The Entrance Gap A Study Of Admissions Procedures At The Willem De Kooning Academy

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Interviewer: *"Do you think the student population is going to change in the coming 10 to 20 years?"*
Respondent: *"Well, yes, so long as the population does not become what you see on the streets of Rotterdam though"* (Interviewee C)[2]

Reflected in this interview segment is a clear outline of an attitude which privileges the habitus, subjectivities and cultural and linguistic capital of 'traditional' students already at the academy contrasted negatively with those who do not. Further raising much curiosity about who is on the streets of Rotterdam. In the light of this attitude, Pierre Bourdieu's criticism of the sector of cultural production comes to mind: *"Although they do not create or cause class divisions and inequalities, 'art and cultural consumption are predisposed, consciously and deliberately or not, to fulfil a social function of legitimating social differences' and thus contribute to the process of social reproduction."* (BOURDIEU 1993, 2)

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The development of this essay relies heavily on two of Bourdieu's central themes: habitus and field. Habitus in the sense of "a set of dispositions which generates practices and perceptions… the result of a long process of inculcation" (1993, 5). Cultural capital embodies the inculcation of aesthetic codes, practices and dispositions transmitted to children through the process of family socialisation, habitus. Habitus is an important form of cultural inheritance, reflecting class position or the subject's location in a variety of fields and is geared to the perpetuation of structures of dominance (BOURDIEU AND PASSERON, 1977, 204-5).

Field, alongside habitus and capital, are used to make sense of the social world which Bourdieu formulates as a space with several dimensions. It is within these dimensions that differentiations occur that confer strength and power to those within. A distinguishing feature of cultural capital is the socialization which is thus an ongoing process of transference, leading to the generation of practices across a range of areas. Thereby accounting for the similarity in the habitus of those from the same social class and I would add ethnic and or racial background.[3] As educational sociologist Wallace (2016) asserts,

"despite the fact that Bourdieu's work has not consistently addressed 'race' and ethnicity, his theoretical concepts have long been used to interpret the experiences and outcomes of racial, ethnic and class minorities" (2016, 38).

Inequality and education researcher Prudence Carter in **Keepin' It Real** (2005), expanding on Bourdieu's underdeveloped accounting of the intersection of race, ethnicity and class underscores the fact that conventional interpretations of cultural capital ignore non-dominant forms of cultural capital. Carter's ethnographic study of low-income African American and Latino youth gives insight into their valuable and abounding desirable resources, which afford them recognition and power within their local social contexts (CARTER 2005). Taking Carter's ideas forward to the Dutch situation, it will be interesting to register if these non-dominant forms of cultural capital are at all present in the academy. Diversity in organisations specialist Machteld De Jong[5] (2014), applied Bourdieu's concept of field and habitus to study the social relations between teachers, staff and BME students.

With respect to field, positions are relationally determined, which also means by what they are and what they are not vis-à-vis other positions. For example, Bourdieu often categorised the field of cultural production as the 'economic world in reverse', in that its logic is driven in part by a rejection of the capitalist mode of production in the economic field (BOURDIEU 1993A). A field is a duality consisting of a structured space of positions and position-takings, accordingly Ferrare and Appel (2014) emphasise, that

"Bourdieu constructed his version of field theory in a dual sense in which social actors experience fields as both arenas of force and arenas of struggle. In the former sense, fields are constituted by rules that direct normative values,

1   This preliminary research *Making Differences* (2011) was conducted by the Institute for Art Education (Zurich University) to gain a first understanding of inequality in the field of Higher Art Education and to assess possibilities of impacting on current practices within art schools. It was conducted at three art schools in Zurich, Bern and Geneva entailing a survey among candidates who had applied and were in the admissions process (700 respondents), and 19 qualitative interviews with heads of Bachelor degree courses.

2   Unless otherwise stated all quotations have been translated from Dutch by the author

3   Bourdieu's work does not deal with race/ethnic categorizations focusing primarily on class, however several scholars have attempted to integrate this aspect into his works, see Hall in Tzanakis (2011), Wallace (2016), Kalmijn & Kraaykamp (1996).

4   Rollock 2007, Reay et al 2005, Reay 2004, Carter 2003

5   *Diversity in higher education* (2014)

regulate actions, reward ontological complicity, and place sanctions on transgressors. Sometimes these rules are explicit, such as the requirements for obtaining a bachelor's degree at a given institution, whereas in other situations the rules are tacit." (<u>2014, 48</u>)

In Wallace's work on Black cultural capital among middle class and working class Black Caribbean teenagers, he notes however that within the field of a local secondary school in London, this capital "does not necessarily inspire an oppositional stance to white, middle-class authority and academic achievement" (<u>WALLACE 2016, 41</u>). Bourdieu's concept of field is a useful way to analyse a social setting, such as a higher educational art school[6], that is governed by a set of objective social relations. Within this field two forms of capital[7] can be identified: symbolic and cultural, the former pertaining to the amount of prestige and recognition can be/ is accumulated, in this case, the WdKA in competition with other art schools in The Netherlands. The WdKA itself, within this body of knowledge, reflects forms of cultural knowledge, competences and or dispositions, the following quote makes explicit what they are.

"I ask them to show me their best work, what the idea behind it is, their concept. I always ask them what they think of the sector in which they want to work and what they don't like about it. I want to know if they keep up to date with developments in their field and how they do this. Additionally, I find it important to know if they do or don't read, what kind of music they listen to, what films they like, what museums they have visited. I try to find out what their world is and what their drivers are." (Interviewee G)

In her latest work **White Innocence** (<u>2016</u>), the Dutch race and gender theorist Gloria Wekker argues that all things considered, it is within field that habitus becomes practice, it is where we lose consciousness of the terms under which we operate, because their very success negates our experience of them as learned structures of engagement. Hall, in **The Spectacle of the 'Other'** (<u>2013</u>), expounds on fetishism as an aspect of representing the other in a similar vein, forcing us to contend not only with what is visible but also with what is not. Fetishism in representation involves displacement, so in following the theme of this article, who cannot enter the academy cannot be represented because it is a taboo instead we focus on something else, which is seen as a desirable integral part of the academy, such as successful inculcation of art & design knowledge and cultural competencies (<u>2013, 256</u>). In other words, habitus is "history turned into nature" (<u>BOURDIEU, 1977 CITED IN WEKKER, 2016, 12</u>)[8]. Wekker's concern, which allows me to embrace another aspect of this enquiry, to which I shall return later on in this work, is how

"an unacknowledged reservoir of knowledge and affects based on four hundred years of Dutch imperial rule plays a vital but unacknowledged part in dominant meaning-making processes, including the making of the self, taking place in Dutch society." (<u>2016, 2</u>).

This embrace affirms the need to critically assess which subjectivities over the four hundred years are naturally felt to reflect particular forms of cultural knowledge and accompanying competen-

6 The Willem de Kooning Academy is one of 14 higher educational institutes within the Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences, Rotterdam.

7 Capital can present itself in 3 fundamental forms: economic, cultural & social. Economic capital refers to income and other financial resources and assets. However economic capital is not sufficient to buy statuses or position, it relies on the interaction with other forms of capital. Two other such forms are; cultural capital & social capital. Cultural capital is the form of capital closely linked to the institution-alization of educational qualifications and the achievement gap (Bourdieu, *Forms of Capital* 1986).

8 Wekker conceptualizes the cultural archive with reference to Bourdieu's notion of habitus (Wekker, 2016, 2).

9 http://iae.zhdk.ch/fileadmin/data/iae/documents/Making_Differences_Vorstudie.pdf

10 http://creating010.com/welcome-to-kenniscen-trum-creating010/

11 https://www.zhdk.ch/suche?q=Nana%20Adusei%20Poku

12 Statistics from the WdKA's own databank show that in 2016, of the 1.908 students 71% are classified as 'autochtone', 17% as western 'allochtone' and 13% 'non-western allochtone'. See page 9 of this text for a further discussion of what these terms mean.

13 Ruth Frankenberg, *Displacing Whiteness* (1997), (1999).

14 For this see McManus: Every word starts with 'dis', in *Reflecting Education* (2006) and Pos in The Netherlands (2014) exploring barriers to art school entry.

HOW TO ARTICULATE WHITENESS, IN AN ATTEMPT TO DISPLACE "THE UNMARKED MARKER"

cies/ dispositions. A major finding of the study undertaken by academics in Zurich[9] was that circulating theories about inequality within the art school tend to delegate responsibility onto previous factors such as schooling, parents, or society in general.

The Dutch research is institutionally embedded within the framework of Creating 010[10], a trans-disciplinary research centre which had cultural diversity as one of its research lines. It is also linked to the work in Zurich through a common board member Nana Adusei-Poku[11] who is principle investigator for setting up the **WdKA Makes A Difference** project within Creating 010 in The Netherlands. Working within this research centre and as a professional teacher within the art academy[12], has afforded me certain opportunities, perspectives and experiences that I will draw from in the course of this essay. One of these is continually finding myself in classrooms where the mix of students is disproportionate to the population of young people in Rotterdam. Teaching classes in which the majority of students are overwhelmingly white, middle class and coming from or are living in the suburbs and villages around Rotterdam. For whom, additionally, the subject matter under consideration in my cultural diversity classes: an exploration of identity, ontology, embodied & discursive power, is extremely challenging. My own academic proclivities are aligned with a critical sociological and feminist postcolonial perspective. My special interest lies in the ways multiple axis of differentiation intersect in historically specific contexts working simultaneously to render bodies into gendered, classed,

racialized, sexualised, religious, differently bodied subjectivities. Grounded in the theoretical ruminations of cultural theorist Stuart Hall where the concept of race is foregrounded, translating these theorems into the Dutch context results in a constant struggle to formulate the words with which to talk about ethnicity, culture and nationality using the Dutch language. How to articulate Whiteness[13], in an attempt to displace "the unmarked marker" (<u>FRANKENBERG 99, 1</u>) that is, echoing Hall, part of its dominance and its attendant privileges are a challenge to what Hall (<u>1991, 1992</u>) has termed an 'internalist' European narrative. Intrinsic to this narrative is an envisioning of Whiteness as a largely homogenous entity, its development uninfluenced by outside forces or contact with other parts of the world, where race exists anywhere but in Europe, as those who are traditionally considered ethnic minorities are seen to be outside of the national community, notwithstanding the fact that the original migrant populations have now by and large become citizens (<u>CHOW 2002</u>). Moving away from discourses centring around simple binary oppositions becomes challenging in a context where binaries are disguised as reflecting stand alone ethnic differences.

Finding myself within this 'internalist' narrative, led to a reflection on the student body itself wondering if widening the participation of those who were let into the academy would lead to a concomitant widening of the discourse, embodied by those, about and not with whom, the discourse is spoken. Rather than focusing on the perception of, how young people living in Rotterdam with multiple heritages view the Art Academy[14], as these young people are not where I am, I started from where I was. As echoing sociologists John Lofland and Lyn Lofland,

"fieldwork is time-consuming, arduous and often emotionally draining. Starting where you are can ease your access to certain research sites and informants... fieldstudies may emerge from personal experiences and opportunities that provide access to social settings" (<u>2006, 9</u>).

According to educational equity academic Jenny Williams, student identities are constructed through difference and 'polarizing discourses' and are tied to the notion of an ideal student subject; the traditional, standard, 18-year-old student (1997, 26). Gaining access to those on the inside, the admissions staff who uphold and enforce the entrance requirements, I am hoping will give me a greater understanding of how the composition of the classes in which I teach has been formed. Furthermore, it allows me to probe whether the demographics of this student body is perceived as problematic by those representing the academy on such moments. I am curious as to whether there is a sense of urgency regarding the necessity of allowing other bodies into the art & design academy? Examining issues of, selection and admission to higher art education have led to a concentration on pre-entry factors and assessment criteria used to admit students into the academy. In an earlier investigation of widening participation policies in the UK, Steven Schwartz (2004) has interesting implications for this work. Namely, if the goal is to widen participation in higher education, which means to allow those groups into the academy who have traditionally been underrepresented, admissions are a key factor in who participates, getting-in. However, it is not clear to me at this stage if the same ambitions are present in this Dutch context.

Interestingly, Tony Bennet et al (2009, 1) researching the link between cultural capital and existing inequalities in the UK argue that

"visual art remains a strong field of classification of social position. Engagement with visual art, as part of a broad visual culture, is widespread, the availability of art substantial and access increasingly available. Yet core participation by better off groups remains resilient, even though fissures and cleavages occur across group boundaries." (BENNETT ET AL., 2009, 131)

More recently, the results of the related research in Zurich, **Art School Differences** (2015), demonstrate how via loaded concepts such as: 'having potential', 'talent', 'legitimate competencies', exclusion in the system of art education is being generated and inequality reproduced. These processes enable social closure primarily through habitus (Bourdieu): people are excluded who do

RACE MAKES WAY IN THE NETHERLANDS ACADEMIC AND POLITICAL CONTEXT FOR DIFFERENTI- ATIONS BASED ON ETHNICITY AND INCREASINGLY, CULTURE

15 https://www.cbs.nl/
en-gb/news/2016/47/
migration-background-
still-plays-a-role

16 https://www.cbs.nl/
en-gb/news/2016/47/
migration-background-
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not hold or embody the cultural capital required. The paramount importance of cultural capital for being admitted and also to progress in schools is enforced cannot be underestimated according to this body of work.

I am left wondering, how does the field within which the admissions staff operate at the WdKA work? Who is deemed to be a successful candidate and on the basis of what criteria are these decisions made?

Unlike in the American and British context the word race is not a convincing point of analytical departure. It is, as ethnic studies theorist el-Tayeb in **European Others** (2011) has remarked, more likely to be a point of contention, noting the now classic Bourdieu and Waquant (1995) polemic against importing American imperialist academic traditions unto European academic soil. This way of seeing race as something outside of Europe has been observed by many scholars, Goldberg (2006), Balibar (2004), Essed (1991), Wekker (2016) to name but a few. As such race makes way in the Netherlands academic and political context for differentiations based on ethnicity and increasingly, culture. In Europe, immigrant groups are ethnically very varied coming as they are from the many former colonies and active recruitment campaigns for temporary workers in the sixties and seventies. In the United Kingdom, the terms ethnic and racial minorities and ethnic and racial diversity are frequently used to denote specific groups, remembering that the terms scholars use to identify a group are labels that have been developed in a specific historical, political and economic context, they are not neutral or all encompassing. Who is Dutch depends on how this is defined: from place of birth, parents birth, cultural socialization, ethnic origin and or nationality.

The term that the Dutch frequently use to distinguish between the native population and the rest is allochthonous, which does not have an English equivalent but generally means originating from elsewhere. The equivalent of "allochtonen" is "autochtonen", meaning "those who are from here," which, as is commonly known, refers to the white Dutch population[15]. The Netherlands, as of 2016, has a population of 17 million, 3.8 million of whom have a migration background, meaning that either they are first generation or second generation (born in The Netherlands) with either one or both parents being born abroad. This migrant population is further subdivided into western and non-western groups, whether a country is seen as Western is dependent on how similar its social economic or cultural arrangement is deemed to be to that of The Netherlands. The four predominant non-western groups are: Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese and or Antillean, growth in these groups is as a result of second generation birth rates. Predominant western groups are from Indonesia, Germany, Poland and Belgium whilst the most refugees hail from Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria and Somalia[16]. The point of this discourse is to stress that the supposedly innocent terminology used to differentiate the population of The Netherlands is, as Gloria Wekker and Helma Lutz (2001) remind us, in fact racializing without the responsibility or burden of understanding who is racist. In fact, in The Netherlands the preferred marker of difference is ethnicity, referring to differences based on origin, appearance, history, culture, language and religion. However, to paraphrase Wekker's (2016) observation, ethnicity and culture have been used in such hardened ways that biology and culture have become interchangeable, it functions as an essentialist imperative, fixing cultures as bounded entities and which are mutually distinctive. Wekker points our attention to the

relational fragility of this endeavour by remarking that when ethnicity is invoked it is not that of the 'locals' or 'the population' so ethnic is not white but in fact encrypted with a racializing grammar. Most white Dutch people, she argues, would then be upset to find themselves categorised as an ethnic group. To remind us of the danger of discourses of culture, we need look no further than Baumann's ethnographic portrait of Southall, London in **Contesting Culture,** who encourages us to recognise

"the presence, and the social efficacy, of a dominant discourse, that reifies culture and traces it to ethnicity, and that reifies ethnicity and postulates 'communities' of 'culture' based on purportedly ethnic categorizations." (1996,20)

Exemplifying what Reeves (1983) has called the 'strategic discoursive de-racialization of discourse' and what cultural studies scholar Paul Gilroy (1992) has described as the new forms of racism; the terms identity and culture. The problem here, is that race is not a cogent marker of difference in the Netherlands, whereas ethnicity is, it functions most predominantly as an explanatory tool and not a site of contestation, so for example differences in educational attainment are framed within a lexicon of language deficiencies owing to culture and thus ethnic origins that are so hardened and all consuming they operate as an essentializing & naturalising discourse.

"There is a fundamental unwillingness to critically consider the applicability of a racialized grammar of difference to The Netherlands" (WEKKER 2016, 23).

So what to do with the words at our disposal? For want of better, I have decided to use Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) while enjoining the reader to bear in mind the dangers of reading ethnic in any stable and stand alone way. My use of the word black is borrowed from that of Hall, situating it in its political, historical and cultural context so not as a biological truth but as a social construct that has real and embodying narratives.

THE SETTING

This research was carried out over the period 2014 to 2015 at the Willem de Kooning Academy in Rotterdam[17]. The Willem de Kooning Academy profiles itself as offering *"contemporary and cutting edge art courses that complement changing, international practice... for people who possess a multitude of talents and skills and who look beyond the borders of their original discipline"*[18]. It is located in a fashionable part of the city, close to public transport facilities which affords predominantly able-bodied students from outside Rotterdam easy access.

Earlier research on the student population of the WdKA by teacher researchers, Paul Pos (2014)[19] and Marleen van Arendonk (2016)[20] has drawn attention to what I call the 'demography discrepancy', in other words, at the municipal level according to recent statistics[21], 60% of the school population are BME[22] students whereas these students make up only 13% of the WdKA's student population. Pos, points out that a student population that is socio-culturally homogeneous seems

17 The interview team consisted of Eva Visser, Rudi Enny and Reinaart Vanhoe and myself working with the research methods from the Zurich prelimenary study, from which we later diverted.

18 http://www.wdka.nl/ willem-de-kooning-academie/

19 Paul Pos, *Not the usual suspects.* Rotterdam: Hogeschool Rotterdam Master Leren en Innoveren (2014).

20 Marleen van Arendonk, *"Ik dacht dat de Academie alleen voor witte mensen was."* Piet Zwart Institute Master Education in Arts (2016).

21 www.ois.amsterdam.nl/ pdf/2012_destaatvanin- tegratie.pdf

22 Black & Minority Ethnic is my term of choice for talking about demographic differentiations in the Dutch context privileging it above the Dutch use of autochtonous and allochtonous.

23 Commonly talked about in local policy documents as allochtone and autochtone.

24 http://www.rotterdam.nl/ Clusters/RSO/Document 2015/OBIPublicaties/ 4085%2Feitenkaart%20 bevolkingsmonitor%20 2016-2.pdf

25 Refers to the high concentrations of ethnic minorities in urban centers leading to a shift of positioning, what was thought of as the dominant group, native Dutch, becoming a minority.

26 Opting is a euphemism for streaming which is done via an IQ test in the last year of secondary school, for criticisms of this and its relationship to educational inequality see: Dronkers, J. & De Graaf, P. M. (1995).

27 MBO is a secondary school vocational education stream lasting 1-4 years depending on options.

28 HAVO is a form of higher general education lasting 5 years whilst VWO lasts 6 years and is the fastest track to university education.

29 See Arendonk (2016) for more on routing paths.

30 Machteld de Jong, *Diversiteit in het hoger onderwijs* (2014), cited on page 58.

31 Interviews cited in Pos (2014, 9) with F. Wartna, Manager Art & Design Teacher Training Course and J.J. Chabot, Dean of WdKA.

RACE IS NOT A COGENT MARKER OF DIFFERENCE IN THE NETHERLANDS, WHEREAS ETHNICITY IS. IT FUNCTIONS AS AN EXPLANATORY TOOL AND NOT AS A SITE OF CONTESTATION

inaccessible to other groups in society and therefore does not change quickly in terms of the diversity within the group. Besides, selection practices follow the law of "gate keeping"; admissions staff, teachers at WdKA, determine whether and what opportunities for contacts and connections there are (POS, 2014).

Zooming out to the municipal level, Rotterdam at last count has 631,687 residents, of which 315.922 are native and 315.765 from diverse ethnic populations[23]. The Department of Research and Business Intelligence of the Rotterdam[24] municipality who collect and publish these figures, predict that the composition of the population will become fifty-fifty by 2016. Hereafter ethnic populations will become the majority group, bringing up their share of the population to 60 percent by 2030[25]. Recent statistics from the Dutch government underscore the different learning routes between second generation and native Dutch with the former as the government puts it 'opting'[26] for the lowest pre-vocational level, MBO[27], (2016, 9) while the latter are more likely to attend HAVO[28] senior general secondary education, or VWO pre-university secondary education. A considerable amount of students in Higher Education (HE) are not students who have taken an academic trajectory

to apply to Universities, instead, they may follow vocational routes elsewhere before attending the academy[29].

So not only is this topic of interest to myself and other teachers working in the academy, it has implications for the future student population of the art school, which means there is a strategic and instrumental sense of urgency. Or to frame it within contemporary neo-liberal policy terms, the business case is clear, without being able to tap into the increasing numbers of BME learners in Rotterdam it becomes increasingly difficult to obtain a certain level of funding as an institute. Moreover, how to maintain a narrative of cutting edge art & design courses when the majority of your students are from the suburbs and villages around Rotterdam who do not embody or experience themselves the bigger societal discourses. Furthermore, as recent research by de Jong[30] has shown many of these students often come into contact with BME students and vice versa for the first time in higher educational learning environments as a result of a largely segregated secondary school experience. Which according to de Jong investigation (2014) leads to difficulties in classroom dynamics. Pos (2014) teacher/researcher at the WdKA sees this demographic discrepancy as undesirable because the ambition of the WdKA to be connected to the city where it is based stems from its social responsibility to also provide social and economically marginalised groups growing up in an urban context, opportunities to develop their talents in a higher educational art & design context[31]. My own motivation is based on a curiosity about who the institution I work within sees as the artist/designer of the future. The institute's tagline

is the motto: 'Creating Pioneers'[32], subsequently what are the criteria for the detection of the future pioneer? From within which habitus are the criteria developed and applied? My goal is to explore who is perceived to be the ideal candidate and upon what grounds, bearing in mind that according to researchers Jackie MacManus & Jane Burke ([2009, 22]),

"All individuals are implicated in complex sets of power relations as situated subjects, including admissions tutors attempting to operate in fair and transparent ways. Admissions tutors are also implicated, like everyone else, in the hegemonic discourses that create possibilities for practice and for a sense of institutional position and legitimacy. Power is enacted in discursive fields that position different individuals, or subjects, in different ways across differences of age, class, disability, ethnicity, gender, race and sexuality as well as institutional status and authority."

METHODOLOGY

"The net that contains the researcher's epistemological, ontological and methodological premises may be termed a paradigm or an interpretive framework, "a basic set of beliefs that guide action" (Guba, 1990, p.17)." ([DENZIN & LINCOLN 2005, 22])

In my view research is an interactive process built also upon the researcher's own personal history, biography, gender and ethnicity, social class and those of those interviewed or observed. While starting where you are may cause certain ethical and methodological challenges, in my view they are a small price to pay for the amount of rich data springing from a naturalistic approach, where it is possible to achieve intimate familiarity with the setting ([LOFLAND ET AL., 2006]).

The objective of the fieldwork is to seek to gather data on how admissions staff give meaning to their situated social experiences in the selection process. This research comprises of nine structured interviews with admissions tutors, in order to examine admissions practices in the selection of students for the art and design academy. A team of five[33] designed the structured interview for the WdKA by adapting elements from the srelatedister questionnaire in Zurich[34]. Our aim was to have fairly compatible areas of interest that at a later stage could compare and contrast. The exploration was designed to uncover the complexity involved in the admission processes and to deconstruct the key assumptions underpinning the selection of students. This was best served by carrying out face-to-face structured interviews by various team members, making the work of comparing responses more transparent. Furthermore, the team of interviewers were of diverse backgrounds, two women, one of whom is White Dutch, and myself Black and British and two men one of whom was also White Dutch and the other Black Dutch. While all of the interviewees are White, predominantly Dutch and other White ethnic. We were aware of this and our choices were intentional. Questions were asked based on the following areas: selection criteria; selection process; socio-economic factors of student's background; students sense of belonging after successful selection; diversity as a selection tool; artist & designer future profile. The range of inquiries reflected our interest in understanding the habitus or rules within which selection processes take place and our desire to unearth the taken-for-granted mechanisms at play. Simultaneously information was gathered about selection staff themselves, as according to Bourdieu ([1996]) what positions agents or institutions within a field is the possession of capital and power that is relevant to the purpose of a particular field. So what capital and forms of selective power are observable among admissions staff in the fabric of the field also needed to be noted. Further methods included observations of actual selection interviews with candidates and attendance of a team training session. A team of four carried out these interviews, there was considerable contact with the coordinator of the admissions process, who expressed support for what he considered a useful and valuable reflection on the admissions procedures. All of the interviews were recorded and professionally transcribed.

RESEARCH IS AN INTERACTIVE PROCESS BUILT ALSO UPON THE RESEARCHER'S OWN PERSONAL HISTORY

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS: THE BIG PICTURE[35]

To resume: what are the criteria for the detection of the future artist & designer? From within which habitus are the criteria developed and applied? Who is perceived to be the ideal candidate and upon what grounds?

Briefly, a reading of the responses to the structured interview reveals several interesting themes and concomitant discrepancies. Striking to begin with is the distance between the official and unofficial selection criteria used by selection staff, in which there are some tensions between differing notions of innate versus developmental artistic talent, the varying degrees of awareness of the role social and financial factors play in selection processes, the relative importance of family background and education route and lastly the contextualising of diversity within the responses.

32 Troubling motto considering the association of the word pioneer as someone who is overwhelmingly white & male going to explore and eventually exploit an 'empty' territory. Its most common meaning as a noun in English refers to a person who is the first to settle or explore a new country or area.

33 Eva Visser, Rudi Enny, Reinaart Vanhoe, Nana Adusei-Poku and myself

34 https://blog.zhdk.ch/artschooldifferences/en/

35 Lofland (2006) identifies four elements in the process of transforming qualitative raw data into findings or results. Firstly, analysis is slanted towards induction not deduction. Inductive reasoning is data driven. It does not test some previously thought through theoretical hypothesis. Secondly, the researcher is the central agent in the analysis process. Thirdly, this requires that the researcher immerse his or herself in that data. Ultimately demanding a persistent and rigorous dedication to untangling the web of impressions collected. The research methods are mixed with both quantitative and qualitative elements. Assessing my theoretical point of departure in the light of data collected.

36 Dependent on which course they have applied for there are small variations.

OFFICIAL AND UNOFFICIAL SCRIPTS

"To enter a field–one must possess the habitus which predisposes you to enter that field and not another, that game, not another. One must possess at least the minimum amount of knowledge, or skill or 'talent' to be accepted as a legitimate player." ([BOURDIEU, 1993, 8])

The practicalities of the selection process are formed around a day long programme where students follow more or less the following schedule[36]; a) bring a portfolio & letter of motivation b) are given one or two assignments to be finished by the end of the day (sometimes to be presented) c) partake in a motivation interview d) have a more general interview based around a and b above. The official, nationally set criteria for art schools upon which selection is to be based according to those interviewed are threefold: authenticity; use of colour in form and materials; and visual imagination. Repeatedly I was assured that these were the only categories around which the selection process was based. Interestingly in practice, admissions staff stated that the following aptitudes and abilities were also helpful in supporting a final decision: communication skills, authenticity, singularity, affinity, social skills, curious mind, talent, driven, distinctive character, desire to develop their talent, click in understanding, critical thinking, imagination, courage, intensity of approach, going the extra mile, determination, quirkiness, risk taking, problem solving, ability to develop ideas visually and conceptually, originality, ability to express themselves, good feedback skills, familiarity with art museums, interest in reading art books, attendance at the open day, knowledgeable about the course, and having a basic understanding of the curriculum. As one respondent put it:

"Maybe mainly to this, to that identity. To a kind of, to an intensity of how things are implemented. And not how it is done but for example that you try something several times. That you set your teeth into something, you develop a specific theme, looking for that one image. That search for example, that you have a kind of inquisitive spirit that we find I think very important. And then perhaps examples of that visual ability. And that I translate as a kind of talent you can translate into a drawing. You have a kind of visual language that, even has a kind of communicative power. And that does not necessarily have to have a skill. You can even cut out very simple things or very coarse, that becomes its own visual language that speaks. So basically yes, I can hardly put my finger on what it exactly is. But we are looking for it, for that kind of... Yeah that communicative ability in that visual language. So that you can convey something. That you have a theme. And then you work on it. And that produces original things." (Interviewee B)

Another respondent described how the selection process works:
"But then you look for a combination of originality and motivation, of the candidate really wants to study here. And if they have it, which is naturally a bit difficult to describe. Its about authenticity, but also affinity, but during the interview and by seeing their work it is possible." (Interviewee A)

Thinking about these comments and the long list of desirables the interviewees provided left me wondering how accessible such a skill set could be for the average 18 to 20 year old. It seems to me that within this habitus, there seems to be a desire for a specific embodiment of cultural capital. Furthermore, here we see the notion of the artist as a romantic individual genius making itself present (BLOOM 1991). The desired applicant seems to be associated with the 'unusual', and processes of creativity that involve risk-taking and invention, characteristics historically associated with white, euro-centric forms of masculinity (SKEGGS 2004). These selection criteria seem ultimately to be embedded in entitlement discourses and in middle-class judgments about what counts as valuable and tasteful. In **The Love of Art** (1991), Bourdieu argues that the love conveyed by middle class parents gives their children a disposition to appreciate and understand art. Moreover, middle class families were more likely to own books on art, and talk about art, which leads their children to develop an interest in the subject, a critical eye and to become 'people of taste.'

In these quotes I see a desire for the uniquely talented artist encapsulated, a romantic notion of the artist as an individual whose skill set emerges almost as a fixed set of attributes removed from any notion of habitus and cultural capital. The admissions staff list of expectations which lie at the heart of and within the fissures of the habitus, is both a marker and a position taking within the field, ultimately it is a statement of who does and does not belong in the academy. It is rule making and value setting, while revealing the strategy for playing the game to be floating, value laden, hidden in abstract categories, for those not able to make sense of this linguistic register. Again Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital is reflected in the vast array of desired criteria exhibited here in the dialectic of cultural knowledge, competences and dispositions expressed, that are largely internalized codes and or cognitive acquisitions. For the range and breadth of skill set mentioned by admissions staff to be present they must have been as Bourdieu puts it inculcated over a long period of time via family education and social institutions. Additionally, as Bourdieu argues these particular kinds of skill sets are unevenly distributed among social groups. McManus research into art school selection practices in the UK (MCMANUS ET AL., 2005) argues that the flip side of such interview questions reveals the desire for canonical right answers. Which is aptly demonstrated in the following excerpt:

"Imagine that an applicant comes from a social background with no art or design affinity, yes well then it becomes difficult. We ask questions about visiting museums, reading the paper or books... but yeah if they have never been to a museum well then they are already behind. But yes you can compensate this with your own ideas, own world but..." (Interviewee A)

According to McManus,

"these questions were seen as standardised neutral and objective, across the art and design academy, but are actually implicated in racialized and classed practices. The acceptable answers reflect white middle class habitus, cultural capital and 'taste'." (2006, 80).

37   Visual pleasure and narrative cinema in: *Visual and Other Pleasures* (1975).

38   See the work of hooks (1992), Pellegrini (1997), Wallace (1998) Haraway (1991).

39   CBS, *Annual Report on Integration 2016 A summary* (2016).

THE INTERACTIONS IN THE NAME OF ORGANISATIONALLY SANCTIONED SELECTION ACTIVITIES OPERATE THROUGH A CODED PRACTICE WHERE POWER IS REPRODUCED IN WAYS THAT OBSCURE THEIR WORKINGS

Museum visits as a marker of artistic sensibilities and interest have also been debunked by Bourdieu who posits the view that, *"members of the cultivated class feel entitled and obliged to visit this hallowed ground of culture from which others feel excluded for lack of culture"* (BOURDIEU 1991, 102).

THE INVISIBLE SELECTOR

To the cloak of neutrality surrounding the above selection practices within art institutions, I would add another, one that owes it existence to early film theorist Laura Mulvey[37]. Mulvey's influential work on the role of the male gaze, a critical reflection of a non-critical masculinist way of looking, it is thus a critique of the neutral I, the naturalized process of looking where a discerning eye, without history or subjectivity, is able to determine, establish the rightful value and true artistic merit of objects. Essential to her assessment and the reason for introducing it here is the tacit understanding among selection staff of themselves as arbiters of cultural value, and a concomitant absence of a challenge to the position of the observer/selector as genderless, raceless, classless, sexless etc. This universalist position was rarely disrupted or contested in the interview sessions. Bloom in **With other eyes, Looking at Race and Gender in Visual Culture**, argues that despite much writing to the contrary[38]

"the authority of this art historical gaze that claims to "transcend" time and place persists in the new work as well as the old, particularly in terms of the way that the implicitly ethnocentric agenda of art history gets reproduced." (1999, 4)

Indeed, if we contrast this with the descriptions of the skill set that the predominantly MBO students have upon entrance, provided by the same admissions staff, the contours of the necessary field requirements become very clear. "In each and every field, certain investments are at stake even if they are not recognized as such"(1993, 8). MBO students follow a vocational education route the intake staff characterised in the following ways:

"What you are looking for is the authenticity in their own creative work. And you don't always find it in their work. Definitely not when an applicant shows a standard portfolio from secondary school or from a MBO course." (Interviewee C)

"We are looking for an ability to communicate in a visual way, it can be done in many ways. Because we have a lot of MBO applicants, there we look for whether they can do that with the assignment we set them. If they go further than the assignment requires, to find images, to find a certain visual quality" (Interviewee B)

Considering the fact that many of the admissions staff feel an MBO education, producing students, "who only do what the tutor has asked them to do", "that's what they get marked on so if they do anything extra that is not appreciated nor rewarded." (Interviewee A), the position of neutral judgement becomes difficult to maintain. If there is indeed a wider understanding and discourse surrounding students from an MBO background, then the very admissions frameworks which are set up to be impartial and transparent are reproducing the very social inequalities they were set up to work against. Bearing in mind that over the past decade, relatively more BME students have pursued this form of education than white Dutch students[39] we not only have a classed but also ethnicized discourse.

This could exemplify what HE diversity specialist Steyn (2010) in **Being Different Together**, identifies as a growing trend whereby *"difficult issues get folded into other topics rather than addressed directly, thus maintaining strategic silences and allowing the existing dynamics to roll over"* (2010, 34). MBO students were regularly problematized in these interviews, and framed within a deficit model, with deficit perspectives that both framed (racial) and classed bodies as minorities based on what they lacked. In many of the interviews students from this educational stream are compared negatively to HAVO students.

"80% is MBO, 20% HAVO, 10 % VWO. No I, I would say that intelligence is an important factor in successfully completing a study here. Otherwise in the assessments, you observe how difficult it is to get MBO behaviour out of students, yes to adapt that and to bring them to a higher level to that of HBO, this is really difficult." (Interviewee F)

The concern expressed is not in terms of how these students feel in the institute or how the institute could make them feel more welcome, but rather in terms of catching up, it becomes the same as the other desired WdKA students, who are able to follow through and under-stand business as usual teaching and knowledge based practices. In other words, the interactions in the name of organisationally sanctioned selection activities operate through a coded prac-tice where power is reproduced in ways that obscure their workings.

LINGUISTIC CAPITAL

Additionally, the widespread use of unof-ficial selection criteria is expressed in a certain linguistic style which Bourdieu would identify as a form of embodied linguistic capital. The unequal distribution of attitudes that are traditionally associated with those from a more privileged habitus come into play when foregrounding for example; 'risk taking', 'critical thinking', 'a curious mind'. The distinctions played out by candidates via the unequal distribution of linguistic capital are not only inscribed upon them by purely and when one looks at selectors accounts, abstractly but also by explicitly bodily, physical ones, as can be understood in the next example

"and then you notice in the way that he expresses himself that he didn't look it up as part of his preparation. But there is a certain observable enthusiasm in his body language. Verifiable, to be seen in how he talks about it." (Interviewee D)

The middle classes, Bourdieu argues are busy trying to achieve the practical mastery over "ennobled" uses of language (gentleness, proper uses of titles, usage of flowery adjectives, etc.) This desire to approximate a particular linguistic and behavioural style works as a marking of class barriers, symbol-izing a mastery of 'appropriate' disposi-tions (BOURDIEU, 1991, 86-8, 124-5). Furthermore, as many scholars have argued, aesthetic value is itself socially constituted, and as such is an expression of a symbolic value. How characteristics such as 'original', 'distinctive character' or 'quirky' are to be measured and judged and made 'trans-parent' and 'fair' were not discussed by any of those interviewed bar one. Noticeably access to entry embodies encoded linguistic practices which are often framed within discourses of profes-sionalism, specifically in a desire to main-tain artistic and design standards whilst simultaneously not losing sight of treating everyone equally. There is a tendency to curtail the social and structural levels of exclusion by personalising them

"Or you can't do it because you don't have the background, the talent to do the assignment. I approach this formally, there is nothing subjective about talent. Absolutely not." (Interviewee C)

THE AWARENESS OF THE NEED TO THINK ABOUT AND ACT UPON DIVERSITY ISSUES IS ITSELF BROAD-RANGING, AS ARE THE CONCEPT-UALISATIONS OF WHAT DIVERSITY MEANS

Feminist theorist Skeggs (1997) would argue that inherent in the persistent selecting of students from middle-class backgrounds on the basis of habitus and cultural capital is a fear of the pollution of the academy by working class students. In the results of the research from Zurich for the International Advisory Board simi-lar findings were reported

"along the uncontested importance attributed to selection, the concepts of 'talent' and 'potential' were main reference points for selection criteria. Within the data collected, their objectivity was never questioned and their social construction barely mentioned." (2014, 3)

Thus, according to the researchers, enabling a form of social closure to ensue, besides this they also pinpoint the aspect of selector and selected as being of import as experts in juries define and assess what is worth being accepted into the institution. Calling into question the neutrality of the selector position when that position obfuscates a knowledge of the selected (2014:7).

40 Bourdieu uses the notion of game within field to suggest the rules governing this area, the idea of competing contestants to increase or maintain their capital reserves be they symbolic, cultural, social or economic (Bourdieux, 1977).

THE MARKER OF RACE, ETHNICITY AND CULTURE

"Like fetishism primitivism is a system of multiple beliefs: an imaginary resolution of a real contradiction a repression of the fact that a breakthrough in our art, indeed a regeneration of our culture, is based in part on the breakup and decay of other societies, that the modernist discovery of the primitive is not only in part its oblivion but its death. And the final contradiction or aporia is this: no anthropological remorse, aesthetic elevation, or redemptive exhibition can correct or compensate this loss because they are all implicated in it." HAL FOSTER (1985, 61)

What follows is an outline of responses to a question on more inclusive selection practices, and a presentation of how thinking about differences haunts the rest of what was said more indirectly through-out the interview sessions, to echo Wekker, "I am intrigued by the way that race pops up in unexpected places and moments" (2016, 1) The awareness of the need to think about and act upon diversity issues within the academy is itself broad-ranging, as are the conceptualisations of what diversity means. Leaving the word open to definition by respondents was as researchers a purposeful act, so as to make visible the tissues and layering of meaning making inherent in its usage.

BLAMING THE OTHER

Liberalist notions of meritocracy and individualism typified some responses, "as I see it, everybody who has talent, who is suitable, gets in irrespective of their background, ethnicity or whatever." (Interviewee H), exemplifying a continued belief that if individuals work hard enough or are talented enough they will over-come the many obstacles, which are then related to themselves. Ethnicity either their own or the applicants not accounting for any larger historical context or habitus within which social relations and interac-tions, the rules of the game[40] (BOURDIEU 1977) have developed. Aside from the encapsu-lating a hegemonic notion of 'talent' which many theorists, as already discussed, view as a highly problematic, what is interesting here is what Wekker refers to as white innocence, which she argues is "part of a dominant Dutch way of being in the world" (2016, 17). This innocence informs the often voiced attitude above in many ways; firstly, a disavowal of the notion of racism or any form of discrim-ination as a possibility within their own selection practices, secondly, the notion of 'suitability' is relational, what are you fitting into and who fits into a predom-inantly white institution is absolutely linked to ethnicity, but as that ethnicity is white it remains invisible, furthermore if we follow Wekker's thought processes further she casts doubt on how inno-cent this not-knowing is "this not-un-derstanding, which can afflict white and non-white people alike is connected to practices of knowing and not-knowing, which are forcefully defended"(2016, 18). Part of this not-knowing is underappreci-ating that organizations "tend to recruit in their own image" (SINGH IN AHMED 2012, 40). As a result of this innocent position-taking it also becomes difficult to understand how another aspect of diversity within

the academy can affect candidates. Race and cultural theorist Ahmed in **On Being Included**, has emphasised the difficulties of inhabiting a BME body in a predominantly all white environment. "The body that causes their discomfort (by not fulfilling an expectation of whiteness) is the one who must work hard to make others comfortable" (<u>2012, 41</u>). I cite this perspective to disrupt the 'irrespective of' way of thinking that is commonplace in the interviews, that the background of the students does not matter. "It can be the simple act of walking into a room that causes discomfort. Whiteness can be an expectation of who will turn up." Ahmed (<u>2016, 40</u>) For el Tayeb (<u>2011</u>) this ideology of colour blindness is a form of invisible European racialization. In the Dutch context this is apparent in the commonplace use of the terms *allochthonous* and *autochthonous*, serving as markers of ethnic difference happily coexisting alongside a colour blindness that suppresses the import thereof. That seeks to defend a 'we are all equal' stance, when the very ability to negate reveals the transcendental power to speak for everyone and a position within the discursive formations of a particular space and time. (<u>HALL 1996</u>)

Other responses reveal an understanding of diversity as a single issue, where the standard student is implicitly white and diversity is located in either a classic academic intelligence or breaking through a naiveté arising out of age, gender and experience, or a combination of all three.

"I think diversity is extremely important. You want a class. Imagine that your class is full of MBO girls who still live with mum and dad at home. Just imagine, yes not very healthy. That's not exactly what I call a brilliant learning environment. So you try, sometimes, so last year I took on someone who was way too old, I think perhaps almost 30…that you wonder what's it going to be like for him in the middle of all those girls. He'd travelled the world over, taken a lot of photo's, spent a long time in Berlin he had beautiful work. He had ideas, he was an independent thinker able to add a lot of valuable knowledge to the group. We try to look out for this. Diversity is indeed an important element for a healthy teaching environment." (Interviewee A).

"We need more students from a VWO background to improve the diversity in the class." (Interviewee A)

41 Curacao was a former colony now constituent country of the kingdom of the Netherlands, and as such the public education system is based on that of the Dutch.

THE FOCUS ON BARRIERS TO EXCELLENCE ARE SEEN AS EXTERNAL TO THE INSTITUTION

As Burke and McManus have emphasized, potential, competence, or talent are ideologically loaded concepts that are "embedded in histories of classed and racialized inequalities, mis/recognitions and complex power relations" (<u>2009, 26</u>) Added to these elements, we can read a negative perception of 'girls living at home', who are not felt to be the true inhabitants of the academy. Their cultural capital is undervalued and does not fit easily into the romantic, idea of the creative as quintessentially male, urban and white. Taking up a detached embodiment of the universal man (<u>BLOOM 2012</u>) which is seen as a more appropriate position than that of one who is living at home. Furthermore, choices made from what could very well be an economic necessity, are deemed 'unhealthy'. Additionally, we see a rather stereotypical notion of man as an independent thinker, set to go off and discover the world i.e. not in a domestic setting, placed by default in opposition to playing it safe, rule bound conforming girls. Another aspect of the ideas expressed above is the focus on barriers

to excellence which are seen as external to the institution. It is not about the institution itself, but it is about, for example, residence conditions, gender and class when these are not part of the disposition and subjectivities of the standard student. Present is also a longing for another type of student one that encompasses the classic academic position, where brighter students will offer more potential. This was often accompanied by the concern that these desirable academic students would not stay long because they would miss learning in a challenging environment. How are we to read this, in some ways as a sort of longing a nostalgia for a time gone by when a particular form of expression or way of teaching was possible, and also as a confirmation of the long list of admissions staff expectations reflecting wider educational discourses on intelligence and ability. Ultimately, ability is uncritically embraced as a signifier of 'inner ability' or 'potential' (<u>BURKE & MCMANUS 2009</u>).

DIVERSITY IS OUT THERE

Many selectors associated with the idea of increasing diversity within the art school include policies aimed at increasing international collaborations between HE institutions. Exchange students from the University of Curacao's[41] art department were often positively cited as a concrete action being undertaken to stimulate greater diversity in the WdKA.

"We have an exchange programme with Curacao, with the academy there, where we actively encourage students from there to come here and that happens. Those students are here studying, so its getting better, but it does need more attention." (Interviewee E)

However, concern was expressed by another selector:

"we have a few students from the sort of white lower-class, who have as a result inculcated racist ideas, and have not learnt how to speak differently… and sit among the Antillean students not realising that what they are saying could be hurtful, because as far as they are concerned we are all equal". (Interviewee C)

These attitudes are interesting for many reasons, on the one hand, there is a clear attribution of cultural capital to international students. They are uncritically assumed to have high symbolic and cultural capital, an asset to the academy desirable of attracting global artistic talent. On the other hand, I am left wondering why local students who embody one or more cultural and or ethnic heritages

are not seen as potentially welcome creatives. The problem of diversity can only be resolved by outsourcing to other countries. But, this presence also is not unproblematic, as these students become the unwitting victims of possibly racist and or discriminatory comments that are 'innocent', there is a strong unwillingness to see racism, and a willingness to wrap it into terms that make the reading of it in some senses positive, racism read as the practice of equality. A double abdication of responsibility occurs here, on the one hand by the students whose backgrounds are really to blame and not they themselves and on the other by a teacher who has effectively removed themselves from the equation and thus obfuscates their own role and power to intervene in this setting. Wekker points to another aspect of white innocence laid bare here, which is the commonly held notion that "by definition, racism is located in working-class circles, not among "our kind of middleclass people" (2016, 18)

Other admissions tutors remarked on the whiteness of the teaching teams within the art school, others are concerned with making exchange students feel at home, while yet others see it as incidental, based more on actual events such as having a discussion about the Charlie Hebdo incident in the class. What is noticeable at this stage is a lack of readiness to interpret these ideas within the framework of a habitus where systemic racial and cultural domination is embedded. Most of the respondents stated a de facto awareness of how white the academy is either with reference to the student population and or the teaching staff, however only one in particular highlighted its exclusionary significance and the repercussions this could have in the curriculum, "I do think that the art academy in general, is a very white, white thinking, western orientated context", (Interviewee F). Various political initiatives by the local municipality to make the academy multicultural, and to attract more students from South Rotterdam to cross the north-south divide that exists, was mentioned by one interviewee, who concluded, "I hardly see anyone from South[42] participating here though" (C). What I find most revealing in this citation is the positioning of the speaker as outside the sphere of change, a discombobulation about who is the agent of this transformation lies at the centre of my interest, for it seems to be neither the person speaking, or the institute itself. Responsibility seems to lie outside with a third party. Operating at its core is an ideological ambivalence, underlying it is a set of beliefs in support of widening participation whilst waiting for another to implement the necessary practices. The pilot sister study **Art School Differences** (2011) in Zurich, has as one of its conclusions that

"this social uniformity stands in great contradiction with the flamboyant self-descriptions of art schools in global competition, nor with the idealistic concepts of art "as a civilising force that has the power to both challenge and transcends historically entrenched systems of social inequality"

as Ruben Gaztambide-Fernandez[43] has put it.

IN THESE EXAMPLES OF EXCLUSIONS A KIND OF CULTURAL ESSENTIALISING IS TAKING PLACE THAT DEPICTS THESE CANDIDATES AS ETHNIC BEINGS THUS NOT ARTISTIC

HAUNTING THE INTERVIEWS

Another feature of the interviews reveals how in particular moments ethnic diversity finds expression, pops up, and in general, is framed in one the following ways: often within a discourse of; trying to help the few that do apply by "giving them a chance" (Interviewee B), by "taking greater care to assess their work" (Interviewee A), "we have the tendency to give them preferential treatment", "if we are doubting, we think let's try it", (Interviewee H).

Subsumed beneath these comments is a benevolent attitude, one that is 'looking out for' diversity, to help them into the academy, so that it transforms itself by becoming a place of diversity. Conversely, the very act of trying harder to find the talent within these BME bodies reveals, to me, diversity as a form of hospitality, which serves to reinforce the host as whiteness (AHMED 2016). To be welcomed in this way is according to Ahmed to be reminded that you are not at home. In fact, she maintains that the welcome is not unconditional, but is dependent on "integrating into a common organisational culture, or by "being" diverse, and allowing institutions to celebrate their diversity" (2016, 43) Moreover, buried within these words is the notion

42 South Rotterdam is a euphemism for poor and of migrant origin with little to no educational opportunities, much poverty, unemployment and heavily reliant on social services and benefits. The South is the poorest part of Rotterdam. See www.rotterdam.nl/nprz, Entzinger & Engberson, 2014.

43 Gaztambide-Fernández, Rubén/Vander-Dussen, Elena/Cairns, Kate (2012): "The Mall" and "the Plant": Choice and the Classed Construction of Possible Futures in Two Specialized Arts Programs. In: *Education and Urban Society* 20, page 2.

44 http://ualresearchonline. arts.ac.uk/view/creators/ Goodwin= 3APaul=3A=3A. html

that these students are not in and of themselves good enough, extra care needs to be taken in reading their work. Consequently, the prospect of misrecognition looms large due to the, 'we are doing them a favour' discourse. As curator and urban theorist Paul Goodwin in the UK has repeatedly contended[44] the impact of BME arts and creativity visible in the global commodification of Black urbanism, is not supported by a concomitant inclusion of these same groups within art schools, because as a general practice they remain on the outside looking in. This role as diversity benefactor, acts to keeps the focus on an individualistic, ahistorical, level and leaves me wondering whether the intention to change the(ir) perception of the institution to which the admissions staff belong rather than the institutional practices themselves.

Other remarks concerned the perceived artistic qualities of BME students who were not successful candidates, explained away as, "his work had something sunny and happy about it... but there was something missing in his application form" (Interviewee A) and "they thought she wanted to bring the Surinamese culture into The Netherlands art academy, they expressed doubts about her cultural background being enough for the arts & crafts programme she wanted to follow" (Interviewee C)

Here I am reminded of McManus and Burke's findings, who noted in those willing to give widening participation policies a chance that as a consequence of habitus confronting,

"an unfamiliar field, although the experience can be transformative, it more often produces feelings of discomfort, ambivalence and uncertainty", (REAY ET AL., IN McMANUS AND BURKE, 2009, 20).

Besides which these explanations of unsuccessful applicants are reminiscent of Bourdieu's (1991) assertion that art is implicated in the reproduction of disparities, whereby the relationship between culture and power results in affinity to tastes as artistic qualities works to create and uphold social differences. The cultural capital of certain ethnic groups, is thereby devalued and delegitimised (BOURDIEU, 1984). In these specific examples of exclusions, a kind of cultural essentialising is taking place, that depicts these candidates as ethnic beings thus de facto not artistic. Using descriptions such 'sunny', 'happy' and 'bringing

colour' functions to infantilise these prospective candidates. Conjuring up images of a hapless, naïveté rather than an independent globally orientated critical creative, so desired by selection staff. Significantly, as Hall (<u>2013</u>) has pointed out one of the results of the West encountering black people gave rise to a regime of representations where black people were portrayed as simple, childlike, happy even in slavery. These innocent words echo a cultural archive (<u>WEKKER 2016</u>) in which white people were associated with a culture that was developed to overcome and subdue nature while black people's culture was inextricably bound up with their nature, fixing them as inferior (<u>HALL 2013</u>). The cultural archive is to be found in the mind and hearts of metropolitan citizens,

"its content is also silently cemented in policies, in organizational rules, in popular and sexual cultures, and in common-sense everyday knowledge, and all of this is based on four hundred years of imperial rule." (<u>WEKKER 2016, 19</u>)

The last two observations reveal a further stereotyping of current BME students:

"We have a student with a Muslim background, brilliant and ambitious. He only wants to work with textiles within interior design. Yes, that and so I asked him why? But working with textiles are for men there is very natural, that is good. So now I get it." (Interviewee C).

The successful student is not making the standard choice and is not understood from a perspective of creativity but one of cultural masculinist essentialism. Working on the gender script that textiles within an interior design is something women do, it is therefore a spectacle[45] if an ambitious male student of Muslim faith chooses this path. However, the notion that a highly ambitious male student is working within the feminine field of textiles within interior design leads to confusion until he reveals he is following a culturally gendered script from another country, a making sense, fixing his behaviour in ethnic terms and therefore readable.

"We have some Antillean students, but they are still in the minority, still yes. I think its also because they think, yes what can you become by studying visual arts? And its better to be a pharmacist or something, yes." (Interviewee H)

Disclosures such as these situate the absence of BME students as a failure of the other to understand the value of art and design, accordingly Sarah Ahmed claims, "the problem of whiteness is thus redescribed here not as an institutional problem but as a problem with those who are not included by it." (<u>2016, 35</u>) This comment is inscribed as an ethnic marker of difference, the implication being that there is little or no appreciation of art and design and the role it can play in what are considered 'other cultures'. Culture, here acts as a real thing not an abstract and purely analytical notion, approaching culture as anthropologists of old did, which is as normative and predictive. Culture here causes behaviour and is not understood as an abstraction from it. Taken-for-granted realities in this way are institutionally self perpetuating,

"the widespread belief that some social distinctions are ethnic by nature can take

on its own social momentum as ethnicity, too, is subjected to reification... It is this process of reification ...that gives it the appearance of being an autonomous factor in the ordering of the social world"* (<u>BAUMANN 1996, 19</u>).

CONCLUSION

Having come to the end of my examination of how selection processes operate, there are several major findings which need to be critically assessed if we are to take part in a serious attempt to rethink whom we want to select and what we as an institution want to become. If we are to become more than a field for teachers to recognise and reward the advantage of those with specific forms of cultural capital and thus exclude those without, reward culture-related competencies rather than art, design or creative potential.

Such selection practices subject working class and or BME applicants to a form of symbolic violence that rewards only a dominant cultural capital. This action, is uncritically assumed to be meritocratic and legitimate. Utilising and promoting such arbitrary criteria of assessment, we could argue that admissions staff are engaged in shoring up a habitus of which they themselves are a part. Without making strenuous attempts to alter the backgrounds of staff, notions of who is and who is not creative, the gap between who takes a seat within the academy and those on the outside will only continue to increase. Population changes in the rest of Rotterdam will take care of that. ●

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45 See el Tayeb (2011: xxiv) for use of spectacular here, referring to the active process of forgetting of repressing the presence of non-white Europeans, as having no place in the collective memory except as a threat or a continuous temporality.

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