

Mai Abu ElDahab

On How to Fall With
Grace—or Fall Flat on
Your Face

The Manifesta Biennial is not unique; its pitfalls are shared by most similar power-possessing institutions to varying degrees and in relation to their particular structures and aspirations. Although it engenders its own nuances and ambitions, for the purposes of the coming paragraphs, Manifesta simply serves as a testing ground for dissecting the processes of the art world into their different layers to illustrate the pressing need for a new socio-political consciousness in the artistic community, and to address the widespread paralysis of cultural production as a crucial socio-political force. As such, turning to education as the heart of what is to become the Manifesta 6 School represents an attempt to slap a patient out of a coma, and awaken a consciousness that is more far-reaching than individual art practices.

In its customary introversion, the arts community does not let well enough alone, but often extends itself just enough to instrumentalise the world around it as props for its own production. A prime example of this tokenism is the growing range of art projects based on a form of seemingly benevolent social science research. The research results (or works of art) are, more often than not, neither up to scratch academically nor do they imbue the information with any new artistic significance. They are forms of either pop information, inaccessible specialist data or, sadly, sensationalism. In contrast, a genuine form of awareness and constructive involvement necessitates commitment, erudition, confrontation and a recoiling from the superficiality of political correctness.

The Manifesta 6 School is a pretext, an excuse and an opportunity. It is a pretext for questioning and possibly challenging the methods of the institutionalised art world. It is an excuse to bring together inspiring thinkers and cultural producers to invigorate the position of art, and cultural production at large. It is a great opportunity for a wealth of critical endeavours: looking at the role of art institutions as participants in cultural policymaking; questioning the role of artists as defined by the institutional climate in which they practice and produce; revealing the power positions that legitimise the prevailing elitism; looking at culture's entanglement with the pressures and demands of corporate globalisation. And, finally, asking what kind of education do we as art professionals need today in order to play an effective role in the world?

The realisation of Manifesta 6 begins with a few set parameters: the Biennial, the team, the site. Let us start by taking a look at these givens before extrapolating the Manifesta 6 School's potential in depth.

The Biennial

Manifesta is the biennial of contemporary European art, although its geography-specific character is often underplayed. The general acceptance of this delineation implies that the debate around modes of representation is only crude when it refers to those outside of the West. Is that not just the other side of the same coin? The Venice Biennale, for example, is often branded as outdated because of its emphasis on national representation. But the Manifesta Biennial, similarly, is a project that focuses on a new united Europe and is funded by numerous national and trans-national agencies interested in promoting their own agendas. These agencies structurally reflect the policies of their states, be they conservative, moderate, liberal, right-wing, left-wing or middle-of-the-road. The bulk of the project's capital is provided by the host city, with the expected returns calculated in the form of short- and long-term benefits. The reality of these returns is quite

evident in terms of tourism, new infrastructure, city promotion, salaries for local administrators, etc.

The Biennial is like a parasite landing on a host. It is an authoritative institution in the guise of a civic entity with a benign mandate. The deliberate ambiguity of its position leaves it prey to the doctrines of corporatism as dictated by the variety of interests it encompasses: the art market, funding agencies, sponsors, foreign policies, cultural policies, city governments, etc. And thus, as an institution that refrains from defining a position of its own on the basis of its ideas and institutional history, it is susceptible to the prescriptions of the external agents whose contributions empower its self-serving nature. One illustration of this dynamic is the way artists from the richer end of the European spectrum are often over-represented in biennial shows as a result of the strength of their local funding bodies. This kind of imbalance creates a false impression of the relative vitality of different cultural milieus, as dissemination becomes a reflection of a state's purchasing power. Preferably, concepts and ideas, rather than financing, should determine the role and activities of civic institutions. Therefore, if such institutions were to profess specific agendas or positions, they might suffer economically but they would be far less accepting of, and vulnerable to, exploitation. The prevalent genre of insipid wishy-washiness is symptomatic of the ongoing corporatisation of cultural production.

The Team

To continue the theme of transparency, we should begin by looking at some history. The International Foundation Manifesta and the host city, Nicosia, began the search for the upcoming edition's curatorial team with a relatively open call for applications. As the dream team of political correctness, we made it through the first round: multi-denominational German-Russian/American-Arab; or North, South and centre; or Frankfurt style, New York glamour and Cairo mystique; or whatever. The first successful sales pitch.

For the next stage of the selection, a proposition about art education was presented by the team. The pros were immediately self-evident: a concrete idea that leaves behind the predictable pseudo-political reductive North versus South or centre/periphery jargon. Instead, the proposal put forth a precise and coherent idea about initiating a seemingly neutral entity with a charitable and highly popular motive and mandate—the Manifesta 6 School. Criticism from militant anti-education activists seemed rather unlikely. Coincidentally, the buzzword in the art world happens to be education. (Whether coincidence or copycat is irrelevant, as the Biennial has wider outreach, a bigger budget and an early press release to protect the concept's ownership). Sales pitch number two.

So the selection was made. Unfortunately, one cannot point to a conspiracy; we, the curators, are just compliantly savvy to the requirements of the industry. However, we are guilty of complacently marketing ourselves according to strategic geographical quotas to cater to the expectations of institutions that ironically thrive on (and appropriate funds by) claiming a philosophy of openness. In fact, such openness runs essentially counter to the demands of the standardisation machine and cannot be tolerated. The incongruity of the world's neo-liberal face is exemplified by these seemingly progressive cultural institutions that espouse an 'openness to all' without ideological predilections. Yet position yourself in

relation to this openness and—lo and behold!—you are swiftly absorbed into it and reinforcing its inbuilt consumerist values. Same old, same old. This dynamic is bred by the economic system's aversion to any change that may disrupt its assembly-line production, in this instance production of ideas. On this assembly line, production has to self-perpetuate, legitimise and replicate itself, or the structure inexorably breaks down. Everything that is interesting happens on the margins, and no one is to know exactly where that is.

Of course, one question comes up again and again: Can you claim you are anti-institutional, and yet work for one of the pillars of the system? A little hypocritical perhaps? And here we can try to slip in some innocence: 'You can only change the system from within—participate and have your say, and gradually you can have some impact.' Or, 'The system is all-powerful, all-engulfing, and there is no room to manoeuvre.' Mere excuses used to protect one's position on the assembly line. A mask for laziness or apathy or, more often than not, for self-serving motives that cumulatively paralyse the endeavours of culture and strip them of their predisposition to question, influence and change.

I acknowledge that we are complicit, but the real issue is how we proceed from this point.

The Site

The divided capital of Nicosia is the location chosen for this European event: part European and part not, part Christian and part Muslim, part rich and part poor. A conflict that is metaphorically, or perhaps practically, a microcosm of the supposed East/West divide fed to us 24/7 by the world's free media. The choice of this location leaves the outsider wondering whether Cyprus is supposed to be a window on the fallacies of Eurocentrism or a wall to show where Europe ends—as the question of Turkish inclusion in the European Union surfaces on a daily basis. Moreover, the project is formulated as having a bi-communal character, a naive problem-solving strategy that ignores similar contrived attempts that have always fallen short as they repeatedly underestimate the complexity of this longstanding reality. Whatever the assumptions and implications, the answer depends on how we proceed from here.

Nicosia is not a capital of contemporary art, but this is certainly not to be regarded as an affliction to be remedied by Manifesta. Rather than stripping the Biennial of meaning, this reality simply indicates that the Biennial requires its own method and configuration if it is to be of significance to the local community with which it will cohabit. Here lies the most demanding aspect of the project: What kind of meanings that are vital, dynamic and requisite for Nicosia can the Biennial generate in this context? The difficulty in striking a balance between the needs of the Biennial and those of the city lies in the dichotomy between the immediate inclination to replicate existing models and the ability to have and generate confidence in the power of the local situation and constituency to breed their own valid frameworks.

In order to initiate meaningful interactions and relationships in Nicosia, Manifesta should communicate a climate desiring of active engagement in congruence with its place and time. Manifesting this desire concretely in the formation of the School is the only function the Biennial can profess as a humble guest rather than an arrogant intruder on the island. Otherwise, what will remain is patronage and ignorance cloaked in a pretence of inaccessible sophistication.

Fortunately, in the aforementioned general atmosphere of indifference, Cyprus has the advantages of location, scale, provincialism and—regrettably—firsthand experience of living with conflict. In these circumstances, an empowering and influential event is possible.

The School

Regardless of the particulars, the fact now is that Manifesta has committed to forgoing the glamour of the conventional large-scale show and opening itself to transformation. Allowing the project to try sowing some fresh seeds, rather than just using generic vacuum-packed merchandise in conformity with the apparatus of corporate sustainability. Consequently, for this Biennial to be of any substance, we need to be able, as curators, organisers and institutions, to stop censoring ourselves, to give up our decorum, to dismiss our elitism, and perhaps even to undermine ourselves.

In order to be successful, this project must fail by the existing standards of the exhibition industry. It should propose a new articulation of the ways of assessment and not fall prey to the trap of proposing innovation yet using the same old criteria for its evaluation. These obsolete standards not only stifle creativity but also endorse a corporate paradigm of cultural production: How many tickets sold? How many new works produced? How many reviews? How many international guests? These questions are measures for a very superficial ‘return-on-investment’ logic, and are standard tools for promoting the Biennial to applicant cities. This is the logic and language of bureaucrats, marketers and advertising executives, certainly not cultural producers. *Cultural production must maintain and defend its autonomy as a space where the freedom to experiment, to negotiate ideological positions and to fail are not only accepted, but defining.*

The Manifesta 6 School can be about creating conditions with a modesty and a desire to accept the possibility of failure. This is not referring to the relativist failure of the laboratory model, but a vocal acknowledgement that certain formulae do not work and should be refuted and new ones tested. One case in point is the proponents of superficial cultural exchange relentlessly orchestrating patronising situations where the didactics of their monologues deafen the audience. Not only are the discussions redundant, the repercussions are damaging as entire cultures and issues are packaged with labels of exchange endorsing the entire futile exercise. For example, museums seize the opportunity of easy public funding for a certain ‘topic of the season’ and package a complex and influential debate into one exhibition to boost their finances through a false show of engagement. These exhibitions reduce significant issues to consumable products, and strip them of their urgency by presenting them as yet another of many options of display. Such irresponsible methods should be rejected.

The Manifesta 6 School should not reiterate generic references. It should demonstrate its uncompromising eagerness to encounter and delve into conditions and realities as lived, and not simply exploit them as ‘content’ for production. This transcending of abstraction and stripping naked of convictions is not a painless exercise, but it is a gratifying one. Searching through diverse disciplines for new directions, whether academic or practical, along with meticulousness, indulgence and a readiness to admit shortcomings may prove to be the necessary approaches. Pursuing new questions requires unorthodox means

and exploration in unexpected places. Learning-by-doing, be it reading, walking, filming, discussing, painting, etc., should be privileged over reproduction or didactic pedagogies. Repetition and re-investigation of exhausted theories whose inadequacies have been repeatedly exposed would be a tedious redundancy.

Moving beyond the current production-on-demand modus operandi of the art world, the School can advance site-specificity as a cerebral exercise rather than a delightful gimmick. This can be possible if great labour combined with flexibility in expectations becomes its dominant strategy. The structure of the School would be demanding, and involve over-information and in-depth analysis. A mind-expanding form of education can only become possible if different paradigms are allowed to confront our own, challenge them and maybe invade our confined and limiting hierarchy of knowledge. Moreover, alternative discourses need to be imposed on the mainstream, and new ideas embraced and voiced on their own terms.

All institutions represent an ideology, whether explicitly or by default. The Manifesta 6 School should be overt and confrontational about its position as a hub for a proactive, politically engaged community of cultural producers. The School should escape from the model of harvesting innate artistic talent, instead affording an environment of intellectual scholarship—this atmosphere being not merely an accumulation of individualist endeavours but rather a direct function of the institution. It should advocate the development of ideas as an ongoing process of investigation. Research should be encouraged as a route towards discovery and knowledge production in fierce opposition to product design and display. This framework should be carefully constructed and communicated, and the participants left with the independence to find and formulate their own methodologies, spaces and languages within it.

This project must be a call for the politicisation of art production, not for political art. It can make us dust off our Noam Chomsky, Arundhati Roy, Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, Antonio Negri, Jacques Derrida, Slavoj Žižek and listen, or even act. The politicians, the corporations and their professionals are steadfast in their motives, purposes and aspirations. The community of cultural producers is not. But in the face of current global conditions, for anything meaningful or effectual to be expressed or produced, positions must be articulated within the cultural sphere, their multitude explicitly representing a belief in the validity of multiple worldviews and positions, and rejecting monological indoctrinations.

The bipolarity of world affairs, as sanctioned by the media, necessitates urgent resistance. Horrific terrorism manifested in the form of a confused nineteen-year-old girl in her US army uniform in Iraq, and on the other hand, dogmatic ideologues empowered by this terror to manipulate a demoralised and terrified teenager into strapping explosives to his own chest. In the midst of this tragic reality, the detached silence of the cultural industry becomes a form of collaboration. Art and culture professionals and institutions must become the third voice with their creativity, inspiration and intellect. It is not a romanticism to be shunned by cynics, but a genuine alternative, when we assert an indiscriminate bias to compassion, and choose to become involved.

In the profound and irate words of Arundhati Roy (in *The Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire*): 'Our strategy should be not only to confront Empire but to lay siege to it. To deprive it of oxygen. To shame it. To mock it. With our art,

our music, our literature, our stubbornness, our joy, our brilliance, our sheer relentlessness—and our ability to tell our own stories.’

The Manifesta 6 School is a chance to fall gracefully, and then stand up and walk a new path. Perhaps this is in itself the education we need.

Notes for an Art School

Anton Vidokle

Exhibition as School
in a Divided City

Just looking at the titles of some recent large-scale international art exhibitions —‘The Production of Cultural Difference’, ‘The Challenge of Colonisation’, ‘Critical Confrontation With the Present’, ‘Urban Conditions’, etc.—one quickly realises that there is an increasing desire, on the part of the organisers and participants of these shows, to see their work as concrete social projects or active interventions. Such language and positioning has become the norm, and it now seems that artistic practice is automatically expected to play an active part in society. But is an exhibition, no matter how ambitious, the most effective vehicle for such engagement?

In 1937, André Breton and Diego Rivera (and, it is believed, Leon Trotsky) wrote the manifesto ‘For an Independent Revolutionary Art’. They call for a ‘true art, which is not content to play variations on ready-made models but rather insists on expressing the inner needs of man and of mankind in its time —true art is unable not to be revolutionary, not to aspire to a complete and radical reconstruction of society.’ What may appear to be a naive call for all-or-nothing revolution includes a subtle and important justification for that demand—that we, as artists, curators, writers, need to engage with society in order to create certain freedoms, to produce the conditions necessary for creative activity to take place at all.

But what precisely does it mean, the desire that art should enter all aspects of social life? Is it a desire to bring art out of rarefied and privileged spaces, or is it merely a move towards the further instrumentalisation of art practice? Perhaps the exhibition is not the place to start. One must begin at the beginning. The Manifesta team proposed going back to school.

The Bauhaus, in its brief period of activity, arguably accomplished what any number of Venice Biennials have not (and at a fraction of the cost) —a wide range of artistic practitioners coming together to redefine art, what it can and should be, and most importantly, to produce tangible results. All this in the face of Walter Gropius’ famous assertion that ‘art cannot be taught’. An art school, it would appear, does not teach art, but sets up the conditions necessary for creative production, and by extension the conditions for collaboration and social engagement. For Manifesta too, these conditions are necessary. To follow Breton and Rivera, ‘We cannot remain indifferent to the intellectual conditions under which creative activity takes place; nor should we fail to pay all respect to those particular laws which govern intellectual creation.’

The need for a more productive and open-ended structure is heightened by the location of this Manifesta—the divided city of Nicosia. It is one thing to bring together a group of colleagues at a designated space under the rubric of an ‘exhibition’ in London or Berlin, it is another altogether to do the same thing in the Cypriot capital. Given the absence of a widespread and historically established cultural apparatus to uphold part of the proposition, the implications of such a gesture are altogether different. The ‘particular laws which govern intellectual creation’ demand self-criticality, and require consideration of political pasts and presents, religious conflicts, and economic forces.

The aftermath of colonial rule has left Cyprus without such national cultural institutions as a museum of modern or contemporary art, an opera or an art academy. Ethnic and religious tensions have resulted in what appears to be an insurmountable political, economic and cultural divide. And while Cyprus historically maintained close commercial ties both with its regional neighbours

and with trade centres further afield, this did not lead to cultural exchanges on the same scale. There are few cultural institutions significant enough to deserve or withstand critique, while the political situation is already prominently displayed by an ever-present Green Line—a presence so strong as to render other ‘political displays’ superficial at best. In other words, the situation demands not commentary, but involvement and production. There is a need to engage with realities in a comprehensive, direct way, to build common ground for the divided city to meet and work, and to pose pertinent questions and answer them as practically as possible—all goals that are often central to the concerns of a school.

It can be argued that this approach is applicable to a much larger situation, far beyond the boundaries of Cyprus. It can be said that the position of artist-as-social-commentator/critic has run its course. Perhaps it’s time to consider forms of art (and wider cultural practices) that can continue to be viable even in the absence of reference points such as institutions, that can remain relevant even in the presence of overt politicisation of the landscape, that can remain productive both within the centres of art production and without.

But what specifically is an art school, and what is an art school at this point in time? My research for the Manifesta 6 School yielded a range of models, from art academies and experimental schools to collaborative projects, accompanied by the insistent voices of critics lamenting the ‘crisis of the art school’. Yet there has been an amazing range of schools in the past one hundred years: from the ultra-academic *École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts* to the high-priced Columbia MFA, from the inclusiveness of the various Bauhaus schools and the dynamism of the *Staedelschule* to the elite coteries of the Whitney Independent Study Program (ISP). Given this proliferation of different models of art education, the notion of crisis seems, at the very least, a misplaced one. Art education is not in stasis. It is being constantly re-thought, restructured and re-invented.

École Temporaire, run by Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Pierre Huyghe and Philippe Parreno from 1998 to 1999, was a series of workshops conducted at several universities and schools in Europe. In one, the artists rented a cinema for a day and screened a feature film, while narrating potential alternative scenarios before the start of each scene. Another workshop was a seminar held at the top of a mountain, a location only accessible by dogsled. In yet another, the artists interviewed the participants in the middle of a frozen lake. Each workshop was a situation filmed and edited by participants and addressed directly to the students at the beginning of the next class session, creating a chain of connections and continuity, and in this way constituting a school that stretched over a range of times, spaces and institutions.

The Mountain School of Art was started in Los Angeles just this year by artists Piero Golia and Erik Wesley. In their exposé, they write:

MSA[^] [Mountain School of Art] is not to be considered an ‘art project’ but a real, fully functioning school. Although the school is small in size, the program as well as its collective ambition is substantial. It is important to understand the intentions of developing as a serious contender in the field of education and culture while maintaining a position as a supportive element in relation to other institutions. MSA[^] members often liken their pursuits to those of 18th century European

revolutionists. Our present location at the back rooms of the Mountain Bar, one of LA’s hippest ‘Art’ bars and hottest nightlife spots, provides a pungent metaphor for this as these revolutionists held court in the back rooms of bakeries, printshops, etc. The culture undercurrent is perpetually condemned to the backroom of the establishment. It is the intention of MSA[^] to continue this tradition while holding onto a more orthodox notion of educational impetus.

The Copenhagen Free University was started by Henriette Heise and Jakob Jakobsen in their apartment. As they describe it:

The Copenhagen Free University opened in May 2001 in our flat. The Free University is an artist-run institution dedicated to the production of critical consciousness and poetic language. We do not accept the so-called new knowledge economy as the framing understanding of knowledge.

We work with forms of knowledge that are fleeting, fluid, schizophrenic, uncompromising [sic] subjective, uneconomic, acapitalist, produced in the kitchen, produced when asleep or arisen on a social excursion—collectively.

What is remarkable is not what these programmes propose, but that they should exist simultaneously, offering such varied approaches at the radical end of the art education spectrum. But bringing up these examples is only to underscore how far the nature of education has evolved in the past century. Only when these experiments are set alongside the historic establishments of the Beaux-Arts and the Art Students League do we have a complete picture. And complete it must be, whatever the type of practice one may wish to pursue, whatever political projects one might wish to promote. As Boris Groys points out in an interview included in this volume, artists' practices are often formed in opposition to their education; methodologies and techniques borrowed from fields seemingly irrelevant to advanced cultural practices can also form the basis for the production of advanced and radical art. Clearly, there is unlimited potential today for the artist pursuing an education.

The real crisis in art education appears to be one of distribution: radical, experimental and advanced institutions are clustered in Europe and North America, acting as magnets for those in other regions who wish to participate in advanced art practice and discourse. As a result, despite the diversity of practitioners, discourse and focus tends to remain bound, on many levels, to these centres of institutional production and their relatively homogenous concerns.

Perhaps the most efficient way to impact the general state of art education is not by denying the plurality of existing schools and programmes, but by building a new productive model. In 1967, Fluxus artist George Maciunas, following 'the great contribution made by Bauhaus and Black Mountain', drew up his prospectus for an experimental art school in the village of New Marlborough. The plan was never realised, due to his untimely death the same year. His prospectus was one of the most inspiring discoveries of my research, a fully formed vision of learning and production in no more than two pages. I was struck by its subjectivity, a singular worldview that drew as much from the spirit of Fluxus as it did from the actual body of work that its loose group of artists produced. The prospectus encapsulates a particular poetics, a core vision that simply and gracefully branches out to encompass all that was relevant in the art production of the day. It is a proposal that hinges on the notion of 'possibility', saying far less about what needs to be done than about what can be done.

The actual activity that can take place in a school—experimentation, scholarship, research, discussion, criticism, collaboration, friendship—is a continuous process of redefining and seeking out the potential in practice and theory at a given point in time. An art school is not concerned solely with the process of learning, but can be and often is a highly active site of cultural production: books and magazines, exhibitions, new commissioned works, seminars and symposia, film screenings, concerts, performances, theatre productions, new fashion and

product designs, architectural projects, public resources such as libraries and archives of all kinds, outreach, organisation—these and many other activities and projects can all be triggered in a school. I say ‘triggered’ rather than ‘located at’ or ‘based in’ to draw attention to the danger pointed out by Paulo Freire, who wisely cautioned against positioning a school as a privileged or an exclusive site of ‘knowledge production’, which only reaffirms existing social inequalities and hierarchies. The activities of the Manifesta 6 School are an attempt to infiltrate the space of the city, to transform it and be transformed by it.

Experimentation is key to the structure of a school, to the process of learning and to notions of progress. It is also key to this project, to the motivation and goals behind the Manifesta 6 School, and to the rationale behind an exhibition as a school. The group of people involved in organising the Manifesta 6 School are not an NGO, a ministry or a bureaucratic educational committee. I see this school as a subjective act, essentially, an experiment—one that aims to open, to question, to encourage the formation of subjectivities. So, although I have outlined my hopes and aims above, there is no ‘ideal’ Manifesta 6 School. There are no ideal results, no hard-and-fast principles beyond the production and circulation of possibilities, a reshuffling of priorities for Manifesta and Nicosia, and an attempt to privilege the conditions for creative intellectual production, both in the city and beyond.

To go back to the beginning, to go back to school, involves a great deal more than the desire to bring art into social life. Producing tangible results that move beyond commentary requires research, groundwork and a continuous process of involvement and production. Let’s call it homework. And a little bit of homework never hurt anyone.

Prospectus for New Marlborough Centre for Arts

George Maciunas

The Centre is being created in recognition of the great contribution made by Bauhaus and Black Mountain as a think-tank and training ground for the future avant-garde. The acquisition of a beautiful "village" of a group of some 12 buildings in the township of New Marlborough presents the possibility of creating a similar center that could devote itself to:

1. study, research, experimentation and development of various advanced ideas and forms in art, history of art, design & documentation,
2. teaching small groups of apprentices in subjects and through procedures not found in colleges,
3. production and marketing of various products, objects and events developed at the centre,
4. organization of events and performances by residents and visitors of the centre.

The Centre would be structured as follows:

1. Studios, workshops and residencies for permanent and visiting members of the community would be housed in buildings 3 to 12, the tentative list of members is as follows:

(a) permanent residents:

- George Maciunas (design, production of multiple objects, new sports, new forms of documenting history, diagrams)
- Robert Watts (director of school, workshops & studios; events, environment and objects)
- Jimmy Giuffrey (jazz workshop)
- Yoshimasa Wada (developing new acoustical instruments)

(b) visiting members:

- Ayo (tactile objects & events)
- David Behrman (electronic music)
- George Brecht (concept art, border-line art, non art, objects, events etc.)
- Trisha Brown (kinesthetic events & environments, anti-gravitational dance)
- Bob Diamond (electronic engineer)
- Jean Dupuy (optic & sound constructions)
- Robert Filliou (literary art, poetry, verbal objects)
- Richard Foreman (surrealist theatre, state mechanics)
- Geoff Hendricks (events & environments)
- Dick Higgins (theatre, art criticism, poetry, music, action music)
- Joe Jones (musical machines & kinetic art)
- Alison Knowles (bean art)
- Shikego Kubota (video art)
- Joan Mekas (film-poetry, film criticism)
- Larry Miller (e.s.p. art)

- Peter Moore (photography, photo-technology, documentation, archives)
- Nam June Paik (action music, kinetic art, robots, video art)
- Takako Saito (games, sports, objects)
- Paul Sharits (experimental cinema)
- Stuart Sherman (magic acts, new vaudeville)
- Daniel Spoerri (objects, events, culinary art)
- Stan Vanderbeek (animation film, video art)
- Ben Vautier (concept art, humorous art, street events)
- La Monte Young (concept art, electronic music, endless music)

2. School-workshop. Students will be accepted on a part time basis. For most part instruction will be individual. Students will maintain a working relationship with the staff. When appropriate, students will assist the staff in their ongoing research. At all times students shall be considered part of the learning community on an equal basis. Students will be introduced to a wide range of experience not ordinarily found in conventional schools and art programs.

3. Library, archives and exhibit space (buildings 1a, 2, 13). It would contain reference material on past & present avant-garde, original documents, prototypes, possibly contain archives of photo-documentation (Peter Moore's), exhibit new work in sound, graphics, objects, video etc. and would contain the "learning machine" being developed by G. Maciunas.

4. Performance space (chamber music room in 1b, theatre in building 2) & lawn bandstand. Music room to be used for small scale, solo events, music, lectures, video presentations, suitable for audiences up to 40. Theatre with audiences up in balconies and a 30ft x 60ft performance space in the middle, for multi-media, inter-media performances, events, theatre, music, dance, cinema, new sports, games etc. Suitable for audiences up to 100.

5. Technical workshops (located in basements of building 2 & 3) to contain equipment for electronic music, video, machine shop, wood working shop, ceramic workshop, photo darkroom, film editing & processing, recording studio, chemical laboratory.

An Incomplete Chronology of Experimental Art Schools

- École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts (1671)
- Drawing School (1751, Geneva)
- Vienna University of Applied Arts (1867)
- Académie Julien (1868, Paris)
- The Flying University (Warsaw, 1883, several versions until 1979)
- Gustave Moreau's Paris studio (1892–98)
- Ox-Bow (1910)
- Ealing Art College (renamed 1913)
- Merz Akademie (1918, Stuttgart)
- Vitebsk Art School (1918–1920s, founded by Marc Chagall)
- Bauhaus (1919–1933, founded by Walter Gropius)
- VKhUTEK School of Architecture (Moscow, founded 1920)
- Black Mountain College (1933–57, founded by John Andrew Rice)
- Bard College (Annandale-on-Hudson, renamed 1934)
- St John's College (Annapolis, 1937 reform initiated by Stringfellow Barr and Scott Buchanan)
- Berlin Free University (founded 1945)
- Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture (1946)
- Independent Group seminars at the ICA (London, 1947–52)
- John Cage at the New School for Social Research (1956–60)
- Ray Johnson's New York Correspondence School (founded early 1960s)
- Intermedia (Toronto, 1960s)
- Experimental Art School (Copenhagen, founded 1961 by Paul Gernes & Troels Andersen)
- National Art Schools (Havana, built 1961)
- Bauhaus Situationniste (Sweden, 1963)
- John Latham and the Artist Placement Group (London, formed 1966)
- The Munich Academy for Television and Film (1967)
- Nova Scotia College of Arts and Design (founded 1882, renamed 1967)
- Whitney ISP Program (New York, founded 1968)
- Jörg Immendorff, Chris Reinecke and the LIDL-Akademie (1968–69) at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf
- New Marlborough Centre for Arts (George Maciunas, 1968–69)
- Image Bank (Vancouver, founded 1969)
- Joseph Beuys' 'Free International University of Creativity and Interdisciplinary Research' (founded 1974)
- Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics (Boulder, founded 1974 by Allen Ginsberg and Anne Waldman)
- General Idea (Toronto, founded 1977)
- Escola de Artes Visuais do Parque Lage (Rio de Janeiro)
- Ultimate Akademie (Cologne, founded 1988 by Al Hansen and Lisa Cieslik)
- The Vera List Center for Art and Politics at the New School (New York, founded 1992)
- DasArts (Amsterdam, established 1994)
- Mode2Research—NPO Austria (Eva Maria Kosa, 1997)
- École Temporaire (1998–1999, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Philippe Parreno and Pierre Huyghe)
- Proto Academy (Edinburgh, 1998–2002, founded by Charles Esche)
- The Independent Art School (Hull, founded 1999)
- School for the History and Theory of Images (Belgrade, 1999, founded by Branimir Stojanovic)
- The Real Presence (Belgrade, annually since 2000, founded by Biljana Tomic)
- Centre for Advanced Study (CAS), Sofia (founded 2000)
- Copenhagen Free University (founded 2001 by Henriette Heise and Jakob Jakobsen)
- Masters in Print and Multimedia, University of Bologna (founded 2001 by Umberto Eco)
- ArtSchool Palestine (founded 2001, London)
- Campus 2002 at Kokerei Zollverein, Essen (founded by Marius Babias and Florian Waldvogel)
- Gasthof 2002 at Staedelschule, Frankfurt
- School of Missing Studies (Belgrade, founded 2002)
- Future Academy (London, founded 2002 by Clementine Deliss)
- University of Openness (London, founded 2002)
- Manoa Free University (founded 2003)
- Informal University in Foundation (Berlin, founded 2003)
- The Paraeducation Department (Rotterdam, founded 2004 by Sarah Pierce and Annie Fletcher)
- Cork Caucus (Cork, 2004–05)
- Mountain School of Art (Los Angeles, founded 2005 by Piero Golia and Erik Wesley)
- Free University of Los Angeles
- L'université tangente
- La Universidad Nómada
- Facoltà di Fuga
- Göteborgs Autonoma Skolas

Notes for an Art School

Florian Waldvogel

Each One Teach One

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Revolt, Reform and Vocation

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

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

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

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

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

Education for the Market

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

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

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

Autonomy

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Manifesta 6 School

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Programme

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

colonial studies and migration.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Research is then undertaken by a number of groups working on

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

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

Manifesta 6 School Wireless Enabled

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

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

Manifesta 6 School Radio

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

active involvement of listeners on location.

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

Manifesta 6 School Library

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

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

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

Artistic knowledge is social knowledge.

References:

Adorno, Theodor W. *Gesellschaftstheorie und Kulturkritik*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1975.

Adorno, Theodor W. and Max Horkheimer. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, translated by John Cumming. New York: Continuum, 1995.

Babias, Marius and Florian Waldvogel, eds. *Campus 2002*. Essen: Kokerei Zollverein | Zeitgenössische Kunst und Kritik, 2002.

Derrida, Jacques. *Die unbedingte Universität*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2001.

Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason*, translated by Paul Guyer. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Gibbons, Michael, et al. *The New Production of Knowledge: The Dynamics of Science and Research in Contemporary Societies*. London: Sage, 1994.

Luhmann, Niklas. *Social Systems (Writing Science)*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995.

Muthesius, Stefan. *The Postwar University: Utopian Campus and College*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000.

Narby, Jeremy. *The Cosmic Serpent: DNA and the Origins of Knowledge*, translated by the author and Jon Christensen. New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam, 1999.

Notes for an Art School

Babak Afrassiabi & Nasrin Tabatabai

Practice of Indecisiveness

Knowledge often breaks into pieces when put into practice, with each piece taking one to the most unlikely places.

At the time of Iran's 1979 revolution, the Iranian filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami made a documentary film called *First Case, Second Case*. The film was originally shot just before the revolution and completed only after the declaration of its victory. The film, itself divided into two opposite moral takes on its subject, later faced the same fate, that is, first winning an award for what was interpreted as a parable on the Shah's secret police, and later banned for addressing issues politically too sensitive for the post-revolutionary government.

The film is about a boy not owning up to having misbehaved in the classroom. The teacher, who does not know who the guilty party is, sends a group of pupils out of the classroom. 'First case' involves the pupils refusing to name the guilty party, and as a result, remaining expelled from the class. In the 'second case' one pupil from the group identifies the culprit and returns to his seat. School inspectors, the education minister and other newly appointed political figures from the post-revolutionary government are filmed commenting on the two cases. Some believe the students should not name names as this undermines the model of moral character, while others agree with the second case as being principally correct. Throughout the whole film we see either the pupils standing in a row against the corridor wall outside the classroom, or the talking heads of the commentators. At the time the film was banned, the political climate was quite similar to what this film depicts. One reason for its later ban was because some of the commentaries were coming from members of political parties that had been declared illegal in the few years after the revolution.

First Case, Second Case operates within the gap between the two moral poles: enouncing (naming) the name of the guilty boy and complying with the principles of the school system, or remaining silent and renouncing one's place in the classroom for the sake of the other. In both cases, however, the 'name', in its exposure and concealment, is just an instrument for a moral arrangement. What is truly sacrificed, either way, is the boy's 'real' name.

The film avoids taking sides. Nor do the comments by the established figures offer a way out either. On the contrary, they only increase and widen the gap between the two points of view. In simply documenting both cases, the film seems to offer two differing options. But what it truly shows is that there is in fact no real third way, not as an alternative discourse, and this is exactly what makes this dilemma unbearable. In remaining inconclusive, i.e. neither depicting the group as 'heroes' nor the fellow pupil who named the boy's name as a 'traitor' (or the other way around), the film leaves us simply in the midst of its dilemma. What the film unfolds is the symptom in each discourse. Both are undermined in the face of this impasse of choice/sacrifice. One either favours one 'case' over the other, or eludes both and is left with nothing—the non-discourse of the third option that the film is about. This is exactly why this film can only be misinterpreted if one remains within the fields of one of the two options; this is why it was first given a prize and later banned, on the basis of two opposing interpretations.

What Kiarostami seems to be saying with this film is that we are relentlessly entangled in these discourses of social posture, outside of which is

nothing but the very place the film itself occupies: the ambiguity of social and political being.

In a place like Iran, where most of life evolves between speculative relations to history and vague notions about the future, cultural production has to a great extent become a volatile and impulsive endeavour. If there is any political or cultural indecisiveness in Iran, it is the consequence of the discrepancy between social reality and its political representation: this essentially irreducible gap between the multiplicity of social logics and its totalising representation by the ruling force acting in the name of the society as a whole. Rulers and governments in Iran have been explicitly concerned to close this gap with symbolic and imaginary identifications to implement the illusion of a unified and sovereign society. With these identifications, the society is offered false knowledge of itself.

The period of the war with Iraq provided the best chance for the Iranian government to reinforce the symbolism on which it had based itself during the revolution. The war was represented as an ideologically collective event, articulated with historical references and rhetoric, mobilising a national force for what was called 'the sacred defence'. To this day, these representations are revived and reformulated at every possible opportunity, in order to maintain the illusion of social uniformity and continuity. However, symbolic representations start to lose their context when every experience hints at their inconsistency with reality. In being compelled to repetition, discourses of power are permanently at risk; in other words, the social and cultural conceptions they repeatedly institute run the risk of becoming de-instituted at every interval. It is exactly in these intervals that the society engages in producing substitutive discourses and representations of and about itself. It is no surprise that only after the end of the war was it possible to disseminate other political views, slightly moderate in their approach, in the ruling elite. During the years after the war, the number of newspapers with different political views increased enormously. During and before the war, any idea of a reform within the existing political establishment was unthinkable. However, it is appropriate to say that the idea of reform has given way to disappointment, even among some of those who promoted it in the first place.

What is interesting is the way these socio-political inconsistencies condition the production of indecisive discourses, from one moment to the next, in variations, and sometimes in contradiction with one another. Rumours are good examples of this, always suspended between belief and disbelief, falsity and truth, pointing to the very ambiguity of knowledge. Recently, after a report on an explosion heard near a nuclear plant in the south of Iran, rumours started spreading about an American bombardment. Newspapers started reporting contradictory explanations. These varied from 'explosives used for road expansions' to 'a military training plane having to discharge its explosives due to technical problems'. The total destruction of a building and the firing of anti-aircraft missiles near where the sound was heard were also reported. Although the truth has not yet been clarified, and most probably it never will be, the rumour did temporarily affect the price of oil that day when the New York oil market opened. (The reality rumours entail does not lie in the truth about an event but exactly in the rumours' very indecisiveness, for they will always return to their true source in spite of being a lie. The source of the sound of the explosion may never be located, but it did reach the 'true' instigator of the rumour, that is the New York oil market.) By pointing out the

representational gap in the totalising articulations of reality, rumours as indecisive discourse undermine discourses of power. Yet they remain hesitant and speculative. What would be the radical yet productive equivalent of such a subversion?

At this juncture cultural practice may take on a double-edged role, at once occupying the space of this gap and rearticulating it into a space for dialogue. Always involving this gap between social representation and pure difference, cultural practice attests to the irresoluteness of political identification, encircling the very ambiguity of discourse. Cultural activities are political in the way they relentlessly reinscribe a split in the heart of any discourse, opening it for negotiation. To give in to this ambiguity is to keep open the possibility for constant rearticulation and negotiation. This is exactly what Kiarostami's film is implementing. It is as if it reconsiders the corridors between classrooms as the place where discourses meet to collide, to be diluted and split into two, a place where the 'real' lessons are picked up.

Pursuing the Indecisive Beyond Locality

Cultural vocabularies change rapidly, as do the contexts upon which they reflect. Today's discourse on the social and political currents of a place may be dated tomorrow. There are always multiple flows of discourse in a society, crushing and cross folding unto one another. Therefore any totalising symbolisations are bound to fall short of this complexity. Cultural projects attempting to pursue a critical flow of discourse are successful only to the extent of escaping symbolisation of any sort. It is the internalising of the very intricacy of conditions that is challenging and constitutes complex articulations.

First Case, Second Case was one of a few films in Kiarostami's oeuvre that did not receive enough recognition outside of Iran. The reason is obviously that most festival viewers and critics do not know of the distinct political—and now historical—context the film refers to. When these historical distinctions enter localities other than their own, they can affect them in the most direct manner—for one thing, they are no longer mere narratives of a far-off place. To welcome complexities of other conditions, i.e. to re-insert them into one's own representational discourses about the 'other', may not only de-certify our subjective position, but also render certain estrangement into the 'reality' of our own condition.

Recent trends in the art world in depicting cultural and artistic practices from various localities have often resulted in simplified articulations and presentations. What should be accounted for is not merely the differences between cultures, or conformist categorisations of conditions, but rather the difference within each and every locality. The latter is of course a more time- and mind-consuming effort and would require certain sacrifices were it to be taken seriously. In coming close to 'real' difference, one is exposed to a kaleidoscopic inconsistency against which all prescribed knowledge is bound to break into pieces. The hardest venture is then to pick up the shattered bits and pieces of fragments and to renegotiate them into alternative configurations.

Here, reconfigurations of meanings are pursued always in regard to the 'other', to other meanings and configurations; in a sharing of knowledge based on its ambiguity, its suspension between (in)comprehensiveness and discord. In other words, to share knowledge is to produce and de-produce it together in a network of enunciations and of localities. This conditions an approach beyond

consistencies of cultural representations and identifications, where knowledge is then a discourse of exchange and of constant transposition. As Georges Bataille wrote, 'Every time we give up the will to know, we have the possibility of touching the world with a much greater intensity.'

Notes for an Art School

Julie Ault & Martin Beck

Drawing Out & Leading Forth

In the recently published *New Keywords: A Revised Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, Genevieve Lloyd describes the meaning of education as situated between the two strands of the word's Latin roots: education as 'drawing out' of qualities already inherent in an individual; and, secondly, as a 'leading forth', which is understood as a form of guiding individuals into certain social contexts.¹ In the first framework, education has an enabling role, that of helping individuals to realise and fully utilise potentials that are thought to be already inherent in them. The second framework situates education in a larger political field, mediating between the notion of individuality and the social body that an individual is always part of: 'Thinking of education as a 'drawing out' of what is rightfully our own can encourage us to think of its benefits as ultimately an individual and private matter, while the 'leading forth' idea encourages concern with the more collective, social dimensions of the process.'² Although describing discordant meanings of education, these two concepts are not mutually exclusive. 'Leading forth' is also partly based on the idea of inherent qualities: 'We can be "led forth" by having our inner qualities or characters "drawn out."³

Individuality and Social Practice

In the arena of art education, these two operations or goals are at the heart of a conflict that haunts numerous art schools in their quest for a contemporary learning environment. This conflict has philosophical, structural and practical consequences.

Distinct from fields of study that utilise the banking method whereby information is deposited into students, art education has largely been conceived as a framework within which inherent qualities of an individual are expressed, encouraged and developed—or, one might say, drawn out. Terms such as 'individuality', 'freethinking' and 'autonomy' remain persistent characterisations of art-making. While striving for independent thinking is in many ways productive and positive, in reality, artistic production is both a social process and a cultural practice, embedded into particular histories and contexts.

Though contested, the art school prototype that holds individuality as its ideology is still widely in use. However, conceptions of art and artist as well as art education have variously transformed during the latter half of the twentieth century. Anti-domination movements have provided theoretical and practical frameworks for making non-hierarchical social structures, including educational ones. In this light, education might be considered a contextual, dynamic, and social process, aiming at the ongoing development of critical consciousness for the purpose of engendering cultural and social agency as guiding principles. Paolo Freire and bell hooks, among others, have theorised such empowering pedagogical processes.⁴

Master and Apprentice

The long-established model of art education is exemplified, both practically and ideologically, by the master-apprentice relationship. In this set-up, students' worthiness to study or gain admittance is measured according to demonstrated talent and the requisite wide-eyed near-religious belief in *being an artist*. Once immersed into such programmes, disappointment and frustration can rapidly set in, while waiting for inspiration that does not come (where should it come from?) and while feeling powerless to practise in an accomplished manner. How could one prove that she is an artist? How to even know? Do the professors

know, or do they more often than not simply assist students in feeling they are *onto something*. Perhaps the enterprise is one of mutual indulgence and reproduction?

Surprisingly, North American art programmes designed in the 1960s and 1970s that proclaimed reform and sought to democratise educational structures and widen the discourse of art beyond tradition have largely succumbed to newer versions of the master-apprentice structure. Although a range of missions and specificities or areas of expertise are purported to define particular institutions and art departments, most prominent art schools function on a business model within which student recruitment is based (via their art careers) on the marquee appeal of teachers who promise new generations of viable careers on the horizon, once the school's stamp of approval has been earned in the form of a Master of Fine Arts (MFA) degree. Such developments are symptomatic of American market culture wherein education is a commodity that costs money, sometimes a great deal of money, and is believed to translate into the potential to make a great deal of money.

While American art schools continue to up the financial ante and traffic in increasingly raw marketing processes of selling education, many European art academies have been immersed in differently textured states of transition in recent years as constituencies grapple with contemporising institutional structures and integrating more recent modes and models into their curricula. One of the conflicts being played out in a number of central European art academies with long histories is the transition from the historical *Meisterschule* principle, a master-apprentice model, to a more topically oriented model of study with an emphasis on discourse and critical reflection.

Topicality and Discursivity

The concept of an art school structured along not just one, but a multitude of models, topics and discourses that are communicated in seminar, lecture and visiting artist formats as well as developed in independent work aims to address shifts in terms of what an art practice and, consequently, what an artist can be. The legacy of Conceptual art and the emergence of new media also question the structuring of an art school along traditional artistic media or material such as painting, sculpture, ceramic, fibre, etc. An expansive model of art in contemporary circumstances might well encompass all potential forms, as well as including both analytic and creative ways of thinking. The differences between practices, between kinds of artwork and between motivations and purposes are what make the art field vital and constitute it as an arena of possibilities.

Topicality and discursivity (formatted into a curriculum-based seminar and lecture configuration) are advocated as capable of transcending historic forms of organisation in favour of a structure based on interdisciplinarity and media diversity. In such a model, topics and critical discourses relevant to contemporary visual and cultural production would be foregrounded, investigated and developed. The teaching focus would largely shift from material techniques to intellectual tools in order to model artistic practice as an integration of analytical thinking and the translation of that thinking into manifestations independent of specific media. In its ideal form, a topically *and* discursively organised structure would be open-ended in terms of methodology, continually evolving and negotiated as well as challenged by various processes of what has recently been termed 'artistic

research’—an open-form, but nevertheless rigorous, visual and intellectual investigation meant to result in artistic communication.⁵

Regulation

The currently much-discussed European ‘Bologna Process’ aims at synchronising university education throughout western Europe for the purpose of furthering cultural and scientific integration. It is meant to enable students to choose, change and combine their sites of education as they see fit. The formal structure underlying this exchange is founded on compatible bachelor’s, master’s and philosophical doctorate degrees (BA, MA, PhD). Translated into the art academy, it would produce a curriculum-based path of study composed of seminars, lectures and independent study units led by various teachers.

The larger transformation is recognised by adversaries of the *Meisterschule* principle as a historic possibility to do away with whatever remains of those structures and steer art education away from the master-apprentice model towards a potentially more discursive one. Rather than studying with one professor for four or five years—as is the case in the *Meisterschule*—students would experience working with different teachers and being exposed to a variety of methods and bodies of knowledge. Moreover, they would be able to seamlessly integrate and combine specialty knowledge offered at different art academies and universities in Europe.

Not surprisingly, the application of the Bologna recommendations in art schools has repeatedly produced conflicts which tend to get rhetorically framed not only as a battle of epic proportions, but far too frequently in polarised terms too. For some this shift represents a foolhardy abandonment of standards and continuity as well as submitting art education to the waves of discursive fashions; for others it is a battle of the past versus the present and future, fought by the necessity to be competitive in the contemporary world as well as to rid the academy of what is often seen as a fossilised structure susceptible to nepotism and corruption. These battles cast choices in black and white terms of either self-reproducing formalisms or reflective open-endedness.

Modelling

There is no doubt that such a process offers a genuine opportunity for reform since hardly ever is it possible to reframe the organisational structure of an entire academic institution in one grand sweep: idealistically speaking, a chance for utopia; pragmatically speaking, a chance to rid a school of outmoded yet institutionalised characteristics.

What gets little play in the rhetorical outbursts marking the transformation is a closer look at the most immediate references for the Bologna synchronisation model—the Anglo-American university system. In the universitarian sub-genre of the art academy, one tends to encounter an innocent enthusiasm for a particular model of US-American art school. The art programmes at Columbia University in New York and the University of California in Los Angeles (UCLA), for example, have sometimes been singled out as inspiration for future development. Over the last few years, both schools have been the subject of newspaper and art press features and have been lauded as some of the most significant schools for art education today. Attention is being drawn to alumni

success stories, the roster of art world celebrity on faculty, the fact that influential gallery owners prowl graduation shows and so forth. The tenor is that today's successful artists are groomed in these kinds of schools. Such media accounts do not, of course, deliver a discussion of educational principles or structures. That is, after all, not headline material. When European art academies are taking inspiration from such schools, it is nevertheless somewhat troubling that it generally seems to be accepted that an art school is a business whose products are professionalised artists who should practice their profession on a prominent stage. In the current neo-liberal cultural and economic climate, one might be able to sympathise with a fiscal argument about cost control in a university setting. But a problem lies in the confusion that arises if an educational institution's success is measured in economic terms, and, specifically, the economics of the current mainstream mercantile art world. The educational question would be: Is a successful art student someone who is able to line up a number of gallery shows for graduation? Clearly it is problematic to define cultural agency only in market terms. What of someone whose work interrogates the ideological parameters and possibilities of cultural agency? Of course, these goals are not mutually exclusive, but they have a tendency to get in each other's way.

Reproduction

Curriculum requirements in art programmes such as the American ones cited above are often centred on one-to-one meetings with faculty and guests, taking place in school-provided individual studios.⁶ Generous spatial working conditions are, no doubt, an asset for schools as well as students and, to a certain degree, important for a productive learning context. However, this kind of spatial and organisational premise implicitly posits a model of artistic practice in which an artist is someone who works, mostly alone, in a studio where every now and then a member of the faculty, visiting artist, critic or curator comes to discuss the work emerging in this situation. One aim of this spatial and social ritual is to simulate *professional* practice. Although offered, the students' curricular obligation to take courses other than independent study meetings is minimal by comparison. Often it is simply left to the students to decide if their education consists mostly of individual studio practice cum meetings or if other intellectual and social engagement with significant discourses around art, visual culture or other fields is vital to their development. Given the pressures of tuition fees (often in the range of \$30,000 annually), peer success, media affirmation, and, last but not least, the normalisation of this educational set-up, one can grasp the difficulties a student might have in developing an artistic practice that differs from a professionalisation that seeks its rewards in the art market.

The faculty's role in this educational model is two-fold and includes both the drawing out and the leading forth: the explicit feedback role in which a teacher draws out a student's simmering talent in private studio conversations is complemented by the more implicit leading forth into the social rituals that compose the art world. Studio visits are, to some degree, ritualised social encounters in which studio practitioner and visitor play scripted roles for which, in order to inhabit them properly, one has to cultivate a certain habitus, to use Pierre Bourdieu's term for an internalised behavioural pattern that is specific to a social context. In the arena of the art studio, habitus translates as a form of

social courting skill that merges genuine engagement with a hard sell. Education and economics are joined together into one experience that aims at the professionalisation of the art student—and the faculty benefit of being able to deliver success stories as the immediate result of their educational efforts. The development of that habitus is a key to the reproductive functioning of this particular art school model. What is reproduced is not so much intellectual information deposited into students (as it is the case with the banking method) or artistic styles (as it is the case of the master-apprentice model), but a scripted model of what artistic practice is. What an artist does, how she does it, where she does it, and how art circulates once it is made are plainly resolved into a coherent version of a professionalised artistic practice that integrates into the gallery circuit.

It would be unfair to blame studio visits alone for such a reproductive tendency—they undoubtedly have an educational value and offer a chance for student and teacher to articulate what the student is struggling with, and help them move forward and identify effectivities. It takes a seamless combination of spatial isolation, no-obligation curriculums and a highly art-world-integrated school environment to generate that dynamic of reproduction.

If looked at on a structural level, the reproduction of a particular artistic role model under the banner of professionalisation has an uncanny resemblance to the principle of the *Meisterschule*. Although more liberal-minded and less focused on artistic style than the traditional *Meisterschule*, the above model is highly effective in normalising artistic practice: in this case as a business practice. Consequently, artistic agency is redefined as the ability to function professionally in a neo-liberal economic model of culture that readily masks its shortcomings and retrograde tendencies—maybe not by purpose but by effect.

Curriculum and Structure

Whereas several prominent US-American art schools operate smoothly within this model, many European art schools—particularly those still battling with the remnants of the *Meisterschule*—are at a crossroads imposed upon them by the Bologna process. As one can see from taking a closer look at the choice of references discussed in that process, the challenge these European schools are facing lies less in the embattled BA/MA/PhD model, but in how to functionally implement notions of topicality and discursivity within that model, in order to develop an educational structure that is capable of defining artistic production as both a social process and a cultural practice. Another battle seems to be looming right around the corner and it will be fought around the minute details of curriculum.

The advocates of structured curriculums believe that there are certain sets of knowledge that are the foundation to an individual's explorations. What these sets of knowledge are is, again, highly contested—for good reasons, since the question of the nature of that knowledge is highly ideological. Even in Art schools that one would deem more progressive, the question of how to balance the need or urge to structure curriculums with a freeform exploratory approach is critical. This balance is often precarious, sometimes eloquently articulated, or—more often than not—taciturnly embedded in institutional structures. Whereas the above-mentioned example shows how, under certain conditions, tilting to one side can produce a capitulation to the marketplace, the other end of

this equation could result in academic over-structuring and knowledge transfer according to the banking method. Both cases are reproductive in tendency.

Within an open-ended framework such as an art school, it seems vitally important that the core curriculum expand its scope beyond independent work, artistic technique and spotty art history, to focus on investigation and analysis of the various contexts artistic production stand in relation to and are influenced by. These include the ideologies, histories and current conditions of aesthetic, cultural, social, political and economic frameworks. Correlating individuals' artistic desires with these larger contexts in a dynamic enterprise might provide, generally speaking, the means for developing critical consciousness and articulating a form of cultural agency that goes beyond professionalisation. Together they constitute a broad agenda for contemporary art education. One goal in particular may be to equip students with a set of methodological models (rather than one method) and the means to their application.

Example: Social Process and Collaboration

In thinking through a notion of leading (students) forth to develop artistic and cultural agency beyond the kind of professionalisation outlined above—for instance, agency based on non-market-centred models that speak to various social dimensions of cultural practices—questions emerge such as: How can social process be taught? How do people learn how to collaborate effectively?

We should state clearly that we do not believe individual practice to be conservative and collaboration to be progressive. This essay attempts to look critically, and with vested interest, at current configurations of the field of art education, noting fundamental conditions and tendencies we have experienced. Within the larger discussion this is part of, various art school models may appear to be on a positional or hierarchical field, within which models are either negative or positive. But things are not so black and white and it is not our intention to advocate one model *against* another, but to advocate an opening up along lines of our particular interests and experience. Our primary aim here is to analyse what particular situations encourage and discourage, and highlight the potential transformation of the social relations (and subsequent artistic production) within differently organised educative environments.

As we have seen above, being ego-oriented with a focus on individuation has been normalised beyond questioning, particularly in the cultural field. Art as social process, collaboration and collective production are largely omitted as topics and models from many schools and institutions. These modes are often denigrated as ideological, or as something people try when they are younger, and then feel that they have outgrown, or that they should move on to develop their singular voices. For instance, it is commonly believed that collaboration eclipses individual practice—which sets up a specious binary relationship—when in fact they can be balanced to productively fuel one another. Collaboration is rarely presented as a viable method, or even simply as a fact of most creativity and production and worth knowing about for that reason. We believe it is important to broaden the field of references to include specific models and principles of effective collaboration as potential influence and inspiration, in order to pose a counter-paradigm to the standard definition of art practice. Only if one knows of differing models is

one able to make choices and take what is needed and desired from various sources.

Clearly, artistic production as social process and collaboration should not be essentialised or regarded as mandatory, to be taught according to formulas laid out in curriculum reports. That kind of regimentation is antithetical to the principles of dynamic collaborative process and would certainly undermine its discursive character, which is so valuable as method for thinking and acting. In this mix, which is in part a discussion of institutionalisation, there is a risk of rendering social engagement and collaboration into genres and medias as opposed to ways of working, guiding principles or operating systems. But from our perspectives, the values of collaboration and collectivity—their inherent tendency to complexify and contextualise—need to be amply represented, theorised and experienced in the context of art education. In art education, collaborative structures and process *as a mode of authorship* need to be effectively brought into the field of models that are referenced, articulated and investigated, including through practice.

Offering—in the course of teaching *and* in the minute details of art school structure—a genuine chance to encounter, analyse and test a variety of modes of artistic practice represents the groundwork for producing artistic agency. Beyond a subject matter for articulation and study, we believe that social process and genuine collaboration as guiding principles, to be evidenced through a number of means, are essential to the effectivity of the topicality and discursivity structure discussed above. If such a programme is aimed at pedagogical empowerment, then the programme itself must be reflexive and open to critical process, including from within.

Were a genuine collaborative spirit along with vigilance against reproducing authoritarian power relations be brought to bear in the acts of leading forth and the democratisation of the educative environment, then not only would relations between students, teachers and institution be reconfigured, but dynamic social engagement as part of a continual process of becoming and being an artist would be central to practice as a means for both individual and collective agency.

Notes:

1. Genevieve Lloyd, 'Education', in *New Keywords: A Revised Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, Tony Bennett, Lawrence Grossberg and Meaghan Morris, eds., (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2005), pp. 97 ff.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 98.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 99.

4. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 1970) and *The Politics of Education. Culture, Power, and Liberation* (Massachusetts: Bergin & Garvey Publishers, Inc., 1985); bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress, Education as the Practice of Freedom* (New York and London: Routledge, 1994).

5. Papers from a recent conference in the Netherlands on this new buzzword have been published in *Artistic Research*, Annette W. Balkema and Henk Slager, eds., (Amsterdam: Lier en Boog, 2004).

6. On these issues see Howard Singerman, *Art Subjects: Making Artists in the American University* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

Notes for an Art School

Liam Gillick

Denial & Function

A history of disengagement in relation to teaching

The last twenty years have seen an enormous shift in the role and potential of educational environments in relation to visual culture. Shifts in the status of art education within the broader pedagogical context have been taking place. These changes in emphasis have refocused our perception of how things should proceed towards a position that is potentially away from the role of the artist as the prime parallel functionary in relation to younger artists/students. This has moved us towards a situation where the artist-teacher is merely one element within a matrix of expectations and institutional aims within established educational models. This perceived shift is, paradoxically, demanded by both university art schools—which must create neo-academic justification for all their departments—and by some independent-minded artists who are increasingly unsure that it is relevant to insert themselves as the sole providers of ideas within schools. We therefore face a new set of dilemmas, for the shift is not complete or well planned; it is taking place as I write and we still face many differing art school models. We must acknowledge that the changes are subtle manoeuvrings in the culture rather than dramatic shifts. For the most part, artists remain the primary educators within studio-based art school departments. But the fact is that the expectations layered onto these schools now clearly exceed the desires and qualifications of most artist-educators in terms of the theoretical and bureaucratic components. We are familiar with the still-standard idea that the best people to teach or educate or discuss ideas with young artists are other artists. Yet, while this assumption of professional competency exchange is still embedded in the culture, there has been a rise in the daily programming of most dynamic art school environments, an increasing provision of parallel structures alongside that of studio practice. The most notable development has been the mutation from a vague representation of basic art history as a component of the young artist's educational experience to the provision of serious critical theory, to a greater or lesser extent. Traditionally, such moves have been viewed with suspicion by older artist-teachers who are devoted to earlier theories of artistic practice via their insistence on the prime importance of the role of the artist in relation to younger artists within the educational sphere. Some art historians have also traditionally been suspicious of engaging with active, ongoing contemporary visual art practice within art school environments. Yet it is clear now that, certainly in the UK and the US, we have been living through a period when the theoretical component of a young artist's education has become an increasingly important aspect of the educational experience in a formatted and clearly defined way, so we better pay some careful attention to it.

The comments related and outlined here are primarily restricted to western Europe and North America, the main places where I have some knowledge of educational practice. And, within that powerful framework, my work has also been mainly restricted to schools that function under the umbrella of large urban universities: in my case, Goldsmiths College, which is part of the University of London, and the School of the Arts at Columbia University in New York. However, I have been involved temporarily as a visiting tutor, lecturer or guest professor in many schools, including the academies in Frankfurt and Hamburg, the department of cultural studies at Lüneburg and the Kunstakademie in Munich. Other specific moments have seen work in relation to the *École des Beaux-Arts*

in Grenoble, along with the ECAL in Lausanne. On top of this, while my knowledge and experience has been partial, my involvement has also been partial and fragmented in relation to the traditional power structures that get established at places such as these.

While I have an interest in the legacy created by artists who have chosen to teach as a way to avoid structures within the dominant art system that might otherwise negatively effect the direction of their work, it seems that the development of a more precise critical component of art education over the last twenty years has made it impossible for artist-teachers to avoid viewing themselves as implicated players within the broad critical territory of art production. It is no longer possible for someone to teach 'artist to artist' but instead necessary to identify oneself as an implicated subject within the critical space that is established within the terms of contemporary art education. The teacher is no longer someone who merely creates a notionally-free space within which the young artist may experiment and operate free from certain pressures. Now the artist-teacher and the artist-student must stand side by side, each as subjects and generators of the critical discourse around art, whether they want to do so or not. Within the art schools that I have been involved in, there is an obligation for the student-artist to be well versed in the language of critical theory in order to provide a political and theoretical framework for their practice. It is expected that this critical framework be rigorously contemporary in order to ensure that even if the student-artist claims complete disinterest in the critical components of their practice they still understand that this apparent disinterest is merely a component of an earlier critical structure rather than a rejection of critical potential per se. While this does not mean that forms of refusal are suppressed, it is much harder to veil forms of refusal than in the earlier environment, where proximity of artist to artist could ensure a suppression of the critical cultural processes taking place between them. It does, however, lead to an embracing of certain figures who leave art school with an apparent rejection of ideas at the root of their work. During moments when the commodity exchange of art-like ideas seems most buoyant, there is a concurrent rise in the number of people leaving art schools who appear to have escaped the critical context in which their ideas were formed. Most of these artists in fact project paradoxical messages, as is the case with people such as Damien Hirst or Maurizio Cattelan, both of whom make work that is deeply steeped in an understanding of post-Duchampian Western traditions in terms of fabrication or creation of the *mise-en-scène* but takes fundamentalist acritical positions to be the base of the ideas, whether that be sex and death or post-clownish auto-destruction and overstatement.

Within this context, that has arisen where the critical procedures that underscore art activity are exposed simultaneously by order and by demand, we ought to witness a shift in the type and quality of art production, arguably for the better. While some would suggest that this shift has created work that is pitched against the art now visible that uses the market as the primary determinant of value and quality, in fact what we more clearly witness is a situation where certain types of gallery- and market-determined structures are increasingly isolated through their reliance on a preponderance of self-conscious, acritical art production—with notable exceptions, of course. This does leave us with a problem. What can be lost

in our current scenario is a sense of the value of a semi-autonomous critical context. So while studio-practice-orientated art students are told about moments of critical significance in the recent past in a form that increasingly melds with the traditional seminar and studio visit, this is at the expense of a distancing that may be required to create a truly significant semi-autonomous critical community. To put it in other words, while a multiplication of critically engaged moments in an art school ought to offer more, it can give students the impression that they have absorbed a requisite quantity of basic theory in the same way that in the past they might have taken the correct number of classes in life drawing. Art school departments need to find ways to attract the best art historians and critical theorists and therefore put themselves in direct competition with dedicated art history and critical theory departments. This new venue for the best theorists would mean the possibility of new critical structures emerging alongside the work of the student-artists.

So, given these broadly and simply stated current conditions of shift and slow mutation, what might be a next step in terms of thinking about the potential of future educational perspectives, for now unencumbered by the dominant structures of broader university requirements and potential complications, in order to clarify thinking? For while many students who attend university-affiliated art schools are conscious of the apparent benefits they might accrue from being able to take classes in various other subjects and generally fade in and out of the academic ambience of a serious place, the result is increasingly a post-student body who at the end of their course are now left looking for a relatively casual differently-mediated, yet still critical, ongoing neo-educational structure to work within as a kind of post-post-graduate working situation.

This means there has recently been a rise in the potential of such a quaternary working place. It is normal for a young artist who has recently graduated from a serious school to look carefully for opportunities within foundation or studio programmes that in fact replace the excess of programming that is often perceived to have arisen at graduate level with a concurrent lack of an articulated critical relationship between the artist and the structure of a place or course. The problem is that the illusion of freedom projecting into the near future is exactly that. A situation created by a confusion of practices that is neither open nor closed, truly critical nor truly free. One of the main problems relates back to assumptions of what working environments should be like: studio-like working environments were originally the desire of the student, but have concretised themselves over the last fifteen years into the rule rather than the option. The idea that each person requires a fixed location to work within—yet within a wrecked and improvised environment—refers only to certain kinds of studio practice and not to others, such as my own, which has never involved using a traditional artist's studio. It is no accident that many of the most interesting students find absolutely nothing to gain from sitting in a cubicle wondering how to relate to the broader social context, or completely divorced from it. Often, the only option in this environment is to work in ways that mimic the conditions of the production, with the concurrent stifling of critical art practices that reject the model of the solo artist struggling to articulate his or her vision within a workshop environment.

The serious model of a new potential school would involve a remodelling of space, both literal and intellectual, at the beginning of each chosen time period of work, with ongoing assessments of the usefulness of the working space on a regular basis. Within these discussions about environment, there should always be more than one representative of the faculty in the room. The elevation of the single teacher and consolidation of his or her role offers a perverse message to students about the potential of the artistic position within society that prefers to view artists as singular, context-free creators who survive or transcend a circumstance, rather than working within one. There must be changes made each year, or at least serious reconsiderations of the appropriate spaces within which to work critically as well as practically, with as much thought given to the spaces where discussion takes place as to the spaces for the creation of art works. Historically, as a legacy of battles from the 1960s, where students fought for more control over their working environments and to be free in relation to the institution, we have been left with an improvised, space-hungry model of working practice that is not necessarily what students would want from a new 'fourth stage' educational environment. We must, therefore, reinvestigate these apparently crucial moments that set in place, over thirty-five years ago, our current model of working in order to understand whether they remain functional models in a contemporary situation. It is quite clear that those shifts were not brought about by students alone, but by certain coalitions of enlightened teachers and students working together to remodel working and learning environments. This situation must be re-attained if a dynamic new working possibility is to be discovered. If a diploma, thesis or degree exhibition is seen as a requirement of the place, it should be shifted within a post-post-graduate environment to halfway through the course and the final moment of assessment replaced by a series of discussion panels and symposia where students would be expected to address their work without an exhibition as such. At this point, they would also be permitted to present, via someone else, a person interior or exterior to the institution, who could speak on their behalf. The relationship between the teachers and students should be under constant review. This would mean that the staff should present work alongside the students in order to create a true debate and shift the potentially hierarchical nature of the discussion towards an exposure of the potential weaknesses of the staff, rather than merely exposing the students to critique. In addition, the provision and discussion of broad themes to be addressed critically should be introduced at the beginning of each yearly work session. This does not mean that the students have to take any notice of these themes, but that the artist-teachers have to start to articulate what they see as crucial issues for debate, rejection and development, rather than merely attempting to adjust their ideas to the propositions put forward by the students themselves. These broad themes would be an attempt to place the school in a critical framework that replaces the existential void that can often emerge in an art school environment, without suppressing the students' desire to find and propose new models themselves. It would be a way of creating a set of concepts to work off, rather than an excessive focus on separation via critical theory classes pitched against an excessive focus on the work of the students themselves, as they attempt to find new models and ways of working.

Within all these shifts there will and ought to be moments of refusal and collapse. The current situation inevitably leads to these moments and it is not possible to imagine a situation where this could not be the case. The issue here is not to try and repress dissent and disagreement in a new model, but merely to change the orientation of the model. At present there are too many givens, each of which is related to a consolidation of earlier moves within art connected to existentially-based philosophy rather than the reality of our complex situation. So at present there is an enormous rift between the theoretical components of an art school environment and other practical working aspects of the same place. This break is not clearly perceived and articulated by most of the people working or studying, but they are aware that there is a problem rather than an interesting set of dilemmas. To change the working environment and at least introduce constant moments of review would not lead to a more calming or precise way of functioning, but would remove the alienating and imploded quality of the current relationship between the creative aspect of the art school and the critical functions of the same. There is no situation now that exists free of critical play. The question is how long we can continue with a situation where the critical and the notionally practical can continue a dysfunctional relationship that at times can appear completely out-of-sync.

Notes for an Art School

Walid Sadek

A Room With a Conversation
in the Middle

We each harbour a story about corridors. A story about those functional components of domestic architecture we customarily walk and casually forget. Corridors, which may in a child's imagination expand into expansive 'neverlandish' fields unchecked within the father's home. But such a moment is usually short lived, trampled by the pressing demands of a life managed in the efficiency of kitchens, reproductivity of bedrooms, chatter of dining rooms and stupor of TV rooms. Such corridors, and the stories that lie in them like dusty moths dead on the reflective plate behind the glow of a halogen light, are usually of the past. Unless a war happens to visit your city, encroach upon your front yard, intimidate your windows shut and send you scurrying into those corridors again on all fours like the child you once were.

War can hurl us back unprepared into the spaces of childhood, into those secondary spaces, the in-between spaces of parental distraction and patience. There we may find ourselves again crouching close to details forgotten by architect and mother alike: the chipped wainscot, the over-stuffed medicine cabinet, the coat-hanger straining under the weight of derelict sweaters, the perfect geometry of unfnoticed hairballs and the mess of electric cables dangling from the paint-splattered fuse box. It is there, crammed in corridors, that we gradually learn to recognise the architectural end point of war; a corridor packed shut into a room, wishfully a shelter, where the pretences of architecture regress to join the fragility of human flesh.

War can hurl us back into the spaces of our childhood. It can pack a family into a box-like semblance of security with little else to do except listen for sounds and hear too many. The irony lies in the realisation that to listen and hear is an indication that one is alive still. Survival, it seems, is nothing other than hearing much and knowing very little. And yet it is in such corridors, when surviving at the architectural end point of war, that we discover the desire for speech. First, it bursts sporadically, disjointed, words heavy with meaning even if without the couch of proper syntax. Words of a rare ambiguity, more like captions to faces we thought familiar, now crumpled in fear, almost primitive. Then it picks up, longer sentences, words connecting into a speculation, a probable guess. The corridor grows slightly more spacious, almost a room with a conversation in the middle. Granted, this is unlikely to last. For language, no matter how it may thicken, is nevertheless easily deadened by the blasts of bombs. Yet, given the briefest lull, words come around once again, gather into inarticulate lumps then slowly fall into formation like a steady and tireless bacterial activity.

This is not reminiscing about the war, our Lebanese civil war. Much more, it is an attempt to locate a structure and a libidinal drive able to provoke and warrant the making of a place of conversation, one that we can perhaps call an art school. This introduction to the issue of a school of art is obviously in avoidance of the conventional language with which such an issue is usually framed. More importantly, it follows a decision to think critically at the limits of the possible. For clearly neither the premises of a liberal education nor the conditions of the market have either successfully promoted or discouraged art or its teaching. And although artists live and work amongst us and a few art courses are available at universities and other like institutions, the fundamental question of 'why an art school' is yet to be answered. We often hear related questions such as 'why art?' and 'what kind of artist?' But as for art schools, the issue seems less imperious.

After all, art happens in galleries and an artist is most probably born as one. To ask ‘why an art school?’ represents primarily a shift of emphasis from the artist as the subject of conversation to the school as a place of conversation. But to do so, one must think outside the well-rehearsed categories of the academy, the so-called foundation courses and vertical studios. In other words, one must postpone discussion of the ascending and accumulative structure of an art curriculum and consider instead the art school as a place we congregate in rather than a pedagogical structure from which we graduate. Such an approach might allow us to suspend those polemical distinctions between artist and art teacher, between artist and designer, between the paths of the vocation and the demands of the market and face instead what is once more a fundamental question: Why an art school?

Clearly, one answer is almost always at hand. An answer that is as redundant as it has become axiomatic in its obedient repetition by artists, educators and audiences alike: art schools are a cultural necessity. And so we continue to teach art mostly as an added value, a cultural topping. We also continue to hold on to the few art courses offered at universities out of an antiquated moral imperative, a vague suspicion that art must be significant.

It seems to me that this cultural necessity, this moral imperative, promoted within art schools derives primarily from an unquestioned loyalty to the figure of the artist. For if pressed to explain why an art school is culturally necessary, we most often answer that it is so because artists are great. Accordingly, art schools gain legitimacy by claiming a role within the larger world of great artists.¹ In this sense an art school remains a parasitical institution, a worldly temple for the adoration of renowned artists, of patron saints, so to speak. And at the heart of every art school there lies a wish for death and resurrection: that one day a student will transgress and exceed the curriculum, join the gallery of those patron saints and thus provide a renewed reason for the continuance of the art school.² In other words, an art school claims its own justification in the figure of the transgressive and singular artist.

To approach an alternative, one needs to insist that an art school need not be concerned with the making of artists. If successful, such an insistence can provide a shift that will not only set us outside the artist’s biography as a paradigm for the annunciation and flowering of great art, but will also lead us into theorising a project specific to an art school. A project that will possibly found the school as a place of conversation unburdened by loyalty to the ascendant teleology that structures the genre of artists’ biographies. A place of conversation that is not foreclosed by the figure of the artist as a prophecy fulfilled.³ And so to propose a structure recollected from the time of war, when one is besieged by a present without a future and when the rushing pulse of poor bodies turns deafening, is not mere exercising. Rather, it is a search for a structure outside the bounds of the figure of the artist, in what is probably a shared experience, a recognisable phenomenological situation, by which we can begin to understand the making of language and the desire that motivates it. It is an invitation to think and reflect at the limit, where an act is usually decisive. And what is this structure we find wherein desire is reared in the midst of a ruined landscape? It is that of a room with a conversation in the middle.

By way of further elaboration, let us assess a situation historically specific to art schools, and one that seems comparable in structure. In her book

titled *Hikayatou Jasad* (Story of a Body), Nadia Annamar offers a series of interviews conducted with Lebanese artists and sculptors, all of whom taught or studied at the Académie Libanaise des Beaux-Arts (ALBA) and later at the School of Fine Arts at the Lebanese University.⁴ What these artists had in common is a model, a nude woman in the centre of their shared atelier. Her name is Mariam Kheiro. We are told that she worked for some time as the private model for the painter Kaisar Al-Gemayel before acting full time as the first professional nude model at the Académie Libanaise des Beaux-Arts when Al-Gemayel was its head. Although unevenly articulated, Annamar's book seeks nevertheless to unearth a hitherto unwritten story about a woman's body repeatedly pictured. Mariam Kheiro's voice, it seems, is yet to be heard. In the interview with the model with which the book opens, Kheiro appears as an elderly and ailing woman, still temperamental, with strong opinions and a marked generosity in remembering the artists of the first and second generation whom she accompanied during the early years of the Académie. Her nostalgia is poignant. Obviously, she is an ageing and forgotten woman who was once at the centre of a nascent art school and whose image was multiplied over the papers and canvases of a growing community of artists. She was once the centre that gave structure to that famed room at the Académie, while the artists had a room with a model at the centre. That is the gist of Annamar's book. It is also possibly a concise description of that pivotal moment in our local history of modernism, namely the founding of ALBA; a moment when the grammar of pictorial arts was presumably set and rehearsed in a room with a model at the centre. Accordingly, the nude body of Mariam Kheiro is proffered as a measure, a standard by which art students are evaluated and towards which they all must tend. Concomitantly, what is usually named style, or in other words, the personal pictorial idiom of each student, is but the visible evidence of a young artist's shortcomings, exasperation, partial solutions and latent desires for that model at the centre of the room. In all of this, the body of Mariam Kheiro remains inexhaustible, a cipher for unrequited approaches, a fixed object of desire on whose shores a million pictures lie awash. 'This ass is not my ass,' she says. Stunned, the student attempts a defence: 'It is not my fault if you are like this.' Mariam replies: 'You are incapable of seeing beauty, this thing is not for you, this ass inspired good artists and by drawing it they all learned art.'⁵

Perhaps this is no more than an anecdote. It tells nothing of that stunned young art student, very little of the interviewee Nkoula Annamar and not enough of Mariam Kheiro. Yet it does provide an image of the insuperable hierarchy on which art schools are founded. Rather than a room with a model at the centre, art schools are in fact structured as a hierarchy, the pinnacle of which is occupied by the conflation of the model with a primer of fixed pictorial grammar. To exceed the pinnacle is to force a miracle and become a singular artist. Yet what the hierarchy provides is the preface to every transgression. And although the hierarchy professes a yearning for the singular artist as liberator, it nevertheless maintains the art school as a solid basic necessity.

In following the logic of this assessment, an art school appears to be ideologically produced. It performs an inversion of relations. It proffers the singular artist as an unbounded subject, a fountain of creativity, vital because transgressive. It does so by positing itself and its curriculum as the contrary, namely an

incomplete proposition, a structure that points at 'genius' but can only provide lessons in the pictorial grammar of yesterday. For the primer of pictorial grammar becomes more antiquated with every transgression of every singular artist. This is an ideological production because it inverts and masks the function of the artist. For is the artist, that singular individual with a proper name, simply and purely a tireless and expansive emitter of ideas? Is the artist truly and simply the other of institutions, the renegade of discourses, a puzzling innovator? Or is the artist a guarantee against the proliferation of signification, what is ironically termed the 'peril which threatens the world?'⁶ In his essay titled, 'What is an Author?', Michel Foucault argues that the author, the proper name—for us it is the artist—fulfils a functional principle by which 'one limits, excludes, and chooses; in short, by which one impedes the free circulation, the free manipulation, the free composition, decomposition, and re-composition of fiction'.⁷ Accordingly, one can argue that the author/artist is the figure through which we avoid the often daunting task of looking at an image, of reading a text and assuming the responsibility of interpretation. And so rather than engage with the making of signification, the weaving of fictions, we relegate unto the artist/author, unto that proper name, all the risks involved.

If I choose to deploy Foucault's insight, it is in the hope of questioning the way art schools are dragged into complicity with a project aiming at the containment of signification. And so if we are to imagine an art school without a model at the centre and independent of the figure of the artist, who stands outside it and antecedes it, then we must face and respond to this incumbent fear of the proliferation of meaning. We must search for a reason, or rather a libidinal drive that makes the proliferation of meaning an utter necessity and not a threat. My argument is that if an art school cannot avoid institutionalisation, it is then necessary that it be constantly an institution in crisis: a besieged room with a conversation in the middle. For it is in such a situation of chronic crisis that the proliferation of signification is never a threat. Rather, it is a libidinal drive to disperse the one thing we are probably still capable of, namely the enunciation of words. In such a situation, words are evidence that we are still able to propose otherwise. Words are evidence of our survival and of our likely deaths. For words, when extinguished, leave behind a noticeable emptiness, a dubious silence. An art school with a conversation in the middle is a place for the dispersion of language, for weaving sentences; it is a place for the making of fictions. Its evidence lies in its ability to make the gradual prevalence of silence noticeable and questionable.

Notes:

1. The figure of the 'visiting artist' is a case in point. Especially prevalent in graduate art programmes, the 'visiting artist' is a successful and famous practicing artist whose visit to the studios of graduate students is almost the one event in the calendar that makes a graduate programme worth enrolling in. This is certainly true in my experience at the Claremont Graduate School of Art (1990–92). Although universities in Lebanon do not offer graduate studies in art, the issue is even more relevant there precisely because it is exacerbated. Undergraduate students are often left but with the hope of emigrating to continue their studies abroad and so partake in the calendar of a graduate programme abroad.

2. Howard Singerman develops this idea at length. He writes: 'Yet it is Art, a genuine discovery, and the student is an artist, only through excess and difference [...]', in *Art Subjects: Making Artists in the American University* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), p. 123.

3. In his often-cited *Lives of the Artists*, Giorgio Vasari (1550–68) lays down a typology of artists' biographies. His chapter on the Florentine painter Giotto is exemplary for his description of a miraculous beginning in Italian painting. For an elaboration of the function of the miracle in an artist's biography see also Kris Ernst and Otto Kurz, *Legend, Myth, and Magic in the Image of the Artist* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979).

4. Nadia Annamar, *Hikayatou Jasad* (Beirut: Dar Annahar, 2001). The Académie Libanaise des Beaux-Arts, most often known under the acronym ALBA, was founded in 1943. Instruction began in the academic year 1944–45 with Alexis Boutros as the first dean.

The School of Fine Arts at the Lebanese University was founded in 1964. Nkoula Annamar, a former student at ALBA (1944–49), became the second dean, following architect Antoine Nahhas.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 45.

6. Michel Foucault, 'What is an Author?' in *The Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984).

7. *Ibid.*, p. 119.

Notes for an Art School

A Conversation Between Boris Groys & Anton Vidokle

Art Beyond the Art Market

AV – Dear Boris, you recently mentioned to me that you left Russia in 1981, the same year that my family and I left. A couple of years before departing, I had started taking painting lessons at a private artist’s studio in Moscow. There was a feeling of underground activity going on in this small class, in part because of its literally underground basement location, but also because of the style of painting we were taught—vaguely modernistic and slightly reminiscent of Cézanne. While this was more liberal than the methodologies of existing official art schools and academies, it was of course light years away from the advanced Conceptual art practices that started proliferating in the seventies and eighties in Moscow. Was there something like a ‘school’ for this new type of work? Where did Moscow Conceptualists study?

BG – Dear Anton, no, of course, there was not a school for this kind of Conceptual art practice in Russia at that time. But I don’t believe that such a school could be found in the West at the beginning of the seventies either—for example, at the time the Moscow Conceptualist circle started. On the other hand, the majority of the Moscow Conceptualist artists of the time already combined visual images and language in their work—long before they began to make Conceptual art. Many of them were book illustrators or designers: Ilya Kabakov, Eric Bulatov, Victor Pivovarov, Vladimir Sorokin, Vadim Zacharov. Dmitri Prigov was a sculptor and a poet. Andrei Monastyrsky and Lev Rubinstein were poets and participated in the artistic performances. As Western Conceptual art became known in Moscow through Western art magazines and catalogues, these artists saw the chance to use their training in this new framework—to redefine their already existing art practices in a new way. You can compare this move to the shift from advertisement to ‘high art’ that was effected by Andy Warhol. Additionally, structuralism was the dominant intellectual fashion in Russia at that time. That means that it was easy and almost self-evident for Russian artists to perceive art as a kind of visual language.

This also explains the relationship between Western Conceptual art practices and the art of the Moscow Conceptualist circle. The acquaintance with Western Conceptual art opened Russian artists up to the possibility of using their own art tradition and artistic training in a new way. But it remained the same tradition and the same training—and therefore Russian Conceptualist artworks actually look quite different from Western ones. In this sense it seems to me that the use the artist makes of his or her training and education is decisive in the contemporary art context. To a certain degree every kind of education is a ready-made—and can be used in very different ways in the art context. The crucial question is, as always: how?

AV – So if we are to take education as one of a number of influences that affect an artist’s approach, can we still talk about certain models of education that are more productive, whether focused on art or otherwise?

Perhaps if we speak of a ‘school’ in both senses of the word—both as an educational institution and an affiliation of like-minded colleagues—it becomes useful to think of historical precedents, such as the relationship between New York School artists in the fifties and sixties with Black Mountain College, or the experimental painting workshop that Siqueiros taught in New York to a group of expressionist painters, including Pollock.

Was there such a connection between artists and institutions

in Moscow in the sixties and seventies? Or were the artists, like their educational backgrounds, ready-mades: one day a book designer, the next day a Conceptual artist? Did institutions ever provide an unofficial framework for group experiments? In Poland, for example, there was an unofficial group working within the Lodz film academy that used the school's resources for independent experimental research—their work closely parallels that of North American and European artists like Michael Snow and Chris Marker. Were there any similar initiatives within the official art academies in Russia?

BG – No, the independent, unofficial Russian art of that time emerged and developed beyond the official institutions. That was partially because of the restrictive art policies of these institutions. But, on the other hand, the artists and intellectuals themselves wanted to go away from these institutions, wanted to situate themselves outside them. I remember this time very well. All Soviet things were hated and despised. One did not want to be a part of the Soviet system, did not want to be mixed with 'them'. People wished to demonstrate that they were different, non-Soviet. Art was just one way to become different—to be unlike the others. It was a form of dandyism in the first place. People were not thrown out of the institutions because they made a certain kind art. They made a certain kind of art just to demonstrate that they didn't belong to the 'Soviet herd'. To do so, one displayed all the conventional signs of 'non-Sovietness': modern art, the Bible, the *Kama Sutra*, Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, Freud, etc. The Soviet state created a huge reservoir of the forbidden and excluded—and the Russian intellectuals and the artists of that time were happy to exploit it as far as they could. They built the networks and circles and black markets that were present in all the major cities of the country. One could live and survive in these networks without having any need to deal with anything 'Soviet'. The majority of unofficial artists of that time were quite satisfied with this lifestyle. Only the Moscow Conceptualists were unsatisfied, because the members of this circle asked a disturbing question: How does the art production of the unofficial Russian scene look in the international art context?

That means that Moscow Conceptual art was a part of a pretty well-developed unofficial art scene. This scene had had its own institutions, traditions and hierarchies since at least the mid-fifties. But Moscow Conceptualists were at the same time an opposition within the opposition, the outsiders within the community of the outsiders.

Speaking more generally, every education is based on a certain system of exclusion. If it is said that something is good and something is bad—and any education consists in saying that—then something is always excluded and suppressed. That means every education creates a domain of the excluded and forbidden that can be exploited by the students. To exclude or forbid something always means to open new possibilities and opportunities. In this sense, Soviet art education was very successful, because it created a huge domain of the excluded and forbidden that opened new possibilities for at least three generations of Russian artists.

AV – Last December in Ljubljana I had a very interesting conversation with Yuri Lederman, who told me a little bit about how he initially got involved with contemporary art in Odessa, in the early eighties. According to Yuri, this had to do with meeting Sergei Anufriev, who was a very flamboyant and charismatic

figure then, who single-handedly tried to start a contemporary art scene in Odessa! Thinking that a 'scene' has to incorporate a number of different types of practices, he assigned various roles among a group of friends, with and without any art background, some of who were supposed to start working with photography, others with sculpture or installation. Yuri was designated to be the performance artist within this group, although he was not quite sure exactly what this entailed at the time. Do you think it's possible to speak of this sort of playful, spontaneous collaboration as a sort of art school, albeit one without teachers?

BG – The unofficial art scene in Moscow was, of course, much more heterogeneous. But the Moscow Conceptualists also met in the seventies on a very regular basis to discuss their work and listen to lectures or readings of poetry and prose texts. This was called a 'seminar', and one can say that it worked like a school—especially for the younger artists. Of course, these meetings and discussions were very helpful, but I am not sure that this kind of practice could be generalised.

Russian unofficial artists had no access to Soviet official exhibition spaces and to the media. There was no art market, no spectators from the outside. That means that these artists made their works for colleagues—for other artists, writers or intellectuals involved in the unofficial art scene. There was almost no competition among the unofficial artists—they built a really utopian community. And an individual artist worked for this community. The contemporary situation is, of course, quite different. Young artists try to get in touch with galleries, with media, with potential collectors as soon as possible. A contemporary artist does not see other artists as the viewers who should appreciate his or her work. Rather, he or she regards other artists as competing for attention, for the gaze of a possible viewer. Under these conditions an education through the building of a utopian artistic community seems to me to be a still desirable but hardly achievable goal.

AV – This is very interesting—it makes me think of the Independent Group: Alloway, Paolozzi and Richard Hamilton and the others who held lectures at the ICA in London in the fifties. Can you tell me a little bit more about these seminars in Moscow—where did they take place? Who organised them? Surely you took part in them?

BG – Yes, I took part in them, indeed. The seminars took place in the apartment of Alik Chichko, in the studio of Igor Makarevich, from time to time also in the studio of Ilya Kabakov. The participants were mostly the members of the circle of Moscow Conceptualists. Each seminar began with a lecture or with a presentation of somebody's work. Then the participants reacted with their commentaries and critique. Also, artists and writers of the various non-Conceptualist orientations were invited to present their work. These seminars codified and formalised the practice that was already well established in the unofficial art milieu. The artists regularly invited people to their apartments or studios to show their new work. Such apartment exhibitions were very popular—and many people came. The poets also organised readings in private apartments. In some cases only a small group of people was invited. In other cases more than a hundred people came. But even if attendance was not so large, these readings and shows were frequent and the work of the unofficial artists quickly became known. Of course, to get the access one had to belong, to be invited or brought along by friends. If one shared some mutual friends with the artist, one could also just call this artist and ask to look at his or her work. In most cases it worked

perfectly. In this sense the unofficial art scene was well informed about what was going on. But on the other hand, one had to be polite—there was almost no discussion or critique. The seminars tried to compensate for this lack of discussion and to create a forum that could offer the artists and writers an opportunity to discuss their work in a more or less systematic way. The seminars took place every three or four weeks. They were attended by twenty to forty people and were not open to the public: one was admitted only by invitation. The seminars started after I moved from Leningrad to Moscow in 1977 and lasted for some time after I left Moscow in 1981.

AV – Boris, who organised these seminars? It sounds like there was some structure to them, since there were rules such as having to be invited, etc. It's also interesting that writers and poets took part. The seminars must have been interdisciplinary in nature? What were some of the specific subjects discussed?

Coincidentally, in 1977 Joseph Beuys reconstituted his 'Free International University of Creativity and Interdisciplinary Research' at Documenta, as a series of public seminars. Was this something that was discussed in the artists' circles in Moscow?

BG – To a certain degree the initiative came from me, because I started my activities in Leningrad and had already participated for a long time in such seminars there. Leningrad's unofficial cultural scene was generally better organised than Moscow's. We had some samizdat magazines in Leningrad like *37* or *Chassy* (Watch) that appeared on a more or less regular basis, etc. But the seminar didn't actually need any specific organisation. People were well connected, they were in regular contact—this was a very close network. So it was very easy to organise people, to bring them together.

The seminar was not really interdisciplinary, because the participating poets and writers were also involved in the visual arts in one way or another. On the other hand, the ideology, and not a profession or a discipline, was decisive. First of all, the participants had a common aesthetic programme. It was similar to the situation with the Surrealist movement, where the borders between artists, poets, philosophers, writers and filmmakers were less important than the common Surrealist programme. And secondly, the participants shared a certain political attitude. They were not political dissidents, but they were in clear cultural and ideological opposition to the official Soviet culture of that time. That produced a certain degree of ambivalence in their attitude to Western Conceptual art, which was—at least rhetorically—left-leaning. We should remember that all these art movements took place in the more general context of the Cold War. Russian artists at that time saw Western leftist politics as being pro-Soviet, as being favourable to the regime that oppressed them. On the other hand, the Western left-wing cultural opposition saw Soviet dissidents as traitors working at least 'objectively' for the CIA.

The situation was indeed complicated. Conceptual art became the lingua franca of the cultural opposition in the seventies. This united oppositions in the East and West on an aesthetic level. But their political sensibilities and attitudes were diametrically opposed to one another, because the regimes to which they were opposed were themselves diametrically opposed. The Cold War split the cultural opposition, including the contemporary art scene of that time, even more radically and uncompromisingly than the dominant regimes themselves.

That is why Beuys' political engagement could not find much positive resonance in Moscow during this historical period. Actually, this split between the cultural oppositions of East and West that has its roots in the Cold War has by no means been overcome yet—and it could be much more persistent than many people expected it to be immediately after the end of the Cold War. After the removal of the communist regimes and the end of the Cold War, the old enmity and distrust were reproduced—using different ideological signifiers—by the former oppositions that now came to power. This process of reproduction through opposition can last for a very long time—longer than people generally imagine.

AV – I'm really curious as to what examples you see of this ideological opposition being played out today. Boris, what does this mean for an art school? Does it have to be set up with an inbuilt oppositional structure, or just extremely aware of its various political contexts?

BG – It seems to me that left-wing intellectuals and artists from the West were shocked by the readiness of the Eastern European populations to abandon the socialist model and embrace a pretty rough version of capitalism. In recent years I have been repeatedly asked by Western colleagues if Eastern European intellectuals and artists would be ready to join the anti-capitalist movements in the West and in the Third World. I said, 'Yes, some of them are very much anti-capitalist,' but I also added that for many people in Eastern Europe, being anti-capitalist means being anti-Modernist and anti-contemporary art because Modernism and contemporary art are perceived there as the signs of Western capitalist expansion. And that means that the sensibilities are still different.

Does it mean that this should be made a topic for education? Rather, it should be made a topic for a discussion. The concept of education presupposes some privileged knowledge that has to be transmitted from the teacher to the students. I don't believe that we can speak about such kinds of knowledge in the context of contemporary art. But, of course, it is useful for an artist to be informed about what happens in the art world and also in the world of politics, theory and cultural studies. The concept of information is usually regarded as being something more profane than a concept of education. But, actually, well-informed people can be pretty inventive and effective—even if, and maybe precisely because, they are not especially well educated.

AV – Actually, this reminds me that virtually all the primary texts used in theory, art history or studio classes in all the schools I went to in New York in the late eighties to early nineties were basically either directly Marxist (Adorno, for example) or very strongly influenced by Marxism, like Foucault. This is interesting because it is taken completely for granted, like air—a kind of a sublimated ideology that underlies all Western contemporary art education.

BG – It seems to me that the absolute majority of today's world population believes that today's art is, actually, the art market, that art is primarily a commodity and that the art market is simply a specific fraction of the general capitalist economy. Marxism is only a sublime high-culture version of this dominant opinion. But beyond that, the Marxist tradition is also 'critical'. And it is critical in a double sense. It is critical of the authors who think that art is something more than simply a commodity—such authors are treated as being 'metaphysical', 'idealistic', 'naive' and blind to the economic and political realities of our world. But Marxism is also critical of people who accept that art is a

commodity and enjoy works of art as beautiful commodities. The correct attitude is to think that art is simply a commodity, but to hate this fact. In this respect, the Marxist tradition reproduces, on a rhetorically sophisticated level, the common-sense opinion that life and, especially, art are actually shit. Adorno is especially good at formulating this evident truth in philosophical language.

But the power of ‘critical theory’ depends substantially on faith in the power of capitalism itself. You have to believe that capitalism is indestructible, that the work of art is always a commodity, etc., to be able to be permanently critical in the Marxist way. Critical theory believes in its own truth because it believes in the historical stability of the object of its critical analysis. But for somebody who was raised outside of the capitalist regime, a critique of the Marxist type is less attractive because they cannot believe in the all-encompassing power of capitalism. In the Soviet Union art was not a commodity, there was no art market, but art was made nevertheless. Maybe this art was also shit, but it was a different kind of shit that cannot be analysed by the same ‘critical theory’ by which the capitalist shit is analysed.

AV – I’d like to bring up Nicosia, the site of our Manifesta 6 School project, as a concluding question. The history of Moscow Conceptual artists in the seventies and eighties is an amazing example of how (what you describe as) an opposition within an opposition can push artists to find potential not only in what is excluded and forbidden, but also in a critical reflection on the ideological nature of everyday reality. The Middle East, therefore, would provide interesting circumstances for similar developments. There are not only large areas of exclusion, but also factors of religion, nationalism and the legacy of colonialism which distort the Marxist/capitalist dialectic we all are used to in the West. Can we imagine a present-day, advanced educational structure for these conditions—to support a complex oppositional stance in a space that is more committed to ‘information’ than to ‘education’, and where the specific dispensation of privileged knowledge of a traditional education model is de-emphasised and its sanctity open to question? I would also be very interested in what critical models you propose in your own classes at the Centre for Art and Media.

BG – The capitalist subject does certain things because he or she is paid for doing these things. Or this subject raises money to be able to do things he or she likes to do. But, of course, one can also do things without being paid for them. Or without being sponsored. In this case we have to do with religion, nationalism, different ideologies, etc. The subject of religion or ideology does things without being paid for doing them. This is already a scandal. To do things unpaid means to be violent—violent against the others or at least against oneself. That is why Soviet art is still excluded from Western art history. It was made outside the art market—and so nobody knows its value. At the same time, this art is immediately perceived as being intrinsically violent, as being a kind of secret brainwashing—even if it does look very peaceful. To reflect something beyond the market means to reflect the violence. That means also to reflect capitalism itself as a form of violence—after all, capitalism can only survive because its security is guaranteed by the military and police. And how to be critical? I don’t think that we have to have a specific critical model to be able to be critical, because that would mean that we accept this critical model uncritically. And we actually don’t need such a critical model to formulate a critique. Every discourse wants to prove that

it is right and true. But by doing so it also shows that it is at the same time a wrong and false one. If a discourse would really be a true discourse it would be immediately evident—beyond any additional proofs or explanations, beyond any additional apology. But in reality every discourse wants to situate itself inside a certain discursive field, to show its differences and its similarities in relationship to the other discourses, to explain why it should be trusted, etc. Every discourse—as every artwork—can present itself only by means of such a self-apology. But every apology can be read as a critique. The need for an additional apology already reveals that things are not so obvious as they should be. Maybe this is precisely the goal of education: to make the students able to read an apology as a critique.

Notes for an Art School

Jan Verwoert

School's Out!-?

Arguments to challenge or defend the institutional boundaries of the academy

The relation of the academy to the field of art production is difficult to assess. First of all the academy is defined by the symbolic boundary that designates the inside of the institution as a place of education by distinguishing it from the outside world of uneducated amateurs and mature professionals. Is there any sense in guarding this symbolic boundary today or is it high time to abolish it?

The critic of the academy will argue that, as art students produce art just like any other artists, the dividing line between the inside and outside of the academy appears to be little more than a virtual boundary. Its only evident function is the establishment and enforcement of the distinction between those who have received the legitimation to call themselves artists (now and in the future) and those who are barred from this right. To call this boundary into question means to challenge the institutional power of the academy to monopolise the right to legitimise art—and is therefore quite simply the right thing to do. Against this argument the defender of the academy will hold that the symbolic boundary between the academy and the outside should indeed be guarded as it in fact continues to be one of the few untouched barriers that, ideally at least, protects art production from the competitive logic of the art market, and gives students the right and freedom to develop their practice in experimental ways that are not yet constrained by the pressure to serve their work up to the public as a finished, recognisably branded product. From this point of view, the right political move would not be to tear down the boundaries that preserve the freedom to experiment, but rather to defend them. Both positions have a point. So the academy can today be understood equally as a monopolist institution of power and as one of the few remaining strongholds against the art market.

This contradiction manifests itself in many different forms. The fact that the academy offers a refuge from outside pressures, the critic will claim, is precisely the reason why liberal and conservative academies alike become safe havens for ageing professors who can indulge in the privileges of their power without ever having to check the premises of their teaching against the realities and criteria of contemporary art production. What then is the academy but a machine for the reproduction of ignorance that warps the minds of emerging artists by feeding them with all the cynicism and defensive narcissism that flourishes in the brains of stagnated professors? Even if this may be true in some cases, the defender of the academy will respond, the strength of the academy still lies in the fact that it is only here that different generations of artists can coexist, learning from and confronting each other, while the outside art world either ignores the importance of the generational contract for the sustained development of art production or reduces it to the market logic of promoting new generations like new product ranges. In the age of the biennials, the generation gap actually seems to have narrowed to two years, as each new show is expected to introduce the next set of freshly emerging artists. This is why the academy has to be preserved as a place where generations are given the space and time to emerge and age at a pace that is not dictated by the speed of the market.

Fair enough, the critic will answer, but in the end the very assumption that the atmosphere and understanding of art production inside the academy is substantially different from the world outside is flawed. Instead of providing a genuine alternative to the market, the ideas about making art and being an artist entertained by people inside the academy are very often just a distorted version

of the dominant principles of the outside art world, with the effect that much of the art made in academies only reflects the desperate desire to approximate the standards which students believe to be the current status quo of gallery art. By the same token, it is at the academy that all the competitive strategies that are later put into practice in the market are learned and exercised in the shark-pit of the classroom under conditions that might actually be even more severe than those prevailing in the real world. If that should be so, the defender will retort, then this is precisely the reason why academies should first and foremost teach an awareness of the difference between the academy and the market, and of the potentials that this implies. And it is precisely this difference that especially the outwardly more progressive institutions fail to recognise as they invite active professionals from the field of contemporary art to familiarise students with its current status quo. The questionable outcome is that these students then emerge from their courses equipped with a ready-made knowledge of the latest aesthetics and terminologies of critical discourse, but nothing to contribute that would make a substantial difference within the field—since to make a difference is something you only learn when you take the time to grasp and confront the traditions and conventions of art practice and discourse.

Superficial teaching is not acceptable, the critic will agree, but this is because in general there is no excuse for bad education. And this is also why it is crucial to create open and dynamic structures, for instance, to bring younger professionals from the field into the academy as they may have valuable experiences to share and can play the crucial role of an intermediary generation between students and older professors. Having said all this, I still wonder: Haven't we only been discussing political commonplaces so far? To create the conditions for a good art education has always been the primary task of the people who run institutions, just as the struggle for better conditions has always also been the cause of student protests. These conflicts cannot be solved theoretically, they have to be fought out practically.

The Academy as a Site of Production Within the Expanded Field of Academia ...

Instead of pedagogical agendas, the critic continues, we should rather discuss the more basic question of what the function of the academy could or should be today! Can we really take it for granted that *education* is still the one and only purpose that the academy is to serve? According to the logic by which the function of the institutions within the field of art is conventionally defined and administered, each institution has a different role to play, of course. Art education is supposed to take place in the academy, art production in the studio, art presentation and circulation in the gallery, art collection in the museum and private home, and so on. If we assume, however, that the assignment of distinct roles to different institutions—following the maxim of 'divide and rule'—is, in fact, a strategy to consolidate existing power structures within the art world, should it not be a primary political goal to question such authoritative definitions of what an institution is supposed to be and do?

After all, there is ample evidence that the redefinition of the role of the academy is already in full swing. Ever since the conceptual turn in the art production of the late 1960s, the academy, apart from being a place of education,

has been claimed more and more as a site of art production, presentation, circulation and collection. The Fluxus performance festivals staged in academies in the 1960s are an obvious example. Similarly today, seminar settings provide a forum for the screening and discussion of video art and alternative films. As their works come to be collected in and circulated through university and academy libraries, the academic field has become a primary audience for at least some alternative film and video makers. In general, the definition of conceptually-based art practices as interventions into critical discourse have brought the field of practice much closer to the academic field. When, as Brian O'Doherty has elaborated, the conceptual work is reduced to an ephemeral gesture, project or proposition that challenges and renegotiates conventional definitions of art, the primary mode of existence of such a dematerialised work may in fact be its discussion and documentation in a contemporary academic discourse.¹ Consequently (as shown, for instance, in the intense exchange of ideas between the producers of the new wave of institutional critique and the critics of the American magazine *October*), the symbolic distance between the artistic production and academic reception of conceptual works can (for better or worse) shrink to an intimate circle as artists respond to the theoretical views proposed by academic writers, whereupon these writers, in turn, update their premises by reviewing the works the artists have produced in relation to their theories, and so forth. In the light of these developments, the academy today must be understood not only as an institution for education, but always also as a site for the production, discussion, circulation, collection and documentation of contemporary conceptual art practices.

To open up the academy to these new tasks also means to break down the boundaries of the institution. As the range of those who become affiliated with the academy by joining the academic discourse is expanded to include all kinds of artists, writers and cultural producers, individual academies become immersed in the general field of academia. Ideally then, the status of the single institution is no more than that of one hub among many that channel the discursive productivity generated by the field as a whole. And although the field of academia may often have to rely on individual institutions to host presentations and discussions, it is, in principle, not fully dependent on these institutions, as it can generate its discourse in personal exchanges and informal discussions just as well as in public symposia or exhibitions. The basis for the open affiliation of different producers with the academy is, in turn, not so much an identification with the role model of the academic but, on the contrary, a sense that, within the academy, clear identity profiles are suspended. In the expanded field the academy thus attracts, especially, those cultural producers who are marginalised within the field of art production because their professional identity (which may oscillate between that of an artist, writer, researcher, project maker, etc.), when measured in conventional categories, is as much in limbo as that of an art student of whom no one can say yet if he or she is a future artist or not. In general, work produced in the academy is a preparation for future art. The uncertainty of the status of work done in the academy (which notoriously prompts debates over the question whether student work should be judged by different criteria than the work of 'mature' artists) implies a huge potential, as it allows for experimentation with working models and forms of production that are not sanctioned by conventional standards. The academy can, therefore, become a site for unsanctioned forms of production

when it is activated as a local support structure for an international discourse between marginal cultural producers and intellectuals. In this spirit, the academy must be transformed into an open platform that offers a viable alternative to the museum and gallery system through the integration and redefinition of the functions of art education, production, presentation, circulation and documentation.

... Or as a Site of Resistance to the Depreciation of Skills

When you formulate the concept of an expanded field of academia with that much utopian vigour, the defender of the academy's boundaries will respond, it may sound like a good idea. Yet, if you look at the standards of work and discourse this expanded field has established so far, things appear in a different light. It still remains to be discussed whether much of the conceptually-based work that passes as an intervention into open critical discourse can, at the end of the day, really count as a substantial contribution. Often enough, those producers who participate in the international circuit of marginal artists and academy members have so little time left to do work as they travel from project to project and tackle issue after issue that all they can possibly do when they are invited to contribute to a show or conference is to hastily gather some available information and stitch it together around some more or less witty ideas. This has little or nothing to do with the in-depth analysis and sustained debate that only becomes possible when people take the time to develop their skills and positions within the context of a specific academic discipline or artistic medium. What we see, instead, is the rise of a new culture of art project-making that is superficial in its content, and in its form deeply entangled in the power play of competitive curating, as these projects are primarily commissioned to fuel the machine of the global exhibition industry and simulate a constant productivity, which purposefully prevents everyone involved from ever reflecting on what it is that they really produce.

The submersion of conceptually-based practices in the global exhibition industry we see today, the defender of the academy's boundaries will continue, is in fact the outcome of a tendency Benjamin Buchloh diagnosed early on as an inherent danger of the dematerialization of art production and deskilling of art producers pushed through by the Conceptual art of the late 1960s. The radical dissociation of art from all aspects of a skilled practice within a conventional medium, Buchloh warned, would in fact make Conceptual art all the more vulnerable to outside forces that seek to determine the shape and meaning of the work: 'In the absence of any specifically visual qualities and due to the manifest lack of any (artistic) manual competence as a criterion of distinction, all the traditional criteria of aesthetic judgement—of taste and of connoisseurship—have been programmatically voided. The result of this is that the definition of the aesthetic becomes on the one hand a matter of linguistic convention and on the other the function of both a legal contract and an institutional discourse (a discourse of power rather than taste).'² Buchloh concluded that the only form of art that could withstand co-option was a Conceptual art that engaged itself in institutional critique and criticised the exhibition industry from the vantage point of a distanced observer. You could, however, also come to a different conclusion. When the working model of the flexible but deskilled conceptual producer has been established as a global norm, a new strategy of resistance can be to reclaim traditional criteria of medium-specific art practice and defend the academy as a site where skills can

be acquired that may strengthen the autonomy of the artist in the face of the new set of dependencies created through the hasty culture of project-making.

Can the Academy be a Place of Initiation
Into Practices of Resistance?

But what then, the critic will hold against this, is the difference between the strategic evaluation of the skills acquired through an academic education which you propose and the neoconservative call for a return to traditional standards? Can you really distinguish one from the other? Or are you not inadvertently playing into the hands of retrograde traditionalists when you praise the potentials of a skilled, medium-specific practice and deny the revolutionary character and liberating effects of the conceptual turn in the late 1960s? Yes, the defender will agree, it is indeed essential to make it clear that the strategic re-evaluation of the notion of skilled practice and academic education in no way betrays the spirit of the initial liberation of art from its confinement to academic disciplines achieved by Conceptual art. Still, it should be possible to renegotiate the concept of skills *in the spirit* of the critical break with disciplinary power. In fact, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak seeks to do precisely this in her book 'Death of a Discipline'.³ In a discussion of the fate and future of the academic discipline of comparative literature, Spivak confirms her belief in the political necessity of an undisciplined form of teaching that challenges the literary canon of colonial modernity. At the same time, she articulates her discomfort with the deskilling of students who receive their literary training only on the basis of the advanced interdisciplinary approach of cultural studies and, as a result, often lack the basic skills of closely reading texts which students enrolled in traditional courses do acquire. 'We have forgotten how to read with care,' she writes.⁴ To rehabilitate the ideology of a disciplinary academic education is not an option. Instead, the question Spivak raises is on the basis of what method or model the skills of a discipline could be taught in a different spirit within the horizon of the critical philosophy of interdisciplinary education that cultural studies stands for.

To learn the skill of reading literary texts, Spivak argues, means to be initiated into the secrets of a cultural practice that can be a source of resistance against the administration and commodification of knowledge production if this process of initiation is carried out under the right conditions. One condition is that the skill of reading is not taught as a technique of mastering the language of literature, but rather as a sensitive practice of 'entering into the idiom',⁵ dedicated to the disclosure and protection of precisely those aspects of literature that remain resistant to any form of mastery, due to the sheer specificity of their language. In this sense, Spivak writes that, 'in this era of global capital triumphant, to keep responsibility alive in the reading and teaching of the textual' is a practice of resistance as it defends those moments within culture that cannot be commodified and made commensurable.⁶ Moreover, Spivak stresses, it matters *in whose name* the ceremony of initiation into the idioms of literature is performed. So, the second condition Spivak formulates is that academic education should be dedicated to a justified political and ethical cause. As a model for this moment of political and ethical dedication, Spivak draws on a proposition Virginia Woolf makes at the end of *A Room of One's Own*. Woolf asks her fellow women writers to dedicate their work to the evocation of the ghost of Shakespeare's sister, which is to say that they should write for a future audience of emancipated women writers and readers

and thereby call it into existence. To 'work for her' is the formula Woolf suggests for this moment of dedication. The distinctive quality of this formula of dedication is that it is specific enough to give a clear political perspective to the project of a feminist literary practice, while at the same time sufficiently open to avoid dogmatism. In the context of Spivak's argument, this formula of dedication becomes a model to describe the general importance and specific character of the attitude with which the initiation of prospective intellectuals into the skills of literary practice is to be carried out. It should take place in the name of a different future and be dedicated to the cause of making that future possible.

So, the critic will ask, the argument is that the dedication of the process of initiation into academic skills to a justified cause will transform the nature of the procedure of teaching and learning those skills from a tedious disciplinary ordeal to a progressive project? Is this not what also Nietzsche meant when he said that the right way to go through with a classical disciplinary education was to 'learn how to dance in chains'? The reply this idea must provoke from anybody with a free mind is the question of why chains should be necessary in the first place. Why should anybody submit themselves to a procedure of initiation when it is clear that such procedures by definition imply the forceful internalisation of the laws of tradition, a violence that can never be justified by the principles of the Enlightenment? No matter what cause you dedicate the procedure of initiation to, the means can never be redeemed by idealistic ends because they are inherently brutal. The only true alternative is to reject outright the academy and the form of disciplinary education it represents. Here we have got to the bottom of the matter, the defender of the academy will concede to the critic, because, in the end, the question we will have to continue to discuss is whether you can dismantle the disciplinary power of the academy and put its potentials to a different use, or whether the power structures of the institution remain too inflexible to allow for such a process of transformation. I believe that it is possible, but in the end we will have to see if works out or not.

Notes:

1. On the intimate relation of the conceptual gesture to the intellectual context of its realisation O'Doherty writes: 'It [The gesture] dispatches the bull of history with a single thrust. Yet it needs that bull, for it shifts perspective suddenly on a body of assumptions and ideas. [...] A gesture wises you up. It depends for its effect on the context of ideas it changes and joins.'
 Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (San Francisco: The Lapis Press, 1986), p. 70.

2. Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, 'Conceptual Art 1962–1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions' in Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson, eds., *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: The MIT Press, 1999), p. 519.

3 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Death of a Discipline* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).

4. *Ibid.*, p. 42.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 50.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 101.

Notes for an Art School

Olaf Metzel

SayNoProduction

In front of the gallery stands a 7-series BMW. It has been parked with care and the parking tickets are clearly visible, squeezed between the large rubber mats under which the vehicle is hidden. The title: *Erlkönig* (Erl-King). Every two hours, new parking tickets are bought and added to the existing collection. After two days, the vehicle is towed away and parked in the police compound in exactly the same state as it was in front of the gallery—in other words, buried underneath rubber mats. The reason it was towed away? Overstaying short-stay parking. For the two days it was there, a surveillance camera installed inside the gallery regularly took photos of the wheels.

Next to the computer on the desk in the gallery there is a coffee cup containing some leftover coffee and a spoon. The spoon is tinkling softly as the cup slowly rotates anticlockwise on its saucer. The title: *Schwarz und süß* (Black and Sweet).

On the wall opposite there is a huge felt-pen drawing, three by five metres in size. A mildly abstract depiction of people fighting. Title: *Oktoberfest Abend* (Oktoberfest Evening).

Fifteen small photos that would normally be kept in a photo album have been mounted in a row along the gallery corridor. They show a family enjoying a picnic. In the background are columns and the silhouetted skyline of Kabul. After a few more family snaps of this nature, the series ends with another picnic, this time on the Olympiabergr in Munich. In the background are the columns of the BMW Tower. This time the women are not veiled. Title: *Der 30. Geburtstag meiner Schwester* (My Sister's Thirtieth Birthday).

'I'll lick the surface that you'll just scratch, if you scratch each other. Scratch the wounds that you'll open, if you open each other. Open the box that you'll buy, if you buy each other. I'll sell the work that you'll want, if you want me. I'll want the fame that you'll reap, if you reap...' This was the beginning of a video that, like the other works described here, was on display at the show called 'SayNoProduction'.

Back in the seventies, Donna Summer's big hits ('Love to love you' etc.) were produced in Munich by a man called Giorgio Moroder with a label called 'A Say Yes Production'. In no time at all they established a music scene set for global success. The talk was suddenly of the 'Sound of Munich'. All this has long since become cult, just as pop culture has become standard fare and artists born in the seventies and eighties—whether in the music business or in the fine arts—have more questions than answers. The distinctions between the various media were becoming blurred long before globalisation. The result? Crossover and anything goes.

One purpose of the 'SayNoProduction' show at Galerie Klüser 2 in June and July 2005 was to highlight the wide range of thematic approaches and sheer complexity of the working methods that have developed in Munich during the past few years. The exhibits included murals, sculptures, installations, objects, video and photography. 'Just because they shout "action", that doesn't mean you actually have to do anything,' Marlon Brando is alleged to have said. That may be true, but if an art scene is to retain its vitality, then it has to be constantly renewed and reinvented. Whether the conditions of production or society itself have changed (or not), whether in line with a trend (or not), whether swimming against the tide (or not). No self-financed art projects. No off domain. And definitely no

institutions. But rather a gallery where contemporary artists from Germany, Austria, Romania, Turkey, Kazakhstan, Iran and Afghanistan can show their work. What all these artists have in common is that they all studied—or in some cases are still studying—in Munich. The exhibition consisted of two parts or rather—to extend our musical metaphor—of an A-side and a B-side, although it is often difficult to decide which is the better of the two.

‘Ne travaillez jamais’ said a slogan on a wall in Paris’s rue de Seine in 1953.

The Situationist International took this up—expressing a particular way of life that tried to put down roots there. Christopher Gray’s comments were characteristic: ‘Total despair was never far away. Guy Debord described one evening when they were in an apartment somewhere, all completely stoned and drunk. It was almost morning and nearly everyone had crashed. Debord alone was still smoking a joint when suddenly he smelled gas. He went down the corridor to the kitchen at the far end of the apartment. There, two friends were sitting at a table and drinking in silence. All the windows were closed and the gas was turned on full blast. They had hoped the whole lot of them would die painlessly in their sleep.’ Productive ‘saying no’? ‘Say: no Production’ or ‘say no—Production’? Defiance or active resistance? Social and/or political activism? Certainly not advice in the sense of ‘don’t say yes when you want to say no!’ Or ‘say no by default’ from the book *Good to Great* by Jim Collins ... and ‘Feel free to say no’ need not belong to the script of an anti-smoking campaign.

Whether the participating artists had a bachelor’s or master’s was not a criterion when we pieced together this show, by the way. No grades, no points, no system, no rules and no political correctness either. Art cannot be taught.

During the preparatory phase we went up to the Walchensee, which is the coldest mountain lake in all Bavaria. The whole class—all twenty-eight students. And painted watercolours! Oh yes and we bathed too, of course, and barbecued and drank a bit as well. The watercolours later went on show at a different gallery and some of them even sold. ‘That’s how delightful studying can be,’ the newspapers said later.

The same students organised a parallel project. They put the Art Academy under observation using cameras, bugging devices, transmitters, computers, mattresses, potato crisps and plenty of drink—all installed behind the blinds of an empty office unit on the opposite side of the road. The photographs were then published in the press. Fluid transitions—what does it mean to be inside or outside the academy—was it deinstrumentalised?

It must have been late 1970 or perhaps early 1971—the first album from Kraftwerk. Although denigrated as junk in some quarters, I still decided to buy it. With such legendary tracks as ‘Ruckzuck’ and ‘Megaherz’, an original album these days can fetch as much as a thousand euros. Somehow, it seemed to be just the right music to go with the book I was reading back then—a book called *Keiner weiß mehr* (No One Knows Anymore). I had just enrolled at university and had decided to study art—mainly because I could not come up with anything better.

Whereas Kraftwerk became an international success, the author of my book, Rolf Dieter Brinkmann, would write only two more books. He was killed in a road accident in London in 1975 and thereafter forgotten, although

those who loved the three books he did write still consider him worth reading. Classic pop culture.

Keiner weiß mehr was published in the late sixties and according to the blurb describes ‘the feeling of a new generation that has yet to make its mark’. By the end of the book, the author is so jaded he seems to find everything ‘lousy and phoney’. After all, no one knows anymore. It was with these bleak thoughts in mind that I opened ‘personne sait plus’ in 1998 at the Villa Arson in Nice, a show in which the featured artists reacted to this situation with a variety of strategies. A form of grassroots activism, perhaps?

‘Our tendency,’ writes Bazon Brock, ‘to identify institutions with the buildings they occupy [...] demands that we view them simultaneously from both the inside out and the outside in.’

When I first entered the Munich Art Academy in 1990, I walked straight out again backwards. I would prefer not to be reminded of the musty atmosphere that hit you upon entering, or the decrepit state of the building. What cannot be denied is that compared with other art schools, it was certainly one of the worst. So why would anyone want to accept a professorship there, still less to be the rector of such an institution? Was it just an experiment? The appeal of grassroots activism? Before long, the newspapers were decrying the ‘anarchy at the academy’ and what they called ‘intellectual hooligans’. In other words, the compliments came raining in! One thing was clear, the academy was suddenly in the spotlight. Even just our non-hierarchical apprehension of art was enough to get people’s hackles up.

My doubling as artist and rector could certainly be described as a contextual situation or perhaps even as Conceptual art. It was therefore only natural that my work should address this issue head on: *Basisarbeit* (Grassroots Activism), for example, was the title of an installation I created about the art academy itself. In addition to a conference table (‘It’s all been said before, but not everyone has said it yet,’ as Karl Valentin once said), the installation also featured voting booths (because we just love democracy), a chaotic assortment of files, a paperweight—in this case a miniature of the academy—and a book. Actually a reader, published in 1999 at the end of my stint as rector in hopes of making the situation at Germany’s art academies more transparent—or at least of facilitating discussion on this subject.

In the foreword, I suggested that an art academy should in fact function much like a supermarket in which the students are free to help themselves to what they want from each department—be it in photography or philosophy, in groups, workshops or seminars, whether with just three students or with thirty. Everyone is at liberty to fill his or her trolley, but no one has to pay. The art academy itself as an experiment—well, that need not remain a pipe dream. With sufficient conviction, it is indeed possible to support such work and projects as promise to venture into new terrain and to nurture the creativity of the younger generation. The focus must be on both the artistic production process itself and the theory of the same in an interdisciplinary context—the learning situation as shaped by the national and international art scene. Artists, art historians, critics, curators and gallerists must of course be willing to engage in free and frank discussion, for only an academy that is at the centre of such exchange can truly be present.

No matter whether the grassroots activism is from the top down or vice versa—these days, art can be produced everywhere and anywhere and in all circumstances. It is simply a question of organisation, infrastructure and flexibility. The transitions are fluid. And that there will always be a periphery is actually just as well, for that is how the social spectrum is broadened. William Copley once said that, ‘Only when you know what art is not is the whole world open to you.’ Perhaps that is why I sometimes felt like an intensive student. ‘Personne sait plus’, no one knows anymore. Ultimately, there are more questions than answers. The introduction of tuition fees here in Germany will turn students into paying customers. Higher education as a glorified shopping trip? The university as a provider of consumer services? ‘The change of roles from student to paying customer ... will lead to social exclusion’ warns Katja Jedermann. The rich have to become richer—so that the poor can become richer too? If you read between the lines of Karl Marx’s *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, even he was in favour of tuition fees: ‘If in some states [...] higher education institutions are also “free”, that only means in fact defraying the cost of education of the upper classes from the general tax receipts.’ So what now? *Realpolitik*, New Deal? Or is it time to subvert the whole system?

‘Anyone who these days is concerned with drafting or implementing curricula is bound to run up against the demand of officialdom that he or she take a stand on profitability profiles, teaching principles, teaching results, grading criteria and such like. Management jargon is eating its way into our institutions ...’ (Charles Harrison). The university as a public-private conglomerate with bureaucratic barriers. The *Bologna Reader* of the German Standing Conference of University Rectors contains a sample teaching unit called: ‘Intercultural Communication in Multicultural Societies’. Thank you very much. Horses I can see, but horseness not. Studying literature, meanwhile, students dip into Büchner, Dante or Racine in the manner of armchair tourists, highlighting a few lines here, copying a few pages there—but no more than that. Learning outcome: five credit points. Enough to join the Jehovah’s Witnesses selling the latest issue of *Watchtower* in front of the railway station or why not go straight to the Salvation Army? Who needs a second wave of European-style colonialism? Not fast track—wrong track.

‘The teacher is now no more than the gatekeeper of a legitimisation process ruled by the logic of equivalent value [...] Today’s freshmen students seem to be miles away from the elitist professionals on the international biennale circuit [...] they are non-professional newcomers who are merely striving for this elitist status.’ (John Miller) What should be taught? Should we teach at all? Does teaching simply mean galvanising students into ‘networking, self-organisation, self-positioning, self-management, the courting of sponsors and even project management?’ (Ute Meta Bauer) Should it be geared to the art market? What function do artists have in a globalised world? ‘In the US education system, driven as it is largely by consumer interests, it is usually the part-time teachers who are most dependent on their students’ grades [...] and it is here that the main weaknesses of the system reside. For how can teachers subject to such constraints act courageously? Only those tensions that are part of the real learning process generate real friction.’ (Trebor Schulz)

‘The question of the extent to which art can be taught and learned—like the issue of the role of our academies and art colleges—takes us back to the mythic apprehension of creativity [...]. as a means of explaining how transgressing the rules of the prevailing orthodoxy in the name of creativity has become the norm.’ (Beatrice von Bismarck)

There is something rather stale, inhibited and self-pitying about nineties-style discursive institutional analysis and critique. The most common grievance is the loss of the critic’s own significance and in some cases that of the legitimacy of his or her own scholarship. Much of what is written about our academies and art colleges is completely lacking in subtext and amounts to little more than the cognitive equivalent of running on the spot. After the third art theory lecture, hardly any students want to attend the seminars, which all too often merely repeat what has been said before or degenerate into a tour of the professor’s card index. If attendance is high, then only because it is a requirement for admission to the exams. Rather less esoteric self-fulfilment and rather more genuine exchange would certainly not come amiss. The art academy is there for its students, after all, and Germany still has open and liberal educational opportunities. Perhaps that is why so many German artists are successful abroad? Perhaps that is why so many foreign art students choose to study here? Of course plenty are needed if at least a few of them are to be any good.

Erst rechts, dann links und dann immer geradeaus (First right, then left and then straight ahead)—the title of one of my early installations, a work made of crash barriers, the idea being that of a roundabout. And it was meant literally too. You do not have to bully your way into the fast lane right away, but the fast lane should still be what you are aiming at. ‘When you’re doing something, you should play your own game and not spend your time looking over your shoulder at where your own game is not,’ says Friedrich Kittler.

‘The work is bearable for as long as it is unfinished,’ wrote Mario Merz in 1983 in *Von den Erfindungen zu den Aussichten*.

No more concepts that are promptly discussed to death, but actions, happenings or—better still—exhibitions. ‘SayNoProduction’ is the latest in the series that began with ‘Küssen und Fahrradfahren’ (Kissing and Cycling, 1996) and continued with ‘personne sait plus’ (1998), ‘Basisarbeit’ (1999) and ‘Rote Zelle’ (Red Cell, 2004–05).

A recent UN survey of big conurbations concluded that one of the salient characteristics of a city is its consumption and production of culture and demonstration in an urban setting of how cultural output can be consumed. Of particular importance here are what are known as ‘Creative Urbans’, a term that doubtless includes artists for whom, being a kind of urban-cultural ornament—to quote Marius Babias—society at least offers the prospect of self-fulfilment, albeit a fulfilment subject to certain financial constraints. There can be no question that the functionalisation of art and culture serves above all economic interests. What is at issue is the image of space as a commodity, the city itself as a commodity. Public space these days is occupied by private enterprise and politics, each of which—whether in the form of a folk dancing society or national league

football club, to say nothing of arts and culture—has a share in the value-added production of the city as a commodity. Art is both a means of expression and a platform for the fictional variable of public space. I am thinking here not so much of mega-events disguised as art shows, but rather of ambitious exhibition projects. It need not be another biennial, nor does it have to be visionary or propose a different attitude to the public in the ever-changing city. The attractiveness of the art scene with its fluid borders could easily be demonstrated in larger exhibitions. The onus now is not just on the numerous institutions, but on those executive bodies that organise such shows and on curators and artists themselves. These are the ones who can best document and illustrate the complexity of the world in which we now operate and who together with the media can forge ahead with such projects.

Urbanity in the form of row upon row of empty blocks of flats—the ruins of superfluous investment, to say nothing of superfluous architecture?—On the positive side, though, it can at least be said that property speculators are not doing as well as they would like either and that soon there will be still more office space standing empty, which may well cause commercial rents to fall below housing rents, thereby opening up some interesting and exciting new venues. This is one subject that is certainly not confined to any one particular city.

‘Leicht kommt man ans Bildermalen, schwer an Leute, die’s bezahlen,’ (‘Painting itself is easy enough; what is hard is finding someone to pay for it’) quipped Wilhelm Busch in *Maler Klecksel*. Artists, and especially young artists, need opportunities to show their work and to make contacts—not just to galleries, but to colleagues, collectors and curators as well.

The mid to late nineties saw a plethora of exciting student projects—among them *Café Helga*, *Galerie Goldankauf*, *Club lebomb*, *Seppibar*, *Chicks on Speed*, *Kein Mensch ist illegal*, etc.—developed on academy premises. As cities have changed their image, so there has been a change of strategy in favour of temporary, self-financed, self-organised exhibitions and other spontaneous activities in leased premises.

Last year saw the opening in Munich of the *Rote Zelle*, a small red building in the courtyard of a residential block, the purpose of which was to add to the range of available art venues and in doing so to increase public awareness of the quality of the work being done by students at the academy. The project was co-founded and is still being run by a firm of book designers on the ground floor of the block in front and enjoys the support of the building’s owner; my own role is more that of advisor than curator. Certainly a cellular structure in which everyone is involved and in which new perspectives can be explored under changed conditions is bound to be an inspiration for such young artists as already have some experience of exhibitions and have already had their debut in public. What makes this project so out of the ordinary is the way in which both landlord and tenants are working together to facilitate the production and exhibition of spatial art in what is actually a very ordinary setting. What also makes it a model worth copying is that it has been limited to two years, if only to prevent it turning into yet another institution. A detailed report on the project is to be published early next year.

At a show in Denmark in February 2000, Chilean artist Marco Evaristti exhibited an installation consisting of a Moulinex mixer filled with water and live goldfish. The appliance was hooked up to the mains and was in perfect working order. Although most museums have a rigorously enforced 'Do not touch' policy, a number of visitors apparently took a different view and countless fish were pureed. The show provoked a scandal. The artist himself described it as a 'social experiment'. An instance of art undergoing a metamorphosis? A short time later, the museum bought the installation and since then, instead of swimming around in water, the fish have been preserved for all eternity in synthetic resin.

It is actually very simple. Someone who has no key to unlock the door and who is not strong enough to kick it in might just as well call a locksmith and claim to have locked him or herself out. This is more or less what is happening to our art colleges too. Art is always a reflection of the times in which it is created and will always be associated with those times and viewed in that context. At some point, however, production takes on a life of its own and becomes an end in itself and in doing so crosses the Rubicon from surplus to superfluous—the never-ending remix better known to us as pop culture.

Jane Birkin once said that when she recorded 'Je t'aime' with Serge Gainsbourg, she had no idea that even then, that was already a utopia. Unfortunately, things like that tend to dawn on us only much later.

Notes for an Art School

Haris Pellapaisiotis

Speaking Thoughts:
On an Art School

Cyprus has got itself a biennial, Manifesta, and with it, it hopes to demonstrate its contemporaneity as a newly joined member of an expanded European Community. In 2001, when I resettled in Cyprus after 34 years of living, studying and working in London, there was a palpable sense of remoteness. Cyprus seemed geographically and culturally distant from events that were shaping the rest of the western contemporary art landscape, something that was felt especially strongly by the local arts community. Cyprus' accession to the European Union in the spring of 2004 meant that the island's future became intrinsically linked to a broader network of activities that are as much cultural and artistic as they are economic and political. Since accession, there has been a noticeable thawing of the isolation. In a way, the presence of Manifesta in Cyprus is testament to that. This is not to give the impression that the local arts community was passive; a few non-commercial art groups and individuals had initiated projects whose underlying purpose seemed to be creating contact between Cyprus and the outside world and the questioning of established ideas about art and culture.

In the absence of an art school in Cyprus, or of any other forum that might accommodate critical and constructive debate on art, I became involved in initiating and organising a series of annual seminars. Artalk began in 2003 and took the form of presentations by international artists, curators, historians, academics, philosophers and writers around themes and issues relating to the direction contemporary art is taking. As an extension of these seminars, Artalk invited the speakers to stay longer in Cyprus, and arranged less formal impromptu gatherings. These ranged from visits to artists' studios to late-night discussions in informal settings that allowed for a different level of exchange and debate. Creating a space that encourages different aspects of learning and exchange and breaks down the conservatism and pomposity of the distinctions fostered within academia is, I think, an important aspect of any creative educational institution and in particular of an art school. Mohsen Mostafavi of the Architectural Association (AA) in London highlights the importance of this when he refers to the bar at the AA functioning as a central meeting space that provides a different kind of environment for engaging in discussion. 'The idea is to construct a situation in the School that is enjoyable, that inspires and motivates people.' (Mostafavi, 2003)

Artalk as an organisation has been mindful of operating on these lines and, by identifying and responding to a gap within the culture and providing a public service, it has also sought to create its own distinct way of operating that allows for a layered and more natural interaction between the invited speakers and local artists, academics, intellectuals and members of the public.

From the outset, the policy was to encourage the participation of the wider community in the programme. The seminars were open to the public free of charge, and people from a range of professional backgrounds and disciplines attended. Also with diversity in mind, the seminars were programmed to expose the audience to different perspectives on the same subject. The spring 2005 seminars, which took as their central theme 'The Politics of Mobility', included presentations by Catherine David, who spoke of mobility in the context of her ongoing project on Contemporary Arab Representations; Michael Haerdter, who addressed mobility in the context of artist residencies as in the work of Künstlerhaus Bethanien in Berlin and Res Artis—International Association of Residential Art; Claudia Wegener, who introduced her writing project '24hrs' and

the work of Foreign Investment, of which she is a member; and Ursula Biemann, whose work focuses on gender relations within the global economy, media, technology and urbanism.

Although the programme started with artists in mind, it was interesting to discover that the greatest enthusiasm and openness for debate came from non-artists, who seemed much more readily able to accept the issues raised within the seminars as abstract philosophical explorations that allowed them to approach their own daily practices from a slightly different perspective. In contrast, a number of artists expressed their disquiet with presentations that lacked visual material and also with work that did not produce consumable objects for placement within museums or galleries. This distinction between art as commodity and art as an exploration of the constitution of 'self' and its relationship to the everyday is an issue that runs through the history of the vanguard in art and is of relevance to the formation of any future art school.

What is an Art School?

An art school can be thought of as an art project. An art project can be thought of as a thinking site, functioning as a springboard from which ideas and concepts can be brought back to the notion of an art school, and give it new form and direction.

A recent article in *Artforum* (summer 2005), entitled 'Remote Possibilities: A Roundtable Discussion on Land Art's Changing Terrain', seemed to bring to the surface an endemic distinction that is symptomatic of the state of contemporary art: what I have called the 'be for art' and 'before art' syndrome; the dichotomy between emphasis placed on the production, marketing, selling and consuming of the art object on the one hand and, on the other, the notion of art as a creative way of engaging with the world. In the context of the theme of the 'remote'—as in artworks and projects being realised in distant places—the notion of 'stepping out' geographically and conceptually from the 'art circuit' was expressed by two of the participants in the roundtable discussion: Rirkrit Tiravanija in relationship to his project *The Land*, and Pierre Huyghe, who referred to his project *Antarctica* as 'a place without pre-existing protocol, a non-knowledge zone ... a place that's not overcrowded with meaning, rules, culture, even longitude and latitude'. Huyghe's reference to 'a place without scenario' is perhaps indicative of a broader criticism of the academic conventionalisation of meaning within art. Huyghe indicates the right of the artist to engage with art as process or event—not art as image or as representation of an event, but art as an integrated part of the everyday; where the everyday is brought back into the fold of the art praxis.

Reciprocity between art and the everyday is by no means a new idea. Nevertheless, if we are to accept that a fundamental aspect of art has been the production of objects to look at, either for pleasure or contemplation, then the dematerialization of 'the object' and the absorption of art into the everyday, as an event, does represent something of a fracture with modernist productions and practices and calls into question the very purpose of the art school. The present model of an art school has centred upon looking at, producing and talking about the unique object of art and developing strategies for positioning it within the art market. The lives of student-artists revolve around the anxiety of the production of the art object and it is through the object that their worth

is measured. The break with such a tradition in art presents an opening for rethinking the purpose of art and of what an art school *is* and what it *does*.

Art Without Object

Conventionally, the art school has reflected a dominant ideology that evolved around the production of the unique object. This idea was, and largely still is, prevalent within the world of art. Historically, the unique in nature, and analogously in art, has been revered in ritual acts as symbolising contact with the ineffable and the untranslatable. The art object, through the act of public spectacle, became imbued with a sense or 'aura' of some greater reality. Walter Benjamin demonstrated how the institutionalised world of art is connected to the social order, which idealises and adulates the unique as symbolic of a transcendent reality. This is what John Berger (1972) calls 'bogus religiosity'.

Modernist art, as Clement Greenberg defined it, and in particular painting in the form of Abstract Expressionism, which is no longer mimetic of nature, entered an age in which the very surface of the painting became its own self-referential reality. Hence, the uniqueness of the object was in the materiality of the medium and that was what differentiated painting from sculpture and art from other activities. Art and the artist demarcated well-defined boundaries between the inverted concerns of the world of art and those of society. The studio was generally regarded as a hermetic refuge from the outside world. In his studio, the artist entered into communion with his craft in search of the absolute and sublime through dialogue with the material itself. Art became self-referential, art for art's sake—and was primarily intended to engage the viewer on a one-to-one basis. This perception of art underpinned art pedagogy and a system of operation within the art school that emphasised the purity and distinction of art and the singular vision and insight of the artist.

By the beginning of the 1960s, the outside world had already entered the sphere of art in the form of Pop Art, with its reference to popular and consumer culture. The modernist distinction between art and wider culture and the privileged place the art object occupied on the basis of its uniqueness came under attack. Arthur C. Danto writes that 'the master narrative of the history of art' came to an end with the demise of Abstract Expressionism and the rise of Pop Art. Danto argues that when anything can be a work of art, as in the case of Andy Warhol's 1964 *Brillo Box*, where there was nothing in the outward appearance to mark the difference between 'art' and objects in supermarkets, then the meaning of art ceases to be taught by example. According to Danto, art makes the transition from experience to thought. Art becomes conceptual and one needs to turn to philosophy for an understanding of art (Danto, 1997). An illustration of these shifting concerns can be found in the work of the artist Joseph Kosuth. In *One and Three Chairs* (1965), he displays three versions of a chair: an actual chair, a photograph of the same chair made in situ and pinned on to the wall, and a blown-up dictionary description of the term 'chair', again pinned to the wall. In this seemingly simple display, Kosuth throws doubt on what constitutes an art object, mixing signifier and signified, and challenging the viewer to consider which is the object of art.

By pointing outward, to the everyday, artists were heightening

a perception of the world at large and extending the right to look across and contemplate a wider field of visual reference. In doing so, they were raising issues of the very contiguity of art to the everyday and articulating their own sense of being in the world. Ed Ruscha's photographs of *Twenty-six Gasoline Stations* (1963) comprised bland and ordinary snapshots of gasoline stations on the highway between Los Angeles and Texas. The artist comments on the work: 'I don't have any message about the subject-matter at all. They are just natural facts, that's all they are.' (Meyer, 1972) Ruscha's seemingly nebulous and intuitive peering at the world, coupled with a healthy disrespect for aesthetic protocol, contains within it the seeds of complex entwining references. Photography, with Ruscha, becomes a deictic language that situates the artists within an actual event; there is no sense in which he seeks to transform the object aesthetically. The art is the event itself, the point of contact between the artist and the space he occupies, the space itself being a complex weave of geography and personal topography, a space to be appropriated by the 'I'. (De Certeau, 1988) In addition, Ruscha's photographs present a conceptual cultural landscape that exists within the collective consciousness as a form of Americana, an image that has been mythologised by the road movie. The photographs were reproduced in a small, slim book, which Ruscha published and sold for three dollars apiece. The artist states, 'I am not trying to create a precious limited edition book, but a mass produced object.' (Wolf, 2004)

The depreciation of the uniqueness of the object, together with an increasing interest by artists in the visual vernacular of the everyday and the banal, signified a perceptual shift in the arts from the production of the 'pure' self-referential image, or the idea of the original in the form of a palpable artwork, to art that connected the artist to the outside world physically as well as conceptually. Artists literally took themselves out into the world or engaged the world within their art. In *Catalysis I* (1970), Adrian Piper spent a week moving around New York in smelly clothing that she had impregnated with a concoction of vinegar, eggs, milk and other substances. In *Seedbed* (1972) at the Sonnabend Gallery, New York, Vito Acconci, hidden under the floorboards of the gallery space, masturbated to the sound of the viewers' footsteps in the empty gallery above him. The unknown viewer was drawn into the work as Acconci spoke his fantasies into a microphone. Both these artworks direct attention away from the art object as product and throw the spotlight onto the artist and the event as art. Piper's and Acconci's actions point to another landscape, not to topography and the idea of personal mapping, but to social distinctions between the spheres of public and private. The gallery visitors, or in the case of Piper the general public, are not allowed to operate within the comfort zone of being a spectator, separate from what they see. Rather, the spectator is forced to internalise the work through the anxiety of displacement.

These artists are challenging fixed notions about the demarcation between the viewer and the work and between personal and monumental space. These unrepeatably gestures created by the artists have inscribed themselves within the history and mythology of the avant-garde in art. Their relevance for us today is in locating and evaluating our own contemporary practices; a necessary process, particularly in an era where the 'master narrative in art' has been replaced by consumer capitalism and a state of excess and intensification of the production

of the art object.

As our understanding of art becomes more amoebic, our sense of what constitutes an art school also becomes more questioning. We can now look beyond the conventional art school model, with its emphasis on the production of consumable artworks, for a possible re-articulation and transformation of the paradigmatic structures that form an art school.

Notes on an Art Project: A Thinking Site:
An Art School

In the roundtable discussion that appeared in *Artforum*, summer 2005, Rirkrit Tiravanija spoke of a project which, while very different, nonetheless encapsulates similar sentiments to those expressed by Pierre Huyghe. This project was *The Land*, which he initiated in 1998 with fellow Thai artist Kamin Lertchairprasert. The project is *not* art, as the founders are adamant to point out. It is literally a piece of agricultural land whose significance lies in the convergence of artists, local farmers and students, with the aims of producing foodstuffs, of functioning within the sphere of the everyday, of growing vegetables, cultivating rice and working towards 'a sustainable infrastructure, not outdoor sculpture'. Tiravanija also referred to the project as a thinking-site away from the art world circuit. In addition, *The Land* functions as an impromptu art school, with visiting international artists giving talks to local art students. Tiravanija sees *The Land* as a laboratory, lending itself to long-term projects without expectations or time frame.

Whatever paradoxes and inconsistencies this project may operate within, it does open up a timely space for conjecture, for rethinking and re-articulating the structures of the art school based on group dynamics rather than individualism, integration rather than exclusion, hybridism rather than purity, exploration rather than interpretation. It points to an art that is essentially social and purposeful, rather than self-serving. It is possible to imagine the function of an art school quite literally as individuals coming together for a common purpose, to explore and discover what that shared purpose may be at the collective level. This seems to me a profoundly important vantage point from which to think about the formation of an art school. Perhaps we should not be thinking of a school as such, but a laboratory that lends itself to exploration, as proposed by Tiravanija. That an art school could first and foremost be simply a collection of people coming together to explore possibilities in relationship to the collective seems an excitingly alternative start. No architecture required; the needs of the group take shape and form as they arise and expand. The process is organic and about mutual respect; not a building of bricks and mortar, an institution of logical divisions and abstract splits. The group learns to function on the collective level as an organism that is allowed to expand and contract according to its own needs, that is, the needs of the group. It will form itself into a distinct body with no preconditioned forms, structures or functions. An art laboratory with such a sense of orientation would make it possible to advance art projects of a different time-scale to those accommodated within the present model of an art school. These would be projects that are not directed towards the consumerist imperatives of the art market but instead evolve out of collaboration and shared interests and engage individuals of diverse backgrounds, not just artists. Unlike an exhibition, whose content can be

unpacked and staged anywhere in the world, an art school does not function as an isolated system, and, in order for it to have a future, it needs to interact with the world around it, both at the local level and connecting to the wider art community. I believe a truly progressive art school needs to respond to what is lacking within institutional spaces of culture and seek to transform everyday life. Further, it would function as a matrix that opens up spaces for exploration, experimentation and growth beyond conventional expectations and time frames.

References:

- Baker, G. 'An Interview With Pierre Huyghe', *October*, 110 (2004).
- Berger, J. *Ways of Seeing* (Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1979).
- Benjamin, W. *Illuminations* (London and Glasgow: Fontana/Collins, 1977).
- Bishop, C. 'Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics', *October*, 110 (2004).
- Buskirk, M. *The Contingent Object of Contemporary Art* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: The MIT Press, 2003).
- Danto, A. C. *After the End of Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).
- De Certeau, M. *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1988).
- Deleuze, G. *Negotiations 1972–1990* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).
- Lefebvre, H. *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000).
- Gablik, S. *The Reenchantment of Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991).
- Griffin, T., 'A Roundtable Discussion on Land Art's Changing Terrain', *Artforum* (summer 2005).
- Meyer, U. *Conceptual Art* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1972).
- Mustafavi, M. *AA Prospectus 2003–4* (London: Architectural Association School of Architecture, 2003).
- Wolf, S. *Ed Ruscha and Photography* (New York and Göttingen: Whitney Museum of American Art and Steidi Verlag, 2004).

An Interview with Tobias Rehberger by Mai Abu ElDahab

Kitsch, Destruction & Education

An extract from a conversation between Tobias Rehberger and Mai Abu ElDahab in the kitchen of Rehberger's Frankfurt home on 6 November, 2005. Rehberger is a full-time teacher at the Staatliche Hochschule für Bildende Künste (Staedelschule) in Frankfurt am Main, where he himself was once a student.

MAD – What were we saying?

TR – We were discussing the idea of the art school. Florian [Waldvogel] asked me to write about what could be the ideal school. I thought that that should be easy because I have a strong idea of what I think and what I'm doing with my students at Staedelschule. But it's actually quite complicated because I'm not doing something fixed with my students; I'm doing many different things with them without having a clear pedagogical focus. You see, with each student it's completely different.

MAD – Right.

TR – To one student I have to speak this way, and to another student I have to speak another way. I have approaches which are more productive than others, but only to a certain extent. I would never decide that a particular model would produce a good artist. In the end, the students decide for themselves how to be good artists because a school is about forming something that doesn't exist yet, something which the students themselves have to discover.

MAD – Now that you've been doing this for a while, do you think that you've found certain ways to move in different directions with different people, like a good starting point to foster a certain atmosphere?

TR – In my experience, the first thing you have to do with students who are just beginning is destroy their expectations, this kitsch they enter art school with. They're coming in, saying, 'I've made it, I know what I'm doing' when most of what they know is a very clichéd idea about being an artist and what an art school is and what they're going to learn. So 'learn' becomes a very important word for them to get used to. The first things you have to teach new students is what the school can offer them, as well as what it can't offer and what it shouldn't offer. You have to begin by destroying their idea of what the art school is.

MAD – Have you evolved this process of destruction?

TR – Usually after you destroy these ideas, you have to remake them, or that's what I try to do. I destroy a lot of things, but only what I find to be clichéd ideas about artists' lives, about art, about art school. At the same time you have to help them to feel comfortable with these same ideas. It's not as if you just hammer at them and leave them to pick up the pieces themselves, because this is still a school and it's a protective space. I also try to help them to understand that they can depend upon this protection for a couple of years. They can stay in bed if they like, no problem. It's their responsibility. However, if they choose to deal with me, they also have to accept that I need to destroy certain things, and that I will give my opinions. It's quite a delicate process, in a way, to make them feel that you like them and that you take them seriously. You have to be really hard to them too, but this is also about how seriously you take them. If you just say, 'Fuck off ... this is shit' then it doesn't work. In the end you have to make them understand that they have to find out for themselves. They have a limited time that is given by, I don't know whom, to find out what it is that they're really interested in. So it's very important that the students begin by at least shedding their pre-education somehow, and the idea that they have to do certain things. They don't have to do certain things. They have to do what they really think is important and not what they have been educated to think is important. I'm always saying, 'You have to surprise me. You have to go beyond what I am telling you. Otherwise you can only reach my level and that's not very interesting because you're already there.' If you're

able to get rid of the kitsch you're carrying around, then you almost automatically get there. It could be super boring but at least it's something else, and it's your own.

MAD – When I was young I would paint, and I always knew that I was painting what other people were painting. At some point you break through a barrier to where you begin doing something which is yours, which can be really difficult.

TR – Yes, that's the hardest. It has a lot to do with being honest with yourself, and I don't mean it in an entertaining way; it's quite difficult to be honest. It's not that the students shouldn't have points of reference—they should, which is another thing they have to learn. Many students think that in art school they're detached from the world. Though you do have to move away from it in a certain sense, you shouldn't lose touch with the existing system.

MAD – Are there any texts that you recommend for students when they begin? For example, Walid Raad teaches at Cooper Union. He always begins by giving his students Howard Singerman's *Art Subjects: Making Artists in the American University*. I think for him this can be a way of destroying the kitsch, as you say. Do you have anything similar to this?

TR – I've never thought about it much. I have always begun with the individual student. Some need to be destroyed by different means than others. I also like to think about what somebody needs. I would find it a bit inappropriate to be always using the same hammer, somehow, though it's probably just a question of character. I don't think I would give a book to everybody; there's nothing like the personal discussion. There are so many ways to approach a thing, but there are also so many ways to escape understanding for oneself what is there. I think if you stand there and look at somebody's face and explain something to them, this just has a very different impact.

MAD – I was wondering about, say, showing the person in the desert a Malevich painting or something like this.

TR – I think it would work very well, but it would give too much direction, like a solution. Now that I think about it, maybe that would be something that students would want: 'So I read this book and now I understand. What is the next book you're giving me to make me an artist?' I have the feeling that most people are very shocked when I tell them, 'Now you're in the school, but you should know that you can't learn anything here, you're aware of that?' Then usually their eyes get big and they don't understand why they're in a school where they can't learn anything.

MAD – How did you pick Stedelschule originally as a student?

TR – I was applying to Düsseldorf because I had learned that it was the most famous school with Josef Beuys and blah, blah, blah. He wasn't teaching there any more, but it was a famous school, it was the biggest, and it's still the biggest art school and the most well-known. It was the first art academy in Germany, I knew about that. I also knew about the University of the Arts in Berlin. So I was applying for these two schools. But while skiing in France, I happened to meet a girl from Frankfurt. So I moved here and called the city office to ask if they have an art school here in Frankfurt. Then I applied and they took me. It was pure luck because at that moment Stedelschule was completely changing. When I arrived, Kaspar König also arrived, and a lot of new teachers arrived. I think that, before this, it was one of the most horrible schools you could imagine.

So I was just lucky that all these people arrived and were kind of opening up the whole thing, but I did it basically because of a love affair.

MAD – What's the system? How were you accepted?

TR – There are a couple of ways to be accepted to the school but the main way is by handing in a portfolio. Then all the teachers look at the portfolio, along with five students.

MAD – Is this portfolio in a file somewhere now?

TR – My portfolio? Oh no, you get it back. (laughter) I think my parents still have it somewhere in a cellar ... I don't know. There are usually somewhere between two hundred and fifty and five hundred portfolios and then you choose between fifty and fifteen people to invite for an interview. They still go through this. I think parts are quite stupid, like there was a test in which the applicant creates work on the spot, which I think had to do with wanting to check whether somebody really made the portfolio themselves. We've changed it a little bit already and we're thinking about changing the whole system but the interview is certainly the most important part.

MAD – Who interviewed you? Do you remember?

TR – I remember that Thomas Bayrle was on the committee.

At that time the system was still a little different because they had two committees interviewing at the same time, so some people had to talk to this committee and some people to the other. Now that I know who was in the other committee and who they are, I'm almost certain that I wouldn't have been accepted had I met with the other committee.

MAD – Were you surprised when you got in?

TR – No, I was really sure that I would get in (laughs). My attitude was, 'I'm gonna go there and change everything.' I had no idea what that meant. I just thought, 'I'm so different', because I was so different from everyone else in my village. I figured that I must be different from everyone else here as well.

MAD – Were you shocked to find you weren't so different?

TR – No, I was quite different.

MAD – Really?

TR – Yeah, because somehow I had this idea, at least a very vague idea, that it has to be about conflict, about developing something very different from anything anyone else did. I was very much really longing for this conflict, somehow.

MAD – Was there a moment when you realised, 'Oh, I'm at home now', or was it always something of a conflict?

TR – No, it was both at the same time.

MAD – And then after the first year you chose a teacher?

TR – Right. I had Thomas Bayrle as a teacher for my foundation course, but since that was the last year the foundation existed, he got his own class and I just stayed on with him.

MAD – How did you pick Thomas Bayrle?

TR – At the time I thought he was the most interesting. I stayed with him for basically all five years that I was in the school. For me, he was the most interesting teacher. Gerhard Richter was there for two years. He's certainly a fantastic artist, but I never had the feeling that he was a fantastic teacher.

Thomas Bayrle was always so awake, he was always so open to a lot of things. He had people in the class who wrote text, he had people who dealt

with the computer in a way which was very uncommon in the late eighties. He had painters, he had sculptors, he had everything, and he was quite open, and also vague. Precise and vague at the same time—he could be very hard to understand. When he speaks, he's very metaphoric, so it was always a challenge to interpret what he was talking about. You had to square it with your own interpretation.

MAD – And was he already doing group things then?

TR – Yes, group things mostly. We had a class meeting once a week where we just discussed things. Mostly people's work, but then other things as well. I have to say, I'm now teaching like him a little bit, but not exactly like him, of course. I find it's always very productive to have open discussions in front of the class. It's also very helpful for the people who prefer to just listen. I'm also doing these class critiques. If somebody insists upon having an individual critique, I do that too, though not as often. Most of the time I'm trying to convince people to present their work in front of everyone so it can be an open discussion.

MAD – Do you think many other students found it difficult to work with Bayrle?

TR – A lot of people found it difficult because he wasn't telling them specifically what to do. He would see an object that looked like a plate and talk about the autobahn or something. You really had to understand the way you wanted to relate to his way of speaking. There were people who were frustrated and left the class. He was not the kind of teacher who said, 'You should make this a little bit more like that' and that's fine. It was never about that. It was never about having a catalogue of qualities. He was always trying to find reasons for qualities, but at the same time asking if they are valuable and in what sense they are valuable. Some people might have found it too soft. Just as he would never say, 'This is good because of exactly this' or 'You should also do this and then it's good', he would also never say, 'This is shit.' He would also talk about the autobahn again. I think this was frustrating for a lot of people, but for others it was extremely constructive.

MAD – If I understand correctly, he left for a year and then Martin Kippenberger took over.

TR – The school has a system of guest professors which the students can select themselves. He had a free semester—every seventh semester you take one research semester. At the same time, as the whole school, we invited Kippenberger and Ludger Gerdes, an artist from Munich who was very theoretical. Gerdes would have his seminars and talk about Baudrillard and all that kind of stuff. Kippenberger wasn't taking over Bayrle's class, he created his own class. At the first meeting there were twenty-five people, then at the second there were fifteen, and in the end there were eleven or twelve students, and then it stayed like that. Kippenberger's way of teaching was completely different again. He would just constantly trash everything and tell you how stupid you are. It was very difficult, he had this very strong presence. In the way he lived his life, it was almost as if he wouldn't allow any possibility for another role model to survive next to him. It was very much like a sect. This was extremely counter-productive for a lot of people because it was hard to think with your own head. I would often catch myself wondering, 'Why am I thinking like this? Because that's exactly how Martin would think about it.' It was extremely difficult to keep him from overlapping with your own identity, because he wouldn't allow you to

think about things in a way that was different to his own.

MAD – How do you feel about this pressure now, in retrospect?

TR – If you survive, it's good. I could give a couple of examples of when it was just totally destructive. Many students just adopted his way of thinking, and of course you could do that maybe once or twice, but you can't just be Kippenberger. Of course not. He wouldn't accept anything other than his own way of thinking. He would never say, 'It could be like this, but it could also be like that.' It was always 'like this', nothing else. That's how it was a little bit like a sect. He would tell you something like 'You should leave your girlfriend because you're an artist and you shouldn't have one', or something really related to your personal life. Then he would insist upon that and be personally insulted if you didn't do it. I have to say I was always kind of accepted but I was always also in a way the black sheep of the family. I think it changed in the last couple years of his life when he wasn't teaching as a job. He had moved to Frankfurt, just around the corner from here. When his teaching job was finished, he would just hang out with the same group and go on, because it was never just teaching. It was not about the institution. Also, because he was someone for whom it was very hard to be alone, because when you're alone, I guess, you have to face yourself. He was totally paranoid about self-doubt. He wouldn't allow that—not from himself and not from other people. He always had to have people around him.

MAD – Sounds slightly traumatic.

TR – Yeah, it was traumatic to a certain extent. I learned a lot from him and it was extremely interesting. As a student, he encouraged you with very interesting encounters. For example, as a student you were meeting museum directors or gallery owners. He just dragged us all over the place for these openings and we would meet a lot of artists and friends of his and just sit at a dinner table with them and talk to them. It was extremely good for me.

MAD – Did he thrive on having these protégés?

TR – Totally. He was always—almost paradoxically—raving about school. He was always saying what a stupid thing it is to have an art school, but then when we would go to New York with him he would be super proud, almost childishly proud, to present his students, and he is the professor. It was kind of a paradox. He died when I had just stopped being a student and was starting to be an artist. There are a lot of things I would have liked to talk to him about. Even shortly after I left art school I already felt that the relationship had changed a bit, because he would suddenly consider you to be an artist and not a student anymore.

MAD – Was it a good group of people? Did you have a good chemistry? A lot of the time you find that so much depends upon a moment when you have the right teachers or faculty and the right students; a chemistry that just works. You can't orchestrate that, it can just happen. Did you have that?

TR – The chemistry in between the classes, with the people I was with ... these people were quite good, we hung out almost every day. It was interesting and it was exciting most of the time. We did funny things and stupid things which other students wouldn't have allowed themselves. We also allowed ourselves a certain amount of arrogance. It was definitely a great time, but it had this other side to it, a difficult side.

MAD – I think it always needs both.

TR – Right. Like with Kippenberger, in a way, it was much more about

himself than it was about us. He used us, and we wanted to be used because we thought we could get something out of it. And we got something out of it. For some people it was productive and for others it was not. It was paternal, but in a very conservative way. He was the father, and you don't question the father. It was complex. I can't say that he didn't take care of us. He made a lot of things possible for us. We would go to Vienna for his show, and if somebody didn't have the money to come along he would help him out—not because he wanted this guy to go, he just wanted everybody there. It was also kind of an ego thing for him, in a way.

MAD – How much time did you spend away from Staedelschule between when you were a student and when you began teaching?

TR – About ten years ... nine years.

MAD – That's a long time. Were you excited to return to the place where you studied?

TR – It was funny because I had offers from other schools and I was thinking, 'Should I do it or not?' I was asked a couple of times to teach here, but I didn't feel good about it because there were too many of my friends—some of whom were still in the school.

Then when Daniel Birnbaum asked me to do it, it was the right time because I had been considering taking a teaching job anyway. I realised that I enjoyed it from having done a guest professorship in Munich and a couple other smaller and bigger workshop things. When Daniel asked me, it was so convenient. If I want to teach, it makes the most sense to do it here in Frankfurt. I liked how it was just around the corner so I could go in my pyjamas. It was exciting, yes, but I was also a little bit doubtful, feeling a bit like someone who's married to the school. But then, after a while, I realised that it wasn't a problem. I'm involved, but it's not something I think about every day. I think I can handle it quite well. I still have enough distance and it doesn't disturb my work at all. I have to say that I really enjoy working with the students, which is mostly because the students I have are really interesting. I also liked the way Daniel wanted to run things.

MAD – Did many other people come in at this time, like you?

TR – Daniel was the first, and then I think Michael Krebber and Isabelle Graw and myself, then Wolfgang Tillmans, and then Simon Starling, and then Mark Leckey. There was a great deal of change happening automatically because contracts were running out. Some of the teachers were getting old enough to retire and Daniel just started bringing in a new generation, and of course a bit of a different attitude. I guess this was also part of the reason he took the job—because he saw that he could rebuild the school in a slightly different way. He was an art critic and philosopher, and he was also curating shows a bit and had run an institution before. Kaspar had been working in a university before, in Canada. He was also a curator. I think, after the experience with Kaspar, which was very positive, we wanted the director of the school not to be an artist, but to be somebody who is extremely related to it. I think it's very good again with Daniel, I have to say.

MAD – How much time do you have to be at the school?

TR – You mean in the contract, so to speak? For me it's different than it is for other teachers because I live in Frankfurt. I have a more or less regular class meeting every two weeks. Sometimes I do it every week. Sometimes there will be three weeks in between. It's not completely regular.

MAD — So, being in Frankfurt, you probably have a more intimate relationship with your students.

TR — That's true. You don't always teach in the classroom.

Suddenly you meet four students in a bar and you start talking, and talking is also teaching. Then sometimes people come to my studio. It's not that I'm always available for them, but it's easier than it is for teachers who live in other places. Sometimes I go with them to see a football match, not with the whole class, but maybe three or four students. I like this family structure. It makes it easier for them to understand that if you're very hard on them it's not because you want to insult them or that you don't care. It's quite nice.

MAD — So is there anything totally horrible about the school?

TR — Something horrible about the school? We don't have enough money!

MAD — Or maybe something you find difficult.

TR — I understand, but it's hard ... I never thought much about it. Tell me something which you think is difficult, or possibly negative about the school, just from what you know about it.

MAD — I think—as an outsider—that it could perpetuate the dated master-pupil system a bit. Do you think this is the case?

TR — Yeah, I can see what you mean, but I don't have the feeling that it's so true in general. It might be a little problematic in some classes. If I compare it to a school like Düsseldorf, which has basically the same system of master-pupil, with one professor who is really the master—or the god, we do have that system, but I don't think that this is what we're really presenting in the end. It's also just that the Städelshule is so small. The students all know each other and they always talk to each other about what's happening in each other's classes and how it is, and 'Why does your teacher always say this?' and 'Why does your teacher never criticise?' and so on. The general atmosphere in the school is totally not about this 'master' thing.

Honestly, for me it's hard to imagine how to make a better school than this one.