

Editorial

The arts of education and education in the arts in late-capitalist times

The place of art in society is hotly debated. This also applies to the question of the role of art in education and education in the arts in times of change. This of course includes questions about the future of art schools and art education itself. But there is more, such as the demand for a broad basic education and access to the arts for all, the role of education in safeguarding the arts in the future, and the inspiration from the arts to think creatively about other forms of living together with human and non-human inhabitants. In this issue we want to shed some light on these questions. This not least against the background of current challenges (e.g. ecological catastrophes, migration movements, growing inequalities, etc.).

We cannot deny that today we are confronted with a rapidly changing society that is profoundly altering our relationships and dependencies. In many places, traditional frames of reference, classifications and modes of conduct are being challenged. Think of the increasing call for decolonisation of our schools' curricula as part of a broader movement that goes hand in hand with the demand for social justice: for example, the deliberate decentering of dominant Eurocentric knowledge and the move towards pedagogies that incorporate indigenous epistemologies and social justice practices (Lindsay, 2020). Another example is climate youth calling on adults to take responsibility for the world. 'Welcome to our world' chants the climate youth (de Wever & Gantois, 2019). Students are growing up in a digitalised society where information is shared and disseminated in the blink of an eye, a world over which the teacher no longer has control and where he or she seems to fall short with the knowledge they themselves have acquired. What does teaching mean in a society where old frames of reference no longer hold water and knowledge is constantly available via the smartphone? What is valuable, interesting and who decides? In other words, making school is no longer evident. The question we therefore want to take to heart in this issue is whether the arts can play a role in this late capitalist society, where our relationships with each other and with the world are thoroughly strained.

In the introduction to *Art & Design Education in times of change* (2017), Gerard Bast, the president of the University of Applied Arts in Vienna, writes:

In response to intertwined phenomena such as the global economic crisis, migration movements and the ubiquity of new technologies in everyday life, the demand for sharp analysis and conscious critique, as well as for artistic, participatory and political practices in governance, education and culture, is growing rapidly (Bast, 2017, p. 7).

Educational policy reports respond to this demand by stating that the acquisition of creative and innovative competences is indispensable for mastering life in twenty-first century societies. "Fostering creative capacities play a key role in addressing the economic, environmental and social crises (...) in Europe' (European Union, 2010, p. 19). Similarly, the OECD (2018) publication on the future of education in 2030 states that

people should be able to think creatively, develop new products and services, new jobs, new processes and methods, new ways of thinking and living, new enterprises, new sectors, new business models and new social models. Increasingly, innovation springs not from individuals thinking and working alone, but through co-operation and collaboration with others to draw on existing knowledge to create new knowledge. The constructs that underpin the competency include adaptability, creativity, curiosity and open-mindedness (OECD, 2018, p. 6).

In other words, there is an interest in the arts, in creativity and innovation, but the focus is not on the arts themselves, but on what they are good for. The emphasis on the arts is mostly justified in the sense that they add value to something else, namely the acquisition of 21st century skills that are intentional rather than attentional and open-ended (Biesta, 2017). As Nadine Kalin (2017) argues, "the current interest in the arts by educational policy is not considered a public, social and common good, but an investment in job training that must yield a return" (p. 24). Such instrumentalist logic, with its strong focus on predefined learning outcomes, is hardly what our troubled society needs today. Instead of assuming ever more comprehensive structures and frameworks that transform the arts into investable and measurable creative and innovative competences and outcomes, in this issue we will explore how (different modalities of) the arts can provide opportunities to engage with the world and make school for an open future (Biesta, 2017). Our aim is twofold: to rethink the role of the arts in education beyond instrumentalization and, at the same time, to ask about the significance of education in safeguarding the future of the arts.

To this end, the special issue brings together contributions from philosophers of education and from artists. Before we turn to these contributions, we present a conversation between a pedagogue and an artist, which was also the occasion for compiling this special issue. The pedagogue and the artist speak with and alongside each other. Each from their own background and intuition regarding the 'thing' at stake. The pedagogue explores school as a sensory space where the child connects

with the world by touching or studying it and relating it to what she already knows. The artist starts from a discomfort towards the art institution as the radar work of our post-capitalist world and sees in making school an opportunity to influence the form of the art space itself and to change its movements by reinforcing the existing collective dynamics within it. The dialogue is not intended to provide definitive answers, but is an invitation to rethink the role of art in education and education in the arts.

The arts of education

If we believe that the arts can have an impact, we are not advocating that more artistic or creative skills should be included in the curriculum. Of course, we share the concern that everyone should have a right to the arts and that the arts are not just for the gifted among us. But rather than focusing on the integration of the arts in terms of acquiring predefined outcomes and competencies on the one hand, or as innovative learning tools or even as the ultimate form of self-expression on the other, we want to rethink the arts as a powerful way to enter into dialogue with 'the world' - to discover the kinds of questions that we 'also' should ask (Vansieleghem, 2021a). Starting from the assumption that we are facing radically new challenges and do not know what we do not know and how thinking should deal with it, we would like to explore how certain artistic strategies and practices can help us to suspend predefined knowledge structures and epistemologies. We would therefore prefer to put it this way and hereby endorse the statements of the Brussels educator Pierre Temples, who wrote in his 1865 book *L'instruction du monde* that it is not writing but drawing that forms the basis of education: "le dessin doit être le principal, l'écriture l'accessoir" (Temples, 1865, p. 198). Temples sees in drawing the possibility of questioning the world. Not only does the young child make a connection with the world by touching it and relating it to what he or she already knows, but he or she also experiences that he or she can leave a trace: that he or she can not only experience the world, but also trace it and relate to it. In developmental psychology, it is said that the moment the child puts a circle - head-first - on the paper for the first time, thinking begins. The child feels drawn to something and then presses itself against that something. It draws a line and makes tangible what it touches. So it does not primarily draw something it knows, but that which it does not know. By drawing, she creates an in-between space, so to speak, in which she gives a place to what has not yet had a place, in which she turns her experiences into signs and subjects them to a test. It is about attending the world and making one's own experience of the world accessible to others. An opportunity to speak about what one has seen, heard, smelled or felt, to share this experience with others and to have it confirmed or refuted. One could say that in drawing, in making art, human beings begin to connect with the world (cf. Vansieleghem, 2021b).

Now one might say that if this is so: if drawing is something that is peculiar to the child, we should see drawing and art not so much as something that can save the school, but rather as an indication that the school is superfluous. Could it not be that the way art is integrated into the classroom today and in the past deprives art of opportunity rather than enabling it? After all, we are not dealing with an educational policy that enhances the child's formative capacities, but with a policy that tames these capacities. On the one hand, education policy wants to put the needs and interests of the child at the centre of education; on the other hand, it increasingly frames these needs in terms of predefined developmental competencies to be acquired. One may be inclined towards this policy, but one cannot deny that it is still based on a process of minimising the distance between the existing potential and the competences to be acquired. Education, or school, therefore remains not only the institution that tries to reduce the distance between student and teacher, but also that constantly affirms and reinforces this distance. In the sense that it is always an indication of where the child is not yet: what he or she does not yet know and cannot yet do in relation to predefined (usually labour market) goals and outcomes (cf. Vansieleghem, 2021b).

If we now go back and radically accept that we are no longer in a position to dictate what a future generation should look like; that the old generation has a responsibility but no longer has the power to assert its future, then perhaps it is time to radically rethink school. To see school no longer as a time and space where a distance is created between 'the one' who knows and the one who is 'ignorant', and where a distance is created on the basis of acquiring predefined and mainly labour market related competences, but as a collective arrangement where space is created to enter an unknown world, both in the way we can understand the unknown and for ways to deal with it. Art, then, not as a solution to the problems facing education or society today, but as a 'form' from which we can rethink the uniqueness of school: as an occasion where students are gathered in a space and where everyone has the power to connect what they perceive with what they have already perceived, and so can use this collective power equally to make their own path and put the world to the test. School, then, as a kind of *sensorium* in which seeing, feeling, smelling, tasting, touching and experiencing, rather than knowledge, are the starting point. Where one comes into contact with an existing world and can study it, without an immediate learning effect, but with the possibility of being 'affected' by and 'in dialogue' with the world and one's surroundings.

Perhaps art in school then does not primarily mean a demand for more creative and innovative competences, but a demand for the integration of a wordless language that we have known since childhood, which is not opposed to learning, but which allows us to actually engage with the rhythms of the world: We become able to

recognise subtle differences, even if they are obscured or mixed with others. We thus develop or become, as Bruno Latour (2004) would say, 'a nose' that enables us to inhabit a world.

Education in the arts

The way in which and from where art speaks, or perhaps rather shows things, should be considered a crucial fact if this art is to play a role in changing social and equal relations. On the one hand, subversive politics is thematically ubiquitous in the many biennials and prestigious art institutions; on the other hand, these very institutions are unerringly part of the radar work of our late capitalist world. They are poles of attraction for a booming economy and an accelerating gentrification. Autonomous artists are in the spotlight and seem to be presented as paragons of liberal individual sovereignty to be followed. Based on this, when we think about the role of education in the arts, we also need to review the positions, roles, and relationships of artists, art institutions, and curators, and ask ourselves what role the school, or rather "making school" within the arts, might play here?

When we say bringing school to the art world, however, we do not mean additional museum education programs or mandatory outreach. Rather, making school means affecting the 'form' of the art space itself and changing its movements. Making things visible by separating them from their usual environment is a characteristic that has been associated with art since the beginning of modernity (see also the article by Vansieleghem and Van Dorpe in this issue). This particular isolation creates the possibility of a different attention to what exists. Gathered on equal ground around the remotely placed 'thing', viewers have the democratic power to examine what is being seen and connect it to what has already been observed.

But this showing and watching never happens in a power vacuum. It is enough to recall the imperial violence of the colonial museum. The looting of thousands of artefacts-to preserve them and display them in museums-was accompanied by a disconnection from how these objects circulated within cultures and produced knowledge. Thus, what is not given voice in the "real" world is given voice institutionally through the global art collection (e.g., the museum, the canon). It is precisely this centralising showcasing that partially robs what is shown of its essential peripheral, subversive power. This is all the more true because the institutionalised art space repeatedly creates a distance between access and participation and non-access and non-participation. Didier Eribon describes this aptly in *Back to Reims*:

An interest in artistic and literary objects always ends up contributing, whether or not it happens consciously, to a way of defining yourself as having more self-worth; it helps produce a differentiation from those who lack access to those same objects,

or a “distinction,” in the sense of a gap between yourself and the others— those from an “inferior” or “uncultured” class... (Eribon, 2013, p. 106, our translation).

The potential of the art space thus goes far beyond the mere ‘neutral’ place where the individual can relate to the world in relative freedom. It can thus develop new forms of encounter between people that go beyond the calibrated forms in which social, hierarchical relationships already exist. In this context, Isabel Lorey (2016) speaks of the exchange of the partially subversive knowledge of the precarious, of the communicative search for the common in order to shape it politically. Bringing school into the arts means creating space to strengthen existing collective dynamics of political research in the art space.

It means thinking about the positions taken in collecting, exhibiting, and sharing, and including those who are normally excluded from the process. It means becoming aware of how these positions relate to others and the world, and taking responsibility for them by changing structures and practices. Schooling, therefore, also means exploring other ways of disseminating counter-narratives that aim to spread without bringing the margins into the centre.

When art thinks in terms of interactions and relations, instead of contemplation, then other experiences emerge, more in terms of human connectivity and togetherness. This way, relational art challenges the safe space of the white cube, expanding the experience of the passive viewer to a more far-reaching collaborative partnership. The little resistance of the white walls, then, are replaced by an acceptance of a loss of control and political conscientiousness and inspirations for social change comes in. One enters a battlefield, a contested terrain where many ideas are alive. Social relevance and social change are therefore not about solving problems, because the solution is often part of the problem. Rather, it is about taking a stance, even if we are not entirely sure we are intellectually on the right side. According to Nora Sternfeld (2013), it has something of a way of producing a mode of impossibility that challenges education with a qualifying ‘perhaps’. Thus, we might describe bringing education into the arts as giving agency to the ‘perhaps’. It might mean laying a ground to a claim, naming problems, and finding ways to render them negotiable and contestable.

Re-considering (art) educational time-spaces as a verb

In this issue we take this dialogue between the pedagogue and the artist as an invitation to reflection and conversation. The contributions gathered in this issue are a response to this invitation. They assume art not so much as a competence or a technique to be acquired in terms of standardised learning outcomes, but as a

verb. Therefore, each contribution approaches the double question in its own way, foregrounding a verb or practice that can help us rethink (art) educational time-spaces. *Camering*, *beginning*, *artistic cosmic forcework*, *studioing* and *unlearning* are strategies that have the potential to disrupt normative discourses and hegemonic pedagogical practices. Each of them is a strategy of reinvention. *Camering* aims to reinvent hegemonic notions of what counts as productive time by opening up space for the creation of indeterminate, undestined time for the exploration of what has been actively made present. Nancy Vansieleghem and Mattijs Driesen's contribution focuses on the camera as a tool and a verb that makes the world actively present so that it can become a common 'thing', and hence can make school real. *Studioing* is another attempt to create an alternative time and space that replaces the fascist and/or neoliberal subjectivities that underlie the concepts of efficient time and space. Tyson Lewis and Peter Hyland argue in their paper that art educators can unleash the pataphysics of the studio through protocol writing and experimentation. *Beginning* opens up the possibility of thinking beyond predefined notions of professionalism that focus on efficiency and embracing a moment of not knowing what the right response is. Similar to how an artist works in a process-oriented way, Sjoerd Westbroek's text shows how arts education can become what Freire calls a cognisable object that allows students to become student-teachers, and teachers to become teacher-students who take turns trying out new practises. *Unlearning* is a practice informed by decolonial pedagogies that aims to deconstruct hegemonic forms of knowledge production and distribution. By analyzing the art collective **pKp**, the contribution by Nancy Vansieleghem and Stijn Van Dorpe reconsiders knowledge production and distribution in the art/school space as a collective, sensitive practice. Finally, *artistic cosmic forcework* brings art and science together via a techné and through apparatuses that Jan Jagodzinski in his essay considers necessary for art education to address the problematic of the Anthropocene. Through artscience or scienceart he wants to shift the ontological ground for art education to think along a cosmology that is adequate for the Anthropocene era.

Taken together, *Camering*, *Beginning*, *Artistic Cosmic Forcework* and *Unlearning* can be understood as a toolbox or kit for developing a transformative educational paradigm for the (art) school and the art space.

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