

The Amateur's Armour

Having had no academic training, except an unfinished one in pedagogy and a few years at a "Free Art Academy" 1970s style in the 1980s, which collapsed soon after, I have been thinking about feasible ways of describing what I do in terms of profession.

My education has been, and still is, I guess, an unplanned and improvised one. It evolved by learning from the people whose paths apparently had to cross mine: musicians, organisers, photographers, printmakers, filmmakers, designers, writers, sculptors, and, most of all, outsiders. The Inadaptables. Out of my fascination for the fringe I became an active part of that fringe. But the ambition to become a fringe artist myself, acknowledged as such by the world, was never that strong. Not even when playing in a band that held a bit of a cult status in the early 2000s, Les Ormores, before dissolving forever.

Apparently my creative interests were too dispersed to even think of going for one of them for a full 100%. And that 100% dedication seemed to me crucial in order to make many sense as a creator. And then come up with stuff that would be better than anything else around, or at least bring something that was not there before. Not so much a training, but an all-consuming drive to make that stuff was a prerequisite. And yes, I know and love the motto: "Everything has been done before, but not yet by you." But, to be honest and straightforward: I think there are way too many artists in the world, or people that see themselves as such. The number of people calling themselves artists, is by no means in proportion to the amount of actually interesting or necessary artworks.

STRIKING A POSE

So meanwhile, I have decided to pose as either an amateur, grassroots expert, shopkeeper, organiser, observer, or (if I think some weight has to be thrown around) curator. I like the idea of being an amateur by profession. Of professing to love things.

Any of these poses work fine for me when having to clarify why I do what I do. No one would demand some sort of certificate to prove your skills in organising events, or in curating, at least not in the scenes where I feel at home. Cooking a meal is curating. Assembling a suitable outfit for the day is curating. Building a community, too. An amateur might even be a much better curator than an art historian or a musicologist with a master's degree. For if you manage to get a career and a big job in the arts & culture industry, it will be harder to love things like an amateur does.

SINGLING OUT

My method, intuitive as it may be - and therefore I would not call it a strategy - is to single out activities that happen either in a different universe (the world of the Inadapted), or there where people found their own answer to the Corruptive Market by creating a sovereign position for themselves. In a world with so much unnecessary or even offensive stuff, the skill to be refined is that of being an indicator, more than being a filter. A spotlight, more than assuming some sort of authority.

CARING

Here's where curation starts. I like to interpret that word as caring, although it stems from curing. Caring means to connect to someone via their work. Being careful in your appreciation of it. Getting in touch with others about this work. Thinking about it. Discussing it.

EXPOSING

If you're only an amateur there is no need to aspire to any status or career for yourself, based on what you managed to single out. Although it's nice when it turns out your gut feeling was right and others appreciate that. Your aspiration is simply to pick out the gems so that people forget about the crap.

CONSERVING

If you take good care of what you singled out, it will also be durable. Be it a text, or a record, a friendship, collaboration or at least a shared amateurism, when you manage to sustain your amateur business for a longer time, your eventual "collection" will preserve its value or even increase in value. Though immaterial value was always the criterium, material value may unexpectedly arrive, and come in useful, too. One can only hope that the maker involved, the Inadapted, did not become Ill-Adapted in the meantime, or even eloped to the Hereafter, and can still share in that bonus.

Choosing to be an amateur in everything, may not bring about an impressive cv, but it enables me to truly love art. Never a dull moment out there in the fringes.

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