

Culture & Art, Who Cares?

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**I believe in destiny.
But I also believe that you can't just sit back and let destiny happen.
A lot of times, an opportunity might fall into your lap,
but you have to be ready for that opportunity.
You can't sit there waiting on it.
A lot of times you are going to have get out there and make it happen.
~Spike Lee.**

I trust you all will be joining me July 13 at 1:30pm Toronto time for a fun and provocative conversation about art, culture, and what it means, brings, and takes from our work. If you know me a little, you can expect detours, stories, very bad English, and an expose of personal boundaries. My name is Erwin Wieringa, and I live in Amsterdam, Netherlands. This presentation is about personal discovery and identity.

As some of you might know, I was knighted by the Queen of the Netherlands for my work on inclusive education. Great honor. But for reasons I will explain now, I never wore the ribbon, the medal and the parchment charter never left the case in which I got it. Instead, I've got the charter my father got, knighted as well, framed on the wall. He survived, Nazi imprisonment and concentration camp as political prisoner. And finally a commuted death sentence, just because the commander of the last camp, spent his best years in a small town, where my dad, originated from. He simply couldn't do it. And he turns out to be the sole survivor of 1000s executed in the last months of the war.

He dedicated his life to humanity and human rights, that was Knighted for that. The basic coincidence of one man will show him as a person and his determination to make a difference, humbled me to never expose my still failing attempts to create an inclusive Netherlands. What I mean to say is that pursuing inclusion is part of my personal culture~ as is storytelling, and bicycle tramping, watching movies, performing with a pole dancer being a soccer fanatic, and a father and grandfather.

Art plays an important role as the fuel that makes things going for me. Experiencing the genius and unique perspective of other human beings pushes me to my limits, all the time. So, when I see that in our work field, we rarely create opportunities to build on a unique personal story/ culture, through unique encounters, we deprive people of their uniqueness. That's why I detest special culture, like the theme restaurants for people with Down syndrome, and all of many more examples. It seems like we can't imagine excellence in people with disabilities. So return to my original Spike Less quote, and use that starting point of our conversation at virtual TSI. Join me won't you?