

IN LIKE
A LION



OUT LIKE
A SWINE

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*A chamber play for and about
the Royal Institute of Art*



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Preface

The Royal Institute of Art has educated artists and architects since 1735. It is the largest fine-arts school in Sweden and the most storied. It might seem that such a heritage would discourage innovation and transformation. But the long history of the school is also written in crucial reformulations and changes of direction. At various points in time and for various reasons – inner expansions, external turns – the school has managed to reinvent itself. Once again it is time to recalibrate the Royal Institute of Art and set the course for the next five years. The school engaged in vision-setting during the fall of 2018 which resulted in two texts. A chamber play for and about the school, as well as a brief summary of the vision that highlights our most important choices in terms of direction.

The chamber play necessitates an explanation. How does one write for a place kidnapped by its own history, in a time when the future appears uncertain and hard to read? How rigidly can one lay out the path for an institution that wants to, and should, be filled with contradictions? It felt necessary to find a form that dared

to convey the difficulty of the terrain as well as its appeal. A story told in a multitude of voices, about a school that exists in its contemporary contexts and dependencies, at the same time as it is burdened and buoyed by its history: A school that in the very act of telling its story dares dream of the possibilities of art in an imagined near future. The idea behind the chamber play is to give the vision the shape of a conversation in which standpoints and deliberations lead to crucial decisions.

Characters

THE BOAR

THE LION

THE ARTIST

THE VICE-CHANCELLOR

THE PRO-VICE-CHANCELLOR

THE ROBOT CRITIC

THE TEACHER

THE DEVIL

THE CADET/ARMOUR

THE CONSTRUCTOR

THE ARCHITECT

(November 24, 2023, Skeppsholmen, the first island in the Stockholm archipelago, in the middle of the city, yet still apart. It is night and sleet is falling. The Artist, a strangely luminous figure, walks down the slope by Moderna Museet, approaching the Royal Institute of Art. A bronze lion stands on one side of the gates, on the other sits a wild boar cast in the same metal. The majestic pose of the Lion contrasts with the Boar's low center of gravity, holding the prospect of various possibilities. The Artist however knows nothing of this, nor of the history of this place, though images and words on the Institute's webpage have piqued an interest. Perhaps, the Artist thinks, this is where I will be able to make my art the way I want.)

THE BOAR: *(grunts and drools)* Damned weather! Storm rain sleet! Then scorching sun sun sun. *(straight out, unclear to whom)* I remember the seasons, do you?! Of course you don't, you silly lounge lion! You and your posh friends always stay inside. Talk, stand, stare... that is all you are good for. Pacing around. So you miss the seasons, you poor things. The varying properties of the earth, new sweetness each season. Worms and roots a day in early spring. In fall: rotten cabbage, acorns, nuts.

But you float around... (*interrupts self*) Pardon, someone is coming! Now! In this weather, I appreciate that. A human following their instinct, having had an idea. Hopefully. It's not just hares and loudmouths who make their way here!

THE LION: (*roars lazily*) There is only one fate worse than being a statue in bad weather and that is standing next to you. You know well that our visitors deign to arrive regardless of time and weather. Yes, if I did not know better, if I was not aware that this would mean risking a mistake of historic proportions, this is where I would have liked to interject that art exists beyond climate and time, but I will settle for the proper remark that the attraction of art appears to be infinite. After all many come here – at all hours and in all weather. You on the other hand cannot stop yourself from magnifying and exaggerating. You get unreasonably worked up since you cannot stand the immobile, the uneventful, and the altogether void that weighs on you. Understandable perhaps, because who could imagine anything lower than the likeness of a swine?

THE BOAR: (*grunts scornfully*) Shut your trap pussycat, close the psychology textbook! Shall we talk about how difficult *you* find standing here, having your fancy bronze mane stained by snowflakes? What?! A neurotic cat, is that not worse? (*mocking tone*) Oh no, the mane is losing its shape... how will that look? Look on the bright side – some of the bird shit will come off.

THE LION: (*roars and shakes his mane*) Be quiet, you stupid pig!

THE BOAR: Oh, stop it. We have to put up with each other. We are standing here after all. We have a task... (*suddenly eager*) Shall we have some fun? Like we usually do? Guess who's coming over there? I will guess: Let's see, not too large... in some kind of suit... Not one of our scholars or students. We know them, as they are always here and few in number. Not someone from the administration. That coat is translucent somehow... An exchange student, or a visiting professor perhaps? But how does one recognize one of those? Or anybody else? Bother, this is above me!

THE LION: Everything is above you, since you lack references and think you have to have experienced something in order to know it. Us intellectuals merely need to ponder the conditions for the emergence of something thoroughly enough, in order to gain knowledge, even of the unknown. That is no professor.

THE BOAR: I don't see anything interior but I can smell and stare! And it smells... Not like a perpetual student, not like an art lover...

THE LION: Obviously. This time of day no workshops are open to the public, and no exhibitions opened their gates today. There is a performance tomorrow, the day after that there is an open lecture with what may currently be considered the most important art collective on this continent, after that there are exhibitions, but...

THE BOAR: Doors open to anyone, those who can't muster momentum. Programmes, planning – none of that used to be necessary.



THE LION: Now, now, don't be jealous you shaggy old beast. No doubt there are those who want and who want a lot. The difference is that more voices have been added. In the past only sons of the most prominent families submitted to a conductor, now the choir consists of many pitches, instruments and people. Synchronization and symmetry is needed so that none of the new wisdom is lost in the hum. I can see the advantages of the new openness, even from my elevated position. It is only reasonable that everyone be given a chance and that old privilege fall by the wayside. That said, our visitor is most certainly an artist. Most who pass between us are artists after all. Even though that can mean just about anything these days: (*sourly*) they make film, noise, worry about the state of the world and the apocalypse alongside scientists, experiment with strange new machines, there is no end to it.

THE BOAR: Now you are being cranky. We are the guardians of art and mustn't get in the way of the new – we've gleaned that much by standing outside these gates. In any case they are still painting in droves, as well as sculpting, printing and casting. They're good at drawing too. It isn't what they do that bothers me. What I miss is the absence of *joyful* contact with the pointless, among other things. (*stops himself*) Shush! Our visitor is almost here. Let's proceed as usual.

THE LION AND THE BOAR: (*shouting in unison at the top of their lungs*) Who are you?

THE ARTIST: (*frightened and confused*) Who?

THE LION AND THE BOAR: You! Who are you?

THE ARTIST: Visiting, I... I am an artist. And you? Who are you?

THE LION AND THE BOAR: We've been standing here since 1995 at which point the Royal Institute of Art moved into its new venue here on Skeppsholmen. But we are older than that.

THE LION: I was born out of the Renaissance interest in Antiquity and initially lived by the Villa Medici in Rome, where I was a statue. That one over there goes by the name of the Florentine Swine and was modeled on a Roman original in Florence.

THE BOAR: It has been said that I was part of a group, but that the flock was scattered. In truth I belong with a wishing well that students threw their coins into for luck in their studies.

THE LION AND THE BOAR: We come from a long line of replicas. We are both replicas. In the mid-17th century Nikodemus Tessin the Younger commissioned plaster casts from France. But we were never used for the model studies, we were left in narrow crates at the royal castle before being moved to Beridarebanan. There we lay, like dead beetles in matchboxes, for two hundred years before we were unpacked just in time for the Royal Institute of Art's re-inauguration in 1895. As you may have seen we were placed in the entryway stairs.

THE LION: (*crossly*) But at that point the classical ideal had already begun to wither and we never became part of instruction. We transitioned from form to narrative.

THE ARTIST: How so?

THE LION: A narrative for and about the students. Since then they have passed between us. They say ‘in like a lion, out like a swine’.

THE BOAR: Or conversely ‘in like a swine, out like a lion’. The narrative was too good to not bring along in the move. So we were replicated once again, in bronze this time.

THE LION: (*proudly*) They brought us and the name of the school. Of course you wouldn’t know this, but the Royal Institute of Art is more of a letterhead than a name. The school is called Mejan for Foundry Master Meyer who donated his palace on Fredsgatan to the Royal Swedish Academy of Fine Arts, to which the school belonged until 1978, when the state became its main proprietor. Well, I won’t bore you, the point being that the name Mejan, the Boar and myself, constitute the indispensable that has withstood all reform.

THE ARTIST: (*with youthful defiance*) I am in the present, not in what has passed. Your hikayas are too distant in time for me.

THE BOAR: (*with curiosity*) But, if I may, what are you wearing?

THE ARTIST: My yamahs? You’ve never seen one of these? A solar-powered transparent flexuosa, a garment with many bends, wires and circuit boards. It contains all the information technology I need for the fix to fix my fixes to xifs.

THE LION: ‘The fix’? It’s called ‘fixing’. Possibly ‘fixating’... ‘fixes to siffs?’ My word, this sounds like some low sniffing.

THE ARTIST: I said xif – X I F. The final product of every process is the inversion of its name; even young children know this. On my circuit and my platform this is how it is. But I shouldn't use so much logic because you wouldn't understand. I think you still get that the impulse is to fix other languages to reveal the pulse. By mistake, or due to inebriation, I droned onto the school's channel the other night. It was like digging through cybernetic mud, but there was something interesting to me about all that old electronic murkiness. This was a surprise, I hate schools, the control, the manipulation, all that we *should* become, over and over the same shit. Nobody even understands why artists exist and what to do with their fix. Maybe some glitter will land on some who have been shouted-out in a feed for some seconds, or managed to luster a collector who's staying hidden, far away from the destruction here. The rest of us, who can't winch or beam ourselves away from opsis, are stuck in circuit with ourselves. We live in it despite being cast out of it. We don't even have houses to squat in anymore. So we are trying to reshape the mass of infrastructure and its various signs, the over-functionalized shuttered possibilities that empty the margins, to other languages, images, objects. I have been looking for somewhere for us for a long time. Perhaps this place is right.

THE BOAR: (*very annoyed*) It talks strange.

THE LION: (*to the Boar*) I don't know about that, it's just different. Do you think anyone understood us when we got here?

THE BOAR: Come on, I think it sounds more like

make-believe, a novelty intended to impress us. They think they're from the future.

THE LION: (*suppressing disgust*) Certainly, this has always annoyed me. The shabbiness and destruction that awaits those who think they can consciously create new things simply because they are unable to look into the depths of history and recognize that they are replicating. Many an innocent creature has stood there and speechified the instant before the ill-tamed wave of life washed over them, snared them, in seashell-covered kelp.

THE ARTIST: (*arrogant*) Meow seems to have swallowed an old-time poet. But I haven't got all night: what do you know?

THE LION: We know everything and nothing. We know so little that all we resemble very well may have become outdated or completely unknown. We know so much that we could show you everything, if only we could decamp from our positions. Now you'll have to enter if you want to know more.

THE ARTIST: You are going to have to tell me a bit more than that. If you don't have anything else to luster with it won't concern much and will be an uncooked hard sell. I assumed a sugared pitch would be slipped into one's mouth at the gates. Aren't you looking to cache educoins in the chain like everybody else?

THE BOAR: You seek information? Do we look like the office of student affairs?! You, who are an artist, have you attended art school?

THE ARTIST: No.

THE LION: That is how they all start here, they are artists and become artists, and in order to do so they need a place with great knowledge of art and of making art. If you want to know more you are going to have to enter.

(The Artist enters the school. There are plenty of people around, despite it being late. And lots of finished and unfinished works of art of various kinds. Amidst the art, people are working and talking. Some are eating. Some are arguing loudly. Someone is laughing. Someone is crying. There is a sleeping figure in a corner. There is a big board full of text in the middle of the atrium. Two people in front of the board are writing, discussing eagerly, then erasing and writing again. Their clothes are coated with chalk dust. The Artist is relieved to notice that they are both left-handed just like the Artist. The board reads: 'An art school is a school that...' But one of the left-handed people immediately starts to erase it with a big rag, sending chalk dust flying everywhere.)

THE ARTIST: *(coughing up chalk dust)* Stop it, I didn't even get a chance to finish droning. Who are you?

THE VICE-CHANCELLOR AND THE PRO-VICE-CHANCELLOR: *(in unison, with an important look and completely unbothered by the chalk dust)* Vice-Chancellor and Pro-Vice-Chancellor! Our task is to collect and articulate thoughts from the school on this board regarding what an art school should do and why it exists. This is no easy task as both art and the world are constantly changing. We listen, think and write.

Write, think, listen. And in all this we erase. Sometimes we don't have the energy to think, listen or write in the midst of all the daily chores and concerns. You understand, new ideas emerge all the time, an artist makes art in an entirely new manner or the conditions for what we do change due to things nobody could predict like fires, budget propositions, expansions of art's sphere of interest, new and lost possibilities. One never knows what's around the corner, so one has to be good at looking out. Sentries are what we are!

THE ARTIST: *(at once disappointed and curious)* You are caught in the writing loop! Everything fluxes and tahulls, runs and escapes – yes, to be sure, that is opsis! But the material and the code? I'm looking for something that will last for eternity. Or I don't want it. If so what use is an art school? Could you describe it, otherwise it will become a funeral of simulated terminability, modkeys.

THE VICE-CHANCELLOR: *(somewhat uncertain of what the Artist is actually saying, but in a lecturing tone)* Well, you understand, what we have seen and heard and thought was pretty simple if you dare believe in it. Sometimes it sounds so simple and trivial... It doesn't sound at all as impressive as when other vice-chancellors speak.

(The Artist wipes their tears and listens attentively.)

THE VICE-CHANCELLOR AND THE PRO-VICE-CHANCELLOR: *(reading aloud from part of the board)*
An art school is a place for making art. Every student is

an artist and uses the school as their space for creating during a period of time. Every art school carries a notion of how the knowledge of making art is transmitted.

(they stop reading) Here we believe that art contains the knowledge of how art is made and what it is like to make it. *(continuing to read)* Most of our teachers are artists. Their experience as artists and the art they make are of great importance to their work at the school.

(continuing to read, making certain additions as they go) In the broadest and most breathtaking sense of the word, art has some form of materiality or salience. The school contains a great body of knowledge of materials and their qualities and contexts in particular, and how they can be used to make art. *(they stop reading)* Here we also have comprehensive experience of how art emerges, becomes public and is experienced. And all of this in the literal sense of the word: This is where art is made, this is where it emerges, this is where it can be experienced.

THE ARTIST: *(impatient)* Everything you say is so masty. You tread on for so long, can't you just tell me besser what I need to know to fix your way? I'm an artist; I want to fix my fix so that it becomes xif, noding else! There has to be some kind of manual.

THE VICE-CHANCELLOR AND THE PRO-VICE-CHANCELLOR: *(silencing the Artist by waving the eraser so that even more dust flies, annoyed at being interrupted)* Setting one specific path is impossible according to the logic of art. Each person must choose their own path and each choice of path is part of shaping one's own artistic practice. The school is a companion, a guide



and an interlocutor. This indicates the directions of the beginning of the path. There is knowledge at the school that we want everyone to take part in and develop, a common ground for the conversation.

THE ARTIST: The hardware... what is it made of?

THE VICE-CHANCELLOR AND THE PRO-VICE-CHANCELLOR: (*continuing to read in high, chanting, voices*) We keep careful track of what has happened here and in art in general, because even though artists must work based on their own conditions, art happens in a context filled with the work of the artists that have come before. On the other hand this means that you are never alone! History is a constant chatter and hum in this building and at times you will need to shield your ears. We are a school in constant transformation due to the adaptability vis-à-vis what goes on in art. Because of this we don't have a fixed canon, but rather a constant conversation about what art can and wants to be.

THE ARTIST: (*quiet and bashful*) Well, one thing has been bothering and hugging me for some time, it connects to that last thing. Perhaps it's down there in the corner in far too fine print, perhaps this issue is completely gone for you, but it must be dared: What would you say art is for? How can one keep fixing when everything is being destroyed around us at the speed of paste filling up and draining from my platform?

THE VICE-CHANCELLOR: (*speaking eagerly, but somewhat bashfully*) Saying something about that which is most important and dear to one is never easy. You know why you made your way to this building, likely

the same reasons that brought us here. Sometimes when there are bad days, with too much noise and complications, we forget. On a good day, art convinces us that the reason is simply that art is meaningful. Or rather, the meaning that art creates and how we are filled with meaning by experiencing and creating art. Art creates worlds and destroys them in the next instant. Shakes and upsets, makes us see, feel and think.

THE PRO-VICE-CHANCELLOR: (*looks quite embarrassed for the Vice-Chancellor*) Well, this turned out exactly as formal and solemn as one rarely dares be when one spends one's days in close proximity to art. It easily becomes full of hot air to the point of bursting if too much effort is put into it. But that's how it will sound, because art is a sense and a reflection of change, an action *with* changes that concerns that which is the most important and keeps the world together... We have to go on in spite of it all.

THE ARTIST: That just sounds egotistical and pompous. My fix isn't determined by art concepts, by what I can fix and how things feel.

THE PRO-VICE-CHANCELLOR: That may be. Those of us who've been here for a long time know that the concept of art is always changing, and must change, so what you call fix is valid here too.

THE VICE-CHANCELLOR: Oh no, we've forgotten to check in with the Robot Critic!

(The Vice-Chancellor picks up a cell phone and calls someone. A small being with shiny, silky fur and smooth

movements walks down the stairs on all fours. The being smiles and reveals a perfect set of teeth with sharp fangs, stops abruptly in front of the gathering, sits down, slowly stroking its long furry tail.)

THE PRO-VICE-CHANCELLOR: (*addressing the Artist who looks confused*) We have invested heavily in robots lately in order to relieve our teachers. Our researchers built this one, in collaboration with a computer science institute in Mumbai. I think they spent more work and resources on its exterior than necessary, but it did turn out quite beautiful in the end. It can handle a good number of instructive dialogues about as well as a human would.

THE ROBOT CRITIC: (*in a soft, lovable voice*) At your service?

THE VICE-CHANCELLOR: I'm sure you've been listening...

THE ROBOT CRITIC: You know I have. I am always connected to you when you are writing.

THE PRO-VICE-CHANCELLOR: Any mistakes?

THE ROBOT CRITIC: You answered the questions. No mistakes.

THE VICE-CHANCELLOR: But?

THE ROBOT CRITIC: But your answers are incomprehensible to a robot. The constant that is to be held to is described as a feeling or an experience in a specific space and within a specific institutional and historical setting. I recognize it to be *love*, and a robot does not know love. I don't know what it represents but

let us call it variable L. L is dependent on the myriad of possibilities and events which line the path of the artist. If the art education exists to provide access to L, then that says something about the art education, but I have no idea what.

THE VICE-CHANCELLOR: Shall we try to specify?

THE ROBOT CRITIC: This is where I am programmed to hesitate. Yes and no. If this artist is to be assisted in choosing – yes. If the important things is that the space, the institution and the history continue to be the apparatus in which art is made and which is recognized as art – no.

THE ARTIST: (*both frightened and mocking*) Is that so?

THE ROBOT CRITIC: An art school allows artist, art and knowledge to emerge in a probably infinite number of configurations: *one*, so that the concept of art remains unstable and continues to shift; *two*, so that methods for making art evolve. An art school builds, maintains and develops an environment in which it is possible to shape and to be a subject that is able to do this. An art school should not strive to streamline itself according to genre divisions or other ideological principles. Art should guard its heteronomy.

THE VICE-CHANCELLOR AND THE PRO-VICE-CHANCELLOR: Thanks! We agree. But it is also good if the school can gather itself and is aware that lines of flight sometimes don't lead anywhere.

THE ARTIST: But isn't that your fix? You write and erase, write and erase, to keep up with the present that you in fact haven't the slightest drone about and that is

constantly stepping ahead? Fix becomes fex in a loop.

THE ROBOT CRITIC: (*still as lovable*) In all likelihood I have missed a software update. What I can say is: There is a decisive contradiction inherent to the making of art: even if the artist does nothing, the non-doing is a form of doing. Art is not in opposition to the most intense forms of activity or passivity. This is also true of the education. This is true of the Vice-Chancellor and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor.

(A person wearing a stained painter's smock interrupts them. The Robot Critic is about to say something, but the person gives it a powerful kick to the head, making it fall over backwards. The fur is torn off its forehead, exposing a display that begins to flash red. A person with black hair and black clothes runs up with a computer, drops to the ground and starts repairing the robot.)

THE TEACHER: It does nothing but talk! Excuse my creeping up like this. But it's impossible to keep one's mouth shut when one hears so much bullshit! Talk is cheap, but you're not even answering the questions! Let me lay it out for you: Is there nothing to hold onto? What do we do at Mejan? The last one is easy peasy: 'Whatever the student wants to do.' Obviously we start with what we teachers know, as well as what the student knows and the ideas they have. And that answers the second question. All artists, I dare say, the ones I've met, start out with a vision in their head that they want to see and show others. You need to have that vision, and

a plan to put it out there, for it to become a real thing. Then you can start thinking about becoming an artist, but then it won't matter if you swap the brains out for a camera or a computer or some other contraption. You've got to get that vision out!

(As the person in the painter's smock talks, the black-haired person is desperately trying to revive the Robot Critic but in the end gives up, sobbing in a controlled manner and tenderly picking the robot up and carrying it away.)

THE ARTIST: *(mildly)* I can connect to that even though...

THE VICE-CHANCELLOR: As psychological description there's something to it. As long as you broaden the actual meaning of vision and image creation.

(Suddenly a chair is overturned with a bang. At the table at the far end of the school canteen, over by the entrance, a figure stands up, dressed in a very elegant and well-tailored suit, but with their face hidden by a frightening illusionist silicone mask. The figure moves in a measured, but aggressive, manner, towards the group.)

THE DEVIL: *(smacking and in a loud voice)* I see the entire mentally challenged elite has congregated! You stupid, pitiful artist, the Vice-Chancellor and Pro-Vice-Chancellor, putting their pompous, overcooked



heads together with a fool and one of those AI-products isn't going to help. Of course it's going to end in a short circuit, drain itself with a phuff. And I will tell you why – all of these grandiose effusions about art are nothing but a fraud! You never agree, always have different theories about why art is so important, but *that* it is important, even *the most important* thing – on that you can all agree!

THE TEACHER: (*interrupts*) You're always slithering around the hallways, whether we want it or not. But I am fixing to fight you anytime. Better bring you out into the light than have you in the closet, you grow in there! Come closer and I'll give you a thrashing so that everyone can see how weak your hands and your head are, you ugly goat!

THE DEVIL: (*interrupts, laughing scornfully*) You are blinded by yourselves and your foolishness. Been thinking too much, feeling too much, you have become pathetic navel-gazers who make yourselves look important at the expense of others. And if one of you is lost, a thousand will come to take their place. There will always be new, firm flesh vying for a place in the limelight. That is why hanging around here is so rewarding, someone is always sure to get hooked when I trawl. My friend (*turns to the Artist*) follow me, I will show you the world, as it is, how to really live with experience. You need to understand that there are no exceptions. None! And then follow that realization consistently.

THE VICE-CHANCELLOR: (*composed but annoyed*) You're just thirsty for warm young blood that can bring

new life to your old dying body. Using the power of art to catch your prey is a dirty trick. (*continues quietly, addressing the Pro-Vice-Chancellor*) We should never have funded that art project with 3D-masks for facial recognition. When they wear that mask they get in everywhere.

THE DEVIL: (*charming*) If you want to become a great artist and need to know what the art world wants, come to me! I know everyone, everything, I always have my finger on the pulse. My word means a lot. I can open doors. If you follow me you will know success, I know what it takes, as opposed to the shit-talkers over here.

THE TEACHER: (*addressing the devil*) Remove your mask, I want to see your face!

THE DEVIL: (*hisses*) As if I have a face.

THE PRO-VICE-CHANCELLOR: Face? You wouldn't understand. Drawing analogies between life and art sounds pretty bombastic, but it is obvious. Living can be reflected through art in a meaningful way because it keeps open a space and time of possibilities.

THE DEVIL: (*sourly*) Not even I can help humanistic morons! Freedom is of a different nature and predetermined.

(The Devil goes back to the overturned chair, stands it back up and sits down. Suddenly one of the Vice-Chancellor's two phones rings. During the conversation the Vice-Chancellor writes on the board, long sentences filled with new ideas on art and art education. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor nods thoughtfully: 'Of course,

we mustn't forget. We should add that, but you should write it differently.' A student joins the conversation and points to what the Vice-Chancellor just wrote: 'How can you write that! We have to change that immediately, everyone knows you can't think that anymore! Also, it's impossible to read your old-fashioned handwriting. Can't you use the writer robot like everyone else?' A person runs up and shouts impatiently: 'We just had a faculty meeting, we completely disagree.' And so it is erased again.)

THE ARTIST: Write and erase. Write and erase. Tear the razor off the eraser, babble, rough and tumble. If the beat has a heart, that's the erasure writing. Everyone here seems to have been through a lot in their fix, but a lot of it just turns into fex, and the heart won't form.

(Pensively the Artist enters a room with a checkerboard floor. Some kind of exhibition is underway, sculptures, screens on the floor with headphones, an enormous red stalactite-like conical formation made out of fibreglass, silicone and gauze shoots out of the ceiling towards the floor. The silence is broken by a metallic noise, steps approach. A medieval armour, or simply an armour enters. A voice emerges from the visor.)

THE CADET/ARMOUR: Attention! Left! Halt!

THE ARTIST: Yees?

THE CADET/ARMOUR: I understand you have questions! One hardly expects a drill here, but somebody

has to preserve traditions and honour the state. The marine cadet dormitories were located in the old part of the building. This is where we slept if the cold and the fleas didn't keep us awake. That was a long time ago. When the art school moved in the navy bid farewell. But I liked it here, couldn't tear myself away and found this old armour to cozy up in.

THE ARTIST: Should I get it?

THE CADET/ARMOUR: No, there isn't much to understand. An old soldier. An even older armour. That is all. It is a good thing that even an art school abides by rules and statutes!

THE ARTIST: Doesn't governmentalizing an art school ruin everything?

THE CADET/ARMOUR: Of course it does! That is exactly it! Forward march! Halt! Present arms! Salute! A state-run art school, subject to laws and statutes. Not a whole lot of fun according to you, but there has to be a clear operating model and clear goals for education. Who are you?

THE ARTIST: I am an artist. I was wired here. It seemed promising somehow. Now it suddenly sounds so normy and scripted! The opposite of what I want!

THE CADET/ARMOUR: An artist! (*mutters*) That explains it... I have heard a lot from my spot in the grand auditorium. Artistic freedom is constantly being contradicted, and the artists are always talking about 'the autonomy of art', as if art could generate its own laws. Everything is so open and directionless and searching. But you mustn't forget, you aren't just artists,

but also humans, citizens and students; as such you are guaranteed rights, such as equality, freedom of speech and democratic process. This holds true no matter what art wants with you. Even if it must be subordinated to the common good. Take the condition of the Earth for example. The ecological systems are being depleted and don't regenerate, so sustainability must be formulated as an absolute and undeniable requirement which obviously also applies to the institution of art.

THE ARTIST: I agree, I just didn't think a relic like you would understand how bad things are. You are the ones who stoked the apocalypse with your fossil death cult. But that wasn't exactly what I connected when I made my way here. More that the school doesn't only exist within the reservation. When I spoke to the bot the other night it said that you were all over the place. I've seen things you've done around town where I've felt the same sustenance I get from my stuff. The restlessness of the hunger movement that slows down and weighs down in concentration beyond opsis. So I wired myself over here and saw openings in opportunities – fix in the workshops, hang with the specialists in various techs here and there. The school didn't seem monadized, but in play with a large world. That's why I came here.

THE CADET/ARMOUR: (*reserved, to herself*) You mean the peace talks... Peace is the most difficult... When art begins to converse with the world it must learn more about the languages spoken by the world, if it wants the world to learn more about art. As I said, I don't understand everything about this place, but



translation is important, to be able to work together with characters from different areas and places. I keep hearing about how it actually happens.

THE ARTIST: Tell...

THE CADET/ARMOUR: We have this project, which documents cities and domiciles that are undergoing change under the pressures of the penny and the forces of self-interest. It has actually affected several larger construction projects to the degree that our students have become a natural component of city planning. Or consider the research group at 3D that works with living matter, which has made possible development of technology in the environmental sphere that beats your fluxousa by a mile.

THE ARTIST: That is entirely different than the navel-gazing that the one in the mask was going on about before. Us turning inward, with the school being the interior.

THE CADET/ARMOUR: Oh no no no, things here do not face inward, we are part of the state. All of this is about the state, believe me. The school is an integrated aspect of power and art comes about through dint of power. Art is pure exertion of power! Up until the early 1980s, all students had the right to carry a sword!

(The character in the well-tailored suit enters and walks straight up to the Cadet/Armour and the Artist. The face is different, but equally attractive. When the character passes them the Cadet/Armour and the Artist are shoved so hard they stumble.)

THE DEVIL: The state! Pure exertion of power! Pure impotence is what it is! Facilitated living for those with dementia, built on broken dreams. It doesn't add up, above all it leads nowhere. Projects, prototypes, drafts, attempts. That is all! Despicable and ridiculous. Should be annihilated, shut down, mocked! Those who want to become real artists have got to be tougher than that! Those who enjoy the sting and pinch of the whip will survive! Who wants to taste my rod? Good things will follow, I promise!

(The Devil disappears.)

THE ARTIST: That one is crooked. Who is that?

THE CADET/ARMOUR: Someone who comes here often, hangs around the entrance, goes around seducing or shouting.

THE ARTIST: Seducing?

THE CADET/ARMOUR: Making promises. I don't want to talk about it.

THE ARTIST: I understand, simulating absorbents are everywhere and are very trixy. One can't talk about them since they steal all images and words for themselves. My platform borders on a conglomerate of those who catch the smallest sign and trash it. But where was I? Even though I've been fixing for a long time I am new to art, such as art is here. But I also think that to fix art completely freely and correctly must be different from the projects you mentioned. They sounded more like any old gig. And with all the rules of the authorities

and all the control it sounds impossible to stop fix from becoming fex, or worse yet: fax and flap. One thing has to be freedom and the other is submission.

THE CADET/ARMOUR: That is something they talk about all the time. It is ridiculous to me. Though at times I hear people argue quite coherently that it is precisely this contradiction that makes it necessary for the artists here to gather good knowledge of society and turn their gaze outward. The important part is found both in and outside the rules after all.

THE ARTIST: Glitch! Tell!

THE CADET/ARMOUR: I will admit that saying 'art' and wagging one's tail around sometimes appears to be enough. But there are gleams of light. (*suddenly exhilarated*) The maneuver of the year! Everyone gathers and confers on strategies and clever moves for the future. The cohesion of a larger group marching in time is unbeatable! The bodies synchronize; their souls jointly swing up to wuthering heights! As I like to say: By my sword, without a chart, a canon, a ship and an eager admiral, no naval battle will be glorious!

(The Artist mumbles in agreement without understanding what the Cadet/Armour means. Luckily they are interrupted. A constructor with a large folder enters the room together with an architect a tight jacket who is holding a laser-measuring tool. The light comes on and they immediately start measuring. It takes them a while to notice the Artist and the Cadet/Armour.)

THE CONSTRUCTOR: And who are you?!

THE ARTIST: I am on flux.

THE CADET/ARMOUR: I am a cadet in armour.

And you?

THE ARCHITECT: I am the Architect.

THE CONSTRUCTOR: We are remodeling; the school is going to be remodeled to create an environment that meets the demands of contemporary life.

THE ARTIST: Demands of contemporary life?

THE CONSTRUCTOR: You really shouldn't be asking me, I didn't commission this, but if I have understood things correctly this is about opening up, creating more spaces in which people can meet and creating spaces in which different techniques and methods can exist side by side and enrich each other.

THE CADET/ARMOUR: (*bellows*) Is everything to change?

THE ARCHITECT: Everything is going to be changed and not much will change. We're not so far along that we have building permits, we are still in the design stage, but if you listen to the order you will understand: We are creating an architecture that facilitates change, that welcomes the temporary and the new, without losing accustomed methods and old knowledge.

THE CONSTRUCTOR: We aren't building anything that won't hold up. In my profession one learns that load-bearing layers are vital. The workshops belong to this category. Here... (*opens the folder and begins to leaf through it*) In the room schedule the workshops are described as the pulsating infrastructure that combines

technical engineering functions with test sites and temporary zones where group critiques and other common activities can quickly be arranged. Really it is all one workshop as the space is oriented towards the interplay of the various techniques and a good number of machines do not have a designated place.

THE CADET/ARMOUR: *(loudly and in a declarative tone)* 'As if time and change were the primary media of artistic education and research.'

THE CONSTRUCTOR: I understand it as more practical. The Royal Institute of Art is aiming to open itself more to the world, it seeks collaboration with other institutions and spaces, simply in order to be able to do more and learn together with others. This building is the starting point, here you have studios and workshops and lecture halls and project rooms and points of encounter, but the school exists in many different places at once and it exists through collaborations that usher the students out into the world where they can make new geographies the site of their artistic work.

THE ARCHITECT: It's exciting! In the five-year programme spending time at a different institution of higher learning has become a matter of course. New scholarships have been added thanks to the eternal bustle of the management, and some are designated assistant scholarships. There is no tuition, everyone is welcome, and it is especially gratifying that the school has developed a scholarship programme for students who come from countries outside of the EU or have difficulties financing their studies for other reasons.

Since I work out in the field I also find it extra exciting that the programme also takes place in spaces that aren't educational institutions.

THE ARTIST: (*quietly to the Cadet/Armour*) That was what I was saying...

THE ARCHITECT: And in the built environment. The architecture programme here at the school offers an applied approach to the built, to the city and the infrastructures. That some of the most prominent architects teach various aspects of the arts of architecture here have lent great significance to the school in terms of furthering society. Think about the art of restoration for one, which has become indispensable in this age of environmental consciousness and re-use.

THE CONSTRUCTOR: Especially as a new field of study has been created in the encounter between architecture, urban planning and public art. In recent years this also includes artistic research, which especially considers the future of the planet. This is where the school is groundbreaking, but also provides these professions with the opportunity for further education in dialogue with events in society and even life on this planet as a whole. Generally speaking, the range of advanced skillsets has grown quickly within the faculty, and this has been vital in attracting a more diverse population of students and coworkers. The path here is no longer as predictable, the school is attractive in more ways than one.

THE ARCHITECT: What we draw should be optimal...

(They are interrupted by loud noise. The sound is indescribable and terrible. The Artist has never heard anything like it. Matter that has remained fixed for centuries set slowly in motion. Petrified metal softens and becomes muscle, ligaments and fur. The Lion and the Boar come staggering, unaccustomed to being free of the rigidity of bronze. Behind them walks the Devil, ushering them forward.)

THE ARTIST: *(astonished)* Oyeah, heyeah, whadwhad, haddo! Fix becoming xif! If art here does anything – shape and destroy, call and hadd – then I’ve fluxed correctly! Metal becomes flesh, fur becomes stone!

THE LION: *(measured)* True devilry, as they say. The Devil canceled our ossification. As always, the Devil has a hand in it, if you don’t keep the door locked tight. *(to the Devil)* Isn’t that right?

THE DEVIL: *(grumpy)* My lines come later. Go on!

THE LION: Well you have the good taste to keep to the script. Everything has its place, but ideally defiled and upside down! And now I’m involved in your play – I am doing something as repulsive like moving. Rule-breaking and defilement is normally the domain of the lovely Boar. My art is delimited and wants to engage in the perfection of form. I know when something is beautiful or ugly. I understand a handsome pose; head high, eyes on the horizon, yawning at my prey. The snout of the swine on the other hand is down in the dirty mud, rooting. That too is an art, an art that has yet to

find its form and that grubs and breaks roots and tries in vain to overturn the big trees from below.

THE BOAR: (*defiant*) If it weren't for my rooting in the formless you wouldn't exist, Lion, the materials would never have been discovered! Art must constantly test its forms, experiment by searching through the matter, run its snout into everything, even if it stinks, is cold, dark and wet. Here at Mejan we root!

THE LION: (*handsome and on guard*) I reserve your right to mess with your art but that right isn't absolute if it crosses other rights. If so I'll call the Cadet who will drive you back into your corral.

THE ARTIST: (*impatient*) Aside from this fix which was xif, all of you are mainly treading. No offense, but when you word I lose pulse. And really all I want to know is – what is the school for, what are you doing here?

THE BOAR: (*stands so close that the Artist can feel his hot and terribly stinky breath on their face*) How hard is it to understand! You have to listen, you rotten piece of root, or you'll never learn. It's not complicated! One creates situations and spaces in which the students can root around in the materials and experiences, where they can try things out and experiment!

THE LION: (*admonishing and posh*) One has to rub it in so that they learn! Basically it is about learning specific technical, discursive and performative methods for extracting form out of various materials. It is about relating to each other's art, to contemporary art and to art history in critical conversations. Tutorial groups



headed by professors provide structure to the whole endeavour.

THE BOAR: (*yapping*) Though there is variation, there are seasons, different creatures! No need to nag and wear with the same livestock year after year. That would be dull and monotonous. The professor isn't the only one on the tutorial group. They are organized in collaboration with one or two lecturers. There are also visiting professors who stay for a longer or shorter period and gather a group of artists around something fun – a theme, a technique or a line of inquiry! This becomes a temporary laboratory where they work together based on the visiting professor's own practice, or the visitor may be a thinker from an entirely different discipline.

THE LION: I want to insist that what I am saying is correct: form is a continuing critical dialogue. On one's own or together, depending on disposition. One might say that this programme tests its own viability as well as that of the group. That which is produced is tested in exhibitions and through other forms of display. And if it is good, the final presentation will often end up at some larger biennial or exhibition venue. A dialogue about art happens in a context much larger than the school itself. The activities resonate throughout the world and meanwhile we gain inspiration and knowledge.

THE ARTIST: I get it! You have broken down the walls of the institution, a zone of expansion where the mass of infrastructure can be broken down and flux into a fix. Prismatic. One can look out and the world can flux to us.

That's not too hard and should be incorporated from the start!

(A wind blows through the room. Suddenly the Artist doesn't want to be associated with their newfound friends.)

THE ARTIST: Go now, beat it! Ruggle back to the spots where you belong! Stand there as stiff as dried-up paintbrushes and old as yesterday's art. I belong on the fluxfix to xif, a future with growing folds that match my coat! You are memos of what was.

(The Artist opens a large gate to usher them out. The door opens onto the dark night. It is still snowing. The Lion and the Boar climb onto their pedestals and instantly solidify into bronze. The Vice-Chancellor and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor stand next to them. The Devil joins them, calm and quiet.)

THE DEVIL: *(unkindly to the Artist)* So it is time, I see. The novice has been ensnared by the future and is putting history back on its pedestal. How remarkably idiotic! And even though you know who I am you haven't even thought to ask me anything. Because you know that you'll find me in the details and that I am everywhere? Don't you think you should seize the opportunity to ask me for some advice?

THE ARTIST: *(arrogant)* What could you possibly teach me?

THE DEVIL: Don't believe in news, don't believe in education, don't think you can create new knowledge. The downfall already awaits, artists are no exception. Here your talents will become hostage to time. You won't be free until you die. Art and art as school is an institution. And institutions only exist to continue existing, that is to say, as long as it is possible to delay the inevitable moment when the gates of hell swing open. Then you will burn, but before that the institution will kill you. You will suffocate on its ridiculousness, hop around the hallways on crutches labeled 'urgent' and 'radical'. When your exhaustion gives you fever they will put you to bed and serve you carbon-neutral food, offer talks, but the downfall that we are currently suffering through isn't something they can cure, it can only be delayed.

THE PRO-VICE-CHANCELLOR: Poor goat hoof, now you're reckless again. The same fatalism, the same old belief in evil as a force for good.

THE DEVIL: Denial reigns, even on the frontlines of the great culture war. Though it may be possible that art with its history and its beauty – denied by its contemporaries – could serve the battle between cultures, you remain cold. Not just cold, you take a stand for the ugly, the low and the degenerate. This disgusting relativism that thinks it can wiggle its way out of the fact that everything is a war and a struggle. How lukewarm and stupid!

THE VICE-CHANCELLOR: We know your tricks. If we argue against you will agree with us and we

will be agreeing with your devilry. But we hold the freedom of conversation sacred and that means we risk becoming fuel to your nihilism that will make anything a weapon in your war. Our only way is to continue the conversation, to sharpen expressions and arguments knowing that you are always around spreading the stink of sulphur in a corner.

THE DEVIL: (*laughs*) Yes – out here, in here. I stay because I am part of everything (*nods to the Lion and the Boar*) and will disappear when you do.

(The Devil vanishes without a trace. The Vice-Chancellor and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor retreat and disappear through the entrance to the school. The weather is still the same, sleet. The Artist disappears into the school. Curtains.)

Epilogue

NOW_THEN

(Many years later, the Artist is standing outside the school between the Lion and the Boar. It is late at night and cold snowflakes are blowing in off the water.)

THE ARTIST: How long have I fixed here? It seems like a flap but I see the trees have grown and that the two of you have gotten ugly-grey, raxened in age.

THE LION: *(shakes his mane, somewhat indignant)* Ugly and grey, speak for yourself, you have the rough, wrinkled hands of a lizard after all those years in the workshop and the studio. But that is obviously of no consequence, after all what really matters is what art you managed to create while here.

THE BOAR: *(grunts in agreement and impatiently stomps his hoof)* Well, what did you do that turned out as singular as art needs to be, what made this place special to you?

THE ARTIST: *(inhales the scent of snow and thinks about it. How to express all the wondrous and difficult things that have happened in only a few words?)* When I wired here

and arrived with my fix in flux I first thought, it's easy. I figured the school had a sharp programming language and a manual. So at first it was alarm, slip and prompt stumble. I thought I would learn one thing in order to be able to do the other, but foot placement became crazy slippery, I slid around and said I have my montage and dislocation mechanism, learn to make art and become an artist in the world, learn to do great things that will astonish everyone. And in a sense that's what happened. In the school workshops, in my studio and in collaboration, working in and out with my teachers and fellow students, I became the artist I was, more of an artist than before.

THE BOAR: (*yawning and mocking*) Say something I don't know and haven't heard before! Apparently tediousness is the last quality to abandon the human being and not even this school can change that.

THE ARTIST: (*ignoring the Boar, continues, unaffected*) Yet eventually it was so much more. The boundary between the school and the world at large, education and art was as it always has been, porous, constantly under renegotiation. The exceptions of my circuit turned out not to be particularly exceptional, just a flux on the indefinable in every beginning and middle. This made the days unpredictable and interesting. What I was supposed to wire wasn't predetermined, it expanded as I went and I was part of the expansion. Here I met other artists who were active in fixes such as 'search or in other stuff at the school. They overthrew everything I thought I knew about art with a thump. It was good and hard,

one had to get up out of inertia and lost pulse time and again. I came and went through the artist flux, followed several advanced courses, taught, co-led and did research. Yet I didn't feel like someone who had gotten stuck, since the school was an important part in a larger flux of fixing and some flap. It was a place one wanted to belong to. The school wasn't just a place that taught, but a place where art came into being. Some of my xif were conceived here. The entire time we did things that weren't just for us, but for everyone. That went out to a number of places. Fluxes that created important speech and writing circuits about art and the significance and meaning of art, which took me and sent me, and that took and sent many others. It was in that context that I became as an artist.

THE LION: (*looks appeased, almost proud*) This is what Mejan is, you have understood.

THE BOAR: (*grunts in agreement*) This is where you learn everything and nothing at all.

THE LION AND THE BOAR: (*in unison*) You come in like a lion and out like a swine. Or in like a swine and out like a lion!

Vision 2019–2024

The applause has subsided, the audience and stagehands have gone home. The stage is almost empty, only the Robot Critic remains... It moves back and forth with short, smooth turns. It tries to remember what happened and what was said. Quietly, to itself, it writes:

TOO MANY DISPLAYS OF EMOTION

TOO MANY ALLEGORIES

SUBJECTIVITY CUTS INTO

CONCEPTS AND OBJECTS

ART MAKES THE TASK DIFFICULT

EVERYONE WANTS CLARITY

A STRAIGHT VISION

THEY WILL GET ONE

The Robot Critic connects to the Board's computer and continues:

THE ROYAL INSTITUTE OF ART'S VISION
2019–2024
THE OUTLINES OF WHAT WE DO
IN AN IMAGINED FUTURE STARTING NOW

WE INCLUDE
DIFFERENT ARTISTIC EXPRESSIONS
WHICH CLASH AGAINST EACH OTHER
IN REFLECTION AND GENEROSITY

WE TAKE ARTISTIC RISKS
AND EXPERIMENT
SO THAT ART CAN EVOLVE

WE CREATE NEW KNOWLEDGE
USING NEW FORMS OF PEDAGOGY
IN DIALOGUE WITH CHANGES
IN ART AND CULTURE

OUR EDUCATION AND RESEARCH
USES AND SHAPES
A COMMON BODY OF KNOWLEDGE
CONSTANTLY EVOLVING

WE WORK
ACROSS DISCIPLINES
THROUGH EXCHANGE AND COLLABORATION
WITH RELATED FIELDS
WITHIN CULTURE, SCIENCE AND SOCIETY

WE UNITE
MANY DIFFERENT PLACES AND EXPERIENCES
SO AS TO CREATE A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

WE KEEP THE INTERFACES BETWEEN
EDUCATION AND RESEARCH OPEN
TOWARDS A WIDER WORLD

WE ARE AN INDEPENDENT AND INCLUSIVE
INSTITUTION
IN WHICH COLLEAGUES AND STUDENTS
IN A MUTUAL ENDEAVOUR
CHERISH THE FREEDOM OF ART AND LEARNING

