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## The Visiting Artist in Schools: Arts Based or School Based Practices?

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### Abstract

In this article, we discuss some issues raised by the increasing number of comprehensive national programs for visiting school concerts and art events in Norwegian schools. We ask what this increase in activity might mean for the nature of arts education subjects in schools, in particular music, what kind of rationale and philosophy the national art event programs bring to schooling and what challenges this new situation represent for the artists as well as teachers involved. We argue that the lack of school ownership of these practices can be understood in view of a dominating rationale based on romantic aesthetic theories. We also argue that neither education nor the visiting arts programs seem to have adjusted their practices to recent trends in western performance practices and aesthetics and to an educational practice building sufficiently on a pedagogy of relations. We propose then to actively embrace, but also to adapt, the relational turn in both fields, but not uncritically and not in a way that might reduce the meaning and importance of great art, nor the quality of educational

learning and Bildung. We think art and aesthetics as well as education has something to offer in the construction of a new relational arts based pedagogy.

### **Introduction**

In Norway, events and activities in the art field initiated by cultural institutions *and* arts education in schools are increasingly being considered as equally relevant for the education of coming generations. In this article, we discuss some issues raised by the increasing number of comprehensive national programs for visiting school concerts and art events in Norwegian schools. We ask what this increase in activity might mean for the nature of arts education in schools, in particular music, what kind of rationale and philosophy the national art event programs bring to schooling and what challenges this new situation represent for the artists as well as teachers involved. In addition to our experience and situated knowledge about the Norwegian context, our discussion is triggered by findings from a close study of four school concert program processes in their making as well as on observation of a great number of visiting practices in schools. This background study is also the empirical part of the first author's PhD project, where the second author is her supervisor.

Findings in the first author's study suggest that visiting school concerts and their artists are deeply grounded in what we call an artwork-based approach in their conceptions of educational quality practices. A piece of music/artwork is not only the starting point for the visiting artist, but also seems to be the very nexus of the arts program preparation for school visits as well as its implementation. We discuss some historical as well as sociological reasons for these findings, arguing that this aspect of visiting artist practices creates challenges for school ownership, as well as for integration of the visiting programs into learning and everyday school education programs. We argue that the lack of school ownership of these practices can be understood in view of a dominating rationale based on romantic aesthetic theories. We also argue that neither education nor the visiting arts programs seem to have adjusted their practices to recent trends in western performance practices and aesthetics and to an educational practice building sufficiently on a pedagogy of relations (Noddings, 1992; Bingham & Sidorkin, 2004; Biesta 2004). We conclude by suggesting that the dominating rationale and practices of arts education subjects in schools as well as visiting artist programs needs to be supplemented by aesthetical and educational theories and practices that are more genuinely partnership-oriented and relational in kind than today's mainstream practices.

### **Background**

The national School Concert program in Norway, administered by "Nor- Concert" (Rikskonsertene) and the Culture department, has this year been running for more than four

decades in Norway. Since the conception of the first national program in the late 1960s, the school concert program has increased in volume, new cross arts programs have been introduced and programs have changed and developed in contents as well as in their formations and implementation. However, the underpinning philosophy and rationale for the programs have always been the same: The introduction of art of high quality to young people within the framework of public schooling. Almost every municipality in Norway, approximately 2 997 schools, and 630 000 students between ages 6 and 15, are now visited by artists several times per semester, bringing concerts or art events, most often in the form of a 45 minutes happening. The idea that students in all schools in Norway should be offered access to living music and high quality arts is a political as well as educational decision. However, a number of critics have claimed that the programs, despite these basic intentions, never have become a natural part of everyday school educational life. In the study serving as the empirical background for this article, the research focus has been threefold: 1) to examine the quality conceptions of musicians and producers in the production of school concerts and how such conceptions are constructed; 2) to examine in which ways and to what extent quality conceptions in the artistic field interacts with quality conceptions of educational practices, and 3) how existing conceptions of quality in visiting arts teacher practices can be challenged and developed.

### **Methodology**

The first author's study is an observation study of 4 production processes randomly chosen among Nor-Concert's 2010/2011 touring program. Observation was connected to casting, specific production processes for each concert, and student reception of the concerts in schools. Data include field notes, video films, sound recordings and 12 semi-structured interviews with musicians, producers, and teachers. The teachers interviewed were all experienced music teachers because quality conceptions were a major topic. A major intention in the design of the study was to focus on musicians' and producers' conceptions of quality in school concert productions, and how these conceptions of quality were manifested in processes, communication and implementation of the programs. Analysis of relevant documents, such as curriculum documents, political documents and working documents within the Nor-Concert organization is also part of the relevant data.

### **Our Position and Background**

The evaluative aspect of our discussion makes it crucial to expose our own educational and artistic values and experiences- in short our positions in education as well as aesthetics. Both of us, a PhD student and her supervisor, are now based in music education, but with very different and to some extent complimentary experiences and practices which include musician practices, school concert producer practices, evaluation practices and music education

research practices. Thus, we have our professional experience mainly from the educational, but also to some extent from the artistic field. Our specialities are art program production and research into music education classroom curriculum methodologies and practices. Important theory inspiring our position and lenses are socio cultural theory, e.g. Bourdieu's contribution to the field (field, habitus, capital, definitional power and doxa (Bourdieu, 1979/1995), progressive education (Dewey, 1939/1998, 1916/2004) and Bildung theories (Klafki, 1963, 2000). We are very familiar with 19-century aesthetic theory, e.g. (David Hume (1711-76), Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), Eduard Hanslick (1825-1904) and recently inspired by relational aesthetics (Bourriaud, 1998/2002) and relational pedagogy (Bingham & Sidorkin, 2004).

### **Quality Concepts as A Nexus for Understanding Practices**

In the first author's work as a program producer, the concept of "quality" was always present, - in open peer discussions as well as a sort of a tacit consensus, probably with different meanings and understanding. Quality is a contextual concept. To talk about quality as a general phenomenon is not only difficult, but according to Wittgenstein (1953/2001), meaningless. The concept of quality in practices can only be meaningful with reference to specific practices. Quality has a sort of double contextuality, because different cultures and discourses often have different values corresponding with the life world different individuals inhabit (Dahler-Larsen, 2008). Quality also has different levels, e.g. when someone within the educational field will reject the whole notion of visiting artists in schools, whereas others might start a discussion on a different level and focus on criteria for quality in such practices. Langstedt, Hannah and Larsen (2003) label these two levels in quality conception "consensus level" and "conflict level". When operating on a consensus level, quality discussion might be meaningless because of lacking consensus about the *value* of a phenomenon. To discuss quality constructively, one needs to operate on the conflict level and leave the first level in agreement about the value of the phenomenon. It is only when agreement about the values is reached that different views on what makes practices good or less good, how they can be measured and how they should change to reach the highest possible quality, can meaning take place (Langstedt, Hannah, & Larsen, 2003).

We do think the educational field and the artistic field in the Norwegian context have established a consensus about the value of school concert programs and visiting teaching artists to some extent, and this is certainly the case at a political level. But we are uncertain as to whether this has taken place among its agents, teachers and artists, operating in schools. However, we are convinced that certain groups of experienced music teachers and artist musicians have established such a consensus through their views on school concerts as Bildung (Klafki, 2011).

**Vignette**

*The two boys are first year students, 5 or 6 years of age and in their first school concert in the gymhall. They sit together with their teacher. She touches their shoulder gently when they turn around to talk to peers, helping them to focus by whispering in their ears. The smallest one is gently being silenced when talking. He has lost attention now, but tries to concentrate and return to what is happening on stage. The teacher is busy, stops student movements, keep turning student heads towards the stage, but approaches her task in a very quiet and almost unnoticeable way. The piece is quite long and complicated, really stretching patience and attention. But the boys seem genuinely interested from time to time, trying to understand and find meaning. The whole situation tells them that this is what we do in school, this is what the teacher wants us to do, and this is what big schoolboys do, even if it is hard .....(Fieldnote/description based on video from concert situation)*

Teachers as well as musicians seem convinced "stretching" is necessary to achieve a rich experience during the concert. This is different from the usual experience commercial popular culture is able to offer. Both groups want the school concert to represent values as well as an experience, which can engage the students beyond cognitive understanding and appreciation. In an American study, teachers interviewed by Bresler (2010) used the concept of "stretching" to describe attempts at opening up and widening the educational experience when involving the arts.

Findings in the Norwegian study in question here modifies Bresler's finding somewhat because musician artists believe and hope that this "stretching" is possible through a mere presentation of serious art music for a child audience, whereas the teachers in the study point out that an added prerequisite is that the music as well as the communication in the situation must be contextualized and be close enough to the world of the school and the students to fully be a platform for meaningful communication and education.

Triggered by these findings in the first author's study, we suggest that there is a missing consensus about quality concepts that is paradigmatic by nature between what might be labelled an art paradigm and an education paradigm, where the major goal of the first one is the communication and transmission of the art work and the accompanying artistic experience. We have observed that, in our work experience as well as in the first author's PhD-study, that the major goal of teachers co-operating with artists is "learning", but also "entertainment", where the concerts' function as relief and variation in a busy school day is openly and positively welcomed. In a recent national evaluative study of the quality of arts subjects and visiting arts programme in Norwegian schools, Anne Bamford (2012) found that teachers' attitude to these activities could be described as "cosy arts", and that such an attitude

seems to be typical for arts activities in Norwegian schools. She writes, “The intrinsic aims of the arts are highly valued in Norway, in particular, a sort of ‘cosy’ (‘koseleg’) feeling that stresses fun, enjoyment, and pride” (Bamford, 2012, p. 8).

When a national study presents the main finding as “cosy arts”, something that is a bit strange, a bit exciting, and a little funny, questions need to be asked connecting this finding to quality conceptions of art among teachers and the role and position of accountability measures in schools. Accountability does not normally affect the arts in a positive way and Norwegian schooling is no exception. In Norwegian teacher education, arts subjects are being marginalised and statistics on arts subjects’ competence in schools show very low levels. Consequences might very well be that teachers choose the easiest way and regard the concert and the visiting artist as an easily added value and a break away from school routine. At the same time they see the value of it, but are unable to utilize its full potential in educational follow up or preparation. The doxa (Bourdieu 1979/1995) of the musicians on the other hand, focus on the performative mediation and communication going on during the 45-minute visits. Their focus is not on the contextual and longitudinal aspect of their activity. Teachers and musicians therefore, both celebrate the concert- but for very different reasons- as an important event, but *not* connected to everyday educational life.

In the first author’s study, we find that many musicians seem to be obsessed by a strong urge to transmit the artwork as art per se and with a basic conviction, *illusio* (Bourdieu, 1995, p. 227), that the magic of the artwork in itself will create the intended experience in the recipients, i.e. the students. This conviction seems to be based on romantic aesthetics of the 19 century established by Kant (1790/1995) and his followers, Hanslick (1854/2002) and others. Within a paradigm framed by a romantic aesthetic rationale, the focus is not primarily on learning or contextual elements, but on the pure experience established through a presentation and performance, which is true to the essence of the artwork.

Several of the musicians in the first author’s PhD study seem to base their quality conception on this conviction without reflecting on whether their audience have understood their conception of quality or whether the concert is meaningful for the audience. Some of the musicians seem to mean that a pure mediation of the music, i.e. musicians’ performance and students listening copying a concert hall format, is the most efficient format for an aesthetic experience. They sometimes oppose the inclusion of student movement, dance or drumming in the concert because this might endanger the artistic value and the experiential aesthetics of the situation. Teachers seem to give away their definitional power in these matters, accepting that the artist is the sole decision maker. Not even very experienced music teachers, even though they point out the importance of contexts, look at themselves as competent enough to take active part in production decisions, selection of music and aspects of the performance.

This means that teachers are socialised into the dominating aesthetics of visiting artists: artistic and aesthetic decisions overrule educational and contextual aspects.

### **The Arts and Recent Trends in Educational Philosophy**

The Arts have a long history of interacting with education and the discussion of what role and qualities artists might bring to education have surfaced from time to time. One hundred years ago, in what can be labelled as the pioneering stage of modern music education in schools, professor of composition at the Royal Academy of Music, London, Stewart Macpherson, suggested that the artist musician working in schools:

...has, with the impatience of rule and method somewhat characteristic of the artistic temperament, been inclined to trouble himself little, and to care less, about such matters as the scientific presentation of the facts he has been called upon to impart to his pupils or the psychology of the "human" boy or girl it has been his duty to teach. (Macpherson, 1916, p. 6)

Closer to our own time, a number of writers have pointed to qualities inhabited by artists and observable in artistic practices as particularly suited for teaching and the teacher's profession, e.g. improvisational skills. Beginning in the 80s, several educators explored improvisation within a metaphor of teaching as performance emphasizing the artistry of teaching (e.g. Timpon and Tobin 1982; Eisner 1983; Sarason 1999). Eisner (1979) argued early in his career that teaching is an art in four ways, pointing out: 1) the similarity of a classroom to an aesthetic art space; 2) teaching skill as the ability to respond during a course of action; 3) the teachers' ability to avoid routine and respond creatively to the unique contingencies of each classroom, and 4) the teachers' ability to achieve emergent ends rather than predetermined ends. Sawyer (2011) pays tribute to the theories of these scholars and the aesthetic dimension of teaching, but argues that the teacher as a performing artist metaphor "has severe problems" (p. 4). The focus on "art" he says, neglects the large body of structures that underlie teacher expertise. Sawyer argues that teaching as performance metaphor needs to be extended towards a metaphor underlining *teaching as an artful balance of structure and improvisation*.

### **Aesthetic Learning Processes**

In Scandinavia, there has over the past years, been an increasing focus on *aesthetic learning processes* suggesting that the nature of such processes are different from learning processes in general. The advocates of aesthetic learning processes are based both in general education and within arts education (e.g. Austring & Sørensen, 2006; Høhr & Pedersen, 1996; Sæbø 2005; Selander, Lindstrand & Thorsnes, 2010; Illeris, 2006). Austring & Sørensen (2006) describe three different kinds of learning processes: 1) the empirical learning process, which is

described as the students direct meeting with the world; 2) the discursive learning process, which they call the theoretical – representational meeting with the world, and 3) the aesthetic learning process which is described as the child’s aesthetic- symbolical meeting with the world. These three learning processes are not separate, but weaved together. They follow us throughout life as tools to interpret, process and participate in the world. An aesthetic learning process is according to Austring & Sørensen (2006, p. 100) characterized by:

A way of learning where the individual during the process of expressing him/herself in a culturally transmitted multimodal language of forms, appropriates this language at the same time as it is used to process her/his own reality (*our translation*)

Comparing Austring & Sørensen’s conception of aesthetic learning processes to other well established theories of learning, e.g. a constructivist learning theory (e.g. Vygotsky, 1978) or a progressivist learning theory (e.g. Dewey, 1902, 1916), a common denominator seems to be the position of ”impression” and ”expression” as continuous, holistic, contextual and interactive elements of the learning process. Moreover, aesthetic learning processes are very often described as being arts dependant, where the multimodal elements of the arts in the form of multisensory and bodily experience and expression characterize the learning process. Applied on art events in schools, e.g. school concerts, a mere presentation of a work of art, no matter how well performed, might therefore seem inadequate in its quest to release the learning potential of the situation in question.

### **Bildung Theories**

The history of modern ”Bildung” theories has a long tradition in Europe reaching back to 16th century theorists such as Humboldt (1767-1835), Pestalozzi (1746-1827), Schleiermacher (1768-1834) and Herbart (1776-1841). The concept of Bildung as conceived in its origin has close connections to concepts of ”quality”. The 18th century brought about a concept of ”Bildung” which connected the concept to privileges of the upper class and a development of canons of subjects, work of arts, and cultural codes. This concept of Bildung is characterized by ”good taste”, being familiar with western scientific knowledge and the right works of art (Janck & Meyer, 2009). The classical concept of ”Bildung” was grounded in the enlightenment and implied training and education in responsibility, self-regulation and solidarity with a goal of emancipation as well as social and cultural learning (Klafki, 2011).

Both concepts of ”Bildung” include learning as an important element. If listening to school concerts can be seen as ”Bildung”, the mere listening to concerts can be seen as a learning activity. This conception of musical learning through listening was legitimized through the so-called ”music appreciation movement” in the first part of the 20th century and further developed to adapt to progressive ideas about interaction and pupil activity by including

“mental activity” as a learning prerequisite during music listening (Scholes, 1935; Espeland, 2011).

The “Bildung” concept of the enlightenment since 1959 has been reintroduced and further developed by Wolfgang Klafki (2011). In Scandinavia, this re-introduction has been successful to such a degree that it seems to have replaced progressivism as the most influential philosophy of education. Klafki underlines that “Bildung” has an objective and material aspect, which presents us with a spiritual as well as natural reality, and a subjective and formal side, which frames our options to open up, reflect and act in relation to different aspects of reality. His theory of learning describes three different kinds of processes: 1) a process where the essential learning is *formal*, inviting such learning activities as project work and information processing; 2) a process where learning is based on the *material*, focussed on the qualities of the cultural artefacts in question, and a 3) a process where learning is categorical, which represents a fusion of the other two opening up to the formation of categories helping us to experience, develop and control ourselves and the world. Although favouring the categorical variant of learning, Klafki underlines that conceptions of quality in learning processes have a material aspect by reinstating the material and objective aspect of learning processes, in our case the work of art, which cannot be anything, but needs to be selected very carefully.

### **A Pedagogy of Relations**

A dominating characteristic in our time suggests that human beings are autonomous, rational, and independent individuals, and to us this existential aspect of western societies seems to be mirrored in the mainstream of global education, in short, an individualistic conception of life, education and learning. But this individualistic conception is also being strongly challenged by modern science. From psychology, Kenneth Gergen (2009) claims that human beings constantly and continuously exist in relational processes, and that purely subjective experience is non-existent because they always are based on one or more human relations. Gergen’s relational view indicates a view of human identity as culturally constructed, but at the same time as an individual with thoughts, feelings and actions that continuously relates to and plays along with the relational participatory life of others and groups.

From neuroscience, Susan Greenfield (2011) opens her book, “You and Me: the neuroscience of identity” by quoting Oscar Wilde’s “Most people are other people”, opposing his famous line and celebrating the uniqueness of the individual. Even so, she claims that this uniqueness is shaped through relations and connections, not only in real life but also in the way the brain (and mind) works:

...that the biological basis of the mind is the personalisation of the brain through unique dynamic configurations of neuronal *connections*, driven by unique experiences (Greenfield, 2011, p. 57)

Greenfield (2011) explain consciousness as constantly changing neuronal assemblies and claims that the very relational structure of the brain with all its synapses, transmitters and connectivity is mirrored in how identity, and learning, is formed and developed. This connectivity she claims, this awareness of how a person or object or action relate to other people or objects or actions, is what can be “viewed as understanding” (p.79).

This relational turn, as we may call it, in psychology and neuroscience, is echoed in Gert Biesta’s (2004) thinking about what education really is. He claims, not surprisingly, that the idea that education is an interaction “...between the (activities of the) educator and (the activities of the) one being educated is, as such, a sound idea”. And he goes on to say,

It shows that education is basically a *relationship* between an educator and the one being educated. But in order to understand the precise nature of the educational relationship, we should take the idea that education consists of the interaction between the teacher and learner absolutely seriously. We should take it in its most literal sense. If we do so, it follows that education is located not in the activities of the teacher, nor in the activities of the learner, but in the interaction between the two. Education, in other words, takes place in the gap between the teacher and the learner. (Biesta cited in Bingham and Sidorkin, 2004, pp. 12-13)

Seen through relational lenses, education and learning must mean that teachers and students participate in each others lives, and it must mean that a major goal of education is to achieve quality learning at the same time as enabling students to develop and release their potential for taking part in relational processes locally as well as globally. To teach as well as to learn means to participate in each other’s educational practices.

Proponents of a relational pedagogy claims that a “fog of forgetfulness is looming over education” and that a pedagogy of relations represents a new and alternative way to existing mainstreams that they label “traditionalists” and “progressivists” (Bingham & Sidorkin, 2004, p. 3) This solution, they claim, “relies on neither brute force of exclusion nor on romantic expectations”. “Schools”, they claim, “must focus on human relations and address the core of the problem” (p. 6).

In their anthology, Bingham and Sidorkin (2004) offer a manifesto of relational pedagogy along with a number of writers who offer contributions of what a relational pedagogy might mean, as well as critique. According to these writers a relational pedagogy implies that:

A relation is more real than the things it brings together. Human beings and non-human things acquire reality in relation to other beings and things.

The self is a knot in the web of multiple intersecting relations: Pull relations out of the web, and find no self. We do not have relations, relations have us.

Authority and knowledge is not something one has, but relations, which require others to enact.

Educational relation is different from any other, its nature is transitional. Educational relation exist to include the student in a wider web of relations beyond the limits of the educational relation.

Relations are not necessarily good: Human relationally is not an ethical value. Domination is as relational as love. (pp. 6-7)

With a relational conception of education and pedagogy, learning cannot be conceived of as a fully individual process, but as an interactive relational journey. However, the concepts of relations and relationships harbour a number of complexities and challenges, which can be described along a continuum of contrasts, such as authority and democracy, structure and freedom, and variation and consistency. Relational pedagogy therefore, is not an easy solution to educational challenges in a global education atmosphere characterized by individual achievement and accountability. Seen as a new educational rationale for music education, it fits well with what we described as aesthetic learning processes because such processes are holistic, interactive, and action oriented in their nature. It is also possible to make connections to Bildung theory because the process of Bildung is communal by nature and is in many ways *categorical* in its quest for self-regulation and transfer of learning to a relational life world (Janck & Meyer, 2006). However, the connections and relations are not as obvious when it comes to the positions of objects and artefacts, and the educational potential and magic of specific art works.

If applied to visiting artist practices in schools, the meeting of the audience (here students and teachers) and the artist will create a potential relational space where those present bring their contexts as contributions to a communal event. The intention of this event is a shared

experience for all, more than a monological relationship where the work of art is transmitted “down” to the audience by means of some magic and objective qualities in the art work. As art educators, however, we are not ready to abandon the magic of great works of art as a vehicle for meaningful educational practices and learning processes. To us therefore, relational pedagogy is not complete before relations to high quality objects and artefacts, in Bildung terms, the material, is included as a legitimate and enriching element of a pedagogy of relations. We shall return to this question towards the end of the article. For now, let us first turn to recent trends in the performing arts.

### **Arts Based Practises on the Move**

A very interesting development from an educational point of view has in the last decades taken place within the arts themselves. Arts institutions in western societies and gradually also in Norway, seem to be in a process of changing their views on audiences and in particular young people. This, however, is not solely an audience recruitment driven movement, but also something that is looked at as beneficial for the artists and art itself. The pedagogical turn in community arts, performative art and aesthetics, relational aesthetics, and the teaching artist movement represent art practices, which can be viewed as an expression of a new trend within the art field towards a more active role in peoples’ everyday life, including education.

This is not a new development but started nearly 100 years ago with Duchamp’s sculpture “Fountain” in 1917 (de Duve, 2003) and it seems to have diverted quality concepts in the arts somewhat away from qualities in the work of art itself as an object, towards what kind of relations an art project may release and maintain. The underpinning theories of what we might call “the relational turn” in the arts seem to contribute to break down the dichotomies between art and artists on the one hand and teachers, students, and audience on the other hand, at the same time as the position of art and the artists are not being devalued or radically changed as such. Art and artists remain within the art world, but is allowed in the name of the artistic process to move away from the ivory tower and become a signifier for something more than “disinterested judgement” (Kant, 1790/1995). In the following, we shall take a brief look into the rationale of the relational turn in arts practices.

### **Performative Aesthetics**

The performative work of art, which originated within theatre performance, is connected to an event, Ereignis (Fischer-Lichte, 2008), which takes place at a certain time in a given space and with specific groups of people on stage and in the audience. The audience is given a central role in the performance, and in this way the original piece of art, whether it be a theatre performance or a concert, is transformed into an event that is not fully produced until the audience has contributed. The central mechanism of the performative event is the *feedback*

*loop*, which takes at its starting point that the audience and the artists are part of a communal event where they share room and space. A dialogue is started between the participants, which triggers a response, and the audience and the artists “talk” verbally or non-verbally with each other, thus activating the feedback loops (Fisher-Lichte, 2008). A flexible and improvisation oriented performance evolves, something which destabilizes the traditional dichotomy of sender and receiver. This gives the receiver more power, but also more responsibility for the event and the sender (the artist) is more of a *transformer* operating from the original work. The audience dialogue and her/his input becomes a transmitter of a specific piece of art.

It is possible to view this process as a learning process with Bildung theory lenses focussing on the development of personal and collective responsibility as well as with lenses grounded in relational pedagogy focussing on shared practices and an expanding network of relations crucial to understanding and learning of whatever can be learnt in such a process. What might seem haphazard and accidental during these arts events however, is not necessarily the case. Thygesen (2009) also underlines that the rationale for performative aesthetic events allows the existence of stage directions and an artistic production plan, and that the artists are strategically agents in their initiatives towards the audience. The criteria for artistic quality, however, as well as the very conception of quality, become very different from events framed by traditional receptive aesthetics, e.g. by focussing on the quality of the interactive process.

### **Relational Aesthetics**

In 1997, the French curator, Nicholas Bourriaud, published a collection of essays he called *Esthétique Relationnelle* followed by his book on relational aesthetics (Bourriaud, 1998/2002). Based on his curating practices and the development in performance art, Bourriaud (1998/2002) offers a radical conception of what art is. “Artistic activity” he writes,

...is a game, whose forms, patterns and functions develop and evolve according to periods and social contexts; it is not an immutable essence ( p. 11).

Bourriaud’s conception of what art is and what a change in our conception of art might mean is not new. Already Umberto Eco (1989) in his essay on the poetics of the open work suggests the new potentials of such a change. “The poetics of the ‘work in movement’ (and partly that of the open work)” he writes,

...sets in motion a new cycle of relations between the artist and his audience, a new mechanics of aesthetic perception, a different status for the artistic product in contemporary society. It opens a new page in sociology and in pedagogy, as well as a new chapter in the history of art. It poses new practical problems by organizing new

communicative situations. In short, it installs a new relationship between the contemplation and the utilization of a work of art (pp. 22-23).

The focus of art as conceived through the lenses of relational aesthetics is moved from the piece of art itself to what it means for the *participants* (this is what audiences and performers are called). The relational musician then, initiates communication and becomes a connecting transmitter of energy to a piece of art that evolves through co-action with the involved. The participants are the main persons in relational art, and art becomes art in the social space. The artwork, as we traditionally know it, is no longer the centre of attention, or it can be a starting point or the realisation of an artistic idea. This means that the art event no longer is framed by a specific time or a specific space as in performative aesthetics, but can have any time frame, take place anywhere and in any kind of relation. It is the relation that *is* the piece of art. Relational art can involve participants who do not know each other, but the process involved may in itself lead to this kind of relations. A summary of Bourriaud's description of the basic principles of relational aesthetics may look as follows:

Art lies in human interaction and its social context rather than in a free and symbolic domain.

Art is a meeting and artistic meaning is developed "collectively".

Rather than a one-to one relationship between the individual and the piece of art, art is situations where the audience create a community

Newness in the form of an artefact is no longer an important criterion

The role of art is no longer to fill utopian and imaginary realities, but to be a form of life and a model of agency in the world

Form can be defined as a continuous meeting, - formations rather than form and artistic form only exists when it contains human interaction (Bourriaud, 1998/2002).

Compared to art theories and aesthetics of the 19th century, relational aesthetics is radical by nature, and has of course not escaped criticism. The critics (Bishop, 2004; Kester, 2004) admit that Bourriaud has been an efficient spokesman for contemporary trends in the arts focusing on process, performativity, openness, social contexts, transfer and production of dialogue, and that he has given a rationale for this as an alternative to modern but still traditional object orientation and hyper individualism. The problem of Bourriaud's aesthetics, they claim, is that it does not reach far enough as a social experiment, because the artists as well as the audience

have situated the relational discourse in fine art circles. The participants then are ok with changing the art and the aesthetics, but not society.

To us, however, the most interesting part of relational aesthetics is the way these practices seem to reflect and mirror an *incredible culture of sharing* which increasingly seems to be a global phenomenon. The increasing interest and activity art institutions display for *sharing* underlines the immanent educational potential of all of the arts, namely to reach out, to affect, to entertain, to move, to touch, and thereby educate. What Bourriaud tries to tell us, we think, in his theory of relational aesthetics is that contemporary aesthetics continuously must be redefined to keep its position as a theoretical foundation for contemporary art.

### **The Educational Turn in Curating**

In visual art, the role of the curator has changed from being an archivist to becoming a creative vehicle for the composition of exhibitions and art mediation (O'Neill & Wilson 2010). In some visual art institutions, artists become curators for special occasions. We see some of the same development in theatres where the dramaturgist is more actively involved in the structuring and redefinition of performances creating a setting and context which informs, engages, renews - and educates, we will add. The fact that the different roles of curators, dramaturgists and creative music producers in art production in this way becomes a mixture of artistic and what we would label as educational activity, opens up new perspectives for arts education. This change of roles seems to take place to such an extent that it becomes difficult, sometimes impossible, to define what is artistic and what is educational. In this way, art becomes pedagogy and pedagogy may become art.

### **Teaching Artists**

The teaching artist movement (TA) originated in the U.S. is an established activity with their own journal, website and practices. The reason we bring the phenomenon of TA into focus in this article, is the fact that this movement these days also seem to materialize in Norway, and there are very strong similarities as well as differences between TA programmes and nationally funded art programmes for schools in Norway. Booth (2011) defines a teaching artist (artist educator) as:

...a practicing professional artist with the complementary skills and sensibilities of an educator, who engages people in learning experiences in, through, and about the arts.  
(p.1)

Originating in the 1980s when president Reagan removed arts subjects as a compulsory part of school programmes, the resulting vacuum made a number of artists enter school activity on a voluntary basis or sponsored by mentors to remedy the situation. This was a very different

approach for the Norwegian national programmes where art was imported into schools on a visiting basis, and led to a number of creative partnerships where teachers and artists shared long time commitment and working relations (Booth, 2011).

Booth defines TA as a sort of artistic hybrid where some of the basic characteristics is high focus on personal relevance, engagement before information, identify and build on the situational competence, balance process and product, work with the teacher, plan with the school, be curriculum relevant and be artistically updated. Booth (2009) describes artistic experience as "*the capacity to expand the sense of the way the world is or might be*", and he underlines that this description is very similar to a description of what learning is (p. 5). TA/community artists are quite widespread in the U.S., but they are not part of national state funded programmes as is the case in Norway. If schools in the U.S. are part of such arrangements, it depends on school and community interest and opportunity rather than a state-provided educational and art-based service. Deasy and Stevenson (2005) refer to such arts based practices as a third way to learning.

The Norwegian model is based on a democratic concept securing access for everyone to art. All schools *have to* receive a certain number of visits by artists and programmes whether they like it or not. A major finding in the first author's study, as pointed out earlier in this article, is that the art field and the artist have the definitional power of this activity for many reasons, maybe first of all because of the structural framework of the national programmes and their "pay a visit" (usually 45 minutes) character, but also because the artistic competence inhabited by artists is given greater value from politicians than the competence of the teacher. In this way, the Norwegian model secures a sort of quantitative fairness, but not shared responsibility, shared definitional power, shared implementation of the artistic event, and shared planning. We argue that this lack of sharing is a major and fundamental weakness of the Norwegian model, that is; if the intention is to create quality practices where learning and education is just as important as the transmission of art. This explains, in our view, the lack of school ownership in the Norwegian model and the lack of influence on schools' everyday life: And what is more; it threatens to undermine what art is all about and reduce it to mere entertainment.

### **Towards a New Relational Arts Based Pedagogy**

As we see it, the artistic and the educational fields have never been closer to a common and shared philosophy, be it artistically or educationally, about questions concerning audiences, present and future, and about the educational value of the arts as a foundation for sustainable and democratic societies. What remains, however, is to see to what extent art institutions as well as schools are willing or ready to adopt the change from a work-based focus towards the relational in their respective and shared practices. We are not saying that these changes do not

take place, but to what extent is it a conscious and willing choice based on new rationale? What we propose then, is to actively embrace, but also to adapt, the relational turn in both fields, but not uncritically and not in a way that might reduce the meaning and importance of great art, nor the quality of educational learning and Bildung. We think art and aesthetics as well as education has something to offer in the construction of a new relational arts based pedagogy. Crucial questions in such a change of philosophy and practice for the art field are: How will the practice of a “relational musician” be different from a work-oriented musician? What basic attitudes and rationale will be the starting point for the development of relational practices, and how will such practices be shaped and unfold in various contexts? How can it lead to categorical Bildung (Klafki) in the generations to come?

The other field, education, also needs to adopt the change. Even if artists become more relational and more inclined towards working in longer and integrative partnerships, what will happen if they generally meet teachers without aesthetic experience and competence and with little understanding of the importance of creative and aesthetic learning processes?

When comparing U.S. based practices as described above with the Norwegian model, it is a paradox, that the established Norwegian model with a *for all* philosophy as its basis seems to harbor an underpinning rationale and practice resulting in lack of school ownership for art programs, whereas the U.S. model with a ‘for the selected few’ philosophy (perhaps not intended, but still in reality so), seems to harbor a more relations based philosophy, at least in a number of cases resulting in school embracement, involvement and ownership far beyond a 45 minute visit.

If asking what this means for arts education subjects in schools, we think teacher training institutions need to insist on the arts as a compulsory part of a basic teacher education, not only because the educational potential of this field for learning in, but also far beyond the subjects themselves. However, they also need to realize that education in the 21st century no longer is the sole responsibility for schools and educational institutions. It is already a shared practice between a number of agents, institutions and organizations, and to meet this situation, the educational field needs to adopt the relational turn in their own practices by actively involving themselves with art institutions and organizations in a quest for re-investing in arts education as a shared practice (Dwyer, 2011).

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