



## ART AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING

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Introduction by Louise Andersson

### **Welcome to our seminar on art and self-directed learning**

I am Louise Andersson and I am head of education and global perspectives here at Swedish Travelling Exhibitions. My job entails working with educational projects and gathering information about developments in the exhibition medium around the world. My task today is to introduce the programme and to keep an eye on the clock!

This seminar on Art and self-directed learning is part of the learning partnership project under the heading “European museum education and young people – a critical enquiry”. All the participating cultural institutions are represented at this seminar, coming from the UK, Portugal, Italy and Ireland.

We have already spent Tuesday and Wednesday together in Stockholm where we looked at various types of art projects that – in varying degrees – are working with young people either in formal education or in their spare time. We have paid visits to Moderna museet, Botkyrka municipal art gallery, Candyland, Kollektivet Livet and Mossutställningar. And we have been to Subtopia in the suburb of Alby where there are numerous cultural activities aimed at or managed by young people.

We have also invited to today's seminar a number of people who work in gallery education, principally from Scandinavia. I wish you all a warm welcome.

The idea of the seminar is to shed light on young people's self-directed learning at art museums, public art galleries and other art institutions. How can we work? What methods should we be using? What resources do we need? How should the organization be run so that the museum, art gallery or exhibition can act as a platform for young people's learning in their spare time? Together we can look at methods, relate experiences and discuss in order to understand what are fruitful approaches.

#### THEME OF THE SEMINAR

First I want to say something about the theme of the seminar.

For our programme today we have chosen a broad perspective on learning that we see as the process in which knowledge is built up. We all arrive at a learning situation with prior knowledge and experiences. In our meetings with others and through the learning process we can build on these with new knowledge and skills.

Self-directed learning is learning in which one's own agenda for learning is in control. I learn something because I want to and have some sort of motivation. In my free time, beyond the school curriculum and educational goals, it is only my own interests that determine whether I get stuck into something or not. In this decision the individualization process, the process of creating meaning and self-fulfilment all play their part. As does a desire to understand and to learn more about other people and how one can act in order to influence and change things. This can build on – and evince aspects both of empowerment and agency.

Bernt Gustavsson, who is professor of education at Örebro University, has shown that self-directed learning requires a starting point in one's own interests, experiences and curiosity but that, in order to give us something new, we have to be challenged in what we already know and that self-directed learning describes a pendular movement between these two conditions.

In her research on computer games as cultivation, Carin Falkner at Jönköping University's School of Education and Communication has shown that curiosity and challenges are motive forces in self-directed learning but that a sense of community – social knowledge – plays an important, if not

decisive, role in young people's commitment to LAN and Internet games, for example. Community creates the preconditions for the dialogue between one's own experiences and those of others that are essential if learning is to take place. For this type of education to be possible there has also to be an open attitude towards new experiences. And this also applies to people like ourselves who work in cultural institutions.

Who are they, then, these youngsters we expect to see being involved in self-directed learning in their spare time at the art institutions where we work? I can see three major groups in the age range 15 to 25. There are probably many others too. But these are the three categories that I have been able to define when looking at how art and cultural institutions work with young people in their spare time.

- There is one group of people who are outside the formal educational structure but are part of groups and organizations where they are expected to take part in activities. These are often people with poorer financial, educational and social opportunities. Art institutions then often collaborate with organizations and activities that are intended to create meaning and to give young people the requisite skills to take their place in the more accepted sectors of life and to keep them out of crime, addiction, abusive parental situations or other forms of marginalization
- Then there are the people who love art, want to learn all about it, produce art themselves or see to it that exciting art events happen where they are active. Art lovers, quite simply. Certain museums and art galleries succeed in being a platform for youngsters who are passionate about art and who want to learn masses about it and to share their knowledge with others.  
Example: Unges laboratorium for kunst, Statens museum for kunst, Copenhagen, on-line art community  
<http://ungeslaboratorierforkunst.dk/index.asp?key=1>  
Kulturverket, Umeå municipalty, collaborative authorship projects  
<http://www.umea.se/invanare/kulturfritid/kulturverket>
- And then there are those who see an opportunity in their encounter with art and a platform for change at the art institutions. The ones who want to change the world. And certain art institutions create space for pursuing issues that youngsters themselves deem to be important. Such issues may be caring about the environment, gender equality, justice and solidarity for example.

Example: RumEtt, The Dunker Culture Centre, Helsingborg, young people's arena at art gallery/culture centre

<http://www.dunkerskulturhus.se/templates/StandardPage.aspx?id=17546&epslanguage=SV>

Lava, Kulturhuset Stockholm, young people's arena at art gallery/culture centre

<http://www.kulturhuset.stockholm.se/default.asp?id=1236&ptid=12253&Category=Lava>

In our research in connection with this seminar, we found that there is not really a surplus of art museums and galleries in Sweden that direct their activities at young adults in their spare time. Most of the museums work principally with schools or, maybe with programmes like evening courses. But these institutions often determine the direction and content of the operations without young people having any real influence on them.

#### TODAY'S PROGRAMME

Having painted the background I should now like to focus your attention on today's programme.

First, Göran Björnberg will give us a brief introduction to Swedish cultural policy in order to provide us with an overview of the landscape in which we operate here in Sweden.

Jytte Rüdiger will then lead a session devoted to entrepreneurship as a method for young people to do their own thing. Entrepreneurship can be both a choice and an obligation if one wants to get something done. I hope that you will take this opportunity to compare how you work or don't work with youngsters and how/if the entrepreneurial method can be a way of working with young adults in their spare time in an art situation.

After lunch Lisa Lundström will lead a short discussion in which we can together consider the strengths and weaknesses, threats and opportunities of the method in our various operations and contexts.

After that, Maria Dahlström will tell us how the art society known as Samtidskonst in Uppsala has collaborated with Uppsala Art Museum as well as about Flukta which is a network for young art societies in Sweden. And I should also point out that Helen Karlsson from Uppsala Art Museum

is here at the seminar. So you can talk to her too about how she views the collaboration as well.

Lina Ahtola, Armin Scholler and Mathias Strömer will then present three examples of how the Swedish Travelling Exhibitions has worked together with youngsters in producing exhibitions.

Lisa Lundström will then lead a workshop where we will be able to discuss how art institutions can be an arena for young people's self-directed learning during their spare time. We hope that in this workshop you will bring with you your reflections on today's various activities so that we can jointly see what a supportive organization should look like, which ways are relevant for working with young people and which issues are important to stress in order to do this in a qualified manner.

After what we hope will be a thought-provoking and stimulating day we shall eat our evening meal here at Swedish Travelling Exhibitions. Mårten Jansson, who works for us as the editor of global perspectives, is taking part in the seminar. During the meal he will give us some personal conclusions about issues and questions raised during the day. We shall also take a guided tour of the premises so that you can see the entire building.

Practical stuff: There are toilets immediately outside this room and on the next floor in the foyer. There is fruit and water for you to consume. There will also be breaks for coffee and lunch will be served.

The success of this seminar depends on your being interested in the art institution as a possible place for young people's self-directed learning – in their spare time. Ask questions, present proposals, talk to the people you have lunch with; and to the others. How do you yourself regard this issue?

Louise Andersson

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