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**Artistic Education and the Artist's Work:
the Way out of Producing Objects**

The artist's refusal to define him-/herself as a producer of unique objects grew alongside the extension of the market's influence on all areas of life. The artist's path, from producing objects to conducting sensory experiences, from producing representations of reality to taking an active part in the construction of reality, was reflected in the process of educational transformation.

Usually, fine art academies adjust to the new ideas rather slowly and accept the change of educational programs and methods rather reluctantly. For this reason, the critique of artistic education is always focused on the ideological basis of academies as places that uphold traditional types of art practice and keep standards and hierarchies. The attack on academic principles of teaching art in the 20th century was implemented through reformist and anarchist approaches. Alternative pedagogical frameworks led to a radical change, and teaching artists often embodied avant-garde ideas inside existing institutions. Requirements for an educational system in the art field were formulated by artists-theoreticians in accordance with their understanding of the role of art and its agents in the society.

Founded in the 17th century, art academies sought to protect artists' autonomy and to prevent them from being controlled and patronised by trade guilds and craftsmen associations. Being distinguished from crafts, art was able to enter the system of academic education. Making art was perceived as a separate type of practical work, while academic education guaranteed its continuity. It was believed that it was possible to teach how to become a painter or a sculptor, although they were considered special professions, linked with the notion of talent. It seemed that art was not conflated with crafts anymore (as it was achieved by the Renaissance), however professional success required mastering. Thus, skill improvement in making art objects was seen as the artist's main objective, but the talent shown that way could only be developed through the conventions enacted by following tradition.

As an avant-garde theoretician, Osip Brik wrote in the beginning of 20th century that the experience of an easel painter was a specific case and individual

painting work, not a general artist experience (1924). Artists representing productivist art offered a new awareness of the artistic work as a work not separated from material production (Arvatov, 1926). At the same time, they manifested objectlessness and pointed that left art could not be reduced to the production of material culture elements. The aim of the artist's move into production was not to create applied things – it was about creating objects of a new function, consequently, these objects were aimed not just to improve welfare, as to change people's sensual habits (Chubarov, 2014).

The ideas of productivist art were embodied in educational and experimental fields – inside the GINKhUK/*ГИИХУК*, *Gosudarstvennyiy Institut Khudozhestvennoy Kulturyi* [State Institute of Artistic Culture] and Vkhutemas/*ВХУТЕМАС*, *Vysshiyе Khudozhestvenno-Tekhnicheskiye Masterskiye* [Higher Art and Technical Workshops], actively functioning institutions in the USSR in the early 1920s. Members of GINKhUK stopped making easel paintings and focused their critique on representational and figurative art. They demanded from artists to become engineers, technicians, inventors. They saw the difference between a craftsman and an artist particularly in the mastery, which, according to them, was inherent to an artist, as a creative, and therefore unalienated process of making a piece.

Along with the reorientation of academic education for artists so that it was able to take part in the organisation of production, a process of another kind – a search for approaches to objectify educational methods – was taking place. For instance, on a scientific basis, Vkhutemas professors were developing an “objective teaching method,” unified for all types of creative work in order to bring them together (Han-Magomedov, 1995). Experimental and analytical search of left artists served as a basis of methodology of learning the primary means of artistic expression, principles of composition, correlation between form and material. These artists were establishing completely new laws of form-making (Han-Magomedov, 1995). Similar analytic and objective approaches were introduced in *Kyivskiy Khudozhnii Instytut* [the Kyiv Art Institute] from 1924 to 1930, in the teaching of formal and technical disciplines (*Фортех*/Fortech course)¹.

At the same time, in Bauhaus Manifesto, Walter Gropius stated that art could not be grasped by educational systems and therefore there was no sense in separating it from crafts (1919). To him, the artist was an exalted craftsman and the difference between artist and craftsman, which should be overcome, was initially the class one. Gropius came back to the pre-academic type of education in workshops and to the notion of mastery. He put improving the technical skill and agility above acquiring the practice of representational drawing in an isolated studio. At the same time, he found it important to separate art from technique, since, according

¹ Apart from some articles on pedagogical programs of the Fortech course written in Ukrainian by O. Kashuba-Vol'vach (Кашуба-Вольвач, 2008) and recently published sessions of the drawing section of the Kyiv Art Institute, where the course was discussed (Filevska, 2017), there are no in-depth studies of this course.

to him, it was possible to become a qualified craftsman or an independent creative artist owing to individual capacities. Gropius regarded art in the unity of disciplines: there were basic principles taught and researched in Bauhaus, the same for architecture, sculpture, and painting, which served as a foundation for all creative activities within the visual arts.

In the beginning of 20th century, due to their proximity to industrial production (in accordance with the shift from pre-industrial crafts to commercial design), art schools introduced a new understanding of an artist's figure and goals of artistic education. Producing objects gained a new meaning, where no longer a unique object became the final result of an artist's work, but an efficient, economical, temporary one, one that took part in shaping a new human sensuality and had direct relations with nature.

The idea of work and art integration in the avant-garde was linked with the aim of shaping a new society, while the idea of art moving to manufacture was intended to show the social nature of creativity. Intended, and therefore free, creation process had to negate the worker's alienation throughout the manufacturing process, since the process of making a product involved skills and developed new means of setting up the material in interaction between different kinds of work and creation.

In his pedagogical practice, through the tasks that did not require a clear solution, as well as evaluation, Josef Albers, a Bauhaus teacher, effectively encouraged the development of creative force and independence. Instead of focusing on traditional methods of learning craftsmanship and gaining technical skills, which limit creative freedom and inventiveness, the primary course program *Vorkurs* (Foundation Course) developed by Albers provoked thinking and playing with the material free from specific goals. The problem-oriented teaching approach designed by him required usage of qualities of materials and interaction between formal elements, it stimulated students to create new forms and to use self-invented methods. Therefore, the process of learning resulted from students' individual finds.

After leaving Bauhaus, Albers was teaching in North Carolina, Black Mountain College, and then in Yale. He encouraged art schools to stop communicating predefined knowledge, methods and rules, in order to shape not the "trained individuals," but creative, curious, and therefore masterful artists. These principles, such as supporting experiment and experience rather than supporting artists' self-expression, prioritising the process over the result, implemented by Gropius in his education process in Bauhaus, influenced the European and American systems of artistic education. Since the post-war era, art departments at universities in the USA, have been running primary programs aimed to give students an understanding of the fundamentals of art, whereas academic education encouraged the development of personalities able to solve modern problems in all forms of visual art, to raise and research new issues (Singerman, 1999).

The concept of transformation was Albers' most extensively addressed pedagogical issue: a thing becomes something different from what we expected because

the artist can make people see things that are absent (Horowitz, Danilowitz 2006). He focused students' attention on the formal interactions between elements, on the perception shift depending on their transformations. In his pedagogical theory, it was manifested as "perception learning." Craftsman skills, advocated by Gropius as means to overcome the artist's academic isolation, were replaced by the field of vision and the basic principles of art (Singerman, 1999). Educational programs in the departments of American universities, renamed from "fine art" to "visual art," are now built on teaching the basics of all creative acts in the field of visual arts, no matter if it is fine arts or applied arts, and they are built on teaching the fundamental elements, the same for architecture, sculpture, and painting, the universal means of creativity – the visual language (Singerman, 1999).

At the other extreme, during the Cold War, in the Academy of Arts in Warsaw, the architect Oskar Hansen was implementing the same approach. In 1952, he became the head of the Solids and Planes Composition Studio, an obligatory class for the first and second year students from all departments. This name was kept until 1970, when it was replaced by the Visual Structures Studio, while in 1981–1983 it was renamed to Interdepartmental Faculty of Integrated Visual Arts. Hansen's pedagogy was based on the Open Form theory and required integration and collaboration between architecture and visual arts. Continuing the pre-war practice of Wojciech Jastrzębowski, a Warsaw's Academy teacher, Hansen stated that he taught not art but a visual language (Gola, 2014).

Artistic education, supported by the idea of general aesthetic education, was widely spread as a medium of developing human sensual apparatus. In *When Form Has Become Attitude – And Beyond*, Thierry de Duve described the basis for modernist education and noted that a new educational paradigm was grounded in the idea that all people had innate talents of perception (basic capability of reading and identifying) and imagination (basic capability of writing), thus, the function of education was to develop them, because everyone could be taught the visual base if not the manual technical skills. According to Gropius, art became a medium for training the viewer's "common language of visual communication" (1948). With that said, the specialisation of visual arts means specific training and development of visual perception and imagination, whereas creativity is a modern name for their combination.

Creativity and field of vision that exist in the present and look into the future, became an educational basis replacing tradition, rules and conventions. Comparing educational models, de Duve describes the modernist one as a model that replaced academic one in the post-war era in Western Europe and America through the new notions of "creativity," "medium" and "invention" that took over "talent," "metier" and "imitation." Learning representational drawing, in its academic pattern, changed into the research of means taking the position of an ultimate goal, instead of being merely an instrument of reaching mimetic goals. As opposed to observation and imitation of external models, artists switched to the internal and started observing and imitating the means of expression themselves. In the new modernist

paradigm, art is distinguished due to the specificities of its means (painting, sculpture etc.) and not due to continuing earlier tradition. Thus, a painter is now not a qualified specialist, in the specific field with its history, but a person who raises the question of painting as a medium. Nevertheless, this approach, supported by the authority of Greenberg, the theoretician of modernism, imprisoned the artist inside the discipline again.

In the beginning of the 20th century, the scientific approach to artistic education started to be implemented in art schools – in Vkhutemas in Moscow and Kyiv Art Institute, the research of objective teaching methods and creative issues analysis was pursued, while in Bauhaus, teaching artist like Johannes Itten, Paul Klee, Wassily Kandinsky were researching the main qualities of a visual world and were working on the programs of colour studies, painting theory, and theory of forms. Pursuing scientific practice, both experimental and theoretical, artists gained new roles (Goldstein, 1996).

Understanding art as a scientific field helped find its place in the university (Singerman, 1999). Along with the shift of understanding of the role of academic artistic education – the shift from maintaining and reproducing tradition to developing new approaches of working with the visual material in the science institutions and laboratories – independent scientific research moved to the foreground and producing new knowledge replaced commenting on and reorganising the old one. The artist's place in a university was guaranteed because he/she became the researcher of the visual.

The academy, as an experimental laboratory, allowed Hansen to develop his subject and to spread his ideas among the young generation in Poland (Sienkiewicz, 2014). Hansen used self-made educational instruments, aimed at helping students to test materials and technological features, at the same time encouraging their imagination and inventiveness (Gola, 2014). The Open Form theory and Hansen's ideas of social cooperation influenced the structure of students' work itself, and art became perceived as a form of communication, dialogue or group collaboration aimed at achieving balance between individual expression and the necessity of building a community. The process itself quickly became more valuable than the work as an object (Sienkiewicz, 2014).

Albers also stated that artistic education should not be separated from life and paid attention to the political dimension of forms. While teaching formal interactions, he compared the imperatives of form and the imperatives of society (Horowitz, Danilowitz 2006). Black Mountain College, founded in 1933 in North Carolina, was a geographically isolated "laboratory" with a rather small amount of students, where ideas of Albers, such as free experimenting and interdisciplinarity, supporting individual experience and communitarianism, prioritising a process over a result, teaching a method instead of a content, were fully embodied.

The shift from Abstract impressionism to conceptual and linguistic practices in Black Mountain College was linked with the presence of John Cage and Merce Cunningham. Their practice at the intersection of painting, music and performance

could happen only in an academy with no separate workshops and disciplines (Pas, 2014).

Black Mountain College significantly affected art and education of the 1960s, while in America and Europe a new wave of artistic education critique was raised that was connected to the conceptual art practices. Rethinking the concept of art, neo-avant-garde artists often focused their attention on academies and embodied their ideas in the form of manifests, books, and alternative pedagogical practices, which radically influenced the notion of art and education in general.

Neo-avant-garde practices forerunner, abstract painter Ad Reinhardt, who was teaching in Brooklyn College in New York during his lifetime and occasionally in Yale and other universities, published a tragicomic text in 1953 – *Twelve Rules for a New Academy*. It was a list of things that artists should avoid (1953). It was primarily a denial of rules of the specific art practices of the time: it was emphasised that these practices used art for self-expression or action focused on the public, for cooperation with the government, business and war.

On the contrary, an experimental book by Robert Filliou, *Teaching and Learning as Performing Arts*, published in 1970, had a positive program. Filliou suggested using participation techniques for solving artistic education problems, and he implemented them in happenings, environments, street performances, action, and visual poetry. One of the chapters from this book contains interviews with artists – John Cage, Allan Kaprow, George Brecht, and Joseph Beuys, among others. Filliou wanted to know their opinion on subjects such as art as freedom, art as providing the potential revolutionary set of values, art as leisure. Also, he wanted to know whether they believed that teaching and learning could be conceived as performing arts (1970).

In 1971, when Joseph Beuys was teaching at the sculpture department at the Arts Academy of the city of Düsseldorf, Germany (Staatliche Kunstakademie of Düsseldorf), he opened his class for everyone interested, pointing out that only a university fully open to creation could free artistic education from bureaucratic limitations. The concept of creativity became a major one again. When he founded the Free International University for Creativity and Interdisciplinary Research with Heinrich Böll in 1974, their idea was to create a social organism as a piece of art. They claimed that every person had a creative potential, but its development was being stopped by competition and struggle for success, hence the goal of their school was to recognise and develop this potential (Beuys, 1973).

Collaborative aspects of visual art and “intermedia” were conceptualised and adopted in practice by Joseph Beuys and other artists from the Fluxus movement. “Art is one of the ways that people communicate” – this is the opening line of the *Statement on Intermedia* by Dick Higgins, who implemented this notion in describing new intersections of painting, poetry, dance, and composing practices. According to him, the central problem is now not only the new formal one of learning to use them [intermedia], but the new and more social one of what to use them for (1966).

Since then, collectivity became a new paradigm: interaction, collaboration, communication were perceived as art's new tactics. Academies became responsive to these ideas. Under the influence of conceptual art, which opposed modernist postulates in the late 1960s, art was considered no longer dependent on specifics and purity of means, which was strongly advocated by Greenberg; instead, it was considered grounded in a concept instead of means. Art found a new basis – language, and it began to focus on research practices and to use strategies from other disciplines, therefore becoming interdisciplinary.

Critique and text became important products in the system of artistic education. Means relevant to the new art came from the intellectual scientific field – from philosophical, sociological, political studies. Thus, theory entered academy and replaced learning in workshops. It provided students with critical vocabulary and intellectual instruments. The new politicised discourse of art and its relations with society was built, and gradually became dominant and institutionalised owing to the forward-looking art schools. This is how Thierry de Duve described a new situation of artistic education, adding new terminology to the above-mentioned to define these changes: “position,” “practice” and “deconstruction” (1994).

Traditional academic artistic education requires a patient, diligent, obedient body that cherishes its talent though the mastery of making a piece in assiduous manual work. Following the mimetic demand of an eye, the hand is trained until it becomes able to register what is seen and intended instantly and credibly (since academic tradition tends to idealise nature). Mastering means and forms of representing the visual world in a way that it can be recognised is the task of a professional academic paradigm education, in opposition to which the future attention focuses on training a perceptive eye, active body and inventive artist's mind ready to intrude into reality. The mastery is changing from handwork skills to verbal ones, therefore, the work of art is perceived as a statement.

New art practices, grounded in communicative features, do not tend to make a material work as a final product. They act in the area of the invisible and, along with art's refusal to serve the ruling discourses, i.e. to be “practical, useful, related, applicable, or subservient to anything else” (Reinhardt, 1953: 37–38), they become elusive. Artistic activity acquires performativity: it challenges the potentiality of the language itself, it contains a goal inside itself, and even though it is embodied in time, it does not have purposes focused either on the past or on the future, although it can re-establish current things in reality as continuities. It is another type of work that has a political constituent. Meanwhile, practice, communication and positioning, being spectacular, can also be products, while art, as a social institution, becomes actively involved in the system of capitalist economy.

In the learning process, an artist creates him-/herself, challenges him-/herself, develops his/her communicative and creative skills – the body itself and its capabilities become means of art. After education, the “art scene” becomes the main place for the artist's self-affirmation. According to Pascal Gielen, the art scene, as a place of social interaction, “involves a work ethic in which work is always

enjoyable – or should be; in which dynamism is boosted unconditionally by young talent; and in which commitment outstrips money” (Gielen, 2015: 110–116). Cultural production requires constant commitment and self-exploiting. In this way, new educational programs prepare cross-functional graduates who value adaptability and flexibility: generally, project-oriented nature of work provides temporary responsibilities and puts an artist in a position dependent on current trends.

Educational institutions in the art field prepare the employees of non-material work requested for new working conditions of non-material part of economy, where language and communication skills, immanent and integral for a human, are the means of production. It is required from a professional to be devoted to work, to be ready to work anytime engaging creativity and enthusiasm, to have flexible working hours, to be mobile and dynamic, to react quickly to a new context, and to put forward fresh ideas. The work of a creative employee, unstable and cheap, since the symbolic capital is mainly enough payment, is a base for the development and growth of creative industries with their demand for constant innovations and involving all human nature. The nature of work changes in general, and artistic activity occupies a special place in it. As Paolo Virno has noted, the cultural industry, industry of communication, acted as an industry of means of production (Virno, 2013: 68).

Recently captured general dynamic is marked by the universities’ loss of autonomy that should guarantee place and time for experiments free from goal-setting. Along with the signing the Bologna declaration in 2010, European universities took the responsibility to provide an internationally comparable education. From now on, the notion of efficiency becomes important and the quality is evaluated through quantifiable measures – economic features.

Nowadays, in neo-liberal economy conditions, when labour considerably matches the language, the rules of normalising creativity and methods of mechanising reactions, emotions, and thinking appear. Thus, the artist’s abilities, trained owing to pedagogical innovations in art academies and university departments, are at risk of becoming the product of a new type, a valuable resource of creative economy, while counteraction determines new challenges for education.

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Abstract

In this article, the changes of the principles of teaching art in the 20th century are discussed. The artist's path from producing objects to conducting sensory experiences, from producing representations of reality to taking an active part in the construction of reality, was reflected in the process of educational transformation. New art practices grounded in communicative features, interaction, collaboration, do not tend to make a material work as a final product, but they act in the area of the invisible. In the new conditions of the neo-liberal economy, the artist's abilities, based on language and developed owing to pedagogical innovations in the

art academies and university departments, are at risk of becoming a product of a new type, a valuable resource of creative economy, while counteraction determines new challenges for education.

Keywords: Contemporary art, art education, objectlessness, creative economy

Słowa kluczowe: sztuka współczesna, edukacja artystyczna, bezprzedmiotowość, przemysł kreatywny

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