



# **OPEN (UP) WRITING**

**Teaching writing as creating;  
making bachelor level art and design students  
comfortable with writing.**

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Rotterdam - March 2020

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are quite a few people I want to thank. The saying 'it takes a village' does not only apply to raising children; it applies to writing a master thesis as well.

There are my supervisors, Jolande Bosch and Sjoerd Westbroek, whose feedback helped sharpen my research and who pushed me to keep going. They were firm when I needed them to be, and understanding and kind when I got stuck and needed some encouraging words.

There are Karin Aarink and Kate Briggs, who made the time for me to talk to them about writing education in Art and Design.

There are my fellow researchers at the HKU, who are part of the research group *Beyond Freewriting*: Ninke Overbeek, Nirav Christophe, Jelmer Soes, and Daniela Moosmann. Our monthly meetings brought inspiration, energy, and provided me with new insights on the term 'comfort' in writing.

There is Koen Caris, who spent hours reading my texts, being my fresh set of eyes, and flagging every 'unclear sentence' he could find. Without his feedback and endless cups of tea, I could not have done this.

And lastly, there is my family.

My mom and my sister, who have kept me sane during this process. Who, in this difficult time after losing my father, have depended on me, as I have depended on them. Who have had my back and were always there when I needed them, even if it was just to vent.

And, of course, my dad, who might not be physically present, but whose voice is always with me. Who would appreciate the fact that I am writing my acknowledgments in the middle of the night because he was exactly the same.

To my village: thank you.

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## THE STUDY ROOM

*We are in a tiny room with a large, old, wooden bookcase and a small desk. There are stacks of paper spread out on the floor. There is a comfortable chair with a reading lamp. The room has a pleasant temperature. When you enter the room, carefully side-stepping the piles on the floor, you see a figure emerge from behind the bookcase. She waves you in and invites you to take a seat.*

MARJOLIJN

Hi there, welcome to this thesis. Would you like something to drink?

*Marjolijn picks up a tray with coffee, tea, some water, and a plate of cookies. She hands it to you.*

MARJOLIJN

My name is Marjolijn van den Berg, and I am both the author of, and your guide through, this research document.

### WRITING WITHIN ART AND DESIGN EDUCATION

MARJOLIJN

Maybe you already expected it from the title of this thesis, but we are going to spend the next [ ] pages talking about writing and writing education within the context of higher Art and Design education. For this research, I have set myself a goal: to find ways to make Art and Design students more comfortable with writing.

If you know me, this will not come as much of a surprise: I am a writer, you see. I have had a deep love of language ever since I learned how to read and write. My childhood consisted mostly of me sitting in a corner, with my nose stuck in a book. My love of language remained and in 2013 I graduated from the bachelor Writing for Performance at the HKU (Utrecht Art School) in Utrecht (The Netherlands). There, I not only studied to be a playwright, but also developed a love for teaching and conducting research.

*Marjolijn grabs another chair and sits down next to you.*

MARJOLIJN

So, how did I come to write this thesis? Well, it started when my colleague Ninke Overbeek and I were asked to create a writing workshop for Art and

Design teachers for the HKU Centre of Expertise, as part of their 'Art and Language' development program. This program was developed because the HKU noticed that Art and Design students struggled to use language to communicate about their work (both verbally and in writing) and lacked writing skills. In this program, the focus seemed to be on using correct grammar and spelling and using the proper jargon used in the students' field. I felt that this approach did not use the full potential that writing has. For me, this strategy seemed to be about ticking the boxes - answering questions like: 'Are the students meeting the standards that we as an institute need them to?' or: 'Are they using the correct terminology?' This is not a bad thing, of course, don't get me wrong. But for me, it does not address the actual problem. Why do the students struggle with writing to begin with? Is it an issue with grammar and spelling or does it run deeper? What does this struggle mean to them and is their experience with it different than what the institute counts as struggling? And how can you address these struggles?

### GETTING THE RESEARCH QUESTION RIGHT

MARJOLIJN

When I started this research, I knew I wanted to do something with writing education and something with art and design. I wanted to improve the writing education within Art and Design education, but I did not know how. Where did my expertise and my love for writing fit in? And how was I going to turn this desire into a research question? I had the ambition to develop a form of writing education that allows art students to feel agency in writing. I wanted them to have the ability to use writing to their advantage. To think about writing the same way I think about drawing, for instance: as an addition to my ability to express myself. I wanted them to feel like they have room to act within writing. But what does that mean: having room to act? What do you need to do that?

For me, this happens when I feel confident in what I am doing. Take cooking, for example. I feel comfortable in the kitchen. When I read a recipe, I can imagine what the end result will taste like, and I can understand why each step is there. So I can also imagine what will happen if I change something; if I add another spice or leave one out. Because I understand the process, I can divert from the instructions. The recipe is just a guideline. That is the type of confidence I want my students to experience with writing. For me, confidence comes from being comfortable with something. And I believe techniques from creative writing, art writing, and

art practices can be used to help the students get there.

*She gets up and walks over to a rolled-up banner, tied up with a string.*

MARJOLIJN

So, the research question I ended up with was:

*She unties the string, and the banner unfolds.*

"How can pedagogical and didactic approaches informed by artistic and creative writing strategies contribute to making art and design bachelor students more comfortable with writing?"

MARJOLIJN

In this research, I strived to:

- Create some clearly defined workshops that I can teach to art students.
- Provide practical and applicable recommendations concerning writing education within a higher art education setting.

Now, it's time to leave this room and take you on a tour. There is a lot to discover and to talk about.

*She takes your hand and pulls you into the hallway with a level of enthusiasm that will dislocate your shoulder.*

## THE STORAGE ROOM

*She walks you down the hallway. You stop in front of a closed door. There's a sign on the door that says: 'Keep everything the way you found it. Yes, you, Marjolijn.' Marjolijn opens the door and beckons you in. The room is meticulous. There are shelves running all across the wall with white boxes on them. In the middle of the room, there is a glass display table.*

MARJOLIJN

In the storage room, you can find out more about how I approached this

research and why it is written in the way that it is. Here you can find the answers to the following questions:

- Who am I and what is my position in this research?
- How did I conduct this research?
- How did I analyze my material?
- Why did I choose this format?

I put them all into different boxes. So let's open them one at a time.

### WHO AM I, AND WHAT IS MY POSITION IN THIS RESEARCH?

*She takes a box off the shelf labeled 'Things about me.'  
In the box are little metal plaques with different inscriptions.  
She puts them on the glass display table.*

MARJOLIJN

I am a multitude of things: a writer with a BA in Writing for Performance, an educator, a thinker, a book lover, a researcher, a performer, a woman, an overachiever with poor time management skills. All of these influence the position I take in this research. I am not only an objective party: I have a stake in this. This means it was crucial to listen to other voices than the ones that whisper to me and to include them in this research. Even, or especially, if I did not agree with them.

*She goes back to the box and takes out two plaques.*

MARJOLIJN

Besides the many things that I am, there are also a couple of things I am not. (1) I am not currently employed as a teacher at an Art and/or Design school. (2) I am not a visual artist or designer who struggles with writing.

This has its pros and cons.

(1) Because I am not employed as an Art and Design teacher, I have had to put in more effort to find students for the educational project. Additionally, it may have been more challenging to gain insight into the structure of the art schools and their curriculum. On the other hand, I was – to some extent – unobstructed by these structures and curriculums. In conducting this research, I did not have to worry: what will colleague A think of this? How

will the course director respond? And another thing: because I am not attached to one specific Art and Design school or one particular course, I could meander. I could do workshops with different people in different courses and talk to teachers of several schools. Because of this I could obtain a broader perspective.

(2) I might not share the same practice as the students, so I have not lived their exact struggles, but I can relate to it. Writing, like making and designing, is a creative process, and no matter how experienced you are, you cannot escape the frustrations that come with creating. I can help students navigate these frustrations. Secondly, I can show students the similarities between the processes. I would not qualify myself as a visual artist, but I do enjoy drawing, painting, and sculpting. For me, both processes have a 'sketching' phase. In both processes I can stumble upon things by experimenting. I try out different styles and try to find the one most suited to make the reader/listener/viewer experience what I want them to. Both processes are about – occasionally – getting frustrated when you know the work is not right yet, but you cannot figure out what to change. And both are about eventually finding your voice.

*She puts the plaques back in the box and places it back on the shelf.*

#### HOW DID I ANALYZE MY MATERIAL?

*She walks further along the shelf, frowns for a second, and then sees the box she wants. It's labeled 'What the heck does comfortable mean?' In the box are two lists. She lays them down next to each other.*

MARJOLIJN

The research question I am trying to answer is:

"How can pedagogical and didactic approaches informed by artistic and creative writing strategies contribute to making art and design students more comfortable with writing?"

The main concept in this question is the term 'comfortable.' To properly assess the research material I have collected, I need to specify what I mean by being comfortable with writing, and, in relation to that, by being uncomfortable with writing. I based this list on my experience as a writing teacher, texts on this subject written by other writers/writing teachers, and

the conversations I had with fellow writing teachers about comfort and what it means in terms of students' process and delivered texts.

For me, signs of comfort in the writing process are:

- Enjoying the writing process, having fun with it.
- Engaging in writing more often (and not only when told to by a teacher).
- Being able to take a step back and analyze the process.
- Being able to navigate writing problems and utilizing writing strategies.
- Being able to assess the quality of the work; only needing occasional affirmation.
- Having insight into the importance of the process and not just fixating on the result.
- Being willing to share the work with others.

For me, signs of discomfort in the writing process are:

- Not enjoying writing, being rigid and anxious.
- Avoiding writing unless being told to do so by a teacher.
- Not being able to take a step back and analyze the process.
- Quitting when encountering a writing problem, and being unable to utilize writing strategies.
- Not being able to assess the quality of the work, needing constant affirmation.
- Not understanding the importance of the process.
- Fixating on the result and 'wanting to do it right'.
- Not being willing to share the work with others.

These two lists compile the signs I looked for when I read literature, conducted interviews, and worked with students.

When reading teaching pedagogies, I looked for ways to help students break through resistance, or ways to help them engage with certain topics. When reading about artistic practices, I looked for answers on how those artists use writing in the work and what it gives them, or why they hate writing and want to stay away from it, etc.

Let's move on to the steps I took to collect the research material.

*She puts the lists back in the box.*

## HOW DID I CONDUCT THIS RESEARCH?

*She walks over to another box, labeled 'how did I do this?'  
She takes out a stack of notebooks, all of them black and leather-bound.  
She puts them next to each other on the display table.*

MARJOLIJN

For this research, I have:

### Read literature

By using existing literature, I was able to map different points of view on the subject of writing within higher art education settings. For me, researching the experiences and theories of others was a good way to gain insight into the current debate on writing within Art and Design, and allow space for other voices within this thesis. I also read literature to find a pedagogical framework I could use, to not only look at artistic writing and creative writing strategies, but also have a solid pedagogical standpoint to support my writing didactics.

### Conducted interviews

Because almost all literature I found on art education or writing education within higher art education was US- or UK-based, I felt I lacked vital information on how these subjects are viewed and experienced within Dutch higher art education. To fill this gap, I conducted interviews with course directors and teachers. These interviews were mostly used during the preliminary phase. I found no big discrepancies with the UK/US-based articles. Doing interviews also allowed me to get live feedback on my research. The round table conversation with other writing teachers helped me to further my research question.

### Worked with students

I did not want to just speculate on different approaches, but I also wanted to try them out. So I organized writing workshops, mostly as part of existing courses, like Arts and Crafts and Fine Art and Design Teacher Training. In preparation of these workshops I also tried out parts of the workshops on my fellow master students. While doing the workshops with Art and Design students, I looked at signs of comfort and discomfort exhibited. I did not end up using these as strict indicators, because it was difficult to do this consistently and to make it measurable, but I did use the signs as a guideline for reflection, and as informal indicators.

To get the most information out of these workshops, I documented them by taking pictures, collecting the work/texts made by the students, and writing reflections on my findings in giving the workshops. I also asked students to write down their experiences.

In total, I did three iterative workshops/courses with students: two courses consisting of three 1,5-hour lessons with ± 20 first-year students of Arts and Crafts and one 3-hour workshop with ± 15 third-year Education in Art students.

*She stacks the notebooks and puts them back in the box.*



## WHY DID I CHOOSE THIS FORMAT?

MARJOLIJN

Only one more question to answer in this room. Namely: 'Why are we in this room?' Or more precisely: 'Why are we in this format?'

*She takes out a final box, labeled 'why are we reading a label on an imaginary box? In it are a resume and a couple of books on creative research.'*

MARJOLIJN

You have been with me for a few pages, so you may have noticed that this does not look like your standard thesis format. I think the subject of this research called for something different than the standard written text. I wanted the fun, creative side of writing to shine through, not only in the content, but also in the way that this content is written. Because honestly, the writing style of most academic articles is not something I particularly enjoy, even when I enjoy their content. So for the past two years, I have been looking for alternatives. I did not do this alone.

Since 2019 I have been part of a research group at the HKU, called *Beyond Freewriting*. In this research group we look for different ways to use writing as a method of inquiry and for alternative ways to disseminate (artistic) research. During my time in this research group I have felt drawn to two concepts: fictocriticism and creative non-fiction. People that have inspired me in this regard are Ronald J. Pelias, Laurel Richardson, Nadim Bakshov, and Maggie Nelson.

Inspired by their work, I decided to stay true to myself. I chose to write this thesis as a play because I am, first and foremost, a performance writer. It gives me space to merge different voices into one, and to interact with them. It allows me address you in a much more direct way.

*She puts everything back in the box and places the box back on the shelf.*

MARJOLIJN

Let's move on.

## THE DINING ROOM

### WHAT IS GOING ON BETWEEN ART AND DESIGN STUDENTS AND WRITING?

*You walk back into the hallway.*

MARJOLIJN

Look over there. Do you see that group of students down the hall? They are just standing there, looking at their feet, sighing. They are waiting for a class where they need to write a self-reflection document.

*The students nudge each other when their teacher walks by, rolling their eyes.*

STUDENT ONE

I can't believe we have to do this.

STUDENT TWO

I know man.

STUDENT THREE

'Writing is not just "challenging," it's oppositional to making art.'

*They nod their heads in agreement.*

*When the teacher says it's time to start the class, they shuffle in.*

MARJOLIJN

Do you recognize yourself in these students? What if we were to take the writing element away? Are there other times you have felt like this? I think we all have things that make us sigh, or that make us feel the urge to resist. Situations that make us feel uncomfortable. Moments in which we are like these students.

Now, I'll be honest with you: that was not a real group of students you just saw. I placed them here to paint a picture. But this group of students did not just come out of thin air. They are based on stories I came across when interviewing teachers. They can be found in articles on this subject. They stem from the reflections I wrote while doing my workshop pilots. Everywhere I looked, there is a tendency to make a clear division between 'art' on one hand, and 'writing' on the other side.

Art and Design students may also feel this sense of division. The experiences of art professors, as described by education faculty lecturers Linda Apps and Carolyn Mamchur in the article 'Artful Language: Academic Writing for the Art Student' (2009), seem to indicate this is the case.

The encounters that art students have with writing during their study appear to be conflictive.

According to Apps and Mamchur, art professors sense that their students not only feel a division between art and writing, but that writing is 'a breeding ground for frustration and resistance from art students who find writing about their art not only challenging but oppositional to the making of art.' (Apps & Mamchur, 2009, 270) Or, in the words of Dr. Rebecca Kill, head of the School of Art, Design and Computer Science at the York St John University: 'A homogenizing force, as an alien presence or as an element that should be resisted.' (Kill, 2006 as cited in Apps & Mamchur, 2009, 270) Reading this could make you wonder: why teach writing to Art and Design students at all? If it is such a struggle, could we not eliminate it?

*She rushes you down the hallway.*

MARJOLIJN

There is a conversation about this going on right now. If we hurry, we can catch it.

#### WHY TEACH WRITING TO ART AND DESIGN STUDENTS?

*Marjolijn and you walk into a formal dining room with a long table. Aversion and Conviction are sitting on opposite sides. Doubt is leaning against the wall*

AVERSION

I don't understand why we would teach writing to art students, anyway. 'An education in Fine Arts Practice and Design does not necessarily need writing.' (Borg, 2007, 85) If they are so opposed to it, calling it 'a homogenizing force,' why force it on them?

CONVICTION

Well, there is the formal argument, of course.

AVERSION

There is *always* a formal argument.

CONVICTION

If you look at it from an organizational perspective, it is quite simple: Art and Design education is part of higher education in the Netherlands.

Because if this, students must meet the writing requirements set for all higher education students.

*Aversion raises its eyebrows. Pours another glass of wine.  
Keeps taking calculated sips while Conviction talks.*

CONVICTION

The goal is to make higher education systems more compatible with one another, meaning that a bachelor obtained in one institute should ensure the student has developed the same educational standard and qualities as they would have in a bachelor obtained in a different institute. This way, a bachelor graduate is equipped to study at MA level in any European country. This uniformity stems from the Bologna Process. Art and Design needs to fall in line with this quality framework.

AVERSION

So you agree: 'writing is included in the program because of social and political choices that shaped the institutions that provide post-compulsory arts education and changes in the understanding of art within the art world. These choices and changes have made a written component a feature of post-compulsory education, and placed theorizing near the center of arts education.' (Borg, 2007, 85) The students are right. It is an "alien presence".

CONVICTION

Well, no.

AVERSION

Well, yes. You can't just say something like that and then deny my point. You! Are you seriously just going to stand there?

*Doubt looks around, pretending not to hear it is being addressed.*

CONVICTION

(to Aversion) You write.

AVERSION

Sometimes, yes. But usually because I have to. Because someone asks me to, for some reason. And it is hardly ever connected to my own art. Besides, I am not a fan of forcing Art and Design students into these language

shackles, just because I pick up a pen every once in a while.  
(to *Doubt*) Will you sit down already?

DOUBT  
In a minute.

AVERSION  
Are you even going to pick a side?

DOUBT  
I just... I...

CONVICTION  
I have a seat ready for you.

AVERSION  
You would like that, wouldn't you?

CONVICTION  
I'm not saying you are not right about the institutional part. I'm just saying writing is not an alien presence in art and design.

AVERSION  
So you mean to say they are liars? They don't want to put in the effort? Do you deny the feeling of discomfort and anxiety you get when you need to write about your work? 'Oh great, the project is done, let's move on to this artificial stage of representation.' The task of reviewing the work belongs to someone else. The artist has done their part. What do you want them to say? Break it down, toot their own horn? Let them move on and leave the words to someone who enjoys using them. (Nelson, 2009, 141)

CONVICTION  
I'm not saying that it is not challenging.

AVERSION  
You know just as well as I do that writing is not just "challenging," it's oppositional to the making of art. One is alive, creative, exciting. The other is dead and time-consuming, and will suck the inspiration right out of you. It's something that you have to do, not something you want to do. (Nelson, 2009, 141)

CONVICTION  
No wonder you see it this way if you separate the two like that. 'The idea that you suddenly stop creating in the sensory realm and suddenly pick up the task of analytical or scholarly writing is alien to all creative processes. Once you have quarantined the creative and sensory part from the writing part, you have effectively determined that one part is alive and the other is dead. The one part is led by creative impulses; the other is led by bureaucratic impulses.' (Nelson, 2009, 141)

AVERSION  
Okay, even if I agreed with you on this, hypothetically, you have still failed to explain the 'why' to me. It benefits the institute, but how does it help the student?

CONVICTION  
Are going to be open to what I am saying? Or are you just going to wait for the perfect opportunity to jump me?

AVERSION  
I wouldn't do that.

*Both look at Doubt.*

DOUBT  
I feel like we are running low on breadsticks. Let me just –

AVERSION  
Fine, I'll bite my tongue.

CONVICTION  
Okay. So, let's agree that there is a formal, institutional part. There is also the art field part, in which artists are asked more and more to write about their art and to validate it towards financing parties, the audience, etc. We can hate it, but we still have to deal with it. So, why not use that to your advantage? 'As the artist writes about art – or their art – they start to take charge of readings of their work, beyond what the work itself curates.' (Francis M, 2010, 107)

But you asked me how it benefits the students. First of all, writing can help you navigate between ideas, theories, and discourses. It helps you see the

connections. 'Because you are critically reflecting as well, you start to connect the dots through that process. For me, when I actually see the words then the light bulbs start going off and I can see and start to feel the connection and where the next dot might be.' (Page, 2012, 55) If you look at ideas or theories like threads of wool, writing is the pair of knitting needles that helps you knit them all together into this whole new thing. (Daichendt, 2012, 75) (Nelson, 2009, 161) (Flower and Hayes, 1977, 454)  
Like –

AVERSION

An idea scarf? A discourse sweater?

CONVICTION

Very funny. You see what I mean, right Doubt?

DOUBT

Well...

AVERSION

Sorry, sorry. Old habits.

(to Conviction) You act like writing is some magical tool, but for me, it does not work that way. 'I know I need images whenever I am putting things together. Images speak to me and give me words. I need to see the thing before I can start to construct any sort of rhythm piece or even a presentation.' (Johnston, 2012, 57) It is the visual that helps you make the connection. There is no need for those writing knitting needles.

CONVICTION

I am not saying it should be one or the other. You asked me what writing can do for the students. Besides, 'writing also has the potential to make thinking directly communicable.' (Daichendt, 2012, 75) This could serve Art and Design students well, if they want to communicate about their work with their peers or their teacher.

AVERSION

You mean like this other brilliant thing called talking?

CONVICTION

Ha! But tell me, how many times have insights gained during conversations slipped away from you? We think we will remember them, but when we sit

down to put them into action, it turns out that we have lost them. And no matter how hard we try, we cannot find them again. 'Writing can preserve ideas so they can be reflected upon.' (Daichendt, 2012, 75)

AVERSION

Yes, but –

CONVICTION

Of course, you could record your conversations. But you might not always have a sparring partner that can help you sort your thoughts. 'You can give yourself this advantage by staging your own discussion' on paper. (Flower and Hayes, 1977, 454) Writing can make your ideas and thinking communicable to yourself. You can explore your thinking and translate it into words. 'The process of writing functions as the essential dialogue that you have with yourself.' (Nelson, 2009, 142) And by writing it down, you can reflect on it later. Maybe your thinking has changed. Perhaps you've forgotten why you made certain choices.

AVERSION

That's nice and all, but –

CONVICTION

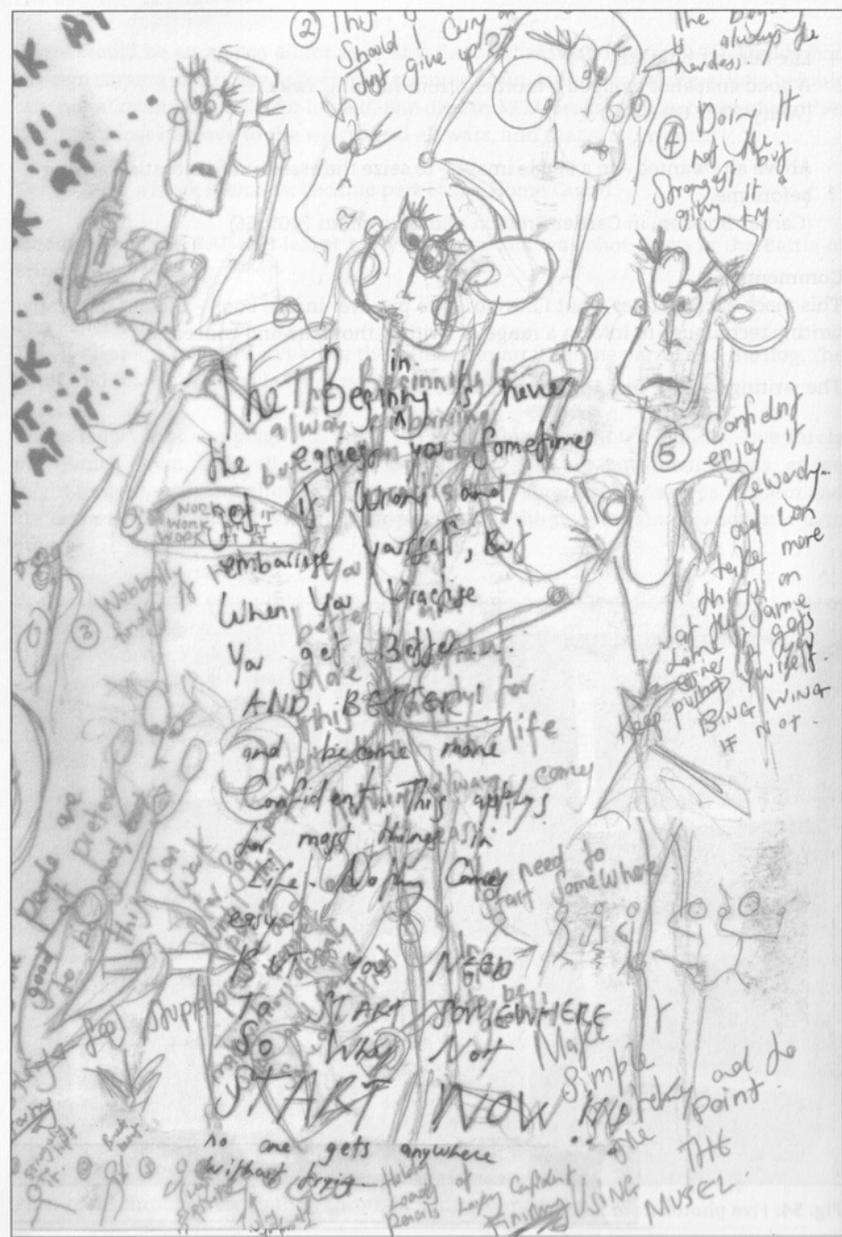
I know you are going to bring up sketching. But instead of just having a sketchbook, could you not integrate the two in a journal? It can be both a visual and a verbal log. Even you have to admit: 'in order to fully take on and deepen your knowledge, you need to develop the skills of reflection on research, activities, visits, lectures, tutorials, etc. The process of keeping the reflective log leads you to assess the material you are gathering.' (Francis, 2009, 81) If you relied solely on visual aids to do this, you would have to remember everything these aids represent. Our minds are quite susceptible to manipulation. A memory is easily altered.

AVERSION

Look who is getting all worked up.

CONVICTION

I'm just saying that writing can help artists: explore ideas, make their decisions, and 'aid their own understanding of the choices made in the studio.' (Daichendt, 2012, 74) You can use it to try to pin down thoughts and ideas floating around in your head, but also to 'evaluate ideas in a concrete



EXAMPLE OF A STUDENT JOURNAL (FRANCIS, 2009, 275)

matter.' (Daichendt, 2012, 74) (Francis, 2009, 36)

#### AVERSION

Ok, fine. There is a point to be made.

But if you really think writing could be useful, you have to look at ways that students can get past those feelings of resistance and frustration. You have to take these feelings seriously; something is going on there. So if you want to teach them writing, you have to look at how you will do this. You have to be willing to cater to them specifically.

#### CONVICTION

Agreed.

*Doubt heaves a sigh of relief.*

#### DOUBT

Agreed.

*Marjolijn taps you on the shoulder.*

#### MARJOLIJN

Time to leave.

*She takes you back into the hallway.*

#### MARJOLIJN

I know I said we needed to hurry here, or we'd miss the conversation, but that was just to create some dramatic effect. I've placed them there, having this exact conversation on a perpetual loop, so they are just going to start all over again.

What I take away from this conversation is that there is a difference between how writing can be beneficial to Art and Design students in their development, and how these students experience writing, which is clearly not beneficial. This needs to change. I want to talk to you about what this 'catering the writing education to the Art and Design student' could entail.

Follow me, will you?

## THE THINKING ROOM

### WHAT DOES WRITING MEAN TO ME?

*Marjolijn brings you into a room. The walls are plastered with mind maps and papers with notes scribbled on them.*

MARJOLIJN

Welcome to my thinking room. This is where I come to make sense of things. Whenever I read texts I need to create mind maps, to understand them better, and if I can find connections between them. Mind maps are part of my “writing knitting needles”, like Conviction called them. I took you to this room to further discuss writing and what type of writing education will help students be more comfortable with writing.



A PICTURE OF MY HOME OFFICE

*You walk around the room and see a tiny note taped to the door, that says 'writing: friend / bully.'*

MARJOLIJN

Oh yeah, I'll tell you why I wrote this note. During this research, the conversation often steered towards the question: what type of writing do I

mean? Do I want to teach the students academic writing, creative writing, reflective writing? I thought I needed to pick one, but I couldn't do this, because I did not feel that what I was doing, was necessarily about a specific genre of writing. It frustrated me that I could not accurately put into words what I meant, so I decided to write down what writing means to me and how I feel about writing, especially concerning (dis)comfort:

For me, writing can be both a friend and an enemy. Writing can be the friend that takes you to places you haven't been to before. The friend that pushes you to go further. The friend that talks to you when you're stuck and that helps you gain clarity. The friend that is always available, anytime, anywhere. But writing can also be a bully. Acting all high and mighty, not telling you what you're doing wrong, instead just rolling its eyes at you. It can shut down your ideas and make you feel like you have no room to breathe. Eventually, you want to avoid spending time with this bully. And if you only experience the bully-side of writing, you will stop writing.

Over the past few years, I have had conversations with people who tell me they 'cannot write'. Whenever they have to write, they feel 'blocked' and 'unable to write a decent text', or 'unable to put their thoughts into words'. Because this keeps happening to them, they have started telling themselves they are "bad writers", when in reality they just can't get past the bully. They freeze or keep trying to push it away; they can't reflect on their work. This does not make them bad writers, it just makes them inexperienced writers. It makes them "uncomfortable writers".

So it seems simple: make writing your friend and not your bully. Unfortunately, it's a little bit more complicated. As any experienced writer can tell you: in the writing process, you will always meet both the friend and the bully. Just like you cannot create a painting without staining your brush or sculpt clay without getting your hands dirty, writing is a messy business and it will always stay that way. It's like Robert Nelson says in his book *The Jealousy of Ideas: research methods in the creative arts*:

'Writing problems are inherent in writing. Writing is always impure. Writing is always incomplete. Writing is always organic (it is mutant and not easily designed). Writing is always tendentious or biased. Writing is always in the wrong order. Writing is always a scramble for authority. Writing is always for someone else. And when you write, all these incongruities compound and are experienced at once.' (Nelson, 2009, 156)

The statement 'writing problems are inherent in writing' might seem a little demoralizing, but to me, becoming an experienced or comfortable writer is not about eliminating writing problems. It is about navigating them. It's the difference between getting shipwrecked and knowing how to steer your ship through the storm. And not only that, but also - because you are not afraid of sinking - having the time to enjoy those moments, standing at the helm with the wind in your face, feeling the sun on your cheeks.

That moment when the perfect phrase pops into your head, or you suddenly see the connection between different texts. Enjoying these moments that writing is your friend and not your bully, is what will make you a comfortable writer, and what will make you stick with it.

This concept of 'navigating writing problems' helps me clarify what I mean when I say writing. When I use this word, I am not talking about the end product; I am talking about the verb. It's like how Nelson talks about writing. He's not (only) talking about the product, but about the act of writing as well. He addresses the writing *process*.

#### HOW CAN FOCUSING ON THE WRITING PROCESS HELP TEACH STUDENTS TO WRITE?

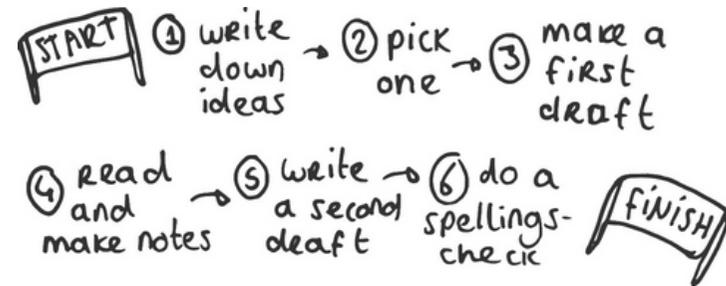
MARJOLIJN

I believe that a big part of students' resistance to writing stems from how students learn to write. One of the things I've noticed when it comes to teaching writing, especially non-fiction, is that often the focus is on what the end-result should be, not on how students might get there. Or, as Linda Flower and John Hayes say in the article Problem-Solving strategies and the Writing Process: 'teaching students to write by dissecting and describing a completed piece of writing.' (Flower and Hayes, 1977, 449) In other words: "this is what a decent essay looks like, and this is how it is built up. Now you do it."

It's like asking students to build a bookshelf by explaining the principles of the shelf, giving them a list of requirements, and then sending them off to do it, without teaching them how to use any of the available tools. And then ing surprised when they just stand there, unsure of themselves. Or scolding them when the result is not level or the edges are too rough.

So why does this keep happening when it comes to teaching writing?

Because how to write is harder to explain than what to write. Well, like I said earlier: writing is a messy business. What happens between the empty page and the final text can feel mysterious. There is an awareness that students must be taught how to write, but trying to do this often results in vague descriptions of indistinct steps, such as these:



Now it might seem like this describes a writing process, but in reality it represents an outline of a writing process. It does not tell you how to get ideas through writing, how to capture those ideas in words, how to write a first draft, or what to do when you get stuck. Schemes like this one seem helpful, and to an extent they are, but, to revisit the bookshelf analogy: they do not explain what tools to use and when to use them. They also trick you into thinking that writing is a linear process (Flower and Hayes, 1977, 461) with steps you can follow, and that as long as you stick to the plan, everything will be alright, but this is not the case. It actually -

*Suddenly, the door swings open.  
In the doorway stands an intimidating figure, wearing a leather jacket.*

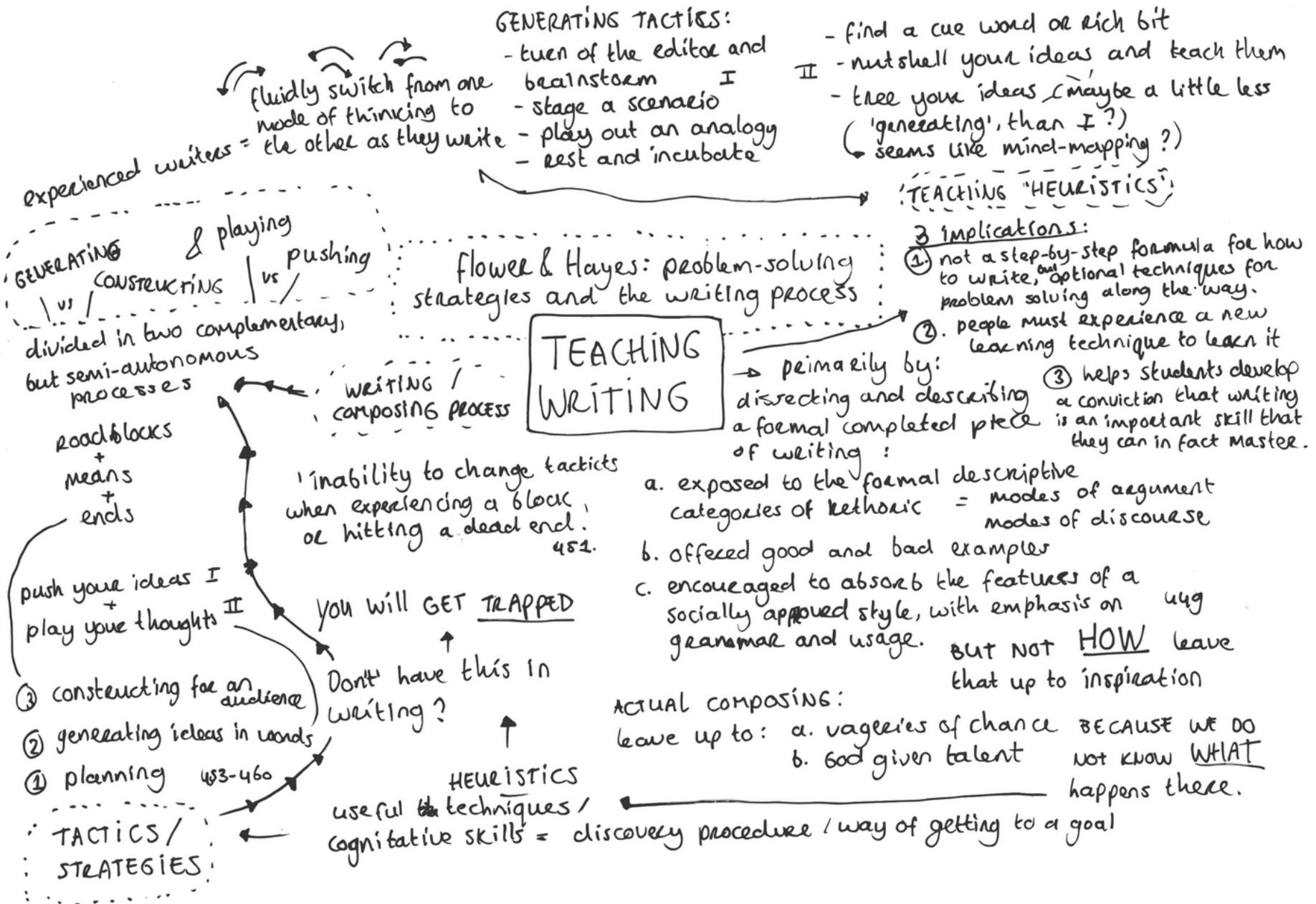
MARJOLIJN

Oh god, what are you doing here?

*The figure grins and walks into the room.*

INNER CRITIC

Hi, I'm Inner Critic. Nice to make your acquaintance. Marjolijn here has been trying to outrun me, even though she knows she can't. Silly woman. I'm here because she keeps making ridiculous claims, like: 'writing teachers do not teach you how to write.'



MARJOLIJN

I made no such claim.

INNER CRITIC

It seems to me like you did.

MARJOLIJN

No, I merely described my experience that writing education sometimes lacks concrete strategies for building a text, and for picking the correct strategies to overcome obstacles you face during your writing process.

INNER CRITIC

You use the word 'strategies' a lot, but can you even explain what you mean by this?

MARJOLIJN

I'm glad you asked. For me, strategies are the different techniques writers use to accomplish their goals. Say, for instance, you are starting a new text. You might want to start by making your initial thoughts on the subject clearer. You can do this by talking to someone and recording your conversation, or you can make a list of questions and write down your answers intuitively. You can read other texts about the subject, highlight the parts that resonate with you and collect these in a separate document. Or maybe you just want to write down bullet points or make a mind map.

INNER CRITIC

And you think you can teach Art and Design students these strategies?

MARJOLIJN

I think so. I believe students can become more comfortable with writing by knowing what strategies to use. And I will try to frame these strategies in a way that resonates with their practices.

INNER CRITIC

Do you have anything to back your claim up?

MARJOLIJN

As a matter of fact, yes. Let's start by taking a closer look at a mind map I made from the article 'Problem-Solving strategies and the Writing Process', by composition theorist Linda Flower and psychology researcher

John Hayes. Flower and Hayes want 'to treat writing as a thinking problem, rather than an arrangement problem,' meaning they don't think that poor writing skills are the result of being unfamiliar with the correct structure and other requirements of a text, but rather a result of being unfamiliar with the mental procedures experienced writers use to write. In their article they offer some 'underlying problem-solving processes writers use in the act of composing' which they have tried to translate from 'basis heuristic procedures' into 'teachable techniques.' (Flower and Hayes, 1977, 450)

INNER CRITIC

Heuristic procedures?

MARJOLIJN

Heuristics are tactics or strategies that you can use to reach a certain goal or explore an idea. They are not a set of rules but rather an alternative way of approaching something. (Flower and Hayes, 1977, 450-451) Inexperienced writers lack these heuristics. When trying to figure out how to write something, inexperienced writers turn to 'prescriptions (how the textbooks pretend people do it)', like that scheme I showed earlier, and 'inspiration' (the infinitely mysterious way people really do it). When this does not work they experience writers' block. Flower and Hayes hope to 'add an alternative to this repertory: problem-solving techniques for thinking through the process.' (Flower and Hayes, 1977, 451)

INNER CRITIC

How, pray tell, did they manage to unravel this 'infinitely mysterious way people really do it'?

MARJOLIJN

To collect these problem-solving techniques, Flower and Hayes asked writers (both "good" and "poor") to compose out loud, saying everything that popped into their minds, so that they could capture their writing procedures. One of the things they noticed was that inexperienced writers had very limited strategies to choose from. They kept repeating the same strategies, even when they were stuck, and even when the chosen strategies had not previously proven helpful. They could not change tactics. They were also unable to correctly identify their writing problems and match these to the right set of strategies. If, for example, you keep resorting to re-writing strategies when you have only written the first paragraph, you will end up with a beautifully written paragraph. But that

"WRITING IS A PRACTICE, ONE THAT IS DIFFERENT FROM ARTISTIC PRACTICES BUT WITH WHICH AS A PROCESS IT SHARES SIMILARITIES" (BORG, 2012, 178)

I say: both are creative practices. (WARR, 2013, 119)  
writing does not just consist of writing. It also consists of days of thinking unconsciously, of not writing or waiting.

'if the ability to create new ideas depends upon combining remotely-associated concepts, then the creativity of individuals should be bound up with the ability to access as many associates as possible.' (Howard-Jones 2002, 219)

'writing is generating and spinning out words. 'You hone what comes. sculpting, shaping, reordering, clarifying, cutting, expanding, elaborating, structuring, making it flow, hearing the voice of the text.' (WARR, 2013, 119)

writing different small pieces that represent associated concepts. → 'oh, I can do bits.' I can do that'. (Francis, 2009, 29).  
→ 'In order to encourage students to write more fluently, writing instructors encourage students write frequently, but in smaller amounts.' (BORG, 2012, 178)  
these tasks are often not directly assessed, but instead they contribute to assignments that gather up small bits of writing into a larger, coherent whole' (BORG, 2012, 184)  
→ 'once ideas are committed to paper, they can be polished to make them conform to more formal academic style.' (BORG, 2012, 178)

there is a need for incubation in designing but writing too!

GENERATIVE

A DUAL STATE



MODEL

NON-GENERATIVE/ANALYTICAL

of CREATIVE COGNITION  
Howard-Jones (221)

- attention: unfocused; generative activity, associational
- primary process thinking
- less conscious
- hindered by reward, competition, evaluation
- benefits from changes in context
- relaxation perceived as beneficial
- chiefly intrinsically motivated

- attention: focused
- non-generative, analytical, critical thinking
- secondary process thinking
- more conscious
- benefits from reward, competition, evaluation
- adversely influenced by distraction
- relaxation not particularly beneficial
- can also be extrinsically motivated

cutting and reordering can be both a generative as an analytical action, depending on context and attention same with 'flow'.

PROBLEM: PERCEPTION  
reflective writing = self-critical & self-aware = a negative influence on creativity  
= "WRITING IS OPPOSITIONAL TO THE MAKING OF ART" (apps & Manchester, 2009, 170)  
But actually it is 'non-generative writing' \* if it is used alone.

"It is not very easy to compartmentalise a particular work scheme into individual tasks that are either essentially generative or non-generative or analytical" (223) Howard Jones

'Reflective writing, which is part of the element genre of personal account, is one of the most important type of writing and design students engage in. Many applied subjects use reflective writing to be self-critical and self-aware.' (BORG, 2012, 177)

'Self-evaluation is commonly advised as an essential activity during designing that should be undertaken at all stages. However, empirical evidence indicates that self-evaluation has a negative influence upon creativity. Without the encouragement to be self-critical, however, it is difficult to perceive how students can develop their ideas independently from/of the teacher. Such autonomy is considered to be an important aspect of working creatively and here empirical studies back up the accepted pedagogical viewpoint, demonstrating that students are more likely to be creative when given more control over the task.'

RISK (HOW, 2003, 216)

state fluent tasks

GENERATING PLAYING = flow & Hayes

EFFECT

does not compete

remodel

CONSTRUCTING PUSHING

does compare

will not help you get further along in the writing process. (Flower and Hayes, 1977, 451) This can cause a lot of frustration. You keep working on something, putting in hours, but you're not getting any further. You push forward, but the text keeps pushing back. It's moments like these when writing turns into the bully, and you experience discomfort.

INNER CRITIC

But, again: you don't think that writing teachers provide these strategies? Doesn't every teacher give feedback? Don't they tell students exactly how to build an argument and give them tips on how to check if their text is structured correctly?

MARJOLIJN

What I am getting at is the perception of writing education, and what you just said only proves my point: these strategies are all about analyzing, evaluating, and editing. They underline the idea that writing is an entirely conscious and linear process. You think of something, make an outline, fill in the boxes, and then edit and improve. Students work in this way, because this is what they have learned about writing. (Borg, 2012, 182) But this is not the only mode of writing. In the abovementioned article Flower and Hayes state that one of the advantages of heuristics is that they 'focus directly on the two major intellectual tasks the writer faces: the need (1) to generate ideas in language and then (2) to construct those ideas into a written structure adapted to the needs of a reader and the goals of the writer.' (Flower and Hayes, 1977, 452) Currently, the focus in writing education is on the second part and not on the first intellectual task: generating ideas in language. They are not learning strategies for this part and that is problematic.

INNER CRITIC

In what way?

MARJOLIJN

Because they still need to do it. Let's walk over to the second mind map, based on the article 'A Dual-state Model of Creative Cognition for Supporting Strategies that Foster Creativity in the Classroom' written by neuroscientist Paul Howard-Jones (2002). In this article, Howard-Jones takes a look at 'the cognitive mechanisms that may underlie creativity'. From this, 'a dual-state model of creativity cognition' emerges that can provide 'a better understanding of when different strategies may be most effective

during pupils' designing'. (Howard Jones, 2002, 215)

INNER CRITIC

Hold up. I thought we were talking about writing? Why are you bringing up an article about designing?

MARJOLIJN

I am using an article about creative cognition and creative processes. Yes, it focuses on design students, but the ideas apply to writing too.

*Inner Critic puts its hands up, semi apologetically.*

MARJOLIJN

Howard-Jones distinguishes two types of thinking processes: one for evaluating and analyzing ideas, and one for generating new ideas. (Howard-Jones, 2002, 221)

Both 'mental states' are essential to the designing process, but they are not equally beneficial during different stages of this process. When getting started, a generative strategy such as brainstorming will be more likely to help students 'access their more remote associations and produce novel ideas' (Howard-Jones, 1977, 222) than an analytical strategy such as self-evaluation. The latter strengthens critical abilities, but also 'has a negative influence upon creativity' (Howard-Jones, 1977, 216) and can be expected to cause 'a reduction in an individual's productivity'. (Howard-Jones, 1977, 222) So you see, when we teach students to only focus on the second mental state when they're writing, it makes sense that writing is seen as something that stops the creative process, because it does. (Huertas, 2012, 59) (Hockey, 2007, 164) In other words: it is not writing that is causing the problem, it is the fact that we're not teaching writing strategies for the whole writing process.

And before you bring up the 'but this article is about design' argument again: Flower and Hayes make the same separation between two mental states during the writing process. See, here: 'We have made a fundamental assumption about the composing process: namely that it can often be divided into two complementary but semi-autonomous processes, which we designate as generating versus constructing on one level and playing versus pushing on another.' (Flower and Hayes, 1977, 452)

# CREATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING

(1977) Flower & Hayes ← WRITING

writing process has two complementary, but semi-autonomous processes:

generating vs constructing  
playing vs pushing  
(452)

both see it as:  
- a cognitive process  
- way of thinking  
- drawing on different strategies

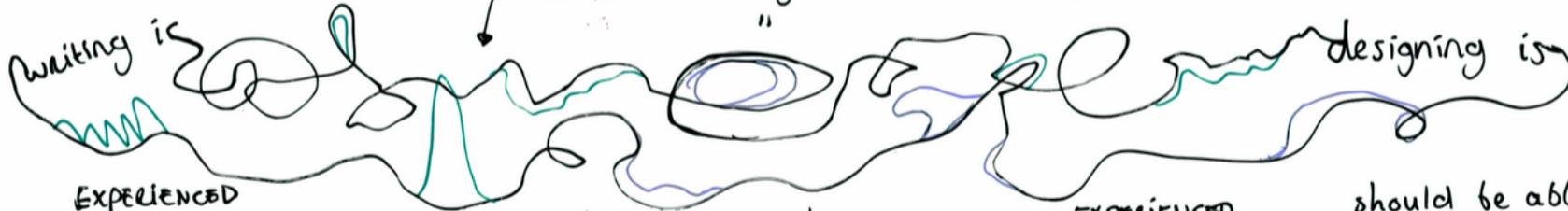
they talk about:  
← DUALITY →

they both agree that this is not necessarily a 'linear' thing  
it can be messy, even unorderly

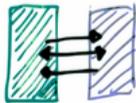
DESIGN → Howard Jones (2002)

it is necessary to differentiate between the stages in the design process:

generative vs analytical thinking  
primary vs secondary process thinking  
(221)



EXPERIENCED  
A GOOD WRITER = can fluidly switch from one mode of thinking to the other as they write (452)



both use concepts as 'brainstorming', 'incubation', 'preparation', 'evaluation', 'audience/user', etc.

EXPERIENCED  
A GOOD DESIGNER =

should be able to freely move between the two mental states, alternately generating ideas and critically evaluating them. (223)



MARJOLIJN

Another problem is that if students are not taught both of these thinking processes, they will end up lacking strategies vital to becoming comfortable writers. You see, another thing these articles have in common is that they both say that in order to be 'an experienced writer' or a 'good designer' you need to be able to move between the two states with ease. (Flower and Hayes, 1977, 452) (Howard-Jones, 2002, 221)

So if one of these states does not get the proper attention, how will students be able to do this? A difference between the students that struggle and the students that don't, might be that the latter have more well-developed strategies for the generative process and are more able to switch between states and choose appropriate strategies. They might not even be aware that this is happening; it might just come naturally to them. This means that there are two things we need to teach students:

- 1) Generative writing strategies, and
- 2) That the writing process is not linear, and that they can switch between the two states at any given moment.

INNER CRITIC

Why the second one? Because it works for you and you know everything?

MARJOLIJN

It's not just my experience. Other writing teachers, like Flower and Hayes, agree: 'What does the entire process of writing look like? Do writers dutifully Plan, Generate, Construct, then turn out the light when the paper is done? The answer is an emphatic no [...] The process of writing rarely ever exhibits those autonomous stages as: Gather information, Outline, and Write. Instead, thought in writing moves in a series of non-linear jumps from one problem and procedure to another.' (Flower and Hayes, 1977, 460) That is not to say these stages never occur, but that it is much more likely that they occur in rapid cycles. If you believe that the writing process is linear, you might feel like you're the problem when it does not work out like that, thus reinforcing your idea that you are a bad writer.

INNER CRITIC

So how will you teach them generative, non-linear writing? Are you going to hand them a list of strategies and say: 'Pick whatever works for you and good luck?'

MARJOLIJN

Of course not. You can't tell someone a strategy; they need to use it themselves and experience how it works. And they may not like it immediately. If you have always done something a certain way, even if it's not the most productive way, it is still your way. If you have accustomed yourself to writing a text in one sitting, starting with the opening and writing until you reach the conclusion, and you feel this works for you, chances are you won't be too happy if you're suddenly asked to write a text in multiple rounds. This might feel like a waste of time. It is my job as an educator to teach students these strategies in a way that appeals to them. (Flower and Hayes, 1977, 461) (Borg, 2012, 182)

INNER CRITIC

Okay, so no list, but what then? Is the answer in one of your mind maps?

*While Inner Critic is looking at the wall,  
Marjolijn walks over to you and grabs your arm.*

MARJOLIJN

*(whispers in your ear)* Get ready to run.

INNER CRITIC

What is your master plan?

MARJOLIJN

Well, we'll be talking to the Kolbs.

*Quickly, Marjolijn pulls you towards the hallway.  
Once you are out of the room, Marjolijn locks the door.*

MARJOLIJN

Good riddance. So to summarize our conversation: when writing a text, you switch between two types of thinking processes: generative and non-generative/analytical. Right now, most writing education seems to be result-oriented rather than process-oriented, which leads to a one-sided focus on non-generative/analytical writing approaches. However, this method does not provide students with enough strategies for the generative thinking process, meaning that the students' "toolbox" for writing ends up being incomplete. Not knowing how to generate and use material can cause frustration, and increase the students' resistance to

writing. If we want students to become comfortable writers, we need to teach them the whole writing process. This also means taking the time to address students' writing habits and developing them into the writing habits of experienced writers.

Now, let's go. Before Inner Critic figures out a way to get out of the thinking room.

## THE LOUNGE ROOM

Marjolijn walks you further down the hallway. You take a right turn and end up in a large room. In the room are two comfy, green, velvet couches and a table with small yellow cups and a thermos full of coffee.

MARJOLIJN

Hmm, David and Alice are not here yet. I'm sure they got caught up in a conversation. They do that.

Take a seat, and I'll fill you in on why we're meeting them here. You sit down on the couch. Marjolijn pours you a cup of coffee.

MARJOLIJN

I asked them to come here because they are experts on experiential learning; which is a process-oriented approach to learning. They pretty much wrote the bible on it. Don't tell them I said that, though. The funny thing is, I was introduced to the Kolbs during my bachelor's, when I took an elective on how to teach writing, but later I forgot about them. Probably best not to tell them that either.

Anyway, reading their work a second time, I realized that, even though I had not been consciously aware of it, I had in fact integrated parts of experiential learning into my teaching practice. For example: not just talking about writing, but letting students experience it through writing exercises. This had become so natural for me, that I had forgotten where the ideas had come from.

*Suddenly you hear two voices, belonging to a man and a woman. They are immersed in a discussion, but you can't make out what they are saying.*

MARJOLIJN

Ah, great. There they are! Alice, David, over here!

*The couple walks in. He is about a foot taller than she is. They wave.*

DAVID

Marjolijn, good to see you!

And who is this?

*You shake both their hands.*

ALICE

I'm Alice Kolb, and this is David, my husband.

MARJOLIJN

I was just talking about your research and what it means to me. Did I already mention that in their book *The Experiential Educator*, they compiled over fifty years of research?

*David and Alice sit down on the couch across from you. Marjolijn takes a seat next to you.*

DAVID

Well, we based a lot of our work on the works of others, such as William James, John Dewey, Mary Parker Follet, Kurt Lewin, Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, Carl Jung, Carl Rogers, and Paulo Freire. (Kolb & Kolb, 2017, 6-24) So, let's say it is a combined effort. What can we do for you today?

MARJOLIJN

The reason I brought you here is that I want to teach students writing strategies to make them more comfortable with writing. I want writing education to focus more on the writing process, rather than just the result. And I am looking for ways to build my pedagogy around this goal.

ALICE

How nice of you to think us. I think we can help.

MARJOLIJN

Great. Would you mind answering some questions to help me explain experiential learning?

DAVID  
Fire away.

*Suddenly you hear footsteps rapidly approaching.  
When you turn around, you see it is Inner Critic.*

INNER CRITIC  
Didn't you realize I have keys stashed away around this thesis and I could just unlock the door of the thinking room?

MARJOLIJN  
I was hoping we might talk to David and Alice in peace.

INNER CRITIC  
Well, I'm joining the conversation. You like them too much to ask the right questions.

*Inner Critic walks over and lodges itself between you and Marjolijn on the couch.*

INNER CRITIC  
Go on.

**WHAT IS EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING,  
AND WHAT CONDITIONS NEED TO BE MET?**

MARJOLIJN  
How would you describe an experiential educator? And how does a teacher become one?

DAVID  
Well, first I think it's good to clear up a common misunderstanding: experiential learning is not a set of tools and techniques that you can apply and voilà: success. It requires a different mindset; a deviation from the traditional approach to education. (Kolb & Kolb, 2017, xvi)

INNER CRITIC  
Traditional approach?

ALICE  
'Traditional approaches to education have relied on an information transmission model of learning where knowledge about the subject is communicated, often by lecture, through the teacher's discourse about the subject. Learners, having no direct contact with the subject, are unable to investigate, explore, and judge for themselves. They are left one-down in a power relationship with the only choice of "taking the teacher's word for it." Teachers for their part are left in a one-way "conversation" that is ultimately deadening and boring.' (Kolb & Kolb, 2017, xxv)

*David shudders.*

DAVID  
It's no fun for the students, but it's definitely no fun for the teacher either. And it does not serve the true purpose of education. 'The purpose of education is to stimulate inquiry and skill in the process of knowledge getting, not to memorize a body of knowledge.' (Kolb, 2015, 38)

ALICE  
'The current focus on educational programs, systems, technologies, and techniques may have caused us to lose sight of the fact that the educator-student relationship is above all a human relation, where what the educator shows is as important as what he or she says. We can easily forget that we are role models for learners. We display our own values, character, integrity, and authenticity for all to see. We become educators by learning from our own experience, and it is this hard-won wisdom that is the foundation of our work.' (Kolb & Kolb, 2017, xxi)

MARJOLIJN  
So for example: I could say the classroom is a safe space where students are free to share their thoughts and ideas. But if I then proceed to disregard those thoughts, my statement that the students are allowed to share them no longer matters, right? Because what I say and what I do, is not in line with each other.

INNER CRITIC  
But teachers are always above students, are they not? As a teacher, you hold the power. So how do you change this?

ALICE

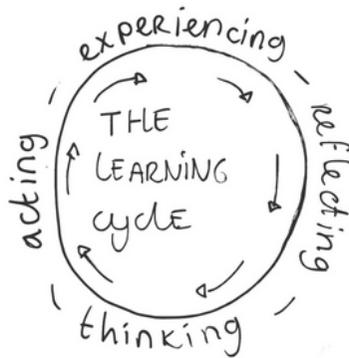
Well, placing the subject of the class in the center 'has a leveling effect on their relationship, to the extent that both can directly experience the subject. Everyone has a perspective on the subject. [...] Questioning differences that arise from these multiple perspectives is the fuel for learning and new insights. Challenging the expert's viewpoint even becomes possible.' (Kolb & Kolb, 2017, xxv)

INNER CRITIC

But aren't there times when students want to hear what you have to say about a subject? I've heard students talk about that annoying moment when a teacher knows the right answer, but refuses to give it to them.

DAVID

I think it's good to keep in mind that there is a difference between 'teaching from experience' and saying: 'Figure it out yourselves and don't bother me.' In experiential learning, we make a distinction between four learning modes: experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting. Together, these form the learning cycle, which is the core part of experiential learning. This cycle does not exclude more traditional formats, such as the lecture, in which you contextualize and provide 'the right answers', but it puts them in a wider context.



ALICE

The most important aspect of the learning cycle is that it describes the learning process as a recursive circle or spiral. 'In the traditional linear model, the learner is a passive recipient of information, whereas in the cycle of learning learners receive information through concrete experiences and transform it through reflection and conceptualization and

then transform it again by acting to change the world including what information is attended to in the new experience.' (Kolb & Kolb, 2017, 33)

MARJOLIJN

I think this is how I teach most of the time. I start by giving a writing assignment and letting the students carry out the assignment in the classroom (experience). Then I have the students share the results and we discuss them together: What was it like to write this? What things do they notice in the texts? (reflection) After this, I give them some context and theory on the assignment (thinking), which I follow up with a re-writing exercise, to put what they have just learned into action (acting). And then we start again.

INNER CRITIC

I'm sorry, but didn't people debunk this whole 'learning cycle' idea?

*Alice puts her hand on David's knee.*

DAVID

People did not "debunk" our theory. They misinterpreted parts of it. Mostly by oversimplifying it, like describing the cycle as a 'rigid four-stage process.' (Kolb & Kolb, 2017, 39) 'Learning usually does not happen in one big cycle but takes place in numerous small cycles or partial cycles. Thinking and reflection can continue for some time before acting and experiencing. Experiencing and reflecting can also continue through many iterations before concluding in action.' (Kolb & Kolb, 2017, 40)

ALICE

You can organize your workshop 'as a series of learning cycles to form a deepening spiral of learning that expands in complexity and application. The learning modes are revisited, and students' understanding is developed further each time. They discover more about the practical limits and the wider applications of their new knowledge by taking what they have learned in one situation and using it in another.' (Kolb & Kolb, 2018, 9) This means they will eventually be able to apply the learned strategies outside of your classroom.

INNER CRITIC

But is what Marjolijn is doing enough? Are there other conditions that need to be met for a workshop to be considered experiential education?

DAVID

In 'the subject-centered approach,' where the focus is on the subject, and teacher and students are equals, 'the experiential educator should challenge themselves to invent ways to bring experiences of the subject matter that have "a presence so real, so vivid, and so vocal" into the center of the conversation.' (Kolb & Kolb, 2017, xxvi)

ALICE

'Equally important is the creation of learning spaces that stimulate inquiry and open minds and create good learning conversations, enabling participants to move from experience to deep reflection, conceptualization, and action.' (Kolb & Kolb, 2017, xxvii)

DAVID

Another important aspect is 'the idea that learning is best conceived as a process, and not in terms of outcomes. [...] learning does not end at an outcome, nor is it always evidenced in performance. Rather, learning occurs through the process of ongoing experience; ideas and thoughts never remain the same but are formed and reformed through experience.' (Kolb & Kolb, 2017, 25-26)

#### HOW DOES EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING RELATE TO THE CONCEPT OF (DIS)COMFORT IN WRITING?

DAVID

But we can talk about the theories on experiential learning forever. What I am more interested in, is what I found in your storage room. In your methodology, you talk about signs of comfort and discomfort in students during writing assignments. I think it's great you made this list, but I am curious: since you use our work as the main underlining of your pedagogy, how do you relate the two?

MARJOLIJN

Well, I think there are different ways it comes into play. I believe experiential learning can work well to make writing strategies stick, for instance, by following the learning cycle. But I think it can also help with moving from discomfort to comfort in other ways. Let's start by taking another look at the list.

For me, signs of comfort in the writing process are:

- Enjoying the writing process, having fun with it.
- Engaging in writing more often (and not only when told to by a teacher).
- Being able to take a step back and analyze the process.
- Being able to navigate writing problems and utilizing writing strategies.
- Being able to assess the quality of the work; only needing occasional affirmation.
- Having insight into the importance of the process and not just fixating on the result.
- Being willing to share the work with others.

For me, signs of discomfort in the writing process are:

- Not enjoying writing, being rigid and anxious.
- Avoiding writing unless being told to do so by a teacher.
- Not being able to take a step back and analyze the process.
- Quitting when encountering a writing problem, and being unable to utilize writing strategies.
- Not being able to assess to quality of the work, needing constant affirmation. Not understanding the importance of the process.
- Fixating on the result and 'wanting to do it right'.
- Not being willing to share the work with others.

Now, I am not saying I will be able to entirely eliminate discomfort and only have students experience comfort in writing. I also don't strive to accomplish this, because even I, as an experienced writer, am not completely comfortable in my writing process. But for students to grow in their writing skills and comfort it is essential to tip the scale in favor of the first list.

INNER CRITIC

Let's cut to the chase: how do you use experiential learning to achieve this, besides that learning cycle?

MARJOLIJN

There were a few other concepts that helped me with my approach and my reflections. One of those was chapter Two of your book. In this chapter, you talk about the interplay between expectation and experience, stating that this is where learning occurs. You quote Hegel and say: 'Any experience that does not violate expectation is not worthy of the name experience.' (Kolb, 2015, 39)

In my lessons I try to be aware of this tension between expectation and experience. Earlier I created a group of students. Did you happen to pass them on your way here?

ALICE

We did. They were a glum-looking bunch.

MARJOLIJN

I know that students come into my classroom with a certain expectation of writing. For some it is a positive expectation, but for most it is a negative one or a neutral one at best. These expectations of writing have been formed by their previous encounters with it. If these have all been with restrictive, formal writing, then this is what they expect I will make them do. And if they think they are bad at it, they are probably not looking forward to it, which I understand. That is why I try to think of alternative entry points into writing. For example, by letting them cut sentences and words out of texts to compile language to work with, or by starting the class with a free-writing exercise. I emphasize the fact that there are no rules; that there is no right or wrong way to do it. I try to give them an experience that, hopefully, violates their negative expectation of writing.

DAVID

'I think it always good for educators to keep in mind what educational implications come from the fact that learning is a continuous process grounded in experience. Put simply; it implies that all learning is relearning. How easy and tempting it is in designing a course to think of the learners' mind as blank as the paper on which we scratch our outline. Yet, this is not the case. Everyone enters every learning situation with more or less articulate ideas about the topic at hand. One's job as an educator is not only to implant new ideas but also to dispose of or modify old beliefs that are inconsistent with them.' (Kolb, 2015, 39)

MARJOLIJN

It's like what Flower and Hayes say: that the inexperienced writer is not a blank slate. They will have adopted their own writing strategies, albeit with mixed results, perhaps. You are not just teaching them new techniques; you are re-shaping the ones they use. (Flower and Hayes, 1977, 461) Another concept in *The Experiential Educator* relating to students' beliefs and convictions was the work of Carol Dweck, on learning identities and "fixed" views.

ALICE

Oh yes. 'More people than we imagined do not think of themselves as learners at all and have what psychologist Carol Dweck calls a "fixed" view of themselves in varying degrees, believing that they are incapable of learning.' (Kolb & Kolb, 2017, 98)

DAVID

And this can be quite problematic. 'If there is a starting point for learning from experience, it must be in the belief that I can learn and develop from my life experiences. At the extreme, those who do not believe they can learn, won't. Most learning requires conscious attention, effort, and "time on task." These activities are a waste of time to someone who does not believe that he or she has the ability to learn.' (Kolb & Kolb, 2017, 98)

INNER CRITIC

But that raises a question: if you have so many students with negative expectations, chances are they have "fixed" views of themselves. So how is anything you do with them going to have an impact?

ALICE

Now, it's not said that it's impossible to learn with a "fixed" view. But it is much more difficult. Carol Dweck has studied the theories that people have about themselves and others. 'In particular, she and her colleagues have examined the difference between those who see their abilities and attributes as fixed and static and those who believe that they can incrementally learn and change themselves.' (Kolb & Kolb, 2017, 98) If you think you are able to learn anything as long as you put in enough hours, you have 'a positive learning identity'. If you believe that, if you are "bad" at something, you will never get better at it, you have a 'fixed identity'. This highly influences your success in school, regardless of intelligence. 'Learners embrace challenge, persist in the face of obstacles, learn from criticism, and are inspired by and learn from the success of others. The fixed-identity person avoids challenge, gives up easily, avoids criticism, and feels threatened by the success of others.' (Kolb & Kolb, 2017, 98) So in fact, if you look at your list of signs of comfort and discomfort, a lot of the attributes you ascribe to being comfortable with writing are in line with the signs of a learning identity. Likewise, the signs of being uncomfortable with writing are in line with the signs of a fixed identity. Could it be that what you want to do is to help students with a fixed view of writing obtain a positive learning identity?

DAVID

That would be an ambitious goal. 'Becoming a learner, someone who can say with confidence, "I am a learner," is not accomplished overnight. Self-identity is deeply held and defended against experiences that contradict it.' (Kolb & Kolb, 2017, 107)

ALICE

Yes, to do this in a single workshop might be near impossible. But it is good to keep in mind that people usually are not just "fixed" or "a learner". 'For the vast majority of us, our self-identity is a mix of fixed and learning beliefs. We may feel like we are good at learning things like sports and not good at others like mathematics. Dweck and her colleagues argue that lay theories are domain-specific, for example, one can believe that intelligence is fixed and morality is learned. Every success or failure can trigger a reassessment of one's learning abilities.' (Kolb & Kolb, 2017, 107) So it might be interesting to see if you can hook on to another part of their identity in which they already feel they have a learning ability. In other words: to come at it from a different angle.

MARJOLIJN

I think that is also where teaching 'a problem-solving approach to writing' might help, because like Flower and Hayes say: 'It allows for the disorderly dynamics of serious thinking and encourages an analytical and experimental attitude in writing.' (1977, 461) This is a dual state thinking process that is also linked to designing and art-making. It is a model of creative cognition. (Howard-Jones, 2002) So there is an overlap there. Another thing Flower and Hayes mention is that they have noticed that by using this approach 'early in the course students develop a conviction that writing is an important skill they can in fact master. Obviously, such a conviction is not always one hundred percent warranted, but in replacing the mystique of talent and the fear of failing with the possibility of an attainable goal, problem-solving helps writers draw more fully on the abilities they do have.' (Flower and Hayes, 1977, 461)

INNER CRITIC

Ok, fine. But that overlap in the process is found at an abstract level. When the students walk into the classroom they are still going to think: this is writing. Bleh. The negative expectation is already triggered.

MARJOLIJN

Well, I have also been looking at approaches to writing that have a more obvious connection to Art and Design. Approaches that are easier to recognize.

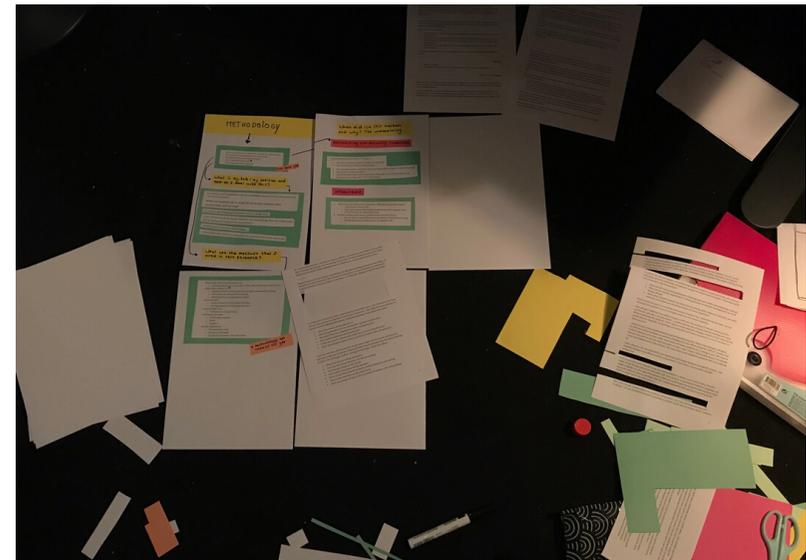
*Marjolijn gets up and invites you to come with her.  
You and the others follow her.*

## THE ART ROOM

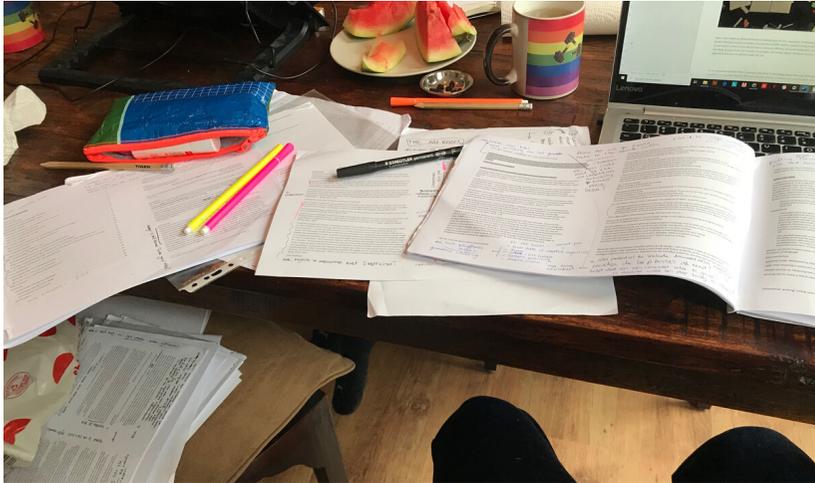
*You walk into the art room. David, Alice, and Inner Critic follow you.  
The floor is filled with pieces of colored paper, scissors, markers, pencils, etc.*

MARJOLIJN

I named this room the art room, but it could have just as easily been called the writing room. For me, all writing is about creating, about exploring, about trying to capture thoughts and feelings in words. Like I've said before, this is a messy business. And in my case, this 'messiness' is not just in my head. I present to you: my workroom.



PICTURES OF MY WORK SPACE



My workroom, when I am in the middle of a writing process, has been described as 'that of a nutty professor', and 'the aftermath of a hurricane passing through.' For me, writing is a physical act. I walk around the room, I read texts out loud. I have different versions of texts lying around and my walls are filled with mind maps. My work needs to be tangible. But if you see the final version of a text, you may never expect the chaotic process that led to the polished end result.

#### INNER CRITIC

And your point is?

#### MARJOLIJN

That I have a specific writing process. Most writers have their own way of doing things. Some start with an outline, others first want to gather material and see what surfaces. But as we discussed earlier: textbooks make it seem like every writer approaches writing in the same way, and this is the only way it can be done. (Flower and Hayes, 1977, 451)

In her book *Inspiring Writing In Art And Design Education: Taking A Line For A Write* Pat Francis talks about the difference between how Art and Design students are expected to think about their process in their practice, and how they're expected to think about it in their writing. In their practice they are encouraged to find their own way, but when it comes to writing this

idea of 'celebrating differences' is strangely absent. Francis states: 'They are either not introduced to possible ways of working, or are encouraged to think that the final logical structure of a written piece, read left to right, front to back, reflects the way it is evolved.' (Francis, 2009, 29)

#### INNER CRITIC

Did we not go over this already in the thinking room? Why bring it up again?

#### MARJOLIJN

Because of how Francis talks about how Art and Design students are encouraged to find their own process in their practical work. This made me realize: maybe students are able to use this experience to their advantage in writing? Because they are used to the messiness of a creative process, they may be more likely to understand, maybe even embrace, 'the unorderly, but dynamic process' of writing, as long as they can recognize it as such. (Flower and Hayes, 1977, 461)

We can help them with this by emphasizing the 'messy' component, the generative element of writing. Alice, remember what you said earlier?

About students connecting to the part of themselves where they already feel they have a learning identity? I think this might be it; where it all comes together. Where we are not just teaching them writing strategies, but also altering their perception of writing. It is, like Eric Borg states, that writing within Art and Design education can draw on more playful approaches, which are not helped by highly structured forms. (Borg, 2012, 178)

#### INNER CRITIC

But how are you going to do this? Show them pictures of your messy workroom and say: 'See, we are just the same?'

#### MARJOLIJN

Very funny. I have looked at the practices of artists, creative writers, and writing teachers for inspiration. In my searches I came across Maria Fusco, Lawrence Weiner, Kenneth Goldsmith, Thomas Hirschhorn, Eric Borg, Jacque Swift, Pat Francis, Tracy Warr, and many others. All of these sources fueled the writing education with the students, but not everything made the cut. Before working with the students, I collected different forms of writing that, for me, constitute "writing as making" and that can be used for writing exercises that encourage a generative state of mind, and tried them out on my fellow classmates.

DAVID

How did you select which forms you wanted to try out?

MARJOLIJN

It was vital to find approaches that could get the students going. First and foremost, I needed them to write. Like Pat Francis says: 'The best part of learning about writing is engaging in writing.' (Francis, 2009, 21) For this, I needed to bring writing exercises to the classroom that would activate the students. It is like Tracy Warr states in her article *At the tip of my tongue*: 'Writing needs provocations – a wall, a blank page, a deadline, a commission, a nice notebook and a pen. Then writing is generating and spinning out words.' (Warr, 2013, 119)

An activating approach could help change how students perceive writing. They might enter the classroom not seeing the point of writing but, simply by doing it, slowly change their relation to it. Francis states: 'Something can happen when you are doing something, even if the motivation comes from outside yourself. If someone is reluctant to write then the act of doing can create a climate for something to happen.' (Francis, 2009, 23) This means we can even move from extrinsic motivation – which is related to non-generative thinking – to intrinsic motivation, which is allied to generative thinking.

ALICE

What sort of approaches do you think can have this effect?

MARJOLIJN

When I was looking at different approaches, two starting points for 'writing as creating' emerged.

- Starting with a (source)text
- Starting with the art work

For both there are activating writing exercises.

#### HOW CAN SOURCE TEXTS BE USED FOR GENERATIVE WRITING STRATEGIES?

MARJOLIJN

I try to find playful ways for Art and Design students to work with texts.

In order for them to experience this playfulness, they must first realize that a text is not sacred. You can do more with them than citing them or writing a summary. You can (ab)use texts, make them your own, let them inspire you.

One of the writing tutors I spoke with, told me that one of the exercises she does with students is letting them bring art statements that inspire them into class. Then she tells them to appropriate the text: use the first line as their own, or rewrite the entire text in a way that better fits their own practice, but leave the parts that sparked something in them. She is not saying: do this, hand it in, and be done with it. But it helps students get started.

For me, this method shares similarities with the work of professor, poet, and "word processor" Kenneth Goldsmith. In his book *Uncreative Writing: managing language in the digital age* (2012) Goldsmith talks about a different approach to language and writing: one where the concept of 'ownership' is not so black and white. By claiming words from others and recycling them, you can create something new; something that is yours. Or, as Goldsmith states:

'In 1969 the conceptual artist Douglas Huebler wrote, "The world is full of objects, more or less interesting; I do not wish to add any more". I've come to embrace Huebler's ideas, though it might be retooled as "The world is full of texts, more or less interesting; I do not wish to add any more." It seems an appropriate response to a new condition in writing today: faced with an unprecedented amount of available text, the problem is not needing to write more of it; instead, we must learn to negotiate the vast quantity that exists. How I make my way through this thicket of information – how I manage it, how I parse it, how I organize and distribute it – is what distinguishes my writing from yours'. (Goldsmith, 2011, 1)

Goldsmith is not looking to improve his students' conventional writing skills; instead, he challenges these views on writing 'in order to demonstrate the flexibility, potential, and riches of language's multidimensionality.' In this book he discusses many ways to use language and his belief that students should not be limited to one. 'A well-rounded education consists of introducing a variety of approaches.' (Goldsmith, 2011, 216-217)

INNER CRITIC

Wait, back up, are you suggesting your students just plagiarize texts and avoid writing altogether?

MARJOLIJN

The opposite, actually. I don't want them to just skim texts for information they can copy and paste into a Word document, I want them to really dig into the texts, pull them apart, and re-assemble them so they say something new. Something that reflects their own views. I want texts to become a material they can use freely. I want to change the way they experience texts.

There was another example in the text of Eric Borg that I found quite inspiring. Borg talks about a student, Asuka Kawabata, who 'investigated the construct of authorship'. She decided to complete a 6000-word assignment 'by cutting each individual letter of her text from a variety of printed documents'. Borg notes that it might be a bit labor-intensive for students to take this "one-letter-at-a-time approach", but that you could ask them to print out or copy source texts and 'physically assemble these into an overarching text'. (Borg, 2012, 183)

This inspired me to make my own method of writing from source texts as concrete as possible. When working with source texts I ask students to bring scissors, glue, and of course their printed source texts. I make them cut up the texts, not by cutting out the parts that they feel summarize the text, but by cutting out anything that stands out to them. Then I ask them go through their selection and re-assemble them on paper. As one of my fellow classmates said: 'By cutting out the pieces of texts and looking at it like this, the words turn into objects. It is a different way to view language. To experience its materiality.' But I will talk more about if and how this works, when we move on to the classroom.

#### HOW CAN ARTWORKS/DESIGN BE USED FOR GENERATIVE WRITING STRATEGIES?

MARJOLIJN

In the previous examples, the starting point was language. But of course, you can also start with something visual: an object, an artwork. I wanted to look for ways to write about these subjects without resorting to the more formal type of writing usually found in art criticism and art history.

I needed something more playful; something students could use to write about the work of others, but also about their own work.

I've read a lot of articles, interviews, and books on writing within and about Art and Design (practice and education) and one of the genres of writing I came across was 'art writing.' Art writing can take many forms: 'fictionalized art criticism, creative non-fiction, writing as art, montage writing, writing through art, etc.' (Thompson, 2017) For me, the most important element of art writing is that it goes beyond merely describing the work and placing it into a theoretical framework. For me, art writing brings something new to the work it describes, an extra dimension.

INNER CRITIC

Can't you please just give us a clear definition?

MARJOLIJN

Trying to come up with a snappy description for this genre of writing has proven quite difficult, not just for me, but for other authors as well. 'Art writing' does not want to be tied down.

One of the artists/writers that stood out to me in this is Maria Fusco, previous head of the MA Art Writing at the Goldsmith University. In the book *Literature and Artistic Research* she describes the starting phase of the master and how she and the students 'collaborated to define what art writing might be through actually doing it.' (Fusco, 2019, 81) Later on she states that there is 'still no satisfactory definition of art writing'. So – even though she is often asked to provide one – she is also not willing to do so, saying that instead, people should read it to understand it. 'The most sincere expression of art writing as a field is found in the galore works of those who practice it.' (Fusco, 2019, 83) To Fusco, the genre of art writing is always changing and reinventing itself. A similar attitude towards art writing can be found in the article 'The dress of thought: Form and style in contemporary art writing' by art historian and writer Susannah Thompson: 'When a singular form of art writing becomes dominant, orthodoxies are necessarily challenged and new forms emerge.' (Thompson, 2017, 18-19)

INNER CRITIC

Okay, fine, then tell us more about what it means to you.

## INNER CRITIC

Okay, fine, then tell us more about what it means to you.

## MARJOLIJN

I want art writing to be a tool that helps students approach writing about Art and Design in a different way. That helps them use their own views as a starting point even when writing about somebody else's work: what do they think about the work? What is their experience engaging with it? Does something happen inside their body?

Art writing is about writing from different perspectives, about zooming in and zooming out. By doing this you can find new material; thoughts and ideas that are absolutely personal and unique. It's like Francis states: 'We don't have the same impression of colors and what stands out in the foreground while other things are backgrounded. Can they see shapes in clouds or puddles or leaf shadows? And do they see a cacophony of tones, forms, movements in a crowd of people?' (Francis, 2009. 101)

Art writing can also be used to get a better understanding of your own work. Because you are not trying to summarize your work, but rather build on to your work, something new can be created. You are building a new work in words, in which you capture the thoughts running through your head by coming at them from different angles. Like Francis states: 'Writing as a way of crystallizing thoughts is the attempt to make physical the random flitting thoughts in our head. Practice in trying to capture these flutters is what helps us grow as people and practitioners.' (Francis, 2009, 36)

## DAVID

And how will you use art writing as a generative tool?

## MARJOLIJN

Let's say students are writing about the work of others: then I let them write about the artwork or the design in multiple rounds. I give them impulses by making them think about sensory experiences they can incorporate in their writing. This is not limited to: what do you see? But also: what do you think the artwork feels like? What would it sound like if you were standing in the painting?

I also provide the students with new input by reading different types of

texts with them, from poetry to scripts and art analysis. This shows them the range of possibilities. Or, like Francis states: 'Reading good writers helps you aspire to transcribe your ideas in ways that might be non-traditional, unorthodox, rule-breaking, but goal-shifting - thus doing you and your work justice.' (Francis, 2009, 62)

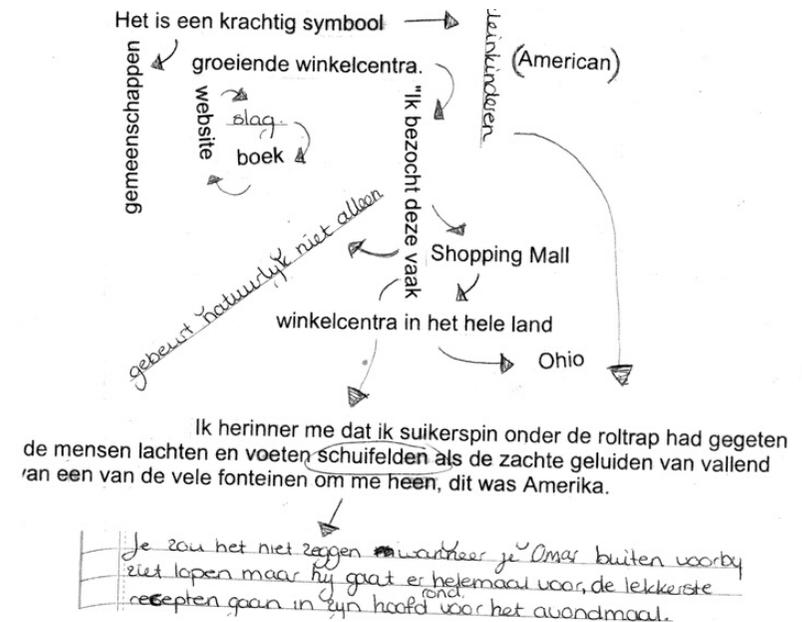
## DAVID

And how does the learning cycle come into play in these ideas?

## MARJOLIJN

We write the texts in small portions, continuously reflecting on them. Eventually we add theory into the mix, moving into thinking. We move on to acting, when the students put their learnings/finding into practice. But if you would like to know more about my educational approach, I suggest we head to the classroom.

*You walk back into the hallway.*



## THE CLASSROOM

MARJOLIJN

Just to keep it top of mind, while we look at the classroom.

For me, signs of comfort in the writing process are:

- Enjoying the writing process, having fun with it.
- Engaging in writing more often (and not only when told to by a teacher).
- Being able to take a step back and analyze the process.
- Being able to navigate writing problems and utilizing writing strategies.
- Being able to assess the quality of the work; only needing occasional affirmation.
- Having insight into the importance of the process and not just fixating on the result.
- Being willing to share the work with others.

For me, signs of discomfort in the writing process are:

- Not enjoying writing, being rigid and anxious.
- Avoiding writing unless being told to do so by a teacher.
- Not being able to take a step back and analyze the process.
- Quitting when encountering a writing problem, and being unable to utilize writing strategies.
- Not being able to assess to quality of the work, needing constant affirmation.
- Not understanding the importance of the process.
- Fixating on the result and 'wanting to do it right'.
- Not being willing to share the work with others.

MARJOLIJN

Now, we are going to take a look at some of the classes I taught, thereby re-enacting some key moments. To give you an idea of what happened during these lessons, I have placed a summary of the classes on the first table we see when we walk in\*. It was interesting for me to revisit these classes because when I taught them, a lot of the ideas discussed earlier were not as crystallized yet, and I wasn't in a position to take a step back and analyze my own work. In other words: I was not yet comfortable as a teacher in this specific setting. The students were different from the students I normally

teach, who usually enjoy writing and have chosen to be in my class. For these re-enactments I have used the reflections I wrote, the pictures I took during classes, and the comments provided by the students.teacher. These students were different from the students I normally teach, who usually enjoy writing and have chosen to be there. For these re-enactments I have used the reflections I wrote, the pictures I took during classes, and the quotes provided by the students.

We will start with the series of classes I taught to the first year Arts and Crafts students, which is an Associate Degree. The writing class is part of the course 'beroepsprofilering' which roughly translates as 'building a professional profile/attitude'. For this course the students are required to write blogs 'concerning the recent developments in contemporary culture and the knowledge about the historical context', that will inform the reader about 'your opinion as an (upcoming) designer'.

### ARTS AND CRAFTS – FIRST TIME AROUND

*You walk into the classroom, followed by David, Alice, and Inner Critic. On a side table next to the door you see the summaries Marjolijn mentioned. You take a closer look*

The class starts by listening to a soundscape a couple of times in a row. Each time the students get a different sensory-based writing prompt: 'Describe what you hear', 'Describe what you see in your mind when you listen to the soundscape' etc. Then, from the material they have generated, the students write a short text, which they then discuss in small groups: what are similarities and differences between their texts? They go back to the soundscape, but this time, it is accompanied by visuals. The students write down their impressions, followed by their interpretation of the installation, which they share with the class. The students then read statements from the artists that worked on the installation, which is followed by a discussion on interpreting art and whether or not the intention of the artist should take center stage.

The class starts by exploring the concept of 'ready-mades' and studying the work of Marcel Duchamp. The students were told to bring in printed source texts on a subject they wanted to write about in their blog. From these texts they proceed to cut out words and sentences that appeal to them. They divide these cut-outs into given categories such as 'object', 'space', 'thoughts', etc. This makes them zoom in and pay attention to the pieces of text on a different level. The students read of their selections out loud to get a feeling for the quality (tone, rhythm, feel) of the language. Then they select material to use for a visual poem on A5 paper. Not only are they asked to think about which words and sentences they want to use, but also about what order to put them in and the visual arrangement. Together they look at the results and reflect on them. The main question: can they distill what their selection says about their views on the subject?

The class starts by reading out loud part of Under Milkwood by Dylan Thomas and the poem Schtzngm by Ernst Jantl. The students discuss alternative ways language can be used. After this, students observe the (images of) art works / designs they have chosen to write about. They free-write about these works for 5 minutes, describing the mood of the work, describing different senses. Some texts are shared. The concept of art writing is explained and the class watches a lecture of Maria Fusco, in which she talks about her residency in Palacia Pombal. Afterwards, Fusco's 11 statements about art writing are discussed. The students either re-write the text, write a new text about a different work, or look for new source texts they can use in the existing text.

DAVID

How did you go about drafting your lesson plans for these students?

MARJOLIJN

This was my first time putting my ideas into practice with actual Art and Design students, instead of my fellow classmates. I wanted to focus on generating strategies; on 'writing as making'. But I also knew they were required to write blogs in the end. This duality did influence my approach, which at times became ambivalent. This is most clear in the first sequence of lessons.

*Marjolijn presses a button and the re-enactment starts.  
The students are happily typing away.*

MARJOLIJN

As you see, the first half of the class went great. Students expressed that they were writing freely and with focus. They were able to filter their material and turn it into a text, which afterwards they readily shared; all signs of comfort in writing. If you look at the learning cycle, we had done 'experiencing' and 'reflecting'. However, the mood changed when we went back to the soundscape and I added the visuals.

*The students look surprised. When asked to write down their interpretations of the visuals, some keep going. Others only write down a few words, and some have stopped completely. After sharing their interpretations with the class, the students read the artist statements of Thessia Macchado and Karin Ostrom, two of the creators of the installation. The students move around in their seats. They grumble. When asked to share what they think of the statements, one of them says:*

STUDENT

I had completely misinterpreted the work. The text I wrote is pointless. I am not going to be able to use it.

INNER CRITIC

That must have hurt. You may have made them even more uncomfortable. This student was clearly 'fixating on the result and wanting to do it right'. See, they're rigid and anxious, the signs are all there.

(1) Ik hoor de industrie die allemaal herrie maakt. Op de achtergrond raar geklinkel. Het lijkt of er nu een zaadje aan gaat. Ik hoor vogels misschien is het een dierentuin of werkzaamheden in de natuur.

(2) Ik zie voor me een machine een kraan of zo iets. Ik begin langzaam de industrie weg gaan en we zitten op een bouwplaats midden in de natuur.

(3) het is koud er zijn wel wat mensen maar niet vol. Ook vind ik dat het heel open is want het is buiten.

(4) Het doet me denken aan een saaie werkdag in de machinekamer een beetje sleutelen aan de motor. Je word er niet echt vrolijk door omdat het zo vertieft koud is.

(5) Je hoort geritsel buiten de werkplaats. Je kan je niet goed op het geluid concentreren, omdat je meer bezig bent hoe koud het is. Je probeert het opnieuw maar alle machines laten je ook niet focussen. Dus je beslist maar de machine kamer in te gaan om op te warmen. Nu zit je gefrustreerd in de machine kamer omdat er nog meer kabaal is.

ALICE

What do you think went wrong?

MARJOLIJN

The reason the exercise of writing from sound works so well, is that you can freely associate and see where your mind takes you. It is a great exercise to create comfort in writing, and to have students quickly write a text they can feel proud of. But, because I wanted to constantly connect my lessons to Art and Design, I replaced a soundscape without 'meaning' with an art installation. And in doing this, I accidentally sabotaged my lesson. Then, when I added the artist statements, I went from experiential education, where the subject is placed in the center, to traditional

education, by placing myself in the center and "being one step ahead" of the students. The students felt like they were 'wrong' because their interpretations did not match the artists' explanations. The learning space went from safe and open to experimentation, to unsafe; a place where making a mistake can lead to humiliation.

ALICE

How did you react? Because a learning space does not have to be painless. Painful moments can actually be beneficial, as long as they happen in an atmosphere where people don't feel threatened or judged. (Kolb & Kolb, 2017, 183)

DAVID

Were there any other times this happened during these classes?

MARJOLIJN

Not to the same extent. But during these first lesson series, I was overly focused on showing students the similarities between writing and making. As a result, I spent too much time discussing theory, instead of letting them figure things out for themselves. The lecture by Maria Fusco I showed them in the third class also was not very helpful.

INNER CRITIC

You don't say?

MARJOLIJN

I wanted to show them that there are other ways to describe something than a non-fiction contemplative text. That when describing a work of art they can tell a story, and it won't be any less valid than the historical background of that work. But doing that by showing a lecture was a dumb move.

*The students seem to be having a hard time understanding Maria's accent. They get distracted. They start talking among themselves or looking at Facebook.*

MARJOLIJN

To add insult to injury, after this I even shared the 11 statements Maria Fusco wrote on art writing in her book *Give up Art*. To be honest, I rushed through it because I realized I was losing them, and I wanted to get to the final writing exercise.

### INNER CRITIC

Is it safe to say you are a little slow-witted?

### MARJOLIJN

You have to keep in mind that there was only one week between classes and that I did not have the reflective distance I have now. I had to go through a couple of learning cycles myself to fully realize my mistakes. After these classes I realized that, firstly: I sometimes slip back into traditional educational approaches without being aware of it. And secondly: it was hard for me to let go of the notion that I had to contextualize things, in order for them to be legitimate and applicable for the students. I have become more aware of the differences between what I know, and what I need the students to know. For example: reading a text by Maria Fusco that showcases art writing together can be more effective than dumping all underlying theory on them.

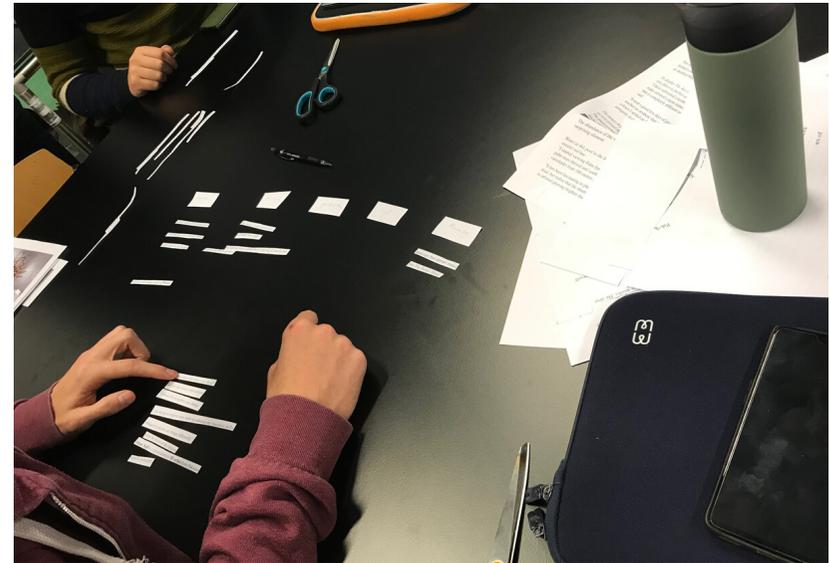
### DAVID

Which elements of the classes do you think did enhance the students' comfort?

### MARJOLIJN

The parts that were a bit more messy, where the students were just intuitively trying out things. Sometimes they needed a little nudge, or some encouragement, but most times they just kept going. Take for example the second lesson. Play rollback!

*Students are cutting out words and sentences from texts. They are dividing their cut-outs into different categories, like 'object', 'space', 'thoughts' etc. In the beginning some students seem to be unsure what to do.*



STUDENTS ARRANGING THEIR CUT-OUTS - LESSON TWO

### STUDENT ONE

This word comes from the title. Is that allowed, too?

### STUDENT TWO

Can you help me? I don't know if this belongs with 'space' or with 'object'.

### INNER CRITIC

What's happening here?

### MARJOLIJN

What you see here is students switching into non-generative/analytical mode, when I need them to stay in generative mode. Asking them to categorize their cut-outs pushed them towards an evaluative mode, which might have triggered a feeling that the task was normative; that there were right and wrong ways to do it.

### INNER CRITIC

Then why did you ask them to categorize their cut-outs?

### MARJOLIJN

Because revisiting their selected material makes them connect to it in a



STUDENT CUT-OUTS - LESSON TWO

different way. This is in line with the idea that the generative mode benefits from 'changes in context.' (Howard-Jones, 2002, 221) But I should have made it more clear what I wanted from them. For me, this approach also makes it easier to select cut-outs in the next step, because you have processed the material a second time and are more aware of what there is to work with.

*Marjolijn ensures the students that they won't get a slap on the wrist for "doing it wrong" and they should just have fun with it. When making their visual poems they don't ask permission to do anything, they just do it. Some add pictures, others write in between the cut-outs. After the students have finished their poems, they place their work on a big table. When asked how they felt about working this way, they say:*

#### STUDENT ONE

This is fun. I think I'm going to do this daily.

#### STUDENT TWO

If somebody had taught me to write like this before, I probably would not have been as traumatized. Thank you.

#### STUDENT THREE

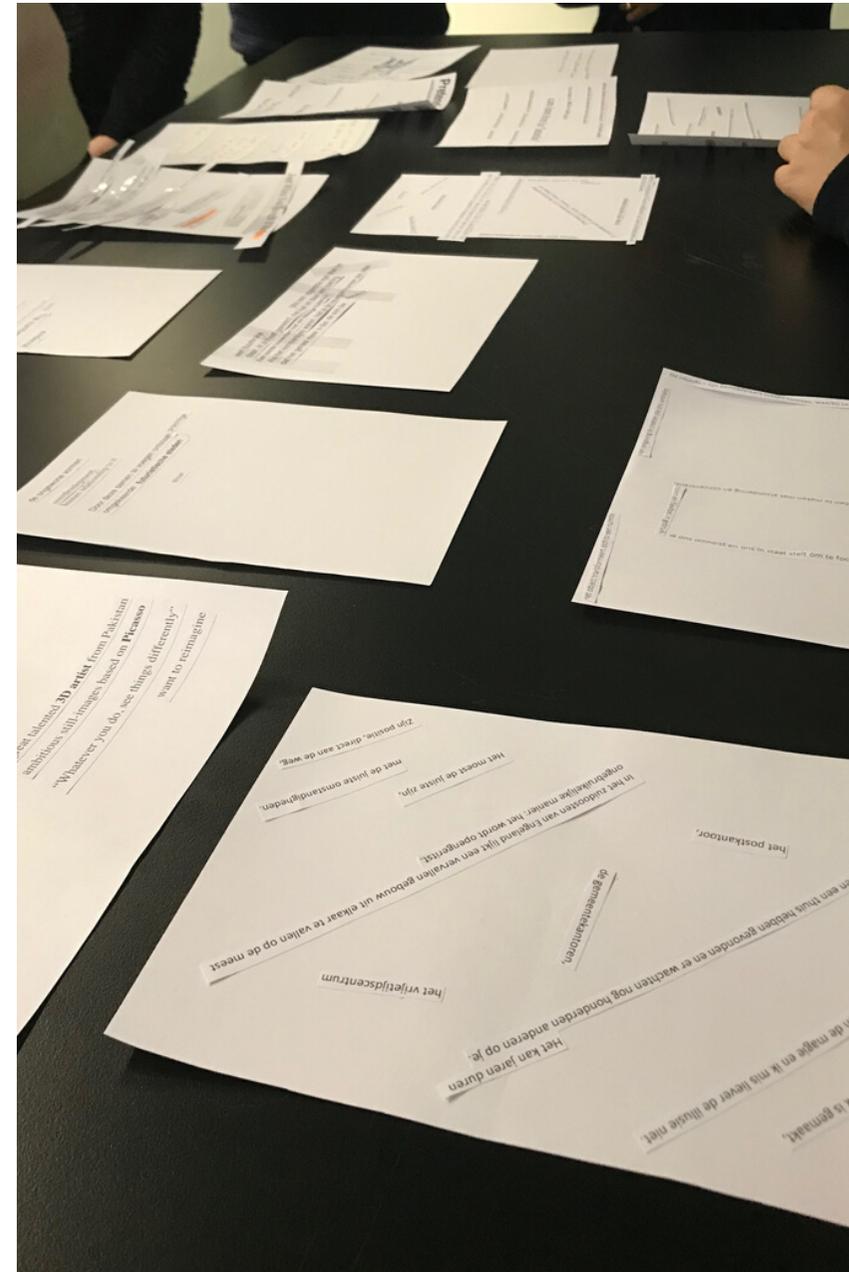
I enjoyed that it was so physical. And it helped that the language was already there, you just had to select it.

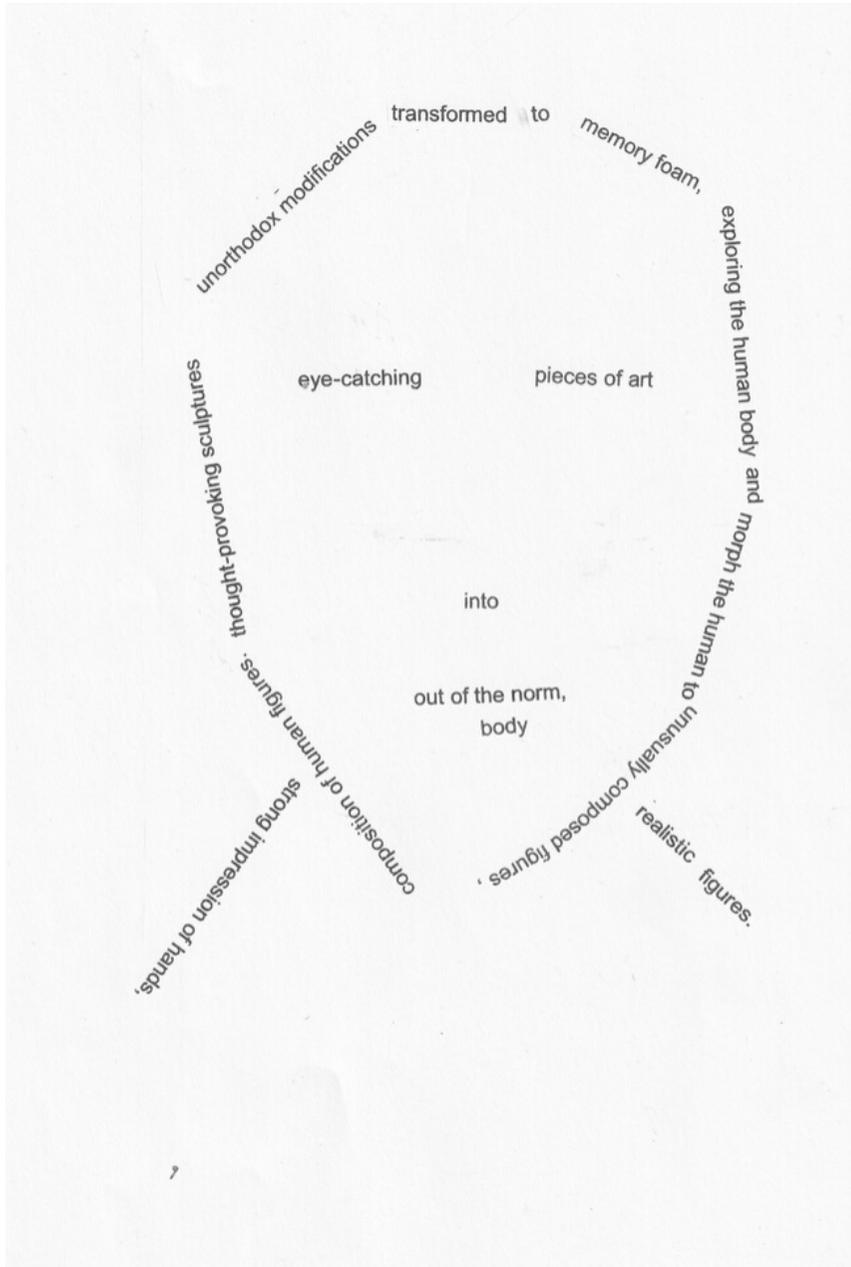
#### INNER CRITIC

I do have some questions: in the summary you say you discussed some of the visual poems, but not all. So, not everyone got their reflective moment. And more importantly: how will they be able to repeat this exercise? Can they distill their view on a subject or (art)work from source material without you there? Teaching students how to utilize these strategies on their own is one of your goals, right?

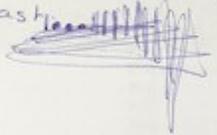
#### MARJOLIJN

This is something that bothered me. So when I did this exercise again in a later class, I changed it, so that students helped each other by interviewing each other. This way they can do it when I am not there.





Plots ontstaat er een storm, een holk. Ik ben er bijna,  
 langs me heen raast de wind, verder  
 is er een leegte. Ik ben er bijna. Het begint  
 nog harder te stormen, kom bijna niet meer  
 vooruit. Het word donkerder en grauwer. Een flits,  
 KABAM! Ik ben er bijna, maar het licht steeds  
 verder weg. Ik begin te kruijen tegen die  
 enorme helling op tussen het gras door  
 Wat elke kant op raast.



Een storm, een holk.  
 Nog even...  
 De wind raast, door de leegte.  
 Bijna...  
 Nog harder.  
 kom niet vooruit.  
 Donkerder, grauwer.  
 Een flits, KABAM!  
 Wat duurt het nog lang.



Listen. It is night moving in the streets, the processional salt slow musical wind in Coronation Street and Cockle Row, it is the grass growing on Llaregyb Hill, dewfall, starfall, the sleep of birds in Milk Wood.

Listen. It is night in the chill, squat chapel, hymning in bonnet and brooch and bombazine black, butterfly choker and bootlace bow, coughing like nannygoats, sucking mintoes, fortywinking hallelujah; night in the four-ale, quiet as a domino; in Ocky Milkman's lofts like a mouse with gloves; in Dai Bread's bakery flying like black flour. It is to-night in Donkey Street, trotting silent, With seaweed on its hooves, along the cockled cobbles, past curtained fernpot, text and trinket, harmonium, holy dresser, watercolours done by hand, china dog and rosy tin teacaddy. It is night neddyding among the snuggeries of babies.

Look. It is night, dumbly, royally winding through the Coronation cherry trees; going through the graveyard of Bethesda with winds gloved and folded, and dew doffed; tumbling by the Sailors Arms.

Time passes. Listen. Time passes.  
Come closer now.

Only you can hear the houses sleeping in the streets in the slow deep salt and silent black, bandaged night. Only you can see, in the blinded bedrooms, the coms. and petticoats over the chairs, the jugs and basins, the glasses of teeth, Thou Shalt Not on the wall, and the yellowing dickybird-watching pictures of the dead. Only you can hear and see, behind the eyes of the sleepers, the movements and countries and mazes and colours and dismays and rainbows and tunes and wishes and flight and fall and despairs and big seas of their dreams.

From where you are, you can hear their dreams.

MARJOLIJN

In the third class, 'writing from an image', the part that worked well was basically everything before I showed Fusco's lecture. The text by Dylan Thomas and the poem Schtzgrm did raise some eyebrows, or, as one student said about Under Milkwood:

STUDENT

It's like the writer just wanted to create very long sentences with difficult words and lots of commas, and this is what came out.

MARJOLIJN

But for me this was a typical example of a useful painful moment. In discussing the texts I was able to broaden the students' frame of reference and get them out of the framework of 'neatly formulated critical writing.' The students do a five-minute free-writing exercise using the art work they had chosen as a starting point. Some students immediately take a shine to it, others need more coaching. One stops writing after the first lines.

*The students do a five-minute free-writing exercise using the art work they had chosen as a starting point. Some students immediately take a shine to it, others need more coaching. One stops writing after the first lines.*

MARJOLIJN

She had described the first thing she'd seen (an art work of a giant yellow duck in a fountain) and then had gotten stuck. I sat down next to her and encouraged her to keep going. 'What does it make you think of? Try to use other senses as well. What would it be like to touch the duck? What would it sound like to stand next to it? Do think you could hear water lapping against it? Is there anything you would like to say to the duck?'

*The student starts writing again. This time, she does not stop.  
Afterwards she says:*

STUDENT

This made it much easier to describe the image. Before this class, I never really thought about writing about an artwork this deeply. I thought I just had to find sources and take input from there. It never occurred to me that I could also write down what I think of the work myself.

MARJOLIJN

It made me happy to see them enjoying and surprising themselves.

ALICE

Did you get any feedback from the students at the end of the course?

MARJOLIJN

Yes, at the end of the third lesson I asked them how they had experienced the course and if it had changed the way they felt about writing. For some it had made a difference, but not for everyone. Some signs of comfort the students shared were 'enjoying the writing process, having fun with it' and 'being able to assess the quality of the work; only needing occasional affirmation' and 'being willing to share the work with others.' But some students also said that they still felt a resistance towards writing, and would not necessarily engage in this type of writing more often.

STUDENT ONE

I really enjoyed doing it, but I already liked writing. I think it was good that writing was addressed and that we took the time to write during class, because there is usually little attention paid to this.

STUDENT TWO

I think writing is just very hard. For me, it is easier to work from images. I like language, but I don't like writing.

STUDENT THREE

I think it would be fun to do this again next year. I did not really care for writing before, but now I think it is okay.

STUDENT FOUR

I liked it. It was interesting to do and it might also make it easier to write. I don't think I will use it for reports, because it does take longer. The text will probably be better, but sometimes I just want to be done quickly.

STUDENT FIVE

I feel much more freedom in writing.

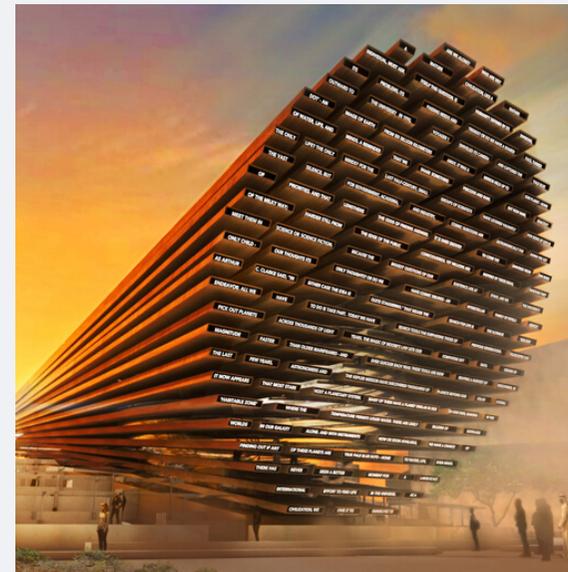
STUDENT SIX

It's nice to just start writing and surprise yourself. Sometimes, when you start with a pre-set idea, you can feel limited.

MARJOLIJN

An important thing I took away from these first three lessons is that I, as a teacher, need to continuously check with myself: what do I want to accomplish with this segment of the class? Why am I telling them this? Then I need to critically assess: is this the best way to achieve that goal? This is not a new insight, but I think it sometimes took a backseat during these lessons. My grasp on what I was doing and why was not always strong enough. When teaching creative writing – as I usually do – I don't have to do this that consciously, because over the years it has become ingrained in my approach. It was good to become aware of this and train this ability.

Futuristisch, tekst, codes, stormend, dreingingen, flash, zweven, schaduw, teveel, overwelming, kleuren, fel, zonlicht, dragend, invloeden, internet, social media, vallen, dreigend, licht eromheen, groen, bomen, donker. Bright, media, rond, cirkel, duistere side, beeps, druipend, snelheid, shockerend, heftig, kleinerend, strak, schrik, wha+t, ignore, no, no, no, cultures, varies, different. (eerste versie)



The workshop consists of three parts: writing from text, writing from image, and bringing the two together.

**(1)** The students are asked to bring in a text that inspires them. From these texts, they cut out words and sentences that appeal to them. They divide these cut-outs into categories such as 'object', 'space', 'thoughts', etc. on the same table. The students read some of the selected texts out loud to get a feel for the quality (tone, rhythm, feel) of the language. They then select whatever text resonates with them, and that they feel says something about their art, and use this to create a visual poem on A5 paper. After looking at the results, they reflect on them in groups of three. They are provided with a list of questions like: 'Why did these words/sentences appeal to you?' and 'What do you hope an outsider would pick up on when seeing this text?' One student asks questions, one responds, and the third writes down the answers. After everyone's work is discussed, the students write down their insights.

**(2)** After a short explanation of art writing, the students read a fragment of the book *The legend of the necessary dreamer* by Maria Fusco. They discuss how you can use a sensory experience (using sensory words and/or zooming in on sensory elements of a work) when writing. They all do a free-writing exercise on the same image and share the results. After this they do the same thing, but on their own work. The students read texts by Dylan Thomas and Ernst Jantl, and discuss the various ways language can be used for a text. The students write about their own work again, after which they reflect on the two texts (individually, in writing), by answering questions like: 'What do you notice about the texts you wrote?', 'How would you describe the mood of your texts?', and 'How would you like an outsider to interpret your texts?'

**(3)** The students go through all the material they have generated, including the reflective text, and cut out (or highlight) everything that appeals to them. They place their selection in front of them and, using this, write their artist statement.

## FINE ART AND DESIGN TEACHER TRAINING

MARJOLIJN

After this three-class course, the second workshop was a three-hour workshop with third-year 'Fine Art and Design teacher training' students of the WDKA. These students are encouraged to maintain an active art practice as part of their education. I was asked to give this workshop to help them write an artist statement for their upcoming exposition. The students had all been part of a 'friendly stalker' project, in which they follow one of their classmates closely and provide them with feedback. So they were used to writing about each other's work, but not used to writing about their own. Writing an artist statement can be hard. As Eric Borg explains in his article 'Writing Tasks in Art and Design' (2012): 'Writing a personal statement forces the Art and Design student to reflect on their work and consider how they wish to position it. Students often find this difficult, a moment in which they have to put themselves forward, rather than letting their practice speak for them, and in student exhibitions it is common for the personal statement that accompanies the work to have only a minimum of information.' (Borg, 2012, 181)

The goal of this workshop was to have them write more personal, inspired, and creative artist statements. This workshop took place about six months after the writing classes with the Arts and Crafts students.

DAVID

What did you do differently in the first part, compared to when you did it with the Arts and Crafts students?

MARJOLIJN

For starters, I asked them to bring in any type of text that they found inspiring, so not necessarily a text about someone they wanted to write about. And instead of categorizing their cut-outs individually, they did it on a shared table. And that was interesting.

*The students look at Marjolijn with a hint of suspicion .*

STUDENT ONE

But how I am supposed to keep track of which ones are mine?

STUDEENTS CUTTING IN WORKSHOP



STUDEENTS ORGANIZING THE CUT TOUTS



*Marjolijn tells them that for the next step she wants them to select any cut-outs that resonate with them. Now, the students get really nervous.*

STUDENT ONE

Wait, does that mean someone else can take the pieces that I cut out?

STUDENT TWO

I don't want to give up my words either!

INNER CRITIC

And this made you happy?



CATEGORIES ON THE TABLE

MARJOLIJN

Actually, yes. Because it meant they felt ownership of the material: they had selected these words, and now they were 'theirs'.

*Marjolijn gives the go-ahead and the students storm the table to pick their favorite cut-outs.*

INNER CRITIC

Let's skip ahead a bit, to the part where the students reflect on the visual poems. Do you still consider this a generative activity or would you say you switched to the non-generative/analytical mode here?

MARJOLIJN

In the learning cycle they move from 'experience' to 'reflection', but I think they are still generating material. This activity is on the border between the two phases. Howard-Jones states that 'although it is not possible for the two mental states to fully occur simultaneously' it is possible for a state to occur that is a combination between the two. (Howard-Jones, 2012, 221) I

I think that's what we are looking at here. Although the students are not critically evaluating what they have produced, they are analyzing it in a way. However, because they are doing this orally, it might be more of a primary thinking process (generative) than a secondary thinking process (non-generative). For me, the most important reason to consider this a generative strategy in this setting, is that I see this exercise as a verbal way to generate material they can later use when writing their artist statement.

DAVID

In your previous reflection you mentioned you want students to write in multiple rounds. In this workshop they did just that. How did this turn out?

MARJOLIJN

Yes, in this workshop I incorporated numerous partial learning cycles (experiencing and reflecting) which worked well, but was not always met with great enthusiasm.

*Marjolijn tells the students to write about their work again. She sets a five-minute timer.*

STUDENT TWO

I really don't know what else to write. I've said everything I have to say.

ALICE

How did you respond to this?

MARJOLIJN

I get this a lot, not just with Art and Design students. And for these situations I have only one response: 'Do it anyway.' Copy what you wrote down before and see if anything new pops up. Write down 'I think this assignment is stupid' ten times in a row if you have to; if you keep at it, something new will come. I know most students don't like to do this, but it is important to keep (re)examining your ideas. Each time you revisit them, they become more specific. (Flower and Hayes, 1977, 456)

*The timer goes off. Marjolijn asks the students if anything new came up.*

STUDENT TWO

Yes. I really did not feel like doing it, but by the end there were some interesting things that I had not thought of before. My hand does hurt from

writing so much, though.

MARJOLIJN

I would like to move on to the end of the class, which I think shows the way the students felt about their artist statements.

*The regular teachers enter the classroom. Marjolijn and the students decide to play a game: Marjolijn reads all the statements aloud and has the teachers guess which student each statement belongs to. They get all of them right.*

MARJOLIJN

During this game the students were relaxed and laughing. They enjoyed watching their teachers guess who wrote which text, and were proud of what they had created.

TEACHER(S)

All of you wrote really interesting statements today, that represent your work well.

DAVID

Did you manage to get feedback from the students?

MARJOLIJN

Not really, because I ran out of time and I decided the game was more important. But I did get a reaction from two students:

*When the class is over, two students linger to talk to Marjolijn.*

STUDENT ONE

When they said we had a writing class today, I thought it would be boring. That you would just tell us the requirements of a good art statement, but this was actually really nice to do.

STUDENT TWO

I liked that it was hands-on and that we did so much writing in class. I am happy with what I wrote. Thank you.

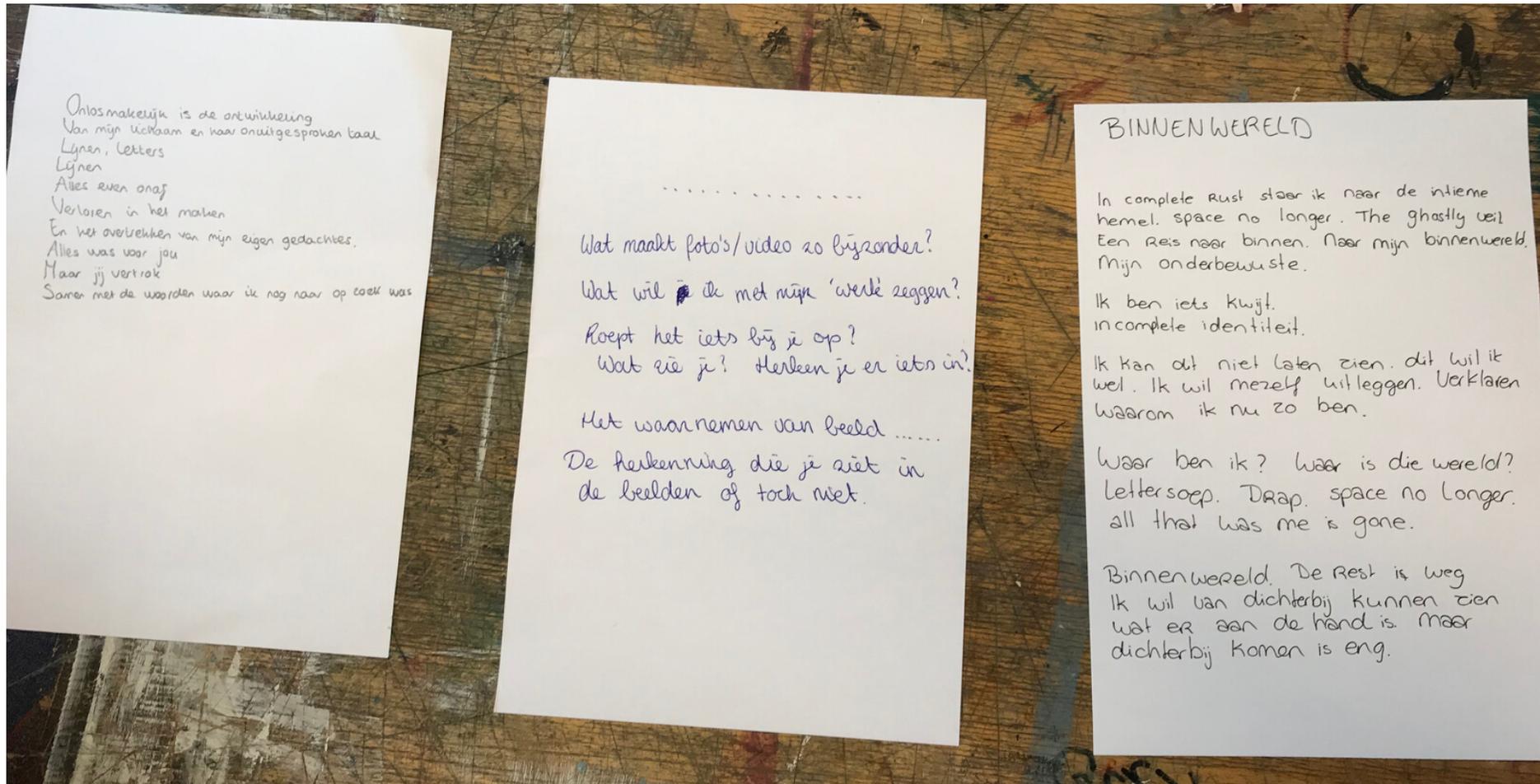
DAVID

Why do you think this workshop worked so well?

## MARJOLIJN

The time-frame helped: three hours instead of an hour and a half. I think this workshop also benefitted from the incorporation of multiple partial learning cycles. We went from experience, to reflection, back to experience, back to reflection, etc. After each burst of writing we slowed back down and took a step back to consider: what did we do here? I think this caused that

spiral effect of learning that we talked about in the lounge. I also think it worked well that they did some of their reflections in groups. This way they also got more used to providing feedback and helping each other. Additionally, by focusing on someone else's work, you are automatically taking a step back from your own. This provided the students with a couple of incubation breaks.



Ontsmakelijk is de ontwikkeling  
Van mijn lichaam en haar onuitgesproken taal  
Lijnen, letters  
Lijnen  
Alles even onaf  
Verloren in het maken  
En het overtrekken van mijn eigen gedachten.  
Alles was voor jou  
Maar jij vertrok  
Samen met de woorden waar ik nog naar op zoek was

.....

Wat maakt foto's/video zo bijzonder?  
Wat wil ik met mijn 'werk' zeggen?  
Roept het iets bij je op?  
Wat zie je? Herken je er iets in?

Het waarnemen van beeld .....

De herkenning die je ziet in  
de beelden of toch niet.

## BINNENWERELD

In complete rust staer ik naar de intieme  
hemel. space no longer. The ghostly veil  
Een reis naar binnen. Naar mijn binnenwereld.  
Mijn onderbewuste.

Ik ben iets kwijt.  
incomplete identiteit.

Ik kan dit niet laten zien. dit wil ik  
wel. Ik wil mezelf uitleggen. Verklaar  
waarom ik nu zo ben.

Waar ben ik? Waar is die wereld?  
Lettersoep. Drap. space no longer.  
all that was me is gone.

Binnenwereld. De Rest is weg  
Ik wil van dichterbij kunnen zien  
wat er aan de hand is. Maar  
dichterbij komen is eng.

In mijn werk verbeeld ik mijn idee over het idee ontstaan van het heelal. Met mijn wens vertel ik een verhaal gebaseerd op verschillende invloeden en ideeën. Dit heb ik gedaan door het maken van een SD collage. De manier waarop ik het verbeeld is luchtig en speels zodat het onderwerp niet lijkt op een statement. Het blijft een idee van 1 persoon. ~~Mensen mogen zelf bepalen of zij het en mee eens zijn of niet~~  
Mijn doel is ~~aan~~ dat om mensen een ander inzicht te laten zien ervaren over dit onderwerp.

Music, an instrument of voice.

Middel om door te gaan.  
Middel om energie te leveren.  
Middel om Beeld te maken.  
Middel om identiteit te vormen.  
Middel om te communiceren.  
Middel om je aan het denken te zetten.

Middel om nooit te stoppen,  
tenzij ik ervoor kies

jij bent wie jij bent.

takee herrie activeerd mij.

U wilt het Basis materiaal papier en verf

Artus Busing

Confronterende  
Huiskamerhumor.

Ongemakkelijk  
Schuldbeuust  
Verscheurd

Als of je in de  
maling  
genomen bent

Blozen.  
Gezellig toch?

The students write down their initial thoughts about the work they selected. After this, they read aloud part of *Under Milkwood* by Dylan Thomas and the poem *Schtzngrm* by Ernst Jantl. The students discuss alternative ways language can be used, after which they free-write a text describing the mood of the work. Some texts are shared. The concept of art writing is explained briefly, after which they read a text from Maria Fusco from her book *The legend of a necessary dreamer* and look at pictures Maria Fusco took at *Palacia de Pombal*. The students write a new text, this time from a different perspective. They may write from the point of view of either the work or something in the work. Some texts are shared. After this, they read a text by Dale McFarland (again accompanied by images) as an example of a text in which multiple ways of writing come together. The students go through their material and select whatever parts they like - single words, sentences, paragraphs - and use these to write a new text. Finally, the students read the results out loud.

The students were told to bring in printed source texts on a subject they wanted to write about in their blog. From these texts they proceed to cut out words and sentences that appeal to them. They divide these cut-outs into given categories, such as 'object', 'space', 'thoughts', etc. This forces them to zoom in and study the pieces of text on a different level. The students read parts of their selections out loud to get a feel for the quality (tone, rhythm) of the language. After this, they select material to use for a visual poem on A5 paper. They are not only asked to think about which words and sentences to use, but also about the order they want to put them in and the visual arrangement. Together they assess the results, after which they are split up into groups of three. They are given a list of questions like: 'Why did these words/sentences appeal to you?' and 'What do you hope an outsider would pick up on when seeing this text?' One student asks questions, one responds, and the third writes down the answers. After everyone's work is discussed, the students write down their insights.

## ARTS AND CRAFTS: THE SECOND TIME AROUND

MARJOLIJN

The second iteration of the writing module for the Arts and Craft students took place a year later. This means I had time to let everything sink in and re-assess the writing classes. One difference: this year I only had the students for two classes. I decided to forego the first class (writing based on a soundscape) and start with the art writing class instead.

ALICE

What changes did you make, compared to the first time you taught the Arts and Crafts students?

MARJOLIJN

(1) I started the lesson on writing from image with a writing exercise instead of a text. This way, the students could focus on writing down their initial thoughts, without also trying to emulate the writing style of the sample text. This also gave me the opportunity to incorporate even more writing rounds.

(2) At the beginning of class I handed out sheets of A3 paper, because working with these feels different than working on your laptop or in your notebook. I provided less theory to make room for more writing time and example texts.

(3) I decided to show images and texts side by side, so the students could get a better feel for what the writer decided to focus on when going from image to words.

(4) I put even more emphasis on having fun with the assignments and not worrying too much about doing it right.

(5) I let the students reflect on their texts in small groups.

ALICE

Can you show us how some of these changes played out?

MARJOLIJN

Yes, let's start with the emphasis on fun. Places everyone!

Marjolijn hits the button and the re-enactment starts. Marjolijn asks the students to write down their initial thoughts on the artworks they have previously selected, in any way that feels natural to them.

#### STUDENT ONE

Does this mean I can also create a mind map?

#### STUDENT TWO

Can I just write down key words?

*Marjolijn explains that in these classes there is no right or wrong way to do the assignments; that she wants them to think of writing as something that has no rules.*

#### INNER CRITIC

And did you actually mean it? Or are we going to see a repeat of the first time, when you made them all comfortable only to slam the door in their faces? I'm sure you wouldn't let them get up and dance on the table.

#### MARJOLIJN

I would, if it helped them write. The most important thing was that they feel freedom and autonomy during the assignments. I needed them to understand that they were writing this for themselves, not for me. The idea of 'no rules' really resonated with some. In the second class, when they are cutting out words and sentences and putting them into categories, some students are unsure of how to do this, then another student says:

#### STUDENT ONE

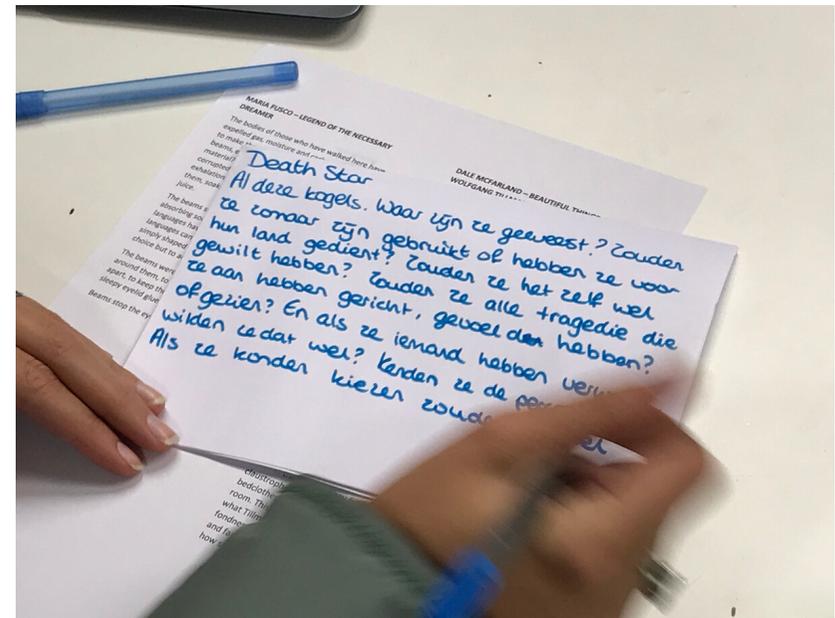
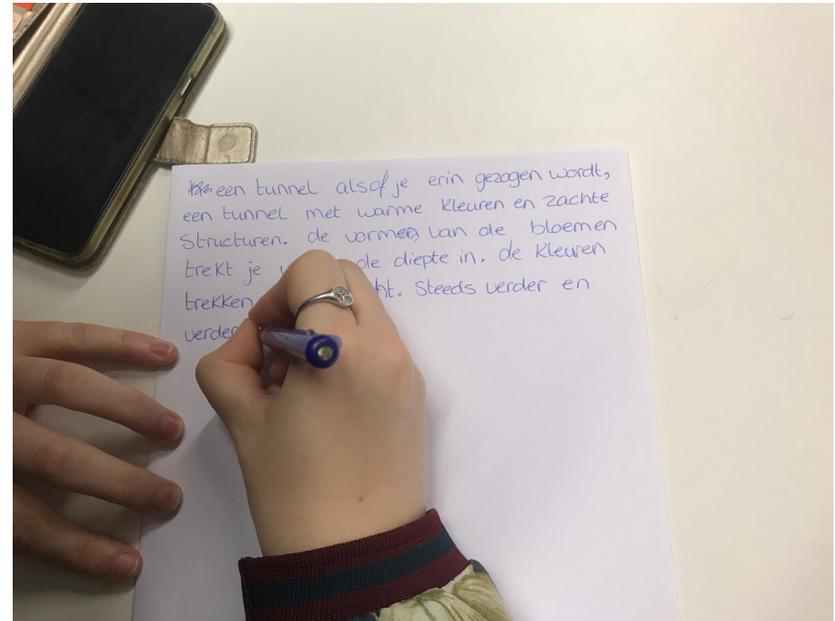
Did you not listen the first time? There are no rules. Just do what you think you should do.

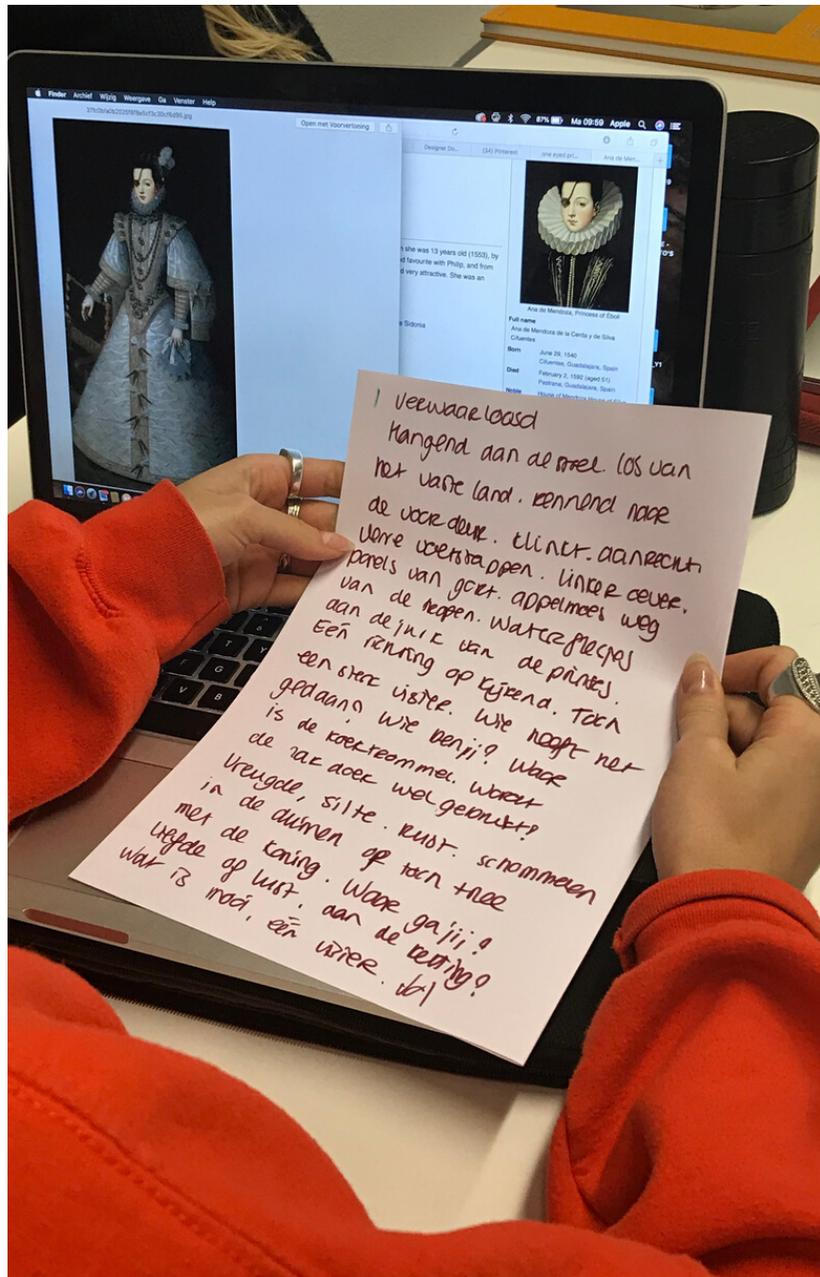
#### MARJOLIJN

Another thing I noticed was how impressed they were with each other's texts. They were giving each other compliments, and the atmosphere was positive.

#### STUDENT THREE

It's like it was written by a spoken word artist!





ALICE

Were there other strategies you used to enhance this positive atmosphere?

MARJOLIJN

When they shared their texts, I made sure I highlighted all the interesting elements. I'm sure you saw how their faces lit up.

INNER CRITIC

But isn't part of making students better at writing also giving them critiques? Pointing out things they can improve?

MARJOLIJN

Yes, but there is a time and a place for everything. This approach helps build them up and helps them learn what works. You don't have to point out what does not work well. If I had started critiquing them, they would have switched to a non-generative/analytical mode and I wanted them to stay in the generative mode. In this sense, these classes differ from my approach with writing students, where I would give them tips for improving their texts earlier in the process. Because they are usually more experienced writers, they can switch between the two states more easily and find critique less daunting. With the Art and Design students I wanted to focus on the process and have them just have fun with it.

ALICE

And what about the reflecting on their texts in groups?

MARJOLIJN

I only did this in the second class, when they were writing from source texts. The structured reflection in small groups worked really well when with the Fine Art and Design teacher training bachelor students, when they were writing the artists statements. However, it did not work as well here. Maybe these students did not feel as strong a connection to the work they selected as the other students felt to their own work. I did notice that when they were putting their cut-outs into the categories, they started reflecting in groups on their own initiative. This more informal way of group reflection worked better. So maybe for these lessons I could think of less structured ways to reflect on the work of someone else.

What worked quite well though was reading the sample texts as a group and reflecting on them together.

STUDENT

I liked that we read example texts in between the writing prompts, because they were inspiring and showed different ways the assignment could be approached.

STUDENT

I liked that we did not read the example texts in silence but that you actually read them out loud. This way, different things stood out and I understood the text a lot better. I never read texts out loud, but I think I might start doing that more often.

DAVID

Can you share some of the other feedback of the students?

MARJOLIJN

Yes, of course. I got a few responses about the effect of getting multiple writing prompts:

STUDENT ONE

I am more inclined now to write multiple versions of a text.

STUDENT TWO

Before this, I would create a mind map and then write the text straight away. Now I know there are more steps I can take in between.

STUDENT THREE

I think I would have been able to do the third assignment at the beginning of class (lesson one), but I do think the text I wrote now is different than it would have been otherwise, because the assignments evoked new insights.

STUDENT FOUR

If you had asked me to do the third assignment at the start of class (lesson one), I don't think I would have been able to. I would not have known where to start. But because we worked our way up to it, it wasn't so difficult.

MARJOLIJN

And I got a few responses on how the lessons influenced their view on writing:

STUDENT FIVE

Before I studied Arts and Crafts I did an academic study. This type of 'no rules' writing was actually quite difficult for me. I kept thinking: but surely I can't just write down what I think? It should be referenced. I should base my text on the texts of others. This did help me realize that here I can also write down my opinions.

STUDENT SIX

I learned you can also write in a creative way. Normally, I see writing as a "punishment", or at least one of my lesser qualities. By looking at an artwork from multiple perspectives you can also write at text that evokes a feeling. Text does not has to be just informative.

STUDENT SEVEN

What the lessons taught me is that making texts and writing is actually really fun. You can change the perception of a design/image by working with text and with this make it stronger. That is something I take away from the lessons and apply elsewhere, and of course the statement "that there are no rules."



STUDENTS WORKING - LESSON TWO

ALICE

Is there something you took away from these lessons as a whole?

MARJOLIJN

This iteration showed me that not everything that works for one group will work for another. This may depend on the goal of the writing exercise (for example, a blog or an artist statements), but it could also just be group dynamics, or even just the time of the day. In both the first course with the Art and Design students and this class, I noticed a difference in engagement between the early morning group and the group that followed. If you know that class starts at nine o'clock and your students will still be waking up, it is better to acknowledge this and integrate a warm-up exercise, than to try and push through it.

*Marjolijn turns to David, Alice and the Inner Critic.*

MARJOLIJN

These were all of the classes. I wanted to thank all of you for getting me to this point - yes, even you, Inner Critic - but now we will leave you. All that is left to do, is return to the dining room, to watch the final conversation between Conviction, Aversion and Doubt.

*Marjolijn hugs them and they all wave goodbye. You walk back into the hallway, down the hall, back to the dining room.*

## THE DINING ROOM (TWO)

### WHAT DID I LEARN FROM THIS AS A TEACHER?

MARJOLIJN

Thank you for taking this journey with me. I hope it was as insightful for you as it was for me. I learned a lot about myself, both as a teacher and as a writer.

Before I started this research, I was not accustomed to explaining the choices I make in my educational approach, at least not to the extent that was required here. When making a lesson plan, I used intuition and my experience of what works and what doesn't. For this research I needed to

place my teaching practice within a pedagogical framework. The search for this framework led me to the work of Kolb & Kolb on experiential learning. I've spent hours scribbling notes in the margins of their book *The experiential Educator*. This book has not radically changed my outlook on education, but it has radically increased my ability to put my vision into words, and into lesson plans. The same applies to Flower and Hayes, and Howard-Jones. After this research, I will continue to teach writing in an intuitive way, but with a stronger foundation to guide my choices. I will also continue to reinforce this foundation by reading research on (writing) education.

This research has strengthened my belief that writing is something students need to do in order to learn it. And not just by doing homework, but also by writing in the classroom, where they can experience the writing process together and the teacher can help them navigate their writing problems and suggest strategies. This way, they can build up their confidence and eventually learn to switch between different strategies and the generative and non-generative modes with ease. Writing needs to take place in the classroom, so that we can teach process-oriented writing, instead of focusing on the end result. By investing more time in teaching students writing strategies and helping them practice these, they will end up becoming comfortable writers, inside and outside of the classroom. The goal is for them to be able to eventually navigate the writing process by themselves, in any situation.

In working with Art and Design students I tried to help them experience writing as a fun process; a creative process where - instead of working with say, clay - they are working with words. As something they can get better at, be more comfortable with. And I think - at times - I succeeded at this. In return, they showed me the importance of selecting the right material to bring into the classroom, of remembering that each group is different and each lesson must be tailor-made. And finally: that sometimes less is more, and that helping students take small steps in the right direction can be enough.

*Marjolijn gives you a hug and motions for you to enter the dining room.*

MARJOLIJN

This is where I leave you. I have to go back to the study room to welcome the next reader.

In the dining room Conviction, Aversion, and Doubt will have a final conversation on writing within Art and Design. They have watched us, listened to our conversations, and talked to the students. If after this conversation you have any questions or thoughts you would like to share, feel free to meet me outside of this thesis. Just send me an e-mail, or tap me on the shoulder if you see me walking down the street.

#### WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH?

*You walk into the dining room. Aversion and Conviction are sitting on opposite sides of a large, wooden table. Doubt is leaning against a wall.*

CONVICTION

Are you going to sit down now Doubt?

DOUBT

I will.

AVERSION

You always say that, but you never pick a side.

CONVICTION

But let's focus on the subject at hand. What do you think now, Aversion? Do you still think writing is an alien presence in Art and Design?

AVERSION

No, I don't. But I do think the students were right when they felt writing halted their creativity; it however turns out that their issue with writing just was not specific enough. It is not all writing exercises, it is writing exercises that only address the non-generative/analytical mode of thinking that hampers their creativity.

DOUBT

So you agree with Conviction; writing is wrongfully accused?

AVERSION

Yes. I think teaching writing strategies for the whole writing process can make a difference and show students that writing can be messy, be fun, be creative. But for this to work, I do think it's important there are enough opportunities for students to try things out and make mistakes, and that this is seen as a learning opportunity.

CONVICTION

I agree. There needs to be a hospitable learning space where generative writing is taught. Preferably in a way that connects students to the part of themselves where they feel they have a learning identity and are confident in their ability to learn and master new skills. A way that approaches writing as creating and takes advantage of the fact that Art and Design students are already used to creative processes in their practice.

AVERSION

And if we are going to implement this form of generative writing it cannot be taught in a single class or workshop. It needs to be integrated in the curriculum. It's good to have a one specific course on writing strategies, but students must also be encouraged to use these strategies throughout their education.

DOUBT

Writing education will probably yield the best results if the process-oriented mindset becomes widely supported.

AVERSION

And this type of writing education needs to start at an early stage of the Bachelor. This way, there is enough time for students to change their "fixed view" on writing and start establishing a learning identity here as well. And those who are still not fond of writing, can at least have enough strategies to manage it.

CONVICTION

Of course! Students are not going to become comfortable writers in just a few lessons, just like a Fine Art student is not going to be the next Picasso after two painting classes. There is a reason that a Bachelor degree takes four years. 'Complex learning is almost invariably slow learning, taking longer to grow than most modules last. Writing should be part of the ongoing process: not bolted on to parts, but running through the whole.' (Francis, 2009, 22)

DOUBT

In the end, I suppose this will also help students meet the requirements of the Bologna Agreement.

## AVERSION

Also, you can't just pick one approach to this and apply it everywhere. You have to adjust the way you teach generative writing to match the students' goals. You have to think about what they are generating: insight into their own work? Into the work of someone else? Are they trying to find connections between different texts or discover what they find most interesting in a text?

## DOUBT

So in conclusion: in order to make students comfortable with writing you need to teach them the whole writing process.

Writing education needs to address both the generative and the analytical state of thinking. Right now, the emphasis in writing education seems to be on the latter, and since the non-generative/analytical state is associated with a decrease in creativity, this can explain why Art and Design students feel like writing stops their creative process.

To change this, there must be space for generative writing. Writing teachers should help their students develop writing strategies for this type of writing. This is done best through activating writing exercises that use a partial learning cycle (experience and reflecting) and that let students write texts in multiple short bursts. These writing exercises should be enjoyable, and can be accompanied by inspiring example texts for students to read together, preferably out loud.

It is important that this type of writing is not just done at home, but also in the classroom, where students can experience the writing process together and the teacher can help them navigate their writing problems and suggest strategies.

Furthermore, it is important for students to understand that the writing process is not a neatly organized linear process and that generative writing strategies can be used during any stage of writing. An experienced, comfortable writer is able to switch between a generative and an analytical state with ease.

If this type of writing education is widely supported within the whole curriculum and commences right at the start of the students' education, it will probably yield the best results in transforming students into

comfortable writers.

Do you agree?

## CONVICTION

Agreed.

## AVERSION

Agreed.

## DOUBT

Good. I am ready to sit down now.

*A couple of movers walk into the dining room.  
Conviction and Aversion look up, surprised. The movers lift up the long table,  
carry it out of the room, and bring in a round table instead.  
Doubt smiles and finally sits down.*

~ THE END ~

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## APPENDIX

### LESSON PLANS - EXTENSIVE VERSIONS

#### Lessonplans Arts & Craft : first time around

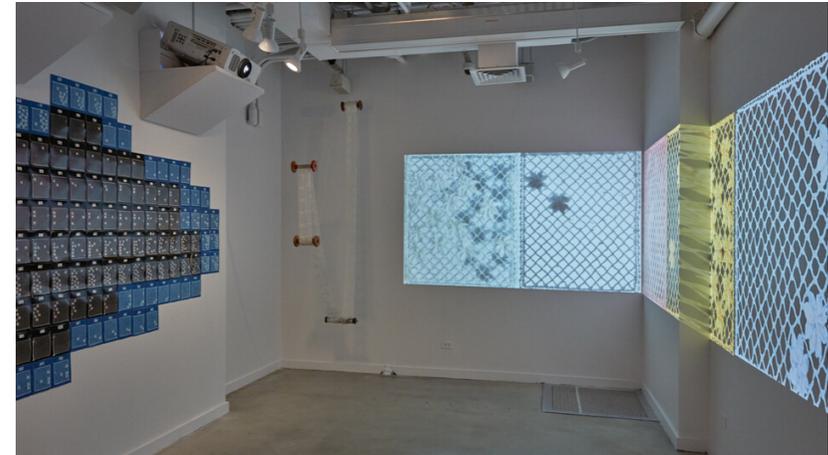
##### Lesson one – writing from sound

(1) We started the class by listening to a soundscape made by an artist Thessia Machado. This soundscape was part of the installation The Lacemakers' Y(earn). We listened to the soundscape multiple times, giving the students a different writing prompt every time.

- What do you hear? Describe the sounds.
- Where is this? Describe what you see in your mind when you listen to the soundscape.
- What is this place you see like? Warm or cold? Packed or empty?
- What do you feel when you listen to the soundscape?

(2) I gave the students 5 minutes to turn their written material into a short text.

(3) In small groups they read their text out loud. After this they discussed the texts. Was there any overlap among their texts? What was different? Every group presented their findings to their class



THE LACEMAKERS' Y(EARN) - FOTO BY JASON WYCHE

(4) We listened to the soundscape one more time, but this time I also showed the visuals of the installation. Their visuals were created by Karen Ostrom. I asked the students to write down the things they noticed. After this we discussed how this changed their view on the work, what was different, what remained the same.

(5) After a short brainstorm on paper, the students wrote a short text about their interpretation of the installation and I asked some students to share their interpretations with the class.

(6) The next step was to look at the descriptions of the installation provided by the gallery.

(7) I asked the students to write down their reaction to the description of the work from the point of view of the artists. This reaction could be written down in steno. In what way does it hook on to your interpretation of the work? Does it change the way you look at the work?

(8) Write down what you find interesting and what you would like to know more about, if you were to further investigate the work.

The Lacemaker's Y(e)arn is a visual conversation between two artists responding to the language of traditional lace construction. Karen Ostrom and Thessia Machado take as their point of departure the culture of Bahia, a state on the northeastern coast of Brazil traditionally known for its fishing villages and lacemaking. Their installation, The Lacemaker's Y(e)arn, is a unique collaboration integrating animation and sound, filtered through traditional lace and a deconstructed fax machine. With this project, the artists create a narrative that speaks of tradition, transition, and obsolescence, the handmade lace and netting mirrored by film and fax-machine technology.

Karen Ostrom commissioned handmade bobbin lace from artisans in Bahia, and exposed these forms on photosensitive paper to make photograms and cyanotypes, created frame by frame. This sequence of images has been animated to produce large-scale video projections. The original lace frames and prints are hung and draped, giving the appearance of film rolls and contact sheets. Thessia Machado created a soundscape for the installation, evoking sounds of the ocean and of lacemaking through a repurposed fax machine run by Arduino microcontroller. In the installation a graphic score travels through a player piano-like device attached to the walls and triggers the sound modules with light patterns.

### Lesson two: writing from text

I asked the students to bring two source texts about the work they wanted to write about. The text had to be printed or copied so that it could be cut up. They also needed to bring scissors, glue, and writing material (pen and paper, or a laptop).

(1) We started the class by looking at examples of 'ready-mades' by Marcel Duchamp to show that renegotiating material is also used in visual arts and that this technique can also be used in writing.



BICYCLE WHEEL AND FOUNTAIN BY MARCEL DUCHAMP

(2) After this, I asked the students to take a look at their texts and cut-out the words and sentences that appealed to them.

(3) When they were finished (or time was up), the student divided their selection into the following categories (individually):

- a. Objects
- b. Space
- c. Time
- d. Thoughts
- e. Physical (things that have to do with the body or acts)

(4.) We read some of the categories out loud to get a feel for the linguistic quality of the material. What does it sound like? What associations does it bring? Can we already see a story there?

(5) I handed out A5 papers and asked the students to make a visual text using the cut-outs. There needed to select the material they wanted to use and think about how they wanted to arrange them on the paper. Making a grammatically correct or a cohesive text was not a requirement.

(6) We arranged the works on a big table and looked at the texts together. What stands out? What does it say for you? We tried to distill what the

selections say about the student's view of the work. What is most important to them? This reflection could be used when writing the blog, not just to write a summary of the different source texts but to choose a specific angle and voice your own opinion.

### Lesson three: writing from image

I asked the students to pick an artwork that they wanted to write about and make sure that they had the artwork accessible, either by having it on their laptop, printing it out, etc. For yourself: bring some art books in case students forget to bring something.

(1) We started the class by reading two texts: a part of *Under Milkwood* by Dylan Thomas and the poem *Schtzngrm* by Ernst Jantl. Where Dylan Thomas has a very rich and poetic language, Ernst Jantl has stripped away as much of the language as he could, keeping only the minimum to get his meaning across. I asked the students to read part of the texts out loud. We discussed the texts and the way the writers used and manipulated language.

(2) After this, I give them a five-minute 'free-writing' exercise where they used the artwork as a starting point. They wrote an associative response to the work, where they did not have to think about spelling or grammar and could even make-up words that they felt described the artwork. Afterward, we read some of the texts out loud.

(3) To provide them with more background and context, we watched part of [a lecture by Maria Fusco](#), about her residency in Palacia Bombal and the writing she did there. Followed up by reading her 11 statements about art writing in the book *Give Up Art*.

(4) To continue their text, I gave them three options:

- a. Re-write the existing text
- b. Write a new text with the existing image and see if other things pop up
- c. Found source texts for your image and select quotes to add to your existing text.

Listen. It is night moving in the streets, the processional salt slow musical wind in Coronation Street and Cockle Row, it is the grass growing on Llaregyb Hill, dewfall, starfall, the sleep of birds in Milk Wood

Listen. It is night in the chill, squat chapel, hymning in bonnet and brooch and bombazine black, butterfly choker and bootlace bow, coughing like nannygoats, sucking mintoes, fortywinking hallelujah; night in the four-ale, quiet as a domino; in Ocky Milkman's lofts like a mouse with gloves; in Dai Bread's bakery flying like black flour. It is tonight in Donkey Street, trotting silent, With seaweed on its hooves, along the cockled cobbles, past curtained fernpot, text and trinket, harmonium, holy dresser, watercolours done by hand, china dog and rosy tin teacaddy. It is night neddyding among the snuggeries of babies.

Look. It is night, dumbly, royally winding through the Coronation cherry trees; going through the graveyard of Bethesda with winds gloved and folded, and dew doffed; tumbling by the Sailors Arms.

Time passes. Listen. Time passes.

Come closer now.

Only you can hear the houses sleeping in the streets in the slow deep salt and silent black, bandaged night. Only you can see, in the blinded bedrooms, the coms. and petticoats over the chairs, the jugs and basins, the glasses of teeth, Thou Shalt Not on the wall, and the yellowing dickybird-watching pictures of the dead. Only you can hear and see, behind the eyes of the sleepers, the movements and countries and mazes and colours and dismays and rainbows and tunes and wishes and flight and fall and despairs and big seas of their dreams.

From where you are, you can hear their dreams.



(7) I split them up into groups of three to talk more in-depth. For this, I gave them a list of questions as a framework for the conversation:

- a. Why did these words/sentences appeal to you?
- b. Which of the categories are represented to most?
- c. Why do you think this is?
- d. What do you think the visual poem says about your work?
- e. What do you hope an outsider would pick-up on when seeing this poem?

One asked the questions, one answered the questions, and the third person took notes. They switched roles after a set amount of time. This way repeated until all three talked about their visual poem. After this, the students had some time to work out the insights gained during the conversation individually.

#### Part two

(1) I briefly explain the concept of art writing. After this, we read the text of Maria Fusco out loud. We talked about the sensory way the text is written. For example the way the text takes the perspective of the beams into account.

(2) I brought an image to show the students and asked to write about the image taking the following questions into regard:

- a. What do you see?
- b. What can be heard?
- c. What can be felt?
- d. What can be tasted?

After this, we discussed how it was to write about an image in this manner. They read some of their texts out loud and discussed them. Can similarities be found? What are the differences between the texts?

(3) The students were asked to write about their own art in the same way.

(4) We read the texts of Dylan Thomas – Under Milkwood and the poem of Ernst Yantl. I used these to discuss the possibilities to play with language, and for language to be a carrier of different kinds of information.

#### **Upwards**

The beams above me act as a force to keep the walls from folding in on themselves. What agency do these beams have? Are the beams servants to the logic, or to the needs of the building, or finally to both?

A servant to this building, keeping it open.

And whilst most servants are interred in the lower portions of a building, these servants are high, lofty in their placement, secured with a view. And yet these beams suffer, they feel our breath.

Those words I have just written I am speaking them aloud, to test where the breath is headed. I believe it goes upward.

The bodies of those who have walked here have expelled gas, moisture and carbon dioxide upwards to make these beams rotten. Yet, are these not good beams, even if they are not intact within their own material? The beams' fabric is compromised, corrupted through too much parley and politics; exhalations and perspiration has risen saturating them, soaking these beams in history and mouth juice.

The beams swell with each and every word. Damp, absorbing sodden words. How many different languages have they inhaled and how many of those languages can they understand? Words rising as simply shaped breath, absorbed by that which has no choice but to accept.

The beams were put in place to support what is around them, to protect, to keep the palácio's walls apart, to keep the walls from falling together as a sleepy eyelid glues shut.

Beams stop the eyelids closing.

(5) I asked the students to 'free write' about their work in an associative manner. I invited them to play with language, maybe even make up new words. I told them to write and to not take their pens off the paper for five minutes. It's better to write down 'I do not know what to write' than to stop writing. Afterwards, we read some of the texts out loud.

(6) The students reflected on their texts, using the following questions:

- a. What do you notice about the texts that you wrote?
- b. What senses are used the most?
- c. Why do you think these are the most present?
- d. How would you describe the ambience / mood of your text?
- e. How would you like an outsider to interpret your text(s)?

### Part 3

(1) The students went through the texts they had written that day (including the reflective texts) and selected everything that appealed to them. That they felt 'hit the mark.' They placed their selection in front of them.

(2) I handed out another A5 paper and asked them to keep the top of the paper empty, and, on the rest of the paper, write their statements using their selection, rewriting it where necessary. When they were finished, they could come up with a title and put that at the top of the paper.

(3) They presented the statements to each other. Their main teachers returned to the classroom and matched the texts to the students.

### **Art and Crafts: the second time around**

#### Lesson one:

The students have all selected an artwork or design they want to write about.

(1) I asked the students to write down their initial thoughts about the work they selected in a way that feels natural to them.

(2) After this, they read aloud part of Under Milkwood by Dylan Thomas and the poem Schtzngm by Ernst Jantl. The students discussed alternative ways language can be used. I asked the students write another response to the work, this time trying to catch the mood of the work. If they wanted to they could make up their own words, just like Dylan Thomas

(3) We went on to read the text of Maria Fusco. On the screen I showed some of the pictures that Maria made in Palacia de Pombal. Afterwards, I asked the students to write another text but this time to change the perspective. To either write from the standpoint of the work or something in the work. We read some of the texts of the students.



PICTURE OF PALACIA DE POMBAL - BY MARIA FUSCO

(4) We read fragments of texts by Dale McFarland. On the screen I showed the pictures he wrote about.

(5) After reading Dale McFarland and seeing another example of what a text about art can be I asked the students to go through their material and select the parts that they like. This could be loose words, sentences, paragraphs. They put them together and used it to write a new text.

(6) We ended the class by having a conversation on what they take away from this method of writing.



A scene on the edge of town: low, red-roofed houses, palm trees, a cat's cradle of telegraph wires, cars parked on the parched dirt roadway. There are pools of dense shadow amongst the luminous white buildings, the windows are dark, and the lonely magnesium glare of two street lamps seems to heighten a feeling of imminence. Hazy clouds hang in a midnight blue sky and everything appears to shimmer as if in the heat of the afternoon. To one side, a group of children in shorts and T-shirts stand on a garden wall. The two eldest look out over the roof tops to a phenomenon light years away from this dusty, low-rise, oil drum, stray-dog townscape: a total eclipse of the sun.



In his studies of drapery - the folded and crumpled fabrics of clothes discarded on a bedroom floor, jeans, T-shirts, details of buttons, pockets and gussets - this classical formalism is highlighted through the most unexpected subject matter. The photographs capture a second of visual pleasure in the colours and textures of a pile of dirty laundry: the play of light and shade on blue satin running shorts, white cotton flecked with some unsavoury stains. They have more than a hint of eroticism, clearly evoking the act of undressing, and appear to retain the warmth and scent of the wearer. They feel airless, maybe even claustrophobic - like being tangled in sticky bedclothes on a hot summer night in a windowless room. This beauty of mess and ephemerality is in part what Tillmans describes: he has a heartbreaking fondness for the moment that will inevitably vanish, and fanatically attempts to record just how lovely, how special and how unrepeatable it is.

### Lesson two:

(1) After this, I asked the students to take a look at their texts and cut-out the words and sentences that appealed to them

(2) When they were finished (or time was up), the student divided their selection into the following categories (individually):

- a. Objects
- b. Space
- c. Time
- d. Thoughts
- e. Actions
- f. Senses

(3) We read some of the categories out loud to get a feel for the linguistic quality of the material. What does it sound like? What associations does it bring? Can we already see a story there?

(4) I handed out A5 papers and asked the students to make a visual text using the cut-outs. There needed to select the material they wanted to use and think about how they wanted to arrange them on the paper. Making a grammatically correct or a cohesive text was not a requirement.

(5) We arranged the works on a big table and looked at the texts together. What stands out? What does it say for you? We tried to distill what the selections say about the student's view of the work. What is most important to them?

(6) I split them up into groups of three to talk more in-depth. For this, I gave them a list of questions as a framework for the conversation:

- a. Why did these words/sentences appeal to you?
- b. What do you hope an outsider would pick-up on when seeing this poem?
- c. Why?

One asked the questions, one answered the questions, and the third person took notes. They switched roles after a set amount of time. This way repeated until all three talked about their visual poem. After this, the students had some time to work out the insights gained during the conversation individually.

(2) After this, they read aloud part of Under Milkwood by Dylan Thomas and the poem Schtzngm by Ernst Jantl. The students discussed alternative ways language can be used. I asked the students write another response to the work, this time trying to catch the mood of the work. If they wanted to they could make up their own words, just like Dylan Thomas

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## **INTERVIEW**

*Transcript gesprek schrijfdocenten, 29 maart 2019, Utrecht*

Nirav Christophe  
Daniela Moosmann  
Jelmer Soes  
Ninke Overbeek  
Marjolijn van den Berg

MARJOLIJN

Waar ik nu nog steeds tegen aanloop is in dit geval het begrip 'comfortabel'. Wanneer ben je comfortabel met schrijven? wanneer ben je niet comfortabel met schrijven? wat zijn de uitingen daarvan? Dus ik ben ondertussen ook aan het kijken naar andere pedagogische dingen. Maar ik dacht als ik nu toch allemaal over docenten bij elkaar in dezelfde ruimte heb, waarom niet gebruik maken van die gelegenheid om hierover te praten? Dus dat is eigenlijk wat ik in een half uurtje met jullie wil doen is kijken: oke wanneer zie je nou aan een studenten dat die comfortabel is? Wat zijn tekenen om wel comfortabel te zijn met schrijven en ook: hoe kun je dat veranderen en valt dat te veranderen? Kun je een student van oncomfortabel naar comfortabel krijgen?

DANIELA

Ik heb een vraag. Hoe voel jij je als je comfortabel bent met schrijven? Om erachter te komen wat jij onder die term verstaat?

MARJOLIJN

Ik heb daar zelf ook over nagedacht en dat stukje dat is in het Engels maar ik ga het gewoon eventjes samenvatten. Waar ik het over had was schrijven als 'friend' of als 'bully'. En dat het niet realistisch is om te denken dat schrijven altijd je vriend is. Dus dat je in een schrijfproces - dat schrijven altijd maar fijn is om te doen en dat 't altijd makkelijk gaat en dat dat de vertaling is van als je 'ervaren bent met schrijven' of 'comfortabel met schrijven'. En voor mij gaat comfortabelheid over dat je ook op het moment dat je vastloopt, dat je strategieën hebt om ermee om te gaan. Dat je weet als je denkt 'oh dit lukt me niet' dat je kan denken "wat heb ik nog meer en hoe ga ik dat dan toepassen?" Dus die zekerheid te hebben dat je uiteindelijk ergens naartoe kan met je tekst.

JELMER

Dus comfortabel heeft heel veel te maken met controle eigenlijk. Controle over het proces.

MARJOLIJN

Ja.

DANIELA

En je vraag was wanneer zien wij dat een schrijfstudent comfortabel is met schrijven? *Zien* wij?

MARJOLIJN

En wat zijn uitingen daarvan.

NIRAV

En kan iemand 't verbeteren of vermeerderen? Of zoiets zei je?

NINKE

Ik heb nog een andere vraag. Hoe weet ik of wat ik mijn leerling zie doen, waar die een oncomfortabel mee is, met schrijven te maken heeft of dat het een onderdeel is van iets anders? Mijn ervaring is dat vaak als een leerling 't niet prettig vindt om te schrijven dat er een reden voor is die niet altijd met het schrijven zelf te maken heeft, maar soms met een vorm van zelfvertrouwen. Of met een angst om bepaalde kennis niet te hebben, die ze denken wel nodig te hebben om te mogen/kunnen willen schrijven. En soms zit het 'm zelfs in dat ze zich in de groep niet veilig voelen waardoor ze niet durven zich te uiten en bang zijn dat ze misschien straks iets

moeten delen van wat ze hebben geschreven en dan moet dat in de groep waar ze inzitten. Dus hoe maak je duidelijk dat wat ze oncomfortabel vinden.... dus hoe zorg je... Hoe maak je duidelijk dat dat over het schrijven gaan?

NIRAV

Een aansluitende vraag: Kan ik het zien aan de teksten? Of moet ik het alleen maar zien aan hoe iemand erbij zit? Kan ik het zien aan de teksten of iemand een comfortabel schrijfproces heeft?

JELMER

Ja, het is eigenlijk ook inventariseren: welke factoren dit nou gaan weergeven, de mate van comfortabel zijn ja of nee. Dus je hebt het inderdaad misschien over teksten, je hebt het over wat je zelf ziet, maar je hoort het ook denk ik over wat ze zelf aangeven. Dus je zou het ook in de vorm van enquêtes kunnen proberen te meten. Waarbij ze dus zelf op een schaal moet aangeven hoe comfortabel ze zich ten opzichte van het schrijven voelen. Ik weet niet - Ik ben ook benieuwd welke van die factoren - Hoe die factoren zich tot elkaar verhouden wat betreft betrouwbaarheid ook. Dat vind ik ook een interessante vraag. Wat is nou betrouwbaarder? Ik zou zelf zeggen dat iemand eigen invulling, dus hoe iemand zichzelf inschat qua comfortabelheid betrouwbaarder is dan wat ik zie. Want ik zie een buitenkant, ik zie niet een een binnenkant, als docent.

NINKE

Ja en tegelijkertijd kan soms het benoemen van ongemak ook iets zijn wat leerlingen doen, alleen maar om even nodig te hebben dat je zegt tegen ze dat het oké is en daarna kunnen ze prima schrijven en dan gaat het dus niet over het schrijven maar over een soort eerste drempel van: wat moet ik dan doen en dat komt er dan even uit. En daarna kunnen ze wel gewoon schrijven dus.

JELMER

Maar ook dat zou je kunnen ondervangen denk ik door het door het vaak te meten. Mijn rij-instructeur, 3 jaar geleden toen ik rijles volgde, die vroeg mij om de 10-15 seconden in een les dat we. iets spannends moesten doen met een heel drukke kruispunt oversteken, om de 10 seconden vroeg ie: "Op een schaal van 0 tot 10 hoe onzeker voel je je nu? Hoe is spannend vind je dit?" En dus kreeg hij eigenlijk meer een soort van grafiekje. Dat die bij mij kon zien zo, zit hij er nu in zeg maar. Dus je hoeft zo'n meetmoment

niet 1 keer te doen je kunt het wel 10 keer doen. Misschien. Dan krijg je inderdaad meer dan - dan ondervang je wat jij zegt. Iemand moet het ongemak uitspreken om zich minder ongemakkelijk te voelen. Dat is inderdaad eentje, ja.

MARJOLIJN

Stel we gaan, we kiezen - ik kies voor een enquête, wat zijn dan vragen die jullie studenten zouden stellen om te kijken: Hé, hoe staan ze ervoor met hun schrijfwerk?

JELMER

Ik moet denken aan de - maar dat is meer omdat ik mijn afgelopen jaren ben doodgegooid met al die pedagogische boeken rondom de lerarenopleiding maar je hebt 3 factoren die een krachtig leerklimaat scheppen, daar zou je hier ook iets mee kunnen. Uhm, weet ik ze nog... Autonomie, competentie en relatie. Vooral de eerste 2 zit ik dan aan te denken. En dan heb je het ook over controle dat ze bijvoorbeeld aangeven of dat je vraagt "In hoeverre heb je het gevoel dat je dit zelf kunt? Dat je dit zonder hulp kunt? Dat je een bepaalde schrijftaken - je kunt misschien wel benoemen - "deze schrijftaak in hoeverre heb je het gevoel dat jij dat zonder hulp nu kunt?" Dat is misschien een vraag naar zelfstandigheid en naar autonomie. De competenties misschien: "In hoeverre heb je het gevoel dat als je dit zonder hulp doet dat het goed wordt?" Ja.

NIRAV

En relatie?

JELMER

Ja die vind ik lastiger dat want gaat er heel erg over dat je als docent oog hebt voor je leerlingen.

NIRAV

Oké.

DANIELA

Het rare is - ik moet denken aan die DVTG-ers waar ik les gaf. Waar ik in het begin 12 mensen had waarvan 11 zich heel oncomfortabel voelden met schrijven. Buitengewoon oncomfortabel, en eentje die zei van: ja ik ik schrijf af en toe gedichten dus ik vind schrijven wel leuk. Het gaat natuurlijk niet om een gedicht te schrijven maar - En dan het einde. Ik hoorde van hun ze

studieleider: Ja, - want ik kan daar verder geen lesgeven - ze zoekt nog een iemand die dan verder les kan geven, een beetje in hetzelfde ding - in dezelfde trant want bij Daniela hadden ze een soort van therapie. Omdat allemaal gelukkig eruit kwamen. Wat ik een beetje een rare definitie vind maar waar ik echt dacht van: huh? Zij ziet dat als therapie wat ik wat ik deed, ik heb - voor mijn gevoel was het puur schrijfprocesbegeleiding. Dus uh, dat heeft ook met comfortabel en niet comfortabel te maken. Van hoe de studenten zich daar in voelden. Maar, uh ja?

JELMER

Nee, maak maar eerst af.

DANIELA

Maar uh - Ik ben het even kwijt.

JELMER

Sorry.

DANIELA

Ik kom er misschien nog wel op.

JELMER

Eén vraag, die ik bij jou ook even parkeer, daar heb je ongetwijfeld over nagedacht, dus ik weet het gewoon nog niet wat je daarover denkt maar - Is bij het comfortabel voelen ook nog belangrijk hoe ze het eigenlijk kwalitatief doen? Of kan iemand zich ontzettend comfortabel voelen bij totaal niet goed kunnen schrijven?

DANIELA

Precies, ja.

JELMER

Want daar kun je je ontzettend comfortabel bij voelen. Van, nou heerlijk het gaat hartstikke lekker. En het worden afschuwelijke teksten. Maakt dat uit? Of niet?

DANIELA

Ja, wij hadden in de schrijfopleiding, een paar jaar geleden, een meisje en zij kon niet heel schrijven en weigerde te herschrijven want zij vond het allemaal goed. Ze zei van: "Nou ik vind de tekst goed." En als je zei van: "ja

maar dat en dat". Dan zei ze: 'Dat vind ik niet, ik vind hem goed.'" Dus zij heeft er eentje geschreven en dan nooit meer teruggelezen. Dus zij was heel comfortabel in het schrijven maar het waren waardeloze teksten.

JELMER

Dus speelt dat mee? Daar ben ik benieuwd naar.

NIRAV

Dat is ook het spannende van het begrip comfortabel.

DANIELA

Ja.

NIRAV

Dat je denkt: ten opzichte van wat? Wat jij net - het voorstel of het voorbeeld dat je gaf van DTVG - volgens mij is het spannend om het begrip te onderzoeken gecombineerd met een duidelijk doel. Bij DVTG moet je die mensen ergens helpen dat ze iets over hun onderzoek schrijven of iets over een art statement of zoiets maken, dus je werkt naar een doel, dus dan kun je ook zien: er komt iets uit. En dan kun je het gevoel van comfortabelheid relateren aan wat ze uiteindelijk geleverd hebben.

MARJOLIJN

Ja, ik heb dus nu een - 3 lessen gegeven aan studenten van 'associate degree' van Arts and Crafts. Dus soort van de doorstroom naar hbo, van 2 jaar, en die moesten uiteindelijk blogs gaan schrijven over kunst binnen een bepaald politieke veld of uh economische dingen. En die heb ik dus 3 lessen strategieën geleerd, maar bijvoorbeeld door de teksten die ze - bronteksten die ze hadden letterlijk te knippen. En daar dan nieuwe dingen van te maken en daarop te reflecteren. Om er dan achter te komen: wat vinden ze eigenlijk zelf over dit onderwerp in plaats van alleen maar 2 dingen samen te voegen en zeggen "Nou, Dat is een goeie tekst." Daarbij gaat het ook - Dat vind ik heel vaak lastig want het gaat mij niet alleen om het eindresultaat want je kan ook prima een tekst schrijven waarbij je 3 teksten samenvoegt. En gewoon een soort samenvatting schrijft. Zonder dus kritisch te kunnen reflecteren op iets of zonder zelf iets van jezelf op papier te kunnen zetten.

DANIELA

Maar is dat belangrijk? Want het gaat jou om het comfortabele toch? En

niet om het kritische denken?

MARJOLIJN

Nou, ik denk dus wel dat dat belangrijk is, dat het verbonden is dat - dat comfortabel zijn met taal - Kijk, uiteindelijk moeten ze bijvoorbeeld bij de Willem de Kooning hun artsist statement schrijven en ze moeten een document schrijven over zichzelf als kunstenaar dus daarbij is het kritisch kunnen denken wel belangrijk.

NINKE

En dus ook comfortabel zijn met kritisch naar je eigen denken kijken of kritisch zijn over je eigen ideeën en je eigen ervaringen misschien ook. Dus comfortabel gaat dan ook over een combinatie van kritisch zijn en nog steeds ook het gevoel hebben dat je niet zwemt maar dat je - Waar ik net aan moest denken wat Daniela zei was. Wat heel erg helpt in mijn beleving voor mij bijvoorbeeld als iemand mij vertelt wat je nu aan het doen bent of aan het ervaren bent dat hoort bij dit stukje van je proces. Of dat hoort bij dit stukje van je ontwikkeling dus het is normaal, of 't is goed, of het klopt, of het is niet gek dat je dit nu aan het doen bent. Dit is een deel van wat je zoekt volgens mij in de term comfortabel gaat inderdaad over een combinatie tussen autonomie maar ook een soort comfortabel zijn met "het nog niet weten" of "nog zoekende zijn of nog -

DANIELA

En het een plek kunnen geven. Dat vind ik een heel mooi wat je zegt. Dat is gewoon een student jet een plek kan geven van, ja van iets - van een stadium van het proces waar die zit. Dat is interessant.

NIRAV

Dan merk je - Als jullie het zo zeggen - dan merk je dat het begrip, jij hebt het didactisch genoemd die in je onderzoeksvraag. De didactiek van uhm, creative writing of van - dat dit eigenlijk meer is dan de oefeningen van het schrijven. Dus dat dat zit - de hele pedagogie eromheen. Van? Nou ja ,de strategie bijvoorbeeld van het allereerst bevestigen van dat het niet vreemd is dat ze oncomfortabel zijn, dat ze weten waarom ze de dingen doen, dat ze leren - Dus dat ze daar zitten allerlei verschillende stappen in die gewoon onderdeel zijn van die creative writing strategies en dat lijkt me wel spannend want je merkt meteen - lkzelf heb, maar dat is misschien wat bout om zo te zeggen, ik zou het heel spannend vinden. om andere manieren te zoeken om informatie van die mensen te krijgen dan om het

ze te vragen, met enquêtes of met het laten vertellen. Dus zou iets is zou je iets kunnen vinden uit? - Doordat je ze hard op laat schrijven. Totdat ze - Inderdaad. Of een tekst. Dat je zegt, "Nou er zijn bepaalde strategieën die ik doe om de tekst te komen, maar er zijn ook wel een aantal strategieën die ik doe om een tekst te herschrijven. Ze hebben wat en je geeft ze de- Je laat ze - Nou, je hebt allemaal een eerste versie van een artist statement en ik moet die van Daniela herschrijven. Hoe is dat? Hoe comfortabel voel ik me daarin? Heeft het echt te maken met "het is iets van mezelf"? Dus ik - Ik vind - ik word meteen geprikkeld door wat voor manieren zijn er om tot antwoorden te komen op jouw vraag. Anders dan dat je hun vraag of ze zich comfortabel voelen.

NINKE

Ja, wat ook gekleurd kan worden door verwachtingen van wat jij wilt horen.

NIRAV

Absoluut. Het woord is zelf al gekleurd. Het is namelijk altijd beter om je comfortabel te voelen dan niet. Terwijl wij allemaal weten het is af en toe buitengewoon productief voor je om je oncomfortabel te voelen. Als dat in een vrij - Bijvoorbeeld als je in een hele veilige omgeving je met een bepaalde taakopdracht heel oncomfortabel voelt, dan kan het heel veel opleveren. Omdat het dan niet aan de persoon verbindt. "Ik kan het niet" of "dan moet ik -"

MARJOLIJN

Ik blijf zelf ook nog steeds twijfelen over wat nou de goeie verwoording is of het dan comfortabel is, dus ik ben er ook nog naar aan 't zoeken. Van, wat is het dan precies? Daarom dacht ik ook volgens mij zo'n gesprek als dit heel goed om daardoor ook te kunnen refereren is het comfortabelheid? Is 't controle?

DANIELA

Ja.

MARJOLIJN

Het gaat mij ook omdat ze de meerwaarde zien van schrijven in hun eigen praktijk, en wat ik merk is dat het schrijven heel erg aan competentie van de opleiding hangt. Dus ze moeten bepaalde competenties hebben, die moeten ze afstrepn. Maar dan gaat het dus niet over wat schrijven kan doen voor jou als kunstenaar, maar wat jij als student moet laten zien om

je vak te halen.

DANIELA

Hmhm.

NINKE

Ja, om het af te checken inderdaad. Ik dacht nog misschien kun je om jezelf te testen kijken of je kunt benoemen hoe je het schrijven zo oncomfortabel mogelijk voor ze kan maken. Om te zien wat je dan allemaal zou doen, omdat dat je waarschijnlijk laat zien: ah, het tegenovergestelde daarvan, of een andere kant daarvan, zit waarschijnlijk meer in de buurt van comfortabel.

DANIELA

Hoe zou je dat doen? Oncomfortabel maken. Je moet stand schrijven. Liggend schrijven.

MARJOLIJN

Nou wat ik interessant vind - Ik ben zelf, om dus weer te ervaren waar zit dan dat comfortabel zijn en oncomfortabel zijn, en wat doet dat met je? Ben ik mezelf aan het onderdompelen in dingen die ik oncomfortabel vind. Dus om mezelf als onderzoeker en als schrijver ook in mijn onderzoek te plaatsen. Zo ben ik nu 3 performance lessen aan het doen, van een reeks van Jeremiah Day en dat is een soort dans/ performance improvisatie. En vorige keer moest ik een stopcontact dansen.

JELMER

Ja, dat is, ja.

NIRAV

Wat dan voor elkaar -

JELMER

Dat is oncomfortabel.

MARJOLIJN

Dat was een opdracht. - We moesten objecten uit de ruimte kiezen en dan bedenken "Wat is dan de beweging van het object? En hoe vertaalt dat zich letterlijk? En hoe vertaalt dat zich in een ervaring? En ik kreeg die opdracht en mijn eerste instinct was: doe normaal, dat ga ik toch zeker niet doen.

MARJOLIJN

En toen dacht ik: oké. maar wat nou als ik het wel ga doen? Dus ik was de hele tijd bezig met: hoe ervaar ik dit. Waarom denk ik 'doe toch niet zo idioot, ik ga toch geen stopcontact dansen? En is dat inderdaad - voor mezelf dacht ik: o ja ben ik bang om mezelf voor schut te zetten? Omdat ik niet weet wat ik doe en vind ik het daarom - is het dat ik het eng vind? Is het omdat ik niet snap waarom ik een stopcontact moet dansen? Dus ook om mezelf daarin steeds in situaties te zetten waarbij ik denk: ik weet niet zo goed wat ik ermee moet. Om dan ook weer dichterbij die ervaring van studenten kunnen zitten en die denkt: ik weet niet waarom ik opeens moet schrijven, ik kan toch prima beeldend werken?

DANIELA

Ja, ook de eerste vraag van jouw studenten. Die van: waarom moeten we dat doen? Van de universiteit.

JELMER

Ja, dat komt natuurlijk voort -

NINKE

Ja, ze vragen het niet letterlijk maar hun houding is: WAT?

JELMER

Ja.

DANIELA

En dat is waarschijnlijk ook. Waarschijnlijk voelen ze -

JELMER

Het komt voort uit oncomfortabel zijn, of uit onzekerheid.

DANIELA

Ja.

JELMER

Veel meer dan uit rationeel echt daadwerkelijk "het waarom" willen weten.

DANIELA

Leuk, leuk dat je dat doet.

MARJOLIJN

Wat ik interessant vond - want ik had eergisteren een gesprek met mijn supervisor en ik ben - ik kan even de naam niet, maar het ging over Carol Drag, Carol Twag, Carol iets. En dat ging over intelligentie. En hoe je intelligentie ervaart. Dat ging ook over een onderzoek van studenten en je kon dan intelligentie als een "entity" ervaren, dan is het een vast gegeven, dus je kan niets of je kan niets niet. En of je er - Een succes draagt niet bij aan jouw gevoel van zelfvertrouwen over of je iets kan. Dus als je denkt "ik kan niet schrijven", dat het een keer wel lukt betekent niet dat je je daarna zelfverzekerder voelt want je denkt nog steeds "nou dat is dan een keer gelukt, maar ik kan niet schrijven." Of je hebt de 'instrumental theorist', En dat is: intelligentie is iets vormbaars, dus ook al ben je ergens heel slecht in je kan het altijd leren. En dan op het moment dat je iets lukt, dat je een succes hebt, draagt dat dus bij zelfvertrouwen. Het is daarbij dacht ik dus, ja "confidence" of comfortabel zijn, dat vond ik ook problematisch dan ineens aan het woord, dus ik dacht maar als je dus studenten hebt die altijd denken: Ik kan iets niet. En ik ga d'r niet - ik ga niet het idee hebben dat ik het beter kan, dan is het dus ook gewoon een kwestie van de 10.000 keer doen zodat je, ook al vind je jezelf geen schrijver, je wel het eindproduct kan afleveren. Maar dan zullen ze dus nooit zeggen "ik ben hier - Ik heb er zelfvertrouwen bij." Omdat ze dat niet - omdat dat niet iets is dat kan veranderen in hun hoofd. Ze kunnen niet ergens "intelligenter" in worden.

NIRAV

Een paar dingen. De eerste is dat ik even toen daarstraks sprak, moest ik ineens denken aan de -die - De definitie van "flow" van Sieksem Mi Hi (??), die altijd zegt de opdracht - je competentie moet groot genoeg zijn voor een opdracht. Maar ook de uitdaging moet groot genoeg zijn. Dus het is zo'n vierhoek dat als je te weinig competentie hebt voor een opdracht, dan ga je dan ga je niet in een flow terecht komen maar als je heel veel competentie hebt en de opdracht is heeft weinig uitdaging. dan kom je ook niet in de flow terecht. Dan word je ook heel oncomfortabel ermee. Dus het wil niet - Het feit dat je oncomfortabel ben, hoeft niets zeggen over dat je te weinig competenties hebt op dat moment. Kan ook om een andere om andere redenen zijn. Het tweede waar ik aan moest denken is van dat je - Je kunt ook dat begrip van comfortabel, dat je denkt van "nou ik ga toch echt probeer het te benoemen volgens de begrippen van het schrijfprocesmodel. Of van schrijfprocesmodellen, hoeft niet per se van Flower and Hayes te zijn maar het kan ook gewoon zijn van, zoals die met

schrijfblokkades, theorie over schrijfblokkades, waar we het vorige keer over hadden. Omdat ik heel veel dingen, die ik hoor, denk ik "Als iemand zegt: "Ja, ik kan er niks van, moet - Ik ben als beeldend, hoe kan - Ik kan toch niet schrijven." Of: Ik wil veel liever - Dit is abnormaal want ik nu aan het doen ben. Ik vind dit niet normaal" of zoiets. Je kunt ook zeggen : ja dat zijn allemaal interne, hoe heet dat - niet, niet de taak. De taakomgeving. Maar de innerlijke normen.

DANIELA

Nee, persoonlijke normen

NIRAV

Persoonlijke normen die je zelf hebt opgelegd het moet zo zo zijn. Heel veel van die. Van die dingen van ik kan er helemaal niks van ja dat is gewoon toch echt die die inner critic, of die bully zoals jij hem noemt, ja als die heftig is, die inner critic, dan kun je namelijk het onderscheid niet meer maken: zit het - ligt het aan in schrijven, of is het persoonlijk, of het allemaal boem, bully. En daarom zat ik te denken van, als je dat comfortabele. - Je kunt zeggen van: ja, het doel van die mensen is - ik wil ze comfortabeler laten voelen. Je zou ook kunnen zeggen: ik wil ze een soepeler schrijfproces geven.

MARJOLIJN

Ja.

NIRAV

En waardoor ik iets makkelijker kan schrijven, ook al voelen ze zich er dan niet comfortabel bij, het schrijfproces wel soepeler geworden. En dat kan ik laten zien doordat er feitelijk meer tekst is gekomen. Hè, als iemand zegt: "Ja ik ben opeens gaan schrijven." Met die beeldende mensen bij jou heb hè, opeens zijn ze gaan schrijven. Dat is al soepeler dan daarvoor want daarvoor schreef ze helemaal niet. Dat is een ding. Maar ook dat ze denken van: nou - ze zijn makkelijker. Je zag automatisch dat ze makkelijker opdrachten gingen. Of dat ze in staat waren om ook op teksten te reageren op zo'n manier dat je dacht: nou, dat is een soepeler schrijfproces.

MARJOLIJN

Ja wat ik interessant van bijvoorbeeld vorige keer had ik dus 1 meisje dat

zei: "Ik kan echt niet schrijven". En toen had ze een tekst geschreven en ik had haar gevraagd om het voor te lezen en toen ging ze voorlezen met een stem van [yeah, but I - and then] En toen dacht ik: ja, nee zo gaat ook niemand denken dat het een goeie tekst is. Dus ik zeg: "geef hem maar aan mij." En toen heb ik 'm voorgelezen alsof het wel een goeie tekst was, en toen reageerde al haar klasgenoten heel positief op die tekst. En toen zei ik: "Dat jij denkt dat je niet kan schrijven. Dat komt door hoe jij naar je tekst kijkt. Maar dat is niet de kwaliteit van de tekst, dat is jouw manier van naar je tekst kijken. Terwijl d'r staan super goeie dingen in, alleen jij denkt dat het allemaal slecht is." Dus daar zit - Dus dat het comfort ook niet perse in een eindresultaat - want ze kunnen iets prachtigs schrijven, maar het zelf weggooien omdat ze vinden dat ze niet kunnen schrijven.

NINKE

Dus deel van het resultaat wat je wilt bereiken gaat over zelfvertrouwen maar dat kun je niet waarschijnlijk in je onderzoek zetten als doel. Of tenminste ik kan me voorstellen dat dat te ver gaat als doelstelling van je onderzoek maar wat Nirav zegt: je kunt natuurlijk altijd meten of iets soepeler is gegaan, of als je het omkeert: 'ik wil met mijn onderzoek schrijfblokkades die leerlingen ervaren opheffen' en dan kun je schrijfblokkades - Schrijfblokkades, daarvan hoeft je dan niet perse te zeggen of ze persoonlijk waren of aan vertrouwen lagen of - Je geeft aan we gaan schrijfblokkades proberen op te heffen en je kunt heel goed meten of iemand nog geblokkeerd was of verder schreef toch?

MARJOLIJN

Ja.

NINKE

Ik weet niet of dat helemaal klopt nog, of dat je er helemaal uitkomt maar -

NIRAV

En op dat gebied kunnen mensen daarop niet zo - Mensen kunnen niet als je een schrijfblokkade hebt, kun je niet lang volhouden dat je 'm niet hebt. Je kunt niet "met mij is niks aan de hand". Ja, als wij merken dat je niks meer schrijft dan kun je dat niet lang volhouden hè - als je 2 of 3 lessen niks aan het schrijven bent en je zegt: "ik vind het een hele leuke les hoor, het ging heel goed." Dan kun je toch constateren dat het geen soepel schrijfproces is. Of dat er een schrijfblokkade eigenlijk is.

DANIELA

Dan gaat het nog niet over de kwaliteit van de tekst zelf maar alleen maar over te schrijven of niet schrijven. Of het produceren of niet produceren.

NIRAV

Precies, dus dat scheelt ook nog ja.

MARJOLIJN

Ik had hier staan. For me, becoming an experienced writer is not about eliminating writing problems. It is about navigating these writing problems. If the difference between getting shipwrecked or knowing how to steer your ship through the storm. And, because you are not afraid of sinking, having time to enjoy those moments of standing at the helm with your face in the wind, feeling the sun of your cheeks.

JELMER

Ja mooi.

DANIELA

Ja.

JELMER

Dat is een heel mooi beeld inderdaad.

MARJOLIJN

Want ik geloof niet dat je schrijfproblemen bij studenten weg kan halen, want dat is namelijk inherent aan een schrijfproces dat je op een gegeven moment naar iets kijkt en denkt: 'mijn god, wat moet ik nou weer met deze tekst' of 'ik weet echt niet hoe ik verder moet.' Maar dat je weet - dat dat niet een eindpunt is. Maar dat je denkt: oke het hoort er nou eenmaal bij. En ik kan nu dit gaan doen. of ik kan nu dat gaan doen. En op die manier kan ik mezelf weer verder helpen. Zodat ze ook niet stagneren.

NINKE

Maar kan je dan niet het stuk in je onderzoeksvraag dat comfortabel beschrijft, niet vervangen met wat je net zegt over het navigeren van blokkades?

MARJOLIJN

Ja.

Ninke

Want eigenlijk is dat denk ik een makkelijker doel.

Nirav

Ja.

Ninke

Je geeft aan: ik ga leerlingen helpen bij het navigeren van blokkades, en daarmee ondervang je gelijk wat je zegt, dat niet elke blokkade opgeheven kan worden, en daarmee ondervang je ook dat je je daar heel oncomfortabel bij kunt zijn, bij het navigeren.

Nirav

Helemaal mee eens. En het is ook bijna technisch wat er gebeurt. Een blokkade navigeren is dat je strategieën - als je niet weet welke kant je op kan en je kan het schip niet besturen kan je niet - dus je moet strategieën hebben. Die kan je al eerst - dus de eerste stap is, voor jou, dat je kan laten zien dat iemand een blokkade heeft. Dat iemand beseft: ik zit in een blokkade. En de tweede is dat iemand strategieën krijgt, en die moet ie - en daar kan je wel iemand wat in leren. Er zijn verschillende strategieën, ik heb er ook een paar hier. En navigeren is dat je naar een strategie - een strategie kan pakken - en volgens het schrijfmodel is een strategie niets anders dan dat je in staat bent van het ene punt naar het andere punt in het schrijfproces te gaan. Dus dat je niet - je hoeft niet van je inner critic af te komen, maar je kunt even een inner critic voelen, en dan weer iets gaan doen. En je kan denken: oh, nu ga ik - ik moet even kijken naar wat ik daar nog van weet, of 'wat was de opdracht ook alweer?' Dus al die verschillende strategieën zijn om te leren soepel te worden in het schrijfproces. Daarom zit je in het eerste jaar ook altijd die mensen die gewoon een - één schrijfstrategie hebben, ja die raken wel in een - hoe heet dat - in een schrijfblokkade. En daarom worden allemaal andere strategieën in het eerste jaar aangereikt.

JELMER

Ja.

MARJOLIJN

Ik denk dat dat wel fijn is, dan kan ik namelijk ook verantwoorden waarom ik bepaalde strategieën kies. Dankjewel.

