

Am I A Patio Artist?

Living in New York City I can never be called an outsider artist. But maybe a patio artist? Not all the way outside but still a few steps from the inside artists. Maybe I am an Insider-Outsider artist, a term I heard for the first in the resume of De Krama who walked into the PLP Gallery where I had curated a show called “Artists Throwing Money Out The Window”, took a fast look around and with a big sigh told me he thought he had made art work that I would be interested in. I said “how so?” Kramo told me over the years he had a brilliant ideas that he invested much time and money into and had high hopes of commercial success but they all failed. He had my attention. The next day he dropped of some art, it was brilliant and I immediately put it into the show. De Kramo is an Insider artist. The kind of artist I can relate to. The kind of artist I can't help loving. The kind of artist that draws to me like a magnet. And where do I find him? In the conservative affluent touristy West Village. (see ATMOTW.com to learn more about the show and write to me if you are interested in purchasing the catalog/book I made of the show).

Krama inspired me to think about myself in the context of Insider-Outsider artists. I went through a phase of wondering if I was an artist or just a creative person. I interviewed some of my artist friends to understand how they came to define themselves as artists. Some of my artist friends thought I was joking. When I asked Laura Kikauka to film me listening to my Bloomberg radio at The Funny Farm in Berlin in 2000 she laughed and said with all her wit and playful sarcasm “ You ‘re making a video of yourself listening to a New York radio station on your Bloomberg Radio in Berlin and you don't know if you're an artist?” OK, it's a stupid conversation to have at this point in my life, or any point for that matter. It's not worth a minutes thought. But it is interesting to me that I would think about it at all. I feel like I have a unique background compared to many artists. I never thought about being an artist while growing up. I don't think I knew what one was even though I was hanging out with them in my teenage years. The friends I was drawn to were interesting and fun and what we really had in common was a passion for music. I didn't go to art school. I never took an art class beyond whatever was mandatory in grade school. I never even went to an Art gallery or Art museum until I was 18 or 19. I discovered modern art the San Francisco Art Museum in 1976. I'll never forget it. And not only because I was tripping on LSD. I immediately called my parents and asked them why they had never taken me to an Art museum. They had no answer. I told them they had to take my little sister to an Art museum immediately. I was so over whelmed by this discovery that I ran a round going to all kinds of Art museums ever since. I absorbed anything that attracted me. I scanned the art and just drew close to whatever pulled me in. I was too impatient to read the cards with the titles and artist name etc, unless the art really moved me to explore further works. This was my initial introduction to art. I slowly began to have a few names of artists that I was attracted to. When I moved to New York City at the age of 19 (or was it 20?) I was totally ignorant of what had happened in the New York Art world or any Art world for that matter. This gave me a fresh approach to Art. But Art was just a side line. My real interest and draw to New York

was music. I had discovered experimental music in much the same way. Flipping the dials on the radio in Philadelphia I chanced upon WXPB playing Kraftwerk, Roxy Music, Bowie, John Cage, Stockhausen, Tangerine Dream and Steve Reich in the early 70s. Music was on the sidelines, not as far off the sidelines as Art but my main interest was literature and poetry. I originally went to college studying modern poetry. I got to meet Gary Snyder and Robert Bly and when I went to San Francisco I wanted to go to poetry readings and the City Lights book store. I went to San Francisco to escape the East coast and on the way to California I read On The Road. During a stop in Portland Oregon in 1976 I saw The Lewd and other some punk bands and immediately fell in love with punk rock.

So instead of Art school I went to school for poetry. But since that wasn't practical I switched to Journalism. Journalism was dry and boring so I took a Film class and thought I had found the marriage of Poetry and Journalism. I came to New York to attend film school at NYU but was immediately sucked into the East Village music scene. I discovered sound and music divorced from the image, bought a synthesizer and dropped out of school. Living in New York City in 1978 it was hard to stay in school. There was so much going on in the bars and clubs and galleries. School seemed a waste of time and money. In 1982 I began traveling to Berlin and met Conrad Schnitzler who I had been corresponding with by post. I really learned about music and art from Conrad. He had been a sailer who worked in the engine room of commercial ships. His main port was in Dusseldorf and that's where he met Joseph Beuys. Beuys encouraged Conrad to study Art. Con became Beuys first student. Soon Con left school to make Art declaring Everybody is an Artist why do I need to study Art? Conrad told me the real reason he went to The Academy of Art in Dusseldorf was because he saw a beautiful woman and the local bar with a big black portfolio who studied there and he decided he wanted to do whatever she was doing. I think Conrad is an Insider-Outside Artist and maybe a Patio Artist too. I know I spent a lot of time on his balcony so he might even be a Balcony Artist.