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ARTISTIC INTERVENTIONS IN ORGANIZATIONS

Research, theory and practice

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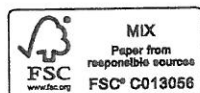
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2 Arts-in-business from 2004 to 2014

From experiments in practice to research and leadership development

Lotte Darsø

Arts & Business: an emergent field

In 2000 I discovered an area that was new to me: Arts & Business. Two years later I was involved in an international research project on Arts-in-Business that led to 53 interviews with people around the world engaged in the field, and in the summer of 2004 I published the book *Artful Creation: Learning-Tales of Arts-in-Business*, in which I set out to answer the research question: What can Business learn from the Arts? (Darsø 2004). Another aim was to map the emergent field of Arts-in-Business and, indeed, try to find out if this was actually a field at all.

Those were exciting days! There was a great optimism and lots of initiatives in motion. Many people saw an enormous potential and dreamt up bold projects. This enthusiasm manifested itself vividly in Davos at the World Economic Forum in 2004, where I had been invited to facilitate a workshop called "What if an Artist Ran Your Business?" When the sign-up procedure started in the morning, this workshop was one of the first to be sold out. The Forum takes place over a period of three to four days with a mixture of plenum sessions and smaller workshops in different formats, and people can only attend the workshops if they get a confirmation, which they have to show in order to get into the session. My workshop included some famous artists, such as music producer Quincy Jones, actor Chris Tucker, photographer Yann Arthus-Bertrand, and film producer Shekhar Kapur.

When I arrived at the workshop people were gathering outside the door begging to get in, but the room was already full. I asked the participants whether it would be OK to include the people outside the door; they approved and we let them in. It was a rather chaotic workshop. I introduced the agenda and I had carefully prepared some questions for discussion at the tables and a process alternating between table conversations, briefings and short plenum recaps. Each table had one of the invited artists to guide the conversations, and I had sent them a mail beforehand with the agenda. However, it did not go at all as planned! Of course, the process worked at some tables, but it certainly did not work at other tables. The artists more or less followed their own agenda, participants hijacked the conversation and turned it into something else, and when

I asked people to report back from their tables, it was messy and chaotic. I had opened 'Pandora's Box'. Fortunately, the workshop lasted only an hour and a half, and most people liked it anyway, because it was so amazingly different from what they had experienced earlier.

Why do I tell this story? Because I want to try to convey this incredibly mad sense of enthusiasm that surrounded the Arts-in-Business field in its early days. Everything seemed possible; there were no barriers; everything was in flux. Companies were rich and powerful, and at least some of them had surplus energy and time for trying out new approaches such as artistic interventions in organizations. One of the most ambitious Arts-in-Business projects at the time was Catalyst at Unilever, UK (Darsø 2004) (Buswick, Creamer and Pinard 2004). This artist-led project started in 1999 with an annual budget of £240,000. I visited several Unilever sites in London for three full days, observed and participated in some sessions with artists, and interviewed seven people, among them the chairman, James Hill, who had brought the artist into Unilever. He had initiated the project in order to change the organizational culture towards more creativity and inspirational initiatives. The Unilever projects explored 20–25 art forms, some of which worked better than others. Failure was considered part of the package because it was an experiment, but overall, it was highly successful. People and spaces radiated infectious enthusiasm and energy.

In 2004 the future looked bright, growth seemed endless, and there was a general agreement that capitalism had proved itself as the 'best' economic system. Certainly, there were lots of problems and challenges in the world also then, and these were also discussed in Davos by important politicians, royalties and CEOs, but the general feel was still a bubbling optimism. Arts & Business was thus in the rising, riding the wave of endless growth. At least this was how it seemed at the time.

Important initiatives

Several initiatives for developing the relationship between Arts & Business were taken during that time. Among the earliest were the Arts & Business conferences that Miha Pogacnik and friends held at Castle Borl in Slovenia every summer from 1997 to 2006. The focus here was on bringing people from the art world together with people from the business world and people from academia in order to explore, experience and reflect on the potential of artistic approaches in organizations. The methods were primarily interactive in order to share and learn together (VanGundy and Naiman 2003).

As this was a formative period for Arts & Business, research was emergent and in the making. An important initiative for inspiring more research was the Art of Management and Organization Conferences, which started in 2002 in London, and have continued since then with conferences every second year. This initiative later resulted in the creation of an online journal, *Organizational Aesthetics*. In 2003 a group of passionate people saw a need for more dialogue

and research and created the research network, AACORN (Arts, Aesthetics, Creativity, and Organization Research Network, www.aacorn.net). In 2014 there were over 250 members of this network.

In 2008, an important research initiative was taken by scholars at the Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung (WZB), who subsequently managed to expand and enrich the field with extensive studies, from both a business perspective and an artist viewpoint (Berthoin Antal 2012, 2013a, 2013b, 2014, 2015; Berthoin Antal and Strauß 2013). This research program, together with the Art of Management and Organizations conferences and the AACORN community, has provided a major contribution towards the most important difference between 2004 and 2014: *an increased and multifarious research arena*.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, several Scandinavian governments subsidized organizations and projects with focus on the business side, such as TILT (Sweden), NyX (Denmark), Forum for Culture and Business (Norway) and many others. Other institutions, such as Artlab (Denmark) and SKISS (Sweden) had focus on preparing and supporting artists for working with organizational development through artistic interventions and projects (in this volume see Johansson Sköldberg and Woodilla). This gave rise to several entrepreneurial start-ups of small artist consultancies. In the US and UK, The Arts & Business Council of Americans for the Arts, US, founded in 1965, and Arts & Business, UK, founded in 1976, both originally had the aim of building relationships between Arts & Business, but only in a one-way format of business transferring skills and resources to the arts. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, they began seeing the potential of a two-way exchange of skills and they began delivering arts experiences by developing programs for matching artists with business, and offered training to artists for working in business settings (Darsø, 2005).

The impact of the financial crisis

Regrettably for the development of the field of artistic interventions in practice, the financial crisis of 2008 brought business to a temporary halt. Optimism quickly turned into pessimism. People lost their pensions, houses and jobs, and people in jobs feared losing them. Companies cut back, and everything was stalled that did not directly contribute to the bottom line. Consequently, whole innovation departments and business development units were closed down, executive education was put on hold, and development projects were stopped or put on the back burner. Artistic interventions, of course, would belong to these categories because they take time, are uncertain, and generally cannot guarantee a specific outcome, let alone directly add to the figures of the bottom line. Even though there are several examples in this book of how artistic interventions have succeeded in ways that generate value for the involved organizations, the point here is that there is no guarantee. From a business perspective defined only in terms of the 'rational logic', perhaps the most convincing approach presented in this book would be the structured process proposed by Schiuma and Carlucci, because it is analytical and follows an operational model.

Here consultants are driving the process and artistic intervention is applied only towards the end. In other cases trying to transfer artistic creativity to organizations was not possible, as selling creativity as a commodity 'escaped' those efforts (see Raviola and Schnugg, in this volume). In yet other cases a more 'artistic logic' is applied with bumps on the road but succeeding at the end. For example, Brattström's chapter in this volume highlights the theatre director's skills as an analytical method for facilitating and merging different perspectives. In several cases artists were both facilitators and in charge of designing and carrying out the whole project together with the participants (such as Jahnke, in this volume).

Looking back at 2004 I now realize that what seemed to be a promising business adventure with a lot of potential did not happen as expected. The financial crisis contributed to this, but, in fact, it seems that most top managers in business never saw the need for drawing on the arts in relation to organizational development and innovation. I thus wonder if business was ever really interested in learning from and with the arts or if the arts are, in fact, still seen as too strange and too different?

Drivers of artistic intervention

Obviously, there are various possible explanations regarding the lack of interest from business. If we examine who have been the main drivers for establishing these collaborative projects, it seems that the answer to this would be the intermediaries (Berthoin Antal 2012; in this volume Johansson Sköldbberg and Woodilla). They emerged exactly for this purpose, both because they believe in it and because the funding bodies often stipulate involving both arts and business. Governments, municipalities, regional institutions or European Union agencies hoped to work through these organizations to support and grow business, public organizations and creative industries. However, most of these projects have had to be 'sold' to business and public organizations, and partial subsidies have often been an important incentive.

Another driver of artistic interventions in organizations has been leaders and managers with an interest in art. In the Unilever case mentioned above, James Hill's meeting with the artist awakened a longing for the arts that he had hidden away a long time ago, because his life was focused on business. Now he realized how much he had missed art and how enriching the artistic interventions were for everyone involved. As Zambrell presents in this volume, leaders and managers are important gatekeepers for letting the arts into organizations. She found that leaders who had engaged in artist-in-residence projects had an aesthetic-inspired leadership approach, which was characterized, among others, by an interest in art.

Energy and motivation

The impact of the economic crisis is related to the fact that an economic paradigm still rules the world. It is an extrapolation of the industrial paradigm

with its focus on resources and efficiency, combined with a belief in capitalism and growth as the way forward. So when artistic interventions take considerable time, when the impacts are emergent and subtle, and when the results cannot be seen to have a direct influence on the bottom line, artistic interventions are perceived as superfluous. In a 'flat world' perspective this is correct (Wilber 2000). But there is growing evidence that employees need more than numbers as motivation. Based on many years of research, Harvard professor Teresa Amabile emphasizes intrinsic motivation as the most powerful influence on people's performance (Amabile 1998). The findings of the Good Business project also demonstrated that the best leaders provide visions for their employees of making a difference in the world (Csikszentmihalyi 2003). People need spiritual food, such as inspiration, social relationships, and a greater purpose in their work.

A relevant term in this context is "artful work" as Richards suggested. He found that "the fundamental substance of organizations is the energy of people" (Richards 1995, p. 6), and he proposed four types of energy: physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. My own slightly different term for this is "artful creation", which I define as: "Artful means 'full of art', e.g., art experiences that initiate an inner transformation, which again open up for a special kind of consciousness" (Darsø 2004, p. 31). The concept of artfulness encompasses body, mind, heart and spirit. It underlines the important perspective of being whole human beings, also at work. People are not machines; people need meaning and purpose in their work life. Unless managers realize this, their organizations will not thrive. Art brings out human emotions; it touches our humanity (Eisner 2008).

Constructive disturbance

If it is correct to assume that the potential of artistic interventions has not yet been acknowledged by organizations, it might be helpful to return to the pivotal question that the authors ask in several of the chapters in this volume: What is the real value of artistic interventions in organizations? I will argue in the following that the most prominent value is encompassed in the term *constructive disturbance*. This concept illustrates the inherent tension that is characteristic of meetings between artistic and rational logics. Constructive disturbance is also an overall theme that weaves a thread throughout this book, for example as "creative abrasion" (introduced by Leonard and Straus 1997; see also Styhre and Fröberg in this volume). The success or failure of artistic interventions depends on the dynamic balancing of the tension between what is constructive and what is disturbing. The tension must be held in this dynamic balance throughout the entire project. If it tips towards the constructive arena, the outcome could be inspirational, but not transformational. If it tips towards disturbance, the project will often be dismissed as failure. In the following I will analytically separate the two concepts in order to elaborate on what they entail and how they have been and can be applied in practice. In order to do that I will have to

generalize somewhat while acknowledging that thereby some differences and nuances may be lost.

Constructive

The term *constructive* comes before disturbance for important reasons. The key to any collaborative effort is developing relations of trust and respect (Darsø 2001). The general perception is that artists belong to the art world and that they can be as strange and provocative as they want at art exhibitions or in art performances. In those contexts such behaviour is considered interesting. But artists in organizational contexts are still perceived as strange and therefore they are received with feelings ranging from surprise to fear and scepticism. Misunderstandings can arise in artistic interventions, which can be disruptive or generative. At the beginning of a project misunderstandings are mostly disruptive and can jeopardize the project. Later they can be highly generative. The surprise can result from the artist's language, methods and open approach towards the process. Also the artist as a role model can be surprising, however mostly inspirational, because artists radiate a lot of energy and passion. The surprise is also apprehensible when employees move from a daily routine of performance measurement, shortage of time and resources, stress, bureaucracy and control to an open-ended process that is playful and emergent, and where there is no guarantee for what will come out at the end. Comparing these two approaches, the latter can easily appear to be a waste of time. The key to channelling employees' perplexity into something constructive lies in formulating a clear purpose for the project and communicating it consistently. A clear purpose is not a specific goal; it is a much broader vision expressing the wishes and intentions of the project and explaining why the process will be open-ended for a while.

As for fear, it is usually fear of overstepping individual comfort zones, of having to make art, and of looking foolish when doing so. To overcome these feelings of fear, trust is needed, both between the artist and participants, and among participants. The quality of relationships is key here. Another response is scepticism, which stems from negative attitudes towards artists in general or to the whole idea of artistic interventions in organizations. When scepticism takes the form of cynical remarks, it can become highly counterproductive and can easily ruin the atmosphere, so also here it is important to be clear about the purpose of the project. Mutual respect must be established. In the numerous interviews I have conducted I have repeatedly asked about the obstacles to applying arts in business settings. Scepticism came up as one of the top impediments, but fortunately, people also had suggestions for overcoming it, based on their experience. One recommendation is that the artists early in the project find ways to show people – without showing off – that they are competent and skilled artists in order to gain respect from the participants. It is equally important for the participants to get the opportunity to demonstrate their competence and skills to the artists in order to feel comfortable in exploring new methods and new ways of using their body or voice. Mutual respect must thus be created along

with trust at the beginning of the project in order for it to gain momentum. The essence of respect is building a sense of equality between the parties. Thus trust and respect constitute a constructive foundation of artistic intervention projects, and research shows that artists are skilled at building this rapport (Berthoin Antal 2015).

Disturbance

Now let's examine the elements of *disturbance*. Disturbance is inevitable when two worlds meet. Artists use a different language and different methods; they have different priorities, different focus, different values, and different perspectives from those that dominate the world of business, but most of all: Artists are skilful in asking questions that provoke. In fact, this is how I discovered the field of Arts & Business. I was conducting research on the birth of innovation in groups of knowledge workers, and I had just analysed my data and discovered the power of questions that were born out of ignorance (Darsø 2001). Such questions could challenge the taken for granted and open up for new possibilities. Innovation feeds from diverse perspectives and artists tend to present angles that no one has considered, because people tend to think within the limits of their knowledge field (Berthoin Antal 2013a). By defamiliarizing the familiar artists disturb people enough that they can get new perspectives on their work, their company or on themselves (see Jahnke in this volume). Artists can give people a mental kick that jiggles their mind-set so that they are suddenly able to see differently. In the literature and training on creativity this is called change of perspective (de Bono 1994). But whereas de Bono's approach is mostly analytical, the superb power of the arts is in truly sensing instead of making sense through analysis (Springborg 2010) and in affecting emotions (Eisner 2008). Therefore, impressions and provocations through the arts have strong impact on people, both at the personal level and in relation to organizational change.

Another feature of artistic interventions is that they foreground aesthetics in the organizational context. This implies activating and engaging people's senses in different ways (Guillet de Monthoux, Gustafsson and Sjöstrand 2007; Strati 2000). Often this happens through the use of artistic materials that the participants would not normally use. Aesthetics activate the senses through materials, colours, texture, sound, taste or smell, such as by listening to music in new ways (www.mihavision.com); singing with people from diverse backgrounds or producing music together as a way of creating community and managing conflict (see Ippolito and Adler in this volume). Other artistic methods include moving and sensing with the body (see Bozic Yams in this volume), theatre rehearsal methods (Ibbotson 2008), and photography, storytelling, or painting together (see examples in Darsø 2004). All these modalities can serve as constructive disturbance. But, of course, they need to be adapted to the participants and support the purpose.

Spaces of constructive disturbance

One of the ways in which constructive disturbance can exist in organizations is through the creation of interspaces, which Berthoin Antal and Strauß (this volume) define as “temporary social spaces within which participants experience new ways of seeing, thinking, and doing things that add value for them personally. In the interspace, doubt and organizational norms are suspended to enable experimentation”. When an interspace also becomes physical, we can talk about organizational studios as spaces for inquiry, as Meisek and Barry propose in this volume.

Artistic interventions in educational contexts

Where would artistic interventions have the most promising effect? I would argue that this would be in education and leadership development. According to Mintzberg, management relies more on art than on science, because art is related to intuition and insights and “managing is neither a science nor a profession; it is a practice, learned primarily through experience, and rooted in context” (Mintzberg 2009, p. 9). Creating engaged executive learning spaces through aesthetic agency (Sutherland and Ladkin 2013), aesthetic reflexivity (Sutherland 2013) and the appropriate design of affording contexts for transformation (Darsø 2014) introduce new approaches and formats for experiential learning. Education could thus be a shortcut towards acceptance of artistic interventions in organizations, because (as documented by Berthoin Antal and Strauß in this volume), one of the most significant effects of artistic intervention projects is personal learning and development. When enough people have experienced the power of learning through artistic and aesthetic approaches, scepticism will decrease and the application may come more naturally. The following two examples of aesthetic and artistic interventions in educational settings help illustrate how and why they can work.

The sensuous school

The first example is a new approach towards renewal of education. As a member of the school Advisory Board, I have followed this project closely. The following is based on written material, conversations, observations, websites and blogs, and email correspondence with one of the sisters. The sensuous school is part of a large-scale Nordic project that has been running since 2011 and will continue into the future, manifesting in a series of Nordic countries. The aim is to experiment with how a school would look in a society governed by aesthetic premises – from a sensuous and poetic way of knowing the world – instead of from the economic and rational premises that have dominated the institutions of society since the industrial age and the Enlightenment, respectively. The idea is to create a parallel universe, in which performance art and activism merges with pedagogy and research. The project, initiated by Sisters Hope (www.sistershope.org).

sistershope.dk), is called Sisters Academy (<http://sistersacademy.dk/>); and it has recently been tested in a Danish high school. The project explores creative courses, such as drama, music and art, not only as important subjects by themselves, but also as input to other courses, such as mathematics, physics, language and biology. According to educationalist Sir Ken Robinson there is left too little space for aesthetic knowing in education even though this is one of the most important resources of the modern world (Robinson 1982). Sisters Academy can be understood as a physical manifestation of an aesthetic-pedagogical approach to learning.

The manifestation in Denmark ran from March 2013 to May 2014 and was performed by the twin sisters (alias Anna Lawaetz and Gry Worre Hallberg), who materialized as head mistresses of the academy. It started with a presentation for the teachers in March 2013, then a performance dinner, where the teachers encountered the fictive universe performatively for the first time by dressing up for a candle light dinner and eating delicious food with their fingers. Afterwards they had a meeting with the Sisters to clarify the dinner performance through dialogue. In October 2013 the teachers worked out a document together with the Sisters in order to share responsibility for different practical tasks, because the budget was minimal. This concerned scenography, lighting and sound as well as logistics such as food, transportation and beds for the twin sisters to stay at the school from Monday through Friday during the project's two week run. In October and December 2013 the sisters and the teachers engaged in one-on-one dialogues in order to clarify questions and doubts and to help the teachers identify how they would teach inspired by the aesthetic and poetic universe. Twenty teachers ended up being involved together with 200 students.

The Sisters Academy ran from February 24 to March 7, 2014. The twin sisters started building the scenography a week before together with thirteen performance artists and set-, light-, and sound designers and the teachers, but it was left partly unfinished, leaving room for the students' input. On the first day the students arrived at the changed school and the twin sisters, who were temporarily head mistresses of the academy, invited them into the universe in order to continue building the scenography. The aim was for the students and teachers to transform themselves during the process by non-acting, or in other words, acting naturally on the stage (metaphorically speaking). Instead of speaking their native Danish, the artists and teachers used English to de-familiarize the familiar, and they were invited to write a personal diary and blogs, separated into a teachers' blog and a students' blog. The first Friday was a showcase where family, friends, researchers and the press had the opportunity to experience and participate in the universe. The second Friday ended with several rituals. The teachers posed in front of all teachers, students and the head of school sitting at a desk with one of the sisters and made promises of three commitments to how they would integrate the learning and insights into their teaching during the next two years. There was a musical ritual and a flag exchange ritual, symbolizing that the sisters returned the leadership to the head of school.

In May 2014 there were follow-up dialogues with the teachers in order to understand which elements and pedagogical approaches had worked especially well. Apparently, the teachers immersed themselves into the universe to varying degrees. Some were reluctant to leave their comfort zones as professionals; others were more daring and explored new possibilities. One teacher wrote on the blog that this was a unique opportunity that was partly wasted, because some teachers held back: "The whole point of making a full-blown *unheimlich* [the German word *unheimlich* means "not homely", and the idea is that by creating a universe that is the opposite of homely, we come home] universe with strict obstructions is to challenge the way we think, act, plan, communicate, etc. If you do not accept the challenge, you will not gain new experiences" (<http://sistersacademy.dk/how-much-will-you-risk-at-the-academy/>).

Another teacher had an experience of "exploring emotional moments". She had given the students an assignment of having someone whisper a poem or lyric of the heart in the ear. Afterwards they were to note down what kind of impression the sensuous experience gave them. In class they shared their notes, which gave rise to a special emotional atmosphere. The teacher wrote on the blog:

Much to my surprise, I was deeply touched by the students' descriptions. The memories the experience had invoked, the subtle descriptions, and the earnestness in which it was shared completely took me aback.

I felt that it was important, in that particular moment, to share my emotion with them – not being completely overwhelmed, I simply stated that I was very happy that we had done this exercise, and that it had moved me deeply to hear of their experiences and feel their earnestness.

Afterwards, I let the class fall silent. It sprung from the moment – I believed everybody had to give this experience (of sharing, and of moving someone unexpectedly) some thought, and I demanded the time for that, simply by staying immobile in front of the class, looking about the room.

(<http://sistersacademy.dk/exploring-emotional-moments/>)

A student also described his learning experience with the Sisters Academy:

The first day of Sisters Academy met me with great surprise. The very first thing that I did after stepping into the universe, was to communicate with a man named The Silence. We sat with him for a very long time chatting, and the funny thing about it was; we didn't say a word! After this I was hungry after more. I found it extremely fascinating, as if I was in a whole other universe, away from everyday life, away from responsibilities. When you walked around you could hear all kinds of different sounds, some of them relaxing, some of them soothing, some of them even a little scary. This was a part of the experience I think. To sense it all. I sat down with The Gardener, and we started talking. He was wonderful to be around, and he had a very calm aura around him. When you sat there, and you listened

to him, you fell into a sort of trance. I could sit for thirty minutes and listen to this man, and this comes from a guy that can't sit on chair for five minutes before getting distracted. He talked about everything, he opened a whole new chain of thoughts in my head. He opened doors I didn't think I could ever open. I asked him one day, what do you think the answer will be? What's your conclusion? He looked up, stared into my eyes and after some time, he simply answered: There is none. This answer defined the whole thing for me. I understood Sisters Academy right at that moment, like I got the answer, by getting no answer. For me this will be in my mind for a very long time. . .

(<http://sistersacademy.dk/my-experience-with-sisters-academy-mads-baltzer-stanley/>)

Sensuous learning

This experiment definitely made impressions on teachers and students, both positively and negatively. It was constructive and inspirational – even transformational – for some, and it was disturbing and provoking for others by taking them way out of their comfort zone. For teachers the constructive and inspirational part was being invited or gently pushed into a sensuous universe that provided new ideas and new perspectives on the subject and on the teaching approaches. They tried out things with the students that they would never have imagined on a normal school day, and some of these processes were so meaningful that these teachers felt touched (for example, when exploring emotional moments) and energized (one teacher wrote on the blog, 'My heart was dancing') and, they also learned something. The more disturbing part concerned the teacher role, which changed from being a professional expert, who knows all the answers, towards a more uncertain inquiring novice, who is unfamiliar with the aesthetic universe, the language (English) and the explorative attitude. This experience can be highly uncomfortable for someone who usually feels in control.

For the students the Sister Academy was a breath of fresh air that engaged them in a different way than on a normal school day. One of the greatest challenges for teachers nowadays is to hold the students' focus and attention. Teachers often complain that students are on Facebook or other social media during the sessions. This was obviously not the case during the project. To his own amazement one student (see above quote), who would normally have a very short attention span and would not be able to sit still for five minutes, sat for a half hour with The Gardener, who had this "very calm aura around him". Their dialog had a strong quality of engagement and presence. Furthermore The Gardener did something that a normal teacher would not do, he provided no answers. This was an important learning for the student, something that "would be in his mind for a very long time". It is interesting to note that questions and unfinished topics have a tendency to keep the mind going, whereas answers often tend to put an end to speculation.

The project continues in 2015 at Inkonst, an international art centre in Malmö, Sweden, featuring music, theatre, dance, performances, film, literature and art all under the same roof (<http://www.inkonst.com/sisters-hope-sisters-academy-nedslag-01%E2%80%B3/>). This project is large scale and has two parts, thanks to a generous funding from the Swedish Culture Foundation. The first part will manifest as a Sisters Academy – The Boarding School of a sensuous society – an immersive, interactive and durational performance-installation at Inkonst in September 2015 where everyone can sign up as students, potentially become teachers or substitute teachers, researchers- and artists-in-residence. The second part is an intervention into a Swedish upper secondary school; with the objective of transforming the school into a sensuous society to explore new more poetic and sensuous modes of knowledge production and learning environments.

Reflecting and learning through artful approaches

The second example is a first-person account from my own practice, illustrated with quotes from some of the involved students. Since 2006 I have been the director of an international executive Master's program in Denmark called LAICS: Leadership and Innovation in Complex systems (www.laics.net). One of its distinguishing features is that artistic intervention constitutes an important part of the learning approach. We work with theatre directors and actors, with music, both a classical violinist and jazz improvisation, with a ceramist, a visual artist, nature as art, mindfulness, drawing, graphic facilitation, prototyping, journal writing, storytelling and design approaches.

Here I focus on one specific seminar, which has a particularly strong impact on people's personal leadership. It takes place in the Canadian Rocky Mountains at the Banff Centre, which is situated in a large nature reserve. The aim of the four-day seminar is for the participants (about 20) to reflect on their personal leadership through a variety of artistic interventions and to enable them to articulate their leadership story at the end of the seminar. On the first day the students go into the mountains to reflect on the landscapes that have influenced their lives, particularly during childhood. Later that day they communicate with clay. One of the exercises concerns silent communication in groups of four or five participants, who are allowed to work with only one hand on a shared piece of clay. The task is to co-create something that makes sense and can be recognized by outsiders. The whole session takes two hours and the tasks become more and more abstract or metaphorical, such as creating a tableau on authentic leadership. The session ends by inviting people to create their own leadership icon in clay. These are fired in a kiln and three days later glazed and fired in a Raku kiln on the last day as part of the closing ceremony. The participants reflect through exercises such as these, interrupted by presentations on leadership theory and art-based research. During the seminar the participants also embody leadership through theatre rehearsal techniques and exercises on storytelling, they

walk and reflect in nature doing breathing and sensing exercises, and they work with natural materials in the forest trying to express their leadership values metaphorically.

The following is an excerpt from a master thesis on psychological innovation. It illustrates an individual experience of reflecting and learning through artistic processes and natural materials. The author, who had been going through a mid-life crisis that had lasted a few years, experienced several personal insights that helped him identify his way forward:

First practice after arriving in Banff was shaping 'my personal leadership' in clay. There were time constraints and no time for reflection. Just do it. I chose the first thing that came into my mind – the symbol of a thriving heart. Afterwards I was surprised that this simple little symbol contained the essence of all the questions I had. It was as if things were fused into a single expression. . . . My next question was about how I got on with the insights I had gained through the heart metaphor. My experience was that I got in touch with nature and that it replied back with a speed and accuracy, which was surprising. The answer was meaningful, profound and surprisingly rewarding. As if the answer unfolded from an immanent truth emerging through my wordless question and my intense listening for meaning. My response was clear – aha – that things fell into place in my consciousness. This was a very rewarding and moving experience . . .

(Kunze 2011, p. 4)

Other students described (in the reflection reports they write in the third module of the course) how the theatre rehearsal exercises have taught them lessons about their leadership that arise from their bodily sensations. It has made them aware of understanding bodily sensations better, such as queasiness and gut feelings in general, and it has also been a lesson for some to pay more attention to their inner voice. One student wrote that an exercise in which he had to walk like his most admired leader gave him several insights about body language. First, he had to walk like a female leader. This made him intensely aware of how he would normally carry his own body, something he had never considered before. Second, his new consciousness made him change his way of walking, because he found his earlier appearance to be counterproductive to whom he authentically was and wanted to be. Another student wrote that the artistic intervention opened him up for another source of knowing. His hands knew the answer before his mind could follow or could formulate it verbally. Artistic interventions thus seem to convey different and more immediate insights than theoretical presentations (Berthoin Antal 2013b; Taylor and Ladkin 2009).

Artful learning

These examples suggest that learning through artistic intervention is different than studying by reading. I would argue that artistic approaches can help

us discover what we do not know that we know. Our body absorbs lots of information that never enter our conscious mind unless we make space for this to happen, for example, through reflection or meditation practice. Our hands know things that may come out in artistic materials (such as clay or natural materials) and our bodies give us signals and impulses that we may easily overhear and not take action upon until we discover the richness of the information (see Bozic Yams, this volume). Through embodiment we discover “the body as a site of knowledge” (Pelias 2008, p. 186). The keyword here is *insights*, insights from our own intuition, paying attention to bodily sensations and impulses, or listening to our inner voice. In my experience this is an important part of developing *innovation competency*, which I define as the ability to create innovation by navigating effectively together with others in complex contexts (Darsø 2012, p. 110).

Innovation competency consists of a foundation of knowledge about innovation, but this is far from enough. Two meta competencies must be developed as well, and these can only be acquired through experience and practice. Socio-innovative competency covers the aspect of leading or facilitating innovation processes in diverse groups. Intra-innovative competency concerns learning about oneself, becoming conscious about strengths and talents, knowing how to motivate oneself and what kind of reflection works, and learning to use intuition (Darsø 2012, pp. 110–111). Aesthetic and artistic approaches are particularly effective for developing intra-innovative competency.

Conclusion

Reflecting on what has happened in the field of Arts & Business since 2004 makes me conclude that the biggest difference since then is the increasing amount of research being carried out around the world, as documented by Berthoin Antal and Strauß in this volume. This is, indeed, the good news. Despite the financial crisis, artistic interventions are also still being explored in the fields of business, organizations and education, and as evident from the chapters of this book, the development has been evolutionary – not revolutionary. It has not given rise to the steep curve of growth that I, perhaps naïvely, imagined in 2004. I have argued that one of the major strengths of artistic intervention in organizations can be expressed as the tension inherent in *constructive disturbance*. Organizations need to be disturbed regularly, because they have a tendency to freeze into a culture of homogeneity and complacency, but as various experiments and ‘failures’ have demonstrated throughout this book, disturbance must be underpinned by creating trusting and respectful relationships between all people involved. One of the ways to escape a closed culture and daily humdrum is to create interspaces or physical studios, as suggested in this book. Unquestionably, there is great potential in artful approaches, but it takes a lot of experience and practice to obtain the competency for understanding the needs of the organization and link it to the overall strategy, in order to create a worthwhile artistic intervention that is meaningful to the people involved,

adequately provocative, and at the same time effective for the organization. Artists are generally not equipped to take on this role because they want to focus on their art, so some kind of intermediary will be necessary here, such as an internal or external consultant.

Besides the importance of more research and more evidence on the values added through artistic intervention, I believe that the greatest potential for artful approaches lies in the field of education, in particular in leadership development. As McGill Professor of Management, Nancy J. Adler, has expressed it: "Twenty-first century society yearns for a leadership of possibility, a leadership based more on hope, aspiration, and innovation than on the replication of historical patterns of constrained pragmatism" (Adler 2006, p. 487). Education as an institution is still far behind. And Professor of Law and Ethics, Martha Nussbaum states: "All over the world, programs in arts and the humanities, at all levels, are being cut away in favor of the cultivation of the technical" (Nussbaum 2009, p. 8). Education, in general, has not been able to adapt or change to better fit the demands of a global "Knowledge Society" (Drucker 1993). When contemplating that new social media platforms have given rise to new types of economy, such as Airbnb and crowdsourcing, and that the creative industries have developed and grown considerably during the last decade (even during the economic crisis), then it becomes obvious that education must change too. The twenty-first century calls for different competencies, like innovation competencies, which is why creative, aesthetic and artistic interventions are both needed and justified. The aesthetic dimension opens up for experiencing, exploring and knowing the world in a different way than logical thinking does. It adds value in introducing diverse sensuous modes of knowing, which make a difference both as inward reflection leading to new insights and outward construction of artful communication and new ways of engaging people.

Reflecting and learning through artful approaches have great potential, in particular in leadership development, but in general also as a way of renewing education in a broader sense. Therefore, the way forward for artistic intervention to become recognized as powerful and value-adding in organizations will be through people who have themselves experienced, practiced and learnt from these during their education. Leaders with artful insights in their bodies, minds, hearts and spirits are intra-innovatively competent and will be more prone to welcoming artistic interventions in their organizations. And with increasing research the field will slowly but surely continue its evolution.

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