

Introduction

Is it possible to teach?

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It is perhaps slightly absurd, after fifteen years' teaching, to deal with the problem whether or not it is possible to teach. Obviously, I only needed to make clear some things for myself, perhaps summarise something, generalize and identify something.

Some comments have also provoked me into it, some of which I have not heard for a long time, and others now not so often. In the last half year, on the subject of teaching and art, I have heard several of them again soon after each other, at AVU too. That was probably the final impulse to the choice of topic.

"It's not possible to teach art!" is one of the phrases which can be heard and which probably each of us at some time in the past has used. Today it is, I think, an unnecessary comment. However, it constantly occurs. This year too. Those "more thoughtful" of the ones called to mind add: "After all, writers, for example, haven't got any schools."

Lecturer's note: One learns a language from birth and, actually, for one's whole life. At least eight years systematically in school; for the most part, however, twelve years. Altogether, that comes to roughly eighteen years and, in the case of a university degree, twenty three years. Therefore, twenty three years' practice, theory, grammar, history, forms and structure of the language, and you can add songs to that too. Of course, a writer must form an artistic opinion for themselves. Still, that surely means everyone.

Next quote: Glazunov said: „Amateurs play the best. Of course they must know how to play well.“

Lecturer's note: „Quite!“

Next comment: photographer (older), teacher: "I teach them (he was thinking of students) that nonsense, how to master something and then I give them complete freedom!"

Comment: I said to myself, why give it to them, that freedom? Before they came to school, they had already had it then absolutely. After school they will again have it and it doesn't even occur to anyone to take it from them. So why give them something which they have in abundance? What are they actually taught, or better put, what do they, the students, actually learn? Something, yes definitely, because roughly 70 - 90% of their results are satisfactory and well known. That's evidence that they learn something anyway, be it under some kind of guidance, or by themselves.

Quote again (several times overheard): "You are still dealing with that craft (AVU meant), but we teach them mainly to think and create." The best subsequent comment heard was: "We now do video completely as standard."

Comment: That rotten word "craft" became, paradoxically, a counterbalance to the equally rotten word "art". Translated to Czech: we at AVU are still drawing all the time, they are creating.

Of course, the best thing is to have a look at all the results. It interested me how often their viva preceded the critique. Usually there are those comments about insufficient time, many important lectures, courses, etc., which students must complete for the attainment of the correct level. Along with that, more often than not appears the bitter comment about the luxury at AVU and the abundant time that they have. A colleague, a graphic artist, added: "It will catch up with you too!" By that he meant, when the European Union „come down on you“ through new laws and we will have to go over to modern "mass breeding". Evidently all art schools suffer from a complex that they are absolutely progressive, without actually defining progress, and are about to distance themselves from the past, without actually having to. I'm not speaking against a theoretic education, but top artists aren't top because they have attended lots of lectures and read many books. There are ten thousand people who have read many times more books and / or are much better educated. But I think I have digressed.

I quite understand officials and colleagues in other schools. If, however, every school without exception is preparing students for a profession, employment and utility, a school preparing a small group of people for a long time and at great expense for a totally useless and suspect mission simply, necessarily, matters. Fortunately we are a small school, with a small number of students. They are, however, absolutely useless. Is then AVU a "Brontosaurus"? Is it bad to teach for ideals? What else are we to teach for in order not to be completely superfluous? And where to get these ideals from? The idea that everything must be entertaining, in competition with television, Hollywood, porn, computer games, 3D-films and so on, pushes us into the role of ridiculous amateurs. Noble-minded "mundane" ideals, whatever they be (justice, progress, culture, defiance, development, achievement etc.), end up like this, or otherwise, in a battle for power or in

a crush for it. I don't know if the idea "to Prevail" is a sufficient ideal. Without an ideal, however, it is not possible to mark the boundaries of space; no borders are established and there isn't anything to maintain nor anything to infringe. Underground and official art merge into one and, as such, can be "paid" from two sides. Nor is there the possibility to grant students and young people much of a long-desired and radiant feeling for a revolutionary fight for progress. All that remains is a fight over grants. Any time now some group or other will, no doubt, mark out the path of truth from the past to the future and bring in "true" thought. Yet one can't reduce all living reality to a selfish trickle so lightly. In particular, it is not possible to teach in conformity with that, since the trickle will soon run dry.

I should like, however, to return to the idea, already started, of craft, whether or not AVU teaches it, and what it actually is. I don't want to "run down" colleagues from other schools nor make light, no matter how, of the efforts of their departments, institutes, faculties and so on. There is no reason. **Indeed not!** What concerns me is AVU. I want to brush up the concept of "craft" a little, its fundamental meaning and beauty.

Is "craft" only that which is carried out by hand and / or even only that which the mind and intellect merely oversee? That could also be craft. But how is it that I know what kind of effect, for example, a fault in an area arranged in a rhythmical way has? I know how to use it with the certainty that, if the worst comes to the worst, this always looks good.

I know what will happen if I put, for example, two squares next to each other and I paint over one of them with something. I know (we know), what will happen, if we tilt one square just a little, or we leave a slight trace on each of them, or we write something on each of them. Whatever. (The same goes for oblongs and others).

The trained mind knows any effect we achieve by multiplying whatever 10x or 100x in space or on one surface. I know what such a mass of multiplied objects "will do", what the display is, what sort of grid it is. From these objects it is also possible to build a room, "a space in a space", or it is possible with one and the same to cover everything, the ceiling and furniture, as a decoration. All this is reliable knowledge and it will never let you down.

With video, computers, cameras and all the other instruments that exist, their control isn't craft. It is rather instructions for use. All instruments, including computers, as "goods", are necessarily aimed at being used by a complete "idiot", and that within 15 minutes of unpacking (see radio, TV and others).

"Craft" is when during filming I use a so-called "mobile camera". I know the effect of this "unconventional" but desperately traditional method of recording perfectly.

If I make long motionless shots of whatever (so-called "boredom"), it is a "craft". This effect is well known.

If I aim the camera at one place and leave it to record at random, an unplanned plot, it is "craft". It always comes out well!

If I enlarge a photo and paint something on it or change it digitally, it is an effect which only rarely comes out badly. It can always be reliably used. It is a "craft".

"Reportage" always comes out well too: all photographed (filmed) so-called accidentally, directly, unaesthetically, without composition. Reliable "craft". If I use a character from a serial or a computer game wherever, I won't be criticized. It is good craft.

If I stand a series of televisions next to each other (as in the director's cabin of a TV broadcast) recording various actions (times) from various places of the world, and I leave one set on for an actual recording of the viewer themselves and one I switch off, I then have a perfectly authenticated effect, it is pure "craft" (of course, in combination it is without number).

If I record repeating or changing events of various places, for example, the movements of people in public places, the movements of animals, the state of water, temperature, the strata of clouds, wood, the changing co-ordinates of whatever, and transfer them to other media (drawing, sound, light, colour) through some "coefficient", I'll always get something interesting. This now is the nature of reality and the nature of the beauty of a "translation" to another form (the inventor is an old well-known graph, i.e. the transfer of actual measurements to a drawn representation). For complete reliability of result it is "craft".

If I leave a TV "humming" in an empty room somewhere in a corner, I have such a certainty of result, that it is pure "craft" (applies also to a TV switched off).

If I put something really excessively large into whatever kind of space, I can be on a bed of roses. The result is one hundred per cent. It is craft. One of the most common (valid in all disciplines and all areas without exception).

The use of neon is expensive but excellent. Here it is practically impossible to make a mistake. It is sovereign "craft", elegant even (valid too for light and fire effects).

If I divide a picture with a horizon and I put a blue stain above, and a green stain below, I safely know that the majority of spectators will connect it with an impression of the countryside. It is "craft".

If I empty a bucket of red paint on the wall, I know the expressive effect in advance and I can't be mistaken. It is "craft".

If I go to a private view naked I am sure of the effect. It is "craft".

If I write on the floor the word "ceiling" and on the ceiling the word "floor", the reaction is easily predictable and well-known. It is "craft".

To pretend that I know how to is also a nice craft, and if I indeed do not know how to, it's nothing to worry about, even amateurism is now, I think, a profession (I don't know if it can be taught though).

The area of contrasts is good, well-known, and tried and tested. It is very effective and completely reliable. It is possible to use it everywhere, in the countryside, in an interior, a picture, an event, a film, music, a story, etc. To bring something quite unexpected or starkly contrasting to anything is reliable (e.g. a contrast of crudity and perfection, etc.). It is "craft".

I can join two objects at an unexpected place. It is an old, surrealistic "craft". If I exhibit absolutely nothing, the relationship between emptiness and the textual justification is now a sanctified craft, etc., etc., etc.

The craft of all crafts is the teaching of complex stylistic schemes, or period cliches, and/or momentary thought patterns. The last named in particular is often used under the title of "learn to think".

The craft of a ship's captain surely does not consist in how deftly he controls the helm, but in how he is a master of navigation, how he is familiar with the sea and maps, how he

knows the boat and the crew, the idiosyncrasies of harbours and legislation. How he deals with this "craft", is a matter of his intelligence and invention - and that's what it's about! "Craft", experience, to make good use of, not surpass! Of course art and craft, in the same way as form and content, if they don't coalesce into one indistinguishable living reality, will disintegrate into corpses. But that now is another matter.

I have recorded here only small, tiny little patterns, the most popular verified schemes, and I have deliberately left many of them out. It would be quite possible, without any problem, to make out a book like a telephone directory of Prague of all these "craft" experiences and knowledge.

"Craft" is a brain experience. If I use this previously well certified experience and know, at least with 70% certainty, what will happen, it is "craft". I cannot see the least researchable difference between painting, video art, graphic art, new media, sculpture, conceptualism, film, music, action, theatre, literature, and so on. They all work on the basis of a sum of experience, and the deeper, more extensive, more thorough this experience, or "craft", is, the more important, interesting, comprehensive and also more subtle the subject is, and the higher the quality of the graduate could be.

Therefore, all schools of art that exist in the world are built on the teaching of "craft" regardless of what they call it. It doesn't depend on the subject nor on the age of the particular school. It depends only on how they give time and space to the development of professional experience or the "craft" of a given discipline and to what extent they resist the temptation to impart only a momentary scheme of thought.

Genuine experience is non-transferable and is good. As a result of that life does not degenerate. Experience develops only with life, and activity, and that takes time. It develops as a combination of physical and mental activity, but the mental always dominates and in everything (anyone who has ever tried to split a boulder, or move it, found out immediately that strength and skill are at that moment absolutely useless to them. Either they know how to do it, or that's the end of the matter).

Experience transforms the student - an apprentice into a new person, a professional. And it isn't a mere by-product of teaching, since, in action, perception, the psyche and the ability to see and distinguish a nuance become more refined; for the non-professional it is invisible. A sensitivity for the given discipline is part of the arsenal of usable experience, "a craft", of every subject. It is one of the indispensable and coveted products of teaching. Even a joiner, a baller dancer, a builder, etc. registers at one glance a mistake which for others is invisible. They will spot a suitable or unsuitable material, or method, or movement, etc. immediately, in the same way as musicians, doctors and a thousand other professions.

There is, of course, experience obtainable easily, immediately, by mere observation. On the contrary, at the other end of the spectrum, there is fundamental experience. This is acquired over a long time, at great effort, with a strong will and humility. Everyone who ever wanted to learn to play an instrument knows this well. Acrobats know it, dancers know it, mime artists and actors, sportsmen, conjurers, magicians too and anyone who ever wanted to truly master drawing from a model. In this study the whole person changes. Not, however, fundamentally, and only a little for the better, but the body and soul will feel it. It's "only" a matter of time.

And this is that moment of luxury which, for AVU, is typical and really worthy of envy. Sufficient time for learning "the craft" of a given subject. It is connected also to a trust in the student and their talent, otherwise this time could not be provided to them (if we don't trust someone, then we don't give them anything). Sufficient time for learning, researching, for doubts, fumbling about, erroneous ways, despair, taking risks. Sufficient time for a crisis, falls and new rises etc. Anyone without this would, only with great difficulty become, in our field, deeply educated and truly professional. Experience, personal experiences, as well as understanding are matters of time.

The luxury not to have an immediate result is an AVU luxury.

The luxury to go through something to absurdity is an AVU luxury.

The luxury to "idle away" time with uncertainty is an AVU luxury.

The luxury of constant personal communication between tutor and student is an AVU luxury (we get to know a personality more quickly "personally".)

And here I deliberately only mention in passing that every process at the school must be professionally prepared and managed, structured, controlled and directed. For precisely this there are the teaching staff. They set the assignments, give momentum, stipulate etc. Without them the time at AVU would most probably, teetering on conviction, dissolve into song and dance. All that I intentionally pass over and leave out, fully conscious of disorganizing the whole picture (I'm sorry about that now because AVU's academic staff are real personalities: they are well-educated and in no way wet blankets; they are full-blooded people, tolerant, understanding, sacrificing, unselfish, some are also good-looking; they are highly regarded, well-fed and full of energy; and many always potent).

From the foregoing it follows for me that an amateur is actually one who was given insufficient time, time carefully controlled, in a dialogue with the given material, for their inner education and self-awareness. This person, an amateur, had neither the opportunity nor the time to be familiar with the chosen material and, through that, themselves. It is profoundly indifferent whether it concerns materials from paper, words, stone, a computer programme, paints, bodies, film, movement, sound and whatever else is in this world. What constantly and always applies is: "Ease is either mastery or it is a deceit!"

And now I should like finally to get to one of the sovereign crafts and sovereign arts of all time, and that is drawing. It isn't from sentiment or from a lifetime of affection. There are three reasons for it:

Drawing is a universal "language" and the skeleton of everything which is necessary to portray, both from the field of the seen and also from the unseen, or "not portrayable". With regard to the fact that it is a "language" older than writing, it has been used by all people of all times. The drawing is probably the first possibility of "portraying" abstract thought. Without it this thought would have developed with difficulty.

Even writing started on the foundations of drawing; it is actually one of its forms.

Drawing is an outstanding, direct, means of researching reality, and that both as object (model), and subject (the draughtsman). Sometimes it isn't even possible to say who in this process is the object and who the subject.

Our school was founded a long time ago on the study of drawing. Because nothing should "be overcome", but be made good use of, this major "gene" is also an AVU

commitment. Who else should now foster drawing, if not AVU? Hopefully not philosophers?

Now to drawing itself, but more or less in outline.

Personally I prefer drawing as a cognitive process. In order for drawing to acquire the structure of a "language", it is necessary to know it as deeply and as broadly as possible. And that "physically", not in discussion.

If I start with Adam, it is necessary to state that a drawing is the quickest means of recording ideas. It won't be done more quickly with a text. A characteristic is that drawing and text splendidly supplement each other. If I pass over classical illustration, there remains the never ending sequence of important ideas, inventions and projects, in which a text without drawings either does not make any sense or is incomprehensible.

Writing and drawing develop abstract thought. A drawing will succeed in "formalizing" a thought. In nature neither the line nor writing exists. Both components try to capture, through the distinct and the visible, "that" which is invisible, suspected. Drawing, of course, has deeper roots in our psyche, and therefore, in capturing "the world of sensations", is more expressive and more exact. It strikes deep into the subconscious and thus can more lightly and universally help in communication.

In the artistic sphere an idea is not an idea until it is drawn, sketched, or otherwise "represented". It is thus "translated" to a pictorial language and only after that can I express an opinion and pass judgement on it.

The sketch, sketching, is an important medium of communication at this school. I couldn't imagine my work without it. Professional communication with the students would actually come to a halt. A sketch is the first step forward. Its incompleteness enables it to engage anyone in communication. Sketching is the noise of an idea, the first phase of deciding, the first pleasure and the first dialogue. It is a provocation to a personal experience and thought. It is the first image of a future picture. At this moment it is still possible to discuss the picture, to change it, intervene in it, to choose variations. If it is complete, it is possible only to criticise.

A certain contrast to the sketch, an apparent contrast, however, is created by a study drawing. I emphasize the word study. This type of drawing does not deal with ideas chasing around our head, nor with those just murmuring somewhere in the subconscious. It deals with the study of ideas forming this world and our psyche giving

everything a likeness. The order of the world displays itself also in a visible spectrum. And the visible again testifies to the invisible. Through the portrayable we get to that which cannot be portrayed.

We learn to see, in order to be able to testify to that what is suspected. After all, even things, animals, and, in the end, people too speak through us and our images. Nevertheless, we can change the likeness of reality on paper, e.g. by a movement of only one proportion. At the same time we are thus touching on one of the beautiful mysteries: what actually is a likeness? How is it that everything has its own likeness? As the most complex being, it is most marked in a human. Why does everything created want to be somehow original? Eyes evidently want "something" to see! During the course of a study

we establish the general characteristics of an object, skeleton, anatomy, etc. But, when it is indeed "a likeness", we get a signal that the aim of the study is close. On the material of paper, from the material of graphite, a likeness "of something or other" is created. From paper looms the image. Shadows form "something" and it is knowledge. It is obvious that the student now comprehends, knows how to co-ordinate himself, sees, understands, and therefore knows! They had to suffer a long time, feel inferior, useless, but recognised too the feelings of happiness, their will and power.

And the will is an indispensable prerequisite. The will itself, "wanting", is practically a kind of being, an existence. Without "wanting" talent is pointless. Must want to be! (verified in practice.) A student should be the bearer of a will. He or she must "set themselves tasks" and I will help them. We can both also flounder about, but without the will effort is useless, even their talent is useless.

During the past hundreds of years the process of teaching drawing has not changed as regards the degree of exertion required. Language, writing and drawing constantly require the same time and effort as ages ago. And better it never will be. That is why so regularly a number of students, used to instructions and accommodation, come up against this discipline's wall of intransigence. They then quickly abandon this area in which, for them, straightforward achievement is far away.

At this point I can personally see that moment why a number of secondary schools, and not only them, withdrew from the study of drawing and went straight over to "self-expression" drawing. To go across without study and knowledge straight into "personal experiences" ends up, in the vast majority of cases, in a complete cliché. The speed of the hand, "as if", captures the feelings of "the heart" and in a flash "transforms" the seen reality into "a personal" image. Paradoxically, all the drawings then look the same, although they should be a quite personal interpretation of a model. Students like to believe in this impersonal expression, because at the time of inception they go through moments of forgetting, happiness, a loosening, floating away from doubts, and they forget themselves. They want it again. A mass of drawings quickly grows and a feeling of creative power and of being historically unburdened emerges. Doubts and exertion are misleading. Either it is possible immediately, quickly and naturally, or there's no point at all. From time to time we encounter this opinion too. It could be called "the devil's trap"! In place of study self-expression comes in. They don't learn to draw but learn "interesting" drawing. They don't form a starting point, but jump straight into the conclusion. This, of course, cannot be truly personal, yet the student will not manage to recognise or admit it.

To teach such drawing is easy and takes but a short time. In any case it is very palatable and "boredom" does not arise. And boredom is the great problem of the time. Even at our school students turn up demanding entertainment with everything, lectures, assignments, tutorials. I praise boredom! It is a fundamental riddle. During boredom from studies, exertion, anguish and stillness the soul makes itself heard, and that at the outset can be painful and unpleasant. It is, however, real and cruelly live. Therefore, glory to the boredom of the litany, glory to the boredom of the journey across the desert, of the construction of the pyramids, the construction of a cathedral, weaving a Persian carpet, glory to the "boredom" of ideas in gestation, the foetus, and everything alive.

With that I finish this lecture and I hope I have at least proved to myself, that it is possible to teach at art school and can be, and for that AVU is the most fitting, I have attempted to highlight a teaching system which for AVU is characteristic, and to emphasize that, which in the process of each course, is lasting and valuable, and separate teaching from mere sorcery. At the same time I have tried in a "non-violent" way to express my fundamental pedagogic opinions. In particular, I wanted to raise the standing of drawing as being completely unique among all disciplines and indicate its direct bond with the principles of information. A more fundamental question, why to actually teach, remains for me and henceforth open.

Přehled výstav Figurama ~ Figurama Exhibitions

- 2001 Znojmo, Slepíči trh (FA VUT, VŠUP)
- 2002 Znojmo, Dům umění
host ~ Guest : *Universität für angewandte Kunst Wien*
- 2002 Brno, Centrum VUT
- 2002 Praha, Galerie VŠUP
- 2003 Wien, Sala terrena
host ~ Guest: *Fachhochschule Mainz*
- 2003 Wien, České centrum ~ *Tschechisches Zentrum*
artelerie ~ Pedagogové ~ Profesors
- 2003 Znojmo, Dům umění
host ~ Guest : *FAVU VUT*
- 2003 Brno, Aula FAVU VUT
- 2003 Praha, Galerie VŠUP
- 2004 Plzeň, univerzitní galerie
host ~ Guest : *Ústav umění a designu zu Plzeň*
- 2004 Znojmo, Dům umění
host ~ Guest : *FAVU VUT ~ Ateliér figurativního sochařství Michala Gabriela*
- 2004 Znojmo, Dům umění
artelerie ~ Pedagogové ~ Profesors
- 2004 Praha, Karlov
artelerie ~ Pedagogové ~ Profesors
- 2005 Mainz, Radnice ~ *Town Hall*
- 2005 Znojmo, jízdárna Louka ~ *Riding School Louka*
host ~ Guest : *Vysoká škola výtvarných umění v Bratislavě:
Akademie výtvarných umění v Praze*
- artelerie ~ Pedagogové ~ Profesors
- 2005 Praha, Karlov
artelerie ~ Pedagogové ~ Profesors
- 2006 Bratislava, ubs
- 2006 Plzeň, bývalé nádraží Jižní předměstí
- 2006 Ostrava, Centrum Chagall
- 2006 Znojmo, jízdárna Louka ~ *Riding School Louka*
host ~ Guest : *Facultad de Bellas Artes Valencia: Academy of Fine Arts in Katowice*
- artelerie ~ Pedagogové ~ Profesors
- 2007 Brno, Bělidla (KRAS)
- Znojmo, jízdárna Louka pouze Artelerie ~ pedagogové ČR
- Mainz, Radnice
- Praha, Karlov
- Artelerie ~ Pedagogové ~ Profesors