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The Academy as an issue

Bert Taken

Bert Taken is carrying out PhD research into the philosophical basis of art and design education. There are very few developed, coherent and well-founded models for visual arts and design education. In fact, there are only two; the academic model and the Bauhaus model. The academic model became invalid in the course of the 19th century, while the Bauhaus philosophy, which determined our ideas on art and design education in the 20th century for many years, has also lost ground during the past few decades. As a result of the loss of faith in modernism, the introduction of new art forms (performance, installation art, video art) and, more generally, the emergence of post-modern thinking, many art academies have been making modifications, altering the emphasis where they see fit and coming up with their own philosophies to justify these changes. In the nineteen-seventies, a completely new situation emerged. The continuing erosion of the boundaries between the various disciplines and media, the need to devise new concepts to replace vocabulary that was deemed too (neo)romantic or modernistic, and the growing influence of theory in the practice of art, meant that art academies had to come up with a consistent way of accounting for their position and practices. The upshot of this was that many academies adopted a rather free and wilful style of using concepts from very diverse theoretical constellations to shape their philosophy on education. Concepts from the French philosophy of difference go hand in hand with concepts from romantic, modernistic or psychoanalytical origins. At the same time, there are now more urgent reasons for developing a coherent vision on education. These include developments from the practical art field, developments in educational policy and the introduction of new technological media, as well as developments relating to processes of internationalisation and interculturalisation. The reasons cited above go some way to explaining the current urgent need to consider the foundations of art education on both a national and an international basis. This research is intended to contribute to the process of consideration.

Bert Taken is a philosopher and teaches at the Gerrit Rietveld Academy and at the Amsterdam Academy of Architecture. He is currently working on a dissertation on the philosophical fundamentals of art and design education. He is also coordinator of the Studium Generale at the Gerrit Rietveld Academy.

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