# FUTURES OF ARTISTIC RESEARCH

## AT THE INTERSECTION OF UTOPIA, ACADEMIA AND POWER

EDS. JAN KAILA, ANITA SEPPÄ AND HENK SLAGER

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# INTRODUCTION
### Anita Seppä, Jan Kaila and Henk Slager

*Futures of Artistic Research* is a collection of essays that brings into focus and explains the actual significance and future possibilities of the experimental exercises and critiques emerging across the field of artistic research.

Designed to raise challenging discussions and to stimulate and push further the already existing ones, the book is structured around seven main questions/topics that are, at the moment, of interest to a wide interdisciplinary field of scholars, curators, and artists.

The starting point for this book is a questionnaire that was sent to writers we consider significant within the field of artistic research. We asked them to either provide a separate answer to each question, or to write a short text as a reaction to the set of questions. The Research Pavilion in Venice (2015 and 2017), hosted by the University of the Arts Helsinki, was important as a setting influencing the selection of writers as well as the questions we addressed to them.

Many participants of this book project have taken part in the exhibitions or in the so-called Camino Events –

spanning a wide variety of cross-artistic events; discussions, interventions, performances, screenings, and concerts – of the Research Pavilion. In addition to them, we decided to invite a number of people not connected with the Research Pavilion to discuss similar issues.

By presenting the responses of these internationally acknowledged specialists, the collection shows how the artistic research discussion reworks older definitions of experimenting, knowledge, methodologies, materials, and purposes of art, and how it also advances new ethical and political insights in the field of research.

## The seven questions we posed to all contributors were:

### 1. THE CURRENT SITUATION OF THE FIELD

When the debate about artistic research commenced twenty years ago, it was primarily viewed as an unarticulated, undefined field; not so much a discipline as a place where the political, the philosophical, and the creative meet in a way that allows people to produce a new set of relations between one another. How can artistic research – as a methodological trajectory – continue to facilitate non-regulated relations between these three domains? And connected to this: How can artistic research keep providing alternative answers to urgent questions?

### 2. NEW METHODOLOGIES AND GENERATIONS

Some traits of today's artistic research might seem to present a 'previous' generation of activity. It is also noteworthy that some critical disciplines, such as feminist studies and post-humanist research, are only now becoming more important for the actors in the field. Yet expressions such as 'Feminist artistic research' are still not even fully formulated, which might feel somewhat surprising if one compares this development to other fields of art research. In your opinion, what kind of artistic research interests and motivations have been kept aside, and is this situation about to change now?

### 3. CONCEPTS

In the last decade, the debate about artistic research was dominated by a number of key concepts such as 'the archival' and 'knowledge production'. The latter has now become rather problematic in an era characterized by cognitive capitalism, radical climate change, feminist and post-colonialist studies, post-humanism, and the current alienation of the cognitive worker. How should artistic research relate to 'knowledge' in a future seemingly characterized by politics without answers and the rhetoric of post-fact truth? Will 'knowledge' remain a key concept despite everything, or should it be replaced with another

concept that focuses more on 'experimentality', 'materiality', 'post-philosophy', or something else?

## 4. ECONOMY

The current neo-liberal economy has largely appropriated the concept of creativity. How should artistic research deal with this? And connected with this, how can artistic research relate to the market? Can it, for example, without romanticising, maintain some 'experimental' space? And in this light, how should the new emphasis on materiality be conceived? As an adjustment with respect to the dominant discursivity and immateriality of the past decade – or as something completely new and different?

## 5. PEER REVIEW

In the current debate on peer review and Open Access, many assessment criteria seem to be derived from traditional scientific practice. But to what extent should artistic research unquestioningly adopt these criteria? Should the field perhaps develop a different form of peer review, with possibly a different – non-academic – form of validation? If so, what would this look like?

## 6. DOCTORAL PROGRAMMES

The current era is characterized by acceleration of communication and exchange of ideas. How is artistic research part of this? Is it a product of this development, or does it have a decelerative capacity that allows it to develop alternative perspectives – for example in the shape of PhD programmes focusing on concentration? What role can such PhD programmes play in the future development of the field of artistic research? And how can these mostly experimental research environments avoid being bureaucratized and turning into new business models?

## 7. THE FUTURES OF ART

Artistic Research can be conceived as a place where art is thought through and can, in time, perhaps develop into something other than art. How should we evaluate the role and the meaning of the current research paradigm for the futures of art?

Intended to reflect the heterogeneity of the field, the book is contradictory in its interpretations of the 'possible futures of artistic research', as well as in its very basic definitions and goals. As the reader will notice, some of the voices involved in the anthology have been active in the field for about two decades, while others are members of younger generations. The contributors also represent di-

verse global and cultural backgrounds. Some writers feel cynical, some hesitant and critical, while others cherish the elements of utopian hope, envision alternatives, challenge the current ways of understanding artistic research, or remind us about expressions of power that, in their view, attempt to dominate the field for their users' needs.

As always, when reading these expressions of thoughts and feelings, we agree and disagree, and ultimately end up seeking our own ways of thinking, by forgetting ourselves for a moment to listen to the echoes of the empty spaces that are left unarticulated between the lines.

We wish that the reader will be challenged by this multivocal and multifocal assemblage of thoughts and empty spaces, and also that the book will inspire new dialogues inside and outside of the field of artistic research.

# ARTISTIC RESEARCH, PUBLISHING AND CAPITALISATION
### Andrea Phillips

Given that the Research Pavilion in Venice that coincides with the 2017 Venice Biennale is funded by a consortia of Northern European university art departments and academies, it seems fitting to begin a short article that responds to the title of the pavilion's theme – 'Utopia of Access' – with a brief description of the modes through which 'access' is most regularly understood in the university sector. Here, the term is equated with two major structural challenges to contemporary education, the first being the availability of higher education to a broad range of constituencies that may not have been historically and culturally admitted ('accessibility'), the second being the concept of 'Open Access' in research publishing.

Both of these ideas concerning access have long histories and are intensely geo-political in their definitions. Therefore, what follows will be a cursory set of

observations and suggestions when both are applied – or drawn close to – 'artistic research.' The main body of this text will focus on questions of Open Access publishing and what it constitutes in the art academy, but I will return to the troubling inaccessibility of artistic education for those of non-European heritage and of non-bourgeois cultural milieus in a bid to unite these two conditions.[1]

The Anglo-European concept of 'Open Access' within academic – or at a pinch 'intellectual' – publishing was initiated by universities and publishers of academic research findings as a response to the growth of the internet and the increasing demand for searchability both by users, government funders, and institutions of research. With increased pressure on academic funding, Anglo-Saxon universities have developed systems of measuring the quality and quantity of research output of universities in order to establish a graded system of value based on the 'excellence' and 'impact' of this research. The vast majority of university research output in this continually paternalistic system comes in the form of patents, books and peer reviewed journal articles. A minor (and much disputed) part of university research comes in the form

of practice-based research: fieldwork documentation, artworks, films, novels, designs, etc.

At roughly the same time with the development of these research assessment exercises and ensuing university rankings, universities began to either charge or increase the charges for tuition (in the UK and the US) and to submit by law to the Bologna Accord (in Europe) to enable the transfer of grade registration and to bring to bear upon Higher Education Institutions a requirement for assessment regularity and transferable protocols. Both of these questions of access (the 'consolidation' of educative methodology and the demand for research availability) are linked to, and at the same time distinct from, the frameworks of publishing more colloquially understood as 'open'. Here, open is opposed to closed, and 'publicly available' is opposed to private or inaccessible. Such an understanding is described by the 2002 Budapest Open Access Initiative funded by the George Soros Open Society Foundations:

*By 'open access' to [the literature in question], we mean it's free availability on the public internet, permitting any users to read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of these articles, crawl them for indexing, pass them as data to software, or use them for any other lawful purpose, without financial, legal, or technical*

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1        'The art academy' necessitates investigation: whilst there are many claims for alternative pedagogies within the framework of art education at tertiary level, a homogeneity of language, methodology and value assumption often exists across the Anglo-European field of provision.

*barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. The only constraint on reproduction and distribution, and the only role for copyright in this do-main, should be to give authors control over the integrity of their work and the right to be properly acknowledged and cited.*[2]

The Budapest initiative is a utopia of access. But rather than a demand for copy-left accessibility, already and historically fuelled within the academic field by the 'publish or be damned' atmosphere of increasingly metricised university systems, 'Open Access' has been from the outset a bargain set between universities, governments, and publishers to ensure that internet accessibility of research would not undermine publishing profits. Here the differing politics of access clash with university researchers – including artistic researchers – caught in a cycle of symbolic and actual value creation, profiting or failing by their ability and willingness to work within the conditions that reputational profit determines. In terms of academic publishing, 'Open Access' (as distinct perhaps from 'open access') requires a choice between 'Green' and 'Gold' routes. 'Green Open Access' demands that the author publishes their script, text, artwork, etc. in a university repository

(searchable database) after a period of embargo in which the publisher will sell the publication in usual ways. 'Gold Open Access' requires the author (or their institution) to pay a fee to the publisher to enable repository access to the script.

The university is then judged by the quality and extent of their accessible research, and publishers are paid by universities for any revenue they may lose through not being the sole providers of access to the script. This is a method contended by a growing number of publishers and practitioners, in turn spawning many independent publishing venues in which the money demanded by 'Gold Open Access' or the length of embargo demanded by 'Green Open Access' is circumnavigated by low cost publishing deals offered to authors who still get peer reviewed for their money (the essential process, particularly in the hard sciences, of having your research findings checked by peer experts and substantiated).[3]

Sarah Kember, a leading scholar on feminist publishing futures, calls Open Access (tracing its roots to histories of patriarchal academic publishing) a 'pay to say' system which is 'exploitative' and 'dangerous.'

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2      http://www.budapestopenaccessinitiative.org/read [Accessed 15.07.2017]

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3      See the debate on this topic in *Nature* from 2013: http://www.nature.com/news/open-access-the-true-cost-of-science-publishing-1.12676 [Accessed 15 June 2017]

*Open access policy has worryingly little to say about the diversity of the book, let alone of the voices, projects, and subject areas that are allegedly made accessible. For me, both ends of the debate, from government to grassroots, conflate access and accessibility... Openness is designed for the public sector – or what's left of it – on behalf of the private sector. Open means open to commercialization.* (Kember 2016.)

This economically-driven publishing imperative is mon-ocultural and driven by the financialisation of research, sitting as it does within a broader university culture described by Chris Newfield as foundationally capitalised. In his analysis '[t]he default lingua franca [of US universities] is money, so that the value of teaching is measured by student enrolments and the value of research is measured by the cash value of extramural grants' (Newfield 2016, 144). The difficulty for researchers is that green or gold publishing within the university system is reputationally critical. For those practitioners with a foot in the institution and a foot outside of it – and this is true of a great deal of practice-based research across disciplines – this reputational economy is paradoxical.

The broad consensus amongst artists who support their practice through teaching at an art academy or school is that such publishing imperatives, in their imperiality and monetising systematisation, should be critiqued and resisted. This may not be the most intelligent response. Whilst it is certainly the case that Open Access publishing within a university context needs to be challenged, tested, and extended, it is also true to say that debates regarding the distortion and/or perversion of artistic research into 'academic output' which destroy the uniqueness and individuality of the research in question, often fail to recognise artistic research's own relation to commercialisation and privatisation.

Artistic research, in other words, has its own historical and taciturn relation with university repository archiving, metrification, and open access. As I have argued elsewhere (Phillips 2011), the field of artistic research as it is practiced and rhetoricised by students and staff in many art academies and art departments is a practice that develops privately, often individually, and defends a right not to have recourse to explanation.[4] The claim

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4    See, for example, the introduction to the theme of 'writing' at the 2016 Society for artistic research conference held in Den Haag: 'Writing gives an explicit verbal account of the implicit knowledge and understanding embodied in artistic practices and products while at the same time art may escape or go beyond what can be expressed by words and resist (academic) conventions of accountability. A "written element" is almost always asked for in the context of higher arts education, as well as by funding agencies, so the artist-researcher in that context often feels cornered, and has to meet opposing demands at the same time.' https://www.sarconference2016.net/rc/index.html#motto [Accessed 15 June 2017].

that artistic research is immanent and not in need of explanation due to its fundamentally phenomenological ontology is the basis of the majority of epistemological claims in the field, thus providing rationales for disputes with both the words 'open' and 'access'. The claim of artistic research is that it is radically open and thus accessible to all comers, giving rise to questions of explanation, exposition, methodological investigation and publishing itself (in the sense of 'making public'), especially in a field dominated by privatization (both in terms of arts connection to infrastructures of its market and in terms of the pedagogical habitus of individuation of expression).

In the institution in which I teach – Valand Academy, University of Gothenburg – this tension between publishing, openness, access, and accessibility is often felt most profoundly through the annual process of research output reporting required of all staff to participate in if their work has been supported by the school. The question of support is a contentious one (a contention that I have encountered in many Higher Education Institutions whilst teaching in art departments but rarely when teaching in social sciences): the artist-researcher is often asked to confront the question of their own individual authorship within both the direct and indirect working environment of the support structure of the institution (an issue

especially vociferous in the arguments made by fractional staff and part time doctoral students, who argue that they are not 'owned entirely' by the HEI).

The issue of the output – and whether the university has the right to retain it in some way – crosses with the issue of publishing: how is an artwork published in the same way as a book, etc.? What is publishing and how is it to be understood in the context of Open Access debates? How does the researcher – the artist-researcher – want their work to be published, to be made public? Is access more accessible in an art gallery or in a book available via a university database? Both are closed systems. What rights do artists who are paid by the university have to withdraw the products of their material and intellectual labour? Do they have more rights than other academics?

One researcher asking this question amongst a growing and transversal community is the artist and publisher Eva Weinmeyer. Weinmeyer inhabits an interesting but potentially contradictory position in that she is both a PhD candidate at Valand, a social organizer, a publisher and supporter of all forms of creative commoning amidst a broad church of research. Her *Library of Inclusions and Omissions*, an open invitation to add an annotated book to a growing mobile library, has been shown at the Research Pavilion as part of the first exhibition of 2017, 'You gotta say yes to another access', curated by Henk Slager and Jan Kaila.

Weinmeyer's collaborative Piracy Project, an initiative prompted by the imminent closure of the library at Byam Shaw, a now subsumed independent art school in North London, instantiated a mode of gathering pirated publications, developing para-indexing systems and affinities with self- and pirate-publishing commoning projects all over the world. In a self-interview published in 2016 Weinmeyer observes:

*What is the goal of artistic practice? [...] [P]iracy is always associated with the re-appropriation of somebody else's property against the law. It challenges the idea of knowledge as property. For me the role of the cultural pirate is more complex. It is a trickster, similar to the role of the artist, who has no predefined territory to roam, connects different areas of thought, and questions established ways of thinking. And this thinking translates into action. Often people who do great stuff just happen to be artists. I don't even think it is helpful to categorize such activities in artists or activists — the main thing is they intervene in the world and envision or create alternatives.* (Weinmeyer 2016, 179.)

Weinmeyer's work is instigated by a demand to free knowledge exchange from academic and other forms of alleged capture; to recognize the hidden and missing literature ascribed a fugitive position in historical narratives of progression and development, particularly those of women. *Her Library of Inclusions and Omissions* was on display, alongside the work of other artist-researchers, at the Research Pavilion in Venice (2017) where it occupied an uncomfortable position: at once a political proposition for radical distributive practices, and on the other an object of ocular speculation, sitting as it does in the symbolic economy of the Biennale, funded by organisations whose desire to be associated with the Biennale may not sit so keenly alongside the practice of their students and staff, whose desires may include to remove themselves from the circulatory system of value exchange through academic research scholarship (although the lure is strong).

Weinmeyer's project raises important doubts, even as it is included within the imperium of the Venice Biennale by association. It is possible to draw a relation between the Venice exhibitions – locales of global trade in which artworks of often exquisite political precision coagulate into objects of huge value – and the Open Access publishing regime, in which the distributed and dissensual ideas of many types of academic practitioners are redescribed as surplus value for those institutions that employ them. As researchers (artistic and otherwise) we need to be alert to the ways in which we subscribe somewhat naively to capitalized forms of access that serve to incapacitate

critical action at a structural institutional level and subdue the politics of argument through privatization – but also to recognize that by escaping the doctrines of the university repository we do not necessarily liberate ourselves into a common utopian accessibility. Referring to the university that employs her, Sarah Kember says:

> *We need to open out from open access, not just because open is closed but because openness is not the universal good it claims to be. It not only further divides Google (not obliged to be open) from Goldsmiths (obliged to be open); it effectively feeds us to them.* (Kember 2016, 351.)

## Literature

Kember, Sarah, Why Publish?, in: *Learned Publishing*, Volume 29, Issue Supplement S1, doi: 10.1002/leap.1042, http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/leap.1042/epdf, 2016.

Newfield, Christopher, *The Great Mistake: How We Wrecked Public Universities and How We Can Fix Them*, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2016.

Phillips, Andrea, Why Practice-based PhDs are Political, in: Quaresma, Jose, Dias, Fernando and Guadix, Juan (eds.), *Investigacao em Arte e Design Fendas no Metodo e na Criacao*, Lisbon: CIEBA, 2011.

Weinmeyer, Eva, Library Underground – a reading list for a coming community, in: Annette Gilbert (ed.), *Publishing as Artistic Practice*, Berlin: Sternberg, 2016, p. 179. Also available at: http://evaweinmayr.com/ [Accessed 25 06 17].

# UNFINISHED GLOSSARY OF ARTISTIC RESEARCH[1]
### Renate Lorenz

## A

### ARTISTIC RESEARCH

I strive to relate to artistic research with speculation and a glimpse of utopia, instead of being descriptive or defining it. That said, I opt for understanding artistic research as a specific kind of research, as one that starts off with a double bind: it performs research and at the same time obstructs research by thinking it over again, questioning it and fighting it through aesthetic politics. The practice of artistic research that I am looking for might treat research neither as valuable per se nor as a tool to domesticate art. Rather it makes good use of research in the field of art in order to uphold curiosity, inquiry, openness, and the pursuit of a concept of subjectivity as incomplete, happily inadequate, and intoxicated by others against the idea

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1   This text is based on many productive discussions and experimentations in the PhD in Practice program of the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, especially with my colleague Anette Baldauf, but also with the researchers currently participating in the program.

of the artist as an able agent. Artistic research has been placed at the crossroads of the Academy and the Art Market, two institutions which unequally distribute privilege and value and strongly perform inclusions and exclusions. *Finding a place* in artistic research thus seems to deny all possible alternatives to the 'prison house' of the here and now (Munoz, 2009, 1). But what if these crossroads, which leave us with so many difficulties to define 'artistic research' as a field, at the same time allow for a space-off, something which is not innocent but partially out of sight, not outside the institutions and the market (and the wish and urge to feed oneself) but still allowing one, as Harvey and Moten suggest, to 'sneak into the university (and the art gallery as I would like to add) and steal what one can' (Harvey and Moten 2013, 26.).

# B

## BONDING

# C

## CRUISING UTOPIA

Artistic research's methodology, if there is any, might be *cruising utopia*, as José Muñoz describes it in his book of the same name (Muñoz 2009). Cruising instead of following a predefined path includes an associative mode of analysis (ibid. 3), surprising encounters (which might be pleasant or not), curiously following a line of desire instead of the rationality of a work plan. Still, there might be violent experiences from the past that co-determine the possibilities or the limits of routes available. Thus, cruising utopia might re-signify artistic research as 'desire-based research,' (Tuck and Yang 2014, 231ff), provided with agency to connect and disconnect, fuelled by histories of violence. Muñoz connects the sexual desire and the curiosity in *cruising* as a practice to Bloch's theory of hope: '... hope's methodology ... dwells in the region of the not-yet, a place where entrance and, above all, final content are marked by an enduring indeterminacy.' Especially the aesthetic, says Muñoz, contains 'blueprints and schemata for a forward-dawning futurity' (Muñoz 2009, 1). A connection with hope and desire might as well replace the use of the so-called pain-narratives in artistic research. Tuck and Yang sharply criticize how even well-meaning researchers capitalize on narratives of pain experiences in their research. Researchers, they argue, tend to reframe the pain of others and falsely assume their stories are participating in change, while instead producing meta-narratives of damaged communities and re-establishing the other as victim, as one who could profit from White progress. (Tuck and Yang 2014, 226ff.) There is knowledge that the Academy (or the art gallery) does not deserve. *Cruising utopia* can thus also be a useful tool for refusal.

# D

## DIFFERENCE

One of the main principles that I would suggest for artistic research can be drawn from queer theory, namely an 'aporia of difference' (Engel 2009, 26): on the one hand it strives to *affirm* difference as irreducible alterity and specificity. On the other hand it *fights* difference in regimes of difference where it appears as exclusion, social inequality, and hierarchy.

# E

## ENCOUNTER

Following the double principle of difference, connections with other human or non-human companions during artistic research might be theorized as 'encounters.' As Sara Ahmed suggests, encounters are meetings that do not happen between two secluded entities or subjects, but are precisely constitutive for subjectivity – they institute the 'I' in relation to, or more accurately as a relation with, others (Ahmed 2000, 6f). 'I' only comes alive in encounters with others. Encounters might happen during research but I would like to suggest understanding the presentation of aesthetic practices in exhibitions or other situations as an encounter as well, which allows us to theorize this presentation ideally as a moment of change.

If the *encounter*, as Ahmed states, is prior to the entities, this means that the relationship to the beholder, visitor, or spectator is already part of the work, and changes both, the work and the beholder, in a surprising way. Something appears in the *encounter* that is 'more' than just the two entities coming together and thus has the capability to reopen a prior history of violence, the 'histories of encounter that violate and fix others in regimes of difference' (ibid. 8). Theorizing the encounter in such an open and indeterminate way equips the objects with an agency and allows for productivities that slip through the control of the artist or researcher and actively take part in establishing the outcome.

# F

## FORM (AND ITS POLITICS)

Artistic research dismisses the fantasy of creating transparent messages in order to transmit its findings. As art practice, it deals with and reflects on aesthetic forms. I understand aesthetic form to describe all ways of appearing, including the specific spatial arrangement and temporal movement in works of art and other cultural products, and there is no aesthetic form without aesthetic politics. As Jacques Rancière argues, aesthetic politics ideally works with a 'negotiation between opposites, between the readability of the message that threatens to destroy

the sensible form of art and the radical uncanny-ness that threatens to destroy all political meaning' (Rancière 2016, 59). It is exactly this 'rupture' of intelligibility – or 'noise' – which upholds or destroys meaning, that allows one to theorize change as the alternation of subjectivities and as the redistribution of access to the public sphere. Something appears that is more than a message, or even works against it and undermines it, something that rejects the common and agreed upon arrangement of appearances, that does not fit into what we already know, embody, and practice. When artist Charles Atlas, for instance, shows in *Here she is...v1* (2015) the filmed portrait of a drag queen, Lady Bunny, speaking about leftist politics, there appears a gap between the image we see of a drag queen with an enormous wig and the images of reliable subjects for leftist politics we know. But then, time and again, the sound of her speech is taken away, which introduces a 'visual noise' (moving lips with no sound appearing from them), and the film outplays the power relations which are inherent in an interview situation and challenges the benevolent idea of giving a voice to the other. Rancière argues that there is no criterion for establishing a correspondence between the politics of aesthetics and the aesthetics of politics (ibid. 58). Although I would agree that there is no possible one-to-one analogy, there may still be principles and references that are useful for both fields of prac-

tice. In the Vienna PhD in Practice program, for instance, we define 'opacity', 'trans-temporalities' (Lorenz 2014), 'commoning' (Baldauf 2017), or 'haunting' as assemblages. These assemblages – as temporarily persisting but still dynamic relations between objects, images, and concepts (Deleuze and Guattari 1980) – create realms for thought and experiment by inspiring principles and enabling references in between aesthetic forms and objects, activism, and political concepts. A principle can thereby be a set of political guidelines, such as 'no unidirectional knowledge production', which inspire but do not determine what is produced as artistic research.

# G

## 'GEE!'

# H

### HAUNTING (AS ASSEMBLAGE)

I am especially interested in Avery Gordon's work on haunting, which introduces haunting as a proper way of knowledge production in research. Violent histories or stories such as colonialism, sexism, or the Shoah let their impacts be felt in our everyday lives, especially when it seems they are over – when their oppressiveness is denied or belittled. (Gordon 2008.) Signs – called ghosts or specters – appear; they disturb us, produce deep cracks

in the surface of normality. The ghosts are alive, equipped with agency, outside of human control. They don't 'belong' to the individual who experiences them, they rather 'appear' as an agency in between subjectivities, images, and space and thus already produce the idea of subjectivity as one stretching not only in between individuals and objects but also in between the past, the present, and the future. Understanding haunting as an assemblage interconnecting research, aesthetic forms, and politics, does not determine the outcomes of a ghostly aesthetics, but produces a set of principles, a framework for reflection, and an understanding of pressing affects: something has to be done.

## I

### INTELLIGIBILITY

## J

### JUDGEMENT

## K

### KNOWLEDGE

There are many forms of knowledge that are provided – among others – by haunting, intoxication, or body symptoms. There is also a long feminist tradition of developing critical epistemologies that call common ideas of knowledge into question. Sara Ahmed, for instance, re-signi-

fies the relation between the strange and the known by reminding us that a 'stranger' (and we could add a 'strange object') is the one who is precisely the object of knowledge.[2] The stranger, says Ahmed, is not any-body (or any-thing) we have failed to recognize, but some-body (or some-thing) that we have already recognized as a stranger, and thus 'a body (an object) out of place' (Ahmed 2000, 55). 'To unlearn how to know' is Ahmed's suggestion against the production of strangerness (Ibid. 72).

## L

### LAUGHING

## M

### METHOD / METHODOLOGY

Criticizing the determination of knowledge production, Erin Manning rejects the demand to define methods in artistic research. Engaging in methodologies, the theorizing and reflecting on methods, is not much better she says, since there is a close connection between the two. As she writes, 'despite decades of engagement in transdisciplinary thought, disciplines still order knowledge according to specific understandings of what constitute proper methods and police these methods through long-standing

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2    Ahmed 2000, 55ff.

systems of peer and institutional review, even tending, in many cases, to suggest that interdisciplinary research is by nature weak because of its inattention to method' (Manning 2015, 56). She understands the call for methods as a process of normalization, which refashions knowledge and subjects aesthetic practices to a static organization of preformed categories. Instead of methods, Manning suggests, artistic research needs a re-accounting of the possibilities of writing in the artistic research process (ibid. 66). Although I agree, her proposal also introduces another difficulty in separating writing from whatever other practices might be involved. Is there any chance of specifying methodologies – such as Muñoz's *cruising utopia* – that do not belong to a specific discipline and that open up a field of thought and experiment instead of closing it down?

# N

## NORMALCY

# O

## OPACITY

As another assemblage, *opacity* might provide tools for connecting epistemology, politics, activism, and aesthetic practice in the field of artistic research. Édouard Glissant has claimed the 'right to opacity' (Glissant 1997, 209) and requested that 'we must fight against transparency every-

where' (Glissant 1999, 356). As Glissant describes it, opacity indeed works as a category of epistemology; in order to avoid reduction, we have to conceive that the other is opaque to us and even to accept that we are obscure to ourselves (ibid. 192f). But at the same time, opacity is an ontological category for him; it implies the other's density, thickness, or fluidity, its 'irreducible singularity' (ibid. 190) and 'the welcome opaqueness, through which the Other escapes me' (ibid. 162). In both senses, opacity provides a defense against understanding and is characterized as a rejection of violent and unidirectional ways of knowledge production. Seen in this way, opacity is even more than an epistemic and ontological category. Instead, it becomes a strategy of resistance; Glissant refers quite literally to slaves who rendered themselves opaque by disappearing into a dense forest, and he gives advice about how to take care of one's own identity: 'I should not allow it to become cornered in any essence' (Glissant 1997, op. cit., 192). As Britton argues: 'Opacity, then, transforms the status of the colonized subject's visibility from a source of vulnerability to the active production of a visible but unreadable image' (Britton 1999: 124). Here, opacity can also be linked to aesthetic politics, by producing images that work against hierarchy, wounding, and domination, images that are rendered unintelligible, beyond understanding (Lorenz 2014, 18).

# P

## POWER

# Q

## QUALITY

# R

## RESEARCH

Artistic research should take into account that research has been severely dismissed. Scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith, for instance, sees 'research' as the world's dirtiest word, (Smith 1999, 1) while Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang advise some of us and inform others about the practice of simply 'refusing research,' though they sketch refusal as something much more complicated than just saying no to research (Tuck and Yang 2014). Research is seen as often producing and entertaining hierarchies, in which the search for knowledge remains unidirectional, linear, bound to progress and other imperatives of the nation-state, part of the contested practices of enlightenment. It gathers knowledge in settler or (post-)colonial communities, and unevenly distributes the right to produce, administer, and govern what has been successfully collected.

# S

## SEXUALITY

# T

## TRANSTEMPORALITY

# U

## URGENCY

The logic of urgency often does not work as soon as we leave the mainstream and leave behind the stories which are newsworthy. Instead of urgency, I am drawn to Elisabeth Freeman's term 'chronic' when thinking of a preferable temporality for artistic research (Lorenz, Danbolt and Freeman 2014). In the realm of medicine and disease, the term 'chronic' usually describes conditions or situations that are less urgent than persistent. Situations that might not appear dramatic or life threatening but that are engraved in our daily routines, as when pain or other types of suffering have become normalized and hope is still an option. Chronic situations can therefore be constitutive of our bodies and identities. If they do not endanger our lives, they might determine them to some degree. In this way, one might consider chronic suffering – and the vulnerability that accompanies it – as an example of what Judith Butler describes as being 'ec-static', in the sense

that we are 'transported beyond ourselves' by enduring scenes that decompose or 'undo' our subjecthoods (Butler 2004). The 'ec-static' scenes of chronicity might be the time and space when and where artistic research places its efforts.

# V
## VIOLENCE

# W
### 'WOW!'ING (INSTEAD OF PEER-REVIEWING)
José Muñoz reminds us of Andy Warhol's fondness for making speech acts such as 'Gee' and 'Wow.' He argues that Warhol's utterances, as well as poet Frank O'Hara's writings, which are saturated with feelings of fun and appreciation, produce a mode of utopian feeling and of hope's methodology (Muñoz 2009, 5) and he connects their work to what Bloch describes as 'astonished contemplation.' Muñoz states that the anticipatory illumination of certain people and objects produces potentiality, which is 'open, indeterminate, like the affective contours of hope itself' (ibid. 7).

# X
## XCELLENCE

# Y
## YIELDING
profit through research applications, while losing control...

# Z
## ZERO
...and always start from zero.

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# FAQ
Mika Elo

Most questions prepare the terrain for their potential answers, but sometimes one is lucky enough to come up with a question that points at something unforeseen, at a tiny spark of contingency, at an inconspicuous spot where an unknown future nests so eloquently that we cannot but start tracing it in the midst of everything. A future that already has passed without any fuss? Perhaps. This kind of question bothers. How could it emerge in the first place?

Cats are said to have seven or nine lives. How many futures does artistic research have? At least there are multiple arts and a whole array of research traditions to lean on. University faculties change their names on regular basis, and when bureaucrats start to feel cosy in an institution, some free thinkers walk out and give reasons for new ones. If combinatorics plays any role in history, we should be safe. There are enough loose ends, enough starting points for many kinds of artist-researchers to come. Perhaps the utopian moment of artistic research resides in the hope that 'normal institutions' have similar

fate as 'normal sciences' in the Kuhnian schema of scientific revolutions.

I consider artistic research practices a nascent set of cultural techniques, that is, operative processes of reproducing, handing down and passing on whatever remains of life: traces, patterns, artefacts. They are processes of differentiation. This abstract characterization of artistic research practices remains rather generic, since what difference does a difference make without some kind of relational setting? In more binding terms, however, artistic research practices show a peculiarity not limited to any specific context: they are transformative, which means that they deliberately touch upon their own opacity.

Instead of being means to an end – that is how functional, or 'transparent,' cultural techniques conceive themselves – artistic research practices problematize the relation between means and ends. In this respect, they are intimately related to the arts. But unlike artistic work that still can find its end in its own unfolding circles and in the safe havens of art worlds, artistic research is driven somewhere else: into the contested space of cultural activity and negotiation where a self-contained artwork does not work anymore; and there is nothing heroic about this impasse.

From a symptomatic point of view, this kind of deliberately dysfunctional set of cultural techniques can be seen as a syndrome. Analogically to medical uses of the word 'syndrome,' *artistic research syndrome* (why not call it *ars* from now on, and thus give a new future to an old name?) is a cultural condition characterized by a set of loosely associated symptoms that all relate to displacement of sense. Artistic research practices devote a great deal of time and effort to effectuating shifts in the cultural hierarchies of sense in every sense of the word 'sense'. *Ars* is a constellation of symptoms indicating a crisis of theory-driven models of research and the revival of pragmatogonic research settings. It is signalling the radical relativisation of human-centred conceptions of world and the recognition of non-human agencies. It provokes the recognition of previously underestimated forms of cognition. It holds sway in the neuralgic points of today's economies and ecologies of knowledge.

Let me note that the terms 'symptom' and 'syndrome' do not refer here to any features that might be viewed as pathological. Rather, they signal that the 'issue' or epistemological core of artistic research is not fixed – some even say it is empty – and appears only indirectly at the intersections or boundaries of different contexts. Furthermore, the symptoms highlighted here point at the successive recognition of medial embeddedness of what in the discussions around artistic research is under the pressure of neo-liberal knowledge economy often called 'knowledge

production'. In fact, a symptom is a rather unproductive form of knowledge, and its 'issue,' whether unfixed or empty, might be enjoyment instead of knowledge.

We have already seen the future where 'artistic research' was gaining the status of an overarching label referring to various research activities within the arts and art universities. In its broadest sense, the label now refers to a wide range of research activities and approaches for which the arts do not constitute the object of study but rather the practical and methodological terrain of research. Often when the term is used in reference to a field of research with specific methodologies, it is seen as an emerging discipline.

I prefer shifting the focus from questions of disciplinarity to dispositions beyond the logic of representation. This implies considering artistic research a transpositional or transformative frame rather than a discipline. Here, a shift in the vocabulary is needed, since 'artistic research' is a problematic notion. In my view, the problem lies in the qualifier 'artistic' and its implied counterpart that is twofold: 'scientific/academic'. The key issue is not whether a research is 'artistic' enough to qualify as *artistic* research or 'scientific/academic' enough to count as artistic *research*. Supporters of this kind of view end up reproducing normative conceptions of both art and research.

The real question is how to conceive a frame where multiple forms of inventive processes fostered in the arts can be recognized, discussed, evaluated, published and developed further in terms of research. We need to divert our reading of the term from its disciplinary connections to the sphere of its dispositional surplus: the commitment to transform 'knowledge production' into a space of thinking beyond frequently asked questions.

The 'futurist' (or should I say 'futuronaut'?) in me emphasises that it is necessarily a question of *multiple* forms of research, not only because there are multiple arts, and not only because different artistic research projects might recognise a vast range of motivations behind themselves, but also due to the transpositional character of the whole constellation that I call *ars*. The very horizon of boundaries to be negotiated, tested, and contested is an effect of differential distribution, and thus embedded in multiplicity.

This complicates the question of 'open access' to whatever is recognized as research outcome. How to make multiplicity accessible? How to define the entry points? Build walls to mark the doors and portals? Open Windows? Equalise all publishers? Put everything online? Cultivate the offline spaces, perhaps even spaces between the lines? Lots of questions, but one thing is sure: whenever you find a peer, you're on the track and need to start rephrasing the FAQ.

# SEVEN ANSWERS
Julian Klein

### THE SITUATION OF THE FIELD

Artistic Research can continue to contribute to answering urgent questions whenever the artistic mode is able to add something to the common discourse, or even is irreducibly necessary in addressing questions like: How do we understand each other across perspectives, cultures, and traditions? How can we reach an understanding between different worldviews? What other perspectives are imaginable? How can we understand phenomena that are somehow incomprehensible to our imagination?

### NEW METHODOLOGIES AND GENERATIONS

In my perspective, the motivations for interdisciplinary research, including but not limited to artistic research, are still developing. A central focus of the past years was the consideration whether or not artistic practice as such can be seen as research. But this question does not cover the entire domain: another approach could be the question when and at which points other forms of research can and do become artistic. This can certainly include

traditional standardized kinds of scientific or scholarly research, while employing artistic ways of investigation, as well as more recently developed forms of direct and personal collaboration between scholarly, scientific, and artistic disciplines.

A frequently asked question about interdisciplinary collaborations might be whether the scholarly and scientific disciplines are able to profit from the cooperation at all. The frequency with which this line of questioning surfaces might be seen as hinting for a sort of basic scepticism. In my experience, there can be no doubt that, in principle, all participants can profit from an interdisciplinary collaboration. However, if such an endeavour shall be conducted with success, it is normally necessary to spend enough time, resources, and motivation to get to the point where real interdisciplinarity can start to happen, which is often difficult to achieve. This might be one reason why, in the view of the sceptics, the benefits for other disciplines in artistic collaboration are so rarely observed. But I am convinced that it is worth investing in such collaborations, and do hope that I have already shown some examples for this argument in my portfolio. Therefore, I am equally convinced that the trust in interdisciplinary cooperation between artistic and non-artistic disciplines will certainly increase with the growing amount of experiences and documented projects of good

interdisciplinary practice. This will also lead to a revaluation of the realm of artistic ways of researching, which in my view appears to be much wider than what is done within the context of academic art education and art production alone.

## CONCEPTS

As long as the term 'knowledge' includes also non-declarative, implicit and experiential forms of knowledge, I don't see any need to replace it by another term. The core motivation of undertaking research is professional curiosity and the striving for increasing knowledge, even if the gain of insight is often more a matter of coincidences and being able to leave room for chance. The motivation for knowledge is exactly what distinguishes artistic research from other reasons for producing art. If the artistic research community dropped the claim of intending to contribute to shared and common forms of knowledge, it would lose its foundation as a serious field of research.

## ECONOMY

In my opinion artistic research, just like any other basic research, should not or cannot be related to the market at all. In most cases, there are no directly applicable, marketable products or results besides insights and

knowledge. Neither scholarly nor scientific basic research would be expected to be marketable. So why should it be the case with artistic research?

### PEER REVIEW

This is exactly what the community around the Journal for Artistic Research is trying to do: to develop a mode of assessment that is driven by artistic motivation, means and discourses, rather than by external criteria. The idea is not to import or imitate the disadvantages of the scientific system, but rather to create proposals of a supportive, enriching, and diversifying artistic discourse. In the peer review for the Journal we also include non-academic forms of criticism and commenting. The main aim of this peer review is to enhance the interconnection within the research community and to foster a professional discourse around relevant research topics.

### DOCTORAL PROGRAMMES

In an ideal world, a PhD programme should educate and enable students to undertake research after their degree. If anything, it should not be misused for purposes only loosely related to research, such as reflecting upon a specific artistic practice or developing artistic production methods. Additionally, a PhD degree should particularly function as a qualification to research, like

an admission ticket to a professional occupation in the research community. In short: Artists do not need a PhD, but researchers do. Looking at my own research, which is mostly based on interdisciplinary collaboration, research on PhD level should (at least also) provide the possibility of being integrated in team-based collaborative research, rather than being restricted to individual, solitary projects, bearing the danger of solipsism. A PhD programme should in any case be able to answer the question of what kind of profession it is educating its participants for. If there is no developed field, funding opportunities, nor support for 'postdoc' or 'senior' artistic research, a PhD programme is somehow missing its legitimation.

### THE FUTURES OF ART

I think we should remain careful not to confound artistic research with the whole realm of art. In my understanding, artistic research is first of all research, and only in the second place qualified as being artistic in one way or the other. Therefore, the question of whether research can contribute to the future of art is a very difficult one. I have the feeling that in the future the different kinds of art will diversify and specify even further, with artistic research still being only one of the various ways of conducting artistic work. At the same time, I am deeply convinced that

artistic research can and will contribute to the futures of research. And I hope that it will earn more and more acceptance and interdisciplinary respect within the whole research community.

# EXHIBITIONARY PRACTICES AT THE INTERSECTION OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH AND PUBLIC DISPLAY

Joasia Krysa

This text responds to the situation of the field of Artistic Research by drawing attention to the recent shift of discussions towards curating, and more specifically exhibition making, in terms of research practices. The intention is to reflect on the current transformation of contemporary exhibitionary practices and point to an understanding of exhibitionary formats as forms of critical inquiry and knowledge production. The question becomes how exhibition research might advance more general thinking about research as a way of addressing urgent questions, and what makes exhibition research a distinctive proposition? Thinking about curating in terms of research would seem not only to have the potential to facilitate non-regulated relations between human subjects but also to demonstrate the potential for new epistemological and ontological insights into subject-object relations more broadly.

In their edited book *Curating Research* (2014), Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson describe two modes of research through curating: 'researching within the exhibition-making' and 'exhibition as a research action itself' (O'Neill and Wilson 2014). Expanding on the latter, Simon Sheikh writes:

> *The curatorial project – including its most dominant form, the exhibition – should thus not only be thought of as a form of mediation of research but also as a site for carrying out this research, as a place for enacted research. Research here is not only that which comes before realisation but also that which is realised throughout actualisation. That which would otherwise be thought of as formal means of transmitting knowledge – such as design structures, display models and perceptual experiments – is here an integral part of the curatorial mode of address, its content production, its proposition.* (Sheikh 2014.)

Developing this further, to position *exhibition as research* would further necessitate consideration of the various contexts in which exhibition making takes place and the impact on how the meanings are produced. One such scenario is to situate exhibitionary practices at the intersection of academic research and public display, for instance by placing exhibition spaces in academic institutions where research naturally takes place. However, this is not new and there is a wealth of historical and contemporary examples of 'university galleries' one could point to.[1] A more recent phenomenon is emerging though, where such spaces are not only linked or explicitly located in academic institutions but also become more closely linked to external cultural institutions, often through more formalised partnerships, offering an interesting model of research, knowledge production and transmission.

One such example I can introduce to the discussion is the Exhibition Research Lab (ERL), an academic research centre and a public exhibition venue founded as part of Liverpool John Moores University's School of Art and Design in 2012.[2] What is perhaps distinctive about ERL is that underpinned by so called collaborative posts held by staff with key cultural institutions in the city - Tate Liverpool, Liverpool Biennial, FACT (Foundation for Art and Creative Technology), and RIBA North (The Royal Institute of British Architects). The establishment

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1      In the UK alone there is a rapidly increasing number of exhibition venues attached to HEs, some organised as part of the specialist professional networks such as CHEAD (The Council for Higher Education in Art & Design) Gallery Network: http://chead.ac.uk/become-a-member/gallery-network/

2      Exhibition Research Lab: https://www.ljmu.ac.uk/research/centres-and-institutes/art-labs/expertise/exhibition-research-lab

of such a partnership model involves embedding academic posts in arts organisations, with their time and research activities shared between both academic and cultural institution. The intention is to develop a dynamic approach to applied research, in which the work becomes the context for post holders own practice-based research. The specific research is applied to the programmes of cultural institutions, impacting upon their practice. At the same time, the practice based activities generated by post holders in cultural institutions feed in turn into the overall research of the academic institution, as well as generate public engagement programme for the ERL's exhibition venue.

This way of thinking about curatorial knowledge production and exchange, which operates as a circular model not dissimilar to what cyberneticians would describe as an open system feedback loop model, also points to the possibility of reconfiguring the traditional ways of thinking about the public exhibition space, or a gallery, as a site of public display of exhibitions/objects towards the idea of a more dynamic and transformational space where experimentation can take place. Situating exhibitionary practices at the intersection of academic research and public display thus expands the traditional remit of a gallery – as the privileged site for staging exhibitions or pedagogical resource – to the idea of a 'lab' where experimental

thinking and making can take place and where artistic and curatorial knowledge is enacted, produced, and made public.

In this scenario, curators become involved in the delivery of activities as forms of knowledge which may not necessarily produce exhibitions as objects for public display in a traditional sense, becoming additionally a researcher and educator involved in both knowledge production and public participation strategies. Practice is not dedicated to an exhibition as object-making activity per se, but rather to a dynamic process of asking questions and setting up frameworks for experimentation and dissemination of curatorial thinking in non-propositional forms. In this sense, if indeed this is a lab of sorts where research is undertaken, it is one where artistic, not strictly scientific, experimentation takes place.

When applied to science disciplines in general, the lab is understood as a neutral space where repeatable and measurable experiments can be performed, but of course they are not neutral spaces at all. As we know from cultural approaches to science (e.g. the writings of Bruno Latour) scientific and technological research is socially constructed, imbued with creativity and critical comment like any other cultural activity such as art. In his book *Science as Action* (published in English in 1988), Latour argues that persons, organisations, funders, and materials

combine to shape scientific theory. He develops the methodological statement that science and technology must be studied 'in action', or 'in the making.' (Latour, 1988.)

With the now commonplace tendency to refer to 'labs' in the context of the arts, art historian James Elkins has called for a close study of the 'artroom', 'studio', or 'gallery' in parallel to the science lab (cited in Holert 2009). This can be extended to the exhibition as a specific set of material practices and lead to thinking about the ambiguous meaning of experimentation more closely. And if science tends towards proving or falsifying something (through repeatable experiments) then how might we characterise artistic experimentation as a more speculative endeavour? From the arts, there is a general emphasis on work in progress; open–ended rather than prescriptive modes; means and process rather than ends or end-products; not simply the logic of cause and effect, but rather following different kinds of methodologies that expose the material-discursive conditions through which exhibitions are produced and make meaning.

In considering the more specific forms this could take and advancing possible future models that take into consideration the spatial-temporal context where and how this takes place, one might ask: What happens to our understanding of research, exhibition, and lab practices when we draw them together? What might it mean

to curate and/or research in a non-propositional way? To what extent can an exhibition simultaneously be conceptualised as a research lab, and to what effects? How does this change our understanding of an experiment, of non-hypothesis driven research forms? Furthermore (and this is my own specific research interest), if technology is introduced in the curatorial process, how does this remediate social relations? Furthermore, what new collaborative modes of curatorial production are to be imagined that involve non-human, machinic/algorithmic processes and agencies? Do we need human subjects at all to curate or indeed to carry out research?

The exhibition lab would in this way seem to acknowledge itself as a complex site of mediation where theory and practice come together and phenomena are excavated or constructed for their underlying discursive and non-discursive layers. This indicates the potential of curating as a research action itself, where the relations between curator, exhibition, and the social context in which it takes place can be seen to be an active site of knowledge production. What is then proposed is not the result of the curatorial or research process but the proposition that curating is research in itself, where questions are not answered but recombined in the very act of making.

## Literature

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Florian Dombois

# <FLORIAN.DOMBOIS@ZHDK.CH> KIRJOITTI 17.6.2017 12.04:

Dear Anita, Jan and Henk,

Thank you very much for the invitation to contribute to your anthology 'The Futures of Artistic Research'! I feel flattered, even though I don't know how to respond. I am – to put it mildly – not happy with the term 'artistic research' and I try to avoid it wherever I can. I am therefore not sure if I could or should contribute to the 'future of it'. And, boy am I glad that you didn't call it the 'Artistic Research Pavilion'!

Research, research.

I think – and I am sure we agree on this – that we should be allowed to do research in the arts and thus have the right to define our own research concept, as in all other disciplines. '*Research* and *science* are generally used synonymously', I wrote back in 2006. At that time, I already insisted that *the separation of 'research' and 'science', which are usually equated,* is the necessary pre-

requisite for being able to develop a distinctive artistic approach to 'research' to begin with (Dombois: 'Kunst als Forschung. Ein Versuch, sich selbst eine Anleitung zu entwerfen', in Hochschule der Künste Bern (ed.): *HKB|HEAB 2006*, Bern 2006, pp. 23-31, transl. 'Art as Research. An attempt to draft some instructions for myself'). The expression 'artistic research', as it is used today, does not make this difference clear. In the discussion on the topic, I still feel there is far too much influence from the sciences. And as long as this reference is not decoupled, I do not want to use or work with this term any more.

For there is a very important difference between (1) an intellectual game whereby art is compared with scientific research, something I always termed 'art as research', and (2) the question of specific research projects at art universities, which I would call 'research in and for the arts'. The second only makes sense, in my opinion, if this research is *not* measured using scientific standards! In other words, if one does not keep the two interpretations of the concept of research apart, one gets confused. And today there are quite a few winners resulting from the confusion caused by this double meaning of 'artistic research', and they are mostly non-artists.

This is apparent from two conclusions that are currently drawn:

I see, for example, those who want to establish *'artistic research' as a proper discipline*. Today, there are courses, further training, and even master's programmes, as in Den Haag, which are called that. In my view, many of these players are essentially interested in disciplining art and attempting to introduce nameable and comprehensible methods, applying quality criteria and standards to make the monster art negotiable and evaluable, in order 'at last' to offer an education that leads to a predictable result.

But who tames art loses it. I firmly believe that if education in art is carried out as dissemination of knowledge and expertise it is bound to fail. Even if our Bologna bureaucrats can't bear the thought: art universities must be and remain free spaces in which e.g. alternatives to the existing social order can be invented and experimented with. These are realms in which something predictable *should not* happen, out of principle.

There is also a second, logical reason why 'artistic research' is nonsensical as a separate discipline. For if artistic research does not mean 'a new kind of art oriented to science', but rather research in and for art, it is absurd

to regard it as a new discipline as opposed to art. This would be like wanting to establish 'mathematical research' as a new discipline alongside mathematics. Research is one aspect of a discipline and not a distinct discipline. That is to say, research in the arts, too, must necessarily be conceived as being part of art.

That's why I speak of confusion. The intellectual game of 'art as research' challenges art to develop, to move, by confronting it with the sciences. But one should not try to dupe art with it.

As a second group, I see those *who use 'artistic research' to demonstrate that art can be used for knowledge production.* With admirable perseverance, they show that art works and artistic projects contribute to our 'knowledge society'. That may sound harmless, but it is not. For instead of acknowledging the value of art as something fundamentally different, art is integrated into the general scheme of utility and thus legitimized as purposeful in the production processes of society. Wrongly, research is used here to justify art whose uselessness, which can scarcely be endured by anyone, is so important precisely for this reason.

And isn't that an absurd statement: 'Art is important because it does research?' Shouldn't it be, if anything at all: 'Art is important. And therefore it can do research?' If we take a look at today's research funding, we see that it does not finance different disciplines to legitimize them, but vice versa: because the disciplines are legitimate they receive research financing.

Furthermore I am bothered by the perspective of this negotiation, which in the end views 'artistic research' from the point of view of 'reception.' Naturally, when we view art we can learn something. But should artists now make art that teaches us something? Or to put it differently: when I am working specifically on a work of art, I never think about knowledge, I do not try to communicate anything, and I do not want to inform or instruct. On the contrary, I can only successfully create a work when I have forgotten, when I do not know how, when I do not know anything! But to claim that the work has to produce and represent knowledge means massively intervening in the production process. Do we really want this, to put art production under the postulate of cognition and knowledge? This contradicts all experience how good works are created in the present or were created in the past. Or do you know any masterpieces that achieved this status because the artist wanted to teach the audience something? When something becomes very popular – and artistic research is incredibly popular – we have to ask who actually

benefits from it. When I observe which projects of Swiss art universities are funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation, I see that it is projects that serve the sort of 'knowledge production' that primarily benefits the humanities. In other words, if I really want a project to receive research funding (and tellingly our projects are negotiated in the humanities department and the research counsellors for art and for art history form a joint expert committee...), I have to build an academic shell around my artistic practice. And if I can subsequently show that the academic output is stimulated and improved thanks to my artistic practice, I receive funding. However, results that advance the arts themselves do not play a role. And the ignorance and arrogance with which this stance is taken vis-à-vis the arts takes our breath away.

We do not need 'artistic research' as a discipline, and we do not need art that claims to be knowledge production! When we set up research activities at art universities, rather, we need research that is in and for the arts. We need an alternative sphere to the art market (which, as is well known, is dominated in large part by non-artists) in order to develop the arts from the perspective of artists. Art universities can, beyond galleries, museums and off spaces, enable a new intellectual and developmental space in which artists of all levels of experience

and success can meet, divorced from financial or attention-economical interests, and exchange ideas, initiate new movements, open up different imaginative spaces. That is what truly interests me regarding 'research' at an art university.

Some of your questions will be addressed in the 'Palaver' sessions during my upcoming show for which you invited me to the Research Pavilion (e.g.: 22 July: 'How to share, how to challenge artistic practice and production?'; 29 July: 'How might artists collaborate with researchers from the natural and human sciences?'; 5 August: 'How does something become art?'; 12 August: 'How can art universities support artists and the arts in general?'). I am not sure whether I can formulate the answers in an essay before the actual events. Or in such a short time. I need to concentrate. I need to work. I prefer to simply start making things happen.

I apologize for refusing to write something. What to do with the text in your book? I don't know.

Yesterday Helmut Kohl, the former German Federal Chancellor, died. And an acquaintance of mine, who is half a decade younger than me, was rushed to the hospital with a stroke. Today in Bern the sky is incredibly blue

and there is a slight breeze. The river, whose temperature dropped several degrees yesterday within a period of just a few hours, is warming up again. Seven swifts with the edges of their wings shining white against the light of the sun are flying right above my head, silently, without making one of their striking cries.

All the best to all three of you

Florian

> Am 22.02.2017 um 11:15 schrieb Seppä Anita <anita.seppa@uniarts.fi>:
>
> Dear Florian,
>
> We are pleased to invite you to contribute to the anthology *The Futures of Artistic Research* we (Jan Kaila, Anita Seppä and Henk Slager) are co-editing. The publication is intended to shed light on the actual significance and future possibilities of the experimental critiques that are emerging across the field of artistic research.
>
> *The Futures of Research* will be published in October 2017 in Venice by the University of the Arts Helsin-ki (Academy of Fine Arts), and it is planned to start a new publication series (Venice Proceedings) that will be thematically connected to the actually existing Research Pavilion that University of the Arts Helsinki hosts for the second time in Venice during the summer 2017.
>
> Please find enclosed a more detailed description of the book.
>
> We very much hope that you would feel able to respond positively to our invitation, and look forward to hearing from you.

> Kind regards,
> Anita, Jan and Henk
>
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# FLYING BACKWARDS INTO THE FUTURE

**Maiju Loukola**

Artistic research is an imaginary practice that can bring unforeseen views into public debate by speaking languages that 'deconstruct both the edifice of art and of life', as we may formulate following the words of the French critical theorist, philosopher Jacques Rancière, who describes Friedrich Schiller's 'play drive' (*Spieltraub*) at work in reinventing the world *in* art (Rancière 2014, 116). Throughout its existence in academic context, artistic research has connected art with the world and its everydayness in multiple ways. The future of artistic research seems increasingly related to more direct participation in social and political processes, partly as a response to the profit orientated tendencies that have infiltrated into the space of the higher education in arts and humanities. The rhetoric of 'creative economies' infect the arts not only linguistically but also through slipping in measuring techniques that serve the tenets of neoliberal ideologies, fundamentally alien to the 'matters of facts' in arts. 'Measure' itself can be seen as a

politico-economical category, but also as a significant part of artistic procedures – for example regarding the spatial and temporal organisation according to which artworks or performances and their related contexts are rhythmically arranged.

## TEMPORAL DISCIPLINE

I sketch two approaches that to my mind persistently exemplify something particularly characteristic for artistic research – and its future. First, I argue that artistic research is fundamentally a temporal practice. Here I lean on Walter Benjamin's critique on the universalism of knowledge, which he challenges by emphasizing the connectedness of intuition and understanding through temporality that appears as singular occurrences, but which are inevitably bound to their correspondence with historical events. Secondly, I present two examples of methodical approaches, which I would like to call solemnly citational orientations.

Artistic research focuses on singular events and is thus fundamentally tied with temporality. Unique moments of 'something' emerge through action, movement and gesture, usually reflected and documented in some way. A 'document' is undoubtedly at the heart of any research, but in artistic research the focus turns even more to the 'event' that brings the 'document' about.

Benjamin's extensive archive of thought offers useful links for piecing together some of the contact points relevant in artistic research – those that emerge between (aesthetic) experience, time, and the epistemic things that often constitute passages to knowledge. Benjamin highlights the singularity and simultaneity of our insights and recognition in the processes of knowing or understanding; the significance of a present moment is conceived as an opening which gives way for the correspondence between the moment of *Now* and the past (Benjamin 2007, 261, XIV). This citational bond between past and all other moments constitutes a messianic temporality that entails all times and shines on every single experience, emerging meaning, comprehension, and sense of 'this here'. Artistic research in its most contemporary forms may be heavily linked to things, objects, and writings hundreds of years old, and still shine as timely if not futuristic.

As we do our artistic acts, these layered messianic moments appear through interruption as recognition or awareness, and suspend our sense of a unique something that is cooking. As far as I am concerned, artistic research is about arranging scenes for bringing together different material and nonmaterial elements with some kind of purpose in mind – intuitive will, a desire towards, a will to test and find out, to see what happens and what might offer itself to be explored as the process evolves.

It is about discerning the things we see, hear, and are in touch with. As if letting the left-hand guide certain materialities into specific kind of 'action', while letting the right-hand listen, or at most, interfere with the process, whatever lead the material may instruct us to follow.

## CREATIONS THAT CREATE

It is vital to recognize different modes of practicing research – artistic, theoretical, contextual, methodical – and nurture, judge, and challenge them according to their own merits. It seems quite imperative to identify particular phenomena in relation to their many 'proper' contexts, for they too travel in time. In order to remediate our ways of *seeing* things, the ability for 'utopian access' by the way of topsy-turvying the prevailing categories and orders in terms of their virtual potential, their '–*abilities capacity*', permits potential passages to the 'rationality' of any worldly phenomenon, each of which is unique and of its own kind.

The idea behind the very common saying 'sometimes you have to travel far in order to see what is near' shines in many ways in the multi-, trans-, and cross-disciplinary takes of the field. New materialism and post-humanistic approach have offered new contact points between arts and sciences, and areas such as bio-art have entered the scene of artistic research with notable force. Pairing up

the scientific formula of 'descriptive modelling' through 'repetition of the same' *versus* the approach more inherent to artistic research of 'research through doing' and 'repeating with differences' does provide a useful alien partnership for potential try-outs of accessibility via foreign territories.

One of the recent illuminative examples of disciplinary turn-overs is artist-researcher Tuula Närhinen's doctoral work in which she dealt with natural phenomena 'too familiar for us to see' and built gadgets that make waves and rain draw: her apparatuses can produce images in collaboration with waves of the sea, rain, and beats of bird wings too fast for a human eye to recognize. Her *Wavetracer* gadget transforms changes in water pressure into patterns that resemble writing. Närhinen has brought the methods of experimental natural sciences into the core of her artistic research practice (Närhinen 2016). In Närhinen's case, the materiality of natural phenomena becomes not only visible but very clearly comprehensible, tangible even.

Kant's much quoted phrase 'intuitions without concepts are blind' (Kant 1929, A51, B76) seems accurate, even though the emphasis towards the production, use, and materiality of 'epistemic things' emerging in arts is conceived with ever more alien partners. Keeping uncle Immanuel's dictum in mind, I like to think that artistic

research enables new passages into many kinds of yet unknown *blind*nesses. It is not about looking for some pre-existing hidden truths but rather about a shifting of perspectives and creating the world anew.

The other example comes from close by: a recent project that I'm involved in is a collective and procedural work that started as an educational project, and results, among other things, in a multi-screen moving image installation.[1] The project was inspired by '*Out 1–Noli Me tangere*', an enigmatic film by Jacques Rivette rarely shown in movie theatres since its completion in 1971. It is a 775-minute gigantic creature made up of absurd elements and fragmentary scenes, with references including Balzac's texts and conspiracy theories, political atmosphere of 'post May 1968' France, and scenes with an experimental theatre group rehearsing and discussing two plays by Aeschylos. It is described as a dreamlike – and also nightmare-like – image of a certain time. *Out 2*, being realised during 2016–2017, explores the correspondences between two separate points of historical and cultural contexts. Our central question is: 'where are we now?' – at a certain (this) time, in certain socio-culturo-political situation, in this particular econo-ethnico-geographical position, as

experienced by a certain art school community. Going nowhere near the 'end result' in more detail, I will conclude with some notions of collectivity as a methodological stance with this particular project in mind.

The source of inspiration for the project includes several correspondences with an idea of 'secret service' or an 'agency of conspiracy'. One of the reference points that has come to my mind is a French capitalism-critical group of anonymous authors called 'Invisible Committee' (*Comitè Invisible*)[2], who were inspired among other things by Gillez Deleuze's writings on resistance, change, and nomadic subjectivity. As I see it, in the *Out 2* group we follow a logic of a collective authorship with a multitude of nomadic subjectivities and work procedurally towards an un-known end result through treasuring the premise of an inalienable equality. As we commit to equality as the basis of our work, we are 'in midst of the creation of 'now''– following Rancière's idea of an *already* existing equality (as opposite to equality that is strived *for*). In the *Out 2* process, equality means the unravelling of

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1     The project is called '*Out 2*' and it is part of the Research Pavilion #2: The Utopia of Access 'Camino Events' programme, exhibited in the pavilion 18–27 August 2017.

2     The group scripted a manifest called 'The Coming Insurrection' (*L'insurrection qui vient*) that drew a masterplan for 'imminent collapse of capitalist culture', and caused a heated debate about whether the group had been behind a recent railway sabotage. See: Comité Invisible, *L'insurrection qui vient*. Paris, La Fabrique Editions. See also the English and French versions: http://tarnac9.wordpress.com/texts/the-coming-insurrection/

individual authorship towards a shared and multivocal community. It shines on the methodical choices and on the form of the *work*. The whole process becomes channelled through an attitude that *takes the lead* over individuals, and allows multi-perspective glimpses – at times contradictory and conflicting, and at others somehow connected and allied – on 'where we are now'. That cinematic texture, a mishmash of space-time-images consisting of fragments – each of them singular in its duration, rhythm, form, style, content, light and forms – is to be continued in the viewer's experience. I like to consider *Out 2* a self-generating creature that gradually takes shape very much as its own master. In this sense, the process holds kinship with the French literary group OuLiPo (*Ouvroir de Littérature Potentielle),* who aimed at 'creations that create' (Mathews and Brotchie, 2005).[3]

Whether the methodical and contextual affiliations stem from arts, philosophy, engineering, honeybee ecosystem, mathematics, fairytales, or genetics, there seem to be certain techniques perpetually relevant regardless of the methodo-contextual framing. Any artistic research

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3    An essential difference between the methods used in *Out 2* and those developed by OuLiPo is that in *Out 2* we specifically wanted to treasure individual *freedom* within the collective mindset – whereas for 'OuLiPians', who navigated along strict rules, shared agreements, and systemic structures developed e.g. from algorithms, *freedom* stands for no more than a 'sheer illusion of liberty'.

does its core handiwork by and through elements of time and transition – rhythmic, repetitious, transformational, moving, distancing, differentiating, documenting, deconstructing, demarcating. Painting, drawing, reading, writing, singing, playing, performing, sculpting, building.

The manifestations, definitions and relations of art, society, and politics will need to be turned over time and again, for as the non-disciplinary discipline keeps on building up its unforeseen scenes, the currency in arts, sciences, humanities, and world no longer applies as 'same'. Artistic research covers an incredibly diverse and multisectoral territory of orientations, methodologies, and experimental practices. The core challenge in artistic research is, to my mind, as valid and pressing today as it was twenty years ago: making 'tacit' more 'explicit'. What remains the crucial challenge of the untamed 'discipline', is that artistic research is deeply tied to art making but art making is not to be made its *object* of examination.

*Playdrive* as its driving force. *Acts* as its arenas of emerging. *Abilities* through which to consider its potential. *Artistic research* in the tiniest possible nutshell?

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# ONCE AGAIN...
# WHAT IS ARTISTIC RESEARCH?
## (Questions: The situation of the field and Concepts)
### Lars Hallnäs

What is artistic research? It seems that this is a question considered to be somewhat old and a bit unnecessary to ask once again now. In addition to having already been discussed at length, it might seem that the question is a purely 'philosophical' one with little relevance for the practice and politics of artistic research and that it is time to move on for a change.

As 'artistic research' was in the process of establishing itself as a field of academic research it was natural to ask what this research is all about. It is in a sense a new member of the academic research family and needed to introduce itself to the other members of the family. There was also the need for discussions on directions, defining the new research programs, mapping out the sub fields, and sorting out all sorts of ideological matters. (Biggs and Karlsson 2011.)

I believe this is a discussion that is still much needed, as the mystical aura around artistic research still persists.

Looking at the ongoing practice of, and discussions on, artistic research, there are two rather different cultures that emerge:

(A) Artistic research as artistic ways of doing research, i.e. the artist as researcher.

(B) Artistic research as ways of developing artistic practice, i.e. a long tradition of artistic development work.

(A) has clear methodological implications: there are scientific ways of doing research and there are artistic ways of doing research. (B) on the other hand, defines artistic research more or less as just another field, a branch of research.

It is in the discourse related to (A) that we often hear that artistic research is something new, a new way of working in research. (B) on the other hand, relates to what we sometimes call 'artistic development work', and explicitly emphasizes that it builds on a very, very long tradition in the arts.

Following (B) the question 'what is artistic research?' is perhaps not that essential, a somewhat naïve and intuitive understanding would certainly have been a good enough foundation for practical research work. But (A) introduces a distinction between 'artistic research' and 'scientific research' that somehow makes it necessary to discuss the meaning of artistic practice as a basic methodology for research. What does it mean, is it a parallel universe of research we introduce – artistic sociology, artistic physics – or what is it all about?

There is something mystical about artistic research in the form of (A), where we somehow 'produce knowledge' by artistic methods. Is it knowledge about different things or in a different way?

As experimental research, artistic research has much more affinity with engineering science, mathematics and even clinical medical research than with the humanities and the social sciences. The relationship between the humanities and the social sciences and artistic research is rather problematic. In terms of (A) artistic research could be understood as an alternative methodology for these areas of research. If so, why talk about artistic research as if it is an area of research in its own right, when it in fact is understood as methodology within given areas of research?

In terms of (B), even if there are many bridges connecting artistic research and the humanities, the research methodology and, more importantly, the nature of results are fundamentally different. In the humanities and the

social sciences, we study given things, while in artistic research we develop practice. Obviously, we develop research practice within all areas of research, but that is not what this difference is all about.

In academia, art is a faculty binding together a collection of subject areas, i.e. music, visual arts, design, literary composition, dance, theatre etc., where research is done to develop the practice of these subject areas. In that sense, artistic research has always been around and the present process of introducing artistic research into the family of academic research areas is not so much about initiating a new area of research as it is about acknowledging research that has always been there but not recognized as such.

When we in terms of (A) talk about knowledge production we go even further astray.

'Knowledge production' paints a picture of the university as a factory for producing facts that can be ordered and delivered as well as designed and produced just like any other product. This is the kind of management discourse that tries to turn research into something that it is not, i.e. production.

The idea that research is knowledge production of some kind is rather strange in case of research in general, and perhaps even more strange in the case of artistic research where the main results come in the form of methods, techniques and programmes. Not only is 'knowledge' a notion that somehow points in the wrong direction, but 'knowledge production' is furthermore a notion fundamentally alien to the nature of the research traditions in the arts. All this might seem innocent enough, but it is a notion that puts thinking and talking about artistic research on the wrong foot.

Research is all about searching, searching, and searching, and searching again. The results we bring forth are expressions of findings. Central to searching in artistic research is the experiment, and central to results in artistic research is the example that displays the expressional implications of our findings. But it is not a fundamentally 'different' form of research motivating a distinction between artistic and scientific research. This distinction may have initially helped in establishing research in the faculty of art, but will in the long run be more of a problem as it only strengthens the perception of artistic research as this other mystical thing in research. What is scientific research? It is not possible to say very much in general terms as this is a domain that is supposed to encompass everything from philosophy and theology to physics and mathematics. What is artistic research? If we answer that it is research for the development of artistic practice we find in the faculty of arts, we in my opinion give an answer that will be much more helpful than if we

try to uphold the intrinsically enigmatic distinction between artistic and scientific research.

The interesting question then is the one about the common foundations that link the various areas into a common faculty of the arts. Where is the theory coming from, where are the theoretical foundations coming from? Sometimes you can get the impression that this is something we may find in the theory of art and in philosophy, as areas of humanistic studies or in the social sciences.

Here is a big challenge for theoretical work in the area of artistic research. What is it that connects subjects in the faculty of engineering science or the faculty of medical sciences? In the first case a reasonable answer is applied mathematics and in the second case biology. If the glue that binds artistic subjects together into a faculty is aesthetics in some sense, it is not as a philosophy of art, but as a methodology of art. There is a theoretical challenge here to revisit this notion of aesthetics and to develop it further as a foundational theory.

Central to such a theory must be the logic of expression(s). What links the different areas of art and artistic practice is the foundational role the notions of form and expression play, i.e. we must revisit the notions of form and expression once again as foundations of artistic practice. Aesthetics as a logic of expression(s) deals with the development of conceptual tools that help us handle and 'see' the logic in the expressions we form in our artistic practice. This is what has always been there as an implicit or explicit theory in the different art practices, but somehow very much neglected in the Sturm und Drang of post-modernism. However, as a more general foundational theory it is a real challenge for artistic research and it defines well what theory could be all about within the field of artistic research.

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# THE OMNIPRESENCE
# OF ARCHIVAL RESEARCH
### Nikita Yinqian Cai

From 1998 to 2008, the accelerated growth of the Chinese economy precipitated consumerism into the driving force behind the construction of identities. Commodities were quickly produced and even more hastily discarded. Everyday objects, electronic devices in particular, were turned into archaeological artefacts immediately after they were introduced to the market, while one's identity was constructed by the acquisition and replacement of commercial products. As much as the global financial crisis of 2008 revealed the disastrous effects of neo-liberalism, the post-Olympics China was able to recover at once and miraculously resume double-digit GDP growth in 2010 and 2011. The proliferation of the Internet, smart phones, social media and online shopping further channelled identity into image and data; personal experiences and memories as well as systems of knowledge and history function as a database of add-ons.

In Liu Chuang's *Buying Everything On You (Guo Chunli)* (2013), Guo Chunli's 1-inch ID photos could go entirely

unnoticed, nor would anyone pay attention to cursory notes on a list of cashier duties. We intend to equate the cheap commodities with their former owner. With Guo Chunli's body gone, her identity is lost, the remains stink of time, unpalatable, but the images stay pristine forever. The physicality of Liu Chuang's collection reminds us of the pre-Internet age. Spanning more than 10 years, Liu Chuang's *Buying* series provides a direct, contextualized entry point to understanding the archival practices of Chinese artists in the decade preceding and following 2008.

Deng Xiaoping's South China tour signalled the onset of mass marketization, where individuals could 'turn to business' (*xiahai*, literally, 'going to sea') to untangle themselves from the fixed, monolithic identities attached to the state and state-owned enterprises. Official records of the life of an individual from birth to death, stored in the State Archives Administration, could no longer encompass the multiplicity of a person's identities. Many of Liu Chuang's purchases were realized at the Luohu General Talents Market in Shenzhen, the first stop for young job seekers from all over the country. For those freshly out of school and entering the job market in the late 1990s, the freedom of career self-determination was more appealing than officially assigned, lifelong occupations.

Thus, from the very beginning, the formal and material appro priation of archives by the Chinese artists was more or less a personal gesture. Their position did not have much to do with the institutional critique that called for the democratization and unsealing of historical archives. Had Liu Chuang's purchases carried on into the future, printed matter might have completely disappeared. The 'clashing realities' as described by Liu Chuang, or the extreme forms of differentiation, would be further compressed into an ever-more-compact digital network device.

Around year 2000, the archive fever that emerged in the Western Contemporary Art discourse focused on shaking up the ideological and hegemonic nature of archives and their mechanisms, thus promoting critical reflection on modernity. It was marked by the publication of Hal Foster's *The Archival Impulse* in the *October* journal (Fall 2004) and the *Archive* anthology published by White Chapel, London and MIT Press. In the post-Cold War period, 'archives for the future' and 'democratizing the archive' became the driving forces which sought to rescue archives from the field of historical research and to reactivate historical interpretation in art and curatorial practices. During that period, works by Chinese artists sharing that same impulse may not have been influenced by theoretical fever of the West, but have in large part

drawn from the artists' own personal memories and expe-riences before the 1990s, most notably after the Cultural Revolution.

Encouraged by being ideologically unleashed, some artists born in the 1960s started to realize that archival documents, which include an individual's identity and their representation in media, had been released from state control. For artists born in the mid-to-late 1970s, the collection and categorization of images, objects, and information is part of their research process. Archives, either in their material form or not, mediate the overlap and conflict of national ideology and personal identity. In the eyes of younger artists, the authority of material ar-chives has already been rendered invalid, and the Internet is now the home for most of the individual and collective memory, as well as the source for common knowledge.

Regardless of when and where they were born, these 'archive driven' artists do not only collect existing images, materials, information, documents, and footage produced by others, but also carry out processes of editing, recon-figuration, and even fictionalization. The archive – dead or alive – provides freedom for artists to move nomadically between text and image, between perceptual networks and systems of knowledge. Their passion for the archive has been charged with their obsession with affect, mate-riality, and form.

The mid-to-late 1990s also saw many Chinese art-ists turn from painting to installation and conceptual-ism. Geng Jianyi created a large body of works about forms, official documents, and polling during this peri-od of time. In *Home: Exhibition Documents* (2000), Geng Jianyi color-coded the forms in red, orange, green, and blue based on the participating artist's choice of medium. The colour index is not only a method of categorization, but also an abstraction of the specific information con-tained by each form – in other words, the 60 forms are transformed into images while the data is not.

While art historians may find it intriguing to identify the individual contributor's artistic voice as historical fact, it remains crucial to distinguish the artistic practice of transforming a collection of documents (including what we call data today) into an artwork from methodologies of academic research, such as archival research, citation, and data collection, employed in the humanities and the social sciences.

The intention to preserve trances left behind by a human or an object can also be found in Liu Chuang's *Buying* series. For younger artists born in the late 1980s and early 1990s, printed media like paper-based forms, books, photographs, and letters already bear the marks of history which become indispensable when they try to relate to the spectator and history. Despite Geng Jianyi's

effort to distance himself from political manifestation, the forms and certificates carry their historical implication into our present.

In this sense, his textual forms are not all that different from the image-based works from the same era. Zhang Dali's *A Second History* series (2005–2010), Hu Jieming's *The Remnants of Images* (2013–present) and Wang Jianwei's *My Visual Archive* (2002) are all concerned with the classification and collection of a particular kind of image – if, indeed, we consider form as a type of image. In these works, the formal qualities of the original image have been kept mostly untouched. Regardless of the artists' adaptation to more diverse media, the visual characteristics of the images stay loyal to the time they belong to.

Xu Tan's *Problem 1* (1996) created for Big Tail Elephants Group's fifth annual exhibition *Possibility* stood out particularly because of its anachronistic appropriation of image and text. By selected and edited excerpts of legal literature, philosophical texts, and images, the four-channel video functions as notepads of the artistic reflection on the legitimacy and paradoxes of L.F.L. Oppenheim's *International Law*. During the first presentation, Xu Tan hired workers to cut through a pyramid of soil in front of projected slides in the basement of Zhongguang Mansion. The ritualistic process

underscores a performative display of the artist's own comment and interpretation.

The pre-Internet, intertextual collage of image and text in *Problem 1* anticipated the post-Internet aesthetic of adopting found text and image, which might not have been what Xu Tan had expected. Xu Tan's conscious appropriation of found images and documents as visual commentary or conceptual studies inform later artistic practice as such. Archival research and presentation provides a comprehensive platform for artists to exercise complex, non-visual ideas, which is partly the reason that Xu Tan, since initiating the *Keyword* series in 2005, has drifted further away from materiality and visuality in his practice.

In response to the challenge of technological innovation to the artist's knowledge and visual repertory, Huang Xiaopeng's recent work *Knockin' on Heaven's Door* (*K.O.H.D.*) (2016) samples from source materials accumulated over 12 years – footage shot by the artist during 4 residencies; a total of 1687 videos, 989 audio files, lyrics and dialogue adding up to 34703 words; as well as work by 6 artists, 21 filmmakers, and 11 composers. The result is a 60-minute flow of moving image which demonstrates Huang's concept of 'homogenizing pixels': eliminating the historical characteristics of the original image via techniques of re-photography, blurring, re-editing, and detail

enhancement so that every fragment compresses numerous fleeting moments of the world.

Compared to a decade ago, the complexity of source materials in Huang's work suggests the disappearance of archival material stored in printed or optical media, and the proliferation of second-hand footage which is not just accessible to the artists but to all video amateurs as well. Huang positions himself as an organ or a biological database perpetually generating commentary on the never-ending flow of images. The mistranslated and dislocated subtitles highlight the illegibility of image/text, just as the indecipherable algorithms to regular Internet users. As images and time stamps are ranked by search engines according to 'big data' and 'relevancy' at warp speed, the artist has produced a perplexing contemporary epic in black and white.

Compared to video and installation, the 'crisis of the proletarianization' triggered by information technology seems to be less threatening in the area of painting. Painting as a master skill can only be acquired by years of practice. When Cézanne famously claimed that 'one cannot see what he cannot paint', Didi-Huberman responded by reaffirming the paradox of 'knowing without seeing or seeing without knowing.' Yet the cognitive sequence of 'painting-seeing-knowing' is all disturbed in the age of open source knowledge, as every new painting is automatically taken as a referential footnote of art history. For painter like Duan Jianyu, the question of 'Is it possible to continue painting without knowing the history of painting?' became pressing.

By introducing fictional narratives within and beyond the canvas, the subjective voice of the artist takes over the objective commentary of professional critics. In 2002, Duan Jianyu wrote a short novel 'A Document Which Has Just Been Discovered,' which corresponds to a set of five oils on canvas titled *Schnabel: Vulgar Scenery of China*. The text recounts the American painter Julian Schnabel, who went to the Danxia Mountains in the 1980s to do life drawings and consequently lost a group of paintings, which the narrator of the novel has discovered and carefully conserved. In the voice of the narrator, Duan introduces key concepts in the history of Chinese painting such as 'immersing oneself in life,' 'China Artists Association,' 'exoticism,' 'plum blossom, orchids, chrysanthemums and bamboos' 'grape-picking Uyghur girls,' 'Soviet style,' and 'Leitmotif art.' The fictional story provides viewers with hints about how they may interpret the paintings. By presenting their own comments on visual history as well as offering visual interpretation of history in general, artists constantly slide between the narratives of 'professional, connoisseur and amateur' when confronting the online art database.

In the narrative of the final book in The *Three-body Problem* novel, the federal government faces times that present a serious threat to human civilization and seeks to construct a Museum of Civilization on Earth. The participating scientists hope to find a

lasting way to preserve information for future generations, yet they discover that modern technologies and methods cannot eliminate the gradual decay of media. Only words engraved in stone will be able to last for 100 million years. Responding to this futuristic metaphor, as a collector of the old world and an archivist of the new world, what does the temporal-spatial presence of a museum contribute to our cognitive process and probing for knowledge? Can artists and artworks offer answers about objects and images different from those that can be found through search engines?

# ARTISTIC RESEARCH IN NORWAY
## The situation of the field
### Cecilie Broch Knudsen

Artistic research has been a statutory component of higher art education in Norway since 1995, and a driving force in professional development since then. The Ministry of Education and Research established the Norwegian Artistic Research Programme (NARP) as a joint initiative for the creative and performing arts. As such it is the most important source of funding for artistic research in Norway. NARP develops expertise in the sector, acts as a national arena and makes an active contribution to the development of art education. The requirement for artistic activity being at the core of the research work is a key condition in all submissions, and the projects are expected to produce results of a high artistic standard of national and international relevance.

NEW METHODOLOGIES, GENERATIONS AND CONCEPTS
Artistic research takes the artist's special experience and reflection as its point of departure. As such, it is in line with the category *research in the arts*. The requirement

for artistic activity of a high standard gives all projects in the Norwegian Artistic Research Programme a distinct artistic profile. The academic environments involved have supported this development unanimously; there is no obligation for the researcher to employ specific concepts or methodologies from other fields. The trust in the value of the artist´s perspective is undisputable. The power to define the content of the research work is a prerequisite for free artistic development. It is a main goal to support a diversity of artistic expressions, and artistic researchers choose their methods and formats according to the needs of the projects. Therefore, it is the artists who are the driving force behind the concepts and the contents that are subject to artistic research funded through NARP.

The field of art is experimental in nature, and critically testing, challenging, and overturning artistic methods is an integral part of its culture. Questions 'about' and reflection 'on' method are fundamentally interwoven with the artistic work itself. The reflection on content, context, process, and methods that is part of artistic practice, has a central place in artistic research and is also a crucial contribution to the educational environments. The Project programme´s guidelines have specific demands for the dissemination of the results of the research. However, it has taken trial and effort to fully develop and articulate the intentions of the platform, and to establish our own standards that meet the requirements of our aims so as to fully exploit its potentials.

### ECONOMY

Project funding from NARP has a bearing on recruitment and on the development of the research culture in Norwegian art institutions/environments. The project announcements in the Norwegian Artistic Research Programme are not directed towards specific themes; this contributes towards sustaining a sound basis in artistic practice and to providing funding for research in unknown territory. At the same time, project themes will always be related to the general discourse in the different fields of art and to what is considered to be relevant at any given time, as for instance the new interest in materiality.

The institutions of higher art education are given the possibility of conducting large joint projects in which participants can experiment with the project form, with different partners, and in critical dialogue. Such projects represent a great potential for artistic research in the future, and will help to highlight and clarify what artistic research contributes to society.

The art-market and the art-scene present conditions in various economical and practical ways that may, in fact, be in conflict with artistic freedom. Artists, working within institutions with funding for artistic research, find

themselves highly privileged in that they can concentrate and experiment in a space that has unlimited room for the unknown. Perhaps the greatest advantage for the artistic researcher is that the projects are produced in an open space, without the constraints of having to customize the artwork for an exhibition space or concert hall within a narrow timeframe.

## PEER REVIEW

Artistic research is a highly debated term, and yet it is indisputable that the practice of the arts and its outcome are central to artistic research. What characterizes artwork produced in the context of artistic research in academia is the articulation of new insights and knowledge enhancement. It is a procedure of raising one's awareness of the reflective process that is rooted in the artistic work before and during the making, as well as after it has been exposed to the public / or publicly exposed.

Through the years, the programme has arranged seminars and conferences where artists present their research projects and discuss them amongst colleagues and peers. There is a strong culture for using international peer reviewers as an important element in the quality development of research projects. The reviewers contribute to the discourse not merely in written feedbacks, but in the artistic research forums where the exchange of experience yields a different kind of validation. However, the definition of what a peer is or should be needs to be rethought many times over. Feedback, even within the same field of practice, may differ just as it does from other fields of art or from neighbouring fields of theory.

Traditional academic scholars can often prove useful for comments on artistic research, but they will always review a project from their own point of departure. The programme regulations require that the main supervisor and the majority of the members of the evaluation committee have artistic competence, this to ensure the artistic profile of the programme. Surprisingly, many of the participating institutions challenge this notion, perhaps because artists have a longstanding tradition for being open to other academic approaches.

However, the programme committee is convinced that the greatest responsibility for developing the premises of artistic research should be placed on artistic proficiency. The encouragement by interdisciplinary dialogue to challenge the limitations of one's own practice does not imply that anyone can be a peer for anything. NARP is committed to developing language based on insight and understanding that can only be developed from inside the artistic practice, thereby strengthening the discursive dimension of artistic research.

PHD PROGRAMMES

In the transition towards the establishment of institutional artistic PhD programmes (expected to be recognized in 2018), the programme board of NARP is keen to ensure that the wording of the PhD regulations are true to the prerequisite that artistic practice is at the core of the projects; the objective being that the programme will remain attractive to the most talented candidates. The increase of international applications to the fellowship programme gives a clear indication of the value of this approach.

To establish a formal PhD programme, the individual institutions are obliged to fulfil demands for a sufficient quantity of PhD students within the subject field so as to establish a critical mass. The nature of the projects and the profile of the fellows that are funded will be crucial to the sustainability of the strong focus on artistic practice. The recruitment of former fellows to post-doc positions would strengthen this position.

In recent years, art schools and academies have been merged into universities and faculties that are based on other academic traditions. Artistic research will, even more than before, have to demonstrate its practice and argue its cause to a larger academic community. Even in a future with larger institutions, many of the art faculties and departments will remain small organisational entities. They have, in the past years, made significant contributions to the growth of the Norwegian Artistic Research Programme by allocating funds to finance research fellowships. We will need strong advocates to sustain the importance of these investments in the new constellations.

THE FUTURE(S) OF ART

It is the government's ambition that Norway shall become one of the most innovative countries in Europe. It states in its sector goals for research and education that Norway needs education, research, and professional scholarly and artistic research that interacts with the world around it. The EU scarcely announces suitable programmes for practice-based artistic research projects. Too often there are demands for cooperation with the social sciences or the humanities instead of acknowledging the practice of research through the arts. For this reason, it is crucial that the Ministry of Education and Research continues its funding for artistic research as a valuable contributor to other fields of research and to society as a whole.

Art has the potential to develop new collaborations and contribute to future welfare creation. At its best, art can point out questions about what the future will hold, or as Berthold Brecht states it in his famous quote: *'Art is not a mirror held up to reality, but a hammer with which to shape it.'*

# ALTERNATIVE KNOWLEDGE
## Jan Svenungsson

We have an increasing problem with lying in our societies. The internet and the changing labor market are pushing us all to continually broadcast enhanced versions of ourselves in order to gain strategic advantage. As a result, projection and illusion have become more valuable tools and talents than reflection and truthfulness.

Agreement on what constitutes fact-based reality is lost when the distribution of news shifts to social networks, where algorithms deliver alternative versions of events based on each user's existing prejudices. False facts won't be challenged when they validate what you already think. Lying seems to have no cost.

Art and research have not gone untouched by this development.

Indeed, it used to be a privilege of artists: to be able to create imaginary reality and promote alternative facts, to be admired for lies that work – on a poetic level!

Artists have used all imaginable means to convince audiences and themselves of the value and possibilities of other realities: crazy, ironic, beautiful, provocative

and challenging alternative realities. In order to do so, all sorts of tools have come into play, including faking and hiding your real motives.

But what about now? When the new reality allows amoral politicians not only to show complete disregard for truth and facts and get away with it, but also to be admired for their transgressions by large swaths of populations who feel alienated in their own societies? When imagination becomes a tool for domination and subjugation instead of being an instrument of liberation and exploration? What can artists do? React, retreat – or join the crowd?

I believe it has become necessary for artists to reflect anew on their strategies and the role they seek for art. The world is changing. The way people behave is changing. Science is being sabotaged. The efforts of climate scientists to spell out in clear words what has been factually proven are challenged by adversaries using doublespeak as a weapon and alternative facts as bombs. And religious extremists of varying persuasions wield real weapons and bombs, killing for the sake of twisted words.

Yes, indeed: words count. Lies count. Facts count. Our future depends on how we use language.

The invitation to participate in this publication came with seven questions regarding the current status of Artistic Research and its future prospects. Authors were asked to consider one or several, and write from there.

I appreciate starting from a given question. For me writing is an instrument of knowledge extraction, the writing process a generator of associations. Ideas and references appear and impose themselves on the text. My job is to say yes or no, to develop and refine. I write in order to understand things better – and I start because there are questions. Ultimately, I wish to make sense and not non-sense.

The first question was titled "The Situation of the Field":

> *"When the debate about Artistic Research commenced twenty years ago, it was primarily viewed as an unarticulated, undefined field; not so much a discipline as a place where the political, the philosophical and the creative meet in a way that allows people to produce a new set of relations between one another. How can Artistic Research – as a methodological trajectory – continue to facilitate non-regulated relations between these three domains? And in connection with this: How can Artistic Research keep answering urgent questions in a different way?"*

Something jars. The first sentence is relatively straightforward: we learn that in the beginning Artistic

Research was undefined and allowed people from different disciplines to interact with one another. The sense of the second sentence is warped: Artistic Research has now become a method (a "methodological trajectory"), but still it works in a "non-regulated" way. Hmm... Finally, in the third sentence, Artistic Research has evolved into having a history of "answering urgent questions".

As if!

In my view, the number-one problem afflicting this new-built institution is that "urgent questions" have been sorely lacking.

I apologize for focusing my attention on the phrasing of a question, but this circular misuse of words disturbs me and is far too common. A lack of real questions cannot be compensated for by employing fuzzy language. Just because there's a need to account for research funding, there's no defense for self-referential arguments.

I don't see art "answering" *any* questions. When art is good it continually *provokes* questions. Yet these questions cannot be instrumentalized, or even really be shared, because they are internal and intimately tied to the person (the viewer, the beholder, the artist) in which they occur. Research, on the other hand, if taken seriously, is an activity where people (researchers) *must* attempt to answer questions with an independent external existence. Thus

work by one person can be continued by another. This is not the case in art, where the illusion of linear progress has been discredited time and time again. Attempting to marry these two conceptions is anything but easy, and it will lead to contortions.

I know examples of Artistic Research where the marriage has produced works of thought and invention that I admire. But frankly, these are rare. I think the mainstreaming and continuous expansion of this institution is a serious mistake.

The current moment calls for a sharp focus on substance and for transparency in every endeavor that involves critical thinking, politics, science or art. *It's no game*. We simply cannot afford to let newspeak take over.

Art happens between people, between the maker and the beholder. Why do I make art? Who do I want to address? Myself, the global market, the social media hall of mirrors, a self-validating academic discipline – or other individuals? Can my art have political impact, beyond preaching to the converted? Can it be of use? What use?

To practice art today is contradictory. The market generates unprecedented dividends for success, but these are divided up by a few at the top, while the vast majority of artists are struggling with huge identity problems and questions of relevance. As counterpoint, the intellectual

apparatus built up over several decades of professional-
ized theory production has achieved a granular finesse
and specialization which makes it self-sustaining.

Apart from the lying and the ongoing brutalization of
public discourse in democratic societies, the galloping
narcissism of social media, the war on science, and in-
discriminate killing motivated by words in old texts, one
issue that also concerns me as an artist and a thinking
person is:

   – Whose interests do we actually serve when we
strive to bring art practice and the paradigm of Artistic
Research ever more closely into alignment?

   The future will be determined by the words we use
in the present.

# IS ARTISTIC RESEARCH IN MUSIC A FEMINIST FAILURE?

Darla Crispin

The history of Western art music is littered with instances in which the creative voices of women are silenced, in part because of the association of music with liturgical and ritualistic power but also because of a wider domination of the paradigm of artistic creator by models of maleness. However, this history also carries points of rupture, when female voices have been heard in remarkable circumstances, often emerging from their dispossession. Such was the case with the *ospedali*, the Venetian institutions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in which orphans of both sexes were trained as musicians, with the girls often celebrated for their achievement of virtuosity and seen as belonging to an elite, albeit an elite paraded as exotic spectacle rather than given its own self-determination.

These institutions were forerunners in some respects of the modern conservatoire but by the time this institutional phenomenon emerged in the early nineteenth century as a response to an expanding need for professionally

trained musicians, as opposed to a vehicle for practically-oriented charitable intervention, the changed function, status, and scale of the entire music-training operation went hand-in-hand with its appropriation by and for male musicians. As a result, access to an institutionalised musical training for women actually contracted, with their domain being defined as domestic and amateur in contrast to the public and professionalised arena in which their male counterparts were empowered to forge viable careers.

As with the earlier exigencies of aristocratic patronage, institutional norms, together with the rise of composition as a musical activity separate from performance and representing the ultimate aesthetic and intellectual outcome of the notion of 'absolute music', meant that women were further debarred from the full spectrum of musical practice; they were generally only permitted to study keyboard playing and singing – and this primarily because these were seen as 'accomplishments' that would enhance their chances in the marriage stakes. While this position has obviously changed, the hierarchical relationship between musical creation and performance is stubbornly persistent. Institutionalisation of the model of *Werktreue* – the idea that musical 'truth' can only be communicated through painstaking transmission of the details of the printed score – in conservatoire thinking and practice means that, even today, performers of such

music generally 'serve' as executants of the ideas of others; and those others continue to be predominantly men.

## ARTISTIC RESEARCH AND THE ADOPTION OF EXISTING PATRIARCHIES

The rise of artistic research, and its emergence within the field of music, should have precipitated a change to this situation because of its foregrounding of the creative dimension in performance. The impact of artistic research upon other arts disciplines provides plentiful models demonstrating its capacity to disrupt the creative and receptive norms of these disciplines. But the attachment of music's core communities of practitioners to the nineteenth century model of 'the Work' remains as the central tenet of the lessons that take place in the teaching studios of conservatoires.

Since the structural models remain, and their materials – the predominant repertoire studied – stand largely unaltered, their injustices remain as well; conservatoires of the West still perpetrate gender and race inequalities, albeit mostly unconsciously. Overall gender balance among students may now be largely equalised but instruments, musical genres, and specific musical roles (composer, conductor) remain highly gendered, with male students enjoying much more freedom than their female counterparts to select their specialism from the entire range.

This problem has an economic twist which can be seen in a more general sense in the plight of the arts and humanities in light of the emphasis on STEM subjects and the instrumentalisation of education to generate a work force. In the international perspective, we find that even though in the arts and humanities fields, women outnumber men in terms of places taken in higher education institutions, we can still expect to earn significantly less than our male counterparts; in North America, 'the figure is up to 20 percent less' (Bianco 2016).

These problems do not have a uniform character. For example, the Nordic situation is better; its emphasis upon social responsibility and mandated gender quotas means that there are attempts to address inequality through employment practices. It cannot, however, be said that full parity has been achieved in the Nordic countries; there is much work to do, and the nature of this work is difficult because it cannot be carried out merely through the alteration of rules in favour of the under-represented. It also has to do with the reform of the study disciplines themselves. This requires the careful and trenchant re-examination of the rise of these disciplines; for music specifically, it entails a critique of the processes of canon-formation that systematically exclude or under-value women's work and 'works'; more generally, it demands a

questioning of the very processes by which disciplines – and artistic research, in this sense, may be considered as a discipline – are formed.

These processes frequently bypass equality in favour of the acquisition of influence, power, and money. This is observable in cases as diverse as the rise of emphasis on the STEM ethos, the instrumental and fiscal emphasis upon the science and technology subjects as a means of generating a ready work-force, and the promotion of artificial forms of 'interdisciplinarity' into the artistic research sphere, as groups scramble through ideological manipulations in the quest for funding. The aping of scientific models by artistic research does not always serve art well; moreover, it imports into the arts practices the patriarchal trappings of those models. This includes the area of 'artistic experimentation', with which many in the artistic research field are currently engaging.

The reconstitution of patriarchal power in American academia in the late 1990s is summed up by the late Harvard professor, Barbara Johnson, as follows:

*Just at the moment when women (and minorities) begin to have genuine power in the university, American culture responds by acting as though the university itself is of dubious value. The drain of resources away from the humanities (where women have more power) to the sciences*

*(where women still have less power) has been rationalized in other ways, but it seems to me that sexual politics is central to this trend.* (Johnson 1998, 3-4.)

One has only to study the rubrics around EU grant-making bodies to see that this emphasis has transferred across the Atlantic.

## WHY THIS MATTERS FOR THE INTEGRITY OF ARTISTIC RESEARCH ITSELF

I believe that much of this dynamic can now also be charted in the rise of the phenomenon of artistic research in music, from the mid-1990s to the present. Against the trend of decreasing interest in the arts, artistic research would appear to be expanding its scope and influence. The problem is that artistic research, perhaps particularly artistic research in music, has done so without much reflection upon how the arts institutions that benefit most from such research – the conservatoires – remain substantially entrenched in the patriarchal attitudes and practices from which they emerged in the first place. Moreover, because artistic research has had to fight for its place at the academic funding table, it has had to have recourse to established power bases, networks, and loose affiliations – which are mainly controlled and populated by men.

Even a phrase such as 'artistic experimentation', cited above, suggests an attempt to paint artistic research as an activity conducted in the manner of scientific experimentation – in laboratories, rather than in studios, concert halls, and other public, social spaces and situations. This may carve it out a slightly larger space at the research table but, with the disproportionality of men to women in science, it also adds a further subliminal distinction between a 'feminine' art and a 'masculine' artistic research.

As co-editor with a male colleague of an anthology of artistic experimentation, I am well aware that this is not the reality; but I have come to recognise the subtle and dangerous assumptions that even supposedly innocent choices of vocabulary can provoke (Crispin and Gilmore 2014). It might be argued that to make a feminist critique of a marginal field like artistic research is to open up a place of hazard, and even to imperil the field itself. However, in countries where artistic research is part of a socially-funded cultural programme, to ignore such matters is to avoid a social responsibility.

So, how might we better understand the nature of these complex problems and work toward their betterment? Such a project invites a re-evaluation of aspects of the critical milieu within which the materials are presented *and a new understanding of musical materiality itself*

(Crispin 2014). Concerns about the nature of judgment in artistic research, and important extrapolations into its relationship with ethics, should be brought into the foreground within arts research and its dissemination platforms, creating the possibility of re-examining the relationship of aesthetics, formalism and ethics in artistic research in music:

> *Feminist aesthetics can only move forward if we look further at what women in our society need from art, and whether or not the records of artistic achievement fairly reflect women's tastes and values* (Battersby 1989, 222).

This call has been imbued with even more urgency given the attacks upon 'identity politics' that have coloured global politics, even before Brexit and the election of Donald Trump (Danuta Walters, 2017). In the wake of these events, and in anticipation of further shifts ahead, artistic research has actually been given a greater urgency, since its questions resist the economic instrumentalisation and attacks upon 'expertise' that are promoted by populist movements.

Such resistance indicates the revivification of identity politics ('Black Lives Matter', 'The Women's March', 'The March for Science') as a critique of exclusion and isolationism. Given this, a linked initiative of feminist criticism

and artistic research work needs to find its way into the conservatoire, as an adjunct to established educational structures, remaking the social relevance of these institutions, the repertoires they sustain and the aesthetics of musical art-making itself.

## TOWARDS A FEMINIST CRITIQUE OF THE CONSERVATOIRE AND ITS PRACTICES:

This brings us back to the creative, to performance, to composition, to artistic research, and to the feminist narratives around creativity. I think that we could do well by re-examining the call to action articulated by Donna Haraway who, in 1989, sounded a warning that we should be heeding – and acting upon – now:

> *Feminist theory proceeds by figuration at just those moments when its own historical narratives are in crisis. Historical narratives are in crisis now, across the political spectrum, around the world. These are the moments when something powerful – and dangerous – is happening [...]*

> *Humanity is a modernist figure; and this humanity has a generic shape, a universal shape. Humanity's face has been the face of man. Feminist humanity must have another shape, other gestures; but, I believe, we must have*

*feminist figures of humanity [...] Feminist humanity must, somehow, both resist representation, resist literal figuration, and still erupt in powerful new tropes, new figures of speech, new turns of historical possibility. For this process, at the inflection point of crisis, where all the tropes turn again, we need ecstatic speakers.* (Haraway 2004, 47.)

This can be read as nothing less than a manifesto for a new, feminist artistic research: the search in our own, musical, terms for 'powerful new tropes, new figures of speech, new turns of historical possibility' – articulated by 'ecstatic speakers', that is, composers, performers, artists of all kinds. I would add that this search needs to be carried out within a *listening culture,* '...a more broadly creative [space] in which the 'reading' of the work belongs to no one individual, but is the domain of all...' (Crispin 2014, 326). For the composer, the performer, her work, when viewed through the lens of a history reshaped, rather than denied, can have the potential to stand on its own merits alongside anything else in the corpus: equal, responsible, and thereby potentially both liberated and liberating.

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# ON THE SINGULAR AND KNOWLEDGE IN ARTISTIC RESEARCH

Leena Rouhiainen

*Whatever might be the specific type of economic circuits they lie within, artistic practices are not 'exceptions' to other practices. They represent and reconfigure the distribution of these activities.* (Rancière 2011, 45.)

*There is no finality in the arts, no satisfying closure, state of peace, or generalizable results. At most there is the singular, the disturbing exception, that does not lead to cognitive gains and their supposed truths, but rather to a break in or destabilization of the reigning codes of knowledge.* (Mersch 2015, 26.)

This text addresses a few insights into artistic research as a methodological trajectory. Artistic research is a critical investigative practice and as such should have the potential to make a difference in shaping art, society, and reality in productive ways. However, how and on what basis this can be accomplished are questions that

artist-researchers either tacitly or explicitly tackle. One way of approaching how artistic research can continue to foster non-regulated relations between the political, the philosophical, and the creative is to look into what these three dimensions entail and how they relate beyond themselves.

Here I will briefly address the creative through considering art, artistic research, and the political. This I do by revisiting already recognized notions, those put forth by philosophers Jacques Rancière and Dieter Mersch. In this I will rely on the notion that futures rely on what has passed and how these pasts are both generated and related to presently. I hope this revisiting of previous thought offers some insight into the potential of artistic research.

From its initiation and especially its implementation within higher education, artistic research has operated at the threshold between artistic and academic conventions and objectives. Its specific realizations have been interdisciplinary and multi-medial in the sense that they have interlinked different artistic and academic disciplines, practices, and formats of sharing. Whilst the activity of artists has been at the core of artistic research, it has been understood as a heterogeneous project occurring in the in-between. Instituting new modes of relating to reality by exploring the potentials of the sensible through art-making has been considered one of the functions of

artistic research (Kirkkopelto 2012). Artistic research has thus been understood to carry the prospect of renewing the arts, creating new understanding about the arts, and inducing inventive forms of subjectivity and community.

In this line of thinking, artistic research, similarly to current art works themselves, challenges and changes conventional or normative practices and experiences. Thus, its aim could be viewed as that of redistributing the sensible in a similar manner to what Rancière describes in *The Politics of Aesthetics* (Rancière 2011). Artistic research interrogates already established approaches and practices belonging to art. It does this by, in various ways, developing accepted conventions further, or by even attempting to renounce them altogether.

After all, artists come to artistic research to solve a problem they have in relation to their art-making. They aim at unearthing something new, something that has not yet taken form, based on what they already know and are skilful in. The speculative orderings they come up with constitute a form critique as they show alternative solutions to and a re-thinking of preceding art. What light is thrown on are the norms and conventions through which art is perceived, made and shared and what these norms and conventions do not support, to say the least. Consequently, artistic research always, to some degree, resists and transgresses previous conventions of art.

Artistic research can challenge diverse forms of life as well. Art is not limited to any given content, form, or material and by necessity, artistic research is influenced and motivated by topical attitudes and approaches to art-making. As the recent hybridization of contemporary art testifies, art is not tied to any specific rules or hierarchies. It is rather identified by its singularity. In producing new diversified material formations as idiosyncratic suggestions of ways in which reality can be addressed and arranged, art works involve excess, something not quite recognizable and graspable. This makes it difficult to define art's exact realm. (Varto 2016; Rancière 2011.) Consequently, while being a creative potential invested in heterogeneity, art in itself is open to interrogating and appropriating conceptions and approaches operative within the sciences and different forms of research.

However, the above-described singularity that is a characteristic of art establishes a tension with the scholarly investment in knowledge production and generalizability that belongs to research. This tension is notably tangible in academic artistic research. Rancière alludes to the problem in different terms in *The Aesthetic Unconscious* (Rancière 2009). In it he contemplates the notion of art as a mingling of unconscious production and conscious procedure or the combination of both non-sense and sense, *pathos* and *logos* (Cobusen 2014).

He terms this perspective on art the *aesthetic regime*, or *aesthetic revolution*, which began its emergence with modernity and was first clearly articulated in the avant-garde art of the 20th century.

While appreciating Freud's involvement with the unconscious, Rancière criticizes the hermeneutic interpretation of the sensible or unconscious dimension at work in art that Freud is inclined to. Freud acknowledged that artists know things that scientists do not. However, he did not consider artists themselves to have offered the unconscious a strong or clear enough status. Freud's attempt was to give this meaningless life a meaning and integrate it into scientific rationality. In contrast, Rancière opines that 'The voiceless power of the Other's speech must be valorized as something irreducible to any hermeneutics' (Rancière 2009, 88).

He supports a view in which *pathos* and *logos* are not subsumed into each other, while also accepting that *logos* is always at play in *pathos* and vice versa. He formulates this by stating that 'art is the territory of a thought that is present outside itself and identical with non-thought' (Rancière 2009, 6). Here non-thought relates to what in the tradition of western aesthetics has been described as the indistinct or confused sensible knowledge that stands in opposition to the distinct knowledge of logic. He also states that with the aesthetic revolution 'confused

knowledge is no longer a lesser form of knowledge but properly *the thought of that which does not think*' (ibid.).

At the end of *The Aesthetic Unconscious*, Rancière comes to the conclusion that 'the power of art lies in the immediate identity of contraries, of *logos* and *pathos*' (Rancière 2010, 86). What is detectable in his writing is that it is the friction between the two that in his view affirms the specificity of art.

The above-mentioned views point towards the fact that art in itself involves thinking and relates to knowledge without erasing its involvement in the not-thinkable and not-known. Art-making deals with the configuration of compositional elements and materials that come together as forms of aesthetic or material thinking. The process of generative interplay between the artist and the materials is thinking ingrained in the making. Whilst the artist employs a sensibility informed by artistic and aesthetic experiences, the materials too have agency and both tacitly and explicitly inform what the artist does, to the extent that it can be difficult to discern exactly who or what is producing a work. While involving an interplay of the sensible and the rational, artworks can be understood as articulations or concatenations of miscellaneous elements.

Continuing with this kind of view, philosopher Dieter Mersch points out in his book *Epistemologies of Aesthetics*

that 'art portrays, exhibits, presents, and performs, but the decisive epistemic modus of these varying practices is always *showing*' (Mersch 2015, 14). Showing in turn is plural in that it both points out and exhibits simultaneously. 'Showings reveal something and show themselves while in showing, hold themselves back' (ibid. 170). Showing therefore underlines the relationship between presentation and presence, manifestation and the manifest. Showing oscillates between the showing and the shown, and owing to this interplay showing is instable as identification. Showings occur as singularities in the present and resist translation into concepts and propositional knowledge. Mersch additionally opines that events of appearing that include contradictions and instabilities and that resist resolution or closure involve a reflexivity. He argues this issue to be at the core of the manner in which art generates knowledge. (Mersch 2015, 172, 176.)

Whilst Mersch articulates aesthetic thinking in relation to artistic research in more detail than many, he is not alone in his views about this approach to research. Knowledge in artistic research has been viewed through considering artistic practice as an aesthetic manifestation that exposes something while simultaneously making the performativity of this showing apparent. Proponents of artistic research Michael Schwab and Henk Borgdorff consider that exhibitions or expositions of artistic

research involve 'a redoubling of practice in order to artistically move form artistic ideas to epistemic claims' (Schwab & Borgdorff 2014, 15). What such a redoubling of artistic practice can establish is 'a reflective distance within itself that allows it to be simultaneously the subject and object of an inquiry' (ibid.). As a consequence, artistic processes or outcomes in themselves can convey both 'a thought and its appraisal' at the same stroke (ibid.).

It seems evident then that art in its current forms entails reflexivity, a form of knowing and knowledge, and that art's epistemic qualities are of specific importance to artistic research. What is worth underlining here is that the artistic thought discussed in this text is a practice of difference that works with the deviant and looks, for example, into minor distortions in order to turn perspectives and change positions. In the process of such thinking artistic works develop their own unrepeatable paradigms (Mersch 2015). In relation to artistic research, this implies that each piece of artistic research establishes its own kind of reality and criteria for assessing its value.

What is more, the uniqueness involved in artistic research can also be considered to entail political implications. In Rancière's view politics questions the manner in which the sensible is distributed and how the society is structured based on that. Politics is concerned with actions by people that challenge given sets of social arrangements in order to substantiate previously deprived forms of perceiving and acting in society. Rancière's understanding of politics is based on disagreement and is thus antagonistic.

Political action challenges predominant orders that determine what is made visible and is perceived and what is not made visible and is not perceived. Not only is the organization of power of the social order interrupted in political action, but more strikingly so are the taken-for-granted perceptual and epistemic premises of these orders. (Rancière 2011, Kujansivu 2007.) It is obvious that the singular showings that art entail produce effects. By unravelling, inverting, or interrupting, they produce material rearrangements between what is perceived and done and what can be perceived and done. They establish new networks of the sensible that, when confirmed by a group of political subjects, reconfigure what are given as facts and thus anticipate communities to come (Rancière 2011). Here lies the political potential of artistic research. However, there are no rules or criteria for distinguishing what comes to have such political impact beforehand, and the political therefore concerns the experimental and tentative.

In my view, both Rancière and Mersch point to the fact that artistic research belongs to what Rancière defines as the aesthetic revolution. It relates to the regime

of non-representative artistic phenomena that adhere to the sensible as a heterogeneous power and, while establishing the autonomy of art, identify it with the other forms of life (Rancière 2011). In being a progressive and critical venture, academic artistic research should be an environment that stimulates the heterogeneity in which art as a singular undertaking thrives. But not only this. *Exploring how art involves thinking about that which does not think in each instance of art-making should also be one of the focal and explicit tasks of artistic research.*

By continuing to respond and relate to this question through both artistic and scholarly means artistic research can substantiate art's ownmost power to think further. It can make evident and thus continue to justify how artistic knowledge is a reflexive knowledge that is separate from yet equal to other forms of knowledge (Mersch 2015). This I consider an important task within the current climate in which art is faced with the task of critically renegotiating its social role and societal value.

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# AUTOHISTORIAS AS A MODE OF ARTISTIC RESEARCH
Mélanie Bouteloup

*Personal experiences – revised and in other ways redrawn – become a lens with which to reread and rewrite the cultural stories into which we are born.* Gloria Anzaldúa[1]

*Autohistorias* is Chicana feminist theorist and poet Gloria Anzaldúa's term to describe her mode of writing, conceived as a poetic form made of different words, languages, and modes of narration (testimonies, tales, theory, and poetry, among others), which enables the overcoming of oppositions in non-linear and singular ways. *Autohistorias* epitomizes an alternative way of coping with dominant ideologies, and aims to negotiate and destabilize borders, disrupt and reorient, creating a network of shifting identities. *Autohistorias* is about outlining the potential of plural, ambivalent, unstable, and performative expressions of the self, so as to allow for the dissemination of personal, depolarized narratives. *Autohistorias*

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1    Anzaldúa 2002.

actively informs my conception of artistic research as a methodology.

Similarly, Bétonsalon – Center for Art and Research and Villa Vassilieff's programs are grounded in the strong conviction that frictions between diverse registers of speech may give rise to moments of encounter where gaps can open, allowing new ideas to emerge. I think of our activity as that of a conductive body, which, by connecting seemingly disparate practices, creates a network that becomes more and more dense, producing unexpected transgressions in the process. As an art center, our task is to create situations that allow for improbable encounters from which arise new, transdisciplinary modes of doing. I think it is urgent to stop opposing academic and artistic research and understand that it is in the interstices, where the categories are blurred, that renewal occurs. We affirm the necessity of 'going outside,' off the beaten path of the art world and academia so as to displace epistemological frameworks for curating and instituting. We then try to connect amateur knowledge to institutional contexts, so as to allow for discussion and collaboration.[2]

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2    Established in 2003, Bétonsalon – Center for Art and Research strives to develop a space where to reflect on and in society. Integrated into the site of the University Paris 7 at the very heart of a neighbourhood undergoing reconstruction, the ZAC Paris Rive Gauche in the 13th district of Paris, Bétonsalon works at the

The encounter with specific fields of knowledge – those of academics, and, less recognized, those of amateurs – challenges fixed assumptions and leads to a shift in perspectives, but only if there is time to be spent together. Research requires advancing hypotheses, which, by nature, may be equivocal and need to be reformulated. I defend a conception of research that privileges the process over the result, and a conception of art that privileges what is happening over what is seen. Artistic research is about inventing a structure that allows for the means of

confluence of art and university research with the ambition to question normalised forms of production, classification, and distribution of knowledge. Bétonsalon works at the intersection between artistic and academic research, by involving art schools and University students, through workshops developed in partnership with museums' collections so as to connect their historical frameworks with art being done today and allow alternative perspectives on art history. Bétonsalon – Center for Art and Research states that art is research. Shifting from a modernist conception, art should be considered as a process where things happen rather than a thing in itself. Art extends beyond the art object to be contemplated. The work is no longer a simple artefact conceived in the studio by a genius artist, but instead it is a continuum in continuous production. The works acts in a distributed way, in relation with a series of activities, from its production to its various possible apprehensions. Its existence is a never-ending journey, it is a relational whole that is always public and in action. The social life of an artwork is part of the research; it constitutes an ecosystem or a contact zone where the form develops at the same time as it is being thought. Accidents occur and their non-linearity is also a mode of research. It is when various discourses intersect that we can put into fruition our capacity to imagine. Conflict is a fertile force, as Edouard Glissant was stating, in its poetics of the relation.

research to develop in tandem with its content. Thinking radically is about looking for a form while researching its contents, rather than presupposing it.

In order to truly destabilize fixed positions, to be transformed by the process, it is necessary to establish long-lasting collaborations and to confront the unknown, to get closer to what seems distant and foreign. By incorporating perspectives and experiences sometimes at odds with predominant conceptions of History, curatorial research can emphasize the necessity of listening to the multitude of small histories that comprise our daily life. An interest in these complex personal stories is at the heart of Bétonsalon and Villa Vassilieff's project. Our commitment to critically engage with these narratives constitutes our mode of decolonizing knowledge by defying the hegemony of a presumed center and by considering the margins that can be found 'inside [our] social space, that is not smooth but multilinear, discontinuous, and pitted everywhere,' as philosopher Rosi Braidotti rightly put it.[3]

At Villa Vassilieff, I initiated a long-term series of conversations with a variety of individuals around the Marc Vaux program – a program aimed at de-Eurocentering art history and museums – which exists in the form of a

travelling research exhibition. Displacement occurs continuously: the exhibition itself evolves to accommodate different discursive activities and workshop sessions, and its various iterations are transformed depending on the context, conditions, and people with whom these discursive events are produced. This malleability allows us not only to translate and incorporate the movement of thought taking place but also to avoid a vertical or authoritarian structure for the transmission of knowledge.

I think the institution's commitment to establishing long-term relationships with a community of artists and researchers can be considered a research methodology. At Villa Vassilieff, we offer grants and fellowships to support research and our artists in residence are involved in an ongoing cycle of conversations, trips, and meetings. This program forms a kind of communal dialogue consisting of a combination of voices that change over time. We do not really know the boundaries of this methodology, where it starts and where it ends. Our intent in curating artistic research is to provide access and points of entry into alternative histories. Artistic research has the capacity to call attention to specific issues in a different way. It is crucially about looking to the space of an interpersonal exchange as a site of radical possibility for discovering overlaps and consistencies between seemingly disparate singular histories.

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3    Braidotti 2003.

In conclusion, the notion of *Autohistorias* serves as a channel for a better understanding of our connectedness, thus allowing intergenerational and intercultural exchange and subjectification. Ultimately, it is individuals thinking and acting through social relations who are making the world, not institutions. We need to rethink our ways of doing things, and to invent tactics for transversal navigations that are capable of deeply transforming our institutions. This work must be done collectively, and it must include the young individuals who are facing this challenge even more urgently. In troubled times of division and conflict, those histories help us dream up common cosmopolitan horizons.[4]

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4    I would like to think here the following people for their input in this text: Lotte Arndt (Theory teacher at École supérieure d'art et design Valence), Hannah Spears (M.A. Candidate at the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College), Camille Chenais and Victorine Grataloup (curator at Villa Vassilieff), Lucas Morin and Boris Atrux-Tallau (curators at Bétonsalon – Centre for art and research).

# GENERATING QUESTIONS ARCHIVES AND CURATING DATA-BASED PROJECTS

**Basak Senova**

We are experiencing a challenging period where politics, social life, economics, and culture are all being shaped by governing authorities beyond our 'access' and 'voice'. Although the current situation sounds and feels 'dark', there is a future ahead of us, waiting for new ideas and designs to communicate, to access, to interact, to learn, to move, and to live by developing alternative systems, languages, economical models, and survival strategies to shape a new future. Thus, we still need to confront the past and on-going ideological fragments of value and power structures, understand how technology is being used and perceived, how information is being filtered and distributed, what our capacity is for the social, political, ecological, and economic negotiations with the governing bodies, and how we can rethink education.

This approach would inevitably generate some immediate questions about the role of art today, such as *How*

*can art be seen or utilized for future projections? How can art production establish productive communication channels that facilitate access to new information resources? How can we trace new mental maps to substitute geographical positioning? Is it possible to read past challenges in art history with new perspectives? How can we develop alternative economic models that can be widely recognized and applied? How can we foster a new language to interpret the archival data to be used for future developments? What are the ways to determine or to test 'new' needs to challenge our modes of production and consumption? How can we provide deeper insight into the relationships within art, science, technology, research, and societal developments? How can global and local societal developments – such as resistance movements, violation of human rights, leaks, and migration flows – be monitored and even envisioned through art?*

In this line of thought, by taking today's research-based contemporary art practices and curatorial trajectories into consideration, we may also recognize the methodology of studying, processing, and curating archival data as an act of producing knowledge. These practices and trajectories certainly have the potential to disperse and discuss the politics and economics of the cultural and artistic production through aggregating all possible means of perceiving and interpreting archives. Then, this perception may inspire new ways to re-think and to re-generate data for producing knowledge along with new questions.

At first sight, such a statement seems to underestimate the dilemma between the uniqueness of an art production in any form and the openness of the interpretation of the data produced or processed by this artwork. Indeed, it is an observation of two phases in sequence that would eventually dissolve after being exposed. As Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt put it, 'today information and communication have come to play a foundational role in production processes'[1]. Art production of this kind produces nothing but subjectivity and permutations by exploiting information and communication with the data. The act of exhibiting and curating data-based art production also addresses a performative process that defines the 'value' within the framework of social relations and politics.

Nevertheless, such a framework of social relations and politics should have its own protocol, which outlines not only some requirements to be met, but also new questions to be addressed.

We already live in archives, but accessing and making use of their content depends on how much we are acquainted with the operation logic of these networks. The Catalan artist Daniel García Andújar presents a

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1    Hardt and Negri 2000, p. 297.

networked archive called *Postcapital: Archive 1989–2001*, which is comprised of over 250,000 documents (texts, audio files, videos, etc.) from the Internet, dating between the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the September 11 attacks in 2001. Exhibitions of this archive functions as an indexing engine about all kinds of information for us. Andújar mobilized this archive by presenting it in different cities such as Rome, Stuttgart, Seoul, Istanbul, Barcelona, Novi Sad, Venice, Dortmund, and Sofia. These exhibitions clearly showed that we receive, perceive, interpret or misinterpret, utilize information through such networks. Nevertheless, the act of curating an exhibition based on such an archive generated two major questions: (i) *Could an archive inhabit multiple and even opposing realities?* and (ii) *How could an archive be read in a different cultural context?*

Likewise, the Romanian artist Simona Dumitru's project *The Surveillance Handbook* (2013) worked with the visual content of the former Romanian secret police archives (now preserved and researched by the politically-charged official apparatus of CNSAS – the National Council for the Study of Security Archives). The project has been shown at Tito's Nuclear Bunker during the second D-0 Ark Underground Contemporary Art Biennial. The handbook includes enlarged scans of hand-drawn diagrams from a small manual used before 1989 to train

Romanian secret police field agents in the art of covert surveillance, and of field positioning for tailing and recording sound and/or images. Not only the project, but the curatorial decision to present this specific project in the context of Tito's secret bunker tackles additional questions such as *Can we write the history once again by discovering an archive?* or *Can history be mobilized?*

As another case, during the Helsinki Photography Biennial 14, the Lebanese artist Ali Cherri worked on the Finnish Photography Museum's archive and focused on the Finnish landscape photographer I. K. Inha's (1865–1930) *Finnish Agriculture series* and formed a narrative around the photographic archives and the construction of national identities with his work *Inha's Cow* (2014). This time, the questions above were extended to another*: Could an archive be not only interpreted but also translated?*

In an inevitable way, in the course of working on data, provided by an archive, the aspect of 'fiction' comes to the surface in different forms through inquiries about the historical and geographical (multiple) facts and stories. The Macedonian artist Yane Calovski produced a series of drawings with the personal archive of Paul Thek, dating from the 1970s. Paul Thek is an American conceptual artist who lived between 1933 and 1988. Calovski discovered his work very early in his studies in Philadelphia and he has been reflecting on the works of Thek. So, while

working for the Pavilion of Macedonia (2015) at the 57th Venice Biennale, he discovered one folder in the Egidio Marzona collection that belonged to his art gallery in Paris ArtService. In the folder there were letters and notes of correspondence between Thek and Benedicte, the gallery manager between 1971 and 1974. His artistic production together with the data found in the folder without any indexing were displayed together. In such a case, *What is the fine line between fiction and reality when reading and reflecting on an archive?*

‘Subjectivity’ as an issue and approach comes into play with another case: The Palestinian artist Benji Boyadgian’s work *Temporary Archive* that was shown at Jerusalem Show 7, documented a valley in Jerusalem, sited in the southern tip of Jerusalem, between the green line (1948–1967) and the Wall (2003). Before the construction of a highway crossing the valley, Boyadgian documented the states of the transformation through ruins in the valley, but not using lens based media. Instead he preferred to paint in situ. Then, *What makes an archive reliable and objective?*

To be able to speak about how to utilize archival data in the art context – as an act of producing knowledge, mobilizing thoughts, reading and producing alternative stories, and generating questions – from a curatorial point of view, one should also be conscious about who is

responsible for the algorithms of collecting and accessing archives. Hence, at this very moment, perhaps the most urgent question is *What do we generate, more than questions, through archives and art today?*

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# ARTISTIC RESEARCH AND ABYSSAL THINKING

**Behzad Khosravi Noori**

Let's start by agreeing that the purpose of artistic research is to produce knowledge. Yet, we need to debate the foundation of the term 'knowledge' in order to define, or at least to be more conscious about, what constitutes artistic knowledge production and who practices it. In this text, I will avoid defining knowledge generally. Instead, I will try to link it directly to artistic practice.

### ABYSSAL THINKING: A MANY-HEADED HYDRA

Knowledge should not be understood as an essentially fixed phenomenon. Perhaps the buzzword 'interdisciplinary' is part of a common agreement to challenge the longevity of separatist procedures of knowledge production. But are we really working in an interdisciplinary environment? To answer, we must first broach the essential and yet complex definition of knowledge in its geopolitical, historical, social, and economical condition and to analyse how Eurocentric attitudes have effected Western academies' ways of distinguishing the land of knowledge from the land of storytelling.

As Boaventura de Sousa Santos argues, modern Western thinking is an abyssal thinking (de Sousa Santos 2014, p. 118). It consists of a system that is visible and invisible. It provides the radical line that divides reality into two realms, one on either side. The realm of the other side of the line vanishes; it no longer holds reality and instead becomes nonexistent. In other words, the system has a perception of who 'the other' is and what characteristic this one might have.

By applying this predefined logic, the system is able to legitimize the notion of inclusion formulated as an invitation for this 'other'. This somewhat exaggerated yet not fictional example could be that of an institution inviting artist to promote and celebrate something that actually forms a continuation of orientalism as an artistic practice. By this invitation the institution is supposed to promote diversity and inclusion. However, it is a form of representation that is taking place within the structure and history of this western institution – and can never be anything else than an otherizing. Therefore, it cannot be defined as a form of inclusion, but as something that rather feeds the realm of phantasy and exclusion. Seen in this way, being the other is hence a predefining social and political characteristic, and the notion of inclusion follows this pre-perception.

I seek to understand the extent to which this divided realm of inclusion and exclusion has affected the view of artistic research, which aims to include all the subjects in a counterbalance and claim diversity. The divided realm advocates newfangled methods of investigation but remains ambiguous in terms of how it positions itself within the realm of abyssal thinking. I must say that this positionality does not necessarily argue about the existence of inclusion and exclusion, which I consider an agonizing fact indeed, but rather about how to go beyond the acknowledgment of the inclusion/exclusion apparatus, which depends on recognition or criticism to exist. The perplexing notion here is that even the criticism of abyssal thinking would construct another abyss, thus resembling a *mise en abyme*, endlessly and constantly echoing itself. It is like a many-headed Hydra that, if beheaded, would immediately sprout two new heads.

However fervently the subject of the relationship between the arts and other disciplines is debated, at the end of the day I could be positive about their relationship – as long as they confine this battle within the methodology and disciplines. I am confident that there will be – and have already been – many examples that demonstrate this relationship. But it doesn't necessarily suggest any new form of engagement or methodological approaches; you do your thing, I do my thing and in the end, we'll

celebrate it together. We guard the border, the dryness of the structured sciences chilled by art, and we artists will assemble to intellectualize and make our practices 'scientific'. I see no spark in this relationship.

My concern here is to understand the position we are materializing in this affiliation between art and knowledge production – in order to be conscious of abyssal thinking.

WHAT TO LEARN, HOW TO LEARN – AND FOR WHOM?
Among other things, my approach to being cautious about what artistic knowledge can be or do is based on the concept of the 'Coloniality of Power' developed by Aníbal Quijano, which includes not only the economic, political, and military dimensions of colonialism, but also its epistemic qualities and the question of how hegemonic Western orders of knowledge are based on them. He discusses how this approach presents itself in different forms of production such as producing perspectives, images and systems of images, symbols and modes of signification, over the resources, patterns, and instruments of formalized and objectified expression, intellectual or visual (Quijano 2007).

In his analysis of the culture of imperialism, Edward Said argues that Imperialistic Eurocentrism creates a bipolar relationship between the East and the West, inventing a concrete border between here and there regardless of the fact that here and there have always overlapped.

It then redefines them as separated entities, and tries once again to bring in 'the other' under the name of multiculturalism or diversity whilst ignoring the reality of European historical relationships. And it doesn't stop here: Eurocentric Imperialism will create hierarchy by assuming that the West is inherently better than the Rest (Hobson 2011). Edward Said suggests that studying the relationship between the West and its dominated cultural 'others' is not only a way of understanding an unequal relationship between unequal interlocutors, but also a point of entry into the study of the formation and meaning of Western cultural practices themselves (Said 1993, 230).

Perhaps the key essential query here is not how to learn, or how to produce art under these circumstances, but what to learn. As Simon Sheikh suggests, not only do we have to ask ourselves what system we are educating people within, but also, which system are we educating people for? (Simon 2012.) Or: If art and artistic research claim to produce knowledge, what kind of knowledge they actually produce and what use will be made of it, and for whom?

At this point, it's good to bear in mind the fact that has been frequently taken up in post-colonial theories: colonialism was to a great extent and in a variety of ways a project of knowledge production, as well as a pedagogical project. Traces of this can still be found in all areas of art

history and science history, but also in accomplishments of wide-reaching educational structures and norms.

### CAN THE SUBALTERN REALLY SPEAK?

In her essay *Can the Subaltern Speak*? Gayatri Spivak goes one step further, drawing attention to what she calls epistemic violence, which defines knowledge as a mechanism of domination as well as of the justification and legitimization of domination. She also describes how this attitude has effected European 'orders of knowledge', and shows its link to colonialist power.

Could she also mean that scholars in Europe are extending neo-colonialism by producing post-colonial studies? Has the application of post-colonial studies also become part of abyssal thinking? Or worse still, has it become an object of university marketing acting as an epi-phenomenon.

Boaventura de Sousa Santos maintains that the philosophies and theories that have accompanied us for the past decades – or in some cases centuries – were offered for sale: determinism, free will, universalism, relativism, realism, constructivism, post constructivism, sustainable development, participation, and so on (De Sousa, 2014).[2]

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2    See also Zolghadr's *Traction* (2017), where he provides an alphabetical list of diverse, fashionable discourses in contemporary art practice as 'Good Objects', pp. 48- 49.

Before deciding to buy or sell, the buyer – who according to De Sousa could also be someone outside academia – would ask two questions: 'How useful is this or that theory for me?' and 'How much does it cost?'.

We could somehow imagine the answer to the first question 'How useful is this or that theory for me?' to be based on the conscious or unconscious Western-centric or Eurocentric attitude, particularly toward 'the others' when historic, phantasmagoric images of the others have created a norm. Abyssal thinking, by creating the concrete border between here and there, defines the different territories of dystopia and utopia. Any form of production must address this distinction. One form of dystopia has to produce images of the less than fortunate places and identities they have left behind; when viewed by the native inhabitants of a 'utopian' land, this heightens their sense of superiority and feeds their false sense of social pre-eminence.

The expression artistic research connects two domains: contemporary art and academia. Art could easily justify itself with respect to knowledge production by legitimizing its relation to any existing form of academic knowledge.[3] An artist statement might, for example, be a 600-word proposition so dense that nobody could ever

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3    This relationship is not easy but it could stop the methodological disagreement.

hope to understand it. In most cases the theory is based on established forms of knowledge production, which follows the gravity of the field and assimilates. This justification is in fact just an ostensive performance in order to funnily prove that we know these fashionable terms. Or maybe it is an emancipatory act to again prove that 'we know these terms so let us free, we want to do art'. This is still unclear to me.

There is a common view, which fantasizes that artists exist in some proverbial Lala land, to employ a Peter Pan metaphor (Hobson, 2011) – that they are kind and innocent people who never grew up, and keep singing Zipadeedoodah in chorus. Hence, they need discipline in order to be able to transfer their stories and turn them into knowledge. This general – and also stereotypical – academic attitude has created a backlash among artists, who mock and challenge the realm of dryness and stultification of academia. Consequently, they fight back and seek self-empowerment within the framework of the academic structure and PhD studies.

During the recent years, I have seen a number of doctoral students in the Nordic universities who mock and fictionalize academia, proposing new forms of artistic research without suggesting any serious structural critique. These practices are rooted in hyper-individual gestures and tend to create singular and disconnected examples.

Moreover, these artists often victimize themselves in relation to the big, bullying, stultifying academy, without even once considering their privileged position as salaried PhD researchers.[4]

I am not trying to devalue the title of artistic research with these critical comments, quite the opposite, in fact. Instead, I aim to proceed a step further and ask whether we are actually part of a purely Eurocentric project. I would like to ask, moreover, what kind of society we are imagining. What kind of environments are we trying to build? How could we critically see the historical background of the rational academic institutions? How do we position ourselves in current political situation?

As I see it, the future of artistic research is closely linked to the question: how to act subjectively and methodologically in this field, and, at the same time, avoid feeding mere phantasies of critical/political art. In other words, there's a danger of 'witless presentism' on the part of those who live only to consume the latest offerings in art and culture.

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4    Many PhDs in the Nordic countries are government-funded. There is quite a lot of evidence in the realm of contemporary art to support the Peter Pan analogy. Perhaps there has been a misconception even among artists as to what is art and what is just aesthetically pleasant.

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# TAKE ONE STEP FORWARD, TWO STEPS BACK, AND THEN TURN LEFT-ISH

## Mick Wilson

Perhaps the single most important shift in the situation of artistic research in Europe today is the way in which an ontological question ('what is artistic research?') has given way to a multiplication of research projects that in some way *question* rather than produce ideological claims dressed up as *faux-questions*. These more recent projects do not have a reductively reflexive focus on their own self-constitution as 'artistic' enquiries.

This work does not constantly resort to substituting ideological claims for the specificity of art *qua* art in place of actually seeking understanding, insight, or to know otherwise through practice. This is a matter of enquiry that is oriented to something other than producing professional self-images of the radicality of the enquirer and her enquiries. (Remember all those tired rhetorics of non-knowledge, recall those institutionalised players disdaining their institutional privilege in grand self-dramatisations of their critical self-consciousness, and consider all that third-hand

and poorly disguised Kantianism that was rehearsed again and again over the decades.) These more recent enquiries are projects that operate artistic means (making art) to develop enquiry into various matters of concern.

Obsessive repetition of the claims for the privileged status of artistic knowledge in putative contrast to other forms of knowledge ('scientific', 'academic', 'dis-embod-ied', 'abstracted', 'normative', etc.) characterised much of the debates on artistic research of the 1990s and 2000s. In contrast, much more of recent research work by artists, most often in collective formations, elaborates enquiry into many different concerns, problems and situations. There are many examples with which to indicate the shift from questions of the general format 'what is artistic re-search?' to processes of enquiry oriented primarily to-wards questioning (or understanding or acting upon or re-situating or otherwise re-making) some aspect of the world and experience beyond the narrower concern of addressing the specificity of 'artistic' research.

One illustrative development here is the development of the research agenda in an institutional frame such as basis voor actuele kunst BAK Utrecht. Here one might wish to contrast the terms of enquiry reflexively consid-ered in *On Knowledge Production: A Critical Reader in Contemporary Art* (2008) with the terms of enquiry that are elaborated in Jonas Staal's *New World Summit* and

manifest in a partnership also with basis voor actuele kunst. (Starting in 2013, BAK hosted and co-produced the *New World Academy*, a department of Staal's *NWS*.)

As one reviewer of *On Knowledge Production* noted: 'Questions such as *What is knowledge?*, *What kind of knowledge are we striving for?* and *With what methodol-ogies do we approach art and the knowledge it produces?*' recur across the articles assembled in the volume.

In the more recent volume *New World Academy Reader #5: Stateless Democracy, realized with Kurdish Women's Movement* (2015) that emerged out of the collaboration between Staal and BAK, we see a difference. The vol-ume takes as its central focus the proposition of delink-ing democracy from the nation-state, expressed in the terms 'stateless democracy' or 'democratic confederal-ism' and as proposed by the Kurdish Women's Movement and practiced in Rojava, Western Kurdistan in Syria. This volume is edited by Reneé In der Maur and Jonas Staal in dialogue with the Kurdish Women's Movement, in particu-lar with Dilar Dirik, a Kurdish activist (and at the time of production a PhD student at the University of Cambridge). The book is announced as a collection of texts that 'are as much an introduction to the model of stateless democra-cy practiced in Rojava, as a potential political paradigm through which to confront the many related crises in pol-itics, economy, and ecology that we face across the world.'

I am pointing to a break here, a break with the habit of prioritising attention to the modalities of enquiry (e.g., what is it to do an enquiry as an artistic process?) to such a degree that it obscures the specificity of any particular enquiry. The difference that emerges in recent work is that of centralising a specific matter of concern and addressing this through attention to concrete conjunctions, as opposed to constantly reducing back to the question 'what is artistic research?'. I give the example of Staal's question of the agency of art in alliance with progressive political struggle as a general matter of concern, and the specific encounters with particular counter-models of cultural and political possibility and practice in the world, in this instance the Kurdish Women's Movement's stateless democracy. The question of what kind of research is *really* artistic research is subordinated to other questions in this later example. Nonetheless it is an important condition of possibility of this later type of enquiry that it operates within, and across, the artistic field opportuning various artistic infrastructures, and mobilising and instantiating artistic practices.

It is also important to register the important enabling contribution of the earlier moment of work. When the volume *On Knowledge Production* seeks to problematise the generic rhetorics of artistic research, and to locate this with reference to neoliberal colonisations of the academy and of contemporary art practices (indeed the neoliberal colonisation of the life world in general), it provides a framework, it gives a genealogy that in some sense makes it possible for the later generation of enquiry to unfold.

There are three caveats to my claim for a generational shift from the ontological, or more properly termed 'ideological', question 'what is artistic research?'.

Firstly, the earlier phase of debate was not completely homogenous and univocal. However, the degree to which the earlier debate on artistic research actually obscured – and indeed obstructed – processes of enquiry by installing an ideological project (to protest the specificity of art and the exceptionalism of art) in place of a praxis of questioning, has not been fully identified and unpacked. In many ways the debate on artistic research was a form of class protest and revolt at the erosion of the ideology of the aesthetic – indeed it sometimes operated as a simple refusal of the actual achievement of this erosion of the ideology of the aesthetic by earlier generations of artistic practice.

Furthermore, the elaboration of a research culture by different institutional players must still be critically contested in ways that draw upon some of the more sophisticated challenges elaborated in this earlier phase of debate. So Simon Sheikh's challenge from *On Knowledge Production* that 'It is better to do nothing than to work formally toward making visible what the West declares to exist' rebounds upon the current moment also.

Secondly, there is a danger of a re-setting of the terms of debate back to reductive questions of the specificity of art *qua* art through the elaboration of institutional research cultures in the nexus of competition for funding and status by both individuals and institutions alike. It seems to me that this danger is apparent in two registers. In one register it is a matter of institutions seeking to position themselves as the bearers of authentically *artistic* values through affiliation to established artworld value hierarchies (e.g., through proximity to art market stars and partnership with players accorded high status in the reputational economy of the wider art system).

In this jostling for status, there is a real danger of simply propping up the wider art system's pre-established valuation practices, and so re-inforcing the mystique of *the artistic* in place of conducting enquiry. In another register, it is a matter of how funding practices are negotiated and navigated. There is still considerable work to be done in accessing research funding through existing funding regimes without, on the one hand, simplistically pleading the exceptionalism of *artistic* research, nor on the other hand, accepting generic terms of research funding as somehow operating univocally or unproblematically.

Thirdly, and perhaps most difficult to frame, is the twin challenges of Eurocentrism and the fetishistic cooptions of various Eurocentric critiques and decolonialisms within artistic research project rhetorics. In recent work at doctoral level a marked increase in the citation of various critiques of Eurocentrism is notable. This has a familiar feeling of something becoming *au courant*, an intellectual and artistic fashion, but also very often with a strong sense of a disconnect from the political projects cited. Staal's project I think may be taken as a useful guide here, in as much as it is both the attempt to think in solidarity with political struggle framed outside the Eurocentric discourse on the Westphalian state system, and it is something that is enabled by the European privilege of geopolitical mobility and presumed rights of access (albeit something that is problematised within the project itself.)

The reason I propose Staal's project as a guide, is that I read the project as not proposing to escape Eurocentrism simply by enacting solidarities, but rather, and again I take the wider context of the collaboration with BAK here as important, because NWS and NWA may be seen to further extend the project of 'formerising the west' by decentering without disavowing coloniality/ modernity. This requires further work, but work as collective enquiry not work as self-fashioning and auto-critique. This is also why the (European) reduction of the artistic to the aesthetic, and of the aesthetic to questions of subjectivity, can be such a tricky obstacle to enquiry.

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*Futures of Artistic Research* is a collection of essays that brings into focus the actual significance and future possibilities of the experimental exercises and critiques emerging across the field of artistic research. The anthology shows how current artistic research discussion reworks older definitions of purposes of art, experimenting, knowledge, and methodologies, and how it also advances new ethical and political insights in the field of research.

The Research Pavilion in Venice, hosted by the University of the Arts Helsinki, has been important as a setting influencing the selection of writers as well as the topics of the book. The editors of the collection, *Jan Kaila* and *Henk Slager* acted as curators, and *Anita Seppä* as the commissioner, of the Research Pavilion in 2015 and 2017.

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