

Art Age projects

WP 05

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Löftadalens Folkhögskola

Interviews with mature students at Löftadalens Folkhögskola

Background:

As part of the project to find new methods of teaching and evaluation of aesthetic learning in the field of arts and culture for the older people, we have chosen to interview some of our mature students.

With aesthetic learning, we mean that the studies are based on doing, a formative, where the student develops curiosity and a desire to approach, embrace and use aesthetic means of expression to understand and express thoughts and ideas, feelings and actions, acquire knowledge and skill proficiency.

Method:

We have developed a number of interview questions based on our research question: Is there any particular difference and qualities in aesthetic learning compared to other types of learning for older people? We also wanted to examine whether the special folk high school environment has particular qualities compared to other ways of acquiring knowledge, skills and experiences in the aesthetic field.

The questions are divided into three categories:

1. Questions concerning practical things, facts and information.

2nd Questions regarding conditions at the school.

3rd Issues relating to their own reflections and thoughts on aesthetic learning and creating.

Implementation:

We are two teachers who have interviewed five students who we meet almost every day in different teaching and discussion situations. The interviews were conducted where by a teacher interviewed a student. Students received the questions beforehand and thought through their answers. They were all asked the same questions. The interview was recorded and then we subsequently wrote down what was said.

Results:

Five interviews with students from Löftadalens folkhögskola each taking about an hour. All students are 65 + years old. The rendered citations are summaries and abbreviations by the responding students.

Sometimes different answers and questions glide into each other.

Species-Age

Interviews with older students at Löftadalens folkhögskola

(BS) Britta Strömbeck. Retired, Self-employed as a potter.

Studying Visual Arts 1 year.

(U.S.) Ulla Stanley. Retired, clothing Seamstress and psychiatric nurse.

Studying Ceramic Art 2: year.

(MW) Margaret Wettesten. Retired. Researcher at the University of Gothenburg and Astra Zenica

Studying Visual Arts 3rd year.

(FA) Finn Aurell, Retired. Architect and worked with city planning. Completed his training in 1976. Has a family with a wife and two adult children.

Studying Visual Arts 1 year.

(PS) Pia Strandberg, retired. Worked in the post office as a cashier, guard director and manager. Also had union and political offices.

Studied Textile art, weaving in several recurring periods.

Interviewer:

Teresa Bortoluzzi

Gunnar Apelgren

1. How did you find out about the course?

BS: A former colleague and classmate has worked at the school and lyrically told me about the beautiful environment, good teachers, the lovely food - and the shorter popular week long courses where it can be hard to get a place. I went to two watercolor classes but wanted to attend a longer, whole term, but was too tight at the time. I did not know about the school earlier and did not know that these opportunities exist.

U.S.: Recommended to search here by patients. Been at the school on study days with the job. Been to open house.

MW: Met an acquaintance who had to attend here, did not think older applicants were admitted. Tried to get into Art College, but it is significantly more expensive.

FA: I applied to some similar programs at other schools. There were large numbers of applicants so the younger ones were accepted first. On Löftadalens website it said that older people were welcome which meant I applied there.

PS: For personal reasons, I needed to move away from Gothenburg. At the time, I was studying at Gothenburg Folkhögskola. The counselor also looked for alternatives to the course was attending and found a weaving course at Löftadalens Folkhögskola.

2nd Why did you apply to this course? What are your goals?

BS: I've been working with pottery all my life and last year had a resistance to the clay, it has not felt right. Now I want to broaden and deepen myself artistically. Find other expressions than ceramics. There s a lot of technical expertise in pottery - in watercolor you can do it as you fancy, if it is no good the first time you turn over the paper and just continue. Then you do not know what happens. Can you change jobs after they becoming a pensioner?

U.S.: I have always been creative, attended evening classes in ceramics. Want to do something new seriously again in my life as a pensioner. Have lived at a college and have been married to a teacher.

MW: Went on small courses, want to get better basic skills, learn to see. One needs to know how perspective and other things work in image creation and after that you can ignore it if you want to.

FA: To improve myself. I need to attend with others to have a context in which to discuss art and exchange views. Painting is a seeking and to make oneself understood. Art in itself, that it is fun to work and try new things and techniques. Fun with education because you get tasks and challenges.

PS: To break with the parts of my life that have been destructive.

3rd Have you been engaged in creative activities in the past?

BS: Yes, all my life.

U.S.: Yes sewing. First I thought that it was too much technique here at the Ceramic course but then discovered that it was needed. Now that I am attending a second year I can work more freely with what I want.

MW: Batik, plant dyeing when I was home with the kids. I enjoyed drawing as a child. I have never regretted my career as a scientist, it's been so much fun. Had no specific expectations from my parents. My best friend went to the School of Design and Crafts in Gothenburg. My husband went to the same school, so art was close by. Previously I attended a watercolor course 3 hrs / week, it is too little.

FA: I have been drawing and sketching and attended watercolor courses. It is important to be in a group, having a context.

PS: I sewed a little. My mother and grandmother wove. When I was little, I helped them with different parts.

4. What did you know about Art -Ceramics and Textile Arts before attending the program?

BS: Because I'm Potter, I have always been in a network of creative people, but how to do visual arts I really knew nothing about.

U.S.: My daughter has been at the School of Design and Crafts, so I knew a lot about Ceramics and textiles.

MW: Tried a few short courses in ceramics and art, gathered colorful yarns without doing anything with it.

FA: Well versed. Has also studied art history.

PS: Almost nothing, except my mother's and grandmother's weaving.

5th If you did not attend school, what would you do instead.

BS: Difficult question, get bored quite simply. Do not long for passivity. Must have structure in my environment. Could imagine working in the cinema a few days a week. Can get very tired after a day. Study Monday, Tuesday, off Wednesday, study Thursday, Friday. The studies here, I see a repetition and further education, even though I am retired.

U.S.: Get involved with something else, church, learning languages and so on. Write about my own life, take a writing class.

MW: Would paint, not go to the gym or golf, not sit at home and wait for something to happen. I feel freer in the evening if I was at school than if I had been home all day. Find structure in my environment, accustomed to work discipline from a relatively free job. Liked it better going to work. It keeps the track of what day it is.

FA: I would attend other courses. I want to paint. I do not want to be at home and not do anything.

PS: I have my own weaving workshop where work with everything I have learned here. I exhibit and is on the market.

6. Do you think that the cost prevents many older people from studying?

BS: Travel expenses, otherwise inexpensive. Do not think the cost is a problem. Not everyone wants to get involved with art - other interests.

U.S.: A lot of people do not know that it's pretty cheap, or do not know that one can attend longer folk high school courses. Older people have an upbringing of saving.

MW: No, many pensioners prioritize other things such as travel. Many older people are richly involved with several associations.

A lot of people do not know the possibilities of attending a folk high school and how low-cost it actually is.

FA: I know a few people who are enrolled in a course.

PS: No.

7. How does your environment - related parties view you attending school?

BS: Very differently, some think it sounds fantastic. Others do not react in any way.

U.S.: Everyone thinks it's good. The children are themselves in the same industry. I feel I have support from my surroundings.

MW: My husband and adult children like that I go to school, I have a strong support.

FA: Positive. My wife does not want to retire and do nothing. She is also interested in art and to further develop herself.

PS: My first husband was angry - he had a view that "what you hadn't learnt when you left school is not worth learning." I think there is a difference between men's and women's reactions when someone begins to study. When women start studying later in life, men fear that they receive a new network and they get involved and become active in something. I think they are afraid of losing control, the security and the familiar disappears.

8. Do you have the opportunity to work with this at home or elsewhere?

BS: I can work with screen printing in my workshop. Can you attend here to get access to a workshop?

U.S.: I have the opportunity to work elsewhere.

MW: I have a small studio at home.

FA: I have a small studio at home. But it is different from having a real studio.

PS: Yes, but it's boring to sit alone, to not have a context.

9. What do you think about the "school environment", mixed ages, goals, etc.

BS: I think it's so rewarding with the mix. I am afraid of young people really. But the guys here are very nice. I learned that young people are not so dangerous. Have heard that young people can be afraid of older people. I see it look as a break in life. An opportunity to reflect. Think about what I want next?

U.S.: Stimulating with different ages and the younger peoples enthusiasm. We live in an age-segregated society, but here generations meet without family ties. I keep the psychiatry separate, do not get into other people's troubles. Concentrate on myself. Do not be too blocked, want to do what I want. Sometimes I want to have structure in my environment but other days it can flow freely.

MW: Great with mixed ages. Have often been too old in different contexts - I was twice as old as my peers at the University. Have tried senior courses but did not like it. It is good to see how other age groups think. My medical students were fairly well adjusted, I only met those kind of people in my group. To see other types of people. One is pretty old in the eyes of the younger.

Those who are younger than me are not that much younger while those who are older, are much older. You do not feel that old, but pretty much as I always do.

FA: Good, it may gladly be even more older students. The training is not so formal and you can eat and snack together with teachers and continue with interesting conversations. In college, there is a greater distance between the pupil / teacher.

PS: The best possible option for adult education. The younger and older contribute to each other with their experience and knowledge. The younger get older not to fall asleep and the older ones give of their life experience to the younger ones.

10th Is there a difference between being creative as young and older (life experience, ability to put new knowledge in a new context, etc.)?

BS: A huge difference. Can utilize the teaching very well. Work Discipline. As a self-employed person one is not used to the big resources, computers, copiers and other equipment. The ability to bring new knowledge in a new context, adding new experiences to old ones. There are not so many rules nowadays. Painting from a photograph - it was not done when I was young. The more you do the more you realize how difficult it can be, but it's just as much fun all the time. Learning to depict, learn new techniques and materials. How should we define art, does art have to be original or can be placed in a given artistic tradition? Learning the terminology, so you can talk about art.

U.S.: Think there's a difference. When you are young you have a different belief in the future. I know I'm creeping closer to death, at best, I will have another 20 years. When you are young you dare more and have a different attitude. Experience can be both positive and negative. It can be good to be able to predict things but at the same time it can be inhibiting. Being older, I can add the new experience to the old. One should not accumulate too much stuff. There are solutions to everything. In being older you do not need to seek your identity by performing (for others). Being older you do not have many limitations in the artistic expressions.

MW: The silent knowledge, references from old forgotten work experiences that pop up. The unconscious knowledge of the past. Slower learning abilities. I do not care so much about what others think of what I do, but it sure is fun to sell a painting.

FA: I have more confidence now. I was more seeking before. I have taken courses and tried before. Art is like a language. You try to paint and see what others think and then that is a way to communicate.

PS: Initially I was locked with it to look a certain way. The teacher helped me a lot to open my way of thinking. You think in a way that you have learned. I think it is harder to start the older you get. You are not as open, you have learned to think that it should look a certain way. But you might not be as afraid of making errors as when you are young.

11. How important is the finished result compared to the feeling of being in a creating situation, to be in a creative process?

BS: 50/50 one wants to be satisfied - a spur to want to move on. Painting is both the moment and the result. I have a professional career behind me, where the outcome was always the most important. When I play music (accordion), it is not important that someone is listening. The moment can be the finished result.

U.S.: The result is the driving force, but it is not the most important.

MW: 50/50 You cannot just produce and produce and never finish. Sometimes I get out old stuff that I had not previously thought were good but now sometimes reevaluate. You have to be content sometimes, have a goal with painting even if it does not turn out as you had originally intended.

FA: The end result is important. You have a vision in your head of how the artwork will turn out. But it cannot be a burden, you also have to be open, so that you can track the progress of what you do. Maybe there's a difference between younger and older, that older people are more open. Every experience in life makes it easier to accept and be open to something happening other than what they intended. Younger people might be a little more tightly bound to it to being a certain way.

PS: It is wonderful to be in the creative process but there must also be a result. Otherwise you lose the desire.

12. How important is the teaching, or are the given conditions described (studio, workshops, equipment, etc.) the most important?

BS: 50/50 Teaching may be good, but not attending an entire course. If you can go along on other courses different modules sometimes it's even better.

U.S.: There is always something new to learn.

MW: Teaching is not the most important but the dialogue with teachers is extremely important. Meeting others who do the same thing and talk about the same thing. Teaching is the same as peers and teachers' feedback, I listen to what the teacher is says but I do as I want to do. Important with the eyes of others to clarify what I want. Pointless to unskilled praise.

FA: It is important to have access to the teachers and their views. And it enriches with teachers who have a different orientation and give different answers. The practical conditions are also important.

PS: It is important with teaching, a teacher who has knowledge and someone who keeps things organized.

13. How important is the teachers and course peers' feedback?

BS: Stimulating to receive feedback. I am not used to that when you're working alone. Now I get a more consistent response.

U.S.: Do not so much teaching when I am attending the 2nd year but it's good to have a teacher to ask. Good with teaching during the 1st year. I'm not here to prove anything, it is a pleasant existence.

MW: Both my teacher and I think I make weird pictures, but he likes them (not all) and we have many interesting conversations.

FA: It is important, with constructive criticism. When someone says something positive you become strengthened to continue.

PS: Very important.

14. What is lifelong learning for you?

BS: I am opposed to the new, such as when I go to the bank to withdraw money. I feel old-fashioned and endangered. Despite that I am learning Photoshop and how build your own website (!?).

U.S.: All learning gives experience and all new experience gives the need of new learning.

MW: In order to understand society and themselves you have to be open and curious to new things, about what is happening and take it in. I would not want to be without my Smartphone.

FA: I have always tried to learn new things. For example I went to new locations and took new jobs. I want to have as broad a view as possible in my existence, try as much as possible.

PS: It started here, and now I continue. I want to learn more. I want to attend here again. You're never too old to learn new things. Weaving is constantly evolving; there are new materials and new designs. It never ends.

15. What is quality of life for you?

BS: LUST is quality of life, it is the most important. Others may find it pleasurable to feed the pigeons in the park, it is important to accept that we humans are different.

U.S.: The combination of rest and stimulation. You build your life in many parts, not just husband and children.

MW: To be happy with your environment and your life, to be healthy and to have your loved ones nearby. Being here at school feels healthy and nurturing. Have track of the weeks and weekdays of the week, these days are always different.

FA: To do what you are interested in with others. The social part is important. This school is good example of that. You learn while having exchanges with others.

PS: To attend here. My partner, good friends, and being healthy. I do not need much more. To attend this program and be asked if I want to be a showcase, participate in markets and sell my crafts.

16. What do you think that you learn through creative work (except to mix paint, throwing, putting up a web, etc.)?

BS: Learning to appreciate and perceive things - what cannot be bought with money, learn to see - learning to live. Not having to rush and chase. Working with imagery is a kind of problem solving. Able to absorb the unpredictable. When an image during the work process leaves one stage and becomes something else - when the image is itself enough. To reflect on what is happening and be able to evaluate it.

U.S.: To look at things in a different way, learn to focus. You change your approach by broadening your understanding of the subject.

MW: to see. I feel livelier. Do not feel exclusion. Got a different sphere to move in. Make a difference even if you live in a social context. I do not babysit my grandchildren. Working with research is about the same thing, do not really think there is much difference. Possibly the times it something actually happened was something more rare in research. But the times it happened was worth all the effort. It need not be beautiful, as long as you are happy with it. The similarities between research and painting is that you have to learn to take a stand on how it looks and not what you think it looks like. Rule Creativity - Creative Concepts. Curiosity is the driving force - to constantly question.

FA: I get a fuller life.

PS: I have learned to open my eyes and my senses. I experience colours for example, and see things in a different way, discover other things and stop at the things I did not notice before. Before, I rushed around more. I've also gotten to know the textile materials in other ways, what you can do with it and that you can not force it to anything, you have to work with the material.

Everything that I worked with before; laws and agreements have lost their meaning. It was the same thing all the time: they tried to implement changes but it was rarely anything happened.

Weaving and crafts provide a satisfaction, to achieve something. I feel you can inspire and help others in a different way than what I did in my work.

Within craft there are always new ideas, you get inspiration and transform the impressions to own expression at home in the studio. You are constantly growing.

17. Do you think that this educational programme affects you as a person?

BS: Yes, I feel safer. I learned that young people are not scary.

U.S.: Not particularly. The daily life - that I am comfortable. This is not vital. The Folk high school year is not the most important in my life, I have many years that have been important. It should not change my life

MW: No, not particularly.

FA: I am be enriched both socially and in my creativity.

PS: I've got so much back from this training. It has been a big turning point in my life. I managed to break with my past life that was destructive, I ended up in a context where I could grow, I got a lot of help and support from teachers. I became whole as a person. My mother was a difficult woman who could not teach anything, if you made a mistake, she became angry. This meant that I lost the desire for weaving and thought that I myself would never begin weaving. But through the weaving myself and my mum began to communicate and socialize again. We started to exchange ideas and wove together for 9 years. I am so grateful for that.

18. Do you think this education affects your other life / your life in general?

BS: Tired, long trips. A different kind of fatigue in the head after a day of school.

U.S.: I feel like I'm participating in a context.

MW: Yes, of course!

FA: Yes, the quality of life and that you develop in the perception of other people's art and your own.

PS: I was not so afraid to retire. At my job, we had courses how to cope with being retired. They were always full. When my former boss who had been standing with his whip over us retired, he came back the next day and wanted to have a coffee. The managers had no life outside of work and thought that everyone else should work just as much as them. I felt sorry for him. When I started here the thoughts of my old job disappeared and I was never afraid to retire because I had my weaving. Everyone who is retiring should begin working with crafts.

19. What qualities does the education give you?

U.S.: Structure, a certain meaning, development. Immerse into a state.

PS: Only positive. I had no thought of attending a weaving education but has become my life. I have been ill with cancer three times while I was at Löftadalens Folkhögskola. But since I was allowed to attend there on my own terms, I was able to continue. It was so important to get up in the morning and go there. And also you learn something. It gave life quality.

20. Will you continue to create when you have finished here?

BS: There's no reason to stop. If you do not tire of the material or costs. I will invest 1.5 years of studies. My driving force may be to have my own exhibitions, a new kind of professionalism, wanting to show others what I'm doing.

MW: I will continue to paint when I have finished here at the school but do not really know how it will be done, who will comment on my paintings in the future? I do not have any good painting buddies. Need professional opinions and comments.

FA: I hope so. I have not painted by myself before. I feel be enriched by getting exchanges with others who reflect upon one's art and provides social context. Getting exchange and discussing with others. Like art, is - communication.

PS: Yes, I do already.

Summary:

The students have talked a lot about art and crafts as a means of communication and the need to exchange in the form of reflection and dialogue about their work with teachers and students. They feel that their studies have changed the way they view the world around them, they have created better connections with their family and other people, they have come to know themselves and their environment better, it has given them life quality.

Other effects (in addition to the above, as well as the acquisition of knowledge and proficiency skills) that the participants expressed, is a changed approach to art with greater acceptance of different forms of art and expressions in parallel with increased critical approach - to more easily assess and acquire their own opinion about what they think of art in various forms.

The environment at the school, the permissive attitude of the teachers, the mix of people of different ages, backgrounds and belief in the future has attracted many mature students to continue their studies in additional years beyond what they planned.

Continuity in the studies is important, one night a week in a study group is not enough. Going to school every or every other day provides a structure and meaning in life as a pensioner while providing a smoother flow in the artistic development. It is similar to a positive regularity from a previous career.

The feeling of participating in a social context having structure in an existence and to meet like-minded people is a recurrent feature in the interviews.

Teacher Reflections: Art is a non-verbal communication. When you look at art the artwork communicates to you and when practicing art you communicate it to others and to yourself.

Through art, music, dance, etc., we get access to and contact with other parts of ourselves than the logical. At the same time art works as a language for what we can not always put into words and a language that is as important as verbal language. The practice of art is part of being human, we all have a need to communicate. The people who have the need to express themselves through art feel they get satisfied by expressing themselves in this non-verbal way, it is even a necessity to feel whole as a person.

In studies in the visual arts, painting, ceramics and textile art the aesthetic learning is a prerequisite. "Learning by doing". In ones own creation the roads to his knowledge, insights and skills are visualized.

The artistic creation can be twofold - one part is the actual creating process, the state you are in when a work is created, a feeling of well-being, anxiety, curiosity, flow or other emotions. Another part is the finished result - to be satisfied with your work and maybe even get recognition from other people.