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Summary

In October 1947, the 38-year-old artist Livinus van de Bundt founded the *Haagse Vrije Academie* as a reaction to the normative education being given at the *Haagse Academie van Beeldende Kunsten*. This put two views of visual arts education at odds with one another. The results oriented, traditional academic view, which strove for images optically true to nature and which assumed objective, testable norms for art against the liberal view, which propagated subjective work 'from within' and which didn't apply any criteria to this. In this study, the liberal educational ideology of Livinus van de Bundt is studied, as well as the way in which his successor, George Lampe, applied it.

The Vrije Academie differentiated itself from all other art courses in the Netherlands in four ways. In the first place, through the premise that personal development and upbringing 'towards the good' were fundamentally more important than any artistic results. In the second place, due to the lack of a structured lesson composition, because there needed to be space for every idea about art. In the third place, the demand that the Vrije Academie should be accessible for all, without prejudice, for the ordinary man or woman without any previous education and with no financial means as well. In the fourth place, finally, there were no norms to be achieved by the end of the course, which could in theory last for ever. This led to the research question: in which way did the Haagse Vrije Academie shape the liberal educational ideology of Livinus van de Bundt, both in terms of content and practically, and how did the students experience this form of education? The four characteristics named above form the basis underlying this research.

The liberal educational ideology flourished mainly under the first two principals, Livinus van de Bundt (1909-1979) and George Lampe (1921-1982). That is why this research has been limited to the period between 1947, the year in which it

was founded, and 1982, the year in which George Lampe died. In addition to the period 1947-1982, the pre-war predecessor, the *Vrije Studio* is discussed as well as the role of the founder Christiaan de Moor (1899-1981). The period after 1982 is described in an epilogue.

Christiaan de Moor and the Vrije Studio (1933-1942)

Christiaan de Moor followed most of his artistic training in Paris. He enrolled in one of the *académies libres*, the Académie Ranson. The institute distinguished itself by its attention to artistic freedom for the students, to individuality and sense of community. In terms of painting techniques, the artistic educational component was basically cubist simplification of form with the aim of giving a clearer representation of nature. In addition, they propagated the idea that a 'good' work of art was mainly done with the heart or the 'soul'. These Parisian ideals stayed with De Moor. When he was asked to set up the Vrije Studio in The Hague in 1932, where he had established himself, the Académie Ranson became a practical and rich source of inspiration.

The wealthy classes in The Hague had a relatively great interest in esoteric and theosophical issues and educational reform, which led to many schools based on experimental philosophies, such as Montessori schools. Innovative insights into art teaching found welcome ears here. That could be seen at the *Aktenopleiding* for art teachers at the Haagse Academie van Beeldende Kunsten. Although the Haagse Academie was traditional and classical in a lot of ways, it was there that the new subject of imaginative drawing was introduced. This was based on the theosophical idea that learning to draw using their fantasy, would lead to a more centred pupil, whose spiritual and cognitive aspects would be more in balance. The later lecturers, Kees Andrea and Livinus van de Bundt, belonged to the first who followed classes in

imaginative drawing. The drawing teachers of the *Haagse Negen* (H9 – The Hague Nine) garnered a lot of influence at the Haagse Academie: their most important concept was that learning craft skills should be avoided, because this would limit the spontaneity of expression. They saw themselves as Psychologists, who regarded drawings primarily as an image of the personality of the producer and only then as artistic products. In 1937, imaginative drawing was also introduced to the department of Fine Arts at the Haagse Academie as well. Here there was no link to becoming a teacher in the future. Now it was about the use of imagination by the artists themselves.

The Hungarian artist François Erdely and the art dealer Charles Bignell asked De Moor to help them set up and implement the Vrije Studio. Financial necessity – it was the Great Recession – was the most important motivation for these two men. De Moor turned it into an idealistic project. He set the organisation up so that poor, talented students could study without payment. There were no entry requirements; just as in Paris, everyone could enrol. There was no fixed curriculum in which students should take their final examination. De Moor was clear that the Haagse Academie was the ‘real’ course, with examinations and education in a class format, but that the artist could thereafter freely develop their personality at the Vrije Studio. Freely developing your personality was new, known to De Moor from the Académie Ranson and from his experience as an art lecturer at the Montessori training college. De Moor and Erdely thought this was important, because in their vision, only a great personality could make a great work of art. Only the inspiration of the artist, their ‘soul’ or ‘heart’ could turn a work into real art. It was precisely in the uncertain years of the 1930’s, that they saw a need for such art. As the personality of the artist was a precondition for the quality of works of art, Psychology grew into a supporting science for art reviewers.

Around 1935 Van de Bundt and Andrea began their work at the Vrije Studio, the former as a lecturer in graphics, and the latter as an assistant for drawing and painting. In their work, you can see that the aspects imagination and fantasy, which they had encountered during their teaching qualification course at the Haagse Academie, played an important role. Their approach served a social aim. They viewed training people into well balanced individuals, where rationality and spirituality were in harmony, as a way of achieving a better society.

In 1942, the Vrije Studio closed down its studios, because the German occupier demanded that they register with the *Kultuurkamer*.

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Livinus van de Bundt, principal of the Vrije Academie (1947-1968)

After the war, Livinus van de Bundt (who preferred to call himself Livinus and to sign that way as well) developed a plan to set up the Vrije Academie. He set up the institute in the attic of the Amicitia halls on Westeinde 15 in The Hague following the example of the Vrije Studio. He maintained the principle that talented young people without any financial means could take lessons for free. Entrance demands were minimal – after an interview and showing some work, almost everyone was allowed to start. In his first press release, Livinus wrote that the lecturers adapted to the individual talents of the students. Self-development, freedom of artistic expression, lack of final norms and an entrance policy without barriers were the most significant educational, ideological assumptions. He offered lessons with subjects which assumed imagination and creativity, experimentation, spontaneity, spirituality and poetry. The education was aimed at letting the student express themselves freely. In this way, the ‘right’ artistic inclination would emerge and this would mean that the artist could influence society in a positive way. He also

wanted to set up a close community, where a group of like-minded and enthusiastic people could work together, inspiring each other in friendship and solidarity. Van de Bundt chose lecturers who adhered to this vision as he did, from the Vrije Studio or members of H9.

The education at the Vrije Academie was divided into three faculties: Fine Arts (I), Applied Arts (II) and Cultural Studies (III). The aim was integral shaping: letting free, visual artists work in applied art and industrial design as much as possible, so that Livinus' social ideal could become achievable. His approach was individual, not just on ideological grounds, but also out of practical necessity. Students from very different backgrounds applied: people who had completed academic studies, but also beginners who had never put brush to canvas. Rich and poor, young and old, beginners and advanced students were in mixed groups. That was seen as positive, because in a heterogeneous group, students would learn more from one another than in a more homogenous group. The students were permitted to draw or paint what they liked. They didn't need to acquire technical skills first; the traditional lesson structure was discarded and everyone was allowed to start using all the colours in one go. A good deal of life drawing took place, but in a particular way. One example is that students had to draw the figure very quickly, so there was no time to think about anatomy or plasticity. In this way, students would be able to instinctively discover their own personal style. On the surface, the lessons seemed like drawing the human form, but their essence was the representation of character and emotions. The circumstances within the academy were frequently not up to scratch, such as heaters being out of order, leaking roofs and insufficient equipment. However, on the whole this wasn't a problem, because of their conviction that 'real life' would lead to better work. Coincidentally, occurring through old materials or a brush that dropped hairs, could also lead to better work. It is certain that some were denied the chance to learn technical skills so as not to de-

stroy the authentic character of their work.

Faculty III was meant for the moral shaping of students, in the form of lectures, debating evenings, theoretical courses, exhibitions and museum visits. At the same time, the *Werkgroep* was set up to carry out large, joint commissions, so that the contribution of free visual artists could start benefitting society straightaway. The community ideal was further expressed in a joint responsibility for the entire institute. Members of the academy were often to be found sanding and painting to improve the building or prepare for an exhibition. This fed mutual solidarity and contributed to moral shaping. Along with a great amount of freedom came individual responsibility, for both the institute as well as society. *Freedom within limits* – Livinius wrote this statement explicitly. It wasn't as much the programmed parts of lessons which ensured moral shaping, but rather the everyday example of the lecturers and principal. Their students were on an equal footing with them. The role model of the lecturers, not just in their work, but also in their way of living, was inspiring and that could give a developmental impulse. Respect for each other and for each other's work was a given. During the fifties, the philosophy aimed at community forming was pushed back by a more individualistic, existentialist oriented vision. At that point, spontaneous expression became the most important premise. Each spontaneous, individual expression was valuable, was the thinking behind this. The distinction between beautiful and ugly became increasingly more relative. Real and authentic became the new defining categories.

Livinus offered his students a lot of opportunities. On numerous occasions, he arranged functions at the academy for people whom he found promising. You may not have been able to gain a final diploma, but there was the chance of a position. He promoted students to assistants and these assistants went on to set up new work groups, which also generated extra income for the academy. Even so, it was difficult

for the institute to make ends meet, at which point they considered applying for subsidies. In 1953, national and local structural subsidies were granted. The lecturers were pleased because of the recognition that an institute which didn't meet national examination regulations could have a role to play. Livinus used the extra money to extend the educational programme, so that his ideal of integral shaping could be better achieved. He wanted to offer a complete education, in which students followed courses in all three faculties. Faculty II was expanded by thirteen lecturers after the subsidy was granted, amongst which were fashion, jewellery making, ceramics and silk screen printing. The number of students grew enormously following this, particularly due to applications from a lot more amateurs. That wasn't actually a problem, because the new categories 'real' and 'authentic' didn't apply to a professional situation. Combining lesson subjects was not however made compulsory. The integral shaping would have been better realised if more students had combined the fine arts with the applied arts, but the aspect of personal freedom of choice weighed more heavily than the ideal.

At the end of 1954, the academy moved to Hoefkade 101. This building offered options to achieve facilities for photography, which led to setting up a real professional photography course. The children's club was new as well, following the example of the Amsterdam *Werkshuit*. However, just as Livinus had feared, the subsidy providers got involved with the contents of the course. In 1957, they demanded that the institute gave up Faculty III, because this part was too expensive. As a result, the academy got a new image. With no discussion evenings or guest speakers, it became more of a workplace with studios than an all-round course in which serious attention was paid to the social and moral shaping of students. Still, Livinus stuck to his principles. He allowed a lot of students to study for free and kept organising positions for those with talent. However, he also became increasingly focused on his own, free work, photo peinture

and the lumo dynamic machine. Lecturers gave their lessons from a common ideology, but this was no longer put to paper. As most of them were members of artists groups publishing manifesto's, their points of view were in fact already known. These lay close to existentialist principles: structural denial of any kind of doctrine or dogma. The differences between lecturers could be great. Where one gave almost traditional lessons, no different than at the Haagse Academie, the other opted for the opposite approach. Such differences were seen as an advantage: it increased the freedom of choice for the students. The option to change from one lecturer to another easily, half way through, was one of the most special educational characteristics of the Vrije Academie.

The free educational ideology also provided some inconsistencies. In the first place, you couldn't enforce freedom, just as it was also impossible not to apply some norms. The contrast between good and bad art, despite the message of freedom of artistic opinion, proved to be clear. When enrolling at the academy, when determining who would receive a grant, promotion to assistant or when taking part in exhibitions, appraisal of work was always at play, even if the norm was never committed to paper. In the second place, creating a mutual bond, the principle of solidarity, was of great important to Livinus. However, because the group of lecturers and assistants formed a kind of fortress, it was difficult for outsiders to connect with them. Taking students on as assistants and lecturers was a way of ensuring their chosen ideology and of maintaining the familiar atmosphere. This meant that new impulses, which could have come from outside, became less likely.

On the other hand, the example of the many good and charismatic lecturers led to more than just the visual results. When later asked, alumni most often mention self-reliance and developing a free spirit. Strangely enough, the ex-students then also didn't recognize the values which Livinus had intended to give them as part of their

artistic education. The friendships and the group atmosphere which emerged were seen as more the fruit of their own efforts than of the principal. This was also true of values such as social involvement, sense of responsibility, respect for others, honesty, authenticity and rejection of materialism. There was always something extra which had happened and had led to long lasting values than just the Vrije Academie education. Something similar was true for the visual course: if students proceed from the assumption that their own personality is all-important for their work, then this means that a course can contribute, but can never be decisive. In that case it is the very absence of directive artistic education which is crucial. That was, of course, exactly what the Vrije Academie offered. In 1962, Livinus came down with an illness. George Lampe, who had been taken on as a lecturer in 1958 was named vice-principal.

George Lampe and Psychopolis (1968-1982)

In June 1964, several months after his appointment, Lampe heard that the academy would need to move to a school building at De Gheijnstraat 129, where initially 18 and later even 27 classrooms were available. The institute was now called the *Vrije Academie-Nieuwe Stijl*. Using this name, the vice-principal, along with Livinus, introduced a new series of lesson subjects in image and sound, for which he obtained extra subsidies. The Cineworkshop was also set up at this time. Initially Lampe followed the line which Livinus had set out, both in terms of content and ideology, but after his appointment as principal in 1968, he changed policies. In 1970, the Vrije Academie launched *Psychopolis*, which was in fact his translation of Constants *New Babylon*. This was a place where every person, as a *homo ludens*, could become an artist and where the boundaries between professional artistry and amateurism became fuzzy. It was a place where people could wander around and change their

environment constantly using their creativity, a place where everyone had the same amount of influence. This was also what Lampe aspired to with Psychopolis. It was a large building which buzzed with ground-breaking activities, where everyone was welcome. You could hear music everywhere, live and from transistor radios and gramophones. The approach to art was liberal and playful – you could see it in the spontaneous, colourful murals in the building and the cutting and pasting in the prospectuses and annual reports. Creativity wasn't allowed to be held back by any norm or opinion whatsoever. Lampe gave his lecturers the explicit message that they were not allowed to make any demands of the students, because without freedom there could be no personal development, which was still seen as the most important aim. If a student wasn't functioning, they shouldn't be discouraged but should go in search of another tutor.

Many lesson subjects were introduced, such as *clean art*, jewellery making, welding, electronic music and leather work. The unique subject Psychomotor was given by Lampe himself, in sessions which were directly aimed at breaking down ingrained patterns of behaviour and thinking. Experimental, improvisational theatre became part of the programme in several varieties, aimed at the free expression of the body and the word. It was meant to 'release authenticity' and remove inhibitions. The Cineworkshop entered a new phase with the appointment of Frans Zwartjes, who gave the workshop an enormous boost through his unorthodox approach. The students could start working with film cameras without any technical or theoretical background and learned how to make do with limited means. The Cineworkshop cooked up a storm very quickly. Zwartjes and his students produced films which were shown at festivals and won prizes. This provided him with a privileged, influential position with Lampe, even in areas of policy. He was given an increasing number of lesson hours, in various disciplines.

An anti-materialistic attitude was typical for Psychopolis, not just for the Cineworkshop. The most important thing was to make use of what was available. Everyone had to be thrifty in all the faculties, despite the large subsidies which Lampe had been able to acquire. There were always shortages, which was mainly noticeable in the quality of the materials and the equipment. Students adapted their work to the available means. Being thrifty with materials became second nature and just as earlier on, it was the imperfection itself which was valued. Unexpected results, occurring accidentally due to incomplete or insufficient materials were applauded. The artistic abilities, characters and temperaments of the lecturers were what made the difference from one lesson to the next. Many lecturers were seen as the real 'great teachers'. A lot of these remained attached to the Vrije Academie for a long time and ensured a constant quality level in this way. None of these people enforced anything on the students, but they tried to guard the student's own style. Even so, it was apparent to most of the students that the norm was that their work should represent either psychological depth or a socio-political statement.

When he started, Lampe applied the democratic principle of one man, one vote, which guaranteed far reaching influence for the students. The students, who he officially referred to as participants, could discuss anything at any time, from the advisors (now the official term for lecturers) and the management, as well as the programme and the way of working. In principle, it was possible, with a majority vote, to fire lecturers (which did actually happen) or to change the entire programme of lessons. In Psychopolis the democratisation didn't come from below, as at the universities, but from the top. After a few years when it became apparent that that much consultation could also lead to inertia, the management removed this democratic model. Introducing the Work Democracy allowed Lampe to guard the ideology of the Vrije Academie better.

Differently to Constant (*New Babylon*), Lampe didn't believe in a peaceful Utopia. He was more convinced of the extra value of tension, frustration and discomfort. From the start, he coupled Art Education with Psychology. Right from his earliest articles, in reviews for *Vrij Nederland*, Lampe wrote about the mentality of the artist. He seemed to know exactly what the 'correct' mentality was. As the principal of the Vrije Academie, mentality change became his most important aim: for him this coincided with the individual personal development of the participants. If for Livinus everything that could grow out of people was in principle 'good', Lampe aimed his policy entirely at breaking down ingrained patterns of thought and behaviour. He didn't want to educate artists, but rather bring about a mentality in his students out of which artistry could be born. He called it mental cleansing and it wasn't gentle; it was expressed in strong terms such as 'razing to the ground' and building someone back up again, 'becoming yourself'. These were terms from the Psychology and Anti-Psychiatry of the day. The students were stimulated to philosophise about their own thinking and feeling. A new idea was the *speak-in*, a public discussion of the work that had been produced. This was an appraisal, even if it wasn't by the lecturers, but from the collective. As they went on, the *speak-ins* changed into meetings which could take a whole day, in which discussions took place about politics, philosophy, literature, Dolle Mina (women's movement), Vietnam, disarmament, Israel and the Palestinians. No subject was taboo.

Policy was still aimed at the academy's growth. The large building with the many classrooms needed to be utilised completely and as many people as possible needed to join in. The earlier admissions interviews were stopped and new participants were consciously not given any introductory information. They needed to find their own way to the suitable advisors for them. If they didn't enjoy the system, the student would leave by themselves. Lampe called this principle

self-selection. He viewed the academy as a labyrinth, in which the participants undertook their own search. The main thing was that they went from classroom to classroom and ignored the boundaries between disciplines: painters should make theatre, sculptors decors, filmmakers get involved with theatre or make videos of activities of others and musicians should build devices. The sample card of options which were offered was unique. Psychopolis offered a student the chance, having arrived as a trainee photographer, to become a painter or filmmaker, or instead of a painter a sculptor, silk screen printer or theatre maker. Changing direction and experimenting in different disciplines was encouraged. Working with others was still very important. The Werkgroep may have been stopped, but the students still carried out a relatively large number of joint projects. This also allowed the different faculties to integrate. Painters, sculptors, graphical artists, filmmakers and audio technicians all worked together.

The solidarity was again strong in the De Gheijnstraat, albeit only within certain small groups just as before. This made Lampe's striving for a change in mentality more difficult, because it was mainly those who already felt some connection to this idea, who took part in the joint activities. A large group of participants withdrew and went their own, individualistic way. Not everyone could connect to the established groups. The freedom on offer made it possible for participants to refuse to work towards a proposed goal. The principle of self-selection meant that anyone who couldn't work with the change in mentality immediately dropped out, such as those who were considered too safe or bourgeois. In this way, they created a self-reinforcing universe, in which only like-minded people would be welcomed openly.

The Vrije Academie increasingly took the new approach beyond its walls. This was literally the case as well, with street art, in schools and in youth centres, with theatre projects or social commissions. Projects were set up for the elderly

and handicapped; working alongside local committees and action committees. Community work in The Hague had its own place within the walls of the academy. The *Release* agency, which helped youths with their problems, was also given an office. In addition, the door was opened wide for people with psychosocial problems. The entire community came to Psychopolis and that was exactly what Lampe thought was needed to change society. It will be obvious that this also caused a lot of unease.

Lampe had increasingly started to view the traditional artist as an 'elite producer', who crafted art for an elite audience. He divided society into *us*, the playful Vrije Academie people, and *them*, the art institutes, bourgeois society and the cultural elite. It was a rigorous division between good and bad. He saw Psychopolis as a separate mini-state, a testing ground, an example for the rest of society. So, it was more anti-society than a contribution to life in the society, as Livinus had thought. However, at the same time, he didn't want to disadvantage his students; if they could obtain a commission or exhibition, he, along with the lecturers, would also put effort into students' exhibitions leading to a possible membership of artists organisations such as *Pulchri Studio* or the *Haagse Kunstkring*.

The conscious vagueness and the chaos which was coupled with the change in mentality didn't appeal to many people. A lot of things were badly organised, which the management justified by referring to the educational character of such a maze. In hindsight, it is debatable whether the lack of structure and the disorder were a conscious strategy or stemmed from carelessness. Any complaints by the students were always about the bad organisation, the lack of materials and equipment, the lack of evaluation for an assignment, the absence of lecturers and the absence of (didactic) structure. Compared to Livinus' time, there was a lot more criticism of art education, which many considered could easily have been a little less liberal or less anti-authority. Any complaints were usually dismissed by the

management by referring to the change in mentality which still needed to occur. This was also the case with complaints made by lecturers. They were also expected to understand that the academy was still in period of growth. If they protested, Lampe generally defended the students and not their supervisors. The principle of solidarity was no more, the aim had become self-realisation for the students, at the cost of others if needs be. The open, democratic model had led to an anti-authoritarian system in which lecturers were viewed as bearers of the power which needed to be combatted.

After a few years when it became clear that Lampe's model had led to a lot of psychological discussions and not a lot of art, the concept of quality became more significant. The symbol of the 'labyrinth' was replaced by the 'laboratory'. The essence of the change was researching instead of searching. Quality proved to be something which could in fact be developed, which went further than a result on the grounds of intuition, dexterity or talent. It was, however, difficult to explain. The management offered more theoretical courses, which were to provide insight into the process of ideation and more was done in the area of cultural and artistic criticism. The technical skill of realistic painting was introduced and less time was spent on free expression. The *special* was introduced for advanced students, to which a student could only gain admission after approval from their lecturer. In the meantime, the government had become increasingly uncomfortable with the academy's status. In 1975, the government decided that the institute was not a professional training course and that they were not allowed to train any professional artists, without risking the cessation of their subsidy. The Vrije Academy was officially a workshop and not a training course. George Lampe, however, didn't take much notice of any such restrictions applied by regulators. He simply continued his accessible educational institution, with even more emphasis on quality, structure and discipline, with theoretical courses and with a

normative difference between beginners and advanced students. This was completely at odds with his own, earlier egalitarian artistic principles, as well as with the initial ideological principles of Van de Bundt.

Lampe died in 1982. The academy then counted more than 2000 participants, fifty supervisors and fifty supporting staff members.

Epilogue

Following the death of George Lampe, a cultural change took place at the Vrije Academie. His successors continued the discussions about quality in artistic education. Frans Zwartjes, principal from 1983 to 1988, quickly experienced a major cessation in subsidies. As of 1984, the governmental subsidy was stopped completely. The council at The Hague was now the only remaining subsidising body. This dependency meant that they were left in a vulnerable position. The issue doing the rounds between the supervisors, management and board, was whether the Vrije Academie should remain a broad, accessible institute or rather a high quality and much smaller institute. Zwartjes was a proponent of the latter, but the conflict which erupted with the board and body of lecturers as a result cost him his position. His successor, artist Bob Bonies, ultimately carried out Zwartjes' plans with the support of the council. Participants needed to be primarily motivated to develop themselves further to become artists for Bonies. Amateurs were welcome if they intended to work professionally. In the first year of his tenure, the academy only counted 600 students, but that was seen as a realistic amount. Participants' work was evaluated not only on admission but also annually. So, there were quality norms and just as with other art courses, the norms were determined by a ballot committee, with an annual change of membership. The Vrije Academie started to become more and more like an ordinary art academy. The choice for smallness and high

quality had led to the institute throwing away the good with the bad. The question which had not been put was whether it might have been possible to create breadth, accessibility and high quality. The art laboratory without restrictions, with its non-normative ideology, broad personal development and with its aim of social added value, disappeared in 1989.

In that year the academy moved to Paviljoensgracht 20. In the meantime, the council subsidy had been slowly reduced to increasingly lower amounts, with an occasional one-time cash injection. By mid-2001, the artist and international lawyer Ingrid Rollema followed Bonies. Her leadership led to a more diverse and younger group of participants. She was able to bring in extensive subsidies, particularly from external parties, so that she could carry out her plans. She particularly promoted the exchange of ideas between western and non-western artists. She organised exhibitions and debates under the umbrella of 'Gemak', a collaboration between the *Gemeentemuseum* and the Vrije Academie. Rollema stopped being principal quite abruptly in 2009. She was followed by artist and curator Marie Jeanne de Rooij. The policy was well underway on its course, but there was an unexpected hitch. In 2012 came the bombshell that the council wouldn't honour any more proposals. The workplaces and the educational function would no longer be subsidised, only the section Gemak would be supported. At that time, the academy organised on average one exhibition or debate per month with social and political themes. On the 4th of December 2015, De Rooij opened the last, one day exhibition, entitled *All art is political*. The council in The Hague had then, quite unexpectedly, also ceased its subsidy for Gemak. Presumably, they no longer saw any more reason to support an institute which barely differentiated itself from other institutes in The Hague. Individualistic, subjectively oriented art education was now also being offered at all other art academies in the Netherlands. The world had changed, freedom had become more everyday

and individual development was no longer the preserve of the elite. Strongly political, ideologically tinted education had lost its appeal.

Along with the closure of the Vrije Academie, came the disappearance of the easily accessible art course in The Hague, where talented future artists, who were unable or not allowed to follow official courses were supported. Between 1947 and 1989 (and afterwards as well), the Vrije Academie had produced many well-respected professional artists, whose work is of no less value than those who had graduated from other academies. The course at the Vrije Academie, as a professional course, proved to be valuable, like the one at the Haagse (Koninklijke) Academie, even though during this entire period no works of art were criticised or adjudged. The Vrije Academie had shown that it was possible to achieve good results with a liberal and experimental educational system. So, it offered a good educational system, but with far more accessibility. In that way, thousands of people, who would otherwise not have been admitted to art education, were able to develop their imaginations at the Vrije Academie and to apply the Vrije Academie ideals to education, upbringing, to numerous other functions and as artists. Everyone who thinks that this is important for society should want (to protect) an institute such as the Vrije Academie.

Vertaling Lynn Coleman