

Artistic Citizenship

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What does artistic citizenship mean? The concept has found its way into art school strategy papers, cultural policy and public discourse, yet the actual definition of it is still in the making. In this article, we try to come a little closer to the meaning of the concept and identify its relevance in relation to the artistic educations. This article is in no way a complete review of artistic citizenship and its significance to and in higher educational programmes in the arts. This is first and foremost an attempt to spark and qualify the discussion on what artistic citizenship can entail in an artistic practice and enterprise.

Citizenship in a historical perspective

The concept of citizenship dates back to the 1700s, but the present use of the word relates to a relatively new philosophy regarding the role of the individual in society. It relates to - and is a refined version of - the classic concept of democracy in the sense that a citizenship-oriented society has an open dialogue on the development of that society. In principle, everyone has equal rights, giving the citizen liberty, security and political means of action. This also includes the principle that in a democratic state, people can have rights and participate in society.

Citizenship can thusly also be seen as an alternative to market and user democracy, which manifests itself through representation when users are involved in development and operation (e.g. parents getting involved in school boards). Citizenship thusly also differs from market and user democracy by having an expanded perspective in relation to interacting with and influencing society.¹

Artistic citizenship as part of the art schools' strategy

The concept of artistic citizenship is part of the Royal Academy of Music, Aarhus/Aalborg's 2019-2022 strategy and defined as follows:

*'What characterises artistic citizenship is the ability to create artistic quality in an interaction between the development of one's own artistic practice and a world that is setting increasingly higher standards for dialogue and reflection. This paradigm creates demands for an education to provide open and flexible learning environments focused on student-centric learning, entrepreneurial skills and co-creation.'*²

¹ Source: Per Mouritsen. *En plads i verden – Det moderne medborgerskab*. Copenhagen: Gyldendal 2015 (chapter 1) and <https://da.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medborgerskab>.

² <https://musikkons.dk/wp-content/uploads/pdf/190320-DJM-Strategi-2019-2022.pdf>

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In the strategy, artistic citizenship appears to be defined as a skill or collective term for artistic actors, institutions or educational programmes seeking to interact and create dialogue with society.

The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts' Schools of Visual Arts' 2019-2022 strategy also highlights the interaction between artist and society as important:

'The relevance and value of the arts to society unfolds in a continuous interaction with the society the arts are part of. Similarly, the financial conditions under which the arts operate is crucial to the scope of action the arts have.'

'The Academy regards an artist's life as a value-based career; training to become an artist is a qualitative choice to pursue a vocation that creates value through the arts. By value-creating is meant an artistic career that in addition to creative art also relates to conveying perspectives and addressing important issues in the context of society and politics as well as in relation to human existence'.³

Without mentioning the concept of artistic citizenship, the strategy highlights the interaction between artist and society, including the artist's ability to tackle important questions about our human existence and the times we live in.

Maria Westvall, professor of pedagogy at the Rhythmic Music Conservatory, conducts research on artistic citizenship among other topics. She wrote the following in an article published on the RMC's website:

Traditional boundaries for what is normally perceived as music (and musicians/composers/producers) in society are constantly being challenged, especially in times with rising social, economic and democratic challenges. The concept of artistic citizenship highlights the potential of artists' commitment to fostering the creative power of action in people's lives, which highlights the transformative potential for art in society.

Artistic citizenship deals with how artists can contribute with their knowledge and skills to tackle some of the general challenges faced by society. This is an inclusive approach to art education, which can affect the quality of life of individuals as well as social groups.⁴

Overall, the above quotes from the schools' strategies fit under the conceptualisation of citizenship as the place where people (the citizen, artist) do something positive for the community and actively participate in society. Citizenship thusly unfolds within the framework of a democratic society in which opportunities for self-determination exist for individuals - at least in principle. In relation to artistic citizenship, one could therefore say that the artist positions themselves actively in relation to society in a movement that extends beyond the individual's practice.

³ Source: <https://kunstakademiet.dk/da/organisation-og-kontakt/strategi-2019-22>

⁴ Source: <https://rmc.dk/da/news/maria-westvall-er-rmcs-nye-professor-i-paedagogik/>

Artistic citizenship in the world of foundations and culture

At some point or other in their careers, most artists find themselves reliant on the funding provided by public and private sector foundations and pools. As an artist, it is therefore relevant to have an understanding of how to position one's artistic practice and enterprise in relation to society in what we could describe as artistic citizenship.

The relational artist is mentioned in several places throughout Danish art and culture policy. Among other places, it is mentioned in the Danish Arts Foundation's initiative *Kunst til hele landet* (*Art for the whole country*), which entails artists and local residents collaborating on art in the residential area Stengårdsvej in Esbjerg.⁵ A number of private foundations such as the Obel family Foundation also highlight social engagement and cultural enrichment in the causes they support.

*We believe that high-quality art and classical music can inspire and challenge individuals as well as society, and that art and classical music can help bring people from different social, economic and ethnic backgrounds together in new communities.*⁶

Another example can be found in the Arts Council England's 10-year strategy (2019-2029) entitled [Let's Create](#).⁷ The previous strategy was entitled *Great art and culture for everyone*, which had a rhetorically greater focus on the cultural sector as a provider of services and goods to society rather than a sector that interacts with society. With the new strategy, it is the interactive, relational and fluid that is actively encouraged through the call: Let's create! This change of strategy in England marks a broader and citizen-involving art and culture policy where the goal is to reach more social classes and a greater geographical spread - not unlike the development we have also seen in the large Danish foundations, both in the public and private sector.

Yet even from a larger perspective that goes beyond financing projects with free funds, it is relevant for artists to qualify artistic citizenship. This applies to the artistic practice as well as the artistic enterprise.

There are, of course, a multitude of ways to do so. In [ENTREWIKI](#) we have included a number of articles that can help qualify and facilitate the development of artistic citizenship.⁸ For example, the article on 'The Artistic Narrative' deals with how artists are actively engaged in creating relationships and worlds via storytelling. As a method, the artistic narrative provides the artist a position from which they can take a more engaged relational standpoint in a shift away from the artist as someone with a special, elevated and in some cases almost divine position of a genius to a place where the artist stands in direct relation to their surrounding reality. The article on the CMM (*Coordinated management of meaning*) model, which deals with how artists make a difference via their chosen form of communication, as well as the article on quality and relevance in the artistic enterprise, also provide perspectives on artistic citizenship.

⁵ : <https://www.kunst.dk/det-satser-vi-paa/kunst-i-din-hverdag>

⁶ <https://obel.com/kunst/>

⁷ <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/letscreate>

⁸ <https://caki.dk/entre/entrewiki/>

Cases

In addition to the articles included in ENTREWIKI, one can also find examples of artistic citizenship in the [ENTRE CASE collection](#). As with ENTREWIKI, the collection is part of the art schools' joint effort to develop entrepreneurship as a field of knowledge. Accordingly, the collection does not only include examples of artistic practices and enterprises working with artistic citizenship, but also examples of applied artistic or cultural entrepreneurship. There are currently two cases in the collection that are directly related to artistic citizenship. These are Camilla Overgaard's project *Meeting in Music* and Anna Weber Henriksen's *Vandrende kartografi*.⁹ Our goal is to regularly add more cases to the collection so that it can provide a nuanced and emerging perspective on what artistic citizenship can entail in artistic practice and enterprise.

In terms of examples of artistic citizenship, it is also relevant to look at practices that deal with inclusion and rights in society. There is currently a movement underway in Danish society as well as abroad that deals with inclusion, rights and structural racism, among other things. Many artistic practices address these issues, and many make an attempt to change the status quo and contribute to a recalibration of social structures that are inappropriate and unjust. In that sense, artistic citizenship manifests itself in a variety of ways, rather than solely through the individual's artistic practice.

In artistic practices across the arts, we are seeing a growing interest in doing something for the community and greater participation in political discourse, based on a desire to drive societal change (e.g. through transforming power structures) and provide a critique of the market forces of capitalism. This movement is largely related to socio-economic conditions such as the security, liberty and political scope of action of individual citizens. From a sociological perspective, this especially relates to the citizen as someone with rights and who is capable of using their influence to participate in society.

When delimiting and decoding the meaning of the concept of artistic citizenship, one should therefore not only look at the strategies of art schools, focus areas of foundations and the political perspectives. The artistic practices provide an equally important perspective that helps us understand what artistic citizenship may entail. We see practices within film, performing arts, music and visual arts that represent a diversity of artistic strategies for artistic citizenship - not necessarily articulated as such but realised in practice.

If one wishes to delve deeper into the subject from a sociological perspective, one place to start is with the sociologist T.H. Marshall. Marshall describes the development of rights as three phases, starting with civil rights, followed by political rights and finally social rights. Social rights in particular are in a state of tension with the market forces unfolding under capitalism.¹⁰ One can also find perspectives elsewhere in the humanities that can help us understand and actively work with artistic citizenship as a benchmark for the artistic educations. From the perspective of art education institutions, however, our primary source must always be the artistic practices, projects, communities and works unfolding around us.

⁹ https://caki.dk/entre/entre_case-samling/

¹⁰ T. H. Marshall: *Medborgerskab og social klasse*. Copenhagen: Reitzels Forlag, 2003.