

Krabstadt Education Center: Conflated Places Editorial

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Krabstadt is a small town located somewhere in the Arctic where the Nordic Countries send their unwanted people and problems. It's populated by the long-term unemployed, asylum seekers, immigrants, and those with too many overdue bills.

Recently, Krabstadt has absorbed an influx of unemployed artists with PhDs, burned-out artist-teachers/teacher-artists, and institutionally stuck creatures. The local Krabstadt government seized this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and opened an Education Center to push Krabstadt to the forefront of education. The journal and subsequent events linked to KEC seek to establish webworks that conflate online with onsite to create platforms for learning, real and imagined.

But how does one start a school? What constitutes a "school" and how does one "start", given that the whole endeavor takes place in the context of a fictional framework, the animated city of Krabstadt? We decided to use methods and objects specific to animation, where fiction, farce, and fantasy are negotiated to both challenge and make sense of lived experiences. Consequently, rehabilitated volcanoes on anger management programs are teachers at KEC, while students are broadly recruited to include flora, fauna, and fungi.

By expanding animation to think about education systems IRL, KEC is interested in looking at the frameworks of where we are currently stuck, and in crafting formats and platforms for addressing visual memory, racial prejudice, ecological crisis, and social exclusion within the scope of art education.

As a fictional world, the objects, characters, systems, and issues pertinent to Krabstadt begin in a writers' room, with collective discussions and writing processes that include both old and new interlocutors and that lead to script development. For this issue of *PARSE Journal* we created an expanded writers' room with artist-teachers/teacher-artists, writers, curators, and a game developer and sent out an invitation to either interact with the world of Krabstadt, and the few defined elements of KEC's pedagogy—such as *break-centered learning*, *a no-gravity room*, *a worry room*, *a stuck cafeteria*, and *the admin floor of dead-end corridors*—or having Krabstadt as a northern star, each writer can find their own portal of entry through which KEC as an institution can appear directly or indirectly.

This open invitation resulted in an issue in which contributions are unapologetically multimodal. The formats include the epistolary, the course description, the interview, the reflection paper, an admissions computer game, and a rudimentary animation essay.

Contributions

One way to enter Krabstadt is through the computer game “Arrabbiata Wants a Raise!” (2020). **Seewon Hyun** succeeded in playing the game and describes her experience as a form of “grey humor,” a term invented by Hyun to account for her encounters with Krabstadt’s characters in a horizontally organized landscape. Recalling Nam June Paik’s vision for a paperless education, Hyun speculates on the future of an Education Center located in the digital sphere.

Melissa Gordon’s protagonist journeys to the ruins of a Dropout Center in a parallel fictional universe from which she reports on the uncanny adventures of discovering the remnants of artworks by Charlotte Posenenske and Lee Lozano, among others. Based on Gordon’s research on the ambivalent figure of the drop-out artist, the story captures the paradoxes of teaching within institutionalized art education—the teacher advocating artistic radicality while simultaneously carrying out the task of re-establishing the institutional order.

In an exchange of letters, **Stephan Dilemuth** and **Karolin Meunier** reflect on activating research by means of performance. With reference to his artistic investigation into the history of the *Lebensreform* movement, Dilemuth points out how certain ideas of self-organization are increasingly appropriated by right-wing groups today. KEC’s No-Gravity room serves as a metaphor for a state of weightlessness that enables a reflection on previous teaching experiences, while the exercise of walking on ice during KEC’s break-centered learning guides the mind to (un)learning from historical predecessors when designing future models of art education.

Henriette Heise contributes with a series of line drawings for KEC with a figure of The Flanet (the flat planet), who embodies experiences of exhaustion and hopelessness of both the planet and the teacher, the latter being burned-out from working at an art academy for too many years. The Flanet leaps into Krabstadt’s northern light, performing the acrobatic act of making the need for invisibility visible with a hidden wink of affinity to her former teacher Stuart Brisley.

Gahee Park sends a love letter to KEC in which she outlines her vision of the educative space as a promiscuous square, where the process of learning can be seen as an insistence to connect with others. By referring to bell hooks’s concept of love in teaching, Park demands to acknowledge the role of affect in educational settings, and applies these ideas to KEC, asking challenging questions about its future structures that we can’t answer.

In collaboration with a group of art school students in Lofoten, **Sille Storihle** uses live action role-playing (LARP) as a tool to examine the power dynamics in group critiques. In her film *Group Crit* students reenact familiar opinions that arise in art school crits. KEC shares with Storihle experiences of group crits, both as students and as teachers, and how those perceptions have changed over time. Mary Kelly’s ideas on the role of the observer/listener in crits serves as a reference to discuss possibilities to rethink the format today and its bearing on digital games and LARPing at KEC.

Linda Paxling was recruited to suggest a course on norm-critical pedagogy and game-making. The course proposal was modified by the KEC Board of Education in its developmental phases to fit the requirements of the Arctic-Bologna process, which ensures comparability with other animated education programs, by complying sadomasochistically with all the criteria of learning outcomes, formative and summative evaluation, progression-tracking and Harvard-style referencing.

Ewa Einhorn and **Jeuno Kim** in collaboration with **Patrick Jarnfelt** and animator **Anni Oja** have made a computer game that is a play on admissions processes. In the game the player shapes the appearance of the KEC school building by admitting students with specific qualities. What is the ideal student cohort consisting of

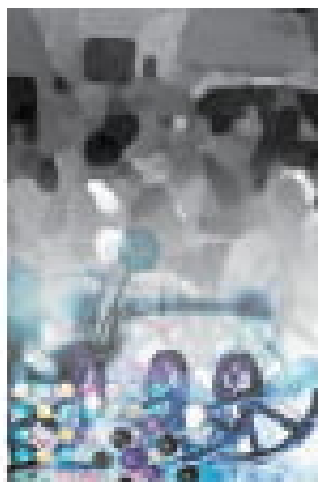
fungi, flora, fauna, and humans? Find out by playing the first ever computer game published in *PARSE journal*.

In the context of Jakarta Biennale 2021, co-curator Grace Samboh connected KEC to three non-degree schools in Indonesia in an online roundtable discussion. **Gudskul, Jatiwangi Art Factory** and **KUNCI's School of Improper Education** shared their different experiences of building self-organized art education programs and what it means to oscillate between fictional concepts and the reality of administrative constraints in their respective cities. KEC was particularly interested in learning about their take on land, art, admissions, imagination, breaks, and whether it all works.

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