

Every now and then one can find it difficult to know whether you've really learnt something or not. From time to time, learning can be perceived as having something you already knew confirmed, but you haven't had the confidence to stand by it. My education at the Royal Institute of Art has often seemed that way; being forced to build a stool so that I can be told what a waste of time it is to do so. The lectures have often gone that way too. Every so often I tell myself I see a pattern: If the lecturing artist is productive and gets results, the lecture itself is often lacking. I've regretted going to meetings and lectures many times because it just feels like a waste of time.

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The Royal Institute of Art is located on a small island in the middle of Stockholm. You can get there by foot, bus, car or boat. Most of the school's employees work between 9 am and 4 pm and is easiest reached, if they're not in a meeting or **running** a course, by you tracking them down **in the building**. If you want to use any of the school's workshops you have to take a few courses where you learn operate the different machines. These courses take place something like once every term. Material for the workshops are ordered a few times each term. This causes a lot of waiting.

Sweden's system, where the students' education is paid with taxpayers' money and where students are offered a loan that's not meant to pay for school, but rent, food and other private expenses, is a fantastic way to give everyone the possibility for education, but makes some students forget that their studies actually cost money. Perhaps, in this system, you become less careful with demanding efficiency and quality in your education.

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There seems to be a general perception that the Royal Institute of Art has a lot of financial assets, especially among people who don't work or study there. I've also heard many of the older employees at the school maxim: "There is money, there is money", almost like a mantra as an answer to the question: "where is the money?" Sometimes they add: "Back in the day you just had to go to the **academy** and knock on their door when you needed money." I don't know or particularly care how this actually happened, but such claims forms part of the myth about the Royal Institute of Art, which begins at the **preparing art schools**. In these schools, you for example learn that in average one suicide occurred each term at the Royal Institute of Art and that the students, in a state of war, has the right to carry a ward in order to defend the king. Generally speaking, it seems that the Royal Institute of Art functions as a sort of generator for these kinds of stories. As a newly accepted student it is hard to **remain passive** to the expectations that these myths generate, many students feel disappointed when the school doesn't live up to its rumour and they try to create new myths by, for example, dressing startling.

There is a story about how the school's previous headmaster, Marie-Louise Ekman, would come down from her office and handed out money to students' projects when she felt they needed it, this concerned, according to the rumour, primarily women who worked with video. This tradition is said to partly live on in the new regime. I have never heard that the current headmaster has given any money, but there is no transparent system for how the professors' and **workshop technicians'** budget is to be divided. It's up to the individual how they want to handle their money. This can, sometimes, lead to a situation where the amount of material one is handed by the **workshop technician** depends on how well one get along with them. The teachers are aware of this problem and they try the situation as fair as possible, but the system

situates the students in a spot where they are depending on their technicians. It's a similar story with the professors' money. Some professors simply choose not to use their budget to finance a student's projects but instead put the money on group activities and **trips**, while others support the students financially. I've heard a professor defend the system by exclaiming: "Did you really think that art was a democratic **occurrence**?"

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I think, when it all comes to it, that none of these structural **idiosyncrasies** pose a big problem. Perhaps because I've found it quite easy to navigate in its wake, or maybe because I – just like everyone else – am too busy with trying to organise an education for myself so that I get my time and money's worth. Personally, I also think that the existence of institutions like art schools is lovely. I love it that there are businesses that are to such an extent relying on taste, arbitrariness and toughness. A **kind and perhaps slightly feeble** person could say that it constitutes a form of resistance in a world where everything is expected to be effective and calculated.

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The Royal Institute of Art is, as previously mentioned, located on an island surrounded by the **districts** Södermalm, Gamla stan, Östermalm and the recreation area Djurgården. From the island you can see the Royal castle, the amusement park Gröna Lund and the cruise ships going to Finland. Opposite of the school's student gallery is the Museum of Modern Art. When the gallery was constructed the idea might have been that the proximity to the Museum would lure some of the museum visitors to the school's exhibitions as well. This did unfortunately not work.

The school's main building is originally some form of a military building, perhaps a regiment. It looks like it was renovated to an art school during the mid 90s. The facility is divided in a system that can be interpreted as hierarchal. At the bottom of the building there's a layer **for** gravel and cement, next to that there's a **framing workshop** where **timber/wood** is stored. **Half a staircase up** there are workshops for metal, wood, bronze, **muraltekniker** and a **room/sal** for **monumental sculpture**. Here there is also a **halation** that's called "**the in-between room**" that can be booked for exhibitions. Up a few more stairs we find the school's entrance, a custodial office and workshops for plastic and Styrofoam. There are also a few editing booths for video located here. Next to the custodial office is a space called (the) blackbox, which is an open room in a corridor with chequered klinker floor and large, moveable walls covered in black fabric. On the next floor is the school cafeteria and refectory along with workshops for glass and 3D printing. The workshop technicians have their offices on this floor. On the next floor there are editing rooms for photography, a computer lab, a **print room**, a lecture hall and a room for art therapy. There are also a few larger student workrooms here. These workrooms are raffled out. The **seniors** get to draw lots first and mostly claim the single studios at the top floor. The **Master-students** then get to draw and most of them get the studios on the second highest floor of the building. **The Candidate students** are next and they usually end up in a building behind the Museum of Modern Art, along with **the second year candidates**. The first year students get their own booth in three large group workrooms on the top floor. Here you can also find the professors' studios, the largest lecture room and the administrative staffs' offices. Furthest to the south, next to the headmaster's office is a staircase to the attic where you can find a small library. (The school's

exchange students cannot participate in the raffle and have to settle for the studios that are left when the other students have chosen theirs.)

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At the school there are also architects that are undergoing some form of supplementary education, however I choose not to write anything more than these lines as I don't know much about it.

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Art schools are special places and can contain many fantastic things. They can also be very boring and uninspiring. I've met many of my absolute favourite people at art schools. Maybe this is because they constitute a homogenous group of people.

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In my second year at school, I participated in a group exhibition at a **commercial gallery**. The **gallerist** wanted four of his artists to write texts for the **exhibition catalogue**. I was assigned with a text that began: "About 25-30 years ago there was absolutely no understanding for other **artistic occurrences** than those who were displayed in special galleries and in **specialist periodicals**. The art world was a place for art snobs. The term of abuse, 'arty-farty', started circulating in the East Village, NYC and other places. It took a quarter of a century for the different art forms languages to meet. Karl Norin's art expresses this wish and fact."

Reading that made me sullen. I thought my art *was* artyfarty. The trash I'd been inspired by was established and canonised and I tried to make art that looked anything but Swedish and tasteful. I saw myself as a working class artist with a taste in bourgeois shallowness but gifted with passionate middleclass anxiousness. The struggle to drag fine culture through the mud belonged to somebody else and was something I thought was accomplished a long time ago, and without any of my interference. It ended with me asking a friend to write a new text. My friend has a, what some might consider romantic, gothic or even slightly perverse taste. God bless him. The text I was handed by my friend was very dramatic and totally incomprehensible, it somehow circulated around two main characters, the "sun" and the "virgin." To me it seemed of topic. I haven't given virginity any considerable thought since I was like 18.

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The following year I participated in a group exhibition at a **county museum**. The exhibition's concept was to show "young" artists who were linked to the region that the museum was in and possibly establish that all **the participants formed some sort of group**. I was however busy during the time that the exhibition was showing as I was putting together another one at an art fair in Stockholm and could not be present when my art was displayed at the county museum. Also, I was bankrupt. I sent a **slab** of marble, an electric grill, an **arm made of wax** and a lamp. Foolishly, I thought that the technicians could display them in a way that would be recognized as good art. This did not happen; the items were placed in the spaces that were left over from the other participants and if my **decoration details** expressed anything it was **simply: failed art**.

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I haven't had a solo exhibition yet. I've learned to make art by doing group exhibitions. I've learnt that it doesn't matter how much time or money you've put into a piece if it doesn't work in the exhibition. I've learnt that a piece becomes art when you display it. I've learnt not to say too much. I've learnt that it can go very fast and be very cheap to make an exhibition that's considered good art.

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I think a good exhibition is a bit like the reoccurring sketch "Is This Anything?" on the Late Show with David Letterman. What happens is that a curtain is opened and something is shown for 30 seconds, it can for example be a fat man in tight pants. The host and sidekick then talk about whether it was something or not. Artistically it becomes a question whether something is interesting as art or not. The more sophisticated and used to art the crowd at an exhibition is, the harder it becomes as an artist to convince that what they're showing is interesting. If you, for example, see an **Exercise Ball** at an exhibition it might be interesting, but the second time it might have to be presented in a way that you haven't seen before. Some viewers also demand that the artist back up what they show. Some people think it's very important to be able to see the difference in what is art and what isn't – I think it's because they expect art to be something special. Such expectations are hard to live up to. Many artists also have these expectations on themselves and the art that they, **in the best case**, produce.

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To produce something that's going to be considered as good you have to give it some form of **worth/value**. In your artwork you can for example include history, attitude, **incomprehension** or humour. Sometimes the viewer understands the joke or opinion that the artist is expressing with their art, but usually not. It's when the viewer understands what the artist is referring to that they run the biggest risk of failing. The risk is that the artwork can be perceived as flat and one-sided. A skilled artist can handle what they're expressing on several levels and at the same time be clear **and** unclear. Also, they're able to communicate with the inexperienced and sophisticated viewer. If you want your art to be perceived as **quality art** it's important to think of who's going to be looking at it. Quality is not a constant and can be defined differently depending on the situation. You have to choose what kind of artist you want to be since it's impossible to satisfy everyone. My favourite kind of artist is the dumb-smart or possibly just the dumb one.

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I've started to arrange and participate in group exhibitions on a monthly basis. The **viewing time** is short and the budget is minimal. To **make** art in a group is effective and fun. Things happen. People fight and make up, butt heads and argue. It might not always be perfect but when it works everyone is doing what they do best.

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I think **chance/coincidence** is a good tool. Many times it's often better if you just put something on the floor instead of measuring where it most fits in. Once I **did** an exhibition where the participants chose which pieces of their art they wanted to display. One by one the

came and unpacked their things and put them against the wall or on the floor – and left them there. It looked very good because the participants didn't try to display it **nicely**; they just packed up their things where there was room. Once I tried to do an exhibition where I literally threw things into a room but it felt violent and a little corny.

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Creating something that didn't exist before is quite hard. You might say that every piece of art is unique, just like every person is, but often a piece needs something **more than just existing for it to be considered good**. As a **viewer** you want to see something that hasn't **been done** before. One way to make new things is by putting several pieces together so that they form a new **totality**. You can mix something new and something old but what comes out of it has to feel completely new. If you also can recognize this new thing as art it becomes easier to compare it to other art. Some viewers think it's important to be able to compare and measure what **she** sees with something else. That way, she can decide what she prefers and claim that she has a certain taste. Once when I was little I tried to explain to my mother why an album I was listening to was recorded with bad sound. She said that the artist could just as easily have recorded it with good sound. It was hard for me to explain because I didn't really know why **I preferred it the other way**. Had I been older I might have been able to suggest that the artist had listened to music that had been recorded in simple circumstances and wanted to imitate that because she felt it conveyed something, perhaps a feeling, perhaps a political view. Perhaps it was enough to say that I thought it sounded nice. Perhaps, sometimes, you might not have to say anything at all.

I recently read an article about how the word "remix" feels embarrassing because it's associated with "mashups", which was a new way to make pop music about 10 years ago. The technique consisted of taking an a capella version of a song and mixing it with the instrumental version of another song. By doing this, a new song was created but you could still hear both of the old songs. Now, this phenomenon is too old to be contemporary but too new to be retro. Personally I think that the word remix always have had an aura of tantalizing jocularly. I loved it when RnB artist started to shout "reeeeeemix" in their songs. You shouldn't be scared of embarrassing stuff. Another slight embarrassing word is "Contemporary art". Once, a professor at school made a list of a 100 things you had to know to be able to call yourself a contemporary artist. Maby it was a joke.

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"The art world" is such embarrassing words. Like super embarrassing. However, I think there exists some lovely qualities in the culture that some call the art world. At its best it can be an amazingly accepting place where **snobbery teams up with ingenuousness**. At its worst it's worst.

I love being an artist. I like that there are art schools and museums. I like thinking about things and trying to make **them as nice as a possibly can and failing all of the time**. I think it's fantastic that someone thinks it's somewhat worth it to take time to look at some stupid things that a decorate some room with. I like that there's not a limit to how successful or failed you can be as an artist. I love it that all of you weirdoes are such vinnarskallar

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At the time I wrote this text I had a falling out with my closest friend. We've made art together for a long time. Lately, he thinks that I plagiarise and steal his ideas. We view it so differently. I miss him. I thought he was Sweden's second best artist