

# On How to grow artists?

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## MASTERS'S THESIS

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### Summary /Abstract

My thesis processes a young artists' awakening, training, and obstacles the artist encounters when graduating from school. In my thesis I try to answer the question: Why is it so difficult for the artist to successfully build a career?

Answering the question I present, I conclude that alongside the lack of possibilities to find employment, the artist himself is the greatest obstacle in building a career. Some of the responsibility is naturally with the education itself. The Novia BA level students' education should take the career after graduation into greater consideration and invest to a larger extent into training for this.

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## **Indrotuction /Abstract**

My thesis is divided into two parts, the written part and the graphic novel Theoretical working process for stereotypical artist.

The written part is a chronological recount of my development, artistic awakening, art school years, and the difficulties I encountered in creating a career after art school, settling down and turns my life took which affected my living and career. The written part ends at my status quo.

Alongside my personal story I muse on the general status of an artist living in Finland, education, the grant and gallery system that rules us. I've interviewed some current students at Novia polytechnic, teachers, and my classmates. On a difficult subject which has no all-encompassing answers I wanted the interviewees to be able to formulate and express their thoughts unedited.

I've tried to pinpoint reasons and consequences, while drawing guidelines for how an artist can affect his or her own career trajectory.

The graphic novel studies the difficulties in building a career as well. The visual appearance, humor and satirical substances have provided a way to interpret it in a different manner. The graphic novel provided me with a possibility to bring out the advice and other important learnings from the Master of culture and arts: entrepreneurship in the arts programme, which I could not express as naturally in the written part.

# 1. ON HOW TO GROW ARTISTS?

## 1.1 Awakening.

My artistic awakening happened in 1998. I had graduated senior high school. I had no idea what I wanted next. My home municipality Saari, which now belongs to Parikkala, is a border municipality to Russia. The only language skills that were of importance in the 90s were Finnish. Now all of eastern Finland has been Russicized, and Russian has become a strong second language. Saari was a friendship municipality to Skatelöv in southern Sweden, located some 20 km south of Växjö city and a part of Småland county. Every year one over 18 year old Saari youth has the opportunity to apply to be exchange student for one year in Grimslöv community college in Skatelöv. Since my future to me was clouded, partially since I wanted to get away from home, I applied for the program. I had no skills in Swedish, barely any in English. I was lucky, though, since that year I was the only applicant. My arrival at Grimslöv community college and the year I spent there changed everything subsequent to that. I've had a traditional Christian upbringing, based on respect for your parents, not questioning anything, and certain subjects should not be brought up at all.

For the first time in my life I had the chance to think for myself, feel what I wanted, question, believe what I wanted. Be my own master. In my life this brought a big commotion, inner revolution. I was reborn. I learned to talk again, since I learned a new language, I learned a completely new culture that was significantly different from the Finnish culture, I learned that I could have an opinion, endless rules and speaking thoughts out loud was of the past. No-one was there to tell me what to believe and that independent thinking was dangerous. I started building my own identity, create a new person.

Unfortunately one year was too short a time for creating a new identity and persona, as I would later find out. The first few months I could not speak or understand much of what the others said, or what I said. Still, communication went surprisingly well. I got along mostly with the students in arts and crafts. Once, when I was spending time with them in the arts and crafts class, I happened upon an ink bottle and a calligraphic pencil. I grabbed

the pencil, dipped it in ink, and started drawing to pass time. I was instantly transferred to a new world. It was like a hypnosis. The details, the trace of the pencil, my drawings took me to another dimension and time. It was a sort of enlightenment, an artistic awakening. I drew numerous images during the year. I was also in the drama group, participating in several theatrical plays. I had done some acting as a hobby, and at the end of the year my future had cleared a bit. Now I knew I wanted to be an actor or an artist. Maybe both.

After finishing my military service I applied for both the Theatre Academy and to Swedish Polytechnic, Fine art studies. I didn't get into the theatre school, but art school welcomed me with open arms. The dice had been cast.

## 1.2. The Art School Bubble

I was admitted to an art education, Svenska Yrkeshögskolan (now Novia) in 2000.

Svenska Yrkeshögskolan offered a Bachelor's degree in fine art. The first two years of studies was focused on basic techniques: Painting, drawing, sculpture, croquis, colour theory, printmaking, performance, photography, video art, numerous other technical and theoretical studies. After the first two years I specialized in spatial and temporal art, while other specializations focused on painting, printmaking and sculpture. The fourth year was, in turn, almost completely reserved for the final exam work. The first two years we spent in a shared studio which was very accommodating. By the third and fourth year we had our own studio spaces.

The first half year of my fourth and last year of studies I spent as an Erasmus-exchange student in Ljubljana, Slovenia. The studies also contained periods of internship. My internship was spent in Hamburg, as an assistant to Visual Artist, Professor Michael Dörner.

To a young artist the art school offered the possibility to find a personal style and technique, by giving access to a range of different tools, trying out techniques and other essential building blocks of artistic practice. In addition, workspaces, materials and their range of use were near unlimited.

Despite this, the studies did not provide thorough preparation for life after the art school, although the importance of a creating a resumé and portfolio as well as applying for grants was emphasized.

I do not, however, recall receiving an education aiming at building a career and future of my own.

There is a possibility that studies in marketing, entrepreneurship and creating a future career was on the curriculum, but we were not willing to accept them as such.

I interviewed education manager Robert Back about the training in career building and

entrepreneurship nowadays given at Novia:

*“-You said that one compulsory and one optional course have been arranged. What are the courses called?”*

*“The course which is included in the curriculum is called Företagskunskap (Business knowledge). It has existed for a long time and probably also existed in one form or another back when you were a student. Among its contents are formal, practical questions about grant applications (where, who, how?), other application processes, some technicalities regarding business practice and such. The course is worth 3 study points (equals ten study days).*

*Via the Research and Development programme an optional entrepreneurship workshop has been running throughout the school year. The workshop meets up weekly, I think. Students form groups (or teams) which work together towards certain goals. The goals can vary, but to great extent the main theme is how to make a living.*

*Several Fine Art students started on the workshop, now all but one have quit. I have not quite worked out why so many quit the workshop. In general I picture they did not find the right kind of project – or maybe the problem was in the methods used. I don't know. Some probably left because they could not form that team – each one could have had their own strong ideas and visions to strive for. That last part is just my speculations, though, and should not be taken for a fact. The workshop is open for students in all fields, and it's possible that they “speak different languages”, so to say. In addition it has been difficult to combine the contents of the workshop with the needs that the studies in Fine Art mainly have. We'll try again next year, and I have discussed entrepreneurship extensively with the course coordinator.”*

*Could you also write what kind of reception the courses have had among the students.*

*What kind of feedback and critique have the courses brought?*

*“Unfortunately I have not yet seen the feedback. Mostly because the optional course still is running, and the evaluation work has not been done.*

*The same applies to our curricular course. If feedback exists it is probably in the hands of (my colleague) Ingela Bodbacka-Rak. This course is also arranged in cooperation with the Photography and Design departments. For the next course we will try to find some specific, better tailored arrangements in order not to create a mix of everything. Hopefully we can provide entrepreneurship studies which are tailored to better suit the specific industry.”*

*What would you point out as the greatest problem with so many trained artists having difficulties starting their career, and why do so many of them quit practicing art altogether after their formal education?*

*“Some years ago we surveyed the working status of our alumni, and were surprised to find that many still had something to do with the broad field of art. Unfortunately only 10% are more active, able to be a practicing artist more or less full-time. About 50-60% are working to some extent – although not professionally. Around 30-40% have more or less left the artistic path altogether. These results have expired by now, and a new survey should be conducted. This only applies to those who completed their education. In a wider perspective the falling off is not unusual or exceptional – taking the share of graduated students in account. The situation changes when we compare with those who have moved on to master of Arts studies. They have managed to take a further step, so to speak, and therefore performed better in the sorting out that, after all, is in effect.*

*If we look at a student who truly want to make an investment in the artistic practice – who really wants to create a successful career – and simultaneously “do their thing” (not adapt too much to the market), the difficulties in building a career can present themselves in in the social part. To actually dare to meet and converse with the people you need to meet and talk to. To dare make that call, to push oneself forward and participate in all kinds of curated exhibitions (collect points) and e.g. to find alternate methods of meeting the public (if galleries and their ilk won't take the bait).”*

The takeaway from this interview is that Novia only gives one compulsory course in business knowledge. The optional entrepreneurship workshop, arranged for the first time,

has taken off shakily, but I find it positive that there are plans to recreate the workshop in a more thought-out form. I see plenty of potential in this course, and also hope that the school manages to convince the students of the importance of this course, which besides making it compulsory, should be a part of a much greater body of studies in career building. I was also confounded by the answer to my question about the training and employment rate: Shouldn't a BA in Fine Art provide with a readiness to succeed in career development? Having earned a BA in Fine Art, artists who are disappointed in their career development do not necessarily possess the motivation necessary to pursue a further education. About the artists who are motivated and strongly aiming to further their career, Back writes that the greatest problems facing them can turn out to be social ineptness. Should the school not provide its students also with these skills?

To widen the perspective, I also interviewed students currently in the art school. They wish to stay anonymous. I asked them about the business knowledge course:

*“There is a course in business knowledge, but not everyone understands what it is all about. I cannot pinpoint the problem, since some students seem to have an understanding and knowledge of their own, which they can utilize to earn grants, but this is purely on their own initiative. Therefore most students ignore this part completely during the education and are panicking by the time the end of the education is nearing.”*

*-Robban (Back) also talked about a separate course in Entrepreneurship, which he stated had started in autumn. All but one student had quit, though. Do you know about this course?*

*“Yes, there was a course announced on short notice, and I think it was difficult to fit into an individual study plan since the studies are constructed with compulsory courses coming in every now and then. This makes for periods of too many, interspersed with periods of too few courses. And what should one invest in? Preferably do personal work simultaneously, and after letting chaos reign for long enough many pull back. I had my hands full, and didn't even have time to sign up. In the end, everyone takes responsibility of themselves, but*

*I think a continuous tutoring is needed to see where you're headed."*

*I heard there's another opportunity to partake in the course next autumn – will you sign up for that?*

*"Of course. It could well be my last chance."*

*What did you think of the business knowledge course? Should there be more courses aimed at the future, career, rules of the art world... and information on e.g. curators, art dealers, collectors, gallerists etc. Should there be more purely theoretical and academic subjects with more emphasis on studying texts and writing?*

*"The business knowledge course is okay, but it should be pieced out with exercises closer to reality. Like doing actual grant applications, executing a project, to get a taste of how budgets, reaching objectives and presenting results work.*

*Looking at the polytechnic schools in Finland I also think the system at the base is flawed. As it is now, polytechnic schools receive funding based on the amount of graduated students. And of course the school wants funding. Therefore students are pushed to graduating, even if several should not have been awarded a BA yet. I also have a feeling that the objectives of a given course are not serious. Since all students need study points (as does the school), study points are earned just by attending class.*

*We do, however, think it would be a good thing to get into the academic study life earlier, with requirements more in line with university studies. Therefore it's often too late to get a grip of things during the last year of studies, when reality is dawning on you.*

*And what do you do after the education? The answer is often to get by working several jobs in different fields, but this is rarely a solution to the problem. And maybe it's difficult to give an answer if you're a teacher. In that position, you're rarely working in a similar way as artists in the field, you're income is secured. Perhaps the school should do more to work up confidence and self-esteem?"*

This answer fortified my impression of the student's success in the future being the responsibility of both the student, to the greater extent, but also to the school. The

interviewed subjects were motivated students, willing to partake in more academically oriented studies, willing to create and succeed in their careers after their education. The pitfalls Back earlier mentioned – social skills, self-esteem – would, according to the students, be a welcome addition to the study program. Self-esteem is truly needed in building a career, this I have noticed.

During my education, the freeform mode of study in the art school gave the students almost completely free reins after making it through the first two years of basic studies. Whether the student was active or not, nearly everyone was able to pass courses and get their degree. Just as the above interview points out, the schools receive funding for every graduated student, which leads to nearly every single student passing the final examination no matter how they spent the time during studies.

The problem in an extensively freeform education, as I see it, lies in giving the students great freedom and responsibility to conduct studies in any way they see fit. This can often lead to many of them losing their drive to do anything at all.

Novia offers all their students a very diverse plate of courses. The student has the right to choose and take a course from any professional field. Here, then, the problem is in the study program of the student's own field, in which the programming of compulsory courses are largely preventing the student from choosing courses from other fields – for example, business and marketing –since the courses overlap.

This turns into a big challenge, even an obstacle which cannot be overcome, for the student who wants to extend the predetermined study program with courses supporting the student and his/her career development in other Novia programs.

Although the responsibility, when it all comes around, belongs to the student, I would still argue that the school should have a critical look at its methods of teaching. The program of compulsory courses should be extended with courses that prepare the student for the artistic career.

In my opinion the last two years, which now focus on final exam work and practically specializing in an artistic field, would have been of greater benefit to utilize for studies

concerning the art world and career building. Tips on how to apply for funding, how to get into galleries and exhibitions could have been included, as well as studying books on art, plain reading exercises and exams. Writing assignments like making a CV, Artist's statement, and portfolio. Evaluating exhibitions, giving and receiving critique with the other students. This sort of training would have been extremely important to the students. It would prevent the students' sloughing off and prepare them for the real challenges that lie ahead.

The question is raised, however, if all or most of the art students would have the stamina for studies of the sort I mentioned above, or if it would lead to a greater negative attitude towards the education, as this program would be seen as a forced and unnecessary theoretical body of study, merely making the students man the barricades?

Linda Kass gave a lecture to us participants in the masters programme. The lecture presented models for grant applications and project management, which lead to artistic entrepreneurship and efficiently starting a career after art school. She was surprised to find us more than willing to learn about the models she presented, which are also extensively used in the world of business. A few years prior, Linda had given a similar lecture in the polytechnic art school, and the reception had been critical, even hostile.

I asked Linda to write a short summation of her experience:

*“During the last few years, I have led several courses in Entrepreneurial Development in the art educations of Novia Polytechnic. The courses have partially taken the form of “Find your passion”, focusing on developing student’s inner drive and entrepreneurial side, partially in the form of more technically oriented entrepreneurial courses – tools for business development, writing applications, etc.*

*Although the reception has mostly been positive, the evaluation has often had recurring elements where the student feels forced to planning a future and career. Objection to giving art a value has also occurred, namely the students have inadvertently or deliberately expressed a view of art which relates to 19<sup>th</sup> century aesthetics (art for art’s sake).*

*As I also actively work with professionals, I have to a greater extent been able to discern a trend: after a few years in the profession, the objectified view of art is worn off by natural means, and a greater interest for tools which help artists in their career development and daily life of a freelancer takes its place.”*

*I wholeheartedly agree with Kass’ analysis of the art students being unwilling to plan out their future, professional life and career. Art is made for art’s sake, not to gain success or create a career.*

*Many artists are highly critical to teachings given by anyone else. A strong negative attitude towards the possibilities provided by the formal training, towards all activities that support the future and career as an artist, etc., completely negates the possibilities to learning, success and career development.*

I also asked Robert Back, Should there be more courses aimed at the future, career, rules of the art world... and information on e.g. curators, art dealers, collectors, gallerists etc. Should there be more purely theoretical and academic subjects with more emphasis on studying texts and writing?

*“These questions are de facto difficult to answer. Which courses should be offered in a BA-level education? What is the balance between different subjects? What should we add or subtract? When it all comes around, I’d say no. In-house, we don’t need more than we have now. The current amount of technical subjects should be enough to generate the knowledge necessary for a BA-level. The point is that the student is free to study more of these courses elsewhere, and in this way personalize the studies. What I see as the greatest problem is that students do too little – that is, sets off too few hours for practical work. Don’t turn, don’t twist, don’t paint, don’t film, don’t dwell, don’t experiment as much as one would wish. It is after all on doing that the career is built – not by taking a course on how to please a gallerist. I see a clear tendency that the students taking more theoretical courses are hindered from doing practical work on their own. Their focus is soon on something else. It’s a tricky balancing act. I don’t think one or the other is right or wrong. It’s not worse to take more theoretical courses. It’s just another direction. In this matter the individual freedom and responsibility is of importance.”*

I do understand the position Back takes very well. Still, my opinion is that it would be of utmost importance to learn how to act when you meet a gallerist.

The education offered by Novia seems then to have low priority on theoretical studies. This is not necessarily a bad stance in itself, as elsewhere in Finland art schools have received criticism for introducing too much theoretical studies. For example in 2012 a decision to close Lahti art institute the debate was hot about, among other things, the increasing theorization of arts education. Art critic Leena Kuumola writes (Taide magazine, 5/2012 p. 20, free translation from Finnish): “The last few years art education has concentrated to a great degree on theory. Perhaps as a result a certain “critical” view has gained foothold in the visual arts, which is linked to the artworks despite the artists’ skill or even will to question the current norms (...) The starting point often feels like the wide-angle explanatory texts, which have become a recurring feature of invitations to exhibitions (...) When reading the texts a feeling of these texts stemming from the expectations of the art world rather than the artists’ own view manifests itself. We are standing on shaky ground here, close to the laws of supply and demand present in the consumer society.”

The debate brought up the fear that all art schools in Finland will gravitate towards an overly theoretical curriculum, and that this may lead to art students graduating as theoreticians, historians, and producers rather than visual artists. The Finnish art school seems to have become divided, in some schools there might be too little theory, in others too much. Still, an education aiming at preparing artists for the meeting with the real world are under-represented to nonexistent. On the lower end of the education there are schools preparing the student for the art education itself, like Nordiska Konstskolan in Kokkola; on the higher end there are schools like the Academy of Fine Arts, aiming at strengthening the artistic expression and knowledge of theory – but apart from the curatorial studies program seemingly lacking a hands-on preparation for entering the art world.

I visited the homepage of the Helsinki University of the Arts (<http://www.uniarts.fi/opetusohjelmat#Taideyliopiston-yhteiset-opinnot>). Helsinki University of the Arts offers a course program for graduating students, by the name of Career studies (2-8 sp). The program consists of three courses preparing for the career: 1. The artist in the postmodern

society (2 sp.), with cultural producer basics and funding structures of art, 2. Art as profession (4 sp.) with e.g. International working models and funding, and 3. Career LARP (2 sp.) in which the student practices career skills with live roleplaying as tool. Apparently, students at the Academy at the very least have a possibility to obtain basic knowledge of the reality ahead.

Unfortunately I have not had the opportunity to study the situation in schools abroad, with the exception of the new methods being broken in in the U.S. and Australia. Still, the problems students face in finding employment and creating a career are global, which leads me to conclude that a practical training for the future, like the one I have received now, is rare.

According to Back, the greatest problem is the passive demeanor of the students.

Instead of trying to take maximum advantage of the education, instead of learning new techniques, making use of studios and other assets given by the art school, energy is wasted on complaining while sunken into a couch, or sitting in a bar. Criticism from other students can play its part in darkening the mood of well-motivated students, in addition to bringing down ones' own motivation.

The fact that the artists' career outlook and employment rate seems bad does not help this negative attitude.

The art student is his or her own largest obstacle in creating a future career.

One of the excursions during the Master of culture and arts: entrepreneurship in the arts programme took us to John Bock, one of the hottest artists at the moment. John Bock told us the following of his art education: *"When they asked me what I want after art school, I always replied: I want to be famous"*.

This is how we should think. Or, if the goal is not being a celebrity, planning well and being optimistic about your own artistic career and future have a positive effect on the development of an artistic career.

The few art school contemporaries of mine who, in a consistent, purposeful and organized

manner started to work and invest in the future and in creating an artistic career before even finishing their education, have managed to create magnificent careers as artists and have already received grants for several years. Now they work in art committees, hold office in cultural centers of cities, municipalities or provinces, or have made their artistic breakthrough.

*“What did you do to manage to start off an artistic career so well?” I asked of an artist couple, of which both are art school contemporaries to me. They had, unlike me, reached success in creating an artistic career. They answered with the following: “Most important for both of us was leaving art school with a determination to make a living as professional artists – in some manner, and there seemed to be a whole slew of manners. We did provide mutual support for each other, but the crucial support came from local artist associations, which we realized we have to join fresh out of art school. Peer support and working together with others was extremely important, especially since the grants would not come trickling in for a long time yet. We constantly kept looking for employment which left as much time as possible for artistic work of our own. Constant networking – locally, nationally and internationally, opened up possibilities to do work on commission and participate in international exhibitions and events. Going from aspirant membership to full membership in national-level artist organizations opened up completely new opportunities. Being active in several artist-run organizations, especially Platform in Vaasa, provided training in proper project management (which would later be of use e.g. in working as a Regional Artist). Both of our careers have followed a steady path, not without its ups and downs and certainly still far from the stars, but we have both reached the milestones we’ve first set – and created new ones, which lie ahead.”*

The answer shows the motivation of the artists, the wish to make it, be successful in creating a career and that both truly knew they wanted to work professionally as artists.

At the time of my own graduation from art school, I also had the chance to do as much as possible to start my artistic career. I did not. I didn’t join any organizations. I didn’t gravitate towards my artist friends for peer support. I was not quite sure about what I wanted from life. My own laziness and life situation were my greatest obstacles in starting

an artistic career in 2004.

I also think that too much emphasis is put on the final examination work. Many students at the time of my studies (including me), poured all resources into the practice of creating the perfect final exam work, which for many became the Final Work, with which the artistic career ended. Many students, including me, held the naïve belief that the Final Exam Work will be the final piece that opens up the paths leading to the top of the art world, after which publicity and financial stability will naturally follow. With the final examination done, everything should somehow have set itself in the right tracks.

For many artistic souls, the years spent in art school is the time to get lost and find yourself time after time, when identity, taboos and all which is built on past experience falls apart. The art students create the bubble. You have the art school versus everything else, the unfashionable “Normal” world outside of it. Creating this bubble is a very bad, but common practice.

In creating isolation from the rest of the world, the art student closes the gates to the future and to those connections that are needed in order to create a career after the art studies are finished. All that has been learned before is also weighed against the new.

In my case, the freeform education did not lead to a languishing per se. Instead, I became a total alcoholic. After the first year my identity started cracking, and I was using drugs at an increasing rate. My artistic output was not, however, slowing down. Au contraire, I used art as a kind of self-therapy. I painted and drew my demons on canvasses and walls. I created art inebriated, sober, in ups and downs.

While in Ljubljana I started my first 365-type project (on which I will expand later). I tried to make at least one piece of art every day. My studio wall in Ljubljana filled up with grotesque faces and eyes. Humor, madness, darkness, pain, chaos and self-loathing. Returning to Finland I had 60-70 works from Ljubljana and was thinking of continuing the project in Finland. At this point, however, the time for the final exam work had come. I had a thought of continuing my project from Ljubljana after the final exam, but this would not happen for a long time.

For my final exam I made a series called Icons.

I made 12 icons, each measuring 1 sq.m., about things that people believe in these days: Money, Power, Sports (Reputation and Honor), Ideologies, Porn, Science, Art, Philosophy, Drugs, Religions and Satan. After finishing my final exam work I awoke one morning to a phone call from my classmate. He told me that our teachers were cleaning out the storage tent, and had already thrown most of my artworks into a container headed for the dump. Naturally this had been announced several times in internal e-mails, but since I had had my mind preoccupied by alcohol and my sorry state of being, I had not cared one bit about the announcements. I made a beeline to the school and managed to salvage most of my artworks. The works from Slovenia and Ljubljana however disappeared during this event. Perhaps this was why I could not muster the strength to return to a project where I would make one artwork every day.

For several years I was bitter at our teachers and staff, for no good reason. All the blame was on me, had I only carried even a smidgen of the responsibility I today have, this would never have happened.

At twentysomething I could in no way comprehend how fast time flies, that a four year education certainly isn't an eternity but a moment in time, after which the time was ripe for creating a career of my own. Endless partying flowed like a river through my art school years, and as art school came to an abrupt end in 2004 I was pretty much ready to end everything else, as well.

### 1.3 After Art School / Crossroads

Many a young artist is driven into a crisis when transferred from the school environment to everyday life. The outstanding personal studio, tools and materials disappear, exhibitions don't just magically appear, many graduates are ill equipped to start investing in their own career. Several things that were a given in art school turn into money-gobblers and labor-intensive chores. Small towns in particular offer no possibilities to work with art – not even culture in general. Many of the graduates may register themselves as unemployed. The budding artist is caught in a crossroads where the only option is to finally face the future. Do I really want to be a full-time artist? How much am I ready to invest in my career? Am I ready to make compromises? Do I quit art altogether and study something else? Do I get a job and make art when I find the time? Move to a larger city where it should perhaps be easier to start an artistic career? And so on.

There are dozens of questions.

After four years of art school studies, many young artists are so burnt out that they actually quit the artistic practice altogether, or at the very least, take an artistic “break” which could last from months to years, decades even. At this time most are around 25-30 years old, ready to settle down, have kids, invest in a house and a car, and so on. Not showing interest in the future by pursuing further education, grant application courses in order to get the career started etc. backfires. Although there are many who start to rent studios, try to find contacts and exhibitions, the lack of knowledge mitigates attempts at getting started.

Money, success, the future. The teachings that were shunned in art school turn out to be crucial to make it as an artist.

After graduating from art school I went unemployed and continued where I had left off. The first six months went by mostly drinking and messing about. I had understanding of my situation, but felt powerless to do something about it. By the end of October I decided to start a new art project in order to put a stop to a one-year bender on alcohol and drugs. The name of the project was Little Big Bicycle Trip To Barcelona. For 20 euros, I bought

a bike, a Crescent from the 1950s and took off from Nykarleby, Finland, setting Spain as my destination. The aim was also to cut off or quit drinking and drugs, and get my mind together. One morning late in October 2004 I got out of bed, hung over. I loaded my bike (which I called my girl) with my gear and headed off. In four years I had gotten into a terrible shape, so the first weeks were extremely tasking on my body. The slow process of sobering up revived my mind, though, as did getting rid of the withdrawal symptoms. During my trip I had relapses in Christiania, Copenhagen and Holland – and when I reached Barcelona I started drinking again.

My trip to Barcelona lasted 55 days, and according to my calculations I covered about 4200 km. I made an exhibition about my trip, first in Barcelona, then in Vaasa. The exhibition consisted of my two travel diaries, a powerpoint presentation and a bike/tent installation.

After returning to Finland I participated in the 110<sup>th</sup> Young Finnish Artists exhibition in Helsinki Art Hall, followed by an exhibition in the Elverket gallery, run by Pro Artibus foundation in Tammisaari. At this early point in my artistic career I was flying quite high, my final exam work had received some real praise and recognition, and I could have capitalized on it and sold some art. I had several offers, a collector even offered to buy the whole suite of works in my final exam suite, but I could not be bothered. I did not as much as exchange phone numbers. In my exhibition openings I was in such bad shape, and usually so drunk that I managed to push over everything I had to stand on. I did not want fame and fortune, just the next bottle and the one after that, to silence the voices in my head.

On a spring day, March 10<sup>th</sup> 2005 I had returned from the Tammisaari opening to my parents in Saari, I received a phone call. My best friend Heikki had ended his life by driving into a truck.

STOP.

This extreme event ended the sequence I had been repeating for several years. I realized I was at a crossroads, either go on as I had done the last few years, probably to join Heikki soon, or change my way of living for real. Two weeks after the funeral I was playing a

gig at the 20-year punk birthday party of my future wife. She had lived a wild life, even besting me. I knew her from before somehow, and during the party two wounded black angels collided. One week later, Sandra moved in with me in Vaasa, starting our journey together. We were both physically and mentally finished, and slowly we started healing, licking our wounds, giving each other support.

I made art sporadically. Learning to live again was the biggest challenge of 2005. In spring 2005 I wrote my first grant application, which answered the question “How would you use your grant” with the words “I make art daily, but I also need money for living. Eating, drinking, paying bills”. It may have been an honest application, but nevertheless it was as badly planned as it was executed. My expectations for the grant were for some reason still pretty high, until the first of many rejection letters dropped in through the mail slot, stating the stipend could regrettably not be granted. I was floored. The artistic breakthrough had never happened. The merits I thought would at the very least be enough to elicit a grant had not been noted (I can recall not enclosing any samples of my works or even a CV). Art as a profession and career path felt like a broken dream.

In Finland, stipends are granted by numerous foundations and funds, in addition to the state and cities or municipalities. Grants can be applied for either artistic work (from 1/2 year up to five years), for projects, travel etc. In this regard Finland offers a very unique opportunity for artists, since the grants that can be applied for are so many and since there are so many you can apply from. For my part, I did not however apply from more than one foundation until fall last year.

The Finnish society works in a dual manner when it comes to art and culture. On one hand, several of the state-run and private funds and foundations give the artists numerous possibilities to apply and be granted funding, on the other hand Finland also possesses a very unique gallery system, in which the artist pays the gallery in order to show works in an exhibition. The rent that a gallery will demand can also be very high, and for the most part an artist will have to apply for grants in order to pay rent for a gallery. In addition, the gallery will demand a provision on sales.

During my year of Master of Arts and Culture training I have learned, that elsewhere the

galleries pay the artist as the artist is accepted. The galleries also demand a provision on sales, but this practice is more beneficial to the artist. The Finnish system is a reason to why I have not yet applied for private exhibitions in any Finnish galleries. Usually I have applied as part of a small group, in order to share the rent, or applied together for grants, sometimes successfully, other times not. Because of the above described system, exhibitions in Finland are a risky business and usually a clearly unprofitable affair for the artist, who has to sell a high volume of artworks to even make the gallery rent.

On the other hand, Finnish galleries also keep this system up. Finnish galleries make a profit even if no works are sold, since the rent for a gallery can be thousands, even 10 000 euros in the big galleries. Juries handling grant applications see a concrete coverable cost in applications where the artist has included gallery rent, making it easier to justify an approval. Then again, the grant does not in this case go to the artist but the gallery, since the artist must use the funding for rent et al. and this makes the gallery the real beneficiary. For this reason, Finnish galleries are very passive compared to those abroad, where galleries can add artists to their roster, gallerists do the sales work promoting the artist heavily and the artist is left with time to create art. In Finland the system is turned upside down, since artists pay for materials, gallery rent, work sales and promotion and still paying the same provision to galleries as they would abroad.

Herein lay the dark side of entrepreneurship, too: The artist risks becoming his own promotor, sales rep, etc. and can be compared to a private business, where a single person is running everything from advertising to bookkeeping. This is why it is important to the artist to learn to create strong networking skills, and learns simple things like the importance of using external bookkeeping services, instead of wasting valuable time on tax reports.

In the Finnish society at large art is not seen as a profession, merely as a hobby. When telling people about his or her profession, the artist is labeled. As a result of this, it took me a long time to be able to tell people that I am an artist by profession. These days it's fortunately easy, and I am proud of what I do.

#### **1.4. At the Employment office**

Early April 2005, after Sandra had moved in with me, I walked over to the employment office. I told them I was a professional visual artist. The officials confirmed to me what I already knew: Unfortunately, there are no jobs available for visual artists and job advertisements for culture and art are very rare. On the employment offices web page, mol.fi, the following text describes the visual artist's options:(<http://www.mol.fi/avo/alat/072.htm>, free translation from finnish)

##### **Job openings**

There are no job openings as such for visual artists, in contrast to most other fields of work. They mainly find work as freelancers or free artists. Most have an unrelated job on the side to secure livelihood.

##### **The artists' livelihood**

The artists' livelihood usually consists of artistic work (e.g. selling artworks), paid work which requires professional knowledge (e.g. teaching) and grants. The level of earnings usually rises with age and recognition, but still few make a living on artistic work alone. Most have another job on the side to secure livelihood. It can be unrelated to the profession.

Visual artists typically find work through their exhibitions. Gallerists and art dealers as well as acquaintances have a significance in creating sales. The sales are also affected by public visibility and participating in competitions. In addition art rentals, artist organizations and artist associations are an important factor in finding customers. There are considerable costs caused by working as an artist, since artists need specialized materials and tools depending on their field of art. Exhibitions also add to the costs: rent for exhibition space, pr, insurances and transport etc. The artist also needs a large and brightly lit working space, where materials, tools and finished works can be stored.

Grants are an essential part of the artists' livelihood. The artist can apply for grants to aid

in working professionally and cover the costs caused by it. The state, cities, municipalities and different foundations and institutes have their own grants and criteria for applying.

Similar thoughts are expressed by (Pollard & Wilson 2014 p.3):

”Creative and performing arts schools are facing unique challenges in terms of developing employability curricula because their graduates do not generally experience the same type of employment circumstances as graduates from other disciplines. They are far more likely to experience what are known as “portfolio, protean or boundary-less careers” characterised by high levels of self-employment, freelance work and short-term contracts.”

Me, not being prepared for any kind of artistic entrepreneurship in my messed-up situation, my main goal at the time was just to find work which could take me out of my situation and change my habits.

Some kind of “compatible” work was found, though, in the form of an internship at the arts and crafts center Stalli. I spent spring and summer interning there. In fall 2005 S. and I moved to Pietarsaari, where I started vocational Cultural producer studies at Optima. After moving it became increasingly important to continue working, but no work in the cultural field was available and I started work at the Numeropalvelu call center. Studies, work and building up my life left no time for artistic work. I had no chance to think about or apply for grants for a few years. After Numeropalvelu I transferred to customer service at DNA mobile. A career as an artist felt very distant at this point, though I did make art during these years. Art had become a dear hobby.

## 1.5. Cultural producer studies and family life

To the artist, acquiring skills in production is in my opinion as important as creating art. After moving to Pietarsaari both Sandra and I started Cultural producer studies at Optima. The studies consisted of courses in e.g. creating ads, making contacts, starting a business, creating a CV and portfolio (in which I didn't get a comprehensive tutoring in art school), marketing exhibitions and other cultural events, how to direct the interest of papers and media and how important this is. We also participated in different events, expos, exhibitions and festivals. We made flyers, posters, banderols, newspaper ads, menus, invitations, business logos as assignments or on order.

Sandra and I married April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2007. Our first son, Rasmus, was born on 1<sup>st</sup> of August. This prompted a few years break from studies for me, in order for Sandra to complete her studies. I cared for Rasmus during the day, worked evenings and nights. After Sandra had graduated I had the chance to continue my studies. My final exam work was an exhibition, arranged together with Henrik Harju and Elena Nestorova. I did the invites, ads and posters for the exhibition. We arranged a press meeting. The opening was packed, record-breakingly so. I was impressed with the Cultural producer education, and graduated 2010. At home, life had not seemed so bright for a long time. We had risen from the gutter; we had bought a house, a car, a dog. We had become The Konttinen.

I had started applying for grants on a yearly basis. Occasionally I participated in group exhibitions, juried exhibitions and events. I cannot say that I was very active, though. I did not apply to have exhibitions of my own, for project grants, for competitions. I did not make a website, I did not try to find contacts, I didn't even publish my work online. Instead of actually doing something, I kept complaining that nothing happens. I blamed my family, school, the art world, anything but the reality in which my own passive demeanor and lazy attitude to investing in my career was the true reason to the lack of progress. By this time I had also accepted as a fact that I would never get out of my job in customer service at DNA mobile. The job felt absolutely pointless, but it was the only future I could see ahead.

## 1.6. Oliwer is born

In this chapter I recount the birth of my second son. The struggle we had to go through changed me to a great extent, my attitude towards life, my morals, and my attitude to art. Without the following events, I would probably not have begun actively rekindling my faltered eagerness to make art and invest in creating an artistic career. The struggle we went through strengthened me in many ways.

In 2011 everything changed. Early that year Sandra got pregnant. Ultrasound and other examinations showed that everything was fine. Still, my wife and I had a feeling that everything was not OK. This time, the pregnancy brought pains, suffering and nausea to my wife. For my part, I had bad premonitions – going out for a run about a month before birth I had a strong feeling that the baby would be stillborn. I shook the feeling off and started running. The birth went by fast. Oliwer was born, skin a greyish-blue hue, and did not start crying like newborns usually do. He just coughed and rattled. According to the midwife this was merely because he had inhaled some of the baby water. The time of birth was 1:30 AM, so we soon went to sleep at the ward. We awoke to shock in the morning: Oliwer threw up all the milk he had had, and was close to asphyxiation. In a few hours Oliwer had been moved to the children's clinic. He had injection needles attached all over. The doctor said Oliwer would be moved to Vaasa Central hospital by ambulance, because for some reason food would not enter through his esophagus. The doctor assumed there was a blockage of some sort in the esophagus. Rasmus visited his little brother at the ward with his grandmother. The situation was weird and heart-wrenching: for the first time big brother saw his long awaited little brother, a first meeting that could be the last.

Rasmus stayed at our house with grandma, as we followed Oliwer's ambulance to Vaasa, shocked and deeply shaken. The ward doctor handed the roentgen results to my wife, and as she read I felt pummeled by hammers and sledgehammers: "Missing stomach, heart situs inversus, heart half missing, esophagus possibly incomplete" etc. Completely jaded I drove to the hospital. The joy of Oliwer's birth had turned into a nightmare we could not wake up from. We met the doctor that had examined him, and he had good and bad news

for us: The good news was that Oliwer's heart and stomach were after all in their right place, but the bad news were that the esophagus seemed to end abruptly. At this time we were also informed of the possible diagnose, Esophagusartresia. According to the doctor, Oliwer had to be transferred to the Tampere university hospital. Come morning, they told us that his heart was alright. After this a doctor confirmed the diagnose Esophagusartresia. He explained to us that the esophagus abruptly ended and the bottom part of it connected the stomach with the lungs. In an operation an attempt to disconnect the stomach from the lungs would be made, and reconnect the upper and lower parts of the esophagus. The operation was a success – or so we thought. Oliwer showed no signs of recovery. Oliwer was misdiagnosed as having an infection, which they tried to cure with prescriptions of increasing strength. This medical struggle lasted almost two months.

Each night we had to leave the ward we knew this could be the last time we'd see our son. Oliwer was transferred back to Vaasa four weeks after the operation, since the antibiotics and other medicine administered to him were strong enough to keep the infection values at near-zero. Arriving in Vaasa, Oliwer's condition worsened again, taking us back to Tampere. When new medication had forced Oliwers CRP value down, his esophagus and lungs were examined. He told us about the connection between Oliwer's esophagus and lungs, and that Oliwer would now be transferred to Helsinki children's clinic, where one of the best surgeons in Europe would be performing the surgery. The transfer to Helsinki was supposed to happen that night, no later than next day, but then the clinic in Helsinki stated they could not accept Oliwer in yet. When an experienced nurse, fiftysomething, at our ward heard this she burst into tears. "This boy won't make it through the week" she said. Oliwer spent the last week in a respirator. Oliwer had surgery in Helsinki after which he started to recover quickly. About a week after we returned to Pietarsaari.

When I sat by Oliwers side, I promised my child over and over that if he would only have the strength to fight and make it through, so would I. I promised him I would run a marathon, I promised him to get another job and do something that would take my life in the direction I wanted.

At home, the struggle to survive continued. And over time, Oliwer's state has bettered.

Still, especially during the first two years, his death mainly due to the danger of asphyxiation, has been close over 200 times.

The terrible struggle my son had to go through, which he survived, strengthened me in many ways. The changes in my life have been much greater than I could imagine in 2011.

I don't, however, wish to generalize saying an artist should need to go through these sorts of experiences to realize what to want from life and what to invest in. Clearly, though, this was what I needed.

## 1.7. Change

After Oliwer returned home, my life turned eventful.

In fall 2012 I started basic studies in pedagogy. I now wanted to study to become a teacher in visual art, in order to work with something I could feel at home in. This was the first time I asked for help in making a grant application. The result was a well written application, and although I got another rejection, I realized that if I wanted to receive grants in the future I had to make good applications. Poor applications would never be awarded. Still, at this point I didn't apply from more than one fund.

I started taking a long run once a week. Summer 2013 I ran my first marathon. Then again, the last half I merely walked and limped, since both my legs cramped up for 10 kilometers.

I knew I could do it. I thought about my son and that I could accomplish anything if I only put my mind to it.

I realized that my job at the call center was an obstacle to change, and started actively searching for a new job. Since there were rarely job openings in the cultural field in Pietarsaari region, I started looking for any other job. In 2013 I got a job at a furnishing company. I worked there for a year. Now I knew that if I only wanted it enough, I could get another job. I started considering my next job. The options were a job in the cultural sector, a job where I would get to help and support disabled children, or a teaching job, preferably teaching art. In 2014 I found employment as a personal school assistant in preschool. I also worked as teacher in woodworking.

I was no longer a drunk, I didn't look like a punk dragged in straight from the gutters. I had grown a backbone, I knew everything was possible now.

Motivation and willingness to succeed are essential to an artist's career – to any career, and life in general.

No school can ever teach you or encourage you in creating a career or investing in work as a professional unless you are ready to do something about it yourself.

## 1.8. 365

Although I have considered myself quite active as an artist since I started making art, I still somehow slacked off after settling down and thereby came to commit an original sin of sorts for artists. Instead of getting things done, I started complaining and blaming others for the lack of time to apply for exhibitions, for never getting a break, for never receiving a grant, for not being able to go to e.g. Helsinki for additional education or having the chance to go on a residency, because of my family. And most of all I complained about not having time to create art.

Luckily, my wife soon got tired of her unsatisfied husband's tirade, and gave me the truth: "You have time! You have lots of time. You could be making art right now instead of whining on the sofa. Why not make a piece every day. Start small, make postcards or something."

I had on several occasions thought about revisiting my project from Ljubljana. I had also followed other artists with similar, everyday repeating projects, for example taking their photo every day, drawing the same picture over and over. For my expression though, this kind of repeating the same subject every day felt really boring. I wanted my project to be more multifaceted. A project that would allow me to evolve as an artist in different ways, and give me a chance to try many different techniques and ways of creating. I also wanted the project to change me as an artist. I wanted a project with completely new rules.

Late in march 2013 I started the art project 365.

The rules I drafted for the project were:

1. Make at least one new artwork every day.
- 2.No censorship, every image has to be published.
- 3.When the piece is done, publish it to Facebook.
4. Do not repeat the same image.

5. Each piece is and artwork in itself, although it is also part of the greater artwork 365.

The time had come to act to make things better, to start an active artistic practice. After the first few months, creating got easier and my feelings toward it improved. I knew I was on the right track after a long time. I would not continue throwing away my talent. Art became a natural part of my life. To start with, I planned to continue the project only for a year, but after about half a year I knew I would continue much longer. Art had, with this project, become what I wanted it to be. Art is an important part of me. I do and create new every day.

It is truly essential that an artist practices every day. The first time I saw a glimpse of this reality I was working as an assistant to Michael Dörner in Hamburg 2002. Dörner started working at the studio at 9:00 AM and work continued until 17-18 PM. After that there was free time, for openings, for parties. Next morning: back to work. Practicing my profession every day refines me and makes me better. Like a musician, say, a guitarist, must practice his instrument every day, the artist must keep his brush wet in order to make progress. If the musician takes a break, he can still play after the break, but a sort of rusting can be discernible in his output. Likewise an artist, having taken a long break from art can still hold a pencil, but ideas and producing or the personal touch which makes the works unique is missing. I don't want to claim that all artists should practice their art every day, but I believe that the more you do, the better you get. This is a rule that encompasses everything we do in life.

So far I have made about 1100 works in the series. I see the project or the process as a part of my life work. The artistic career is the foundation on which I build my house. Together with my family it brings greater content to my life.

This year I am making a book on the first year 1-365, and possibly also a poster portfolio with all the works from the first year as posters. I'm also starting three new 365-projects to accompany the first one. The first of these is making one artwork once a week, working on it every day. The second one is making one work each month, working on the piece every day. The third, making one work each year, working on it every day.

The idea for this I got from the training I'm in now, of which I will write in the next chapter.

## 1.9. Master of culture and arts: entrepreneurship in the arts

Methods of learning borrowed from the business world have seen increased usage in e.g. the United States. Gary D. Beckman (2008 p.1614) writes: “With the steady growth of classes, efforts and programs dedicated to teaching entrepreneurship in Fine Arts units, many design committees collaborate with, and seek the guidance of, business schools.”

Still, we as artists are not only businessmen and our training is very exclusive. Therefore training in entrepreneurship would be important and desirable. Beckman continues: “By understanding the unique culture of Arts training, entrepreneurship educators can tailor their recommendations that better reflect the needs of their Arts colleagues. This understanding includes the nineteenth-century cultural aesthetics of Art, the demands of an Arts degree plan, the lure of pre-existing business courses and a desire to define “entrepreneurship” idiosyncratically to blunt the perception of the topic as being a strictly fiscal endeavor.

In this collaborative context, entrepreneurship educators have significant authority and should consider focusing their recommendations to Arts units in these areas: Presenting alternative conceptions of entrepreneurship that do not conflict with nineteenth-century aesthetics, advocating for a holistic approach to the effort, developing specific business classes for Arts students that focus on economic literacy/impact and lastly, reaffirming that entrepreneurship curricula is a contextual endeavor. By using these recommendations, business educators can advocate for an “entrepreneurial ecology of Arts” approach to these programs instead of a “business education for Arts students” curricular typology. When envisioning Arts entrepreneurship programs and efforts in this manner, this collaborative design process can result in an authentic and empowering curriculum better suited to the needs of Arts students and Arts units.”

The Australian government has also started to support a new kind of model of education (Pollard, & Wilson 2014 p. 4 ) “Recently the government has: made public funding partially contingent upon demonstrable graduate outcomes with an emphasis on the

production of “work ready” graduates who are competent within their disciplinary fields and possess the abilities necessary to negotiate a world of work that is in constant flux.”

Education in this manner, where the graduates are prepared for work as professionals in their field straight out of school, has been much needed around here for a long time, and therefore the Master of culture and arts: entrepreneurship in the arts higher education program, in which I now am studying, works as a pioneer of Finnish art education models and is now arranged for the first time in Novia.

In spring 2015 I read an online call to apply for the new program at Novia, Master of culture and arts: entrepreneurship in the arts. I visited the website [www.eitama.com](http://www.eitama.com) and read the study program. I knew this is exactly the kind of education I had been waiting for the last ten years, after graduating from art school. Even though I now created art every day, I still didn't know much of how I could break through as an artist. I had no real knowledge of how to start my career. The visits to art capitals in Europe interested me, as did gaining new contacts, and meeting important people in the art world. As I saw it, the program was made for me. I met Eva Forsman at the Novia art school 30-year anniversary, and she egged me on to apply to the study program. I made a meticulous application. Three top tier people working in the cultural field backed my application with their recommendations. My application was like a well executed grant application. I made it to the interview stage. At this point I knew I'm the only one who could blow my chances to make it into the study program. My greatest insecurity lies in my knowledge of the English language. Although I have traveled the world, worked as customer service for seven years in the language department (Swedish/English) I knew this was my weakness. Going to the interview I was tired. I tried to meditate while waiting at the door, go through answers in my mind once more, with little success. When my turn was up, I was surprised to only see Eva Forsman in the interview room. Power Ekroth was present on the screen of a laptop. The interview went by in a haze. I tried to impress the interviewers, and I think I made it clear that I truly wanted to study.

Afterwards I felt that I could have said everything a lot better, the answers I had planned were left unspoken. My surprise and joy was total on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2015, when I received my

letter of admittance.

School started in autumn. The first two weeks were pretty hectic. I got more knowledge on successful career building in the art world than I had had in my whole life up until then. We learned the importance of a good artists' statement, which over the course of the year we have done and redone several times.

Two weeks in, proxy studies began. Next we traveled to Istanbul, to attend the Istanbul Biennale. Since there was a terror attack in Ankara a week prior to the trip, it was recast as an unofficial trip. Of our class about half went anyway, together with Power Ekroth. After Istanbul proxy studies with reading and writing assignments continued. The next practical part of the studies was in Stockholm, where we met with curators and art dealers, visited institutes such as IASPIS and went to numerous galleries and museums. Studies continued in Berlin, where we also got acquainted with many institutes and collectors' private exhibitions, e.g. Hoffmans. Here we also met with famous artists like John Bock and Juan-Pedro Fabra Guemberenan. After Berlin studies continued with another extremely tight week in Pietarsaari, and in March 2016 we visited Dubai, where we got first-hand experience of how the art business actually works as we went to Artfair Artdubai.

In Artdubai we took on different roles, we were art critics, gallerists, collectors. We also introduced ourselves and each other as artists to several galleries.

We've been taught how to present our own work in a quick-fire situation. Given a time of 8 minutes, we presented our art to a big player in the art game (curators, famous artists, art dealers, art professors). Each one of us also went through a one-hour Crits session, where the artist has more time to present their work or a specific project, which all students, Power, and a guest got to critique and comment on freely. Both the shorter and longer presentation of my work and the feedback/critique I received has been incredibly important to me. Getting feedback on your art and giving it to other artists is not easy, but it pays off helping us to evolve and find new ideas. I had at least a few brilliant ideas from the critique and short presentation. Talking about your own art in a concise but convincing manner is a challenging but rewarding and extremely important skill when considering the future.

We were told which these important players of the art world are. Curators, art dealers, collectors etc. What their job description is, what their role is.

We've visited different institutions, museums and centers of the field of culture and arts. We've met many curators, dealers, artists, writers, promoters and others essential to the field of art and culture. They've told us about their own careers and given us their advice for the artistic career.

We've been given tasks where we take on the role of the main curator of a great exhibition or biennale, or the role of a journalist/critic. We've learned about the many loops of the global art market. We've had the privilege of individual discussions with many important people in the different fields of art. We've learned different approaches to how an artist can get works into a gallery.

Linda Kass gave us a lecture on applying for grants and starting projects with the help of models, of which some - for example the project creation model – was a copy straight from the business world project creation model.

Timothy Persons short visit was also very important. He told us e.g. about Helsinki School, his experience at art fairs, galleries, different models of conduct, how to get represented in a gallery, for example. He read through the artist statement of every student and gave direct feedback, line for line.

We had a lot of challenging, demanding, as well as very useful assignments. Lots of reading assignments, films to watch.

We learned things that are essential to building an artists' career, for example social skills, a good website, the portfolio, artists' statement, grants, artist residencies, getting represented in a gallery. Public art, competitions, actively participating in events of the art world and recognizing chances in events, and of course being able to talk interestingly and convincingly about your art, as well as being genuinely interested in other artists.

Linda Kass's lecture on applying for grants and project creation models was really good.

During this year I have learned more about the artists' career and building it than in

my whole lifetime. As I see it, this kind of studies would also be sorely needed in the bachelor degree education. A business course worth three study points and an optional entrepreneurship course feels very insignificant. The feedback from students at Novia also shows a lack of confidence in oneself and in the education, as well as one's own future. The fact that the school receives funding from the state for every student that graduates should not be the reason to let students pass courses and graduate without regard to how active or passive he or she is. I really hope that entrepreneurship education models would be present to a greater extent in the BA education. This would benefit both the school and the students. A high-profile education, strongly urging the students forward in their career, would raise the status and reputation of the school, and boost students' confidence in the education and their own skills as artists.

Most of all my hopes are that this programme, Master of culture and arts: entrepreneurship in the arts, will continue. As has been noted elsewhere in the world, this kind of training is essential for the artist. (Pollard & Wilson 2014 p.4) "Our finding that the development of an arts entrepreneurial mindset also contributes in unique and valuable ways to broader creative and performing arts educational outcomes is an important step towards the necessary paradigm shift. This is because it positions arts entrepreneurship education as enhancing the mainstream of performing and creative arts education as it is understood in Australia."

I hope that Novia also understands the significance of the education and I firmly believe that the years to follow will, through the way my classmates and I perform on the art scene, strengthen this understanding. Many of the players in the artistic field to whom we have described our education have truly been positively surprised. Although The Entrepreneurship in the arts –program is in use in other countries, our study program, which has taken us to art capitals of the world and put us face-to-face with players in the art field, is unique. Study programs like this one, taking the student to important locations, is at the moment arranged only for curators, not for artists.

This time around I have tried to make all I can of my education. I noticed that working on the side was no longer possible in order to study full-time, so early this year I applied

for study leave. This decision was crucial to my studies. This time around I have tried to have a positive and optimistic attitude, instead of once more focused on resisting and criticizing everything I could possibly find wrong with the education, which would have rendered my studies useless once again. This decision with the positive attitude have been very rewarding. There are many things I could have done better, and perhaps in another life situation I could have taken away even more from the education. Still, I'm satisfied with what it has given me now. This year has been a year of privilege. Privilege which has brought me closer to a sustainable artistic career than I've ever been before.

For the first time in my life I applied for funding from several different foundations, both project funding as well as a 1-year working grant. I wrote applications to the Swedish Cultural Foundation, the Arts Promotion Centre and Finnish Cultural Foundation. My very first application was accepted. I was awarded a 1-year working grant from the Arts Promotion Centre Finland. For the first time in my life, the career as an artist feels like a natural option. I have Time! This year is my year. I can work on several art projects in addition to my 365 project. I can participate in competitions, exhibitions, try to get my works shown in a gallery.

I'll finally publish my own website as well as the book "365 – the first year", possibly the 365 poster case too. I can be a more active part of the art and culture scene, as well as work with international projects. One such is coming up in May, when I go to Bosnia with my classmate Joakim Hansson. I'll be making street art for a week. Life as an artist seems luminous. I'm extremely grateful for the way my obstacles have made me grow. For starting an active artist's career by myself even though I had not received any financial support. My productivity has probably helped the foundations realize that I have not given up, that I have a want and a will to make professional art continuously. I'm grateful of this training, which have given me a tremendous amount of information and motivation to push forward, take my career to the next level. My will to be and grow as a professional artist is great.

## 2. Theoretical working process for stereotypical artist

### 2.1. Introduction

The second part or sibling part of my thesis deals with the problems inherent in building a career as an artist in manner more suited for me as an artist, visually. I have worked in the comic or graphic novel style before, but Theoretical working process for stereotypical artist is the first long graphic novel I've made in ten years. My original idea was to make the graphic novel stand alone as thesis, but after discussing my thesis I understood the significance of the written form and now the graphic novel is an important part of my thesis. The graphic novel is a compressed story about the struggle with starting an artistic career, and solutions which make the career-building possible. The graphic novel studies the subject from a slightly different perspective than the written part, which in my opinion brings a wider perspective to my thesis. The graphic novel has provided the opportunity to use polarized humor, stereotyping and satire, tools which I could not use in the written part.

The main protagonist, Stereotypical Artist, is a generalization. He makes all the mistakes I could think of, as well as functioning as an example of how you should act. "The stereotype is a generalized and simplified means of describing or depicting a group of people or a phenomenon. We utilize stereotypes in creating a general view of the world and its phenomenons. In media stereotypes are used to make it easier and faster to understand the world of the story. Stereotypes can be found in both fiction and reality-based media. What makes the stereotype problematic is its narrow and generalizing nature. The stereotype does not represent the individual, instead it creates an image where a certain trait is associated with every person or phenomenon it represents." (Sari Autio and Elina Rislakki: Meditaatio. LK-kirjat 2011. Citation freely translated)

A career as an artist can also be created in several other ways than the ones I have described. The solutions offered in the graphic novel are not actually a golden road to success, although I do believe that by heeding the advice the chances to creating a

successful career can rise significantly.

The word “stereotypical” is near racist. We can stereotype groups of people, e.g. stupid blonde, rich Swedish-speaking Finn, donut-guzzling cop. The stereotypical artist would then be one provided of by society or lazy bum living on grants. In the eyes of society, and people in general, us artists, musicians, writers and others in the cultural field are often a stereotypical group of people subject to prejudice.

In the graphic novel I have also used satire as a stylistic tool, which have allowed me to work with serious matters in a light-hearted manner while being able to express my opinion and criticize.

Frederik Turner writes in his essay *On Satire in the Arts* (<http://www.nccsc.net/essays/satire-arts>) “Satire is laughter that reveals the truth, and human truth is, among many other things, essentially ridiculous. If we stand back and consider the splendor of the human soul, the dignity of our political and intellectual roles, the beauty of our ideal human images, and then juxtapose with them the spectacle, sound and smell of our ways of eating, disposing of what we have eaten, reproducing ourselves—and add the endless embarrassment of negotiating our social obligations—we must either laugh or despair.”

My graphic novel is not meant as comedy, even though it is made with a smile. The problems and difficulties depicted are real, and the guidelines I’ve added can actually help us in creating a career. I’ll end my foreword to the graphic novel with the masterpiece of satire, Monty Pythons *Life of Brian*(1979) in which the final scene Brian, together with the other crucified is singing the song Always look at the bright side of life. We, the artists, can actually find success!

*Always look on the bright side of life.*

*Some things in life are bad.They can really make you mad*

*Other things just make you swear and curse*

*When you're chewing on life's gristle. Don't grumble, give a whistle*

*And this'll help things turn out for the best...*

*And.....always look on the bright side of life...*

*Always look on the light side of life...*

*If life seems jolly rotten. There's something you've forgotten*

*And that's to laugh and smile and dance and sing*

*When you're feeling in the dumps. Don't be silly chumps*

*Just purse your lips and whistle - that's the thing.*

*And...always look on the bright side of life...*

*Come on.*

*Always look on the right side of life...*

*For life is quite absurd And death's the final word*

*You must always face the curtain with a bow*

*Forget about your sin - give the audience a grin*

*Enjoy it - it's your last chance anyhow.*

*So always look on the bright side of death...*

*a-Just before you draw your terminal breath...*

*Life's a piece of shit, when you look at it. Life's a laugh and death's a joke, it's true*

*You'll see it's all a show, keep 'em laughin as you go. Just remember that the last laugh is*

*on you*

*And...Always look on the bright side of life...*

*Always look on the right side of life...*

*C'mon Brian, cheer up*

*Always look on the bright side of life...*

*Always look on the bright side of life...*

*Worse things happen at sea you know. I mean - what have you got to lose?*

*You know, you come from nothing - you're going back to nothing.*

*What have you lost? Nothing.*

*Always look on the right side (I mean) of life...*

*what have you got to lose? You know, you come from nothing*

*- you're going back to nothing. What have you lost?*

*Always (Nothing.) look on the right side of life...*

*Nothing will come from nothing ya know what they say?*

*Cheer up ya old bugga c'mon give us a grin!*

*There ya go, see!*

*Always look on the right side of life...*

*(Cheer up ya old bugga c'mon give us a grin! At same time)*

*There ya go, see!*

THEORETICAL WORKING PROCESS FOR A STEREOTYPICAL ARTIST

# ART School Bubble

Art school was/is VERY SPECIAL Place for young students...

School make/made illusion that these students were somehow different + other creatures on this planet

WE ARE THE CHOSEN ONES!

School also gives lot or unlimited possibilities to do experimental, all different kind of techniques, materials and tools to try. AND BIG ART STUDIOS WHERE ART STUDENTS COULD WORK 24/7 STILL USUALLY:

WHAT ALSO USUALLY HAPPENS AT ARTSCHOOL IS THAT THESE YOUNG ART STUDENTS AND WHOLE SCHOOL ISOLATES FROM WORLD OUTSIDE... ARTSCHOOL BECAME A SAFE ZONE, THE BUBBLE

BUBBLE WHERE ALL STUDENTS CAN FIND AND LOST THEMSELVES AGAIN AND AGAIN. BUBBLE WHERE YOU DON'T NEED GALLERISTS, DEALERS OR ART COLLECTORS. NO THEY DON'T EVEN EXIST. NO THERE IS ONLY YOU

## THE ARTIST!

THE WORK IS VERY RARELY MENTIONED IN ARTSCHOOL, IF SOMEONE ASKS ABOUT WORK AFTER ARTSCHOOL, FUTURE JOBS ETC. EASIEST WAY IS JUST CHANGE THE OBJECT... OR IF YOU GET GOOD ADVICES AND HINTS

HOW MANY LIVES? LET'S HAVE A PARTY!

...AND AFTER 4-5 YEARS BA-THESIS WORKS. THEY ARE PUTTING ALL THEIR POWER TO THAT WORK. THE FINAL WORK CAN OPEN ALL THE DOORS TO THE ART WORLD. FOR SOME OF THE STUDENTS IT IS A FINAL WORK FOR REAL!

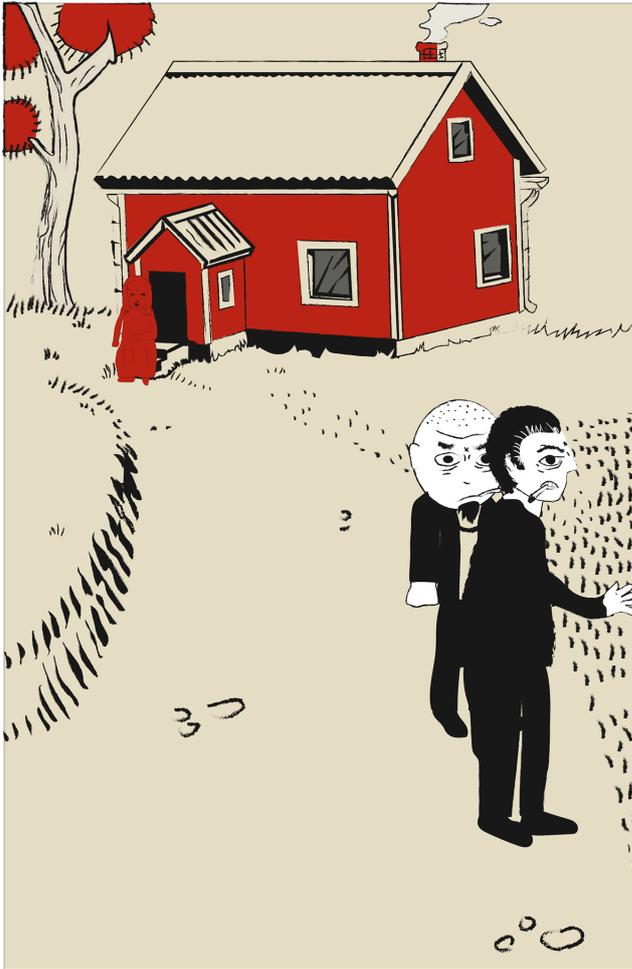
AND THEN AT A GRADUATION DAY, D-DAY ALL STUDENTS ARE STANDING AT SPOTLIGHTS. BELIEVING THE FUTURE AND WAITING THAT EVERYTHING WILL BE SERVED ON THE TRAY...

WELL ACTUALLY THEY DON'T KNOW THAT AT THAT MOMENT SAFE ZONE DISAPPEARS AND REALITY WITH NOT SO SHINY WORKING POSSIBILITIES IS WAITING ROUND THE CORNER...

POKS!

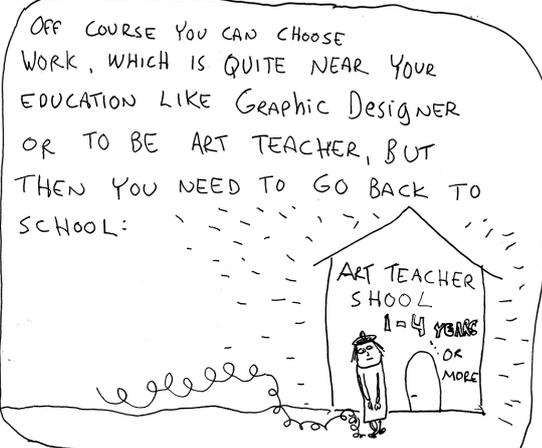
AND BUBBLE BREAKS OUT!

\* DETAIL OF FINAL WORK ON NEXT PAGE INSPIRED BY SOFIE OJSEVEN AND PETER TILKEMAN

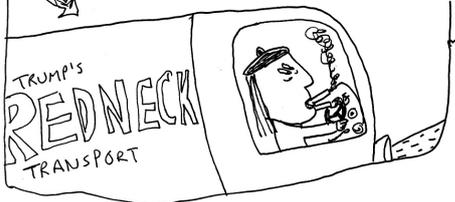


# ARTIST AT CROSSROADS

THEORETICAL WORKING PROCESS FOR A STEREOTYPICAL ARTIST...



OR THEN YOU JUST GIVE UP AND STUDY SOME OTHER PROFESSION LIKE TRUCK-DRIVER OR SOMETHING ELSE:



YOU CAN STILL DO ART. IT IS THEN YOUR HOBBY... WELL USUALLY WHEN PEOPLE ASKS ARTISTS WHAT THEY DO FOR LIVING AND GET ANSWER "I DO ART OR I AM ARTIST" THEY REPLY: "YEAH, BUT I MEAN WHAT DO YOU DO FOR LIVING WHERE ARE YOU WORKING? OR THEY THINK THAT THEY HEARD WRONG OR THAT YOU HEARD WRONG...."



OR THEN YOU CAN TRY TO START YOURSELF AND MAKE YOUR OWN ARTISTIC CAREER...



AT THIS POINT IT'S VERY IMPORTANT THAT YOU FINALLY START TO GET INFORMATION AND FACTS ABOUT ART WORLD, DIFFERENT "PLAYERS", RULES AND HOW IT WORKS



AND THAT YOU START TO CO-OPERATE WITH OTHER ARTISTS AND MAKE CONTACTS. YOU CAN FOR EX. SHARE STUDIO HIRES JOIN ARTIST GROUPS AND OFF COURSE YOU GET LOT OF INFORMATION FROM OTHERS...



THEORETICAL WORKING PROCESS FOR A STEREOTYPICAL ARTIST  
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# ARTIST AT WORKFORCE AGENCY



... AND ALREADY THE FIRST DAY AFTER GRADUATION OUR STEREOTYPICAL ARTIST HAD TASTED THE STAKE OF REALISM. ACTUALLY MANY ARTISTS GIVES UP WITH THEIR CAREES QUICK AFTER THEY FINISHED AT ART SCHOOL AND START TO STUDY SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT.

THEORETICAL WORKING PROCESS FOR A STEREOTYPICAL ARTIST

ARTIST WAKES UP EVERY MORNING 6 AM. YIPPEE!!!

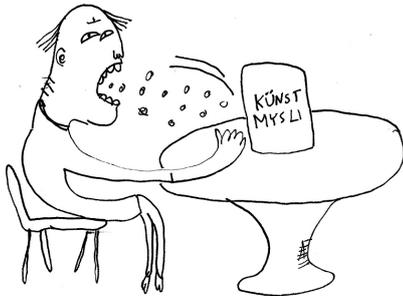


ACTION!

HE BRUSH HIS ARTISTIC TEETHS



EATS BREAKFAST...



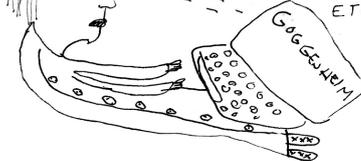
AND STARTS TO WORK AS AN ARTIST 8 AM...



THEN HE FILLS APPLICATIONS FOR GRANTS...



UPDATES HIS HOMEPAGES, SEARCH FOR COMPETITIONS, OPENINGS IN HIS AREA AND THE POSSIBLE GALLERIES AND EXHIBITION PLACES HIS ART COULD FIT IN ETC...



AND DO SOME BRAIN STORMS AND SCETCHES FOR HIS FUTURE MASTERPIECES



AT 6 P.M. ARTIST WEAR HIS BEST CLOTHES AND GOES OUT FOR OPENINGS...



BECAUSE HERE HI HAS LOT OF POSSIBILITIES TO CREATE NEW IMPORTANT CONTACTS AND EVEN GET HIS WORK TO GALLERIES...



NEXT MORNING ARTIST WAKES AGAIN 6 A.M. AND STARTS TO WORK OR AT LEAST HE THINKS

THEORETICAL WORKING PROCESS FOR A STEREOTYPICAL ARTIST:

# BARRIERS FOR CAREERZ

IF YOU CHOOSE TO MAKE YOUR OWN ARTISTIC CAREER, WELL IT AINT ALWAYS THIS EASY: →

OUR STEREOTYPICAL ARTIST IS HAVING A WET DREAM...



LOOK, IT'S A KING!!!

OH MY GOD... ONFG LMAO

HE IS DREAMIN THAT AFTER HIS THUNDER AND LIGHTNING CAREER START, HE BECAME THE NEW KING OF ART:

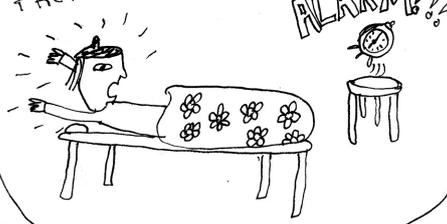
## DAMIEN HIRST THE 2ND!

HAVING ALL THE COLLECTORS, DEALERS, CURATORS, CRITICS AND GALLERISTS AS SERVANTS OR SLAVES OF HIM. QUEUE AFTER HIS ART STARTS FROM LONDON AND ENDS IN PEKING. EVERYBODY WANT'S TO BUY HIS ART WORKS IN ANY COST, EVERYONE WANTS HIM, ADMIRERS!



STEREOTYPICAL ARTIST WAKES UP TO REALITY. TIME TO GO FOR WORK! MOST OF THE ARTISTS NEEDS TO WORK WITH SOMETHING ELSE TO MAKE THEIR LIVING:

ALARM!!!



STEREOTYPICAL ARTIST WORK AT TELEPHONE CUSTOMER SERVICE FOUR-SHIFT ~~JOB~~:

WHAT IS A MEANING OF LIFE???

CUSTOMER CARE!



ALSO YOU CAN GET SOME OTHER BARRIES WHICH TAKE TIME AWAY FROM YOUR ARTISTIC WORKING PROCESS. FOR EXAMPLE YOU CAN FALL IN LOVE:



BUILD A RELATIONSHIP AND HOUSE, GET A BABY.....



OR 15 BABIES AND THEN WITH WORK AND FAMILY AND EVERYTHING ELSE YOU....

FATHER!!

AAAAA!!!

PAPA!

HUNGRY!!



FIND OUT, THAT THERE IS:

NO TIME FOR ART!!!



CONTINUES ON NEXT PAPIER →

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 AND THEORETICAL WORKING  
 PROCESS FOR STEREOTYPICAL  
 ARTIST.

# BARRIERS FOR CAREERZ 2.

WELL ANYWAYS USUALLY ARTISTS STILL FIND TIME FOR ART IF THEY WANT TO FIND IT. STILL BUILDING YOUR ARTISTIC CAREER AINT EASY...

FIRST YOU NEED TO HAVE LOT OF EXHIBITIONS. AND YOU SHOULD ALSO GET SOME PUBLIC IN THERE...

AND MOST IMPORTANT: YOU SHOULD GET THESE PEOPLE ~~INTERESTED~~ INTERESTED IN YOU AND YOUR ART

COLLECTORS

DEALERS

GALLERIST

OLEG BAYBOB

I WANT THAT!

I'M AER DEALER SEAN KELLY

STEREOTYPICAL ARTIST SHOW NOW IN MY GALLERY

DAVID ZWIENER GALLERY

JOURNALIST FROM BBC

IT CAN ALSO TAKE A WHILE BEFORE YOU GET ANY POSITIVE ANSWER TO YOUR APPLICATIONS...

2014 ICKE

2015 WE ARE VERY SORRY BUT

2016 SORRY AGAIN NO NO NO! WE COULD NOT GIVE YOU ANY GRANTS.

SINCERELY MULEKV JARSSON

NO!

STEREOTYPICAL ARTIST SHOULD ALSO GET HIS ART TO BIG CURATED GROUP SHOWS... (BIENNAIS, DOCUMENTA) AND TO IMPORTANT GALLERIES...

THIS YEAR AT VENICE BIENNIAL FINNIS PAVILLION IS PRESENTED BY!

STEREOTYPICAL ARTIST!!

SI!!

AND WIN COMPETIONS, GET HIS NAME IN MEDIA PRESS, TV, HAVE A GOOD HOMEPAGE SOCIAL SKILLS ETC. ETC...

HELP!!!

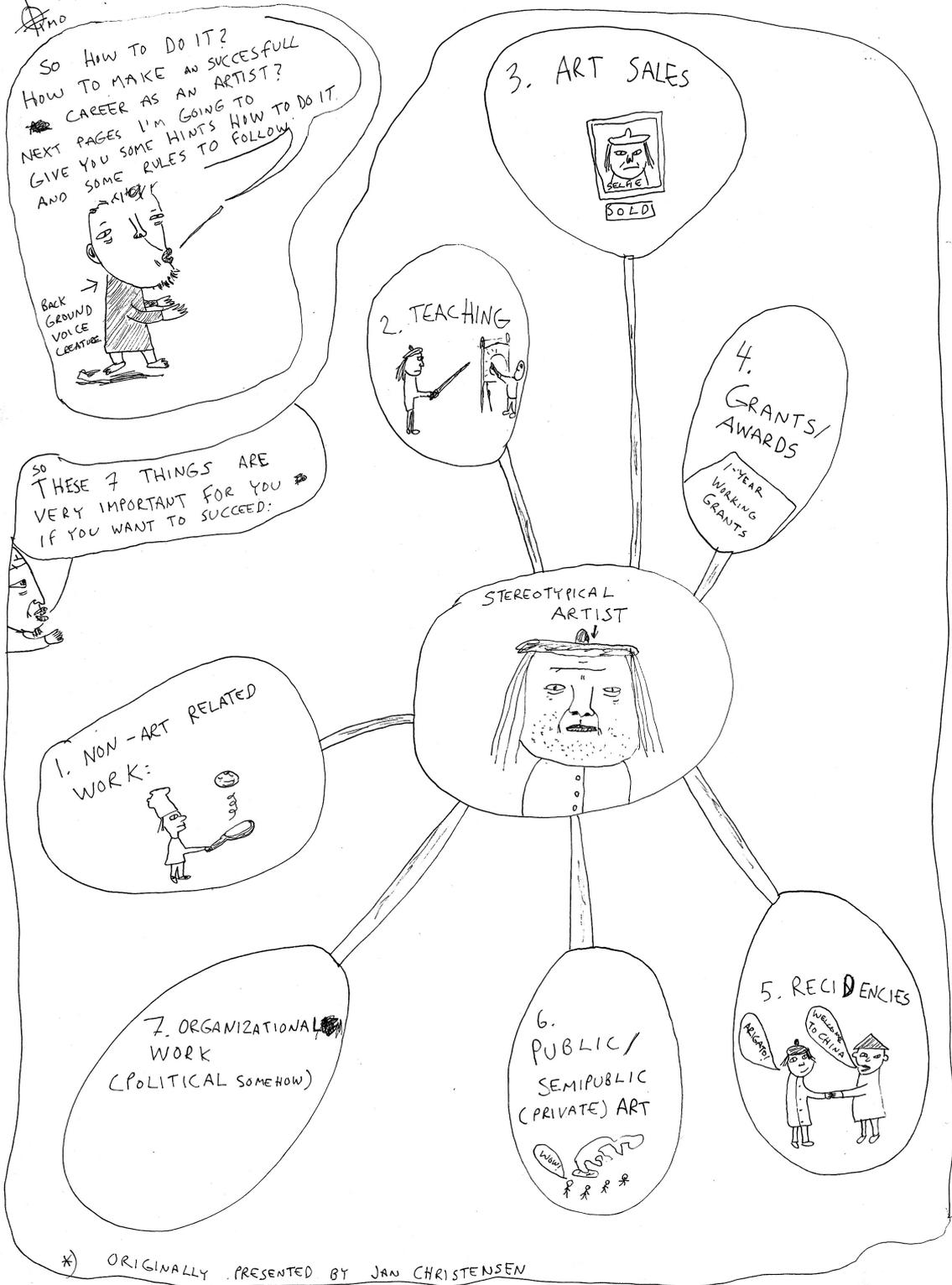
WE WILL TELL YOU EVERYTHING IN

CHAPTER: ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN ARTS!

SO HOW TO HECK STEREOTYPICAL ARTIST COULD SUCCEED???

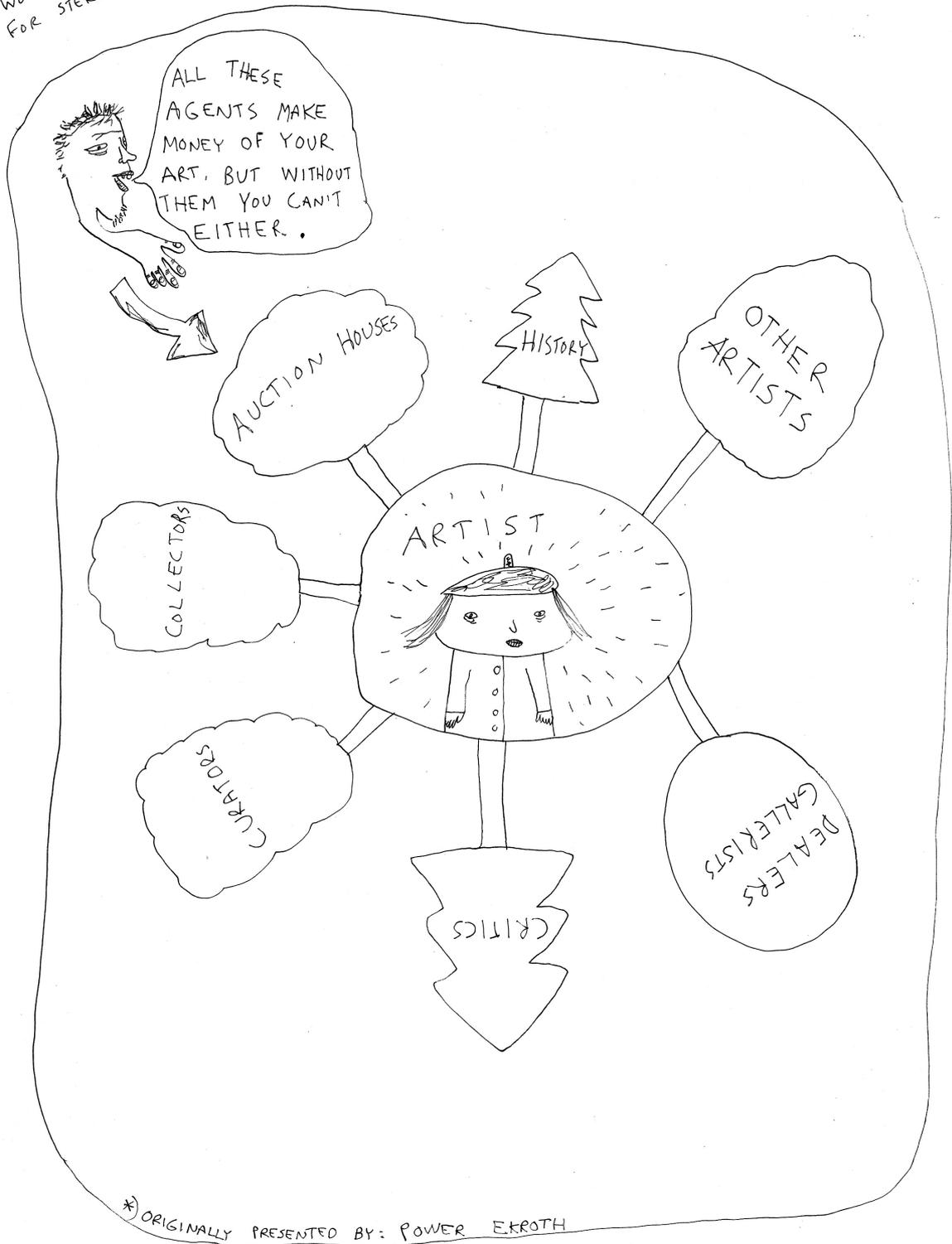
THEORETICAL WORKING PROCESS FOR STEREOTYPICAL ARTIST

CEVEN A AMAZING DIFFICULT WORD  
ENTREPREUNERSHIP IN ARTS



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THEORETICAL  
WORKING PROCESS  
FOR STEREOTYPICAL ARTIST

## ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN ARTS PART 2.

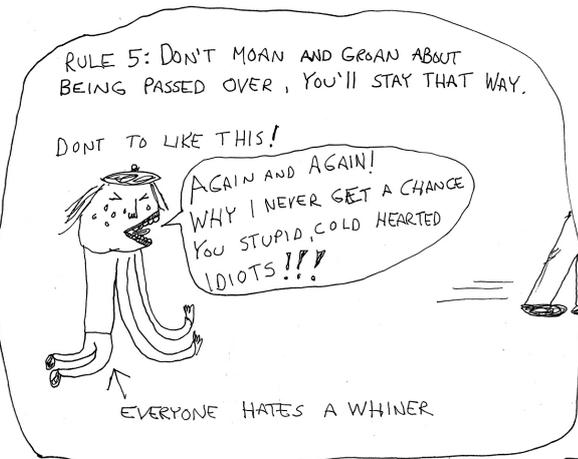


\* ORIGINALLY PRESENTED BY: POWER EKROTH

THEORETICAL WORKING PROCESS FOR STEREOTYPICAL ARTIST

# ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN ARTS PART 3 THE RULES FOR ARTISTS

\* ORIGINALLY BY IRIT KRYGIER

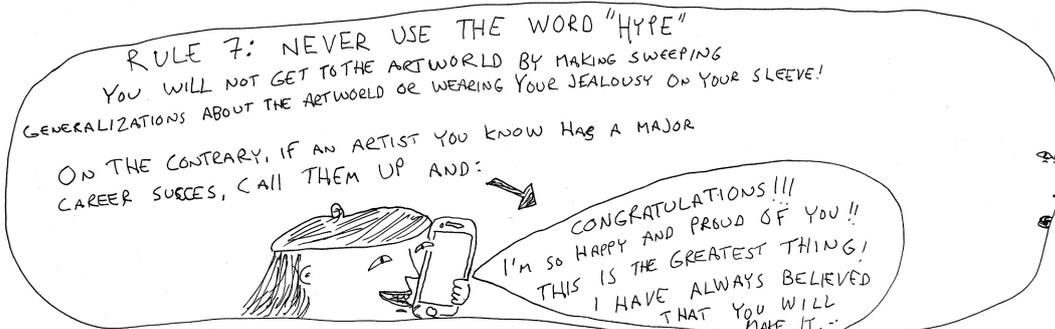


➔ MORE RULES ON NEXT PAGE

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 ARTIST

ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN ARTS PART 4  
**THE RULES FOR ARTIST** PART 2

\*) ORIGINAL RULES BY IRIT KRYGIER



SO THERE THEY ARE: THE RULES FOR ARTIST. FOLLOW THEM TO THE LETTER! KEEP IMPLEMENTING THEM, NO MATTER HOW HIGH UP ON THE SPECTRUM YOU ARE. DO NOT STOP DOING THEM NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS. BUT REMEMBER THAT TRUE ARTISTS CARE ABOUT ONE THING AND ONE THING ONLY, MAKING THE WORK ITSELF. THAT HAS TO BE YOUR MAIN FOCUS. KNOW IN YOUR HEART THAT YOU HAVE A CONTRIBUTION TO MAKE AND GO ABOUT MAKING IT. IF YOU KEEP THAT AS YOUR NUMBER ONE PRIORITY, AND ADHERE TO THE RULES, YOU TOO CAN BE A STAR!



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