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# **The Value of Art and Culture in Everyday Life. Towards an expressive cultural democracy.**

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## **Introduction**

Ever since the earliest forms of mass media, the dichotomy of mass culture/popular arts and high culture/fine art has been a topic of debate. This discussion focuses on the value and use of different art forms and on different notions of and attitudes towards the purpose of art. Starting in the 1960s, studies on the value of popular culture got more attention, for example, from sociological studies and from the new research field of cultural studies (e.g. Williams 1958, Gans 1975, Escarpit 1958), a development that created a growing interest in the users. Further, the late modern society and the development of media and technology created discussions on cultural liberation (Ziehe, 1986) and fluid identity (Giddens 1991; Bauman 2000) and in cultural policy, talk about cultural democracy changed the discourse in most countries (Duelund 2003). With the latest developments in mediatization (Hjarvard 2010) and digitization of culture, we are experiencing a participation turn (Jenkins & Bertozzi 2008; Simon 2010), which again expands and challenges the way we think and practice cultural policy, cultural strategies and arts advocacy.

History has given us a better understanding of people's tastes and choices when it comes to art and culture (Bourdieu 1979; Gans 1974). It has further shown us, that despite this understanding, the democratization of culture has only to a smaller degree dissolved boundaries or respected different tastes when it comes to people's preferred forms of culture (Pettersen & Kern 1996; Bennett et al. 2009; Mangset 2012).

Despite all these attempts to develop a broader understanding of culture and to acknowledge different ways of experiencing, valuing and participating in art and culture, cultural policy continues to reproduce dichotomies between high and popular culture, valuing the first over the latter. In Denmark, where the authors are situated, an instrumental cultural policy has dominated the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and continues to rule on late modern media and digital conditions, especially, but not exclusively, when it comes to children and youth. Exposure to high culture is still considered an educational way to foster children into capable, creative and adaptable citizens (Ministry of Culture 2014 a; 2014b; 2014c). The tendencies are also seen in the emphasis on social inclusion and outreach, such as exists in the UK (Kawashima 2006; Stevenson et al. 2015; Belfiora 2010), where outreach refers to strategies developed to reach vulnerable groups and thus contribute to social policy. Art and culture are rarely understood as independent ways of experiencing meaning creation and creating value in everyday life.

When it comes to cultural institutions, cultural promotion and art advocates, some of the same tendencies manifest themselves. The American communication professor Joli Jensen points at a widespread consensus among American arts advocates in relation to what she calls an “instrumental logic”:

“I found calls for the arts to somehow turn everyday people into an American populace that could be trusted to self-govern. This deep-seated mistrust of the American public as it currently exists leads to an inflated faith in the possibility of the “right” kind of culture to create (or restore) the “right” kind of citizen.” (...)” In this way art is defined as the non-mass-mediated cultural form that intellectuals appreciate and the masses ignore”. (Jensen 2003, 68)

Cultural institutions and their dissemination strategies *do* change, as they develop new methods to present and narrate the objects and stories they tell. This is for example seen in the aforementioned participation turn (e.g. Simon 2010), where cultural institutions develop a variety of options for users to participate, often using new media to facilitate the interaction. Still an instrumental logic as described by Jensen seems to dominate the cultural policy field, which makes us wonder. Why after all these years of research, debate, turns and developments, do we still rely on Cartesian dichotomies and oppositions? Why do we still maintain an instrumental cultural policy perspective, which excludes the taste of the majority of the populace? When we take into consideration the cultural institutions' loss of authority, the cultural liberation and the participatory turn caused by media and digital technology, we might expect a cultural policy turn that points toward the contribution to negotiations on meaning, with value in our everyday life as an independent purpose.

Our everyday expressive life is ruled by individual interests. The different interests gather and separate us as participants, audiences, readers, listeners, and viewers. Some prefer popular art forms while others choose high culture. We each choose particular activities and experiences because they make a difference to us—they contribute value and meaning to our everyday lives.

Focus on the abovementioned studies has to a large degree concentrated on art forms and on user groups. The concept of cultural democracy has worked as a way to acknowledge and support a variety of cultural activities (Mulcahy 2010; Duelund 2003). In this article, we argue for an expanded understanding of cultural democracy, which not only acknowledges different tastes and cultures, but also includes the central perspective of giving voice and expression across interests and taste--the perspective of what we might call an *expressive cultural democracy*.

We anticipate that the tenacious valuation of high culture as being beneficial to all is widespread as a way to legitimize the funding of cultural institutions, and contributes to a dearth of arguments

related to the independent value of art and culture itself. In this article, our goal is contribute to a new understanding of arts experience, which can serve as the point of departure for a turn of perspective on arts advocacy and cultural policy. Our point of departure is Joly Jensen who was the first to draw our attention to this paradox. We then include scholars who contribute to explain the paradox, but also help us develop a new understanding that points to the independent usefulness and value of cultural experiences.

### **A new cultural policy perspective – an expressive logic**

The instrumental logic as coined by Jensen has dominated not only western cultural policy and arts advocacy throughout the 20th century, but also art education and art critique. It links the notion of art with a notion of literacy, determining the very meaning of cultural policy, arts advocacy and cultural communication as educational and therefore primarily addressing the part of the populace with popular, i.e. bad, tastes. Jensen points out that the instrumental logic leads to oppositions between art and culture, and between elite and popular taste. Since the elite taste belongs to the educated elite, who are in charge of policymaking, arts education, and arts advocacy, their taste ends up being the scale on which participation in art and cultural habits are measured. When we rely on this logic Jensen says, we “insult the very people we most need and hope to persuade.” (Jensen 2003, 71)

Cultural policy and arts advocacy is thus turning art into what she calls ‘cultural spinach,’ something we know we ought to like, but that we (secretly) dislike. A literacy project turned against the collective Dionysus, devoted to the individual Apollo. As a conclusion and a vision she proposes to let go of the instrumental logic and to develop what she calls an *expressive logic*.

In her book, *Is Art good for us?* (2002) Joli Jensen combines her analysis with a radical strategy that inverts not only the educational goal of cultural policy as a whole, but also the communication form and the power and authority connected to instrumental thinking. Cultural dissemination, she claims, is not a form of one-way communication in which professionals educate and inspire non-professionals. Instead, it is a process whereby meaning and values are under negotiation and where all of us are in charge. Inspired by the American philosopher John Dewey, she suggests a new notion on art that emphasizes and respects a variety of aesthetic experiences. Arts advocates and arts critics must surrender instrumental logic, and replace it with a more Deweyan expressive logic, in which art and art experiences are valuable in themselves (Jensen 2003, 77). Art is, she says, far from a one-way form of communication in which the passive receiver uncritically assimilates ideas and values from the sender. Instead, cultural participation is a conversation, a dialogue in which the receiver interacts with the sender and negotiates meaning. “ (...) arts *are* experiences, they are the human practice of communication, and therefore they are examples of valuable conjoint activity” (Jensen 2002, 174).

By placing the users of art and culture and their different personal tastes and preferences in the center of cultural policy, arts advocacy and audience development consequently means that the classic cultural arenas – theatres, concert halls, cinemas, museums and libraries - are regarded as democratic participatory platforms for exchanging and negotiating meanings and values. This perspective turns both cultural policy and cultural dissemination away from an educational instrumental perspective governed by professional experts and towards an expressive perspective built on respect for, and the co-existence of, both elite and popular tastes.

“This is the way we should think about the social role of the arts. An expressive view of the arts, then, is a view that does not try to erase notions of high and low, authentic and commercial, arts and craft, sacred and profane. It presumes instead that these distinctions are important because they are *important to the participants*. Lines of demarcation between good and bad culture are endlessly being constructed, sustained, repaired and transformed. These distinctions matter, but they matter because they are part of an evaluative ritual – the ceremony of making and protecting worthiness. The arts are part of our vital ongoing conversation about what is valuable, human, exalted, sacred, pleasurable, challenging, and worthwhile and what is not. And that is why the arts are so important and so valuable.” (Jensen 2002, 199)

Jensen is not only challenging an instrumental logic. Her expressive logic is at the same time an attack on the enlightenment tradition that developed both western cultural institutions and the instrumental logics that accompany those institutions’ educational practices. Both the instrumental logic and the inherent oppositions and dichotomies stem from rational philosophy built on the dichotomy between brain and body, reason and sense. To dissolve these dichotomies is not just a question of wish, will and cultural strategy development. If expressive logic should be able to guide cultural policy and cultural institutions for the future, both must be grounded in philosophy of aesthetics and surrounded by theories and notions that produce the kind of thinking and arguments needed to legitimize, implement and practice from them.

Joli Jensen points at an expressive logic as a starting point, but leaves us wondering about the perseverance of the Cartesian oppositions, and the dichotomies between high and low. In order to strengthen our argument we include the philosopher and researcher Richard Shusterman, another

scholar who takes inspiration from Dewey (e.g. Shusterman 1997), and studies the historical and etymological basis for the valuation of different art forms and cultural experiences.

### **A new perspective on art and popular culture – a concept of entertainment**

With his studies of artistic status and general cultural value of popular art, starting in the early 1990's, Richard Shusterman placed himself in the middle of the intellectual fight pro et contra art and popular culture that has divided philosophers and academics since antiquity. His studies illustrate why it is extremely difficult to create new perspectives and a change in perceptions about oppositions and dichotomies. All over the western world, we still think with and through them. Even when we are directly confronted with them, they tend to reproduce themselves in new ways.

Reflecting on the many critical reactions to his work on popular art, Shusterman realizes that below the historical hierarchy between high and popular art forms lies an even more solid contrast between art versus entertainment (Shusterman 2003, 290). His analysis starts out with a focus on the strategies that have formed theories and concepts of entertainment and popular art. The first, Shusterman says, places entertainment as subordinate to the field of high culture. Entertainment, or popular culture, borrows from it, but also corrupts it. The second places entertainment in opposition to high art, in a sphere of its own, with its own rules and norms. Neither seems adequate. Instead, Shusterman proposes 'meliorism' as a middle way between condemnation and celebration, a theory of entertainment that steers between mere subservience to and sheer defiance of high culture. (Shusterman 2003, 291)

Shusterman starts by studying 'entertainment' both in an etymological and a historical perspective. Comparing the etymological meanings related to 'entertainment' in French, English and German

languages, he finds a complexity. In all languages, he finds terms as ‘amusement’ and ‘distraction’ connected to the concept. In Latin the concept is *inter + tenere*, which means to hold together or to maintain. Shusterman argues that "The straightforward philosophical lesson implied by this etymology is that a good, if not necessary way, to maintain oneself is to occupy oneself pleurably and with interest" (Shusterman 2003, 293). Looking further in to the complexity of the concept, Shusterman finds that the English and French terms of 'amusement', 'divertissement' and 'distraction' point in the direction of being absorbed in thought, to wonder, but also to waste time. The concepts seems to hold a dialectic of both focused attention (to maintain oneself) and distraction (to loose oneself). Shusterman concludes that "To sustain, refresh and even deepen concentration, one also needs to distract it; otherwise concentration fatigues itself and gets dulled through monotony." (Shusterman 2003, 293)

Entertainment as a productive dialectic of focused attention and diversion, concentration and distraction, serious maintenance and playful amusement is the new notion he offers. It makes it possible to understand entertainment not as opposed to, but as a vital part of art, popular culture and everyday playing activities. Studying the concept's genealogy through a tour de force of texts from those by Plato and Aristotle, to those by Hegel, Kant, and Adorno, to contemporary critics who shape today's understanding, he explains why this productive dialectic during the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries ended up simplifying oppositions and dichotomies. "Most cultural critics (...) sharply contrast art and entertainment identifying the latter with idle pleasure seeking and lower-class vulgarity". (Shusterman 2003, 301). Historically and traditionally, pleasure has been connected to the pleasure of the flesh and therefore stands opposed to mind and thought. Shusterman argues that with the secularization of the modern world, art increasingly became a place for sacral contemplation. Poetics took over the role of the sacred texts and museums replaced churches as

rooms for enlightenment and spiritual arousal. As entertainment connotes pleasure of the flesh and earthly desires, it came in opposition to art and sacred contemplation.

Shusterman's arguments primarily rely on 'sound reason', but as an introduction to his critique of Hannah Arendt's view on art and entertainment, the outlines of an underlying theory on play and aesthetic experience is hidden. He underscores that pleasure "stands out from the ordinary flow of perception as a special aesthetic experience (...) an experience that so absorbs our attention that it also constitutes an entertaining distraction from the humdrum routine of life". (Shusterman 2003, 304). The characteristics of pleasure as Shusterman pinpoints them here, mirrors the definition of play (e.g. Huizinga 1936). Entertainment/pleasure, we add, constitutes *a break* from everyday social routines in the same way as play, and activates an aesthetic perception mode, which creates new cultural experiences bound to movements in the moment – the here and now.

Shusterman further claims that "pleasure is (...) inseparable from the activity in which it is experienced" (Shusterman 2003, 303). When we interpret his work in the light of Play Theory, it involves a necessary dimension of active participation. If the activities are not framed and the break from social life not fulfilled, full and focused participation in, and pleasure from these experiences is not possible. Shusterman ends up with the special social dimension related to these kinds of framed cultural experiences. He claims that: "Aesthetic experience gains intensity from a sense of sharing something meaningful and valuable together and this includes the feeling of shared pleasures" (Shustermann 2003, 304).

In his latest works, Shusterman argues that we need to consider the body as an inseparable part of all human perception. The body is a central part of human perception and performance, and should

be taken into consideration when we discuss art experience (Shusterman 2013). Shusterman has developed what he calls *somaesthetics* as an interdisciplinary field that unites the cognitive and sensuous perception:

“Art enchants us through its richly sensuous dimensions, perceived through the bodily senses and enjoyed through embodied feelings. Yet philosophical aesthetics largely neglects the body’s role in aesthetic appreciation.” (Shusterman 2012, 1) “Building on the pragmatist insistence on the body’s central role in artistic creation and appreciation, somaesthetics highlights and explores the soma – the living, sentient, purposive body – as the indispensable medium for all perception.” (3)

By emphasizing the bodily perception, Shusterman also challenges the great emphasis on interpretation and discourse in modern society and philosophy. In relation to modes of cognition, he suggests a distinction between *understanding* and *interpretation*, where understanding is related to immediacy and the unreflective, whereas interpretation is related to a more reflective form of perception (173).

Shusterman is here in line with the literary scholar Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht who follows the same line of argument in his book *Production of Presence*. We are living in a world dominated by meaning, Gumbrecht argues, where interpretation and hermeneutics are a central part of how we think and talk about the world. The goal of his book is to “develop concepts that could allow us, in the Humanities, to relate to the world in a way that is more complex than interpretation alone, that is more complex than only attributing meaning to the world.” (Gumbrecht 2004, 52)

In contrast to the widespread *meaning culture*, he introduces the concept of *presence culture*, a tangible, spatial, bodily perception of the world. As many of the others scholars included in this

article, he turns to medieval culture in order to find notions and understandings, which help him develop the concept of presence culture. He also includes several scholars, especially Martin Heidegger and his concept of Being-in-the-world (Dasein) as “human existence that is always already in – both spatial and functional – contact with the world” (71).

Gumbrecht does not argue for a cancellation of the hermeneutic meaning culture, but suggests a balance between the different modes of perception and knowledge production. As with Dewey and Shusterman, Gumbrecht points to the aesthetic experience as an oscillation between presence effects and meaning effects. Gumbrecht relates the understanding of presence to concepts as moments of intensity and epiphany, and stresses that there is nothing edifying in such moments. Why then, do we seek and value aesthetic experiences, he asks? Because it gives us something which we cannot experience in our everyday world, because we lose control, and because our desire for presence is “an reaction to an everyday environment that has been become so overly Cartesian during the past centuries, it makes sense to hope that aesthetic experience may help us recuperate the spatial and bodily dimension of our existence (...).” (Gumbrecht 2004, 116)

Both Shusterman and Gumbrecht argue that we need a new epistemology, and that we ultimately must secede from the legacy of Decartes. Another reason why this is not only interesting but also necessary in relation to cultural policy, cultural institutions and arts advocacy, is the development in the popular culture, more specific in new digital media.

### **The digital challenges**

In the article *Artistic Expression in the Age of Participatory Culture*, media scholar Henry Jenkins and program manager Vanessa Bertozzi refer to "a series of interviews – conducted face to face,

with video, and over instant messaging, e-mail and phone – with seven young artists" (2008). They sum up the results of their studies as a new participatory culture:

"A participatory culture might be defined as one where there are relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, where there is strong support for creating and sharing what one creates with others, and where there is some kind of informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to novices. It is also a culture where members feel that their contribution matter and where they feel some degree of social connection with each other at least to the degree to which they care what other people think about what they have created."

(Jenkins & Bertozzi 2008, 174)

Although this description does not differ from descriptions of children and young people's classical play cultures and playing communities, the authors conclude that these new participatory online communities and their experiences "may be reshaping what is meant by art and by participation in the twenty-first century." (Jenkins and Bertozzi 2008, 175) The article serves as a warning for policy makers and cultural institutions. The online participatory culture is characterized by blurred lines between commercial and non-commercial art, between producer and user, between professional and amateur. According to the authors, arts institutions need to keep up with these changes, they need to redefine art, to redesign art worlds, to reconsider the digital and to remake arts institutions (Jenkins & Bertozzi 2008)

What is going on in young peoples' creative and expressive online communities is not only considered a challenge, but a threat against the classic cultural institutions. Jenkins and Bertozzi's portrait and definition of these new types of participatory culture has been seen as both an

inspiration and a challenge by researchers. In the article *In and Out of the Dark. A Theory about Audience Behavior from Sophocles to Spoken Word*, theater scholar Lynne Conner identifies “an ever-widening interest gap between passive forms of high culture (...) and more active types of entertainment (...) that are either inherently participatory or are connected to opportunities that invite participation before and after the arts event.” (Conner 2008, 4) The gap means that the live arts have lost touch with the popular or mass audience: “In theatres and symphony halls across America, it is said; the audience has left the building” (2008, 103). In general, researchers' explanation for this development has pointed to a shift in consumer patterns. Conner does not support this explanation. “America audience””, she argues, “are very much as they have always been: looking for similar kinds of satisfaction from their cultural sources.” (2008, 103) What has changed are not taste and consumer patterns, but “the culture surrounding arts participation – what I label the *arts experience*” (2008, 103). Jenkins and Bertozzi are warning arts institutions, whereas Conner follows up with an explanation on the gap between passive forms of high culture and more active types of entertainment that point to the entire traditional arts industry. The industry, she claims, “has abandoned responsibility for providing – or even acknowledging – the importance of larger opportunities for engagement with arts events, particularly those that encourage an interpretive relationship” (Conner 2008, 104).

In order to support this thesis and to develop new guidelines for the traditional arts industry, Conner takes her readers on an informed historical transformative journey. From the active participatory audiences in antiquity and during the Elizabethan Period, in which the quality and value of theater performances was a decision made by the participating audiences, to the development of the passive attending audiences dominating the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. At that time professional reviewers of the press had the authority to choose, discuss, evaluate and recommend on behalf of the passive

audiences. Further to the future, she predicts the rise of new types of young active audiences that expect to co-author, interpret, discuss, negotiate, and evaluate meanings and values from the cultural experiences offered.

The lesson she takes from the history of audience cultures and presents as a challenge to the non-profit arts industry, is not just to reinvent and remake the old participative audience patterns. Such a return to former models is not possible, but some kind of institutional alignment would be necessary. According to Conner, the problem with existing attempts to create active involvement, is that they are based on the same us/them position as mentioned by Jensen (year), in which experts guide the illiterate.

As with Jensen and Shusterman, Conner challenges both the former authority of the experts, the educational one-way communication form between experts and users/audiences, and the dichotomies between high and low art and culture. Her concept of late modern participatory audiences and her advice on opening possibilities for co-authorizing and cooperation between experts and users in cultural institutions are modeled on Jenkins and Bertozzi's definition of late modern young participatory cultures.

“Today's consumption patterns make it clear that adult audiences – like their forebears - seek entertainment promoting the interplay of ideas, experience, information, feeling, and passion. They, too, seek the cognitive satisfaction that comes from the opportunity to formulate and express an opinion in a public context. Simply put, today's audiences are willing to spend their money and leisure time on live entertainment that puts them in the position to participate in, through and around the arts event itself.” (Conner 2008, 117) (...) “To compete in the cultural marketplace of the twenty-first century, the non-profit live arts community must concede that an audience-driven

cultural transformation is already under way – with or without permission or approval. American audiences of the twenty-first century, especially younger patrons, are busily and happily engaged in the process of redemocratizing the arts.” (2008, 120)

Both Jenkins & Bertozzi and Conner draw our attention to the change in cultural behavior caused by new digital media. The digitalization and the mobility of media has resulted in a democratization of culture in relation to art forms, taste, creativity and production. Online activities allow people not only to have access to all kinds of artwork but also to use the technology to remix and interact with both high and popular art. People participate because it is fun, it is entertaining, and it creates value for them in their everyday lives. Moreover, and most importantly, it takes place without any gatekeepers telling people what to do. In our opinion, this does not mean that people necessarily should have the same opportunities in cultural institutions, but it means that people have a different approach to art and culture and to the role it plays in their lives.

### **Expressive lives – towards a new form of cultural democracy**

Both Jenkins & Bertozzi and Conner’s articles stem from the volume *Engaging Art. The Next Great Transformation of America's Cultural Life*, edited by Steven J. Tepper, professor of art and design at Vanderbilt University, and Bill Ivey, folklorist and former chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts. In his introduction to the volume, Bill Ivey stresses that: “the volume is an attempt to address the question of how to better understand the changing landscape of cultural participation.” (Ivey 2008,2) “How have technological, cultural and demographic changes affected non-profits, and how might they respond to contemporary challenges? (...) How can we best conceptualize participation to make art, art making, and connections with art organizations part as a high quality of life for all Americans?” (Ivey 2008, 9)

Bill Ivey has in several publications been occupied with these questions and offers a concept, which seems productive for us, “expressive lives”. In his contribution to the British cross-party think tank *Demos* pamphlet, "Expressive Lives," (2009) he characterizes the term expressive lives as “nothing new under the sun:”

“The phrase draws in part on my training as a folklorist and the sense of community, heritage, connectedness and history, embodied in the folklorists' sense of tradition. Thus 'heritage' constitutes one half of expressive life: the part that is about belonging, continuity, community and history; it is expressed through art and ideas grounded in family, neighborhood, ethnicity, nationality and the many linkages that provide securing knowledge that we come from a specific place and are not alone. 'Voice', the other half of our expressive life, is quite different: a realm of individual expression where we can be autonomous, personally accomplished and cosmopolitan – a space in which we can at times even challenge the conventions of community or family heritage. (...) 'Heritage' reminds us that we belong, 'voice' offers the promise of what we can become.” (Ivey 2009, 27)

Ivey coins the term 'expressive life' as a critique of the famous concept of culture created by the British cultural critic, Raymond Williams. Williams defined the concept of culture as the dialectic between two notions of culture: the anthropological notion encompassing *the whole way of life* (heritage, traditions, and habits) and the aesthetic notion denoting fine arts (culture with capital C). Ivey's problem with this concept in a cultural policy context is first, that users and their experiences with and within the arts are excluded from the equation. Secondly, he considers Williams' notion of the arts to be experimental, and argues that it excludes experiences with and participation in popular arts and culture. Ivey's answer to the challenge is to reframe the dialectic. He places art and culture

as part of the anthropological notion as 'heritage' and he places peoples 'voices' as the activity that ensures and qualifies meaning with art and culture in everyday life.

In the *Demos* pamphlet "*Expressive Lives*" (2009) the editor and head of culture at the British think tank *Demos*, Samuel Jones, summarizes the challenges created by 'expressive life' and the possible perspectives on a cultural policy level. Agreeing with Lynne Conner, he claims that "We use new-found powers of access to do things we have always liked doing. New and older forms of behavior and preferences are part of the same continuum." (Jones 2009, 9) He takes as a prerequisite that "Technologies and the invigorated will of the public to participate, shape and personalize have changed the nature of cultural engagement." (2009, 9) The combination of the same preferences and this new will not only to attend, but also to participate challenge both cultural policy and the cultural institutions. Both have to move from a model of provision to a model of enabling.

"If our cultural policy and institutions do not facilitate expression by enabling us to participate in shaping and personalizing the culture of which we are a part, then they miss the point. Rather than simply communicating our culture and our heritage, our cultural and creative policy and institutions should help us to make use of them and create new values for the present and the future." (Jones 2009, 10)

Consequently, this renewed cultural policy will have the potential: 1) to reestablish the meanings and values of art and culture in everyday life; and 2) to restore the meaning of cultural democracy to society.

“From the foods that we eat, to the images that we see, cultural forms and the creative choices we make are expressions of what we value and how we see the world. Like no other, the cultural and creative sector reflects and generates the values that make up our society.” (Jones 2009, 11)

Ivey, Jenkins & Bertozzi, Conner, Shusterman, and Gumbrecht all find inspiration and understanding in history in order to identify cultural conceptions, which are not only adequate with today's mediated and digitized culture, but that also help us reconceptualize art and culture as something that is valuable in everyday life. They take their point of departure from a time, when culture was part of everyday life, or from an understanding of culture (folk culture) where culture and participation were inseparable. Ivey's notion of expressive lives connects history, community and belonging (heritage) with individual lives in the present. In our point of view, 'Voice' represents the individual, who is participating in cultural activities and drawing meanings and values from the heritage, which makes sense in his or her life. The challenge seems to be that the development in society, caused by emerging media formats, gradually has created a more nuanced and appreciative view on all kinds of art forms, on crossover formats, fora for participation, and ways of creating meaning. Still, these same developments have not found their way into arts education, art criticism and art institutions to the same degree as in popular culture.

## **Discussion**

We started out intending to develop a new understanding of culture and cultural democracy, which could function as an argument that cultural experiences are valuable in themselves. Our goal was to contribute to the decomposition of the instrumental logic that still characterizes cultural policy and cultural advocacy. In this concluding paragraph, we would like to summarize and discuss some points in our argument.

First, this call for change in the way we understand and practice cultural policy and advocacy is closely linked to technological developments. Not because people necessarily expect tablets and touch screens at museum, but because our perceptions, cognitions and behaviour changes according to the new modes of engagement enabled by new digital media. Both Jenkins & Bertozzi and Conner (and many others) points to this fact. As argued by Conner, it is not the culture itself, but rather the culture *surrounding* us that has changed. This change in behaviour does not only apply to young boys playing computer games. It applies to all of us, for whom interaction, entertainment, play and connectedness, is a part of our everyday life. Moreover, this digital culture is for the most part a culture that takes place outside educational institutions, outside cultural institutions, and without gatekeepers and mediators. It is an interconnected, peer-driven participatory culture, which is voluntary and pleasurable. While this new media culture may seem modern, it bears many similarities with earlier forms of culture characterised by pleasure, interaction, participation, collaboration and community. We need to consider this culture and develop cultural policies and arts advocacies that allow some of the same kinds of interaction and collaboration, which characterize media culture. We need to acknowledge the way in which media culture creates values in people's lives, and develop ways in which all forms of art and culture can reassume a central position in our lives.

Many of the scholars we have included in the article draw inspiration from historical examples or from folk culture in order to find comparable cultural communities. They seek times and places when participation and perception was integrated into everyday life, and when the ideas of entertainment, movement, body and activity were embedded into definitions of culture. John Dewey and his concept of art as experience is central to our argument. Dewey emphasizes that the

experience that happens between the subject and the artwork, *is* the work of art (Dewey 2005, 1). What Dewey—and the scholars quoted above—argues, is that in their view, aesthetic experiences are characterised by combining cognitive and sensuous perceptions. Further, the aesthetic experience takes place outside of everyday life, not as a sacral experience, but as something, which is situationally framed. Finally, aesthetic experiences are meaningful and valuable, intensely experienced, and ones to which we surrender. Gumbrecht and Shusterman would say that we lose ourselves for a moment. This definition of aesthetic experience is not necessarily connected to art, which many of scholars also stresses, and, in relation to the media argument, could just as readily be applied to computer games or participation in online communities. What we can learn from the concept of aesthetic experience, is an emphasis on both the framed situation in which it takes place, and the degree of absorption or immersion which characterise the experience.

Finally, the entertaining approach to aesthetic experiences draw our attention to the very moment and mode of perception. Both Shusterman and Gumbrecht argue that we need to consider the aesthetic experience (the presence effect) as a non-hermeneutic condition, which we experience with our body and senses. Aesthetic experiences are not a cognitive interpretive activity alone. As participants, we are always in-the-world, participating with our body, mind, and with all of our senses. The insistence that the body is a central part of the experience, invites cultural institutions to stimulate not only the mind and the cognitive perception mode, but to include communicative and narrative strategies, which stimulate all senses. Here it is important to point out that both Dewey, Shusterman and Gumbrech view aesthetic experiences as a combination of presence and meaning, of understanding and interpretation, and of mind and body. They do not dismiss the interpretive approach, but insist on the sensuous bodily perception as being not only relevant, but significant for the art experience if it is to have meaning in our lives.

In summary, we suggest that the concept of expressive cultural democracy unifies different concepts of culture and not only acknowledges but further stimulates an integrated use and understanding of high and popular culture. Better still, this works for a cultural sector, in which hierarchies are non-existent. However, an expressive understanding of culture also means that art and cultural institutions must create mental space for people to not only create their own meaning, but also create opportunities to use the ‘heritage’ as a foundation for creating values in our everyday lives. Finally, an expressive cultural democracy acknowledges both body and mind as vehicles for aesthetic experiences. An expressive cultural democracy is thus a mental expansion of cultural democracy, which allows people to create meaning in cultural activities in relation to their own life and their own creative activities inside so-called high culture institutions. Accordingly, cultural institutions and their collections should be seen as, and organized according to a democratic platform for exchanging and negotiating meaning, as arenas in which both heritage and voice can interact.

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