



APPLIED NON-DIDACTICS

Ed. Frank Brümmel



ART THEORETICAL WRITINGS FROM THE ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS

21

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My heartfelt thanks to all.

Frank Brümmel

Introduction

This publication explores *Applied Non-didactics*, looking at art, education and the intersections between them. It seeks to redefine the connections between instruction and discovery by suggesting ways of teaching and learning that honour art itself, and which are open to its intrinsic possibilities. This approach offers an open invitation to engage with the world, both in and through art. In *Applied Non-didactics*, art doesn't simply offer an aesthetic experience, but gives an opportunity to engage with multiplicities of meaning, past experiences and personal growth. Art in this context offers spaces for teachers and students to encounter and process novel experiences that exceed the limits of didactic instruction.

Applied Non-didactics seeks transformative educational experiences, celebrating the interconnectedness of art, education and the socio-political contexts in which they occur. It emphasises the importance of sensitivity, not only on the part of teacher, student or viewer but also in the way it invites participants into a continuous process of becoming. As the range of texts in this book argue, *Applied Non-didactics* offers an open-ended invitation to engage with the world, rather than a fixed pathway towards predefined knowledge.

The phrase 'Applied Non-didactics' was first used as a title to frame a one-day program during the Research Days at the University of the Arts Helsinki, Academy of Fine Arts in December 2022, which some of the authors here contributed to with lectures and workshops. The presentations and experiments of this Research Day circled around the topics of 'artist as teacher' and 'teaching at art schools', and enquired about which pedagogies tend to occur

when artists teach. The presentations also engaged with questions of how artists can bring their own artistic work into the teaching process, and about bridging the gap between theory- and practice-led conversations.

The contributors to this publication approach the topic of art and education from their own different areas of expertise, and reflect on the potential of artistic pedagogy in various ways, some more practical and some more theoretical. The collection of texts here ranges from pedagogies of place to critiques of predominant oral-dialogical pedagogical modes, to how drawing, singing and improvisation can facilitate deep connections and empower individuals to navigate the complexities of their own educational journeys. The book begins with a text by Gert Biesta on ‘authority in teaching’. Several of the authors in the book refer specifically to Biesta’s writings, advocating for an education that embraces a triadic relationship between the teacher, student and the world. While the various texts do not converge on any one form of pedagogy, they collectively seek an educational framework that values the present moment, embraces uncertainty, and emphasises the importance of context and materiality. Together they are united in an idea of how artistic practices can challenge traditional educational structures and invite meaningful engagement with the world.

The aim of this publication is to give the reader different entry points to what Applied Non-didactics can or might be. The authors reflect on educational processes, genealogies of teaching and institutional traditions, the particularities of artists teaching artists and artistic thinking on a more general level. They also address the need for educational institutions to be part of the process. Some of the texts want to expand the horizon, and consider the wider societal impact of artistic thinking, opening a path for exploring Applied Non-didactics and the way it might influence education more widely.

In the first text, ‘Authority in Teaching: Overcoming Didactophobia Through Applied Non-didactics’, Gert Biesta writes about the triadic relationship involving teacher, student and the world, going beyond a control-based dyadic approach. Here the teacher’s active role is to point the student’s attention towards the world, asking for responsible engagement. Biesta frames freedom in education as a meaningful action, as distinct from offering limitless choice. The teacher in this model fosters the student’s autonomy and responsibility until a point is reached where the teacher needs to step back from teaching. This is to promote a real educational moment, transformative personally, socially and educationally.

In ‘The Oscillating Art School’ Magnus Quaife advocates for a plurality of alternative pedagogies in art educational institutions. He addresses ongoing issues with power dynamics that can hinder innovation, particularly among marginalised students, as manifested in the art school system’s reliance on verbal critique and tutorials. Quaife proposes project-based learning and hands-on workshops to foster multiple forms of artistic practice. These kinds of experiences, he suggests, could form a more inclusive, dynamic, oscillating educational approach.

In ‘I see you, I see me – encounters in arts’ Sanna Vuolteenaho writes about singing and improvisation as ways of fostering personal and collective connections. Vuolteenaho describes how she blends teaching and performing to create open and collaborative spaces where visitors (participants) are engaged to participate directly in music-making. Dissolving borders (and hierarchies) between performer and audience, and deepening connections between oneself and others, she describes, are ways of creating meaningful encounters.

Minna Suoniemi and Marja Rasta’s text ‘Tuning in with the World – Knowing with Places’ describes approaches to teaching that

encourage collective learning. They challenge didactic educational models by co-learning with an environment and embracing embodied ways of knowing. The text suggests a 'pedagogy of place', valuing present, shared and fluid learning experiences that are rooted in personal narratives, uncertainty, and attentiveness to the material world, with the aim of linking subjectivities with natural histories to foster deep connections across time and space.

'Delaying the Final Meaning: On Painting, Artistic Thinking, and Intentionless Learning' by Luis Guerra Miranda describes in two parts the intersection of art, pedagogy and socio-political contexts. He first describes how art can disrupt established histories to provoke fresh and new interpretations, and foster a political engagement that transcends boundaries. He then writes about intentionless learning, which asks students to critically engage with materials and context. The text concludes by describing the author's own experience of drawing, and how this practice functions as a reflective process to reveal new meanings.

In 'A Situated Scenery: An Arts pedagogical exercise for sharing individual frames of references' Heli Kauppila and Marika Orenius describe an art educational exercise that encourages participants to connect with their inner sensations. Kauppila and Orenius emphasise personal and collective experiences within a shared space. The approach highlights empathy and intersubjectivity, and how immersive and reflective practices in arts education can support individual and collaborative growth.

In the text 'What Applied Non-didactics is for me' I describe the thought processes and experiences that have led to this book. I suggest a definition of Applied non-didactics based on a convergence of the writings of Gert Biesta with the theories of Alfred North Whitehead. In the beginning of the text I describe how the term came about, and then give examples from my own artistic practice

to help visualise what Applied Non-didactics might or can be in practice.

The final text, ‘A Teacherly Moment’ by Hanna Vahvaselkä, explores the relationship between wood, craftsmanship and knowledge from artistic and philosophical perspectives. Vahvaselkä reflects on the agency of wood as a material, and its historical memory – how materials record events over time. Woodworking is presented as a mindful practice, connecting maker and nature, and one which is underpinned by ecological sensitivity. Based on an example of a teaching exercise where participants were asked to personally engage with pieces of wood, Vahvaselkä describes how the material itself can become a guide in the creative process.

Authority in Teaching: Overcoming Didactophobia Through Applied Non-didactics

GERT BIESTA

Preface

There exists in the history of education a longstanding dissatisfaction with teachers and teaching. The reason for this dissatisfaction lies in the widely-shared belief that teaching inevitably ends up as an exercise of control, thereby constraining the freedom of those being taught. The main response to this fear of teaching or *didactophobia* has been to turn the relationship between teachers and students on its head, by putting students, in the guise of ‘learners’, at the centre of the educational endeavour. This development, which I have referred to as the *learnification* of education,¹ tries to solve the problem of the authority of the teacher by handing it over to students. Students supposedly exercise this authority through their acts of sense- and meaning-making, thus relegating teachers to the role of facilitators of otherwise ‘autonomous’ (i.e., teacher-independent) learning.

1 See Gert Biesta, *Good Education in an Age of Measurement*, Boulder, Colorado: Paradigm Publishers, 2010.

A key problem with this response is that it actually ‘dissolves’ education. After all, if the teacher is only there to facilitate what may happen without them anyway, then the teacher is only accidental to education, not essential for it.² This suggests that we might well do away with the teacher. Whereas some would welcome such an end to education, and others try to save education by re-installing the teacher as a figure of authority and control – a form of *didactophilia* – I suggest a different response to the fear of teaching. In this setup, the teacher has an essential rather than accidental role to play, but the locus of authority neither lies with the teacher-as-controller nor with the student-as-meaning-maker, but rather with that to which the teacher seeks to redirect the *attention* of the student.

Students encounter this ‘third element’ in the educational relationship not through their acts of learning or sense-making, but by pondering what ‘this’ – that is, what they encounter or, more precisely, what encounters them – may be asking of them.³ This, as I will suggest, not only opens up the world differently to the self, but also opens up the self differently to the world. For all these reasons, as I will try to make clear in what is to follow, such a reconfiguration provides a thoroughly *educational* response to the longstanding fear of teaching. It is a response in which the teacher has a role to play, in which authority has a place, and in which students encounter the question of their freedom in a far more serious way than through the

2 See Gert Biesta, ‘Ingen uddannelse uden uddanner’, *KvaN*, 44(129), 2024.

3 See Gert Biesta, *World-Centred Education: A View for the Present*, New York/London: Routledge, 2021.

rather lazy – and some might even say neo-liberal or consumerist – way of their own sense-making.⁴

Effecting miracles?

The word ‘didactics’ is the Latinised form of the Greek word ‘didaktikos’, which is an adjective that indicates the quality of knowing how to instruct or how to teach. The Greek word ‘didaktos,’ meaning ‘taught,’ is the past participle of ‘didaskain,’ which means ‘to teach.’ Somewhere in these words there is a link to the Sanskrit word ‘dasra’, which apparently means ‘effecting miracles.’ If didactics can thus be understood as the art of teaching, then *non-didactics* must either be the denial or the refusal of teaching. *Applied non-didactics*, then, entails the call to enact such a denial or refusal, which may well come down to the question ‘How *not* to teach?’ or ‘How to avoid teaching?’⁵

In this chapter I seek to unravel some of the complexities of what I will refer to as *didactophobia*, that is, the fear of teaching. I will indicate how and where this fear may be meaningful, also in light of more recent manifestations of *didactophilia*. I will link this to the problem of teaching as control – which does indeed need to be refused – but will argue that the solution that is often proposed (to turn the educational endeavour towards learners and their learning and make them the source of authority) is also problematic. This is due to educational, philosophical and political reasons. Against this background, I will approach the question of teaching differently,

- 4 See Gert Biesta, ‘As if the world is just waiting for our opinion: In search of a (re) configuration’, in C. A. Säfström and G. Loughran (eds.), *Being in the World Anew: Events of Art and Education in Post-climate Times*, London/New York: Routledge, 2024.
- 5 See also Jacques Derrida, ‘How to Avoid Speaking’, in *Derrida and Negative Theology*, Harold Coward and Toby Foshay (eds.), Albany: SUNY Press, 1989, pp. 73–136.

namely as an invitation to encounter the authority of the world, thus shifting authority from the teacher to the world, rather than removing it from the educational equation altogether or putting it in the hands of the ‘learner’. ‘Applied non-didactics’, so I will suggest, may well be the proper term for what I will be proposing.⁶

Didactophobia: the fear of teaching

Doubts about the possibility and desirability of teaching are not new in the history of education. A certain reluctance to teach and a deeper *didactophobia*, that is, a fear of teaching, runs as a red thread through the literature. One famous example is Socrates, who, on the one hand, is often depicted as a model teacher and exists up to the present day as the originator of what is known as the ‘Socratic Method’.⁷ Yet again and again the literature reminds us that Socrates would always claim that he cannot teach anybody anything but can only make other people think.

Socratic teaching is therefore not conceived as a mode of instruction in which students are being told what to do or what to think, but is enacted as a process of ongoing questioning – some refer to it as a dialogical style of teaching – aimed at ensuring that students do their own thinking and draw their own conclusions. Socrates is only there, so the story goes, to continuously raise questions. However, the accounts of Socrates’ teaching – which have been ‘received’ indirectly via the work of Plato – do seem to suggest that the line of questioning he pursues often pushes his interlocutor to a very particular

6 I am very grateful to Frank Brümmer for suggesting this phrase, which turned out to be a more helpful prompt than what I had initially envisaged.

7 See, for example, Ward Farnsworth, *The Socratic Method: A Practitioner’s Handbook*, Boston, MA: David R. Godine, 2021.

and often *inevitable* conclusion, thus raising the suspicion that Socrates is actually far more directive than his method suggests.⁸

A more explicit rejection of the whole idea of teaching and the teacher can be found in the work of Paulo Freire, particularly in his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.⁹ The book contains Freire's famous critique of education enacted as a form of 'banking' in which students are turned into "'receptacles' to be 'filled' by the teacher" and teaching is an "act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher the depositor".¹⁰ Although Freire argues that banking education leads to superficial forms of learning, his critique is *not* that banking education relies on a misguided learning theory. He rather hints at the deeper point that in banking education students can only appear as objects of the powerful acts of the teacher, and not as subjects in their own right. In banking education, Freire writes, "the teacher is the subject of the learning process, while the pupils are merely objects".¹¹ This is why Freire argues that all education actually needs to begin with a resolution of "the teacher-student contradiction". In his view, this can only be done "by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both teachers and students are simultaneously teachers *and* students".¹²

Whereas Freire is suspicious of one-sided setups in which teachers instruct and students receive and, on that basis, argues for a more equal and more transformational approach to education, proponents of the anti-education movement (*Antipädagogik*), which

- 8 See, for example, Sharon Todd, *Learning from the Other*, Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2003.
- 9 Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New, revised 20th anniversary edition. New York: Continuum, 1993.
- 10 Paulo Freire, 1993, p. 53.
- 11 Paulo Freire, 1993, p. 54.
- 12 Paulo Freire, 1993, p. 53.

emerged in Germany in the late 1960s, made a case for the abolishment of the educational project altogether.¹³ In their view *all* education, be it in schools, be it in families, can always *only* be enacted as a form of control and therefore inevitably undermines rather than enhances the freedom of children and young people.

Didactophilia: the love of teaching

The preceding examples show that there is a long history of didactophobia in education in which the fear for or even rejection of teaching seems to be motivated by a concern that teaching is unable to give any space to students as subjects of their own life. Teaching, so the argument of the critics of teaching goes, is inevitably a gesture of objectification. Before I engage with this critique, it is important to mention that objectification is not universally seen as a problem. There are also those who love teaching *precisely for this reason*. Here we can think of those who have used – and probably are still using – education to bring about political or religious indoctrination, which basically amounts to telling students what to think, what to believe and how to be, without any scope for negotiation.¹⁴

But it is not just in the context of indoctrination that we can find enthusiasm for teaching as control. There is a similar orientation in the still growing field of school effectiveness research and the

13 See Ekkehard von Braunmühl, *Antipädagogik. Studien zur Abschaffung der Erziehung*. Weinheim: Beltz, 1975.

14 See, for example, W. W. Brickman, 'Ideological Indoctrination Toward Immolation: The Inauguration of National Socialist Education in Germany in 1933', *Western European Education*, 15(1), 1983, pp. iii–xxxii; Margeret Eastwood, 'Lessons in hatred: the indoctrination and education of Germany's youth', *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 15(8), 2010, pp. 1291–1314; A. Neundorf, E. Nazrullaeva, K. Northmore-Ball, K. Tertychnaya, W. Kim, 'Varieties of Indoctrination: The Politicization of Education and the Media around the World', *Perspectives on Politics* (online), 2024:1-28.

concomitant idea of evidence-based education. Here researchers are seeking for the most effective – and often most efficient – ways to bring about particular educational outcomes, relying on a causal – or as I have called it elsewhere: quasi-causal¹⁵ – way of understanding the dynamics of education. The overarching idea is that the most effective school is the one in which all variables are under control so that desired outcomes can be brought about with 100% certainty. Achieving such a degree of perfection requires, of course, that students do as they are told by teachers, just as it requires that teachers do as they are told by the effectiveness researchers.

On teaching: control, babies and bathwater

Didactophobia and didactophilia share a common assumption, which is the idea that teaching is a matter of control. While those who want to reject teaching do so because they believe that education should *not* be about controlling students, those who embrace teaching do so precisely because they believe that education should be a matter of control.

For a long time when discussing these issues, I have argued that didactophilia is not entirely out of bounds, as one could argue that there are instances of education in which it makes sense to work effectively and efficiently towards pre-set outcomes. A prime example I have often used is the case of driving lessons. Interestingly enough, however, I was recently walking through a street in the city of Augsburg in Germany when I came across the shop window of a driving school. This school had a big poster on which it advertised its services with the slogan ‘Deine Freiheit ist unser Ziel’, which

15 See Gert Biesta, ‘Improving education through research? From effectiveness, causality and technology, to purpose, complexity and culture’, *Policy Futures in Education* 14(2), 2016a, pp. 194-210.

translates as 'Your freedom is our goal'. I was pleased to note that even those who give driving lessons were interested in the freedom of their students. Come to think of it, they were absolutely right that good driving lessons should not be about controlling students, but about educating them so that they can become free to drive by themselves in a responsible manner, without the need for the driving instructor to constantly tell them what to do. Freedom is indeed the aim of all education worthy of the name; anything else would amount to indoctrination.



Shopfront window of Fahrschule Buhmann, Theodor-Heuss-Platz 3, Augsburg, Germany. Photo: Gert Biesta

From this angle we can say, therefore, that didactophobia is the legitimate fear that teaching will turn into indoctrination. If that is the case, we should indeed be suspicious about teaching. Yet it is not just that this suspicion has become widespread over the past decades. More importantly for the line of thought I'm developing in this chapter is the fact that the main 'solution' that has emerged is to turn the educational endeavour to learners and their learning.¹⁶ The 'learnification' of education is visible in a number of discursive shifts, such as the tendency to refer to students as learners, to schools as learning environments, to classes as a learning communities, to teachers as facilitators of learning, or to adult education as lifelong learning. Beyond the discourse, it has also impacted on classroom arrangements, curricula, and even the very architecture of education.¹⁷

The turn towards learners and their learning relies on the assumption that teaching is or runs the risk of being a form of control, which goes against the very point of education as an endeavour orientated towards the student's freedom, that is, education as emancipation. Based on this assumption, it has been concluded that if teachers and their teaching are taken out of the educational equation and learners are put in charge of their own learning, we have realised a situation in which learners are free, rather than that they are constrained by teachers and teaching. But is this really so? Is it really the case that teaching can only be enacted as control? And is

16 See Robert Barr and John Tagg, 'From Teaching to Learning: A New Paradigm for Undergraduate Education', *Change* 27, no. 6, 1995, pp. 13-25.

17 See Gert Biesta, 'Creating spaces for learning or making room for education? New parameters for the architecture of education', in H.M. Tse, H. Daniels, A. Stables and S. Cox (eds.), *Designing buildings for the future of schooling: Contemporary visions for education*, London/New York: Routledge, 2018, pp. 27-40.

it the case that learning is always and necessarily and automatically a matter of freedom?

I think that the simple equation of teaching with control and learning with freedom overlooks a number of thorny issues. One has to do with the question of whether learning is necessarily and automatically a matter of freedom, and I have reasons – which I will present in the next section – to doubt that this is the case. Similarly, there is the question of whether teaching can only be enacted as a matter of control. With regard to these questions I have actually been surprised by the binary character of the discussion, as if there are only two options to consider: teaching = control and learning = freedom. What is remarkably absent is any attempt at repositioning teaching on the side of emancipation and freedom, which also requires that we explore what ‘kind’ of freedom actually plays a role in the discussion. I think – and have argued elsewhere¹⁸ – that a rediscovery of teaching along these lines, that is, as an emancipatory act rather than a technology of control, is actually both necessary and possible. Below I will discuss what such a different, educational account of teaching looks like. But I will begin with the question of learning and its (alleged) connection with freedom.

(going beyond) The ontology of learning

There are many problems with the discourse of learning and the way in which it has come to dominate contemporary discussions about education. One problem is that the ‘learnification’ of education has marginalised questions about the point and purpose of education. The suggestion that it is the task of teachers to ‘facilitate learning’ or that it is the task of the school to be a ‘learning environment’ forgets, conveniently, that learning can go in many directions. There

18 Gert Biesta, *The Rediscovery of Teaching*, London/New York: Routledge, 2017.

are, in other words, both meaningful and deeply problematic forms of learning, which suggests that education should be concerned with exploring this difference rather than promoting or facilitating learning *per se*. Put bluntly: in order to become a ‘good’ criminal or a ‘good’ Nazi one also needs to do a lot of learning.¹⁹

The point I wish to highlight here, however, has to do with the more fundamental question of how the ‘logic’ of learning positions individuals in relation to the (natural and social) world – a matter we might call the ontology of learning. Put simply, when human beings are seen as learners, it envisages a relationship between individuals and the world in which the world appears as an object for the individual to learn (about). The world, natural and social, appears as an object for their understanding, an object for their sense making, an object for them to form a view, and perhaps even an opinion or judgement about. Learning, in other words, positions the individual and the world in a relationship where the individual views – literally and figuratively – a world outside of them.²⁰ The freedom that is at stake in this setup is that of the individual to make sense of and give meaning to this world. Emmanuel Levinas has aptly characterised this freedom as the ‘freedom of signification’.²¹

While I do not wish to deny that human beings are able to make sense of and give meaning to a world outside of them and, in this way, exert their freedom of signification, the point I wish to make is

19 See Gert Biesta, ‘Education towards self-uncertainty, Or why there has to be weakness’, *Raeson*.

20 See Gert Biesta, ‘From the point where I stand to the place where I can be found: The critique of perspectival reason as philosophy for education’, *Educational Philosophy and Theory*.

21 See Emmanuel Levinas, *Humanism of the other* (translated by Nidra Poller, with an introduction by Richard A. Cohen), Urbana and Chicago: Illinois University Press, 2006.

that the relationship between self and world is not exhausted by this freedom. Put differently: the ontology of learning is not the only way in which the relationship between self and world can be envisaged. The reason for this has to do with the fact that the world is not *just* an object for our sense making and interpretation. In addition to the 'gesture' of learning – which always goes from me to the world outside of me – another gesture is possible, conceivable and, in my view, also necessary.

Here the world does not appear as an object of my sense making, but rather manifests itself as (an) *appeal*. The simple but highly relevant example is the fact that a plant is actually not interested in my learning and sense-making; rather a plant needs something from me – care, attention, water, light, shade – and thus appears quite differently: not as an object for me, but as a question and, more specifically, as a question for *me*. This is also the case with animals and other human beings. Again, they are not just objects for my learning and sense-making, but they appeal to me, address me and, in the case of other human beings, literally speak to me.

This therefore hints at a different 'gesture' and a different ontology. If the gesture of learning goes from me to the world, in order for me to learn about the world, make sense of the world, grasp and understand the world, there is an altogether different gesture that goes from the world to me, as appeal, as demand, as question. This is not about what I might want from the world, but rather about what the world might want from me. This question actually interrupts the freedom of signification, precisely because the plant or animal or other human being who is 'after' me is not interested in my sense making, my interpretation or my learning, but is interested in *me*, in *my* actions, in *my* response to their question or appeal. They are all interested, to put it differently, in my freedom, and in a slightly weird but nonetheless important sense we could say that they are

curious about what I will do with my freedom. Will I say ‘yes’ to the appeal, or will I walk away?

Taking things as calls

One author whose work I have found helpful for thinking through the ‘turn’ I am suggesting here is the French philosopher Jean-Luc Marion, who, throughout his career, has been exploring this ‘other’ gesture, the one that goes from ‘elsewhere’ to me, rather than from me to ‘elsewhere.’ He has done so through the theme of ‘givenness’, and the question he has been pursuing is whether and how we can ‘make sense’ of the phenomenon of ‘givenness’, bearing in mind that the very point of ‘givenness’ is that it is *given* and therefore precisely *not* the product of our sense making or interpretation. One of the shortest formulations Marion has provided of his explorations is with the ‘principle’ “that everything that shows itself must first give itself”.²² This phrase contains an important point, because it suggests that before any intentional act of knowing or understanding or sense making can take place, or even before anything can be experienced at all, something must have given itself to us.²³

For the line of thought I am pursuing in this chapter, it is particularly Marion’s discussion of what he refers to as two ‘attitudes’ towards things that is relevant. The first attitude Marion discusses is the one that is “the most widespread” and also “the one for which we are trained”, as he puts it. It consists in “reducing the chances that those [things] around us will surprise us; consequently we continually learn how to better control them”. In this attitude “we really count on being able to anticipate situations and accidents, to be able

22 Jean-Luc Marion, *The reason of the gift*, Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2011, p. 19.

23 See also Wolff-Michael Roth, *Passibility: At the limits of the constructivist metaphor*, Dordrecht: Springer, 2011.

to react, to control, to correct, to secure". This is a world where we find ourselves surrounded by objects, "which, being essentially functional, function because they are intended and conceived to function to our advantage". This is done "so that we are in the centre".²⁴

Through this attitude, Marion argues, "we live in a world that we organize such that we retain from it only those things that can be constituted as objects, only what we can grasp with our intelligibility, under the control of a quasi-master and possessor of nature". We do this, we constitute such an 'object-ive' world, in order to rule out danger. Yet, so Marion asks, "what does ruling out danger mean if not keeping away from the unexpected," from that "which cannot be constituted as object, that against which one cannot protect oneself"? While the first attitude is therefore very useful for thinking ahead, that is, for what can be anticipated and controlled, Marion argues that "this rationality ... does not want any of the rest [but] only retains this layer of reality that one can call the object".²⁵

Marion argues, however, that the object only offers "a very thin and superficial layer of things. It leaves to the side ... everything it cannot foresee, everything it cannot anticipate, what is said to be unknowable". Yet it is precisely here "that the given is displayed because it characterizes what among things *resists* objectification and is given by its own initiative".²⁶ Marion adds that it is not for us to look for the given, so to speak. Rather, "in the given, in the phenomenon inasmuch as it gives itself according to its character as nonobject (...) a place and moment are described where the ego must know how to allow itself to be found and which it does not decide".²⁷

24 Jean-Luc Marion, *The rigor of things: Conversations with Dan Arbib*, New York: Fordham University Press, 2017, p. 83.

25 Jean-Luc Marion, 2017, pp. 83-84.

26 Jean-Luc Marion, 2017, p. 84, emphasis added.

27 Jean-Luc Marion, 2017, p. 85.

Here the ego leaves its central position, “obeys the event, and sees without foreseeing”, as Marion puts it, and this ‘seeing without foreseeing’ is precisely the opposite of the seeing-of-objects.

Marion gives the example of a painting in a church in Rome which has a secret point where one must be situated to see the painting. This point, Marion explains, “is determined by the painting and not by the spectator” so that “the spectator must obey the painting in order to see it”.²⁸ (This principle is more generally known as anamorphosis.)

Although ‘givenness’ so conceived may give the suggestion that it requires passive receptivity from the side of the ego, as Marion puts it, he stresses that the term ‘passivity’ is not good enough, precisely “because I cannot remain passive in front of the event: I make myself available or I avoid it, I take a risk or I run away, in short, I still decide, and I respond even by refusing to respond”. This means that in order to ‘become passive’ in such an encounter, “a certain kind of activity is required; one must leave oneself exposed to things with a certain amount of courage”²⁹ or, in educational language, one must *let oneself be taught*.³⁰

Marion is fully aware, however, that before trying to respond to the call “there is the more difficult thing, which is ... to discover that there is a call, that is to say, being able to interpret what is as what comes to us”. And “this decision to take things as calls ... decides everything else”.³¹ That Marion refers to this as a decision may suggest that it is ultimately still up to us – and to our sense-making and interpretation – to decide whether we want to ‘see’ the world as call or as object for control. Yet I do not think that this is what Marion is

28 Jean-Luc Marion, 2017, pp. 84-85.

29 Jean-Luc Marion, 2017, pp. 85-86.

30 See Gert Biesta, 2017.

31 Jean-Luc Marion, 2017, p. 39.

trying to say. The decision, so it seems to me, is not a decision about the world, but it is *a decision about my own life*. It is the decision to let the call of the world ‘in,’ to not deny it, to conduct my life, from now onwards, out of this ‘attitude’. This decision, we might say, is first and foremost a change of heart, not a change of perspective.

What, then, about teaching?

If learning, seen as my sense-making and understanding of a world outside of me, is at the very least no longer the ‘only game in town’ because, as I have tried to make clear, there is another possible and conceivable gesture (namely the gesture that goes from the world to *me*) I can now return to the other question of whether it is possible to conceive of teaching outside of the confines of the idea of control. Can teaching, in other words, be (re)connected to emancipation? While some would argue that this requires putting emancipation at the top of the educational agenda – and this has particularly been the approach of critical pedagogies – one concern I have about this (and have had for a long time; see Biesta 1998), is that such a suggestion still relies on using education as an instrument for bringing something about, and therefore is not entirely free (or perhaps not free at all) from using education as a tool for control. Yet rather than fighting over the right ‘agenda’ for education, I have found it very helpful – and also quite liberating – to pursue a suggestion made by the German education scholar Klaus Prange, who has argued that taking education seriously in itself begins by taking the *form* of education seriously. So how, then, is education enacted, and what does that tell us about teaching?

Prange’s main insight is that all education is basically a matter of what in German is called ‘Zeigen.’ The word ‘Zeigen’ can be translated both as ‘pointing’ and as ‘showing,’ but given that Prange is trying to highlight the unique and distinctive *form* of education,

that is, the way in which education is done, I tend to translate it into English with the word ‘pointing’. Prange has made the strong claim that all education (the German word he uses here is ‘Erziehung’) must include ‘pointing’. As he has put it in German: “Wenn es das Zeigen nicht gibt, dann auch keine Erziehung”,³² which literally translates as “When there is no pointing, then there is also no education.” Pointing is, in other words, essential for education.

What is pointing? A dictionary definition characterises it as “directing someone’s attention towards something by extending one’s finger.” This connects to a helpful suggestion made by another German scholar, Dietrich Benner, who has argued that teaching ought to be understood as “the art of redirecting someone’s gaze” which, in a slightly ‘broader’ formulation, we could take as the art of redirecting someone’s *attention*.³³ The idea sounds simple but the implications, so I wish to suggest, are profound. And this has everything to do with the little ‘re’ in the word ‘redirecting.’

We can, after all, assume that human beings are able to direct their attention towards something. We can look at something, we can listen to something, we can focus on something, and we can also, deliberately and consciously, look at something else, listen to something else, and focus our attention onto something else. But what we cannot do by ourselves is to *redirect* our own attention. We cannot ‘distract’ ourselves, to put it differently. Or, in a slightly more precise formulation: we cannot direct our attention onto something that we aren’t aware of. For this we need someone else who invites us, urges us, and perhaps summons us to look *there* rather than at what we were looking at, to attend to *that*, rather than to what we

32 Klaus Prange, *Die Zeigestruktur der Erziehung*, 2. Auflage, Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2012a, p. 25.

33 Dietrich Benner, *Umriss der allgemeinen Wissenschaftsdidaktik*, Weinheim: Beltz/Juventa, 2020, p. 21

were attending to. Redirecting attention thus indicates a situation where the teacher is essential rather than accidental.

There are two qualities of pointing that are relevant for grasping why it is essential for education or, in a slightly better formulation, why pointing is inherently *educational*. One is, as Prange also highlights in his work, that pointing is actually a *double gesture*. Pointing is not just pointing to something but is always also pointing to someone with the invitation to this ‘someone’ to attend to this ‘something’.³⁴ To put it differently: pointing calls someone to attend to something or, in educational terms, it calls the pupil or student to attend to something. ‘Student’, by the way, would be my favoured word here, because a student is someone who studies, that is, who devotes time and attention to something.³⁵

By saying that pointing invites or calls someone to attend, it also becomes clear that pointing is a ‘weak’ educational technique. Through pointing we can invite our students to attend to something; we can try to focus their attention onto something; we can even go as far as to demand attention from our students, for example by saying “Now, pay attention everyone!” But what we cannot do through pointing is force our students to attend and even if we managed to ‘catch’ their attention, as the expression goes in English, we cannot *control* their attention. In this regard we can say that the act of pointing refers to or, with a play on words, points towards the freedom of students. It calls students to their *own* attention, and is interested in what students do with their own attention. Pointing, therefore, is not very useful if we are after indoctrination or control.

34 Klaus Prange, 2012a, p. 68.

35 See Claudia Ruitenberg (ed.), *Reconceptualising study in educational discourse*, New York/London: Routledge, 2017.

In the very form of teaching we can thus find an ‘account’ of teaching that is the opposite of the enactment of control. For this it remains important, however, that as teachers we keep reminding ourselves (and our students) that teaching is a double gesture in which we are always calling students to their *own* attention, not to our attention as teachers, and also not to attend to the prescription of policy makers or by the global educational measurement industry. In doing so, the challenge is to call students to attend to what calls them, so to speak.

The third element, the locus of authority, and the end of teaching

The idea that underlies the considerations I have presented in this chapter is that education basically has a triadic structure. It is not a (dyadic) encounter between teacher and student, but always a ‘staging’ of teacher, student and ‘something’ (to which, with a rather ‘big’ term, I tend to refer as the world).³⁶ This then provides another way to articulate what I’ve been trying to say in this chapter. After all, in a dyadic staging of education there seem to be only two options: either the teacher is in control or if the teacher doesn’t want to be in control – and I have argued that this can never be the point of education – it seems as if the only other option available is to hand everything over to the student.

When we see, however, that education is fundamentally triadic, that is, that it is always an encounter between teacher, student and world, we can first of all see that the teacherly work of redirecting the student’s attention is not so that teachers can say ‘pay attention to me’ – which would indeed turn teaching back to control – but rather that they can say, with or without words, that it might be

36 See Gert Biesta, 2021.

worthwhile for students to pay attention to the world and to what the world may be asking of them. This is precisely the third option I have been trying to pursue in this chapter, one in which the locus of authority is neither the teacher nor the student, but lies in the ‘something’ that teachers try to direct the attention of their students towards. It is the authority of the world as question, as appeal, as demand, perhaps, which is always a question for, appeal to and demand towards my freedom. That it is my freedom at stake follows from the simple fact that we can always say ‘no’ and always walk away from what comes to us.³⁷

Here, then, we encounter teaching that is explicitly non-didactical if, that is, ‘didactics’ always carries with it an echo of control. How to apply such non-didactical teaching in practice is, of course, a further matter.³⁸ But what I would like to argue is that it is not teaching that we should be afraid of but rather, if the word is not too laden, something we can and should be proud of. It thus provides a meaningful response to those who seek to abolish education altogether – the anti-pedagogues – and those who want to dissolve education into learning.

While it does entail a future for teaching and, if I am permitted to say so, a progressive and emancipatory future, it is important not to forget that even this kind of teaching needs to come to an end. As Bertolt Brecht has put it beautifully in *Me-ti: Book of interventions in the flow of things*: “Every teacher must learn how to stop teaching, when the time comes. That is a difficult art. Only a few are able, when the time is right, to allow reality to take their place.”³⁹ At some

37 And that we may do so for very good reasons – see, for example, my discussion of the no-saying of Rosa Parks in Biesta, 2021.

38 See Biesta, 2021, and the works indicated as ‘in press’ in the bibliography below.

39 Bertolt Brecht, *Me-ti: Book of interventions in the flow of things* (edited and translated by Antony Tatlow), London: Bloomsbury, 2016, p. 98.

point we, as teachers, need to step back so that students can take care of their own attention for the world. That point of freedom – which, to say it one more time, is not the freedom of signification, the freedom to make sense without limits and limitations, but the freedom to come into a relationship with the authority of the world – is indeed the freedom that should be our goal.

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The Oscillating Art School

MAGNUS QUAIFE

I want to put forward a provocation, in the form of a caricature of English art schools. This caricature suggests that many higher education courses in contemporary art are slipping into, or in some cases are already deeply engaged, not so much in the contemporary, nor in pedagogy (which I would argue requires some level of awareness on the part of the educator), but in dogma.

Within the dogmatic art school or department, staff can often be heard repeating the mantra that what worked in the past will work again, and if it doesn't it is almost certainly the fault of the students, who are less prepared than they once were, more distracted than they used to be, and somehow less ready to learn. Beyond the obligatory bureaucratically-led student feedback forms with their notoriously low levels of engagement, leading questions, and general 'un-art-schoolness',¹ there is often little structured attempt to

- 1 Ane Hjort Guttu's damning analysis of the changes faced in Nordic art schools since the turn of the millennium describes the art school of the recent past as "an indefinable zone of freedom". Such notions of freedom are a key part of art-schoolness. At their most romantic (and admittedly exaggerated), this might be considered as a pseudo-bohemian condition in which the student artist, and the teacher of art, can proceed in a state of exception exempting them from many of the rules which apply to wider society. In this condition they can continue in their creative mission to move beyond accepted aesthetic and social norms, providing a valuable critique of society in a manner which is (perhaps ironically) relatively unencumbered by institutional, societal, or academic frames. See 'The End of Art Education as We Know It', *Kunstkritikk Nordic Art Review*, May 2022, online (retrieved 26.08.24).

reflect upon the teaching. On the one hand it is not uncommon to hear it said that to engage in such reflection would be to risk 'professionalisation', and moreover that it would deny the significant power of the artist's instinct as applied within the realms of their pedagogies. Flippantly, I might paraphrase the artist Ben Shahn who claimed back in the 1950s that artistic intuition is the result of years of tuition,² and suggest that 'our' pedagogical intuition is the result of years of experience. But we must acknowledge that the lack of meaningful reflection leading to significant pedagogical change is predominantly the result of mounting pressures on time.

What was once the expectation to be an artist who exhibited and committed some of their self to teaching has developed into a demand to evidence that you are a world leading researcher, whose research has a particular usefulness in terms of knowledge exchange, and whose students' satisfaction can be measured by metrics and their success upon graduation, the value of which is judged in terms of salary. Senior management rarely look beyond these measures into the nuance of how a subject is delivered on the ground. The burgeoning ranks of middle managers and bureaucrats have taken responsibility for change, even while failure remains the burden of the academics. And change must happen because this is the remit of the middle manager, hence not to change is an admission of redundancy. Such is the resulting pace of new initiatives, modifications and revisions that it becomes impossible for the artist-educator to focus on much else other than attempting to implement each new structural permutation in ways which do not undermine what they understand as the foundations of their subject's pedagogy. Responsive pedagogical developments routed in anything more than cursory reflection are stifled by these seemingly hegemonic conditions.

2 Ben Shahn, *The Shape of Content*, Harvard University Press, 1957, p. 107.

Meanwhile, the world has changed. While the socialising aspect of Fine Art education typically asked the student to come towards the educator's world so that they might be taught, more recently the students have begun asking the educator to come towards their world. This is of course a generalisation and students have sat somewhere on a sliding scale as long as I have been teaching, but in the past decade there has been a clear sense that the median position on that scale has shifted. The more sensitive amongst us, which in reality I think includes the majority, have to one extent or another been thinking in these terms for some years now, and adapting or reinventing our teaching as a result. Recent years have seen the urgency of such demands accelerate and they came into sharp focus during the pandemic. The pressures of bureaucracy and a persistent state of academic emergency have made it difficult for teachers to keep up with these accelerated demands. In this essay I will propose a possibility amongst others through which we might come towards the students, or at the very least set out middle grounds where those meetings may take place.

Firstly though, I would like to make a confession, or a perhaps declare a conflict of interests: I believe in art schools, I believe that artists often make outstanding educators, and that most of what happens on Fine Art programmes in higher education is not only deeply meaningful but also good, and that I am very much invested through my own career in these ideas. Further in the spirit of disclosure I want to tell you that I studied at Chelsea School of Art in the mid 1990s and that for me it was a time of optimism both inside the art school and out. The Conservative party, having been in power for well over a decade, were imploding and it was clear political change was on the horizon. London's gallery scene was flourishing, and plans for the new Tate Gallery had been approved. There was space for artist run initiatives to be ambitious, and for independent

curators to develop projects. It was still just about possible as a student in London to find a room in walking distance (albeit long) from art school and as a result many of us lived close to each other, we socialised together (perhaps too frequently), and formed strong friendships and something resembling a critical and creative community. I encountered inspiring teaching in the form of studio tutorials, lectures, and very occasional group crits. It was a good place, a happy place, and after graduating the people I kept in touch with felt very much the same; it was something of a utopian experience and I missed it when I left.

In the years since I have increasingly encountered fellow students, not my direct contemporaries but from around the same time, who feel very differently. The focus of their dissatisfaction varies but often it relates to approaches to teaching in which a mono-cultural understanding of what art is was rooted in patriarchal thinking. I have heard it described as a 'lads club', and a 'macho environment'. What I had understood as an open, supportive, and critical learning environment had been experienced very differently by some of my peers, who had found it to be closed and combative. I began to reconsider my own experience and this, along with conversations I was having with my own students, led me to question my own approach to teaching because it was very much grounded in the teaching that I had received. I began to wonder how we might embrace the reality that we are teaching in a plural world and equally plural art world in which students bring a diversity of personal and cultural experiences in to the art school, and where while there may – rightly or wrongly – still be canons, it is no longer possible to hold every student's work up to canonical models as a way of understanding the potential of their developing practice. How might we begin to develop pedagogies that can bring together such diversity into a community of learning?

There are several pedagogical theories from outside of the art school, from Dewey to Engeström, that place motivation at the centre of successful education. But how can we understand motivation in relation to art students? One possibility might be to think of desire as the driver of motivation. In an attempt to explain how we can avoid the art school system which Ed Ruscha described as “being full of teachers camping it up pretending to be artists, and a lot of artists pretending to be concerned individuals” and “if not rape then seduction”.³ Jon Thompson posits that:

“It is desire which provides a site around which teaching and learning will find its most effective form. This is particularly true when the subject and object of desire is art. It must be that the shared desire for art is a pivotal point around which the delicate negotiations between artist and teacher, teacher and young artist, young artist and artist, occur. And it is here that partiality and impartiality are rendered indistinguishable, that oppression and deceptive persuasion hold little or no sway.”⁴

There is an echo here of Gayatri Spivak’s description of education as the “the *non-coercive rearrangement of desires*.”⁵ But in the art school, who defines what forms that desire can take, what kind of art should the student or teacher desire, what kind of artist should they desire to be?

Since the project of massification it is certainly no longer possible to claim that the vast majority of students come to art school

3 Ed Ruscha quoted in Jon Thompson, *The Collected Writings of Jon Thompson*, Riding House. London, 2011, p. 316.

4 Jon Thompson, 2011, p. 317.

5 Gayatri Spivak, ‘Righting Wrongs’, *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, vol. 103 no. 2, 2004, p. 524.

with the ambition or belief that doing so will lead to them being an artist. And with those that do it is more difficult to understand that desire in relation to the frames that the art school may have traditionally set. Addressing an artist teacher friend, Jiri Kovanda claimed that rather than coming together over existing desires: “Our task should (...) be to encourage them (the students) to awaken their desire to reveal and test things, and not to traumatize them and rob them of this desire.” And he continued:

“Although I understand the demands that you place on students, I’m convinced that they do not always fall on fertile soil. What stimulates one person may instead discourage another. Some people respond by truly shifting into a higher gear, while others decide that next time they would rather go dancing.”⁶

Kovanda highlights the danger of a singular pedagogical approach falling flat with some students. The pedagogical approach which Thompson saw the desire of staff and student coming together around still dominates English art schools and is sometimes called the Tutorial System. It became prevalent in a post-Coldstream landscape, and has been influenced by constructivist theory in education and the linguistic and conceptual turns in philosophy and art. From 1958 to 1971 Sir William Coldstream was the chair of the National Advisory Council on Art Education, an organisation that

6 Jiri Kovanda, *Forming the Reformed*, read on the YouTube channel of the academy of Fine Arts Prague: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g42YU_pMDFc, 2021, online (retrieved November 2022).

produced ‘Coldstream’ reports in 1960⁷ and 1970,⁸ the cumulative impact of which was significant changes to ‘tertiary’ art education in England. This included the introduction of the Diploma in Art and Design, a pre-diploma course (which became known as the ‘Foundation’ course), academic entry requirements, and the requirement for every course to have an art history and complementary studies element. The first report has been described as “...a graspable moment of displacement in the British art world. It represents a shift between an educational system based on disciplined studies of techniques and crafts to one based on conceptual thinking...”⁹ So the teaching of technical skill had been replaced with the conceptual skill and such a shift necessitated new pedagogies which at first manifested in a stripping away of all that had come to be seen as outmoded. Artist Brendan Neiland started a Foundation course in 1962 before going to Birmingham in 1963 to study for the brand new Dip AD, “Everything was changed...”, he has reflected,

“... the Life Drawing, Life Composition and the exams that had to be taken [were all gone]. In came ‘free expression’ and one whole day of Liberal/Complimentary Studies to give Fine Art courses some credence – The onus was obviously put onto the young art student to

- 7 William Coldstream, ‘First report of the National Advisory Council on Art Education’, National Advisory Council on Art Education, Great Britain, Ministry of Education (issuing body), 1960.
- 8 William Coldstream, ‘The Structure of Art and Design Education in The Further Education Sector: Report of a Joint Committee of the National Advisory Council on Art Education and the National Council for Diplomas in Art and Design’, Department of Education and Science (DES) National Advisory Council on Art Education (issuing body), 1970.
- 9 Kate Aspinal, 2014. ‘The “Pasmore Report”?: Reflections on the 1960 “Coldstream Report” and its legacy’, paper delivered at the *Art School Educated* conference, Tate Britain, September 2014.

find Content and Imagery – And Abstract Expressionism was idolised... the late Sixties and early Seventies were a wonderful time to be an Art Student... With the new course Dip AD came optimism... and the belief that ‘anything was possible’.”¹⁰

Another aspect of change implemented after the Coldstream report was the Foundation course. A year of pre-degree study, it emerged from the Basic Design courses that had been developed in the 1950s by artist educators that included Harry Thubron, Richard Hamilton, and Victor Pasmore, who were heavily influenced by the Vorkours at the Bauhaus. The Bauhaus was itself influenced by “the reform pedagogy of Pestalozzi, Rousseau, Schiller, Steiner and others”, which “was based on the original meaning of the word ‘education’: Latin ‘ex ducare,’ that is ‘to lead out’ inherent existing capacities.”¹¹ Hamilton, however, strongly rejected pedagogies focused on self-expression in favour of a more “rational and objective approach”, believing that “the adult student was beyond the need of self-expression, and its nurturing in higher education was a misapplication of Montessori in the adult realm.”¹² Neiland’s experience demonstrates this was far from a universal position, and the “liberal Rousseau-Pestalozzi-Froebel-Montessori reform tradition”¹³ continues to influence higher arts education and has developed into aspects of

10 Brendan Neiland, online conversation with the author; Nov 2020.

11 Eva Forgács in Dóra Hegyi, Zsuzsa László and Franciska Zólyom (eds.), *Creativity Exercises: Emancipatory Pedagogies in Art and Beyond*, Sternberg Press, 2020, p. 208.

12 Richard Hamilton quoted in Richard Yeomans, ‘Basic Design and the Pedagogy of Richard Hamilton’, in Mervyn Romans (ed.), *Histories of Art and Design Education: Collected Essays*, Intellect, 2005, p. 199.

13 Marcel Francisocono 1971, quoted in Neil Mulholland, *Reimagining the Art School: Paragogy and Artistic Learning*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, p. 26.

“learner-centered constructivism”¹⁴ maintaining the belief “that education is essentially the bringing out and developing of [...] inherent gifts through a guided process of free and even playful activity and self-learning”.¹⁵ This is what Michael Archer, former programme leader for BA Fine Art at Goldsmiths, has described as “a process of allowing what is already there in the students to find a way out”¹⁶ – as opposed to understanding that arts education might need to offer the student artist some possibilities to work with, question, or explore, this position imagines the problem and the answer to be situated in the students.

In 1968 critic Michael Wood had declared that “...the century has turned. Art no longer aspires... to the condition of music. It aspires to the condition of language.”¹⁷ And by the 1970s the critical pedagogical theory of Freire, Illich, and Rancière, which promoted various oral-dialogical approaches to teaching, had become increasingly influential in art schools.¹⁸ But perhaps the most prominent representation of the linguistic turn in art in the 1960s was Conceptualism, and it is here we can find a direct link back to oral-dialogical art school pedagogy through the writing of Joseph Kosuth. In the essay *Teaching to Learn a Conversation About “How” and “Why”*¹⁹ Kosuth suggests that art education seems to “begin with two points: an institution and a conversation” and that “The teacher of art, as a teacher and an artist, can do no more than

14 Neil Mulholland, 2019, p. 106.

15 Marcel Franciscano 1971, quoted in Neil Mulholland 2019, p. 26.

16 Michael Archer in Sarah Rowles, ‘11 course leaders 20 questions’, *Q-ART London*, 2011.

17 Michael Wood, 1968.

18 Dean Hughes, ‘Painting and Paragogy’, in M. Quaife (ed.), *Teaching Painting, Painting the New*, Cambridge Scholars Press, forthcoming, 2024.

19 Joseph Kosuth, *Art After Philosophy and After: Collected Writings, 1966-1970*, MIT Press, 1991.

participate with the students in asking the questions.” So pervasive was the shift from teaching techne to (teaching) theory that by the turn of the last millennium, Pavel Büchler, the former Head of Art at Glasgow School of Art reflected that “By now, art is predominantly studied from the position of theory (or ‘discussion’ if not quite ‘discourse’) and developed through the constant reworking of its theoretical and ideological framework.”²⁰ At the same time atemporality and plurality has lead to a pragmatic (not in the Deweynian sense) position, which understands pedagogical consensus as impossible. If we cannot agree what to teach, nor can we decide how to teach it then, as Mikkel Bogh has claimed, “the onus has fallen firmly on learners to continually re-imagine their discipline’s lingua franca”.²¹

There are powerful potentials in this possibility of reimagining linguist frames, not least because the reimagination of language also necessitates a retelling or translation of the meta-narratives that support our world views. Here there are distinct possibilities of reinvention or reinforcement. The former is perhaps akin to Donna Haraway’s notion of ‘Speculative Fabulation’²² as a practice of worlding. One example she discusses is Ursula K. Le Guin’s *Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction*. “It is the story that makes the difference. It is the story that hid my humanity from me, the story the mammoth hunters told about bashing, thrusting, raping, killing, about the Hero. The wonderful, poisonous story of Botulism. The killer story...”, Le Guin explains, before proposing an alternative narrative in which the receptacle predates the weapon.

20 Pavel Büchler, ‘New Academic Art’, *Somebody’s Got To Do It: Selected Writings by Pavel Büchler since 1987*, Riding House, 2017, pp. 133-141.

21 Mikkel Bogh, 2009, quoted in Mulholland, 2019, p. 25.

22 Donna Haraway, *Making Oddkin: Story Telling for Earthly Survival*, Lecture at Yale University, 2017, online (retrieved 22.11.24).

“If it is a human thing to do to put something you want, because it’s useful, edible, or beautiful, into a bag, or a basket, or a bit of rolled bark or leaf, or a net woven of your own hair, or what have you, and then take it home with you, home being another, larger kind of pouch or bag, a container for people, and then later on you take it out and eat it or share it or store it up... if that’s what it takes, then I am a human being after all. Fully, freely, gladly, for the first time.”²³

Re-imagining the lingua franca as a form of subversive translation²⁴ might then afford the student the possibility not just of controlling the narrative of their own practice, but also of redefining the wider narrative of the field in which their practice is situated and perhaps even the world beyond it.

In the latter, narrative is used as a means to maintain and grow what is established, reinforcing the status quo. “We should take notice”, Phillip Schönthaler urges us, “when companies like Coca-Cola and Microsoft move narrative to the centre of their communications strategies... It seems that storytelling is required to gain attention and influence in the age of new media.”²⁵ Such reinforcement, considered in relation to art school teaching, is what Kosuth warned against when he cautioned that “The presumptions and prescriptions that are taught there are a de facto description of what art is.”²⁶ Or to put it another way: to offer a version, or versions, of what art is to students, rather than to question art, reinforces the established order.

23 Ursula K. Le Guin, *Dancing at the Edge of Time*, St Martins Press, 1997.

24 ‘Subversive Translation’ is a concept proposed by Douglas Robinson, who describes its potential as “an undermining or overthrowing of some fundamental assumption or expectation that the receptor beings to the translation”. Douglas Robinson, *The Translator’s Turn*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991, pp. 223-231.

25 Phillip Schönthaler, *Portrait of the Manager as a Young Author: On Storytelling, Business, and Literature*, MIT Press, 2018, p. 108.

26 Joseph Kosuth, 1991.

Theoretically, through developing common vernacular, and the attendant reflective understanding this affords, the oral-dialogical approach is a factor in socialising the art student within particular traditions, conventions and value systems that the lingua franca represents. As such it has the potential to empower the student to narrate their own practice in relation to those conventions. Then through a process of reflection to reinvent their practice, and ultimately to reinvent *or* reinforce the narratives of contemporary art. In practice, however, the privileging of oral-dialogical modes of teaching has led to a point where, as Büchler has described: “The developments of art in the academic environment have [...] become less founded in the experience of art making than in the constant questioning and self-questioning of that experiential foundation itself.”²⁷ Within the oral-dialogical approach of the tutorial system the questioning that Kosuth advocated has become a form of meta-questioning and the potential to reinvent and reinforce is limited accordingly. Furthermore, in maintaining a persistent focus on what artist Dean Hughes has described “the idiosyncrasies of an individual practice”²⁸ it fails to actively engage in the potential of arts education to develop intersubjectivities: to create the space of education that Irit Rogoff has suggested “signals rich possibilities of coming together.”²⁹

At its worst this can be quite disastrous. In the late 1980s Griselda Pollock described art education in English art schools as follows:

27 Pavel Büchler, 2017, p. 137.

28 Dean Hughes, 2024.

29 Irit Rogoff, ‘Turning’, *e-flux Journal*, #00, November 2008, online (retrieved November 2021).

“The basic pedagogical plan is that the privileged independent spirits selected for the course at interview are given the opportunity to sink or swim. Space is provided, materials, a few technical resources. The student is expected to develop a programme of work, ‘my work’, that precious phrase, a project about which, from time to time, a conversation is held in unequal, ill-defined and educationally lamentable conditions... Undoubtedly some students thrive in this hostile and unsupportive environment, especially where their own sense of identity is implicitly reinforced by the hidden agenda of macho self-reliance and aggression, the son’s battle with the father... The hidden agenda is institutional sexism. Let there be not flip-pant underestimation of what this intimidating and bizarre parody of education means to women. Some have literally died of the experience.”³⁰

Clearly the tutorial system was failing, and I do not doubt that the students who lived through the experience in the 70s and 80s and became the next generation of artist educators have (in the main) done a great deal to address these shortcomings. But there are problems that remain inherent in the system: In requiring a discussion of inner motivation from which ‘creativity’ emerges, Dean Hughes tells us that: ‘there is a charged and potentially vulnerable moment being enacted.’³¹ And he explains that this is perhaps in part because of an imbalance of power between the more experienced artist educator and the less experienced artist student. Meanwhile Susan Orr and Alison Shreeve caution that there is a danger that students feel forced to position themselves in relation to

30 Griselda Pollock, ‘Art, Art School, Culture: Individualism After the Death of the Artist’, in Bird, Curtis, Mash, et al (eds.), *The Block Reader in Visual Culture*, Routledge, 1996.

31 Dean Hughes, 2024.

the established value systems if they are to be successful.³² The possibilities of questioning and reinventing are only available to those who are equipped to engage with the system. Consider the account of Nell Painter from her book *Old in Art School*.

“During my first year of graduate crits, I couldn’t tell whether my teachers and fellow students were critiquing me, old-black-woman-totally-out-of-place, or critiquing my work, which was not good enough, TOTALLY NOT GOOD ENOUGH, or, as it felt, completely, utterly stupidly rotten. My self-confidence collapsed.

I felt perfectly awful and alienated. There was no strength in my alienation, no saving grace. It was abject, I was PATHETIC.”³³

Ethnographer Gary Allen Fine, who spent two years studying the MFA system in the US, also questioned the crit, describing it in violent and almost gladiatorial terms. “At the end... no matter how hostile the questioning – how much blood spilled – the attendees applaud. The student has survived.”³⁴ The crit is the product of a system that, if no longer always entirely “hostile and unsupportive”,³⁵ certainly requires a level of independent study for the student to define the ‘What’ and ‘How’ they are to learn. Perhaps ironically it is those that arrive already fluent in the lingua franca and adept at independent study who are least likely to feel hostility or a lack of support, and that at the same time such independence can mean

32 Susan Orr and Allison Shreeve, *Art and Design Pedagogy in Higher Education: Knowledge, Values and Ambiguity in the Creative Curriculum*, United Kingdom: Taylor & Francis, 2018, pp. 107-124.

33 Nell Painter, *Old In Art School: A Memoir of Starting Over, Counterpoint*, 2018, p. 205.

34 Gary Alan Fine, *Talking Art: The Culture of Practice and the Practice of Culture in MFA Education*, United States: University of Chicago Press, 2018, p. xiii.

35 Griselda Pollock, 1996.

students are as likely to reinforce their sense of identity and their practice as they are to question it. Finally, it is difficult to address hidden agendas as long as the teaching and curricula that are structural supports remain undefined. As Suhail Malik, Programme Co-Director of the MFA in Fine Art at Goldsmiths cautions: “Left informal [...] the problems of how, what, and who informs the school can be dealt with only through the informal channels of authority within it. This power remains utterly opaque, incontestable because it is unformulated.”³⁶ And many of these problems remain products of the “structural contradiction [...] the collision of two professions – artist and teacher; the collision of two ideologies – individualism and socialization.”³⁷ that Pollock diagnosed.

My intention is not to suggest that the tutorial or group critique are inherently bad as modes of teaching, rather that the problem is that within the tutorial system the privileging of these oral-dialogue modes over other forms of teaching is almost total. If they aim at a Kosuthian “questioning process as to art’s nature”,³⁸ they assume that this is *the* way to facilitate at the expense of other possibilities. The tutorial system is pedagogically monolingual. However, the socialising function of the art school is not limited to the spoken language, it includes visual languages, languages of materials, of the haptic, and more. Should this not therefore be reflected in our pedagogies? To become socialised within a community (or communities) of practice and more broadly in the conventions of contemporary art, the students must become polyglots of sorts, familiarising themselves with different ways of articulating and rearticulating the world, before converging upon the modes that are most productive

36 Suhail Malik, 2011, quoted in Mulholland, 2019. p. 22.

37 Griselda Pollock, 1996.

38 Joseph Kosuth, 1991.

for them at a given moment. This is the convergence of the theoretical, the visual, and material in the work of art (as well as its articulation in spoken and written forms). Perhaps currently it is the most talented, or able, and/or best educated who also learn the nuance of accent and dialogue to a level where they can not only deploy them at will but begin to develop new artistic languages which can meaningfully reinvent not just the narrative around the work, but the work itself. So, the question we must ask is how the education we provide might enable the student to become polyglottic. Part of the answer is utilising pedagogies that facilitate as well as those that can encourage students toward these various forms of dialogue.

Modes of teaching other than the oral-dialogical are assumed to be descriptive, deemed to demonstrate and prescribe, and in doing so to encourage repetition and reinforce the world as is, rather than engaging in a questioning which leads to new possibilities. Kosuth suggested that “By teaching a description of reality you are engaged in constructing it...” and that “description quickly becomes prescription.”³⁹ For example, the project brief, in describing (however loosely) aspects of the conditions that the work will emerge from, might prescribe a version of reality. In practice though, the oral-dialogical approach is as likely to reinforce and prescribe as it is to challenge given aspects of a value system (aspects of which are represented and often unquestioned by the art school itself). The beliefs and skill of the tutor are factors that affect this. That skill might for example manifest itself in the ability to instigate, develop, and maintain meaningful dialogue; to know when other modes of speech are needed; to introduce possibilities for the student to explore without examples becoming prescriptive or demonstrative; the sensitivity to embrace the student’s worldview; and to facilitate balanced

39 Joseph Kosuth, 1991.

critical questioning of that world view without alienating the student. Abilities that are certainly not inherent. It is the same for other modes of teaching: the skills, knowledge, and approach(es) of the educator as much as, and in some cases as opposed to, the format that determine success. In the context of art school projects, Orr and Shreeve have identified a typology of the brief, which includes *Process Focused*, *Immersive*, *Live*, *Group*, *'no brief' briefs*, and *Dystopian or Utopian Briefs*. "The brief", they explain, "is a mediating artefact that transforms the studio into a learning space..." Briefs can utilise problem-based and enquiry-based learning which reflect "interest in student centred pedagogies"⁴⁰ and as such embrace a range of potentials to go beyond the prescriptive or descriptive.

In the UK most fine art lecturers do not have formal pedagogical training beyond the requirements of membership or fellowship of Advance-HE, a process which encourages reflection on achievements rather than training in or exploration of new possibilities. Approaches to teaching are often learned from the models experienced by the individual in their own education and developed in response to those experiences. Perhaps then, having been the experience of several generations, it is no great surprise that the tutorial system has come to be seen as natural. Yet other approaches to teaching can facilitate various modes of oral and non-oral dialogue which the tutorial can only ever encourage or cajole the student towards. These include direct encounters with material; various modes of engaging with theory and practice together; and collaborative or collective practices. As such projects, classes, and workshops can accelerate students through possibilities they may otherwise not engage with, they provide a 'safer' space to move them away from the comfort of the familiar, and put them in territory

40 Susan Orr and Alison Shreeve, 2018, pp. 117-124.

they may not otherwise explore. There is a shared imaginary of art school education as a journey into “partially uncharted territory”⁴¹ through which the student must find their own path, and the project and course could be deemed too close to a map. In reality though the tutorial can suggest rich sites of discovery to the student while a project or workshop can take them there. The project, class, or workshop can embrace experiential teaching and learning while in the tutorial system experiential learning happens out of sight of the tutor in between the formalised moment of teaching. The combined effect of these potentials points to a valuable pedagogical tool for facilitating the student to oscillate between different possibilities as they learn what may be useful, not only as they find their voice and begin to develop a practice, but as they hone and refine that practice.

Gianni Vattimo suggests that the work of art itself oscillates. Put briefly, Vattimo draws from Heidegger and Benjamin to suggest that the aesthetic experience of art oscillates between the foundation and un-founding of worlds, and that along with ambiguity and disorientation, “in the era of generalized communication, these are the only ways that art can (not *still*, but perhaps *finally*) take the form of creativity and freedom.”⁴² I want to propose a correlation between the prescribing and questioning aspects of pedagogy, the reinforcing and reinventing potential that art school might afford the student, and Vattimo’s aesthetic conception of the oscillatory work of art which founds and un-founds worlds. The aesthetic possibilities of founding and un-founding, and stabilising and destabilising, find a parallel in Kosuth’s notion of prescription reinforcing the world as is, and on the other hand a “questioning as to art’s nature”⁴³ thus

41 Susan Orr and Alison Shreeve, 2018.

42 Gianni Vattimo, ‘Art and Oscillation’, in *The Transparent Society*, John Hopkins University Press, 1989, pp. 45-61.

43 Joseph Kosuth, 1991.

allowing us to think of the function of the art school as an oscillating machine within which students are enabled to move between various possibilities as they learn to make works of art that oscillate in turn.

Alva Noë also draws on Heidegger: the “job” of the work of art, he tells us, “...is bringing into the open, and putting on display, and at the same time instituting and so setting up, the structures and values that... organize us. It reveals organization and also reorganizes.” For Noë this reorganisation then influences the established order. He describes organising activities as level one (first-order), and reorganising as level two (second-order) and explains that it is “more complicated than merely first-order versus second-order...” because “...the second-order reorganizational practice arises out of the first-order organized activities.” And this forms “an existentially vital link between arts and the domains of living, the organized activities, from which they source.”⁴⁴ So the artist exists in the organised realm and reorganises through their practice. Noë suggests that the reorganised loops back and influences the organised realm, the second-order “gets consumed and digested and reworked at the first-order” and hence the world beyond the work of art becomes reorganised. The art student is in the process of organising and reorganising their identity, their emerging practice, and the conceptual frames through which they theorise these possibilities. If, as Frederic Jameson⁴⁵ has claimed, it is impossible to understand practical and theoretical conceptions at the same time, then the art student does not just need to oscillate within the multiple possibilities of each of these aspects, but between aspects as interrelated

44 Alva Noë, *Strange Tools: Art and Human Nature*, Hill and Wang, 2015, pp. 11-18.

45 Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Duke University Press, 1991.

but distinct elements. As well as oscillating between “diametrically opposed positions” proposed by the Meta Modern manifesto, they are equally likely to be moving between the subtle nuances of pluralistic positions as they navigate towards their own position within them.⁴⁶ The loops of the art student’s journey are multiple, irregular and connected.

There are historical examples of forms of loops and oscillations in artist’s pedagogies. Sibyl Moholy-Nagy describes how in the line’s journey through Paul Klee’s pedagogical sketch book, it has been “transformed by the counterforces of earth and world, of mechanical law and imaginative vision” and “rests within a unified diversity.” She explains the effect on the student as “the sum total” of “what Paul Klee calls *Resonanzverhältnis*, meaning a reverberation of the finite in the infinite, of the outer perception and the inner vista.”⁴⁷ Similarly, in a recent interview Doug Ashford described how Ruben Kadish’s teaching at Cooper Union “emphasised the phantasmagoric relationships between historically discontinuous forms” and quotes Kadish explaining that the “past is never over”.⁴⁸ Klee then aspired to oscillate both the material (of the line) and the subject (in the student) through opposing positions. Kadish used slide-based lectures to oscillate the students through diverse visual histories. Both understood the student as a node at which these oscillatory possibilities might converge. Yet either approach taken on their own can only offer limited possibilities to the student.

46 Luke Turner, *Meta Modern // Manifesto*, MetaModernism.Org, online, (retrieved January 2021).

47 Sybil Moholy-Nagy, introduction to *Paul Klee, Pedagogical Sketch Book*, Faber and Faber, 1953.

48 Doug Ashford and Owen Duffy in Conversation, ‘*The Past Is Never Over: Cooper Union, Reuben Kadish, and the Education of Artists*’, Art and Education, School Watch, December 2021, online (retrieved 20.01.22).

I am proposing that to facilitate productive oscillation in their students, artists' pedagogies employed in art schools must themselves oscillate between different possibilities: that the art school should propel the student through encounters with different approaches to teaching, as much as it should do so with different artistic, material, and theoretical possibilities; and that a diverse system of pedagogies has the potential to facilitate the students to engage in forms of non-oral dialogue and non-oral questioning which are significant aspects of the artists polyglottic ability. Of course, the version of English art school education that I have outlined above is necessarily reductive and the reality is more far more complex. I know of institutions where 'set' projects remain central to Fine Art pedagogies until the final year of undergraduate studies (not always with great success), others where Masterclasses are used as occasional punctuations of the students' studio time, and some where visiting artists deliver optional projects that students can choose to complement their studio learning. But largely speaking the oral-dialogical remains predominant, and the rich possibility of projects, classes, and workshops to diversify pedagogy and the students' experience are either missed entirely, side-lined, or employed as an afterthought.

In Helsinki, where I currently work, I see a different kind of possibility: tutorials are replaced with studio visits, crits with studio seminars, and these provide the pedagogical space of the oral dialogical while the system of courses (shorter blocks of learning which have a particular focus) opens students to multiple other possibilities including materials, techniques, situations, and more, each encounter with varying degrees of theoretical underpinning often delivered in connection to the material or aesthetic possibility being explored. The students use these credit elements of the course to collage together the credits needed for their degree. We could argue

the strengths and weakness of the model; it has been accused of failing to develop a sustained critical community and of taking the students away from their studio practice too much. But what is clear is the potential to take the students out of the familiar and find various ways of not just connecting to desire or of ‘awakening’ it but of pointing the students toward new forms of desire. Hopefully in doing so the students develop the understanding that they can find different ways of engaging instead of giving up and going dancing. It is important to remember that this is not just a question of trying different things out, and that a deep and critical engagement with the possibilities is a key element of the process. Moreover, that desire is not something that education should simply fulfil as in the neoliberal version of student-centred education but, to paraphrase Gert Biesta, desire should be “interrupted”. For Biesta the instant fulfilment of desire is a root cause of many of the problems we are facing as a society, from the excesses of consumerism to a threat to democracy in the form of populism. In the art school, if we only fulfil existing desires, awaken those already within the student, or allow students to simply be the medium by which tutors restage their own remembered desires, we have failed to offer anything that can help them reorganise themselves or their identity in new meaningful ways, then we leave them to reverberate in the world view they brought with them.

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I see you, I see me – encounters in arts.

SANNA VUOLTEENAHO

I sing

I improvise

I invite others to join in my spontaneous expression

I interact

For me, singing has always been a bridge to connect with others. When I improvise alone I journey inward, using my voice to explore my body, thoughts and emotions: where I stand at the moment. Once, I termed this ‘vocal tuning’ or thought of it as a warm-up, preparing my voice for music. But isn’t it already music, already art, if I sit alone with a five-string *kantele*,¹ plucking its strings and singing my feelings? No one hears, no one witnesses – but each time, I meet myself anew.

Singing with others is a profound, shared breath, a deep experience of togetherness that I have cherished since childhood. I vividly

1 The kantele is a traditional Finnish string instrument highly valued as part of Finnish folk music. According to Finland’s national epic, the Kalevala, the kantele was originally made from a pike’s jawbone and later from birch wood. In mythology, the kantele’s sound is enchanting and fascinating, drawing people towards the instrument. The five-string kantele has preserved its unique status and remains an integral part of Finland’s cultural history. Its delicate timbre and approachability have also made it a widely used instrument in education.

recall the wooden benches beneath us, warmed by the bodies sitting side by side. The benches seemed to breathe with us, rising and falling like the sea in the rhythm of our collective breath. No one had to teach us how to breathe; it was instinctive, part of our very essence as humans. Later, when I studied singing formally, breathing became a skill to master. But in those childhood moments, singing hymns, I learned to breathe naturally, with no need for instruction, the melodies carrying me into a sense of belonging and security.

My journey as a singer and teacher has taken me to diverse spaces: concert halls, churches, classrooms, senior centres, hospital rooms. Sometimes I identify myself as a teacher, other times as a singer or a community musician. Once, in a seminar room after listening to lectures, writing poems, and whittling wood, I improvised, inviting others to make sounds with me. Some joined in, others continued whittling freely and confident that no one will be criticised if they continued to whittle. Yet we shared the space, relaxed and alert, on the edge of being. Even in silence, we were together, privately united. At that moment, I was just one of the others, a participant.

I realised that even if no one joins me, I remain whole. Life's experiences, approached with bravery and openness, teach us. Learning is a shared construction, and my life's security grants me the courage to embrace vulnerability. In the classroom, I create opportunities for learning, reigniting motivation that might be lost. In the concert hall, I perform. My need for interaction permeates my art-making, and drives my artistic doctoral studies.²

Quoted in several writings on socially engaged practices, an idea of Dan Graham's resonates with me as well: "All artists are alike. They dream of doing something that's more social, more

2 *Sounding together: Audience engagement in a (classical music) concert* (working title), DocMus, Doctoral School of Sibelius Academy, University of Arts Helsinki.

collaborative, and more real than art.”³ My doctoral studies are not just about social change or the wellbeing effects of art, but about forging deeper connections with audiences. Connections will also be formed between participants and within each individual, encompassing the internal experiences that are invisible to others. My art springs from encounters, from the magic of shared experience, from the possibility of being heard and seen, both for oneself and for others.

Performing traditionally as a classically trained singer often creates a gap between the audience and myself. Cultural anthropologist Edward T. Hall categorised the distances between people into four communication zones: public (360-700 cm), social (120-360 cm), personal (45-120 cm), and intimate (0-45 cm).⁴ Operating in the public zone feels too distant for genuine interaction. As a teacher, I can bridge this gap, adjusting the zones by moving closer, fostering connection. Sound itself connects and shortens the distance: everyone in the same space are as if within a tapestry of sound. In larger concert halls, I resolve this distance by greeting attendees at the door, establishing a connection that persists even though the physical distance is greater during the performance.

Teaching and performing are intertwined for me. When I sing, I bring the sensitivity of pedagogical improvisation to the stage, and in the classroom, I infuse my teaching with artistic processes, guiding students through creative exploration. In a way, when performing as a singer, I can't forget that I am a teacher as well. I'm constantly looking for opportunities for connection and dialogue with the audience just like when I'm teaching. My practice is grounded

3 See, among others: Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*, New York: Verso, 2012, p. 1.

4 See Edward T. Hall, 'A system for the notation of proxemic behavior', *American Anthropologist* 65(5), 1963, pp. 1003-1026.

in improvisation, in the sensitivity of being in the moment, with the courage to act intuitively. I embrace the roles of artist-educator and pedagogue-artist.

Deep down, we all crave to be met as we truly are. This longing is natural and good, and it requires others to fulfil it. The moment of being seen can be as fleeting as meeting someone's eyes at a concert or feeling another's body relax, sighing into a shared moment of safety. Encounters are inherently temporary, but their secret and power lie in the mutual exchange between people. After having built a bridge of appreciation through shared experiences, the afterglow of an encounter can linger long after. If there were no others, would I still create art or merely sing to myself? Yes, I would. Not for honour or fame, but for the need to be seen and appreciated even if just by myself.

My art is deeply rooted in vocal improvisation. When I perform, I deliberately place myself in a vulnerable space, accepting the uncontrollable. Trusting the moment's possibilities, surrendering to misjudgements (and dealing with them with grace), is crucial. Remaining open, avoiding rigid expectations, I navigate each situation with an awareness of the many potential paths forward.

In the summer of 2023, as I prepared for my first doctoral concert, I gave several performances in churches, bringing with me 25 kanteles for the audience to play. Every kantele found a player, and some attendees even brought their own instruments. Remarkably, about 80% of the participants confessed beforehand that they had never played or even touched a kantele. Yet, as one participant joyfully remarked upon returning their kantele: "We did it! This is the kind of hidden talent we have!"

After my first doctoral concert, the enthusiasm and gratitude shared by the audience and myself were palpable. The concept of the concert was transformed, with listeners becoming active

participants. Following the performance, we engaged in a lively discussion, and I collected anonymous feedback. The responses were heartening:

It was reassuring to read in the program leaflet that you cannot go wrong here. I cannot play the kantele, but I was still able to participate wholeheartedly. I felt the music in my gut. It was a mystical, magical, enchanting, miraculous, moving experience.

If concerts were like this, I would be a regular! Amazing and wonderful! The experience of participation was born at the concert.

I believe that bringing art to people in this way is both important and inspiring. Art has the power to captivate and transform, and such an approach can deepen the connection between the audience, the music, and the performers.

When audiences are invited into the art-making process, the quality of the art does not decrease; it expands and deepens. Participants have the freedom to engage or simply listen, ensuring that no one is excluded or left out. Together, we share a moment of our lives, encountering each other through art.

The space resonates, the visuality of the space resonates. Usually, I listen bodily, especially rhythmically, but now the sensations ripple throughout my body, thighs resonating, chest resonating, fingers tingling with the vibrations of the church walls. Thank you for being together, for sharing the flow of this moment.



Minna Suoniemi: Exposures of the middle-aged body, (chemigram in progress), 2019

Tuning in with the World – Knowing with Places

MINNA SUONIEMI & MARJA RASTAS

Tuning in

You sit there, staring at these words and letters.

*Your feet feel the floor beneath the table, your body settles into a chair,
your back stiffens, perhaps.*

Your breath flows in and out without effort.

*Suggestion: take a deep breath, in. As you let the air flow out, close
your eyes for a moment. Then open.*

We write this essay in dialogue, based on our pedagogical practice at Aalto University, Department of Art and Media. During the past ten years we have come to know each other not only as colleagues in higher art education but also as friends with mutual interests in transformative pedagogies and feminist and new materialist approaches to artistic and pedagogical practice. In this essay we approach our artistic practices as the ‘soil’ of teaching, tilled by our thinking and shared discussions. The process of co-writing creates a shared place for us to re-think and find new understandings of our artistic-pedagogical practices.

As artists and art educators, we are interested in what happens between the work and those experiencing it. What the work of art

‘does’ is not innate to the work but recreated with each encounter with the piece. The material that the artist works with – matter, time, space, places, relations with other beings; ideas, theories, stories, histories; experiences, emotions, sensations – forms a perception of the world that seeks encounters with others. What makes these encounters meaningful is a kind of resistance: each piece – regardless of whether it seemingly relates to some other existing pieces – resists the already-known and creates its own place in the world. The *what* and *how* and *why* of artistic practice takes place in the in-between. In this essay, we look at this *place* from the point of view of artistic practice, knowing and learning. Like Anna Hickey-Moody and Tara Page, we see both pedagogical and artistic practice as “modes of thought already in the act” that invite us “to think anew, through remaking the world materially and relationally”¹ Here, we look into our artistic and pedagogical practices through the act of *tuning in with the world*, as embodied ways of knowing and being.

In our essay *Paikan pedagogiikka - paikka opettajana*² we were looking at our joint course *Contemporary art education* and asking how pedagogical situations are reformulated when we think of places as active artistic and pedagogical agents. How do our human roles as art educators take shape when places are seen as active participants in the artistic process or as an actor similar to a teacher? Here, we shift the focus towards artistic practice as an inseparable agent within the pedagogy of place. We take a closer look into our artistic practices, and how places have guided the processes. The chosen artistic projects form two layers in this ‘text-place’ – one layer consists of process images and images of artistic work, and

2 Marja Rastas and Minna Suoniemi, ‘Pedagogy of Place – Place as Teacher’, forthcoming (in press), 2025.

another of notes and excerpts from our personal working process journals. The projects included are *Butterfly News* (ongoing since 2021) by Marja Rastas and *Dense Water, O* and *Doppelgänger* (work in process) by Minna Suoniemi.

So, what are we talking about when we talk about places? Place – topos – is ‘omnipresent’: human experiences are always attached to places.³ According to Doreen Massey, our entire living environment is constructed by places as specific concentrations of spatial and social relations. They emerge simultaneously as social, spatial, material and temporal events. The layers of places conceal their earlier temporalities and the stories told about them.⁴ As educational scholar Karen Malone notes, “seemingly an ordered and simple concept, place is also simultaneously complex and contested”.⁵ In this essay, instead of searching for definitions of ‘place’, we are asking *what places do* in artistic and pedagogical practice. How does the teaching situation take shape when air, water, earth, rock, sand, other-than-human beings, wasteland and its structures, the smells and odours of the places, dust or mould in old buildings are seen as actors in the art pedagogical situation alongside humans?

Our questions reflect a posthumanist and new materialist approach that dismantles the understanding of learning and teaching as an exclusively human, linear process. The current phenomena related to globalisation and climate change have highlighted the need for new kinds of conceptualisations of place that take into account the global flows of people, other beings, things and matter, and approach places from a broader than anthropocentric

3 See Karen Malone, ‘Place’, in M.A. Peters (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Educational Philosophy and Theory*, Singapore: Springer Science+Business Media, 2016.

4 See Doreen Massey, ‘Globaali paikan tuntu’, in M. Lehtonen, P. Rantanen and J. Valkonen (eds.), *Samanaikainen tila*, Tampere: Vastapaino, 2008.

5 Karen Malone, ‘Place’, 2016, p. 5.

perspective.⁶ Western thinking traditions are penetrated by dualisms like human/nonhuman, nature/culture, subject/object, knowing/sensing. Posthumanist and new materialist approaches to education challenge narrow conceptions of knowledge and knowing, and of the knowing subject as a rational, self-directed and autonomous agent.⁷

Knowing with places

“Bodies and things are not as separate as we were once taught, and their interrelationship is vital to how we come to know ourselves as human and interact with our environments”, Hickey-Moody and Page write.⁸ Our perception of pedagogy is based on understanding the human body as porous and multi-directional, capable of receiving, staying with, and acting on a wide range of impulses. In artistic practice and teaching, knowledge is embodied and non-discursive – it is based on bodily acts and activities. When processes and events take precedence over outcomes, what is relevant to artistic thinking is not immediately articulated in words. Embodied knowledge remains as imperceptible movements in the participants’ bodies and settles into new contexts of meaning.

6 See Karen Malone, 2016; Reetta Hyvärinen, 2014; Henrika Ylirisku, 2021.

7 See Hillevi Lenz-Taguchi, 2011; Inna Perheentupa, Suvi Salmenniemi and Pilvi Porkola, 2023; Stephanie Springgay and Sarah Truman, 2016; Henrika Ylirisku, 2021; Astrida Neimanis, 2016.

8 Hickey-Moody & Page, 2015, p. 5.



Marja Rastas: Butterfly News, 2021, found process material



Marja Rastas: Butterfly News, 2021, dyeing silk with nettle leaves

Posthumanist feminist theories see knowledge and knowing as partial, ever-changing, socially and materially situated. Knowledge is produced in being and doing, in relation to other agents and circumstances, and is attached to affects, emotions, senses and experiences.⁹ According to philosopher Karen Barad, “we do not obtain knowledge by standing outside the world; we know because we are of the world.”. The practices of knowing and being are not separable but rather mutually consequential.¹⁰

In artistic practice, the place and its materials form entanglements as active agents in thinking and working processes. Working together with places means being exposed to their otherness and the physical and embodied resistances they offer.¹¹ Henrika Ylirisku writes of *dense material learning and knowing* whose practices stray beyond clear and definable knowledge and are present in both artistic practices and artistic and art-based research. To allow new thinking and knowing to emerge, it is important to keep the processes undefined and open-ended.¹² Tim Ingold suggests that we should ‘follow the materials’ - referring to what Deleuze & Guattari call a

- 9 See Donna Haraway, ‘Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective’, *Feminist Studies* 14(3), 1988, pp. 575–599; Aino-Kaisa Koistinen and Pieta Savinotko, ‘Tuottava hämmennys ympäristökriisien ajan utooppisena käytäntönä’, in A.-M. Elonheimo, S. Miettinen, H. Ojala and T. Saresma (eds.), *Intersektionaalinen feministinen pedagogiikka*, Tampere: Vastapaino, 2022, pp. 115-123.
- 10 Karen Barad, ‘Postumanistinen performatiivisuus: Kohti ymmärrystä siitä, miten materia merkityksellistyy’, in A. Nauha T., Arlander, H. Järvinen and P. Porkola P. (eds.), *Performanssifilosofiaa: esitysten, esiintymisten ja performanssien filosofista performanssijattelun*, Helsinki: University of the Arts, Theatre Academy, 2019.
- 11 About the importance of resistance in artistic practice and research, see also Taneli Tuovinen and Riikka Mäkikokkola, ‘Artistic Research and Conditions of Experience’, *Research in Arts and Education* 3//2020, p. 46.
- 12 Henrika Ylirisku, ‘Tiheikön kanssa: Yhteisen ajattelun tunnustelua’, in *Kasvatus & Aika*, 16(3), 2022, p. 167.

‘matter-flow’ - insisting that whenever we encounter matter, it is matter in flux.¹³ Similarly, we understand pedagogy as an entanglement of materials, place and bodies producing knowledge together within a teaching situation. Our role as human teachers is to tune in to the place and its participants, human and non-human, and ‘to follow the materials’.

Now, take a swim with me

You glide in a black, freezing stream, swimming forward but drifting backwards with the current. The water moves in eddies, and you scoop against it with your hands. Together, you form circular paths of motion. Through the water your skin looks rusty red, and you think of the fluids, salt water and blood flowing inside your body. Your body is driven by the living substances (bacteria, cells, salt water) flowing inside it.

In the flow, your body adapts to the temperature, the skin cools down with the ice-cold water, and it arouses endorphins and pleasure. The water surrounds your skin and the cold drains through the skin. Your heart beats fast at first and then slows down to adapt. You desire to stay in the water longer – your watery body longs to be in the water.

13 Tim Ingold, ‘Bringing Things to Life: Creating Entanglements in a World of Materials’, ESRC National Centre for Research Methods, *NCRM Working Paper Series*. 5/2010, p. 8.



Minna Suoniemi, still image of O, digital pinhole video, 2022

Working with places subtly stretches the boundaries of thinking, knowing, doing, and social being.¹⁴ Places have the ability to reorganise the ways bodies relate to each other and to the existing material and social structures. In the absence of pre-established hierarchies and predetermined patterns of action, places can invite bodies into new ways of grouping, approaching, distancing, emerging and hiding. Community is not given but is shaped by what becomes. It suggests the possibilities of joining or withdrawing, being social on one's own terms.

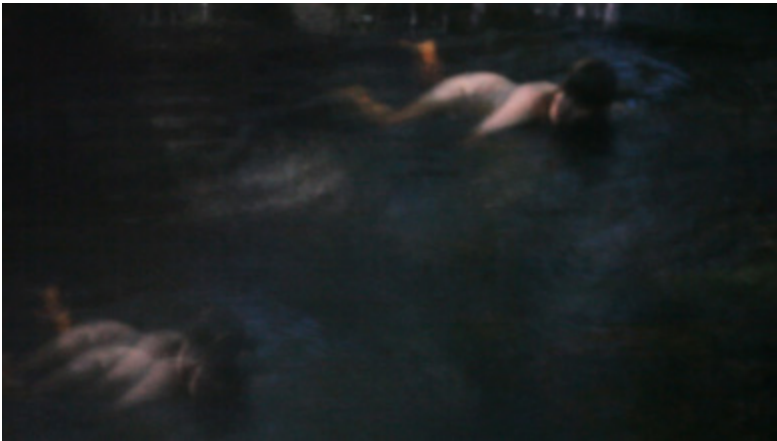
In Evo Forest, a temporary community is created by the place and the people there, as well as by other species. The awakening ants become part of our human community, as do the river flowing beside us in the

14 See Taru Elfving, 'Paikantuneiden käytänteiden ekologiaa. Tahmaista osallisuutta monilajisissa yhteisöissä Seilin saarella', in L. Kantonen and S. Karttunen (eds.), *Yhteisötaiteen etiikka: tilaa toiselle, arvoa arvaamattomalle*, Helsinki: Academy of Fine Arts, 2021, pp. 253-276.

freezing cold, the tree trunks in the snowy forest, carved by beavers, the birds whose sounds we hear. Three days stretch the time of the place. Artistic processes are interwoven with the place and its activities, cooking as a shared gesture of care, bathing in the sauna and working side by side.

Artistic work and pedagogy take place in direct interaction with the place. A student works with ants still awakening from their dormant state, another runs around the lake as an artistic method, one student photographs birds without disturbing them and finds solace in their existence.

I swim in the icy stream, again and again, and film swimming upstream with a digital pinhole camera. The circumstance creates the beginning of a new video work that could not be created as such anywhere else. Teaching becomes a parallel working together with the place, the current, the light, the camera and a student working next to me with the materials they collected on site.



Minna Suoniemi: Doppelgänger / *Varjosielu* (working title), still image of a digital pinhole video, 2024

In the narrative above, the place invites participants into a shared process of artistic work, exploration and thinking. The pedagogy of place emphasises coming together and participation – forging bonds and creating community through shared artistic activity. In socially engaged art, the communities involved are understood as permanent and local or, on the other hand, temporary groups of people gathered for each project.¹⁵ The open communities, in pedagogy of place, consist of several nested, transient communities open to the randomly encountered human and non-human. They emerge as place-situations and stay in the state of becoming. As Elfving writes, participation means sensitivity to the ecosystem as an ethical stance and a recognition of the limitations of one's own perspectives.¹⁶

You have the ability to weave unique, strong, shining fibre from your tiny body. There are other moths doing the same, but you seem to be special.

Your co-existence with us humans, called sericulture, began in China thousands of years ago. Nowadays, it's your only existence. You exist only for human needs.

You entered Europe and us Europeans fell in love with your silk. It was soon everywhere in the hands of those who were able to afford it, and it still is.

In my wardrobe, too.

Due to a long period of domestication, your wings are too small and weak for flying. Easy for us humans to keep you in order.

15 See Lea Kantonen Lea and Sari Karttunen, 'Johdanto', in L. Kantonen and S. Karttunen, (eds.), *Yhteisötaiteen etiikka: tilaa toiselle, arvoa arvaamattomalle*, Helsinki: Academy of Fine Arts, 2021, pp. 9-40.

16 Taru Elfving, p. 265.

As a larva, you are called silkworm, kept in highly controlled circumstances and fed with White mulberry leaves. You grow bigger, and finally weave a fibre cocoon around your body, to keep the pupa safe. We humans don't want you to break out of the cocoon by cutting the fibre into parts. We want efficient processes and perfect silk fabrics. That's why most of you are boiled dead inside the cocoon before completing the metamorphosis. A few of you are chosen to produce the next generation.

We humans want straight lines.

I have never encountered you face to face, but I have some questions for you. Do you have a face? Are you sentient? Does it matter? What should I think of your life and death and all of this? Should I, as some fellow humans, have you as a pet, to learn more about you, with you?

entwisting, entangling paths of knowledge and thought

entangling lines in time and space

lines of writing, letters running like tiny black insects

text, textile, texture¹⁷

Pedagogy of place means tuning our bodily rhythms in to each other and the materialities of places. As Perheentupa et al. summarise, “a community of people and matter can collectively know a lot”.¹⁸ Indeed, community can be seen as a connection to other-than-human rhythms and temporalities: rhythms of places, rock, soil, water, plants, weather, and even human-made artefacts and structures.

17 This working process journal excerpt is inspired by anthropologist Tim Ingold's study of lines. See chapter 2 of Tim Ingold, *Lines: A brief history*, New York: Routledge, 2007.

18 Perheentupa, Salmenniemi and Porkola, p. 22.

Sensitivity to the multiplicity of co-existence can lead to an ethical and ecological reflection and reorientation of one's own and others' actions. Annette Arlander and Mika Elo highlight Isabelle Stengers' concept of 'thinking through the environment' as the ethical basis for site-specific artistic practice and research. When general principles cannot be found to support artistic solutions, one must take time, open one's imagination and be as observant, attentive, and discerning as one can.¹⁹ Becoming sensitive to the specificity of places means becoming responsive to the forms of artistic activity they suggest. Artistic thinking emerges in the rhythms of apparent passivity and active bodily exploration.

Thus, I had two species, a wild one and a domesticated one, living in opposite parts of the globe, in opposite conditions. They both connected to specific fibres: Nettle feeding Small Tortoiseshell larvae and Bombyx Mori larvae extracting silk fibre from their bodies. There was also a thread between deaths of the two, caused by human activities: A slow death of Small Tortoiseshell as a species, caused by the degradation of their habitats, and sudden destruction of Bombyx Mori pupae, as a result of the sericulture process. The line between them emerged for me as real and clear as the scientific way of classifying the two beings to the same entomological category.

Altogether, what did I have? There was a web of lines, threads, fibres, two butterflies²⁰, their lives and deaths, and a human, entangled with this meshwork. The epiphanic moment of seeing the connectedness of these was fundamental to the process. It suggested something that was

19 Annette Arlander and Mika Elo, 'Ekologinen näkökulma taidetutkimukseen', *Tiede & edistys* 42(4), 2017, pp. 10-11.

20 To be precise, Bombyx Mori is not a butterfly but a moth. The Finnish word *perhonen* refers to both.

not obvious yet but would become visible – like imagining something that suddenly turns out to be real. From this messy intersection I would proceed somewhere, not knowing how and where. My conclusion was combining silk and nettle, in one way or another, as substitutes of the beings themselves.

Places and times

In the context of artistic practice and art education, both the teacher and the student have to embrace side-tracks, repetition without a clear goal, chance and the unexpected as part of the process. Pedagogy of place distances itself from a linear, forward-looking concept of time. The future is not something assumed to be a given, but something that can be imagined together. Instead of defining learning by assumed individual future skills, pedagogy should be about richer and more diverse understandings of the present.²¹

It began with my grandmother, born in 1924. This woman, unsuited to her own time and rural community, unintentionally broke her family, and herself. Something of her exists in me.

The material is filmed with an old super 8 camera from 1972, the same year I was born. Battery acid has leaked in it, there are short circuits, the film slows down or stops rolling. The film is also expired and faded. We are both ageing.

In spring 2021 we spent three weeks in isolation, and these rooms became a cage for us two, the world inside the windows. I began documenting us imprisoned behind these walls with a pinhole camera made

21 See Lenz-Taguchi, 2011; Ylirisku, 2021, p. 201.



Marja Rastas: Accessories for Butterfly Encounters, human-scale clothing made of nettle dyed silk, 2021

of an iPhone box. I developed the negatives in our bathroom with coffee, vitamin-c and baking soda, and fixed them with dense salt water.

When my son had the virus, I rinsed his nasal passage with salt water. I thought of the salty water inside our bodies, his, mine, my mother's and grandmother's. In the darkroom the dense salt water crystallised in two days as the water evaporated. Inside us the water flows. What if something of my grandmother still flows in me.

For Springgay & Truman, the 'politics of slowness' means creating spaces for hesitation and resistance, which in turn produce new ways of being in relation. Like many posthuman scholars, they call for dismantling the subject-object-oppositionalism of learning and ask what we might learn *with the world*, rather than trying to learn *about the world*.²²

The summer of 2021 was exceptionally warm and dry. We were delighted by the swarms of butterflies, showing themselves around the cottage yard and surrounding area. On sunny afternoons, the curious, colourful insects joined our outdoor meals, attracted by the odours of our bodies and our food. They landed down around us, and we saw them folding their wings over their hairy bodies. They walked on our skin, exploring us with their antennae and proboscis, and allowed us to observe them closely. Staying still, we were able to sense the touch of their six tiny limbs moving tenderly on our arms, and their spiral-like proboscis stretching out and tasting our sweaty skins.

22 Stephanie Springgay and Sarah Truman, 'Stone Walks: inhuman animacies and queer archives of feeling', *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 2016, p. 5.



Minna Suoniemi: With Sankyo camera from 1972, pinhole photograph developed with caffenol and fixed with dense salt water, from the exhibition *Dense Water*, 2021

Small tortoiseshell was the most common of our non-human companions. My enjoyment of their presence was mixed with sorrow and anxiety, being aware of the human impact on their life conditions.

Utopias of obscure places

The word *utopia* comes from the Greek word *u-topos* – a place that does not exist. Riikka Haapalainen examines participatory practices in contemporary art as utopias of everyday life. Utopias are built on the formless loss and longing experienced in the present, and the simultaneous hope of reaching that loss.²³ Our pedagogical utopia of place is about practising mutual responsibility and equal agency. It is committed to the view that no one thinks, knows, or learns alone. In pedagogy, it's not essential to focus on individual performances, but rather on what each can bring to the mutual situation.

We are writing in a time that anthropologist Anna Tsing describes as “the end of global progress’s easy summer”. Tsing asks how we can maintain a sense of hope and a faith in life in this strange new world, which is characterised by a pervasive mood of instability and precariousness.²⁴ In the students’ artistic work, we can recognise the states of mind that emerge from the experiences of instability that Tsing describes. In our pedagogical practice we want to create spaces for sharing and unpacking these emotions. We share Tsing’s idea of imagination and curiosity as coping strategies that can help us to collectively find unpredictable paths and new ways of living.

In this essay we propose that working with places – when it is based on ethical attentiveness to others – can open radically new

23 Riikka Haapalainen, *Utopioiden arkipäivää. Osallistumisen ja muutoksen paikkoja nykyaikaisessa 1980-2011*, Helsinki: University of Helsinki, 2018, p. 43.

24 Anna Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*, Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2015, pp. 2-5.

ways of knowing and being together in the world. As Haapalainen suggests, art should not represent or communicate what is already known or what others should know. Rather, it should operate in the midst of everything, sharing and generating knowledge.²⁵ Indeed, pedagogy of place calls for attentiveness, imagination and curiosity as alternative ways of knowing. As university teachers we are aware of the diverse needs of our students and our responsibility to create and maintain learning situations that feel safe and accessible. We want to believe that pedagogy of place has the potential to interrogate predetermined relationalities and identities. In doing so, it can create spaces that are not only safe and accessible, but also brave, curious, joyous, and attentive to our shared world.

Pedagogy of place is in dialogue with many others who are attracted to places of art, teaching and learning and to embodied connectedness with materiality. Its ground is the diverse places that have welcomed us as teachers and artists. It suggests places as co-teachers, regardless of what the places are: studio, gallery, museum, classroom, island, meadow, wasteland, water, body – or a text such as this.

25 Haapalainen, 2018, p. 157.

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Delaying the Final Meaning: On Painting, Artistic Thinking, and Intentionless Learning¹

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L'art est une pensée dont les œuvres sont le réel (et non l'effet). Et cette pensée, ou les vérités qu'elle active, sont irréductibles aux autres vérités, qu'elles soient scientifiques, politiques ou amoureuses. Ce qui veut dire aussi que l'art, comme pensée singulière, est irréductible à la philosophie.²

Thinking practice

Contrary, perhaps, to the style or apparent intentions of much critical writing, artistic practice is a way of thinking that is irreducible to philosophy. That which is art in its appearance in the world is neither exhausted due to, nor exhausted by, the interpretation of its origins, its potential metaphysical or onto-political destinies, or in

1 This text is framed in the context of my work at the Research Institute of the University of the Arts Helsinki: <https://www.uniarts.fi/en/projects/gestural-philosophy-collective-artistic-practices-as-informal-devices-of-intentionless-learning-radical-democracy-and-institutional-activism/>

2 'Art is a thought in which artworks are the Real (and not the effect). And this thought, or rather the truths that it activates, are irreducible to other truths—be they scientific, political, or amorous. This also means that art, as a singular regime of thought, is irreducible to philosophy.' Alain Badiou, *Handbook of Inaesthetics* (translated by Alberto Toscano), Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005, p. 9.

the institutionality that determines it, state or private. Whatever the art thing is, it escapes from any contextual operation that seeks to subject and cancel it. Here, I will only refer to visual practices and leave out of this framework other situated practices such as theatre, dance, and music, to name a few. Alain Badiou's words, quoted above, admit the impossibility of the European philosophical tradition of suturing the thinking that artistic practices are. Art is a thinking that cannot be delimited by a thinking outside itself. At the same time, as is evident, all artistic practices are affected by many cultural, social, economic, political, technological, geographical, and material factors. Art is a thinking that is not opposed to its translatability but avoids any pretended conceptual closure of its drift. It is a thinking that nomadises. Radically, the French thinker Fernand Deligny will go so far as to declare that 'art is for nothing', thus making explicit the anarchic singularity of art, alien to any linguistic apprehension and as a practical potential for otherness.³ Artistic thinking occurs through tools that insistently exceed the given and prescribed meaning where it appears. Furthermore, artistic thinking occurs in this excession, even if it is minimal, untraceable, indeterminable, disappeared, inexistent, despite (and included in) the restrictive conditions in which it occurs. This excess, as a place or site, links experiences, memories, situations, and emotions despite the brutal instrumental demands to which the practice is

3 Fernand Deligny, *Ouvres*, Paris: L'Arachnéen, 2007.

subjected in a context of neo-functionalism.⁴ To intensify this tentative description of artistic thinking, I would like to mention here what the Chilean artist Eugenio Dittborn said about installation as an artistic practice:

‘The traditional notion of the compact work, illusorily detached from the architectural materiality that invariably contains or surrounds it, is dismantled by the installations when they include the spatial and social particularity of the places they conquer to engage there seriously. Places without which they have no place. This desire for coupling, which each installation plays as its difference, has a temporal correlation: the installations are dismantled at the end of their duration. The space-time of the installations, then, irreversibly dismantles the works of the fine art tradition that insist on inhabiting any space, in and during any time, because of their supposed autonomy. In installations, what is installed, by how it is arranged in the multidimensionality of space, allows it to be discovered and dismantled by crossing it through a rigid hierarchy (...) Installations

4 By neo-functionalism, I mean the wave of systemic discourses that, again, are trying to frame artistic practices under specific meanings of use. Neo-functionalism sees art as a mere tool to solve necessities that the State and community action should engage. We can think about any curatorial frame in any big institutional or cultural event where we can witness art practices reduced to portraying values, politics and social issues. I am not saying that the practitioners haven't already defined the purposes or references in their processes. In fact, many practitioners are trying to engage politically through their practices, as I have mentioned before in other articles. What I am naming here as neo-functionalism is the neoliberal and capitalist desire to reduce the arts to an always meaningful and professional desire that flats the discussion against systemic problems. Deeply engaged political art cannot be functionalised by these well-behaved institutional discourses.

refloat there the shipwrecked multiplicity: abandoned erogenous zones.’⁵

Dittborn wrote this reflection for the catalogue of the exhibition *Rúbrica* by Chilean artist Gonzalo Díaz.⁶ *Rúbrica* consisted of an installation composed of the complete red lighting of the Centro Cultural Matucana 100 exhibition space in Santiago de Chile, 2003. Without interruption, *Rúbrica* remained open to the public for 240 hours, day and night, from 3 to 13 October. An aluminium and red acrylic screen was installed at the main entrance of the space, through which the visitor entered the installation. On entering, the visitor was crushed by the redness of the space. Fourteen neon texts were placed on a wooden walkway that serves as the first floor.⁷ Red acrylic plates reddened the windows of the Cultural Centre. Finally, a sound element was added to the installation: a love song interpreted by María Martha Serra Lima.⁸

5 Eugenio Dittborn, ‘Jack Ruby’ in *Rúbrica*, Santiago de Chile: Ediciones de la Cortina de Humo and Centro Cultural Matucana 100, 2003, 1-17. Dittborn originally wrote this text for the publication *Camino Way* in 1991. This quotation was introduced as a fragment before the text written by Dittborn for the exhibition *Rúbrica* by visual artist Gonzalo Díaz.

6 Gonzalo Díaz Cuevas (1947) is a Chilean artist professor at the School of Fine Arts of the University of Chile. He received the National Art Prize in 2003. His work is considered part of the Escena de Avanzada, which includes a series of visual strategies composed during the military dictatorship. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QAnugw1z2bc&t=90s>.

7 The neon text reads ‘EL NEON ES AMNESIA. EL NEON ES DESMAYO. EL NEON ES MARASMO. EL NEON ES LATIDO. EL NEON ES BLASFEMIA. EL NEON ES JADEO. EL NENON ES SECRETO. EL NEON ES DESDICHA. EL NEON ES ZOZOBRA. EL NEON ES QUEBRANTO. EL NEON ES PLEGARIA. EL NEON ES DEMENCIA. EL NEON ES INFARTO. EL NEON ES DELIRIO.’ Gonzalo Díaz, *Rúbrica*, 2003.

8 The song is ‘Los Enamorados (Ay amor)’ by María Martha Serra Lima (Buenos Aires, 1950 - Miami, 2017), an Argentinian singer and actress.

Rúbrica, as the Chilean philosopher Pablo Oyarzún writes in his text, was bounded by the ‘referential semantic field of the work: the thirtieth anniversary of the military coup in Chile and the experience of torture.’ Therefore, the main place of occurrence of *Rúbrica*, as an installation, is a temporality subject to an adverse event, the coup d’état perpetrated by the Chilean Armed Forces against the legitimate government of Salvador Allende in 1973. However, as on other occasions in Díaz’s work, this reference is not made explicit to the visitor or spectator.⁹

Such potential references are not represented in Díaz’s works. He declares that he works by displacements, ‘diasporas of insinuations and whispers, of ravages and mutilated vestiges, because no master rule of restitution of meaning is proposed’.¹⁰ The work of art, in this sense, does not aim at rebuilding a foundation. Instead, it disposes of a space of dispute, of *différance* – representation is deferred by the installations. Oyarzún will go further in exposing this artistic thinking operating not only in Díaz but, I daresay, in every critical visual operation developed in South America under the period of dictatorships, which constitutes a frame of reference for contemporary artistic practices in the Global South:

- 9 Luis Guerra, ‘Agonistic affects: Visual devices that force the existing narrative landscapes in the museum institutionality of memory.’ Communication presented at the 1st International Conference on Visual Culture, Periphery and Interdisciplinarity in Visual Studies, Universidad Juan Carlos I, Madrid, 2023. In this text, I argue around the work *Lonquén 10 años* by Gonzalo Díaz, originally exhibited in 1989 at the Galería Ojo de Buey and re-installed in 2001 at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, in 2011 at the Museo de la Memoria in Santiago de Chile, and at the gallery Il Posto in 2017, Chile.
- 10 Oyarzún, Pablo, ‘La materia está hecha de recuerdos’, in Gonzalo Díaz, *Rúbrica*, Santiago de Chile: Ediciones de la Cortina de Humo and Centro Cultural Matucana 100, 2003, p. 34.

‘The artist, as an artist, does not want to say anything: to give rise to a work implies a renunciation of intentions and all the more so of second intentions. (And an important point: ‘not wanting to say anything’ does not in itself imply giving oneself up to the opulence of plethoric showiness and the pleasure of the gaze; the silence of the work can also silence the luxuries of the manifestation). Díaz knows this and has known it for a long time. The way in which he satisfies his declared intention here consists precisely in the double desistance from discourse and pleasure.’¹¹

In the installation, as a practice, we can no longer merely use existing systems of meaning for their legitimising restitution. Still, in its own material condition, the installation displaces the entire epistemic apparatus of the meaning of the work of art, dislocating its condition and de-founding it. This disengagement entails a delay that extends an inoperative excess and a loss. The indisposition that the installation operates in the temporality of the work produces an uprooting in the constructed or existing experience. This de-foundation, this uprooting, this dis-rooting, occurs primarily through an imbalance in the experience of temporality. The deferral installs itself in the experience as an (a/e)ffect of deceleration. De-obliterating, the installation generates an apparatus of thinking that is unhinged from the system of meaning imposed by reason and its opposite, unreason. Like the poem, which will exceed the sense of

11 ‘El artista, como artista, no quiere decir nada: dar lugar a una obra supone una renuncia a las intenciones, y con mucha más razón a las segundas. (Y un punto importante: “no querer decir nada” no implica de suyo abocarse a la opulencia de la pletórica vistosidad y al agasajo de la mirada, el silencio de la obra también puede acallar los lujos de la manifestación). Esto lo sabe, lo ha sabido Díaz largamente. El modo en que satisface aquí su declarada intención consiste precisamente en el doble desistimiento del discurso y del placer.’ Pablo Oyarzún, ‘La materia está hecha de recuerdos’, p. 34. All the translations from Spanish are mine unless otherwise indicated.

determination of communicational language, contemporary artistic forms and practices bifurcate ways of understanding, feeling and, therefore, thinking, demanding a radical deconstructive operation. This operation of artistic thinking undomesticates legislated meaning, producing a disorientation that deterritorialises and nomadises the established logic of knowledge.¹²

The act of art thus provokes an imbalance in the existing context in which it emerges or is installed.¹³ In the case of *Rúbrica*, the installation interrupts not only the site where it emerges as an infrastructure, the architectural space of the institution, but also the memory and recent history of Chile as a community. Its apparent operative 'inexistence'¹⁴ occurs as a monumentality of the undomesticated. It is also important to note that this is not the first time that Díaz, in his artistic thinking, composes this conditionality of the monumental in an installation that subsequently disappears, and of which only a memory remains to be reconstructed, to be reworked, including by this text.

Following Badiou, we can say that every practice, as an art procedure, is a finite location of an infinite un-domiciliation, of abandonment or wandering that will have no assumed location except in the same trajectory to be discovered through other subsequent operations. The works operate as fixed points of a trace that do not claim the determination or the finitude of what they refer to as being part of. The aim is to disassociate and disarticulate any

12 See *On Gestural Apparatuses for a Memory to Come*, Helsinki: Academy of Fine Arts Press, ISBN: 978-952-353-464-3, 2024.

13 'Education as a pharmakon: Action art as political pedagogic device for enacting radical democracy', *Ethics and Education*, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449642.2023.2282353>, 2023a.

14 Luis Guerra, 'Towards an Anarchistory of action', in *The Imaginary Reader*, curator and editor: Marie Neerland, Bergen: Arts Council Norway and Public Art Norway, ISBN: 978-82-303-2814-9, 2017a.

potential reading that subsumes the work to an otherness superior to its actual existence. A reading that, for example, predisposes this practice to a romantic suspension, composing the 'body' of the work as a mere 'incarnation' of an Idea, consequently superior and universal. Thus, if this condition, that of practices in their multiplicity, are descriptions without place, they inaugurate a displacement towards what surrounds them. The eventuality of what will happen is the promise of inevitability in the consequences. The description of what has not yet taken place constitutes the gesture of setting in motion the actualisation of a fissure, which is a cutting away from what is currently happening. We know that all appearing is, ultimately, a vanishing of the very instant of appearing. However, what has happened initiates an unusual trajectory that is immediately verified in a subsequent instant in which there is no certainty except in the inventive recomposition of the practice itself. Artistic practice is thus understood not as the object resulting from a specific process of production but as a complex instantaneity that argues itself through in the concomitance and alterations of others, regardless of its historical singularity, accumulating in itself both the temporality of its being happening, and an inaugural temporality of otherness, of which, being part, it is now a testimony of its openness: 'A thing exists more or less, and intensity has no relation to being, but only to the concrete world in which the thing appears.'¹⁵

I want to stay in this displaced space of the condition of practice as artistic thinking. In this dislocation, a placeless description describes a site in continuous displacement: the political possibility here would be that which is produced by events and the invariants that can be traced between them. Invariants that appear through

15 Alain Badiou, *The Age of Poets* (translated by Bruno Bostels), New York: Verso, 2014, p. 80.

the subjective singularities of each localisation operate the inquiring efficacy of a truth for the place. It is a politics of practices in displacement, a politics without a known address, that is to say, a wandering, undomiciled politics, which flees from uniqueness, from a centrality, from a party, from a philosophy, from a god: 'International and nomadic creation with – as in a work of art – a mixture of violence, abstraction and final peace.'¹⁶

Artistic practices thus unfold a way of thinking/doing that, being indiscernible, traces intensities, which are not distracted by the fixation of a form or system but compose the marks and lines of cartography in movement.¹⁷ To institute new worlds, to transform existence as we know it, not to work anew to perpetuate what is there would be the mark of an artistic practice that is part of a configuration that exceeds it.

Dittborn's pedagogic provisional awareness

'1. Dibujar es representar relaciones'¹⁸

In 1984, Chilean artist Dittborn 'began to produce what he calls Airmail Paintings'.¹⁹ He folded and mailed the paintings to recipients abroad. That was his artistic and material solution to Chile's geographically isolated situation and a way to sneak past military

16 Alain Badiou, 2014, p. 82.

17 Deligny, 2007.

18 '1. Drawing is representing relationships,' Eugenio Dittborn, 'latortiilla correeDoraaaaaah, catorce tumbos' in Dittborn, Eugenio, *Delachilenapintura, historia*, Santiago: Galería Época, 1976, p. s/n: chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.eugeniodittborn.cl/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/FDB101.pdf

19 Guy Brett, 'Dust Clouds', in Eugenio Dittborn, *Mapa: pinturas aeropostales de Eugenio Dittborn 1984-1992*, Southampton, UK: ICA, Offset Colour Print, 1992, p. 71.

ensorship. As has been correctly stated by art theoretician Nelly Richard, what we find in Dittborn practice is a:

‘techno-social memory (the mediations of visual representation); an anthropological memory (Indigenous sub-stratum); a cultural memory (cross-reference of artistic and literary quotes); a news memory (press coverage of current affairs); a biographical memory (certain images that denote the family); a productive memory (the selection and re-editing within the work of fragments drawn from its own past) and so on.’²⁰

I worked as Dittborn’s assistant at the Master in Visual Arts at the University of Chile from 2002 to 2004. In 2001, I was also one of his students and became an assistant in his classes. We both were trained as artists in the same art school at the University of Chile. During this period, I witnessed and practised a methodology of artistic pedagogy based on his lived experiences as an artist. It is this that will bring us to the condition of intentionless learning later.²¹

What Dittborn proposed in the class was always a questioning and an exploration based on the artistic practice itself and not through a set of concepts that could define the practice for

20 Nelly Richard, ‘Nosotros/The Others’ in Eugenio Dittborn, *Mapa: Pinturas Aeropostales de Eugenio Dittborn 1984-1992*, 1992, p. 47.

21 I need to state that, in this text, I will refer only to Eugenio Dittborn’s pedagogic work during the time I worked as his assistant at the MA in Visual Arts programme, University of Chile. Therefore, I will not discuss the extensive theoretical literature regarding his artistic production. Nevertheless, I will mention at least three main catalogues of his work: *Mapa: pinturas Aeropostales de Eugenio Dittborn 1984-1992*, *Mapa: The airmail paintings of Eugenio Dittborn 1984-1992*, Southampton, UK: ICA, Offset Colour Print, 1992; *Remota: Pinturas Aeropostales = Airmail paintings*, Santiago de Chile: Publica Editores, 1997; *Mundana, 24 pinturas aeropostales en el Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes de Santiago de Chile*, Santiago de Chile: Publica Editores, 1998.

transmission or communication.²² The art process was the material space of critical inquiry, disrupting academic assumptions or learned theories. Art was and was not what we were taught at the University or what we found in theoretical texts and exhibitions. The procedures involving the student's artistic practice were the primary pedagogic materials. You and the shadows you bring within you were the sources of your practice. Also, the forms of relational tools you developed for your practice were essential to what you defined as your art practice: What do you want to do with your practice? What is the purpose of your art decisions? Why do you want to practice art? Do you already believe in the hidden rules established in the system you live in? Does your practice really embrace your way of life? Does your practice expose your hidden thoughts, reflections, and desires, or is it a calculated operation to achieve specific aims pre-established in a situated system? Do you want to become a 'professional' artist, or do you want to learn how to practice your art? What do you really want? And do you have the tools to know what you want? Some of these questions were posed in the first meeting. Then, sometimes, other questions were asked in the discussion as a means of looking for ways of understanding and cracking the alleged knowledge of art and even life: What do you think about your family in relation to your practice? How much is the cost of your materials? Who pays for your materials? Where do you work your art? At your house, on the bus, in front of your computer, or when you sleep? This

22 This was different from other pedagogic practices at the Art School of the University of Chile, for example that of Chilean artist Francisco Brugnoli (1935-2023), who was also a professor, and director of the Museum of Contemporary Art (1998-2021). Brugnoli was my teacher during the last two years of the BA in Fine Arts at the University of Chile. He began every year by dropping a concept around which the students would work. Every week, we discussed the exercises and artworks produced by playing with the concept's meaning, perhaps changing it entirely or extending it, but the concept was at the core of the teaching game.

set of questions operated as a space for relaxing the ambience and, simultaneously, ‘tensing’ the alleged knowledge we claimed to have. Dittborn was constantly pointing out how to look at this information, too. That data you were unfolding was important to the art activity because that hidden performative materiality directly informed how I practice art and, therefore, how I would *think* through the practice. Without directly answering (to) some of these questions, without consciously confronting and embracing them, I would constantly create frustration in my practice.

In Dittborn’s pedagogy, all these minor materialities, sometimes dismissed in formal art teaching processes, were essential to how I would confront and build my artistic thinking. Dittborn pushed for learnings that were not evident to the students by interrupting the procedures and questioning their routes through the practice: Why are you using those materials, and that size, and that form? Sometimes, it was evident that the attachment to specific materialities was based on emotional and romantic approaches to the arts taken without understanding our place in history, politics, and life. Why were we painting as if we were European XIX-century painters? Of course, if you ultimately wanted to continue working the same way, it was your own decision. However, the questions were crucial in discovering the hidden rules and complicities in the systemic context, how you were also a participant in extending those rules through your practice, and the way you accepted those ways. If you want to paint, why don’t you use what is already around you? What is the correct size of your art? Why don’t you learn how your practice’s materials and circumstances operate before bending to a system? As a way of interrupting these rules, the Master programme students were confronted with their imaginary limits through material assignments. That was the pedagogic game, the *enjeu*. I remember the slow craftsmanship we engaged in creating the assignments

for the students as a way of disrupting their artistic, theoretical and technical assumptions. Creative and unseen responses to the assignments were not considered ways of finding solutions but, more than that, ways to learn from the practice and delay the final meaning. We observed that one of the primary diseases in contemporary art practices was (and perhaps continues to be) an excess of pre-determined meanings that sometimes overwhelmed fragile and minor materials and practices. This pedagogic procedure was a learning process based on *provisional awareness* entangled with the practice itself and not through a new rigid regime of representational conceptualisation. The notion of provisionality seems here an essential element because, as Dittborn answers in one of his catalogues:

‘Various things occur to me, for example, you might understand the precariousness in my work as the fact that the elements which are connected are provisionally connected. If, for example, you stick one piece of non-woven fabric over another, you can unstick it, unstick it, pull it apart. None of the means I use to stick things together allows you to do it definitively. So, that is what the provisional character of the inscription is about, and therefore, of the connections. (...) In a condition in which you can keep on making comments about the meaning and go on delaying a conclusion, not intending any definitive meaning. (...) The precarious is something which can fall or be taken to pieces at any given moment, something provisional and therefore transitory. (...) An accidental encounter that leaves a mark.’²³

In other texts and presentations, I have claimed that artist

23 ‘Conversation between Roberto Merino and Eugenio Dittborn’, published in *MAPA, Airmail Paintings*, catalogue from the exhibition *The Airmail Paintings of Eugenio Dittborn 1984-1992* held at ICA (April 15 – May 30, 1993) and Witte de With (December 11, 1993 – January 30, 1994), p. 7.

pedagogy occurs ‘through a sustained relationship between bodies produced through time. In that span, actions, exchanges and adjustments, communications and conflicts, cultures and languages spontaneously create networks of intentionless learning. Pedagogy in the arts hangs from a social cognitive process of sedimentary exchanges and interactions, modifications, and analyses, creating performative, relational surfaces of provisional inscription.’ In the case of Dittborn’s pedagogic provisionality, relationality was also unintentionally sustained through material elements and actions that were ‘teaching’ through their activity: a masking tape, for example, keeping an A4 paper with drawings made with Giotto’s brand oil pastels was as important as the potential representation made by the coloured lines or letters made on that same paper. Something could be found through the accident there; if a finding is found, you must keep it for your practice. How the A4 papers were disposed of and hung on the walls was also essential to understand the artwork. Where those walls were was also an element of the artistic practice: Are you hanging your drawings in an entrance to a building? Outside of the same building? Are they installed in the bathrooms or the alleys? Therefore, the process of definition was a critical and analytical process of those unseen elements that could answer the purpose we had, or they could even show us purposes that were hidden within the forest of learned art. To act unintentionally can create clearings in an otherwise rigid form of consciousness. The given perceptual ecology can get interrupted, for a while, be delayed in its meanings, and create paths to unknown threads. Moreover, the provisionality keeps the encounters away from overdeterminations.

Nevertheless, what do I mean by *intentionless* when describing Dittborn’s pedagogic practice? The concept comes from another Chilean thinker (and biologist) Francisco Varela. His ideas have been influential in my practice as an artist and philosopher. Varela

published a book based on three lectures he gave at the Fondazione Sigma Tau in Italy. In this book, *Ethical Know-How: Action, Wisdom and Cognition*, he challenges a traditional Western reading of ethics as related to conscious, fully intentional, and conceptual meaning, taking an *enactivist* position²⁴ that proposes an ethics founded on 'know-how,' which would be a form of knowledge based on intentionless processes of cognition:

‘We can distinguish between self-conscious or intentional action and self-less or intentionless action. (...) We dress, we eat, and, more important, we exercise consideration for others. We do all these things without intention, but we do not do them randomly or purely spontaneously (...) Through appropriate extension and attention and by training over time we have transformed these actions into embodied behavior.’²⁵

What I found important in Varela’s approach to intentionless action is the fact that embodied behaviour is created through appropriate and attentive training. In art practices, we can say that the knowledge produced or created is based on attentive and appropriate activities. We, artists, craftspeople, and practitioners, *embody* our practices; we are involved in them in the sense Bernard Stiegler uses the word ‘*entramée*’, which means not only involvement in the sense of attention but also as a way of becoming part of/with it. We

24 Varela’s arguments highlight that cognition is not based only on given and defined data. Cognition comes forward through an adapting and collaborative exercise of mutual exchanges between an organism and its environment. That relational condition is essential to his idea of cognition. Enactive Cognition, therefore, proposes that cognition does not happen just in the brain but is, in fact, closely tied to the body and its interactions with its environmental conditions. For more: Francisco Varela, Eleanor Rosch and Evan Thompson, *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience*, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1991.

25 Francisco Varela, *Ethical Know-How: Action, Wisdom and Cognition*, Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 1999, p. 35.

become immersed in the practice; therefore, many actions are made within the logic that grows and flows from the practice itself. We never return the same after that diving process. To act unintentionally means to act in such a way that one becomes part of the action and the environment one is within. It is necessary to say that in Varela's thinking of intentionlessness as part of ethical practice, Eastern philosophies such as Buddhism and Confucianism, to mention some, are deeply important. In Varela, the Western logic intention of 'doing for something' is interrupted by an intentionless *care* action that acts 'for nothing'. An action that belongs to a practice that seems to be part of the context even before any aim. This connects with Deligny's 'art is for nothing' in the sense of a practice that does not entail any objective, at least not from itself, and therefore, any meaning is delicately left provisional, open, away from any conception of property or ownership. Intention is disarmed, so to speak. For Varela, an ethical, unintentional act becomes 'natural' (perhaps disarmingly so), like life itself. It seems to act without a reason, and without foundation (once again, no 'rebuilding' is required), without even an opposition to intentionality.²⁶

In the process of art, many acts relate directly to the practice itself. They do not respond to the systemic necessities of the art world. We are far away from that fully intentional path created by the dominant ideologies of today, and which is reproduced by their agents. Through certain elements and examples, I am exploring a pedagogic artistic practice that works through material proximity.

26 Varela used to mention Antonio Machado's poem *Caminante no hay camino* as a metaphor for the enactive approach to perception: 'Wanderer, the road is your footsteps, nothing else; wanderer, there is no path, you lay down a path in walking.' Francisco Varela, 'Laying Down a Path', in William Irwin Thompson (ed.), *Gaia, A Way of Knowing: Political Implications of the New Biology*, Rochester: Inner Traditions Bear Company, 1987, pp. 62-63.

This provisional learning awareness keeps itself within intentionless procedures that can develop embodied knowledge.

Returning to Dittborn and attending to the limits of this approximative text, I will end by saying that through his pedagogic practice, he encouraged the students to perceive their conditions in all the senses of the concept, meaning that their conditions are political, economic, emotional, historical, etc. Without a psycho-deconstructive procedure of the given self we work with, it is not possible to break with the continuity imposed by the perceptual ecological system.²⁷ Understanding the frames you impose on yourself and those implemented upon you frees the possibilities of exploring through the materials you have around, recomposing new relational devices with your context. This material provisional awareness does not imply a restriction on their possibilities. The aim was to train your capacity to encounter encounters and to allow the encounters to develop other paths without restrictions. If necessary, we can point again here to Deligny's gestural philosophy when he references the saying: 'L'occasion fait le larron' (the opportunity makes the theft), meaning that the creative circumstances can only occur by taking the chance-drift of that accidental moment.²⁸

Dittborn's pedagogic procedure often encountered resistance from students at the beginning. Many wanted to learn how to become 'professionals' in the arts and not lose time to exercises that jeopardised their already learnt processes. Even then, when someone did not get the game and returned with classical responses, conceptual or not, it was evident that provisional awareness played a role in that process, allowing the exercise to exhibit all the hidden

27 Derek R. Ford, *Teaching the actuality of revolution: Aesthetics, Unlearning, and the Sensations of Struggle*, Madison: Iskra Books, 2023.

28 See Luis Guerra, 2022 and 2023b.

elements working within that resistance and in alliance to the systemic order of art. We were all exposed to that experimental process of thinking in practice, creating intentionless learning that occurs in that place we all, together, organised for teaching. In the end, it was your journey, and you must be able to learn from the traces left by a practice. I will end here just quoting a quote that Dittborn liked to repeat:

‘Among those who study painting, some strive for an elaborate effect and others prefer the simple. Neither complexity in itself nor simplicity is enough.

Some aim to be deft, others to be laboriously careful. Neither dexterity nor conscientiousness is enough.

Some set great value on method, while others pride themselves on dispensing with method. To be without method is deplorable, but to depend entirely on method is worse.

You must learn first to observe the rules faithfully; afterwards, modify them according to your intelligence and capacity. The end of all method is to seem to have no method.’²⁹

The drawings

Finally, I want to expose part of my current artistic thinking; even though these drawings were not made for pedagogic purposes, they may have an intentionless desire to be part of a book where the notion of non-didactics is present. I will first describe

29 ‘Ch’ing Tsai T’ang, Discussion of the Fundamentals of Painting’ in Sze, Mai-Mai, *The tao of painting: a study of the ritual disposition of Chinese painting; with a translation of the Chieh Tzu Yüan Hua Chuan; or Mustard Seed Garden manual of painting, 1679-1701*, Vol. 2. Bollingen Series XLIX, New York: Pantheon Books, 1956: <https://archive.org/details/taoofpaintingstu0002szem/page/16/mode/2up?view=theater>.

the circumstances of where they are coming from. These drawings were made in 2022-2023 during my research residency at the Künstlerhaus Büchsenhausen in Innsbruck, Austria, as part of the Art & Theory programme.³⁰ I am sharing here just four of a set of fifty-four drawings. A selection of them will be published as a book in Chile this year. These drawings were made as part of a daily drawing practice. They were never considered part of a work of art in the traditional sense. I used the time there to allow a memory to come through drawing, even doodling. This is why they were made using graphite, in notebooks. Sometimes, they looked like sketches of potential paintings for me. I did them, of course, ‘under the influence’ of readings, writings, and discussions inside the project I had proposed to the programme, which was an extension of my artistic research at UNIARTS Helsinki and a retake of my studies on Fernand Deligny’s pedagogic thinking.³¹

What was interesting about this process was the sediment it formed. Spontaneously, all the elements came to intersect on the surface of the trace and without ‘thinking about it’, I spent the

30 The *Fellowship Program for Art and Theory* at the Künstlerhaus Büchsenhausen consists of a research residency period of six months. It began in the spring of 2003: ‘The program is based on the idea of generating and maintaining a context for production and discussion, in which artists and theoreticians can connect and reflect on international art and societal discourses in relation to local topics and issues. At the same time, it offers an artistic laboratory of experimentation, where new artistic practices and strategies may be tried out.’ <https://www.buchsenhausen.at/en/fellowship-program/>. The programme director is Andrei Siclodi. I was selected together with German curator Bettina Knaup, Filipino curator Alice Sarmiento and Albanian artist Endi Tupja.

31 *The Attempt of the Undomiled* was my post-doctoral artistic research project at the Centre for Artistic Research (CfAR) at the University of the Arts Helsinki (May 2019 - June 2020). My current project is titled *Gestural Philosophy: Collective Artistic Practices as Informal Devices of Intentionless Learning, radical democracy, and Institutional Activism*. For more on my proposal at the Künstlerhaus Büchsenhausen please visit: <https://www.buchsenhausen.at/en/fellow/luis-guerra/>.

months of the residency drawing. I constantly drew without determining why or how the figures I traced were composed, except for letting memories appear unconsciously among the lines. Memory played a central role in this process. Memory is a source of encounter between one's personal and culturally acquired images. Images that have been inscribed or are being inscribed on me appeared through the traces. I see them as remnants of a past intertwined at different levels and contexts. I see the act of drawing as an e/affective mechanism which, in its variations, forces the given context to decree the possibility of an uninscribed phenomenon. It is a form of wandering and of sheltering echoes, without necessarily understanding the roles they play together.

To a certain extent, in my practice as an artist-researcher-teacher, both Deligny and Dittborn's influence has found its way into a wandering procedure that traces itself in *ricochets*. My drawings and traces compose a formation in which sediments mingle without the intention of creating artwork. They allow the appearance of a fault or an absence.

To draw is a mechanism of delaying any finite purposeful meaning. Drawing is a way of interrupting the disruption, in Stiegler's sense. The practice of art, not in the sense of producing or creating artworks within an already closed and mechanised system, forms a *thinking* that allows encounters to occur unintentionally. Both for me and perhaps for those who encounter them sometimes. In what way will those encounters impact my situation? How long will it take for a new meaning to emerge from there? It is difficult to say. Nevertheless, the finding is open to being caught if necessary. A provisional pedagogic device is deployed to wander around unintentionally, encountering findings to memorise.







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A SITUATED SCENERY: An Arts pedagogical exercise for sharing individual frames of references

HELI KAUPPILA & MARIKA ORENIUS

So, first I would like to invite you to pause, to calm down and to find a peaceful and pleasant place in the space. Then, I would ask you to sit down comfortably, in a position that feels good and well-supported. I will guide you through this exercise of pausing and idling, creating moments for attuning to the sensations and inner landscapes of the bodymind.

Please, let everything just dissolve, whatever happened before this moment or whatever will come up later, let that just be, and let yourself be in this present moment.

You can soften your gaze or close your eyes. I propose you let my voice guide you in this exercise for five minutes. (You are also free not to follow the suggested impulses. You can take the five minutes for resting and letting the time pass.)

As you sit comfortably, with your eyes relaxed, you can notice how you breath. You can just observe how it is happening; you do not have to change anything. Just bring your attention to your breathing. You can continue to sit in stillness and explore, bringing more consciousness to

the waves of breath. And as your breathing is happening freely, I invite you to think about a place where you feel good, somewhere you have felt relaxed and safe. And as you find the place, you can start to sense the feelings in your body as if you were in that place. In your own place, you can observe the surroundings, you might pay attention to how it looks in there. You can perceive the scenery and let yourself idle there. You can linger in the scenery calmly, there is no rush...

While you are in your own scenery, I also invite you to focus inward, how do the things you are observing make you feel? You can spend some more time watching the scenery, imagining being in your chosen place...

Then. Slowly, carefully, you can begin to let go of the imagined scenery and the place you chose. You can start to be more aware of your surroundings here, you might do little movements with the fingers, toes, feet. Then, by lifting your eyelids open, you can connect with your vision here and now. Look around the space, and the people sharing the space with you.

Heli's point of view and some thoughts around the practical collaborative work

Natural sceneries and landscapes are formed over periods of time, due to various interactions in the world. They convey historical and cultural values. Sceneries are an integral part of our being and living within our surroundings. Parallel to that, we can consider sceneries as metaphors for spaces of encountering and learning. For this article I have approached the topic with the notion of landscapes and sceneries connecting us to our surroundings, the past, to our own histories, as well as connecting us with others around us, now and in the future. As a compass for this short navigation through

my collaboration with Marika is the idea of ‘wordliness’, meaning each person *is in the world* and *from the world*.¹

In connection to the landscapes and sceneries of learning, I explore the idea of environments created by someone (‘a teacher’), as spaces for sharing lived experiences and unique, situated viewpoints. The territorial location for this investigation is higher arts education. In an arts university, artistry and pedagogy overlap and intertwine on a personal-professional level, and the teaching position is a hybrid of many individual and organisational objectives and undertakings.² To facilitate encounters in a context that aims at learning, one is always stepping into a field of intra- and inter-personal experiences and into a matrix of powers, aims and standpoints.

The notion of ‘situatedness’ (Kauppila 2012; Lehtovaara 1996) is at the core of my reflection on our collaboration and co-facilitated workshops with Marika. From the phenomenological point of view, one approaches each moment with an intention that is directed towards something. Reality appears to us, in experience, as meaning something. Understanding cannot be separated from what is understood and perception from what is observed. Learning from this perspective refers to a person’s experiences as being in the world. Each person approaches and makes sense of reality from their own starting point, through their own horizon.³ A person experiences and

1 Lauri Rauhala, *Ihmiskäsitys ihmistyössä*, Helsinki: Gaudeamus, 2015.

2 Heli Kauppila and Kai Lehikoinen, ‘Johdanto’ in Kauppila and Lehikoinen (eds.), *Toiminnasta sanoiksi: Puheenvuoroja oman työn kehittämisestä taidealojen yliopistopedagogisessa koulutuksessa*, 2020. June 12, 2024.

3 See Heli Kauppila, *Avoimena aukikiertoon. Opettajan näkökulma kokonaisvaltaiseen lähestymistapaan baletinopetuksessa*, 2012; Maija Lehtovaara, ‘Situaationaalinen oppiminen: Epistemologisia ja ontologisia lähtökohtia’, in Jorma Lehtovaara and Riitta Jaatinen (eds.), *Dialogissa osa 2. Ihmisenä ihmisyhteisössä*, Tampere: Tampereen yliopisto, 1996.

interprets reality subjectively, from a unique and specific viewpoint, a situated place in a shared situation.

In an educational setting, i.e. in a learning situation, the one who initiates an exercise, a task, an assignment (often called ‘teacher’) provides the context and points towards something.⁴ To direct the participants’ (often called ‘students’) attention towards something is an educational gesture. So, we can say: one person (the ‘teacher’) is directing the others’ (‘the students’) attention towards a reality/entity/concept/idea/existent/material/thing out there. The next question could be: What is there to be pointed at – would that something be the substance of the learning expected to be achieved? Working in the field of arts education I would answer: not at all. The ‘something’ is rather the pointer’s view, ‘a personal take on the matter’ that they have chosen to share. The pointing action itself becomes the significant element in this situation. Pointing grows not only to be a gesture but a movement. A movement that is a proposition, a sketch, a suggestion, an initiative. It shows something of the pointer and their ‘situated scenery’. It locates the pointer in the world with others, but not at the centre of it. It is an offering of coming together and, through collaboration, supporting the individuals to define their own relations to the substance of an exercise or a task at hand. Pointing reveals something about our own sceneries; where do we come from to a situation, and where do we stand now. It requires us to take our place and meet the responsibility as pointers, in our unique state of being.

In the action, the responsibility to respond or not is left to the participants (‘the students’). This is a central ethical principle in the equation of education; when someone is pointing *towards*

4 See Gert Biesta, *Why the form of teaching matters: Defending the integrity of education and of the work of teachers beyond agendas and good intentions*, 2022.

something, they are not explaining it based on their take on and understanding of that something but are calling forth the participants to find their own unique footing. The pointer, the proposer ('the teacher'), has arrived in the situation with their own background, and each act of pointing is somehow connected to these scenes located behind the seen, i.e. to their unique positioning in the world. The point in the horizon where they point is in turn approached from each one of the participants' unique positioning. So, the thing that is pointed towards is also captured somehow personally, partially, momentarily.

I consider the act of pointing to be an active pedagogical moment. In general, a pointer can be something other than a person. For example, an artwork might point towards an idea, an experience, a certain feeling or atmosphere, a circumstance, a memory, a wish... It might take a stand for or against something, or perhaps show something of the connections between the maker and the material and comprise all these elements and many more. One can certainly learn from encounters with artworks. Nevertheless, the artwork is not capable of the responsibility that is embedded in pedagogical situations and relationships. By connecting the concepts of worldliness, situatedness and acts of pointing I wish to lay the course towards holistic, ethically considered ways of enhancing the pedagogical orientation in teaching and learning in the arts.

'Situated sceneries' resembles Jack Mezirow's idea of 'frame of reference', which is the basis for our assumptions about and approaches to our surroundings. According to transformational learning theory the way in which the learner views the world alters.⁵ Rather than being just a mental filter we can probe the shift of

5 Jack Mezirow, *Transformational Learning: Theory to Practice*, 2002. June 12, 2024, p. 5.

perspective holistically when we bring it into connection with the concept of situatedness. We possess a body of experience that orients us towards our surroundings. We embody the thoughts, beliefs and values that in turn manifest in our interactions with others.

Transformational learning is described as the process of effecting change in a frame of reference. In parallel to this I have considered the idea of ‘situated scenery’ as a possibility for creating spaces for personal explorations of one’s own perceptions and sensations. To facilitate an exercise where there is a continuation to this, exploration by sharing something of these investigations with others can strengthen the individual’s critical reflection towards their own embedded assumptions and values. As transformational learning requires a reflective discourse, this exercise needs time. Dedicating time for personal reflection and creating spaces for sharing the processes of sensing and making sense of one’s own situatedness might lead to the appreciation of diverse worldviews and learning paths. The awareness of being in the world and from the world could fundamentally support us in recognising what it means to be *with the world*.

Marika’s point of view and some thoughts around the practical collaborative work

In fine art studies, students are guided individually, but they also participate in group teaching through seminars of their study areas and thematic and theory courses. All the different forms of teaching together develop the student’s self-awareness of the manifestation of their own work so that others can experience it too.

When entering the working space of a fine art student, the teacher enters the world of the student and shares the space of their artistic work. The studio visits allow the teacher and the student to think and observe simultaneously, and sometimes together

they witness the emergence of something new or the creation of a work. In these encounters, the teacher's ability to empathise, on the one hand, and sensitivity to their own position of power, on the other, are important.

When reflecting on pedagogy, I consider the concept of intersubjectivity to be a coherent way of understanding how our experience of others emerges. In philosophy, intersubjectivity generally refers to what exists because everyone believes it exists, for everyone. In particular, the cognitive and social ability of human beings to understand and share the content of subjective experiences (feelings, perceptions, thoughts, linguistic or other meanings) through interaction and collective action.

Edmund Husserl has a theory of how the subject forms an experience of others, which is based on sociality and empathy (*Einführung*). In Husserl's phenomenology, experience is limited because it is based on seeing.⁶ That interests me when thinking of our task: A situated scenery. When we close our eyes during a scenery exercise, do we experience each other mainly through our bodies and senses other than seeing? In visual arts education, individual guidance plays a big role in the student's independent artistic work. Is putting vision before all other senses too narrow a way to understand empathy?

6 See Edmund Husserl, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time* (Translated by J. Brough), Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1991; Marika Orenius, 'Teaching is being in an interpretative space', in Pilvi Porkola and Denise Ziegler (eds.), *Visual artist's workbook: essays and exercises on teaching arts*, Helsinki: The Academy of Fine Arts, Uniarts Helsinki, 2023.





Reciprocity in pedagogy is about being accepted and taken into account. Mutuality and the ability to see oneself and the other person in the situation that arises between teacher and student is essential to learning. While the teacher reflects the work of the student, they also reflect, like a prism, their own artistic work or vision. Seeing is a two-way process, and it is a phenomenon in which the see-er is also seen.⁷

The art teacher recognises the personality of the art student and empathises with his or her situation. This empathy helps the student to empathise with his or her own situation as an art student, which in turn makes it easier for the student to accept his or her own artistic personality and work as an artist. Of course, this attention is also important later, when they are working in the field of art and are more directly involved in society and their environment.

In the teaching relationship, the teacher sees themselves as an art student and at the same time as an artist-teacher in front of the student. Being seen is therefore a wider idea than just being physically seen. Perhaps seeing is about the simultaneous acceptance of both by the other. Reciprocity in a learning situation presupposes acceptance of oneself in the other as well as in oneself.

The scenery exercise and other workshops that have been conducted through collaboration with Heli are different from a situation where the teacher confronts the student with, for example, the student's artwork. However, both, in my view, involve subjectivism. The above view is also driven by subjectivism, with limited knowledge and judgements. A teacher or student, prone to error, engaged in the present and the culture, has a way of looking at things or a

7 See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 'Eye and Mind' (1961), in J. E. Edie (ed.), *The Primacy of Perception*, Evanston, IL: Northwestern UP, 1993; Marika Orenius, *Eletyt tilat kuvataiteilijan työssä ja koulutuksessa*, Helsinki: Aalto University: The School of Arts, Design and Architecture, 2019.

worldview that colours the teaching situation. Without hesitation, we always emphasise our own point of view, making our own perceptions relevant and potential sources of knowledge. The learning situation is therefore a kind of situation that exists within each person rather than in the environment or physical space itself. In interpreting the situation, it can be thought of as a reflection of the teacher's and the student's interconnectedness (connection), as reflections of the minds of both parties.

Shared notes on the practical workshop

In the arts-based exercise described in the beginning of this text, the idea was to propose a slowed down, quiet way of setting the parameters of the individual's perceptions and sensations, as a possibility for creating shared encounters. The exercise was a part of the transdisciplinary arts-pedagogical collaboration we have been conducting since 2021. This particular exercise was a part of a lecture demonstration we held at the international symposium, 'What is Artist Pedagogy?', organised by Magnus Quaife on the 23rd of May 2023 at University of the Arts Helsinki.

Each participant approached the task as an individual, concentrating their own inner sceneries and imagined landscapes, although the exercise was carried out together in a shared space. So there was a sensation of the others sharing the room and time. The participant's own artistic practice and background perhaps guided the participation and immersion more than we had anticipated. However, we probably hoped that the interaction would bring the participant closer not only to the scenery of their own thinking, but also to the situated scenery that each one perceived the others to have. The encounter is thus influenced not only by the past, by the life lived, but also by the unconscious, by the orientation and thinking that point to the future. It was important for us to suggest and perhaps

just remind fellow artist-teacher-researchers of the importance of immersing ourselves in a scenery where we feel connected to ourselves and to the independent artistic work by which we teach and learn in higher arts education.

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What Applied Non-didactics is for me

FRANK BRÜMMEL

In my artistic research on a possible educational apparatus in contemporary sculpture, I am trying to find out – by artistic practice and with the help of educational theory – what a possible educational element in sculpture might be, and how an educational encounter through art might happen.¹ In the context of this research I use the term ‘Applied Non-didactics’,² which became the title for one of the Research Days at the Academy of Fine Arts, University of the Arts Helsinki, in December 2022. I was looking for a title that could create the space of interest I had in mind in regards to artistic thinking, artist pedagogy and art making, and establish a framework for the lectures of all the contributors on that day.

In this text I will explain how I came to this phrase, what it means for me, and what it might mean in a wider context. I will first lay out my artistic-thinking, -experience and -practice. I will concentrate on the writings of Gert Biesta, as well as proposing some links to the thought of Alfred North Whitehead. Finally, I will describe practical

- 1 My ongoing doctoral artistic research project is entitled *Allegory for Pedagogy – Sculpture as an Educational Tool?*
- 2 ‘Applied Non-didactics’ was the title I gave to a 1-day program during the Research Days in December 2022 at the Academy of Fine Art, University of the Arts, Helsinki.

examples of my own artistic practice and explain what Applied Non-didactics means for me in their contexts.

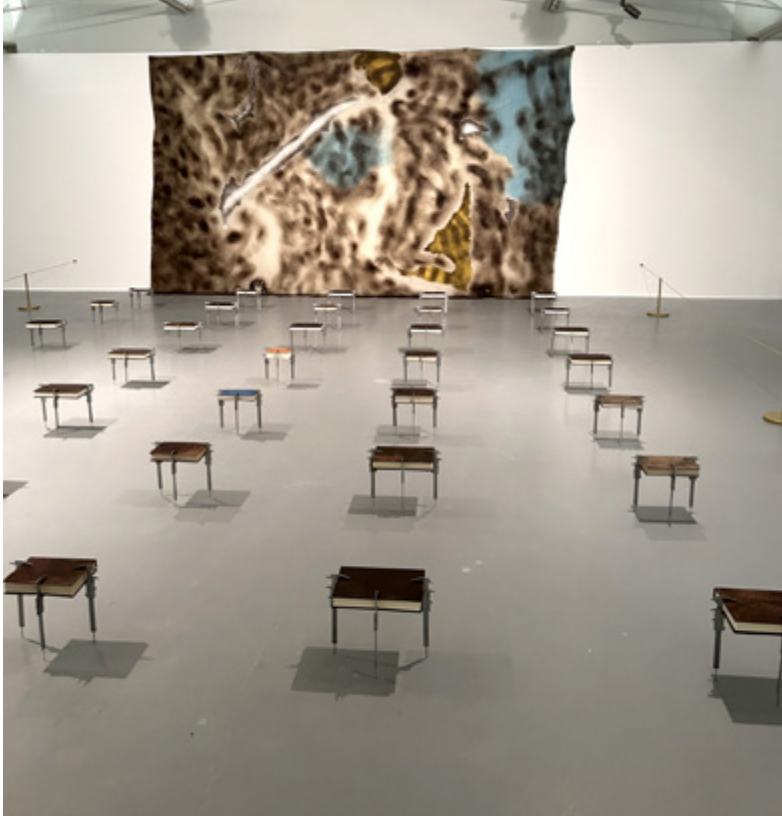
Being with Art

My personal starting point with Applied Non-didactics was an observation I tend to make more and more when visiting art events. In recent years when visiting these events, art in the contemporary art world, I observed that more and more artworks are overloaded with meanings and textual explanations, about what they do and what their topic is and how to read them as well as read around them. But also, some artists also seem more and more prone to ‘concretising’ their message too directly, too transparently. Personally, and for reasons I’ll outline in terms of both practice and theory, I feel troubled by this development. In my opinion, besides the fact that there is almost no space for a lot of art to ‘breathe’ any more, or be something more than its description, I am also wondering why there is seemingly so much less trust in the works themselves? Can’t they be relied upon to communicate what is said in the text accompanying them? And what makes ‘everyone’, from the artists to the curators and the visitors, think that an encounter with an artwork needs to be controlled and pedagogically guided? ‘Everyone’ is a big word, and my viewpoint here is personal and subjective, perhaps reflective of my own background and sensibilities – but I will go on to suggest ways in which Applied Non-didactics might provide a way of making, teaching, thinking about and presenting art that positively avoids the possibility of any viewer (not just one like me) being overloaded by what they see. In fact, I will propose that Applied Non-didactics offers ways in which art may function more in terms of open invitations rather than instructions. As an example of when things can seem too directed, especially when working on a currently urgent topic like the ecological question, some artists seem to take the path

of especially pedagogical descriptions to accompany their artworks. And I find that the more art seems to be the vehicle for this kind of content-based description of itself, the less I can see the art. It is as if the artist (or the curatorial system around them) wants everything the work has to say to be right there on the surface, directly stated and delivered – with the effect that the viewer is given no space or imperative to dive in, to immerse themselves in the work and perhaps find more. Of course, there are fantastic examples where artists can handle the situation in a way that both these elements, the didactical and the ‘other’ (which might be named experience), work wonderfully well together.

At the 2023 Liverpool Biennial there were several examples of work where these elements seemed to be successfully negotiated. Francis Offman’s work *Untitled 2019 – 2023* is an artwork about the need for multiple perspectives in order to understand history, consisting (amongst other things) of a bible that the artist’s mother took with them when fleeing from the Rwandan Civil war, as well as colonial-era callipers used for racial classification. Charmaine Watkiss’ work *Witness* from 2023 is a story of memory told through the deities of Water and Earth, which addresses the ideas of wisdom, endurance and survival during the transatlantic slave trade. Khanyisile Mbongwa, who curated the Biennial, set the tone for this approach by working from the ground up, rather than taking a topic or theme then seeking suitable artists and works for the show. In a lecture given at the Tate Liverpool in August 2023 for a group of our students and teachers from the Academy of Fine Arts in Helsinki, she described how she would walk around the city, sensing the place, and only then would begin to talk with artists, listening a lot until the theme, so to speak, showed itself, evolved or emerged. The works that ended up being selected shared this authenticity, meaning that they could carry serious and urgent topics like slavery,

for example, without just telling the viewer what the work is about. Moreover, the works for me have a ground, a fundament (not least, their authentic place in an open curatorial process) they are standing on, and in this respect give me as a viewer a possibility of experiencing ‘something more.’³



Francis Offman *Untitled* 2019-2023. Photo: Frank Brümmel

- 3 This ‘something more’ can be many things, and might be described in various ways, but following Gert Biesta I’d like to see it as the place where I become aware of myself and get an understanding of what it means to be in the world, and what the world asks from me.



Part of Charmaine Watkiss' work *Witness*, 2023. Photo: Frank Brümmel

I do not want to generalise here, but rather describe these observations as a starting point to question the different communicative channels in an artwork and their possible educational impact. One can take an abstract work as an example, simply because in an abstract work there is often no immediate ‘topic’ or ‘theme’ in the foreground, so to speak (although of course there can be clear themes and topics in the work). I look at a work by Agnes Martin, which in its abstraction does not obviously point to any particular topic (of course art history has done its job and considered what Agnes Martin was dealing with when making the works). For a viewer who has not seen the works before, nor knows anything about them, they might not point to the themes we are told are present in the work. This is unlike a clear statement given by or given alongside an artwork, for example works dealing with the topics of homelessness, immigration, etc. In Agnes Martin’s works, for me, there is nonetheless *something*, that seems to connect me with an understanding of *something more*, in a way that does connect things for me, perhaps to a better understanding of the world. And if I come back to the example of artworks dealing with topics like the ecological crisis, the works of Agnes Martin might even connect me better with an understanding of the ecological need, to an understanding of what I have to do (instead of overwhelming me by the massive task the issue presents), by bringing a certain kind of awareness to me – by not only allowing me to think, but by implicitly inviting me to do so.

I mean that I do not need a didactical ‘finger’, which describes everything for me about the artwork or the importance of a topic in an artwork. And I understand that for a wider audience it is sometimes necessary to give information because it might be helpful for a viewer to access a work of art. But with Agnes Martin’s work, the art itself connects me with ‘something more’ and helps me to understand.



Agnes Martin: *Untitled (Drawing) #31*, Peggy Guggenheim Museum Venice.
Photo: Frank Brümmel

Bridging Applied Non-didactics

I would like here to re-visit some of Gert Biesta's thoughts in the book *Letting Art Teach: Art Education 'after' Joseph Beuys*.⁴ I find the thoughts made clear in the book highly relevant for anyone interested in artmaking, art and education and art-education. For Biesta, the question is not that art should produce something or bring something out that 'counts for' something else. Biesta is not an advocate of 'art for art's sake' either, but rather that art should not be instrumentalised. He writes that real educational work (in art education) goes beyond facilitating self-expression by bringing people 'into dialogue' with the world. He continues, proposing that artmaking, in all its manifestations, is a continuous attempt to find out and try to understand what it means to be in dialogue with the world. This process of engaging in dialogue with the world, as an educational question, is for Biesta inherently connected to the question of art. As he puts it:

'...this joint ambition... provides... ground for an approach... in which artists are not turned into didacticians whose task it is to deliver objectified art, but where the educational moment appears *inside* the artistic endeavour, in such a way that art *itself* can and is allowed to teach.'⁵

For Biesta, the question of the whole process is not to make sense of it or to understand it, but rather to accept that the world is asking something from us, which in the best possible case leads to a very different form of understanding. He continues: 'Explanation as bringing someone into reason should be distinguished from bringing reason into someone, which would count as a form of indoctrination

4 Gert Biesta, *Letting Art Teach: Art Education 'after' Joseph Beuys*, ArtEZ Press, 2017.

5 Gert Biesta, *Letting Art Teach: Art Education 'after' Joseph Beuys*, p. 38

rather than education. What matters, in other words, is that explanation is about bringing *someone* into reason.⁶

Isabelle Stengers' book *Thinking with Whitehead* comes to mind here,⁷ and the way Alfred North Whitehead's writings were discussed in a reading group at the Academy of Fine Arts in Helsinki in autumn 2022 and spring 2023. Whitehead writes about events, creativity (as a driving force in becoming) and eternal objects, with events being the primary elements of reality. According to Whitehead, an event takes place in space and time and includes both mental and physical aspects. For Whitehead, elements of reality are events rather than objects and substances. Events here indicate that everything we discern always has a beyond.

The moment of becoming fuses various aspects such as past experiences and abstract potentials into something new. In Whitehead's philosophy, abstract potentials are diverse possibilities that can be actualised in the ongoing process of reality. Abstract potentials are eternal objects, which include abstract properties (e.g sense-, perceptual- and scientific-objects / feelings, odours, colours, molecules).⁸ These properties exist as potentialities and can be realised in events. Through the process of 'prehension', these potentialities can influence the outcome and character of the event. Following Whitehead, these eternal objects, as timeless potentials, can be actualised in various ways within different events.⁹

6 Gert Biesta, *Letting Art Teach: Art Education 'after' Joseph Beuys*, p. 45.

7 Isabelle Stengers, *Thinking with Whitehead: A Free and Wild Creation of Concepts*, Harvard University Press, 2011.

8 Isabelle Stengers, *Thinking with Whitehead: A Free and Wild Creation of Concepts*, p. 83.

9 Isabelle Stengers, *Thinking with Whitehead: A Free and Wild Creation of Concepts*, p. 82.

In the context of Applied Non-didactics and art, I think that such abstract potentials, or eternal objects, are ‘part’ of an artwork – not necessarily in terms of the artwork as a physical entity but also as something that the artwork brings with it as potentialities. In this way, an artwork offers the possibility to relate with one’s own past experiences. This can also be one explanation why an art experience with the same artwork might have different outcomes for different people.

Even though the personal outcome of an experience with an artwork, in an Applied Non-didactics process, might (at first glance) differ for every person, what links them is the introduction of novelty in the process of becoming. In my opinion, this introduction of such a novelty¹⁰ is the crucial moment that carries the spark for awareness or insight that exceeds the limits of any didactical process or aim.¹¹

This aspect of an artwork (fusing with one’s own past experience, being open to the invitation, becoming aware, getting in touch, in dialogue with the world), its potentiality, does not necessarily happen in the specification of an obvious topic/theme that is being dealt with in the work, but may instead happen somewhere else.

10 Following Biesta, I refer here not to ‘novelty’ for its own sake – something new doesn’t always mean something good – but something that sets you ‘in reason’.

11 In *The Beautiful Risk of Education* Biesta talks about when education is ‘meaningful’ – not only a means of qualification and socialisation, but also subjectification (see also footnote 20). Biesta suggests that we should not understand this bringing being into existence as a metaphysical manoeuvre, but should rather see it as a calling being into life (*The Beautiful Risk of Education*, p. 139). I interpret this moment of carrying a necessary risk when engaging in such educational openness as being near to the novelty mentioned before, and see Whitehead’s process philosophy as another kind of metaphysics, as doing something other than the one criticised by Biesta (I might be wrong in doing so, of course). As in Whitehead’s metaphysics, everything exists through relationships and processes.

For me this connection-making part is independent from *any* theme of the work, whether there is an obvious one or not.¹² And it is here that a real educational moment (Biesta) can happen, when the art offers an educational element, or includes an educational apparatus.

I think, therefore, that what Applied Non-didactics really does is in contrast to non-didactics¹³ or the non-didactical, in that it does convey information. However, this information is conveyed in the form of an open invitation, a connecting experience conveyed if the invitation is accepted.¹⁴ This invitation does not function didactically either.

Whilst strongly emphasising the active role of the artist¹⁵/teacher, Applied Non-didactics takes into account the individual past experiences of viewers/students. In all cases, this has nothing to do with facilitating a situation, but rather in the sense of Applied Non-didactics, offering an invitation that sets one in *reason* with the world.

Examples from my practice

To visualise my thoughts more, I'd like to introduce some examples from my own artistic- work and -research and describe them in regards to Applied Non-didactics. In my research on an educational dispositive, an educational apparatus in contemporary sculpture, my artistic work has three strands. One is stone text plates, where

12 And yes, exceptions are the rule – occasionally, in my experience, such a theme might also contribute to Applied Non-didactics.

13 Non-didactic in the sense of not intending to teach or convey information or instruction.

14 At the end of the research day with the topic 'Applied Non-didactics' in December 2022 Biesta mentioned the idea of seeing Applied Non-didactics as an invitation (to the student and, for me, to any viewer or person engaging with an artwork or in an educational context) to connect with the world.

15 Artists, I think, already engage in such a dialogue when working on artworks; they are actively seeking this connection, this potential for an invitation.

I make engravings of words, texts and ornaments in stone. The second is Fair Sculpture, an artistic communal project in which I participate. And the third is Artists as Teachers / When Artists Teach.

Stone Text Plates

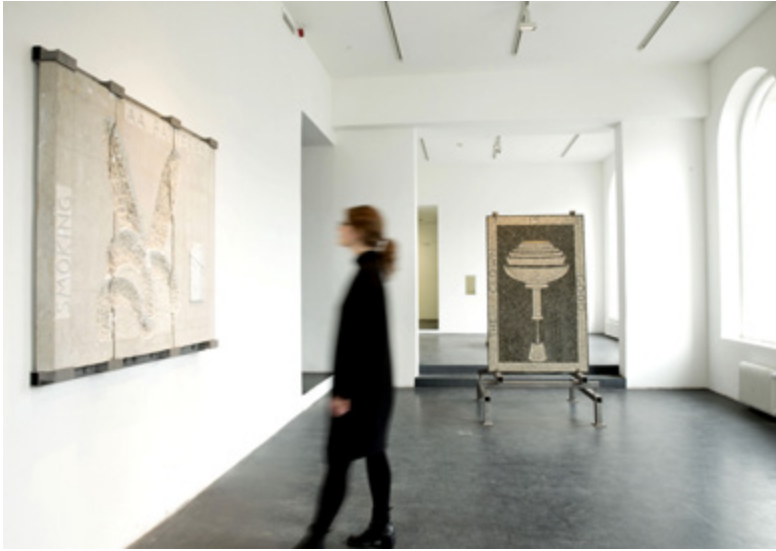
stone / text / inscription / landscape / layers / ornament / time

For many years my interest in making the stone text plates was based on my background as a stonemason and was therefore conceptually considering the historical usage of stone text plates, how they have been used for thousands of years across cultures and geographies.

I applied a critical, fictive archaeological point of view to stone text plates.

Historically the content of stone text plates (as for sculpture) was often based on educational aims, like demonstrations of power, delivering information to illiterate people, or disseminating information in general, for better or worse. The artefacts I produced, on the other hand, have no need to exist in this way because, with very few exceptions, we hardly see the need to communicate information on stone nowadays. It is an imaginary story that I made up, as part of my concept, and through which I intended to explore how words, texts and images carved onto stone develop meanings and narratives for us and about us today.

In a time in which the lifespan of everyday messages is very short, I worked with messages in stone, a medium which is often considered 'eternal'. I am not especially fond of the word 'eternal' in this context, but I must admit that it has been helping to support my concept, denoting as it does ideas of 'importance' and 'significance', and helping to suggest that contingent decisions and actions have been made permanent, literally 'set in stone'. By working with stone in a slow way I have been trying to open a window, by decelerating, to a more conscious present moment.



Exhibition view of the works *The Clown Is Good* and *Smoking AA Batteries*. Photo: Pasi Rauhala

Whilst working on the pieces for the *As you May Sense* exhibition (curated by Samir Bhowmik and Jussi Parikka with main curator Joasia Krysa for the Helsinki Biennial 2023 and Uniarts Research Pavilion) I had already got interested in stones as agents. Widening my perspective to our environment, here the urban environment, I looked at stones which work as proxy archives of environmental impact. And I wondered about how to re-think the act of inscribing into stone in this light. How to re-find another kind of archival status in regards to the readability of the various layers of inscriptions in stone? I speculated that the illusion of archiving information in an 'eternal' material by carving could therefore be grounded by an understanding of other kinds of inscription; the unintentional but

nonetheless 'readable' inscriptions of contamination or decay in the exact same material.¹⁶

In the work I exhibited I implemented new techniques like cutting thin sections of the same stone to make it possible to see changes between minerals in these sections. These kind of possibilities are a part of the artwork, and then can work as windows that open into time, showing different layers of inscription, allowing for other ways of reading stones, reading our urban environments, and reading the artwork itself.

Now, my interest shifts to when people coalesce with places, becoming an entity, a bigger organism, connecting various elements together and transmitting between each other. With trees, rivers and mountains and perhaps even stones becoming relatives. Widening my perspective further, from the stone text plates to the urban environment and its population, and now to the whole landscape. I am interested in the complex interplay of inscriptions, landscapes, space and the concept of place in regards to questions of belonging, occupation, extraction and kinship.

I am interested in finding out when a kind of occupation of place happens, which tries to overrule the area and implements power within it, with the intent to expand its presence. And in looking at how stone engravings and stone structures played a part in this, in so many cultures world-wide.

I see these questions as being like the act of looking at layers in stone. The different layers, the sediments, have different thicknesses and therefore describe and archive (long) moments in time. And what do engravings mean on a stone plate, as metaphors that describe a timeframe of being at a certain place, either living with it or trying to dominate it?

16 Frank Brümmel, 'Stones as Active Agents', in *Environment, Data Contamination*, edited by Samir Bhowmik and Jussi Parikka, Helsinki, Academy of Fine Arts, University of the Arts, 2023, pp. 31-40.



Exhibition views, part of *From Cupmarked Stones to an Attempt of Home*.
Photos: Frank Brummel

In regards to Applied Non-didactics my intention in these stone works is very precisely focused on trying to artistically embed and create variety with different layers of information, whilst giving some kind of freedom to the viewer. The texts I use do not necessarily make sense, instead they play with history, as do the ornaments and other engravings. I use wordings and texts that also give space for something else, something new. The texts do not contain didactically-packed knowledge; they are more keys to get engaged with the underlying invitation. As does the placement of the work: the installation of the pieces breaks expectations. You would not normally see stone works with such writings placed in front of buildings.¹⁷ Nor would one find archaeological artefacts in museums with ornaments and texts like *Smoking AA Batteries*, or *In Conversation With The Elliptical Trainer*. In the artistic working process, I try to get into dialogue with the work and therefore with the world. The end result is not usually anything that has been planned in advance. As an artist (and in agreement here with Biesta), I think that being in dialogue with the work during the working process is something that can be experienced again later on, by the viewer, as an openness, an invitation. This is the base for something like Applied Non-didactics to happen. The artistic dialogue is, for me, an attempt to be in connection with the world and to get a glimpse of what the world is really saying. The artwork, in the end, is a suggestion for viewers to subjectively connect.

17 More of these works can be seen at my website: www.frankbrummel.com

Fair Sculpture

Fair Sculpture is an inter-generational and multidisciplinary artistic community project consisting of two branches, participation in which is free.¹⁸ Originally initiated by me, the Fair Sculpture project quickly became a group project and is now run by a group of artists from The University of the Arts Helsinki with administrative support, and support by technicians and students, also funded by the University.

One branch is a weekly afternoon school for kids and youngsters in the facilities of the Academy of Fine Arts and the Theatre Academy in Helsinki (Sörnäinen Campus). In spring 2022 a group of 8–16 year-olds participated over the course of 10 weeks. The project funded metro tickets, food and drinks, teaching and materials for the participants. In the weekly afternoon sessions they worked with clay, did metal work, spray painting and later performative works. In a final show the group presented a dance accompanied by spray painting, which was performed and presented for parents and family members in the Theatre Academy and Sculpture department's inner yard. During the spring of 2024 the afternoon group was held in cooperation with the City of Espoo and a group of twelve 16–20 year olds participated.¹⁹

18 Please visit: <https://www.uniarts.fi/en/projects/fair-sculpture/>

19 Again, detailed info on the project and participating artists can be found on the webpage.



Participants of the Fair Sculpture afternoon school working. Photo: Heidi Hänninen.

The second branch of the project is a residency, where artists are invited into a school and work there not as teachers but as artists. The project aims to empower kids and youngsters from different backgrounds. The focus is on giving exposure to school children who do not normally have the opportunity to meet professional artists and encounter different kinds of cultural events, as well as giving the participating artists the opportunity to create in a vivid learning environment. In autumn 2022 two artists were invited by an open call to go on a month-long residency at a comprehensive school in Joutsa, a town in Middle-Finland. They worked there as artists and made artistic works. Now, in autumn 2024, two other artists were chosen, again by open call, to work for two and a half months at two schools in the City of Espoo, South Finland. The two

artists will get their own spaces at the schools, which will be their artist studios for the duration of the residence. The project covers a monthly salary as well as a modest materials grant for the participating residency artists

The Fair Sculpture project does not have any curriculum, neither is the idea to provide a preparatory school or some kind of art school for kids and youngsters. On the contrary: the artists who are teaching in the project, in the afternoon classes, will guide the participating kids and youngsters towards the possibility and freedom to find their own way, by implementing aspects of artistic-thinking and -working. So, the aim is not to help them express themselves, nor that they should produce something (though that might be an outcome) but it is more about the freedom that they can find there in the afternoon school. This might include what Biesta describes as qualification and socialisation, but moreover subjectification.²⁰

In Fair Sculpture's second branch, the residencies at schools, artists work at a school, doing their artistic practice there and allowing the students to come by, observe and ask questions. 'Teaching' does not happen in its regular form, but Applied Non-didactics gives the opportunity to students, in the context of their school environment, to get in contact with the artist and the artworks, and have the possibility to engage. Neither branch of the Fair Sculpture project has a didactical aim, as becoming aware or being 'set in reason' is just there as a possible outcome of an invitation. The participants, if they want, can engage in their own dialogue. That might lead to artistic work but can also be the invitation to an educational moment; to gaining another understanding.

20 What Biesta calls 'subjectification' is the process of becoming a subject, more independent and autonomous in their thinking and acting. See *Good Education in an Age of Measurement*, New York: Routledge, 2016, p. 21.

Artists as Teachers / When Artists teach

As for teaching as an artist at an Arts University, I think of Applied Non-didactics as being something very different to simply creating a pedagogical setting (which of course is important). Coming from a vocational training background, as a stonemason who was educated in the Master-apprentice system, I think that in art teaching over the last few decades we have lost something important: working together. In earlier academy times students and teaching staff in the academy would often work together on artworks, would meet in art and artmaking, like they do in the apprentice system. To be clear, I do not long to return to these often-problematic systems. My point is that teaching at academies nowadays is mostly verbal, taking the form of dialogue-based discussions or lectures, and I want to look at other possibilities. We are discussing things (which some would see as working together), but we do not discuss *in materials*, in artistic practice. In my own experience, whilst applying for positions at Art Universities, one main factor will always be the personal artistic work and the artistic CV of the applicant, among others factors like pedagogical qualities etc. A CV normally includes the various institutions, biennials, museums and galleries where one has exhibited or participated in projects, and an artistic portfolio with images or videos showing the works is attached. But the moment one is in such a teaching position, at least in my experience, the educator's own artistic work somehow becomes something private. The students only see glimpses of the teacher 'as an artist' when they receive an invitation to an exhibition of the teacher's work, for example.²¹ Now, one can say that this is also a form of showing, of teaching. As a teacher one is showing what it means to be an artist

21 There are exceptions where artist-teachers have their own studio on a campus site, though due to cost-space issues this is somewhat rare.

and what it includes. But I think that this is somewhat detached. The students are left alone to figure out how to find their own way. I would therefore like to see a practice of Applied Non-didactics for teaching in art schools happening in a way that brings teacher and students together again, sets them both in dialogue with the world together, whilst creating and meeting in artmaking, in art; which sets them in reason. At this stage of my research an international working group with members from three different Universities and Art Academies from Finland and Germany has been established, in which (amongst other aims) we try to develop formats and methods which would allow for such a dialogue.²² In May 2024 we started collaborating and worked together with students at the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich, Germany. Two members of the group, Heli Kauppila and Minna Suoniemi, are also contributors to this book.

I want to close the circle to what I wrote in the beginning about the different communication layers of artworks, the ones with a direct message, a very didactical approach and the ones who do not do so and of course the ones with didactical and non-didactical approaches and the many shades in between. I laid out what Applied Non-didactics is for me, though there will still be much to write on the subject which would go beyond the scope of my contribution to this book. But I do hope that this short account opens a thinking path. I also brought in examples from my own artistic practice, including teaching as an artist, to better visualise the way these thoughts and methods look from my perspective. Again, a description of art works and documentation photos will never do the same thing as a personal encounter with art. In this respect the text here only approximates the topic it addresses. I can only encourage

22 The workshop in Munich in May 2024 was conducted under the theme of 'From Me to We'.

the reader to engage with art themselves and bring with them the position I just attempted to describe, and see whether it makes any sense for them – in practice. For me at least, an artwork (artists themselves, and artists as teachers) can offer an invitation to a real educational moment, as Biesta calls it. This is what is meant, and hoped for, by Applied Non-didactics.

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In my research gesture *Teacherly Moment*, I placed small pieces of wood on the chairs in the conference room before participants entered the room. The pieces were all 'leftovers', salvaged from the studio's waste box, found in the log shed or collected from the ground. Some had traces of human hands or woodworking machines, some were carved by caterpillars, but mostly the pieces were random and uncategorised, each unique in their own way.

A Teacherly Moment

HANNA VAHVASELKÄ

Failures and methods

When the stone falls into pieces, not only do we encounter the reality of the stone, but at the very same moment we encounter our desire in relation to the stone, and perhaps realise that the stone is trying to tell us something, is trying to teach us something – we encounter a “teacherly moment”.¹

Towards the end of 1998 I took part in a research trip to Egypt, organised by the Academy of Fine Arts, Helsinki. It was a trip for both students and teachers of the department of sculpture. As well as visiting the pyramids of Cairo and Luxor, museums, temples and graves, we also visited Aswan to see the Unfinished Obelisk. The Aswan Obelisk lies partially underground in an ancient granite quarry to the east of the city. The quarry is now a kind of an open-air museum. The obelisk is nearly 42 metres long and surrounded by a 150 cm deep and 60 cm wide trench. The underside of the obelisk is still attached to the bedrock. The work on the obelisk has been traced to the reign of the female Pharaoh Hatshepsut (1479-1458 BC)

1 Mary Ann Hunter, University of Tasmania, as quoted in Gert Biesta, *Letting Art Teach: Art Education ‘after’ Joseph Beuys*, Arnhem: ArtEZPress, 2017, p. 72.

and it was supposed to become the largest ever carved monolith. It was left unfinished because of an unexpected fissure in the stone.²

I am a handcraft-based sculptor. My material is wood. I have worked with wood for over two decades. In my work, wood is the material and the creator of visual appearance and also part of the conceptual content; the work is attendant to, for example, intergenerational meanings or questions that arise from the forest ecology. Constantly working with material processes allows the will of wood, the language of wood, the speech of wood and the memory of wood to become part of my work. Working with wood is also the starting point and method of my artistic research in the doctoral program of the Academy of Fine Arts, Uniarts Helsinki.

In this text, I contextualise a research gesture called *Teacherly Moment* that I organised as part of the KuvA Research Days in late 2022. The gesture was tied to my artistic practice with wood and the starting point was the fissure of Aswan Obelisk, which has bothered and touched me for years. I have thought of the fissure as an unfortunate mistake and unexpected coincidence that suddenly changed the direction of something that was pre-planned. For me, the fissure is also an example of the will and agency of materials themselves. According to philosopher Susanna Lindberg, the moment of fissure is sort of a teacherly moment, when the randomness of the material bursts out and becomes visible, and the will of the artist breaks.³

Teacherly Moment was related to my research questions about the memory of the material and the material's ability to store and transmit information – and be an active agent in knowledge production. In this gesture, I let the material guide our work and thinking,

2 See Reginald Engelbach, *The Problem of the Obelisks*, 1923, online (retrieved 02.01.2022), https://www.academia.edu/16237211/Engelbach_the_problem_of_the_Obelisks

3 Tutorial conversation with Susanna Lindberg, 24.1.2022.

and pondered what we can find or read from the materials, what we can learn from them and from working with them. I also wanted to give the opportunity to touch and to be touched.

I will start this text by talking about wood as a material for crafts and sculpture. I rely on my own experiences as a professional sculptor, but also as an art educator working in different contexts. Referring to various source materials, I touch on some theoretical topics such as the agency of wood, ‘vibrant matters’ and ‘focality’. Finally, I will share the research gesture I made with wooden pieces at the KuvA Research Days. This text is part of my artistic research at the Academy of Fine Arts, Uniarts, Helsinki. In artistic research, other media such as images are important for writing. When using pictures here, I not only illustrate the text but allow images to have their own active, informative agency and role.



In his artwork *kara, hankala kapula* (*core, awkward baton*) professor of artistic research Mika Elo from the Academy of Fine Arts, Helsinki, ponders the definition and topography of the wooden abstract object he has carved. According to him, it is important to recognise that the object itself also draws out relationships and enables multidirectional negotiations regarding its meaning as an object.

The language of wood

“The unique wealth and force of wood lies in the fact that it recounts two histories at once. It tells about the cycle of its own organic growth and gradual decomposition, but at the same time it bears witness to the manual skill and imagination of a professional.”⁴

Wood is a living, renewable, and therefore relatively ecological, material that is easy to find. In addition to having many good properties such as strength, lightness and cheapness, it is also soft, warm, beautiful and humble. All wood has its own aesthetic and structural characteristics, which vary depending on the type of wood, where the tree grows, the part of the tree and the age of the piece. Each piece has its own unique and rich texture, smell, tactility and spirit. Wood also patinates pleasantly with time and use. Worn or decaying wood evokes feelings of compassion in the viewer, and old wooden objects seem to touch us.⁵

Due to its haptic properties, working with wood by hand is pleasant and touching the material accesses deep layers of the toucher’s memory. Wood has been used for thousands of years to make necessary things for domestic use, but also cult items for ritual purposes. In visual art, wood combines folk art with contemporary art, the mythical with the living and the everyday with the sacred. In my

4 Juhani Pallasmaa, *Hartman*, exhibition catalogue, Amos Anderson Art Museum, 1987, p. 6.

5 See Markku Kosonen, ‘Sculpting wood’ and Markku Valkonen, ‘The Marble of the Far North’, *Wood in the Hands of the Sculptor*, Espoo: EMMA Museum of Modern Art publications, 2008, p. 7 and pp. 55-59; Salme Sajas-Korte, ‘Wooden god’, *The Language of Wood*, Museum of Finnish Architecture, exhibition catalogue, 1987; Julie Lasky, *A Swan Song for Lowery Stokes Sims*, The New York Times 16.3.2015, online (retrieved 14.6.2024), <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/19/arts/artsspecial-at-museum-of-arts-and-design-a-swan-song-for-lowery-stokes-sims.html>.

opinion, wood also bridges the gap between modern sculpture and the prevailing ‘muddy era of earth renaissance’.⁶ Finnish wooden sculpture and ways of working with wood are inevitably linked with the experience of nature, and talking about the material’s own expressive power was typical amongst modernist sculptors.⁷ For example, the pioneer of Finnish wood sculptor Kain Tapper (1930–2004) “*expressed his ideas in a concise and subtle form, as if nature herself had left imprint on it*”.⁸



Log wall of the old barn, Outokumpu, Viuruniemi, East Finland.

- 6 My own translation for ‘Multakausi’. See Riikka Haapalainen, Tiina Pusa and Helena Sederholm, *Suomen taiteen Multakausi*, Espoo: Aalto ARTS Books, 2023.
- 7 e.g. Salme Sajas-Korte, ‘Wooden god’, *The Language of Wood*, Museum of Finnish Architecture, 1987, p. 10; Jyrki Siukonen, *Vasara ja hiljaisuus*, Helsinki: Finnish Academy of Fine Arts, p. 20.
- 8 Leena Peltola, *Kain Tapper Artist of the year 1981*, Helsinki: Art Hall, exhibition catalogue, 1981, p. 35.

Wood is also by its nature ambivalent. Even though it has been cut down, it is still alive. It is at the same time hard and soft, heavy and light, fresh and rotten, blond and dark, tough and fragile.⁹ Using wood as a material, sculptors encounter many physical and technical challenges, limitations and boundaries. I myself have worked as a handcraft-based contemporary artist with wood for decades. My early artworks are full of unwanted, uncontrollable cracks. I did not understand the grains and growth of the tree and tried to bind and shackle the material's natural movements. Over the years, with the help of practical experience and the instruction of carpenters, I have often succeeded in finding a form for my works that follows the life of wood. Wood, however, is still a mystery to me.

When working with wood, the artist doesn't just transform the material according to their preconceived idea, but rather develops the idea together with the material's features and the chosen technique.¹⁰ The material must be listened to carefully, and the works made according to what the wood allows. Material is full of surprises, coincidences, and it announces this about itself. Warping and splitting when drying is in the nature of wood. Even the metal clamps and doweling used to support gluing are unable to restrain this. Sometimes you must change methods and do things differently to what you originally planned. This affects the artist's style, and also the shape and size of art pieces. One must cooperate with wood and

9 Markku Kosonen, 'Sculpting wood', *Wood in the Hands of the Sculptor*, Espoo: EMMA Museum of Modern Art publications, 2008, p. 55.

10 See Denise Ziegler, 'Teaching sharing learning', *Visual Artist's Workbook: Essays and exercises on teaching arts*, Helsinki: The Academy of Fine Arts, University of the Arts, 2022; Riikka Mäkikoskela, *Ympäri, sisällä: Kolmiulotteinen työskenteleminen kuvataiteessa*, Helsinki: Aalto ARTS Books, doctoral dissertation, 2015, online (retrieved 31.3.2019).
https://shop.aalto.fi/media/filer_public/f6/38/f638ea2d-9a05-4f7d-9e7c-1d95efb1ca47/makikoskelaweb.pdf.

face one's own limitations in the face of wood's power and will. We have to learn to live with wood's movements.¹¹

I was not even born yet when Kain Tapper brought a stump of wood to an exhibition at the Ateneum in spring of 1963. Another sculptor, academician Wäinö Aaltonen (1894-1966), condemned this act. In Aaltonen's opinion these items that looked like found objects were not "products of the artist's own personality, and neither can they be ascribed the value of a work of art".¹²



Gebhard Burger, *Studio Furniture*, exhibition at gallery Sculptor, Helsinki 28.5.-19.6.2022

11 See Markku Kosonen, 2008, p. 59.

12 Liisa Lindgren, 'Pictures of the Graspable World', *Wood in the Hands of the Sculptor*, Espoo: EMMA Museum of Modern Art publications, 2008, p. 24.

We have come a long way from these ‘stump disputes’ of the 1960s. Today, stumps, logs, branches, shavings and other pieces of wood can be found in many exhibitions, and wood seems to be living in its golden age in the contemporary art world. Impressive installations are made from construction waste, a dance performance can be danced with a tree trunk, and soundscapes produced by sanding a broom handle. Art has changed radically, and you don’t always know where an artwork begins and where it ends. For an artist, a piece of wood can be a raw material, a work of art, a work in progress, a model, an abandoned leftover piece, a seat, or just firewood.¹³ If a wooden work is taken into the forest after the exhibition and it begins to decompose, when does it cease to be a work of art?



Repo Aapo and Jukka Ristolainen, *Puurranko (Tree Trunk, Hard Work)*, dance performance, Mikkeli, Art and Design Week, 2016.

13 Gebhard Burger, *Studio Furniture*, exhibition at gallery Sculptor, Helsinki 28.5.-19.6.2022 <https://sculptors.fi/exhibition/studio-furniture/>

Although wood has its own incomprehensible language and its own message that is alien to the human senses, it also has a kind of kinship with us humans. The warm finish of wood resembles human skin,¹⁴ and as a plant, trees are chronologically comparable to human beings. The growth of a tree

*“begins from a seed. It flies off, carrying with it the inheritance of its species. Having fallen to the ground, it takes root and stays there all its life. It competes for existence in a more radical fashion, yet with more meagre resources, than human does. It reaches its full height within a human lifespan. It can gain thickness and maturity for a long time after that. But increasingly rarely gets to enjoy being retirement age.”*¹⁵

My own artworks are often the result of a kind of collaboration, in which wood tells its own story behind the colours, lines and surfaces, while I tell mine with the use of different tools and by arranging the material. The works themselves draw out meanings, which viewers receive as they join in with the work's process of meaning-making. In recent years I have tried to move towards the 'roots' of making art and find a new, more immediate relationship with my hands. Through touch I try to get closer to memory and something maybe already forgotten. I have also practiced leaving things open, doing less, and enjoyed clumsiness, incompleteness and mistakes, as well as working in a way that leaves room for unexpected coincidences and bursts of material. Instead of mastery, I have tried to learn to listen to the wood's own language.

14 Markku Valkonen, 2008, p. 7.

15 Markku Kosonen, 2008, p. 59.



A screenshot from Annette Arlander's video work, made during *Teacherly Moment*, KuvA research days 2022.

Expanded learning

*“Dear piece of wood. I’m leaning the front of my head against you and against another, taller piece of wood. I normally don’t work with wood; I work with living trees, but I realise that you have been a living tree, and in some sense, you are probably still living or at least you can react to changes in your circumstances...”*¹⁶

While as an artist and art educator I have been teaching theories and techniques related to wood in various contexts, wood as an active agent, as well as studio and teaching situations, have also taught me. Many ideas and insights have been born while working. As the artist molds the material, the material molds the artist. For example, grinding large surfaces smooth requires patience, small details require concentration and precision, and creating durable structures requires problem-solving skills.

In the *Visual Artist’s Workbook*, sculptor, artist, researcher and teacher Denise Ziegler talks about expanded learning, in which, for

16 A quote from trailblazer of artistic research Annette Arlander’s video work, at KuvA research days 2022.

example, the studio, the artist's hand and a piece of wood are in a synergetic collaboration. According to Ziegler, in the studio the artist's hand, which may be holding a tool, is learning about the wood's properties and features. By using tools we can also learn to read the language of the tools.¹⁷

Posthumanist and new materialist approaches have in recent years deconstructed the subject-object division and human actors are seen as part of material reality in constant interaction with various non-human actors and materialities. New materialism suggests that we take matter seriously in our meaning-making process and that we regard matter as a transforming and transformative part of our world. We produce knowledge together with the material world around us.¹⁸

In my own teaching, we often start working by sharing our spontaneous thoughts, experiences and memories related to wood. Someone thinks of a pirate's wooden leg, someone remembers a creaking floor plank from childhood. For some, the wood material recalls sushi chopsticks, while someone thinks of logs with which to heat a sauna. In this exercise, the material evokes the memory, and we also notice how differently we react to the material world around us. At the beginning of my lessons, I have also given everyone their own personal piece of wood, which I have encouraged them to listen to carefully. I have suggested taking the piece with them as they

17 Ziegler Denise, 'Teaching sharing learning', *Visual Artist's Workbook: Essays and exercises on teaching arts*, Helsinki: The Academy of Fine Arts, University of the Arts, 2022, pp. 18-19; Siukonen Jyrki, *Vasara ja hiljaisuus*, Helsinki: Finnish Academy of Fine Arts, 2011, p. 75.

18 e.g. Jane Bennett, *Material väre*, Tampere: niin&näin, 2020, (translated by Tapani Kilpeläinen), Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004, p. 15; Pilvi Porkola, 'Art pedagogy with matter - new materialist approaches to performance and pedagogy', *Visual Artist's Workbook: Essays and exercises on teaching arts*, Helsinki: The Academy of Fine Arts, University of the Arts, 2022, pp. 48-49.

go about everyday activities, wishing that it would be carried along, taken for a walk, for a lunch, to home, and to wash, smell, stroke and protect it. My teaching philosophy is that I'm not trying to teach anyone to be a carpenter or craftsman (how could I, I'm a contemporary artist!), but rather how to think with material.



As a teacher, I have found it important that assignments in teaching situations are easy to access and, as Pilvi Porkola puts it, that they are so open that there are many ways to complete them. I often give knives and branches at the beginning and simply ask the students to peel a piece of wood. If you are left thinking about tasks for too long, you will be left with your head spinning. When you get up to speed with your hands, your thinking also lifts off. The hand and body produce different ideas than the head.

In addition to peer learning from materials, objects and situations,¹⁹ there is also knowledge in the space in which we work, and the bodies we are.²⁰ A woodworking class or studio is always full of movement, sounds, dust and smells, to which we react consciously or unconsciously. Woodworking machines buzz, squeak and rumble, hammers bang. Varnishes, glues and wood also smell. Workspaces need to be protected, ventilated and cleaned often; the waste from work is difficult to control, chips spread everywhere, and in the worst case dust fills the lungs. Working requires rather a lot of strength, time and space. You need to spread, move and mediate with others. When working with wood, hands and clothes often get dirty, and you easily get splinters and wounds. Using machines can cause fear, physical work takes time, and we often get bored and tired.

In his book *Mökin kanssa ajattelu*,²¹ Jarno Valkonen, an environmental sociologist at the University of Lapland, writes about situated knowledge, referring to Donna Haraway. He describes how knowledge is tied to *places* of knowledge and the relationships that take shape in them. Valkonen observed life at his summer cottage on an island in Lake Inarinjärvi and took notes. When trying to write up those notes in his office back at the university, things no longer seemed to connect. “*Knowing in an office is different than knowing at a cottage and with a cottage*”, writes Valkonen.²²

The craft-based sculptor’s knowledge is also tied to the studio, the workbench and the movement of a sharp chisel and the studio with its mess is a treasure trove of ideas for bricolage.²³ Similar to Valkonen’s observation, I must note that my own thoughts are

19 Denise Ziegler, 2022, p. 13.

20 Pilvi Porkola, 2022, p. 48.

21 ‘Thinking with a summer cottage’ (my own translation).

22 Jarno Valkonen, *Mökin kanssa ajattelu. Ympäristösosiologinen mielikuvitus ympäristökriisin aikakaudella*, Tampere: Vastapaino, 2022, p. 18.

23 Jyrki Siukonen, *Vasara ja hiljaisuus*, Helsinki: Finnish Academy of Fine Arts, 2011, p. 67.

happening now, and happening here, in front of the black plastic computer keys. It is nothing like the dialogue I have in my studio with tools, while wood is bursting around me.

A mute wooden god speaks...

“Matter, body, or objects cannot be explained without a spirit that knows something about them, and a spirit cannot be explained without matter, body, or objects, where it fulfills itself” [...] “The material and the spiritual have a common pre-conceptual basis that is neutral in terms of division”.²⁴



The Wooden god.

24 Pauli Pylkkö, *Ajatus ja kädet*, Taivassalo: Uuni, 2013, pp. 125–126 (my own translation).

The Language of Wood, a 1987 exhibition at the Museum of Applied Arts in Helsinki, was a survey of Finnish wood sculpture, design and architecture from prehistory to the present day. The multi-hundred page catalogue of the exhibition has been important to me for decades. On the first page there is a picture of a wooden object resembling a human head. The head is narrow, flat, and under the neck you can see a slight hint of shoulders. The nose of the object is chipped, all the details are polished to be round, and the surface of the object is quite worn. The object is named ‘Wooden God’, its place of discovery is given as ‘Raasepori, Pohja; Kuru’, and the date of manufacture was the Stone Age – about 4000–2000 years ago.²⁵ Every time I browse the catalogue, this wooden god touches me. It seems to convey something from millennia ago that I understand in some sense but have no words to describe.

In her book *Vibrant Matter*, American political theorist Jane Bennett talks about object-oriented power: the agency of objects that is not limited to the human scale. For example, she describes how ordinary man-made objects have a strange ability to transcend their status as objects and become vibrant things with a certain agency of their own. She writes about how a mute idol speaks, and how the subject finds such an object disturbingly familiar.²⁶ Bennett calls this the ‘vitality’ of the material.²⁷ Finnish philosophers Antti Salminen and Tere Vaden also reflect on material as an active non-human actor with its own power beyond human knowledge. Matter is much more spiritual and spirit much more material than is usually admitted, and according to Salminen and Vaden ‘the soul’

25 Picture from Finnish Heritage Agency, opened 20.7.2024:
<https://finna.fi/Record/museovirasto.FF4A042A2DC4BB00D93A849AF383IDC1>

26 Jane Bennett, 2020, p. 18, 27.

27 Jane Bennet, 2020, p. 29.

is easily seen in material objects in the Baltic-Finnish tradition.²⁸ Post-humanist and new materialist research identifies a number of different sensory realities, human and non-human ones, about which people cannot say much due to their own limitations. However, these realities can confront and permeate each other in some respects. This horizontal sharing of experience with other materials is a step towards ecological sensitivity.²⁹

In context of my artistic research, I have discussed the memory of wood. By this I mean the material's own ability to store and transmit information. The memory of material can appear as concrete traces and signs on the surface of the object. The work's dents and patina tell their own story, while the arch of the leg of a wooden rocking chair, for example, shaped under the weight of snow, tells its own. From the wood-object's visual appearance, such as form and patina, we can read stylistic trends and cultural preferences, but the material also speaks for itself, as itself. It stores weather, season, and annual variations of its growth, and in its seeds it passes the toughest memories on to posterity.³⁰ Visually, we can read frost summers and famine years in the tree's rings, while radiocarbon dating allows us to find out about events from even further afield. Even seemingly inconspicuous signs are traces of past biospheres.³¹

But is the vitality of material anything other than the associations, memories and affects of the recipient, accumulated *around* materials and objects?³² What is alive, what is the agency of the material and

28 Antti Salminen and Tere Vaden, *Merkitys ja ala-aine*, Tampere: niin&näin, 2024, p. 73.

29 e.g. Bennett, Jane, 2020, p. 37. See also Sami Keto, *enemmän kuin sapiens. Kasvu elonkirjon jäseneksi*, Helsinki: into, 2022, pp. 155–156.

30 Aada Färding, *Puun elämä*, Tiede Luonto 3/23, online <https://www.digilehdet.fi/tiedeluonto/3735082c-79ff-4d66-9822-bb976c49854a>

31 Jane Bennett 2020, p. 35.

32 Jane Bennett, 2020, p. 37.

does a stone raised as a pedestal for a sculpture also have agency in a similar way?³³ What is the message of the wooden god?

I don't really know if the material is vibrating. Nor can I say if a wooden object has a soul or perhaps an aura, or if the meanings arise from relationships, if the punctum in the gaze or if the meanings of objects are somewhere in the in-betweenness or in *bas-material*, or all of this at the same time. However, the wooden god really touches me. But I am also touched by the freshly cut pile of birch logs and the huge pile of demolition wood at the sorting center. From the carpenter's waste I collect wooden pieces, save them from being burnt, and transport them to the studio. Wood and wooden objects have an inexplicable tactility and spirit of their own that seems to awaken layers of memory that I am not even aware of. When I touch the wood, it touches me back.³⁴



Pile of demolition wood at the sorting center, Mikkeli, 2020.

33 Doctoral candidate Henna Laininen's gestures at thesis seminar 2023.

34 Referring to Mika Elo (ed.), *Kosketuksen figureja*, Helsinki: Tutkijaliitto, 2014.

Focality and hand

*“The human hand is still infinitely more complex than any multi axis CNC machine – so I continue to work wood by hand – not to be nostalgic, but because the result is much more nuanced and spontaneous for me...”*³⁵

Handcraft-based sculpture is often more than just the skills and the outcomes it produces; it can also include “a whole concept of life and humanity, which practicing a skill in traditional forms teaches about itself as it were”.³⁶ Such a holistic and dedicated activity can be called focality. In addition to dedication, focality is also locality, presence and concentration that combines various bodily functions, social relationships, everyday chores and also the cycle of nature.³⁷

While staying at his summer cottage on an island in Lake Inarinjärvi, Jarno Valkonen studied what cottages can teach us about coexistence with nature.³⁸ What do our everyday habits such as heating, washing, food and waste management and water use look like when we think about them *with* the cottage? According to Valkonen, the (focal) activities commonly associated with summer cottages, such as wood heating, are coexistence with and through materials. According to Valkonen, “*the cottager lives the energy order with all his senses.*”³⁹

35 Christopher Kurtz, Artsy, online (retrieved 14.6.2024) <https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-6-artists-pushing-limits-wood>

36 Salminen, Antti, Vaden, Tere, Energia ja kokemus, Tampere: niin&näin, 2013, p. 134, avattu 14.6.2024: <https://netn.fi/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/netn-salminenvaden-energiajakokemus.pdf>

37 Reijo Kupiainen, ‘Taiteen ei-teknologinen maailmasuhde’, *Research in Arts and Education*, 2004 (1), pp. 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.54916/rae.118609>

38 Jarno Valkonen, *Mökin kanssa ajattelu. Ympäristö sosiologinen mielikuvitus ympäristökräisin aikakaudella*, Tampere: Vastapaino, 2022, p. 16.

39 Jarno Valkonen, p. 54.



Working with wood at KuvA Research Days.

Working with wood and practicing woodworking skills is also a way of living with all the senses. Wood binds the worker experientially and bodily to the rhythm required by the seasons and physical work phases, for example. When working with wood, one becomes inevitably aware of the cycles related to the growth and life of trees, and the availability of the material awakens a new kind of appreciation for all kinds of raw materials. When working by hand, one also perceives the amount of different energy needed to build and maintain our material world. According to Salminen and Vaden, focal skills also “*bind naphtha-free entities and allow non-technological life to breathe past atomized individuals*”.⁴⁰ Although focality can be

40 Salminen, Antti, Vaden, Tere, *Energia ja kokemus*, Tampere: niin&näin, 2013, p. 132, avattu 14.6.2024: <https://netn.fi/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/netn-salminenvaden-energiajakokemus.pdf>

easily considered as conservative anti-technological romanticism, it is after all an attempt to find the deepest core experience and meaningfulness as a counterbalance to technological time and the age of fossil capitalism.⁴¹

Focality is an experience to be shared, and art education has always strived to find and share common meaningfulness. In focality, the body and mind also combine into one agency and presence.⁴² Working with wood cannot be completely transferred inside the head, which is why the bodily and sensory aspects are an essential part of the work. As Gert Biesta has written, art education combines hands, head and also heart, and when we learn to combine thinking, skills and caring, we grow to live whole, and be responsible for others.⁴³ By touching, we can be touched, and the sense of touch connects us to time and tradition.⁴⁴

Teacherly Moment

This piece of wood is your personal companion today. I'd like you to keep it with you and by spending time together, try to get to know each other well. Maybe you can go to lunch together, or take a walk, or you can listen carefully to where your piece wants to take you to. If you want, you can mould your piece with the tools you'll find in the room or you can just feel how the piece moulds you. You can also document

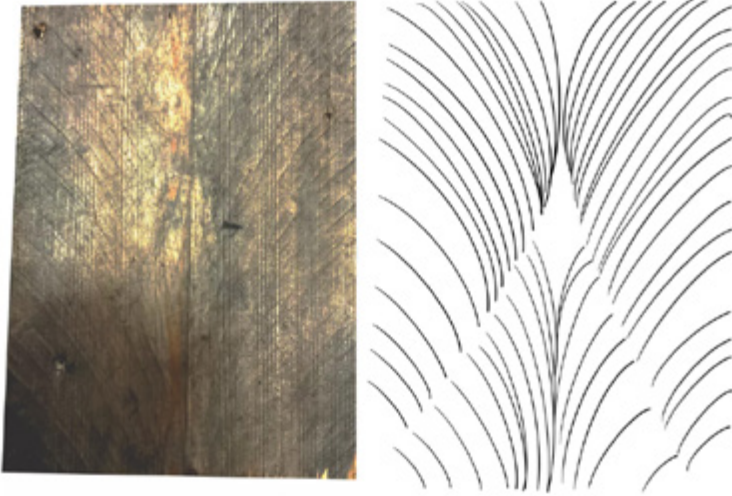
41 Reijo Kupiainen, Mediakasvatuksen eetos, Rovaniemi: Lapin yliopisto dissertation, 2005, p. 132, retrieved 30.7.2024: https://lauda.ulapland.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/61704/Reijo_Kupiainen_v%c3%a4it%c3%b6skirja.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

42 Reijo Kupiainen, 2005, p. 133.

43 Gert Biesta, *Letting Art Teach: Art Education 'after' Joseph Beuys*, Arnheim: ArtEZPress, 2017, p. 81.

44 e.g. Juhani Pallasmaa, *Ihon silmät -arkkitehtuuri ja aistit*, Helsinki: nTamo, 2016, p. 45.

*your time together somehow. If you do so, my wish is that you'd share documentation with everybody at the end of your day.*⁴⁵



Piece of work or a sketch, which was made during *Teacherly Moment* and shared in Padlet.

Finnish philosopher Juha Varto has emphasised the importance of sensuous and embodied knowledge in meaning-making and knowledge-producing processes. According to him an important part of human knowledge is the ‘mastery of the doer’.⁴⁶ This mastery or skill, as he calls it, requires that one knows the principles of one’s actions and is able to assess one’s own level, to see what one is not yet able to do and what one is perhaps heading towards in one’s skill.⁴⁷ The measure of carpentry skill has traditionally been a well-made joint,

45 This note was included with the wooden pieces in my research gesture.

46 e.g. Juha Varto, *Taiteellinen tutkimus. Mitä se on? Kuka sitä tekee? Miksi?*, Helsinki: Aalto ARTS Books, 2017, p. 13.

47 Juha Varto, pp. 34-36.

but what could be the measure of the skill of a contemporary artist? It is also said that experience and the expertise that comes with it are the maker's worst enemies, and too much practice or thinking can stifle performance.⁴⁸ The artist's skill is to experiment, to get excited and to play, but also to tolerate error, incompleteness, admire the fuss, and get excited about fissures. Forgetting is as important as remembering, not knowing as important as knowing, uncertainty as important as certainty.⁴⁹ An artist's skill is also to unlearn.

In my artistic research and artistic activities related to it, my intention is not to know in advance what will happen. I try to proceed by listening to the material and trust my profession as an artist. In my research gesture *Teacherly Moment* I was similarly unsure about what would happen. The gesture was an open invitation to play and get into dialogue with wood. My purpose was not exactly to teach, to tell, or to give answers. I let the wood guide our thinking, working, discussion and knowledge-making process.

Creative ideas are rarely the result of straightforward derivations.⁵⁰ Often, when throwing yourself into the process of doing, doing gives rise to ideas, and in turn ideas give rise to doing. When working on an initial idea, the concept branches out into new paths and as the process progresses, this pattern of intersecting trajectories becomes even denser; play begins to play its player.⁵¹ Even a small piece of wood, or a piece of an idea, can serve as an impetus and starting point for the action and possible art piece.

During the KuvA Research Days, pieces of wood were carved, coloured, drilled and hammered. Someone took her piece of wood

48 e.g. Juhani Pallasmaa, *Ajatteleva käsi arkkitehtuurin eksistentiaalinen ja ruumiillinen viisaus*, Helsinki: ntamo, 2017, pp. 50-51.

49 Juhani Pallasmaa, 2017, p. 103.

50 Juhani Pallasmaa, 2017, p. 73.

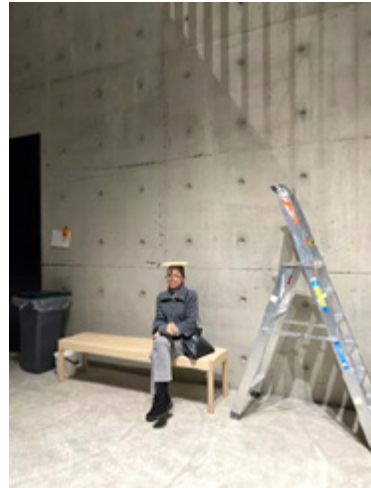
51 Hans-George Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, London: Sheed&Ward, 1989, pp. 102-109.

out for a walk, another rolled it down the stairs. Someone went with their wood for a coffee, someone else had theirs as a companion at lunch. Someone used their piece as a printing plate or as a starting point and sketch for an artwork. In my gesture, I hoped for interaction and encounters with the material, all sorts of flings, coincidences, and bursts. At least it produced a lot of clinking and clonking.



In my research gesture *Teacherly Moment*, I also placed small pieces of wood on the chairs in the conference room before participants entered the room. The pieces were waiting on benches in the morning when the participants arrived at the conference room. A seat could be chosen according to a piece that seemed interesting. I didn't explain the pieces, but there was a note around each one where one could read what it might be about.





After lunch, we had half an hour to work with pieces. The working method, place and style were free. I had brought tools and a pile of other wood material that could be used in the work. I reminded participants that instead of moulding the piece, one could also just let the material guide them, they could go for a coffee with it or just go with the flow.

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Frank Brümmel is an artist and educator with a background in stonemasonry. Brümmel graduated as Meisterschüler (2006) from the Academy of Fine Arts in Nuremberg, Germany and received a

Master of Fine Arts (2008) from the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts in Helsinki. Currently serves as Lecturer in Sculpture at the Academy of Fine Arts, University of the Arts Helsinki, and is developing his doctoral candidacy (since 2021). Brümmel's artistic research project is centred on the question of 'Allegory for Pedagogy – Sculpture as an Education Tool?', approached from the position of artists as teachers, the necessity of artistic communal work, and the development of fictional archaeological stone artefacts. For Brümmel, carving texts and ornaments in stone and considering stones as active agents are the artistic methods of this current project. Brümmel's works have been shown internationally.

Luis Guerra (Santiago de Chile, 1974) is a visual artist and philosopher, and is a researcher at the Research Institute of the University of the Arts Helsinki, Finland. He is currently developing a research project about Artistic Thinking and Pedagogy, entitled *Gestural Philosophy: Collective Artistic Practices as Informal Devices of Intentionless Learning, Radical Democracy, and Institutional Activism*, funded by the Research Council of Finland Profi7 Fund, 2023-2026. Between 2022 and 2023 he was a Research Artist in the Art and Theory program at the Künstlerhaus Büchsenhausen, Innsbruck, Austria, and participates as a researcher in the Postfoundational Thought Research Group (PID2020-117069GB-100) at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Barcelona, Spain. He recently published his third book, *On Gestural Apparatuses for a Memory to Come*, Academy of Fine Arts Press, University of the Arts Helsinki, 2024. He has been supported by the Saastamoinen Foundation, the Kone Foundation, the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía (Spain), the Württembergischer Kunstverein Stuttgart (Germany), Canada Council of the Arts, The Danish International Visual Arts Council, among others.

Heli Kauppila, Doctor of Arts (in Dance), works as a university lecturer and is the head of university pedagogy in the arts program at the University of the Arts Helsinki. She has also designed an ongoing postgraduate arts pedagogical program for arts professionals. Kauppila has previously worked as a dancer and a dance teacher, and is active in the field of artistic research. Her research focuses on the dialogical and ethical basis of arts education, the pedagogical intersections of different fields of arts, and the possibilities of arts-informed practices in different learning situations. Currently she is co-leading a research collaboration as a part of Global Innovation Network for Teaching and Learning that builds international educational partnerships.

Marika Orenius, Doctor of Arts (in Fine Art), is an artist-researcher-teacher and works as a lecturer of art pedagogy at the Helsinki Academy of Fine Arts at the University of the Arts. In addition to designing and teaching fine artist pedagogy courses, she is active in the field of pedagogical research. In her doctoral thesis (2019), Orenius draws connections between the work of the artist and the work of the teacher, and explores the nature of artistic work and fine art education. Her work has been shown in exhibitions and events since the mid-1990s. Currently she is co-leading a research collaboration as a part of Global Innovation Network for Teaching and Learning that builds international educational partnerships and examines the work of the artist-teacher in her artistic work.

Magnus Quaife is the Professor of Artists Pedagogy at the Academy of Fine Arts, University of the Arts, Helsinki. He is an artist, educator, and pedagogical researcher. His artistic practice has been described as that of a conceptual artist interested in paint, and taking an approach that is akin to an archaeology of the modern

and contemporary. Quaife's research focuses on how experiences of art school inform the development of artist's pedagogies. He is a founding director of the organisation Teaching Painting; the organiser of Artists/Pedagogy/Research, a specialist interest group of the Society of Artistic Research; and is on the steering group of the International Network of Foundation Educators. He has co-convened conferences and symposia including 'Teaching Painting' at the Whitworth and the Royal Academy of Arts; 'Writing Painting/Painting Writing', and 'Funny Peculiar' at Manchester School of Art; and 'On Not Knowing: How Artists Teach' at Glasgow School of Art. Quaife worked at Manchester School of Art for over 15 years and has been visiting lecturer/professor at the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Art, the Hungarian University of Fine Arts, Glasgow School of Art, York St John University, the University of Lincoln, and the University of West England.

Marja Rastas (b. 1960) works as a Lecturer of Art education at Aalto University, Department of Art and Media. Her major academic interests include transdisciplinary, arts-based pedagogical practices and ways of knowing, philosophies and histories of (arts) education, teacher development and curriculum theory in the context of visual arts education. In her professional practice she moves between pedagogy, artistic work and writing. Her texts have been published in several forums and she has been co-editor of two books. She has strong networks in the field of Finnish art education and has worked as a specialist in national curriculum reform and teacher education development initiatives. She's a regular visiting teacher at the University of the Arts Helsinki and has been involved in creating sustainable structures for pedagogical co-operation between Helsinki and Aalto.

Minna Suoniemi (she/her, b. 1972) is a Helsinki-based artist and University Lecturer at Aalto University, Department of Art and Media. Her artistic practice draws from embodied experience and feminist knowledge production, and she has worked on themes such as control, body, class and family. Her latest projects examine the materiality of the ageing body and the transgenerational bodily experience of being in-excess and excessiveness. Her academic interests include transformative, arts-based pedagogical practices, questions of class in arts and education, and embodied and feminist approaches towards knowing and researching. She enjoys collective writing processes and her co-written texts have been published in peer-reviewed journals such as *Research in Art and Education* and *Origins – Finnish Studies in Art Education*. Her work has been exhibited internationally in Europe, the United States, South America and Asia and her work is represented in Finnish collections including EMMA Espoo Modern Art Museum, Kiasma Contemporary Art Museum, and the Finnish State Art Collection. She has been nominated for trustee positions at, for example, The Finnish Arts Promotion Center and has worked as an artist, curator, and pedagogue with various institutions.

Hanna Vahvaselkä is a sculptor, living and working in Mikkeli, eastern Finland. At present she is a doctoral candidate at Academy of Fine Arts, Uniarts, Helsinki. Her material is wood, with which she has worked since 1999. In her work, wood is the material and the creator of visual appearance, and part of the conceptual content; for its intergenerational meanings or relating to questions arising from the forest ecology. The will of wood, the language of wood, the speech of wood and the memory of wood are at the centre of her works. Working with wood is also the starting point and method of her artistic research. In addition to her own artistic work and

research, Vahvaselkä has a degree in art education, and she is teaching in various contexts.

Sanna Vuolteenaho is a singer, music educator, community musician, and artistic doctoral candidate. She graduated with a Master of Music degree in 1994 and completed her classical singing studies in 2001 at the Sibelius Academy. Since 2010, she has been inspiring and engaging her music pedagogy students at Metropolia University of Applied Sciences as a senior lecturer in music education. In 2017, she completed her master's program in improvisation at the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre. Currently, she is pursuing artistic doctoral studies at the Sibelius Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki. Sanna aims to challenge concert conventions, encouraging audiences to participate in the creation of shared art. For Sanna, teaching music goes beyond imparting musical skills. She believes that music has its intrinsic value, but it also serves as a tool to help us connect and interact with one another. For Sanna, singing and improvisation are about fostering a connection with oneself, calming the mind and body to listen and discover new insights. Sanna is a passionate explorer, a bit whimsical and funny, a lifelong learner, and someone who believes in the goodness of life. Her motto is 'Permission to play'.

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Edited by Frank Brümmel

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This publication on Applied Non-didactics suggests a way in which education, art and their social contexts can intertwine to transcend traditional boundaries. It seeks to redefine the connections between instruction and discovery by suggesting an act of teaching and learning that honours art and its intrinsic possibilities. Applied Non-didactics advocates for art as not just as an aesthetic endeavour but as an invitation, part of a transformative space in which real educational moments can happen as part of an act of becoming. Taking these ideas as a framework and an encouragement, the contributors to the book lay out various ways in which such educational moments might happen, drawing from their diverse backgrounds as practitioners, theorists and educators. They, and the book as a whole, share an interest in the way these roles might interlink and intercommunicate.

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