

The following text is not my MA thesis, it will be published by The Media at a later point.

As Seen on TV

A Critical Reflection by ODEE

This is a true story. The events depicted took place in Björgvin, Norway in 2025. At the request of the survivors, the names have been changed. Out of respect for the dead, the rest has been told exactly as it occurred.

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Preface

This Critical Reflection is written in alignment with the MA2 guidelines, combining conceptual depth with personal narrative and theoretical engagement. Rather than isolating a single project, it maps the evolution of my practice across multiple performative, socially engaged, and media-based works. As a conceptual artist, nearly five years of my education have been fundamentally rooted in critical reflection — thinking is my core practice. This sustained focus on thought as method and medium informs not only the artworks themselves, but the way they are framed, discussed, and understood. Drawing on culture jamming, situationist thought, and lived artistic experience, the text reflects not only on outcomes but on the methodologies, turning points, and existential questions that drive my work.

Though it exceeds the suggested word count, the expanded form is essential to accurately represent the scale, relevance, and trajectory of my practice. This is not just a reflection on art — it is itself a conceptual extension of the work.

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Entering the Discourse

Having studied Fine Art for almost five years, I have continuously evaluated the learning process critically. What am I actually learning — how, and why? What is the essence of a Fine Art education?

Starting my bachelor's at the Iceland University of the Arts, I had no idea what to expect. I just knew I wanted to evolve and bring something new to my professional career as an artist.

One key component for me was watching others create and present their artworks. The variety of art I was exposed to was phenomenal. The creativity was of such a high standard that I didn't always understand what I was looking at — and that's when I learned the most. My classmates pushed boundaries at every opportunity. From watching these intellectuals critique, describe their thought processes, and interact with one another, I absorbed so much.

This is not a stale process. It evolves. Each time someone presents something for others to see and engage with, you can observe new layers of learning and deeper reflections being applied.

If anything, you knew that everything presented to the class was meticulously thought out — every little detail.

One of my favorite classes was *Critique*. It was a small, selective course offered each semester. Each session lasted four hours, with one student presenting an artwork for the group to study and critique, while the artist simply listened.

The group would dissect every component of the work — from creative decisions to mythology, references, and more.

It gave me insight into the minds of fine artists — my colleagues, classmates, and friends. Fine artists are some of the most creative and thoughtful communicators in the world. We think through every minor detail in the work and its presentation — and how we want (or don't want) the audience to engage with it.

It's comical, in a sense. Because if you ask the average person on the street, they probably can't name a single contemporary fine artist. Try it. Go to a store and ask random people if they know any modern artists. The odds are they don't. They

might mention someone locally known — in Norway, perhaps Edvard Munch; in Iceland, maybe Kjarval, Erró, or Tolli.

But ask them about actors, musicians, or influencers — they'll rattle off a list.

Fine artists — the supposed specialists in communication — are terrible at communicating to the masses. Even though we meticulously hone our craft of communication through our work, we're probably the least famous kind of artists.

A common trope: we only get famous after we die.

I'll return to this point. But first, let's focus on the group dynamic and social interaction of artists in an academic and educational setting.

The Situation in the Studio

Each Fine Art education is deeply individual in terms of what the student creates. But the main vehicle for learning, in my view, is interaction — not just with classmates, but with tutors, faculty, the public, and beyond.

For this reason, the studio can become a hub for creativity. It's not just a place to work — it's a space for inviting others into your world. As a conceptual artist, I don't need a traditional studio. When NRK came to visit me at my studio at KMD, they asked if I could paint or sculpt something for the camera. I replied, "I'm a conceptual artist. I sit around and stare into the air and think all day." They said: "Well, that's not good TV."

But ironically, that studio captured my process perfectly — without them even realizing it. Like my previous studios at the Iceland University of the Arts, it was more of a crafted environment than a workspace.

I created an inviting space for students, faculty, the public, media — anyone who wanted to join. Throughout my academic career, this proved invaluable. Having deep conversations about art — your own and others' — is a priceless endeavor. At one point, I even considered whether offering free coffee was worth it. I could buy 10 coffee capsules for 25 NOK — so each conversation cost me 2.5 NOK.

It's funny to think of it like that, but it was a small price to pay for immense value: insights into others' approaches, feedback on my own work, and access to everything going on inside and outside the school.

This ties directly into my artistic practice. I lean heavily into the philosophy of the Situationists. They believed art should be lived in — not just hung on walls. They believed in creating situations — hence the name.

That's exactly what I aimed to do: create real-world situations for people to interact with in meaningful ways. It didn't just benefit me — it enriched everyone who entered the space. A warm, welcoming experience.

As my research deepened, I also reflected on the importance of gathering — real human connection in a digital world. Technology, while meant to connect us, often isolates. It gives a false sense of closeness.

By the end of my first year at KMD, I had co-founded a collective with a few classmates. An abbreviation of our names, we called it *HOM(e)*. For the first-year group exhibition at Bergen Kjøtt, we decided to create a “conversation pit” — a central space for visitors to sit, relax, and interact within the exhibition.

Using stacked wooden pallets, colorful textiles, and pillows, we crafted this communal zone. It became one of the most used parts of the exhibition — at times, holding up to 30 people at once.

Inspired by that success, I aimed to expand the idea for my second year. I requested a larger studio to accommodate this shared space.

My new studio included sofas, bean bags, comfy chairs, and a central table. Most of the furniture was second-hand — lived in, with personality. The walls were decorated with art and crafts by other students, creating a truly communal atmosphere.

Every time I entered my studio, people were there. It was alive.

One of the most popular aspects? The aforementioned free coffee. Students came daily, not just for caffeine but for connection. The space even bridged gaps across class years and disciplines. External guests came too.

This environment became the core of my master's studies — and what I hoped to recreate, in some form, at Bergen Kunsthall for the graduation show. Continuous dialogue and interaction with studio visitors maximised my learning experience in Fine Arts, which I consider the true heart of Fine Art education. In this sense, my practice aligns with the tradition of social sculpture, a term coined by Joseph Beuys in the 1970s. Beuys believed that art wasn't limited to objects, but that society itself could be shaped like a sculpture — through thought, conversation, and participation. He famously declared that “everyone is an artist,” not in the literal sense, but in the belief that everyone has the potential to co-create social and cultural reality. My studio, much like his notion of the *Free International University*, was less about production and more about *provocation* — about building a zone for critical inquiry, presence, and mutual transformation.

More recently, artists like Rirkrit Tiravanija have extended this lineage through the genre of *relational aesthetics*. Tiravanija's exhibitions often involve cooking and serving Thai food in gallery spaces — not as a spectacle, but as a social gesture. The work is not the curry or the table — it's the conversation. The gathering. The exchange. Similarly, my studio practice was not defined by objects but by relations — the countless interactions, the atmospheres curated, and the temporary communities built through coffee and presence.

These frameworks help articulate what I was doing intuitively. I wasn't simply working “in” the studio — I was designing the studio as a *conceptual space*, a situationist microcosm, a kind of artistic agora. The coffee wasn't just hospitality — it was infrastructure. It made conversation possible. It shaped the rhythm of the space. It was part of the sculpture.

In a time when fine art education increasingly leans into solitary research, grant writing, and solo presentations, I chose to treat social proximity as my methodology. Art, for me, is not something to be made in isolation. It's something to be lived with others — something that emerges through the friction and warmth of shared presence.

But unfortunately... my coffee machine was stolen.

So, I had to shift focus. And I returned to earlier works....

Entering the Narrative

This is a good moment to revisit the fact that fine artists are not typically publicly known individuals. This became even clearer during my studies — especially because when I first entered the Fine Art education track, I had no idea what Fine Art even was.

But that doesn't mean Fine Art shouldn't get attention. In fact, it shapes the world around us. It has inspired all other artistic disciplines. Fine Art isn't just a singular art form or a specific education — it's a craft of creativity. Whatever you can imagine and declare as your art, becomes your art. And chances are, someone has already developed an artistic philosophy around that exact practice.

I relate to that. When I began my studies — blindly stepping into the Fine Art world — my tutors told the class: there are no grades. You either pass or fail. And, more importantly, you can do whatever you want.

I remember someone asking, “Can we just throw shit at the wall and call that art?” The tutors replied, “Yes — but it's been done quite a few times... so consider adding a new twist.” Then someone else asked, “What if we do absolutely nothing for the entire semester — and that becomes the artwork? A conceptual piece about inactivity and still passing Fine Art school?” The answer: “Yes — and, actually, I can name a few students who've already done that.”

This intrigued me more than anything else. It offered complete freedom to express myself however I wanted. Even better, it was within the context of education — a space where experimentation is encouraged and protected.

During my first semester at the Iceland University of the Arts, COVID was a major influence. In the Icelandic news cycle, a number of eccentric figures were publicly announcing plans to launch new airlines — bold, flamboyant characters reminiscent of Elon Musk or Richard Branson.

But why were all these people announcing airlines? It was because WOW air — Iceland's hugely popular low-budget airline — had gone bankrupt after nearly a decade of operations. The airline had become something of a cult staple, woven into Iceland's national zeitgeist. With its collapse, a vacuum opened.

COVID had stalled the launch of any serious replacements. Several people had declared plans for new airlines, but none had actually materialized.

Seeing this unfold, I also thought back to the idea of artists being culturally invisible. And I saw an opportunity. It wasn't just about a gap in the airline industry — there was a slot open for a “rockstar-type” Fine Artist to insert themselves into the pop-cultural narrative.

All these individuals announcing new airlines — like WOW2, Stracta Airlines, PLAY, and others — didn't have anything concrete. No planes, no staff, no flights. Just press releases and vague ambitions.

Positioning oneself within the cultural narrative is fundamentally about achieving relevance and visibility. This aligns with my approach, drawing inspiration from artists like Salvador Dalí and Andy Warhol, who seamlessly infused themselves into the pop cultural zeitgeist. Both Dalí and Warhol understood the power of self-promotion and the art of being seen, transforming their personas into integral components of their art. Similarly, my practice seeks to blur the boundaries between artist and artwork, ensuring that my presence is as impactful as the pieces I create.

So I thought to myself: *I can be one of these characters.*

I created MOM air.

Launching Thin Air

MOM air was a conceptual art project I launched during my bachelor studies — a fake airline designed to mirror the entrepreneurial theatrics unfolding in Iceland after the collapse of WOW air. It was part satire, part social experiment, part media intervention. I designed a website, created branding and policy details (including optional toilet paper and COVID/non-COVID flights), issued press releases, and held a launch event as if the airline were real. I now was the CEO and Founder of MOM air in the eyes of the general public.

Within two weeks, it attracted thousands of booking inquiries, over 15,000 social media followers, and widespread media coverage — from CNN to Lonely Planet — reaching more than one billion people globally. Members of the public, influencers, journalists, and even industry professionals engaged with the project as if it were real.

But MOM air was never a real airline — it was an artwork in disguise. It was designed to expose the absurdity of spectacle, belief, and branding in late capitalism. It was a mirror held up to both media systems and consumer behavior.

MOM air became a turning point in my understanding of what Fine Art could be: not just something to be made or displayed, but something to be *performed into reality*. It challenged the conventional roles of artist, entrepreneur, and communicator — and revealed just how thin the line is between fiction and belief when you occupy public space with conviction and clarity.

As mentioned earlier, creating something new today often means discovering that someone has already put a name to it. That was the case with MOM air. I had no formal design or craft-based intention when I created it — it was driven purely by gut feeling, instinct, and curiosity as a creative, experimental person.

However, people kept likening MOM air to the work of others — like The Yes Men, Nadia Plesner, and Joey Skaggs. Through further investigation, I discovered that someone had already coined a term for the practice I was engaging in: culture jamming — a practice rooted in the legacy of the Situationists.

Becoming familiar with culture jamming as an artistic practice unlocked new levels of creativity and communication for me. It validated my thoughts and ideas, and propelled them further, as I could now study other artists' research and results through their own culture jamming practices.

Culture Jamming

Culture jamming is a relatively recent phenomenon in the artistic context and does not possess a long history compared to more traditional visual art mediums. Many culture jammers consider themselves descendants of the "Situationist International," a group of artists, intellectuals, and political activists that emerged in France in 1957.⁶ The leader of the group was Guy Debord, who sought to challenge the status quo and create a new social order based on principles of self-expression, freedom, and independence.

The Situationists believed that the modern world was characterized by alienation and separation, with the public trapped in a cycle of consumerism and herd behavior. They rejected consumer culture and the political and economic systems they viewed as oppressive. Their goal was to disrupt this vicious cycle by creating "situations" that allowed individuals to experience life in a new and more meaningful way.

The group developed a concept known as *détournement* (diversion), which involved reusing existing artistic, cultural, and political elements to challenge traditional norms and create new meanings. They believed that by diverting objects and imagery from everyday life, they could expose hidden ideologies and power structures that governed society.

If the term culture jamming is broken into its two components, the word culture refers to the influence that media imagery and advertising have on the zeitgeist. In this context, it is companies and institutions that shape the culture of the present moment. The word jamming, on the other hand, has more than one meaning in an academic sense. A common interpretation of the term is that jamming refers to an interruption or disruption of communication, often associated

with sabotage. During World War II, radio jamming was used to disrupt the communications of enemy forces. This was achieved by broadcasting interference, such as siren sounds, on the same radio frequency the enemy was using for their communications. Culture jamming, in this context, could then refer to a cultural disruption of the communication between corporations and institutions and the public.

However, as culture jamming is not solely about disrupting communication, and as scholars often disagree on the meaning of core concepts within academic fields, an alternative interpretation of the term has gained traction. The word "jamming" could also refer to the English phrase "jam session," where musicians come together to play music, usually improvised and in a free-flowing manner. In this sense, "jamming" would represent the collaboration of artists and activists who join forces to creatively utilize the tools and techniques of media and marketing to their advantage.

Culture jamming in an artistic sense revolves around a form of subversion where the artist uses the power of their opponent against them. It can be likened to rhetorical jiu-jitsu, emphasizing leverage over brute force. This reference draws from the martial art of jiu-jitsu, designed to enable weaker individuals to overcome larger and stronger adversaries.

The more a company or institution pushes back against the artist, the greater the impact of the performance. Through culture jamming, the artist seeks to undermine corporations and institutions by methods such as deceiving the media with fake news, performing acts of sabotage, "liberating" billboards, or appropriating brands and imagery.

One of the most popular methods of culture jamming is satire, where the artist alters marketing materials and presents them as advertisements in public spaces. These works aim to reveal an alleged truth about the company or institution in question.

In many cases, culture jamming highlights contrasts and exaggerates them. The goal is not always to incite change but rather to shed light on the conditions faced by the average consumer. In doing so, culture jamming can diminish the cultural influence of corporations and institutions that wield the most power in society.

Capitalism has often co-opted the successful tactics of culture jamming for its own marketing strategies. As a result, culture jamming continues to evolve, seeking new ways to outmaneuver its ever-changing opponent.

Regardless of how it is defined, culture jamming undeniably requires knowledge and discipline within the dynamic environment of advertising and media. With globalization, artists have gained access to a larger audience, but this comes with significant competition from larger news and advertising outlets.

Caught in the Artists Net

We're Sorry is a concept- and performance-based piece that draws from Culture Jamming. This project has since evolved into my current master's research at the University of Bergen.

We're Sorry is a dynamic social sculpture that directly addresses corporate wrongdoing by the Icelandic fishing company Samherji. The artwork replicated Samherji's official website but prominently featured a bold apology — "We're Sorry" — placed front and center. The site also included a fictional press release in which the company apologized for its wrongdoings, offered restitution, and pledged cooperation with authorities.

The project was inspired by the *Fishrot Files* scandal of 2019, in which WikiLeaks published 30,000 documents exposing Samherji's alleged corruption in Namibia — including bribery and exploitation. These actions caused significant social and economic harm, marking what is considered the largest scandal in both Icelandic and Namibian history.

The human cost of this corruption cannot be overstated. Tens of millions of dollars in bribes were paid, often to high-ranking government officials, to secure lucrative fishing quotas. According to recent reports, over 90% of fisheries workers who lost their jobs due to Fishrot corruption have been unable to return to work — highlighting the devastating toll of grand corruption on vulnerable communities.

The artwork has garnered significant global attention, igniting meaningful social discourse around corporate responsibility and freedom of expression. It has

been featured in prominent art news outlets such as *ARTnews*, *Artnet*, *Hyperallergic*, and *The Art Newspaper*, as well as in major publications including *The Guardian - Observer*, *Reuters*, and every major media outlet in Iceland. Coverage has also extended to *The Namibian*, the *Windhoek Observer*, and national broadcasters across the Nordic countries. Furthermore, it has been spotlighted in leading fishing industry magazines such as *Undercurrent News*, *Intrafish*, *Seafood Source*, *Fiskerforum*, and others.

We're Sorry extended beyond the website into a 10-meter mural displayed at the Reykjavík Art Museum, featuring the same bold blue text — “We're Sorry” — amplifying its message in public space. The project serves as a powerful critique of corporate malfeasance and challenges the lack of accountability often seen in global business operations.

Although Samherji is currently under investigation in multiple countries — with individuals already in detention awaiting trial — they chose to take legal action against me. This resulted in a high-profile case in the High Court of London, where I faced claims of copyright infringement, malicious falsehood, and passing off. The court recently issued a judgment against me, finding that I do not have real prospects of success in opposing those claims and that there should not even be a trial. While this judgment represents a legal loss for me, it raises profound questions about the limits of artistic freedom and the influence corporations wield over public discourse.

Through We're Sorry, I aimed to highlight the role of art in exposing and confronting injustice, sparking necessary conversations about corporate responsibility and transparency. The subsequent legal battle has expanded the artwork's scope, incorporating discussions on freedom of expression and the chilling effect corporate power can have on it.

Art makes waves — and it has rocked the boat of my unintentional collaborators in art, Samherji. Their continued efforts to suppress We're Sorry have ensnared them in the very critique they sought to silence, placing an even greater spotlight on their wrongdoing internationally.

This is one of art's most powerful features: its ability to challenge power, question structures, and spark conversation.

We're Sorry has already claimed its place in history. No other Icelandic artwork has been taken to court like this — let alone to the High Court of another country — dragged there by a company already exposed for wrongdoing in multiple ways. It has arguably become Iceland's most well-known contemporary artwork.

Prominent voices and institutions have called upon Samherji to end its legal pursuit against me, underscoring the public interest and societal value of this commentary. World-renowned artists such as The Yes Men, Nadia Plesner, and Ragnar Kjartansson, alongside organizations like the Federation of Icelandic Artists, the Association of Icelandic Visual Artists, the University of Bergen, and more than 25 leading whistleblowing, free expression, and human rights advocacy organizations, have all offered letters of support.

These organizations stand by the right to freedom of expression — which allows us to examine moral and ethical choices and to interrogate how power operates, whether political, social, or economic.

If the judgment of the High Court in London is allowed to stand, it risks setting a troubling precedent — one with dire consequences for society, freedom of expression, and public critique. This judgment enforces the will of a corporation and casts a chilling effect on anyone who dares to publicly criticize Samherji. It threatens to silence not just artists, but also activists, journalists, and citizens who seek to engage in public debate. It has the potential to deter an entire generation of creative thinkers from using their platforms to address societal issues — thereby restricting public discourse in favor of corporate interests.

This underscores the critical importance of keeping Samherji's actions and corruption on the global agenda, and of demanding accountability in cases where justice has been delayed for far too long.

We're Sorry's role in pushing social discussion is far from over, and its message will continue to resonate — inspiring dialogue about accountability, artistic freedom, and human rights.

Active Participation

So, is We're Sorry my new focus?

Well, yes and no. Ongoing academic research is not — and should not be — condensed into a single graduation artwork. To suggest otherwise would be preposterous.

In the same way, claiming that the graduation artwork is unrelated to the master's research would also be preposterous.

These things are interconnected...

I have taken parts of We're Sorry — such as the mural and social sculpture elements — and applied them to my graduation work.

Let's dive into that.

Last year, the University of Bergen (UiB) wrote an open letter of support for my ongoing legal battle in the High Court of London. In the letter, they wrote:

“At the Art Academy, we see freedom of speech as a cornerstone of a free society. As an Art Academy, we strive to educate free and independent artists who are ready to speak from their hearts and minds through their work — artists who are not afraid and who are motivated by a need to address situations that they find problematic.”

At the time of writing this critical reflection, the same institution is silencing my work before it has even been seen.

On February 24th, my master's project for the upcoming graduation exhibition was preemptively censored and removed. This was confirmed in an email I received from the faculty on March 4th, which states:

“...on Monday, February 24th, the decision was already taken to take you out of the MA exhibition. This is a common understanding between the KMD organizers of the exhibition (Ruby and Chloe), Katrine as Head of Department,

and the leadership of Bergen Kunsthall (they all met on Monday [February 24th] to discuss the process of the exhibition)."

When I asked for clarification, the Head of Department at KMD responded in an email dated March 5th:

"The inclusion of your work in the exhibition is subject to our ability to undertake the necessary processes involved in a group exhibition which is part of a program of study at UiB, which also involves another institution — and which is open to the general public."

An artwork, once unveiled, no longer belongs solely to the artist. No institution should dictate when an artist must unveil their work. The right to release it into the world belongs to the artist alone.

It should be noted that my master's project has already been awarded 40,000 NOK from *Fritt Ord*, a Norwegian foundation dedicated to defending freedom of expression and a free press.

As part of my curriculum, I was required to submit an *Exhibition Info Sheet* detailing my planned work. This was signed by my tutor and submitted to UiB on January 27th. The sheet stated:

"A large-scale mural, approximately 2.2 meters in height and 10 meters in width, will be painted directly onto the wall of the exhibition space. The mural will feature bold, striking text designed to provoke thought and engage audiences."

"I am confident that these spots [the artwork] will complement the spaces, exhibition, and surrounding artworks."

"The work does not present any foreseeable health or safety risks to myself or others."

Despite this, in recent days UiB has blatantly misled the media about my exclusion.

On March 17th 2025, the Head of Department told *Bergens Tidene* (a local newspaper):

"No students have been removed from the Master Exhibition."

Hours later, UiB adjusted its statement:

“No decision has been made to exclude him. In general, for all projects at the Master Exhibition, HSE and ethical challenges are considered along the way.”

The university attempted to mislead the media, contradicting its own internal communications. The emails prove that the decision to remove me had already been made — and only afterward did the university introduce health and safety, ethics, and risk analysis as justifications.

This is clear preemptive censorship — and could be considered a violation of multiple UN conventions and Norwegian legislation.

Even with full visibility of how Samherji became ensnared in the artistic net — their every move amplifying the critique they aimed to suppress — the university has now willfully done the same. With complete knowledge of the legal context, public discourse, and media patterns surrounding *We’re Sorry*, UiB has stepped directly into the artwork, becoming a willful collaborator in the next act of culture jamming. They did not fall into a trap; they walked into it. Not out of ignorance, but out of fear — or worse, risk management. And in doing so, they reinforced the very critique they tried to silence.

If this issue is ignored, it sets a dangerous precedent for artistic freedom and freedom of expression within academic institutions. Next year, UiB could impose stricter ethics reviews, risk analyses, and bureaucratic censorship on students. The Master’s Exhibition could even be removed from Bergen Kunsthall entirely — forcing students to find their own exhibition space.

These are the mechanisms of bureaucratic censorship and the chilling effect.

If art must always be safe, healthy, and ethical, then it’s no longer art — it’s compliance. The power of art lies in its ability to confront, not conform.

If art must pass a risk assessment, it will never reach the heart.

Resistance is Futile

The Borg, from the Star Trek universe, are a fictional alien collective known for their chilling mantra: “*Resistance is futile.*” Operating as a hive mind, they don’t conquer through destruction — they conquer through assimilation. They absorb technologies, individuals, even entire civilizations, folding them into their collective consciousness. In cultural theory, the Borg have come to symbolize systems of control, conformity, and technological dominance — the slow erosion of individuality under the weight of collective obedience.

There’s something eerily familiar in that idea. Like the Borg, my artistic practice doesn’t just confront — it assimilates. It absorbs critique, converts institutions into unwilling collaborators, and grows stronger through every attempt to suppress or contain it. Resistance isn’t futile because I overpower opposition — it’s futile because the opposition becomes part of the work. Samherji became a co-author in the very critique they tried to silence. UiB, despite having full visibility of that process, has walked into the same artistic trap. They didn’t shut the work down — they extended it.

It reminds me of a scene in Jurassic Park, where they reflect on how the dinosaurs were never supposed to escape. The whole system was designed to contain them — until it didn’t. That’s often how the media frames me: as a force that evades containment, an artist whose work breaches the barriers it was never meant to cross. And like the raptors testing the electric fence, I probe for structural weaknesses — legal, institutional, cultural — not out of malice, but necessity. I’m not here to tear the system down. I’m here to test if it’s real. Chaos theory.

My tutor, Frans, once looked at the scope of what I was doing — the media reach, the lawsuits, the public interventions — and asked me: “*What are you doing here?[in The University of Bergen – KMD]*” It wasn’t a critique. It was wonder. And to some degree, I’ve always felt too expansive for the institution. Not because I reject its premise, but because I’ve already moved beyond its framework. They invited a fox into the henhouse — and now they’re surprised the feathers are flying. But I didn’t come to destroy the structure. I came to stress-test it. To see what it could hold, and what it couldn’t.

That feeling — of being slightly out of place — isn't new. I've often felt like a conceptual art emissary in Bergen, or maybe just an alien. Conceptual art still feels exotic here, unfamiliar to many in the local art scene. In Iceland, it occupies a revered place in the hierarchy of fine art. The conceptual gesture often eclipses the traditional object. But here in Norway, there's a kind of caution, a hesitancy to fully embrace what cannot be easily explained. And yet that's exactly where I feel at home. I don't make work to be immediately understood. I want it to be felt, misunderstood, talked about, maybe even dismissed — until it can't be ignored.

At times, I resonate with the main character from *The Matrix*, navigating a world coded with invisible rules everyone else has accepted as unchangeable. But I see them — the architecture, the constraints, the illusions. I walk through systems like a glitch. While others conform to the structure, I move through its cracks. This isn't rebellion for rebellion's sake — this is method. This is material.

Quantum Concept

My practice echoes the spirit of *The NeverEnding Story*. In that tale, the act of reading shapes the narrative. The story doesn't just unfold on its own — it changes depending on who is engaging with it, and how. The same is true of my work. As soon as someone begins to observe, comment, or critique — they've engaged with the artwork. The moment of attention is the moment of activation. That's when the work begins to live.

In *The NeverEnding Story*, the boundary between reality and fiction dissolves when the protagonist, Bastian, is pulled into the story itself. He doesn't just witness events; he becomes part of them. That's exactly how my work functions. I don't create isolated pieces for display — I create situations that absorb participants. Whether you're a journalist, a university board member, a lawyer, or just a casual viewer on social media, once you engage with the work, you're in it. You're not a spectator — you're a contributor. Sometimes willingly. Sometimes not.

This makes my work fundamentally participatory. Not in the performative, “*please interact with this installation*” way — but in the sense that *everyone* becomes part of it. The media response becomes part of the work. Legal challenges become part of the work. Institutional interference, outrage, support letters, silence — they all feed back into the evolving sculpture. The story grows with each input. Like *Fantasia*, the fictional world in the book, my work is an ecosystem — not a static object, but a living structure that morphs as people enter it.

But here’s where it gets interesting: the story doesn’t unfold the same way for everyone. The narrative — like the artwork — is multi-dimensional. Depending on where someone enters the work, how they react, or what role they play, the outcome changes. A journalist sees one story. A lawyer sees another. A casual viewer, an academic, a protestor — each creates a different thread, a different arc. The artwork behaves almost like a quantum structure: collapsing into a specific form only when observed from a particular vantage. Until then, it exists in potential — in all possibilities at once.

In that way, the idea of “completion” is irrelevant. My works do not end; they ripple. They move through time, reappearing in different contexts, taking on new meanings. They are never confined to an opening night or a gallery wall. They live in conversation, in conflict, in media loops, and in public memory. Like *The NeverEnding Story*, they are recursive — narratives within narratives, critiques within critiques, systems folding into themselves.

The Artist Life

When someone studies an artist in a book, they’re often introduced to just one or two works — maybe a photograph of a sculpture, or an installation frozen in time. Beneath these images, there’s usually a brief bio. A couple of lines describing the artist’s life: where they lived, how they worked, what made them different. And often, that bio becomes more memorable than the image.

But a bio isn’t conjured out of thin air. It’s lived. That’s why I’ve always placed emphasis on the *biographical* component of my artistic practice — the lived

experience of being an artist. I've intentionally crafted a lifestyle that echoes the archetype: bohemian, adventurous, larger-than-life. Because the artist's life itself can be a performance — and that performance becomes part of the work.

Most conceptual artists are known for one or two signature works.

Darfurnica by Nadia Plesner. *Take the Money and Run* by Jens Haaning. *Dow Does the Right Thing* by The Yes Men.

What's strange, though, is that my job as a culture-jamming conceptual artist is to create once-in-a-lifetime experiences, again and again. And so far, I've done just that. *MOM air*, *Starbucks Iceland*, *We're Sorry*, *Co-Branding*, and now my upcoming graduation project at UiB — each stands as its own rupture, its own headline, its own lived situation. This isn't just a portfolio. It's a trajectory. And it demands a life that is open to chaos, risk, and full immersion.

And that's the real key to legacy. When you hear about powerful artistic legacies, they're rarely about consistency or polite professionalism. They're about stories. I often think about the Icelandic musician Bubbi — one of the country's most iconic artists (aside from the internationally known names like Björk or Sigur Rós). Bubbi's story is the stuff of legend: drugs, rebellion, protest songs, late nights, loud opinions. He lived it all. And now, that chaos — that life — is what defines his cultural weight.

His biography became a musical. Literally. It's the most successful stage production in Icelandic history, based on his own music and mythology. He earned hundreds of millions from it. His life has been translated into merchandise, prints, and public memory. Not because he played it safe — but because he didn't. His story became his relevance.

And you hear that same tone in the stories of so many artists you admire. The adventures. The struggles. The resistance. These become *mythologies*. But the only way to shape a legacy of that sort is to live it. You don't get that from a spreadsheet life. You don't build legacy by falling into the hamster wheel of society and clocking out at five.

The role of the artist — at least the kind who wants to be relevant — isn't to conform. It's to *perform*. And not just on stage or in a gallery, but in life itself.

Because consider the alternative: an artist graduates, then takes a job at a café or a kindergarten, carving out moments to create in the evenings or on weekends. There's nothing inherently wrong with that. But it often limits the *performative dimension* of their practice. The bio becomes quieter. The life becomes linear. You're not free to leap into the unknown or say yes to strange and risky ideas — your mind is elsewhere, occupied with unrelated concerns.

The act of dedicating your entire existence to art is itself a statement. That devotion becomes embedded in the work, in the stories that surround it, and ultimately in how it's received. Who made this? Why? Where were they in life when they made it? These are not trivial questions — they're often what transform an object into *art*.

In my opinion, performance — and the bio — can outweigh any physical artifact left behind. Anyone can make an object. But *why* it was made, *who* made it, and *how* they lived becomes the engine of relevance. That's what separates fleeting gestures from lasting impact. A headline or a viral moment isn't enough. Fifteen minutes of fame do not make you relevant.

Just look at the phenomenon of *Florida Man* — a media shorthand for chaotic, often absurd news stories involving anonymous men in Florida. These individuals grab headlines, but they vanish. There's no continuity, no narrative arc, no artist's hand shaping meaning. It's noise, not presence.

The human artist, in contrast, lives one timeline. One unfolding path. That's what makes the bio matter — it's what makes us *human*. And, in many ways, it's what separates us from AI. An AI can simulate multiple lives at once. It can generate a thousand poems or mimic an artist's voice. But it will never know what it feels like to stand in a field at dusk, watching the sun bleed into the horizon while writing a line of poetry about your first love.

These are the moments that chisel the soul.

The Submission of a Generation

Throughout my Fine Art education, I've paid close attention to the artists on the cusp of graduation. Most of them don't know what comes next. Yet there's

enormous pressure to create a “masterpiece” for the graduation exhibition — something to slot into a portfolio, fit into a grant proposal, or look sharp on a CV. And why not? That’s the system.

But the system is off-putting by design. It’s complicated. Opaque. Frustrating. Which deters many emerging artists from even attempting it. Instead, they slip into stable 9–5 jobs — predictable, safe, and slowly silencing. That’s the first death of a creative mind.

Then come the review committees. Artists are required to pre-analyze their creativity — to reduce ideas into proposals that can be reviewed, measured, and approved. This is a form of soft censorship: if your work can’t be explained in advance, it may not qualify. If it doesn’t tick the right boxes — theme, community outreach, ecological relevance, diversity balance, risk analysis — then it doesn’t get funded. The teeth of a whole generation have been filed down.

Many artists now work backwards from the grant. They study the requirements, check the thematic boxes, and build a proposal to match. The creative process becomes a checkbox exercise. The work is pre-shaped by bureaucracy before it even begins to breathe.

Fine Art — once a field of radical experimentation — is becoming a professionalized industry, full of admin-heavy roles: curators, producers, board members, funders, critics, strategists. Everyone gets paid. Everyone participates. Everyone does something “*around*” the art. Meanwhile, the artist becomes just another cog in the creative economy — confined, funded, boxed in.

The Historically Non Historic

You can feel it in the most basic gestures. For the group graduation exhibition, we’re told to write professional bios, provide high-resolution documentation, contribute to social media campaigns, and help produce pamphlets, wall texts, and posters. All conforming to “*standard procedures*.”

The whole class, it seems to me, is more concerned with pre-archiving their work — crafting it to fit neatly into a CV they intend to carry into the professional

art world. Some, if not most, are relying on this exhibition to showcase their intended “*masterpieces*,” which — historically — are not.

All this effort — bios, headshots, wall texts, PDFs, hashtags — feels less like making art and more like the job of an art historian or archaeologist.

The group is traditional in every sense. Devoid of risk. Reactive instead of proactive. They follow the guidelines. They submit to the format. They craft statements for committees. It’s art by permission slip. Safe. Predictable. Forgotten.

Adding mischief to mayhem, the Norwegians even award cash prizes to the “*best*” artworks in the graduation exhibition — as if we’re at a livestock show. These awards don’t just crown someone with a ribbon; they actively shape how work is made. They introduce — right at the finish line — the backwards methodology of crafting the artwork to fit the grant description.

I’ve had conversations with fellow artists who’ve admitted to altering their works with last-minute additions: textile elements, animatronics, nationalistic references — all in the hopes of aligning with specific awards and their affiliated juries. What starts as an artwork becomes a Frankenstein project stitched together to tick criteria boxes.

In a system that has already discarded grading, how can we justify this kind of stupidity? It’s ceremonial, arbitrary, and entirely at odds with what contemporary art is supposed to do.

These prizes don’t just undermine artistic integrity — they breed animosity. They introduce silent competition between classmates and quietly push creativity toward conformity. The result isn’t better art. It’s safer art. And worse: it’s art that knows how to behave.

My practice, like the Situationists before me, doesn’t seek approval — it seeks disruption. When I kick the anthill, it’s not to watch it burn, but to expose the structure underneath — to see how fast every ant returns to its role. My work functions the same way: I don’t take sides or dictate meaning. I shine a spotlight and let the reactions speak. Whether someone opposes, agrees, recoils, or doesn’t understand — each response is a revelation. That rupture, that moment of raw exposure, is the point. That’s where the truth lives. That’s the power of art.

The Professional

I once attended a lecture where they shared actual statistics about Fine Art graduates. It was sobering. Of all the people who complete a Fine Art degree, only about 2% are still practicing artists a decade or two later — meaning, statistically, one practicing artist emerges every four years. And how many of those become hugely successful, world-renowned, or leave an imprint on the cultural zeitgeist? A fraction of a fraction. One percent of the two percent.

Thankfully, I've never been one for statistics. I'm about crafting once-in-a-lifetime moments. And you're witnessing one right now. Because only once in a lifetime does an artist like me come along. Perhaps I'll be remembered as the next Guy Debord, or the Dalí of a generation.

I don't mind a bit of showmanship. Pretending to be something doesn't necessarily mean you are that thing — just as an actor playing a murderer isn't actually a killer. But for the artist, especially for an artist like me, the line between performance and life is so thin it begins to dissolve. The gesture becomes the person. The artwork becomes the life. And the life becomes the myth. Because in the end, who is remembered — the actor, or the character they played best?

As a conceptual artist, the mind is the primary medium. And the greatest achievement is not to create a work that exists in a space — but to create one that exists in *someone else's mind*. That's where the work lives. And if the artist's life itself becomes part of the concept, then the bio is no longer a footnote.

It's part of the masterpiece.

Conclusion

Throughout this reflection, I've charted the evolution of my practice — not as a tidy academic progression, but as a living, breathing organism. From conversation pits and conceptual provocations to fake airlines, media spectacles, legal battles, and institutional critiques, my path through Fine Art has never followed a straight line. It's been one of tension, disruption, experimentation, and connection.

Projects like MOM air and We're Sorry were never just “artworks” in the traditional sense. They were activated situations — disruptions that absorbed media narratives, institutional responses, and public attention. These works didn't sit on pedestals; they unfolded in real-time, drawing their power from participation and unpredictability. They blurred the lines between fiction and fact, artist and audience, concept and consequence.

What I've encountered — from global media attention to censorship and courtroom drama — reinforces why art still matters. Not as decoration or product, but as a site of resistance, a vessel for truth, absurdity, and structural critique. Not to soothe, but to shake.

In reflecting on my practice, I've also come to see its wider impact: the economic, professional, intellectual, and societal value it generates. With nothing but ideas, I've activated lawyers, journalists, bureaucrats, curators, educators, and researchers. We're Sorry alone mobilized entire legal teams, launched global media discussions, and ignited academic debate. The estimated £200,000 Samherji has reportedly spent on legal costs is just a glimpse of the institutional gravity the work holds.

And that's only a fragment. MOM air became the subject of a peer-reviewed article authored by three PhDs, analyzed as a case of subversive entrepreneurship. It demonstrated how Fine Art can rival — and sometimes outperform — entrepreneurial ventures. It generated societal value not just symbolically, but functionally. It entered systems and disrupted them.

Beyond academia and the courts, dozens of organizations — art institutions, advocacy groups, even my own university — have responded. They've written letters, held internal meetings, debated ethics and institutional boundaries.

Countless hours from professionals across fields — all triggered by conceptual work. And still, the real impact can't be measured. That's the nature of conceptual art. It doesn't just exist — it echoes.

What I've built is relevance. MOM air, We're Sorry, Co-Branding, and now my graduation project — these are not fleeting gestures. They are time-stamped provocations that hold cultural, intellectual, and historic value. They are lived situations that will resonate far beyond this degree.

That's also why this reflection — and my practice at large — is saturated with pop cultural references. This is the core of the culture jammer's method: not just engaging with the academic elite, but embedding signals into the mainstream. These references aren't distractions — they are bridges. They carry the conceptual into the conversational. My core philosophy has always been to create work that's easy to consume, but hard to digest. A person who has never stepped foot in an art museum might still engage with my work through a newspaper headline or a viral moment — and then retell it at a dinner table. At the same time, the forensic, academically inclined viewer will find layers, riddles, and systems to unpack. The work stretches to meet both. That duality is intentional — and powerful.

If art is supposed to soothe, I'm probably doing it wrong. But if art is meant to disrupt — to expose cracks in the system, challenge authority, spark cultural chaos, and force the powerful to react — then I'm not just doing it right.

I'm doing it at scale.