

## **artmann on students**

(from: h.c. artmann (ed.): *lyrik als aufgabe. arbeiten mit meinen studenten* ('poetry as task. work with my students', vienna. 1995.)

christine huber: the classes of the schule fuer dichtung last for ten days, fourteen days ... but then of course with some students you stay in contact?

h.c.: of course. friendships develop. that's very important. but also the people should get together a lot more among themselves. the way i imagine it is that one achieves for groups to be formed, that meet constantly and are constantly part of the same circle. if one of them is in klagenfurt and the other in munich, then that's very difficult. but that is actually my aim: that groups develop. that is very important.

christine huber: are there any basic tips, are there any standards that you have to work through in any class?

h.c.: yes, for me it's form. the form of a poem. first of all one has to be able to write a really formally perfect poem, before one starts to do anything else. it's very old-fashioned, this idea, very conservative. in our day, we dropped out of school because we'd had it up to here with all that rhyming business, and those constraints. but we knew what the constraints were. today they no longer know that, because they are no longer taught it in school. there's no basis there. people write poems, and they have the inner will to write poems, to make something, but they don't have the tools to do it. that hasn't been learned. you can't become a watchmaker, or a shoemaker, if you haven't learned the trade for three years. it's exactly the same ... you can't make poems the way a bird sings. somehow there has to be some kind of pre-requisite.

...

christine huber: and if there is no schule fuer dichtung, what is then the way to acquire knowledge?

h.c.: well, read read read. you have to be able to read with an aim. of course, i also integrate that into my so-called teaching, in whatever form that might be, i might say, for example, read the expressionists, read medieval literature, read the impressionists, read the dadaists, although that less. the first 50 years of german-language literature in the 20th century and the literature in translation that's available, one has to have read that.

christine huber: one needs to have a love of reading poetry. if you don't have that, then it will all come to nothing ...

christine huber interviewed h.c. artmann on 24 june 1995 in salzburg. the book *lyrik als aufgabe* ('poetry as task', edition schule fuer dichtung in wien, passagen verlag) can be ordered from the office of the sfd.

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