art education, describing various schools and their relationship with the professional practice and the world at large; then we shall describe some important characteristics of the changing international professional practice of artists and designers; and finally, we will examine the resulting changes in the field of art education in Rotterdam, as well as further changes yet to come.

1. Tradition

Historically there have been six main models or examples for art education. In chronological order these are:

The master-apprentice system
The Italian Renaissance academy, and subsequently the Académie des Beaux-Arts
19th-century arts and crafts education
Bauhaus
Black Mountain College
Cal Arts, Los Angeles

These are all iconic examples, as they profoundly influenced the way art (and later also design) was experienced and appreciated at important turning points in history; they played a major role in announcing the arrival

of a new historical period, and in establishing standards and values of artistic representation for those periods. Since World War I, the accelerating succession of historical periods in Western culture and society has meant that, while successive schools have been internationally influential, they have been so for increasingly brief periods. However, all of these schools have made lasting contributions to the current system of art education.[1]

1.1 Antiquity and Middle Ages

The master-apprentice relationship, which already existed in the Antique period and was institutionalised during the Medieval period into the guild system, was based on the prestige and authority of the master as a highly-skilled practitioner of his trade. The artistic profession had a well-defined body of stylistic and aesthetic conventions, as well as an established set of technical skills in which the master was expected to be proficient. The apprentice (and in a later phase of his ‘study’, the journeyman) learned his master’s trade through unquestioning imitation. The apprentice could even, under the master’s supervision, contribute substantially to artworks being produced under the master’s name. In this period in history, originality was not a desired quality, nor was the inclusion of personal, idiosyncratic or otherwise expressive visual elements. Reproduction and emulation, and working in the style of a well-known example, were not perceived as a lack of artistic vision,

imagination or proficiency, but rather as a demonstration of one's mastery of the proper form and style. One did not wish to break with tradition, but to belong to it. Art in the present-day sense did not exist: creative intellectual labour was the privileged domain of the philosophical sciences, and of music and poetry. Visual art was 'merely' a craft.

Traces of the master-apprentice model can still be found in contemporary art education: for example, the relationship between teacher and student within the relatively sheltered environment of the classroom; or in contemporary educational systems, particularly in Germany, where there is a tradition of students working under renowned artists, according to their specific instructions and often through the intermediary of their assistants.

I

The master-apprentice model, based on the assumption that artistic proficiency can be learned through imitation of a renowned master, was predominant from the Medieval and Renaissance periods up until the aristocratic culture of the Baroque period. These were rigidly regulated societies with clearly established social classes. Acceptable modes of thought were dictated by the religious and aristocratic classes, and there was no upward social mobility. The content of art was mostly determined by the church, which held that all worldly reality was subordinate to a higher religious reality.

II

1.2 Academy

The Académie des Beaux Arts, the first state-controlled institute for art education, was founded in France in the 17th century, in order to facilitate the realisation of an increasing number of state commissions for artworks. Artists were trained within a strict framework, so that they may absorb and master the one and only correct style. The Académie's model was copied in most Western countries; the 18th-century Royal Academy of Arts in England was particularly renowned for its strict rules based on a consistent theoretical system, all of which now seem quite mannered and artificial. From the 17th century onwards, an increasingly strict separation between church and state meant that state institutions and aristocratic families held sway over political and social life, imposing their world view through academic doctrines.

Artists were valued for their technical proficiency. The artist's apparent facility in realising an artwork, and his degree of erudition (as well as that of his patron, who commissioned the artwork), expressed through the complex symbolic iconography found in the artwork,

were important factors in the definition of artistic mastery. By now, the natural sciences had begun to complement (rather than challenge) the traditional Christian view of the order of the world and the universe, resulting in a search for an elegant symbiosis between science and religion: the universal regularity of science was seen as a demonstration of the grace of the hand of God, who had created the world according to natural laws which men could learn and understand, all for the greater love and praise of God. But this was also a time of great upheaval: the Christian world was torn apart into two hostile factions. In the Catholic lands, the Baroque style aimed to inspire a sense of awe through grandiose artworks for a highly privileged upper class (opera houses, St. Peter's Basilica, Bernini's baldachins); whereas in Protestant bourgeois society, the reading, discussion and interpretation of the Bible led to a new interest in depictions of small-scale, realistic everyday life (Vermeer, Jan Steen).

In Catholic countries, the Academy encouraged its students to develop their ability to dazzle the crowd through their technical virtuosity and adventurous exploration of subject matter and composition, as long as the style and content remained within the strict societal norms and conventions of the day. The Protestant reformation, although founded on a rebellion against the old social order, was in fact artistically very conservative: here, the Medieval master-apprentice tradition was upheld, and the

visual arts were seen as a useful tool for warning mortals against the dangers of thinking they might be any greater than God had made them; the only life which held any true value was the eternal afterlife, where all scores from this temporary earthly life would eventually be settled.

In the Romantic period, which began in the early 19th century, the Academy's ideology of artistic virtuosity was further developed into the cult of artistic genius.2 The notion of the uniqueness of the individual went hand in hand with the emancipation of the citizen, who now occupied a social position which had previously been the privilege of the religious and aristocratic elite, according to a world order legitimised by a complex Christian ideology. In the new bourgeois society, on the other hand, politics and a teleological view of history served to provide various justifications for a new individual-centred (Western) world order. Though all of these justifications were based on the same general assumption that society could and should be engineered for the greater good of all, they also held contradictory views as to how exactly this society should function, as well as the means needed in order to achieve it.

With the Romantic movement, artists began for the first time to question the rules set by academia, and to overcome these rules by

defining new ones, which in turn would also be set aside as other new movements took over.

The Academy's lasting influence in the West can be seen mainly in today's institutionalised and formalised education programmes, where teachers are expected to conform to established guidelines. Today's art education programmes were largely developed in parallel with other higher education programmes, systematised and regulated according to models applicable to all approved establishments of higher education. The assumption here is that art is something that can be learned, so that a student's academic career is a path leading directly to a professional practice at a certain established level, for which there are clear professional standards; the state is responsible for monitoring the quality of the curriculum and the application of these standards.

III

1.3 Arts and crafts

The industrial revolution and subsequent methods of mass production created a new demand for education on an unprecedented scale. The 1851 World Fair in London made it painfully clear that mechanically produced goods were ugly and lifeless. New craftsmen were needed, who could apply the new mechanical production techniques to the creation of quality products. In the cities, dignitaries sponsored clubs and associations where young workers could take evening classes in drawing and other techniques mainly focused on building.3 Though engineers seemed to have taken over the fields of design and building, their soulless products left much to be improved. This created a demand for arts and crafts schools as well as technical schools. Most of today's art schools were originally founded either as 19th-century arts and crafts schools, or as 17th-century academies; the Beaux-Arts tradition generally operated on a higher social and intellectual level than the arts and crafts schools, which were more practically oriented as vocational training.

IV

1.4 Modernism

In the first half of the 20th century, the Bauhaus in Germany and the Black Mountain College in the United States broke with academic tradition, adopting radical new principles focused on the development of individual artists with a personal stake in designing industrially produced goods for society as a whole. The Bauhaus emancipated applied design, bringing it to the level of fine art, while Black Mountain College was particularly influential in its adoption of anti-authoritarian principles; teachers were seen as mentors and facilitators, working together with the students to run the institute and generate income.

Here the Romanticist notion of artistic genius was combined with a belief in engineering modern society for the greater good; the artist was a

visionary, marching in the front ranks (the origin of the term ‘avant-garde’) of the army of humanity on its way to a better future. Machines would soon liberate us all.

Something of these notions can still be found in today’s art education programmes: ideas that originated at a turning point in history, the dawn of the modern age, when new technologies, new methods of mass production and the rise of civil leadership led to broad social reforms, new labour and power relations, and new aesthetic values. The individual in his uniqueness needed to be liberated from any ruling class, or any class-determined world order. In the arts, the most intimately personal vision became a vehicle for the universal (as in expressionism); conversely, abstraction became a new aesthetic for the machine age (as in constructivism). On another level, Bauhaus and Black Mountain College brought about a symbiosis between elements of the Beaux-Arts and the Arts and Crafts traditions. Design was emancipated to the level of fine art; and all arts were expected to play a positive role in humanity’s struggle towards a better society, which was seen as the logical and inevitable conclusion of our historical journey, from primitive tribes to a fully developed and liberated universal community of humankind. The philosophy of the uniqueness of the individual had by now taken over all aspects of Western culture. Social sciences such as psychology and sociology

were founded on a humanist belief in the primacy of the individual. In this world view, artists were the idealised embodiment of the notion that each human being is indeed individually unique and valuable.

V

1.5 The 1960s

The California Institute of the Arts (colloquially known as CalArts and located near Los Angeles) was founded in 1961 and is often described as a direct descendant of Black Mountain College. CalArts soon became famous for its anti-authoritarian stance which, in line with the countercultural ideals of the 1960s, held the promise of liberation from bourgeois morals and conventions. The power of creativity and the spirit of non-conformism would help bring about a better society than the one inherited from the

previous generation. The optimism of social engineering had been permanently discredited by the horrors of World War II, while the fresh horrors of the Vietnam War demonstrated that only critically and creatively thinking individuals could manage to bring down the ‘evil commercial capitalistic’ world of the older generation.

The culmination of these ideals can be found in today’s art education: the teacher is a living example of an independent artist, who does not follow any specific style but instead creates artworks, grounded in concept development and a critical view of society, which seek to engage, challenge and respond. The student is expected to follow this example. Indeed, students tend to identify with artists who have rejected the established order of an older generation. The dialectic of this historical period has usually been defined in terms of young against old, rather than rich against poor.

1.6 The current situation

Today’s institutes for art and design education are focused on educating competent practitioners, by stimulating each student’s individual qualities and thus enabling them to make use of relevant techniques in order to produce original and meaningful contributions to the profession’s historical body of work.

Teachers do not work according to any predefined definition of art, not even their own, but rather

challenge their students, discussing with them concepts which call into question artistic traditions as well as social norms and values.[4]

Institutes which now serve as models for others, do so based on their curriculum and the professional reputation of their teaching staff. An institute's success is not based on its educational philosophy and underlying definition of art, but on the subject matter of the curriculum and the reputation of its teachers and alumni. Examples include Goldsmiths, RISD, Central St. Martins and the Royal College of Art.

Now that there is no longer a single dominant conception of style, and that the gap between fine art and applied art no longer applies, one may well wonder which guidelines an institute and its students are expected to follow.

There are several ways in which an educational institute may be successful. The institute may have acquired a certain national or international reputation among the general public, based on the success of its alumni. In the long term, wide brand recognition in itself is no guarantee for actual quality: however, a good reputation often attracts good students and good teachers, allowing the institute to maintain its acquired reputation. An institute which loses this reputation, will have a long way to climb before it can re-establish its standing.

Some academies have acquired a reputation for a particular discipline or a specific group of

teachers; the fashion design department in Antwerp is a good example of this. The department becomes a school within the school; the department's fame can also reflect positively on other departments.

I. [1] The various educational systems have been well described and exhaustively documented. For a brief description of the systems listed here, see: Honour and Fleming, A World History of Art, London, 1995.?

II. [2] The Romanticist notion of genius was eloquently analysed by Egon Friedell in essays written in the early 20th century. See E. Friedell, Abschaffung des Genies, Zurich, 1985. The concept of genius is not an objective fact, but rather an idea we like to believe in, and which has characterised Western art from the 19th century onwards, including Modernism and post-World War II movements up until Pop Art. This concept has now become outdated.?

III. [3] The Willem de Kooning Academy, for example, has its roots in the association 'Van Hierdoor tot Hooger' (literally, 'From Hereby to Higher') founded in 1758.?

IV. [4] The changing role of the artist is very well described in an essay by C. van Winkel, De Mythe van de Kunstenaar ('The Myth of the Artist'), Amsterdam, 2007?

2. The changing 21st-century professional practice

2.1 Technology and collaboration

New technological, social and macro-economic developments have brought about extremely rapid developments in the professional practice of artists and designers.

New technologies and new modes of communication are having a profound effect on the nature, content, form and scope of art, design and education. The impact of new digital technologies cannot be overstated. The relatively low cost of using relatively complex

technologies has not only democratised the production, distribution and consumption of art and design products; it has also democratised aesthetic values. New technologies and methods of communication are no longer the privileged domain of professionals, but are increasingly becoming available to amateurs and consumers. This has fundamentally altered the relationships between the artist/designer, the industry and the consumer.5 The artist/designer no longer enjoys a monopoly in the fields of aesthetics, design and (small-scale) production; the industry no longer holds a monopoly on (mass) production processes and marketing; consumers increasingly handle their own production and distribution. In all these changes, technological innovations (in both hardware and software) play a central role. The complexity of the techniques requires collaboration with experts, as well as new attitudes toward the mastery of technique. Students will be required to familiarise themselves with digital technologies, at least to the extent that they are aware of the possibilities and limitations of these technologies.

As the role of consumers in designing products goes on increasing, designers must learn to adopt co-creation processes. But even the integrated development of product service systems requires artists and designers to acquire new knowledge and skills.

However, research6 has shown that students of visual art education programmes in the

Netherlands are primarily consumers of digital technologies and digital media, and tend not to indentify or present themselves as producers of digital products. Their knowledge of software and hardware is limited, as are their ambitions for production using digital media, production of digital products, and digital distribution.7

Another remarkable conclusion of the aforementioned research is that students generally do not work collaboratively, and do not think of digital communication platforms as potential tools for working on collaborative projects or distributing digital products. This contrasts sharply with the professional practice, where loose and constantly shifting (digital and international) collaborations are increasingly becoming the norm. This in turn has led to a new understanding of authorship. Art and design are no longer an exclusive act by a single individual artist or designer; meanwhile, mass communication and private communication are becoming increasingly intertwined. The consequences of these changes reach far beyond the domain of the arts, affecting the curriculum of all higher education programmes.

2.2 Local / global

International relations are also rapidly changing. The dominant position of Western economy and culture is no longer taken for granted. As a result of ongoing crises compounded by failing

governmental oversight, public confidence in the liberal capitalist foundations of the Western economic system, and in the ability of governments to solve current problems, has eroded. Meanwhile, shifting age demographics and perpetual national debts create an impression of passing on the bill to the next generation, with the risk of a new clash of generations. A rapidly growing global population, and the emergence of new economic world powers which have managed to free themselves from Western domination, are threatening to quickly deplete whatever natural resources are left (regardless of whether we will even be able to meet the growing demand for food). Millions go on flocking to the huge cities, where there always seems to be work and money for those who can find it, leaving the countryside to be plundered by corporations eager to exploit its soil and natural resources.

Shrinking confidence in governments and economies, together with increasing urbanisation, have already led many people to start seeking alternatives. These can be found in small informal communities which have developed their own barter systems (exchange of time and services) or even their own local currency. Also, an important shift can be observed in Western values. Economic growth and earning money are no longer the sole factors for determining status. Small-scale economies, sustainability and the search for a sense of purpose are increasingly seen as essential

values, and publicly adopted even by large multinational corporations.

New technologies, specifically fablabs and 3D printing, hold the promise of enabling in the near future a shift in traditional production processes, from manual labour and assembly-line production towards local high-quality customised production. This in turn would signify a shift from the globally organised supply chain (with knowledge-based economies in wealthy countries and production industries in low-wage countries, linked together through global transportation and distribution industries) toward locally organised industries where on-demand conceptualisation and production are increasingly the norm.

2.3 The changing role of artists and designers

The contemporary professional practice of artists and designers can be described as: hybrid, multidisciplinary and international. Hybrid, in the sense that artists and designers produce both fine art and applied work, and rely on fluctuating combinations of various sources of income: sales of independent work, work commissions, traditional employment, and subsidies.

Although most artists and designers have received specialist training, the professional practice of the overwhelming majority of artists and designers today is only partially specialised.

The multidisciplinary character of the professional practice is also multi-faceted; the artist or designer with specialised knowledge and skills may be part of a multidisciplinary team of artists, designers and/or other specialists; the artist or designer may be a generalist, working with various media or in various disciplines; the artist or designer may assume different roles, depending on the nature of the task, within teams collaborating on projects; or, the artist or designer may function as an equal partner in a co-creation process with a client from a different discipline or sector.

The international nature of the professional practice is largely based on the speed and global range of modern communication media; artists and designers are able to connect worldwide, 24 hours a day, and to collaborate using digital communication platforms; furthermore, they tend to find their sources of information and inspiration locally as well as globally. Discussions on art and culture take place on a global stage, and the market of supply and demand has also become a global one.

The distinction between artists and designers, founded on the historical dichotomy between on one hand the tradition of the Académie des Beaux-Arts (artes liberales) and on the other hand the tradition of artisans and craftsmen (artes mechanicae), has become irrelevant. Both artists and designers can work on projects and commissions whose scope and complexity are

defined and limited in practice by specific goals and budgets; and both artists and designers can create products and services based on their own personal creative ambition, and find a customer for these products and services only after they have been completed. It should be noted here that this artistic and financial independence, which has been a key element of the professional practice of visual artists ever since the Romantic period, has in fact remained unchanged: it has always been a hybrid or partial professional practice. Visual artists create their own market; there is no job market in the traditional sense, with clearly formulated replacement needs.8 What is obvious, however, is that the state's role as patron and protector of the arts can no longer be taken for granted.

All these developments require artists to embrace interdisciplinary or trans-disciplinary approaches to art and design processes, as well as a critical historical awareness, and an acute sense of the challenges and developments of the present as well as the near future.

2.4 Professional practice and education: conclusions

We now face important choices in the development of a position on how best to prepare students for a successful start of their professional career, so that they may contribute in a meaningful way to the

contemporary field of art and design in Western and non-Western societies:

I. The idea that art and design are subject to fixed rules is an outdated concept. Yet many of the complex conventions and techniques which have come to define art and design clearly demonstrate the need for comprehensive bachelor and master education programmes.

II. Technical expertise and critical engagement are essential requirements of artistic practice, and as such must occupy a prominent place in the education programmes.

III. Regardless of the economic sector in which the artist/designer chooses to make a living, all practitioners must develop strong competences in the fields of collaborative strategies as well as networking and entrepreneurial skills.

IV. The intense and inspiring relationship among students and between students and teachers within a learning environment is an essential condition for the development of the critically engaged artists which the professional practice requires.

These are the four pillars on which the academy of the future will be built. It is the institute's responsibility to ensure that this happens in a manner which does justice to the institute's own historical curriculum and reputation, while giving concrete meaning to the choices made in terms of the new curriculum's focus on specific

domains (defined by markets as well as by cultural factors).

The choices the WdKA has made, and the way in which these choices are implemented within a coherent curriculum, will be described in the following section.

I. [5] For an excellent description of the new social relationships which will radically transform urban environments and they way they are experienced as a result of the daily use of new communication technologies, see W.J. Mitchell, City of Bits, Space, Place and the Infobahn, MIT, 1995. The book describes a vision of the future which has now already become a reality.?

II. [6] Aldje van Meer, I Would Rather Design a Poster than a Website, Rotterdam, 2012.?

III. [7] It is doubtful whether our teachers are sufficiently competent in these fields to provide their students with the necessary knowledge and skills. Also, we must realise that our students do not necessarily share the older generation's fascination with digital media. For the younger generation, computers are nothing new; they are simply appliances. As a result, many students show a preference for traditional techniques, which represent different notions of value.?

IV. [8] A recent paper by C. van Winkel and Pascal Gielen offers an excellent overview of this hybrid practice, describing the age-old tradition of the artist as independent entrepreneur. C. van Winkel, P. Gielen and K. Zwaan, De hybride kunstenaar: de organisatie van de artistieke praktijk in het postindustriële tijdperk ('The Hybrid Artist: The Organisation of Artistic Practice in the Post-Industrial Age'), 's-Hertogenbosch, 2012.?

3. The Willem de Kooning Academy

The WdKA has taken on the momentous task of fundamentally reviewing and updating its education programmes and organisational structure, according to the following principles:

I. The WdKA has always been an academy with a strongly practical-minded, sometimes commercial, character. Conceptual ability, a

media-oriented outlook and an active international presence have always been clearly recognisable in the curriculum, and must remain so.

II. The WdKA chooses to keep up with the times and to focus its education programmes on the contemporary professional practice, as well as emerging practices.

III. The WdKA's education programmes attract large numbers of talented students. Those talented enough to be admitted and eventually graduate must be provided with a head start in every aspect of their professional practice.

IV. The professional practices are varied, as are the professional roles which graduates can be expected to assume within different projects. In order to gain a clear understanding of their possibilities and opportunities, students must learn entrepreneurial skills as well as practical knowledge.

V. Artists and designers are often required to work as part of a team. The complexity of the various projects and media, and the multi-layered intricacies of engaging with a heterogeneous public, all require collaboration with various specialists and actors in the production process. The WdKA makes good use of its position as part of an all-round university of applied sciences, by proactively seeking collaborations and crossovers with like-minded and otherwise related fields of knowledge and education

programmes, within the university as well as in the world at large.

VI. Good teachers must prepare students for an increasingly complex and heterogeneous professional practice. This means that at least part of the teaching staff must be not only professional artists/designers, but first and foremost professional teachers.

These principles have led to the formulation of a vision on education and professional practices, which in turn has required the adoption of a completely new curriculum.

The professions are undergoing major and rapid changes, as are the products of these professions. Although the necessary insights and skills are deeply rooted in a professional tradition which continues to set the standard for emerging practices, students must become proficient in new forms of knowledge and collaboration. The education programmes no longer make any distinction between art and design; both approaches are active in the arena of public space and commercial production from the perspective of their own disciplines. New challenges are arising in the fields of technology, public space, engaging with the public, and shifting international relations. All these challenges must be reflected in the graduation profiles.

Media focus, research skills and entrepreneurial skills must be integrated as part of the

student’s competences for each phase of the curriculum. In order to achieve all of the education programme’s goals, the curriculum’s individual components must form a coherent whole. This requires a project-oriented approach, which in turn demands new teaching methods. Teachers will now be team members with tasks and responsibilities focused on academic goals, rather than custodians of a specific academic subject within the whole of one year’s curriculum. This will require changes in staff policy.

3.1 The curriculum

The WdKA distinguishes three work fields for graduating artists and designers, each with its own economic orientation and operational business model.

Social Practices

Social Practices are artistic practices focused on enhancing the quality of life of individuals or groups within society, by raising their awareness, educating them, or contributing to their sense of identity. In other words: helping people to improve themselves in their relationship with their surroundings. Here, the social engagement of the artist, teacher or designer takes precedence over his/her personal expression. Through engagement with image and design, individuals or groups are shown a new way of perceiving their own world, and of finding their own place within this world.

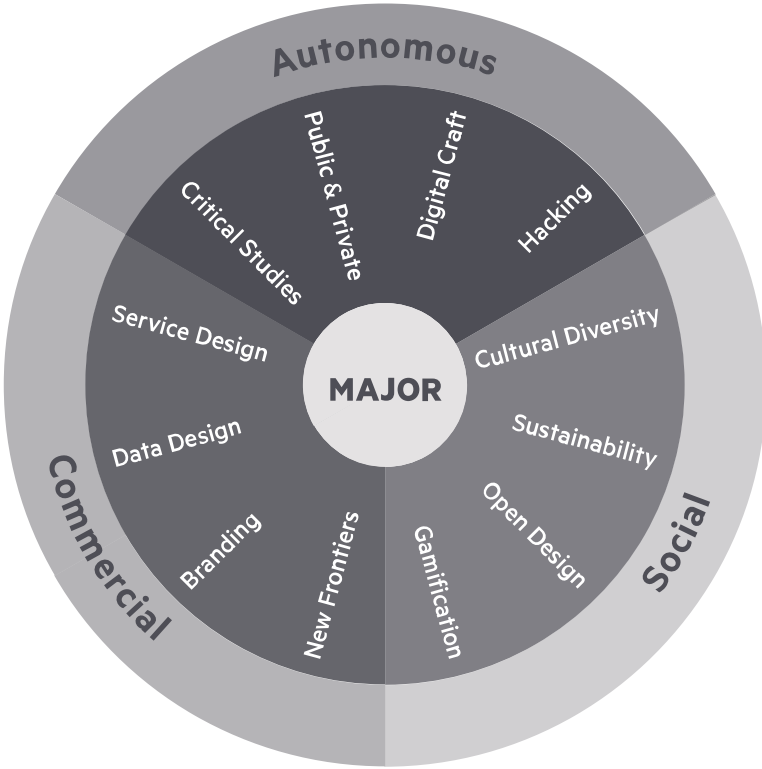
Autonomous Practices

The Autonomous Practices profile focuses mainly on the artistic ambition and expressive possibilities of the (individual) artist, teacher or designer. Autonomous creative entrepreneurs formulate their own goals and assignments, based on their personal vision of the world and the human condition, and give shape to this vision; working from their studio, they then find a market for their independently developed products or services.

Commercial Practices

Commercial Practices combine artistic practice with an original vision of everyday reality, in order to promote and improve the exchange of ideas and goods between various parties. Marketing and commercial principles are combined with concept development and visual aptitudes, focused on reaching a large audience. The visual product or service is largely determined by the situation in which the commission was formulated, or the opportunities of realising large-scale productions for a large audience.

During the course of their studies, students who initially started out within a traditional artistic discipline will increasingly focus on one of these three work fields and learn its methods and conventions. This will become their graduation profile.



Within this chosen profile, students learn to identify their strong and weak points, and how these apply and relate to various professional roles.

Students learn to work collaboratively, with students of other visual disciplines, and where applicable also with students of other education programmes not directly related to art and design.

The ‘pyramid’ below shows how the major specialisations relate to the challenges within each domain specialisation and to the three graduation profiles.

During the course of the education programme, the strict division between the different academic disciplines will be left behind. For the WdKA, the traditional distinction between independent and applied work is no longer relevant. Students work in interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary settings on challenges specific to the emerging culture: the markets and the world of the present and the near future. Creative individuals learn how to collaborate in cross-over settings, and even how to develop new specialisations. In order to make this possible, and to organise the educational programme in a flexible way, focusing on current challenges rather than fixed professional conventions, the traditional major-based specialisations will be gradually replaced by new challenge-based domain specialisations. For each economically defined domain, each challenge is addressed according to the requirements of that particular domain.

Within the three profiles, the education programmes are organised according to four domains: In Transit, Public Space, Technology (Open Source) and Experience Strategies. Within these domains, relevant themes and challenges from the professional practice are defined for each profile. The choice of specific themes and challenges is based on the WdKA's vision of the future professional practice of its graduates.

3.2 From major specialisations to domain specialisations

	Autonomous Practices	Social Practices	Commercial Practices
In Transit	Critical Studies	Cultural Diversity	New Frontiers
Public Space	Public & Private	Sustainability	Branding
Technology (Open Source)	Digital Craft	Open Design	Data Design
Experience Strategies	Hacking	Gamification	Service Design

Social Practices

Cultural Diversity focuses on the experiences and behaviours of groups or individuals who manifest themselves in their urban environment and along various dimensions or registers (lifestyle, art, religion) as ‘local world citizens’.

The accelerating shortage of natural resources, the changing economies and the growing world population all demand a reorganisation of our modes of production, transportation and consumption. Within **Sustainability** students research how this process can be designed and influenced.

Open Design embraces a participative design methodology, where users are invited to modify the design, making the design process a dynamic one. Designers can publicly share their design according to ‘open source’ principles.

Gamification is the application of game design principles to non-game situations, focused on

boosting the motivation, involvement and active participation of the target group.

Autonomous Practices

Critical Studies explicitly operates on a meta-level, discussing and questioning the legitimacy of fundamental issues, on a theoretical (conceptual) as well as practical (operational) plane.

The blurring of boundaries between areas of tension, such as the virtual and the physical, or the public and the private, generate new perspectives of ownership and exchange. This requires new perspectives on intervention and design of **Public & Private** space.

Digital Craft focuses on creating and reinventing creative tools, combining analogue and digital technologies, and reconsidering how the two can be combined.

Hacking means finding applications for a system which were not intended by its creator, resulting in a shift of consciousness. Quick and simple alternatives are preferred above more complex solutions.

Commercial Practices

New Frontiers focuses on the exploration of new markets. Students develop powers of observation and an ability to recognise opportunities for internationally expanding their business activities and their professional appeal.

The media and the methodologies which individuals and organisations use for communicating their identities are changing, requiring new marketing, communication and design strategies for branding, city marketing, profiling, etc. **Branding** focuses on research, design and strategy development.

Data Design focuses on identifying meaningful information in large amounts of data, and coherently communicating this information to a target audience.

By facilitating and enhancing the dialogue between users and designers about behaviour, desire and motivation, **Service Design** improves the quality of an interaction, product or service. These methodologies are used for the creation of user experiences.

These are the challenges which have currently been defined for the various domains and graduation profiles. Naturally, this is a flexible system. Depending on developments in professional practices, markets and artistic visions, these challenges can be updated or even replaced by new challenges.

The WdKA's research agenda is currently determined by these challenges. Research by teachers and students, as well as collaborations with external partners, focused on solving or re-examining practical problems from these domains, must therefore concentrate on these subjects.

3.3 Working methods

From September 2013 onwards, the education programmes will mainly be implemented in project-oriented teaching formats. This means that there will be less traditional classroom teaching, and more collective study and focused individual study in open ‘stations’ (which replace the traditional studios and workshops). The teacher’s main role is to guide and supervise (groups of) students. The education programmes are structured chronologically into four quarters per year. All of the WdKA’s four-year education programmes consist of three phases. The first phase focuses on Profession and Concept (quarters 1 to 6); the second phase focuses on Broadening (quarters 7 to 12); the third phase, the graduation phase, focuses on Deepening (quarters 13 to 16).

The new education programmes are nurtured and supported through increased collaboration with Creating 010, the Rotterdam University’s institute for research and innovation, as well as a limited number of strategic partnerships with internationally renowned universities.

Didactical quality will be the main factor in determining staff policy for the coming years. Master-level training for existing teachers, and an increase in the number of teachers with more contract hours (supplemented by a flexible pool of temporary and guest teachers) are the most essential elements of this policy.

Accommodations and facilities, including the stations and the electronic teaching environment, will be further customised to meet the requirements defined by the curriculum.

Conclusion

The development of the curriculum described in these pages, and the consequences of its implementation on accommodation and staff policies, have required a huge effort on the part of the academy's teachers. Since the summer of 2011, they have managed to combine their regular teaching duties with research, development and training focused on implementing the new curriculum. In the course of this process, they have thoroughly assimilated and further refined this curriculum. Since the spring of 2013, the curriculum's originators and developers have coached the rest of the teaching staff, helping their colleagues to fine-tune their working knowledge of the new programme. This way, the curriculum has been implemented from the bottom up, so that the teachers are true shareholders in the new programme.

Of course, the introduction of the programme is not the final stage. We can already glimpse a future of alternative academies; for example, the academy as a living and working community for

students and professionals. If there’s anything history can teach us, it’s that in the long term, the most successful academies are those which continue to evolve, by organically adapting to their changing environments, while those unwilling or incapable of change are destined to extinction.

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Essay #2 /Interventions, Experimentation, Markets

Florian Cramer

Art education and cross-disciplinary creative practice

Introduction

Summary: This paper begins by re-examining two major traditions - one intellectual, one vocational - which have historically defined art education in the West. In recent years, however, contemporary art and design have seen the emergence of cross-disciplinary work forms, which are rapidly becoming the norm in creative practices and industries, locally as well as internationally. The curricula of established art academies, implicitly based on traditional concepts of art and design, do not yet reflect these changes. In this light, the Willem de Kooning Academy’s 2013 curriculum reform is a radical one.

1. Idealism and fine art

1.1 Plato

In Plato's conception of academia (Ἀκαδημία) there is no place for visual artists. In book ten of The Republic, Plato, expanding on the classical Greek concept of mimesis, rejects artistic representation as "third from the truth"[1] - in other words, an imitation of an imitation (the true original existing only in the metaphysical spheres). Rather than conveying ideas, painters offered nothing but mirrors and shadows, which could only distract from the philosophical truth. Such notions would eventually inspire the iconoclastic movements of later centuries, in Christian as well as Islamic cultures.

A partial exception was granted in the case of music: while Plato banned most harmonic systems from his ideal Republic (as well as all instruments except for the lyre and the harp), music was at least recognised as the creation of beauty.[2] Here, Plato was indebted to Pythagorean thinking, with its discovery of corresponding laws of symmetrical beauty in music, mathematics and macrocosmic nature. This exception would have far-reaching consequences for the very definition of the arts in the European Middle Ages. Music was included in the canon of the septem artes liberales, the seven liberal arts, together with grammar and rhetoric (as the precursors of linguistics and philology), dialectics (as the precursor of philosophical logic), and

arithmetic, geometry and astronomy. On the other hand, those disciplines which prefigured what would eventually become the art and design professions (including weaving and architecture) were relegated to the canon of the 'lower' artes mechanicae which also included agriculture, cooking, blacksmithing, martial arts and trade.

1.2 Middle ages and renaissance

This normative divide has persisted to the present day. In fact, it can be plainly noticed in the field of art and design education: on one hand, we have the 'liberal arts' model, as the humanist continuation of the septem artes liberales; on the other hand, we have the model of vocational art and design craftsmanship, as an (often class-conscious) continuation of the 'lower' artes mechanicae.

The Italian neoplatonist Renaissance philosopher Marsilio Ficino attempted to break through this divide when he founded his new Platonic Academy in 15th-century Florence (financed by the House of Medici and working in close collaboration with contemporary painters such as Botticelli). Through its complete integration of Pythagorean thought, Renaissance neoplatonism was fundamentally based on aesthetics, and on an aesthetics-centred metaphysics. Botticelli's Birth of Venus, and later Raphael's School of Athens and Leonardo da Vinci's geometrical drawings of the human figure, are all clear examples of visual art striving for that same level

of beauty (both transcendental and mathematical-harmonic) which Plato had recognised only in music.

1.3 20th century

From the Renaissance to the present day, much of the history of Western visual arts can be interpreted as a continuous struggle for emancipation from the ‘lower’ crafts, and acceptance into the ‘higher’ liberal arts. Through the break with scholastic science in the anti-university academy movement of the 17th century, the liberal arts were transformed into the modern humanities and sciences. In this respect, contemporary notions such as ‘concept art’ (a term coined in 1961 by the philosopher and artist Henry Flynt, who was fully aware of these historical issues), [3] ‘dematerialisation’ or ‘artistic research’ do not really describe anything new.[4] At their simplest level, they express a desire by artists to emancipate themselves from the ‘lower’ crafts, and to have their work accepted as intellectual labour; or, figuratively speaking, to be accepted as thinkers in Plato’s republic. In this light, ‘concept’ (or ‘conceptual’) art is in fact straightforward idealism, with an agenda that can be traced as far back as Hegel, who wrote in 1828: “[...] art, considered in its highest vocation, is and remains for us a thing of the past. Thereby it has lost for us genuine truth and life, and has rather been transferred into our ideas instead of maintaining its earlier

necessity in reality and occupying its higher place."[5]

The notion of artistic research still carries the potential to break through the confines of conceptualism: rather than merely implying that artists should conform to academia and standard notions of intellectual labour, it offers a way of cutting through idealism, and of emancipating artistic practice itself as an act of thinking. A similar notion was pursued in Western continental philosophy, by Martin Heidegger and later others such as Jacques Derrida; in East Asian intellectual traditions, such ontological and deconstructive thinking goes back much further, to the earliest beginnings of Taoism (interestingly, in the same century as Plato). Therefore it is not surprising that this divide between fine art and applied art does not exist in countries like China and Japan, except as imported Western culture.

I. [1] Plato, Republic, book X, 602.?
II. [2] Plato, Republic, book III, 403.? IV.
III. [3] Henry Flynt, Concept Art, Essay, 1961, in: Jackson Mac Low, La Monte Young (editors), An Anthology, 1962.? V.
[4] Lucy Lippard, Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object, University of California Press, 1973.?
[5] G.W.F. Hegel, Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1975, p. 10.?

2. From metaphysics to ontology, from arts to crafts

Rather than being resolved, the dualisms of Western art seem only to have shifted: from

‘mechanical’ versus ‘liberal’ arts, to ‘applied’ versus ‘fine’ arts; or, in the 19th and 20th centuries, ‘design’ versus ‘visual art’; and finally, in the 21st century, ‘creative industries’ versus ‘artistic research’. After the recent sweeping cuts in public funding for the arts sector in the Netherlands (which, incidentally, have equally affected many ‘commercial’ designers who are in fact largely dependent on commissions from subsidised arts institutions), art school students today see ‘creative industries’ and ‘artistic research’ as their two major career options.6 The question remains as to whether the two are in fact mutually exclusive.

From a sociological viewpoint, the desire by artists to be recognised intellectually in Platonic academia may be understood as a class struggle resulting in upward social mobility. The notion of the Renaissance painter as an independent maker, researcher and entrepreneur is arguably the earliest manifestation of what Richard Florida calls the ‘creative class’ - a description that applies not only to creative industries, but may include almost any type of high-skilled labour.7

Another type of class consciousness could be observed in artist-designers who refused this ‘intellectual’ career path, choosing instead to preserve and continue the medieval crafts and workshops model, while gradually transforming its organisational system: from

guilds into cooperatives. The Arts and Crafts movement of the 19th century, guided by the socialist ideas of the art critic John Ruskin and the artist and writer William Morris, was more than merely a counter-reaction to the industrial revolution; it can also be understood as a practical-minded opposition to idealist notions of art, including Hegel's assertion that art had lost its significance because it had "rather been transferred into our ideas".8 Martin Heidegger's shift from metaphysics to ontology (or, in the terminology of contemporary philosophy, from purely speculative to object-oriented practice9) was in fact understood and applied by the Arts and Crafts movement long before it was theoretically formulated by Heidegger.10 Interestingly, Heidegger was profoundly inspired by expressionist artists such as Vincent van Gogh, as well as by the Lebensreform ('life reform') movement which began in the late 19th century in Germany and Switzerland and remained influential well into the 20th century. (Retrospectively, the life reform movement may also be seen as a historical bridge between anti-intellectualist practices such as Arts and Crafts, and the shift in early 20th-century continental philosophy away from Platonist and Hegelian idealist thinking and towards fundamental ontology. In all of these movements and schools of thought, practice is valued just as highly as theory.)

The influence of the Arts and Crafts movement's practical-minded philosophy can be found in

various 20th-century art movements, often in unexpected places. The direct legacy of Arts and Crafts in Bauhaus and De Stijl (also known as neoplasticism) is well-known and has been extensively documented.11 Both De Stijl and Bauhaus adopted Arts and Crafts' anti-industrial programme and applied it to modern industrial design. Even more significantly, they also envisioned, through the (literal) equality of 'arts' and 'crafts', a radical fusion of fine art and design. Theo van Doesburg's 1917 Neoplasticism ('Nieuwe Beelding') manifesto addressed on equal terms "the painter, the architect, the sculptor as well as the carpenter", as visual designers of every aspect of life, for whose work the same principles should apply.12

This blurring of the boundaries between fine art and design has remained an important characteristic of the arts (and of visual culture in general) in the Netherlands. It has also characterised Dutch art education which, with a very few exceptions, was modelled after the 1922 Bauhaus curriculum: a foundation course (German 'Vorlehre'; Dutch - by way of Classical Greek - 'propedeuse') is followed by introductory instruction in composition, colours and materials. The main instructional method consists of material-specific and media-specific workshops, on location in the school. Just as Arts and Crafts was a counter-movement to 19th-century fine art, art schools with Bauhaus-derived curricula were a counter-

programme to classicist art academies (modelled on the Académie des Beaux-Arts in Paris, which was founded by Cardinal Mazarin in 1648, at a time when France was still living under absolute monarchy).

What is less well known, is that the core ideas of both the Arts and Crafts movement and the Bauhaus school were later embraced by two art movements of the 1960s, which are usually associated with quite opposite notions of conceptualism and dematerialised art practices: the predominantly American (but also European and Japanese) Fluxus movement, and the continental European (predominantly French) Situationist International. George Maciunas, the founder and central organiser of Fluxus, urged artists (in his 1963 Fluxus Manifesto) to “purge the world of bourgeois sickness, ‘intellectual’, professional and commercialised culture, PURGE the world of dead art” and to “FUSE the cadres of cultural, social & political revolutionaries into united front & action”.13 Regardless of the apparent contradiction between the ‘beauty’ ideals of Arts and Crafts on one hand, and the countercultural audiovisual aesthetics of Fluxus on the other, Maciunas (an architect and graphic designer by trade) obviously followed Ruskin’s and Morris’ lead in several respects. Like them, he envisioned Fluxus as affordable art for the common people. Hence Fluxus’ focus on street theatre actions, small-edition artists’ books, and small objects and boxes produced as multiples and sold inexpensively in ‘Flux Shops’ in New

York and Amsterdam. Maciunas' elaborate Expanded Arts Diagram combined popular amusement (such as American Vaudeville) with avant-garde art, design and music into an integrated alternative vision of contemporary art. Significantly, Fluxus was also the first 20th-century Western art movement to include non-Western (namely, Japanese) contemporary art.

The Fluxus programme has been characterised (in its own time as well as in retrospect) as 'total art', where art and life are one. While such tendencies certainly did exist within the movement, there is also a danger here of reducing Fluxus to just another romanticist art programme. In 1798, Friedrich Schlegel described a vision of romanticist poetry as "a progressive universal poetry" whose "destiny is not merely to reunite all of the different genres, and [...] make life and society poetic", embracing "everything [...] all the way down to the sigh, the kiss that a poeticizing child breathes out in an artless song".14 By the late 19th century, this idea had further evolved into the late-romantic concept of the 'Gesamtkunstwerk' or total artwork (referenced in Maciunas' Expanded Arts Diagram as WAGNERISM / "whole art").15 But the performance scores typical of Fluxus (such as George Brecht's Word Event, consisting of only the word 'EXIT') certainly invalidated any grandiose Wagnerian expectations. Their extreme minimalism and their explicit absence of any higher or metaphysical meaning, made

them rather ontological exercises - inspired by Western existential philosophy as well as Japanese Zen Buddhism. Also, Fluxus objects, such as Maciunas' extensive diagrams, defy any simple classification as art, graphic design or (anti-academic) research.

The Situationist International movement went even further, operating under the guise of a research organisation: its main activity was the publication of a quasi-academic journal. One of the precursor groups which eventually led to the foundation of the Situationist International organisation was the 'International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus', established by the Danish painter Asger Jorn after the breakup of the artists' group COBRA. The essential question for this 'Imaginist Bauhaus' was the same which had been central to both Arts and Crafts and Bauhaus: in Jorn's words, "WHERE AND HOW to find a justified place for artists in the machine age."16 Accordingly, Jorn characterised the original German Bauhaus as an "answer to the question: What kind of 'education' do artists need in order to take their place in the machine age?"17

In Jorn's view, post-war functionalism, as exemplified by the design school of Max Bill, had twisted the original ideas of Bauhaus (which Jorn credited to Ruskin, among others) and reduced them to mere utilitarianism. His 1957 Imaginist Bauhaus manifesto is likely the first document to literally call for artistic research: "We want the same

economic and practical means and possibilities that are already at the disposal of scientific research, of whose momentous results everyone is aware. Artistic research is identical to ‘human science,’ which for us means ‘concerned’ science, not purely historical science. This research should be carried out by artists with the assistance of scientists”.18 In other words, the purpose of artistic research is not to elevate or promote artists to the ‘higher’ level of academia, but rather to save science from blind technocracy. In the same year, Jorn published a collaged subjectivist map of Copenhagen, Fin de Copenhague19 (with a credit for his Situationist comrade Guy Debord, as “Technical Adviser in Détournement”). Within the Situationist International movement, Jorn’s programme converged with the group’s concept of ‘unitary urbanism’ - a method of mapping cities through subjective experience, rather than top-down functionalist urban planning. This concept particularly attracted the Dutch artist Constant Nieuwenhuys, who was a member of the group from 1959 to 1960.

In contrast to American Fluxus, Jorn’s Imaginist Bauhaus and the Situationists’ unitary urbanism embraced some elements of European romanticism: from the notion of artists as humanist ambassadors (which Debord rejected, eventually leading him to expel all artists from the group) to the concept of dérive (drift): the intuitive exploration of the

urban landscape, an idea borrowed from the Surrealists (and, going back even further, from the romanticist flâneur, strolling smartly but aimlessly through the streets).[20] Conversely, Situationist unitary urbanism may be seen as a direct precursor of contemporary service design: perceiving a built or designed environment, not merely as a structure, but more importantly as a (customer) experience. In fact, the methodologies of Situationist unitary urbanism and service design mapping have a great deal in common, as the service and interaction designers Bill Gaver, Tony Dunne and Elena Pacenti pointed out in their much-cited 1999 paper Cultural Probes: “For instance, our maps are related to the psychogeographical maps of the Situationists, which capture the emotional ambience of different locations.”[21]

I. [6] Observation based on the author’s tutoring of Bachelor and Master students of the Willem de Kooning Academy, Rotterdam.?

II. [7] Richard Florida, The Rise of the Creative Class, New York: Perseus Book Group, 2002.?

III. [8] G.W.F. Hegel, Aesthetics, op. cit.?

IV. [9] The contemporary philosophical movement of Speculative Realism seeks to reconcile these two; Graham Harman, Tool-Being: Heidegger and the Metaphysics of Objects, Open Court, Rotterdam, Speculative Realism inspired the recent exhibition ‘Blowup: Speculative Realities’ organised by V2 at Roodkapje, Dec. 8, 2012 - January 11, 2013.?

V. [10] Martin Heidegger, On the Origin of the Work of Art, in: Heidegger, Basic Writings, New York: HarperCollins, 2008, pp. 143-212.? XI. [11] Elizabeth Cumming, The Arts and Crafts Movement, London: Thames & Hudson, 1991, p. 166.?

XII. [12] Theo van Doesburg, Ter inleiding, in: De Stijl, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 1-2. The original Dutch: “Zoowel de schilder, de architect, de beeldhouwer, als de meubelmaker”.?

XIII. [13] George Maciunas, Fluxus Manifesto, 1963, reprinted in: Hans Sohm, Harald Szeemann (eds.), Happening & Fluxus, Kölnischer Kunstverein, 1970.?

XIV. [14] Friedrich Schlegel, Kritische Schriften, Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1958, pp. 37-38.?

XV. [15] Astrid Schmidt-Burckhardt, Maciunas’ Learning Machines, 2nd revised edition, Vienna/New York: Springer, 2011, p. 190.?

XVI. [16] Asger Jorn, Notes on the Formation of an Imaginist Bauhaus, in: Asger Jorn, Against Functionalism, 1957, http://www.bopsecrets.org/SI/bauhaus.htm.?

XVII. [17] ibid.?

XVIII. [18] ibid.?

XIX. [19] Asger Jorn, Fin de Copenhague, Édité par le Bauhus [sic] Imaginiste, 1957.?

XX. [20] Walter Benjamin, Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism, London: Verso, 1983.?

XXI. [21] Bill Gaver, Tony Dunne, Elena Pacenti, Cultural Probes and the Value of Uncertainty, in: Interactions, January/February 1999, pp. 21-29.?

3. Since 1970

The above examples of 20th-century art and design all share the following characteristics:

Distinctions between ‘art’, ‘design’ and ‘research’ have become increasingly meaningless, except as traditions or points of reference;
Innovation takes place in cross-overs: in Fluxus, design thinking is adopted by an art movement; in Situationism, artistic experiment is applied to social research and social intervention; in service design, artistic research is a tool for product/service development;
Art is no longer by definition only ‘for art’s sake’; design is no longer (purely) functionalist; research is no longer (purely) academic.
Even cross-over concepts can suffer from limitations inherited from their constituent disciplines - such as the Bauhaus curriculum, with its sole focus on materials.

Also, the standard vocabulary of art/design history and theory is often inadequate for the analysis of these tendencies. Art theory is constrained by the analytical categories of 19th-century philosophical aesthetics, and defined through idealist terms such as ‘conceptual’, ‘dematerialisation’ and even ‘hybridisation’.

In all the previously discussed examples, as well as more recent cases which we shall introduce in the next section of this text, artists/designers have been investigating new relationships between visual culture, social intervention, globalisation, new economies, and experimental forms of research and education.

4. Case Studies

4.1. Art as social intervention: Food and RAAF

Food was a restaurant founded in 1971 by a group of artists in New York's SoHo district: visual and performance artists, filmmakers, musicians and poets, loosely gravitating around the main initiators, Gordon Matta-Clark and Caroline Goodden. The restaurant was, first of all, a neighbourhood business; perhaps more significantly, it was the main precursor to what the curator Nicolas Bourriaud has called the 'relational' art of the 1990s. Matta-Clark, in his letter A MATTA'S PROPOSAL (alluding to Jonathan Swift's A Modest Proposal, which satirically advocated cannibalism as a means of solving the Irish famine), described his "mission [...] to restore the art of eating with love instead of fear".

The difference between Food and other performative art projects (Fluxus, happenings) is the complete absence of any symbolic framing. The restaurant simply was, deriving its meaning entirely from its social and economic function: sharing food, creating an artists' community space, and financing artists' projects. Unlike the usual restaurant jobs which artists often must take on in order to support themselves, the work was not perceived as some alienating day job with no connection to the artists' own work, but rather as an art project (or social installation) in its own right. In this way, cooking food was elevated from the lowly artes mechanicae to the level

of contemporary art. At the same time, Food dispensed entirely with the notion of art as something different or separate from crafts and social activism. Food, as an artist-run space designed for enabling processes, social dynamics and experiences, can be seen as an early example of what we now know as ‘social design’.

Food became the prototype for all economically self-supporting artist-run social spaces, which typically generate income by selling food and drinks. In Rotterdam, the small venue RAAF (‘Rotterdam Art Adventure & Food’) is a perfect contemporary example of the concept originally pioneered by Food. RAAF was founded in 2009 (originally under the name Kunstplatform de Kapsalon, ‘The Barbershop Art Platform’, in a former barbershop in South Rotterdam) by students of the Willem de Kooning Academy. Running the venue, which unequivocally combined art with globalisation-critical political activism, became their graduation project for the Bachelor Fine Art programme.22 Later on, moving the venue to another location in South Rotterdam and transforming it into RAAF involved some major changes in its programming and

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economic model, since the makers wanted the venue to be able to sustain itself without government art subsidies. RAAF is now a multi-purpose space, with more emphasis on its café and restaurant function. Besides small exhibitions from Rotterdam artists and other residents of South Rotterdam, RAAF also hosts music concerts and open mic poetry readings, attracts a steady audience, and serves as a young artists' community hub for the neighbourhood.

Kapsalon/RAAF is in fact a typical example of the post-graduation projects and careers of many of today's artists. Although the project did not entail visual or fine-art work in any traditional sense, the teaching staff of the Willem de Kooning Academy's Bachelor Fine Art programme was forward-looking enough to accept their effort as a fine-art project, and to reward it with a positive assessment. However, there was nothing at all

in these students' curriculum which supported or prepared them professionally for their undertaking - no electives or minors to train them in interdisciplinary project organisation, no curriculum options for systematically studying art as social intervention or for acquiring the business administration skills needed for running a self-organised project or venue. Until now, students who chose to work as social designers, community artists and non-traditional educationalists had to rely on their 'natural' project organisation talent or some additional training in order to mature into professional entrepreneurs in these fields.

4.2. Art as radical autonomy: Atelier van Lieshout

Joep van Lieshout is likely the most prominent living artist to have graduated from the Willem de Kooning Academy.[23] Operating with his studio workers under the corporate moniker Atelier van Lieshout (AvL), he describes his work as "objects that balance on the boundary between art, architecture and design".[24] These are often monumental sculptural installations which embody dystopian factories of social engineering: hospitals, restaurants, living spaces and brothels, where humans are reduced to anonymous cogwheels in machineries that recycle their waste and feed it back into their food chains. AvL builds these environments as sculptures, architectures and designs to be actually used by real people;

for example, the office spaces of the media-experimental arts venue WORM in Rotterdam.

AvL's work is characterised by seemingly extreme contradictions. While the environments depict humans as tiny parts in machineries beyond their control, AvL in 2001 declared its studios in the Rotterdam harbour a free state (with its own currency, legislation and national flag) and spent most of that year focusing its efforts on practical experiments toward achieving economic and ecological self-sufficiency. In this respect, AvL has taken the Western notion of the autonomy of art and artists to its logical extreme (an idea first formulated by Immanuel Kant in his Critique of Judgement, and formalised as government policy in the Netherlands in the late 19th century by the liberal politician Johan Rudolph Thorbecke). However, AvL also undermines the established values of autonomy in fine art by sacrificing the individual names and signatures of its artists in favour of a collective corporate identity, and by disregarding - much like constructivism, Fluxus and Situationism in the 1920s and 1960s - any distinctions between art, design and architecture.

Autonomy, in this sense, is an issue of intellectual freedom, which goes far beyond any automatic assumptions that contemporary art by definition exists purely for its own sake and on its own terms. (It is worth noting here that the term 'autonomous' is also, in the Netherlands at least, a fairly recent synonym for 'fine art', 'visual art',

etc. For example, prior to the 2013 curriculum reform, the Dutch title of the Willem de Kooning Academy's Fine Art Bachelor programme was 'Autonome Beeldende Kunst'; literally, Autonomous Visual Art.) AvL's works, on the other hand, reflect the concept of autonomy in a dialectical way, with the constraints of alienating machineries as the price one must pay for self-sufficiency.[25]

Thus, 'autonomous' practices are no longer by definition the privilege of 'autonomous' fine art programmes - as Theo van Doesburg already implied a century ago in his Nieuwe Beelding manifesto. For art schools, this means that the 'autonomy' of the arts must first of all be questioned in its real-world limitations, and secondly be regarded as a challenge for creative practitioners of all disciplines - regardless of whether these disciplines traditionally were classified as 'fine art' or as 'design'. Prior to the Willem de Kooning Academy's radical 2013 curriculum reform, the 'Autonomous Fine Art' programme (which, incidentally, only accounted for about 2% of the student population) often served as a refuge for students who could not find their place in any of the school's design programmes. For example, students often switched from a design programme to the fine art programme at a later stage of their studies. This in itself is a serious indication that fine art is not necessarily a creative discipline in its own right, but rather a radically

experimentalist - often even political - attitude, regardless of the practitioner's chosen discipline.

AvL's work shows us that any creative practice which explores and insists on autonomy, is by definition a social practice. However, unlike the practices of community artists and social designers, autonomy is not necessarily socially constructive; it may just as well be anti-social. This is not to advocate the romanticist (and bourgeois) cliché of the artist as sociopathic genius. Fluxus street actions and Situationist psychogeographical drifts, for example, were anti-bourgeois provocations in their day; nevertheless, community artists and service designers later discovered how these strategies could be applied to socially and commercially oriented creative practices. Conversely, radically autonomous practices such as those of AvL are also unapologetically commercial: AvL is one of Rotterdam's major 'creative industries' enterprises, along with Rem Koolhaas' architectural firm OMA and Marlies Dekkers' fashion label. If 'autonomy' means that an artist project (such as RAAF) should be able to survive without government funding, then a viable business strategy becomes an absolute necessity.

4.3. Commercial practices: Piet Zwart, Kurt Schwitters, Fabrique

In 1923, the German collage artist and poet Kurt Schwitters toured through eight Dutch cities, performing Dadaist sound poetry with Theo and

Nelly van Doesburg (and with riotous audiences providing the necessary scandal and spectacle).26 Schwitters lived from the proceeds of his performances and his collage paintings, which he sold cheaply out of a suitcase he always carried with him. Through Van Doesburg, Schwitters was introduced to Piet Zwart, who had been trained as an architect in a period when Arts and Crafts dominated Dutch design culture. In the year of Schwitters' tour, Zwart had his breakthrough as a graphic designer with his constructivist advertising campaign for the Nederlandsche Kabelfabriek (NKF), a electrical wire and telephone cable manufacturer based in Delft.

Zwart and Schwitters soon became close friends. Schwitters visited Zwart every summer from 1925 to 1928, and again one last time in 1936, before his emigration to Norway and later England. Zwart inspired Schwitters to work as a commercial graphic designer and to set up his own advertising agency, Merz-Werbe, in that same year, influenced by Zwart and Van Doesburg, Schwitters switched to constructivist design and painting. In 1927, Schwitters founded the ring neuer werbegestalter ('circle of new advertising designers') whose membership included Zwart as well as the German typographical designer Jan Tschichold and the Bauhaus professor László Moholy-Nagy. Tschichold's seminal 1928 book Die Neue Typographie ('The New

Typography') includes examples of work by both Zwart and Schwitters.

What makes this biographical fragment so illuminating, is the way it defies various common assumptions about commercial artistic practices. Zwart and Schwitters were not specialists, but rather multidisciplinary practitioners. In Schwitters' case, exposure to new commercial work fields did not result in less radical artistic work; on the contrary, it played a positive role in renewing his work and positioning it within the avant-garde visual culture of its day.[27] Engaging with everyday visual culture made it possible for artists like Schwitters to not only influence the development of mass media, but also to broaden the cultural impact of their own work.

Commercial application of the 'new typography' compelled artists to confront the new technologies of their time. In 1928, Piet Zwart, then still a teacher at the Academie van Beeldende Kunsten en Technische Wetenschappen (the school which is now known as the Willem de Kooning Academy) wrote in the newspaper Het Vaderland: "In fact, the fine art painting programme will have to be shut down completely, in as much as this is still understood as that primitive method of applying colourful matter to a canvas, using a bundle of pig hairs tied to a stick. Instead, there should be a great deal of emphasis on synthetic and visual drawing, advertising, modern reproduction technologies, typography, photography and its

visual possibilities, film, and the use of colour in architecture and in the urban space".28 With this article, Zwart scandalised his colleagues and superiors, setting off a controversy within the Academy that would eventually lead to his forced departure five years later. In 2013, Zwart's vision has finally been realised. But as Aldje van Meer, head of the Willem de Kooning Academy's interdisciplinary media lab CrossLab, demonstrated in a recent empirical study, the new digital communication technologies which dominate contemporary everyday life now face very much the same kind of resistance within Dutch art education.29

In 1994, the Dutch design agency Fabrique was, in all likelihood, the first design agency to receive a web design commission in the Netherlands. Yet Fabrique's founder and director Jeroen van Erp describes Fabrique as a 'hyperdisciplinary' agency, offering a holistically integrated brand communication service "in which the traditional boundaries between graphic design, industrial design, interior and retail design, and interactive media are sometimes nearly unrecognisable".30 Fabrique's approach is to design a total customer experience, incorporating product/service ecosystems characterised by synergy of product and brand. 31 This design practice is, in Van Erp's words, research-driven and based on the assumption that the impact of the digital revolution in changing the interaction of

customers with products and services, is as profound as the impact of the industrial revolution was in its day. Just like Gaver's, Dunne's and Pacenti's previously quoted 1999 paper on 'Cultural Probes', Van Erp's design philosophy corresponds with Situationist experience strategies as well as earlier romanticist aesthetics, privileging aesthetic experience (aisthesis) over production (poeisis). Consequently, Van Erp thinks of the designer not as a maker, but as a strategist.[32]

Fabrique currently employs about a hundred people at its two branches in Amsterdam and Rotterdam; it is one of the few design agencies managing to grow in the current economic climate. Dutch polytechnic education - which includes art schools - tends by default to think of monodisciplinary vocational training as suitable job training. Yet, Fabrique is a striking example of a contemporary employer that expects its designers to think in radical multidisciplinary terms. Clearly, traditional monodisciplinary art and design education no longer prepares students for the contemporary work field. This means that cross-disciplinary, project-oriented and theme-oriented creative work is no longer merely a niche for experimental or activist art; rather, is has become a mainstream skill requirement for the commercial market. Cultural changes, brought on by new information technologies, are now introducing this development into relatively conservative work

domains, such as product design, retail design and fashion design.[33]

I. [22] Referring to their project 'The Mobile Kapsalon', the group writes: "During the trip the economic crisis will also develop itself. Not only in the Netherlands, but in the whole of Europe the governments are trying to reduce government debt by letting the innocent civilians pay. Therefore demonstrations, manifestations and other solidarity actions are on the program as well." Ashley Nijland et al., Kunstplatform de kapsalon, Rotterdam (self-published book), 2009.?

II. [23] Joep van Lieshout is currently ranked by artfacts.net among the top 300 contemporary artists worldwide.?

III. [24] Source: http://www.ateliervanlieshout.com/pressAboutAVL.htm (accessed on April 19th, 2013).?

IV. [25] This is precisely what Adorno and Horkheimer have described as the 'Dialectics of Enlightenment' - with fascism, Western consumer society, and the writings of the Marquis de Sade as their main examples.?

V. [26] Friedhelm Lach, Der Merzkünstler Kurt Schwitters, Cologne: DuMont Schauberg, 1971, p. 56.?

VI. [27] Before 1923, Schwitters' visual language was still very much influenced by cubism; in 1919 the Berlin Dadaist Richard Huelsenbeck dismissed him as an "abstract Spitzweg" (referring to the German Biedermeier painter Carl Spitzweg).?

VII. [28] Piet Zwart, Nederlandsche ambachts- en nijverheidskunst, in: Het Vaderland, Mar. 31, 1928: "Feitelijk zal de schilderkunstafdeling geheel moeten vervallen, indien men daaronder wenst te verstaan de primitieve methode waarbij met een bosje varkensharen, die aan een stokje gebonden zijn, kleurige materiën op linnen worden uitgeborsteld. Daarvoor in de plaats zou veel aandacht besteed moeten worden aan synthetisch en beeldend tekenen, reclame, moderne reproductiemethoden, typografie, fotografie en haar beeldingsmogelijkheden; film, kleurgeving in de architectuur en in het stadsbeeld".?

VIII. [29] Aldje van Meer, I would rather design a poster than a website, 2012-2013, http://iwouldratherdesignaposterthanaweb

IX. [30] The original Dutch: "[...] waarbij de traditionele grenzen tussen grafisch ontwerpen, industrieel ontwerpen, ruimtelijk ontwerpen en interactieve media soms nauwelijks nog herkenbaar zijn", http://www.ccaa.nl/page/4031/nl?

X. [31] Van Erp cites Nespresso as an example of such a brand; Jeroen van Erp, lecture at CrossLab evening Dynamic Design, De Unie, Rotterdam, March 27, 2012, published in the e-book http://extra.wdka.nl/crosslab/2012/07/02/epub-dynamic-design-2.?

XI. [32] Ibid.?

XII. [33] Van Erp cites the example of window shops in South Korean subway stations, where customers can order goods for home delivery by scanning them with their mobile phones.?

Conclusion

This paper began by identifying Platonic academicism and Arts and Crafts as two opposite poles which have traditionally defined the practice and education of fine art and design in the West. Then, examining cutting-edge 20th and 21st-century creative practices

which focused either on social intervention, autonomous experiment or commercial orientation, we observed that:

these practices have rendered the division between ‘art’ and ‘design’ either arbitrary or obsolete;
further disciplinary specialisations (graphic design, media design, interior design, etc.) have become increasingly problematic as well. The study disciplines no longer correspond to work disciplines;
cross-disciplinary categories such as social intervention, autonomous experiment and commercial orientation can be helpful in order to understand cross-disciplinary creative practices - but in the real world, any practice in one of these three fields will invariably involve the other two as well.

The initial question of this paper was whether art/design students nowadays face a choice between ‘creative industries’ and ‘artistic research’ (which are in fact no more than new terms for ‘design’ and ‘fine art’ respectively). Using the broader term ‘creative’ instead of either ‘art’ or ‘design’ provides an opportunity to embrace both, leaving the old dichotomy behind. Conversely, as the example of Fabrique demonstrated, research has become just as much a requirement in the commercial domain as it has in activist and ‘autonomous’ fine-art practices. The fact that the term ‘artistic research’ has become worn out through recent overuse[34] does not in any way change this reality.

The Willem de Kooning Academy will be the first art school in the Netherlands - in all likelihood,

one of the first in the world - to implement a new curriculum which structurally addresses the issues and challenges described in this paper. The school's reform is a radical one. But, to conclude with a subjective assessment: if students are expected to find their place professionally within the types of artistic practices described in this paper (rather than other creative niches), then this radical break with the past is a matter of sheer necessity.

[34] This is at least the unanimous opinion of the course directors of several fine art master programmes in the Netherlands; Dutch Masters, in: Metropolis M, No. 2, April/May 2013.?

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Colophon

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www.eversendegier.nl
Editing and translation:
Joe Monk, Monastic Language, Rotterdam

Made possible by:
Willem de Kooning Academy + Kenniscentrum Creating 010, Hogeschool Rotterdam

Printer:
Veenman Rotterdam

Edition: 600

september 2013

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Reinventing the Art School, 21st Century

Art and design professions are currently undergoing major transformations. Perhaps for the first time in history, Western art education is no longer naturally linked to stabilising norms within the professional creative practice.

During the past few decades, art education has been unable to adapt sufficiently to shifting global economic and cultural realities. Neither has it been able to catch up with the new technological requirements which its graduates must face. The nature of the public has changed as well: consumers have become co-creators, while do-it-yourself culture increasingly challenges the role of the artist as the authoritative creative professional. Meanwhile, service design and project-based practices which exist on the boundaries between traditional fields of knowledge are becoming as important as artistic work in the conventional sense.

Therefore art education will have to undergo a radical transformation, if it is to go on playing a meaningful role in the 21st century.

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