

Air# Let's Suppose the Academy is a place for artists...Thursday 11 January 2007.

How to grow possibility: The potential roles of museums/Charles Esche / Director of the Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven.

Thank you for the invitation to come and speak. It is always a privilege to be invited to come and speak at art Academies, as in some senses it is 'where it all begins'; and it should be 'where it all begins' as well. Therefore, if you can change academies you can actually change a lot. We, as museums, galleries or institutions that develop art in public space, are completely dependant on the Academy because without the generation of discourse from the Academy, or if the Academies fail, then we have to find something else for us to do! Or we have to find something very radically different; so it's nice to have this opportunity to talk here today.

It is a nice introduction from Marijke. I have been busy in the last 2.5 years or so, with museums and I think that is why I made a slip of my fingers, when I was typing and said that this talk was going to be about the possible role of museums. I actually meant about the possible role of Academies, because I have been rather busy with Academies in the past and I certainly feel that I continue to be, for precisely the reason of what I said. As I think it is where things start and change has to be embedded - if change is going to work - through the system. I felt it would be interesting to reflect on some of the work and research that I have done a few years ago when I started the 'Proto Academy', which was a project in Edinburgh that began in 1998. The project began with a very simple idea of a table. Whoever came to the table was a member, whether it was a teacher or student or somebody from the outside that demonstrated their qualifications by the information, the intelligence, the ideas, the confrontation that they brought to the table. It was out of that, the idea of the 'Proto Academy' began - a very, very simple metaphor in a sense. In looking at the 'Proto Academy' and where we could take it after we had already got the table (which wasn't so expensive even for Edinburgh College of Art) we then started to consider what the precedence of what an Academy could be.

Part of this lecture is based on some of that research, what precedence for an Academy, an Art Academy as a place where art is taught, might be the precedence for a place where possibility could grow. Possibility for me is a very important point and very important word because I think that is what we are busy with and we do that through thinking things otherwise. In addition, it is only by thinking things otherwise and I think the currency of art is about the imagination and the imagination is about imagining what is not and through that process of thinking things otherwise, we can change the world. Of course, it is a long journey from the thought and the act but nethertheless there is a relationship between the world and what we do here and how we think. I think we have to maintain that and I will talk about the dangers of autonomy in that respect. I think it would be interesting to take a look at the histories of academies initially and to see what they can also teach us and its interesting to see how repetitive those events are going right back to the early 20C. Now I also start from the point of view that the Art Academy along with all institutions of the enlightenment is fundamentally in crisis. I hope that we all agree with this (laughs). That crisis is produced not by the Academy itself, nor by the demands of stupid politicians or bureaucrat, but actually its produced by a fundamental questioning of why we exist. What is it that purpose is in teaching art, in showing art or representing art, or in having a public discourse? It is generated by many-many questions which break down the consensus of the bourgeois public

sphere, or the consensus of the enlightenment. Those I will not name extensively, if we call it 'Globalization', if we call it 'Mass Immigration' or we call it 'changes', or 'the threats' to our cultural assumptions which have been brought about by economic and political changes. In 1989 a massive political change was apparent with the loss of communism. Since 1989 economic change through the development of this form of Globalization, which is only one form of Globalization, that is the form that we have to deal with and change that we have to operate from and within. So that produces this crisis, but it also seems to me that on a more pragmatic level we are living through a change to the necessary structures through which art is supported and distributed, discussed and consumed. In other words, there is the creation of other kinds of platforms. The Academy, just as the museum, born essentially in the 19 C - there are many, many predecessors that we can go on about - but essentially in the late 18C or 19C, is an institution which has to respond to the changes that are going on in the outside world. It is in this responsiveness that we might begin to understand where the Academy could go or learning from those. Now those changes certainly have to do with technology, but more so with the social and economic expectations that art now has from the wider world of politics from the media and particularly the public. This crisis is producing new models anyway; new ways of funding, new ways of thinking, new methodologies of teaching. New ways of making or allowing people to become perhaps better artists. The question is 'whether that change is something that can be directed by the Academy itself?' or 'whether the Academy most like the museum is simply the victim of all those outside changes and simply responds to the political demands?' Now what I mean by that, in perhaps a very crude way, is to say the kind of economic demands that are based on efficiency. In our sense of the museum, in terms of visitor figures, but in your sense in terms of the kind of the productivity of your student and your money per-student, are all things coming from the outside. These are making a massive change in the Academy themselves. Actually, the question would be, 'lets not resist that but lets try and find how we can change it from within?' I think there are various models in the past, which might lead us to see where the answers or the temporary answers might be. It is in the end, the question of 'how much can we involve ourselves in broader social movements?' Indeed I would say resistance to the kind of Globalization that we currently have, that will create the possibility for art to be relevant, to be interesting, to be important today and the possibility for *thinking things otherwise*. This, I think, is the necessary part for any engagement for the questions of what might the Academy become.

Now I also - before talking about all these projections of academic discipline -want to put in a very important caveat: *I think that the very idea of teaching art is slightly absurd*. The processes of becoming an artist involves the very opposite of acquiring a body of knowledge and joining a profession. It is about questioning learned responses and ways of behaving, of following your own enthusiasms and being an amateur in the realm of professional that the possibility of art lies. Often today as a form of collaborative research in which specialists are brought into help. However, the lines, the tracks that are laid down by his forebears, do not determine the journey of the artist. Art is not about standing on the shoulders of giants, to put it very simple and therefore teaching art requires very different kinds of methodologies of teaching than for instance teaching science. In addition, because it is collaborative, it is as much a social as it is intellectual, as a practical discipline. It requires all of those elements to work, and if anything, needs to be taught. It is perhaps a certain attitude of mind, a particular ambition and a particular confidence of addressing your own questions to the world and listening to the world in order to define your own question, rather than any

particular kind of specific skills base as being talked about by the educational authorities. Or any kind of specific skills that can be converted into economic value. It's actually an attitude of mind that needs to be taught and that, and how to teach that is an extremely open question. In those terms then, we might say that academies can simply, by the confluence of hands and minds investigating art in a particular place might actually be fine. That art schools - simply by their virtue of existence and attendance of students - should be interesting places for the discussion and production of culture. Because you can't teach art, as then all you need to do is bring people together and talk about it, and something is bound to happen - unless we have real problems with our youth and real problems with our society. If this is true, we might also imagine that those responsible for the development of these academies can actually sit back, rest easy, work within whatever given structures are implied by the government, or the education structures of the day. Follow the path to the least resistance as determined by the over arching bureaucracies; which I am sure you are all familiar with. I guess this is quite a seductive model for teachers, it is also a seductive model for me in many ways, and partly I think it is not too far from the truth. Often it is the possibility that students create for working against the system that can be the most productive aspect of any school curriculum. In some cases and for some individuals the most significant thing that can be said is "No, that is not what we do here". A denial can act as the most suggestive and powerful provocation to action. In other words, it's almost a plea for bad academies, but actually sometimes bad academies - and I experienced this a little bit in Edinburgh - I think that sometimes bad academies are actually the stimulus. That those few students that can survive the bad Academy, and of course you are only talking about a few that can actually go through the bad academia and come out the other side. Those ones that come out a bad Academy are a hell of a lot better than those ones that come out of a good Academy. Therefore before we get enthusiastic about exchange in the academies, we should also allow at least the possibility of failure and inadequacy to occupy our thoughts when we are thinking about how the students themselves, can take something from the education that they have. But I have to say that despite this manifesto that for what might seem to be in-action and laziness on the parts of the academies, I do think we might very properly try to envisage and create the most energetic and interesting situations we can. Because when academies 'do get it right' and when they 'do raise their game', they can really make a difference. We only have to look at specific moments in Art Academy history from Unovis and Gincook in the early Soviet Union to the Bauhaus to The Free International University, Nova Scotia, Cal Arts in the US and even Goldsmiths in London, to see that there were moments when academies made a difference. In all these places something occurred between the energy of the students the commitment and courage of the staff, the external political social circumstances that they find a new way of working with art education and benefited all parties enormously not only the students but also the staff and not only those but also the world outside the Academy . Unfortunately, none of these examples developed sufficiently similar structures and these are some of the examples I have looked at, we cannot simply institute them in a programmatic way. We cannot simply take the model from Goldsmiths or the Bauhaus or Unovis and implement them here. That is sad, but a necessary fact to understand. Each was inevitably brought about by a confluence of individuals that shared certain ideals, and were allowed to put them into affect by the intellectual and political climate. Or actually, if you look at the process, often were simply not simply stopped from carrying them forward. I think it's often the case in academic change that you simply 'do it' and you 'get on and do it!' I think it is like the artist in residence, it is a process where you invite artists in to work with the *muse-conservatorium* or

with another faculty, and you actually see what comes out. And that doing it is what develops the radicalism and if you look at these radical moments from art academic history, then you understand that a lot of it is a set of pragmatic decisions and a philosophy of just 'getting on and doing'. Not of building or arguing, a huge set of principals beforehand. It is a fact also that many of these great moments in art academic history have only lasted a few years before they also need external challenge and renewal. In other words, it is a constant process and organic process and this pattern of development is probably the best we can expect from any new projects or pedagogic ideas that we might want to implement. The main question then is, 'how we might establish situations to channel and encourage our energies as a group of participants from whatever size and experience while always enjoying ourselves in the reinvention?' I think enjoyment is a big part of art academic life. I thought it was great you talked about happiness in this respect, if we forget that and become too pedagogic then we forget the difference between the possibility of an Art Academy and the possibilities of other kinds of high-level education. While also always being away with what might take us further, with the forging of connections with wider educational, social and political discourse, actually the way that we can to understand where we need to go, is understanding: 'what is our relationship with outside?' If that relationship with the outside is actually functioning in a dynamic way. If we can see the response mechanisms that are happening outside, sometimes perhaps, hopefully perhaps, very negatively from outside, but indeed that very negative response rather than a kind of ignorance of what we are doing is *actually what* might give us a clue to say, "Ok - go further".

Now in preparing this talk, I have looked at a number of art academies that I have mentioned and there are certain points of consensus around structural and pedagogic issues that I have tried to pull out. I think these might give us the lead to see where we can go; I have turned to most of the founding documents of these institutions, in other words the envisaging of what they want to do as well as a number of texts often written by artists. Particularly for the late 1960s onwards and I will only quote one which will be Allan Kaprow which looked at the possibility of a more radical art education. Now I have to admit that it is a extremely partial this selection and also given the time that I had to prepare this, it is partial as there are some gaps that I couldn't fill in in time. Nevertheless, I hope that given the lack of art historical discipline behind the lecture that you will forgive me and find it slightly interesting. One particular aspect in the founding documents is that they had an agreement of certain fundamentals, it seems, even going back to the Bauhaus. Which I tried to coral under three headings, which are: anti-specialist, anti-isolation and anti-hierarchy. These are probably in a sense all familiar and I am going to come back to the familiarity of these proposals and maybe the familiarity means that we have not succeeded in creating the anti-specialist, anti-isolated, anti-hierarchical institutions that we would like, or that we maybe have and we need to think beyond them.

The first point is that artists should not be specialists, or limited to activities in certain specialisations, and indeed should oppose the philosophy of specialization. Forced upon education either by scientific models or by economic criteria of assessment and this happens throughout the time. It is not only now we have this forcing of disciplinary structure of goal obsessed disciplines of what the students should produce and what we should produce as organizations. Walter Gropius for instance, saw the complete building, the *Bau* as a mechanism to unite different art disciplines, handcrafts and manual skills. While Beuys' from The Free University, in his founding statement wrote:

‘The specialists insulated point of view places the arts and other kinds of work in sharp opposition; whereas it is crucial that the structural form and thematic problems of various work processes should be constantly compared to one another. Further on, the division of the disciplines for the training of experts and those substantial comparative methods reinforces the idea that only specialists can contribute to the basic structures of society, economics, politics, law structures.’

This is written in the early 1970’s, I think that point has become more and more true. In other words what is tragic about the way the media, for instance, covers art is that they never really ask artists. In the Netherlands, as well as in Germany -although Germany is slightly better than in the Netherlands - and certainly Britain , they rarely ask artist to comment on things outside of art. Just as they do not ask economists to engage themselves with culture. This obsession with specialism. that we have as a way of commenting on our political and social life is something that I think which is becoming stronger. Now the most recently prospectus from Cal Arts, California Institution of the Arts, picks up this conviction from The Free University. Cal Arts is an interesting foundation, it was founded by Disney money in the early 1970s but founded as an extremely radical school. This radicalism to some extent has disappeared but it remains in the rhetoric of the school, rather than in the practice of the school, it remains and part of this rhetoric is here. This faculty has long questioned the traditional categories of art production, and encourages a cross-disciplinary approach. This means that painters can work with photographers or designers can work with video makers. It is very pragmatically American. It also means that using the resources available though Cal Arts, a sculptor can work with a musician, performance artists with a filmmaker, a photographer with a writer. A new program in integrated media creates challenging opportunities for the investigation of hybrid art forms. All the resources of the school are thus available for every student with an openness that also paradoxically leads to a kind of institutionalized fiction that can cause a constant questioning of boundaries assumptions and aims. These ideas relate to - *I have to say I feel a little bit ignorant because I don't know the structure very well at the AHK sufficiently and to how much you work in this interdisciplinary way so forgive me if this sounds very familiar or not* - but from my knowledge of these institutions this is a common threat and I can imagine you are also busy with these things in your own institutions. These ideas relate to a connected concern that art education should be directed towards the whole human, this is what you find at the Bauhaus onwards and opposed to a kind of vocational training which they see in other disciplines or even as you might say is current in much political discussion of Education. They also see 'Arts Role' in the Academy , or in the university, or broader society, as a kind of *synthesizing agent* crossing disciplines. When they think about the production rather than the structures of what they are doing, they see the ‘role as art’ as the *connecting fluid* that will bind together these disciplines and specialists. Beuys, and other people talk about separating out knowledge so that it can’t be questioned being very damaging because if you create disciplines and you create specialists then you also forbid it to be questioned by those that are outside the discipline and that means that it is then protected by itself. Of course, economists come onto television and tell you how the world is, and we cannot question it because we are not economists but the way they tell how the world is affects our world immensely. In addition, it is that questioning in the art or though art, which might become possible and that then relates to how the Academy deals with certain specialists.

A second point of consensus between all these institutions is a real commitment to opening up dialogue with specific non-art communities, either 'the community' that is often a very vague word cited, art should and the Academy should, be represented in the community or also with certain industrial and intellectual environments. I have chosen to call anti-isolation in my attempt to have 'three anti's'. In Vitebsk you know these organized urban decorations in for the celebrations in 1920-21 which include Malevich, Chagall and Levitsky, which we actually have brought, one of my purchases in the Van Abbemuseum, we have a Levitsky collection. It even might be collaboration between Malevich and Lezitsky from Unovis, where they were asking for permission from the newly constructed Soviet in Vitebsk to put up these decorations in the main square of Vitebsk. This place is now destroyed, so the work is a beautiful early socialist bureaucratic document - where Levitsky has done (and perhaps Malevich as well) the drawings and proposals for a series of banners. Constructed banners that would sit on the town hall in the main square and it has various stamps - which must have literally been made- as it was the 1920's, only after the civil war is over, literally made a few months before giving approval to this proposal. Come and see it.

In contrast, the Bauhaus was quite limited in its vision of being anti-isolationist but it was most interested in connecting to craft and industrial design enterprises. Interesting the Bauhaus was very commercially directed in a certain way although Gropius himself employed architects sculptors and painters to work with conscientious and co-operative effort together and return to the craft. Of course, this idea of the 'craft man' is key. It is interesting that the Bauhaus, despite all its radical credentials, is actually the most conservative of all the institutions that might be named as a significant Art Academies over this period. Certainly far more conservative than what was going on in Unovis in Vitebsk the 1919-1922, it was a very short period before it was closed down. The new initiatives after 1945 also emphasized even more the need for contact with other academic disciplines with commerce and with the immediate community. In doing this research, I came across a beautiful democratic document, which is actually Caroline Thistle, which was Joseph Beuys's assistant or girlfriend assistant at the time (laughs) she performed a number of functions. The Caroline Thistle report that she wrote to what used to be called the European Economic Community rather than the European Union in 1975, where she wanted to propose the establishment of the Free International University in Dublin, Ireland which had just joined the European Economic Union at that point. What is interesting is that she had to write this in bureaucratic language that could be understood by bureaucrats in Brussels. It had to be in fact extremely clear she had to say what The Free International University in words that Beuys would probably never would be able to or want to articulate, so she had to spell it out, which its quite an interesting document in that sense. She described the interdisciplinary contact she hoped to establish, as follows;

'The Free International University will be a learning and research community open to the public. It will differ to the traditional university in the following ways:

- The cross fertilization of the disciplines will be fundamental to its structure and will start from a common objective;
- The exploration of the contribution that cultural and intellectual life can make to society;
- It will be independent of ministries and departments of education its procedures will be open to public examination;
- It will respect the will to learn as a qualification and will not impose age restrictions;

- It will welcome cultural and political differences as a basis for dialogue and will not seek to impose standardized opinion;
- It will regard learning as a process and not an end.

That is The Free University in a nutshell, which is quite nice, as a proposal. The policy of cooperation will be extended across all sorts of art and research academies in Europe, also to adult education and people colleges in Ireland itself even to the special unit in Ballany jail. This was for murderers and people who had been involved in violence, in extreme crime to the university college in Dublin and particularly departments of psychiatry and metaphysics. Of course you can imagine that this bid, even in their attempts to write it clearly and succinctly for the bureaucrats in Brussels was completely turned down and rejected and The Free International University was never brought to existence in Dublin but its an interesting moment when these descriptions become clear.

In the United States at around the same time Allan Kaprow in 1971 wrote the essay 'The Education of the Un-Artist', which you probably know about. I do not say this because of our activity, but in February we are opening an Allan Kaprow exhibition, which will have some of the spirit of this text I hope within it. In the text he proposes and even more radical mixture of artists in society after describing the morbidity and the deadness of 'Art Art', as he calls it. He writes:

'Seeing the situation, as low comedy *Art Art* is a way out of the bind. I would propose that the first practical step towards laughter is to 'un-art' ourselves, avoid all aesthetic roles, give up all references to being artists of any kind what ever. An 'Un-Artist' is one who is engaged with changing jobs, in moderising, it is quite possible to shift the whole un-artistic operation slightly away from where the arts customarily congregate. To become for instance: an economist, an account executive, an ecologist, a stunt writer, a politician, and a beach bum. In these difference capacities, the several kinds of art discussed would operate indirectly as a stored code, which instead of programming a specific course of behavior would facilitate an attitude of deliberate playfulness towards all professionalizing activities well beyond art. It is this idea of acting, as an artist in a sense, rather than being an artist.'

These types of proposals express perhaps in different terms but links to ideas of the synthezing artists, the artists who again is the *connecting fluid* seems pertinent also a very different type of situation. It certainly resonates with the idea of the inclusion, also the demands of the dynamic of audience. In this case, the inclusion where you become the audience or you become potentially someone who is not separated from the audience in Kaprow's work (this is something that I will discuss later on). Also and again, something I will try to bring up is that it also questions the idea of autonomous art, (Autonomous Kunst) a word I have heard extensively in my 2 years in the Netherlands. It surprises me that its used in an unproblematic or unquestioned terms or used, even as thought it's a good term, I would be actually frightened of being an autonomous artist (laughs). Nethertheless, it is used oneself-consciously which is interesting.

The final and third point of consensus for most post-1960 new Academy models is the desire to flatten or eradicate hierarchies between artist and teacher or artists and student. The Free International University initiated this model to some extent with its appeal for reciprocity between staff and students and where there will be no director, and all major

policy decisions will be reached through discussion with all staff and students. Since the university itself will function as a model of democracy. I am sure you would all like to apply that (laughs). In times that are more recent, the demand for democracy had been replaced by the plea to be free of the binds of bureaucracy and administrative detail that complaint can be found in all most every Art Academy staff room throughout Western Europe. John Thompson at Goldsmiths was responsible really for the generation of Goldsmiths as a site where artists started to think differently about their condition. Even though Michael Craig Martin took it on after, it was actually John Thompson who started it, who subsequently came to Maastricht actually but then disappeared. John Thompson threw the responsibility of the course almost entirely onto the student participants, asking them to invite external teachers and organize discussion groups. Essentially he did what we were talking about before the idea of a bad Academy, he just said "ok this is a bad Academy so just get on with it". This getting on with it for those group of students around Damien Hurst and Sarah Lucas and Liam Gillack and various others, also from different types of production which was also very stimulating. It also happened at the time when Goldsmiths needed to increase its public profile because it was exactly under pressure. You have to remember that Goldsmiths in the mid-1980s was actually in danger of being abolished and closed down as it was not seen as an art school that was doing anything. In a sense in response to this John Thompson said, "Just go out there start inviting people, just doing things." It is through this using of demands that are coming from outside and trying to subvert them from within; about 'how we could respond to this?' is that, Goldsmiths, in order to survive, needed to have a public profile. How do you get a public profile? Well you just let the students go out and start to do things. If they do enough stupid things the profile will come, of course, I do not think he anticipated the whole story of what happened at all, but the condition of that moment was so. It was also in the face of massive proposed cuts that they hadn't done this, he also said,, 'just invite people that you want to come and if you invite them as students with enthusiasm they will probably not charge or want little money. If we invite them, officially as an art organization Goldsmiths College of Art, then they will want to be paid properly and we do not have any money'. Smart wasn't it? However, this combined with Damien Hurt's zeal for publicity, also it was as much his idea combined, to bring about the change of the status of art, that has not really happened in Netherlands. It has happened in Britain where artists become part of the celebrity system and that change is brought about very much through this approach in the Art Academy and through exhibitions like *Freeze*. Where initially for instance, I know that Damien sent out 'Taxis' to all (at that time there were very few) contemporary art directors in London. He sent 'Taxis' to them in their homes and said, 'get in this taxi and come to the opening', which was again a very smart technique. I think- Van Abbe perhaps should do this as well, but its an expensive taxi from Amsterdam - but Nevertheless it was a very direct approach which was learnt form this *laissez faire* attitude like, 'Ok, we don't have very much money, just go out and try and do something with what little we have'.

So to conclude this brief and very partial survey of historical innovations in Art Academies I have taken a few quotes from this relatively brief publication that was done in England in 1997, so now 10 years ago. It was done through the selection of Sarat Maharaj and Gillian Wearing of a student show called the *newcontemporaries*. It still exists as a model, every year its done and then toured, in the provinces in England mostly. They were asked to select from an open submission of slides work for this exhibition. Basically they sat there for a few days and became thoroughly depressed and thought, 'their isn't any good work, why is it so

awful?’ So in asking, ‘Why is it so awful?’ They decided to make the show into a questioning of the art schools themselves, they send a question to number of people who are active artists at the time: “The art school closes in 1997, imagine its reinvention”. This was an opportunity for people, many of them were working in art schools themselves at the time, to *imagine things otherwise*. Which is a term artists are hopefully still familiar with. A few quotes:

Pablo Bufa, who was at the time at the Glasgow School of Art -

My modern Art School would be a non-hierarchical open space, constitutionally, spiritually and physically, where ways of thinking and working evolve from flows and collisions of ideas and interests among peers.

Simon Cots, a publisher, who also worked in art schools -

Perhaps for the moment, it’s best to leave the padlock on the door until such time when we are certain of the consistency for whom it is taking place at all, rather than provide an expensive pick and mix service industry in the absence of many other forms of productive economy.

Gilliane Tower-Dross was head of the New International Institute in Britain -

I imagine the art school reinvented not as a monolithic institution which relies on exclusion and elitism and competition but rather as a number of sites located in the every day world, where artist hone their practice along scientists, map makers and house wife’s in mutual dialogue and interaction.

Grant Kester, a teacher at the time –

I would advocate an art school defined not by static formally defined media, but by a process of dialogical exchange, that combines the moral vision, analytical and representative powers of the aesthetic with the practice that is local and performative.

There are a number of things we can take out from that I hope. I will leave them as they are as quotes.

That was some research that I did some time ago and I have cut it down and changed it for this talk. I also realise that most of that material was between 10 and 19 years old in terms where the Academy sits. I think it is quite interesting that many of those questions, the same complaints and suggestions would be valid in 2007, that anti-specialist, anti-isolated, anti-hierarchy are still terms that we deal with. But I think there are necessarily certain changes over that time that make the situation in 2007 different again. The necessary responses I feel that need to be different to ones that I had in 2001 when I made that research; one difference that I mentioned is the *defense of the autonomy of art* that seems to me to have become less and less soundly based. As they say, it’s partly a bit more in the Netherlands I’ve heard this term, I’ve heard this term more than in other conditions when I’ve taught in Sweden, Denmark, Germany or Brittain or even America. I think we suffer a little bit from the old fashioned idea of Kunst here, in comparison but its only marginal, in fact it is this idea of autonomy and the autonomy of art goes for many places in the old Capitalist West. I think the danger of autonomy is what it has resulted in, of course if we go to Adorno and we understand what autonomy means in the conditions of the WWII it of course is extremely important. It

is not to dismiss it or to derogate it to something that is simply old fashioned and we need to be done with it, but it is to try and take what we need by the autonomy of art seriously. I mean we take it seriously it must not come to me, what it sometimes does, which is a feel or in a sense *a cry for irrelevance* or *a plea for self-indulgence* of the field. In other words, that art can be busy with itself, with art and not with the world and I think this danger is inherent in the idea of autonomy. Though autonomy is that, which I will try to prove, is not a concept that we should forego entirely and what I put is *autonomy and engagement*, which is exactly what Kaprow did as well, as two terms and see what happens when we bring them together.

I think that the danger and I see this with artists in Eindhoven, who when they talk about being autonomous artists, is that they claim this *autonomy as a right* not to have to deal with the world and not to have to deal with themselves often. And of course the funding system encourages this, actually because it allows you to survive as an autonomous artist up to the point of where our 30 or 32 where it's pretty much too late to become anything else, through Basis stipendium and things like this which exist. It survives longer because immediately after education you are faced with the economic imperative about how you are going to survive, the idea of autonomous art has a very different kind of value. Nevertheless it can be still talked about and fought but not has to be demanded. In a sense autonomous art here has become a demand, a right now that seems to me really as a right a plea for self indulgence to do what you want without caring about anybody or anything else and certainly not about the wider conditions of political, social or economic. For instance, I still find it a little shocking, I have to say, that there is so little art in the Netherlands that touches on the immigrant experience, now I'm looking for that and I find we are busy with a big project. In percentage terms there is so much art produced in the Netherlands. I think if there is an over production of anything I think it is art in the Netherlands. At the same time there is very little that touches on the immigrant experience or the recent forces of Globalization and how that has affected questions of identity, questions of urban planning, questions of experience of the city or of life in general. Again, it is general but slight more here than else where, so little considers the condition, its own condition as a *hyperactive market commodity*. Very little art actually challenges itself, if we talk about institutional critique from the 1979's surely the arts should be critiquing that they are completely engaged within a market economy and if you go to any of the art fairs you will see the absurdity of the sort of mechanisms of buying and selling that are being done now. But where are the Michael Eschers of that? They are not here. So little art defines or tries to depict even our relationship to the wars of the 1990s and 2000s, certainly here again and clearly in Yugoslavia it is, about how many artworks have you made about Srebrenica and our role in that? Or reflecting on it. How many artworks have you made in general about reactions to the questions of so-called 'terrorism'? This seems to be lacking, that lack leads me to ask 'why?', and that lack leads me to ask about *autonomy*. In addition, this idea of autonomy being the excuse for not needing to deal with it. Even if autonomous art is an excuse for such avoidance then we should ask, 'What precisely is the value of autonomy?' *Is it, in very negative ways, has it become - simply a confirmation of a continued modernist tradition that is broken elsewhere?* In other words, art defends modernism where in other places it is indefensible. *Is it as the last bastion of enlightenment values to the museum as a museum, a run there to cry out for the enlightenment when all around everything is crumbling?* I think if it is, it would be terrible, but sometimes I worry. *Is it a distraction to the hyper-marketing activities that you see in art fairs and the galleries in Amsterdam?* To some extent, is it a distraction for me to ignore the fact that the likes of

reason and emancipation are going out elsewhere. *Or is it simply something to be able to not deal with the questions that maybe we need to deal with?* I leave those as questions; I do not want to answer them, as I am not sure what the answers are, I am just sharing with you some of my concerns and some of my worries about where this notion of autonomy is.

I have to say that when I look at the press and the media and again I talk my experience in the last 2 years in the Netherlands particularly. I feel precisely it is the defense of modernism and the defense of enlightenment. The media, which is after all our popular self reflective mechanism, we have to accept that, and the NSA is. There is no point in trying to shy away from it, we reflect on our self that way. If you think about Paul Shaffers multicultural drama from 2000 it is still significant. We need things like that to exist in the media in order for discussion to change. But they do not. It seems to me, television is even worse and it is a tragedy. In those terms, I do not want to propose that we abandon autonomy then there is a danger of becoming totally engaged. Therefore, what I would like to do is modify autonomy with the term engagement as in *engaged autonomy*. Which should be read as an admonition to the autonomy I have spoken about now, but also as an admonition to engagement, in the sense of a political art is when engagement becomes dangerous, that gives up all of self-reflectivity. That gives up the possibility of the space between it and its production it and its message. Autonomy gives us that. That is why it is still valuable, that is why without autonomy we have no possibility to reflect. We need it, but we need to modify it, and we need to modify it with engagement. *What might engaged autonomy mean?*: well it means that artists should remain in an antagonistic relationship to ideology, be that idealistic, or economic, or curatorial and that agonistic relationship comes through autonomy. While through engagement responding the issues at hand responding to the economic, the political, and the curatorial. What this suggests to me is a quality of curatorial that is not invested in objects but states of being and action. Perhaps exchange, or what perhaps even Kaprow refers to as 'Un-Art' rather than autonomy - the idea of 'art as a cipher' that allows you to be self-critical. That allows you the autonomy, that is held in your head and allows you to be an autonomous individual within the system - is an autonomy I think we are in danger of losing. That is a real autonomy and that is taking the autonomy of art seriously which is rather invested in the style, form, subject, or object of art. To act autonomously while committing the results of those acts to specific context and conditions, of course miles away from universalism, might be then what we need to teach in our academies, rather than the older priorities of trans-disciplinary, non-hierarchical, anti-hierarchy, anti-isolation. I suggest that maybe engaged autonomy, which is a term, which is not *anti* but *for* an engagement, but for a connection with the world that is self-consciously autonomous and critical. That engagement, that idea of attitude centered around engaged autonomous positions is something that might be interesting for us to pursue. Coming out of that history and the very interesting and important demands that it makes cannot be straight forwardly applied now, but it can teach us something. And that is something to do with our current situation, not giving up what we have and at the same time accepting being anti-hierarchical, trans-disciplinary and anti-specialist that those are not necessarily sufficient, they maybe indeed those that come along with being in an engaged position with your own production with the world and they are not sufficient.

Finally, the other difference over the last 10 years is the attitude to or necessity for addressing a public. This is often a component missing from the discussion missing about the new forms of Academy and this is where, in one of my roles as director for the Van

Abmuseum, is the relationship between the Academy and the museum. I don't want to *talk about it* so much, as I want to *do it* as John Thompson might have said, so come to Eindhoven and see what we are doing! A project that we had that Marijke made mention of when the Academy learnt from the museum is actually an example of placing certain academic forms of discussion, learning and knowledge into the museum and seeing how the museum can handle that with a different kind of public. A public with the museum that is open, that is part of the public sphere, you have to pay unfortunately, but we have as many free evenings and days as we can. Nevertheless, apart from that drempel, that threshold to cross as payment, the museum as an institution of public space, it is different from the place of the Academy and the institution in the public sphere. This then gives us an opportunity to use some of the methodologies of the Academy in the museum, and maybe *visa versa*, the other way. It is then maybe as joint autonomous institutions that we can learn from each other, museums engaging in discourse and pedagogy for its public and also perhaps having house theorists and having lectors having people associated directly with the museum. At the same time the Academy presenting its thinking and facilities to the public and opening itself up to a different kind of public scrutiny which the museums already have. These are the challenges ahead in which the Academy can learn from each other and in that spirit talking the threats which are outside and trying to answer them from within is something that we can develop together as these two separate but connected institutions in the future.

Thank you.