3 Million Stories
Understanding the Lives and Careers of America’s Arts Graduates
MARCH 7–9, 2013 • VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY • NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE
Theme: Artistic identity and self reflection
- How do I work?
- What do I need to say?
- What motivates me?
- How do I define success?
- Am I “justifiably” confident?
Forging a strong, “thick” artistic identity maybe critical for success – both for those working inside and outside of the arts.
How well do schools provide the space, encouragement, trust, openness and critical feedback to help students forge a “thick” artistic identity?

Can this be assessed?
Art schools must give students the opportunity to have “an unmediated relationship with his or her work – unfettered by the commercial landscape, allowing a connection with their work and their deepest individual self.”
Theme: The Social Life of the Artist
The Social Life of the Artist

- Social capital and networks are critical
- Being “in the scene” (face-to-face) is necessary for serendipitous encounters that could lead to gigs
- Artists model careers (and ignore risks) based on success of a few peers (“big break” fallacy)
- Artists need supportive communities to flourish (example of Nashville songwriters)
Can schools realistically do anything to support the social life of artists? Or is this one of the “intangibles” that is beyond the institution’s reach?
Theme: Project-based careers in a Contingent Economy
“We have moved from an Elf to a Fairy Economy”
“In the future, we will all be producers”
“The top 6 jobs today didn’t exist 10 years ago.”

How do we develop a curriculum to keep up with this constant innovation and change?
“We need to help student cultivate creative resilience and an appetite for ‘delicious ambiguity’.”
Theme: Tensions and Conflicts
Facing Art Schools
“We cannot relinquish who we are and what we do even as we explore collateral uses of arts training.”
I'm a guerrilla girl. Fuck patriarchy.
We must solve the “teaching paradox” by creating a structured environment that still leaves room for creativity
How do we balance skills-driven instruction with open-ended, risk-taking and tolerance for ambiguity?
• “What can we teach now that will be relevant to our students 20 years from now?”

• Will training always lag behind the fast-paced changes in the economy
“Every arts educator tries to make every student just like them; but few students will be just like them.”
“We will perish if we don’t embrace change. Our choice if evolution or we will face revolution.”
Artists-Scientists Change the World

But, “We are hurting students by making it difficult to study science & art at the same time.”
Theme: Critical Tools in a Artist’s Tool Kit

Can we teach them? Do we teach them?
• Improvisation
• Risk taking
• Play
• Negotiating Collective Creativity
• Hustle
• Interrogate assumptions
• Charisma
• Ability to “inhabit difference”
• Empathic listening
• Expressive agility and story telling
• Tolerance of “discomfort” and ambiguity
• Persistence
“If we can be more explicit about tools, we can more purposefully translate value to others.”
Nobel Prize winners are 17 times more likely to be visual artists

-- scientists benefit from being able to see patterns, imagine alternatives, work with their hands
Students must learn how to “enter into enemy territory” and get “acquainted with the terrain of someone else’s imagination.”

“Authentic Collaboration is required to negotiate difference and to address inequities”
Theme: Reducing Barriers and Facing Shortcomings
Are we prepared for the demographic changes in this country (in 2 decades we will be majority non-white)?
There are too many significant barriers (financial, cultural, social) facing students from disadvantaged backgrounds. We all have a moral imperative to change this.
Does our curriculum connect with enough diverse cultural traditions?
“High schools need to reach down and address issues of readiness. Colleges need to think beyond recruitment. Admission is not the end of the race.”
• “We (artists) need to change people’s minds in unconventional ways. Be crazy....”

• We need to hold institutions responsible for their dismal record at including women and minority artists on their walls and stages.
“My daughter has a larger display of female artists on her walls then the MOMA and the Guggenheim.”
To içerik:

When yo-grow

Wern

Kahlo

A Female Guide to Guerilla Girls
“This is not Us vs. Them. Your parents or grandparents may be Dean or Curtis.”
The power of creative appropriation and culture jamming

“Building Rome in a Day” and then welcome the stealth “Reconquering of Rome”

“Jam your culture, remake your institution.”
“Limitations are constraints you allow others to place upon you.”
“Our moral imperative (to address inequality) is anchored in stories of our own courageous social mobility, or the stories of someone we love or who has loved us.”
Theme: The Arts and Enterprise
Artist work across sectors, toggling between for profit and non profit work
“Help. I can’t afford to live in the neighborhood that my fellow artists and I helped to regenerate!”
Artists are increasingly becoming “brands” – using their style and reputation to tap new markets
What is “oppositional” art in an economy that has commodified “hip” and the “avant-garde”?
• “Artists have gone from being outsiders to engines of the economy.”

• What does this mean for art schools in terms of specific training and the larger campus culture? Are there ideologies, beliefs and practices that students lean in arts school that are hostile or incompatible with this new reality?
“Artists drive creativity; not institutions. We need to support artists more directly”
• “The best way to prepare to be a well compensated actor, producer, or director is not to major in drama”

• “There are negative effects on most earnings if you major in the arts....”
“We do a disservice to our graduates when we pass on the ideology that causes them to say “that’s not art.”
“To be competitive, artists need more than just craft and talent. They need business savvy.”
Theme: The Artist as Change Agent
A single artist can change and revitalize a community, especially in smaller towns and rural communities.
How do we train students to be change agents? To negotiate creativity in public spaces? To have a core set of civic skills in addition to “artistic” skills?
We train artists to challenge assumption? Are we willing to challenge our own assumptions?
Quality of Life Issues are Important

• Art schools provide their graduates not only with skills for work, but also skills necessary to have an engaged, creative life outside of work.

• How do we “fit” a career to the lifecycle? – How does “aging” influence artistic careers?
“First generation uses fists, so second generation can use hands to build, so the third generation can use mind to lead and create.”
“The great trap of the virtual world is working for nothing....”
“No one gives a shit about one-act plays.”
“I went to Yale the way others in my generation went to Vietnam.”
“Students know that I completely believe in them; and even those that I don’t believe in, I pretend....”
“If I am not paying for it, how do I know it’s art?”
"If you had any brains at all, you'd go into health administration right now."
“The drunks are willing to hire me and the professionals have no idea what I do.”
Big Questions for Arts Schools?

Are we ready for the barbarians at the gate who will demand that we prove our value?”
Has anyone created the 21st Century arts school?

What would it look like?
“We are in the middle of a Renaissance. Arts programs that jump on the bandwagon today and help shape this new Renaissance will be the ones that thrive....”
In Conclusion....
“It is going to be remembered as a legendary event.”