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Title:

AESTHETICALLY FOUNDED PROCESSES OF FORMATION WITHIN
ENCOUNTERS BETWEEN KIDS AND ART

In this paper I want to specify the expressions *aesthetics* and *culture*, and link these to a limited perspective concerning where and how kids formate themselves in encounters with art. By using the word *formation* (*dannelse* in Norwegian; from the German word *Bildung*) rather than socialization, I want to emphasize, and at the same time restrict the content of this paper, thematizing the possibilities of kids' direct and active participation in their own self-creation understood as *creation of identity*. This I want to describe and pinpoint within a scientific context – and from a hermeneutic as well as phenomenological point of view. At the same time I will make references to perspectives within developmental psychology. I do not operate within the tradition trying to find solutions to pre-set problems. Rather, I want to point towards some moments that might shed light upon as well as deepen and – hopefully – contribute to new questions within the headlines of this conference.

Rather than considering children's culture as a limited phenomenon, I intend to focus on some chosen characterizations concerning kids' self-creating work within their encounters with objects defined as cultural expressions, interacting about as well as within these works of art. Encounters like these will be specified within this paper by the (Norwegian) expression *kunstmøter* (directly translated into English I choose to call it *art-meeting* rather than encounters with art). In doing this, I concentrate on central, relationally founded, aesthetic processes within as well as amongst kids and art-objects (in the widest impact of this expression), but not as art-objects made especially for an audience consisting solely of kids. Instead I want to lay an emphasis on what might happen within encounters between *kids* and art as something of a different quality compared with corresponding encounters between art and adults, and how and why we can imagine the first encounters as unique incidents from my perspective of formation. My intention is to make visible how kids part-take and develop relations of importance to them as humans and citizens rather than as belonging to a limited children's culture.

To make concrete the uniqueness of kids versus adults as actors within their own formational process (see the idea of life-long-learning), I start out by the help of the concepts *pre-judice* and *reflection*. Taking advantage of the word *pre-judice*, I want to show how traditional dichotomies like friend-enemy might be thematized among kids concerned within aesthetic experiences, and how questions of aesthetics might be recognized and treated amongst multi-cultural groups of kids within the *art-meetings*, in spite of different cultural backgrounds. I point out how especially the kids' ways of building relations – through shared experiences and expanding consciousness concerning each others aesthetic experiences – might help us (living within a plural cultural, post-industrialized society) understand and communicate about who we are, and who we want to become.

The paper is a presentation of some characterisations of encounters between kids and culture. By presenting examples and theory, I will argue for the importance of preparing for the kids own initiatives to *create culture and at the same time cultivating themselves and each other*. My hope is that this paper might contribute to the discussion concerning the relevance of letting kids spend time on *art-meeting*-activities – and with them on uttering themselves about various artistic expressions, as well as documenting and reflecting around encounters like these.