



## Sensuous Learning

Sensuous learning is a conceptual frame to explore the lived learning experiences that have been explored, unfolded and recorded in my practice for almost a decade. My practice operates from the intention articulated in the *Sensuous society* manifesto, which I wrote as a response to the financial and ecological crisis in 2008. This manifest argues that the aesthetic dimension has been under-prioritized since respectively the Enlightenment and The Industrial Revolution, in that cognitive and rational perceptions, recognitions and experiences was valued higher than the sensuous, which is at the core of the aesthetic experience of the world as described by Baumgarten and the aesthetic philosophy following him. It furthermore argues that since then art has been more or less exclusive due to its autonomy and the idea of the 'art-genius' - That only people with very special transcending intelligence have access to this mode of experiencing the world. Art is a quintessenced mode of the aesthetic dimension, however the sensuous and poetic mode of experiencing the world lives within all of us - As we say in our performance methodology of the poetic self - The poetic self is inherent within us.

Therefore I also aim at 'democratizing the aesthetic dimension' by which I mean to unfold and open the sensuous within potentially everyone and on the multiple stages of society. This intention unfolds in my practice. Through immersive, interventionist and interactive performance art strategies I apply a sensuous and poetic layer to different institutions of society in an exploration of what this institution would be if this was an institution of a Sensuous society. Sensuous society is a potential future world governed by aesthetic, by which I mean sensuous and poetic, principles instead of rational and economic, which are currently governing. I see the possibility of exploring what any institution or relationship would be if governed by aesthetic principles - E.g.: What would the prison of a Sensuous society

be? What would the Hospital of a Sensuous society be? What would the bank of a Sensuous society be? What would the family of a Sensuous society be? Etc. However, I am currently exploring what city life and living in a Sensuous society would be with the large-scale project the Dome of Visions, and what the school of a Sensuous society would be with the large-scale project Sisters Academy. The lived findings of this experiment are *Sensuous learning* contributions. These are recorded in the expansive data material of our sensuous Archive, consisting among other of notebooks, diaries and artefacts from the different layers of participants in our Sisters-manifestations. In my forthcoming practice-based PhD with the working title: "Sensuous Transformation: Democratizing the Aesthetic and Sustainable Futures" (since 2016, but may ofcourse change before I hand in my thesis in 2020) I will look at this data and investigate my practice theoretically when exploring my current research question: "*What is sensuous transformation and how does it contribute to a sustainable future through sensuous learning processes?*". As Sisters Academy is a performance-experiment the sensuous learning explorations happens within a performative framework. Sisters Academy primarily unfolds in two different large-scale formats: *Sisters Academy - The Takeover* and *Sisters Academy - The Boarding School*. In each format sensuous learning is explored through practice and thus recorded through lived examples in different ways.

In The Takeover we take over the leadership of a series of actual upper secondary schools. During a one-week vacation at the school we move in as a team of performers, set-, sound- and light-designers, technicians and documentarists. When the students come back to their school Monday morning the school has been completely transformed into a sensuous universe sound, light and sensuous spaces and artefacts. Their classes will now be conducting in this sensuous space. The dialogue with the school has been initiated years prior to the manifestation and the preparation of the teachers at the school at least half a year before. The teachers has been asked to innovate their classes from the premise: You are now teaching at the school of a Sensuous society where the aesthetic dimension is governing, which means, that our guiding principle is the sensuous recognition, perception and experience of the world. This furthermore means that your teaching has to stimulate sensuous learning. So as a Math teacher the question is: "How can I teach Math sensuously?" or "How can I teach Math to stimulate a sensuous learning experience?". The teachers go through a process of innovating their classes completely from these premises. They are guided

by the performative methods of Sisters Academy. Central to the performance method is the method of The Poetic Self. As indicated we define The Poetic self, not as a character or a fiction, but as the inherent poetic potential that already lives within us. The poetic self derives from the sensuous aspects of our being, which we might not give much space in everyday life. In a Sensuous society, however, this side of our being, would have space, and thus, when we manifest our performance experiments, we are present as our poetic self. The poetic self is discovered through a series of performance exercises. Once it is discovered it is also externalized and thereby made present and visible to the world. It does not only live an inner hidden life.

In the preparation with the teachers they find their poetic self. From this mode of being, from which they begin to perceive and be in the world from and with the sensuous aspects of their being they rethink their teaching and innovate it to stimulate sensuous learning. We do not deliver a manual on how to do that, but deliver an inspirational framework in the form of:

*A vision:* Sensuous society.

*A (research) question:* How would you teach at the school of a Sensuous society to stimulate sensuous learning?

*A performative inspirational framework (immersion and intervention):* We transform the school completely into a physically manifested sensuous space in which we can conduct these explorations of the question within.

*A performance method:* The Poetic Self. A new mode of being in the world, from which we can explore this question informed by the sensuous aspects of our being.

*A performative inspirational framework (interactivity and intervention):* Performers will be present in their poetic self as you new colleagues at the school. These new staff have moved into the school and are present in their poetic self. The conduct sensuous learning experiences in the in-between spaces at the school space and time-wise. That is before and after other classes and in breaks and in the unused spaces of the school: underneath the staircase, in the hallways, toilets, foyer, a corner of the gym or the school yard.

In the process many teachers are frustrated that they do not receive more precise instructions on how to teach sensuously. But once they 'crack it' they feel a strong ownership of what they have developed, empowerment and a stronger implication for anchoring and integrating these sensuous learning innovations at the school when the physical manifestation of the performance experiment has come to an end. Thus, sensuous learning is the innovations that are happening in the classroom of the teachers at the school, it is the practices

unfolded by the performers and due to the overall sensuousness of the space and the vision of a Sensuous society as a guiding principle it is also happening in all the in-betweens at the school.

In the Boarding School we move into an art institution and transforms it into a sensuous boarding school. It is a large-scale, immersive performance-installation, where everyone can enrol as a student to participate in the explorations of sensuous knowledge production. This format involves different levels of participation: performers, visiting researchers/teachers/artists conducting a residency to explore their take on sensuous learning, daily visits from real upper secondary school classes, concert guests, panelists, panel attendees and the staff of the co-producing institution. The format is durational, and thus the school is open around the clock for the duration of the manifestation (About Sisters Academy). Students enrol at Sisters Academy for at least 24 hours and leave their electronic devices and everyday clothes behind. During their stay, they take part in poetic rituals, morning- and evening gatherings, sensuous classes, meals, encounters and beyond.

These sensuous learning innovations lives in the ones who have taught them and the once who have received these teachings and in everyone who is submerged into the overall sensuous ambience as atmosphere of the universe of Sisters Academy. They are also recorded in the data, which is donated to the Archive at the end of the manifestations and as described above comes in the form of notebooks, diaries, gifts, letters, confessions, artefacts and beyond. In that way an important contribution of the Archive is also to transport data out while the aesthetic, sensuous, experience is going on rather than afterwards, which is otherwise often the case. As mentioned I will look closely at this material in my forthcoming PhD in which I will also come to a more theorized understanding of what sensuous learning is. The power of my current (since 2012) explorations of sensuous learning is the lived experiences of it through wide and deep practices.