

Meditation 7

On Art and (Professional) Art Education

'The' art and 'the' artist do not exist. Actually, they have never existed. Will they ever exist? (Here is certainly not only referred to the shared contributions of cultural anthropology or ethnomusicology, from which appears that these sort of labels can not be stuck on without some evidence of (neo-)imperialism toward so-called non-Western cultural expressions. What is meant is that both diachronically and synchronically, 'our Western culture' has no univocal definitions for these concepts).

Art. The concept exists only as (linguistic) concept, as philosophical idea, as theory. Nothing is 'of itself' art. That became more than clear when an object – let us call it a urinal – could in one instance be stamped as artwork, while in another situation it remained merely an 'appliance'. Whether something is art or not cannot, thus, be detected from its exterior. And what Duchamp achieved for visual art, Cage achieved for music.

Language, aesthetical and philosophical theories, categorizations and institutional embeddings 'make' art, make something become art. Naturally this is no closed in upon itself, isolated process: present and past are always at work with these sorts of determinations.

That is why art does not develop completely unpredictably. Developments in (parts of) the art world are determined to a large extent by what has in the past been considered art as well as by actual societal classification systems through which art can still be regarded as a separate institution. But a future society could conceivably organize itself in such a way that art as relatively autonomous phenomenon disappears.

Which art will still be seen and heard in the future is dependent on a complex network of (f)actors: the wishes and possibilities of an artist (related or not to professional training), societal opinions, technical possibilities, developments in and of the market, aesthetic qualifications and legitimizations, societal stratifications, the role that art chooses or is forced into, (professional) art education, political preferences ... These are only a few. But also in the future, that which will be called art will have maintained a certain relation with contemporary visions of it, contemporary visions which, in their turn, are also partially determined by the past.

Thus, it becomes evident that current developments in the (professional) art education will leave their traces in the art of the future. This is no unequivocal and strictly causal relationship, but there is a connection. In addition, it should be noted that (professional) art education is also attached to all kinds of other societal developments. Just as education helps form a society, education is also being formed by multifarious societal forces.

Art and education have their unstable, ambiguous, non-hierarchically-ordered position within this complex force field, where a network model seems to better approach reality than linearly set-up structures. But within this, the question "which art will be deemed valuable enough to be passed down" remains relevant. Or, which music will the music world – a world in which conservatories hold an important and respected place – decide should remain sounding in the future? How this music should subsequently be taught is another matter.