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Master thesis

Sculpting The Artist

How Art School ‘Moulds’ Art Students

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Abstract

"There's so much more to being an artist than just making art," voiced a professor. Being an artist, instead, is a way of life, and becoming an artist is deeply connected to learning this way of life. At arts schools around the world, art students are learning how to talk, think, and act. The students are learning what to create as art, what to value in art, and, vitally, they are learning a social way of being that diffuses out of the institutional setting and into their everyday life.

Overwhelmingly, evidence today suggests that becoming a 'professional' artist is intimately linked to having studied art at the level of higher education. This ethnography engages with art students who are doing just that, at the Academy of Fine Art in Oslo. It is students from studies like this who will be exhibiting in the world's most esteemed galleries in the future. And exhibiting to the vast audiences of these galleries gives artists powers far beyond their numbers to influence culture. The concept of value(s) is a core theme throughout this thesis, viewing what the art academy places explicit importance on - namely 'fame' -, as well as how both teachers and students are socialized into having certain values. Specifically, this project focuses on ways in which the art student differentiates themselves from the 'normal' worker, including notions of freedom and resistance, as well as the art students' conceptions of money and exchange.

The artist has the ability to influence society, and the educational institution has the ability to influence the artist. Therefore, formally, the aim of this thesis is to gain insight into the ways in which art students are shaped by art academies. The true aim of this thesis, however, is to highlight the struggles of artistic resistance and therefore open up to ways in which artists can use their art to incite action against ideologies of eternal economic growth at the expense of the human experience.

There's an art to becoming an artist, and this art is learned at art school.

Acknowledgments

To everyone at The Academy of Fine Art in Oslo, thank you. This process could not have been done without you, your kindness, and your collaboration. I hope something here can help. Special thanks to *Bernadotte, Inger, Momo,* and *Vera*. Thank you, also, to everyone at the Department of Social Anthropology in Oslo. Especially to my supervisor Theodoros Rakopoulos.

To my friends. To Katja, for helping me swim when I was barely treading water. To Jake and Håvard, for your time and generosity. And to my partner Tatjana for noticing the smallest details. Thank you. And finally, to my family. For understanding when I quit studying maths and took a different route. Like a half-forgotten nightmare, I can barely imagine what life would be like if I continued on that path. Thank you for wanting nothing but happiness for me.

I leave this project affected by everyone I interacted with. With this, because of all of you, I should be leaving a kinder, funnier, more curious, more interesting, and generally better person. Everyone who helped me, and anyone at all at the art academy, do not hesitate if ever you want a favour returning.

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1 Introduction and Methodology

"Shall we allow the social sciences to reduce literary experience – the most exalted that man may have, along with love – to surveys about our leisure activities, when it concerns the very meaning of our life?" (Sallanave, 1991, in Bourdieu, 1992/1996, p. xiii).

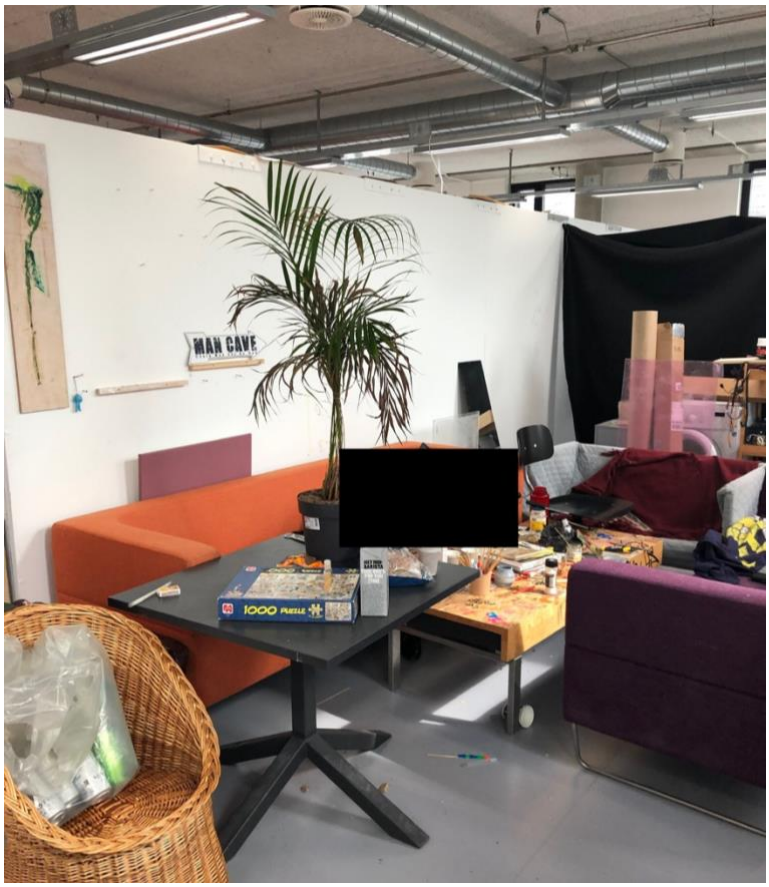
The same could be said about fine art, replacing the love, the magic, of art, with numbers and theory. I truly wish not to do this. Luckily, I am studying anthropology, which, through its pioneering fathers, has magic in its foundations (see: Malinowski, 1925; Evans-Pritchard, 1937).

The Art Academy

Walking over the cobblestone courtyard towards the revolving doors at the main entrance, I looked at my phone: 09:55. I had made it on time, even a little early. A meeting, Friday 10am, with the 'program coordinator' of the Fine Arts degree had been arranged after a few emails a couple of days before. The foyer was grand yet understated - tall ceilings and little decoration - an old Norwegian sails factory turned into an arts university. Sunlight skipped across the floor in front of the refracting revolving door as the program coordinator, wearing bright red glasses, entered from outside. I looked at her tentatively, wondering if it was the right person. She reciprocated the look and smiled. We walked over to one another and began to chat, her presence calming my nerves.

First an access card was created for me. It was late April and she asked how long I wanted access, which was about eight months. She gave me sixteen. Then the tour began. We walked back outside, through the sunlit cobbled courtyard, and with the help of the new institutional access card, entered a black door that seemed like a back entrance, albeit a very popular one. Immediately we turned right and headed downstairs. "It's like a maze in here," she said. If she meant that it was culturally hard to navigate, she was right. Another door opened up onto a large atrium that we walked through until we reached some stairs. First, she showed me around the 1BA (first year Bachelor students) "studios", then the second years', and after

walking upstairs to another floor I was shown the 3BA (third year Bachelor students) studios. The floors with studio spaces were to be my main field site. These consisted of a large room, which was filled with partially enclosed smaller rooms (the individual 'studios') made up of three-quarter height removable walls, and somewhat of a hallway through the floor. The building-site smell of paint, glue, industrial chemicals, and wood shavings made it so the shopping trolleys full of well-aged empty beer cans were not noticeable by smell. The ventilation system, which hung from the ceiling, must have been working well. The inside of the studios, where individual art students had their yearly space, differed greatly. The connecting feature being the construction, and, at first sight, the hard to distinguish mix between art and trash. The BA studios increased in size as the study year increased. Of the approximately seventy students that could have been there we saw one. I was to learn later that student exhibitions happen on Thursdays, so Friday is normally a late start. The students, or as one teacher later joked, my "lab rats," evaded me. I would meet them soon.



2BA studios floor (with sleeping student cropped out).

The Critique (The Crit)

The Academy is my permeable field-site. Within The Academy there are many spaces, events, classes, and people. The studios within The Academy were the places I spent most time while in the field, but time was spent in other places too. Instead of listing off every place and every method I used during fieldwork in this introduction, I will integrate them throughout this thesis as the matters I come to analyse unfold; stating when, where, and often how, the interaction came about. However, one important event, that will be referred to repeatedly is 'the critique' (known colloquially as a 'crit'). Crits generally take place in the students' studios. They are The Academy's fundamental ritual - the "main pedagogical event," according to one teacher, in which 8-10 students of all years (bachelors and masters) and one teacher get together for one or two days. Each student spends over an hour presenting their own artwork, discussing and justifying it with the class and teacher, with the aim of receiving feedback that will help them improve their art, before moving onto the next student. The crit "models the larger art world as a networked world and a space of social practice …. The fact that students and faculty are willing to gather for days to discuss artworks asserts that something important is at stake" (Fine, 2018, p. 139). The crit becomes a vital aspect in learning to become an artist.

Beyond The Academy - The Field of Fine Art

During the first interview I had with a teacher at The Academy – a 50-year-old, wearing a baggy white hoodie -, I was told that to understand the influences on the students I had to look further than just The Academy. She said I should look at the symbiosis between different players in the field of fine art: The Academy, museums, art critics, elite artists, and so on. It is not only The Academy that has influence on what the students make, do, or how they think, but a wider social and institutional context. The founding fathers of anthropology knew this too. Boas, in a study of "American Indian languages" discusses potential "hybridization" of languages (Boas, 1940, p. 220). Even in a time before so-called 'globalization' "it was axiomatic to the Boasians that cultural boundaries were porous and permeable" (Bashkow, 2004, p. 445). In other words, the "cultural boundaries" of The Academy are penetrated by other cultures. In the case of The Academy, the other actors in the field of fine art are the

most clear cultural penetrators, but could one not say there is much more at play? Even the field of fine art, with all its separate branches, is not secluded and unaffected by other parts of the world. For example, the art student who also has a passion for snowboarding and spends time in snowboarding spheres is more likely to be making art that is less critical and is "just having a good time," as this student said. While the art student who has parents of immigrant background is more likely to be exploring identity, belonging, or colonialism.

In studying the blurriness of boundaries, the question of scales also comes into play. Bourdieu critiqued the way that "the field [of art] has been invaded by international commercialism, in particular, through the doctrine of liberal economies exported from America to an apparently receptive audience in Europe" (Grenfell & Hardy, 2007, p. 180). If American economic structures effect art that is created in Norway, how is it possible to only study one location to understand the influences on the art students? Globalization - meaning the increased and increasing interconnectedness and intermingling of the world and therefore culture (Eriksen, 2016) - means that most, if not all, anthropological fieldwork involves some form of cultural hybridity. It is not possible, though, to do an exhaustive study of all influences throughout the entire world. Instead, I am focusing on the focal point for the student artists trying to become professional artists: The Art Academy. I have not spent any extended time at museums, with art critics, gallery owners, or the arts funding council. There are certainly things I will miss in this thesis, namely some influences upon the art students that do not come from within The Academy, including the penetration of American economic ideals over to Norway, the creation and manipulation of taste through media, or how snowboarding effects the art student.

There are other stories that could have been told from similar research – there are always other stories that could be told -, however the story I am telling is how The Academy and its implicit culture influences the art students, and therefore their art. Though inevitably, there will be some hybridity, overlap, and leaking into the rest of the world. Some vital aspects outside of The Academy that influence the art students' ways of being will be explored. For example, I have conducted interviews with a gallery jury member, and have spent time with some of the art students outside of The Academy, in bars, cinemas, museums, and in their or my apartment for breakfast and dinner. For the most part, however, the observations and

conversations I will present were conducted inside the grounds of The Academy, with students from all years, but mostly 1BA and 3BA students - 3BAs as they were largely finishing their institutional art education, and 1BAs as they were just beginning.

Early Starts (Socioeconomic Backgrounds)

In the same way that one is influenced across spatial boundaries, so too is one influenced across temporal boundaries. A person is not an art student only because of the present moment. Each person has their own history, and narrative of their history, that has led them to becoming an art student. Students do not simply apply for The Academy at random. There is a reason they want to be artists, or at least learn how to make 'better' art. Bourdieu (1979/1984) highlights how artistic tastes are formed when one is a child, and are largely related to one's class. The habitus and doxa, the disposition, to want to become an artist begins much before the student enters the art school, at a minimum age of nineteen.

Paul Willis' (1977) book, *Learning to Labour: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs*, shows how the educational system hinders working class "lads" from escaping working class life. The "lads", he argues, have ingrained values and ways of being, developed from their parents and their working class environment, that clash with the values of the educational system and its supposed correct ways of being. Therefore these "lads" dislike schooling and resist it, leading to the teachers disliking them and becoming less willing to help. This, in turn, means they are less likely to get good grades, and therefore, because of their cultural dispositions from childhood, they are more likely to end up with working class jobs. Willis' ethnography shows how the educational system contributes to the reproduction of class differences, based on the habitus one has gained during childhood.

I cannot turn back time and spend it with these art students twenty years ago to understand how their upbringing affected their ways of being today. But I did spend time with them now and asked questions, observed, and learned about how they were as kids, and the type of background they came from. One story that could be told, but I will not tell, is specific origin stories of how one decided to become an artist; the students would often have a specific

moment in time and mind, '*this one occurrence is why I wanted to become an artist*'. What I will allude to throughout this thesis, however, is the interactions I had with art students, both individually and in groups, that, put together, form the general character of the 'art student' as a social unit. Generally, the art students were raised in urban areas. Generally, they share specific desires and ways of being before joining The Academy: these are desires to be subversive, to make art, probably be politically left-wing, and more. Generally, their fashion is somewhat different to normative Norwegian fashion – being different to the 'normal' person is a recurring theme -, but not too different. As Chumley (2016, p. ix) states, "though artists may seem (and see themselves) as different, unconventional, radical, or unusual, compared to normal society, they are still within the parameters of mainstream urban life which will form their art practices." Clothes are often a bit baggy, or black, or very colourful: different but not too different. Generally, before matriculating into The Academy, prospective art students will go to a private foundational school. There will be general ways of being before joining a foundational school, and they will likely be pronounced during one's times there. Although the class system is not as pronounced in Scandinavia as it is in, say, the UK or France, there were only a few students who came from a "working class" background. There may be many reasons for this, as we will explore later, including that art museums in Norway cost money, so simply being exposed to art at a young age requires not only cultural capital and a desire to show your children art, but also financial capital and a willingness to spend money to view it. In other words, the art students' parents are generally at least somewhat interested in art and have the money to view it. That being said, art students may not necessarily have rich parents, but it is likely that they have parents with lots of cultural capital.

Additionally, at The Academy there are more female than male art students, and a few non-binary people. The typical age of a BA student is between 20 and 30, and the vast majority of the students are white, just as the vast majority of people in Norway are white. Like most of the world, age, gender, and ethnicity are important characteristics that affect what one believes, how they act, and how they are acted upon. This could be another interesting story to tell, that I will not focus on, as at The Academy there is a clear attempt for these things not to matter. To be part of the art community, art students should not care about these things, instead they should care about inclusivity and equality.

What is Art?

This thesis aims to gain insight into how institutionalized art education influences art students, and to explore the ways students at The Academy come to act and to think. Although this is not of study of art itself, nor is it an investigation into "the soggy embrace of philosophical aesthetics" (Gell, 1999, p. 17), these themes repeatedly come up at The Academy and form the backdrop of why students do what they do. It is important, therefore, to briefly delve into the cliché: what is art?

According to anthropologist of the arts, Alfred Gell, there are three possible answers to the question *what is an artwork*? 1. 'Aesthetic' theory; 2. 'Interpretive' theory; and 3. 'Institutional' theory.

1. Art is any object, through the intention and skill of the artist, that is aesthetically superior to most other objects. Gell dismisses this theory, due to the likes of conceptual art, but he argues that this view "is still widely held, especially by the general public, who tend to think that visual attractiveness, or beauty, is something they can recognize automatically" (Gell, 1999, p. 187).

2. That the aesthetics of an artwork are not necessarily vital for a thing to be defined as art, but that an artwork simply needs to be interpreted as art based upon "a system of ideas that is founded within an art-historical tradition" (Gell, 1999, p. 187). 'Interpretive' theory argues that something is art if it bases itself in previous forms of art.

3. That the qualities and inspiration of the art do not define if something is an artwork. It is solely art based on "whether or not it is taken to be one by an art world, that is, a collectivity interested in making, sharing and debating critical judgements of this type" (Gell, 1999, p. 188). 'Institutional' theory believes it is the art world, made up of, namely, artists, critics, dealers, and collectors, that has the power to decide if something is art. Not history or aesthetics, but people.

As I show in the upcoming chapter, this third theory, the 'institutional' theory, is closest to the beliefs at The Academy of what an artwork is; even if 'interpretive' theory joins the mix, with 'historical' inspiration being almost ritually stated when talking about one's own art. The belief in this theory impacts what the students come to understand what art is and therefore what they should be creating.

Art and Anthropology

While Gell tells us a lot about the concept of *what art is*, he does not expand into the question of *why art is*. Gell does not tell us about intentions, motivations, influences, artist discourses, or the ways of being of those who create art. The importance of art being defined within the 'institutional' theory, and therefore by powerful agents within the field of fine art, is that art is not about any technical skill, nor is it grounded in history. Art instead is defined by people in existing social relationships. It therefore is decided by, and may reinforce, existing hierarchies based on predisposed cultural and educational capital, and hence economic capital, and all their associated theoretical and aesthetic dispositions. Already, these are some important impacts upon *why* art is what it is.

It is the anthropologist's job to familiarize the exotic and exoticize the familiar (Eriksen, 1995). Exoticizing the familiar, however, is something the artists have been doing long before anthropologists saw any use in it at all. In the 1920s, the Surrealists aimed to show the surreal aspects of our own lives; how strange, 'exotic', and non-rational *we* really are. The surrealist movement had great influence on anthropology (Sansi, 2015, p. 26). Thirty or so years later, around the 1950s, anthropologists began regularly studying aspects of our own culture (or as we call it "anthropology at home" (Jackson, 1987)) with the likes of Ronald Frankenberg conducting ethnography in Wales and Hortense Powdermaker in the USA. More recently, it has been claimed that art has taken back from anthropology. Hal Foster's (1995) article '*The Artist as Ethnographer'* addressed how art was incorporating anthropological methods. Nicolas Bourriaud (2022), too, in his new book '*Inclusions: Aesthetics of the Capitalocene'*, argues that artists are the anthropologists of this era. I was shocked to find students at The

Academy reading Levi-Strauss and Tim Ingold. All this is to say, art and anthropology have a lot to offer one another.

Although this is a 'fieldwork at home', I want to argue that it is more 'exotic', more different, than an 'at home' fieldwork would normally be. Though the artist and art student may not be as marginalised as they would like to seem, they are still their own little tribe in the heart of the city, with their own cultural codes. They are a tribe that is looked upon with both wonder and disgust. One that, in an attempt to identify themselves as a unique group, oppose themselves to the 'normal' person. I was still the once-romanticized, now-controversial, lone, white, male, fieldworker, infiltrating the native tribe, observing the primitives who spend their time obsessed with material transformation, physical distortion, and entering trance states that they would call "creative flow." But I was also similar to them, and I made friends that I am sure I will keep. Furthermore, this was not an ethically challenging fieldwork. Other than anonymizing the people who are part of the study, the main ethical guideline I tried to follow was rule number one: do no harm. And while I'm here, I would like to state my envy of ethics in arts. Artists have fewer imposed ethical restraints, they can even be deliberately transgressive to ethics and morals, something that Schneider (2012, p. 65) argues is not necessarily negative, and in fact is another thing that anthropologists could learn from.

The aim of this thesis is to gain insight into the ways in which degree level art education influences art students, both through formal teaching and informal socialization with peers. Each chapter has a theme which grew out of observations made during the eight months I spent at The Academy of Fine Art in Oslo. After this introduction, Chapter 2 discusses the explicit forms of education, including being taught to exhibit art, which therefore implicitly teaches students the ultimate value of 'fame' (visibility and reputation). This chapter highlights how the art student learns what to make as art and how to discuss it, both of which are intertwined with concepts of legitimation and authority. Chapter 3, then, explores the discourse of 'freedom' that is ubiquitous at The Academy, while the following chapter, Chapter 4, delves into another common discourse, but also a way of acting: 'resistance'. These emic concepts of 'freedom' and 'resistance' are not explicitly taught by The Academy but are learned through processes of socialization. Vital in these chapters, and throughout this study, is that becoming a 'real' artist is largely a process of socialization in which one gradually thinks

and acts more like the others within the same social group, which is predicated on legitimation and hierarchies. The final two chapters explore art students' understandings of money. Chapter 4 delves into the political economy of the social field, looking at the ways in which everyday aspects of money affect the artist and therefore the art. Chapter 5 discusses the morality of exchange, arguing that exchanging art for money is not necessarily immoral, but being 'greedy' is. This chapter includes concepts of *The Gift* and commodities, and uses Melanesian pigs as a metaphor to understand the concept of fetishism in the art world. Finally, and to conclude, I bring together the themes discussed in previous chapters, in the context of the newly built National Museum of Art in Oslo.

Throughout this thesis I will try to highlight some paradoxes within The Academy, not to show that the artists are delusional or what they say is wrong or naïve, but to show that their lives, like all lives, are full of deeply rooted complexities and contradictions within a specific cultural matrix. In fact, students at The Academy are taught to be reflective on themselves and what they are doing. The art students and teachers, therefore, will already be aware of many of my reflections upon the complexities of becoming an artist at the institution. Some of the arguments I propose come directly from the teachers or students questioning themselves. Much of what I say may, to those at The Academy, seem obvious, though I hope it allows another form of self-reflection for the teachers and students alike. To everyone else, enjoy.

2 What is an Artist? (Learning to Become One)

"Everyone is an artist"

- Joseph Beuys

"There's no right way of being an artist," a teacher stated to all the 1BAs, sat circled around her in a plain white artless room, on one of their first days at The Academy. Artistic practice and method are different for everyone, she continued. However, as this chapter argues, there are ways that are *more right* and more beneficial for occupational success. These *more right* ways of being an artist are both formally taught and informally learned at The Academy. I begin the exploration of what an artist is (and how students learn to become one) by highlighting some means of differentiation that students and teachers used to distinguish between a 'real' artist and a hobby artist, namely imagined boundaries and the necessity of "hard work" within the field of fine art. I then take a step back to the very first day of school at The Academy, discussing the influence of legitimation, authority, and socialization, upon art students. This chapter argues that one of the implicit effects of The Academy is to help students become 'real' artists, and in doing so it has created and structured (or purposefully not created) an educational program to achieve this outcome. I therefore move on to look at the educational program, examining three of the four 'themes' that are actively taught at The Academy: '*Artistic practice'* – learning to make art with the brain -, '*Exhibition practice'* – gaining a reputation/'fame' -, and '*Theory for practice*' – learning to 'communicate art'. I omit the fourth 'theme', '*Thematic focus'*, as it encompasses the other three 'themes' but is taught in too many forms to explore (there are over ten 'Thematic focus' courses the art student can choose from). The general purpose of this chapter is to understand the explicit forms of education at The Academy - even if some of the explicit forms are also learned implicitly - that teach a student some of the many right ways of being an artist.

Differentiating The Artist

'Artist' is not a protected title. There do not exist specific qualifications, achievements, or criteria in order to define oneself as an artist. The Academy, therefore, cannot make someone definitively an artist. Instead, its role is to make the student into *more* of an artist. In a

profession, in which membership is not clear-cut or subject to formal ratification, defining membership is somewhat subject to opinion - a lawyer who has passed their exams, and therefore would be legally defined as a lawyer, would be the opposite. The profession 'Artist', on the other hand, is not officially recognized and therefore can only be confirmed or disconfirmed subjectively or based upon informal agreements (Goffman, 1959, p. 68). The insecurity of the title 'Artist' is heightened as anybody can claim it without legal repercussions. If I were to claim I was an artist for example, I may be mocked and rejected by some, but welcomed by others.

In fact, after spending some months at The Academy and repeatedly hearing about the emotional aspects of making art: the pride, the vulnerability, the trust in others; I flirted with the idea of making art myself in an attempt to understand this emotional side firsthand. I brought this idea up to a group of 1BAs after we had lunch on a sunlit bench by the cobbled courtyard and were walking back up the stairs towards the studios. The students enjoyed the idea and generally encouraged me, though somewhat comically. Vera – a 1BA in her early 20s, artistically interested in the darker sensations: anxiety, depression, heartbreak; yet interpersonally the opposite: caring, welcoming, and wanting to make people laugh -, knowing me well by this time, got a laugh from everyone at my expense, as she looked up at me playfully and said, "you can't make art, you're not an artist." Though this was a (cheap) joke, it still shows a desire to distinguish between artist and non-artist. An ethnography of an academic art scene more than forty years ago shows how little this need to distinguish between 'real' artists and hobby artists has changed: "As a Cal Arts teacher bitterly quipped, "If anybody can be an artist, then an artist is nobody."" (Adler, 1979, p. 12).

Central to a structuralist understanding of constructions of reality, as Levi-Strauss would suggest, defining oneself is dependent on binary oppositions: to define a man there must be the opposite, a woman; to define dark, there must be light; to define 'Artist', therefore, there must be non-artist. The dichotomized *us/them* reinforces the sense belonging to a specific group - one that has shared understandings and common interests - while separating the 'other' into another category that does not belong with one's own. In this case, it would be an attempt to create a social and definitional boundary between the artist and the other (Gershon 2019).

This desire to distinguish between 'real' artist and 'non-real' artist was revealed during a discussion in a class for the new 1BAs at the beginning of the semester (the very same class, plain white and artless, as from the teachers opening quote). A student said, somewhat out of the blue, "There are many people who do art as a hobby, but we are doing it seriously." Without hesitation and with absolute conviction, the teacher replied, "yes, this is not a hobby." That one's profession may be another's hobby is a clear point of contention. That anyone can define themselves as an artist, that the title can only be confirmed more or less, can be devaluing to occupational identity. This was, again, highlighted by Vera, when describing what is it to be an artist: "An artist for me is most importantly a hard-working person. If you just draw a little sketch once a month, can you really call yourself an artist? Like is it fair to call yourself an artist?" Here, Vera implicitly acknowledged that 'Artist' is an unprotected title, and therefore attempted to distinguish between a 'real' artist and a hobby artist on moral terms based on 'hard work': asking "is it fair" on hard-working 'artists' that anyone can call themselves an artist? Additionally, as I was leaving The Academy one evening, I bumped into a 3BA outside a back entrance, smoking (smoking is common among art students and part of the romanticized 'myth of the artist' – Chapter 3). When I brought up the idea of making my own art with her, she replied that there was no point of me even beginning if I did not have the passion or time. To this student, even the idea of me making art was pointless if I did not have the ability or desire to put in hard work. To this student, to Vera, and many of the other students and teachers, the boundary between 'real' and 'non-real' artist was negotiated through the concept of hard work within the field of fine art.

As Joseph Beuys' quote, "everyone is an artist," and the partial encouragement that many art students gave me to make my own art highlights, the strict boundary between 'real' artist and 'hobby' artist is not as strict as it seems. At the same time, there is certainly a desire to differentiate the artist and the other, and there are certain criteria that do this, one of them being "hard work" in the arts. To put it in other words, although there may not be an entirely strict distinction between the 'real' artist and the 'non-real' artist – it may be more of a dynamic continuum; an indexical term - there is certainly a distinction at the two opposing sides of the spectrum. It is the role of The Academy to get their students distinguishable and justified as 'real' artists. To do this, The Academy, as one would expect from most educational

institutions, repeatedly promotes hard work. Students at The Academy are regularly told that to be an artist one must work extremely hard. Inger – a 1BA, 26, with precocious charismatic authority: confidence, eloquence, and matching intelligence - explicitly stated this in an interview: "I keep getting preached that it's [being an artist] a really hard thing to do, so yeah, I think they're pretty hard working." In this sense, what makes art school different from most other educational institutions is that there are no objective criteria suggesting how 'good' the student is. Instead, it is supposedly completely "subjective," and working hard will not give the art student better grades. However, within art school, working hard will help the students become *more* 'real' artists. Due to this, I propose two main reasons for promoting hard work at the art school. One, to differentiate between the 'real' artist and hobby artist; and two, because the everyday reality of being an artist, to make a living from your art, is challenging and competitive, and to achieve this unlikely goal of 'making-it' as an artist will require "hard work." "Hard work" may also increase one's chances of legitimation in the art world.

Legitimating the Artist

It was a beautiful late August day. The first of the study year. Students, teachers, and administrative staff lingered by the lofty brick building eating free pizza and drinking free white wine, soaking up the sun. Some students were new to The Academy, some returning after summer vacation. A meet and greet with the teachers and all the students, from 1BA to 2MA (second year Master students), was taking place at 14:30. Once the crowd was inside and sitting, the teachers gave impromptu speeches. Afterwards the students were told to mingle with people not sat near them, with people in different year groups, and with teachers. As would be expected, many people stayed in previously formed cliques. However, considering this was in famously introverted Norway, there was a lot more intermingling and new meetings than one would expect - challenging Norwegian normative conventions was a norm itself at The Academy, and maybe the free wine helped.

This technique of expanding students' social circles, as happens so often and so awkwardly on the first days of many new schools, may seem commonplace. The important difference between most educational institutions and this one, however, is the encouragement to

socialize outside of one's school year group (as I argue in Chapter 5, 'networking' is beneficial for occupational success). Implicit learning through socialization was a recognized teaching method within The Academy. A teacher explicitly stated this the next day in a speech to the new students (the 1BAs and 1MAs): a "core pedagogical principle is that the students learn as much from each other as they learn from the professors." Not only does The Academy encourage socialization through year groups, but also many of the courses are shared between year groups, as are crits (the main pedagogical events). That is to say, there is a great interconnectedness between the 'newcomers' and 'old-timers'.

I use these words – 'newcomers' and 'old-timers' – as that is what Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1991) use in their classic book *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. "Legitimate peripheral participation" is a term used to describe how new students begin at the 'periphery' of a community with novice knowledge on relevant subject matters (in this case, how to be an artist), and learn from those who are closer to the 'centre' of the community, with more relevant knowledge. Similar to apprentices, the newcomers learn from the old-timers, not through being formally taught with knowledge "set down on paper," but informally learning "in the flesh" (Sennett, 2008, p. 54), through a process of participation in a community. As this happens, the previously novice student expands their knowledge and moves towards becoming an expert. Towards, in other words, "full participation" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 37).

"In the beginning I struggled to articulate myself," a 1MA student articulated to a 1BA in a break during a crit, noticing the 1BAs struggle. In crits, legitimate peripheral participation became hyper-visible. Like a nervous child entering a new school mid-way through the school year, the 1BAs (the newcomers on the periphery) would be more likely to sit passively than to speak, while the 2MAs (the old-timers, closer to full participation) would have the knowledge and confidence to contribute more - though this may not always be the case as precocious or overconfident students exist everywhere. Over time the newcomers will gain the knowledge through socialization with the "expert" old-timers and eventually become experts themselves. Additionally, the 1BAs are less likely to suggest potential improvements or interpretations of other students' art, and would be less likely to question or disagree with other students' interpretations of their own art. Newcomers' opinions were more easily

swayed by the old-timers than the other way around. As Lave and Wenger show, people learn through processes of socialization and participation with those who have more knowledge and expertise than them. Lave and Wenger acknowledge themselves, however, that there are central issues in relation to legitimate peripheral participation that they barely touch upon, "in particular, unequal relations of power" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 42). I therefore delve into some of these issues here, namely legitimation and authority.

This institutionally assisted socializing of the students between different years, while allowing implicit learning, also reduces, or obscures, the informal hierarchy and status between the year groups. It therefore obscures the power relations that are at play in forms of socialization. In a field that lacks 'objective' values, it is the community, with its acknowledged and unacknowledged leaders, that has the power to judge and therefore define standards of art and influence the appropriate ways of being. The Academy assisted intermixing of year groups means that one of the ways that students learn how to be an artist is through the hierarchical socialization between other students and teachers who have more authority and/or are more of a legitimized artist than they are. This legitimation-based hierarchy is deeply associated with time spent in the field.

To define the criteria that lead to this implicit hierarchy I use Max Weber's theories of legitimacy and authority. To Weber (1920/1964) there were three types of authority: Traditional, Legal/Rational, and Charismatic. Traditional authority, least relevant in this case, is formed through long-standing customs, traditions, or heritage. Legal/rational authority is formed through sets of rules within rule-bound and rule-making institutions, with emphasis on bureaucracy. Finally, there is charismatic authority, which is "devotion to the specific and exceptional character of an individual person" (Weber, 1920/1964, p. 328).

Adapting these generalized forms of authority into more localized forms that operate within The Academy allows for better understanding into who has greater power and influence on the art students. Traditional authority did not exist at The Academy. If one was the descendent of a great artist, maybe they would gain this authority, but I knew of no students at The Academy with this heritage. Legal/rational authority, then, is formed by the institutions within the field of art as well as the qualifications available through increasingly administrative

educational systems. That is to say, legal/rational authority is gained by having one's work shown in galleries (hence '*Exhibition practice'*), holding talks within the field, teaching, being acknowledged by other legitimized figures within the field, as well as gaining the actual degree qualifications. Finally, charismatic authority within the field of art should be seen as specific desirable traits such as confidence, charm, and eloquence. These 'charismatic' traits may seem unteachable, but, as Weber notes:

> *"Within certain limits the transition between charismatic and rational specialised training is of course fluid. Every charismatic education includes some specialised training... This empirical and professional component, which is often treated as secret know-how for the sake of prestige and monopolization, increases quantitively and in rational quality with professional differentiation and the accumulation of specialised knowledge"* (Weber, quoted in Adler, 1979, p. 143).

This, for example, could be being taught how to articulate oneself in a specific way (hence '*Theory for practice':* communicating art).

The acknowledged leaders at the school, therefore, are the teachers. They have, most likely, gained the academic qualifications (teachers increasingly have PhDs), have had many exhibitions shows, have partaken in many events within the field of fine art, and have spent the most time 'practicing' their art. Among individuals, it is the teachers who have the most influence within the institution in defining standards and ways of being. Second in command, theoretically, is the student who has had the most exhibitions or has shown their art in the most respected galleries. They probably already have a bachelor's degree, and they are confident in themselves and their knowledge of the field. These are the unacknowledged leaders.

This implicit hierarchy of legitimation was made explicit by one of the teachers while giving a speech to the new students. All of the years, excluding the 1BAs, chose their top three desired supervisors. The higher the year a student was in, the more likely they were of getting their first choice. In describing why this was the case, the teacher said, stumbling on her words, "there's always an order of priority, meaning that the first BAs are… are… they are… at the

lower end." I was told later that the other reason for this is that the ('newcomer') 1BA students do not yet know as much about potential supervisors, nor about their own work and practice, and are therefore less likely to pick a suitable supervisor.

Finally, there is the symbolic legitimation of the degree qualification that is the official end to the university program. Though the main goal of many students at The Academy is to improve their art, the one outcome that all students who complete the studies will objectively gain is the degree qualification. A degree symbolically marks commitment to the shared understandings and common ideals of the artist as cultural unit, which, as I have shown, is partially pinned down to hard work within the artistic field. Not having a degree will not stop one from gaining a place in a legitimized gallery but it will make it harder. Not only is the degree hugely beneficial in exhibiting more, but it is also a form of occupational protectionism: a means of differentiation between the 'real' artist and the 'non-real' artist.

Artistic Practice – Making and Thinking

To gain the degree and to gain legitimation – to become *more* of an artist -, one should 'make' art. Often in studies of art schools, authors feel it revelatory to point out that the aim of art schools is to create artists, while the creation of art objects is secondary (Fine, 2018; Singerman, 1999). This immediately shows how people imagine art school to be different from other types of education – it is obvious, for example, that one goes to law school to become a lawyer, not to make laws. However, the claim that the art is a secondary goal for art schools is a claim that was entirely absent during my fieldwork. Instead, to become an artist one must be doing art: the art and the artist are inherently connected.

Though 'Artist', now, is not a protected title, in late medieval Europe, 'art' and 'craft' titles were protected by guilds: syndicates of craftsmen (painters, sculptors, goldsmiths, potters, etc.) that controlled trade, limited competition, and enforced quality control (Warnke 1985/1993). The concept of 'ars', meaning skilled craftwork, incorporated 'art' and 'craft' as we understand them today – there was no differentiation between them, both were seen as a purely manual activity. However, after a century long campaign, ending in the late sixteenth-

century, the 'artist' succeeded in differentiating crafts and art. Crafts were still purely manual labour, while arts included the mental labour of creative power. Art Academies began to pop up around this time, emphasizing the importance of knowledge over technical skill. "The artists reinvented themselves as creators to be venerated for their godlike powers, while the artifacts, taking on a heightened aesthetic character and a mystique of greatness, were redefined as "art"" (Woods-Marsden, 1996, p. 220). The fine artist managed to differentiate themselves from the craftsman.

Back at The Academy, while twiddling my thumbs in the library, I received a text from Bernadotte – 30, a 3BA, and as entirely chaotic as she is curious and caring - asking for a favour. I made my way over to the plaster workshop – a spacious room, with weighing scales, sacks of plaster of Paris, and plaster-powder dusted desks - and followed her instructions. I sat with both hands soaking in a bucket of warm water, waiting for them to wrinkle so that Bernadotte could make a mould of them. "Do you think of yourself as an artist?" I asked. She laughed, acknowledging my conspicuous performance change in the contrast between our previous conversation and this: this was very much a question for research. "I'm at least trying to be one" she replied. "What do you mean by that?" I asked, confused. "It depends on how you define an artist… Do you see me as one?". As I stumbled on my words trying to think, my silence spoke to her. She laughed, "well you clearly don't." As the conversation continued, she pointed out that she did not see herself as making much art: "I'm not really making anything;" and that she had not exhibited much work. I then asked the only other student in the room, Roy - in his early 20s, new to The Academy, and in the process of making a cement replica of a tennis ball - if he thought of himself as an artist. "Everyone is an artist" he replied. "Is everyone an artist though?" I responded, "Is Roy the banker as much of an artist as Roy the art student?" He hesitated, "it's just a quote by Joseph Beuys." "Who's that" I said. "He's an artist". A very famous one, I now know.

Additionally, one Monday, in the approach of winter, I went to The Academy at around 10am. There were zero people in the studio spaces, the grey rain facilitating inaction. I met Inger, the only 1BA who I saw at the university that day, down in the ceramics workshop. She was making some plant pots and listening to joyous pop music that she said counteracted the miserable weather. The ceramics room is a large open space, filled with racks of half-made

and fully finished objects, on the first floor underground. We admired some of the works standing on the windowsill, discussing our interpretations of them. A knobby green object particularly stood out to Inger and she decided to try replicate its exterior onto the plant pot she was sculpting. While she sculpted, she said that she was not really making anything now, so at the moment she did not consider herself an artist, but when she is making 'art' she does. She had made a similar statement a couple of months before, during a group interview, sat on the grass outside the school on a warm early-autumn afternoon. Four of us - Vera, Inger, another student, and I - were discussing what we imagined an artist to be. After trying to describe the way this imaginary artist looked, they all agreed that first and foremost an artist is a hard-working person. I then asked if they felt like an artist all the time. A resounding no was the answer. Inger elaborated, saying:

"I was watching this interview with a French artist named Sophie Calle… Well, Sophie Calle says in this interview 'the first time I became an artist', and I quite like that phrase because it's saying that it's a state of mind she enters and leaves. Because she becomes an artist several times throughout her life. That it's not a thing which she is all the time. And I like that state of mind because an artist for me is quite hard to be all the time."

In addition to working hard, there are two important points to be taken from these examples. First, the way these students define themselves or others as artists was based upon recognized artists legitimized within the field of art: Roy with Joseph Beuys, and Inger with Sophie Calle. Second, that to be an artist you should be making art. Interestingly, both Bernadotte and Inger, when I asked them these question *were* making objects. However, what they were making did not fall under their perception of art.

Inger messaged me one day after I had concluded fieldwork. She was wanting some suggestions on how she could turn something that supposedly was not art into art. During a crit, she presented a hanging mobile that she had been working on for a while. She conformed to the way of being during the crit, explaining what the object was, what it meant, and why she made it. The teacher (the most legitimized, and representing The Academy) said, apparently, that Inger's object was beautifully made, but asked *is it art?* The teacher believed that the object was a fine piece of craft but not fine art. This was because there was not

enough of a concept behind it. As argued in Chapter 1, whether something is art or not is dependent on "whether or not it is taken to be… by the art world" (Gell, 1999, p. 188). In Inger's example it was not accepted by the art world (in this case the teacher), because it was seen of as craft – which in the sixteenth century was differentiated from art. It could not be accepted by the teacher because it would oppose the idea of the artist as one who uses their mental labour, not their physical labour. Hard work is vital but not enough by itself. To be a 'real' artist, which is intrinsically connected to 'making' art, also requires the art to have a culturally specific concept that is accepted by the field of fine art. Inger, after being asked *is it art?*, understood this further.

Inger's mobile

Exhibition Practice – The Fame of Gawa

To be *more* of an artist one should also exhibit, and to exhibit art one needs to have 'made' it. The importance of both making and exhibiting art is repeatedly emphasized by The Academy. Within the first week of the 1BAs starting at the school the teachers were already recommending that students reserve the exhibition spaces the school had to offer as soon as possible, even if they had no finished artworks to exhibit, as these spaces rapidly get fully booked. Exhibiting objects is, Bourdieu argues, how the field of art creates value. Elaborating upon the concept of value, here, I compare exhibiting art to anthropologist Nancy Munn's (1986) classic '*The Fame of Gawa'*, demonstrating how artists exhibiting art, and people of Gawa exchanging items, use the same mechanisms to achieves similar outcomes, namely 'fame'.

The Fame of Gawa: A Symbolic Study of Value Transformation in a Massim Society, is a study of value transformation based on expanding the 'fame' of the person through space and time, or as Munn calls it "intersubjective spacetime" (Munn, 1986, p. 9). Gawa is part of the Kula-ring exchange system in which people exchange food and other Kula valuables, and in doing so make "connections not only with consociates but also with more distant contemporaries with whom they have few or no face-to-face relationships" (Munn, 1986, p. 6). This exchange can create so-called 'fame'. 'Fame' is created through projecting oneself, via the relationships made through exchange, "beyond the confinements of the body" so that the person comes "to be known more widely than they can travel" (Strathern, 1988a, p. 191). 'Fame', then, is the reputation gained through the circulation of objects, plus the "intersubjective" act of remembering, carrying 'fame' beyond immediate time and space. The greater the time and space reached, the more visible the person, the more 'fame' they achieve. Food, a common object of spacetime expanding exchange, is therefore generally not eaten by those who grow it as it would not fulfil its capacity to generate positive value, as keeping it for oneself would not create or nurture relationships and therefore not increase the producer's 'fame'. That is to say, without exchanging an object, the person's name and 'fame' does not circulate, and therefore no value ('fame') is generated. In fact, the potential value is lost. Positive value is created by becoming visible and known through the exchange of items. This happens on

different scales on the island. Certain objects are more valuable than others, and certain people are more 'famous' than others. For example, exchange of Kula valuables with great prestige will increase the 'fame' of the giver more than exchange of food would. At the same time, the greater the 'fame' of the giver, the greater the value of the object exchanged. It is not only the person who defines the value of the objects, but also the objects that define the value of the person. As Munn (1983, p. 283) states, in the exchange of shells, "although men appear to be the agents in defining shell value, in fact, without shells, men cannot define their own value; in this respect, shells and men are reciprocally agents of each other's value definition." Both the person and the object can gain or lose value dependent on their interactions and the visibility created.

Exhibiting art - in which people the artist knows ("consociates") and people they do not know ("distant contemporaries") see the art and the artists name - expands the dimensions of the spatiotemporal relations of the artist to the viewers: it increases the artists 'fame'. The art visibly represents the artist as a "spatio-temporally detached fragment" (Gell, 1998, p. 98) of the artist themselves. Gell calls this 'distributed personhood'. When an artist makes a piece of art it may have value in and of itself solely to the artist, but it can only fulfil its value potential through exhibiting, in which, because the artwork is shared with the public and made more visible, its capacity to create relationships beyond the self is increased. The ability to distribute a fragment of the artists personhood is therefore increased. The importance The Academy places on exhibiting art highlights the social field's value of 'fame'. Additionally, just as the name and 'fame' of the artist increases due to an artwork being visible, if the artist was already 'famous' the value of the art would be increased: as Munn (1983, p. 283) would say, they are "reciprocally agents of each other's value definition." It is not only the artist that defines the value of the art, but also the art that defines the value of the artist. While for the people of Gawa, "without fame, a man´s Influence would, as it were, go nowhere" (Munn, 1986, p. 117), 'fame' for the artist is more than influence: reputational capital can be turned into financial capital.

Graeber (2013, p. 225) argues that "value is the way that importance of our own labors… becomes real to us by being realized… in some socially recognized form, a form that is both material and symbolic." Just as for the people of Gawa, their labour can become 'fame', so

too is the artists value (fame) realized through labour (art and exhibiting), which spreads their name, and 'fame', out in the minds and imagination of people in space and time. If it was the art in and of itself that held the value, there would be little reason to exhibit.

This concept is embodied by the art students. One student, after presenting some of her art during a crit, said that she did not really feel like she had been doing anything all year. She presented six abstract and two "a bit too fashion magazine-y" black-and-white A3 'prints' – made by carving a surface, covering it with paint or ink, and pressuring another material on top, creating an impression: a 'print' - out of over 200 different prints she had made: clearly, she had been doing things. There are two important reasons why she did not feel like she had been doing anything. Firstly, she said that she did not know why she made them, which connects to the idea of art needing a 'concept' (maybe this was not 'art' enough). Secondly, and connecting to Gawa, she said that she did not want to exhibit any of these artworks. Like a person from Gawa eating their own food and therefore not achieving its potential value, not exhibiting one's art means the potential value of an artwork and therefore the artist themselves is left unfulfilled.

However, maximum value is not solely about the number of people one exhibits to. It is dependent on where and to whom one exhibits their work. It is about expanding one's spatiotemporal relations, being made 'visible', to the correct people. What is the point gaining 'fame' among nobodies (with little prestige) when you can do it among somebodies (with lots of prestige)? Certain people, or certain galleries and exhibitions, have more prestige than others, and exhibiting there and to them will gain the artist the prestige and 'fame' among the desired people and places. In the case that an exhibition is not valued by a student, they may decide not to expand their intersubjective spacetime, as it would be an expansion to people they do not care about.

Every year the 2BAs are supposed to exhibit some of their art to prospective students. These prospective students have little value to the current students and many of the 2BAs did not want to exhibit. "Who gives a shit," one told me as she pressed playdough into bark fissures. The prospective students are not people the art students care about showing their art to. The expansion of their name and therefore 'fame' is not gained among the correct people: there

is no reputational increase (this is where the hierarchy of legitimation comes in again – the prospective students, probably, have little legitimation). Whereas when an 'important' exhibition takes place, such as one at Kunstnernes Hus (a respected gallery space in Oslo), almost every single student wanted to exhibit. Exhibiting, or not, dependent on the social construction of an exhibition, shows how "action is informed by values and simultaneously creates value" (Otto & Willerslev, 2013, p. 2). That the final act before gaining the degree is exhibiting one's own art shows the importance of exhibiting to The Academy. The overt importance of exhibiting art enforces the idea that 'fame' or 'reputation' is a vital part of being an artist: 'fame', not money - as I will discuss in the final chapters -, defines occupational success.

Another reason, I will add, is that it is extremely challenging for a 'hobby' artist to exhibit work in any space that is consecrated or legitimized within the artistic field, and therefore doing so allows for another distinction between a 'real' artist and the other.

Theory For Practice – Communicating Art

"It was really nice. A bit too *shibboleth* for me so I couldn't concentrate," a student told me after she had seen a PhD defence at The Academy, "I thought the art world would save me but then it's very academic." The student loved the "aesthetics" of the art presented in the PhD defence, but she did not love, or entirely understand, the discussion.

The very first theory class for the 1BAs - the most classic form of university education at The Academy, in which the students sat in a circle around tables and discussed with the teacher - was named 'Shibboleth'. Shibboleths are words used to differentiate groups of people (a biblical passage describes how different pronunciations of the word 'shibboleth' were used to differentiate people. Those who pronounced it 'sibboleth' were murdered). In the theory class it was used metaphorically to highlight how artists use specific terminologies and language to differentiate themselves from the other. During the class the students were asked to read a press release for an exhibition opening by E-flux (an art publishing and archive platform). They were then asked what the exhibition was about. Never had I experienced a

room of artists quieter: nobody had a clue. The teacher had shown this as he was critical to what he called “performative uses of terminologies” - using terms specifically to show you are an artist, but not using them correctly. Interestingly, at once, the theory class was critical of the art world’s shibboleths yet at the same time it aimed to teach the students to write and speak this way. The teacher hoped, at least, he could teach them to use art world terminologies correctly.

However, art is often claimed to be liked because of an unexplainable feeling. One may not know why they like an artwork, just that it “speaks to them” or they “just like it” for whatever reason. Nevertheless, The Academy teaches that the feeling alone is not enough, one must also learn to communicate why they like or why they made an artwork. What learning (art) theory does is to allow for a culturally specific explanation of this feeling. It is not enough, The Academy imposes, to simply make art: one should have the capacity to discuss it. As Gary Alan Fine points out, “gallerists increasingly choose to represent artists schooled in art practice, believing that well trained MFAs [art students] can articulate intentions that allow them to participate effectively in a competitive art world” (Fine, 2018, p. 4). In this case, the ability to ‘communicate art’ will increase one’s chances to exhibit, therefore increasing their ‘fame’. This ‘fame’ increasing ability to communicate art is not only formally learned in the ‘*Theory for practice’* class, but also informally learned by simply discussing art on a daily basis with peers both above and below the art student in the hierarchy of legitimation.

Many students, however, do not want to discuss every aspect of their art in any specific way. Momo – a 3BA, around 30, with sharp-tongued eloquence and a gentle giggle -, during a crit, was asked to explain his artworks further. With apologetic aggression he resisted: “I have said so much that I’m at a point where… I’m so sorry … that I really don’t give a fuck… Like, I wish I could say less.” He was clearly frustrated and asked why, believing that he should not have to explain his art when one could simply feel it.

Students entering The Academy may believe (contrary to what their school is named) that they are stepping away from pallid emotionless academia, and stepping into the art world of emotion, feeling, and the senses, but they soon find out they need to talk and write about their art in a culturally specific way, that is deeply rooted in academic theory. As the name

'Shibboleth' shows, The Academy is aware that communicating art is a means to differentiate the artist and the other. Though the boundary for the social group 'Artist' may be artificial and liminal, "the postmodern idealization of a world without shibboleths is a red herring" (Bashkow, 2004, p. 455). In other words, the ability to communicate art correctly is another way to separate the 'real' artist and the other, and in everyday life means of differentiation do occur.

I titled this chapter *What is an Artist?,* and then immediately quoted Joseph Beuys, saying: "everyone is an artist." But if everyone is an artist, what is the point of art school? Throughout this chapter I have shown that there is a desire from art students and teachers to distinguish between the 'real' artist and the 'non-real' artist. To be a 'real' artist one may not have to go to The Academy, nor be able to articulate themselves perfectly, nor have a well thought through concept for their art, nor exhibit in the 'best' galleries. However, doing so is beneficial for occupational success: 'fame'. The Academy helps the art students achieve these criteria, facilitating learning through socialization from those who have more legitimacy, as well as teaching the students the culturally correct understandings of what art is, highlighting the importance of exhibiting, and teaching the students the shibboleths of the art world. Additionally, and running throughout the chapter, was the criteria of "hard work" when differentiating the 'real' artist and 'non-real' artist. This necessity of hard work becomes a contradictory theme as I move onto the next chapter, and one of the main discourses at The Academy: *Freedom.*

3 The Freedom Paradox

"Ideally you should be completely free," the same teacher stated to the same 1BA students, still circled around her in the same plain white artless room. The lesson had started late that morning, after the teacher scrambled to fix a mistake - the classroom the 1BAs were to use had been booked to teach the 1MAs '*Exhibition practice'*. The room, therefore, was not free. Part way through the lesson, after solving the problem, the teacher continued, saying that the artist, and therefore art student, should be free from money and have the time and space they needed for their artistic practice. In the everyday experience of the art student, however, this was not the case.

The word 'freedom' was thrown around at The Academy like it was a U.S Republican rally. Considering these two groups, (Norwegian) Artists and U.S Republicans, are overwhelmingly politically opposed, it becomes clear, as I will show, that "Freedom's Just Another Word" (Harvey, 2005, p. 5). I begin this chapter by deconstructing the concept of freedom. Following this, I discuss how invisible influences, such as the hegemonic idea of the 'myth of the artist' as well as performing to others' expectations, effect the art student. And finally, I explore how freedom is understood by the art students - which is viewed in contrast to the work/leisure dichotomy of 'normal' workers - and how The Academy facilitates this. If freedom is just another word, this chapter explores what that word means.

Unwrapping Freedom

That the liberal ideal of freedom is used differently, yet desired equally, - by 'Pro-Life' U.S Republicans and 'Pro-Choice' (Norwegian) artists, for example - shows the challenges in studying the concept. Anthropology, instead, has attempted to deconstruct freedom into less abstract terms and its assumed opposites: domination and resistance, agency and socialization, kinship and social obligation, legitimation, neoliberalism, and oppression, to name a few. The previous chapter explored legitimation and hierarchical socialization, and there will be an exploration of resistance and aspects of neoliberalism in ones to come.

However, because freedom is such a common discourse, with different meanings to different people, there is a need to mark a point of entrance when using the term.

The father of American anthropology, Franz Boas, spent time with an Inuit community on Baffin Island. This led him to write the monograph '*The Central Eskimo*' in 1888. The book describes in minute detail the ways of living within this community in the late 19th century. The year Boas died, 1942, the book '*Freedom: Its Meaning*' was published, which included Boas' article titled '*Liberty Among Primitive People*' in which he contemplated the concept of freedom, using the Inuit community as his point of reference. Boas believed that the "Eskimos," mostly, believed they were free. However, from his perspective, he could clearly see their lack of so-called freedom, stating:

> *"The life of the Eskimo as seen from my point of view, as well as my life from the Eskimo point of view, was not free, for objective observation from the point of view of one culture shows the restraints imposed by life in another type of culture"* (Boas, 1942, p. 51).

And therefore that:

> *"Freedom is a concept that has meaning only in a subjective sense. A person who is in complete harmony with his culture feels free. He accepts voluntarily the demands made upon him. He does not feel them as imposed upon him. They are his natural reactions to the events of daily life. Obedience to a ruler, law, or custom is not exacted but rendered freely"* (Boas, 1942, p. 53).

Though Boas believed that complete harmony was the purest feeling of freedom, it is still clear he acknowledged the external influences, and demands imposed, upon the individual. A person may be living harmoniously, yet they are still obedient to cultural arrangements and customs. Instead of pure uninhibited freedom, this should be thought of as *freedom from restraint*. Furthermore, Boas believed that in a place without conflict between the wishes of the individual and the wishes of the society, the concept of freedom could not arise. Therefore, the freedom of pure harmony with one's culture is not felt as freedom but as

normality. In other words, according to Boas, conflict is needed for 'freedom' to emerge – the paradox of freedom.

There are clear restraints to 'freedom' when it comes to politics at The Academy. The vast majority of the art students are left wing and there will be resistance against right wing art and opinions, be that negative judgement or social exclusion. In fact, in the midst of the Black Lives Matters movement in Oslo, The Academy became significant to a national discussion about so-called freedom of speech, as a few students, who were against the introduction of an optional post-colonial studies course and the removal of a painting, received backlash from many other students for voicing their (right-wing) opinion. Internally at the arts university there was a general consensus on how to solve the situation. However, after being hijacked by the media, the internal affair broke through the boundaries of the arts university and became national, culminating in the resignation of the director of the arts university – the outside world affecting the 'freedom' of The Academy. Yet it is not only political disputes that show a lack of 'freedom'. *Freedom from restraint* cannot be not suitable for artists either, who, believing that they are more free than the 'normal' person, commonly see themselves as acting against restraints, being subversive, transgressive, critical to society, and counter-hegemonic.

Economist Amartya Sen (1999) argues that *freedom to* and *freedom from* are the main tenets of the notion. If *freedom from* restraint is not what the art students consider as freedom, then other forms of freedom must be explored. Anthropologist Caroline Humphrey's (2007) article, '*Alternative Freedoms*', does precisely this by examining the definitional differences of Russian words for freedom. The Russian language has more terms for freedom than English, which has Freedom and Liberty (and Autonomy at a stretch). Humphrey chooses three words that would be translated to English as freedom: *Mir, Svoboda,* and *Volya*. Each of these words "contains its own Nemesis; that is, what can seem to be "good" about them in one context, or from one perspective, can seem dangerous and wrong from another" (Humphrey, 2007, p. 1-2). These three freedoms, put briefly, are as follows:

Mir "points to the well-being naturally present between all persons, communities, and their environment" (Humphrey, 2007, p. 3). This idealized form of freedom is the same as Boas'

claim of living in absolute harmony with one's culture. This utopian image of the fully harmonized universal society, which was the ideal during the Soviet era, has fallen out of fashion. Its nemesis, where this form of freedom falls apart, is when any differing opinion is thought, or when a person with complete faith in this freedom is manipulated by someone claiming to represent it. Interestingly, the definition of the *mir* changed, post-Soviet Union, to a word which now resembles peace and unity, and the absence of war or political instability.

Svoboda has two meanings: first is societal independence and "not being ruled by foreigners with an alien set of values" (Humphrey, 2007, p. 2), like how the artists believe they are not ruled by normative society; and second, comparative free-ness, "a privileged political status, in a situation where a part of society (the prisoners, the Gulag inmates) was unfree" (Humphrey, 2007, p. 2). The essence of *Svoboda* is that the group of people are "*not unfree"* (Humphrey, 2007, p. 3): a classic, us/them, dichotomy. This form of freedom falls apart when cultures with differing values meet, yet both believe they are free.

Finally, *Volya*, which "is the state of fulfillment of desires that you yearn for when in a situation of non-freedom" (Humphrey, 2007, p. 6). It is individual freedom and will - close to the opposite of *Mir*. However, this form of freedom falls apart when one's *volya* opposes another's *volya.* During a crit, Momo, with his immense talent as an accidental wordsmith, poetically described *volya's* nemesis, saying, "I wish my dreams could be fulfilled without costing other people their dreams." Momo's *volya* of not wanting children, opposed his parents *volya* of wanting grandchildren.

Often when one expresses the importance of freedom it is a mix of these terms, with the specific meaning of freedom changing situationally. By comparing these three Russian words to their English counterpart, it is clear to see the relativity of freedom. In Western discourse, freedom normally dances between *Svoboda* and *Volya,* ignoring *Mir*. Context dependent, freedom moves in and out of these terms, intertwining them at will, or stepping on the other's toes. It is vital to keep in mind the multitude of meanings that freedom can have while continuing to look at The Academy. Not only is the term relative, but, as *Mir* did, 'freedom' can change.

The Myth of the Artist

The 'myth of the artist', too, has changed. Changed from the heroic artist of the past, channelling the divine through their human body (think: Michelangelo), to the starving, misunderstood creative genius mastering the craft (Van Gogh), to the more modern, depressed cigarette rolling transgressive artist pushing the boundaries of what art is and can be (Nan Goldin). These understandings or 'myths' of the artist "shape the typical fate of a particular professional class" (Kris & Kurz, 1934/1979, p. 132). In other words, the socially constructed idea of the artist effects the artists understanding of themselves and who they ought to be. So when, while enjoying a cigarette outside an overcrowded bar, both Inger and Bernadotte said they would rather be sad and productive than happy and unproductive, the current myth was vocalised.

In their seminal book '*Legend, Myth, and Magic in the Image of the Artist'*, Kris and Kurz (1934/1979) sought to investigate the origins of the societal imagination of the artist. To them, the image of the artist ran in tandem with the myth of the hero and the magician. The ultimate myth, they believed, is that the artist is like God; God being the quintessential free being. This is made up from the ideas of the artist as an individual creative talent who is not taught how to be an artist but has an inborn gift, and that the artist does not become an artist out of choice but feels a calling, as if they *had to* become an artist. Here is another paradox: that while the artist is a 'free' individual, they *had to* become one. Seemingly, becoming an artist is not a free choice, yet because of it they are free. It is vocation as restriction - the freedom/calling paradox.

God is a gross overstatement. None of the art students had the self-conceit to compare themselves to any God. However, if it is to be explored seriously, artists should be seen as fallible gods (think Eros accidentally scratching himself with his own dart). Art has regularly been compared to religion. "For Bourdieu, art is akin to religion" (Grenfell & Hardy, 2007, p. 47). Gell (1999) speaks of the Western cult of aesthetics. And Sansi (2015, p. 67) highlights the belief that "art is a modern form of religion and aesthetics its theology, just as museums are its temples." Artists do, like the Christian God, take base matter and through artistic

alchemy create beauty or contemplation. They have the ability to turn a seemingly mundane object into one of great value ('found objects' - readymade objects found and taken, often for free or very cheap - represent this perfectly). As Appadurai (1986) would argue, objects, too, have social lives. The artist adapts the objects social life, allowing it to communicate in a new way to the viewer, in a way that it would not have been able to do before the artist laid their reanimating hands upon it. The artist is, like God, a creator.

Another overstatement, but not one without any basis at all, is the idea that one becomes an artist not out of choice but out of calling. Students would say they felt like they "had to" make a specific artwork, or that they needed to express a feeling somehow and "get it out of their body," or that they "just don't want to do anything else." Though many of the students very much wanted to be professional artists, most of them acknowledged their slim chances of 'making-it' but still preferred the idea of having a part-time job and practicing their art than working full-time and giving up on art completely. Students may not have explicitly said they had a calling to be an artist, but they would say they had a calling to make art.

Finally, there is the myth of the artist as creative genius with inborn talent. In fact, Boas himself described artists as "gifted individuals" with "free inventive genius" (Boas, 1942, p. 55). This aspect of the myth of the artist, which is most clearly prevalent in popular thought, was reinforced by The Academy. There is an underlying belief at The Academy that the students' creative capacity should not be orchestrated by anyone other than the student themselves. This way of thinking was summed up by a student in a 2014 study of art and design students own perspectives on their education: "somehow the answer is brought about from within you, so you're not told, well do this. I think a real skill is to be able to empower and enable an art student to come up with their own solutions" (Orr et al., 2014, p. 38). It is The Academy's aim to help the student reach the place they are trying to get to, free from being told what to do. The teacher's role is to help the students with whatever they want their artistic practice to be; to, as one professor said, "help them along their path," instead of trying to turn them into a copy of their teacher. This is highlighted in a course description, with The Academy stating that it "offers a wide range of thematic workshops, seminars and lectures to *enable the students to enrich their own practice*" (KHiO, 2022, p. 9 [emphasis

added]). The Academy does not focus on formally teaching. Instead, it enables the innately talented individual.

For anthropologists, however, the concept of a pure individual self, entirely uninfluenced by others, does not exist. We believe that humans are inherently social creatures; that everyone is affected by everyone and everything that comes into contact with them, albeit to a greater or lesser extent. If we are to take the approach that "all knowledge, therefore all meaningful reality as such is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of inter-action between human beings and their worlds, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context" (Crotty, 1998, p. 42), no longer can the romanticised idea that the artist is a totally individual talent add up. This is further amplified as the route to becoming an artist has been largely institutionalized (Wilf, 2014). Instead, as shown, even the myth of the artist - which is reinforced by educational structure of The Academy - influences the art student. And there are many other invisible influences at play. For example, the influence of expectation on performance.

Performing (un)Freedom

"It's like you're trapped inside a mask of your own face"

- Student, sat on a sofa

A near-perfect visual metaphor of the relationship between power and performance – to be *trapped* inside a mask of your own face. In this case it was doing the art the student thought she should be doing, according to her assumed expectations of The Academy. She internalized what she believed to be others' expectations of herself, while at the same time felt trapped by the role she was playing and the person she was becoming. That the students come to embody the way they believe they should be as an artist at The Academy shows the collision between freedom and performance.

Occasionally, the idea of performing in the way one believed they were supposed to was heightened by a physical structure. After hearing about the newly built art, music, and design

school in Bergen, I took the train over to see it. It was designed as a modern, highly equipped, smart building. Students and staff hated it alike. One staff member vented his anger towards the building at me, saying it was "like a dildo made of sponge: It looks nice but it's useless." In contrast to most European art academies, this newly built school originally did not have individual or group studios, but instead one large open space. An opinion piece written about the state of art education, with a focus on the Academy in Bergen quotes a student:

> *"When I'm at my workplace at school, I start to behave the way I think an art student would behave. If I'm doing carpentry, for example, then I think 'now it looks like I'm working'. I pace back and forth because I think it looks good, like I'm being productive and know what I'm about."* (Hjort Guttu, 2020a).

This is a perfect example of a Foucauldian Panopticon in action (Foucault, 1975/1977). The student here, knowing that there is a possibility of being watched, is performing in a way that they believe makes them look like an artist, but not necessarily acting in the way they want to be acting for their own specific artistry. They felt as if they had to enact a front stage performance (Goffman, 1959) at all times due to the visibility permitted by the structure, and therefore they could not get into an 'authentic' state of work. Unlike the panopticon of Foucault or Bentham, the aim here is not necessarily to make students internalize power structures and rules and therefore police themselves. Nevertheless, it is an unintended consequence. However, while some students, internalizing expectations of who they should be as an artist, feel trapped in believing they should act in a specific way, others know which roles to play and when to play them.

In a cigarette-smoke laced kitchen at Bernadotte's 30th birthday party, among booze and music that dampened the beat of the thrashing rain outside, I fell into a conversation about films with Isak, a 3BA. I had spoken with Isak a few brief times before and knew his artistic practice often incorporated film. I asked if he was going to show one of his films at a crit. He answered that, while he may show some films, he did not want to show a specific film at a crit because the other students would think it was "too commercial." A project on the more commercial side, apparently, would not be appropriate to show to at The Academy. That Isak had the ability and willingness to consciously perform to the correct standards of the field

highlights how the accepted standards of The Academy restrict what the students would show. It shows how performing to the standard of the field restricts 'freedom'.

Artists not in Offices

"One is a painter because one wants so-called freedom; one doesn't want to go to the office every morning"

- Marcel Duchamp (Cabanne, 1971, p. 25)

Sat on the cobbled stone ground under the sun, I ate lunch with a group of 1BAs. They were chatting about some of their friends who had applied for The Academy but not been offered a place. Apparently, some of the students' friends had struggled to not show their envy when finding out the students had matriculated into The Academy. Envy then hijacked the conversation. Soon after, a student brought up notions of freedom in relation to envy, saying, "some of my friends think it's a bit ridiculous that they have to work all the time while I get to do whatever I want." Not only does this suggest that the art student believes they are free, but that apparently many people outside the realm of art believe that about artists too. Like Duchamp, the student has opposed artists to 'normal' workers. Us (the free artists) vs Them (the unfree workers): a *Svoboda* form of freedom. This comparative freedom was nested in the work/leisure dichotomy. In deconstructing this dichotomy, trailblazing anthropologist Margaret Mead highlighted this nestedness of freedom, stating:

> *"One significant variable [of the work/leisure dichotomy] is a sense of freedom: what one does of his own free will must be separated from anything done under coercion, by the need to eat, or survive, or by the will of others. So hunting for food would be work, and hunting for the joy of the hunt would be leisure"* (Mead, 1960, p. 15).

In this sense (and it is a sense, not an objective fact), work is coercion, leisure is free. Using this logic, if the artist is supposed to be 'free', then they should not 'work' based of the will of others. However, while the 'normal' worker supposedly has a clear distinction between work and leisure, the artist does not and therefore is not ruled by this logic. In the previous chapter we heard a teacher, in order to differentiate the hobby artist and the 'real' one, make clear

that art is not a hobby. However, art also is not a job according to many of the teachers and students. In fact, even if to be an artist one must "work hard," making art is antithetical to 'normal' work. Romantic German philosopher Friedrich Schiller argued that "the desire to create art is simply a manifestation of the urge to play as the exercise of freedom" (Graeber, 2018, p. 85) and that "play's freedom is contrasted to the servitudes of work" (Rancière, 2004/2009, p. 31). This comparative discourse of freedom was, by far, the most common reason for why one wanted to become an artist.

To explore how this comparative freedom - this *Svoboda* - was felt by the students and how The Academy facilitates it, I propose two points that are prevalent within at the school: 1. They get to "do *what* they want," which is deeply connected to notions of money; and 2. They practice art *when* they want. Here, just as Humphrey did, I will point out where these freedoms contain their own nemesis.

Doing *what* they want

Surrounded by fetching dogs and packs of kindergartners with runaway footballs, I sat in a park with a 2MA student who was about to finish her degree. Post-graduation she would stop receiving a student loan. I had met her for the first time during a crit a few days before, and during it we arranged an informal interview. We meandered through the interview for over three hours, reflecting upon networking, money, freedom, age, our pasts, and so on. About half an hour in we were discussing Instagram and promoting one's own work. She was sceptical about doing anything commercial but did consider it, saying:

"It would be nice to actually sell work and live off it, but that might end up taking much more time than I want, like in terms of making stuff for the market… and I'm just happy in a way, just keeping myself afloat through part time jobs, which gives me the freedom to focus on what I want."

For her, having a part-time job allowed her to continue making the art she wanted to be making. It would give her the freedom to use her time to make the art she wanted, not art others wanted. The idea of working full time on art that she did not want to do was, for her,

worse than ‘working’ less regularly on the art she wanted to ‘work’ on, while having a non-art job on the side.

Under capitalism, the worker generally does not get to do what they want. If they are employed, they work for a company or another person. Even if one is the boss, it is most likely that working is not what they want to be doing (if money was not involved). If a worker is self-employed, they are essentially under a perpetual, potentially precarious, temporary boss-like employment structure: they still work based on what the clients wants and pays for. The art student, however, *should* do what they want. As the student above suggested, working full-time on art that did not stem from her free choice but came from a paid request or “making stuff for the market*”* – ‘coercion’ (therefore not leisure, therefore without freedom), as Mead (1960) would say - would be less meaningful than ‘working’ part-time on art that was born out of her own artistic desire (therefore closer to leisure, therefore with freedom). Unlike the ‘normal’ worker working for the sake of money, the artist who is socialized at The Academy, should not make art for the sake of money, but for the sake of desire for the art itself, or what the art represents. The artist should have full autonomy. In this example the separation from art and money – explored further in Chapter 5: *Money (part one)* - is so great that the art student would rather make money working a ‘normal’ job, than from art that was coerced.

That the art students should make art about what they want was facilitated by The Academy. The educational schedule is organized so that the vast majority of the students’ time, 80-to-90 percent (ironically based on full-time employment – 37.5 hours), should be spent in their studio, working on their artistic practice, with the other 10-to-20 percent spent in classes or in practical workshop courses**.** This means that the majority of the students’ schedule is set by the students themselves. Additionally, The Academy does not have a set curriculum, so if the students are wanting to research or read anything, they will have to search it up themselves. It is the student who must instigate the action that will lead to learning, even if they will then be helped by another person, whether that be finding an article themselves or experimenting themselves, or whether it be sending an email to a teacher or another student to help them with finding a text or learning a specific technique. What this facilitates is a broad range of interests and topics that can be, and are, researched upon, and have art created about. This freedom to do what they want unbounds the limits of what one can make art

about. Even if, as highlighted in the previous chapter, 'fame' (gaining visibility and reputation among the correct people) is the fundamental value, the artist should gain 'fame' while doing the art they want to be doing (within the limits of it being defined as fine art).

However, The Academy simply does not have the capacity (space, time, or money) to offer every single form of teaching. I was told by Petra, a 3BA, that although she wanted to make protest art, she did not feel like she had the knowledge to do so, and that she could not get it from The Academy. The freedom to do what one wanted came at the cost (the nemesis) of lack of specializations. When I asked Petra why she did not just try to make protest art, she replied "I dunno. Now I just feel like I can finish this degree and *then* go do something helpful for the world." Bernadotte voiced something similar, saying, "I feel like I spent the last few years wondering what's the point in everything I'm doing." The all-too-common feeling of aimlessness was another consequence of this freedom.

'Practicing' *when* they want

"I like having the ability to do what I want. That's why I don't like working [in paid employment], cause you're scheduled in," Inger told me, after offering me some clay to "play with," and before I ruined it. Here, again, the freedom to start and stop when one wants was compared to the supposed lack of freedom of the 'normal' worker. The fine artist, like the author or academic, decides their own schedule. The 'normal' worker, on the other hand, is stuck in a 9-to-5.

During my first couple of weeks at The Academy I would arrive around 10am. Potentially there would be one or two students of the possible seventy, rubbing their eyes and putting a kettle on. Confused one day by the lack of students at about 12pm, I asked the only 3BA who was in the studios where everybody was. He said simply that some people come early to the school, and some come later. In fact, I soon learnt it was more regular to stay at the school until 10pm than to arrive at 10am, unless there was a class scheduled in the morning. Later in the evenings the art students would have a chat and a drink with co-students, then continue to make art: there was no strict separation between 'work' and life. That The Academy was required to close between 00am-06am was a disgrace to teachers and students alike. The forced prevention of 24/7 accessibility was an assault on the freedom to do art when one

wants. Resisting this, one student at The Academy had crafted herself a secret bed, stuffed under a desk in her studio and hidden by a curtain. Even though this student rented a bedroom in the city, she would sleep at The Academy on occasion if she was especially engaged in her current artwork and wanted to ceaselessly continue. When guards patrolled to make sure people were out by midnight, she would crawl into the bed, pull the curtain, and lay silently, waiting for them to pass. A similar story was told to me by a teacher who, apparently, while employed at a different art academy, would stay there overnight. For these artists, there is no distinction between art and life. There is no dichotomy between work and leisure. For them, being an artist was clearly not a 9-to-5.

For some students, however, the freedom to do art whenever decreased urgency and increased lethargy. At the beginning of a crit at the end of the school year, a teacher asked for feedback on what should be improved upon. There were two points that stood out: that some of the students learned not to care too much about what other people think and just enjoy their own practice (supposedly breaking the confines of performing to the expected standard of the field and the value of a good reputation), and that most students wished they had more deadlines for their work. The power of deadlines was unavoidable at the end of semesters or before crits, in which presenting one's art was the expectation. During these times the previously desolate 10am studios would suddenly fill up. One student, on discussing his final 3BA exhibition piece stated, "If I didn't have deadlines, it wouldn't have been a finished project." This creates a dilemma: with too much freedom of time the students may not complete their artworks, yet, at the same time, freedom to decide when to make them seems to be a necessity.

The nemesis to the freedom to 'work' when one wants, comparing oneself to the 'normal' worker, and not dichotomizing work and leisure, is the restrictive feeling that one should be practicing art at all times. When I invited Vera to the cinema, for example, she said she wanted to join but she felt like she had to produce art. The 'normal' worker, living the work/leisure dichotomy, can have part-time 'free' leisure and part-time 'unfree' work. The artist does not live this dichotomy, meaning 'free' leisure time does not exist to them in the same way. Interestingly, some students said they were envious of other people who *could* work "boring jobs" or work jobs that gave them no meaning at all but were easy. This envy came from the

supposed ease of living for the 'normal' worker, while the student artist believed they had to 'work' exceptionally hard, even struggle. Yet the art student feels like they would not be able to do "boring" easy jobs as it would give them no meaning – as the myth says, being an artist is their arduous calling. While the 'normal' worker becomes completely free to do whatever they want within their means after work, the artist does not get this form of freedom. The artist should always be an artist. It is not a dichotomy of work and leisure, of free and unfree, but an "interpenetration of art and life" (Mead, 1960, p. 14).

If work is servitude and leisure is freedom, what can freedom mean to an artist who does not embody this dichotomy? Furthermore, if the art student believes they *should* be free, what do they mean by this? Like Boas with the 'Eskimos', it is clear to me that the student artists are not free: they are restricted by time, space, and money. They are also restricted by invisible cultural constraints such as expectation and accepted behavior in the field. On the other hand, the artist is not restrained by money in the sense that their art is not coerced by it, nor time in the sense that they can largely start and stop as they wish. This chapter has shown that understandings of freedom are dynamic and dependent on context. Although The Academy attempts to facilitate 'freedom' for the art students to do what they want, and when they want, there are still specific cultural codes to be followed. In the previous chapter it was suggested to Inger that what she had made was beautiful but that it was not art. She had not understood the cultural code, and should think of something new to make, or adapt her (non)artwork to make it more 'art'. Additionally, there are the invisible forces at play such as the influence of the myth of the artist and performing the role of the artist. If freedom is in fact *freedom to* and *freedom from*, ideal freedom for the art student is *freedom to* work whenever and on whatever they want, and *freedom from* the life of the 'normal' worker. Finally, and to conclude this chapter, I showed that the identity of the artist as free is partly constituted in opposition to the 'normal' worker under contemporary capitalism. Living in opposition leads us to the next chapter: *Resistance.*

4 Irresistible: Resistance at The Academy

Bernadotte, Inger, and I, watched Laura Poitras' 2022 film '*All the Beauty and the Bloodshed*' at the cinema. The small, red-seated, auditorium was less than half full; maybe 30 people were there, and we were surely the youngest. Scattered pairs of well-dressed 60-year-old white women with red wine made up the audience. *All the Beauty and the Bloodshed* tells the story of American art-photographer Nan Goldin's art and life, as well as her activism against the Sackler family for their role in the opioid crisis. In the film, Nan Goldin and the advocacy group P.A.I.N. (Prescription Addiction Intervention Now), founded by Nan, conduct several protests at art galleries that have collaborated with, and sometimes bare the name of, the Sackler family. In addition to the protests, Nan says she will remove her artworks from these galleries if they continue to collaborate with the Sacklers. These acts of resistance led to some galleries removing the Sackler name, no longer collaborating with them, and the Sacklers having to pay a multi-billion-dollar settlement to drug-related charities.

Nan Goldin lived on the fridges of society. She worked as a sex worker, curated exhibitions about HIV while it was still taboo, photographed domestic violence, and so on. She resisted societal norms, while fighting for what she believed was right. Additionally, she protested against the Sackler family, in an act of resistance against the economically powerful Purdue Pharma (the Sackler owned Oxycontin company) and their collaboration with the art world. The protests and activism, the film illustrates, are some of Goldin's greatest artworks. Her art and life had been leading up to this. Her art infused the personal and the political. Her life, supposedly, was one big act of activism, one big act of art, and one big act of resistance. Once the credits started rolling, Inger turned to me, the auditorium still dark, and thanked me for inviting her to watch it. Later that evening she said it made her feel like she should do something political. That she was making a hanging mobile (see page 21) seemed weak after seeing what other people's art could do.

At The Academy resistance is advocated for, but not pushed for. Some of the teachers made overtly political art. One teacher shared a film about trans and women's rights. Another, which I expand upon in this chapter, made a short film criticizing art education. Many of the

students, like Petra in the previous chapter, wanted to make political art, but as the example of Petra showed, doing this within the art world was not easy.

Resistance is learned at The Academy. One should participate in it, in one way or another - whether that be by opposing oneself to some normative ways of being, or whether it be making art as resistance - in order to become part of the art community. The artists themselves, for the reason that part of their identity is constituted in opposition the 'normal' worker, can be seen as resistant to hegemonic ideals. Furthermore, artists and art students often truly want to help people and create change for what they see as the betterment of society. This often means criticizing forms of power and normative ways of being, which can include advocating for equality and protesting for inclusivity. Contradictorily, fine art does not want to be popular – a sign of the banal, ignorant masses – and therefore is exclusive. Though it may not be the intention of the artist, in challenging what the majority see as beautiful or acceptable as art - an act of resistance to the tyranny of art and beauty - it contributes to fine art's elitism. Art becomes something not for the taste-less masses, but for the few who were raised or have taught themselves to appreciate it. Art becomes for the people who have gained the correct educational and cultural capital.

This chapter asks the question: *is art at The Academy resistance or not?* For example, art can be a loophole in which the artists can get funding, often from the state, to challenge hegemonic ideals: an immediate oxymoron - artists get paid to criticize those paying them. Additionally, using the term 'art' and stating something is art can allow the artist to do something otherwise illegal: the system allows a loophole for its legitimation, delegating criticism to the act of art rather than to 'reality'. Art, therefore, is often seen as the realm of the symbolic, not the real. Therefore, *is art resistance or not?* I begin by exploring what 'resistance' can mean. Continuing on from this, I look at a brief history of artists challenging hegemonic ideals within art, and argue that artists are now expected to challenge these ideals: again, if it is expected of them, is it resistance? I then highlight an example in which The Academy taught and advocated for resistance, which may have unintended consequences. And finally, I delve into the concept of political art, and find the meeting point between art, resistance, and everyday life.

Resistance and Anthropology

In the 1970s and 80s 'resistance' – meaning challenge(s) against power and domination - shot into popularity within anthropological theory. A key figure was political scientist and anthropologist James Scott, who, in 1985, published the now classic '*Weapons of the Weak'* (Scott, 1985). This book provided the analytical framework of 'everyday acts of resistance', arguing that resistance is not only major revolutionary acts such as peasant uprisings, but also minor, inconspicuous acts of resisting domination such as stealing or gossiping. The uncritical popularity of 'resistance', then, led to the term's impotence through lack of concrete delineation (Seymour, 2006). Critical questions began to appear: Can something be defined as resistance if it only reinforces one's domination, or if the so-called resistance is only awarded? Or is it resistance if it is not acknowledged as such by those engaging in it?

Inspired by Foucault's argument that power is not only oppressive but also productive, American anthropologist Lila Abu-Lughod (1990) argued that 'resistance' became romanticized, and in lived life resistance is not necessarily in opposition to absolute power. In fact, there are multiple structures of power that intersect in all spheres of society: local hierarchies, national hegemony, economic domination, and so on; and resistance to one power may be subordinating oneself to, or agreeing with, another power. Acts of resistance, instead, need to be viewed within their specific given contexts. Another anthropologist who challenged the usefulness of the term 'resistance' was Susan Seymour (2006). She argued that the term became related to anything that supposedly opposed power no matter of the context, even if there were no rules broken, no act to resist, or no attempt to create change. Seymour examined three ethnographies of resistance, highlighting the terms use and overuse. I refer to the two of the three ethnographies taken from Seymour that are most productive for understanding 'resistance' at The Academy.

Firstly, Ahearn's (2002) '*Invitations to Love: Literacy, Love Letters, and Social Change in Nepal'*. In this, a Nepalese society's marital and gender systems have been changing along with rapid socioeconomic growth, increased education, and increased literacy. Partly because of this, the system of parentally arranged marriage is 'resisted' by some youths by writing secret love

letters to one another, and potentially eloping. Importantly here, Ahearn sees resistance as being somewhat supported through family backing and economic independence, or by absorbing the habitus to resist from a young age. Additionally, resistance here is facilitated by the changing society: higher rates of women's education means more likelihood of economic independence, while newly gained literacy allows for the essential clandestine communication via love letters. A changing society met by a person who has a greater possibility to resist, allows for resistance. This is why "there is no such thing as pure resistance" (Ahearn, 2002, p. 93). In short it is the way they have been brought up, their habitus, their parental support, their economy, their education, and more, that facilitates this 'resistance'. This sheds light on the point that some people have it easier to resist than others. As touched upon in the introductory chapter, Paul Willis' '*Learning to Labour'* showed how "the lads'" upbringing made them resist the school's rules and authority, which caused them to be rejected by it. In this case, "The lads'" resistance to power became the reason they were oppressed by it; their resistance was punished. The art students, too, have a specific habitus and have generally had similar upbringings, yet, as I will show, they are applauded for resistance. Resistance is beneficial for them. The Academy may even endorse it. This should not, however, diminish the importance of a resistive act, but it can explain why 'resistance' is so common among art students.

Secondly, Raheja and Gold's (1994) '*Listen to the Heron's Words: Reimagining Gender and Kinship in North India'*. This focuses on rural women's songs and oral performances in which they critique patriarchal family systems, as well as recite subversive thoughts to other likeminded women. In this example, Seymour argues that having a safe space for projecting one's discontent can, in fact, stop action being taken to enact change. In fact, what could be resistance is placated by giving the dissatisfied women channels to express their dissatisfaction, therefore stopping oppositional acts being conducted. Additionally, the oral performances are not threatening to men's dominance, nor objected to by the men. In fact, some men join the performances, finding the sexual content entertaining. Seymour (2006, p. 312) argues that "to the extent that they [the oral performances] currently provide safe and restricted outlets for women's dissatisfactions, one must argue that they are actually anti-subversive." However, it is important to note that these oral performances may "constitute mental preparation for a changed reality" (Seymour, 2006, p. 312). In other words, preaching

to the choir is not resistance; it may stop resistance, or it may prepare for it. Important, in relation to the art students, is the idea that their political or resistive art may only be shown within the art world, and therefore in a safe space with likeminded people, and may not be 'real' resistance. It may in fact stop 'real' resistance from taking place as the artists pacify their discontent without conducting any oppositional acts. With this in mind, the Situationists, an influential organization of artists and theorists operating from the late 1950s to early 1970s, tried to escape "the dead world of art galleries, museums, and ateliers" (Sansi, 2015, p. 29) and engage with the world outside of art. They attempted to reintegrate art and life, and oppose aspects of 'real' life from within. They disbanded in 1972, four years after the May 1968 protests in France, said to be greatly inspired by the Situationists themselves.

Whether an action is resistance or not is entirely dependent on context. It depends on the specific location, the time, and on the people that one conducts the 'resistive' act on. The same action, in a different setting, can either be resistance or not. It can be subversive or countersubversive. Unconformity, for example, in certain contexts, is conformity.

The Cult of The New: The Paradox of Conforming Unconformity

In 1917, when 'avant-garde' artist Marcel Duchamp attempted to place a urinal in a gallery, it was to challenge the hegemonic idea of art; to upset the bourgeois' conception of aesthetics. Instead, what happened was the art got co-opted by the bourgeois for its contribution to the discipline. As Duchamp put it himself: "I thought to discourage aesthetics...they have taken my ready-mades and found aesthetic beauty in them. I threw the bottle-rack and the urinal into their faces as a challenge and now they admire them for their aesthetic beauty" (Richter, 1964/1997, p. 208). Or, as one of the founders of Dadaism, Richard Huelsenbeck, stated, "Neo-Dada has turned the weapons used by Dada, and later by Surrealism, into popular ploughshares with which to till the fertile soil of sensation hungry galleries eager for business" (Richter, 1964/1997, p. 211). What the Dadaists did not expect was the ease to which the bourgeois embraced counter-cultural art, and therefore spoiling its powers of resistance. What was a counter-hegemonic act was accepted by the dominant classes it attempted to challenge, and the act became hegemonic itself.

Instead of this form of art challenging the middle-and-upper-classes, it ended up challenging only those who have not acquired the cultural and educational capital. More often than not 'new' art challenges the working classes to the advantage of the middle and upper classes: art becomes a social tool for class differentiation. As art critic Brian O'Doherty said: "Things have reversed themselves and now it may be the bourgeois who shocks the avant-garde" (Richter, 1964/1997, p. 209). It was not the artist who shocked the bourgeois with their art, but the bourgeois with their embrace and open wallet who shocked the artist. Shocked them by not believing their resistance to be resistance but to be art. Counter-culture art became high-culture. "Once… [subversive art's] role in stimulating consumption had been grasped, the semblance of radically challenging the premises of artistic practice not only ceased to be perceived as threatening – it became recognised as a necessary precondition to occupational success" (Adler, 1979, p. 41). That is to say, subversive art, or art as 'resistance' to societal norms became a requirement in the art world. The artists' opposition to 'normal' workers may be a necessity for occupational success. The artist must be 'edgy'. They must not conform. Paradoxically, unconformity therefore becomes conformity.

Back at the school I joined a class about the 'modern' history of exhibition space. This bullet tour presentation showed different ways to use and form exhibition space from around the 1900s onwards. The room was stuffed full of students. They perched on the sofa's arms, doubled up on single chairs, stood at the back, and sat on the floor. Since modernism in art, exhibition space has typically been the 'white cube' – a space, most likely a museum or gallery, characterized by a rectangular room and white walls - (O'Doherty, 1986). The teacher showed how the white cube can be utilized or subverted, as well as other spaces one could exhibit in. After the presentation, Momo put his hand up, "Why is everyone always trying to do something new? Sometimes I think it's just stupid, like, what's the point… it's just stupid, you know," he said to the thirty or so people cramped together. The opposing consensus from the class was that it is about showing how the art interacts with different spaces, and how its perception and interpretation can change. Momo agreed but questioned why that mattered. Momo, here, opposed the hegemonic ideal of 'newness' within the art world. He acted within a context that disagreed with him. Within the art world, and at The Academy, this was potentially a small act of resistance. On the other hand, at The Academy students learn to

create “new” art. Artworks are evaluated, in part, on their presumed advancement of the artistic discipline (Adler, 1979, p. 42). To become the new ‘new’ one must deny the old ‘new’ (Grenfell & Hardy, 2007, p. 120). In other words, gestures of deviance against the current revered art *is* revered art. Momo could be being ‘new’ by ‘resisting’ newness, and therefore conforming unconformity. He may be doing exactly what he should be doing.

The cult of the new and the paradox of conforming unconformity reached its pinnacle when I stated my confusion to what was meant by ‘conceptual art’. According to the teacher, conceptual art generally refers to art from a specific period in the 1960s and 70s, but it can also refer to art from any time that is more concept based than object based. She continued, however, to say that conceptual art is extremely hard to define because most art has a concept behind it. “You could say Odd Nerdrum is a conceptual artist,” she continued.

Odd Nerdrum is a commercially successful Norwegian classical figurative painter, considered to be one of the best classical painters alive today. He began art education in the 1960s at the Art Academy in Oslo but left before completion in order to focus on classical painting. Odd Nerdrum’s art challenges the hegemonic ideal of newness in art. His art, potentially, is an act of resistance against the cult of new. Yet within the contemporary art scene people are questioning if the act of resisting against newness, not by creating a new ‘new’ but something traditional, is itself a new and conceptual act. In this sense, it is not an act of resistance at all but an act of conformity in creating a different form of ‘new’. One, coincidentally, that gave him great commercial success. So, when wondering if Odd Nerdrum is a conceptual artist, conforming unconformity meets and combines with the cult of the new.

It may seem here like the artist is stuck in a paradox stranglehold – subversive art is conforming, and at the same time, ‘conforming’ art is, definitionally, conforming. But how can this be challenged when resistance is made impotent through its own necessity in the art world? When ‘resisting’ is conforming, when doing something new is conforming, and when doing something already done is conforming, the artist in trapped in a double bind.

Teaching Resistance: A Double-Edged Sword

> *"It could be said that the dominant theoretical framework in the art world in the last decades has been "institutional critique," the radical questioning of the very institutions of the "art cult": museums, galleries, artworks, artists themselves."* (Sansi, 2015, p. 68)

There are many ways in which resistance is taught and shown to be valuable within The Academy. This can be resistance to anything, and what is popular comes in trends. According to a teacher, in the 1990s anti-capitalist artworks were popular in Norway. Currently, identity politics animates fine art. (It strikes me that, in this way, artists are a product of their time and in many ways conventional: their art following western political trends, moving away from class-based left-socialist activism and moving towards identity politics). Here, I give another example of art as an act of resistance. This form of resistance is the teachers' and students' opposition to increasingly institutionalized art education. This includes the excessive rules, the supposed misuse of money, bureaucracy, and the impersonalization of education. The reason I have chosen this example is because it shows most clearly the double-edged sword of teaching resistance. Bluntly put, this upcoming example tells the students that it is a good thing to protest against the art school which they are a part of.

During the first week of school for the new 1BAs there was a "meta-class" - I was told this class was created because the teachers acknowledged that, for the students, the processes of becoming an artist at The Academy are confusing - in which the students were taught about the ways in which they would be taught: what crits and tutorials are and how they function, what artistic practice is and could be, specific terms within art, as well as general information. After discussing what a crit was, we watched Ane Hjort Guttu's video '*Manifesto'*. The video was the very first artwork the 1BAs were shown at The Academy. *Manifesto* is a critique of the contemporary art school. It is a piece of art as an act of resistance against the current transformation in art education. In just the first five minutes of the half hour video, it criticizes: 1. The buildings' physical structure; 2. Oversurveillance; 3. The merging of the art school with a larger university (which later goes on to criticize increasing bureaucracy); 4. The inability to make a mess and therefore freely experiment; and 5. The lack of communal space. After

criticizing all of this, it shows ways in which the fictional art school resists these problems: 1 and 2. The physical structure of the building is mocked as a teacher outsmarts the high-tech door, which students need keycards to open and in doing so can be tracked, by holding it open with a standard cinderblock - the opposite of high tec - therefore showing its futility and massive misuse of funds on unnecessary technology; 3. The secret formation of a new dean, and colluding with administration to create fake courses to send to the people higher up in the bureaucratic university system who regulate art education but do not know about the students and teachers' desires, again showing the impersonalization of education, and waste of funds; 4 is not solved, but highlights the sense of excessive rules and, with that, a reduction of freedom; and 5. The creation of a secret and mobile kitchen, which facilitates socializing, community, and saves the students money - a precious resource.

Secret mobile kitchen (Hjort Guttu, 2020b).

There are many more points of criticism in this video that could have been highlighted. The important aspect here, however, is that *Manifesto* is a film which overtly criticizes the ongoing change in art educational institutions. The students were in awe of the film, shocked that in their first few days the teachers were showing a film so greatly opposed to the art university, akin to the one they had just begun. Once it finished there was a discussion about the film. The students were all extremely positive about it. They were already learning to resist the art

educational institution and criticize their own school. A quote in the film, taken from Harney and Moten's (2013) *The Undercommons,* was brought up during the discussion: "the only possible relationship to academia today is a criminal one." This quote is at the core of *Manifesto*. It is more than that some rules may have to be broken. It is that some rules *should* be broken. The video is a call to arms against a supposed overly institutionalized art education. It is an impetus to act. An incitement to resist. The aim of *Manifesto* is to criticize specific aspects of institutionalized art education. It is not so much a criticism of art schools in general but a criticism of what the state is doing to the contemporary art school, and what it is therefore becoming. However, a consequence of the film is to teach the students that resistance - both the act of resistance and showing resistance within one's art – is endorsed by The Academy and positively valued.

Similar to Raheja and Gold's ethnography, in which "village women's songs and stories thus constitute a counter-hegemonic feminine identity that could lead to acts of opposition. In this regard they are a potential form of resistance" (Seymour, 2006, p. 309), *Manifesto* constitutes a counter-hegemonic educational ideal that could lead to acts of opposition. However, because it is shown within the field of art (a safe space filled by nods of approval, in which resistance is not only expected but praised) and to students who agree, this video, may "remain anti-subversive in… [its] present form" (Seymour, 2006, p. 315). Additionally, as supposed acts of resistance are not only valuable for their potential to create change but for the value of the art itself, the lines are blurred between art as an act of resistance and 'resistance' as a means of legitimating the artist. When the artist employs resistance as a tool for their artwork, they are corresponding to the expected role of the contemporary artists. It is, simultaneously, counter-hegemonic and hegemonic.

Teaching most forms of resistance - that is, teaching the positive value of resistance - creates a culture in which one believes they should resist. It is not just resistance to what the students see as undesirable aspects of society, but also what they see as undesirable in the school. *Manifesto* highlights that one should be critical of their own education and the social structures and rules within the school. This can lead to conflict between staff and students, when students do what they have learned and resist against the school. This is the other edge

of the sword: teaching resistance may cause resistive acts to be conducted upon those teaching it.

Back at the school, I joined an informal tour of the school's facilities for the 1MAs, given by a couple of 2MAs. We were led through the building, exploring all the different rooms, workshops, and equipment. In the group of 1MAs there were two students who worked mainly with photography, so when the door to the photography and film equipment was opened, mouth agape, one of the students asked, "can this equipment be loaned and taken out of the school?" The 2MA-come-tour-guide paused, tilting his head, "*technically*, no" he replied with a smile. "But is it insured if I take it out, like, what happens if it gets damaged?" Nobody there knew the answer to that question; he would have to find out by himself. While I was at the school there was a rumour about some filming equipment crossing an international border - a small act of resistance towards the rules of the school.

The paradox here is that while they are critical of the school, there is the belief that the school will commend their resistance, making resistance conformity - making resistance irresistible. I will add that the means of resistance I have shown, although potentially unofficially praised by the teachers, would likely be condemned by the administration or some layer of the bureaucracy within the increasingly institutionalized school. One of the many reasons that the supposed over-institutionalization of art education should be resisted. The bureaucracy does not understand the culture of The Academy and may punish someone for something that should be commended.

The students are taught to value resistance. They are taught to protest and critique. Protest and critique, so closely akin to complaint. I believe this, compounded by the frustration of truly wanting to help or resist but being stuck within the double bind of artistic resistance, to be one of the reasons that leads to the embodiment of the modern myth of the artist as not only transgressive, but miserable. Protest requires action. Critique intends to propose change. Complaint, the whiny younger brother often mistaken for critique, creates misery. At best it is the demotivated motivation to critique which in turn is the motivation for resistance. The examples for this within the art school are many. I will briefly depict the two I see as most telling. Both coming with a self-deprecative (or group-deprecative) humour.

Firstly, as I was waiting on a sofa by the studio space as I regularly did, Momo who I had not seen for a long time walked by. We discussed what he had been doing – acting for an experimental theatre. I told him how much time I spent waiting on this sofa until someone came out from their studio and wanted to chat. "Be careful that you don't become our therapist," he said, giggling: another accurate reading from Momo of himself and his peers. And secondly, after explaining to a student the aims of my thesis, she replied, "Disillusionment… That's your entire thesis done. That's all you need." The double-edged sword of teaching, and therefore learning, resistance would come back around and hurt the students.

Art on the Political Spectrum

There is a saying in anthropology, '*giving a voice to the voiceless'*, about the anthropologists' goal to help those with less power. The same, often, goes for art. To quote the clearest few from many, the art students would say, "I want to help the voices that cannot be heard," "I want to help the people in the group I belong to," and "I want to do something political." It is not the case that all the students were interested in 'helping', with some saying that they make art purely for themselves - seen in the many artworks being created to express the artists individual emotions. However, many of the students do truly want to help. They want to challenge hegemonic ideas, whether that be within identity politics, capitalism, feminism, technological 'advancement', or any other realm.

During a class for the 1BAs a student vocalized her confusion about the definition of political art. She was confused because a lot of art within The Academy seemed to be a critique of certain aspects of society, yet most of it would not be classed as political art. The teacher responded, saying that political art is hard to define because "all art is political …. To claim that something has nothing to do with politics is a very privileged role." By this the teacher was not claiming that all art represents pressing political issues or current affairs, but she was indicating to art being political in the sense that it represents an idea one finds important or beautiful, and it is putting that statement out into the world (exhibiting) to influence others.

Even if art is made to be apolitical, there is a political choice to avoid politics. “So,” the teacher continued, “all art is political, but political art is more clearly political.”

Art’s political character, therefore, must be a continuum: art on the political spectrum. There were many occasions in which a student made an artwork with a political intention but the physical ambiguity of the artwork obscured its political aspect to the viewer. For example, a student’s artpiece - I will not describe it for anonymity reasons - that was critical to increasingly mechanical mass production of clothing, and incorporated ideas of overconsumption, waste, and the depersonalization of machine-made materials in contrast to the great relational value in handmade objects, was to me and many of the students I spoke to, incomprehensible as a critique. It was just a “cool” looking artwork. In translating a critical message into physical art, the potentially political artwork was depoliticized, as its political content was hidden behind aesthetics. So, when a student says “I want to help…,” their form of help will often be made ineffective by the need to make an art object. The impenetrability of contemporary art hindering its power of resistance. Art’s political critique may instead become a tool of social capital, only for those privileged enough to have gained the knowledge of its ambiguous intention.

It is easy to criticise the “circle-jerk” of the art world, in which (political) art is made, but only shown to or understood by others in that sphere, congratulating themselves on their great contribution to the cause without creating any change. But it would not be fair to The Academy to leave the concept of resistance here, as if all supposed forms of resistance within the art school are self-aggrandizing, futile, and incapable of creating change. (One could say the same about the anthropologist, who, wanting to make the world a better place, conducts fieldwork among the subaltern and returns from the field only to be patted on the back by other anthropologists to no empirical change). *Manifesto*, the video mentioned above, played a part in recruiting and galvanizing the students against overly institutionalized art education. The students joined the teachers and protested in a serious attempt to separate themselves from the larger university (to give The Academy more ‘freedom’) - as of now, April 2023, this form of resistance is ongoing. In this case, art ignited an act in the ‘real’ world. The teachers and students stepping out of the art world, protesting in the ‘real’.

Additionally, there are occasions in which art is overtly political in the 'real' world, but it may not be recognized as art to the general public, although (to the artist) it is. Some examples of this I cannot share - writing about resistance is challenging because resistance is potentially punishable, and it could put the people written about at risk - so, I will give a short analogy. One that is very similar to a real occurrence by a student.

A student (let's call her Sara) entered a Norwegian bank (the walls most likely decorated with fine art). Wearing a secret camera, she conversationally asked the bank's employees' opinion in the bank investing in offshore oil projects. Using quotes from the employees, Sara then made posters and hung them outside different branches of the bank. This action made it to the state news channel *NRK*, contributing to the debate over a bank using its customers' money to invest in projects the customers disagree with. Interestingly, to the public and the media this was not seen as art. However, to Sara, it was art as well as protest (you can be certain that if these posters were placed in a museum, they would be seen as art: political art). Like Laura Poitras showed in *All the Beauty and the Bloodshed,* Nan Goldin's art and activism were intertwined; her activism was her art. This intertwinement is understood the same way by Sara. However, to the public, Sara's actions and the objects she made were not viewed of as art, only as protest. Even if, to the artists, the domains of art and politics are intertwined, the public keeps them separated to a great distinction. This returns to the idea that art is seen of as the realm of the symbolic, not the real: criticism through art being designated to the act of art rather than to 'reality'.

Additionally, the students are taught by the art school to value resistance and protest. It is part of what an artist *should* be doing. This diffuses out of the art and into so-called non-artistic life. On October 26, 2022, I, Bernadotte, and a couple of other students, joined a demonstration against the introduction of university tuition fees for non-EEA citizens (excluding Switzerland). There were approximately eighty protesters standing in the cold outside the Norwegian parliament building, listening to the speeches by political figures that opposed the (now passed) bill. Of the protesters, art students and teachers were the majority. As an international student myself, it was heartwarming on this cold day to see the number of students and teachers from The Academy joining the protest. Teaching resistance causes resistance inside and outside of the art world. Resistance becomes part of the life of an artist.

In this chapter I have shown that not all forms of 'resistance' may work as seemingly intended. In fact, some forms of resistance may placate the desire to act. Not conforming, and always attempting to challenge the 'old' artworks, may also simply be a necessity for occupational success. However, some forms of resistance may play a part in enacting change, and teaching resistance also leads students to value resistance both in an outside of the art world. Like Nan Goldin, art and life, for the students, are not separated. Becoming an accepted member of the fine art community is facilitated by being taught and learning to resist, whether that be stealing from construction sites, making 'new' art, breaking into a bank, or simply opposing oneself to the 'normal' worker: be that not caring about 'normal' employment or, as I will explore further in the upcoming chapters, looking down upon money.

5 Money (Part One): In Debt for Art

"There are few modern relationships as fraught as the one between art and money. Are they mortal enemies, secret lovers or perfect soul mates? Is the bond between them a source of pride or shame, a marriage of convenience or something tawdrier?" (Fine, 2018, p. 189).

Both 'resistance' and 'freedom', as shown in the previous chapters, are constituted in part by their distance or opposition to money. Nevertheless, art repeatedly lives in close connection to financial capital. There are art bunkers for the mega rich in Luxembourg (Rankin, 2019). Private "art islands" are popping up around the world (Barrett, 2023). And, as described in the previous chapter, many galleries are influenced by the opening and closing of wealthy people's wallets. The connection of art and money, however, is not a new phenomenon. Art critic and author John Berger (1972) argued that money played a vital role in the creation of art throughout history, through private arts reflection of status. Art historian Martin Warnke (1985/1993) argued that it was the patronage of the courts during the early renaissance that unbound artists from the guild system, allowing for more creative freedom. Yet, although money has and continues to sleep in the same bed as art, the art students continue to cursorily oppose it. This chapter explores the political economy of the social field encompassing The Academy, showing how money is relevant in different aspects of the everyday engagements of art students. I begin with the relationship between art and money, highlighting how the domain of money infiltrates the domain of art. Moving on, I look at how certain economic and cultural privileges are helpful to gain admission into The Academy, which, in turn, makes it more likely that one will become a professional artist, as well as make one's art worth more money. Following this I investigate the art students' need for money, which includes getting part-time jobs or receiving grants to make art - this section highlights how The Academy, even if it supposedly does not explicitly teach anything in particular, gives students greater 'economic freedom', allowing them the time and space to make art. And finally, to conclude the chapter, I discuss how the political economy of the field structures the artists understanding of their labour, their distinction between artists and non-artists, and the artists connection between art and 'life'.

Silent Infiltration

It is widely accepted that the domains of art and religion, art and politics, or art and emotions, are happily entwined; that they live together, helping or critiquing one another. However, the idea that the domains of art and money live together seems much harder to admit. Susan Gal (2002) in her untangling of the Private/Public distinction, argues that the terms are indexical – something cannot be only private or public, but comparatively more or less private or public - and nested within previous dichotomies: community vs. individual, rationality vs. sentiment, solidarity vs. self-interest, or money vs. love. The belief that these domains oppose one another "continues to generate heated political argument. It motivates the widespread fear that practices such as money payments for intimate care will contaminate the trust and love of private life" (Gal, 2002, p. 78). There are, however, countless examples of money and love being deeply entwined - a clear example being spending three months' salary to express everlasting love in the form of a wedding ring. (For more examples, see: Kwon, 2015; Hardt, 2011; Wright, 2020).

At The Academy students learn through socialization that the domains of art and money are antagonistic; that the evil spirit of money can and will contaminate the purity and authenticity of the art. There is a fear that people will be making art for the sake of money and not making 'art for art's sake', art as an act of resistance, art as an act of love, or art as societal critique. Money may pull away the magic and mysticism of art and make it impure. However, in the everyday life of the student artist, the supposedly separate domains of art and money are profoundly entwined. It is not that the relationship between them is necessarily sinister - for example, the number of students at the Academy in Oslo rose greatly during the depression around 1930 as fewer Norwegians travelled abroad (Markussen, 2009, p. 42) -, but it can be, with money silently infiltrating the sphere of art and effecting it in ways that are undesirable to the artists.

After I paid 100kr ($10) to simply enter Høstutstillingen ('The Autumn exhibition' – one of the most visited and revered exhibitions in Norway) I, like other gallery attendees, gently strolled around, with my arms crossed or held behind my back like a fine-dining waiter, attempting to

contemplate pieces of art among a sea of turtle-neck sweaters. I walked up the black marble staircase, turned right through a white marble doorway, and bumped into a student who had finished her degree during my fieldwork. She now worked part-time at Kunstnernes Hus (the gallery this exhibition was taking place). “It’s hell today” she said. It was the final day of the exhibition and the busiest day of the year. We discussed our favourite piece – a wonky, bulbous, multicoloured, multitextured, stuffed lion-like, awkwardly flirtatious alien creature - which we agreed upon because of its silliness. I asked her how her art was going and she told me that she had not been making much at that time because it was “grant season,” so when not at work she was making applications and applying for grants. I had noticed that there were not many artworks with a small sticky red dot next to them, meaning few had been sold. According to her, this year it was especially hard to sell things because people were poorer due to energy prices and inflation. This means, unsurprisingly, that the global economy, and the War on Ukraine, effected the earnings of the artists and the museum.

Though I was not surprised that the global economy affected the amount of art bought and sold, I was surprised by the way the global economy manifested itself in the jury’s way of choosing which art to exhibit. Continuing the conversation with the ex-student and part-time museum employee, still by the marble doorway, she said “I spoke to one of the people on the jury and, like, it’s not an official criteria but they tried to bring things in that are sellable, in a way.” This means that the jury, who decided which artworks to exhibit, were not basing their decision entirely on what they thought was the best art, but also what was sellable.

The artworks exhibited at Høstutstillingen are seen by huge numbers of the public as well as art students and, because this exhibition is one of the most consecrated in Norway, the art is legitimized and more likely to be viewed as ‘good’ art, therefore influencing the students on what they should be making. The present as well as future of artists are affected by the choices made by the jury, which, in 2022, was affected by sell-ability. Money silently infiltrated and influenced the artists-to-be. Apparently, however, this is not always the case. During an interview with a previous head jury member of Høstutstillingen, upon me asking how the jury chose what to be exhibited, she did not once mention money, but just a voting system with the other jury members that was based upon a “feeling” of if the art was good enough – this was a time with a growing global economy. Though, apparently, money had no

influence during a previous year, during my fieldwork the effect of the global economy influenced the decisions made by the jury of what art to exhibit. This, in turn, influences what the art students see as 'good' and, vitally, what they see as exhibit-able, which, as argued in Chapter 1, is how the artist gains the fundamental value, as taught by The Academy, of 'fame'.

Another form of money's inconspicuous infiltration is the changing language used by students at The Academy, namely the language of production: "I don't want to come to the cinema, I feel like I have to produce art": "to produce," as if art is a product, as if art is a commodity. A professor brought this change in language up to me, saying that she had seen its direction moving more towards art being a commodity - I will discuss art as commodity in the upcoming chapter: *The Morality of Exchange*. For the teacher it was worrying that profane commercialisation was penetrating the sacred art world. Because of this, teachers routinely reminded students that "art is not a product," yet they did not state what exactly art is. Confusingly, while the art students are being told by The Academy that art is not a product or a commodity, they are seeing in galleries and museums that it is. The art student comes to realise that the domain of art is infiltrated by money, whether they like it or not. Most often not.

In Debt to Art

Leading on from highlighting the interconnectedness between the domains of art and money, this section explores four intersecting points that intend to show the role money plays in becoming an artist: 1. That receiving a degree from The Academy allows one to earn more money from their art; 2. That one is much more likely to become a professional artist if they go to an art university; 3. That there is a certain cultural and educational privilege which is helpful to gain admission into The Academy; and 4. There is a certain economic privilege in being comfortable to get into debt for art school. This section highlights the ways in which becoming an artist is easier for those in economically and culturally privileged positions. It therefore implicitly opens up to the ways in which the inequality of privileges can be alleviated.

1. On one rare occasion I entered into a conversation between two students about if they thought it was “right” that a piece of art will be more expensive if you have a degree in art. The student who was arguing that it should be worth more was somewhat of an anomaly at the school, a bit of a misfit, which at The Academy meant a bit too Norwegian-normative. To her, she should reap the rewards of using three years of her life, which includes three years of student loans, on a degree. Whereas, to the other student, art should be priced based on how ‘good’ it is. To this student, studying art will hopefully make one’s art better, and therefore worth more money, but the symbol of the degree in itself should not increase the price: fine art should not be gatekept. Though it may make some teachers and students uncomfortable, the symbolic capital of a degree from The Academy will make one’s art more economically valuable. Not only would the same artwork be priced more if the artist has a degree, but one is more likely to become a professional artist – through legitimation and gaining the relevant career expanding social network - if they go to an art academy.

2. A quick internet search of solo exhibitions - an exhibition in which all the artworks are by one artist - at Kunstnernes Hus (one of the most highly regarded fine art museums in Norway) shows that all four artists with upcoming solo shows in 2023 have a master’s degree or higher in art. Looking back the at the sixteen solo exhibitions from 2020-2022, at least fouteen of the sixteen artists had a degree in the arts, the majority with a masters or above. One artist, coincidentally the only dead artist in the list of sixteen, was not formally educated in the arts, and I was unable to find the relevant information for the final artist. This is one of many examples that one is much more likely to become an acclaimed artist, whose work is shown in consecrated areas, if they go to art university beforehand. However, an aspiring art student cannot simply go to The Academy because they want to, they must be accepted. This requires not only the willingness to pay for it, but the cultural and educational knowledge, as well as being ‘good’ enough to be accepted.

3. Cultural and educational capital were touched upon during the introductory chapter. One’s desire to become an artist begins way before going to art school. The seeds of this desire and knowledge are planted once one is born and grow during the child being raised. Yet, even ignoring the very early stages of the transmittal of artistic habitus, doxa, and way of being,

one needs to simply know about the foundational schools – 1-to-2-year private art schools -, which is more possible with the correct cultural, educational, and financial capital.

As I walked to the cinema with Bernadotte, to see Derek Jarman's film *Jubilee*, we discussed how she felt certain expectations due to her age. At 30, Bernadotte was slightly older than the average student in her class, and she wished she went to art school earlier. When she was in her early twenties, she wanted to go to The Academy, but did not think she would get in. Instead, she took up part-time amateur photography and worked service jobs. She felt it was unfair that she, someone from a background with less cultural capital, was never informed about the foundational schools: "I didn't know about these government funded foundation schools till I was like twenty-three, whereas there's loads of cliques who know [about the foundational schools] while they're still in videregående (Upper high school, from age 16-19)." In contrast to Bernadotte, people from a background with more cultural capital (and likely economic, as they are often connected (Bourdieu, 1979/1984)), knew about foundational schools from a much earlier age. These foundational schools are pivotal in matriculating into The Academy: of the twenty-five 1BA students at The Academy, twenty-four had previously been to foundational art schools.

Bernadotte learned about foundational schools later than many of her peers, and only joined when she was twenty-four. It was a difficult decision for her as she had to defy normative society's', and somewhat her own, expectations of ticking off life goals (having a steady job, an apartment, etc.) by a certain age. If she was within different social spheres growing up, - i.e. had more cultural capital, and had been given the information about these foundational schools that was obvious for many of the other art students - the difficult decision could have been made easy, as she could have begun years before certain societal pressures were trying to push her in a different direction. In addition to the cultural capital needed simply to know about these foundational schools, economic security also comes into play as these foundational schools, though government assisted, are not free.

4. The Academy, proudly, has one of the highest application to admission percentages of any university programme in Norway (in 2021 there were approximately twenty-one applicants per available position (KHiO, 2021)). It is extremely hard to gain a spot at The Academy, and

many of the students apply multiple times before matriculating. Competition is already at play before entering the school. As stated earlier, of the twenty-five 1BAs at the academy, twenty-four had previously enrolled in private (costly) foundational art schools. The Norwegian government does support students at these private foundational schools, in the form of loans that will need to be repaid. That is to say, to get into the art university, you more-or-less *need* to go to a foundational art school, which means that you must be willing to take out a loan and get into debt, in order to get into The Academy, which still does not leave you with great career security. The students know this however, and generally do not care. There is a belief that they are resisting and opposing themselves to the neoliberal economy, which in some ways they are, willfully giving their life over to a sense of precarity. However, the willingness to get into debt for art, which is vital for the professional artist-to-be, is often a great privilege.

Printout taped onto a workshop door.

In Norway, university tuition is essentially free - the semester fee in 2022, which goes to specific student organizations, was 840kr ($84). However, living as a student is not free: one must pay rent, eat, have a social life, etc. Oslo is one of the most expensive cities in the world,

meaning there are few students who can afford their monthly living costs from a non-supplemented student loan. And furthermore, the art student often needs to buy art materials. Money is scarce for many of the students. The money to pay for all of this can come in a few ways. Some people use savings, others receive economic support by someone else (most likely parents), but by far the most common is taking out a governmental student loan and likely getting a job on the side. In other words, to go to university you most likely will get into debt. This may be the same at most university courses, but the difference for art university is that career security after graduation is lower. There is more of a long-term economic risk. To be able to become an art student one should have no huge anxieties about making a living in the future.

When I first spoke to the dean, in order to get access to The Academy, they wondered if I would be interested in looking into economic equality of their admissions, as The Academy is aware and uncomfortable with this admission inequality. In an attempt to counter this, The Academy had run an application workshop in which want-to-be students could bring a portfolio – a vital part of an application – and be advised in how it could be improved. This was open for everyone. However, as a 2MA student who had been part of helping told me:

"you could tell, like, the people who came around who obviously hadn't done a foundation year and it's, like, there's a massive gap between them in terms of how professional things looked, and people coming and showing this stuff on the phone, which is like really hard to kind of gauge with…"

Whereas in the foundational schools:

"…they're taught how to present, like, make portfolios and stuff for the [art academy application process] …. It becomes very apparent who hasn't gone to those [foundational] schools."

Not only do foundation school students have more years of practicing art than others, they also are taught how to present their art in order to get into art universities.

It is important to add that, although economic privilege plays a part in becoming an art student, in Norway this privilege inequality is much lower than, say, USA, China, the UK, or the many countries in which university education is not free at all. Yet in Norway, as The Academy is attempting, it could be more equal. However, there are vital stages in entering The Academy, that are autonomous to it, and largely out of its control: a child's upbringing, the cost of rent, the fact that foundational schools exist, etc. This means it is difficult to decrease inequalities in the matriculation process, even if The Academy is trying to do so.

There are, however, a few examples of professional artists who did not go to university, for example Trude Viken, who was 'discovered', in her 40s, through Instagram by the artist Richard Prince. In this case, Prince, such an elite in the art world one could call him royalty, gave his patronage, and therefore gave Trude Viken cultural consecration and legitimation. Plus, everyone loves a good underdog story. However, cases like this are rare, and as I have shown, to be an acclaimed artist, one should go to art university. To go to art university, one should go to a foundational art school. Both require a willingness to get into debt for art. A willingness that may weed out the not-passionate-enough, while the passionate-enough would still pay. Or, perhaps, a willingness that weeds out the non-economically secure, while the economically secure would pay. Money plays a huge role in one's chances of becoming an artist. Freedom to choose to get into debt for art is not an equal choice for people of different economic backgrounds, who do not want to limit their life choices. So, when the teacher says "all art is political. To claim that something has nothing to do with politics is a very privileged role," she is certainly onto something.

If to become a professional artist one should go to university, and to do so one is going to get into debt, and if the artist has a disproportionate authority on high culture (arts), it is important to consider who has the luxury to get into debt for art, as well as who knows the routes which should be taken in order to matriculate into art university. Should it be that the type of high culture (art) that is being produced for mainstream consumption and therefore having great power to influence society, is created by people, more often than not, born into privileged positions? Not only would this, as Bourdieu (1979/1984) would argue, reinforce distinctions of taste based on bourgeois ideals, but also, as gaining a degree will increase the financial value of one's art, it may reinforce already existing economic inequality. Students at

The Academy are not normally part of extremely wealthy families. More likely their families are economically secure, with high cultural capital: they are middle-class, making objects for the middle and upper-class. This is why they are both "*apart* and a *part* of the dominant class" (Grenfell & Hardy, 2007, p. 57). This is also why many students cannot simply rely on their parents to buy whatever they want, but need a student loan and struggle with money while they are studying.

Art School as Economic Emancipator (but not enough)

At the same time as going to The Academy prompts the borrowing of money as a loan, The Academy allows the students access to equipment and space that would be beyond their financial limits had they not gone there: wood-working machines, giant furnaces, studio space, metal-cutting machines, laser cutters and printers, and access to specialists who can teach craft and assist. A 2MA, who was about to graduate, told me of her fear in not being able to access, post-graduation, the equipment she had been using for her artworks, as she would not be able to afford similar equipment once she left The Academy. She spoke about sneaking in and using it, or getting her friends that are still at the school to craft the objects with the equipment for her.

If the students did not go to The Academy, they would not receive a student loan, and therefore they would have to work a paid job. They would have less time to practice art, and they would not have the equipment or space to do so. This freedom of time and space, given by the state and school, was a regular comment when I asked students what they felt they learned at The Academy. It was not so much that they were taught anything in particular, but they had the time and space to practice and express themselves in ways that would not have been possible had they not attended the university. The university emancipates the students from everyday working life – in this way The Academy resembles the patrons of the past.

However, materials to make art cost money. Some materials, including clay and some paint, are covered by The Academy, but most are not. Inger found herself working with (free) clay more than she expected before joining the school. Vera told me once: "I'm going to make

paint cause I've run out of it and it costs so much money to buy [from an external shop], and I think they have resources at the school." One student said he stole from construction sites, both to save money and as an act of resistance against capitalist property developers. Momo often made art out of 'found objects'. In fact, Inger stated that she thought so many people worked with 'found objects' for the exact reason that they did not have much money. Bernadotte, too, struggled to have the 'artistic freedom' she wanted due to her finances.

In fact, after spending a day with Bernadotte, who wanted to experiment with moulding and casting, I wrote down these notes:

We met before 10 and went to the workshop. Bernadotte spoke about what she wanted to learn, what she wanted to make, and the workshop master said 'let's get a few things and learn'. It was an informal experience of asking questions and (mostly) receiving answers from both sides. It was not a strict lecture with specific info, but open to whatever info the student wanted …. Again, the main problem was money. Using Alginate [a moulding material] is very expensive, so wanting to mould a whole body changed to moulding one single hand. This still costed around 200kr ($20), not yet using the silicone for the final process of creating a mould. A lot of learning came from minor unspoken actions done by the workshop master, such as folding a metal strip to make a container, using playdough to make it water-tight etc. Watching the master at work was an implicit pedagogical experience in itself.

I showed Bernadotte these notes the next day, to see if she agreed with them. Here are my notes from this interaction:

After showing Bernadotte my notes, she stated her disagreements or different interpretations. Another problem about casting a whole body was the practical challenge. Also the silicone mould (the final goal) would have been about 4x more expensive. She wanted me to be more specific. Silicone moulding is expensive because of the material (585kr ($59) per kilo, which is what would mould 1 hand. Then the alginate and plaster would cost another 200kr ($20) - which is the part she already knew how to make). This makes experimentation and learning by failure inaccessible for most people on a student budget.

When I showed Bernadotte the new notes, she was more pleased. For her, even though the cost of materials was mentioned in the first note, they were not mentioned enough. Money was so close to her everyday experience of struggling to experiment and therefore become a better artist, that it was vital to her that I be more specific. While The Academy allowed the art students the time, space, and equipment needed to practice their art, it did not completely free them from the need for money. Money still played a role in what the students 'made' as their art.

Though there is a general disdain at The Academy of money, they acknowledge the need for it, both on an institutional and individual level. At the same time, as shown in previous chapters, there is a constant want to oppose the artist from the 'normal' worker; the free from the unfree. Many of the students want to become artists so they do not have to work, in the conventional sense. However, as much as it may be despised, money is still needed. A lack of it, as in Bernadotte's case, inhibits artistic practice. It is normal in Norway for students (non-art students included) to work part-time while studying full-time as the student loan barely covers the average rent and living costs, and art students then have the extra cost of materials on top. Many of the art students, therefore, endure employment within the neoliberal market economy, so they can afford their artistic practice. Many of the students hope they can get a job within arts: Vera was working as a drawing teacher for children, other students worked as guides in art galleries or at the reception of museums, and some worked as assistants for professional artists. More common though would be a student working in a bar, a kindergarten, or in retail.

To become artists, in which they oppose themselves to the 'normal' worker, art students become part-time 'normal' workers. A paradox of working in paid employment to escape the world of paid employment: working for money so they do not have to work for money. All the while they know it is likely they will have to go into full-time paid employment once finishing the art degree.

"The Boring Stuff"

Excluding the need to get a job, it is not just making, learning, and exhibiting art for the students while they are studying, supposedly away from the world of money. There is also "the boring stuff": applications for grants, residencies or trips, reimbursements for exhibitions, as well as applications to exhibit at galleries. It is not much of a coincidence that the "boring stuff," according to the art student, relates to the general admin of being an artist, relating to when the artist is not doing art. Additionally, the "boring stuff" is often connected to the attainment of money. When I spoke to a previous jury member of Høstutstillingen (and therefore an artist with a master's degree – a necessity to be on the jury) about freedom, the reality of administrative work in the life of an artist is the reason she believed artists are not free, and freedom is one of the main misconceptions - yet, interestingly, one of the main stakes (Chapter 3) - that many art students have.

Considering the hostility towards money, it is interesting that most students are applying for "free money," as a 1MA said, meaning money, received from arts funding grants, that they do not see themselves earning. A grant application generally includes a portfolio as well as an application letter. The artist puts time and effort (labour) into creating art, then they put time and effort (labour) into documenting it for the portfolio, more time and more effort (more labour) goes into designing the portfolio in the desired style, and finally one must write an application letter. The students, however, are not expecting to be paid for this as they do not see it as work, yet at the same time they are told by teachers that it fundamentally is not a hobby. This form of not-work, not-hobby, labour (non-dichotomized work/leisure distinction – Chapter 3) could be viewed of like housework and childrearing for a housewife: cooking and cleaning, housekeeping, driving the children to school, then sports practice, then drawing class. It is labour unrewarded financially because one feels like they should be doing it. Like how getting to spend time with the children is seen as a reward in itself, therefore removing the need for money (Rosaldo, 1974), making art is often seen as a luxury and a reward in itself, vanquishing the requirement for a monetary 'reward'.

Fetishism (Marx, 1867/2001) – obscuring the action that went into making an object and only seeing the value of the outcome - can be a useful concept to think with here. Like how the action (labour) of childrearing is largely ignored when looking at the child, the labour process of making art, documenting it, making a portfolio, and writing an application letter is ignored by the artist when looking at a grant application. Though the art students do occasionally receive the "free money" through an accepted grant proposal or similar, most often an application will be rejected. More than just being told by teachers that it is not work (although it is "hard work"), another reason it is not seen as paid work is because when a grant proposal is rejected the labour gone into the application process is not rewarded financially. When this happens, it is certainly unpaid – it is not just "free money," it is *no money*. In the world of grants, in which labour may not receive monetary reward, it may be hard to accept that what one is doing is work. There may be a refusal of money-for-labour as the students do not expect to be given a grant, but still apply. Acknowledging one's own artistic and application labour as work may hurt, as one is aware their labour may be unrewarded. Or, like a mother may be in expecting to be paid to rear her children, artists might be looked down upon for not being satisfied with the reward of doing something they should love.

Applying for grants with a portfolio can be viewed of like using a CV to apply for temporary employment, the difference being that when a grant is given, artists do not see it as getting a temporary job – as, to the artist, it is not seen as labour. Within The Academy there is no learning how to sell work; in fact, it is barely spoken of. First and foremost, The Academy is attempting to guide the students into making their art better. The step after this is not to make money but to gain a reputation: to appear in shows, exhibit work, engage with galleries, and begin to make a name for oneself - to gain 'fame'. Making a name for oneself will make it more likely for the artist to receive a grant or sell their work: an act of social/reputational capital translating to financial capital. Again, it is like adding to one's CV. The more shows one has had, the better galleries one has exhibited in, or the places one has held a talk, are all going to make the "CV" better and the likelihood of getting a better 'job', whether that be a grant or a residency. Whereas, selling one's art to a private collector will not make the "CV" better. Unless the private collector is legitimized within the field of art (which I come to in the following chapter), directly earning money from selling art is not recognised as valuable at The Academy, whereas receiving money through means that will make the "CV" look better

is. This could be said about most job applications in which one makes a CV (with unpaid labour) and must apply and apply without reward until finally, hopefully, being offered a job (Gershon, 2017). Opposite to the 'normal' worker, for the art student there is a strong desire to not let money infiltrate. Although it is impossible for them to avoid a neoliberal world and a neoliberal Norway, they avoid viewing their labour as paid work, and they use language that tries to oppose the neoliberal political economy that encloses their life outside of The Academy by not considering grants as normal money, nor temporary jobs. Here, there is another attempt by the art student to not let money into the world of art. Once again, however, it does. Yet, even though money infiltrates, there are techniques to resist it, and it does not infiltrate into the art students' world the same way as it does to a 'normal' worker. This can be seen by the level of helping out co-students for free, or in the necessity of networking.

Networking as Necessity – Paying in Kind

Although grants and "free money" can help the artist economically, they are far from guaranteed. The artist, and even more so the art student, can go a long time with little money, but still with a *calling* to make art. This can make knowing people who can help you out - with their labour, knowledge, space etc. - a necessity in the art world. When I asked a student, who previously worked in animation, if she still used animation in her art, she answered:

"No, I don't really animate anymore, no, it just takes too much time. Unless I had actually a genuine project in mind, and then I would probably get someone else to animate it for me. If they're, like, really efficient."

"But wouldn't you then have to pay someone to do it?" I replied.

"But then you can apply for grants to pay people, you know if you're lucky. But it also is, yeah, sometimes it works both ways as it's more of a kind of ... you do stuff, it's like a favour to others and then they will pay it through doing something back …. But there's a lot of that [helping others out] in the arts. Cause, you know, there's not really much funding available."

If grants are not received, favours between people you know can be used instead of payment – the Norwegian language, interestingly, has a word for these non-economic transactions: *vennetjeneste* (friend favour). The Academy is a place which assembles people with similar interests, similar needs, and corresponding skills. Though networking is not explicitly taught at the school, it is fundamentally facilitated by putting similar people in the same place. This can benefit people who are more "naturally" apt in socializing, or disadvantage the inapt, as a 2MA stated, "Yeah, yeah. It [networking] just doesn't for me come naturally… It just feels fake and like, I can't do it… So this networking thing, I mean, obviously some people are just naturally very good at socializing …. some people take advantage but most people I think are quite genuine."

That "some people take advantage," shows the sinister side of networking. The students believe, and are aware, of a fine line between 'authentic' socializing for the sake of making friends, and 'inauthentic' socializing for careerism: both networking. The kind side of networking belongs to comments like this:

"I like it when things just happen organically like, you just, you know, you might find certain people there, you know, whose practices kind of align with yours, this kind of natural way. You become friends and things kind of go, you know, on from there."

While the sinister side belongs to this:

"Half of this is drinking free wine; the other half is schmoozing."

The second 'sinister' quote came from a student who was at an exhibition opening of some friends. As she said this she mimed 'rimming' - spreading apart arse-cheeks and licking the arsehole: a physical gesture of careerist sycophancy. In fact, this exhibition was run in a space owned by a friend of those exhibiting. As Fine (2018, p. 98) states, "Today networking is embraced in the "social turn" in art. Despite dangers of insularity and "social incest", using friendships to open doors for art practice is common."

During a meeting about exchange programs between art academies, a student coordinator who was the exchange program representative, explained the process of a 6-to-12-month exchange to another country. Once she finished, three students who had been on exchange spoke about their experiences. Towards the end of the meeting the representative asked, "What do you think you have learned that will help you after you've finished your education and you're becoming a professional artist?" The three students looked a bit confused by the question. What was this 'normal' worker meaning by it? After hesitating, one student conjured up an answer somewhat related, saying that the best thing for their future artistic practice was that they met so many other artists from different places around the world and that their network has been greatly expanded into multiple countries, allowing for collaboration and help from many people, more connections with people who in the future might run galleries or know those who do, and so on. For this student, the best thing she gained from one year of practicing art was an international network.

While Norwegian society likes to think of itself as a meritocracy, the art world within it conspicuously runs, in part, on nepotism. This is not necessarily bad, though the cultural hegemony might propose so, but it is a fundamental part of being and becoming an artist. In fact, it is especially necessary when artists and art students do not have enough money to rent out exhibition space or hire in specialized labour. What may hurt the artists is opportunist befriending for art, instead of genuine befriending which happens to additionally be beneficial for one's art. Many of the students acknowledge that networking is helpful for their chances at becoming a professional artist – at getting a better "CV" -, yet at the same time believe they want to meet people for the joy of it, not for their career. This then compounds the lack of separation between art and 'life'.

Even if Norwegian society is a meritocracy, it is a meritocracy that makes it easier to gain merit if one has money: a classed meritocracy. In the art world that includes paying for exhibition spaces, using more expensive materials, being able to experiment more, or buying help. The Academy, with all its equipment, space and governmental support, may level people's chances of buying merit, but it is important, too, to ask who gets this levelling. As this chapter has shown, often, it is people already in privileged positions who enter The Academy and therefore it is privileged people being given support. Although The Academy promotes a

separation between art and money, this separation is not currently possible. Money continues to infiltrate the art world in many ways. It therefore influences the art that is made. I will continue, further, to discuss forms and perceptions of money and exchange in the final chapter: *Money (Part 2): The Morality of Exchange.*

6 Money (Part Two): The Morality of Exchange

"I wish I didn't care about selling things at all, like, I understand that in three years I have to live a real life that's outside of the school and I'll have to earn money somehow"

- Vera

But Vera did care about selling things. She, like most of the art students, looked down upon it. In fact, Vera thought it was funny that after joining The Academy she had sold much less, even though because she was at The Academy now, - therefore having more legitimation and symbolic capital - her art was more sellable. As shown in the previous chapter, money effects what is exhibited at galleries, one often needs money to make art and to experiment, and there is a privilege in getting into debt for art education. And, although there is a cursory distain for money at The Academy, it is prevalent, even influential. This chapter delves into how money and other forms of exchange, namely 'the gift', are understood by the art students, and how these forms of exchange are conducted, utilized, or exploited. It is important to make clear again that the art students' conceptions of art, money, and exchange are not learned through formal teaching, but through socialization and implicit influences at The Academy. To show the complexities of how the art students moralize exchanging their art, their time, and more, this chapter uses some greatly influential works from the Anthropological canon. These works include: Mauss' (1925/2002) '*The Gift'*, Strathern's (1988b) '*The Gender of The Gift*', the Bohannans' (1953) '*The Tiv of Central Nigeria'*, and as the title of this chapter suggests, great influence comes from Parry and Bloch's (1989) '*Money and The Morality of Exchange'*.

I begin with a comparison: selling one's artwork as a student at The Academy and trading a woman as a member of *The Tiv of Central Nigeria* (Bohannan & Bohannan, 1953). Leading on from this, I explore the moral differences between gifting art and selling art – a central complication in the morality of exchange at The Academy. In light of gifting and selling art, which considers art's 'commodity character', I delve into concepts of fetishism and alienation, and how art, and the creation of it, is perceived by art students and elite artists. And with elite

artists I round up, exploring the exchange of different values when art students work for these elites. But first I return to Vera.

The Money Taboo – Spheres of Exchange

Vera's studio was not particularly isolated – one makeshift three quarter height wall, and one wall-imitating-bookshelf – and the studio next to hers was similar. As we sat chatting, I overheard her studio neighbour planning with Roy (who was briefly mentioned in Chapter 2, quoting Joseph Beuys) for an upcoming exhibition that a lot of the students were participating in. Vera felt like she should exhibit something but did not know what. She picked up a nearby tennis ball and joked that she would exhibit that. "I wonder if I can sell it," she said, mocking the confusing nature of contemporary art. I then asked her if she did, in fact, want to sell something at the exhibition. "God forbid you sell your art at the academy," she said, highlighting that selling one's art was looked down upon at the institution, "it's as if the academic value [of the art] goes down if you do [sell it]." This comment suggests an inverse relationship between academic value and monetary value. It implies that the exchange from art to money is a 'downward' conversion; ethically and aesthetically. To Vera the "academic" value of the art is worth more, in a holistic understanding of value, than the economic value: it is not a simple one-to-one conversion, but one of contrasting values - a meeting of different spheres of exchange.

The Bohannans, central figures in the anthropology of exchange, studied the separate 'spheres of exchange' in the Tiv society of Central Nigeria. I discuss this, here, as a comparative example of another exchange system that is ongoing at The Academy. Importantly, exchange spheres should not only be seen as the structure of the economy. In fact, "the concept of spheres has a much greater analytical utility if it relates to all forms of circulation and transformation of value" (Barth, 1967, p. 157). As I show, exchange is not a purely 'rational' profit-seeking action, but one culturally bounded to different forms of value and moral codes.

The Tiv of Central Nigeria are a community which, before colonization and the implementation of capitalism, had three distinctly separate spheres of exchange. The first

sphere was subsistence items: locally produced foodstuffs, small livestock, and certain utensils and tools. The second sphere, the sphere of prestige goods, included cattle, slaves, medicine and magic, specific cloth, and, importantly, brass rods. The third and most prestigious sphere was 'rights-in-humans' (other than slaves who belonged to the second sphere). This involved exchange of women, children, and wards, and its values were expressed in terms of kinship and marriage.

These three spheres of exchange were theoretically separate and ruled by their own morality. Within each separate sphere the items were tradable to one another, but not tradable to items in a different sphere: one should not trade any number of (first sphere) chickens for a single (second sphere) brass rod. In the first (subsistence) sphere, exchange took place through barter or gift and had the "morality of the free and uncontrolled market" (Bohannan, 1959, p. 493). The exchange of prestige goods, the second sphere, took place at specific ceremonies, rituals, or medical events, and never entered the morality of the market. Finally, the rights in humans sphere, the third and morally highest sphere, normally involved two men trading sisters for wives. This sphere could also contain the additional trading of wards, and often required approval by the exchangeable woman. This was a deeply personal sphere that created intricate social relationships. It also often created complex forms of debt, in which one family may owe generations of wards to another family.

In exceptional circumstances, however, it was possible to exchange across the spheres. The Tiv would say it was 'good' to trade food (first sphere) for brass rods (second sphere), but 'bad' for the person on the other end of the exchange, who loses brass rods and receives food. Similarly, it would be 'good' to trade cows (second sphere) for a woman (third sphere) but extremely 'bad' to trade a woman for cows (Bohannan, 1959). Exchanging 'downwards' is seen of as morally wrong, while at the same time exchanging 'upwards' was morally appropriate. However, even in "the depths of extremity" (Bohannan, 1959, p. 494), when a prestige item was exchanged for subsistence items, the prestige item would immediately return to the moral sphere of the prestige. Everything within the same sphere was exchangeable, but certain things held greater (or lesser) moral value than others, and were therefore split into separate spheres of exchange. Just as, for the Tiv, a woman has more moral worth than brass rods and therefore should not be exchanged with one, art at The

Academy, Vera notices, has more moral worth than money and therefore should not be exchanged for it.

Whispers immediately began to travel upon an art student selling their art, with other students saying that they could never sell their art "like that." The students, too, would often negatively judge the art and art student who sold their work. Neither Bernadotte, nor Momo, nor Inger had sold their art while at The Academy. To the art student, art is in a higher sphere than money, and therefore should not be exchanged with it. As with the Tiv morally exchanging sister for sister, so too can art be traded with art – as happened often between the art students - in what is seen as a moral exchange, and an act of friendship. Art can be exchanged for many things within the same moral sphere. But art for money, like women for money, is wrong.

This may seem like a hugely exaggerated connection because the idea of human-as-exchangeable may be morally abhorrent, but just like how a Tiv man, in dire straits, would be looked down upon for trading his sister for brass rods, so too is the art student looked down upon when trading art for money: it is permissible, though shameful. If this still seems too farfetched, it is at least the same mechanisms at work, in which separate spheres of exchanges are met and moral values between the spheres are challenged.

This clashing of separate spheres and their moral values, however, is not as concrete as it may seem at The Academy. Towards the end of my time there, I helped out a little in setting up a fundraising exhibition for one of the students. In this, students and teachers donated their artworks to the exhibition, with the aim of them being sold. The earnings from the sales, however, would go to the fundraising cause and not the artists themselves. During this exhibition there was no talk about feeling uncomfortable selling one's art. If anything, it was seen as wonderful, a gesture of love.

It may seem obvious that contributing to a good cause was seen as positive while helping oneself was seen as negative. However, this example opens up to the moral complexities of selling artwork for the students: it is not selling artwork that is seen as morally problematic per se but selling artwork for one's personal economic gain. It shows, too, that it is not money

that reduces the "academic value" of the art, but taking that money for oneself, as if taking money for yourself is an act of greed. In fact, selling your art for a good cause may increase other values as well as the artists reputation. Selling one's art for a 'good' reason, overrides the immorality of selling art. Money, then, is not the taboo. Personal economic gain is.

Furthermore, the giving of one's art to be sold at a fundraising exhibition can be seen as a gift exchange. The art student is not selling their artwork but giving it away as a gift, which afterwards will be sold by someone else. And gift exchange, as opposed to monetary exchange, is seen as morally appropriate within The Academy. In fact, Raoul Vaneigem, a member of the profoundly influential *Situationist International*, influenced by Mauss' *Potlatch*, saw the "pure gift" (Vaneigem, 1967/2017 p. 81) as a moral pinnacle. For the Situationists, converting an object from commodity to gift was "a revolutionary strategy against what they saw as the commodification of everyday life" (Martin, 2012). If art is sold with the intention of gifting the money, then it is morally unproblematic - such is the power of the gift at The Academy.

Between Gifting and Selling: Art's Commodity Character

So far, I have shown that art and money, at The Academy, live in loosely separate spheres of exchange. Yet, at the same time, dependent on the specific context of the exchange, movement between the spheres may be morally acceptable. Here, I move away from separate spheres of exchange, and move into understanding the supposed binary distinction between gifting and selling, and consequently the commodity character of art.

The word "commodity," applies to "objects produced in order to be sold" (Graeber, 2001, p. 31). If a commodity is a thing produced to be bought and sold, - i.e., to have exchange value - then art's commodity character is based on the intention of the artist. Art may be a commodity if it was made to be sold, or it may not be a commodity if there was no intention to sell it. Art may also be partly a commodity if it was made with a chance of selling but not for that reason. In the footsteps of Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno argued that the "culture industry" changed the commodity character of art, making it more of a commodity. In doing

so “the autonomy of works of art…is tendentially eliminated” (Adorno & Rabinbach, 1975, p. 13). Art-as-commodity, according to Adorno, reduces art’s supposed freedom. Additionally, creation of art with the intention to sell goes against a core value at The Academy – that reputation/’fame’, among the correct people, is more important than money. Art should not be a commodity, at least it should not be made to be “too” sellable (remember Isak, from Bernadotte’s 30th birthday in Chapter 3, telling me that he would not exhibit a film he made because it was “too commercial”?). As, although only the maker of the art knows its commodity character, monetary exchange for art certainly increases its commodity essence. Because of the ambiguous nature of art’s commodity character, I shall refer to gift exchange as art exchanged for non-monetary things: art traded between friends, given as a thank you for helping, and other forms of reciprocity. Commodity exchange, on the other hand, will be referred to as art exchanged for money.

As Marcel Mauss (1925/2002) showed, the gift, in contrast to monetary exchange, is invested in relationships between people, creating alliances and maintaining social bonds. At the same time, Mauss wanted to show that the gift may not, as is often thought, be an innocent transaction: it is driven by the social obligation of reciprocity - to give, and to receive – which is embedded within social orders. For example, gifting may be a societal necessity and be a part of reproducing unequal hierarchical relations: having to give a ‘gift’ to a king or chief to show one’s loyalty, in which the king then gains more wealth, and the gift-giver loses theirs; or an art student making art for an elite artist, who gets to take the profit, while the art student gains little money and loses time. It is because of these unequal social relations that Marshall Sahlins (1972, p. 134) stated, “everywhere in the world the indigenous category for exploitation is ‘reciprocity’.” However, what is important about the gift, in comparison to commodity exchange, is that it “contains both the quality of the giver and of the receiver” (Appadurai, 2006, p. 20), while commodity exchange contains only the quality of the commodities, removing that of the buyer and seller. According to Gregory (1982, p. 41), “commodity exchange establishes a relationship between the objects exchanged, whereas gift exchange establishes a relationship between the exchanging subjects.” With gift exchange, the object is personified; with commodity exchange, the person (as human labour) is objectified.

Bernadotte was often broke after spending her money on art material. So sometimes, when we spent time outside of The Academy having a beer, I would buy us the drinks from a bar (as a commodity), then give one to her (as a gift). She had been so helpful during my fieldwork, she did not have money, I did, it was the least I could do. One day as we played pool, I was shocked upon her offering to buy me a beer. *Who did you steal from*, I joked. Bernadotte had been paid 900kr ($90) by one of the teachers to help with some menial tasks. Bernadotte was happy she finally had some money again and she could experiment more with her art, as well as buy me a beer. But what she was really happy about was that the teacher had, as a thank you gift, given her a small piece of art. In contrast to the money received, the gift felt highly personal, highly meaningful, it contained something more valuable, whatever that might be, than money itself. Both gift and money were received for the very same menial tasks, but Bernadotte clearly valued the gift in a different, more meaningful way. In other words, the gift had more 'value', to Bernadotte, than money.

Value "is the meaning or importance society ascribes to an object" (Graeber, 2001, p. 39). But there are different ways of measuring this value. These ways become clearer when comparing a commodity and a gift. The commodity is of quantitative value: Bernadotte is objectified, her labour, as Polanyi (1944) would say, becoming the (fictitious) commodity, worth 900kr – this can then be measured in equivalence to another commodity worth 900kr, for example ten beers from a bar. Whereas a gift is of qualitative value: its value is held internally, in the social relations it creates; in the honour Bernadotte feels of being gifted a piece of art from her teacher. It does not have a direct equivalence; Bernadotte could not trade the feeling of honour for ten beers, nor could she exchange the piece of art at a bar. The morality of gift exchange as greater than that of monetary/commodity exchange mirrors and reproduces what the students learn to value – the creation of social bonds through gift exchange spreads ones 'intersubjective spacetime' and 'fame' (using Munn's terminology), further than relation-less commodity exchange. Also, it made Bernadotte smile.

It is tempting here to say that gifting is always good, and selling is always bad: gift exchange creating and reproducing social relations; monetary exchange diminishing them into impersonal material capital. However, the "distinction [between selling and gifting] is not an empirical one; rather it depends on the construction that may be placed on any given

transaction" (Toren, 1989, p. 143). For the art students, the morality of monetary exchange is dependent on the specific transaction that takes place, not just the object(s) or money exchanged, but the specific time, place, and person(s) the art is being exchanged with.

Continuing the discussion I had with Vera about selling art, I asked who she had previously sold her art too: mostly family, friends, and friends of friends. When I asked how she priced her art, she said that she sold it cheap or gave it away for free because it was normally to her friends who were students and therefore did not have much money, but that once she sold her art for a lot of money because the buyer was wealthy. In this example, Vera priced her artwork dependent on the buyer's economic wealth. It was a given as a gift to some people and traded as a commodity to others. The morality of the monetary exchange for art differed, to Vera, dependent on the person she was selling to. The artwork was not a commodity with a single exchange value, but it was exchanged sometimes as a gift and sometimes as a commodity, with its economic value, and the morality of exchange, dependent on the relationship between herself and the receiver. Additionally, I was told a few times, with pride, about a time an elite artist had bought an artwork from a student. While this is a commodity exchange, it is also a sign of approval from an elite artist, which gives greater legitimation to the art student, and increases their reputation and position in the art world hierarchy: increasing their chances of gaining 'fame'. When a student's art is bought by an elite artist, monetary exchange for art is not a point of shame nor taboo, but something to be screamed from the rooftops. The morality of exchange applies to gifting or selling one's art, which is largely based on the construction of the exchange - in this case, the receiver of the art.

Another example, showing how the moral understanding of art-for-money exchange changes due to the spatial construction of the transaction, is the difference in selling one's art on Instagram versus selling one's art in a gallery. Instagram as a platform to sell one's art, though becoming more common and accepted, was less respected at The Academy than selling one's art at a gallery: the traditional route of professional art sales. Selling one's art at a gallery maintains the traditional social order within the field of fine art: to get exhibited at a gallery someone legitimized must have thought the artists art was worth exhibiting – the art has the approval stamp of the fine art world. Whereas, selling via Instagram means the traditional ways of structuring the fine art field, as well as evaluating and legitimizing the art, are thrown

out of the window. What is good art is no longer decided by the people who 'should' have the power to decide, but is decided by the artist themselves, who will receive the money directly from the layman buyer (who 'should' know nothing). Additionally, as shown in Chapter 2, engaging with the gallery system is a way to gain reputation which is highly valued, while Instagram only gains one money (not, most likely, reputation among the correct people). Furthermore, selling art via Instagram may heighten its commodity character in that it was not made to exhibit but made to sell. Selling art over Instagram suggests a misjudgement of values: that money is more important than reputation, instead of the inverse.

Furthermore, according to Gell's theory of distributed personhood (mentioned in Chapter 2), art in itself has a part of the artist in it: in contemporary western art, this is supported by a signature. In this case, selling art, to some students, may be perceived of as selling a part of themselves for money - prostituting a part of themself. Whereas if art is given as a gift, part of the artist is offered to the receiver, as an act of love. Art as a gift then compounds the aspect of the gift containing the quality of the giver, as art, regardless of if it is a commodity or a gift, always contains some of the artist. Additionally, if art contains a part of the artist then one may expect it to be inalienable (ironically, the inalienability of the uniqueness of the art form, as proved by a signature, is what makes it more tradeable: the signature bestows the artwork with greater economic and cultural value). However, in selling art as pure commodity, it removes the social relations created through exchange and therefore can alienate the artist from the art. In doing so, it alienates the artist from a part of themselves. This may be why on multiple occasions I heard students say they would not sell their artwork but they could sell something if it was 'made-to-order', as if then it was not a part of themselves, as if it could not be alienated because it never felt truly theirs. This connects back to conceptions of what a fine artist is, and what they do (Chapter 2). For the fine artist it is not the physical but the mental, not the craft but the thought, that constitutes their art. What they then get, from a 'made-to-order' piece of art is an object that does not feel alienated because the physical labour does not connect to their identity as an artist or their artistic practice, and they have not had to think up an idea. In fact, in this scenario the art student would receive an inflated labour price that is based on the fetishism of the artists name and the symbolic capital of the art degree, instead of the craft that has gone into it. A 'made-to-order' is always a commodity and therefore entirely morally sellable. But a 'made-to-order'

would be both coerced (removing freedom) and too commercial (culturally inappropriate). Additionally, as a 'made-to-order' would not be entirely thought up by the artist, it may not be accepted as art by the fine art world.

Fetishism

If there is one word that is overused at The Academy, it is 'fetish'. For art students the word has two important meanings: the Marxian sense of objects being viewed as having an inherent exchange value, which obscures the labour that went into them (though Marxian fetishism may not be fully understood by the art students, it is still consciously reflected upon); and the sexual sense of an erotic orientation - licking feet, using whips, or calling your lover your father. Marxian fetishism is seen of as intellectual and probably on the anti-capitalist, art student, political spectrum. Sexual fetishism is seen of as provocative and transgressive, and has an air of freedom to it. It is the perfect mix, for art students, of academic and edgy (I wonder why 'bondage' hasn't received the same popularity). Here, though, I will stick to the social sciences, viewing fetishism in the Marxian sense.

Marx (1867/2001, p. 49) claims that:

> *"...it was the common expression of all commodities in money that alone led to the establishment of their characters as values. It is, however, just this ultimate money form of the world of commodities that actually conceals, instead of disclosing, the social character of private labour, and the social relations between the individual producers."*

Parry and Bloch (1989), following Marx, argue that it is money, as the 'ultimate' form of exchange value, which fetishizes the commodity "by making the value of a commodity expressed in money terms appear as an intrinsic quality of the commodity itself…. [making] relations between people masquerade as relations between things" (Parry & Bloch, 1989, p. 6-7). This, as I have argued, is the opposite of what the art student is attempting, which is to

create relations between people, and therefore to resist commodification and object fetishism.

Fetishism of art, however, is another double-edged sword for the artist. On one side, buyers do not see the labour that has gone into the art and the artist may get an extremely low pay (per hour of invisible labour). On the other side, fetishism of art may massively benefit the artist economically: a successful artist has 'a name', has 'fame'. The 'name' can be fetishized for an inflated price which would be huge (per hour of invisible labour). The student artist, most likely, has not yet made a name for themselves: they cannot sell their art based on their name alone. Fetishism of art is therefore detrimental to them. Multiple students invoked the concept of fetishism, even if they did not explicitly name it, expressing their dissatisfaction about receiving a monetary offer for an artwork that they deemed did not value their labour time. They would be disappointed that the potential buyer did not contemplate the number of hours that went into the artwork. So even though the idea of making money from one's art may be taboo, taking a payment that is too low compared to the hours of labour put in is also objectionable. Art is often called a labour of love, but in this sense, it is still labour - labour that the buyer does not contemplate.

The sale of art complicates fetishism. Fetishism separates the product and the producer/production. Artists, however, rely on their name – themselves and their art are never fully separated. Fetishism connects the art and the artist's name, but not the producer's labour. Like the gift, art, even if paid for, is seen of as not being separated from the artist. It is both fetishized and not. However, even though the art that is made should be thought up by the artist, it may be physically crafted by someone else. This may be an assistant to an elite artist, which many of the art students I spent time with were, or it could be made through hiring an external company. This is an example of purely fetishized (and alienated) labour. The art student, or company, could spend X-hundred hours producing an artpiece for an elite artist, for the elite artist to sign it and sell it as their own work, which is entirely accepted in the art world. In fact, as I was told, not acknowledging assistants is regularly imposed within art institutions – even if the elite artist asks to get their assistants recognized for a piece of art, the museums can and often do refuse. The labour of the art student-come-assistant is consciously made invisible. Their work is both alienated and fetishized. This, again, goes back

to the time when artists managed to differentiate themselves from craftsmen, convincing people that their thought processes and ideas, not only the labour, were worth being paid for. The elite's 'name' is fetishized and valued greatly because it suggests the elite artist's genius thoughts are in the artwork. But here, there is a student artist (who should have their own genius) working for an elite artist. Within this construction, the student artist becomes a brainless craftsman for the genius elite. The assistant loses their creative brain that artists fought so hard for. Whereas when making their own art themselves, the student regains their genius. Labour time, both for the assistant and the elite artist, is not recognized. It is the art or the artist's name and brain that is. Art is fetishized in the sense that the labour involved is obscured. At the same time, however, it is not fetishized in the sense that the buyer will be acknowledging the artist, not simply the art object itself (the crafted *Sunflower Seeds* are an Ai Weiwei even though Ai Weiwei did not physically make 'his' sunflower seeds. The same goes for the candy from Félix González-Torres' *"Untitled" (portrait of Ross in L.A.)* – both *genius* ways to spread one's intersubjective spacetime).

Money, Fame, and Pigs

"The elite of contemporary art, that which constitutes contemporary art proper, is probably wider and more global than some decades ago" (Sansi, 2015, p. 117). The elite, through the authority of legitimation, have influence way beyond their numbers in affecting what art students conceive to be good or simply valid art. Beyond the elite is a much greater number of non-elite artists, art students, and art-wannabes "on which it partially feeds" (Sansi, 2015, p. 117). Keeping in mind how exhibiting art has the potential to generate 'fame' through increased intersubjective social relations (Chapter 2), this section looks at the role 'elite' artists play in the creation of value for the art student. Crucially, the fetishism of pigs is used comparatively to understand the fetishism of art.

Bernadotte had previously been an assistant for an 'elite' artist. The elite artist received funding from the state to pay the minor fee for Bernadotte's assistance. Bernadotte was delighted to be doing this. She would be working with and learning from someone she deeply admired and be part of the process of making art that she loved. After the funding for an

assistant stopped, Bernadotte stopped. They stayed partially in touch and later Bernadotte reached out asking if she could assist once more. The elite artist said that Bernadotte could be an assistant again, but only after she finished her art degree – even becoming an assistant and learning through a 'master' was not possible, in this case, without the degree.

Although the pay was low, Bernadotte did not mind at all. What she gained instead, and valued more, was the legitimation (and inspiration) of working with an elite artist, one who was above her in the (art) hierarchy. While the elite artist, in putting their name on an artpiece physically made by the student, feeds on the art student, they also give something back: reputation of having worked with them – an unequal form of reciprocity. If, as Munn's '*The Fame of Gawa'* shows, "people and things constitute each other's fame and hierarchical rank" (Sansi, 2015, p. 98), then the collaboration with the elite artist gives the art student symbolic capital, and part of the elite's 'fame' trickles down to the art student. There may be an extremely low monetary value of being an assistant, but there is a high symbolic value of 'collaborating' with the elite. A symbolic value that can go onto the art student's CV and make the chances of receiving grants and funding for themselves much higher. Bernadotte choosing to work for the elite artist is an action that will gain her some symbolic value, while the elite artist gains more tangible economic and reputational value. This, again, shows how unequal hierarchical relations shape 'reciprocity' and inform different values. This becomes clearer by comparatively viewing the gendered exchange of pigs in the Hagen society of Papua New Guinea.

As shown by Roy Rappaport (1967) in '*Pigs for the Ancestors'*, pigs, in Hagen society, are important agents in exchange transactions. They can be used for "bridewealth, funeral and compensation payments, and also that class of gift giving, ceremonial exchange (*moka*), that promotes men's prestige and political interests" (Strathern, 1988b, p. 148). Married couples cooperate to rear the pigs; the wife doing the majority of the labour. On the most part, however, only the husbands can exchange them in public. That is to say, only men can translate the value of a pig into 'fame'. The "men are both producers and transactors, women are by and large only producers" (Strathern, 1988b, p. 148). Importantly, it is the transaction that allows for the visible social relations that increase reputation. The labour of the wife, according to Josephides (1982), is fetishized and converted into symbolic capital for the

husband. Josephides claims, therefore, that the wife is exploited by the husband as she gains nothing while he gains prestige. Marilyn Strathern, even with her avowedly feminist stance, disagrees. She points out that Josephides is assuming that one *naturally* has the rights to whatever they produce, and that "a vocabulary… of 'rights' must entail premises about a specific form of property. To assert rights against others implies a type of legal ownership" (Strathern, 1988b, p. 142). In Hagen society, however people do not inherently have the rights to what they produce. In fact, "it would never occur to a [Hagen] Melanesian that anyone would have the right to... the products of her own labor" (Graeber, 2001, p. 40). Though Hagen society is, to Josephides, clearly unequal, the Hageners may not see it as so, or more likely they do not value, or contemplate equality as she and the majority of 'the West' does.

The art is the pig.

Though the student artist-come-assistant may have physically made the art, the transaction is done by the elite: the elite artist (and elites in general) receives the prestige and accumulates surplus value. The relationship between elite and assistant could therefore be seen as a form of exploitation (and at The Academy they staunchly value equality): the elite, already in a higher position, gains more than the assistant. But through the social context of the art world, it is seen of as normal, even fair. Like a surrogate mother not owning the baby they birth, the students come to abide by the idea that it is not the physical producer of the art that has the ownership or "rights" to the art, but the mental producer: the one who thought it up. This then reinforces the understanding of art as different to craft (as Inger realized in Chapter 2). The art student/assistant does not see it as their art being fetishized because it is not their brain-labour – instead it is like a made-to-order, ordered by the elite. The value generating potential of the art, whether that value be economic or reputational ('fame'), is dependent on the genius brain, not on the human labour. The social formation and conceptions of value creation means that if the assistant were to take credit, the value of the art would drop. The brain, not the body, needs to take credit, otherwise the whole system of valuation within fine art would start to crumble.

I want to briefly continue with the final idea of the artist as a tribe that has a staunch ideology of equality. Some forms of art (painting, photography, sculpture) are much easier to sell than

others (performance, video, protest). Selling one's painting or photo for personal economic gain may be seen by the tribe as unfair. It may be seen a betrayal to those who cannot sell their art as easily. The relationship between the individuals in the tribe is also altered when one begins to gain more money. The ability to experiment more changes, and the ability to hire external labour to produce one's own work changes, which then makes it easier for them to make more art, achieve 'fame', and rise up the hierarchy - the opposition of equality.

The morality of exchange for the art students is deeply complex and occasionally contradictory. These complexities are learned through socialization within a society: The Academy. Additionally, at The Academy there is great interconnection between morality of exchange and other forms of value, namely 'fame'. The morality of exchange generally applies to selling or gifting one's art. Selling art, for the artist's personal economic gain, is seen of as morally inappropriate. Gifting art, on the other hand, is the respected form of exchange. A vital 'lesson' at The Academy is that reputation/'fame' is of great value. Gifting, which creates personal bonds, is therefore more valuable than selling, which impersonalises exchange. Furthermore, selling art makes it seem like more of a commodity, and, according to The Academy, art should not be a commodity. But, importantly, the morality of gifting or selling depends on the specific construction of the exchange. Just as selling to a rich person is acceptable, an art student would not gift to someone they disliked. Additionally, art is not seen of as the property of the physical producer, but the property of the mental producer. The art object, therefore, cannot be fetishized from the producer's physical labour, nor is the physical producer alienated from the 'product' if they were not the mental producer: it was never theirs, they were just paid to craft it. Finally, while the elite artist can seemingly sell their art without moral wrongdoing, the art student, like Vera, is looked down upon for the same act of selling, reinforcing an art world hierarchy within a matrix of societal values. It seems to be that one should not sell their art before they have achieved a certain level of 'fame'. 'Fame', which through the importance of exhibiting, is informally advocated for by The Academy.

Final Remarks

Months after concluding fieldwork at The Academy, I visited Norway's brand-new National Museum of Art with Bernadotte. The building, which opened in 2022, is the Nordic region's largest art museum. This is where the most celebrated artists of the past and the present have their art exhibited. It is a place of immense consecration and legitimation, and a place with huge influence on the art student. Upon entering the $650 million museum (Klesty, 2022) and walking to the ticket desk – an adult ticket costs 200kr ($20), but art students (and evidently anthropologists studying art) get in for free – we asked what the temporary exhibitions were. We were told about Carroll Dunham's exhibition, and further informed that he had gifted 161 artworks to the National Gallery. I steepled my fingers like a villain in his $650 million lair, "I've already got some data" I told Bernadotte. "What?" she asked. The elite artist had gifted many art pieces: further evidence of gifting being valuable; and thanks to this gifting his artworks will be shown to the new mega-gallery's vast audience: giving these gifts is likely to expand his 'fame'. "This is what loads of my thesis is about" I said, "that the main value at art school is fame not money." Bernadotte snorted at the comment. "No," I said in defence, "fame being like visibility and reputation. Not like becoming any mindless celebrity but gaining a reputation in the art world." Bernadotte much preferred this. After walking downstairs and locking away our bags, we went to see Carroll Dunham's exhibition. Neither Bernadotte nor I liked it, agreeing that the art was dull and uninteresting, and that the descriptions beside it were pretentious and full of shibboleths. Bernadotte wished I went to the previous temporary exhibition of Sir Grayson Perry's art, as she thought I would have liked it. She was right, I do like Grayson Perry's art. The descriptions next to his artworks, according to Bernadotte, were incredible. They mocked the pretentiousness of descriptions in the art world Grayson Perry knew he was a part of, while still retaining his personality.

Carroll Dunham and Grayson Perry's exhibitions were the two most recent temporary exhibitions from living artists at the National Museum. This brings the thesis back to where it began. As I argued in the first core chapter (Chapter 2), The Academy places explicit importance on exhibiting, and therefore the ultimate value of 'fame'. For an artist to exhibit they should understand what to make as fine art, as well as to know how to communicate like

an artist: both explicitly taught, as well as learned through socialization, at The Academy. Carroll Dunham and Grayson Perry also show this. Dunham's art, and his descriptions of the art, were too pretentious and seemed meaningless for me and Bernadotte, while Perry apparently made art and wrote about it fantastically. Perry subverted art descriptions while, as Bernadotte said, being "present in what he exhibits." In other words, Grayson Perry was distributing his personhood more conspicuously: expanding his 'fame' through his "presence" in the descriptions. Perry's mockery of the art world was a highlight to Bernadotte: 'resistance' (Chapter 4), again, becoming beneficial for occupational success. Additionally, according to the National Museum, Perry's "works revolve around themes such as identity, social classes, gender roles and consumer society. His art exposes and challenges society's norms, values and taboos" (Nasjonalmuseet, n.d.). However, the question is, what does this form of artistic 'resistance' do? And can art that challenges hegemonic ideals, when shown by the state-owned National Museum (an agent of hegemonic power) and to an obliging audience, incite any change? I want to believe that it can, but I'm not sure.

Both of these elite artists – Dunham and Perry - have a bachelor's degree in the arts, and they are part of an older generation. It is now becoming increasingly crucial to have a degree, often above bachelor's level, to become a 'professional' artist. As I argued in Chapter 5, getting a degree in art often comes with the privilege of being economically secure and not having huge anxieties about making money in the future. Additionally, at this museum, adult tickets cost 200kr [$20] to enter - gaining the habitus to appreciate fine art, and gaining the cultural and educational capital, comes at a price. Children of parents who have the money and are willing to spend it on taking their family to an art museum are the children who can gain the cultural and educational capital available. Furthermore, Carroll Dunham's gift of 161 artworks to the National Museum, and immediately being told about the gift by a member of staff at the museum, is further evidence of gifting being understood as morally right (Chapter 6). And thanks to him gifting artworks, his name is voiced more often, and his art will likely be exhibited more often: the offering of gifts expands his 'fame'.

The remaining core theme to return to is freedom (Chapter 3). Not only do the art students gain more economic freedom as they get free entry to the museum, they also see once again that art can be many different things: Grayson Perry and Carroll Dunham seemingly having

the freedom to make the art they want to be making. Importantly, 'fame' means that the artist interacts and influences an immense number of people through the art the artist wants to make. Grayson Perry's 'fame' allows him to project his views that are counter-hegemonic. Carroll Dunham's 'fame', too, allows him to project his art to vast numbers of people. To me, to Bernadotte, and to a friend outside of the art world, Carroll Dunham's art was either bad or inaccessible for the uninitiated – we guessed some of it was an attempt to satire the male gaze. If this was the case, the aesthetics obscured the message and made the art uninviting: this art becoming a tool of social differentiation, and therefore decreasing equality (which is so sought after at The Academy). Grayson Perry's art, on the other hand, was liked by Bernadotte and my friend for its unambiguity: his message of *it's okay to be different* was apparently much clearer, and not only understandable by people privileged enough to have gained the cultural and educational capital.

The observations made at the National Museum mirror what this thesis has explored: how art school 'moulds' art students. Although the understanding of freedom may convince The Academy that it should not shape the art student - it should only enrich the students' own artistic practice, help them understand what fine art is, and teach them the culturally specific means of communicating - it is clear that The Academy, largely through informal socialization, does influence students. The first core chapter opened with a quote from a teacher: "there's no right way of being an artist." However, it should now be apparent that there are ways that are *more right*: gifting, resisting, and being 'free'; which all revolve, in part, around the value of 'fame' and the opposition to money. Finally, as a degree is fundamental to occupational success within fine art, The Academy has immense power in determining who will achieve 'fame'. 'Fame' in art, as in all spheres of life, expands the scale of one's influence. Fame expanded the reach of Greta Thunberg's climate change mitigation aims. Fame also heightened the reach of Donald Trump's hatred. Fame increases one's power to instigate change. In a world in need of new directions, art, if it manages to loosen itself from the straight jacket of artistic 'resistance', can become a pivotal agent in generating change. With The Academy being greatly responsible for who gains 'fame' in the art world, it must decide the ways in which it influences the art student – for better, for worse, or for art - in its institutional role of sculpting the artist.

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