

**ELIA (European League of Institutes of the Arts)
Closing session of the 7th Teachers' Academy
12 May 2015
Tilburg, Museum de Pont**

Participatory trial claiming: 'The 'teaching' of art is an artistic practice in itself.'

Artists/Teachers have the potential to transform people and their lives. Yet the 'teaching' of art remains marginalised within current discourse. This participatory 'trial' will challenge the 21st century focus on artistic practice as 'making' by examining alternative paradigms.

Nelly van der Geest, University of the Arts Utrecht (HKU)
Marjolijn Brussaard, College of Art and Design Nottingham Trent University
Loykie Lomine, University of Winchester
Mantautas Krukaukas, Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre
Annemarie Maas, University of the Arts Utrecht

Ushers introduction

Nelly van der Geest, University of the Arts Utrecht

On stage: The prosecutor, The advocates

Dear Audience: Welcome to court. Today, there will be a trial in this solemn room.

Teaching artists are put on trial here today. And the good news is, you can all participate. Why do we do this? Trials are meant to determine what is right and wrong according to the community involved.

You are that community.

Therefore, during the trial, the judge will ask you to stand if you disagree and to remain seated if you agree. The Judge will also ask some of you to explain your motivation.

My role is simple, I'm here to make sure the rules are followed.

If I ask you to rise, please rise. If I ask you to keep silent, please do so. If I ask you to speak up, don't be shy and come forward with your arguments.

We also have a prosecutor, Mister Loykie Lomine from Winchester University. And we do have two advocates. Mr Mantautas Krukaukas of the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre will argue in favour of the claim. Mrs Annemarie Maas from Utrecht University of the Arts will argue against it.

Off course we do have a Judge, Mrs Marjolijn Brussaard of the Nottingham Trent University. She will lead the whole process.

And especially for this event, the judge asked for an advisory committee: a so called Jury six students at Fontys university of the art. They are the teaching artists of the next generation.

This court stands in a long art tradition. André Breton staged trials as part of his surrealism (1920-1930). In the fifties the Dutch writer Anna Blaman (1949) stood on trial

for her novel *Eenzaam Avontuur*

(Lonely Adventure).

And in 2007 Anton Vidokle and Tirdad Zolghadr went to court for a hearing over art and power (2007). Madrid Papers

So why have we put teaching artists on trial today? To determine how they contribute to nowadays society. To determine whether how this differs in several European countries. To determine whether they are artists, educators or teachers.

So now, the advisory committee, the jury will enter the room, and take their places. Please give them a warm hand.

“Silence. All rise” Judge enters. Opening of the court.

PROSECUTOR SPEECH

Loykie Lomine, The University of Winchester

Your Honour, Members of the Jury,

The influence of teaching artists is a lot like the effect of love.

We all know it exists, but it cannot be calculated, nor measured, nor put into an Excell spreadsheet.

Only eternity can determine where its influence will stop.

As the Magnetic Fields once sang:

*‘The book of love is long and boring
and written very long ago
It’s full of flowers and heart-shaped boxes
and things we’re all too young to know.’*

This is the essence of teaching artists: we know we have a huge influence on students, on society and on the future.

But so far, we have not developed a proper language to explain to the world what we do, why we do it, how we do it, and for whom.

This, your Honour, Members of Jury, has resulted in moaning and complaining.

Teaching artists complain: “Politicians tell us what to teach, and how to teach it!”, they say.

They say: “We lack funding.”

They say: “My neighbour thinks I’m not a real artist.”

And when we’re done moaning, we moan some more, using arguments that are borrowed from other disciplines.

And this is why teaching artists are on trial here today:

Teaching artists should be disbarred from teaching, as long as they keep complaining.

Teaching artists keep moaning - and yet - they never had it so good.

Teaching artists are living in a new golden age.

They have power.

They have responsibilities.

They can work with young talented people from all over the world.

They can use all the latest innovations in class.

So why then, aren't teaching artists like football coaches?

Think about the resemblance.

Coaches have power, they have responsibilities, they can work with young talented people from all over the world, they can use all the latest innovations in training, tactics and teamplay.

If a football coach does a good job, the nation jumps for joy.

But when was the last time you saw a nation jump for a teaching artist?

Is it because teaching artists don't have the same passion as football managers?

No: it is because teaching artists don't believe in themselves.

You don't hear any football coaches who are unable to state what they do, why, how and for whom.

That's because football coaches have a goal (to win) and know what the value of their goal is.

So football coaches don't complain.

They don't complain about society.

About their colleagues.

About their players.

Or about their politicians.

They would probably be without a job in a flash if they did.

And more importantly, because complaining has no effect on their value for society.

Yes, teaching artists should be disbarred from teaching, as long as they keep complaining.

Teaching artists must define their work with their own values, in their own language.

They must realize, as Paulo Freire said, that if the structure doesn't permit dialogue, then the structure must be changed.

Take this building, for example.

When it was built, it was a textile factory, a wool-spinning factory.

Now, it is a museum.

It has reinvented itself

It has made itself relevant for the present.

Teaching artists must redefine themselves for the present.

They must make higher arts education fit for their needs, built on their values, articulated in their own language.
Teaching artists must speak in social-artistic terms about their contribution to society.

They should not fall back on economic arguments,
Because you convince no one of your worth by counting up that the creative industries in the UK make 8 million pounds an hour.

They should not fall back on social arguments either,
Because you convince no one of your worth by telling that without arts education communities would fight and crumble.

They should not fall back on scientific arguments,
Because you convince no one of your worth by drawing your cause in logic frames and using numbers to prove their quality.

Isn't it ironic that teaching artists, who tell their students over and over again about the intrinsic value of art, seem unaware of the intrinsic value of art education?

They lack words to explain the intimate relation between the questions:

What is good art?

What is art good for?

What is good art education?

And what is art education good for?"

And this relation must be addressed, because herein lies our value.

Teaching artists waste their time defending their work in an economic, social or scientific driven discourse.

They should rather spend their time on developing innovative learning,
On developing teaching strategies for the arts,
And deepening their knowledge about the intimate relationship between pedagogy and the arts.

Whom of all those teaching artists gathered here at this ELIA teachers academy is in contact with ground breaking pedagogues? With Neuweg? With Biesta? Or with Bressler?

Do these names even ring a bell?

Teaching art is an artistic practice in itself.

Ladies and gentlemen, Your Honour,

There is another problem with using arguments from other domains.

Teaching artists use words like gain, profit, investment, and efficiency.

That is like trying to teach someone to dance a passionate tango by explaining how a violin works.

Instead, teaching artists should use words like beauty, meaning and courage.

Teaching art is a profession in its own right: it should be much more than a way to earn a living.

Let's recover our relationship to the gods of Olympus:

We are Muses, created by Zeus to tell the stories of heroics and humanity. We are skilled to overwhelm all human senses.

We were created to root human beings in memory and meaning.

We are the patronesses of Paideia, the practice of rearing and education.

We have to retake this task on our own terms:

We have to stand up for Teaching Art.

So to come to a conclusion, Your Honour,

The Magnetic Fields whom I quoted at the beginning, went further to try and define love:

*Love is like a bottle of gin, they sang.
It makes you blind, it does you in
It makes you think you're pretty tough
It makes you prone to crime and sin
It makes you say things off the cuff.*

The comparison seems apt.

Love does resemble a bottle of gin.

But then the song ends:

*'You just get what they put in
and they never put in enough
Love is like a bottle of gin
but a bottle of gin is not like love.'*

And so it is with teaching arts.

We may think it is a lot like economics, politics or science, but in the end, it is not.

Teaching art is unique and cannot be defined unless on our own terms.

My Honoured Judge,

Teaching artists who are unable to express the value of art education in their own terms should be disbarred from teaching.

Teaching artists must define, claim and grow their own values in their own language so they can survive – so they can achieve – so they can conquer.

I tell them:

Teaching artists, stop complaining.

Do not listen to people who say that you are not artists.

Do not use the criteria and the words given by someone else.

Do not let others judge you.

But instead:

Start evaluating your own impact

Define your own value.

Reverse your thinking.

Take ownership – take responsibility – take pride.

Your honour, art education is bigger than art, and bigger than education.
Art education is art plus education.

So yes Your Honour, teaching artists should be disbarred from teaching art as long as they complain

Lawyer's for the defense

Annemarie Maas University of the Arts Utrecht

Your Honor, members of the jury, members of the audience
(Addressing to the audience:) There's a little liar in each one of us....

The defense would like to thank the prosecutor for twisting reality so well.
Twisting reality is exactly what is happening day in day out in the world of art and education.

[1]

The prosecutor states that teaching artists have, and I quote: ' power, possibilities'.

Also the prosecutor compares the art of teaching to the private million-dollar business called football. The football coach is being compared to the teaching artist....

We all know this is a joke.

If, at all, a comparison should be made, the coach of a football-team should be compared to art-business.

He might be considered a chairman of the board of an art institute, having to deal with forces that are always high above the heads of the ones that actually do the job: the players: us teachers.

The art teacher has to play along with whatever politicians have dictated to boards of schools. Who, in their turn, have transformed political views into the best 'worse case scenario' (trying to squeeze art education into the organizational formats of knowledge based education). They then transit this view to the deans of schools, who, In their turn try to translate these views into educational views that somehow still fit the character of the art form. This view finally reaches the art teachers, who have to do the actual job.

So comparing the football coach to the art teacher is comparing a tree with a wooden tool.

2.

In the prosecutor's claim the transformation of a factory into a museum is an example of good practice.

Again, your Honor, members of the jury, members of the audience:

What does this mean for art educators?

Don't get me wrong: art teachers are always reinventing the art of teaching; every day, every hour.

Unless education in art becomes a bottom up organization, nothing can be done. I myself have been a teacher in art for 25 years and this is how it works: Identity of teaching in art is put upon us top-down.

This makes it impossible to, and I quote, 'build on our own values' or 'speak our own language'.

Why? Because we are not trusted with the freedom to do so.

Let me give you an example. In the 25 years of being an art teacher myself, developments in art and education have always turned out to be: trying to discuss something that had already been implemented in higher levels of organization. It is the language of those who pull the strings, that teachers are puzzled with all the time.

WE are not using numbers, economic or social arguments.

We KNOW and we ARE the intrinsic value of art education.

And will no longer be mocked by those who say that we don't know the difference between, and I quote again, 'good art education' and 'what good art education does'.

We are no longer willing to do what art teachers are to supposed do since art education was invented.

We are no longer willing to shut up and find a 'playful, artistic' solution to problems that we did not cause.

We will NOT bite in our own tails anymore.

So we should start complain and moan!

3.

Well, your honor, members of the jury, members of the audience: We all have the same goal: Art and art teaching being considered indispensable for human kind. Being an art educator is an honorable job; you don't have to be an artist to do the job well. This should be common belief.

So: let's speak the only language politicians and leaders are able to speak and think in.

Otherwise we will be back in the ivory tower again, being referred to as 'those artists, who always nicely think of playful solutions'.

We, art educators, should stop biting in our own tails and get real: Complain, protest!

Lawyer for the prosecution

Mantautas Krukauskas, Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre

Your honour, members of the jury, members of the audience:

A lot has been said here today.

And I guarantee you, a lot will be said on this theme in the future.

We've heard the opinions in defence of the claim and against the claim.

But that's just that – opinions and words.

In the beginning there was a word, however word is not enough to re-create the world.

If we all just talk, argue and moan, then how do teaching artists differ from politicians?

We need action.

Over the last 50 years the amount of information and possibilities have increased more than ever before in history.

Everything grows, and now there are millions of students, who graduate each year.

Graduating is like rolling the boulder up the mountain like Sisyphus.

Because after getting their final diploma the students roll back to the beginning or rather – they are teleported to the real world.

The world and the students have no time to waste on listening to our bickering.

We have to start practicing what we preach right now, from this very moment.

(We all agree how we define major problems)

Now:

The first action happens in the brain – we stop division between ourselves, we stop ranking others – and the world is starting to change.

The second action happens in the heart – we let go of this old, rusty, industrial conceptions of education system – and the world changes.

And the third action comes from our senses, when we follow the new world to its roots – groves of Academe.

And so there new creative environments flourish, where teacher, student and artist becomes one.

Your honour, members of the jury, members of the audience

We have to take risks.

Outdated concepts, habits and perception of reality have to end here and now.

Those who use words without action, should be banned from teaching and fined.

Collected resources will be given directly to students.

They, I strongly believe, will find new ways of using it for greater good.

Judge The Verdict

Marjolijn Brussaard, Nottingham Trent University

As you might imagine this is not an easy case to give a verdict on. We had a great conference where colleagues gathered to network, learn and share and this trial and claim is taking us back to reality of our everyday jobs. I'll take into consideration the remarks and arguments from the audience and the advise from the jury. I'd like to thank the prosector: Loykie Lomine, the lawyer for the defence: Annemarie Maas and the lawyer for the prosecution: Mantas Krukauskas for their pleas.

We have heard arguments from the audience, pro and con. I do agree with some of the arguments made today that as the dean of one of the largest art schools in the UK I do use arguments from other disciplines every day to defend my school. I'm very familiar with KPI's, budgets and economical arguments, with explaining the importance of Art for University and Communities.

It is fair to say that one of the arguments in the audience: 'I use whatever argument it takes to defend art education' is true to some extend. I would like to add that that means that I'm institutionalised to an extend to function properly and to achieve the best for my School, students and staff in the political arena of a big institute.

We do need to listen carefully to what our students, the jury, who are our future have to say and how they think. They have an important role to play in the future of Art Education.

If I listen to the jury there are arguments to be taken seriously here:

- Criticism, being critical is essential, you've put the classical academic discussion back on the table. We need to be critical and teach our students to be critical in their future profession. We need to use the right words to express criticism
- The jury also stated that there needs to be room to improvise and to make mistakes. I'm sure we all agree that mistakes are a very valuable way to learn and we all make mistakes. I do make mistakes to be sure.
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In the world that is changing and we need new arguments since the economic model of more more more is soon out of date so we need new values, or better yet to express our own values. It is strange that we do not have core values of Art and Art Education accepted in society. So I do agree with some of the rhetoric of the prosecutor that we do need to establish that very soon.

I'd like to call on ELIA to work with us on a clear statement on the value of Art and Art Education in society now and in the future.

To conclude: I do however not think it is a good idea to disbar any of teaching artists who are complaining because they are so desperately needed in our society.

This is my verdict.