

# Anecdotes in the book.

These are anecdotes preceding many but not all sections. They serve as **appetizers**.

This is a preprint of the following work: Hans Abbing, *The Economies of Serious and Popular Art, How they diverged and Reunited*, 2022, PalgraveMacmillan reproduced with permission of PalgraveMacmillan. The final authenticated version is available online at: [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-18648-6\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-18648-6_1)

## *A Period of Serious Art. An Art Ethos*

*Anna is a visual artist. She is over 70. When Anna was young she often went to the circus with her family and friends. On one occasion, after a woman had performed some amazing acrobatics high up in the tent, there was loud applause and she heard somebody next to her exclaim: "She is a true artist". Later her parents told her: "She is good in her role, but she is, of course, not an artist".*

## *Useful Art*

*Anna's niece Karin recently graduated from art school and found a job as artist in a company that develops games. Anna thought this was great. She asked her if the school had taught her skills useful for collaborating with non-artists. Karin told her that this had not been the case. She had asked a teacher why not, and the teacher explained that art has absolute value and that in the collaborative case, the use of art is instrumental and thus a threat to artistic freedom. Anna wondered what the teacher meant with "absolute value" and wondered how much freedom independent artists can have when they are having a hard time making a living.<sup>6</sup>*

## *Artworlds*

*Not long after graduating from art school, Anna showed her portfolio to a well-established and successful dealer in Amsterdam who specialises in "con- temporary" visual art, hoping that he might be interested in representing her. He wasn't. Later she learned from a colleague who was represented by this dealer that he considered her figurative work outdated. For Anna, this dealer represented "the artworld". She had already earlier noted in conversations with other visual artists, that they often used the term "the artworld" in a pejorative way. And she followed suit. But then she received funding and suddenly she stopped blaming "the artworld" – at least for a while anyway.*

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## *Serious and Popular Art. Art Buildings*

*Anna's son, Martin, is a DJ-producer who is 50 years old. Anna has noticed that he has never perceived himself as an artist. She once asked him why. "I make popular music but I'm not an artist. It would be presumptuous to call myself artist". Meanwhile Anna's granddaughter is also a DJ-producer. When asked her the same question, she said: "Of course I'm an artist! But I don't know whether electronic is considered art? Classical music is art".*

*Anna's father was a reverend who loved both classical music and gospel music. He occasionally took Anna and the other kids to concerts in the city. In 1956, he took Anna to a park where, even though it was drizzling, a large, enthusiastic crowd had gathered to listen to an American gospel choir. Anna asked her father why gospel couldn't be heard in the concert hall. Her father came up with a long and complicated answer, but it came down to this: "Gospel does not belong in a concert hall". (Later Anna learned that already in the early 1960s, Mahalia Jackson and Aretha Franklin performed in major music halls in the USA. Europe followed.)*

## *Art Used to Be Entertaining, Frivolous and Contemporary*

Anna went to a primary school in which – as was common in the 1950s – the children once a week had music class during which they learned to play the soprano recorder. It just so happened that the melody they were taught was from Händel's "Wassermusik". Whenever the teacher left the room, two boys would stop playing and start to dance on the minuet in the way they believed it was done in Händel's time, but in an exaggerated way. When the teacher returned and witnessed this "performance", he got angry. "This is serious music", he declared. "But they used to dance to this music; it is a minuet", a know-it-all boy responded. The teacher was taken aback: "Not like this". Anna later learned that it was only in the nineteenth century that Händel's music became serious and people stopped dancing to his minuets.

### **Classification, Isolation and Etiquette**

On another occasion when Anna was still learning to play the recorder in class, some kids in the back of the room started swinging their bodies along to a Telemann Sonata that the class was playing. They were clearly enjoying themselves. The teacher angrily terminated the class. He claimed that classical music was serious and neither entertainment nor popular music. He much emphasised the difference.

### **Art-Classics and an Art-Heritage**

Anna seldom watches football matches on TV. But in 2016, she watched a few matches of the UEFA Europa Cup with some friends. What she noticed was that each match started with the performance of "Ode to Joy" from Beethoven's 9th symphony. This surprised her. Someone told her that it is the European Union's anthem. Anna had not expected this, but she realised that famous music from the past could potentially unite people and nations.

### **Celebrations and Magnificent Art Buildings**

In 2004, Anna went to Graz in Austria. She was struck by an art building, the Kunsthaus Graz, a modern art museum. The museum was large and the architecture altogether futuristic and eye-catching. Anna thought: What's going on in the world of art that even relatively small cities have these extravagant art buildings. Later, she learned that the building had been built as part of the European Capital of Culture celebrations in 2003. She realised that Graz was not a minor city, but a "capital" and, given its art and culture, an important "capital".

### **Much Respect for Art and Artists**

In her interactions with working-class people, Anna noticed that there is broad respect for art in society. She has since the age of 12 regularly lived among farmworkers and worked along with them in the Netherlands, England and Brazil. She was struck again and again by the farmworkers' admiration for both art and artists. This admiration only continued to grow as she herself became an artist. Just identifying herself as an artist, accorded her a level of attention and respect that no teacher or dentist would ever receive. It also happened more than once that Anna upon entering an upper-middle-class circle, was introduced by the host as an artist, while the host introduced others by name only.

Anna remembers that the 1970s politician and Dutch economist, Willem Drees jr, was the leader of a centre-left political party. He was someone she liked because pursuing decreased government spending he refused to make an exception for the arts. He argued in Parliament that it was the well- to-do who profited most from the funding of the arts. The artworld elite immediately described him as some kind of cultural philistine because they believed art should be an exception. As an art lover, he never fully recovered from the insults. Anna felt sorry for him.

### **Respectful Behaviour in Art Buildings**

At a young age Anna's parents began to regularly take her to concerts in a beautiful concert hall in the middle of the city. She had to wear her Sunday best and was told to behave. She was quite nervous that first time, but once inside the hall, together with her parents, she was able to enjoy the concert. The audience was uniquely quite here, unlike any other place. During the intermission, people spoke in subdued tones. Anna was impressed, she realised that a classical music concert was very special – and serious. At the time she

liked it.

Almost 50 years, while working in her studio, Anna was listening to a classical music radio station and other stations that played popular music. She noticed that the classical music radio-station announcers spoke in a low, restrained, somewhat solemn voice that expressed their respect for the music. Meanwhile, the popular music stations featured announcers with normal or even excited voices. Although, recently she has begun to notice that the tone of the classical music presenters had become less subdued and less respectful.

### **Gatekeeping by Artworlds**

Anna graduated from a visual arts academy. Prior to graduation, a few students were informally selected by teachers because of the quality of their work. They were introduced to dealers and the staffs of modern art museums. But Anna was not one of the chosen and that was disappointing. She was obviously not cut out to be a recognised artist. Later she applied for a government grant as every serious artist in the Netherlands does, and to her amazement she got one. She was relieved. Finally, she was going to be a recognised artist and become a member of the family of recognised artists. The grant, in fact, allowed her to find a well-recognised dealer and this was also reassuring. Two years later she applied for another grant and was again successful, but then the third time two years later her application was rejected as they were the next two times as well and so she stopped applying. The rejections were just too painful. Her dealer eventually lost interest in her and her work. Anna still considered herself an artist. But it was hard no longer actually belonging to the artworld. It also became more difficult for her to make a living from her art. She only realised much later that the rejections were not really her "fault". It was simply that the tastes of the grant committees and those of her dealer had changed – they were now interested in conceptual art.

### **Financial Support by Governments and Donors**

Anna produces and sells her own drawings and photographs. The value-added tax on artworks in the Netherlands and many other countries is lower than on other products. This means that art is indirectly being subsidised. Or at least that's what Anna thought. She sold her photographs in editions of ten. A taxman paid her a visit one time and she had to show her bookkeeping. He noticed that buyers were paying the lower VAT rate. He pointed out that only if the series was not more than seven copies it was considered art. So she would have to repay the tax. Anna was dumbfounded.

### **The Evolving Justifications of Public Support. "Quality Comes First.**

Anna occasionally goes to the opera with her friend Emma. She's happy that her friend buys the tickets because they are expensive. They knew that, despite the high ticket prices, opera is heavily subsidised. Emma once said: "The high level of funding is justified because otherwise poor people could not afford to go to the opera". Anna could not stop from laughing out loud – which is, of course, unacceptable behaviour in the foyer of an opera house. She said how many poor people do you see among the crowd? Nobody. So, why do we not pay more? You certainly could afford to pay more" Emma: "We pay much higher taxes".

### **Innovation and Restricted Production in the Popular and Serious Arts.**

Ever since she was 15, Anna has been a fan of popular music. She continues to listen to new pop styles and related indie genres. She would listen to the radio, and in 1964 she bought her first single: "Pretty Woman" by Roy Orbison. She continued to listen to pop including artists like Bob Marley, Luke Slater and Drake. She has since the 1960s always been struck by the many exciting innovations in styles, lyrics and videos. Having been raised on classical music, she also listens to new mainstream and contemporary classical music. She noticed some innovations in new classical, but didn't find the music very exciting except in the case of minimalism.

### **Art Setting. Art Experience. Self-Constructed Artworks**

When she was eighteen, Anna saw Turner's well-known painting *Rain, Steam and Speed in the National Gallery in London*, in which a train comes out of a chaotic muddle of clouds and mist. The painting

had a great effect on her. She gradually realised why. She identified with the train. She was the train, that very powerful machine. She had come from a disturbing past, but was now moving forward with great energy, although, she was moving on a track that she had no influence over. Anna found herself immersed in an internal conversation. Later she told her friend Peter about her experience. He had also seen the painting but had come up with a very different story. The two of them wondered what Turner's story was regarding the train.

On another occasion, Anna was gazing at a large reproduction of Willem de Kooning's *Woman III* painting. She saw her mother in the painting which, given the violent nature of the painting, disturbed her very much.

### **An Ideal of Personal Authenticity. Deep Art Experiences**

When Anna told her father that she wanted to become an artist, he was not pleased because he associated art with laziness and carelessness. But Anna became an artist. It was only much later that, to her amazement, Anna figured out that her father was actually jealous that she became an artist. It reminded Anna of Thomas Mann's novel *Buddenbrooks* in which he describes the ups and downs of *Buddenbrooks* merchant family in the nineteenth century. The first-generation *Buddenbrooks* is seemingly uninterested in art. While the son is fairly interested in art. He marries a woman who is dedicated to art, but continues to have his suspicions of art. And indeed, much to his regret, the third-generation son is no longer interested in business. He is artistic and weak and his father shows his contempt for his artistic son. But secretly he admires him. (Near the end of the novel, the son, not yet a full adult, dies of typhus. Mann suggests that he would have eventually become an artist had he lived.)

### **The Artist-in-the-Work**

When Anna was still young, her father bought a record player and some Mozart and Beethoven LPs. As she listened, she saw their images before her eyes; they were definitely "in the music" she was listening to. Her father eventually bought small busts of the two composers, which he placed on the piano in the living room. But Anna was not pleased because she thought their expressions were all wrong. They looked far too serious. Mozart's music sounded light and lively. Later her father purchased Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony*. While listening to it, Anna realised that she had been wrong in Beethoven's case. Indeed, a very serious Beethoven emerged, not unlike what the bust revealed.

### **No Distractions. Much Self-Control**

For a while in the 1980s, Anna drew the faces of musicians in classical music ensembles while they performed, moving her pencil across the paper in rhythm to the music. On two occasions people sitting several rows behind her asked her during the intermission to stop: because the sound of the pencil moving over the paper disturbed them. But when she asked her friend, seated next to her, whether she heard it, she hadn't. This puzzled her. It is only later that she realised that it wasn't the noise but the movement of her body that had disturbed the two concertgoers, which means that they were "hearing" sounds that weren't actually there. She then began to wonder why such insignificant movements were so distracting. Maybe it was not just the movement that disturbed them but the fact that she had not properly restrained herself as is protocol in these classical music type situations?

### **Informalisation**

When Anna was still young, her parents would constantly insist that she sit up in her chair during meals. And her primary school teacher would command her and her classmates to sit with their arms crossed to keep them still. A few years later, in 1956, when Anna was twelve, she got a glimpse of another, less formal world, which made her happy. One day on her way to her weekly alto recorder lesson, she was cycling past a large hall when she suddenly heard much noise coming from the hall.<sup>18</sup> This was unusual. The next day in the newspaper she read that Lionel Hampton had performed there that evening and that young students and jazz fans had gone crazy listening to Hampton. They stood up on their chairs. The newspaper was appalled declaring: "This has nothing to do with jazz".<sup>19</sup> But Anna was quite pleased.

### **Identity Creation by a Choice of Artworks**

Anna really liked the Beatles and when she heard Joe Cocker's cover version of their "With a Little Help from My Friends", she liked it better than the original sung by Ringo Starr, which amazed her.<sup>24</sup> She told friend Amy but she didn't like either, preferring the Tina Turner version. It is while they listened to and compared the three versions that they discovered more about themselves and each other. They also discovered that the line "with a little help from my friends" meant different things to them. But the fact that they loved the same song was also significant because it strengthened their friendship.

### **A Cost Disease. Subsidised Authenticity**

Anna was unhappy when there were no more big band performances in Amsterdam. She used to go to these concerts and she enjoyed them. Since then she started going to small jazz ensemble concerts, which one could see more often. She realised that this disappearance of big bands in The Netherlands was no accident. Having been the manager and technician for a student pop band, she knew that performances by big bands with from 12 to 25 musicians on stage were just too costly. But she wondered why big band performances were not too costly back then. And also: how come that the much larger classical symphony orchestras still existed.

### **Lowering Cost and Innovation**

In circa 1960, Anna's grammar school class, together with classes from other schools would twice annually attend a theatrical performance in the afternoon, while the evening performances were reserved for the adult regulars. Anna remembers that before the start of the performance, some official would get on stage and urge the school kids to keep quiet during the performance. They seldom succeeded for very long. Whenever an actor pretended to be whispering while almost shouting out loud, many of the school kids could no longer contain themselves, they started to audibly make jokes about it. Anna among them.

### **An Experience of Singularity and Aura**

Anna read James Joyce's *Ulysses*, and, unlike most of her friends, she liked the book. She even started to research Joyce's life and the history of the book. Whenever she holds this heavy tome, she is very aware of its uniqueness. She learned that, at the time, the use of interior monologues was very rare in literature. She also learned, that Carl Jung wrote a rather negative review of the book and that Joyce had made the remark "Hang it low", meaning that one can read Jung's unfair review and realise how important his book was. This and other information about the book just added to her enjoyment. The book seemed to have aura. Being aware of the fact that since publication hundreds of thousands of copies of the book had been printed and sold did not diminish her experience of the book; in fact, it was quite the contrary.

### **Correct Attribution and Financial Value**

When she was sixteen, Anna bought the drawing of a hand she had found among a pile of artworks in a charity shop. She was almost certain it was a Van Gogh drawing and she fantasised being the centre of the ensuing publicity. She also contemplated selling or not selling the drawing. She liked it and, being a young and stubborn girl, she was sure not selling it would only add to its and her prestige. But when she showed it to her uncle John, who was an artist, he began to laugh. "This is not a Van Gogh. Forget about it. But, it is a pretty good copy of a Van Gogh. Just hang it on your wall". The drawing is still there hanging on her wall.

### **Attractive Sole Authorship. Little Collaboration**

In the 1970s, Anna had a friend, Peter, who was a cameraman. For several years, he worked for a well-known visual artist, who mainly made films and video art. During this period, Anna's friend began to feel increasingly frustrated, because he never received credits or public thanks, while many vital ideas for the films and videos had come from him. She felt sorry for him. His contributions had certainly been creative and invaluable. This was quite obvious, because, like Anna, critics also began to notice that after Peter's departure, this filmmaker's work changed.

### **Passive Audiences. Refraction and Co-creation**

*Anna often prefers listening to classical music at home. She's not a fan of the passive audiences, whose behaviour she considers unnatural and unpleasant. She also listens to various kinds of pop music at home but also goes to live pop concerts. She prefers smaller venues featuring a musician who she knows will communicate intimately with the audience. And she loves dance music events with larger audiences. It is the live interaction between DJ, his music and the audience that she finds exciting and attractive. But she thinks listening to dance music at home is a disappointing experience.*

### **Declaring to Be Artist. Between Professional and Amateur. Many Self-Taught Professional Artists**

*Anna was already making nice drawings at age 6 in primary school; nicer than those of the other kids. Her classmates and her teacher started to refer to her as "the artist". In secondary school, her art teacher regularly praised her work. At that time her parents and siblings started calling her "artist". This was after an uncle, a gifted amateur artist himself, told everyone: "She's a true artist". So, among friends and acquaintances, she began to refer to herself as an artist. She already felt like she was a member of the group of real artists. A feeling that was confirmed when she was admitted to art school.*

### **Decreasing Incomes. Increasing Numbers**

*In the 1980s, Anna was on the dole for seven years. She had no second job and she could not really make a living from her art. At the time welfare benefits for artists did not require applying for non-art jobs and thus she could continue to make art full time, and this made her happy. Moreover, within limits, the little money she did earn from her art was not deducted from her benefits. Because there were so many artists who could not make a living from their art, and because art was considered important, the government had decided to make an exception for artists and thus was indirectly subsidising art. Of course, Anna cheated a little bit in her bookkeeping (like most of her fellow artists) to avoid losing her benefits.*

### **Second Jobs. An Art-Work Preference**

*As a visual artist, Anna often works with models, some of whom are dancers. On one occasion she hired a dancer named Philip. After mentioning the amount she paid for modelling, he started to negotiate the rate. This was unexpected. He appeared to be greedy. She, nevertheless, decided to pay him a bit more. Six months later he asked for a raise, and because Philip was a good model and Anna wanted to continue to work with him, she started paying him what he asked for. But then something unexpected happened: Philip began to regularly cancel their appointments. Anna became annoyed and asked him for an explanation. He hesitated and then explained that since Anna started paying him more, he could earn just as much as before by working fewer hours, which gave him more time for rehearsals and performances with other dancers – unpaid performances at that. For him, art came first.*

### **Experience of Failure and Distress**

*Anna's colleague, Peter, was a somewhat successful artist for a while. He had exhibitions, sold his work, his work was praised, be it mainly within a circle of colleagues, friends and a few buyers. So Anna was amazed when he told her he didn't think his work mattered much anymore. He felt unrecognised as artist and that he had little voice. He envied his friends who got a pay check every month. The next time they met he told Anna that he'd given up on art. He was no longer an artist. This was sudden, but Anna was not amazed. His wife had always complained about not being able to go on holiday, buy new furniture and so forth. The last years her complaints had increased. So he found a full-time job in a nursery. He said that secretly he had always felt miserable as an artist. However, quitting only made things worse because now everybody saw him as a failed artist.*

### **Underrepresentation of Underprivileged Groups Among Consumers**

When in 2005 Anna attended a performance of the Peter Brook play *Tierno Bokar* at the prestigious Holland Festival she saw only one non-white person among the circa 1000 audience members, a Surinamese woman accompanied by a white man. Anna considered this quite shocking. She found it extra embarrassing because up on stage there were 30 black actors and only one white actor. She pointed out this absence of people of colour to her friends who were there with her. They said she was probably right, but admitted that they hadn't noticed. (The latter is an example of so-called "colour-blindness".)

### **Learning and Understanding Art Is a Social Affair**

Eight years ago, a friend of Anna's took her to a classical music rave in Amsterdam. There a DJ cleverly mixed various fragments of classical music. The pieces were well-known like Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* and Ravel's *Bolero*, some Mahler and other, more obscure samples. Everybody was dancing and most of them quite expressively. Anna too; she had a good time. She got "into the music" and noticed details of the classical pieces she had never noticed before.

### **Price Exclusion**

In 1964, Anna went to see a play in London's New Theatre with her friend Toni. They had third balcony seats. That's all they could afford. She was shocked when after showing their tickets at the main entrance, the doorman indignantly pointed them to a small entrance hidden in a narrow backstreet with a stairwell leading straight to the third balcony. She was also shocked that during the break when she wanted to see her friends who had better, more expensive tickets on the second balcony, she discovered that there was no direct public stairs connecting the two balconies. It seems like they weren't allowed to mingle with people from the lower balconies.

### **Informal Exclusion in Art Buildings**

During several holiday periods in the 1960s, Anna picked fruit as part of a small "gang" who worked the fields of Evesham, England. Mick, the farmer, invited Anna to stay with him and his wife. They became friends. Mick and his wife, Myrna, were lower middle class. Unlike most middle class people they listened to both classical music records and often watched ballet on television in the evenings. Anna, who at the time, loved classical music and ballet, proposed that they actually go to a real ballet performance. They were hesitant but, nevertheless, the next summer they travelled together to Birmingham to attend a performance of Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* by The Royal Ballet. Mick had rented a proper suit and Anna and Juliette wore nice dresses. Nevertheless, once inside, they were "found out" by the regulars who stared at them, not in an unfriendly way, but nevertheless it caused discomfort and embarrassment. Afterward they told Anna that they enjoyed the performance but would not go again. In a local pub, they told their friends about their excursion. There they had a second unpleasant experience when they overheard friends saying that they were getting above their station.

As Anna remembers, once in 1980 she went to a classical music concert, and during the break she noticed a couple in the foyer that was drawing quite some attention. They looked like *nouveau riche* types in that they were overdressed, their behaviour was over the top, overly civilised and too polite. They were also seen as people who did not belong. Anna noticed that those who spoke with them were also overly polite. "Oh, it is so nice to see you're here". This kind of comment can be humiliating. Anna, also overheard a conversation, which was clearly intended to be overheard, in which a woman with a disdainful tone said to her companion: "Look at that woman with the gold necklace. Why don't they just go somewhere else".

### **Socialisation. Wrongly-Resourced and Unwanted. Differently Resourced**

When Anna was a student at the Gerrit Rietveld Academy, she served, for a while, as the student representative on a committee that decided on which students to accept to the academy. One time one of the applicants clearly came from a lower-class background. His work was kitschy but, Anna thought, he could easily develop in a direction that would be more interesting and acceptable in the school. Another applicant was an immigrant from an Arabic country and everybody agreed that his work was pretty good. Both were rejected however. The school simply thought they would not fit in. Anna was furious. It was only much later that she realised that the other committee members were right because they would have felt

*uncomfortable in the school's environment, would grow disappointed and would have most likely quit, disillusioned.*

## **Own Meaningful Art of Social Groups**

*In 1992 Anna went to a pop concert in Amsterdam with a young American friend. In the opening act was a group of three young, black American rappers. Their rapping was lively and aggressive. The audience was mostly young and white and as is the custom at these concerts, people began to lift their outstretched arm over their heads to show their enthusiasm. Anna asked her friend whether black audiences in the US would react this way. He said that audience reactions in the US were more varied and as they listen to the political lyrics, they would respond with a mix of camaraderie and anger. Anna thought: Yes, that is because this is their art.*

*One time Anna's well-to-do friend Emma took her to see the opera Madama Butterfly. Emma gladly paid for the tickets. Anna noted: "I do not see lower class people. This must be because the ticket prices are too high. It is not fair." Emma responded: "How many would actually show up, if it was cheaper? Probably not too many." Anna reluctantly agreed. "Yes, this art is the art of the elite; it is their art. It is our art. Madama Butterfly is apparently meaningful for the elite, otherwise it would not be this popular. But did you notice that this opera represents a number of prejudices and offensive beliefs? I hope they'll get around re-composing it along with a couple of other popular operas, or otherwise just delete them from the repertoire."*

## **Looking Down on "Others" and Their Art**

*When in the 1970s collector De Bruin was a regular visitor to Anna's studio, he incessantly praised her art and art in general, but also complained about the low quality of visual art one finds in most people's homes. "So vulgar. These people cannot be art lovers." But he complained most vociferously about the pop music young people were listening to. "They just have no taste. They weren't raised properly."*

## **Disdain for and Fear of Low-Cost Reproductions and Recordings**

*When Anna was 15 she received a simple record player as a gift. She bought her first classical music LP, Beethoven's Pastoral, with pocket money she had saved up. Her father remarked that the record was a poor substitute for a live concert. But eventually, her father began purchasing many classical music LPs and he would spend hours listening to his LPs. Later, when Anna was a student, she had a good-quality, large reproduction of Picasso's Blue Nude on her wall. Her parents expressed their disapproval of this reproduction. They thought she should have originals on her wall or nothing at all. But five years later, when she came home she noticed at least 15 postcard reproductions of famous artworks on her parents' bathroom walls – small and only in the bathroom but still a significant change.*

## **An Unwillingness to Lower Costs**

*Of all the opera performances Anna has seen, there are two that touched her most. Both were student performances with a very sober and inexpensive set. This was not the case for the opera that her friend Emma took her to in 2018 when they were in London. The Royal Opera performed Das Rheingold, the first section of the Wagner Ring Cycle. The performance left her cold, unlike the two amateur ones. Anna was unenthusiastic but the critics were not – they loved it. One critic wrote that an outstanding quality of this and the other three performances had been the numerous props. He mentioned a full-sized, crashed fighter plane, an eight-metre-long sofa, some golden apples, a skinned toad and a plethora of wigs and prosthetics including one that dramatically enlarged the head of opera singer, Brindley Sherratt. The review also mentioned the 31 principal singers, a chorus of 77, 22 actors, 42 children (with chaperones), and 3 actors to operate a dragon. Her well-to-do friend Emma had paid for the tickets: only £150 each. Anna thought that this performance was cheap, both literally and figuratively.*

## **Membership in Exclusive Circles. Investment. Speculation.**

As noted earlier, Anna bought her first LP, Beethoven's Pastoral, when she was just 15, using pocket money she had saved up. She loved the music, but what was just as important was that she felt she belonged to the family of art and classical music lovers. She took the record to school, hoping to impress her class mates. It most impressed Esther and Thomas who also owned records. The three of them were now member of a group of three, three classical music lovers. They were better people than the rest.

### **Power. Distinction. Exclusivity**

In 1965 Anna watched the movie *My Fair Lady* with some friends. They liked the movie; they thought it was very funny. Later they realised what made the movie so funny was that poor Cockney flower-seller Eliza Doolittle managed to reverse the typical roles in her relationship with the distinguished and arrogant phonetics professor Henry Higgins. Miss Doolittle should have been looking up to Higgins and not the other way round.<sup>47</sup>

### **Hostile Spheres**

A friend of Anna's at a party once noted that Woody Allen said: "People think I'm an artist because my films lose money".<sup>3</sup> They had a good laugh. But in the days that followed this statement continued to bother her. Anna knew that Allen had produced a good number of flops before he made many successful movies. Does the fact of "not making money" somehow improve an artist's work? Does a true artist never care about money? At the time, Anna was concerned about making money and made a serious effort to try to market her work. Did this desire to sell her work go at the cost of the quality of her work? Was she no longer a true artist? Does money corrupt art? Her response was to take the easy way out: sometimes it does and sometimes it doesn't.

### **"Art Is Precious". "Price Must Not Stand for Quality"**

Some of the drawings that Anna creates, she prefers not to sell. They are personally important to her. But the rest she's eager to sell. She hates it when "her children" are neglected in her drawers. She wants them to be hanging on the walls of people's homes. She also likes to know who is buying her work. Are they good people? Will they take care of her "children"? She gets to know some of the buyers when she sells them out of her studio or when her dealer introduces them. She once went to a collector's house. He had purchased some of her work and she noticed that he kept her work in a portfolio in a large cupboard. This did not please her. "This is no way to treat my children", she thought.

Anna once had a small solo exhibition of her drawings. In the first hour of the opening, her dealer sold all but one of her drawings. The last one was sold just before the end of the opening. The buyers of her drawings clearly perceived them as one-of-a-kind. For artistic and personal reasons they were mostly interested in only one specific drawing. If the one they liked was already sold, they did not venture to buy another. Anna was happy that "her children" had found such enthusiastic "parents". The last drawing, however, was purchased by a couple who arrived late. They had approached the dealer with a desire to buy the drawing and Anna overheard their conversation. They had no idea that she was the artist. "It is a nude woman. This is what we have wanted for some time now. ... Her works are kind of expensive and they sell well. And so her works must be good ... We might just as well buy this drawing...." Anna was not pleased by the conversation. She had hoped for a better home for her drawing. She in fact wouldn't mind if the dealer didn't sell the drawing to them.

When Anna turned 60 she was no longer selling much work anymore. She therefore told her dealer to lower the prices, assuming that this would increase sales and income for her. But her dealer refused. He told her that the returns would be less. Reducing the price would give a signal to potential buyers that the quality of Anna's work had declined and, as a result, she would sell less work. He also pointed out that he sometimes raised the prices of the work of starting young artists, with the consequence that he actually ended up selling more of their work than before.

### **A Culture of Generosity**

In the 1980s, Anna had a dealer who, although generally friendly and supportive, was always late in paying his artists. It once happened that the dealer owed Anna and her colleague and friend Eric an extraordinarily large sum of money. He obviously had cash flow issues but, he eventually did pay Anna, but

not Eric. At first Anna found this difficult to understand, but later she realised why. Eric had threatened to involve a collection agency which, given his dependent position on the agent, this would never go over well. But Anna, unlike Eric who had a lower-middle class background, had learned the “generosity game”. Anna dramatically appealed to the dealer’s sympathy by telling him she could no longer pay her studio rent and that her paint had gone bad in the winter cold, because she couldn’t afford to pay the gas bill. None of this was true, of course, and her dealer probably knew this. But what she did was give him a chance to play the role of a benevolent “Maecenas” who could now help this “poor, miserable” artist out. The dealer eventually paid her, pretending that it was not a payment but a gift, and Anna expressed her gratitude. Shortly thereafter, the dealer told Eric he could no longer represent him.

### **Covering Up of Commerce. Laundering of Blameworthy Activities**

When Anna welcomed the collector Mr. de Bruin into her studio, the conversation was almost exclusively about art, about the importance of art for people and about the high quality of Anna’s work. But during a short break, De Bruin asked Anna what the price of a drawing was and whether the price was negotiable. The atmosphere suddenly changed: the conversation became less personal and more down to earth. De Bruin described a comparable work he recently purchased that was cheaper than Anna’s work. So Anna offers him a rebate and De Bruin bought the drawing and there is a sudden return of the earlier pleasant atmosphere and the civilised conversation is resumed as if nothing ever happened in the mean time.

### **Introduction. The Autonomous Space of Artists and Arts Organisations**

In academia I “buy time and autonomy” for the writing of a book like this one. I can afford it by living humbly and while working at my well-paid one-day-per-week official Erasmus University job. Others may opt for similar strategies, but I am a bit extreme in that regard. I now wonder whether I learned this kind of frugal behaviour from being artist. Many artists live frugally while maintaining non-art-related jobs. This gives them the means and the freedom necessary to make the art they want to make.

### **Commercial Art for the Sake of Art. A Balancing Act**

After having graduated from art school, Anna met up regularly with Margaret and Peter, two ex-classmates, to discuss each other’s work. They distinguished three categories of work: their own or autonomous work, work done for the market and work for the government. In their own works they had pursued only their own artistic goals. In their market-oriented work, they had taken into account the preferences of groups of consumers. They had all found their own individual sub-markets to earn some market income. They also pursued government work – which they often called artworld work – keeping in mind the preferences of committee members who decided on grants in order to gain funding from local and national government agencies. They were aware of compromising and being commercial, but they could joke about it. In fact, Margaret rather enjoyed making artworld work, and Peter enjoyed making market-oriented work besides their own work. But whenever there were possible customers or committee members around they always insisted that all their work was their own work.

### **Artists Being Shamed for Being Commercial**

Anna remembers that not long after she graduated she met up with some young artists who regularly criticised and scolded a fellow ex-student, Adrian, who was quickly becoming a successful artist. They’d say things like: “Adrian is a sell-out”. “He’s always networking”. “He makes commercial art”. “He should be ashamed of himself”. That’s what they thought of him and his work. Only later – after she herself had become fairly successful – she realised that Adrian may have simply been good at “networking”, and that the criticism they had for his work was totally unjustified. Artistically, it was actually very good autonomous work that just happened to sell well. Maybe they were just jealous. Later on she met up with Adrian and he had been well aware of being criticised for being a sell-out who produced commercial work and this was a painful experience for him.

### **The Influence of the Market and Artworld Demands on Artists**

Anna has always made relatively large drawings of heads – 70 × 75 cm. She liked drawing with her

crayons using large gestures. When her dealer suggested that she should also make some smaller drawings because these would sell better she got upset. Nevertheless, she began producing smaller 40X45 cm drawings. At first, she felt bad about it. She had compromised.

But they indeed did sell better. Her income rose and, given that it was very low, she thanked her dealer for the helpful advice. Over time she realised that these small drawings were good, even better than the larger ones, and she forgot that she had ever thought that she had compromised by turning to a smaller format.

## **Reprehensible Cultural Entrepreneurship**

When Anna became a professional artist she told people she didn't have any business skills. Her friends told her, that, like many other artists, she was flirting with a lack of these skills. They were right. In fact, she was not at all bad at running her small art business. She noticed that most of her colleagues were also pretty good at it. They actually often helped one another with tax returns and grant applications. But later on when someone told her that she could do even better by taking a course in cultural entrepreneurship, she became indignant. "Come on, I'm not an entrepreneur".

## **A Research Sphere**

Anna recently revisited her old art academy. She noticed that much had changed since her graduation. The traditional classroom situation of 20 students sitting in a half circle learning to draw nature, and sculpt clay or wax no longer existed. Now students had studio spaces, which they might share with 3 other students that they divide up using flimsy partitions. She also noticed that most of the students had sofas in their studio spaces. She saw little activity. She saw one student sitting on a sofa intensely gazing at her current painting. When Anna returned an hour later, the student was still gazing at her painting, which had not changed in the least. Anna asked her what she had been doing all this time. She responded: "Oh, I've been thinking about what to do next". Anna thought this was ridiculous. But when she later saw the final painting in the examination show, Anna had to admit that so much thinking had resulted in a very good piece.

## **A Bohemian Sphere and Wageless Work**

Anna's nephew Alex is a talented guitarist. He is 24 and plays in three bands. He told Anna that he hangs out with a circle of colleagues who play in each other's bands. He described how they help each other and do not compete with one another. They borrow each other's equipment and help their buddies find gigs. They often discuss artistic ideas. He said: "It is as a brotherhood". Anna was struck by his descriptions of solidarity and cooperation. Anna asked him if he had gone to conservatory, and if he could make a living as a guitarist? He had applied but was rejected. "No big deal. Maybe it is good for a career as a studio performer, but not as somebody who composes his own music". "Unless you have made it you anyway never really make money in pop music. Most of us will never become successful. But... maybe I will be an exception. And now I also give guitar lessons and work as a bartender in a club. I have nothing to complain about". Anna wondered whether in ten years he will still have nothing to complain about if he continues down this path. She actually believes that after a little additional non-art professional training, he will eventually find a non-art profession that pays the bills and continue as a semi-professional artist.

## **Entrepreneurship and Entrepreneurship Education**

In 2002, Anna's nephew, Alex, who was studying composition at the conservatory, told her about a new elective course they were teaching in the school called "cultural entrepreneurship". Most of the teachers and students had a good laugh when they heard about this new course. Teachers even advised their students not to take the course because it would simply be a waste of precious time. Alex did not take the class. But in 2012, Anna's cousin, Elisabeth, who was studying dance at the time was required to take this by now compulsory course in cultural entrepreneurship. In 2018, two years after graduating, she received a national survey questionnaire that sought to learn how ex-art academy students had fared since graduating. She told Anna that there were questions about the art entrepreneurship class. She, like many of the others, thought the course was inadequate in preparing them for the real world and that more attention needed to be paid to the subject. It was around this time that her nephew Paul, a self-taught musician, told

her that he did not separate art activities from those involving business skills. This intrigued Anna who always considered business activities as robbing her of time that could be spent making art. Obviously, she did not think highly of these types of courses.

### **Changes in Art Buildings. Side-Line Products**

Anna regularly goes to two theatres in Amsterdam that are located exactly opposite one another on a narrow street in between: the nonprofit, highly subsidised Stadsschouwburg (the municipal theatre) with a long-term serious art reputation and the totally renovated in 2010, for-profit DeLaMar Theatre. The Stadsschouwburg used to have a very pompous, luxurious and old-fashioned interior, which always left Anna slightly uncomfortable as if she didn't really belong there. After renovation the interior of the DeLaMar was slightly posh but not too imposing. Several ensembles performed in both theatres, and the audiences attracted to the venues were quite different. Anna noticed more lower-middle-class visitors in the DeLaMar probably because they felt more comfortable here. In conversations with her theatre-loving friends she learned that most of them preferred the Stadsschouwburg's interior. Some even expressed their outright disgust for the DeLaMar's interior. But, in the 2010s, the Stadsschouwburg's interior was also renovated. The end result was a far less posh ambiance. Management even added a second entrance that looked like the entrance to an ordinary movie theatre. Anna realised they had decided to change the conservative image of theatre and with some success. The elderly were no longer in the majority and more different types of people began going to both theatres. And Anna's friends? They stopped complaining about the DeLaMar theatre across the street.

### **Combinations of Serious and Popular Art**

Anna is not ashamed to watch popular romantic movies. Not long ago, Anna saw a successful dance movie on television that told the story of a well-known conservatory where a main character from an upper-class background was training to become a ballerina. The other main character was a lower-class black guy who worked as a janitor and was a good break-dancer. Of course they meet, fall in love, learn each other's moves and end up developing some crossover dance performances despite the resistance of teachers, parents and friends alike. But they persisted, and, in the end, triumphed. Also predictable, by the end tears welled up in Anna's eyes.

### **The Platform Economy**

Two years ago, just before the pandemic, Anna spent a month in Athens. Every day she would go to the same small restaurant for dinner. Here she engaged in conversations with the restaurant employees. Once she mentioned that, in the sixties, she had been the manager of an obscure band called the Roaring Doors. A few minutes later a song by the Roaring Doors was blasting from the restaurant's speakers. She was flabbergasted. How was this possible? Well, they explained how they'd searched for the band name on YouTube and found the track "Jinn Song". Evidently a fan of the band had uploaded it on YouTube and now it was available anywhere. Anna thought: "Everything, everywhere, all at once".

### **Marketing. Standing Out. Parasocial Relationships**

Among her artist friends, Anna was the first to have a website. But she was the last to join Instagram. Three years ago she opened an account and began posting her drawings. After a few months she had some 300 followers. A few, mainly acquaintances, regularly "liked" her posts and periodically someone would leave behind a brief comment. But other than that nothing much happened. Anna was disappointed. She wondered what she was doing wrong. She looked at the pages of some other visual artists who had several thousand followers. And from the comments she gathered that they were evidently selling their work. She went back to these pages and noticed that they posted several times a day, and most of the time the posts had nothing to do with their art like a cat in the corner of a studio or the view from a studio window. Anna decided that she was too old for this.

### **Monetisation. Cost. Funding**

Anna recently went to visit friends and during their conversation, their 13-year-old son, Tony, dashed into the room holding a laptop. "Listen to this", he said. Anna listened and liked the music. "I'm now a successful beatmaker. I just sold two of my beats for \$300 on Bandcamp to two DJ-producers. I don't know them. One is in Los Angeles, the other in Sao Paulo". Anna was amazed. She wondered: "Can you sell your music on the internet? How is that even possible? And what is a beat?" His older brother, John, said, "A beat is a short instrumental track that usually supplements a rap. I helped him. It is easy. Tony has an account. He uploads his beats to his page. People who buy his beats also have an account. They use search criteria, find his beats and go to the check-out page where they pay with a credit card and next they download the beats and use them in their own productions. They paid \$330. Bandcamp transferred \$300 to Tony's bank account – well actually it is my account – and Bandcamp keeps \$30." Anna: "Ah, it is like Amazon." "No, it is not the same. He doesn't just sell music. He sells copyrights. These guys are free to use and change his music. There is no copyright infringement. That is why he gets so much money for only two of his beats."

### **Superstar Effects. A Long Tail. High and Low Incomes**

In 2005, Anna went to Bahia in Brazil. She spent many nights in the homes and sometimes sheds of very poor people. When they heard that she was an artist they would talk to her about art. They all knew the Beatles, Rolling Stones, Mozart, Rembrandt and similarly famous artists. It turned out that one of the people she met liked Mozart's *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik*. So she would talk with them about things like the merits of the Rolling Stones "Paint it Black". She never expected that she would have conversations about art. And she really enjoyed these conversations.

It always fascinated Anna that some artists have become superstars and extremely rich, often in a relatively short period of time. She had pity for them. Always having to be on your best behaviour, meeting rich and influential people – terrible. She was also angry. Why not dispose of all that money asap; giving it all or most of it to a good cause? But she gradually began to realise that this is not really an option for these stars. Either you go along with the business end, meet the jet set, give super posh parties and make a splash for the whole world to see because if you refuse, you don't really exist. So you just have to learn to enjoy it. She noticed that this now also pretty much applies to Beyonce, a singer she admires. But she continues to have mixed feelings.

### **Winners in the Virtual and Real World**

Maybe somewhat unexpectedly given her age, Anna is a Justin Bieber fan. She thinks he's very musical and has his own style. She loved his early YouTube videos when, as a young boy, he addressed his audience. Anna thinks he was already a good performer at age 13. But recently on Spotify she began to notice that Justin wasn't as unique as she once thought. He hadn't been the only young performer to directly address his audience and there were other good musicians who also became famous. That made her wonder whether there weren't more "Biebers" out there who, for whatever reason, never made it in the world of digital media. She thought: "There must be more of them, many more". But she remained a loyal fan despite any doubts she may have had.

### **Industry Structure. More of the Same?**

By now Anna is older and has started complaining about music, although she continues to listen to mainstream and alternative pop. Recently in a conversation with her friend Jonathan, she began complaining about the boring lyrics of today's pop songs. "It is all about you, me, love, lost love and the other person's body. So boring. And the top-twenty? All in the same style. It must be caused by the music industry and all those new platforms." Her friend responded: "Maybe not you, but people have always complained about the music industry. Is it any worse now than before? I don't think so. You are right, there is much imitation in the top-twenty. But the dominant style regularly changes. And think of raps: the lyrics can be very different." "Yes, you are right. I like them. They are like poems."

### **Omnivorousness. There Is No Longer a Significant Boundary Between Popular and Serious Art**

*In around 1960, Anna's parents considered pop music a threat to their beloved classical music and to society in general. They tried to stop Anna from listening to pop. They obviously considered it inferior. Moreover, they were afraid that listening to it with friends would lead to unhealthy habits like the smoking of hashish. But in 1961, at the age of 15, Anna, like many other children, got a small transistor radio and started listening under the blankets to pop music broadcast from a pirate ship, Radio Caroline which was anchored outside territorial waters to circumvent the monopoly of national broadcasters in the UK and the Netherlands that offered up mostly boring, sanitised pop music. While being extra careful to not get caught listening to pop music, she used to go to a local café during lunch breaks with friends. Here they could listen to their beloved pop music. She even went to pop concerts in small venues surreptitiously. And even "worse", she started smoking hashish. But times change. She recently went to a pop music festival and noticed that many of the young had come with their parents.*

### **No Opposing Art Movements. Hybridisation, Blurred Boundaries and Diversity**

*Recently Anna visited the Tate Modern in London which opened its doors in 2000. A timeline of all exhibitions in the museum had been drawn on the wall of the main staircase. She noticed that the earlier exhibitions had been group exhibitions with titles that referred to major genres that had been important in the twentieth century. In the later exhibitions there were a few with a social theme, but by far the most were solo exhibitions with in the title the name of the artist. She wondered how this was possible. Did artists no longer work in a well-known style? Had every artists an outstanding own style? And even stranger: were there no new widely shared major styles in the twenty-first century, which could bring works of artists together in an exhibition?<sup>77</sup>*

### **Art or Culture? Who Is an Artist?**

*During the Covid-period of 2020–2021, Anna used to cycle through Amsterdam and saw posters almost everywhere demanding in giant letters that passersby "Support Culture". They had evidently been distributed by the city. Anna wondered why culture needed support. Why did it not say "Support Art". When Anna checked the poster's website she noticed that the ensembles and festivals that people were encouraged to donate to were basically serious art ensembles, and both serious and popular art venues and festivals. Was the term culture used because many people still associate the term "art" with boring traditional art, and that by using the term "culture" more money would be donated? She asked her friend Jonathan and his response was: "No. It is simple. Nobody knows what art is anymore. And so now they use the term culture".*