

A Societal Survival Strategy

When you meet an unseeing person you must either fight or run for your life. Keep away and protect openness! Those who can keep their senses alert also have soft shoulders and hands that feel what they touch. By remembering to keep your eyes open you can develop the ability to see also those who imagine themselves invisible and find your way to places the unseeing think unattainable. As artists we train to keep our senses alert, but also with our deeds help sharpen other people's vision.

We need each other. It is a mutual dependency: policy/art/culture. To develop the knowledge needed for good artistic activity we build networks and fora where we can share, provoke, stimulate and perform. In different corners of Europe there are examples of artist driven fora aiming at offering artists a chance to develop and enable art that is topical, engaging and reflective.

Many artists take part in networks and processes that contribute to a positive development of society. There are two evident trends that stand out from the culture of preservation: one is the adaptation to "Creative Industries" with a focus on economic growth, the other is political art working closely within society with a focus on democracy movements and new entrepreneurial work forms. It is the latter category I want to highlight.

It is not enough just to be good or a fast runner. Today you also need knowledge that enables you to work in a specific cultural context. Artists train. Artists do research. Artists form organisations and fora to jointly develop, learn and create. These fora today have a decisive role in society, but are rarely noticed in a political-cultural context: PAF, Weld, Dancelab, Pro-Arte, BUDA, SAR, BadCo, A-pass, etc... Artists meet others to develop knowledge and methods that open-mindedly bring us forward, push the development and nourish hope.

Culture is what we live, our common foundation, our societal contract. We need strong cultural policies, not just for survival and material well-being, but as the ideal mental climate for long-term, sustainable development. We live a need for faith in the future based on curiosity and respect for who we are or long to be.

To make art a natural part of everyday life in the good society, a policy is needed that deals not only with the broad cultural perspectives, but also with art's availability, credibility and topicality

– as art. This demands fora where artistic presentations query the current state and generate insights in what would otherwise remain hidden. The activities at the fora I point to do precisely this. Artists create art and push it toward a widening of both cultural norms and formal regulations in society.

Much research underlines the importance of art for society's progress: for choosing locations, for economic development, for new work forms, creative industries etc. Art contributes greatly to the knowledge about creativity, how creative environments are formed and new knowledge about the uniqueness of being a human being with her senses intact.

An active and radical cultural policy welcomes criticism and provocation, it highlights and makes available art as an indispensable stimulus of curiosity, well-being, cultural and societal development. It enables fora needed for this. It makes it possible for us to live in the conviction that we cannot know what will happen, but we are prepared. Fighting doesn't make you strong. Art is an integral part of society's survival strategy!

I give you my manifest, something I wrote to comfort and encourage myself:

”Change a habit and avoid convention. Stop indifference from catching a hold. Push away slowing resistance and open up for enjoyment free from perversion. Stir up and mess up. Create new rites around that which must be protected so that goodness and love are again recognisable. View art as immaterial pleasure or materialised madness, the alphabet of outrage paired with lust and profound intimacy. A dissection of reality down to its smallest particles, reunited in entirely new entities dipped in love. The encounter with art should be like coming home or finding an exciting, challenging place where anything can happen. A place where we want to remain, amidst all the incomprehensible, to be present, listening, narrating...”

Some examples of fora I think have an important role to play in the future of Europe:

PAF, Jan Ritsema, www.pa-f.net

Weld, Anna Koch, www.weld.se

Dancelab, (The Cloud) Jette Schneider, www.danslab.nl

BadCo, Goran Sergej Pristas, www.badco.hr

Pro-Arte, Elena Kolovskaya, www.proarte.ru

BUDA, Franky Devos, www.budakortrijk.be

SAR, Anna Lindahl, jar-online.net

Art Residence Project, Konstantin Grouss, www.art-residence.ru

A-pass, Elke van Campenhout, www.apass.be

And there are more...