

Visual Culture and aesthetic learning strategies

Abstract

The aim of this project is to develop educational models within which theoretically based research and artistic development mutually contribute to new forms of knowledge. The masters program in Art Education at Konstfack will serve as a studio/workshop with the goal of creating a more mutually enriching relationship between academic research and artistic practice. The purpose is three-fold:

- 1) To develop forms of documentation that can be used to identify and reflect over the aesthetic learning strategies and forms of knowledge that arise in the practice of visual art;
- 2) To establish the legitimacy of these strategies and forms of knowledge as a basis for ongoing research in art education; and
- 3) To establish a sound foundation for pursuing doctoral work in art education and visual culture studies based in artistic practice.

The project starts in two art projects each led by a faculty member in the department. The processes are documented throughout the project, using a variety of documentation forms, including diaries and sketches, photography and video. Both students and teachers review the documentation during the course of the project, as a basis for reflection over the work and its qualities, and to address questions of what is being displayed and learned through this process. The projects will culminate in a joint exhibition, and also be compared with a similar project "Art Lab" at Valand, Gothenburg.

Assessing the quality of work in the visual arts is only one aspect of the more important issue of these kinds of knowledge processes. What are the aesthetic learning strategies that come into play as a work is being created? Can these be identified and developed – encouraged or criticized? The relationship between process and product; Can the process be made more transparent and reflective, both to the artist and to the viewer? These are questions that arts colleges and other institutions will be attempting to answer as they develop post-graduate programs in the visual arts.

Visual Culture and Esthetic Learning Strategies

Background

Contemporary cultural theory describes culture as a creative process where people actively construct and produce meanings in various symbolic forms. This definition places a renewed interest in the creative esthetic processes and practices through which culture is formed, learned and expressed (Fornäs 1995, Becker 1999). Over the past decade, the concept of *visual culture* has arisen, to account for the centrality of vision and the visual world “in producing meanings, establishing and maintaining esthetic values, gender stereotypes and power relationships within culture” (Rogoff 1998:14). Describing a culture as visual means that knowledge is shared through visual forms, and that what people know is based to a significant extent on what and how they see (Becker 1998, Becker 2003). The conviction that certain forms of knowledge are acquired and constructed visually can be traced to Foucault’s analysis of the “visible and the articulable” as distinct knowledge systems with different formations (1972).

Evidence of different systems of knowledge can be found in the distinctions drawn in western culture between the sciences and the arts (Mitchell 1994). These have been institutionalized throughout the educational systems, with different methods of teaching, different criteria and languages used in assessment, and different means of achieving the desired result. Often, as is the case in Sweden, the sciences and the arts are developed and funded through entirely separate institutions, agencies and policy organs. In recent years, there have been efforts to reach across the gulf established by these institutionalized structures, and a growing interest in what these different ways of knowing may be able to contribute to each other. Examples include the variety of collaborative projects that have been initiated between colleges of art and university research faculties and institutes.

These efforts have stimulated discussion about the nature of advanced work in the arts, and raised the issue of to what extent artistic quality can be compared to the research competencies demanded by universities and research institutes. The concept of “konstnärligt utvecklingsarbete” (“KU-arbete”) is used to describe artistic work that contributes to the broadening of the field, through new knowledge or techniques used in new ways. This work in “artistic development” (roughly translated) is used by arts colleges and funding institutions as the equivalent of research on an academic faculty. As colleges and universities move to establish doctoral programs in the arts, attempts are being made to define and clarify assessment criteria for work that shows evidence of “artistic development” (Karlsson 2002). Increased support has come from The Swedish Research Council through a series of grants to enable arts colleges, in cooperation with universities, to develop programs of advanced studies in the fine arts. Yet many questions remain: What should be the form and structure of doctoral programs in the fine arts? What criteria should be used to assess the quality of the work? What constitutes “doctoral-level” work in the arts?

A related issue, and at least as important as assessing the quality of work in the visual arts is to understand the nature of knowledge that is enacted and developed through the visualization process (Becker 2001). What are the esthetic learning strategies that come into play as a work is being created? Can these be identified and developed—encouraged or criticized? Can the process be made more transparent and reflective, both to the artist and to the viewer? Can the quality of the work be represented without words, or with a minimum of text? These are questions that arts colleges and other institutions will be attempting to answer as they develop post-graduate programs in the visual arts.

The masters program in art education at Konstfack, the Swedish National College of Art, Craft and Design, has since its inception in 1996 been concerned with these issues. Following the model developed at the undergraduate level, this one-year program of full-time study places equal emphasis on cultural theory, research methods and artistic work. The final examination consists of both a research-based thesis and an artistic project that address the same question and inform each other in their results. Each student has two advisers, one for the thesis and a second for the art project. Several years’ experience with the program indicated that both students and advisers lacked models for understanding of how these two different forms of knowledge and practice could be used to mutually enriching and inform the work leading to the examination. In 2001 a development project was started in cooperation with Stockholm Institute of Education, with support from the Council for the Renewal of Higher Education (Projekt 021/F01), and linked to a research project from The Swedish Research Council (VR) to investigate esthetic learning strategies. A condition for the Council’s funding was to

exchange experience with a parallel project at the Art Lab at Valand, University of Gothenberg (006/F01), and to present the results of this exchange at an open seminar on artistic research and esthetic learning.

Project goals

The purpose of the project was to establish educational models for the parallel pursuit of theoretically based research and artistic work, and to develop methods for assessing the progress and quality of the work, particularly in the visual arts. The project had three primary goals:

- 1) To develop forms of documentation which could be used to identify and reflect over the esthetic learning strategies and forms of knowledge that arise in the practice of visual art;
- 2) To use these forms of documentation to help identify and describe steps or stages in the learning process and to assess the quality of the work; and
- 3) To develop proposals for applying the project results in doctoral-level work in the visual arts, toward a long-term goal of establishing a doctoral program integrating research and artistic practice.

Project implementation

The masters program in art education at Konstfack was used as a studio/workshop for implementing the project. The project group consisted of seven faculty members (four artists and three researchers including project leader Karin Becker), seven students during spring 2002 (Group I) and seven students during fall 2002 (Group II). The two student groups included all who were enrolled in the masters' course, plus, in Group II a student from ceramics and glass department at Konstfack. Faculty members held meetings once a month throughout the project, to discuss different approaches to artistic research, to plan the project's implementation and to develop modes for documenting esthetic learning processes. The project was carried out in three major phases, designed to enable us to identify and compare stages of esthetic learning in an individual's work, differences between the esthetic learning process of individuals and groups, and differences between experienced artists' and students' esthetic learning processes.

PHASE 1. Group I, Spring 2002, Examination work: In the first phase, Ewa Agborg, art adviser for students who had entered the program Fall 2001, organized workshops focusing on their examination projects. The workshop was oriented around the theme "The Body as Art", considering ethical and moral questions raised by techniques involved in representing the human body as art (cf. Kemp & Wallace 2000). Agborg and the students worked side by side, experimenting with different forms and materials, as their individual projects progressed. Both adviser and students documented the process, keeping workbooks and photographing at regular intervals. The documentation was used as a reference when students then met with their respective research advisers. Reflective discussions were also held at regular intervals, led by researcher Ulla Lind from the project group. In these group discussions, which were recorded and transcribed, students were invited to reflect over the progress of their work. Lind also held a concluding reflective discussion with each student following the final exhibition and examination.

PHASE 2. Individual artist's work, Spring 2002: Agborg carried out her own project parallel with the students' examination work. Like them, she documented the work as it progressed, and discussed it with Björn Eneroth, senior faculty adviser/artist from the project group. The art installation which resulted from Agborg's project was presented and discussed by faculty and students at a seminar on artistic research led by these two artists (Appendix A).

PHASE 3. Group II, Fall 2002, Group project: The third phase of the project consisted of a week-long workshop with students who had entered the masters' program in the fall. The purpose of the workshop was to examine questions of narrativity in contemporary art within the framework of planning and carrying out a "dinner" for the class. The workshop was led by visiting artist Carin Ellberg, and organized by Marja Nurminen, artist and teacher from project group in collaboration with artist and resource person Arijana Kaijjes. The first day Ellberg presented an overview of her work, followed by several days of research in which the students carried out their own documentation and visited various sites that were important sources of inspiration for the artist's work. The final day the students were given an "assignment" to arrange a dinner, to be seen as both an artwork and an artistic

process. The entire workshop was documented by the project group and Lind held a reflective discussion with each student following the conclusion of the project.

Documentation. Three approaches to documentation were developed in the course of the project, each designed to provide a different and complementary perspective on esthetic learning. *Ethnographic documentation*, expanding on traditions of ethnographic fieldwork in social anthropology, consisted of notes, photographs and video made by students and faculty as they observed the progress of the work. This material provided a time-line and an external point of reference. It also was intended to be used in analyzing and presenting the project results both internally and externally for example in comparisons with the project carried out in Valand's Art Lab. Previous experience by the project leader further suggested that the distanced perspective provided by ethnographic documentation would be useful for reflecting on project participants' own perspectives (Becker 2000). *Artistic documentation* was conducted by the student or artist documenting his or her own work. This was an exclusively visual documentation, more process-oriented and focusing on stages the artist found significant. It included experiments with different representations of the work and was often used to alter or complement the work in progress. *Pedagogic documentation*, inspired by methods used in Reggio Emilia pre-schools and the research of Hillevi Lenz-Taguchi, was conducted by both students and teachers as a tool to reflect upon the process of learning (Barsotti 1997, Lenz-Taguchi 2000). The forms of documentation included notes, workbooks, photographs and transcripts of the reflective discussions. In practice, these three approaches to documentation often intersected, with implications for the evaluation of the project and its results.

The reflective discussion is a pedagogic tool designed to give students access to how their own learning changes and progresses. These discussions were carried out with the students at several key points in their work, with the goal of helping them gain distance on their work even when they were in the midst of the process. Initiated by Lind, the point of departure was to inquire into the student's present situation, what had happened since the last discussion, and what form this had taken in the student's workbook. The various forms of documentation were made available and were often integrated into the discussion. All the reflective discussions were taped and transcribed then distributed to all members of the project group, both students and faculty. The aim was to afford the student a cooperative "meaning making" and to make the stages in the learning process visible to both the student and the faculty.

Comparing experience from two projects. A condition of the council's funding was to compare and exchange experience from this project with a parallel project at the Art Lab at Valand in Gothenberg (006/FO1), led by Bengt-Olof Johansson. Their five practicing artists were being supported to develop post-masters level projects. The Art Lab artists met regularly to discuss their work, but worked largely independently of each other. Advisers from scientific fields relevant to the artists work were drawn in at a later stage, once the direction of the work had been established. Project leaders Becker and Johansson met on several occasions to discuss and compare the two projects. In December 2002, five members of the Konstfack project attended a seminar in Gothenberg where the Art lab artists presented their work, and presented in turn the three phases and preliminary results of the Konstfack project.

An open seminar. In order to meet the Council's requirement to hold an open seminar at the conclusion of the project, the Institute of Art Education organized its annual research and development conference in March 2003 around the theme "Behind the Surface: Four Days on Artistic Research and Esthetic Learning Processes" (Appendix B). The program of lectures, seminars and workshops included presentations of each phase of the project and a presentation of artists from the parallel project at Valand's Art Lab. An estimated 200 teachers, artists, critics, researchers and students attended the seminar, coming from many parts of Sweden, as well as 2130000eachers and students from Denmark and Finland.

Revisions in project implementation. The project was originally designed to be carried out over a two-year period, with a proposed budget of 1.150 million crowns. Three substantial changes were made in the project implementation, in order to accommodate the restrictions imposed by a one-year funding period and the requirement to arrange a public seminar at the conclusion of the project. First, the group project "The Design of Gender" to be led by art teacher and designer Britt-Marie K uhlhorn in collaboration with the Stockholm police force and the special forces unit of the national police, was excluded. Funding was obtained from another source for this fascinating design project aimed at identifying barriers in recruiting women to male-dominated occupations. Under K uhlhorn's

leadership, the project included Konstfack's departments of textiles and interior design. Two students from Group I also took part, with significant results for their examination work.

The second revision was that Ann-Cathrine Andersson, faculty member with primary responsibility for arranging the project's photographic documentation, left the project after its initial phase. Andersson nevertheless succeeded in setting up the forms for documentation and plans for a web site that could be used for the duration of the project.

Third, it was further necessary to forego a major part of the analysis of the documentation that had been carried out. In particular, the deeper analysis and additional implications of the project, for which the extensive transcriptions from the reflective discussions and project meetings provided a rich basis, was curtailed by the one-year limitation of project funding. An attempt to remedy this by applying for an additional period of funding was unsuccessful.

The budget revisions made it possible to finance the conference held at Konstfack in March 2003. Funds to support the project group's two-day seminar in Gothenberg in December 2002, with the aim of comparing experience with Valand's Art Lab, were provided by the Institute of Art Education at Konstfack.

A final, less major revision involved the structure of the Group II project and workshop. Instead of a series of lectures by external resource persons, the two artists Ellberg and Kaijfe were engaged in different capacities throughout this phase of the project. This provided greater continuity and required no revision of the project budget.

Results

The extensive documentation was one of the primary differences between the Konstfack project and its Art Lab counterpart. The variety of forms of documentation, ranging from the students' workbooks to transcriptions of reflective discussions and minutes from the group project meetings, together with the systematic methods of gathering this material provided a rich bank of knowledge and experience. Issues related to documentation were also a recurring topic within the project group meetings, and distinctions between the three approaches to documentation – ethnographic, artistic and pedagogic – were hotly debated. It became evident that one could not determine by examining the documents themselves which of the three approaches had generated them. It was rather how a particular document was used that established the approach. Thus, for example, the video that had been taken to establish a time-line for the development of the Group II “dinner” project (ethnographic documentation), became the basis of an artwork exhibited during the conference (artistic documentation). In another example, the ethnographic photographs documenting the workshops during Phase 1 were later used in the reflective discussions, as pedagogic documentation. The three approaches, rather than generating distinctly different documents, became significant as distinct heuristic perspectives. Ethnographic, artistic and pedagogic perspectives each provided a specific framework or point of view for considering the project's implications and results. This allowed us to shift between them, depending on the context and questions we were using the material to address.

The reflective discussions, drawing upon and referring to the projects' various forms of documentation, were found to be a significant pedagogic tool, and provided the thread that tied together not only the project itself, but also the various aspects of the masters' program. The masters students' reflections and documentation were central to the project and its results. They participated in the reflective discussions, read and commented on the transcriptions of these discussions. They documented their individual work process in their workbooks and made photographs for the web site, documented the group project and the process of preparing their examination exhibition, and participated in the planning and execution of the conference, “Behind the Surface”. We found that the students came to expect and look forward to the opportunity to discuss and reflect over their work, even after the work was completed. Through their active participation, the processes of esthetic learning were made visible and accessible both to themselves and to the faculty members of the project group.

In Phase 1, the transcriptions of the reflective discussions revealed a clear progression of esthetic learning. It began with 1) an inward exploration directed at the student's personal histories and experience, toward 2) a concern with how to give this experience a form, externalizing it, and 3) relating their experience and the formative processes to external models, directed at both the arts and

the sciences. The steps in this progression were mirrored in the advising sessions with the students' research advisers, where the starting point was also the student's workbook. The forms of documentation and the many relationships between them provided a means of identifying stages and progressions in the esthetic learning process.

A similar progression was observed when the students' experience was compared with the artist's as it emerged in Phase 2, but in a more compressed form. The first stage, an exploration of personal history, was more critical to the artist's prior work, and took far less time than the second stage, where the focus was on finding a form to express the experience. The second stage was also more closely interwoven with the artist's relation to external models and the questions being addressed in the broader fields of contemporary art and science. This progression, the time and energy devoted to its different stages, and which of them are most visible in the artist's work may provide a useful basis for developing assessment criteria in the arts.

In Phase 3 of the project, where the focus was on a group project, slightly different results were noted. Preliminary results from the "dinner" project indicate that students shifted the focus of their own learning away from the product of their work to the learning process. In the individual reflective discussions that were held at the conclusion of the group project, the individual's own learning process reemerged with greater clarity regarding alternative choices, steps that can be made and possible relationships between them.

Many artists resist engaging in this kind of open reflection, believing that it interrupts the creative process. Examples of this point of view were evident in the seminar hosted by the Art Lab in December 2002. Several of the artists working in that project argued that they considered an analytic, verbal examination of the artistic process disruptive to the flow of their work. The results of the Konstfack project support an opposing interpretation, that actively reflecting upon the esthetic learning process in words and images enabled students to actively engage in and influence the progression of their learning.

This in turn led to new breakthroughs in the work and a deeper understanding of its implications. Support for this result was also evident in the students' presentations of their work in other contexts. The first occasion was a seminar they held for other students and faculty, showing their final exhibition of their work (Appendix C). A second occasion was when two of the students, Ylva Trankell and Stina Myringer-Karlsson, presented their work at the conference "Behind the Surface". A third example was the students from Group II who participated in seminars during the conference, explained the esthetic learning processes that took place during their group workshop and how it related to their later work. In each case, the student could clearly verbalize the meaning of the work and how it had progressed. The seminar that was held in Phase 2 provided yet another example, where the two artists, Eneroth and Agborg, engaged in a dialogue about artistic research, relating it to the processes actualized in Agborg's installation, which she performed for the group.

Reflective discussions were thus found to be useful in several different ways. First it was as a *tool in learning*, giving both teachers and students a means of gaining insights into the process of esthetic learning. Second, it was as a *tool of investigation*, by generating material that can be used to compare different aspects of and relationships between learning environments and third, as a *tool of presentation*, providing material that can be used in the presentation and distribution of the projects' results.

Finally, it was significant that both groups of students, in contrast to earlier masters' groups, had far less difficulty relating their artistic work to the research they conducted for their theses. The dialogue and cross-fertilization between scientific and artistic inquiry was far more nuanced than had been the case for previous classes. This suggests that the forms of documentation and reflective discussions provided a way of relating knowledge gained from different ways of learning, for example through practice and through research. This has important implications for doctoral-level work based in both scientific research and artistic practice.

Evaluation of the project's effects

Comparisons between the approaches to esthetic learning used in the Art Lab and the Konstfack projects indicate that the uses of documentation and the regular reflective discussions that characterized the Konstfack project were central to the learning process. They enabled students and

advisers to visualize and verbalize stages in the process of the practical artistic work and what they were learning at each stage. These methods also helped both students and advisers discover and develop fruitful relationships between the scientific research and artistic practice the students were carrying out in the examination work. The differences noted between the Art Lab and Konstfack project participants may have been due to the levels of work; the Art Lab participants had all worked as professional artists since receiving their degrees from colleges of art several years earlier. Those who expressed reservations about the effects of reflective discussion and documentation on their work may consider these tools as infringing on the integrity and independence of their roll as established artists. On the other hand, Agborg, whose education and experience as a professional artist were similar to the Art Lab artists, made extensive use artistic documentation as a means of developing her work. She also engaged in discussion about her work with the project group, Eneroth in particular, and found these methods useful in finding new interpretations and further developing her art.

The experience, material and methods developed in the Konstfack project provide the starting point for refining and extending the knowledge into other learning environments. Faculty members from the project group encouraged students in their other classes to use workbooks and, relying on the form of reflective discussions, found that students in the undergraduate program also began to draw links between their thesis work and their art projects. This, in turn began to influence other teachers in the Institute of Art Education to use these techniques in their advising. The major art project which students carry out in the second year of the teacher education program has also adopted aspects of this development project. Experience from the project has also been put to use in the pedagogy course that the Institute of Art Education at Konstfack has arranged for Konstfack's faculty members, in accordance with the new requirement that all college teachers have formal training in pedagogy.

The Graduate Research School in Esthetic Learning Processes, a collaboration between the Stockholm Institute of Education and six art colleges in the Stockholm region, has also benefited from the Konstfack project. Several of the doctoral students in this Research School have found the methods developed in the project useful in their own research, a combination of artistic practice and scientific inquiry.

The response to the conference "Behind the Surface" was extremely positive, and has led to increased cooperation between the Stockholm Institute of Education, the teacher education program in Malmö and contacts with several teacher education programs in Denmark and Finland, with plans for exchange visits between institutions.

Two publishers have expressed interest in publishing a book reporting on the project, and there have already been many requests for the conference report being prepared by the Institute of Art Education.

A proposal has been developed for a doctoral program, a Graduate Research School in Visual Art and Culture, based on the experience of this project and resources provided by a planning grant from the Swedish Research Council division for research on learning ("Utbildningsvetenskap"). The Graduate Research School is planned as a collaboration between the College of Music at Gothenberg University, Tema Q (Cultural production and history) at Norrköping University and Konstfack. The eight doctoral students in the proposed program would combine work in the visual arts, cultural theory and research, and their dissertation would reflect an integration of these forms of inquiry. A decision on funding will be made in November 2003.

Contact with other institutions

The project was designed to draw on and enrich Konstfack's previous contacts with other institutions, through the involvement of faculty and staff from the Stockholm Institute of Education and Interactive institute. This cooperation continued in various forms beyond the conclusion of the project. The meetings and seminars held in cooperation with the Art Lab at Valand were mutually enriching and have led to increased contact, particularly with several of the artists in that project. As mentioned above, the response to the conference "Behind the Surface" led to renewed contacts with several teacher education programs in Sweden, Denmark and Finland, and in particular a closer cooperation with the program in pedagogic anthropology at the Denmark Pedagogical University (DPU) in Copenhagen.. The project has also led to exchange of experience with several undergraduate programs in Sweden which are developing programs that combine research and artistic practice,

notably KKK in Malmö and KSM in Norrköping. The project's effects within the network of the Research School in Esthetic Learning Processes has led to a closer cooperation between Konstfack and the other participating arts colleges, with plans for seminar series and a publication where the project results would be included.

An important effect of the project has also been the increased contact between the Institute of Art Education and the other Konstfack institutions. This has been evident in the increased student participation across institutional boundaries during the project. For example in the pedagogy course for Konstfack's faculty, and also in the formulation of Konstfack's research strategies for 2004-2008. Experience from this project has provided an important base for discussions of starting a graduate program in the arts for the college as a whole. Finally, as mentioned above, the proposal to launch a Research school in Visual art and culture is designed as a mutual effort, drawing on the combined resources of the University of Gothenberg, Tema Q at Norrköping university and Konstfack.

Public presentations of the project

As mentioned above, Konstfack's Institute of Art Education organized its annual research and development conference in March 2003. It was an open seminar around the theme "Behind the Surface: Four days on artistic research and esthetic learning processes", with 200 participants including teachers, artists, critics, researchers and students from Sweden and Denmark. A report from the conference is planned, to be published in December 2003.

A series of papers from the project was presented at the 31st Nordic Educational Research Association (NFPF) Congress held at the Denmark Pedagogic University, March 6-9, 2003. These included a keynote address by Karin Becker, "Behind the Surface: Researching Art as it Happens", and papers by Hillevi Lenz-Taguchi, "Aesthetic Learning Strategies and the Tool of Pedagogical Documentation in Education", and Ulla Lind, "Postmodern Reconceptualizing of Aesthetics for Education". Becker's paper was further presented and discussed at a three-day seminar of the Research School in Esthetic Learning Processes in Mariefred in April 2003. The project will also form the basis of Becker's presentation December 4 in the seminar series "I tolkningens tid" [In the Time of Interpretation] at the Historical Museum in Stockholm.

Results of the project will be presented at several national and international conferences in the coming year. These include the College Art Association in Seattle, USA in February 2004, the Nordic Educational Research Association's 32nd annual congress in Reykjavik in March 2004 and the conference of the International Society for Education through Art (INSEA) in Turkey July 2004.

Publications

A conference report, "*Bakom ytan: konstnärlig forskning och estetiska läroprocesser* [Behind the Surface: Artistic Research and Esthetic Learning Processes], will be published by the Institute of Art Education at Konstfack in January 2004. Two publishers have expressed interest in a textbook reporting on the project, but this not possible at the present time, due to lack of funding. Additional publications are planned, based on the above conference papers and public presentations. The following article is currently in press:

Becker, Karin (2004) "Perspectives for the Study of Visual Culture", *Nordisk pedagogik nr 2*.

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Summary of students participation in Projekt 021/F01 - "Visual Culture and Esthetic Learning Strategies"

Planning

In planning the project, student perspectives were gathered from previous evaluations of the masters program including the examinations with verbal oppositions of each other's work. From these evaluations, it became clear that the students as well as the teachers lack language and methods to use for the aesthetic learning strategies which in turn hinders possible connections between the research-based and the artistic-based thesis in the student projects. This lack of competence further was expressed in the students' uncertainty of how to evaluate this masters program compared with other programs.

All in all seven students participated during spring 2002 (Group I) and seven students during fall 2002 (Group II). The two student groups included all that were enrolled in the masters' course, plus, in Group II one student from the ceramics and glass department at Konstfack.

The project steps

PHASE 1. The students who had entered the masters program in Fall 2001 were brought into the project in three different modes. A) organized workshops, led by an artist teacher and advisor focusing on their examination projects. B) Workbooks for students and advisors as a tool for visual, verbal and written documentation during the entire process. C) Reflective discussions held regularly with the group of students, and led by a researcher and advisor. These discussions, which were recorded and transcribed, invited the students to reflect over the progress of their work and created a collective learning environment; to learn from each others projects and processes. The students workbooks served the entire process with transgressive data.

PHASE 2. Individual artist's work, Spring 2002

All students were active in the project seminars and presentations as equal participants with the same status as project staff, teachers, artists and advisors.

PHASE 3. Group II, Fall 2002, Group project

As an additional artistic course the students as a group were afforded a weeklong workshop led by artist teachers. The students who had entered the masters' program in the fall used workbooks for process documentations during their entire master studies, as a result from the experiences of first student project group. As a result of this workshop the students were able to experience the shifting of the focus of their own learning away from the product of their work and to the learning process. The students and teachers documented the workshop and a research advisor also held a deep reflective discussion with each student following the conclusion of the project. The students were asked to consider all that seemed relevant to the learning process including the pedagogical consequences, comparing and connecting the ordinary masters courses, the projects' "dinner workshop" and the research-based as well as artistic-based thesis in their project.

Results

The masters students' reflections and documentation were central to the project and its results. They participated in the reflective discussions, read and commented on the transcriptions of these discussions. They performed co-constructive knowledge, learning from each other's individual projects as well as the artist teacher's projects and workshops. They made these processes visible through visual, verbal and written documentations. They transformed their knowledge through the process of preparing their examination exhibition, and participated in the planning and execution of the conference, "Behind the Surface". The Council for the Renewal of Higher Education also recruited one student to present her project for new found receivers. Through the students' active participation, the processes of esthetic learning were made visible and accessible through an elaborated discourse, both to themselves and to the faculty members of the project group. As a result of the acquired discourse competencies, students were capable of communicating the embedded complexity of their experiences during the project. This informed the project with unique knowledge not only for the quality of the masters program, but also for reconstructions of the model for student's examinations at the undergraduate level and further plans for doctoral-level work based in both scientific research and artistic practice.