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RHEA

International Perspectives on Transformation in Higher Education in
the Arts in the Twentieth Century

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Abstracts



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James Elkins, School of the Art Institute of Chicago
Some Issues in US Art Education

This is an informal sketch of several major themes in U.S. art education: (1) the belated influence of the French Academy model and its continued presence in conservative art institutions; (2) the belated influence of the Bauhaus and modernist models; (3) the belated influence of Continental models of art history and art instruction (and the effects of the emigration of German art historians and artists); (4) the institution of the MFA after World War II, and its rapid spread in the 1960s; (5) the rise and characteristics of postwar art schools (including the present state of the Foundation Year); and (6) the nature and effects of the U.S. system of state schools and community colleges, in relation to large urban institutions.

Maria Görts, Dalarna University, Sweden
The French Studio Tradition and Higher Fine Art Education in Scandinavia in the 20th century

Art education in the Nordic countries changed in the 1920s and 30s due to the new experiences the artists had from studying in Paris at the so-called free academies. The shift occurred within the old Royal academies in Sweden and Denmark – the only institutions for higher art education at the time – and modernised instruction for decades to come. The new regulations persisted, even if questioned at times, well into the postmodern situation in the 1980s. I will discuss the main aspects of this shift and its consequences for art education in Scandinavia, including issues concerning the strong position of the professor in the studio tradition, the informal structure of instruction, and the impact of the art field in artistic training.

The Scandinavian higher fine art education is fairly homogeneously organised as a state-regulated education with extensive independence. Even though the differences are manifold and obvious, the common features are just as manifest. These are, above all, the superiority of the presumption of artistic freedom – a premise that has affected the framing of the instruction – and the reluctance to speak about a model of instruction. Contrary to this idea, however, criticism has occurred from the 1960s and onwards, and claims have been put forward to formalise the education.

Wolfgang Ruppert, University of Arts, Berlin
The structure of the German „Künstlerausbildung“ and its development (since 1960)

The interesting question is whether or not the term „hohe Kunst“, in a highly idealistic sense of the second half of the 19th century, is a very special phenomenon of German cultural history. It was written into the institutions of the „Künstlerausbildung“ in the 19th and 20th centuries and remains important today. It marked a cultural border to the sphere of aesthetic work in the world of economic purposes and useful things to run everyday life. The main questions of the different phases of reforms in the 20th century concerned to what degree and in which forms these different types of artistic works and their professions were compatible within one institution.

The time following the lost First World War and the subsequent democratic revolution in Germany marked the invention of different types of reform models. In the first part of my paper, I will show the specific ideas behind the institutions of the Akademie der bildenden Künste, the Bauhaus and the Vereinigte Staatsschulen für freie und angewandte Kunst (Berlin).

The development in the institutions after the 1960s has been based on these models, but while the integration of the artistic work with spreading media brought about substantial change in the Künstlerausbildung, it did not change the institution itself.

Hester R. Westley and Beth Williamson, Research Department of
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*From Donkeys to the Dip. Ad: Retracing the Lines in British Fine Art
Education since 1960*

This paper will discuss the major shifts in art education in Britain since the governmental educational reform in 1961, known as the Coldstream Report. This report mandated the rejection of a skills-based training in favour of more progressive approaches to the teaching and making of art. Since art schools responded to the Coldstream Report in very different ways, we will use individual schools as case studies of the various themes that emerged since the Report's redesigning of art education. Specifically, we will examine the contributions of artist-educators such as William Coldstream (Professor of Fine Art at Slade, London) alongside alternative models offered by Victor Pasmore (Master of Painting, King's College, Newcastle); furthermore, we discuss how new approaches to the creative process, as derived from the Bauhaus model, supplanted the traditional notions of life drawing as the apogee of an artist's education. Our case studies comprise the Slade, Chelsea, RCA, Central, St. Martins School of Art and Goldsmiths. Of the many themes that emerge in our analysis, most notable are: the increased importance of and competing identities of art schools; the new emphasis on internationalism; the dematerialisation of the art object; the rise of conceptualism; and the turn away from historical precedent. Each school has its own complicated history of these themes, but what emerges in our study is an historical narrative of ideological battles, of combative personalities, and of competing definitions of the meaning of British art education.

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