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Date: 14h August/2020

MANIFESTO

In every culture, art has its own special place as it is one of the forms of study that connects with the human spirit and reflects human emotion. Not only does visual art define feelings but gives way to self-expression and human creativity. This manifesto is about how these entrance exams reflect on upcoming artists. By relaxing these exams we can not only help students but also provide new forms of evaluations which can be beneficial for Art universities.

Not for the first time, Art education finds itself under attack for not delivering what it is supposed to deliver. These attacks come from different directions. Realism is one of them. When we talk about Art, we expect an artist who can draw very well and is able to produce a realistic drawing. This definition of an artist has become very popular. So a drawing is always judged by its closeness to what is real and what is not.

Students after completing their A Levels or Fsc/Fa, apply to different universities. For admissions, they have to fill out a form, given a formal interview, and sit for an entrance test. For Art Schools, the same procedure applies which is where I have questions. How can a student who has never been taught drawing or drafting is judged on their skills of drawing or drafting? Some students come from a science background or pre-engineering background. How can these students sit for an exam which they have never been taught?

Due to the fear of the test, some students take additional classes or work in studios with different artists to develop those skills. In my opinion, this is not right. Students should not be evaluated or judge on skills which they have to develop in the coming 4 years of their university life. Every child is different, and everybody should get a completely fair chance. Some students can afford to take these additional classes but some students can not get these extra lessons.

Drawing is a skill that requires practice and time with the right encouragement. Now students because they have around two months to prepare, learn tricks and shortcuts, which creates problems for them while they are actually learning the right methods. Students believe that if these tricks have helped them in the entrance exams they will also be good enough to complete their actual assignments. Because they have been working with a senior artist or in an established studio, they do not respect their teachers who are teaching them in their foundation year.

While I was teaching in an ART university, a student of mine had a difficult time understanding the objectivity of my assignments. I wanted him to enjoy the process and experience the experimental phase of the assignment. He always planned the end product or the final outcome without going through any experimental procedure. He always asked me “why have you given me fewer marks as compared to the other students. My work is more beautiful and is cleaner” I always asked him “what do you mean by beautiful work?” Why is it important for you to produce something that is clean or is safer to work with? Why don't you come out of your comfort zone and experiment with new materials? He was so rigid and never actually wanted to try out my methods of exploration only because he has been working in studios with bigger and more established names.

Why can't students be judged on their concepts? Why do they have to draw or draft? Why can't they explain or have a debate? Why can't they draw something out of their imagination? During my readings, I found some relatable answers in the philosophy of John Dewey and Howard Gardner.

According to John Dewey:

Encourage students to find personal interest in the subject matter. Dewey believed that students should feel connected to the material, in order to retain information and adapt it for personal use. Boost student motivation by highlighting the ways students can use subject matter in the real world

Dewey's philosophy, known as experimentalism, or instrumentalism, largely centered on the human experience. Rejecting the more rigid ideas of Transcendentalism to which Dewey had been exposed in academia, it viewed ideas as tools for experimenting, with the goal of improving the human experience.

While reading Howard Gardner, I also came across how one test is evaluating, so many different intelligences. To broaden this notion of intelligence, Gardner introduced eight different types of intelligence consisting of Logical/Mathematical, Linguistic, Musical, Spatial, Bodily-Kinesthetic, Naturalist, Interpersonal, and Intrapersonal. Howard Gardner is a developmental psychologist best-known for this theory of multiple intelligences. He believed that the conventional concept of intelligence was too narrow and restrictive and that measures of IQ often miss out on other "intelligence" that an individual may possess.

I propose that we have to speak for education in an educational manner, which means to express an interest in freedom and, more specifically, an interest in the freedom of others, the freedom of the child, the freedom of the student. Freedom is not licensed. Educational freedom is not about the absence of authority but about the authority that carries an orientation towards freedom with it. These entrance level exams need to be more relaxed and more conceptual based. A student should not feel the pressure of going to a studio or take any extra classes for preparation. Each student should express himself in any form of art, be it in writing or playing an instrument.

Some clear instructions should be laid out in the university's prospectus. Students should be clearly informed of what will be judged upon, what will be the breakdown of the assessment. What should students focus upon before coming for the exams and how should they prepare?

The drawing test should be an open test. Students should be able to draw/paint according to the response they want to give. For example, instead of putting a still in front of them, an instrument could be played in the background and students have to draw their response, whatever they imagine while listening to that melody. Some kind of dialogue can be presented as well and students can draw out their response to that dialogue.

We also need to bring a change in the marking system of these entrance exams. I am suggesting one below, I am not looking at the line quality or how realistic the drawing is, I am focusing on the ideation of the student and how well he/she is explaining his/her work. How effectively the student is using their environment to absorb and reflect their responses. Time is also an important factor, so how a student is utilizing the given time.

| Grade | A+/A Outstanding/Pr oficient | A-/B+ Excellent/ Very Good | B/B- Fair/Satisfacto ry | C+/below Unsatisfactory |
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| Using the environment | Able to use the environment efficiently in the original thought and process, in making reflections, exploration, and executing the task accordingly with the logical reasoning. | Shows above average utilization and understanding of the environment in the given task, by making few connections with the proper reasoning and logic. | Shows acceptable take-ups and variables from the environment by giving the fair identification and observation but lacks in implementing them in the thought and practical process as well as in the final outcome. | Shows unsatisfactory identification and use of variables from the environment in the process and execution of the given task. |
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| <p>Understanding, documentation, and demonstration of the given task</p> | <p>Outstanding in eliciting the work while describing the details (especially the important ones to be precise).</p> <p>Able to communicate and deliver the viewpoint in a clear and brief manner by being eloquent.</p> <p>Efficient in documenting the progress and process of the given tasks.</p> | <p>Able to present the project effectively by describing its details.</p> <p>Can communicate and deliver the viewpoint clearly and effectively.</p> <p>Fairly document the progress and process of the given tasks.</p> <p>Able to present and demonstrate the project showing the partially critical analysis of the project.</p> | <p>Able to describe the project fairly but not digging deep into the details of it.</p> <p>Able to communicate and present the project but needs directions (guidance) and intriguing questions to be more detailed and clear in the description.</p> <p>Inconsistent in documenting the progress and process of the given tasks.</p> | <p>Unable or find difficulty in describing the project and delivering the viewpoint appropriately.</p> <p>Lacks in documenting the progress and process of the given tasks.</p> <p>Hardly able to present and demonstrate the project and skips its critical analysis and details.</p> |
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| <p>Time management</p> | <p>The outstanding manifestation of managing and completing the task in the given time by utilizing and dividing the test duration effectively.</p> <p>Able to divide the time among the activities and carry the work progress efficiently, resulting in giving the extra intricate details to the final outcome.</p> | <p>Is able, most of the time, to maintain a very good balance in managing and dividing the time among the different stages of work for the completion of the final task.</p> | <p>Satisfactory performance in managing time to complete the given tasks.</p> <p>Rarely manages the time among the different intermediate stages of the final task/project, ending up showing the lesser required details of the project.</p> | <p>Unable to meet the targets and given tasks on time.</p> <p>Inconsistent in delivering the tasks on time and looks for the postponement.</p> |
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