

COUNTER- POINTS OF ART AND RESEARCH

CONCEPTS, PRACTICES, AND DEMARCATIONS
FROM THE FINNISH ACADEMIA

EDITED BY OTSO AAVANRANTA AND SUSANNA VÄLIMÄKI



ART THEORETICAL WRITINGS FROM THE ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS

19

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Counterpoints of Art and Research:
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Art theoretical writings from the Academy of Fine Arts (19)

Edited by Otso Aavanranta and Susanna Välimäki

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Contents

Contributors	8
1. INTRODUCTION	
Delving into the Luxuriant Terrain of Art and Research	9
Otso Aavanranta and Susanna Välimäki	
2. A FAREWELL TO EXCLUSION?	
The Self-Referentiality of Art Meets the Politics of Inclusion	23
Kalle Lampela	
3. THEATRE AS HISTORIOGRAPHY	
Milja Sarkola's Harriet	45
Hanna Korsberg	
4. MODALITIES OF ART AND ARTISTIC RESEARCH	
The Possible, the Potential and the Virtual	69
Esa Kirkkopelto	
5. ISABELLE STENGERS'S COSMOPOLITICS AND ARTISTIC RESEARCH	101
Mika Elo	
6. THE INTRA-ACTIVE REALITIES OF ARTISTIC LABOUR	
A Proposal for a Multidisciplinary Approach	135
Mikko Jakonen, Paul Jonker-Hoffrén, Katve-Kaisa Kontturi and Milla Tiainen	

7. PHENOMENOLOGICAL INSIGHTS INTO EMBODIED WRITING IN ARTISTIC RESEARCH	169
Leena Rouhiainen	
8. RESEARCH-CREATION	
Bridging Practices of Research	
Between the Arts and Academia	191
Otso Aavanranta and Sara Bédard-Goulet	
9. GLOBAL ALTERNATIVES FOR ART AS AIDES FOR THE DIVERSIFICATION OF THE ART SYSTEM	213
Max Ryytänen	
Index of Names	231

Contributors

Otso Aavanranta is Professor of Artistic Research at the University of the Arts Helsinki.

Sara Bédard-Goulet is Fellow in Environmental Humanities at the University of Tartu/Estonia, and Assistant Professor of French at Utrecht University.

Mika Elo is Professor of Artistic Research at the University of the Arts Helsinki.

Mikko Jakonen, DSocSci, Docent, is Professor of Social and Public Policy at the University of Eastern Finland.

Paul Jonker-Hoffrén, DSocSci, is a University Researcher at Tampere University.

Esa Kirkkopelto is Professor of Theatre Art, Artistic Research, Tampere University.

Katve-Kaisa Kontturi, PhD, Docent, is Senior Lecturer in Art History at the University of Turku.

Hanna Korsberg is Professor of Theatre Research at the University of Helsinki.

Kalle Lampela is a University Researcher in the Faculty of Art and Design, University of Lapland.

Leena Rouhiainen is Professor of Artistic Research at the University of the Arts Helsinki.

Max Rynnänen is a Principal Lecturer in the Department of Art and Media at Aalto University's School of Arts, Design, and Architecture.

Milla Tiainen, PhD, Docent, is Senior Lecturer in Musicology at the University of Turku.

Susanna Välimäki is Professor of Art Studies and Head of Musicology at the University of Helsinki.

1. INTRODUCTION

Delving into the Luxuriant Terrain of Art and Research

OTSO AAVANRANTA AND SUSANNA VÄLIMÄKI

This edited volume investigates the intersecting terrain of art and research in multiple dimensions. The texts engage with the conceptual grounds, fields of practice, and territorial demarcations within, in-between, and beyond the institutionally established binary of artistic research versus humanities or scientific study of the arts. Together, the texts reveal a polyphonic and contrapuntal scholarly landscape that extends from the epistemic foundations of artistic practice and thought towards the entanglements of the arts with historiography, labour, academic disciplinarity, the politics of inclusion, as well as cultural diversity. The collection brings to the fore a multiplicity of research approaches, methods, and theoretical discussions that illuminate the current dynamic atmosphere, as well as the potential of cross-informing and cross-fertilisation between the research approaches in and around the arts.

This edited collection originated from the need to advance the dialogue and liaisons between artistic research, which is primarily founded on artistic practice, and art studies, which is primarily founded on humanities/sciences. Both represent research and are related to art, even though research as art and research as humanities/science have constitutional and traditional differences related to their modes of knowledge formation, discursive practices, institutions, and sectors of society and culture. Yet these two distinctive

approaches to research in and around the arts in the academia of the 21st Century have clearly converged and influenced each other's development in significant ways over the past couple of decades, and in reality it is a question of a spectrum of approaches to art and research, rather than a binarity.

These are some of the issues we were discussing when planning and executing the colloquium *The Many Faces of Art and Research: Practices, Concepts, and Demarcations*, which took place in Autumn 2021 as a cooperative effort between the University of the Arts Helsinki Research Institute and the Disciplines and Study Programmes of Art Studies at the University of Helsinki.¹ This edited volume is based on the papers presented at that event. The original colloquium was held predominantly in Finnish, while the articles are presented here in English to make them available for a wider audience, as the subject-matter is of high relevance to the current international field of arts and research.

Art and research in constant transformation

At the beginning of the 2020s, the most salient institutional pillars around the academic discussion on art and research in Finland (and elsewhere in Northern Europe) are, on the one hand, the various forms of artistic research, always linked in one way or another to artistic practice, and on the other hand the traditional research disciplines of art studies (e.g., aesthetics, art history, film and television studies, literature studies, musicology, and theatre studies). Both

1 *Taitteen ja tutkimuksen monet kasvat: käsitteet, käytännöt ja rajankäynnit*, at the University of Helsinki, 15 October 2021, organized by the University of the Arts Helsinki Research Institute and Disciplines and Programmes of Art Studies at the University of Helsinki. The organizing committee consisted of Professor Otso Aavanranta (University of the Arts Helsinki), Professor Susanna Välimäki (University of Helsinki), Principal University Lecturer Max Ryytänen (Aalto University), and Colloquium Secretary Johanna Rauhaniemi (University of the Arts Helsinki). See UA 2021.

are characterised by their own specific histories, institutional and educational structures and regulations, knowledge interests, societal roles, repertoires of concepts, practices, and debates.

In many cases, these two research orientations, the first one grounded institutionally in art academies, and the other in the humanities and sciences in research universities, have been seen as fundamentally different and mutually exclusive on the basis of an oppositional understanding of art vs. science, i.e., because of the differences in epistemics, scope, and objectives involved in artistic work and scientific/humanities work. However, research fields and practices related to art have often been, in fact, characterised precisely by the integration of different approaches, traditions, and methods, the dismantling of conceptual hierarchies, and curiosity around experimental, experiential, and action-based knowledge formation. Research evolving within artistic practice and research examining art in the scientific/humanities tradition can engage in fruitful dialogue not only in the general discussion around art and research, but also within individual research projects. Indeed, many researchers and projects combine scientific/humanities research *and* artistic research, and art-based and creative methodologies have increasingly been adopted in various branches of the humanities and social and environmental sciences, for instance. Design-based, developmental, experimental, and applied research in and around the arts have always combined features of both artistic and humanities/scientific approaches, regardless of the conceptual, disciplinary, and academic definitions or fashions at the time.

Art and research (as well as humanities/science) are historical and cultural concepts, and thus subject to changes both in history and in different cultural and linguistic contexts. Many of the bygone or age-old traditions that we nowadays regard as art or research, scholarly enterprise or science, did not recognize these concepts or any differences between them. Art and research have shared a long

history of intertwined thinking since antiquity, which is evident, as just one example, in the many meanings of the Latin word *ars* (pl. *artis*), referring to a method, knowledge, science, skill, craft, art, professionalism, trick, character, and power. Correspondingly, the Ancient Greek term *tekhnē* refers to practical knowledge, art, craft, technique, and skill. Art, science, research, knowledge, and skill are complex concepts with far-stretching roots. In planning this collection of writings, we were motivated by these diverse traditions of thought and understanding, and by questions such as: how do we understand these concepts, such as art and research, in contemporary academia? What is the common and shared conceptual basis for all research dealing with art, or does such a basis exist? How should the concepts of “artistic research” and “art research” be revisited, examined, defined, and developed in relation to each other, and what alternatives for this established division could be found? How can we understand and grasp the totality, diversity, history, and future of research connected to art? How should the concept of art be understood and reshaped in the 2020s?

Beyond the binary of artistic versus humanities or scientific research

The writings in this collection are authored by researchers working at various Finnish and Estonian Universities where the intermingling of art and research takes place in manifold ways: the University of the Arts Helsinki (Academy of Fine Arts, Sibelius Academy, and Theatre Academy), the University of Helsinki (Disciplines in the Art Studies), Aalto University (School of Arts, Design and Architecture), the University of Lapland (Faculty of Art and Design), the University of Tampere (Degree Programme in Theater Arts and Faculty of Information Technology and Communication Sciences), the University of Turku (School of History, Culture and Arts Studies), the University of Eastern Finland (Faculty of Social Sciences), and

the University of Tartu, Estonia. The editorial intention has been to form a corpus that engages with and interacts upon the shared conceptual terrain of artistic research tradition and humanities/scientific art studies tradition. We have been especially interested in the potential to move forward from the institutionally cemented segmentation of art studies vs. artistic research towards a conceptual and methodological fluidity where approaches in and around the arts interweave and mutually support each other. Hopefully, these counterpoints of art and research initiate new ways to study, understand, and conceptualise the manifold intersections and entanglements between art and research.

Upon closer examination, the different research approaches are already de facto interlaced, as may be observed in the tradition of art- or design-based applied sciences, or in artistic research being infused with conceptual imports from the humanities and social sciences, and in symmetry, as can be seen when the humanities and social sciences adopt sensorial, artistic, and creative methods. The articles in the edited collection at hand often tap into a common corpus of references. In our view, there is much to gain from intra-action within the art and research cluster, especially in the current macro-political context and worldwide crises, which calls for taking bold and substantiated stands for values incorporated within art and research, and the cultural field at large.

Through its multifaceted collection of writings, this volume aims to contribute to the mapping of the width and diversity of the research-related concepts, approaches, and methods in and through the arts. Together and in relation to each other, the texts highlight the various connections, entanglements, and lines of demarcation between artistic and scientific/humanities research approaches. They also open perspectives into different, parallel, and complementary forms of knowledge formation, as well as their genealogies and identities that are retraceable to academic, educational,

and labour policies and traditions. We are well aware that the approaches included in this delimited volume cover only some of the possible directions that art and research might take. Several major currents such as design research, pedagogical and activist research in the arts, as well as art-based approaches in social sciences and humanities are missing from this collection. This is the result of circumstances and scope, and hopefully these agencies can be brought in to further diversify the discussion in future colloquiums and publications.

The contents of the volume

All of the eight chapters in the collection, following this introduction, are double-blind peer-reviewed chapters. Six chapters were written especially for this collection, and two chapters (chapters 5 and 6) are English translations of peer-reviewed articles originally published elsewhere in Finnish and translated for the purpose of this collection.

The volume opens with Kalle Lampela's chapter "A Farewell to Exclusion? The Self-Referentiality of Art Meets the Politics of Inclusion", where the author explores the incompatible dynamics between the self-feeding closed circuit of the contemporary art establishment and the political project of inclusive culture. The dialectics of self-referentiality and inclusion provide a lens for a nuanced discussion of art as a historical construction, leading to the question of the legitimacy of fine arts in contemporary society. Lampela investigates the exclusivity and the frontiers of the established arts systems, in relation to the notions of art, non-art, and artistic research.

In "Theatre as Historiography: Milja Sarkola's *Harriet*", Hanna Korsberg analyses a 2019 theatre production by the Helsinki-based theatre company Ryhmäteatteri, which staged a set of possible historical interpretations of a well-known yet mysterious event during the Finnish Civil War (1918). Korsberg's reading demonstrates how

a theatre performance can present, depict, and bring into the discussion, via concrete means of performing arts, essential historiographical questions, concepts, and themes. Indeed, history writing always puts up a kind of a performance, since any narration of history involves choosing between multiple possible interpretations and negotiating around undocumented voids, grey zones, and contradictory discourses; history writing is never totally objective or value-free, but is rather an art of interpretation. In these terms, a theatre performance such as *Harriet*, based on archival study of historical sources and even informing the audience of these references, can reflect on, via its artistic means, what historical research is.

Esa Kirkkopelto's chapter, "Modalities of Artistic Research: From Possible to Virtual", sets out to examine modal logic in relation to the arts and artistic research. Philosophical modalities traditionally refer to the categories of "possible", "real", or "effective" and "necessity", as well as their negations. Through this theoretical inquiry, the (im)possibilities of artistic research become questions that lead the author to expand the conceptual horizon towards a meticulous examination of the potential and the virtual as fundamental aspects of artistic experience. Artistic creations reside on and play with the borderlines between virtual and actual, potential and real.

The chapter "Isabelle Stengers's Cosmopolitics and Artistic Research", by Mika Elo, proposes a way forward for artistic research. By drawing on the philosopher of science Isabelle Stenger's concepts, and the notions of cosmopolitics and ecology of practices in particular, Elo conjures the figures of the practitioner, the expert, the professional and the diplomat to navigate the pluralistic modes of research (and knowing) in and around the arts. The key question is how different epistemic practices can live up to their potential without a programmatic agenda, as well as how they can contribute to cooperation and exchange without taming their mutual differences. For the case of artistic research, mobilising the heterotopia of cosmopolitics

allows for shifting the debates on artistic research from ontological considerations of what artistic research is towards epistemological and ethical considerations of what artistic research can do, and how it can connect with other modes and practices of research. (The chapter is an English translation of an article originally published in Finnish in *Tiede & edistys*, Nr. 4/2021.)

Written *en quatuor* by Mikko Jakonen, Paul Jonker-Hoffren, Katve-Kaisa Kontturi, and Milla Tiainen, the chapter “The Intra-active Realities of Artistic Labour: A Proposal for a Multidisciplinary Approach” sets art as labour in the focus in our common effort to understand what art, artistic work, and artistic processes are and mean in contemporary society, as well as looking towards the future. This perspective allows us to explore how, in artistic work, specific practices in different forms of the arts, as well as aesthetic, cultural, and political discourses around the arts, are inevitably entangled with the subjective experiences of artists trying to make their living out of their art, and the various socio-economic and political factors related to their profession in current society. (The chapter is an English translation of an article originally published in Finnish in *Kulttuurintutkimus*, Nr. 2–3/2021.)

In the chapter “Phenomenological Insights into Embodied Writing in Artistic Research”, Leena Rouhiainen fleshes out an inquiry into how the act of writing emerges from lived bodily experience. Rooted in dance and choreography, and taking somatic practices and phenomenology as its vehicle, Rouhiainen explores how the felt-sense that emerges in and through the body, entangled with the perception of the environment, gives rise to poetic language. The artistic researcher in dance and choreography cultivates their appreciation of and capacity to engage with their sensuous, perceptual, and affective experiences in and through the body, and transforms these experiences in their research writing into poetic expressions – a cognitive process that can be understood as “writing embodiment”.

In the chapter written *en duo*, “Research-Creation: Bridging Practices of Research Between Art and Academia”, Otso Aavanranta and Sara Bédard-Goulet formulate a proposal for entangling artistic research and research in the arts via the notion of research-creation. Research-creation, a close kin of artistic research, may be seen as a terrain where artistic practice and other forms of inquiry and knowing meet. Aavanranta and Bédard-Goulet examine the francophone foundations of the research-creation approach in connection with its institutional framing in France and Québec, Canada, as well as its more recent global developments, and discuss the transdisciplinary potential of research-creation through the common denominator of “research as practice”.

In the final chapter of the volume, “Global Alternatives for Art as Aides for the Diversification of the Art System”, Max Ryyänänen expands the perspective of arts-related research towards cultural diversity and an understanding of the multiplicity of art systems around the globe. The “Western”, i.e. Central-European, system of art is only one possible framework for distinguishing aesthetic cultures, and Ryyänänen presents alternative frameworks to it from India and Japan. Looking into such alternatives might prove helpful in rethinking and widening the perspectives and practices in and around the arts and research. Decentralising the prevailing art system can itself also pave the way towards multiplying our possibilities for future appreciation of aesthetic cultures.

Notes on art and research in the Finnish academic context

This volume speaks primarily from the specific standpoint of Finnish academia, with the hope that the discussions herein might find resonances with other local and glocal contexts. The articulations of art and research in Finland have substantially evolved from the historical division of labour between “artist practitioners” trained

at art academies and the “art thinkers” educated at research universities. Since the 1990s, along with the higher education degree reform implemented by the European Union (the Bologna process), some art academies have become universities with responsibilities in research as well as in teaching, and thus theorization and practice are finding multiple contexts of entanglement and co-development. However, professional and institutional lines of demarcation still continue to shape art-related research practices, values, socio-economic models and career paths. Whether one’s professional education and expertise lies in artistic practice or science/humanities leads to different careers, even when focusing on research; artistic researchers do not qualify for positions in scientific/humanities research, and vice versa (however, some few are professionals in both areas, and some academic positions include the option to specialise in either). At the level of university funding, the relatively scarce resources attributed to the arts and humanities may become an object of competition between institutions.

Another point of contention is the societally-attributed legitimacy of different research approaches within the arts and humanities/sciences. The epistemic modes forwarded by artistic research, such as aesthetic and sensuous knowing, or visual or sonic thinking, are often not recognised as categories of knowledge at all by most scholarly institutions. Where discursive scholarship in the arts and humanities holds a disadvantage of prestige in comparison to science, artistic research is outright marginal, and enters the academic scene from the standpoint of an underdog, affecting the standing of researchers’ outputs and their career prospects. Yet another, more recent, worrying phenomenon is the web-mediated harassment and targeting of researchers within the arts, humanities, and social sciences – especially affecting those working with issues of art and social or environmental justice – which often develops in the merging environment of political populism and social media.

This frequently takes the form of a brutal “utilitarian” argumentation aiming to delegitimise the entire prospect of art and artistic research as useless waste of public money. Such public harassment can have a negative impact on both researchers’ career choices and research topics. These are just some of the phenomena that demonstrate the importance of finding a common denominator that enables discussion, collaboration, and support between different research traditions in and around the arts, as we struggle with such societal, political, and institutional challenges.

At the level of national regulations, a traditional research university, such as the University of Helsinki, defines its basic duties as the practice of free scientific research and teaching based on scientific research; the latter also means that research feeds the curricula. Moreover, the university advances research-based education in society, and it interacts with other actors in society, yet seeks to maintain its independence (UH 2015, Section 2). According to the regulations of the University of the Arts Helsinki, which originated in a 2013 fusion of the former art academies, its core duties are to provide the highest level of education in the arts (music, theatre, and visual arts) and to promote art and research, as well as artistic and research-based education in society. In addition, it “strengthens the significance, status and autonomy of art in society, as well as Finnish art and cultural life.” In carrying out these duties, the University of the Arts utilises cooperation across the fields of art and research (US 2021b, §8).

Accordingly, humanities/scientific art studies and artistic research are institutionally largely divided between traditional research universities and the University of the Arts Helsinki, so that only at the University of the Arts can one complete a doctoral degree based on artistic research, and only the traditional research universities provide basic degree education in scientific and humanities research. However, in practice, the academic field is more diverse,

complex, and dynamically evolving. For example, there are three basic types of doctoral degrees at the University of the Arts Helsinki: research degree (traditional dissertation), applied/developmental doctoral degree, and artistic doctoral degree. At research universities, for their part, only scientific/humanities research dissertations can be pursued, although at several research universities, as well as at universities that combine features from traditional research universities, polytechnic universities, and art academies, an artistic part can be included in a doctoral research degree, serving as a methodological, applied, or design/developmental component of the dissertation (cf. the University of Lapland's Faculty of Art and Design, Aalto University's School of Art, Design and Architecture, and Tampere University's Degree Programme in Theatre Arts). At the University of Turku, for instance, in its role as a traditional research university, creative writing is taught at the undergraduate level. In the bigger picture, it is important to note that in traditional research universities, art-based and creative methods may be used in many fields of the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences, from education to sociology and acoustics, and that this can even be seen as a growing trend.

Amidst this evolving context, and acknowledging the precarious position that arts-related research is currently facing in the university, education, and cultural politics of Finland, it is necessary to operate with a broad view. By respecting the different universities' professional education and research profiles, we can also work towards the common goal of advancing and developing all research related to the arts, as well as making its importance more visible and understood in society. Institutionally-maintained disciplinary research silos can easily become isolated, small, and fragile units that are prone to extinction within the hard Darwinism of current research optimisation policies. Beyond mere survival, the liveliness and renewal of the field of art and research is at stake. We hope that

this volume might provide a step towards establishing dialogue and mutual recognition within the Finnish art and research scene, and perhaps inspire similar gestures elsewhere.

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2. A FAREWELL TO EXCLUSION? The Self-Referentiality of Art Meets the Politics of Inclusion

KALLE LAMPELA

During the last thirty years we have seen a growing deconstructive and decolonising criticism of the legacy of the modern system of the arts. Along with the criticism the hierarchies of the art system and the legitimacy of fine arts in society have also been reconsidered.

I am especially interested in the incompatible dynamics of the self-referentiality of the established arts and the cultural political project to increase inclusion in culture. At first, it seems that these two policies have completely different ambitions. However, on closer inspection, one can identify common ground where they meet. Fascinatingly, both self-referentiality and inclusion contribute to the discussion on the legitimacy of fine arts in society.

To begin with I introduce the story of art as a historical construction very briefly. After that I take a look at the dialectics of nonart and art in artistic research and at the discussions on the changing notions of artistic labour and exclusivity of the established arts.

Fine art as a historical construction

In his groundbreaking 1951 study art historian Paul Kristeller argued that the category of fine art did not exist before the eighteenth century (Kristeller 1992a [1951] & 1992b [1951]). Building on that premise, in 2001 philosopher Larry Shiner showed in *The Invention of Art* that fine art, as we have generally understood it, was neither eternal

nor ancient but a historical construction (Shiner 2001). The ancient Greeks had no word for what we call fine art. Instead, they had the word *techne*. The Romans had *ars*. Those two words included many things that we would call craft. They embraced things as diverse as carpentry and poetry, shoemaking and medicine, sculpture and horse-breaking. (Kristeller 1992a [1951], 5; Shiner 2001, 19; Staten 2019.) In ancient and medieval Europe there was not a single category of fine art. There was a Greco-Roman division of the arts into “liberal” versus “vulgar” – or “servile” – that the early medieval writers adapted. The liberal arts were divided into the trivium (logic, grammar, rhetoric) and quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music theory). Medieval theologian Hugh of St Victor made an influential argument for replacing the pejorative terms “vulgar” or “servile” with the term “mechanical arts,” claiming that since there were seven liberal arts there should be seven mechanical arts. Hugh’s seven mechanical arts included weaving, armament, commerce, agriculture, hunting, medicine and theatrics. (See Shiner 2001, 28–29.)

During the Renaissance many writers and artists – like Leonardo da Vinci – attempted to raise the status of painting and visual arts. Some artists wanted to liberate them from the restrictions of the craft guilds. Although there were signs that suggest the beginnings of the modern concept of the artist – like the emergence of the genre of the artist’s biography, the development of the self-portrait, and the rise of the court artist – the Renaissance lacked our modern category of fine art, and our ideal of the autonomous artist pursuing self-expression and originality. (Shiner 2001, 28–29; Kristeller 1992a, 17–24.)

The ideas and influences of the Italian Renaissance continued their existence in the French Classicism and in the Enlightenment. Institutional factors started to emerge during the sixteenth and the seventeenth century. The founding of academies and freedom from guild restrictions were such. The category of fine art (*beaux arts*) was elaborated among the aristocracy in London and Paris during

the eighteenth century. Charles Batteux presented the system in his book *Les beaux arts réduits à un même principe* in 1746. He integrated the term “beaux-arts” with a restricted set of arts – music, poetry, painting, sculpture, and dance – and grouped them on the basis of an explicit principle, “the imitation of beautiful nature.” (Shiner 2001, 83; cf. Kristeller 1992b, 38.)

Although Batteaux made imitation his central criteria, he also gave an important place to the opposition between pleasure and utility. On this basis, Batteaux claimed there are actually three classes of arts: those that simply minister to our needs (the mechanical arts); those whose aim is pleasure (the beaux-arts par excellence); and those that combine utility and pleasure (eloquence and architecture). Batteaux also used two other criteria for separating the beaux-arts from the rest: genius, which he calls “the father of arts,” because it imitates beautiful nature, and taste, which judges how well beautiful nature has been imitated. (Shiner 2001, 83.)

After Batteaux’s book a few other classifications followed, more or less along the same lines. New fine art institutions were founded and “the polite class for the polite arts” was educated. Fine art needed a faithful audience that could contemplate art in a silent and sophisticated way. (Shiner 2001, 79–98; Rynänen 2021, 34.)

The artist and fine art was separated from the artisan and crafts:

the category of fine art and its criterion of refined pleasure and informed judgement was neither purely intellectual construct nor the simple expression of an existing social division but part of an effort to institute a new distinction at once social and cultural...On this high cultural ground, noble and bourgeois could meet as a fine art public, rejecting both the frivolous diversions of the rich and highborn as well as the vulgar amusements of the populace. (Shiner 2001, 97.)

In the separation of the artist from the artisan, all the “poetic” attributes – such as inspiration, imagination, freedom and genius – were ascribed to the artist and all the “mechanical” attributes – such as skill, rules, imitation and service – to the artisan (Shiner 2001, 111–115).

In the first half of the nineteenth century, art became an independent realm. The separation of art from life became the norm within the modern system of the arts. Manifestos for the absolute independence of art were also elaborated in terms of “Art for Art’s sake” and the idea of autonomy of art. “The spiritual elevation of art took the Schillerian form of viewing art as the revelation of a superior truth with the power to redeem.” Art as a spiritually elevated realm was a core idea also in the work of F. W. J. Schelling and G. W. F. Hegel. (Shiner 2001, 194–195.)

Parallel to the invention of the modern system of the arts, in the beginning of the eighteenth century, Alexander Baumgarten coined the term “aesthetic” for the kind of response he believed appropriate to the “sensate discourse” of poetry. He wanted a name for sensation’s own logic and he called it “aesthetic” from the Greek *aiesthesis*. Immanuel Kant and Friedrich Schiller integrated the concept of the aesthetic with the new concepts of fine art and the artist. According to Shiner, by doing so, “they provided the first systematic justifications for the modern system of the arts” (Shiner 2001, 146).

According to Kant, theories that make taste the application of concepts or rules, of sensual pleasure or utility, all admit of an “interest” or desire, whereas true “aesthetic taste” is a pure, disinterested pleasure in which we only contemplate an object... By making disinterestedness the key to the universality of aesthetic judgement, Kant distinguished the autonomy of aesthetic experience not only from the ordinary pleasures of sense or utility but also from science and morality. (Shiner 2001, 146–147.)

Shiner argues that Kant used the specificity of the aesthetic to explain the new polarities of fine art versus craft and artist versus artisan. Craft work, Kant claimed, was merely labour, something people did only if paid, whereas making fine art was an activity pleasurable in itself. Unlike the artisan or craftsperson, who followed a specific concept, the artist used his genius “aesthetically,” exercising the imagination and understanding in free play. (Shiner 2001, 147–148.)

In addition to the aesthetic, the discourse on genius was elaborated. The genius was a white man, to whom the restrictions of art and society did not apply. In the justifications of the era, genius was gendered and refined taste was racialised. (Nochlin 1994; Shiner 2001, 148–150, 195, 200–201; Shusterman 1993.)

In *The Changing Social Economy of Art*, Hans Abbing called the nineteenth century an era of spiritually elevated art or “serious art,” classified solely as Western art. Art was not only separated from craft but also from applied art and entertainment.

In the nineteenth century a further narrowing of the notion of art occurs. The distinction between art and applied art becomes important. Gradually, applied art is no longer real art; it needs an adjective. It has less goodness than art...The art that cultured bourgeois judge to be serious is separated from popular art...The latter two are entertainment-art rather than real art. They are “no art.” As such, they need adjectives, like popular, inferior, entertainment, commercial and so on. It is the art of the populace. The art-loving and cultured bourgeois monopolize the term art; only their serious art is art, that is, art without adjective. It is this kind of art that is triumphant. (Abbing 2019, 11.)

Within the modern system of the arts there was a resistance to its values and hierarchies. Some resistant groups of artists tried to construct their own art worlds and systems on different values

and premises than those that were considered ruling. The Arts and Crafts movement was powerful, as were Russian constructivists, Dadaists and conceptual artists. (Shiner 2001, 229–301.) However, most of the products and gestures of those groups were recaptured by the art world in ways that blunted their critique of the fine art system (Shiner 2001, 8, 292). Such was the fate of a utopian avant-gardist attempt to overcome the difference between art and life (Bürger 1984, 59; McEvelley 2005, 351; Johansson 2005). Resistance through art proved difficult, as “art” – whenever it was claimed – connected the actions, events or gestures to the frame of art – different genres, art criticism, art talk, etc. – without which everyday events would not have been possible to conceive as art (Saito 2010, 39; Kirkkopelto 2018, 34). One has to represent or classify a wheat field or planting of a tree as art, otherwise the wheat field would be a mere wheat field and the tree, simply a tree.

The dawn of a non-artistic post-art age

Postmodern theories were ruthless on all types of utopias and essentialisms – whether critical, social, political or artistic (Lüdtke 1986; Jameson 1991; Rossi 1999, 33–43). Nevertheless, the old utopian aspirations of institutional critique and everyday life merging in art were still kept alive in some niches of performance art and theorisations in artistic research at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Esa Kirkkopelto defended, on several occasions, his idea of artistic research as an institutional practice that is still able to sustain certain avant-gardist goals. In 2015, he emphasised that the “double bind” – i.e., the fatal stumbling block of institutional critique – was not fatal in the context of artistic research. It was clear that artist-researchers were part of the power play in institutions as this was where they did their research. However, according to Kirkkopelto, the double bind did not need “to paralyse us.” The reason for this was “the institutionally inventive nature of artistic research practice

itself.” According to Kirkkopelto artistic research was not only done in institutions, “but it should also conduct research on them, take institutions as its object.” He referred as well to particular institutions where the research took place as the institutions in a broader sense: “from the aesthetic institutions of perception and affect to current political institutions, through showing how the latter are connected to the former or even based on them.” (Kirkkopelto 2015, 52.)

Kirkkopelto saw in 2018 that Kaprow’s logic of nonart applied when artists started to do research in universities. According to Allan Kaprow nonart was “whatever has not yet been accepted as art but has caught an artist’s attention with that possibility in mind” (Kaprow 2003, 98). Although it was widely recognised during the twentieth century within the Western art world that making art had many elements that recalled research, artists were not very familiar with research as the academic practice with its scholarly requirements (Siukonen 2002). Kirkkopelto’s insight here was that research par excellence was the non-artistic element in artistic research.

When professional artists start to make research in institutional academic settings, respecting at least to some extent the corresponding criteria of knowledge production and entering into an explicit dialogue with non-artistic discourses and disciplines, they clearly abandon something of their former status and practice, whether they admit it or not. Their endeavours are often also motivated by an explicit attempt to transform their practice to make it more “real” and efficient – for instance, socially, politically, or ecologically significant. But they also pay a price for this move, the nature of which is hard to define. This creates an interesting parallel between artistic research and the avant-garde. (Kirkkopelto 2018, 36.)

Kirkkopelto saw that in relation to the debate between modernism and the avant-garde, artistic research could be conceived

as “a way to liberate the avant-garde from its deadlock – that is, to bring its appropriation to a halt and pursue its agenda by new means.” According to him, the reconsideration of the legacy of the avant-garde could “be applied for contextualising artistic research historically and liberating it from overtly institutional, artistic, or philosophical closures.” (Kirkkopelto 2018, 39.)

Kirkkopelto argued that as artistic research liberated art from producing and representing art, it changed our relation to art significantly. According to his conception, artistic research was interested in “the reality of art, not in art as part of the given reality and not as its representative” (Kirkkopelto 2018, 40). To summarise: artistic research took place in the processes of reality research instead of representing the reality.¹

While Kirkkopelto’s reconsiderations of their goals and ideals certainly contribute to the theory of neo-avant-garde and institutional critique, and to the discussion on artistic research, respectively, they do not enhance inclusion in the field of fine art. However, the neo-avant-gardist ideals and the goals of the institutional critique as such do not inevitably rule out inclusion. For instance, one can recognise the inclusive aspect in Ernesto Pujol’s practice, in addition to the question whether withdrawal from art world can be regarded a way to practice institutional critique in the twenty-first century.

Pujol is a former monk, performance artist, social choreographer and educator. He has researched reality in his own terms outside academia. In 2018, in *Walking Art Practice*, he stated that we needed to detach from art,

1 Kirkkopelto’s ideas were well grounded in his artistic and teaching practice in the Uniarts Helsinki’s Theatre Academy. However, his approach did not represent the approach of artistic research at the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts. Visual artists who practiced artistic research there in the first two decades of the twenty-first century produced and represented art as usual.

yet hold on to what art was about throughout most of the history of humanity: the desire to reach a state of existence that is more than mere survival, surpassing material survival by providing insight into the possibilities of the human condition, connecting us with each other and with the planet...In that sense, what we used to call art allowed for the creative expression of the mystery of the self-awareness of matter, which sought to transcend the gathering of food and water, the making of clothing and shelter, our reproduction, and our submission to religious and secular powers. (Pujol 2018, 92.)

Pujol conducted long-lasting collective walking projects, but he was not interested in whether walking was art or not. “Walking can be art, and walking can be walking, just walking” (Pujol 2018, 93). He wrote that he preferred to free himself “from the shackles of that tired old dynamic, of having to argue whether something is art or not.” He simply stated that “the question, too, is dated; indeed, it is as dated as the term.” (Pujol 2018, 92.)

Pujol’s arguments bore a certain spirituality, which was not aimed to justify art, but rather to direct the discussion to a broader meta-level than art theory usually reached. According to him we had to “detach from art, because art was only meant to be a cultural bridge, it was never destination...The goal of art was to achieve greater consciousness.” (Pujol 2018, 92–93.)

Pujol wrote that we were experiencing “the dawn of a post-art period”; “entering a post-art path”; “walking into culture without art.” He argued that much of art-making lost its relevance to society during the twentieth century. Most of what we called fine art was “costly high craft.” On the other hand, art did not embody “the visual currency of contemporary daily life any more than stained glass or embroidery” did. Pujol emphasised that all languages, including the language of art, could die when fewer people could read them. (Pujol 2018, 94.)

Pujol was not interested in building a new practice by tearing down another one. “Humanity will always engage in image and object-making,” he claimed (Pujol 2018, 94). For him, the practice of creative walking, “when performed within the more generous definition and context of culture,” reclaimed “the original intention of all art-making, and its future” (Pujol 2018, 95).

Pujol rigorously questioned the legitimacy of fine arts in society. His book can be seen as a powerful statement for artistic withdrawal from the market-based, celebrity-driven, self-referential and strongly institutionalised contemporary art world. There are other topical ways to embody withdrawal as a political act in the current turbulence in the arts.

Withdrawals and changing notions of artistic labour

I participated in a panel discussion at the Arctic Art Summit held in Rovaniemi in 2019. During the panel and while listening to the other discussions and presentations, I and some of my colleagues noticed that the researchers from Arctic universities were very critical of the idea of the centred – or established – art world. It felt as if the art world with biennials and star curators did not matter much. That was understandable, as the northern areas have their own academic and artistic networks and art worlds (see Huhmarniemi & Jokela 2020), or “scenes” (Ryynänen & Kovalčik 2024). Still, I was wondering why the questions of economic power and hierarchies of art worlds were not discussed. Was it a question of empowered withdrawal from those fine art issues and themes that were held central at the beginning of the twenty-first century? Or was it that ecological and specifically indigenous themes were more crucial in the Arctic area than those of the art market and labour conditions of artists?

In 2017, Kuba Szreder – professor at the Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts – wrote in an *e-flux* article about the wave of art strikes, boycotts and occupations that targeted artistic infrastructures like

museums, biennials and art fairs in Europe, Asia and South America. Szreder focused on a few cases – like *The Polish Day Without Art*, the 2014 boycotts of Manifesta in St. Petersburg, the Sao Paulo and Sydney Biennales – in which artists protested against appalling working conditions or “the unacceptable political or corporate agendas of their sponsors.” Szreder used the concept “productive withdrawal,” with which he referred to “a way of practicing and instituting the commons,” and that was “often organized by people who identify as art workers” (Szreder 2017).

Striking art workers engage in artistic self-organization...which produces new social assemblages that sustain artistic creativity beyond its ossified forms. When strikes, boycotts, and occupations reclaim or reshape artistic infrastructures, institutions of the commons emerge and provide ground for art as a practice of freedom. Far from destroying circulation, the refusal of art workers in moments of productive withdrawal might even accelerate social flows, while emancipating them, allowing for their redirection under better terms. Without moments of collective refusal, there would be nothing to circulate under the name of art but luxurious objects, markers of oligarchic distinction emptied of sense and any value other than exchange value. (Szreder 2017.)

Szreder strongly criticised the art market in his article. He also gave voice to art workers. With his cases, Szreder illuminated the harsh labour conditions of art workers in different countries and within different central art events. He pointed out the changing notions of political activism and labour among artists.

The ways of withdrawing on which Szreder focused in his article were very different to those that the critic Martin Herbert had presented a year earlier in *Tell Them I Said No*, although there were parallel elements. Herbert focused on artists that withdrew from the art world either fully or conceptually. He referred with his concept of

“full withdrawal” to “exasperated reaction to the intolerability of the art world, to the limits of political potential, to gender bias, profiteering, the presence of repellent personalities, and neon egos” (Herbert 2016, 13). With cases like Charlotte Posenenske and Cady Noland, Herbert referred to a dismantling legitimacy of art, understood as a market-based and strongly institutionalised policy. Nevertheless, some cases that he used in his book were not plausible. Some of the artists, like Cady Noland, did not truly withdraw from the art world – or their withdrawal was highly questionable to say the least. Also, conceptual withdrawal was just another self-referential way of being a part of the circulation and market-based art world economy.

Intriguingly, Hans Abbing saw at the beginning of the twenty-first century – in *Why Are Artists Poor?* – that artists’ attitudes were “moving in basically four directions.” Based on these directions Abbing constructed his ideal types of future artists: the artist-researcher, the postmodern artist, the artist-craftsman and the artist-entertainer. According to Abbing, many modern artists developed an attitude that resembled “the scientist’s attitude.” Most of these artist-researchers were not particularly interested in audiences or buyers. Studios were laboratories, while concert halls, museums, books and internet sites were lecture rooms for a select and well-informed audience. According to Abbing, the artist-researcher’s attitude was in line with a contemporary art that had become increasingly self-referential. Artists like John Cage, Donald Judd and Dan Flavin “fit into this group.” (Abbing 2002, 298.)

According to Abbing, postmodern artists did not try to shift the boundaries of art but instead preferred to leap over them from one field to another. They moved “freely between art, design, and applied arts, including advertising” (Abbing 2002, 299). Abbing saw that visual artists like Mathew Barney and Pipilotti Rist fitted into the postmodern artist group. Such artists challenged “the prevailing attitudes in the arts, especially the inclination to deny the economy.”

According to Abbing successful postmodern artists “often establish a business and might hire a number of employees to assist them.” “In this sense, they are more like businessmen and they are not ashamed of it.” (Abbing 2002, 299.)

The artist-craftsman was a more traditional type of an artist than the artist-researcher and the postmodern artist. According to Abbing, craftsmanship lost “much of its high value among artists during the second half of the twentieth century,” because “of the increased importance of self-referential and conceptual art.” “The artist-craftsman” was a type that reinstated old techniques and developed new, more positive attitudes towards craftsmanship (Abbing 2002, 300).

Then, finally, the artist-entertainer was an artist who was not “afraid of entertaining people.” According to Abbing the painters Francesco Clemente and Sandro Chia were “examples of this trend in the visual arts.” (Abbing 2002, 300–301.)

Co-operative projects in which artists and researchers worked together increased after Abbing’s book was published. In 2007, John Roberts wrote in *Intangibilities of Form* that techniques and strategies once associated with the neo-avant-garde – such as photography, interview and direct communication – had passed into the oppositional media of the new social movements and popular consciousness. Artists started to co-operate with eco-scientists, computer scientists/programmers, engineers, technicians and activists. Roberts illuminated cases in which artistic visibility was not at the fore. (Roberts 2007, 215–217.)

The post-visual, or better still anti-visualization, is essentially what happens at the formal level to art when artistic technique and immaterial labour converge as intellectual labour. Art is diffused into an ensemble of non-artistic intellectual skills and competences. However, this is not to say that such artists are no longer interested in working with images,

representations, or symbols. But, in contrast to the counter-symbolic model of post-conceptual network theory, the détourned image and text is not at the centre of artistic praxis in this model. On the contrary, artistic skill is radically decoupled from the residual pictorialism of the post-war neo-avant-garde in favour of collaborative research-based projects which are not in any primary sense...defendable or explainable as *art*. This means that artistic technique and general social technique mutually dissolve into non-artistic practices. (Roberts 2007, 217.)

Roberts's case example was the Danish Superflex group that at the time favoured working on projects that were directly and practically beneficial to a group, community or client – just as the Austrian group Wochenklausur did (see Kester 2004, 98–111; Karttunen 2004). However, these non-artistic post-visual cases were not able to escape the paradox of contemporary art – or the double bind. The projects of Superflex and Wochenklausur depended on the frame of art – documents, photographs, videos, art criticism, art theory, etc. – without which it would not have been possible to conceive of them as art. (Saito 2010, 39; Kirkkopelto 2018, 34.)

One of the ways to avoid negative connotations of the term “art” was to call one's projects by another name. Sari Karttunen studied the changing conception of labour in the context of community art in Finland. She highlighted that community artists did not necessarily embrace the concept of community art. Some of them chose other terms to use, e.g., “social circus” and “jail theatre,” or expressions with slightly different emphases such as “dialogical art,” “city activism,” “workshop,” and “practice.” (Karttunen 2017.)

Abbing wrote in 2019 that “over the last decades two poles have developed in the established arts.” On the one hand, there is “an extreme of serious, studious and supposedly autonomous art, directed at artists and expert-consumers, who discuss art using a specialist's discourse.” On the other, there is “an extreme

of user-oriented and even entertaining art for a large audience.” According to Abbing art education and research was becoming “scientified,” or treated and organised similarly to a scientific discipline. Students in art schools did not make art anymore; rather, they were involved in “projects” and they did “research.” Curators in art spaces explained works in texts that were incomprehensible to non-specialists. (Abbing 2019, 230.)

In the user-oriented domain of established arts, many art companies and artists focused on accessibility. In this domain, “to earn an income,” entrepreneurship of artists and companies became important. To succeed, “flexibility and entrepreneurship” became basic realities. (Abbing 2019, 231.)

According to Abbing, at the end of the 2010s, it became clear that new, alternative, varied and parallel career paths emerged in the arts (Abbing 2019, 238). Fighting against the exclusive mechanisms of art worlds became more and more visible. Abbing wrote that “since new waves of protests about the still inferior position of women and blacks have reoccurred in the Western world, curators suddenly start to recover pieces of art by long dead black (and female) artists, which they now judge to be of high quality, while earlier, they or their predecessors did not” (Abbing 2019, 235). The shift from white male-dominated Western contemporary art to a geographically, sexually and racially more diverse art also happened in Finland, especially within the established series of *ARS* contemporary art exhibitions in the contemporary art museum Kiasma (see Hirvi 2001; Karjalainen & Sakari 2006; Metsola et al. 2011, Haapala et al. 2022). Voices of people who were not white men began to be heard within the art discourse (see especially Fall 2011; Kilomba 2022).

Abbing argued that the legitimacy of art worlds to control the taste and aesthetics in contemporary culture started to crumble. For instance, the gatekeeping power of different institutions became

demonopolised. The boundary between professional artist and amateur artist became “very unclear.” Existing conventions changed. Institutions or art worlds could not control the number of artists anymore. A single meritocracy of artistic quality created and maintained by art worlds did not exist anymore. (Abbing 2019, 239–241; Abbing 2022, 279, 306–318.)

New channels and career paths replaced the few channels and paths that earlier were monopolised by art worlds. Self-organisation and commons became crucial. This change was the result of self-organisation by entrepreneurial individuals and small groups. Another phenomenon that was closely connected to the changes in the notion of artistic labour was hybrid authorship. Being a hybrid artist became an acceptable form of being an artist. According to Abbing, one did not have to be ashamed of combining “proper” art activities with design and other creative activities. Some artists were proud of being a hybrid artist and were praised for it. Hybridity became a legitimate way of working as an artist. (Abbing 2019, 238–242; Abbing 2022, 250–251, 257–258.)

Tensions and dynamics of exclusion and inclusion

The domain of study and research remains a refuge where self-referentiality prospers as theorisations of avant-garde, artistic research and contemporary art meant for a select audience of co-artist-researchers and professors. The amount of the literature is vast.²

2 In 2013, James Elkins wrote that approximately 280 institutions around the world offered the arts-based PhD. According to him, 2011 stood out as the first year in which it became impossible for any single person to read all the literature on the arts-based PhD. However, Elkins categorised different “cultures” into six models of arts-based PhD, of which “the Nordic model” is the one into which artistic research in Finland fits. (Elkins 2013, 10–11.) The literature on the Nordic model of artistic research is also vast. I am not going to estimate whether reading that is impossible or not.

Inclusion is being discussed in cultural policy, education and politics. The aim of inclusion is to deconstruct unequal structures in society, or in other words to increase equality and accessibility to education and culture, including the fine art institutions (Bäckström 2021). Unfortunately, the self-referentiality of art and the discussions on inclusion go on different paths even though one can identify a striking structural similarity in – seemingly – different conceptions of authorship within the self-referentiality and hybridity. For instance, extended authorship within artistic research bears some similarity to the hybrid authorship described by Abbing above. Neither authorship can be regarded as an autonomous in a traditional sense. The scope of an artist-researcher is no more constricted than that of a hybrid artist. However, extended authorship within self-referentiality is realised only in a small, exclusive group of artist-researchers. Paradoxically, authorship is extended by limiting access to doctoral studies. Selection is a common practice in the arts, after all.

To conclude, artistic research is theorised and discussed in small study groups of selected artist-researchers and in on open-access but relatively poorly known platforms such as *Ruukku* (Studies in Artistic Research), *JAR* (Journal for Artistic Research) or *VIS* (Nordic Journal for Artistic Research). The popularisation of research outcomes is not discussed or taken into account. In addition, the current intersectional and decolonising voices are not particularly focused on the institutional problems of artistic research and established contemporary art.³ Rather, those voices still focus on fighting gender bias, binaries and white Eurocentrism in the entire society – which is, of course, a legitimate and commendable effort. Gradually, these critical voices became a part of the language of study and research, and as such, part of the exclusive language

3 See a very relevant exception, Järvinen 2023.

of the arts; for instance, decolonisation became a fashionable metaphor without a concrete link to the colonial past or practices within Western academia (Järvinen 2023).

Difficult art language is a key factor in “inner-art-world exclusion” (Abbing 2019, 141–142), meaning that difficult art discourse serves as both a differentiation strategy and a tool of power. Gaining access to prevailing Western art philosophy is itself a privilege not everyone possesses. There can be several reasons for this, such as socioeconomic or cultural background or different abilities. (Hannuksela and Karhunen 2021, 36.)

The tensions and discreet dynamics of exclusion and inclusion in the field of art are not easy to discern. It goes without saying that difficult art language has its place in the domain of research, i.e., in art theory and in academic discussions on art. In addition, culturally privileged positions are inevitable in art worlds. These social facts do not align very well with inclusive goals. Irrespective of inclusive efforts (according to which everyone should have access to education and culture, including fine arts), exclusive structures remain firmly in place in art worlds.

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3. THEATRE AS HISTORIOGRAPHY

Milja Sarkola's Harriet

HANNA KORSBERG

While making the show, I realised that the narrator's gaze is always fixed, that subjective truth is the starting point for understanding reality and not so much an obstacle. Something must be believed until proven otherwise.

I wrote the play trying to be as faithful as possible to my sources: what has been claimed in writing about Olof Lagus's death over a hundred years and how these claims could be performed on stage. I tried to avoid extra interpretations and freedom of imagination. The effort was, of course, impossible and insane. Documentary is always an interpretation, under the guise of objectivity. (Sarkola 2019.)¹

Just before the last battle of the Finnish Civil War in Heinjoki near Vyborg, Karelia, on 20 April 1918, three people go on a horseback ride: nurse Harriet Thesleff (born Dippel, 1891–1965), Major Olof Lagus (1893–1918) and Major Ero Gadolin (1889–1944). Two of them return a couple of hours later but the third, Olof Lagus, has been shot dead. Several historians have interpreted the incident at

1 Milja Sarkola (b. 1975) is a Finnish playwright and a theatre director. All translations from Finnish are the author's own.

different times, but there is no definitive clarity about the course of events.²

Theatre director and playwright Milja Sarkola's play *Harriet*, which premiered at Ryhmäteatteri³ on 13 February 2019, is based on this unclear historical incident, which seems to be a matter of local history. In my opinion, however, the play discusses universal issues that revolve around historical narratives, such as: how does historiography take shape? What does the truth mean and does everyone have a right to their truth? *Harriet* discusses these themes, and the play is based mostly on the interaction between various literary sources ranging from nonfiction books and historical accounts to archive materials such as diary entries, and from historical novels to biographies. In fifteen scenes, *Harriet* performs all possible interpretations of the fatal horse ride, based on different sources written, recorded, or published over a century. The scenes present options for how and why Olof Lagus died and different interpretations of the event. The performance, by five actors playing nine characters, takes an hour and a half, and the play text is approximately sixty pages (Sarkola 2020).

In my article, I am interested in how historical memory is performed on stage and in the relationship between history writing and theatre performance. Is a performance merely a way of interpreting past events, a way of doing history research, or are there areas in history writing where a theatre performance can deliver more than research?

2 For example, a very thorough description of the event and the research on it is published in Käkälä 1994, 44–51.

3 A professional Finnish theatre located in the district of Kallio in Helsinki.

The performative turn in history writing

History and performance have approached each other since historian Hayden White's treatise *Metahistory* (1973), which reflects the nature of history writing as literature, and his article "The Historical Text as Literary Artifact" (1981, orig. 1974). In the latter White (1981, 1–24) argued that historians narrate past events as they write history. In his *Re-thinking History* historiographer Keith Jenkins (2003 [1991]; 2009, 5) pointed out the ontological gap between history and the past, and both Jenkins and historian Alun Munslow have stressed the essential role of the representations in historical narration. Munslow (1997, 2–3) argued that history begins with representations, not with the events of the past itself. Jenkins has gone even further in his argument that the past is all that is irrevocably absent and that it is only partially achieved through the study of history: "no representation, no past" (Jenkins 2009, 5).

As a theatre performance, *Harriet* contains all the sources and interpretations about the historical event it discusses. Sarkola has used the research published about the event during the past century and the materials in various archives. Although the historical person behind the main character of the play, Harriet Thesleff, was director-playwright Sarkola's great-grandmother, she heard about this event only in 2016 when her mother found Harriet Thesleff's diary (see Laari 2019; Onninen 2019). *Harriet* is both an archive and a repertoire, as performance studies scholar Diana Taylor has defined these concepts. According to Taylor, archive or archival memory is in the remaining documents of theatre, for example of the performance as a historical event. As an archive, *Harriet* includes written and spoken documents by people from the past, whether diary entries or letters. Repertoire is in the embodied memory, for example, in performances and gestures, in the brief acts that cannot be repeated. Repertoire does not stay the same or last. (Taylor 2003, 19–23.)

According to theatre and performance scholar Freddie Rokem, a theatrical representation of the past is a hybrid concept in its efforts to build a bridge between the “now” of the performance and what has happened in the past. At various moments, the performance moves closer to its documented pole or to its fictional pole. (Rokem 2000, 7.) In *Harriet*, this move between the two poles can be seen in many scenes where most of the spoken lines are based on or derive directly from archival documents. Sarkola has argued she was as true as possible to the different interpretations when writing the play (Sarkola 2019; 2020, 9). However, *Harriet* is a work of fiction.

In 2002 historian Greg Dening suggested historians should start to think of themselves as performers. Historians should reflect on the process of making meaning of the past, from using the archives to write about the past. As Dening (2002, 1) writes, “history – the past transformed into words or paint or play – is always a performance.” A year later, Diana Taylor proposed that theatre scholars had perhaps misread the relationship between performance and reality. Rather, they should problematise the ways the performance actualises the real. For example, Taylor (2003, 16) proposes that “writing has paradoxically come to stand for and against embodiment.” According to literature scholar Dorrit Cohn (2006, 138), changes in the chronological order of events made by historians are determined by the nature of the source material, the subject, and the interpretive arguments, while fiction writers are motivated by aesthetic questions or experiments with structure. Structural experiments are essential in *Harriet* since the composition of the play varies the theme in fifteen scenes. The variations are based on different interpretations and memories of the event performed in chronological order. The first scenes are based on the interpretations presented close to the event itself and the later scenes are based on later interpretations, presented at a greater chronological distance from the event itself.

Since these publications theorising history, many historians have discussed the performative turn in history writing, and in the field of theatre, scholars and artists have started to reflect on how performances discuss individual and collective pasts. For example, theatre scholar Milija Gluhovic's monograph, *Performing European Memories: Trauma, Ethics, Politics* (2013) questions the idea of the shared European memory, and the anthology *History, Memory, Performance*, edited by David Dean, Yana Meerzon, and Kathryn Prince (2015) discusses the role of memory and remembrance in the performances of the past constructed in the contexts of both history and theatre. Often these performances address tragedies of the twentieth century, such as world wars, the Holocaust and other genocides, and civil wars.

The historical context: the Finnish Civil War (1918)

At the turn of the millennium, historical research in Finland was undergoing an active reassessment of the war years, 1918 (Finnish Civil War), 1939 (Winter War against the Soviet Union), 1941–1945 (Continuation War against the Soviet Union in alliance with Germany until 1944; and Lapland War against the Germans in 1945), and their effects. Theatre was also very involved in the debate surrounding the new interpretations of these wars. Many performances discussed these issues on the stages of Finnish theatres (see, e.g., Korsberg 2007). Perhaps understandable, a considerable part of the research dealing with war had long been dominated by men's perspectives. The research discussing the Civil War of 1918 has only recently focused on women's activities during the war (see, e.g., Näre 2018, 132).

The main characters of *Harriet* are based on real historical persons. Later, I will refer to them by their first names and surnames. Like Milja Sarkola in the play's dialogue, when I use first names only I am referring to the characters in the play. There is detailed information about the six true persons behind the main characters

in the programme of the play. The title character, Harriet, is Harriet Thesleff, wife of Colonel Wilhelm Thesleff; she was educated as a nurse and worked in nursing in various places from 1915 onwards. During the Civil War, she worked as a nurse in the battalion Captain Olof Lagus was running. Both Olof Lagus and Ero Gadolin had fought in Germany during the First World War. Olof Lagus was the platoon leader of the 1st Machine Gun Company (Zugführer), who received the Iron Cross at the Eastern Front on 12 October 1916. Eero [Ero] Gadolin was Oberzugführer of the 3rd Company, and received the Iron Cross at the Eastern Front on 19 November 1916. (Järnström 1932, 148, 152.)

Three other characters based on real people are Lieutenant Taavetti Laatikainen (1886–1954), Lieutenant John Rosenbröijer (1887–1955), and Nurse (or Schwester) Saara Rampanen (1886–1974). Only three characters are mentioned without any name, they are a Soldier, a Farmer, and a Narrator (Ryhmäteatteri 2019a).⁴ The events took place in the village of Ristseppälä in Heinjoki, Karelia, Eastern Finland. The Narrator is an interesting character, who narrates some scenes, like the first scene, which is only one lengthy line. The Narrator's lines also describe the action in the scenes, almost like speaking the text in parentheses describing the action in a play-script. In some scenes, the Narrator acts like a historian, practicing source criticism, commenting some sources critically, and interpreting others.

The incident the play discusses happened during the Finnish Civil War of 1918, which arose in the aftermath of the revolution in Russia in 1917 and the First World War (Meinander 2017, 111). The

4 The characters of the play based on real historical figures are introduced in the programme (Ryhmäteatteri 2019): besides Harriet Thesleff, Olof Lagus and Ero Gadolin, they are John "Jack" Rosenbröijer (1887–1955), Taavetti Laatikainen (1886–1954) and Saara Rampanen (1886–1974).

Civil War is still one of the most repressed traumas in the Finnish national consciousness. The war between the Whites (the White Army and Civil Guards formed by the middle classes), and the Reds (Red Guards established by the socialists), started in January and ended with a White victory in May 1918. During the war, 38,000 people died, 85 percent of them were Reds. (Tepora and Roselius 2014, 1–5.) Besides, the Whites imprisoned 80,000 Red soldiers in prison camps around Finland, awaiting trial for treason and political crimes. Most of the victims died in the prison camps, many of them from hunger and disease. (Hentilä 1999, 112.) The Civil War divided the nation into victors and defeated, casting a shadow over the nation's history for decades.

The Civil War is perhaps the most researched topic in Finnish political history, and it has been discussed in several films, novels, plays, and theatre productions. Dealing with the past through theatre is an interesting and ambitious task in *Harriet*. In this respect, we may ask: How has the past been mirrored through theatre performance? What interpretations of history have been presented, and by what theatrical means? Next, I will describe the scenes of the play and their different interpretations of the death of Olof Lagus.

Stratification of memories and commentaries

Theatre scholar Jeanette R. Malkin argues that theatre is “the art of repetition, of memorized and reiterated texts and gestures” (Malkin 1999, 3). The art of repetition characterises *Harriet*, since the fifteen scenes discuss the same event, based on different sources. Most of the sources are presented in chronological order. Scenes 1–8 of *Harriet* are all based on different sources from 1918. Scene 1 is based on unofficial information the staff of General Wilkman received from an unknown informant on 21 April 1918. According to it, Olof Lagus died because he hit his head on a rock after falling from his horse. (Sarkola 2020, 8). (see Figure 1.)



Figure 1. The horse ride at Heinjoki. Harriet (Roosa Söderholm), Olof (Pyy Nikkilä) and Ero (Robin Svartström). Photographer Mitro Härkönen. Photo: The Archive of Ryhmäteatteri.

Scene 2 is based on an interpretation of Ero Gadolin's letter to General Wilkman on 21 April 1918, in which Gadolin argues that the death was caused by an accident with the gun. Scene 3 is based on Harriet Thesleff's first version, told to Olof Lagus's brother in May 1918.⁵ According to this version, Olof was shot from far away, perhaps by a Red assassin. Harriet and Ero searched for but could not find Olof's revolver. This version is varied in two of the following scenes, 4 and 5, which are based on Harriet Thesleff's second and third versions told to Olof Lagus's mother in May 1918. (Sarkola 2020, 7–16.) The first two versions by Harriet Thesleff, Scenes 3 and 4, the first one told to Olof Lagus's brother and the second to

5 Olof Lagus's brother was Ruben Lagus (1896–1959) and their mother Emma Matilda Lagus (1861–1950).

Olof Lagus's mother, refine the picture of what happened, especially of the events preceding the trip. Instead, the details of Olof's death remain unclear. In these versions, Olof is shot behind a bend in the road so the others cannot see it. They only found Olof Lagus dead with a bullet in his temple. In Scene 4, the first version told to Lagus's mother, the revolver is found next to the deceased Olof. (Sarkola 2020, 10–13.)

In Scene 5, based on the third version by Harriet Thesleff told to Olof's mother, Olof Lagus shoots himself. It happens very close to Harriet and Ero, so they are forced to see the suicide. However, in dialogue, the Narrator tells the audience this, not Harriet or Ero. (Sarkola 2020, 14–16.) In Scene 6, based on Ero Gadolin's second version told to Olof Lagus's mother in the summer of 1918, Olof dies after shooting himself. However, it is not clear whether the shooting was an accident or suicide. Again, it is the Narrator who says: "Immediately after getting on the horse, Captain Lagus took out his revolver, struck the horse in the hip with it, then raised his hand and shot himself." (Sarkola 2020, 19.) Later, the Narrator specifies: "According to Major Gadolin, it was unclear whether he [Lagus] shot himself due to an involuntary movement caused by the galloping horse or on purpose" (Sarkola 2020, 19–20).

Scene 7 is based on Harriet Thesleff's fourth version told to Olof Lagus's mother in the summer of 1918. According to this version, there was a love triangle in which Harriet was leaving Olof for Ero. Also in this version, it was unclear whether the death was an accident or a suicide. Again, the Narrator told the story: "According to Mrs Thesleff, it was unclear whether he shot himself due to an involuntary movement by the galloping horse or on purpose" (Sarkola 2020, 26).

Scene 8 changes the viewpoint from the participants of the event, Harriet Thesleff and Ero Gadolin, to a third party: the scene is based on Lieutenant Taavetti Laatikainen's version told to Olof

Lagus's mother in May 1918. Laatikainen had been present at the time Lagus, Thesleff, and Gadolin left for the horse ride, and he had been there when they returned. According to Laatikainen, a soldier had brought Olof's body back with the horse cart, and Thesleff and Gadolin had returned two or three hours later. According to this version, Harriet argues that Olof most likely shot himself while riding the horse. Laatikainen questions this, since Lagus was wearing clean clothes; he could not have fallen from the horse after shooting himself since the ground was muddy. Scene 8 includes a version of the horse cart story, based on Laatikainen's interpretation performed on stage. According to it, Harriet approaches Olof and wants to sit on his lap. Olof denies he has any feelings towards Harriet. Harriet takes the pistol and shoots Olof. Ero hears the gunshot and rides to the horse cart asking what happened. At the end of the scene Ero says: "It was an accident." (Sarkola 2020, 27–31.)

Scenes 9–14 are based on nonfiction, research, written memoirs, and a novel; the latter is written by a journalist who has also written an article about the event. The scenes are performed chronologically, starting with Scene 9, based on a nonfiction author H. J. Boström's 1927 version of the incident. According to Boström, Harriet shoots Olof because he does not return her feelings. Again, it is the Narrator who tells audience this on the stage. (Sarkola 2020, 32–34.)

Scene 10 is based on a 1972 version written by Åke Backström, who was a diplomat and a war historian. According to Backström, both Olof and Ero were in love with Harriet. His version is told by the Narrator, who is the only character on stage in this scene: "It has not been clarified whether it was a duel, a killing or a murder" (Sarkola 2020, 35). Scene 11 was based on a version written by the sister-in-law of Olof Lagus in 1983.⁶ According to her version, it is

6 In the play the sister-in-law of Olof Lagus is not mentioned by name. She was Kenny Christina Emilia Lagus (1910–1992), second wife of Ruben Lagus.

not clear exactly what happened and who shot Olof, though there is a bullet missing from his revolver, which is noticed by another nurse, Schwester Saara Rampanen. Yet again, the Narrator comments:

Ole [Olof] and Mrs T get into the horse cart and Colonel Gadolin gets on the horse. According to Ole's sister-in-law, a farmer drove by a couple of hours later and found a lonely horse in the middle of the road and Ole's body sitting in a horse cart. He took the cart to Ristseppälä. Mrs T and Colonel Gadolin had left Ole alone for dead and were wandering in the forest. A couple of hours later Mrs T and Colonel Gadolin arrived in Ristseppälä. Mrs T was hysterical. She threw herself onto the stretcher of Ole, who was right-handed and shot through the cap in the left temple, and took the cap, cockade, and coat-of-arms ring from the body. (Sarkola 2020, 38.)

Scene 12 is based on a 1993 version by nonfiction author Helge Smedjebacka (2002 [1993], 56), a book about Jaeger F. U. Fagnäs, who fought in a battalion led by Olof Lagus. Based on Smedjebacka's version, in the scene Olof kills himself, because of suffering from alcoholism and unhappy love, since Harriet is not interested in him (Sarkola 2020, 41–43). In Scene 13, based on nonfiction author Erkki Käkälä's 1994 version, there is a love triangle between Harriet, Ero, and Olof, and Ero shoots Olof in a duel. Käkälä argues that there was no reason for suicide (Sarkola 2020, 44–45).

Scene 14 is based on a version by a journalist, Martti Backman (2015). Based on Backman's historical or "document" novel, at the end of the scene, the story is told as in parentheses: "Harriet pulls out her Bayard pistol as intimidation, threatens with the gun, fights over it. Harriet or Ero accidentally or intentionally shoots Olof in the temple." The Narrator continues: "The jaegers staying on Ristseppälä hill were sure of one thing. One way or another, the cause of this accident was that devilish whore. It didn't matter

whose finger had pulled the trigger, but that cursed witch, Harriet Thesleff, had caused the death” (Sarkola 2020, 53).

The last word in Scene 15 is given to Harriet Thesleff herself, whose 1918 diary was found in 2016. As mentioned, Harriet Thesleff was Milja Sarkola’s great-grandmother, and so Sarkola had been able to read the diary in the private family archive that perhaps had remained unknown to historians of the event. On the other hand, Sarkola’s mother, Emelie Enckell (b.1945) had published a biography about her mother, Dagmar Thesleff, i.e., Harriet Thesleff’s daughter, in 2018, and that book has been available to researchers. In her book, Enckell (2018, 51–53) briefly describes the events in Ristseppälä based on Harriet’s diary entries. Although a lot of hope of finding the truth of the event is invested in the diary and this scene is the longest in *Harriet* it does not answer the question of who held the weapon when Olof Lagus died.⁷ None of the sources or commentaries reveal what happened in the past. *Harriet* performs all the known interpretations (Sarkola 2020, 54–62).

Performing histories, interpreting the past

According to Freddie Rokem, when taking its subject matter from a historical event, theatre takes on the role of a researcher or interpreter of the past. Still, it does so in different ways than a historian. (Rokem 2000, 24–25.) Sarkola, like historians, bases *Harriet* on various sources, archives, commentaries, research, and so on, though contrary to researchers, artists are not obliged to take this approach. Playwrights who deal with real people or events of the past, and actors who portray these people have the same artistic freedom as the authors or performers of any fictional text. However, artists have aesthetic obligations imposed by the art form, and their goal often is

7 An image of the pages of the diary is published in the programme for *Harriet* (Ryhmäteatteri 2019). It shows that a page has been torn out of the diary.

to achieve the highest possible level of art. In my opinion, from this perspective, Sarkola's *Harriet* can be considered a structural experiment, drawing an idea from a musical composition. The actors were like musicians playing the scenes in a fugue or variations, where the same theme appears repeatedly in different settings and forms.

Usually, instead of historical documents or the skill of the historian, theatre relies primarily on the skill and ability of the actors to convince the audience during the performance that something "real" about the past is seen on stage. Actors, in turn, must rely on the creativity of the rest of the team, such as playwrights, directors, costume and set designers. In the performance situation, their work conveys the past described on stage. According to Rokem, the actors are "hyperhistorians" who convince the audience that they are seeing something from the real past. When an actor portrays a historical person or someone involved in historical events, they become a witness in Rokem's terms, even though they may not have seen or experienced those events either. The actor has adopted their views from, for example, written sources and research. To make the audience members become secondary witnesses, as it were, to form their understanding of the forces that influenced the course of events, the actor is not required to have a neutral attitude or strive for objectivity. (Rokem 2000, 8–9.)

The set and the entire scene of *Harriet* at the Ryhmäteatteri were evocative and mostly white, the colour of the winning side in the Finnish Civil War. The production used music to create the historical atmosphere and cultural context. The well-known songs heard in the performance (see Ryhmäteatteri 2019a) were connected to the time of the historical event and to the context of Finnish jaegers. The best known of these songs was *Jääkärimarssi* or *The Jaeger March* (Op. 91a), a patriotic military march, composed by Finnish composer Jean Sibelius in 1917 to the lyrics by Finnish Jaeger and writer Heikki Nurmio, who was trained in the military school in

Libau, where he served in the Royal Prussian 27th Jaeger Battalion of the Imperial German Army. In the context of the Finnish Civil War, the march is connected to the Whites. Also, the other songs heard in the production relate to the Whites, since they represent German-language popular music of the time: a well-known Viennese operetta tune *Küssen ist keine Sünd* (“Kissing isn’t a sin”), composed by Austrian composer Edmund Eysler to lyrics by Moritz West and Ignaz Schnitzer,⁸ and the song *Still Ruht der See* (“Calm is the lake”), composed by German composer Heinrich Pfeil to his own lyrics and popular in Finland as well, especially in Swedish-language versions (“Lugn hvilar sjön”).⁹ The fourth song heard in the production, *Der Wanderer*, is a solo song composed by Harriet Thesleff to her own lyrics, probably in the 1910s (see Koivisto-Kaasik 2023, 32).¹⁰ The genre and style of this song is like that of German-language popular music at the time, though it was never well known in Finland or elsewhere. All this music is historical and documentary in nature, and one song is even composed by a historical person who is the main character in the play, and in close proximity to the time depicted.

Visual simplicity in the production emphasised the acting, which was very evocative and precise. The young Harriet was played by a young actor, Roosa Söderholm, (see Figure 2.) played this role as her final project for her degree at the Theatre Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki. In the media reception, her acting was considered calm, sensitive, and mature. The older Harriet was performed by Minna Suuronen, who was also the Narrator in some of the scenes. As the older Harriet, Suuronen was able to convey the feeling of distance and lifelong guilt. Robin Svartström as Ero

8 The song is from the operetta *Bruder Straubinger* (1903, “*Brother Straubinger*”).

9 The popularity of the song in Finland can be seen in many references to it in the Finnish newspapers from the end of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century.

10 For more on Thesleff’s song, see Koivisto-Kaasik 2023, 302.



Figure 2. Roosa Söderholm as Harriet. Photographer: Mitro Härkönen.
Photo: The Archive of Ryhmäteatteri.

Gadolin and Pyry Nikkilä as Olof Lagus focused on one character in all the scenes, while Santtu Karvonen changed from one character to another. Karvonen played the parts of John Rosenbröijer, Saara Rampanen, and Taavetti Laatikainen, as well as the Narrator in some scenes. Karvonen's Narrator took the position of a kind of history researcher. (Rothberg 2019; Hallamaa 2019; Onninen 2019; Saarelainen 2019.)

According to Rokem, the representation of history is a hybrid concept in its attempt to build a bridge between the now of a performance and the past it depicts; the performance moves between two poles: documentary and fictional (Rokem 2000, 7). From the audience's point of view, this slippage between fact and fiction adds to the credibility of the theatrical interpretation of the historical incident, even where the interpretation is of fiction created by the playwright. The line between fact and fiction is crossed in the play-script, although the theatre performance itself is always on the fictional side of the line. By various theatrical means, the performance of *Harriet* seeks to bridge the gap between the now in the theatre and the past it depicts. For example, all the music during the performance relates to the historical period the play depicts – so music can be heard as an attempt to build a sonic bridge from the present now of the performance to the past it depicts. The most important load-bearing structures of these bridges, however, are the memories, interpretations, commentaries, and histories written about the event over a century, and layered on top of each other during the ninety minutes which the performance lasts. Some of the memories and interpretations questioned or even denied each other. Although, in theatre, there is no requirement to rely on historical documents or make references to sources that have influenced the interpretation, in *Harriet* the audience could see the sources since the scenes were titled according to the written sources behind the interpretations.

The past met the performance not only on stage but also in the programme where some photographs of the historical Harriet Thesleff were published together with photographs of the production, and excerpts from the text of the play were juxtaposed with real historical documents about Harriet Thesleff, Ero Gadolin, and Olof Lagus; a picture of Harriet Thesleff's diary; and a map of Heinjoki (Ryhmäteatteri 2019a). Likewise, the printed version of the play text includes a bibliography and list of sources, such as the family archive of Harriet Thesleff (Sarkola 2020).

In the media reception of *Harriet*, the question arose as to how faithfully a fictional play based on the life of a real person should follow the documented past. Some critics mentioned that all the scenes were based on some kind of document. The different versions were considered interesting, but some critics felt that additional background and context would have been desirable. Some comments discussed the performance's ethical approach to real (historical) people as well as fidelity to the interpretations of the past events presented in historical research. (Rothberg 2019; Hallamaa 2019; Onninen 2019; Saarelainen 2019.)

At the same time, critics saw theatre as a medium with potential for narrating different versions of an unclear historical incident. As theatre critic Laura Hallamaa writes:

After all, theatre is the best place to tell untruths, too, and in *Harriet*, there are many lies. In literature with a similar structure, different variations of the narration would numb and would make the narrator unreliable or at least confused. But in the theatre, the audience gets to see all the stories, the entire evidence. In principle, the audience can decide the course of events they like for themselves. (Hallamaa 2019.)

When looking at theatre as performing history, the obvious question is what a historian can do that theatre cannot, and vice versa.

In writing history, the researcher cannot enter the thoughts or feelings of the people who lived in the past in the way theatre can. Even when the feelings documented in the diaries or letters of the person are available, the researcher's approach must remain critical. Sarkola has written a researcher into *Harriet*: the researcher is the Narrator who questions the sources in the way source criticism is practiced in history research. By presenting possible alternatives and interpretations of a historical incident and thus of historical research, *Harriet* demonstrates and emphasises that the documents and facts behind known interpretations of history are never "pure," neutral, totally objective or value-free, and they include contradictions. Historians may agree, but still prefer one interpretation over others: in this play, all the interpretations are presented as equal. Theatre can challenge the documents and facts behind the known and accepted interpretations of history in many ways.

Nevertheless, it is safe to assume that human activity – in history too – has always included thoughts, experiences, and feelings, and actors are professionals in conveying them and communicating them to others. Emotions are present when something exceptional and tragic happens. A performance such as *Harriet*, dealing with extreme acts and events, can make visible the probable feelings and thoughts of those involved as well as the immediate reactions of others towards the events. For example, the question of guilt is present in *Harriet*. Regardless of who held the weapon when Olof Lagus died, Harriet Thesleff and Ero Gadolin were guilty of what they did just before the shooting. It is understandable why there are six different versions told to Olof Lagus's family. As Sarkola has said in interviews, the family wanted to know as much as possible what happened in Heinjoki, and why. Despite several requests from the Lagus family, the event was never properly investigated (see, e.g., Laari 2019).

Despite the interest in the past, both researchers and artists ask questions about their materials from a contemporary

perspective. What is somehow striking in the source materials for the theatre performance in this case, most directly present in the novel by Martti Backman (2015), is the attitude of hate towards Harriet Thesleff. Her actions were perhaps not typical for a woman of her time, which has probably created her a questionable reputation from the point of view of a patriarchal society and made her a tempting object of projected misogyny. In an interview, Milja Sarkola mentioned also that Thesleff family members strongly believed that Harriet Thesleff was innocent. Also, the Lagus family perhaps did not openly admit the possibility of suicide (see Laari 2019).

The order of the scenes in the play is based on the order in which immediate accounts and memories of commentaries and research appeared, leaving Harriet Thesleff's diary, which was found in 2016, till last so that Harriet gets the last word. Even the memories of the event by the title character Harriet altered when different scenes unfolded, including a different number of details, and focusing on different details in different versions, i.e., scenes. With her play, Sarkola was making an argument about authorship in discussing the past. More precisely, *Harriet* asked whether everyone was entitled to their (own) truth. How is history shaped over time? What do we remember when we recall events before us? (Ryhmäteatteri 2019b). In my opinion, the production also discussed our relationship to historical research by evoking questions about how we find documents and create interpretations of the past, who decides which interpretation is true or closest to the truth, and whether we can find historical truth when the sources contradict each other.

Conclusions

On 20 April 1918, Captain Olof Lagus died of a bullet in his temple at Ristseppälä in Heinjoki, Finnish Karelia. The different interpretations in memories, documents, histories, and fiction do not give a

definitive answer as to whether Olof Lagus killed himself, died in a duel, was killed by accident or murdered.

The interpretations of this historical incident in *Harriet* are far from providing a definitive answer to the question of who killed Olof and why, but they did stimulate debate on the various options. Repeating the historical interpretations on stage offered the audience the opportunity to reassess them together and to compare them. This is exactly what historians do: they compare interpretations and source materials. The event they discuss has disappeared in the past and cannot anymore be experienced in all its complexity.

Paavo Haavikko, an author and playwright, has claimed that writers always write about their own time or about “an unresolved time” (see Valo 1999). Although there have been different accounts and interpretations of the tragic event in Heinjoki in history texts and memoirs, researchers and the reading public have been interested in what happened for a hundred years. In the media reception of *Harriet*, the interpretations presented in the production were considered challenging, although the performance was often considered traditional, as the plot focused on interpersonal relationships between the three main characters.

The importance of knowledge about the past in the development of collective identity is generally recognised in historiography, to the extent that, according to Keith Jenkins (2003, 22–23), different groups of people or social classes can be said to write collective autobiographies that reinforce the group’s own identity. Theatre has contributed to the development of collective identities, whether cultural, ethnic, national or international, and even to their creation, as has been shown in many theatre history studies. According to Freddie Rokem (2000, 3), theatre contributes to the creation of collective identities by questioning our hegemonic understanding of the legacy of the past. Though *Harriet* is based on a tragedy that directly touched a relatively small group of people, it discusses the

question whether everyone has the right to their (own) truth, based on their (own) memories.

As *Harriet* is based on interpretations of the events made by contemporary participants or later historians, several layers exist between April 1918 and the theatre production in February to April 2019. The theatre takes advantage of its inherent ability to build a bridge between the now of the performance and the past it is discussing. By presenting possible alternatives and interpretations of a historical incident and thus of historical research, *Harriet* demonstrates and emphasises that the documents and facts behind known interpretations of history are never “pure,” neutral, totally objective or value-free, and they include contradictions. By performing different interpretations and their contradictions together, *Harriet* challenges the documents and facts behind the known interpretations and shows the complexity of writing history, including source criticism and interpretation of different documents. As quoted at the beginning of this article, although Sarkola aimed for objectivity, she found it impossible to write the play without making interpretations of the sources. Her approach to the past is ethical, as she does not put one interpretation above another but shows the different possibilities and asks the audience to ponder the various interpretations. A performance, like written histories, can contribute to a collective understanding of the challenges in researching and attempting to find information about the events and circumstances of the past.

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4. MODALITIES OF ART AND ARTISTIC RESEARCH

The Possible, the Potential and the Virtual

ESA KIRKKOPELTO

In this article, I study how modalities work in the arts and how the arts work with them.

In philosophy, modalities are traditionally understood as the categories of “possible,” “real” or “effective” and “necessity,” as well as their negations, “impossible,” “unreal/ineffective” and “contingent.”¹ In modal logic, modalities characterise how a statement is true or false, or the way in which something exists or does not exist. From a larger philosophical perspective, modalities describe our cognitive relation to the world as speaking, perceiving and acting subjects. In our everyday communication and thinking, modalities are in constant use, and people often use them without noticing. As I argue, modalities are not merely conceptual categories but, as forms of

1 Modal logic and analytic philosophy have mainly been concerned with the modalities of the possible and the necessity and their negations, as their focus is in logic form of propositions and how they speak about the world, regardless of the facts. (*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* 2021: “Varieties of modality”) In a wider philosophical perspective since Aristotle, modal considerations include the effectivity or reality of things. In Kant, modalities figure alongside other categories or empirical experience and characterise its existential aspects. On Kant’s modal philosophy, see Abaci 2019.

experiencing, they are something that arts and artists can effectively manifest, modify and operate with.²

The matter is of interest to artistic researchers since, as will be shown, modalities lead them to consider the grounds of their activity. By artistic research (AR), I mean research made by artists or from their point of view. By changing their artistic medium into a medium of research, an artistic researcher aims at producing changes in the institutional order of making and receiving art and thereby, more generally, in the ways of sensing, perceiving, thinking, speaking, behaving, learning, teaching, governing, etc.³ According to my argument, AR's ability to exist as an independent area of knowledge formation and distinct from art research or aesthetics depends on its capacity to sustain and promote the significance of the "artistic" as an intrinsic and irreducible aspect of human reality. By "reality" I understand preliminarily the counterpart of the cognitive experience, the presumably common state of affairs defined, maintained and governed by discourses and institutions. My question concerns thus the relationship between *artistic*, *aesthetic* and *cognitive* experiences. The question can neither be raised nor answered without taking modalities into reconsideration.

My interest in the matter as an artistic researcher relates to my concern of AR's globally precarious position. AR is nowadays a well-implemented branch of academic research in many Western countries. However, from a broader or deeper geopolitical, artistic or academic perspective, its role and significance can still be considered marginal and questionable. Is AR here to stay, i.e., has it become an intrinsic part of various cultural realities, or is its

2 As I speak of "arts" or "art," I generalise and try to think inclusively of all the art forms I know. What is common to all of them is the artistic experience, into whose mode of existence, i.e., modality, I am enquiring.

3 I have maintained these ideas about AR in Kirkkopelto 2015 & 2017a.

existence conditional and disputable, a matter to be contested or proved? In this article, AR is discussed from the latter perspective. Even within contexts where AR has been adopted as the main denominator of academic research education, its introduction to fields outside that academic practice, from postdoctoral level on, put the premises of AR to a new test. How can AR and artistic researchers establish themselves in inter- and transdisciplinary settings as operative and equal partners with other forms of production, practice or research? Not least in the field of artistic creation itself.

That said, in what follows I take as little as possible for granted and discuss AR *as a possibility*. As I argue, the concern of AR should not be its own possibility but the possibility of arts, artists and, notably, *artistic experience* in the contemporary world. AR is here to stay, not to distance itself from artistic practices in their existing and known forms but to sustain art and artistic experience in a novel way that other, more traditional disciplines or branches of research cannot do. I try to show how AR as a historical phenomenon, practice or discipline is rooted in the arts as their latent possibility. In this respect, the text provides an example of the philosophy of AR or, more precisely, of artistic phenomenology (Arteaga, Cocker and Himanka 2022), not of AR proper. I am particularly sensitive to the tension prevailing between academic AR and non-academic AR (see, e.g., Cotter 2019; Cramer and Terpsma 2021), What I said is meant to dispel possible prejudices around the topic. The relationship between artmaking and AR can be established in a manner which benefits both. I approach my topic through the following three questions:

- How has AR itself become possible at this current historical moment?
- What possibilities and impossibilities do arts operate with? Or what possibilities and impossibilities do they promote?
- How does one need to change one's modal understanding to

sustain the possibility of the artistic experience? And what is the role of AR in that change?

The further the article advances, the clearer it becomes that the question of the reality of art cannot be solved following the categories of classical modal theory. A new way of considering the subject matter opens through the introduction of the category of the virtual. That category, too, must be reformed, to understand the modality of artistic experience.

On the historical possibility of artistic research

AR as an institutional practice became legally and structurally possible at the end of the last millennium thanks to an EU policy: the Bologna process introduced the third cycle of education to arts academies (Wilson and van Ruiten 2013, 8–33). Ever since, arts academies around Europe and elsewhere have tried to seize that possibility and realise it in practice. The turn is historic. Although artists may have always developed their practice through research, they have not ever before been granted an institutional role as agents of knowledge formation, charged with respective socioeconomic, ecological and other *nonartistic* expectations. As AR has opened new possibilities for arts and artists to inform societies and change the world, it has increased their agential capacity or *potential*, which is another possible sense of the term “possible” and which, in what follows, will be under our scrutiny.

AR is being introduced as an academic practice at the same time as late capitalism deprives art and artists of their former position as self-evident producers of “symbolic capital” (Bourdieu 1986) manifesting the identity and distinction of different sociopolitical classes. As Paolo Virno and Pascal Gielen have argued, the turn relates to the changed logic of production, where material production is replaced by immaterial production and material labour by immaterial labour. Instead of physical effort, presence and (self-)discipline, labourers

are now required to have mobility, flexibility, communication skills, playfulness, adaptability and other psychic or cognitive capacities (Virno 2004; Gielen 2015). The display of the capacities, or “performativity” (McKenzie 2002), has become at least as important as their use. Consequently, as Gielen (2015, 28) concludes, “[t]he employer of an immaterial worker invests not so much in effective labor as in potential: in creative powers and promise.” According to the same logic, the “art scene” has turned into “a production unit of economic exploitation.” The tendency of biopolitics and cognitive capitalism to realise the human physical, psychic and social potentials leads to a situation where the human experience becomes knit in the given reality ever more tightly, leaving less and less space for choice or alternative, creativity or critique.

The Bologna process can be seen as the perpetuation of the same neoliberal governance, as instrumentalisation and exploitation of the arts and artists. It is hard to argue against. According to my observation, the urge of artists to become researchers in the given situation is twofold. Partly, it is motivated by a wish to escape art markets and the increasing sense of exploitation they imply. Partly, their research interest relates to the mentioned legitimacy crisis which deprives artmaking of its former cultural value and meaning. The worry about the loss of meaning is sustained by an intuitive sense of the arts’ inner meaningfulness and potential. To tease out that something and articulate it in the given economic and political circumstances, and against them, requires the means that research is supposed to provide. In modal terms, the debate concerns the very sense of the possible as something either

“potential” or “powerful,” *potentia* or *potestas*.⁴ Politically and socially, the question is about who uses or appropriates artists’ potential or has access to it.

Modalities work differently in different institutional and academic contexts, whether logical, physical, metaphysical, moral, legal, psychological or technological. Each context has developed its own modal discourse. My question is now how modalities work in the arts to understand arts’ reality and thereby the possibility of AR. To approach the topic, I choose an antinomic way of reasoning and start by sustaining two seemingly oppositional statements. According to the first one, arts are considered according to the possibilities they open and operate with. In the second case, art is engaged with making something impossible.

Arts and artistic research operate with something possible and show that something is possible

This argument, which dates to Aristotle’s *Poetics*,⁵ is still in current use while arguing in favour of the epistemic, political or societal significance of the arts. Art creates and studies “possible worlds.”⁶

4 The distinction between *potentia* and *potestas* (in Italian: *potenza* and *potere*; in French: *puissance* and *pouvoir*) derives from Antonio Negri’s reading of Spinoza’s philosophy (Negri 1991). *Potestas* can be understood as characterising the relationship between bodies, the power of one body over another body, whereas *potentia* refers to the capacities of individual or collective bodies, to what they can do.

5 “[I]t is not the poet’s function to relate actual events, but the kinds of things that might occur and are possible in terms of probability and necessity [...] Consequently, poetry is more philosophical and more elevated than history, since poetry relates more of the universal, while history relates particulars” (Aristotle 1986, chapter 9).

6 The idea dates back to Gottfried Leibniz who understood possible worlds as ideas of the divine mind. Accordingly, the world God chooses to create must be the best possible one. In the past century, the philosopher David Lewis became famous for their “modal realism” according to which all the possible worlds are real and parallel to our actual world (Lewis 1986).

The problem with the argument is its formal weakness. As one states that this or that a thing is formally possible, it simultaneously turns contingent: it either becomes true or it does not. Another well-known argument of Aristotle in *On Interpretation* (Aristotle 1962, chap. 9) concerning a forthcoming sea battle highlights this point. The battle either takes place tomorrow or it does not. Before that, the truth value of the proposition regarding the occurrence of the event is pending, neither true nor false. If this kind of formal thinking is contrasted with artistic one, we can immediately notice that, in the arts, we are not interested in merely formal or speculative possibilities. Instead, as members of the audience, we often expect from artworks an anticipation, a promise, or a prognosis, regarding our individual or common future: happiness, unhappiness, utopia or dystopia, nothing “merely possible” or contingent. Art may evoke mind games, but it does not need to. In real life, the same is true even with the sea battles, like any other fights. As readers of the news, we are interested in not only whether they take place but also who wins. Likewise, the idea of possibility in the arts exceeds mere logical or speculative options. Following Bertolt Brecht’s fundamental argument, the aim of the theatre is to depict the world not as it is but as something that must and can be changed: another world is not only possible but also urgently needed. The possible here refers to something potentially realisable. It contrasts with fantasies, which play with unreachable states that are pleasurable to imagine.

Another case for the arts to make something possible is to introduce a new kind of technique, material, topic area or way of addressing the audience. That is basically what every artist aims at doing as they develop their practice, and AR is often occupied with such goals. But it is also possible to invent a totally new artistic genre, for instance by introducing a new artistic medium. Inventions of this kind often go hand in hand with the technological development of societies, as in the case of the internet art. It is also possible

to turn an area of reality that, earlier, was not considered artistic into something that art and artists can operate with. An example of this is bio-art. Consequently, our modal understanding of art's potential, *what art and artists can do*, has to be revised. Finally, an existing everyday practice or domain of reality can become artistically transformed and revalorised. As the Estonian artist-researcher Marta Konovalov invites us to consider mending as an artistic activity, or as her colleague Ulvi Hagensen suggests that cleaning could be considered artistically, their aim is less to establish a new genre of art more valuable than the everyday practice, than to suggest that those practices have a potential artistic aspect and meaning to their practitioners that can be highlighted and appreciated. As avant-gardist experimentation has testified, basically any form of human activity or level of reality can either be treated artistically or turned into an activity producing artistic outcomes. The actual reality, no matter what is counted within it, is therefore thoroughly and implicitly *potentially artistic*. The possibility of art resides in every moment and place. What is needed to realise that potentiality is an *artistic act*. That act can be the simplest possible, modifying slightly our way of observing, or it can lead to the creation of most complex artworks. The question is now to understand what guarantees the artistic nature of the act in both cases.

As one thinks about what art and artists can or cannot do, one asks about art's "potential" or "impotent" aspects. The latter does not necessarily always imply weakness. The potential someone or something has does not always need to be discharged, used or wasted.⁷ Art and artists have a potential to suggest changes within societies, but artists cannot necessarily carry those changes out alone.

7 As Giorgio Agamben has maintained, potentiality in the human sense always implies a capacity for suspending one's action, the possibility not-to-do (Agamben 1999, 177–184).

The *effective power* of arts and artists (now in the sense of potency or *potestas*) remains conditional or suspended. Activist art does not satisfy itself fully with this option. Through individual or collective public engagement and actions, it aims to inform more directly sociopolitical decision-making, regulation, legislation and public opinion. AR may pursue the same goals through institutional development and knowledge formation. However, insofar as both actions also desire to retain their *artistic* aspect, they must balance with their simultaneous instrumental or applied side. Something in the arts resists their turning into a mere sociopolitical practice or use of power. In other words, arts also aim at retaining a certain *potenti-ality* regarding the prevailing reality and its urgent needs. Does that mean that, strictly speaking and unlike what was discussed above, arts cannot be fully exploited, since if they were, they would turn into something else than art? Or is it rather that an activity ceases to be artistic as soon as it loses its contact with what is unexploitable in it? I am inclined to think in the latter way. The observation does not of course undo the pressures arts and artists suffer from in contemporary societies, but it may motivate them to do AR.

I have referred to the expectations that neoliberal governance sets for AR. But what can artists and the arts expect from it? In the academic environments where I have worked, those expectations are presumably high, but they are rarely specified. Is it because they may sound too ambitious, or daring? For example: does the future of art reside in AR? Should AR replace artmaking or rather save it or, at least, support it? If the first option sounds improbable, how about the second? Considering my previous diagnosis regarding the legitimacy crises of art, the idea of saving art through research should not be farfetched.

Arts can be supported by AR in many ways. As mentioned, AR may contribute to the development of new forms of making, teaching or receiving art, etc. The idea of saving arts through research

goes deeper and touches on the very possibility of the arts, which all developmental work in the field leans on in the last instance. But does artmaking need or deserve to be saved or supported, if it cannot exist by itself? One can immediately realise the uncomfortable political weight of the question. As artists and artist-researchers, we should be faithful to our vocation and suppose, at least hypothetically, that arts are needed, and that AR can help arts to survive. What grounds could be found for this conviction? What would salvaging the arts through research imply? In modal terms, it is possible to formulate the following answer: one should be able to indicate and, thus, prove the *necessity of art* not only for the existence of the artists themselves but for our planetary coexistence. Salvaging the arts: to help arts to save. In this respect, AR's mission does not distinguish from that of the arts themselves: to keep up their own possibility. If this kind of global task is considered appropriate for AR, in it may also reside its possibility, this time in the sense of "chance" or *kairos*. Presumably, the option corresponds to the ethos of many artistic researchers today.

The possibility of AR resides not in showing that art is possible as a human practice and form of production. Of that, we can be sure. Instead, what needs to be proved or indicated, or proved by indicating, is its necessity for humankind. The idea is far from being self-evident. Most people today in Western societies do not feel that they need "art," not at least "modern" or "contemporary art" (Spalding 2003). Let alone in non-Western cultures, which do not necessarily have an institution called "art," or not in the same sense as in the Western world. If today most people on this planet do not need or recognise the existence of art, does it mean that they need something like AR even less? I would state the contrary: the possibility of AR resides in its capacity to make art something relevant, if not necessary, for everybody. Does this sound impossible? Maybe it does. But it does not prevent us, as artists and researchers, from trying.

Arts and artistic research do something impossible

To develop the idea further, I start by quoting the famous saying of Sun Ra, the African American jazz musician, known as a pioneer of the contemporary decolonial artistic movement called afro-futurism:

“The possible has been tried and failed. Now it’s time to try the impossible.”⁸

What is “the failure of the possible” based on? Why does not it satisfy a progressive artist? And what might “trying the impossible” in the arts imply? Another slogan deriving from the May 1968 student revolt may clarify the matter: *Soyez réalistes, demandez l’impossible!* “Be realistic, demand the impossible!” The slogan establishes an interesting link between two modal categories, real and impossible. If one wants to challenge the whole system, and not just something within it, one must require changes that go beyond the possibilities provided by and within that system. The “failure” of an artist is to contend with the given. However, the ways arts can “try” or “demand” the impossible are various. In what follows, I distinguish at least three different interpretations.

In the first case, art does something impossible by revealing what is behind or underneath the given reality, or *more real than the given reality*. That kind of *critical* endeavour is often sustained by a sociopolitical or ecological ethos. In the second and more affirmative case, art aims at opening new kinds of dimensions, layers, or *registers of reality* besides the known ones. Art, as it is often characterised, makes the invisible visible, inaudible audible, unconscious conscious, unsayable sayable, inaccessible accessible, prohibited

8 I have not managed to identify the origin of that famous quote. Instead, I have found the following quote, according to which is time think of the impossible “because everything possible has been done and the world didn’t change” (Lock 1999, 26). History knows numerous quotes from distinguished persons regarding the possible and the impossible. See e.g.: <https://quotlr.com/quotes-about-possible-and-impossible> (accessed 13 Feb 2024).

allowed and so on. In both cases, artists take an *epistemologically emancipatory role* claiming that what they do can provide a deeper or truer insight and knowledge about the universe and our existence within it. This is, I suppose, what Sun Ra and other avant-gardists have done. The ethos of the artistic avant-garde is transformative. As experimental art, it comes close to what is nowadays understood by AR (Kirkkopelto 2017b). At this point, the critiques of AR are right: if the matter is considered outside AR's institutional framing and vocation, it is often difficult, if not impossible, to make a distinction between "researching art" and "artistic research."

The third, largest and most commonplace case of the impossible overlaps with the previous ones. In it, one encounters *emergent* and therefore unexpected phenomena that artistic products have always also been, insofar as they have been considered *creations*. The new and singular form of appearing the work embodies did not exist earlier and was unthinkable, unpredictable and therefore impossible before it came into existence. However, even after its arrival, it does not turn into an object of reality among others but retains its exceptional position as a performer of possibility or a maintainer of potentiality. In this respect, the category of impossible applies to all activity, even the most conventional one, insofar as it can be considered artistic.

Each of the mentioned three cases reveals something essential regarding the modalities of art, and those cases also complement each other. I will now concentrate on the third one, which shifts the focus to a more phenomenological level, regarding how one encounters an artwork as an artwork, and what distinguishes it from other possible encounters. At first sight, the creations appear as if they were coming out of nothing, *ex nihilo*. But out of nothing, nothing can arrive. This simple fact is now to be underlined: insofar as an artwork, an artefact, performance, film, poem or composition comes from somewhere, it also makes its source or background perceptible

and accessible in a certain manner and to a certain degree: not so much as a story of its making, or as an account on its material elements, technical solutions and social conditions, but as *a dimension of potentiality*.

As creations, artworks have modally a twofold structure and dynamic: something appears by coming up, and something else appears by withdrawing. The idea is not new. Martin Heidegger (2002) has underlined its importance in their art philosophy. Both aspects, appearing and withdrawing, are encountered, sensed or perceived but in different manners. Thanks to this double character, artworks can simultaneously reside within the so-called real world and outside it, or at its margin. The relative void a work opens within the reality, and which surrounds and sustains the work, is simultaneously full of potentiality – something imperceptible, pre-individual, indiscrete, uncertain, fantastic, or “unknown unknowns,” as Sher Doruff has called them.⁹ That paradoxical apparition of nothingness does not automatically imply the concealment of the technical, material or social genesis of the work. Quite the contrary, the fact that the audience simultaneously perceives how the work is made, only emphasises the experiential aspect of that potentiality, depriving it of spectacular and illusory aspects.

The potentiality an artwork thus evokes makes itself manifest as something nonmanifest and *not working*. Modally, its existence or subsistence is hard to catch. It is simultaneously possible and

9 “[I]t is the surprise encounter with unknown unknowns (what we don’t know we don’t know) that is the hinge of the *potentiality*, of the indeterminate contingencies of artistic research practice” (Doruff 2011, 19). In my mind, the “unknown unknowns” could be understood as referring to something beyond mere contingency, to something radically unknowable, the manifestation of which would revoke all what we have known so far, or would force us to revise our knowing fundamentally. Although we cannot know, we can hope for the arrival of a subversive event and prepare conditions for it.

impossible, potential and impotent. Yet, one can still sense its power affectively.¹⁰ The affective quality or attuning of the potential dimension varies, and each work opens and defines it differently. Thanks to the existence of the artwork, one can now relate oneself to that dimension, from which many unexpected and surprising things may appear in addition to manifest ones. The experience of artworks, the *artistic experience*, is essentially constituted as a relationship between the singular art object or event and the sphere, zone or dimension of potentiality it opens, sustains and distinguishes from. Correspondingly, the claim for “trying the impossible” in the arts could be understood as concerning the shift of focus from the manifest aspects of the works and processes to their nonmanifest aspects, which are no less real, or which are *differently real*. If I could, I would like to draw a diagram of what I am trying to say here. But it goes beyond the powers of my four-dimensional spatiotemporal imagination. Inversely, this incapacity of mine indicates how the modality of the art goes *necessarily* beyond the capacities of the representative imagination and its user, the subject of representation.

The antinomic treatment of my topic has now reached its endpoint at the same time as it has revealed a modal discrepancy at the heart of artistic practice itself. On the one hand, art anticipates possible worlds, desired or undesired, or transforms the existing ones from within; on the other hand, art accomplishes something impossible and operates with it in various ways. In both cases, it introduces a potentiality, the nature of which is hard to grasp conceptually. I see the confusion around the matter as symptomatic. It means that the classical modal thinking, based on the categories of necessary,

10 By affect, I understand like Silvan Tompkins (1995) the feel that accompanies all intercorporeal relations. Affects can be more or less conscious. They can turn into emotions and passions, in which case they characterise the mindset of the cognitive and aesthetic subject.

real and possible, and their opposites, does not suffice to capture the modal nature of art or artistic experience. Either one is forced to speak about the matter in negative terms, for instance as I just did about the “impossibility” of the arts. Or one must have recourse to ambiguous discursive constructs common in more philosophical discourses, like “(im)possibility,” or “possibility of impossibility.” From an artistic point of view, the discursive or rhetorical weakness of these formulations is obvious: Imagine yourself defending the public funding of the arts, art education or AR by underlining their impossibility! No wonder that nowadays the arguments sustaining arts often appeal to extra-artistic reasons, like wellbeing, innovation or social cohesion. It is a challenge for AR to understand *how the arts could be defended on artistic grounds*.

To make that possible, one should find an alternative and more *affirmative* way of speaking of the arts’ existence. This obvious need has motivated me, like many other artists and art theoreticians in recent decades to get interested in the sphere of the *virtual, virtuality or virtualisation* (Massumi 2002; Popper 2006; Parker-Starbuck 2011; Diodato & Benso 2012; de Assis 2018; Jarvis 2020; Dimitrova 2022). Accordingly, this turn to the virtual, or the “virtual turn” (Tavinor 2021), is not motivated by the development of computer-based technology only. It is also sustained by an understanding concerning the narrowness of classical modal thinking for grasping what is going on, not only in the arts but in the contemporary world more generally. However, the prevailing understanding of the virtual does not provide us with immediate solutions either since, as we will see, arts also inform that understanding.

Virtues of the virtual

To discuss the sense of the virtual, one must navigate in a network of conceptual and phenomenological divisions. The term itself is nowadays used mostly as combined with another modal term, namely

“reality.” Although the term “virtual reality” (VR) was initially coined by Antonin Artaud to describe the similarities between the theatrical and alchemistic practices (Artaud 1958, 49), the first thing it brings to mind is neither theatre nor alchemy but technically produced and sustained artificial worlds, or virtually “augmented” forms of the real world. However, VR is just one form of the virtual.

The different ways of understanding the virtual can be seen as deriving from the equivocal etymology of the term. The Latin adjective *virtualis* stems from the noun *virtus* which, in turn, allows two different interpretations. For the sake of clarity, I will now call these two interpretations VIRTUAL 1 and VIRTUAL 2.

According to VIRTUAL 1, which corresponds to the idea of VR and thereby the widest contemporary use of the term, *virtus* means a “virtue.” In virtue, a force or power combines with some (positive) quality, like merit, courage or excellency. When someone is virtuous, they have and manifest some positive capacity or potential. By contrast, when something is virtual, it has an efficient and positive quality, a virtue of something, *without being that thing*. Virtual therefore means something which, without being real, has the *virtue of reality*.

This interpretation has been proposed by Denis Berthier, who uses it for a critical analysis of the different forms of virtual technology and artificial intelligence (Berthier 2004, 73). The variety of the phenomena that according to him are virtually real is large and extends from basic optical operations (the virtual image created by a mirror, loop or telescope) to virtual worlds viewed in simulators or a VR helmet. In all those cases, the criterion is the same: in the given setting the virtual phenomenon *cannot or is not distinguished from the real*, although one knows that it does not exist in reality. Virtually real phenomena influence one’s perception and behaviour like real phenomena, or phenomena belonging to reality. As technically produced and sustained, they are adjusted to the cognitive experience of the human species and its respective motoric, sensory

and communicative capacities. Consequently, the phenomena disappear only as one changes the operative setting or one's perspective on it.

Although the arts share certain aspects with VR, there are also significant differences. In conformity with VIRTUAL 1, an artistic arrangement always implies an artificially created and sustained virtual state or situation, which is related to the surrounding reality. However, the link between the user (artist or audience member) and the interface (artwork), as well the relation of the latter with the surrounding reality is left deliberately open and thereby *inoperative*. Art does not reproduce our relation to the world faithfully. Instead, it aims at *transforming* that relation and the world as its counterpart. In this respect and according to the previously discussed option, "art shows what is possible": something that does not exist yet, but is perceivable, realisable and possibly forthcoming. It is conditionally effective, enabling us to feel and sense what it would be like if it were real. That ability could also be considered as its utopian aspect. In sum, instead of virtual realities, art creates states of *suspended reality*, which implies much more than just the "suspension of disbelief" as William Coleridge once called it.

This observation, if it holds true, has two important implications for the present analysis. First, insofar as arts and artists are situated in the margins of reality, as simultaneously belonging and not belonging to it, their critical and transformative vantage point on reality becomes more understandable. Second, a question arises concerning the mode of existence of those beings, entities or events at the borderline of reality.

Virtualisation

What in artworks and artistic practice goes beyond the cognitive experience is their material, corporeal and existential aspects. Those aspects in the arts are no less virtual, but their virtuality is

different than in the previous case. Let it be called here VIRTUAL 2. Its etymological roots reside in medieval scholastic philosophy, where *virtualis* was understood as “what exists potentially, not as an act” (Lévy 1998, 13). Behind the conception resides thus the Aristotelian distinction between *dynamis and energeia*, as well as its Latin translation as *potentia* and *actus*. The virtual combines here with another Latin-based modal term close to the “real” but not identical to it, namely the “actual.” Together, they describe processes where a latent capacity or a state or thing unfolds itself and gives birth to a new and manifest state or thing. On this basis, one can reason retrospectively that the resulting phenomenon existed “virtually” in the preceding state: a tree is virtually in the seed; a chick is virtually in the egg; a crystal is virtually in the liquid, a genius or a criminal is virtually in the child; a revolution is virtually in a state of depression, a hurricane is virtually in hot weather, and so on. This is how people are used to thinking and speaking regarding different kinds of *emergent* processes that the world is full of. Although the way of thinking is based on retrospective projection, it enables us to recognise the singular nature of the process and its outcomes, as well as their ambiguous ontological status between being and nonbeing.

According to Henri Bergson and Gilles Deleuze, the idea of the virtual breaks with the triadic modal logic discussed in previous sections. The virtual should not be considered a synonym for the possible. Insofar as the possible only constitutes a representation of something potentially real, it remains subjugated to the known and existing reality. Instead of introducing something not-yet-knowable or not-yet-existing, possible only doubles and reproduces the prevailing state of things. (Bergson 1930; Deleuze 1994, 208–221.) Thinking in terms of the possible leads to a representational idea of reality. It may suffice to describe causal processes, where a recognisable effect follows an identifiable cause but is unable to understand

the emergent or creative processes that Bergson and Deleuze have aimed at understanding.

So far, VIRTUAL 2 means very much the same as the potential. On many occasions, the terms may be used synonymously. Here, it is important to see their difference. Unlike the potential, which appears either as a capacity to act or not-to-act, or as a reserve of future phenomena and events, expectable or unexpected, the virtual consists of structured force fields which follow their own logic, and which work despite, or thanks to, their lack of actuality (Deleuze 1994, 209). The focal points in the optics, like the attractors and border values in various complex and dynamic systems, are examples of this kind of virtual effectivity (DeLanda 2002). In biology, the way insect colonies organise themselves seems to be based on a commonly sustained virtual pattern (Varela 1991). The psychic life of the human being is populated by conscious or unconscious virtual formations, which inform one's behaviour and experience without ever becoming actualised. Human communities comprise numerous virtually existing symbolic agents, which guide and organise their actual behaviour. In Deleuze, who in many respects has taken the described logic to its extreme, the virtual is an ontological category which characterises all kinds of pre-individual, singular and multiple states and processes preceding and sustaining their contextual and phenomenal actualisations (Vanhanen 2010, 42).

What is the role of virtual agents in the arts? Paulo de Assis has applied the idea to renew the understanding of the existence of musical works from the artist's (composer, performer) perspective: "The virtual is the whole set of forces, energies, potentials and intensities that exist, that are real, yet that are not actualised in the here-and-now of the present. The actual are all the forces, energies, potentials, and intensities that are currently happening in the here-and-now of our presence" (de Assis 2018, 26). The idea applies particularly to describe the way of being of musical composition, whose relation to

its actual performance is virtual (*ibid.*, 34). The same idea applies to other performing arts where actualisation is based on a score, play, role character or a set of instructions. However, the difference between performing arts (here: music included) and other arts is only relative. Insofar as all artworks can be considered compositions, they imply a virtual idea, principle or diagram, according to which their sense is understood or judged. Here, improvisations as instant compositions are no exceptions. The artistic experience comprises both virtual and actual aspects, and their concomitance should be understood as constitutive of the artistic experience.¹¹ The potentiality an artwork surrounds itself is not opaque (mute, deaf, blind), indiscrete or transcendent, but structured, discrete and immanent to a certain degree. Respectively, the borderline between real and potential, actual and virtual an artwork retraces and where it dwells is porous, or diffusional.

At the same time, and unlike the previous examples of the virtual, artworks are also material objects, technical arrangements or events, which have a quasi-real existence without having the virtue of the real in the sense of VIRTUAL 1. In this sense, artworks belong to a group of beings that I would call here “virtual objects” or “virtual bodies” (cf. Diotato and Benso 2012, 1). They do not reproduce anything known or met in the given reality. Yet, they are encountered within it as paradoxical supplementary or marginal beings. Their role and function vary. Outside artistic contexts, they may function as “transitional objects” of early childhood (Winnicott 1971), as magic items, cult objects, fetishes or commodities, or as symbolic objects of exchange (money in material and virtual forms). All kinds

11 As Janne Vanhanen has maintained, this idea comes forth strongly in Deleuze’s art philosophy (Vanhanen 2010, 186). What in my mind Deleuze’s thinking does not explain sufficiently is the modal nature of the artistic act itself, the practice of the virtual, that is here called virtualisation.

of scenic or performative transformations, despite their corporality, temporariness and localness, also belong to this genre of the virtual. A virtual object can turn into a body and a body into an object. The virtual objects address and attune our bodies both affectively and mimetically, through their feel and their likeness.

What artworks share with all these entities is their *charm*, i.e., their special manner of engaging human experience, as connected to their capacity to embody and display a certain kind of potentiality. The use of virtual objects manifests their power without exhausting it. At the same time, virtual objects are material entities, whose apparent insignificance or unworthiness only highlights their imperceptible power. As a material or corporeal object turns into a virtual object, for instance through a stage animation, it undergoes a transformation that I call here *virtualisation*. As a result, an object simultaneously opens a field of virtual potentiality and embodies and represents it in the actual reality. Its existence, in modal terms, is *virtually actual* or, more simply, *artistic*.

We encounter here a change of perspective proper to artistic creation. To describe it, do we need to establish a third form of the virtual? I do not think so. Instead, I would turn the perspective around and, from it, define virtualisation an experiential act or event, through which it is possible to reconsider all the other modalities and their sense for the human experience. What leads me to think like that?

So that an object of use or a piece of material can change its appearance and mode of behaviour and turn into a plaything, magic item or artistic component, one must first consider it as capable of taking any form whatsoever, at the same time as it can turn meaningless. Once the thing has been put into play, it can in principle change its appearance and function constantly and at any time. Structurally, a change from one state to another implies a phase where a thing is neither this nor that. This capacity for

meaningfulness and meaninglessness, the capacity for assuming any appearance whatsoever and turning strange, belongs to the artistic nature of things, objects or bodies.¹² The object at play assumes its artistic quality from the players' or makers' bodies which give it to the object willingly. As that happens, a player or a maker, using the virtual object or body, gets in touch with their own artistic nature.¹³ More than anything else, the sense of the operation is existential and corporeal: existential regarding its singularity; corporeal regarding its materiality. Virtualisation as a material transformation produces both mimetic and affective effects, a change in the likeness and the feel of the material. Both are corporeal qualities, and through them, the work addresses and attunes the bodies of the possible audience.¹⁴

Although we assume, as I propose, that virtualisation has an intrinsic artistic aspect, it does not make all virtual objects or bodies artistic. How do artistic entities distinguish from other possible virtual entities? Whereas other virtualisations have a definitive purpose, artistic virtualisation happens as if for its own sake. Artworks manifest the very act, event or *phenomenon of virtualisation*, study its possibilities and play with it. Correspondingly, an artistic act is an act of virtualisation that manifests its own taking place. If that is the case, what prevents artworks from turning into mere fetishes or commodities, or resists their fetishisation and commodification?

12 As Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe (1989) has maintained, the idea of the human being's mimetic superiority, their capacity to imitate everything and, therefore, be nothing, comes up first in Denis Diderot's idea of the actor.

13 The techniques of virtualisation are many and vary from one art form to another. Virtualisation may take place for instance through isolation, transposition, reframing, association, narration, impersonation, objectification, staging, light, acoustics or by using dramaturgic, choreographic or compositional techniques. The area would require a separate analysis.

14 Regarding the corporeal nature of the artistic virtualisation, I refer to my monograph *Logomimesis* published in 2020 in Finnish (Kirkkopelto 2020), and forthcoming in 2024 in an updated English translation at Routledge.

In the world today, that tendency is intensive. Maybe it cannot be avoided, but by artistic means, it can be resisted. The modal integrity and independence of artistic creation is related to their *compositional* nature. All the components of an artwork are virtualised in different ways, and they virtualise each other. The artistic experience a work enables is born as a sum of those components, at the focal point in between them. As I as an audience member encounter a work, I try to find my way to that virtual location, where my sense of existence and the existence of the work would coincide, so that I could become transformed and informed by the work, to some extent embody that work. That makes art more difficult to encounter than other possible virtual objects and settings, whose sense and use are restricted and established beforehand. A work resists its commodification by compositional solutions, which are many and include the way of performing and exhibiting works.

Artistic experience

What is now the relation between virtualisation and the previous forms of the virtual? As I claim, the understanding of the virtual opens from the perspective of virtualisation, not the other way around. *Our virtual understanding is based on the virtual capacities or potentials of the human body*, its possibility to transform itself virtually. As artistic beings capable of assuming every appearance, falling into total strangeness and lingering in between, human beings can open fields or areas of potentiality. Artistic also means here “technical” in the fundamental sense, capable of manifesting the truth of the technique as *technè*. In post-Heideggerian continental aesthetics, the idea has come up repeatedly in many versions (e.g., Lacoue-Labarthe 1989). What my present analysis aims to add to that understanding is the modal variation, according to which one mode of experience can change into another without them opposing or contradicting each other. Not least the cognitive, aesthetic or artistic experience.

As virtually actual systems, artistic creations reside on and play with the borderlines between virtual and actual, potential and real. They engage and rearticulate human experience according to that borderline and as that borderline. The specificity of the artistic experience, its way of being more real than reality or transcending the given reality, resides here. As it happens, my experience is transformed. The cognitive mode of experience, characterised by the three modalities (possible/effective/necessary and their negative opposites) gives way to a mode of experience whose focus is now on the singular and corporeal existence of beings. That experience divides me in a novel way. As an *aesthetic subject*, and despite my corporeal (affective and mimetic) relation to the work, I also retain a certain distance from it. I can assess (appreciate, depreciate, wonder) its way of evolving and its way of addressing my physical, psychic or social reality. And I can speak about it. Whereas *artistically*, as a maker or a receiver, I participate in the singular existence of the work (or the work participates in mine), embody it partially and, to that extent, *exceed my subjective position*. I taste the singularity of things, mine included.¹⁵ I cease to be an everyday, empirical, ethical or aesthetic subject and, instead, at least partially and momentarily, become a part of the artistic arrangement or participate in it. For a moment and locally, *I lose a part of my corporeal existence* to the manner of embodiment enabled by that arrangement. In this experience, despite its strangeness, there is always something welcome and enjoyable. The experience of art oscillates between (artistic) ecstasy and (aesthetic) reflection.

In other words, the possibility of making and encountering art is conditioned by the existence of something *virtual within me*, or *us* as human beings, which does not fully belong to the reality where it finds itself. That singular something, which underlies

15 I analyse this logic of artistic desubjectification in more detail in Kirkkopelto 2023.

my experience in its various forms, can become externalised and virtually actualised through art and as art, as something simultaneously appearing and withdrawing, and therefore fundamentally inappropriable.

For the same reason, VR can never replace the human experience. As VR reproduces an artificial reality, it must adjust itself to the cognitive experience and its modalities (Milgram et al. 1994). However, the modal structure of the human experience, which constitutes its condition of possibility, is always larger and deeper than any given reality. As much as the reality is established, it is suspended. VR can only operate with given modal structures, imitating or reproducing them and playing with their possibilities. The same is true, I would suppose, with artificial intelligence, which will soon exhaust the resources of the possible and imaginary and, thereby, indicate their fundamental narrowness from the experiential point of view. Neither of these applications can comprise that structure that makes them possible, the *scene of experience*, which brings forth beings in their singularity against the depth of potentiality. Our possibility as human beings to contribute to the construction of our common reality in various fields of human culture including technological development is conditioned by our simultaneous ability to transcend any given reality.

The singularity in us is nothing absolutely transcendent. If that were the case, it would remain inexpressible. Its *relative inexpressiveness* is rather due to its irreducible agential potentiality, the endlessness of its connections with other singular beings or situations and their variation, as well as its sensitivity to virtual fluctuations, to affects and mimetic contagion. Its withdrawal is not due to the compactness of selfhood but to the potentiality of appearing. Artistic presentation can express something characteristic of this potentiality including its inexhaustibility. For the same reason, the attempts to exploit the creativity of the singulars are, in a long run, doomed

to fail. First, the exploitation raises resistance. Second, if the resistance fails and the exploitation continues its subject escapes, falls ill or dies. In all these cases, the expected creative potential is lost. Artistic virtualisation should oppose *realisation* that aims at exploiting capacities, actualising potentialities and exhausting sources.

How can research become artistic?

To conclude, I would venture the following proposition regarding the arts' modal nature and function: *artistic creation operates with virtualised elements of reality to carry out virtual transformations in it*. All that has been said before concerning the possible, impossible, potential, virtual and actual could now be reconsidered from this vantage point. Insofar as artistic creation shares certain aspects with all those modalities, it should not be considered another case of the virtual but as a modally creative activity, from which a perspective opens out onto reality construction as such, in all its possible and impossible forms. The modal weakness of arts, the fact that their outcomes are only virtually actual, is simultaneously their existential strength. Through arts, we, as members of humankind, enter a level of experience the cognitive experience and the respective reality must always negotiate with. It is the level of singular corporeal coexistence characterised by affective and mimetic relations and emergent material processes manifesting and retracing the borderline between virtual and actual.

If these are arts' modal parameters, the same parameters apply to AR, and impose on it a very precise task. As proposed above, there is something implicitly artistic in all virtualisation. Respectively, there is something implicitly artistic in every singular existence or event. It is this implicitly artistic that has made artmaking possible and that it has manifested in all times and places wherever something "artistic" has been encountered or practised. Artmaking may continue as it has until our days, adapting or

reacting to the changing sociopolitical situations and development of human knowledge. What AR can add to all that is to *explicate artistic aspects of reality*.

Above, I made a distinction between aesthetic and artistic form of experience. The relation between the two forms of experience is alternate but their difference is crucial for the understanding of the arts' modal existence. However, as much the "aesthetic" is not concerned with artworks only, the "artistic" does not need to be either. If the singular existence constitutes the tie and the common denominator between the artwork and my body, then the artistic experience is not tied to the existence or appearance of artworks. What rather makes the criterion here is the artistic virtualisation which, in favourable conditions, can take place at any time and in any place, either deliberately or spontaneously, producing potential artistic components and their possible compositions. To put it in the shortest possible way, the task of AR is to give the attribute "artistic" an affirmative and positive sense. Based on the former analysis, we may now see the radicality of the operation. If what is understood by reality is constituted and instituted to correspond to the cognitive experience, and if the sensible and corporeal, merely "subjective" aspects of reality are considered as something aesthetic, then the artistic adds to this understanding a singular and creative aspect, it adds *us* to it as coexistent emergent beings.

Based on my former diagnosis, the distance between experience and reality is shrinking, leaving less and less space for change, creativity or critique. Is AR here to accomplish that closure, or does it rather imply a new opening? Both options are possible, of course. In this article, I have tried to argue in favour of the latter option. I have tried to prove that the cause of AR is not opposed to that of art. On the contrary, insofar as the possibility of AR is dependent on the possibility of art, the task of the former is to explicate the real consequences of the latter: how the arts contribute to reestablish and

maintain a simultaneously *necessary and free* relationship between human experience and its more-than-human sphere. This is its ethical task.

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5. ISABELLE STENGERS'S COSMOPOLITICS AND ARTISTIC RESEARCH

MIKA ELO

In a footnote in one of the volumes of her seven-part work on cosmopolitics, Isabelle Stengers makes an observation that catalysed this article¹. Having first analysed the relationships between empirical sciences, mathematics and speculative philosophy, and having emphasised the independence of the latter two regarding the compromises and negotiations that empirical research approaches imply, Stengers writes in the footnote:

I would add that artistic practices need diplomacy but cannot delegate experts. Art puts at risk the sedentary components of experience in themselves and brings them into existence for themselves. And from this anything can follow except an “artistic” knowledge claiming to promote its constraints and negotiate its scope and meaning for others. (Stengers 2011a, 455.)

As is well known, the devil can be in the details. At least, it was here. How to relate the roles of a diplomat and an expert, which

1 An earlier version of this article was published in Finnish with the title “Isabelle Stengersin kosmopolitiikka ja taiteellisen tutkimuksen tiedolliset sitoumukset” in *Tiede&edistys* 4/2021, 266–284. This revised and shortened version is based on the English translation made by Päivi Tikkanen. The article emerged in the frame of an Academy of Finland funded research project (decision number 320265).

Stengers mentions, to the role of an artist-researcher? How to think of the limitations of artistic knowledge that Stengers addresses?

Art and research: analyses

The debates around artistic research have pondered the relation of art and research in many ways. Dieter Mersch's (2015) helpful overview² of research in the arts highlights four lines of argumentation:

1) Art has always been research; it craves for truth and knowledge. As artistic research, art is aesthetic basic research that focuses on blind spots and on the peculiar; it does not look for generalisations. In the field of science, artistic research is a provocative intruder that questions the current knowledge structures as an underdog (ibid. 28–30).

2) Artistic research is a reformative art-pedagogical movement established in Western art universities that develops new artistic methods. As a material-discursive, epistemological reflection, it presents implicit critique of science. Artistic research is an aesthetic, educational project (ibid. 30–34).

3) Both science and art are creative activity, and their mutual difference is a historic variable. Artistic research dismantles the hierarchies between various processes of knowledge creation and promotes a new convergence of art and science through joining in multidisciplinary collaborations. The artist-researcher is a trans-disciplinary agent (ibid. 30–43).

4) Artistic research introduces scientific principles into the arts and promotes a culture of expertise following the procedures copied from academia. It assumes a scientific approach as the model for new artistic competence, and positions itself as a discipline on the border between the art world and academia, on the latter's

2 I have summarised Mersch's overview also in my text "Three Phases of Artistic Research" (Elo 2022).

conditions. Artistic research raises art to the elevated ivory towers of academia and subdues the free line of aesthetic thinking (ibid. 43–50).

All four lines of thought agree that art is research – or at least it can be. However, they differ from each other with respect to the question of what might be at stake in artistic research. This shows in the plethora of titles included under the heading “artistic research” that accentuate different methodological aspects: art-based research, practice-based research, practice-led research, artist-oriented research and so forth. Should artistic research be considered an independent exploration of singular details, or should it produce new epistemic potential with wider relevance? Should it, or, should it not, promote its transformative epistemology and negotiate its relevance for other fields? In the name of what truth?

To dissolve this kind of either–or questions, in this article, I will discuss Isabelle Stengers’s cosmopolitics that drives a wedge between truth and knowledge. Stengers relativises the epistemic search for truth and exposes it to the ecology of practice. The range of truth becomes the issue to consider. In my perspective, Stengers’s cosmopolitics gives reason to re-think the relationship between art and research. It invites the question as to what artistic research at its best can *do* and how it can *connect* instead of asking what it *is*. The relationship between art and research is strained because art’s epistemic commitments are complex and susceptible to programmatic constructs.

In order to avoid convoluted vocabulary and to shift the focus from definitions to relations and practices, I have proposed the Finnish neologism “*taidetutkimus*” (literally, art, “*taide*” + research, “*tutkimus*”) for an ecumenical umbrella term to cover both scholarly

research on art and artistic research (Elo 2017).³ It names the terrain of research (art) but leaves open the manner of moving on the terrain. The term is helpful in relativising the weight of various disciplinary debates related to artistic research and in avoiding a futile controversy between scientific and artistic research – which the term “artistic research” often provokes – and directing attention to the ecology that various research art-related approaches create (Arlander and Elo 2017, 335). A cultural shift described by Erich Hörl as “general ecologisation” is at stake; it adds weight to and politicises the complex questions of relations and functional connections (Hörl 2017, 1–7). Ecology understood in the research context involves questions of how to operate in the strained field of complexities, diverging causal relationships and ramifications of epistemic dispositions, and what research designs to implement. Since no one has command of the whole, the question of “unintentional creation of meanings” must be considered (Stengers 2010, 34–35).

Taidetutkimus (“art-related research”) is a literally an *ecumenical* term; the word derives from Greek οικουμενικός (“the inhabited earth”). It does not refer to positioning research within arts in a topographical or defining sense so much as to earthing and situating it. In the spirit of the vocabulary used by Bruno Latour and Donna Haraway, who are Stengers’s interlocutors and intellectual allies, it is a terrestrial or worldly term that emphasises

3 In this article, I structure the complex relationships between art and research based on a heuristic division into these three categories: scholarly research on art (*taiitentutkimus*), artistic research (*taiiteellinen tutkimus*) and art-related research (*taidetutkimus*). The scholarly research on art involves research approaches in which art is the object of research or study. With “artistic research” I refer to research approaches in which artist-researchers (or groups) include epistemic questions in their artistic practice, which then are processed in various contexts. By using the term *taidetutkimus*, I position these two within the discordant body of thought patterns and operational models that, in one way or another, bring together art and research.

specificities and framing conditions. For Stengers, the question of territory regarding conceptual, functional and sensory operations – outlined by Deleuze and Guattari – is also at stake (Deleuze and Guattari 1994). Positioning artistic research as part of the ecology of art-related research in the spirit of Stengers' thinking leads to the thematisation of the ecology of practices and cosmopolitics. Later, it will become apparent why ecumenism here is neither cut from the same cloth as the benevolent tolerance in Christian contexts, nor is it invested with missionary ambitions.

The circle of art and how it is disintegrating

Dieter Mersch's overview of the debates about artistic research highlights that the societal status of art is in transformation fuelled by reflections, experiments and institutional structures related to the epistemic dimensions of artistic practice. This presents new challenges to the theoretical study of art.

In his seminal book-length essay "The Origin of the Work of Art" (*Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*), Martin Heidegger aptly describes the circular structure of the conceptual machinery within Western art philosophy: According to the accustomed understanding works of art are created by an artist. An artist can abstain from producing art, but without works of art, there is no art. Then again, without art, artists are not artists. Even if they were highly productive, their work would not constitute art. (Heidegger 1977, 1–3.)

Western art philosophy has been occupied with analysing and disentangling the three elements of the circle of art from various perspectives (see e.g. Dickie 1971; Tanke and McQuillan 2012; Carroll 2000). Within artistic research, as well, debates have drawn from these theories, starting in as distant of a past as Baumgarten's *Aesthetica* (Kjørup 2006; Cazevaux 2017).

For Heidegger, the circular nature of the conceptual machinery within art philosophy is a genuine problem, not something that

should be avoided or solved by breaking it down into discursively manageable units. Instead, ways of entering the circle effectively must be developed. Entering the circle is not “a makeshift or a defect” but “strength” and “feast” of thought, provided that “thinking is a craft” (Heidegger 1977, 3). With the question of the truth of being in focus, Heidegger enters the circle and challenges the whole tradition of art philosophy to widen its horizon.

In his time, Heidegger underlined that art philosophy should not avoid the circle of art; instead, it should enter the circle and recognise its power. Now, with the surge of artistic research, it would seem that the entire circle is disintegrating and becoming a new entanglement resulting from the erosion of the basic concepts that used to keep it together.

Artistic research is a catalyst of this disintegration. The figure of artist-researcher has generated discussions that cast new light on many key questions of art philosophy, including the dynamics of the circle of art highlighted by Heidegger. From a researching artist perspective, art does not constitute a mere research object or a conceptual challenge; instead, art can provide a generative context, new methods and specific objectives. In sum, art can be a research object and an intellectual challenge (as in scholarly research on art) but also a driving force, means and methodical terrain for research.

Research has an increasingly important role in specifying the preoccupations of an artist, including epistemic motives and related methodological, ethical and communal questions that art and its conventional contexts do not necessarily feed. The category of artwork has opened up not only structurally but also methodologically, even in accordance with logics that cannot be considered part of the art circle. Art is not internally divided only into diverse forms of art, but it is also involved in divergent and even mutually repellent societal constellations, from activism to aesthetic consumption and

from interdisciplinary research projects and research, development and innovation initiatives (R&D&I) to facilitating grassroots-level social processes. The circle of art highlighted by Heidegger is, without doubt, strained and paradoxical to the core. In the current situation, strain and paradox are nothing new, but the ways in which they operate are – at least in the “ontic” perspective.⁴

What looks like a circle from a critical distance appears as a meshwork or an *entanglement* from the artistic practices perspective, to use a term made popular by Donna Haraway. To Haraway, an entanglement is “material semiotics” that shapes subjects and objects; it is always situated and worldly (Haraway 2016, 4, 13). For Haraway, the current essential challenge is developing retracing strategies – “string games” – that suggest new patterns and narratives (ibid., 63). Whereas a circular structure involves one power circuit, an entanglement dwells in the turmoil of multiple force fields. Therefore, viable retracing strategies are relational and symbiotic by default; they do not depend on a more foundational structure beyond the very entanglement they are part of (ibid.). As an artist and researcher, one can explore the artistic terrain in numerous ways and link up with the most diverse configurations, material-discursive contexts, and developments.

An artist-researcher feels particularly close to various art-related research contexts. However, the artist-researcher's academic identity does not necessarily specify a researching artist's epistemic interests, as, for example, Esa Kirkkopelto and Juha Varto (inference

4 In the frame of this article, I am not able to do justice to the ontological difference that structures Heidegger's approach.

to Kirkkopelto) have suggested.⁵ While from the perspective of art scholarship and academic artistic research, an artist-researcher seems like a hybrid operator that combines the traditional roles of an artist and a researcher, with the focus on the ecology of art-related research practices the situation looks different. When the circle of art disintegrates into an entanglement, a strong identity cannot be an artist-researcher's supporting structure; a given context of action does not outline the horizon of action. From the retracing strategies perspective, various partial and practical identifications compose the artist-researcher's identity. Their processual nature has more weight than the perspective of unification, to which the hybrid role model of an artist-researcher, today still in the centre of discussions around artistic research, often seems to refer. The processual nature of the artist-researcher's role also implicates that artistic models of operation do not bind artistic research. Research "within the arts" and "by artistic means" does not necessarily involve "artistic phenomena" unless one assumes Kirkkopelto's idea of the principally "artistic" structure of reality, which would make artistic research exploration of the reality and its "higher linguistic nature" (Kirkkopelto 2020, 314–326).

In Mersch's analysis, one of the dividing lines between the discussions about artistic research is the question of the research field's identity. The question of whether artistic research is or should be a discipline of its own, equal to other disciplines, divides opinions strongly. For example, the *Vienna Declaration on Artistic Research* (2020), jointly formulated and signed by several art universities and arts research institutions, wants to position artistic research in the

5 Varto begins his book *Taiteellinen tutkimus. Mitä se on? Kuka sitä tekee? Miksi? (Artistic Research. What is it? Who does it? Why?)* with a definitional statement borrowed from Esa Kirkkopelto's inaugural lecture: "Artistic research is academic research which takes place at universities of the arts [...]" (Varto 2017, 12, 172).

context of multidisciplinary research culture and academia (Culture Action Europe 2020). At the same time, the connections between artistic research and the academia have been considered one of artistic research's key problems in that they accelerate the process of academisation of the whole field and promote narrow-minded and Eurocentric focusing on the epistemic aspects of the arts (Cotter 2019; Cramer and Terpsma 2021).

Stengers's cosmopolitical proposal

Isabelle Stengers's cosmopolitics provides several potential elements through which to examine the transformation of art and the disintegration of the circle of art related to the epistemic commitments of artistic research. Stengers develops her science-philosophical approach, cosmopolitics, in a multi-volume 1990s study, originally published in French with the title *Cosmopolitiques* (Stengers 2010 and 2011a). The study consists of seven sections on scientific disputes, transitions between conceptual paradigms and the internal logic of experimental configurations. The compilation's central reference point is modern physics and its paradigms related to mechanics, thermodynamics, quantum physics and self-organising systems. The study's seventh section broadens the cosmopolitical approach to include human sciences.

However, what is Stengers's cosmopolitics more precisely about? An ample starting point could be to comment on Stengers's choice of the term 'cosmopolitics'. It does not refer to Immanuel Kant's cosmopolitics in any way. In her article 'Cosmopolitical Proposal', Stengers writes that she was unaware of Kant's cosmopolitics when she was writing the first part of her work *Cosmopolitics* in 1996 (Stengers 2008, 154). Instead of Kant's world citizen, Stengers links her cosmopolitics with Gilles Deleuze's idiot. Idiot is a conceptual persona who radically challenges one to review the conventional orders of importance and to slow down the knowledge creation

processes (ibid., 155; Stengers 2005b, 152). Stengers's cosmopolitical proposal is a non-programmatic provocation that invites one to reconsider matters and parties left outside of the orders of importance and perceived as irrelevant and disadvantaged. In this sense, the "politics" in "cosmopolitics" parallels to Jacques Rancière's idea of the dissensual relationship between politics and police order (see e.g. Rancière 2010).

The prefix *cosmo-* refers to the insufficiency of a human-centred perspective when analysing political and ethical questions. However, it should not be associated with the idea of the universal because *cosmos* as an element of the term "cosmopolitics" does not correspond to any preconditions, and it does not lay any claims (Stengers 2011a, 355). As a term, it rather activates the idea of a clash of cosmoses. It invites a development of a political ecology responding to the questions of a network of relationships in a situation where the all-over setting is neither given nor controllable (Stengers 2018, 150–151). Instead of universalisation, cosmopolitics attempts to slow down and complicate the construction of a universally shared reality and to give space to hesitation (Stengers 2008, 157). Ultimately, it is a question of "reinventing politics" (Stengers 2011a, 355). According to an anecdote highlighted by Latour, one of Stengers's numerous students, has playfully noted that Stengers's approach levers the framing conditions of politics to a completely new level: The question now is not what is politically correct but what is cosmopolitically correct (Latour 2008, 16). This witticism reveals something essential about the ethos of Stengers's cosmopolitics: While correctness is part of the cause and effect of relationships and their defining rationality, cosmopolitical correctness is embedded in a complex cluster of approaches deriving from incompatible rationalities that co-exist without unified possibilities for problem setting, and consequently, without any view on universal solutions (Stengers 2008, 158). This gives an idea of why Stengers's cosmopolitics cannot be

programmatic in any straightforward sense. Neither is it an emancipatory project built on connections or harmonies; instead, it focuses on epistemic obligations and commitments that feed specific practices. Instead of tolerance that would resolve differences, Stengers emphasises Leibnizian situation-specific ethics (Stengers 2005a, 188). *Calculemus!* Let us measure, compare and construct a “we” that enables commensurability is the only slogan of cosmopolitics (Stengers 2011a, 393–406).

Beyond relativism

Stengers's science-philosophical exposition of two essentially different concepts of measurability gives a hint of the logic of cosmopolitics (ibid., 8–17). A phenomenon or object (cause) measured according to the model based on causality can be determined by its effects through a series of variations of the experiment. In this causal model, reality, in a way, produces its description. Here, the epistemic analysis focuses on an “experimental factish”, which feeds the researcher's epistemic obligations in the sense that the experimental arrangements precisely define it and, at the same time, make it appear as an entity. In other words, it is more than an artefact that the experimental arrangements produce (ibid., 306). Stengers has borrowed the term “factish” from Bruno Latour (ibid., 306, 444), who coined it as a neologism derived from the words *fact* and *fetish*. For Latour, the results of science are attached to entities produced by experimental methods, which provide content and a point of reference to scientific facts but also support symbolic meanings reaching behind their material figures, as such also comparable to the fetishes of the so-called primitive cultures (Haila 2013, 67; Latour 2010).

The second concept of measurability is based on detection, which abandons the idea that measuring according to causal standards can reveal the real nature of a phenomenon. Contrary to the causal model, detection involves probabilities on which a phenomenon is

modelled. When a causal arrangement switches to a model-based arrangement, the question of the framing conditions of modelling becomes essential. Reality can no longer dictate how to describe it (Stengers 2011a, 14). Research does not produce conclusive deductions or conceptual power of judgement. An experimental arrangement's epistemic validity is no longer primarily based on its internal coherence and a closure of causal connections; instead, it depends on the interaction of the measurer and that to be measured. The experimental factish becomes ambiguous, and the logic of epistemic commitments intertwines with a cosmopolitical question of the framing conditions of an assumedly independent entity.

Stengers's extensive flow of science-philosophical reflections includes the idea that the modernistic research practices' problems lie in the tendency to connect epistemic analyses and factishes with a promise of a wider relevance even universal validity. This tendency is apparent in the foundationally polemic nature of modern science: it disqualifies non-modern approaches in the name of its inherent scientificity (*ibid.*, 285). In other words, modern science can easily be harnessed for attempts of universalisation. This is evident also in that significantly different experimental arrangements within modern science share the practice of basing theories and modelling on experimental factishes. In accordance with the logic of modern science, one could say that an experimental factish tends to become technical; it can mobilise new experimental arrangements. According to Stengers's analysis, this means that an experimental factish, on the practical level, is always also potentially a "promising factish" (*ibid.*, 306).⁶ Stengers writes that the relationship between these two factishes is pharmacological; it consists of

6 In his research into experimental systems, Hans-Jörg Rheinberger proposes a similar classification into "epistemic things" and "technical objects" (Rheinberger 1997, 28–29).

two simultaneous, opposing elements – one invigorating, the other lethal: “As soon as the ‘promise’ claims to be endowed with any ability to determine how it should be kept, that is, as soon as the promising factish claims a power and autonomy that assimilate it to the experimental factish, the practice of articulation tips the values of tact toward those of proof” (ibid., 307).

This formulation requires some elaboration, since “tact” is not part of the ordinary vocabulary in the context of hard sciences. Stengers specifically links the demand of tact with scientific modelling. Because of the preconditions and epistemic obligations related to scientific modelling, modellers can never trust their models. The possible inaccuracy or irrelevance of the model does not cause this; instead, the modeller, in accordance with the inherent logic of modelling, cannot know *how* or *to whom* the model is ultimately relevant. “Tact, therefore, expresses an obligation that limits the power of whoever is situated by her knowledge of the other’s problem” (ibid., 277). Problem settings are finite, and the same applies to the epistemic analyses they propose and to the range of truth they can claim.

Nevertheless, it is to be noted that Stengers’s cosmopolitics does not lead to relativism. Instead of the relativity of truth, Stengers emphasises the truth of relativity. As Bruno Latour notes, Stengers’s philosophy of science is actually normative in that it attempts to differentiate good and bad science (Latour 2008, 20). However, the question is not about the difference between true and untrue; instead, it is about recognising the difference between well-constructed and poorly constructed epistemic analyses. Stengers continues to emphasise in the most varied contexts that construction of a good research setting presupposes risk taking. Securely building on earlier research and keeping to what in its light seems worth questioning, and therefore, relevant, does not constitute good research for Stengers. The research topic must lend itself for questioning with all its framing conditions (Simons 2017, 8; Stengers 2018,

65). From the cosmopolitical perspective, extensive and objective definitions – truths – should not be research culture’s goal; rather, the goal should be all parties’ active participation in setting up a problem (Stengers 2008, 181). The routes of argumentation do not define the relevance of an approach; it is a question of tact. With her cosmopolitical proposal, Stengers allies with the mode 2 knowledge production, transdisciplinary research culture and the advocates of citizen science with the provision that she emphasises the situatedness of knowledge creation and extends various interest groups to include non-human entities, such as test animals (Stengers 2008, 161). I will return to this important issue later. As Haraway writes, Stengers’s cosmopolitics requires that decisions be made in the presence of those who will face the decisions’ consequences (Haraway 2016, 12). In *Another Science is Possible*, Stengers describes in detail how and why this requires that the scientific community radically opens up regarding other societal operators. Her line of thought leads to the basic questions of democracy (Stengers 2018, 76–77, *passim*). However, I will not follow that line in this article.

Clearly, some of the parties or stakeholders a research approach implicates are outside the science community. To engage these parties cosmopolitically, it is necessary to implement an analogous process to dissolving the circle of art: *dissolving the circle of science*. In her analysis of the relationships between science and society, Stengers provocatively writes that Science – capitalised – is an amalgam that must be dissolved (*ibid.*, 59). This would expel apparent similarities and authoritative knowledge structures, disguised as facts, and release the elements and specificities of research to their strong areas (*ibid.*). Here, using a chemical metaphor is more than a shallow phrase. Originally trained as a chemist, Stengers often has a reference point in chemistry. In her article “Cosmopolitical Proposal”, she writes that “the art of chemists” hints at the ways in which political assembly is as equally unspontaneous as the formation of a chemical

compound (Stengers 2008, 175). Skilled practices and their cultivation are required to catalyse the combinations of chemical agents or actants (ibid., 174). Dissolving the circle of science does not entail atomisation of research culture to introduce relativism and to welcome alternative facts; instead, it will cultivate sensitivity towards the framing conditions of the interplay between different practices. Stengers's search for an intensive model for research culture from the "art of chemists" highlights a certain "alchemic" trait in her cosmopolitics. Cosmopolitics objects to the compilations or "amalgams" the neo-liberal knowledge economy produces and creates intensive combinations or "compounds", a practitioners' culture that currently seems almost impossible to implement in any other way than as an unrelenting attempt of cultivation. Summing up the key ideas of her cosmopolitics, Stengers writes that she has tried to act like a chemist. She has chosen a reagent that respects practices and does not dissolve what she finds interesting, but, instead, "attacks the way practices use the disjunction 'either... or' to reterritorialize themselves in terms of ancient codes derived from (political) philosophy" (Stengers 2011a, 410).

I now return to the question of the range of truth. For Stengers, the problematic trait to be "dissolved" in modernist sciences is not the production of truth claims but the ways in which these claims are invested with universalising power. When the situatedness of research approaches is recognised in the spirit of cosmopolitics, the whole setting appears in new light. The key role of ethical choices in the justification of epistemic aspirations is foregrounded, and the experience of a finite truth range comes to support the epistemic commitments. In the current political climate, this might appear as problematic due to the widespread rhetoric of "alternative facts". However, as I mentioned above, Stengers's cosmopolitical proposal is not relativist; instead, it positions the truth of relativity in the centre of science philosophy (ibid. 197). This highlights Stengers's

speculative constructivism, which is also normative. In light of the cosmopolitical proposal, the criteria of truth should relate to one another, not so much via triangulation or formalism but starting from the Leibnizian contextual ethics, which requires articulating the fundamentals of epistemic commitments and the ethical choices behind them in every here and now.

Towards the ecology of practices

As has become clear above, Stengers's cosmopolitics is not programmatic as such. However, it can be used as a means of a certain transformation. To discern the nature of transformation in question, the elements of Stengers's cosmopolitics must come under scrutiny still from another angle. Everything revolves around the idea of the ecology of practices, which involves cultivating a research culture that tackles delimitations and specificities as a counterforce to the universalisation tendencies of modern science and the neo-liberal down-dumbing forces of knowledge economy (Stengers 2005a; 2011a; 2015). However, the ecology of practices is not a solution but a learning process and a way of resisting the future visions that the current power relations tend to normalise (Stengers 2011a, 407). It is a cosmopolitical instrument of thinking that helps construct new practical identities for practices; that is, create, for them, ways to be present and to connect (Stengers 2005a, 186). In a provisional summary, the question is about the operations that produce an independent entity and connect it to its environment and other entities. From the research perspective, these operations have their constructed points of reference (factishes), articulated preconditions (experiments) and operators (researchers), who outline specificities, and, in contrast, authorised representatives (experts) and mediators (diplomats), who see to the more extensive connections.

The key question within cosmopolitics is how epistemic practices can live up to their potential without a programmatic agenda,

as well as how they can contribute to cooperation and exchange without taming their mutual differences. Stengers describes the problematic coexistence of various practices in terms reminiscent of transference and describes it as an asymmetrical reciprocal capture, which does not guarantee or authorise anything: “[it is] the experience, always in the present, of the one into whom the other’s dreams, doubts, hopes, and fears pass.” (Stengers 2011a, 372). To complement Stengers’s line of thinking, a unilateral capture would be colonising and a symmetric capture would be totalising. Perhaps an asymmetric reciprocal capture equals mutually challenging perspectives, recognising and acknowledging one another as part of their environment.

Stengers further explains the logic of this ecology, central to cosmopolitics, with the help of the concept of emergence. She relies on James K. Feibelman’s definition of emergence, which states that the relationships between parts and wholes – for example, organs, an organism and its environment – cannot be perceived only through means and goals. According to the traditional holistic definition, a genuinely emergent whole is more than the sum of its parts, and it can be considered its own goal for which its parts have been organised. In accordance with this interpretation, an owl, for example, a sighted animal, has eyes to see (and to be the sighted animal that it is). To this, Feibelman adds an element essential to the mechanisms of Stengers’s ecology of practices. According to Feibelman, the mechanism of emergence is always situated on a lower level than the object of examination is, and its purpose is always on a higher level: the higher level depends upon the lower and the lower level is directed by the higher (Feibelman 1954, 59-61). This means that any analysis of an organised entity always requires three levels: its own level, a lower level and a higher level (Stengers 2011a, 219). In other words, the goal or purpose of an organised entity, an organisation, can only be perceived through another, heterotrophically; in

Stengers's words, in the form of an asymmetrical reciprocal capture. The objective of seeing does not explain the evolution of the eye; the eye also produces seeing.

For research (and research organisations), this means that when novel practices become established, their evaluation criteria and the practices themselves are formed simultaneously but do not guarantee or authorise one another. In other words, the conceptual core of Stengers's ecological logic implies an emergence that depends on another or others. Therefore, the cosmopolitical challenge is that one must find the foundations for evaluating novel developments from experience without assuming they would be constructed as straightforward empirical deductions (Haila 2013, 70). The problem is practical; it is not given but needs to be constructed. Stengers highlights the relevance of speculation and transductive thinking in this process (Stengers 2011a, 292–294). She owes much of her understanding of speculation to Alfred N. Whitehead (Stengers 2011b), but the speculative vein of *Cosmopolitics* that I will take up in the following is mainly connected to Gilbert Simondon's transductive thinking (Simondon 2017).

Transduction is the key concept of Simondon's original theory of individuation. Simondon argues that the existence of an individual cannot be satisfactorily explained based on its substance, or on hylomorphism, that is, on the interplay of matter and form and a related teleological process (Simondon 2017, 23). Instead of looking for a principle of individuation, Simondon suggests an "ontogenetic" approach with focus on the processes of individuation (Voss 2018, 97). In Simondon's analysis, these processes are transductive operations; they gradually propagate a structuration within physical, biological, mental, and social domains (Simondon 2017, 32). Transduction describes the process of spatialisation and division, which Simondon defines, based on thermodynamics, as information (Combes 2013, 6). Information in this sense is an event of triggering a structural shift

in a metastable system (Voss 2018, 98). Simondon's paradigmatic example of this is the way in which the insertion of a seed initiates the crystallisation of a supersaturated solution (*ibid.*, 97).

From Stengers's perspective, Simondon's thinking is speculative in that it creates concepts that help to connect matters that our thinking manners and our favourite abstractions categorically tend to separate (Stengers 2011a, 292–294). Simondon's ontogenetic approach connects the “individuals” organised in the form of a crystal, psyche and collective (Simondon 2017).

Even though Simondon's idea of transductive individuation is structurally similar to the concept of emergence presented above, Stengers emphasises that transduction should not be the foundation of a scientific analysis of emergence (Stengers 2011a, 294). Transduction is not about explanation; as a methodical approach, it explicitly resists the choice between mutually exclusive explanatory principles and attempts at standing on both sides of the gap. It is reminiscent of the relativity of the explanatory power of factishes and the limited range of truth while it also encourages formulating questions to which scientific analyses do not give reason within their own rationality. Transduction can “help recognize and celebrate the occasions when the scientist, temporarily putting aside any professional plausibility, searches for the words to express the question that the experience of what she is involved in invincibly imposes”. (*ibid.*, 295). Through transductive speculation, new experiential connections can be created to promote new practices.

Since cosmopolitics is the discordant coexistence of cosmoses, various rationalities step into play. Stengers emphasises that the question of rationality is not only epistemological. Rationality is a *pharmakon* that connects knowledge and power (Nathan and Stengers 2018, 131). In connection with the classical *pharmakon* dualism, Stengers often ponders how the question of rationality is formulated, how it – depending on the context – can motivate and enforce

thinking or cripple it. Here Stengers is not far from Foucauldian analytics of power and Rancière's idea of politics as a distribution of the sensible. Michel Serres's communication theory also figures in the background. However, Stengers emphasises that as a *pharmakon*, rationality, above all, causes practical challenges for which reasoning is part of the solution and part of the problem (ibid.). From the ecology of practices perspective, this also means that reasons do not explain rationality. Rationality builds on relations, which implies that reasoning needs to involve also experimenting with connections between various rationalities in practice.

On a more concrete level, the implications of Stengers's cosmopolitical proposal can be examined in relation to scientific animal testing, an issue that was already mentioned above and that Stengers has addressed more than once (see e.g. Stengers 2008, 161–164; 2011a, 397–398). The science community weighs the ethical foundations of animal testing through standardised regulation mechanisms that protect individual researchers. The cosmopolitical proposal aims to construct contextual preconditions that would force the researcher to take an active stand on the ethics of their testing in the presence of all parties involved (Stengers 2008, 162–163). This would lead to self-regulation in which the “self” would not be a given (e.g. a scientific community and its standards), but part of the complex of issues at hand. Whose voice should be listened to when weighing the legitimacy of an experimental arrangement? How should the non-interest group parties (in this case, animals used in testing) – those who do not or will not have a voice of their own and who are in principle deaf to the entire question of legitimacy – be considered? “The cosmos” is the name of the multipolarity and coexistence of unrelenting, non-hierarchical forms of being that starts to take shape with these questions. This shaping is a “cosmic event” in which Stengers sees the possibility of an extensive transformation of research culture beginning with the researcher's individual process of change

(Stengers 2008, 164). As a means of transformation, cosmopolitics requires risk taking and experimental ethical practices (Stengers 2010, viii).

Artist-researcher as a practitioner

As I mentioned above, Stengers's cosmopolitics challenges us to shift the focus of discussion within artistic research from ontological definitions to practices and relationships. The ecological approach, which I proposed above, also encourages this; with this approach, artistic research can be grounded as part of the multiplicity of research activities conducted in relation to the arts (in Finnish *taidetutkimus*). In light of Stengers's cosmopolitics and ecology of practices, I can now examine whether and how the artist-researcher is – in accordance with Dieter Mersch's mapping – a provocative intruder, an aesthetic educator, a transdisciplinary agent or an academic. How are artist-researchers' epistemic commitments manifested in their ways of navigating in the field of research? To unravel this question, I will need an outline of Stengers's cosmopolitical agents.

In addition to the idiot, Stengers introduces a whole group of conceptual figures on the cosmopolitical stage. They are not necessarily "conceptual personae" but cosmopolitical agents, "psychosocial types", whose roles are contextually arranged in relationship to one another (Stengers 2011, 393, *passim*, cf. Deleuze and Guattari 1993, 73). Here, I will discuss the practitioner, the expert, the professional and the diplomat.⁷

For the ecology of practices, the key figure is the researcher, that is, the practitioner. A practitioner can say "we" only in relation to a problem that is sufficiently intensive and well-constructed to feed a

7 For my earlier attempts to present Stengers' cosmopolitical agents see Elo 2020 and 2021.

specific – practitioners’ – research culture. Practitioners construct problems, cultivate specific practices and question them; in other words, take risks and open possibilities to new connections between their practice and its environment. Risk taking is an essential part of practice in the ecology of practices. In it, the sedentary elements of practice are exposed to emergence depending on another or others, which produces an “experience of ‘feeling’ one’s territory” (Stengers 2011a, 372). Practitioners are specialists in their own practices, but when they are mandated to speak for their special knowledge beyond its specific framing conditions, they become experts.

An expert is listened to in connection with societal decision-making processes. An expert presents factishes, often transplanted from other contexts, and as such, easily perceived as universal truths. An expert is an advocate of modernity (ibid., 391). Under the neoliberal forces’ pressure, an expert can become a professional with an agenda of interests outside of the research practice (Stengers 2015, 38, *passim*). In the current political situation, the slide from a practitioner to a professional – on a global level – is a rule rather than an exception, which Stengers considers a disaster, not only for the future of science but also for the entire civilisation (Stengers 2018).

A diplomat holds a key position in mediating various rationalities. When diplomats say “we”, they always speak for some others, but structurally separated from them. A diplomat’s goal is not peace based on consensus, but a situation in which all parties recognise the structures of the problem at hand and find a functional relationship to them; in other words, are included in defining the problem. For a diplomat, peace is a “possible peace, always local, precarious, and matter for invention” (Stengers 2011a, 387). Diplomats are translators whose imperfection makes them seem somewhat like traitors. However, they accomplish a possibility of convergence (ibid., 414). A diplomat produces “a ‘diplomatic’ scene allowing for the transformation of oppositions into contrasts”, as Didier Debaise aptly writes

(Debaise 2018, 26). This is also a scene where rationally binding obligations appear as epistemic commitments.

Stengers's diplomat is not an advocate of broad-mindedness or tolerance. The seventh book of *Cosmopolitics* actually focuses on the curse of tolerance (Stengers 2011a, 303–416). For Stengers, the formula of tolerance is “yes, but”, and it is based on the distorted idea that the tolerator has “more and better knowledge” and can thus afford to tolerate other views; for the tolerator, these views seem limited half-truths or immature, “primitive” opinions. In light of this structure, Stengers blacklists even phenomenology in that it entails a revelatory return to the things, beyond everyday thinking and theoretical constructions (ibid., 313). She outlines a psychosocial prototype of a researcher committed to specific epistemic analyses to counterbalance the sublime character of a sage, a phenomenologist capable of eidetic reductions, and a mystic (ibid.). Stengers's black list could perhaps be complemented with a conspiracy theorist creatively combining alternative facts – as a cosmopolitical agent, a professional of pseudo diplomacy. Stengers emphasises the importance of slowing down of research processes and decolonising thinking but underlines that, from her perspective, this does not include connotations of accusations or heroic reinterpretations (Stengers 2018, 69). For a viable ecology of practices, cultivating the connections of reciprocity *and* asymmetry is essential.

I will now return to the opening quote of this article, the footnote in which Stengers wrote that art could not delegate experts. Stengers presents the footnote as an indirect analogy to the exposition of the relationships of philosophy, science and art that Deleuze and Guattari developed in *What is Philosophy?* (Stengers 2011a, 455). Here, the authors write that these three forms of thinking outline their territories as planes of conceptual operations (philosophy), functional operations (science) and sensory operations (art), which partially overlap and a “rich tissue of correspondencies” can

be established between them (Deleuze & Guattari 1994, 199, *passim*). In Stengers's analysis developed in the context of sciences, these forms of thinking propagate into specific practices and raise questions beyond their internal constructions about the connections between the practices and the mechanisms of exchange (see e.g. Stengers 2005b, 156). In light of dissolving the circle of art, art's inability to support expert mandates – for example, with the help of the artist-researcher figure – is caused by that artistic research does not have a territory of its own; it is not immanent in the plane of aesthetic composition that Deleuze and Guattari outlined (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 163–199). In other words, it does not have a well-defined variety of skills, methods and materials or even contexts in which it would be at ease – except for, perhaps, academia, as undoubtedly is the case from a professionalised artist-researcher's perspective. At the level of an artist-researcher's entangled exploration strategies, art does not have a foundation, and it cannot offer one to any other parties. It can only construct its medium or milieu through and in relation to practices attached to a specific situation and in relation to pressing matters that motivate its singular touch. Similar to art, artistic research operates *in medias res* and articulates unprecedented factual connections. Thinking along the lines of Deleuze's and Guattari's analysis, the plane of artistic composition is not sufficient for artistic research; instead, artistic research ventures out to epistemic parsing between the three forms of thinking. For these articulations to fulfil their epistemic potential, they must be presented both on their own terms and as able to connect. This means that an artist-researcher must take the role of both a practitioner and a diplomat. An artist-researcher is a cosmopolitical agent whose identity consists of partial identifications. It is based on the ability to participate various “we” constructions.

Tuija Kokkonen's idea of weak agency provides a more apt starting point for describing research in the arts than that of identity,

which is prevalent in discussions about the field of artistic research. It sees art-related research settings as agent networks that must consider, in addition to artist-researchers, various agents, some of them non-human. According to Kokkonen, the term “weak agent” is a neologism based on calibrating existing vocabulary (Kokkonen 2017, 167). It questions the difference between culture and nature, human and non-human from within artistic research practice. As a cosmopolitical agent, an artist-researcher is a weak agent whom the roles of a provocative intruder, aesthetic educator or academic researcher do not suit if they require a strong identity of an expert or professional. As a weak agent, an artist-researcher can well be transdisciplinary but also lack an expert's or professional's agenda.

New dividing lines in the field of artistic research

Art cannot outsource its activities to experts but it requires diplomacy. Unlike professionalised experts who know how to compile contexts in accordance with their agendas, diplomats feel the weight of special situations, similar to practitioners. They can act as catalysts, but they do not have a mandate to act as experts expected to formulate the problem at hand properly. In the space of negotiations that the research community and its reference groups share, “cosmopolitically correct” artist-researchers are diplomats rather than experts or professionals. By presenting their artistic processes' results as research results, they critically distance themselves from their artistic practices and provide an opportunity for epistemic negotiations. They do not propose solutions; they show the problem at hand in its constructedness, which, at best, leads to a discharge of initial stages of reciprocal asymmetric capture.

In the role of a practitioner, an artist-researcher's epistemic commitments mainly concern presentation that constitutes a point of reference for epistemic negotiations, a sort of a transitory factish. The epistemic achievements of an artist-researcher constitute a

point of contention – or, as, for example, Henk Borgdorff writes, a boundary object (Borgdorff 2012, 177). All those concerned debate the status and implications of such a point of contention with related framing conditions. Paraphrasing Stengers’s loaded footnote: an artist-researcher exposes the sedentary elements of experience to epistemic negotiations.

Bruno Latour’s analysis of the material-discursive logic of reference in a research process is one potential way of making this setup concrete. In his renowned article “Circulating Reference”, Latour schematizes the process of a field study conducted in Amazonia all the way from the jungle to a research publication (Latour 1999, 24–79). He examines the process as a series of articulations in which the material is analysed by giving it a controllable form. In the process, each analysis is exposed to a reversion that makes it the material starting point of the following articulation in the chain. Thus, soil samples collected during the project gradually find their positions in a diagram that connects diverse variables. The division between a referent and its representation is not given; instead, the referents are constructed into two directions as a traceable chain, which Latour analyses per Figure 1. In the diagram, reductive steps lead from specific to general while amplifying steps lead from general to specific. Michael Schwab has proposed that, from the perspective of artistic research, Latour’s diagram – a plane figure – should also be viewed in 3D.⁸ This would show that the axes of reduction and amplification intersect also at a right angle and that the teleological process of the interplay between form and content does not manage to exhaust the logic according to which the phenomena under examination are constituted.

8 Michael Schwab presented this idea in a doctoral seminar at the University of the Arts Helsinki’s Academy of Fine Arts and Theatre Academy on 18 February 2021.

In light of Stengers's ecology of practices, I see a space of cosmopolitical negotiations open with this new dimension in which the intersection of axes at each reductive/amplifying step enables transductive speculation between various rationalities. Thus, Stengers's cosmopolitics provides a new perspective into the discussions of the expositiveness of artistic research (see e.g. Borgdorff and Schwab 2013).

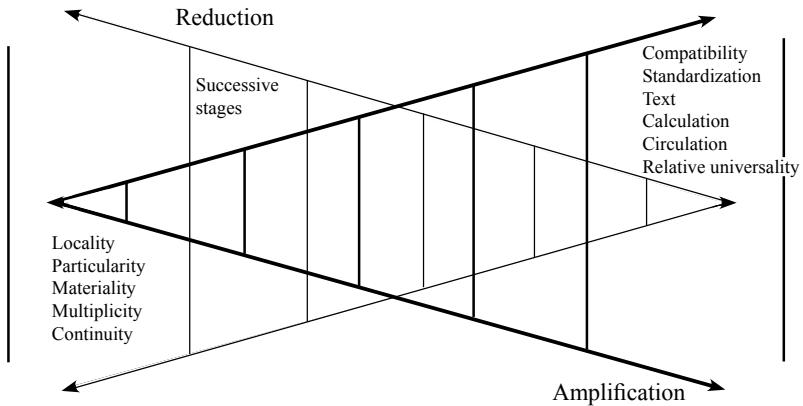


Figure 1. “The transformation at each step of the reference [...] may be pictured as a trade-off between what is gained (amplification) and what is lost (reduction) at each information-producing step” (Latour 1999, 71).

In short, the question of expositiveness figuring in the debates about artistic research concerns the epistemic commitments of artistic practice and how they can be highlighted and introduced into critical debates on their own terms. Schwab's notion “exposition” (Schwab 2011), originally introduced in the context of *Journal for Artistic Research*, implicates the process of explication, but at the same time, challenges the idea that this process would progress linearly from an assumedly more opaque medium or mode of articulation towards an assumedly more transparent one. Rather, the exposition process explores the hierarchies between various cultural techniques in and through its articulations.

In a viable ecology of practices, the power relations between various articulatory events – that always emerge when intensive practices meet – have a limited range; therefore, they cannot constitute hierarchies capable of rigid formatting. Thus, the expositional strategies that have been developed within artistic research can contribute to a process in which the categorical confrontation between art and science diverges into contextual contrasts. This is an approach provided by Stengers's cosmopolitics to the third line of argumentation in Mersch's mapping, according to which the dividing lines between science and arts are historical variables.

In addition to the approaches mentioned above and in light of Stengers's cosmopolitics, at least two new dividing lines clearly emerge from Mersch's overview.

1) A question of the type of practitioners that the institutional research environments within artistic research educate. Stengers argues for developing practices and research-related structures that strengthen diversity. They would counterbalance the neoliberal forces of knowledge economy that dumbdown practices and turn practitioners into professionals, advocates of knowledge economy. The question of tact presented above becomes a central dividing line: the situatedness of a practitioner's knowledge should be cherished when setting a problem, constructing a research approach, analysing research results and making decisions based on the results. Regarding the academic framework of artistic research, this means that all parties should consider the logic of emergence analysed above.

2) The question of how artistic research could be better positioned not only on the interface of art and academia but also in relation to other societal contexts. This is acute insofar as the circles of both art and science are disintegrating. Examples of

related initiatives are available in the ArtsEqual⁹ project or in the Participatory Art-Based Research project (PABR)¹⁰. A challenge here is presented by how all projectified initiatives are susceptible to unilateral captures by science policies and financing mechanisms. Means should be found to maintain reciprocity and asymmetry on the practical level and in institutional structures. Note that the extensive transformation of research culture, which Stengers calls “a cosmic event”, above all is change of attitudes within basic research (Stengers 2008, 164). Artist-researchers can also contribute to this in their strong areas.

On many occasions, Stengers emphasises that practitioners should reclaim the right to deal with complex issues that require slowness and rehabilitate the skills needed for that (see e.g. Stengers 2018). A corresponding setup is reflected in *Reclaiming Artistic Research* (Cotter 2019), a book that contains discussions with researching artists, which Lucy Cotter edited. In the introduction, Cotter writes that researching artists have largely become alienated from artistic research attached to academia and that they should reclaim artistic research to the arts (ibid., 9–21). In light of Stengers's cosmopolitics, the tangle is more complex and unavoidably includes more operators and parties. At the end of the day, perhaps the key question one should ask is, how does one learn to be an idiot on the territory one inhabits?

9 ArtsEqual was a 2015–2021 project at the University of the Arts Helsinki that the Academy of Finland's council of strategic research funded, which examined how arts as a public service could increase societal equality and well-being in the 2020s Finland (Uniarts 2021).

10 In spring 2021, Stengers herself participated in a symposium of PABR, a project funded by the Behörde für Wissenschaft, Forschung, Gleichstellung und Bezirke Hamburg (Participatory Art Based Research 2020)

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6. THE INTRA-ACTIVE REALITIES OF ARTISTIC LABOUR A Proposal for a Multidisciplinary Approach¹

MIKKO JAKONEN, PAUL JONKER-HOFFRÉN,
KATVE-KAISA KONTTURI AND MILLA TIAINEN

In this article, we propose approaches through which the work of artists could be studied as an essential part of art and as processes in which the specific characteristics of the arts, the subjective experiences of art-makers, and various socio-economic and political factors constantly intra-act. The article is motivated by the assumption that new kinds of dialogues between research in the fields of art and work significantly expand and advance the understanding of the specificity, current forms, and future directions of artistic work.

The position of the artist in Finnish society is uncertain. On the one hand, artists are valued as creative, specialist professionals who

1 This article was earlier published in Finnish as “Taidetyön yhteismuotoutuva todellisuus: ehdotus monitieteiseksi lähestymistavaksi”. *Kulttuurintutkimus* 38, no. 2–3 (2021): 96–112, <https://journal.fi/kulttuurintutkimus/article/view/102980>. Translation Michael Dutton. The authors are working in the Kone Foundation funded project *New economies of artistic labour: from individual entrepreneurship to sustainable collectives (Taidetyö ja talouden uudet muodot: yksilöyrittäjyydestä kestäviin kollektiiveihin, 2020–2024)*, which is led by Kontturi and Tiainen. In the project, with the help of an interdisciplinary research group, the changes in the work and professional identity of artists in present-day Finland are analysed in relation to various economic dynamics, such as the current forms of the market economy, state funding and the sharing economy.

have gone through a demanding education and whose work has many purposes in society. On the other hand, their labour market position can be markedly uncertain or *precarious*: an artist is sometimes considered an employee, sometimes an entrepreneur, sometimes a professional for whom art making is a way of life. The fragmentation of an artist's income is often seen as the inevitable state of affairs. (Hirvi-Ijäs et al. 2017, 2020; Pyykkönen, Sokka and Kurlin Niiniaho 2021.) In addition, conceptions of the making of art as work are unclear and even disparaging. These conceptions were highlighted in the 2021 statements about the plight of several art fields during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many artists and other interlocutors have noted that the pandemic has starkly revealed how artistic activity is not considered as full-fledged, socially significant work; nor is its specific nature understood. This is demonstrated by the strict restrictions on theatres, concert activities, and the artistic and cultural events industry in general, which prevented the practice of these fields during the pandemic, as well as serious delays in the financial support provided for these fields (Suosalo et al. 2021; TAKU 2021; Puukka 2021; Kanerva and Lehmusvesi 2021).

However, the unclear working life status of artists and their problems already existed before the COVID-19 pandemic. Indeed, the health crisis only further emphasised those aspects of social reality and the challenges of making art that not only shape the work and life of artists but on which artists themselves can also have an influence through their activities. This reality is constructed by the labour market and legislation, guidelines, and practices regarding unemployment and social security. In addition, it includes art education, institutions and organizations that manage art making, public and private grant systems, domestic and international art fields, institutionalized fine art, popular culture and so on. The nature of artistic work is also determined by a wide variety of changing social-material contexts: spaces and communities, work

tools and materials, and publication channels (see, e.g., Monni and Törmi 2019). When compared with traditional areas of paid work, the operating environment and work of artists can be referred to as hybrid (Ansio, Houni and Piispa 2018) or liminal (Kontinen et al. 2013).

The hybrid nature of artists' work means, firstly, a multi-professional job description, in which other jobs, such as marketing, administration and applying for funding, are intertwined with the actual art making. Secondly, hybrid artistry refers to artists who combine artistic, art-related, and unrelated skills in their various works. (Ansio, Houni, and Piispa 2018.) On the one hand, the concept of liminality has been used to refer to the normalising yet continuous state of change in working life as a whole, and, on the other hand, to the identity of the workforce transitioning from one job to another, as well as the associated feelings of belonging and not belonging to work communities (Kontinen et al. 2013). In this article, we aim to advance conceptual clarity regarding the work of artists, both for multidisciplinary research in this field and for societal debate. What makes our approach special is its combination of perspectives from social policy, working life research, new materialist art research, and the philosophy of work. The synergy and interaction of these perspectives strengthens the understanding that art making is about constant *intra-active relationships* between the social, material, and subjective features of art processes and the economic and social boundary conditions of art making. In principle, none of these dimensions can be considered the primary determinant of art making. On the contrary, both in research and in political decision-making concerning artistic work, their continuous mutual influence must be understood and given attention. Awareness of this should influence the fact that, for example, in labour market administration, the specific features of artists' work would be noted better than before; for example, the project-based nature of the

work, the transition between entrepreneurship and waged work, and the changing roles in different art processes and collectives.

Theoretically-speaking, we draw inspiration from the term *intra-action* coined by philosopher of science and developer of new materialist thinking, Karen Barad. This term refers to the continuous structuring of phenomena in the mutually influencing relationships of different sub-factors, i.e., in *intra-action* (Barad 2007, 33, 56–58, 197; 2019, 113–126; see also Kontturi et al. 2018). Our overarching concept for the intra-active elements of art making is *artistic labour*. This approach emphasises two things. Firstly, artistic labour refers precisely to the set of mutually influencing and changeable elements from which or in which art making takes shape. Secondly, the final part of the concept emphasises a socio-politically essential aspect: although art making can be a way of life, it should not only be thought of as a vocation the practitioners of which solely “live on thin air.” Artistic labour is also the activity of people trained in a profession that falls within the scope of the concept of work and aims to generate income (see, e.g., Houni and Ansio 2013, 20). This aspect has recently been underlined, for example, by the profile picture frame “Art is work” used on Facebook by many artists and those who show solidarity with them.

From this conceptual starting point, we ask: how can artistic labour and its development directions in the Finnish society of the 2020s be theoretically grasped and defined? Our main question is further clarified by the following sub-questions: what kinds of factors related to labour market status shape artistic labour, and what kinds of cultural practices, material components, and experiential features that belong to art making emerge in *intra-action* with them? By material elements, we mean the tools, material supplies, physical environments, and bodily processes of artistic work. Experiential features refer to the lived corporeality, affective dimensions, and verbal articulations of the artistic labour. Our approach combines

perspectives from the social sciences and art research, which are concretized in this article as a three-dimensional way of perceiving artistic labour. The first dimension is based, above all, on the study of work from a socio-political perspective and concerns the definition of art making for financial profit. This perspective assists in examining the relationship between the specificities of artistic work and the contemporary labour market and social security system, as well as the position of the artist in these contexts, as objects and actors of cultural policy governance.

The second dimension of our approach deepens the understanding of artistic work by bringing in the *new materialist* perspective developed in art research in recent decades. This dimension emphasises the processes of working and emergence behind each “finished” work of art and the importance of studying these. Drawing from new materialist art research, we align the term *artistic work* and the complementary concept of *work of art*, as distinguished from the concept *artwork* (Bolt 2004). This concept refers to the interactions, or intra-actions, between human bodies and minds, spaces, institutions, cultural practices, economic aspects and more than human factors (technologies, artistic materials, physical environments). The concept of *work of art* posits that art is created and experienced in the dynamic synergy and interplay of these various factors. (Kontturi 2018, 10, 15, 50–55.)

The third dimension of our approach is based on the thinking of occupational health physician and philosopher Christophe Dejours (2007, 2012; Dejours et al. 2018). This dimension complements the socio-political and art research perspectives by emphasising work as simultaneously being an organised social activity and a subjective experience. Dejours has examined the interaction of sociocultural and experiential processes, especially in relation to occupational wellbeing and sickness. However, we suggest that his thinking also provides an important perspective on the intra-action of social and

individual, experiential factors in artistic work more generally. Next, we position our study in relation to the existing approaches to the research of art and work.

Examining artistic labour in the study of art and work

Since the early 2000s, the work of artists has become the subject of a new form of scrutiny in art research. This interest can be seen as a counterweight to the post-structuralist ideas about the death of the author that have been around since the 1980s. According to these ideas, works of art are meeting places of cultural meanings that go beyond the intentions of individual artists and gain their real meaning in the interpretations of art (e.g., Barthes [1968] 1988). The approaches of recent decades, for example in art history, visual culture research, and music performance research, do not suggest a return to the assumptions of modern art theory or those of classical humanism regarding the artist as the determinant of what art is. However, what they do examine is the corporeal, other material and socio-cultural components and relationships that shape the artist's work through, for example, interviews, ethnography, and autoethnography (Bolt 2004; Cook 2013; Kontturi 2018; Tiainen 2008; Moisala et al. 2017, 14–20). The focus thus shifts from the *artwork*, considered as the end product, to the fact that the artists' *work processes* are also an essential part of the art.

The working life status and livelihood of artists has been studied sociologically in Finland for decades, including in many recent studies (Houni and Ansio 2013; Ansio, Houni, and Piispa 2018; Karttunen 2017; Korhonen et al. 2013; Pyykkönen, Sokka, and Kurlin Niiniaho 2021). These enquiries are connected to internationally recognised changes in cultural policy and economy, the strengthening of research on precarious and post-Fordist work, and the growth of cultural economics (Cincolani 2014; Gill and Pratt 2008; Jakonen 2014; Jokinen and Venäläinen 2015; Menger 2009; Throsby 1994,

2010; Standing 2011; Zoran and Stevan 2013). In addition to the aforementioned studies, reports on the position of artists in Finland have been published in the 2010s by, for example, Arts Promotion Centre Finland (Rensujeff 2014), Cupore: Centre for Cultural Policy Research (Roiha, Rautiainen, and Rensujeff 2015) and the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health (Houni and Ansio 2013).

Several of these reports define artists as a special, if heterogeneous, group of professionals and workers. The analysis has focused, among other things, on the median income of artists working in respective art fields, the distribution of their labour market position between the categories of freelancer, salaried employee, entrepreneur, and independent artist, as well as the importance of gender in employment and income level. The research has so far highlighted the markedly atypical position of artists in relation to the labour market norms regarding salaried employment and the challenges the social security system faces in recognising the characteristic forms of artistic work. Artists' wellbeing at work has also been considered (Houni and Ansio 2013). These studies, which are mainly based on extensive statistical data, can be seen as a continuation of the discussion about the status of artists enacted in Finnish arts policy and in studies conducted by the national arts administration since the 1970s (Heikkinen 2007, 15; Heiskanen, Kangas and Mitchell 2015, 232–309).

Conceptualising the making of art with empirical data and from various theoretical perspectives is, therefore, an important trend in art and culture research, cultural policy research, and cultural economics. In this article, we strengthen the synergy of these research fields with our three-pronged, multidisciplinary approach. The concept of artistic labour that we propose also includes limitations. One of these is that, although the job descriptions of artists share some common features, there are also significant differences and hierarchies between and within the art fields in relation to, for example,

career development and earnings (Kangas and Mitchell 2015, 277–279; Pyykkönen, Sokka and Kurlin Niiniaho 2021). Thus, we acknowledge that the conceptual understanding we propose must be further tested and challenged in empirical research and close analyses of artists' work in the future. In this article, however, we focus on features that can be considered to characterise artistic work in many fields, and we illustrate our claims with brief examples from different fields.

The precarious labour market position of the artist as worker

There is a widespread perception in the study of work in the cultural fields that almost all work based on *creativity* should be considered artistic work. In this definition, creativity and the related notions of *novelty* and *uniqueness* are at the heart of artistic work. (See e.g., Hirvi-Ijäs and Sokka 2019; Menger 2009; Pirnes 2008; Throsby 2010; Wennes 2009.) Art making thus differs from work *performed* in the cultural fields and professions, such as assisting tasks in film, television, and the performing arts, or coding computer games. However, the creativity and novelty of artistic work should not be understood as absolute, self-sufficient features. These features always arise in relation to the broader practices, expressive traditions, and materialities of art and culture. (Kontturi 2018, 70–81; Tiainen 2012, 256–300.)

Defined in this way, artistic work includes traditional and institutionalised forms of fine art, the popular and mainstream creative activities of the cultural industry, as well as activities in various

specific sub-cultures.² It produces new content, ways of doing things, and artistic or cultural works, experiences, and phenomena. Artistic work can be based on a wide variety of traditions, trainings, and canons, as well as new technical, substantive, and conceptual developments. Artistic work may take the form of, for example, painting as a trained or self-taught visual artist, curating art exhibitions and events, contemporary and conceptual art, street, media, and social art, as well as various types of music, dance, and sound performances. Moreover, artistic work can take place in diverse institutions and facilities and in different areas of the cultural economy, such as popular, street, or digital culture.

However, not all artistic work is directly connected to the process of generating economic value, nor does it always result in immediate profits. Performing artistic work may include different types of activities that look like hobbies, studying or training, but which, nonetheless, indirectly create financial value. Artistic work can also involve unpaid work. This work is connected to expertise or creativity (*art*), which can be acquired through formal education, and which is practiced professionally, but which also includes a considerable amount of informal learning and independent hobby-like activity (Flichy 2017; Menger 2009; Pyykkönen, Sokka and Kurlin Niiniaho 2021).

In addition to understanding the special nature of artistic work, we include the precarious position of the artist in both the labour market and the unemployment and social security systems at the heart of the concept of artistic labour. In a precarious labour market situation, a person occupies either a part-time or a fixed-term

2 We do not use the terms “high culture” or “entertainment and popular culture” because they refer to hierarchical differences, which are often also interpreted as measures of quality. To see such hierarchical assumptions about quality differences cannot be reasonably made nowadays. We therefore propose that these terms be abandoned both in the fields of art and culture and more generally in speech about social groups.

employment relationship or an uncertain entrepreneurial position. They may be engaged in a fixed-term internship, other work experience, or labour market training, or they may be in a situation in which their earnings and job opportunities are difficult to predict. A precarious worker's earnings are often not enough to live on, despite their best efforts, and they must rely on social security or financial support from people close to them, or even hold down several jobs at the same time. The earnings a person occupying a precarious labour market position needs to live on come from many sources, in various bits and pieces. The overlapping of different subjectivities and identities (artist, mother, student, part-time employee) and hybrid work are also typical of the precarious labour market position. (Ansio, Houni and Piispa 2018; Jakonen 2020, 161–182; Pyykkönen, Sokka and Kurlin Niiniaho 2021; Standing 2011, 1–25.) The notion of post-Fordist work is often mentioned when talking about precarity. It refers to a lack of work autonomy and the intense competition associated with work, as well as the overarching presence of work in the lives of workers (Gill and Pratt 2008; Jakonen 2014; Vidal 2013).

Although precarity is defined by low income, the concept is broad in the financial sense; in the end, the art worker themselves sets their own level of sufficient income (Pyykkönen, Sokka and Kurlin Niiniaho 2021, 69–74). Sufficient earnings can be affected by factors related to housing, family, household, property, and debts. One definition of sufficient income for life in Finland may be considered low-income (“poverty line” [in Finnish, *köyhyyseraja*]), which is a relative amount of 60 percent of the median household income. For one person, this means working capital of around 1,350 euros per month (Statistics Finland 2023).

The challenge that precarious working relationships pose for one's livelihood is often revealed through the need for social security and the various difficulties associated with combining social security and earned income. Such problems are caused by, for example,

constantly changing sources of income. Integrated forms of social security, such as housing allowance, do not respond quickly to these changes, which then cause (temporary) income poverty and “precarious circumstances.” (Jakonen 2019; Standing 2011.) Moreover, not all artists can participate in paid work or entrepreneurial activities. This applies, for example, to minors, pensioners, those who are unwell, disabled persons, and to those who do not have a residence or work permit (Salonlahti 2019). Artistic work can generate significant additional earnings or replace social security for these people (Abbing 2008). On the other hand, additional earnings may also limit a person’s social security allowance and even prevent professional artistry (Salonlahti 2019). In the Finnish labour market, the vast majority (approx. 85%) of the workforce is employed, which includes many forms of work, including both full-time and temporary work (Statistics Finland 2020b; Hotvedt et al. 2020). Another key form of work is self-employment (approx. 12%), which for its part may constitute precarious work for self-employed persons and freelancers (Statistics Finland 2020b; Pärnänen and Sutela 2017). Some art workers, such as actors in institutional theatres, may be entirely salaried employees, while others, such as successful visual artists, may be entirely self-employed. The earnings structure of most art workers, especially over a longer temporal period, consists both of salaries and income from entrepreneurship, grants, and, in some cases, various forms of social security and unemployment insurance. Thus, artistic work is, in many ways, precarious, hybrid, and liminal (Ansio, Houni and Piispa 2018; Kontinen et al. 2013; Pyykkönen, Sokka and Kurlin Niiniaho 2021). Furthermore, art workers’ income often includes income not directly related to artistic labour, which provides a living that cannot be obtained from artistic labour at that moment. The precarious position of the artistic worker does not in itself arise from the artistic labour, but from its unclear definition and uncertain position in the current labour market and social security system.

The precarious position of artistic workers is further increased by the fact that they often have to choose the status of entrepreneur for various practical and legal reasons (Pyykkönen, Sokka and Kurlin Niiniahho 2021). This affects their unemployment and social security because earnings-related unemployment allowance is only related to paid employment. (Kananen et al. 2019, 76.) An entrepreneur can only receive the basic labour market subsidy if they give up their business and register as a job seeker. This means stopping work or continuing it “secretly” while maintaining the status of unemployed.

The precarious labour market position of artistic workers is illustrated in the *Art and Culture Barometer 2019*,³ conducted by the cultural policy research centre, Cupore, which surveyed approximately one thousand respondents.⁴ Only “every third respondent had occupied a single labour market position during the year.” Combinations of different jobs increase randomness and unpredictability, which affects taxation and social security. Almost half of the respondents were in a salaried relationship during 2018, but only eight per cent in a full-time permanent employment relationship. The most

- 3 The importance of artistic labour to the Finnish economy is not very great, but it is not completely marginal either. According to Statistics Finland’s so-called culture satellite account the importance of the cultural industry to the national economy was about 3.5% in 2018 (Statistics Finland 2019a). The industry employed 80,000 people (Statistics Finland 2020b). However, estimates vary according to the labour force survey, the number is approximately 117,000 people (Statistics Finland 2019b). The differences in the numbers are related to the definition of the field and, on the other hand, to the measurement method. The cultural industry is very diverse, as the Art and Culture barometer and our proposed definition of artistic labour also show.
- 4 It is difficult to assess the representativeness of the survey, but it is likely that more artists and cultural workers responded to it than the number of people in the labour force collected in the study conducted by Statistics Finland. Compared to Statistics Finland’s surveys, the advantage of Cupore’s survey is that it contains sub-specific questions that give a more comprehensive picture of the work and income of artists as a whole.

common of these was as an entrepreneur (27%). The most important sources of income for artists were grants and unemployment benefits. (Hirvi-Ijäs et al. 2020, 132–133.)

Although the figures presented by the barometer cannot be generalised to the entire field of artistic labour, other studies (Houni and Ansio 2013; Pyykkönen, Sokka, and Kurlin Niiniaho 2021) also confirm that the uncertainty of an art worker's working life is significant. The data from Statistics Finland (2019b) also show that unemployment in the arts is clearly higher than the average unemployment level. In addition, part-time work is considerably more common in creative culture industries than in other fields. International research also shows the particularly precarious position of the art worker (Abbing 2008; Kunst 2015).

Due to the special nature of artistic work and precarious position in the labour market, it is important for artistic labour not to be understood so narrowly as just paid work or entrepreneurship. In general, artistic labour should not be considered as a *commodity* similarly to paid work or entrepreneurship, where the employee sells their work effort with the main goal of earning money. (Koistinen 2014; Korhonen, Pasanen-Willberg and Kuhanen 2013; Menger 2009.) Instead, when defining artistic labour, it should be understood more broadly than paid work as a person's daily, planned, and purposeful artistic activity, which nevertheless has long-term purpose aimed at generating earnings. Due to the precarious labour market position occupied by artistic workers, it is essential to identify where and how they *primarily* seek to obtain a sufficient livelihood.

In the economic sense, we thus define artistic labour as an artistic activity with which a person *tries* to achieve a sufficient long-term livelihood. Artistic labour is a consistent and comprehensive form of activity that covers a significant part of an artist's everyday life. It should be noted, however, that a self-employed person can temporarily or more permanently, and clearly of their own desire, do

many other gainful jobs. Often, the precarious labour market position guides artists to acquire earnings from many sources, which possibly reduces the focus on artistic activity (Ansio, Houni and Piispa 2018; Pyykkönen, Sokka and Kurlin Niiniaho 2021). We also emphasise that the current labour market position or the effort to earn a living through art alone does not define an employee *as an artist*. An artistic worker may also have an opportunity to organise their art making in such a way that it is an important but not comprehensive part of their life in terms of time or income. On the other hand, artists may be prevented from conducting artistic labour against their will for long periods of time, because they are forced to earn a living from other kinds of work. Of course, artists can also do work that is at least indirectly related to their personal art making, such as different forms of teaching and supervising art.

The current definitions and practices of the labour market and social security do not adequately recognise the many special qualities of artistic labour. They often equate artistic labour to simply paid work or entrepreneurship and examine the art worker according to their immediate labour market situation. A person who strives to support themselves with art can therefore nowadays be defined as an artist, a student, an unemployed job seeker, an entrepreneur, or a hobbyist. (Houni and Ansio 2013; Hirvi Ijäs et al. 2020; Pyykkönen, Sokka and Kurlin Niiniaho 2021.) This causes unnecessary friction in combining earned income with unemployment and social security and various sickness and pension issues. Such friction may directly hinder the artistic activities of art workers. In the labour market and social security systems, it would be particularly important to listen to the artists' views and wishes about how they should be positioned in the system and what the reality of artistic labour entails (Night Schoolers 2018; Tenhula and Makkonen, eds. 2018; Monni and Törmi, eds. 2019).

From an artwork to a work of art

Understanding the special nature of artistic labour requires understanding it as concrete art making practices and situations. In addition to administrative and socio-political definitions, work is fundamentally structured by its occurrence as processes of enactment and the ways these processes are conceptualised. Both in art research and in artistic research, researchers oriented towards new materialist thinking have, since the 2000s, conceptualised artistic labour interestingly in this sense (Bolt 2000a–b, 2004, 2014; Arlander 2016; Tiainen 2012; Kontturi 2012, 2018). In new materialist thinking, attention is directed to how reality, including art, is never formed only at the level of symbolic and social meanings and structures. In contrast, the symbolic and the social are in constant interaction with material processes; these registers determine and shape each other – they intra-act. Consequently, art simply does not exist to be experienced and interpreted without the intra-action, for example, of paint, brush, fabric and air humidity, or bodily functions and physical environments that are part of coding, sound production or dance performance (Kontturi 2013; Tiainen 2008; Adamson and Bryan-Wilson 2016; Gerber 2017).

One of the first initiatives in new materialist art research is the work of the Australian visual artist and art theorist Barbara Bolt (2000a–b, 2004), who theorised art as material process already in the early 2000s. Bolt's book *Art Beyond Representation: The Performative Power of the Image* (2004) surveys theories concerned with corporeality and other forms of materiality, where the focus is on reaching beyond representation – that is, on the effort to also consider the material levels of reality alongside the symbolic and discursive ones (see also Hongisto and Kurikka 2013). Bolt relies on Judith Butler's concept of *performativity*, but also makes a clear difference to it. She looks for starting points that emphasise the materiality more strongly (than Butler) from Martin Heidegger's

phenomenology and from such materialist philosophers and theorists as Baruch Spinoza, Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, Elizabeth Grosz, Donna Haraway, Brian Massumi and Paul Carter.

For Bolt, the understanding of art beyond the frame of reference of representation is linked to the concepts of work and artwork. Theories of representation, among which Butler's (1990) theory of performativity is often counted, usually pay scant attention to how representation is actually formed in the art making process. Instead, these theories typically focus on the formation of meanings in relation to previous meanings – that is, the appearance and repetition of signs and discourses in different contexts (*re-iteration*; Butler 1990). However, the artist's work is always about material processes, in addition to recycling or modifying symbols, meanings and discourses. From this point of view, ignoring the material dimension of art can even be seen as ethical disregard for the work of artists (see. e.g., Cusick 1994; Tiainen 2012, 17–27; Kontturi 2012, 19–21, 35–36). For Karen Barad (2007, 53) “representationalism” is a problematic practice as it does not take into account the complex process of art making or art's emergence in which representations are created. Barad writes: “Images or representations are not snapshots [...] but rather condensations or traces of multiple practices of engagement [and events].”

In terms of our concept of artistic labour, Bolt's (2000a–b, 2004, 2014) distinction between the terms *artwork* and *work of art* is essential. Separating the concepts in Finnish is complicated by the fact that both have been translated as “artwork.” However, the artwork is precisely the concept that belongs to the reference frame of representation that Bolt challenges. For her, an artwork is the end result of an artistic process: a representation and an object of interpretation. In such a setting, *the interpretation* entailed by the work of a researcher, critic or other art connoisseur is given weight instead of the work that belongs to the creation of art. The work of

interpretation is seen to set the work in motion and make it alive – as if the art itself were passive and would only be activated by the interpreters (Kontturi 2013). Instead, the concept of *work of art* emphasises the importance of actual physical work and other material components in the making processes of art. The work of art also encompasses the materially sensuous affectivity of art, which is inextricably linked to the way art is made (Bolt 2004, 1–4).

The concept of *work of art* directs attention to the active, productive nature of art's emergence, or the processes of making it. Where the *artwork* is an object, a finished and defined entity and the object of research and analysis, the *work of art* is a process: a verb rather than a noun (Bolt 2004, 5). In the book *Women Making Art* by art historian Marsha Meskimmon (2003), this emphasis is related to the specificity of the artistic labour undertaken by women; to ensure that this work is not passed over as if the special and renewing representations would just appear by themselves. The work of art always requires a physical affective contribution. Philosopher and artist Erin Manning (2013, 101–107), on the other hand, speaks of dance to emphasise the relational, embodied, and intra-active character of the work of art: the work of a *work of art* is like a dance in which intra-active forces exceed technical control and offer new, sensuous experiences (see also Kontturi 2018, 37–38). In addition, performance artist Annette Arlander (2016, 10) when outlining the focus of artistic research has reminded us that the work of art takes place essentially in the material, affective and discursive (change) effects it has on the world. According to Arlander, artistic research should focus on this work of art. In our own definition, we examine the efforts and effects of artistic labour by also expanding on the kind of critical study of work and production processes that relies on Karl Marx's materialist thinking. This kind of research has analysed, for example, the exploitation and subjugation inherent in various fields and processes of labour (see, e.g., Adamson

and Bryan-Wilson 2016, 16–19; see also Parviainen 2011; Parviainen, Kinnunen and Kortelainen 2017). In relation to this topic, some new materialist researchers (e.g., España 2019) have returned to the projects of artists who were attached to the materialist feminism of the 1970s, such as Mierle Laderman Ukules. In her performances, Ukules dealt with the often-invisible cultural maintenance work done by women, in particular. An example of this is the cleaning of exhibition spaces, such as art museums. In such traditions of critical theory and art, the essential dimension of our concept of the work of art re-emerges as works of art are never created without some kind of connection to the human body – whether this is a matter of painting, digital sound art, conducting an orchestra, or performance. Artistic labour is often physically demanding as well. This approach shifts attention from the discursive production of meanings, central to post-structuralist perspectives, towards the essential, genre-bound, but also situational participation of the art-maker's body-mind in artistic labour.

At the same time, we emphasise that art teaching and artistic work are not exclusively human activities. A human agent does not exhaustively control the material emergence of art with their own plans or actions (see Arlander 2014; Manning 2016, 54–55; Tiainen 2017; Kontturi 2018, 48, 92–95). Rather, it is a matter of cooperation not only between people but also with different non-human factors, depending on the situation. Bolt (2000a, 324) describes how the process of painting in the Australian sun in the heat of the backyard changes the composition of the paint, causing its surface tension to fail. In such conditions, the paint starts to flow uncontrollably and allows insects to land on it, whereupon they become part of the painting. On the other hand, outdoor painting in the sunshine – that is, the encounter between a human actor and a particular more than human environment – produces permanent, potentially dangerous changes in the artist's skin (see Bolt 2000b, 206). This is

one example of the many levels on which non-human material things and actors can participate in the artistic labour and the work of art, intra-acting with other elements.

While the art research of the past decades has directed attention to the special characteristics and materiality of art and the work of art, in the future it will be necessary to examine this work in even more depth in intra-active relations with the various structural factors of society. By these we mean both the labour market and social security systems, as well as the specific traditions and socio-economic relations of the arts. In connection with this, Brian Massumi (1992, 10–21) has considered the relationship between wood and woodworkers in a way that is interesting for the study of artistic labour. Massumi writes how, for example, it is important for woodworkers who make a certain kind of table, in other words carpenters, to find the right wood quality for their project at hand and to be able to understand the grain of the wood, i.e., its essential nature. Woodworkers must therefore work together with the wood. At the same time, this collaboration is generally possible because of already achieved artistic experience or education. Furthermore, woodworking is also inextricably linked to the supply, demand, consumers, and transporters of wood products (cf. Viljo 2006). This example illustrates how various material, corporeal, cultural, subjective, cooperative, and socio-economic factors intra-act in the processes, or the work, of art. The example is also applicable to artistic labour that does not have a seemingly permanent end product or that has many kinds of participants, such as the intra-actions of the performance art process between artists, audiences, and landscapes (e.g. Arlander 2014).

Artistic labour as encounters between objective reality and real work

Above, we first outlined artistic labour from the point of view of the artists' labour market position and livelihood, stating that its key feature is precariousness. After this, we approached artistic labour as the actual processes and effects of art making, referring to these with the concepts of both artistic labour and work of art. In other words, we discussed the different dimensions of artistic labour: on the one hand, its place in the labour market and social security system, and, on the other hand, the lived practices of art making that intra-act with many factors, including socioeconomic ones. Next, we will elaborate on how the connection between the precarious social status of artistic labour and the actual making of art could be examined by focusing on the thinking of Christophe Dejours (Dejours et al. 2018, 23–69).

Dejours' background is in psychoanalysis, and his thinking is central to considering (occupational) wellbeing – both structurally and in terms of subjective experiences related to work. In accordance with materialist thinking, Dejours repeatedly emphasises how physical conditions (tools, corporeality) affect the realities of work (see Dashtipour and Vidaillet 2017, 24–25). For example, social theorist Jean-Philippe Deranty (2008, 2010) has emphasised the contribution of Dejours' research to new social theory and work research. Dejours and his colleagues (2018) assume that all work-related worries, such as mental health problems, work burnout, anxiety, and even suicidal thoughts (e.g., Allan, Autin and Wilkins-Yel 2021), are a sign of structural problems at work. In a 2019 study of illness-related absences from work in Finland, The Social Insurance Institution of Finland (SII 2019) found mental health disorders to be the most burdensome form of illness in relation to work ability. The Social Insurance Institution of Finland (SII 2021) has also estimated that more frequent diagnosis of depression and anxiety indicates

an increase in the workload of working life. There is not much up-to-date research on this topic in the cultural and artistic sector. However, when Tiina Pensola, Raija Gould, and Anu Polvinen (2010, 89) examined the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health's report on occupational disability pensions, it became clear that artists (and other professionals in the culture and entertainment industry) are at the greatest risk of retirement due to mental health disorders. While reporting on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on artists' work, Cupore (2021) found that increased stress and general uncertainty are key factors.

Dejours and colleagues (2018, 23–42) claim that the experience of the above-mentioned concerns and disadvantages of working life cannot be understood without a deep understanding of the institutional and other structures related to work. Their starting point is the question of what the work actually consists of, both theoretically and practically. An essential part of Dejours' decades-long research has been to intervene in companies or organizations where there is a lot of malaise in the working community (see Deranty 2008, 444). In other words, Dejours' theoretical conceptualisation is firmly based on empirical observation and development work.

The concept that cannot be avoided in Dejours' thinking is translated into English as "the Real". In the philosophy of Dejours' work, the notion of "the Real" means "the many factors that prevent the direct application of rules and procedures." The concept refers to the fact that "no plan, programme or set of regulations can actually anticipate what it will take to make the productive act succeed." (Deranty 2010, 184.) The Real thus always affects work. In this context, however, it is important to specify that from the point of view of both Dejours and new materialist thinking, the worker, their labour and output, and the wider surrounding reality are ontologically "on the same level" (Deranty 2010, 201– 204). Even though conceptually it may seem useful to separate human actors and the "external

world” surrounding them, socio-material factors that extend beyond the individual, and also non-human factors, inherently influence the performance of work in material, spiritual, and symbolic ways precisely because they meet in the same reality (see e.g., Kontturi 2018, 67–68, 80–81).

Based on the aforementioned empirical research, Dejours (2012) describes work as always being a “struggle with the Real.” In particular, he has studied how the objective reality of work affects people’s wellbeing and ill-health at work. Dejours’ approach can be applied, for example, to the examination of artistic labour from a socio-political perspective in such a way that it helps to identify how it is difficult for an artistic worker to be creative in the objective reality of an institutional level, which includes their precarious position in the social security system and the uncertainty of their income generation (see Dejours et al. 2018). Moreover, the new materialist perspective on the processes of artistic labour is in dialogue with Dejours: although the artist develops what they do and create, their ability and skills to practice artistic labour, that is, in Dejours’ terms, their struggles in this work, are always affected by several factors at the same time, such as the artist’s (intra-active) relationship with tools and environments, manufacturers of work tools, sellers and other networks.

For the employee, the tools are integral components of work operations in numerous fields. Although their use is part of the skills of, for example, subjects making art, they can also be a source of malaise, in which case the struggle with objective reality is accentuated (cf. Massumi 1992, 13; Kontturi 2018, 106, 110–111). There are many examples: a guitarist may have a vintage instrument with an incomparable sound, but the instrument is picky about the conditions in which it stays in tune. The cut or material of an actor’s costume may prevent them from finding the right way of expression in the scene of the performance. In other words, art workers must

learn not only from each other but also from the quality of their work materials and, based on this, figure out how cooperation can go; how the struggle might produce wellbeing. Dejours (2007, 78; see also Dejours et al. 2018, 69–93) considers in more detail, why work is not only subjective but also always material. For him, the human body is an essential work tool. This point of view is also important for the concept of artistic labour that we are proposing. Dejours' way of emphasising corporeality can be meaningfully connected to the points of departure for new materialist research into artistic labour, which we discussed in the previous section (see also Kunst 2015; Kontturi 2012, 85–100).

The struggle with objective reality especially concerns the area where art workers exercise their skills, creativity, abilities, and opportunities for subjective action in order to reduce the gap outlined above between work instructions or goals and empirical conditions. This area is also important for learning. Theoretically speaking, this is a question of an interface with the new materialist concept of work of art, because the objective reality covers (artistically as well) the various material processes and factors that shape the work. Resistance to objective reality is also the part of human activity that creates corporeal-mental affective experiences. On the one hand, so-called flow states arise from this, and, on the other, blockages, such as stress and anxiety (see, e.g., Cupore 2021).

In Dejours' conceptual framework, subjective work partly refers to the difference between how the work is instructed and how it is implemented and experienced. This dimension is also described by the term "real work". As stated above, the gap between the planned and the actual often causes suffering (Deranty 2008), for example burnout and depression. This point of view would be undeniably pessimistic if it were limited to this. Dejours, however, broadens his perspective, stating that work can also provide new subjective strength insofar as employees cope with the challenges posed by

objective reality. The emancipatory effect of the work is then created through “recognition”. In this context, recognition means the same as appreciation given to a worker’s skills and contribution. (Deranty 2008, 445, 453.) In addition to the experience of personal success, the social recognition of successful work performance is therefore of great importance. According to Dejours, giving and receiving recognition ultimately enables cooperation between individuals (Dejours 2007, 83–84). Recognition also provides employees with a sense of belonging to a group or a profession. Dejours’ contribution to the study of artistic work is that he outlines the diverse social and material processes and conditions that affect the relationships between work and the subjectivity and identity of working individuals (Dejours 2007, 77–78). In this sense, his thinking can act as a bridge between the sociological studies of artistic labour and the concept of the work of art that emerges from art research.

Dejours’ perspective on work as a subjective experience that, however, always takes shape within a wider and partly uncontrolled reality, thus offers new conceptual starting points for studying artistic labour. First, it is important to gain an understanding of work as the actions and abilities of subjects in an intra-active relationship with “objective reality”. In other words, work is an activity in which part of the objective reality is (also) transformed into the subjective experience of the employees. Secondly, Dejours places particular emphasis on such dimensions that affect work wellbeing and ill-health. These mainly include objective reality, which, in turn, includes everything from institutions to tools, and in which uncontrollability is a significant (part) phenomenon. Dejours and his colleagues also (2018, 74–77, 196–200) suggest that work as a struggle is applicable to communities of art workers. This proposal can be connected, among other things, to Howard S. Becker’s (1974) thesis on art as a collective activity. The idea of collectiveness is essential from the point of view of the study of artistic labour because many

art forms and their products are basically born as a collaboration of many people – and non-human factors (e.g., visual arts, music, dance and performing arts in general). According to Becker (1974, 775), the arts are further defined by social conventions that facilitate making art together. From these points of departure, Dejours' concepts offer a fresh perspective on artistic labour and its precariousness, which covers much more than just the so-called formal aspects of work and earning a living.

Intra-active artistic labour

In this article, we proposed that artistic labour should be conceptualised as a process in which the special features of making art, the subjective experience of the artists, and the political, economic, and socio-cultural factors that define art as work constantly intra-act. In recent decades, the work of artists has been examined both as a central dimension of art and as a form of employment. Several studies have combined these perspectives with different emphases (e.g. Ansio, Houni and Piispa 2018; Pyykkönen, Sokka and Kurlin Niiniaho 2021). Our own approach sought to deepen the dialogue between the perspectives of the sociology of work and employment and social policy research, new materialist art research, and the philosophy of work. We claim that the increasing cooperation between these research fields can significantly enrich the understanding of the features of artistic labour and its future directions, while at the same time deepening the theories of both art and work. The perspectives offered through this kind of multidisciplinary intra-action can also influence the ways in which artists' work is treated in art, culture, and labour policy.

We outlined the dialogue within the research fields mentioned above in the form of a tripartite approach. The first dimension of the approach was summed up in a definition of artistic labour that emphasises continuous intra-actions between the special features of

artistic work, such as its project-based nature, and characteristics of the labour market, such as the paid work norm. This point of view assists in analysing how the nature of artistic labour is recognised, or not recognised, in the practices of working life and social security. We suggest that the precarity of artistic labour arises precisely in the partial incompatibility of the structures of working life and the specific characteristics of art making. We emphasised the need to listen to artists regarding the ways in which artistic labour should be understood and positioned in the labour market and the social security system.

The second dimension of our approach was anchored in the concept of the *work of art* as a complement to the notion of artistic labour. In this, we drew from new materialist art research. New materialist thinking emphasises the active structuring role of different materialities, which, in the case of art, include the artist's physicality, the materials for making art, the production environments, and art's consumption practices. Relatedly, the concept of the *work of art* enables the examination of art making simultaneously as a subjective and, more broadly, as a socio-material phenomenon. It draws attention to the many intra-active components and registers of the praxis of art making, which extend from the corporeal affective experience of artists and art's recipients to the social situatedness and economic demand of the arts.

The third dimension of our approach was built on the thinking of Christophe Dejours. We focused on his concepts of *objective reality* and *real work*. According to Dejours, work output and experience are formed in encounters or struggles between both the working individual and the material and social processes of the surrounding reality. Struggles can either enrich or reduce a worker's ability to function. Dejours' thinking offers a new perspective in dialogue with new materialist research on artistic labour or the intra-actions of artistic, subjective, and socio-political processes therein. The "struggles"

he addresses provide an important perspective on the social conditioning factors, corporeal affectivity, and mental precariousness of artistic labour. The approach taken in our article is intended to be a conceptual initiative, and it should be refined and tested in the analysis of diverse empirical data in the future. Nevertheless, our approach has arisen as a response to the features and problems already observed in the work of artists. If we accept the idea that the precariousness and “fragility” typical of artistic labour give indications of the future forms of work more broadly (e.g., Kunst 2015), our approach offers interesting possibilities for application both in the multidisciplinary research of artistic labour and, more generally, in the study of work and culture.

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7. PHENOMENOLOGICAL INSIGHTS INTO EMBODIED WRITING IN ARTISTIC RESEARCH

LEENA ROUHAINEN

I am sitting at my desk facing an open laptop and a glowing blank Word document. I have the intention to write about embodied writing and phenomenology. Yet, my concrete bodily sensations shift into the background as I enter thinking mode. It is as if my head were expanding beyond its bounds and my consciousness were moving in this experientially less physical space in search of impressions, insights and words, as well as recollections of other texts that could instigate the actual process of writing. I am anxious, not sure what will emerge and if in the end I will have anything worthwhile to say. I remember that phenomenologist Max van Manen has described writing as hard and disorienting, like trying to find a way through darkness (van Manen 2016, 2). Somewhat disoriented and groping for comprehension on how to proceed, fragmentary ideas emerge. I write down a sentence and then two into the empty document and am reminded of an article that discusses phenomenological description as a work-in-progress (Kozel 2015). Searching the saved documents, I find it on my computer. I read a while and notice an interesting section to quote that allows me to gain some sense of how to continue. With quick finger movements on the keyboard, now more enthusiastic, I manage to write a few more lines that begin to form an entry point into the narrative carrying this essay. Then, suddenly, I am hit with the idea that I should describe the actual moment of rummaging for words and insight to commence this article. My text finds a new beginning.

The previous paragraph is an account of a lived moment that underlines the open-ended, uncertain, fumbling and occasionally insightful characteristic of writing. Writing seems to be about a process of searching and becoming aware that includes intermittent hesitation and moments of regrouping and rewriting throughout. For me this is true especially when writing conventional academic texts. However, in this essay I am interested in thinking about the roots of evocative embodied writing and the significance this can have for artistic research, especially in dance and choreography. In their domain it is often taken for granted that writing is an embodied activity. How it is so is mostly not focused upon in much detail. This does not mean that language and writing have not been discussed and emphasised previously in these areas. As early as 1995, dance historian Susan L. Foster opined that in writing about bodies in dance: “the writing itself must move. It must put into play figures of speech and forms of phrase and sentence construction that evoke the texture and timing of bodies in motion” (Foster 1995, 9). What also is true is that several dance artists and artist-researchers in dance and choreography have provided us with great examples of how to integrate experimental and creative forms of writing into artistic research in dance and choreography (e.g., Unmüßig 2021; Fahlin 2021; Kellokumpu 2020; Gaudreau 2020; Gansterer et al. 2017; Longley 2016). However, only a very few have done so from a phenomenological perspective and seldom is the process of coming up with words and text discussed. How the actual process of writing engages the body is what I am attempting to briefly focus on through considering some aspects of language and human embodiment on the basis of a phenomenological perspective opened up by Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

As might be evident by now, I am not a literary writer, nor am I a literary scholar. My interest in contemplating the body, words and writing derives from my work with experimental forms of writing

in order to both process and disseminate my artistic research mainly in the area of dance, somatic practice and choreography (e.g., Rouhiainen 2022; 2017). In so doing, aside of drawing from the dance and somatic practices I work with, I have also rekindled my engagement with phenomenology by considering what it can offer artistic research (Rouhiainen 2020; 2015; 2011; 2009; 2008). Collaboration with dance artist and university researcher Kirsi Heimonen has been important to my thinking. Together, we have developed a phenomenologically informed approach to textual choreography that is based in our shared site-specific embodied writing. Parallel to this we have also problematised extended human embodiment and writing in dialogue with the thinking of Emanuel Levinas and Jean-Luc Nancy. (Rouhiainen and Heimonen 2021; Heimonen and Rouhiainen 2022.) However, the main body of our site-related collaborative writing produces something quite different from academic texts. Here is a short sample that evidences the kind of textual outcome our collaborative writing gives rise to that we consider “textual choreography”:

A loose stone paving.

A seagull swimming the bay.

The hubbub of roaring cars.

A circumscribed islet tightly guarded by streets, lanes, alleys, bridges and a highway.

Efficient function.

A junkie stooping on the shoreline, freezing.

Trees growing in boxes escaped into hibernation. Moss and lichens deploying their tired generosity.

Passers-by proceeding in their ways.

Boatless and shipless docks echo the past.

Aversive melancholy.

Do not fall under. Will anybody be saved?

Rows of empty metallic benches. The Hakaniemi bank at some prior moment.

One pitiful boat returning from sea.

Suddenly, without warning, wet lime tree trunks in a row slide under the breastbone.

The chilly dimness lacks breath, holds tightly.

(Heimonen and Rouhiainen 2022, 76.)

In the process of generating our collaborative textual choreography, in slightly different ways, Kirsi and I have both been struck by the experience that the first words we write down during our site-specific movement exploration are not of our doing. It has felt more like they were given to us as gifts from the inter-relational enactments we have become together with the environments we explore. From a Merleau-Pontian perspective, I became curious to think about how words come about as immediate responses to our embedded embodiment or to the situation we find ourselves in. I thus am aiming at bringing light to how our found words are an expression of the co-constituted phenomenon of our site-specific movement exploration. Understanding this issue further might help us to better write the body into artistic research.

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I first side-track a bit to consider why embodied writing is significant for artistic research and choreography. In their recent forms, both share a critical interest in language, writing and text. What is well established is that artistic research, specifically as an academically

advanced field of research in the arts, is conducted by artists and encompasses artistic processes and outcomes employing “a variety of epistemological models as well as trans-disciplinary, collaborative, and participatory practices” (Caduff and Wälchli 2019, 1). While not excluding more conventional conceptualisation and theorisation, artistic research emphasises that art practice involves particular forms of material thinking and that artistic articulation, in the form of artistic processes and artworks, itself conveys artistic knowledge that is not communicated through any other means. Therefore, aside from published volumes of diverse kinds of reflective writing, the outcomes of artistic research typically include exhibited or performed artworks. Interestingly for this article, since artistic research emerged in the 1990s in Europe, especially in the Nordic countries, writing has been among one of its most importantly debated issues (e.g., Schwab and Borgdorff 2014; Hannula et al. 2014). When understood as a form of knowledge production, artistic research has both utilised and questioned known forms of scholarly writing in portraying the artistic undertakings intrinsic to it. The inclusion of any explanatory text in artistic research has even been contested in an effort to substantiate the aesthetic and epistemological qualities most unique to the arts (e.g., Mersch 2015; Borgdorff 2012; Pérez Royo 2012). Generally stated, artist-researchers often employ inter- or transdisciplinary insights in interlinking art and research or practice and theory and engaging with multi-media formats of dissemination. They creatively utilise and challenge words and written texts when integrating reflective appraisal directly into artworks themselves or in supplements to these works. Operating in between practices in other media (than language) and writing, the experimental methods of articulating artistic research have been dubbed *hybrid texts* (Schwab and Borgdorff 2014). In artistic research, writing has thus been conceived of “as an operation of the ‘in-between’ unfolding itself in-between materiality and the intelligible” (Schäfer

2020, 87). Finding approaches to writing and conceptualisation that convey the sensuous and material thinking inherent in artistic processes has even been considered more important for artistic research than the construction of more conventional research methodologies (Rouhiainen et al. 2014).¹ In this respect and to continue developing writing approaches suitable for artistic research in dance and choreography it seems necessary to develop our understanding of how words are evoked through embedded human embodiment.

Something similar has been going on in the field of dance and choreography, in which the experimental use of speech, language, writing and text have been increasingly integrated into the realm of choreographic practice. André Lepecki, a performance theorist working with choreography and dramaturgy, has argued that by the early twenty-first century, European contemporary dance – as a transcultural practice with choreographers from diverse training backgrounds, social and national contexts, and conflicting aesthetic lineages – had moved from a theatrical to a *performance paradigm*. In this context choreography became a field of transdisciplinary creation “where the visual arts, performance art, political art meet performance theory” (Lepecki 2004, 172). Choreography began its move beyond the conventional medium of human bodies in motion and extended its focus on the transdisciplinary processes of arranging the actions of more-than-human performers and actualising performances in diverse locations and site-specific settings. In so doing, choreography constitutes a variety of both more concise and more open-ended plans according to which movement, actions, situations and events unfold (Foster 2011).

1 The creative opportunities language and writing affords artistic research is being actively explored by the Language-Based Artistic Research Special Interest Group of the Society of Artistic Research (see: <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/835089/835129>).

Because choreography derives its meaning from different semantic systems, specific historical and cultural moments, it both presents and inscribes social and cultural values in its performers and audiences, and hence has been considered a material form of writing and theorising (Foster 2011). Currently a number of choreographers are interested in process and use philosophy and critical theory to consider reading, writing and discussing methods of their artistic practice. This has entailed experimentation with customary choreographic practice and media of communication and resulted in conventional performance-making being disrupted and integrated with words, texts and other realisations of language in performance (Monni 2022; Cvejic 2015). Correspondingly, this has led us to new problems as is poignantly expressed by dance theorist Bojana Cvejic: “the choreographic ideas shift their objects out of dance, and so we might be forced to think another problem that the expansion of choreography choreographs for us: the new forms of entangling life and work that contemporary dance expresses once it leaves the theater that protects its relative autonomy as an artform” (Cvejic 2015, 231). In concert with the interest of this essay, it might be said that one way in which we are re-choreographed is in our exploration of language and writing as means to perform choreography.

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One conclusion that can be reached from the previous discussion is that the common aspect in the relationship between writing, artistic research and choreography is the interlink between writing and the body. In the following, I therefore move to observe how phenomenology can help us think about the connection that the body and writing share with each other. In the introduction to *Phenomenology and the Arts* (2016), philosopher Peter R. Costello succinctly describes what phenomenology is about:

Phenomenology is, first and foremost, a *method of paying attention* to things in our experience. It is a way of perceiving. Along with its method of paying attention, phenomenology is secondly, a *manner of description* of what appears when we are attentive to experience. It is also a way of writing. Phenomenology is, therefore, combining these two: a way of attending to and of rendering the significance of things. Phenomenology is a perceiving and a writing. But phenomenology does not just attend to and render *things* outside of the perceiver. Phenomenology also renders its own attending. It writes the perceiving within the perceived. And phenomenology also attends to its own rendering. It notices, develops, revises, and contests the writing, the language, it uses to render experience more explicit. In its attending and rendering, phenomenology thereby attends to and describes things and itself together, in a “zig-zag” fashion. (Costello 2016, ix.)

Writing and especially descriptive writing that offers evidence to and conveys the sense of the phenomena observed is important to phenomenology. Phenomenology is known to emphasise original and even poetic language in order to open up new vistas of experience and new understanding about the constitutive structures of reality. Phenomenologist Max van Manen further opines that writing is a way of making contact with ourselves and the world (1994/1990). He underlines that in writing we do not simply write down some pre-existing insights lingering in us. Instead, writing is a process through which we come to learn how we relate to the world. In considering the nature of writing in more concrete terms he notes that:

To write is to reflect; to write is to research. And in writing we may deepen and change ourselves in ways we cannot predict...the pathic phenomenality of phenomena and the vocative expressivity of writing involve not only our head and hand, but our whole sentient embodied being. (Van Manen 2014, 20.)

Stressing the importance of embodied vocative expression, however, he points out that it is the most challenging dimension of phenomenological inquiry and often ignored in phenomenological literature. He continues to discuss the double bind of phenomenological writing:

On the one hand, phenomenological writing is a rational process in the sense that it tries to systematically explore the meaning structures of a phenomenon or event. On the other hand, it is also nonrational in the sense that it tries to find expressive means to penetrate and stir up the prereflective substrates of experience as we live them. (Van Manen 2014, 240.)

And he adds:

The vocative aspects of phenomenology involve an aesthetic imperative, a poetizing form of writing...Poetizing is thinking on original experience and is thus speaking in a more primal sense. Language that speaks the world rather than abstractly speaking of it is language that reverberates the world. (Van Manen 2014, 241.)

In detailing the features and conditions through which phenomena arise, phenomenology engages in descriptive articulation that utilises evocative expression and renews language. It does this to redress conventional conceptions and in order appreciate the previously unnoticed characteristics of the phenomena it observes. Here, descriptive writing is a method of enquiry in which poetic and artistic means have also been employed (Kozel 2015; Finlay 2011; van Manen 1994/1990). In this respect, especially, phenomenology as a philosophical style of thinking could be understood to bear likeness to art (Merleau-Ponty 1996/1993b). Many phenomenologists have contemplated on how art-making and encountering art illuminates

our experience of ourselves and the world as well as transforming our relation to them. Art has even been considered as one of phenomenology's philosophical practices. Art has been understood as a kind of phenomenological demonstration since, more straightforwardly than any philosophical text, art can direct our attention to things we do not pay attention to and to disclose their ownmost nature (Wrathall 2011).

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To understand what the body more focally has to do with writing from a phenomenological perspective, I address some partial aspects of language. They might help in further clarifying the previous insights into phenomenological writing. In Merleau-Ponty's thinking language is what could be called a founded tradition, something that pre-exists us humans and operates as a condition for all our behaviour. Whilst not completely determining our being, it structures our perception and understanding, and we are never fully placed outside of language. Merleau-Ponty writes that language is "our element as water is the element of fishes" (Merleau-Ponty 1964, 187.) 17; see also Madison 1990/1981, 108). Phenomenologist Shaun Gallagher underlines that "our interpretative access to our pre-linguistic experience, our possibility of understanding it and the possibility of it having an effect on our understanding, are through and through conditioned by language. Language remains "the medium of hermeneutic experience" (Gallagher 1992, 73). Interestingly though, this does not mean that "there exists only, language, but rather...that language is the mode of manifestation of being. Things other than language come to be in language" (Moran 2000, 282). This notion illuminates the idea that language appropriates things and gives them expression in order for them to be exposed as certain entities. In contemplating a phenomenological view of language, Charles

Taylor writes about himself trying to grasp a vague emotion he is experiencing. As he recognises it as envy, he argues that this term is the right one because it articulates and thus brings clarity to what he is feeling. His emotion calls for this particular expression, and the expression simultaneously succeeds in bringing to presence a distinct emotion. (Taylor 1992; Rouhiainen 2003.) It is as if language, then, supports the unfolding and evolution of things into their full being. When considered in this way, there is a performative sense to language. Whilst things find a place in language, in the best cases, they become articulated in ways in which their ownmost nature becomes recognised and allows them to become what they are in any given situation. Merleau-Ponty describes this amongst others by writing that:

It would then be found that the words, the vowels and phonemes are so many ways of “singing” the world, and that their function is to represent things not, as naïve onomatopoeic theory had it, by reason of objective resemblance, but because they extract, and literally express, their emotional essence. (Merleau-Ponty 1995/1962, 187.)

Nonetheless, as Taylor’s example shows, pre-linguistic experiences exist as a more or less ambiguous sense of a situation or an entity. Yet, whilst apprehending or anticipating these experiences, we pre-understand them through an awareness influenced by language. We understand them as possibly definable and distinctly graspable experiences and our previous experience and language use influences how they become articulated in language. In fact, verbal expression is influenced by various features. It is not only directed by the thingly qualities of the entities referred to. It also involves the attitude through which the speaking or writing subject regards these entities as well as the significance the words used in an act of expression themselves bear. In speaking or writing we

come to utilise words, whose meaning is formed by their relation to the other words we utter but also to the totality of the particular language we use. Consequently, the meaning of what we say or write has a relation to what we leave unsaid, as well as to the ways a language has previously been used by others. What influences the meaning of words used and expressed in any situation, then, is the significance they have acquired in use, how they are used in a particular act of speech or text, and how they relate to other words uttered in this act and to those left unsaid. (Merleau-Ponty 1996/1993a; 1995/1964; Rouhiainen 2003.) Merleau-Ponty writes: “As far as language is concerned, it is the lateral relation of sign to another which makes each of them significant, so that meaning appears only at the intersection of and as it were in the interval between words” (Merleau-Ponty 1995/1964, 42). In commenting upon Merleau-Ponty’s conception of language Gary Madison describes this further: “A word has meaning only in opposition to all other words. A given meaning is but a certain value having to do with its use: it does not exist in or alongside the word but *between* that word and all the others” (Madison 1990/1981, 112).

But how are we to understand the significance the body bears in generating words in speech and thought, and eventually writing more specifically? It is no surprise that for Merleau-Ponty language is fundamentally embodied. Taking up Merleau-Ponty’s notion of the gestural foundation of language and proposing a communicative theory of gesture, Shaun Gallagher writes that “Language is a modality of the human body. It is generated out of movement” (Gallagher 2004, 106). Merleau-Ponty himself writes that: “the body converts a certain motor essence into vocal form...because the body is a power of natural expression” (Merleau-Ponty 1995/1962, 181). Indeed, Merleau-Ponty believes that the first indicators of language are found in our expressive and communicative bodily gestures and that conventional signs are derivatives of vocative originating speech in which

a meaning emerges for the first time (Merleau-Ponty 1995/1962; Madison 1990/1981). Through this view language is grounded in the phenomenal world that we have access to through our immediate bodily experience. What is more, a gesture is an action that helps create significance and “the narrative space that is shared in” an immediate communicative situation (Gallagher 2004, 116).

The previous insights point to Merleau-Ponty’s conception that abstract and conventional use of language is a secondary form of language that draws upon the more primordial expression of direct affective meaning. And the emergence of a new meaning, the coining of a new expression, is an event of original speech through which the world acquires a place in language. It is only through time and sedimentation that words start to distance themselves from this ground and become more abstract terms (Dillon 1988). In discussing the origins of our expressive bodily gestures Merleau-Ponty takes a spoken word to be a true gesture, which contains a meaning like any other gesture. He claims that the expressive gesture that goes along with anger does not make one think of anger, but instead is anger itself. (Merleau-Ponty 1995/1962). A similar existential dimension is inherent in speech, and why not in writing. In Merleau-Ponty’s view, speech first and foremost expresses feelings and an attitude towards the world, rather than beliefs and a conception of the world (Heinämaa 1996). Merleau-Ponty, then, considers that in speech a subject expresses the sense of the position they have come to hold in a certain situation in relation to the world (Merleau-Ponty 1995/1962). Merleau-Ponty writes: “The word, far from being the mere sign of objects and meanings, inhabits things and is the vehicle of meanings. Thus, speech, in the speaker, does not translate ready-made thought, but accomplishes it” (Merleau-Ponty 1995/1962, 178). In his thinking speech is not the expression of a previously formulated thought. Instead, speech and thought are linguistic expressions of our relation to the world, through which

this relation *becomes graspable for us*. If we wish to express a new or situationally specific meaning in speech or writing, we have to assemble a new composition of words “by bending the resources of constituted language to some fresh usage” (Merleau-Ponty 1995/1964, 389). In this way speech as one form of thinking is constitutive of the world we inhabit. Simply put, in so thinking to ourselves the world becomes understandable to us. Through speaking to others, we transmit an understanding of the world to them, whilst the world simultaneously becomes comprehensible to us (Rouhiainen 2003).

With these insights Merleau-Ponty is arguing that language accomplishes thought. What is interesting in relation to embodiment is that he considers gestures to facilitate this achievement. In discussing his insight of the gestural base of language, aside from speech Merleau-Ponty also refers to painting, writing and music as sharing a similar meaningful function to language (Merleau-Ponty 1995/1962, 389). They all are dependent of our bodily activity and movement. Gallagher claims that “Even if we are not explicitly aware of our gestures, even in circumstances where they contribute nothing to the communicative process, they may contribute to shaping our cognition” (Gallagher 2004, 121). Gallagher details the gesture as expressive movement that is activated in communicative situations and is not consciously thought of beforehand and yet contributes to the accomplishment of thought: “we do not have to be conscious of embodied functions for them to effectively accomplish thought. Gesture and language shape cognition in a prenoetic manner” (Gallagher 2004, 123).

Even if, in Merleau-Ponty’s view, perception at its most basic level allows us to open upon the world be instead of positing it, he acknowledges that with our personal interests and motivations we can also regard the world in a way that is not attuned to its various features (Merleau-Ponty 1987/1968). He writes:

The relation between things and the body is decidedly singular; it is what makes me sometimes remain in appearances, and it is also what sometimes brings me to the things themselves; it is what produces the buzzing of appearances, it is also what silences them and casts me fully into the world. Everything comes to pass as though my power to reach the world and my power to entrench myself in phantasms only came one with the other; even more; as though the access to the world were but the other face of a withdrawal and this retreat to the margins of the world a servitude and another expression of my natural power to enter into it. (Merleau-Ponty 1987/1968, 8.)

What happens when we distance ourselves from the world is that we start to perceive things as separate objects, without their interrelations to other entities and the world in general. Nevertheless, original or authentic speech in Merleau-Ponty's view is a gesture, which "presents and frees the meaning captive in the thing" (Merleau-Ponty 1996/1993a, 82). He compares this sort of expression to empirical language, which is "the opportune recollection of a pre-established sign" (Merleau-Ponty 1996/1993a, 82). In his words:

The process of expression, when it is successful...brings the meaning into existence as a thing at the very heart of the text, it brings to life in an organism of words, establishing it in the writer and reader as a new sense organ, opening a new field or a new dimension to our experience. (Merleau-Ponty 1995/1962, 183.)

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The above discussion on expression, gesture and language underlines that there is a kinship between bodily movement and writing that should be appreciated. It substantiates the fact that the

site-specific movement-based bodily exploration that Kirsi and I engaged with was important to how the words that expressed features of our relationship with the environment emerged in our thoughts. However, as the abovementioned notions also underline, writing that is appreciative of embedded embodiment requires an attentive attitude and an intentional orientation. This orientation, which in our case included the intention to explore chosen urban settings through movement and attentive attitude, which for us entailed an open-ended curiosity as to what kinds of movements and experience emerge, together play a part in how the silent web of language we carry with us became mobilised into articulated words that we continued to write with. What I believe enhances language-based poetic embodied expression in dance and choreography is the appreciation of and capacity to engage with the felt-sense that emerges in and through the body, and how it is perceptually engaged with its environment. This obviously is something that dancers and choreographers cultivate in their work. A similar appreciation of verbal language is helpful too, that is, acknowledging verbal language as means to convey the sense of embodied encounters and engagement with the world. Writing with a phenomenologically informed stance can offer artistic research in dance and choreography articulation of new dimensions of relational embodiment. This can help promote practices of and understandings about dance and choreography. More generally it can help us to understand what embedded embodiment and movement can offer our wider society. As Foster (1995, 17) notes, it can endow “body-centered endeavors with an integrity as practices that establish their own lexicons of meaning, their own syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes of signification, their own capacity to reflect critically on themselves and on related practices.”

I have nearly finished writing this essay and return again to write about my own writing process. I am tired now and must admit it has been a gruelling task to try to fit together disparate interests and patch together diverse thoughts in a way that would satisfy my interest to understand and convey something meaningful to the reader. There is always so much more to find out, so much more to learn and so much more to continue articulating. Crafting this essay really felt like pushing against many kinds of restrictions, mostly the lack of time to contemplate, write and read. Now it is time to let go and bring this writing to a stop. Yet, the text calls me to return, to read again and get confirmation that it runs fluently, has a logic to it. After several moments of re-reading a paragraph here, another there and changing some words, I am finally sitting quite still, allowing my thinking to slow down and perception to linger in how I feel. There is a sensation of softness as my fingers dexterously tap on the keyboard and I read and write, write and read the now emerging text. This movement I am well-rehearsed in and there is a comfort in the familiarity of this action. I feel the weight of my body on the chair and my feet resting on the ground, am I now more grounded than a moment ago? I wonder how my body would like this text to evolve and how much it is in charge at this moment. Bodily habits and skills at play, automated movement, gestures writing. I pause, lift my hands from the laptop and listen to the sounds in the room, take a spontaneous deep breath and realise that I appreciate this moment.

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8. RESEARCH-CREATION

Bridging Practices of Research Between the Arts and Academia

OTSO AAVANRANTA AND SARA BÉDARD-GOULET

This text aims to contribute to the current discussions concerning research on the arts and artistic research in the Nordic context by introducing a third factor, namely research-creation, which may be seen as an approach that is open to both academic and artistic agencies, and involves their hybridisation. Research-creation is historically embedded in French-speaking Europe and North America – France, Québec, Belgium and Switzerland – while being less established elsewhere in Europe, Scandinavia, the UK and USA. Thus, we authors, founding members of the “Nordic-Baltic Transdisciplinary Research-Creation Network,” claim that it is timely and relevant to introduce research-creation to the debate within the Nordic context as a proposed model for bridging heterogeneous agencies in the arts and research.

Context

The entanglement of the arts and research is a cultural phenomenon that has established itself in institutional contexts since the turn of this millennium, and is affecting the discourse and cultural codes of the arts within and beyond academia. In different linguistic and geopolitical contexts, the same cultural phenomenon is named differently, with a spectrum of terms denoting a spectrum of subtly different approaches and emphases. A tentative taxonomy of the

conjunctions of the arts and research might involve a long list of terms, such as artistic research, art research, art-as-research, practice-as-research, art-science, practice-led research, practice-based research, *création recherche*, and *recherche-création*/research-creation.

The emergence of this cluster of practices is the fruit of complex sociocultural evolutions, partially still in the making, which are beyond the scope of this text and might constitute a terrain for future art historians. In this text, we use “art-research cluster” as an umbrella term to refer to the general phenomenon of entanglement between the arts and research.

This text endeavours to formulate a contribution to the Nordic discussions on the arts and research by presenting research-creation as a possible alternative articulation within the art-research cluster. The Nordic context refers here to the general third cycle and professional research landscape that is currently observable in Finland, Scandinavia and the Baltic states. Of course, this landscape is vast and varied, involving a number of specific and local arrangements, but we authors see it as characterised by two major poles of attraction. On one hand, in “traditional” university institutions research on the arts is the predominant genre, including or excluding artistic practices to various degrees. On the other hand, arts academies and arts universities focus strongly on artistic research and artists’ research agencies. This context constitutes the referential landscape where this entire book is rooted, and it is analysed in more detail in its introduction (see Introduction, pp. 9-21).

Within this Nordic higher education and professional research context, we authors bring in our perspectives and experiences, which build on our encounter with research-creation in France and in Québec, and our current situations in a university of the arts in Finland (Otso Aavanranta) and a humanities university faculty in Estonia (Sara Bédard-Goulet). Respectively, our research is rooted in music technology and literary studies, which involve

entirely different media, methods and practices. However, our career tracks have both been shaped by the notion of research-creation, which, for us, has emerged as an enabling axis for cross-disciplinary outreach in our research work. In the following, our intention is not to put forward a value scale for articulating the arts and research; we wish to introduce an articulation of the arts and research that has received less attention so far in the Nordic context.

Institutional embeddedness of artistic research, research on the arts and research-creation

Institutional embeddedness is key to articulating the different threads of the art-research cluster. Each country, geopolitical and linguistic areas have their distinctive histories and organisational models affecting the arts and academia.

In much of Europe, artistic research has become the main umbrella term for a wide spectrum of approaches involving the arts and research. This term has gained the upper hand as the reference term within the taxonomical cloud presented above, especially in the Nordic region. In the larger Europe, the Bologna process has arguably had a seminal role in the emergence of the artistic research genre, instigating a third-cycle research mission to arts academies formerly dedicated to practical and professional training (Lesage, 2009). Looking at the origins of artistic research, one may identify the key role of arts academies, especially in visual arts, in establishing the foundations of the field, as Henk Borgdorff notes in his 2006 text, "The debate on research in the arts."

The first thing that is noticeable about the exchange of views about practice-oriented research in the arts is that the discussion mainly takes place within the fields of visual arts and design. It is less of an issue in the fields of theatre and dance education, architecture, and film and new media; and in music there was virtually no debate at all about practice-based research until recently. The reason for

that is pure speculation, but the fact remains that in the past 15 years both the theoretical and philosophical dimensions of arts research and its more policy – related aspects have been the most widely debated in the world of visual arts and design. (Borgdorff 2006, 10.)

The arts academy heritage of artistic research is traceable in some of its central concepts today, such as “expositionality,” which has its roots in the tradition and questions of exhibition curatorship within contemporary technological and epistemic contexts. According to Michael Schwab, artistic research exhibitions are “aesthetico-epistemic transpositions of practice aimed at articulating artistic research,” materialised as “a set of multimodal web pages created on the Research Catalogue for the purpose of presenting artistic research,” (Schwab 2019, 32) stemming from a reinterpretation of the concepts of exhibition, exposition and photographic exposure (*ibid.*, 29). In this genealogy, one can see the imprint of visual culture and media theory and their primary institutional seat – the visual arts academy.

At present, artistic research thrives within the doctoral programmes of European arts academies. The Society for Artistic Research (SAR) has almost fifty European arts academies as “institutional members” (SAR 2023), and the European Artistic Research Network (EARN) regroups ten “art academy partners” (EARN 2023). Postdoctoral career phases are taking shape from the epicentres, and some specialist institutions have emerged, such as the Orpheus Institute in Ghent.

The origins, organisation and self-understanding of artistic research has fuelled a vast and growing literature, in which one may note a conceptual thrust emanating from philosophers who are not – or do not declare themselves as – artist practitioners, but who have explicitly formulated positions concerning artistic research. For example, in the Nordic context, Juha Varto (2018), Søren Kjørup (2006) and Tere Vadén (2014) have discussed the epistemological

status of artistic research, as well as formulated some of its possible operational directions.

Although its foundations include philosophical sources, a central characteristic of artistic research is its self-positioning as a type of research carried out by (professional) artists. This is emphasised in “official” definitions of the field; for example the University of the Arts Helsinki declares that “artistic research is typically carried out by experts in various fields of art, i.e., artists – or artist-researchers” (Uniarts 2023a). The emphasis is corroborated by prominent theorists of the field, for example Varto (2018) and Borgdorff (2006), and also expressed as a claim, as in Cathleen Coessens, Darla Crispin and Anne Douglas *Manifesto for artist-researchers* (2010).

In this line of discourse, artistic research thrives in arts academies, and constitutes research carried out by artists, through art. Closer scrutiny is called for, however, as the majority of artists traditionally work as freelancers, with the arts academies serving as training ground for professionals aiming to establish their work in the larger field of the arts. The academisation of artistic research and its frictional relationship with the freelance arts has been the object of critique (Cotter 2019; Cramer and Terpsma 2021), as well as the theme of enquiry for the 2023 University of the Arts Helsinki Research Pavilion (Uniarts 2023b). One may certainly observe mutual influences, overlaps and cross-pollination between institutionally embedded artistic research and the freelance arts scene, but at the same time there are (at least) societal, aesthetic and economic differences.

On closer reading, the artist’s agency that is a central characteristic of artistic research in its own self-argumentation might specifically refer to institutionally connected artists. In this case, the cultural figure of the artist-researcher, which emerged only relatively recently, would in large part equate with an artist working inside, or in relation with, a higher education institution or research centre.

Research on the arts, which involves different fields in the arts and humanities, has been traditionally embedded in universities with a fairly consistent model throughout the Global North. Research on the arts takes artforms and artworks as research topics, building on various theories that, for the most part, conceptualise the arts from outside artistic practice (Huyghe 2017, 69). Disciplines such as literary studies, theatre studies, cinema studies, cultural studies, art history and musicology have developed an expertise that spans all types of artworks throughout their existence, i.e., from their conception to their reception and potential destruction or disappearance. Some disciplines in social sciences, such as sociology or anthropology, may also take the arts and artistic practices as their research topic, considering that they participate in larger societal phenomena. All of these disciplines interact with one another in various degrees and, because of their institutional embeddedness, are involved with the wider university context, including technological developments or funding. However, because of their external perspective on the arts, the research activities rarely venture into artistic agency.

For the most part, research done in the arts and the humanities fosters study programmes that build on disciplinary expertise and exclude artistic practice. These curricula do not include the development of an artistic practice and, at all levels, theses are based on a theoretical framework without involving any artistic production. Some programmes are more flexible, especially at BA and MA level, and allow students to work on a concrete project and produce a thesis that provides a theoretical basis for this project and analyses its results (for example, at the University of Tartu). These projects may involve an artistic production, but its quality is not evaluated, since the programmes do not train students to acquire artistic skills.

In parallel to these more traditional frameworks, there is a recent movement in the humanities towards involving creative and imaginative research methodologies, such as autoethnography,

participative research settings, action research, and activist research (Ryynänen and Rannikko 2021). In some instances, this interest translates into alternative study programmes that involve creative and imaginative methods in the humanities and social sciences. Programmes such as the PhD on study and practice in the arts offered at Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM) trains students in an artistic practice while providing them with disciplinary methods to analyse artistic processes and works (UQAM 2023). The theses produced in this programme must include an artistic production (in any artform: architecture, music, visual arts, literature, dance, design, media art, theatre) alongside theoretical development and analysis.

Research-creation is originally embedded in the French higher-degree educational context, with subsequent strong development in Québec and Canada, and more recently in Australia. The French genealogy of research-creation can be traced to the restructuring of the university institution following the 1968 student uprising. The post-68 era saw the Université de Paris divided into thirteen independent units and the opening of arts departments at the Université Paris 1 (Sorbonne), and Université Paris 8 (Vincennes – Saint-Denis). These arts departments, named “arts plastiques et sciences de l’art,” were independent from art history and philosophy departments from the start, and their ethos was to interweave practice and theory (Darras 2015).

Doctoral programmes in the arts were established in the 1970s. Reflecting the heritage of both the arts academy and the university humanities and social sciences paradigm, the doctorates were structured to combine a theoretical textual output with an artistic output (Darras 2015). This double model of the doctorate in arts was named “thèse en création-recherche” at the Sorbonne, and it has since gained ground in other French universities, such as Aix-Marseille, Toulouse and Strasbourg. Somewhere along the way,

perhaps in relation to shifting university policies, the term has been inverted to “recherche-création,” which is mostly frequently used at present. Notable doctoral schools and research centres offering a research-creation orientation comprise the previously mentioned universities, as well as the SACRe doctoral school at Paris Sciences et Lettres University (PSL 2023), the “Création recherche en sciences sociales” programme at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS 2023), the interuniversity research centre Labex H2H (Labex 2023) and the “Maison des Arts et de la Création” at Sciences Po (SciencesPo 2023a). Currently, the French research-creation scene appears to be vigorous and expanding, with a growing number of active participants and forums. In the wider context of French academia, however research-creation remains a marginal movement.

A notable particularity of the French higher-education context is that arts academies have not been integrated into the university and three-cycle Bologna model, and that they remain the preeminent professional educational institutions for the arts. In the arts academies, namely conservatories of music, theatre and dance and fine art schools, until very recently the perspective has been focused solely on practice, with little emphasis on theoretical development. A de facto division exists between more theoretically and discursively oriented arts curricula in universities, and the more practically and professionally oriented arts academies. In this dual context, research-creation has clearly emerged in the arts departments embedded within universities (Darras 2015).

Being part of the larger university shapes research-creation. As a pocket of subjectivity, creation and sensuous emphasis in an institution dedicated to academic scholarship, the arts departments have been constrained to perpetually negotiate their approaches, methods and epistemic foundations with their counterparts in other disciplines, leading to a preponderant development of theory,

methodology and discourse. Constant proximity and entanglement with the humanities and social sciences has led to an overspill of research culture from the humanities and technological sciences into the arts. Methods, categories, concepts and academic practices from the humanities and from technological innovation have provided models for arts departments to interpret and adapt. This has laid fertile ground for developing interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches between arts and sciences, and form the specific focus of some approaches to research-creation, for example at Labex H2H and EHES.

Notably, the French discussions contributing to the theoretical edifice of research-creation emerge not only from within the arts, but also from humanities scholars, such as in literary studies (Citton 2018; Houdart-Merot and Petitjean 2021), theatre studies (Pluta and Losco-Lena 2015), design (Lécho Hirt 2015), anthropology and social sciences (Dubos 2021), political science (SciencesPo 2023b) and philosophy (Huyghe 2017). In this sense, research-creation can be seen as an intersection of heterogeneous practices and perspectives on research.

In Québec, research-creation emerged as the arts were integrated into the universities from the existing arts schools in the 1980s, based the arts practitioners' need to talk about work that did not fit into the parameters of research as it was defined by academia (Gosselin and Le Coguiec 2004, 14). Unlike in France, research-creation is recognised at a national level and supported by specific funding from the provincial (FRQ) and federal (SSHRC) research councils. From Québec, research-creation has spread to the mostly English-speaking rest of Canada, where it is equally recognised as a legitimate approach to research and defined as:

An approach to research that combines creative and academic research practices, and supports the development of knowledge and innovation through artistic expression, scholarly investigation,

and experimentation. The creation process is situated within the research activity and produces critically informed work in a variety of media (art forms). (SSHRC 2023.)

Research-creation is represented in Québec at an institutional level in study programmes and in research networks, such as Hexagram, a network of research-creation in arts, cultures and technologies (Hexagram 2023) that gathers members from eight universities. It is also present in a less institutional form in endeavours such as the SenseLab, as described in Erin Manning and Brian Massumi's book *Thought in the Act: Passages in the Ecology of Experience* (2014). In Canada, the ResearchCreation and Social Justice CoLaboratory (CoLAB) hosted at the University of Alberta and led by Natalie Loveless, brings together local, national and international partners "interested in developing a critical discourse of research-creation attuned to social justice" (CoLAB 2023). Research-creation developed in Canada has spread elsewhere in the English-speaking world; for instance, scholars in Australia elaborate their own thoughts and practices (Knight 2023; Truman 2022) and common projects between the two countries (WalkingLab 2023).

Faces and cases of research-creation

The respective French-speaking contexts in which research-creation has emerged have led to various debates and instantiations. Some authors have highlighted the theoretical and pragmatic stakes that underpin research-creation typologies and differentiate between research *on* arts, research *in* arts, research *with* arts or arts *with* research (Huyghe 2017) and research *by* arts (Baumann 2018). Comparable discussions in the English-language literature on the topic, such as Owen Chapman and Kim Sawchuck's different articulations of research and creation (2012), make a case for the more traditional intersection of research and the arts through the study

of artworks as a research topic. Some have insisted on the central collaborative aspect of research-creation, as well as on the Frascati manual's inadequate yet stimulating criteria for defining research in relation to the arts (Baumann 2019). Some authors have engaged in a debate over the possible degrees of "researchness" in given arts practices (Goosse 2016), while others have insisted that discursive output should accompany any research-creation artistic production (Beyrouthy and Bédard-Goulet 2022).

Within the art-research cluster, research-creation is a particular, inherent assemblage of artistic and scientific contexts and approaches, due to its intra-university genealogy. Research-creation may apply to, and may be applied by, artists working at or related to the university, as well as researchers in humanities, design and technological development. The disciplines and practices contributing to research-creation referred to in this article comprise a spectrum from fine arts, music and performing arts to architecture, art history, design, literature studies and human-computer interaction. Research-creation is thus resolutely transdisciplinary: its non-homogenous mix of disciplines maintains a perpetual questioning of each discipline and of itself.

While it comes with constant uncertainty and negotiation, the in-betweenness of research-creation provides a conducive framework to question not only the fossilisation of disciplines but also institutional knowledge-making. The modern ideal of scientific progress that still leads most of the research done in universities today comes with an under-questioned epistemic problem: "modern science has endeavoured to solve the issue of truth by advancing it as the inherent quality of proper scientific knowledge." (Nobus and Quinn 2005, 48) This problem, coupled with the neoliberal condition of today's higher-education institutions and their demand for productivity, largely hinders serious reflection on institutional knowledge production and commodification. The arts and artists have

been praised (or blamed) for their subversive power to criticise not only society but the arts themselves. Academia, in turn, has been blamed for its lack of self-criticism, as expressed by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu:

more than once I have wanted to fight the symbolic violence that is exercised, firstly on philosophers themselves, in the name of philosophy [...] I envied the freedom of writers [...] or of the artists, who from Duchamp to Devatour, have, in their own artistic practice, constantly subverted the belief in art and artists. (Bourdieu 1997, 2.)

We propose that research-creation, because it is inherently transdisciplinary, provides certain resources to subvert beliefs in both academic and artistic practices. The encounter of disciplines and practices is in itself a powerful device for everyone to reassess their relationship with the knowledge that supports their research and art. However, as Manning and Massoumi (2014, 84–86) point out, research-creation treads a fine line between critical creativity and recuperation into a neoliberal agenda of knowledge production.

Natalie Loveless has been a key figure in bringing the debate on research-creation into English-speaking Canada, and her publications have gained a wide international readership.

Reflecting the inherent hybrid nature of research-creation, she has coined the original neologism “polydisciplinamory,” in order to highlight the inherent heterogeneity and passion that animates her approach:

Traditional interdisciplinarity, with its intertheory thrust, could be said to be about who (which disciplines) one commits to, while research-creation, as a polydisciplinamorous orientation, becomes about how one commits to producing new kinship ties not only in terms of content (the ‘who’) but in terms of form (the ‘how’). (Loveless 2019, 63.)

When a single researcher internalises plural perspectives, they become a hybrid figure, the “researcher-creator”: a puzzled up, messy, entangled figure that embodies a mix of things and agencies in their practice, drawing from both academic and artistic practices and methods – and extends towards collaborators to reach out to distant horizons. This hybrid researcher figure stands for porosity and intermediate positions between disciplines and viewpoints, with a curiosity for otherness as a basic standpoint. Inherent to this interdisciplinary approach is a value system that renounces the ideas of purity and homogeneity, which echoes the discussions taking place around the queer, as Loveless (2019, 61) points out, in that it is in conflict with the dominant normative discourse.

As such, research-creation does not point towards the formation of a discipline; rather, it constitutes a space of continuous negotiation and a possible meeting point for researchers, discourses and approaches. Essentially, research-creation constitutes an academic forum open to those who wish to be involved and articulate their participation. As an international and decentralised research scene, with no top-level journals, conferences or official instances, no single party holds the mandate to define the scope, methods or outlooks of research-creation. As an example, the SSHRC definition mentioned above does not have authority in European contexts of research-creation and is criticised by some in Canada (Manning 2020, 214). Each voice in this space embodies different perspectives and stakes, thus multiplying the contributions to develop a non-prescriptive research-creation.

The baseline of research-creation remains the involvement of (artistic) creation in academic research, with the full scope of configurations, knots and confusions it may potentially entail. One evident risk that research-creation faces is the prospect of its institutionalisation. On the one hand, institutionalisation may provide additional support, including financially, as in Canada or Belgium,

where specific funding is intended for research-creation projects (see, e.g., SHHRC 2023; UCLouvain 2023). On the other hand, the field may become prescriptive, provoking homogenisation as practices conform with institutional gatekeepers' agendas. Creativity and multiplicity are at risk when authoritative models outline "best practices," and start to limit the inherent subversive potential of the arts and critical stance of academic research.

Research-creation as a space of pluralistic practices

As a nonstructured and heterogeneous space, research-creation offers a transdisciplinary environment for the crossing and conjunction of practices and discourses. Setting practice as the central concept of reference, one may examine the traditions of the arts and academia in terms of their concrete, situated and material instantiations. Research is above all an activity, a concrete undertaking engaged in on a daily basis by its practitioners, regardless of their discipline. This activity comprises methods and routines, relying on tradition and heritage, discipline-specific norms of doing, behaving and communicating, but also imagination and invention, driven by a fundamental curiosity to know more, comprehend and explore. The multiple present-day discourses on research as knowledge production often come across as if knowledge was simultaneously immaterial and completely abstract, and an object to be produced and stored in a database. Rather, as numerous philosophers of science have pointed out (Barad 2007; Haraway 1988; Latour 1991), knowledge is essentially situated, embodied in the activities of those who engage with the desire for knowing. From the perspective of research-creation, it might prove fruitful to break down research disciplines into sets of practices that can be examined, compared and negotiated at parity.

In the following, we authors, tentatively unpack some research practices combining artistic and academic lines that we have

firsthand experience with, namely literary studies, music and technology.

Although traditionally separated in most universities, literary studies and creative writing share common interests and expertise regarding literary scholarship and writing practices. Research-creation in literature contributes to shifting the general perspective in literary studies, where literary works constitute a basis for feeding and elaborating theories (research *from* literature) rather than a passive object of a given interpretative approach (research *on* literature) (Houdart-Merot and Petitjean 2021). Moreover, research-creation allows us to apprehend literature through experimentation and practice and brings creative writing to universities, eventually giving these institutions an important place within the literary and publishing scene (Bélanger, Bédard and Doyon-Gosselin 2015). For writers-researchers, participating in the literary scene may involve spending time in writers' or artists' residencies, physically shifting them outside of the institutional bubble of the university and into contact with writers and artists who are not affiliated with higher-education institutions, and with whom collaborations can emerge. This time "away" can suspend the usual academic life, but it may also blend with the ongoing tasks of research and encourage back and forth movements between writing and research practices. These movements contribute to the fruitful friction born from the transdisciplinary condition of research-creation, which encourages a constant questioning of practices. While text is a common medium for creative and academic writing, these two types of writing require an attentiveness to different elements that come into play to produce a text. Experimenting with these two types of text draws attention to the materiality of language and multiplies perspectives on its capacities.

As a field, music and technology combines musical creation with practices of technological design and development, as well as a body

of theoretical knowledge of both aspects. Working within its materiality of everyday practice involves multiple activities: building and configuring audio equipment and instruments, listening and responding, playing instruments and playing with ideas, finding new design schemes in conjunction with musical desires, setting down to formalise, prototype and test those schemes. Composing, improvising, performing. Talking. In the conceptual domain, the practices involve reading, finding relevant sources. Writing. The work entails navigating the spaces of conferences and artist residencies, immersing oneself within a social-material field of peers. To the practitioner of music and technology, it is impossible to delimit the areas where the arts end and academic scholarship starts. The contents, gestures and ideas flow into each other; the conceptual domain is extended by thought in action, which feeds back into “semantisable” insights. It is a gradual crafting of and interaction with objects both material and conceptual, embedded in social and emotional dimensions.

As these examples sketch out, breaking disciplines down into their constitutive practices shows that both artistic and academic research practices have a “homo faber” dimension that enters into a material interaction with its environment. Researchers in the arts, humanities and technology, “do” concrete things while working on their subject-matter. This “making,” or craft, involves a tremendous amount of background knowledge – both explicit and implicit – and gives rise to epistemic artefacts that are materialisations of the “knowing” involved (Loveless 2020). At the same time, each research practice mobilises intuition, vision and desire, as well as on the spot decision-making and improvisation. And each practice involves reflective, analytical, slow modes of thought and contemplation, as well as discourses, social conventions and codes. At the level of their constituent practices, it may be that academic research and artistic creation are not ontologically alien to each other. The practices and their objectives may differ, but they may offer themselves to

encounters and discussions within a peer-to-peer framework. In its commitment not to separate artistic and academic lines of research agency, research-creation insists on the arts as an epistemic practice on the same level as that of academic research. Considering artistic and academic practices together levels both fields to enable equal and enriching contributions to an open dialogue and negotiation of knowing, which in itself might be the essential perspective offered by research-creation.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have sketched out a perspective on research-creation, to contribute to the discussions around artistic research and research on the arts that are currently taking place in the Nordic context.

Having analysed the institutional embeddedness and the general ethos of artistic research and research on the arts, we delved into the specific institutional grounding of research-creation. With its genealogy in French-speaking countries and the university reforms following the 1968 student uprising in France, research-creation stems from the introduction of arts practice into the research university. In our analysis, this entanglement of the arts and creative approaches with different academic disciplines and traditions of research may create a space of conjunction and negotiation.

Today, research-creation is expanding internationally from French-speaking to English-speaking (and other) institutions and researchers. Despite its growth, the field has not organised itself into a coherent discipline, as there are no umbrella conferences, publication series, journals or authoritative models of methodology or output. Instead, the current state of research-creation is a bottom-up burgeoning of initiatives and projects, here and there, with the floor open to those who declare themselves to be invested in and through research-creation. The spectrum is wide, involving

elements from arts and design, humanities, social and political sciences, as well as technology.

The key element in our analysis is the notion of research practice as a common denominator to research activities proper to both the arts and academia. The mundane, material, situated, everyday practices of crafting ways towards knowing constitute a lingua franca of research, a baseline along which different research cultures can meet, articulate, debate and possibly also converge. In our experience as research-creation practitioners, such convergences are not only possible, but readily available through a personally embodied plurality of approaches as well as through transdisciplinary collaborative constellations of researchers, and they may bear fruit in formulating multifaceted, trans-epistemic enquiries.

The heterogeneous and decentralised field of research-creation may provide a third way into a setting where creation is seen as the exclusive preserve of (professional) artists, and where “serious” academic practice disdains the fuzzy logics of artistic research. In our view, research-creation holds the ingredients to break up this unfruitful dichotomy and enable peer-to-peer encounter between different practitioners of research. In our view, this attitude of encounter would benefit both artists engaged in epistemic enquiries, and academics involving artistic and creative practices within their research.

Dialogue between arts and research practitioners could be encouraged and supported by creating possibilities for encounter, starting at the undergraduate level and continuing all the way to postdoctoral and professional research settings. To foster permeability between universities and arts academies that allows students and colleagues to meet and understand the stakes in each other’s practices, we need to foster a transdisciplinary culture that prepares students to work outside the comfort zone of their own field and value other types of practice.

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9. GLOBAL ALTERNATIVES FOR ART AS AIDES FOR THE DIVERSIFICATION OF THE ART SYSTEM

MAX RYYNÄNEN

In this essay, I discuss (the “Western” system of) art as only one possible framework for distinguished aesthetic culture. I briefly present some of the key history of the Western art system, and then alternative frameworks to it from India and Japan. I show that a look into the alternatives might prove helpful for widening and rethinking culture, and encourage the reader not just to study them, but also to test them out (playfully), to open up new ways of thinking and experiencing art and aesthetic cultures. Decentralising the art system itself paves the way for multiplying our possibilities for future appreciation of aesthetic cultures.

The modern system of the arts

The “modern system of the arts,” as historian of ideas Paul Oskar Kristeller (1951) calls it, grouped together, named and institutionalised the major aesthetic cultures of continental European upper-class men. The system was quite finished by the mid-eighteenth century. “The invention of art” took over two millennia, but the main development from the Renaissance to the 1830s was the institutional forging of the system, mostly from the mid-seventeenth to the mid-nineteenth century (Shiner 2001).

Painting, sculpture, dance (including theatre), music and literature, accompanied by the applied arts, architecture and eloquence

(which silently dropped out from the system in the late nineteenth century) had not had much contact before – institutionally and network-wise, they used to be as distant as disco dancing and web design are now. During the invention of art, these forms were suddenly hailed as crystallisations of imagination and expression. Many raised them to the status of the highest achievement of humankind. Their future development and coherence was safeguarded through the establishment of academies. The Accademia di belle arti was established in Florence in 1563, and the Académie Française, established by Richelieu in 1635, came soon after. Academic research in the arts started to flourish through university chairs from the late eighteenth century onwards (Shiner 2001; Sörbom 1993).

Similarities and differences between the chosen *boas artes*, *belle arti* and *beaux-arts* were mapped by various thinkers from Leonardo da Vinci (1877 [1651]), who compared painting to sculpture, to G. E. Lessing (1962 [1766]), who worked on the affinities of sculpture and literature. Once differently networked – e.g., until the late seventeenth century painters were mostly members of medicine guilds, as they were seen to do the same thing, i.e., mix paints while doctors mixed medicine – and practicing their skills and creativity without a connection to each other, practitioners of different arts soon found each other and their work was framed as alike. In the end, arts practitioners began to give themselves the same title (“artist”) and be aware of what colleagues did in other “arts.”¹ This made it possible for Surrealists to be both painters and poets – while, two centuries earlier, the connection between these two arts was not much more than theoretical.

In the early modern period, the art system became a system of the privileged ones, and they judged “fakes,” “forgeries,” and low-life attempts to foster aesthetic culture. Women and “their” aesthetic

1 Here I am focusing on practical change, not on thoughts by philosophers.

cultures were overshadowed by thinking patterns debasing women as “less capable” of art making and appreciation in the new system (Battersby 1986). Notes by misogynist philosophers like Joseph Addison confirmed the gender gap philosophically; Immanuel Kant likewise stressed that Black people had less capacity to raise the bar in aesthetic practice (i.e., that they had not come up with anything culturally valuable).² Working-class aesthetic cultures were of course not accepted to be art, neither, except as archives of material that composers and painters could use as resources in their “higher” practices. In the modern era, Pablo Picasso famously appropriated African sculpture traditions in his own modernist work. Composers like Johannes Brahms and Mihail Glinka matrixed “gypsy romances” and filtered folk music into highbrow culture, “works of art.”

A variety of small developments added breadth and depth to this territory where we roam today and which we call the arts, from the physical separation of musicians and the audience to the ideas of artistic freedom (an echo of Enlightenment thinking) and the superb worth of “original” works – without forgetting the establishment of museums, criticism and art grants (see Goehr 1992; Talon-Hugon 2017; Duncan 1995; and for an overview Rynänen 2020). On this basis it was natural to roll out attacks on art. One typical way to deal with the (privileged golden cage of) claustrophobia that the soon very strong, autonomic system stimulated, was to start dreaming about the possibility to distribute art to everyone. The museum version of this practice became a commonplace by the late nineteenth century (Duncan 1995) and in the early twentieth century, Dadaists and Constructivists, among many others, followed (see, e.g., Huyssen 1989).

2 Addison made this clear in the newspaper he worked in, the *Spectator* (no. 606, 1712). See Shiner 2001. On Kant's views on race, see Pauline Kleingeld's 2007 overview. For a history of the art system with the accent on gender, class and ethnicity, see Rynänen 2020.

Sometimes this practice of art for everyone was incredibly naïve. If one looks at the teacups and plates that the Suprematist movement produced, with Kazimir Malevich as its famous icon, it is obvious that the artists were so much in love with their idea of broadening the sphere of art, that they totally forgot that there was a fantastic artistic world of pottery and ceramics out there, all the time producing beautiful and even intellectually playful objects. Why should the revolution of the everyday come from a small group of painters? The same can be said of today's dreamers, who want to take the art out of "the arts" and give it to everyone, and who do not seem to recognise how the world is full of art outside of the arts system, if one is open-minded enough to gaze outside its borders. As philosopher Crispin Sartwell neatly puts it, country musician Hank Williams already does art in the broad sense of the word (Sartwell 1995, 183) – and the same goes for pop star Shakira and Studio Ghibli animation today. To broaden one's definition of art does not make any sense aesthetically, only funding-wise and institutionally, but even then, for many becoming part of the system does not bring only positive or wanted traits – as, for instance, those who fear the academisation of jazz or those who want to keep graffiti straightforward and "cool," can testify.

The same spirit can be seen in today's post-colonialist wishes to crosspollinate "art" with non-European aesthetic cultures. By exhibiting artworks from cultures that did not have an art system before they were colonised by West Europeans, one easily subdues them to the European framework without reflection on the original framework, the system of culture, where they flourished. Why would an old, beautiful earring from Somalia be better off as art in the colonialist framework?

Why not turn (Western) "art," then, into something else, into another context, another system? This is tricky, as in China, Japan and India, for example, the old systematisations and classifications,

one could say institutions for education, culture and what we would today mostly call the arts, were either weak (their historical periods of flourishing were over) when the Western system arrived, or soon after the arrival of the Western understanding of art, they were weakened to the extent, that it is not easy for Westerners to find live alternative systems to look at. Only remains, and historical echoes exist. Still, we know enough of these old ways of doing things, and we have, here and there, “ruins” of alternatives, old competitors to “art,” that we can, for sure, think of sketching out how they could help us to diversify our understanding of art, and how they could offer us ideas about where art could be developing as an institution, thread of values and ideals, and a cluster of ways of producing and experiencing artistic practices. Not many historians of the arts know much about these alternatives, neither, which makes the discussion easily a bit blunt. We need to take a look at some of the historical alternatives first to understand the problem.

Historical alternatives to Western art from Japan and India

The most institutionalised system that has existed besides what we today call the Western art system has been the Japanese one. It was based on a split system of networks. At first, sword practitioners, calligraphers, poets, and later practitioners of ikebana and tea masters, for instance, created a sort of network based on Zen, Buddhist meditation and life philosophy. This way of doing things has of course become a part of the Western art world through the work of Japanese makers who have chosen to mix their approach with the Western one (see, e.g., Stalker 2017), but many Western artists have found sensibilities of the Japanese system lucrative and fruitful (like John Cage), although there seem to be no conscious attempts to revive the old system of culture. Often, artists who have been more into processes than end results, in happenings

and community art, for instance, have made clear and conscious references to this way of working.

Aesthetician Akira Amagasaki, claims, after his historical research on classical Japanese art systems, that Japan has in a sense had an art world for 1000 years, and calls this side of the systematisations of art-like practices in Japan *geidō* (the way of art) (Amagasaki 2010, 30). The other side of the system, *yugei* (art for play), brings more to the mind some later modern economic and societal problems that (popular) artists had in the West (Amagasaki 2010, 31):

[G]eido is for artists who devote their lives to art, while yugei is for amateurs who enjoy art just for fun. Geido, which aims toward the sacred horizon, is to be distinguished from yugei, the participants of which tend to remain in secular society. Furthermore, these two art worlds and their institutional systems overlap, and the boundary between the artist and amateur is sometimes quite vague in Japan.

The *yugei* included actors (often considered to be outlaws) and musicians, who were constantly poor and lived in the shady parts of town, where tea houses and brothels were situated. Although appreciation of “artists” (it is good to remember that this conceptualisation did not exist in Japan) rose between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries, the main tenet was still that the *yugei* artists were poor and less respected than the *geidō* artists. Also in the West, when popular culture has borrowed a lot from Japanese popular culture, artists with a capital A have sought more inspiration from the *geidō*.

All and all, interesting differences in the Japanese systems can be found in their lack of critique (Sakabe 2010). Amagasaki uses the concept of *asobi* (play) to interconnect these two worlds. He sees play as missing in the Western art system, although one must say,

that if we look at popular culture, a sort of systematisation itself in the West, and based on local traditions as much as “art” (aesthetically speaking there is no basis for cutting a major amount popular culture out of art), the popular culture has in a sense based itself on play. Amagasaki claims that the conception of *asobi* came to its full size and depth in the eighteenth century, not much actually before the Westerners came to Japan with full force. One can of course say that a critical attitude is often problematically overwhelming in Western arts – e.g., philosopher and cultural theorist Peter Sloterdijk claims that overt criticality, which can be called a cynical attitude, came to flourish since the Weimar Republic in Germany (Sloterdijk 1983).

Could there be a way to study the Japanese system, maybe not through going into its sensei-centred way of education, but to think of alternative ways of being critical that Sakabe might agree could have had a presence in the Japanese system? Some people lost in poetry competitions, and masters showed off, competed in a way, maybe more than in the West – so by maybe entering a platform of critique, although less textual, if one would like to think of it that way. Playfulness is, of course, also present both in Rabelais and Dadaism, but when one thinks of it, in the West it has been rather strange to make popular culture include playfulness systematically, and contrast it with more “serious” high culture that is anally stuck in “originals” and rules of representation, and traditionally leaves play out.

Indian networks of practices and audiences was far less tightly developed. Sage Bharata writes in the ancient treatise *Nāṭyaśāstra* (The science of drama), that

[Brahma] decided to compose a fifth Veda incorporating all the arts and sciences, and enlightening too. This he did by taking words from Rigveda, music from Sāmaveda, movements and make-up from Yajurveda, and emotional acting from Ātharvaṇaveda. Then he called

Indra and others and said, “Here is the Nātyaveda. Let the sura-s (gods) practice it. It requires persons who are smart, intelligent, observant and self-controlled.” (Bharata 1984, 1.)

Although the Indian subcontinent did not host any concept that brought the arts together, approximately 1000 years ago there was a way of bringing together arts, and not just into one drama (as in Bharata’s two-millennia old description). In Kashmir, Abhinavagupta (c. 950–1016, see Gnoli 1956) and Anandavardhana (c. 820–890, see Anandavardhana 1990) wrote treatises on aesthetics showing that it was natural to connect drama, poetry and music; later treatises following these two³ included visual culture.

Debates on the theory of *rasa* (emotive atmospheres or sentiments) show notes on experienced, reflective audiences, and it looks as if, 1000 years ago, there was not really something institution-like at stake; in upper-class circles on the Indian continent there still existed a space shared pretty much by something that we could call arts. At least there was a network and some kind of shared cultural territory where these arts from time to time bumped on each other. There was no concept of art, and no classification system for it in this sense, but there was another, broader framework. The *kala*, the sixty-four practices, or “arts,” were discussed as quintessential for the nobility and listed in the curriculum for their education that was not as strict as Western educational curricula, but more like an ideal of formation (this is the basis for what Westerners know as *Kama sutra*, with its notes on love poetry and court culture of love). And the Southern end of the continent, with its Carnatic culture, provided its own distinctive connections, making temple dance into a topic together with literature (in a sense both high and low, see Hämeen-Anttila 2011).

3 Only Sri Shankuka seems to apply the theory of *rasa* to painting. See Pollock 2016, 2.

But when was there a framework that resembles “art” so closely that it can be called an *alternative*? If there is no answer to this question, it forces us at least to reflect on what our system is about. Philosopher Chantal Maillard calls the way Westerners today look at classical Indian culture “aestheticizing.” According to her, we cannot anymore understand how ancient Indian people looked at things in *kala* (sometimes called *shilpa* too), when they grouped poetry and music together with culinary arts, etiquette, cosmetics and the making of artificial flowers. (Maillard 2010, e.g., 190.) In my cultural context, too, I am also not convinced that I can understand how eighteenth-century continental upper-class men felt about “art.” If we find an art-like framework for poetry, drama and even painting in eleventh century Kashmir, we also find a clearer alternative to it.

The alternative is about life. Amagasaki keeps saying to us that traditional Japanese art was always for life and living, as is Western popular art, at least mostly. Theatre and film director Pauliina Feodoroff has claimed indigenous Samí culture works like this, too.⁴ The Indian system, which highly appreciated taxonomies (Bharata 1984), was not as institutionally strict as the Western system, but it was about life, making everything a bit like art, enriching life. In the highly original theoretical discussion that this Indian artistic sphere produced, emotive atmospheres (the *rasa*) were so central, that they must have been essential for appreciation of the arts. Westerners have only lately found the idea of atmospheres (e.g., in Gernot Böhme, Tonino Griffero and Peter Sloterdijk), but the accent in India was always more in the emotive side of arts, and in the way strong atmospheres in theatre, for instance, can push us to higher stages of reflection. Could we think of local *rasa*, i.e., key emotive atmospheres that could explain new traits in the Western theatre tradition?

4 See Ryyänen 2020 for notes on this.

Changing the framework(s)

Any framework helps to make sense of culture, and if practices are grouped together in a system – as happened with sports like the 100 metres and long jump from the late nineteenth century – they start learning from each other and connecting the practitioners. Philosopher Arindam Chakrabarti (2016, 4–5) writes:

Indian art, classical and contemporary, spreads over a vast and variegated canvas including sculpture, architecture, painting, theater, dance, instrumental and vocal music, poetry and literature, cinema, religious rituals, crafts, public festivals and carnivals, cosmetics, perfumery, fabric-design, gold-jewelry (which should not be sniffed at as “mere craft”), arts of primary pedagogy – for, teaching children of the socially marginalized how to read can be quintessentially an aesthetic agenda, sports and entertainment – urban and folk, traditional and avant-garde.

There is no way, he laments, to articulate any family resemblances here – but that is how Western aestheticians have seen art too, of course (Chakrabarti 2016, 4–5; see also Weitz 1956). Still, one can imagine, that as the same package, they have shared a sort of educational space, and at least a minimally institutional platform, which might have made it easier for people to connect jewellery with cooking, or perfumes with writing letters. What do we want to connect art to? We have lately connected highbrow art to the culture of politics and activism. What next? Everything is possible, as history shows.

Maybe many who have aimed to broaden the art system in the West have actually needed the support of a broader system of this type, which could include food or perfumes – even preparing paper flowers for the kids’ birthday. But as they have been stuck with the knowledge of only one kind of framework, they have instead tried to think that they need to get that narrow part of the framework

extended and distributed more widely, and perhaps felt ambivalent about it.

The arts systems in the world are multi-faceted: the Chinese had poetry and archery in the *keju* education of bureaucrats; the Igbo in Nigeria have festival as the focal point of culture and artistic activity (Wy and Zha 2018; Achebe 1965). Faced with the challenges of the economically and globally culturally dominating Western system and its concepts, values and frameworks, scholars in Eastern countries such as Japan, India and Korea have been able to see more than the Westerners have been capable of.

Art historian Hunyee Jung writes on *Hangeul*, which is a classical form of calligraphy in Korea, that it is tricky as it is being conceptually nailed as art although the tradition supports this only to a marginal extent (Jung 2010). Junhui Park writes about *meot*, a Korean concept which connects often to aesthetic appraisal that it is useful but not close to Western ideals. It

is the most general Korean form of positive aesthetic appraisal. It is applied not only to works of art proper but to all sorts of objects, events, actions, states of natural or cultural affairs, all kinds of human and animal behavior, as well as to ideas. Thus, Mount Fuji, the evening sky, a river, the Russian Revolution, the flight of a fighter, Taoism, the Platonic philosophical system, Einstein's Theory of Relativity, the Discoveries of Copernicus, Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata," Giacometti's sculptures, Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake*, are all often said to be or have *meot*. (Park 2010, 67-68.)

Like the famous Japanese concept of *wabi* (lack, negation, poverty), that is central for tea ceremony, *meot* is something really worth studying. It is nearly a wonder that critics of Western art and the system around it have produced endless critique using the methodology offered by that very same cultural system (see the above

Sloterdijk quote on negatively cynical criticism). Instead, one could critique Western art using concepts from elsewhere in the world. We could aim to digest composer and multi-instrumentalist John Zorn's *Naked City* album (1990) and the whole genre of jazz-metal as *meot*, or embrace countryside sauna culture in forested Finland as *wabi*. New concepts can show new sides of works of art and cultures where aesthetic and artistic practices are central. While crossovers between systems and works fail easily in depth, they can shed light on what kind of concepts and frameworks could work, and where to head in studying global art systems. Seeing something through something else does not entail full knowledge and mastery of it.

Alternative cultural systems show accents and thematisations in various ways that could be studied, if we desire to really develop art not just by criticising it internally but by framing things differently. For sure, some would say that from the Western perspective, these are cultures of “others,” and this should be done with care – but respect for cultural practices could mean seeing them as something to learn and to learn from.

And whose system is the so-called Western, in the end? Why not look at other “others” *too*? Although I research and teach theories of art at a Nordic university, being from the North of Europe which gained the Western art system later than British colonies (see Ryyänen 2020), and working class by background, I feel lot of distance from the continental European upper-class system. This major European system which originated thousands of kilometres away from where I was raised, did not even include all European arts, and never anything from the working class. Other systems might be better in many ways, and we could appreciate the people who built them and their potentials.

Unlearning art: a new way of thinking about aesthetic cultures

As we all the time develop the art system by making choices, these forgotten or less-known alternatives can offer new ways to think of what to do with the arts – if nothing else, small steps to test, small glitches. We could curate exhibitions drawing on *yugei*, *geidō*, *kala* or any other form of categorising and classifying culture, so that we would understand art collections in new ways. We could learn new sensibilities, and we could unlearn “art,” at least a bit, if we are ready to see it just as one system of thinking and experiencing, and not as a naturalised universal framework, as the tradition has had it. For instance, we could steer Western theatres at least a bit with ancient Indian *rasa* theory. The same cross-pollination of frameworks between any two countries could offer unforeseen paths. Looking at Western culture through other systems could also build convergence across highbrow and lowbrow in unprecedented ways – and extend even to science and other forms of culture.

To break with the old globally dominant system does not mean that we should only criticise it. ‘Good old art’ was a great project too, in many ways – or what else could one say about artistic autonomy and the focus on aesthetic experience, that became key elements in “art” since the eighteenth century? There is just so much to test out, and I believe our knowledge of the alternatives to the European framework created by the rich wig-heads and powder-faces of Italy, France or England has the potential for a new wave of thinking about art and aesthetic cultures that could enable us to not just see more but to also act in new ways, and to get glimpses of new ways of experiencing.

We can cross borders more, not just of geography but of gender and class. For instance, needlework can be included into the art system that once debased it as women’s culture. As a working-class member, I say: come and learn from the working class, feel free to

learn how we laugh about ballet and appreciate football aesthetically. But truly, focusing only on criticizing art keeps the upper-class continental European male as the universal model and leaves everything else in a “ghetto” of frameworks. Then, the work of the generations of people who built these less-known systems is not appreciated as it could be, professionally speaking. There is nothing natural in these systems. They are all produced by talented people. And they all have different potentials.

I cannot experience the ancient Indian “awe” (Chakrabarti’s allegory for what the ancient Indian art theorists were after; Chakrabarti 2016), but I can imagine it, and I can try to at least get a better glimpse of it through studying the system, together with yoga, kalaripayattu and Sanskrit literature. As much as one can appreciate all kinds of artistic work on this planet, one can learn from all kinds of frameworks. They are invisible, but they govern our perception, interpretation and experience – and form the working context for artists. One can compare, get ideas and even test out. Why not give this a try?

While decolonialising practices and inclusion-driven projects trend in the art world for a reason (which I support), they always work uncritically within the upper-class European system called art, into which they attempt to include practices from all over the globe (including the so-called lower Western arts). While some of these projects are driven with a delicate, reflective touch, this approach continues to colonise those cultures outside the Western art system, which produced art in resonance with other systems and frameworks (e.g., *kala*). So the centre is sadly still all the time found in the pipe-smoking rich white man sitting in his studio in Paris in 1830. All this could change, though. It just craves some extra work. We need to study other systems.

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Index of Names

A

Aavanranta, Otso	7, 9–10, 17, 191–192
Abaci, Uygur	69
Abbing, Hans	27, 34–40, 145, 147
Abhinavagupta	220
Achebe, Chinua	223
Adamson, Glen	149, 151
Addison, Joseph	215
Agamben, Giorgio	76
Allan, Blake A.	154
Amagasaki, Akira	218–219, 221
Anandavardhana	220
Ansio, Heli	137–138, 140–141, 144–145, 147–148, 159
Aristotle	69, 74–75, 86
Arlander, Annette	104, 149, 151–153
Artaud, Antonin	84
Arteaga, Alex	71
Assis, Paulo de	83, 87
Autin, Kelsey L.	154

B

Backman, Martti	55, 63
Bäckström, Heidi	39
Backström, Åke	54
Barad, Karen	138, 150, 204
Barney, Mathew	34
Barthes, Roland	140

Batteaux, Charles	25
Battersby, Christine	215
Baumann, Pierre	200–201
Baumgarten, Alexander	26, 105
Becker, Howard S.	159
Bédard-Goulet, Sara	7, 17, 191–192, 201
Beethoven, Ludwig van	223
Bélanger, David	205
Benso, Silvia	83, 88
Bérard, Cassie	205
Bergson, Henri	86–87
Berthier, Denis	84
Beyrouthy, Damien	201
Bharata (Sage)	219–221
Böhme, Gernot	221
Bolt, Barbara	139–140, 149–152
Borgdorff, Henk	173, 193–195
Boström, Henrik Johannes	54
Bourdieu, Pierre	72, 202
Brahms, Johannes	215
Brecht, Bertol	75
Bryan-Wilson, Julia	149, 152
Bürger, Peter	28
Butler, Judith	149–150

C

Caduff, Corina	173
Cage, John	34, 217
Carroll, Noël	105
Carter, Paul	150
Cazeaux, Clive	105
Chakrabarti, Arindam	222, 226

Chapman, Owen	200
Cincolani, Patrick	140
Citton, Yves	199
Cocker, Emma	71
Coessens, Kathleen	195
Cohn, Dorrit	48
Coleridge, William	85
Combes, Muriel	118
Cook, Nicholas	140
Copernicus, Nicolaus	223
Costello, Peter R.	175, 176
Cotter, Lucy	71, 109, 129, 195
Cramer, Florian	72, 109, 195
Crispin, Darla	195
Cusick, Suzanne G.	150
Cvejic, Bojana	175

D

Darras, Bernard	197–198
Dashtipour, Parisa	154
Dean, David	49
Debaise, Didier	122–123
Dejours, Christophe	139, 154–160
DeLanda, Manuel	87
Deleuze, Gilles	86–88, 105, 109, 121, 123–124, 150
Dening, Greg	48
Deranty, Jean-Philippe	154–155, 157–158
Dickie, George	105
Diderot, Denms	90
Dillon, Martin	181
Diodato, Roberto	83
Doruff, Sher	81

Douglas, Anne	195
Doyon-Gosselin, Benoit	205
Dubos, Anne	199
Duncan, Carol	215
Dutton, Michael	135

E

Einstein, Alfred	223
Elkins, James	38
Elo, Mika	7, 15, 21, 101–102, 104, 121
Enckell, Emelie	56
España, Juliana Keller	152
Eysler, Edmund	58

F

Fagernäs, F. U.	55
Fahlin, Marie	170
Fall, N’Goné	37
Feibelman, James K.	117
Feodoroff, Pauliina	221
Finlay, Linda	177
Flavin, Dan	34
Flichy, Patrice	143
Foster, Susan (Leigh)	170, 174–175, 184

G

Gadolin, Ero	45, 50, 52–55, 58, 61–62
Gallagher, Shaun	178, 180–182
Gansterer, Nikolaus	170
Gaudreau, Lynda	170
Gerber, Alison	149
Giacometti, Alberto	223

Gielen, Pascal	72-73
Gill, Rosalind	140, 144
Glinka, Mihail	215
Gluhovic, Milija	49
Gnoli, Raniero	220
Goehr, Lydia	215
Goosse, Bruno	201
Gosselin, Pierre	199
Gould, Raija	155
Griffero, Tonino	221
Grosz, Elizabeth	150
Guattari, Félix	105, 121, 123-124, 150

H

Haapala, Leevi	37
Haavikko, Paavo	64
Hagensen, Ulvi	76
Haila, Yrjö	111, 118
Hallamaa, Laura	60-61
Hämeen-Anttila, Virpi	220
Hannuksela, Riina	40
Hannula, Mika	173
Haraway, Donna	104, 107, 114, 150, 204
Härkönen, Mitro	52, 59
Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich	26
Heidegger, Martin	81, 91, 105-107, 149
Heikkinen, Martta	141
Heimonen, Kirsi	171-172
Heiskanen, Ilkka	141
Hentilä, Seppo	51
Herbert, Martin	33-34

Himanka, Jussi	71
Hirvi, Maria	37
Hirvi-Ijäs, Maria	136, 142, 147-148
Hongisto, Ilona	159
Hörl, Erich	104
Hotvedt, Marianne Jenum	145
Houdart-Merot, Violaine	199, 205
Houni, Pia	137-138, 140-141, 144-145, 147-148, 159
Hugh of Saint Victor	24
Huhmarniemi, Maria	32
Huyghe, Pierre-Damien	196, 199-200
Huyssen, Andreas	215

J

Jakonen, Mikko	7, 16, 21, 135, 140, 144-145
Jameson, Fredric	28
Järnström, E.	50
Järvinen, Hanna	39-40
Jenkins, Keith	47, 64
Johansson, Hanna	28
Jokela, Timo	32
Jokinen, Eeva	140
Jonker-Hoffren, Paul	7, 16, 135
Joyce, James	223
Judd, Donald	34
Jung, Hunyee	223

K

Käkelä, Erkki	46, 55
Kananen, Johannes	146
Kanerva, Arla	136
Kangas, Anita	141-142

Kant, Immanuel	26–27, 69, 109, 215
Kaprow, Allan	29
Karhunen, Maija	40
Karjalainen, Tuula	37
Karttunen, Sari	36, 140
Karttunen, Ulla	36
Karvonen, Santtu	60
Kellokumpu, Simo	170
Kester, H. Grant	36
Kilomba, Grada	37
Kinnunen, Taina	152
Kirkkopelto, Esa	7, 15, 28–30, 36, 69–70, 80, 90, 92, 107–108
Kjørup, Søren	105, 194
Kleingeld, Pauline	215
Knight, Linda	200
Koistinen, Pertti	147
Koivisto-Kaasik, Nuppu	58
Kokkonen, Tuija	124–125
Konovalov, Marta	76
Kontinen, Tiina	137, 145
Kontturi, Katve-Kaisa	7, 16, 135, 138–140, 142, 149–152, 156–157
Korhonen, Pekka	140, 147
Korsberg, Hanna	7, 14, 45, 49
Kortelainen, Ilmari	152
Kovalčik, Jozef	32
Kozel, Susan	169, 177
Kristeller, Paul Oscar	23–25, 213
Kuhanen, Ilkka	147
Kunst, Bojana	147, 157, 161
Kurikka, Kaisa	140
Kurlin Niiniaho, Ari	136, 140, 142–148, 159

L

Laari, Susanna	47, 62–63
Laatikainen, Taavetti	50, 53–54, 60
Lacoue-Labarthe, Philippe	90–91
Lagus, Emma Matilda	53–54, 62–63
Lagus, Kenny Christina Emilia	54, 63
Lagus, Olof	45–46, 50–56, 60–63
Lagus, Ruben	53–54, 62–63
Lampela, Kalle	7, 14, 23
Latour, Bruno	104, 110–111, 113, 126–127, 204
Le Coguiec, Éric	199
Léchet Hirt, Lysianne	199
Lehmusvesi, Jussi	136
Leibniz, Gottfried	74, 111, 116
Leonardo (da Vinci)	24, 214
Lepecki, André	174
Lesage, Dieter	193
Lessing, Gotthold Ephraim	214
Levinas, Emanuel	171
Lévy, Pierre	86
Lewis, David	74
Lock, Graham	79
Longley, Alys	170
Losco-Lena, Mireille	199
Loveless, Natalie	200, 202–203, 206
Lüdtke, Martin	28

M

Madison, Gary Brent	178, 180–181
Maillard, Chantal	221
Makkonen, Anne	148
Malevich, Kazimir	216
Malkin, Jeanette	51
Manen, Max van	169, 176
Manning, Erin	151–152, 200, 202–203
Marx, Karl	151
Massumi, Brian	83, 150, 153, 156, 200
McEvelley, Thomas	28
McKenzie, Jon	73
McQuillan, Colin	105
Meerzon, Yana	49
Menger, Pierre-Michel	140, 142–143, 147
Merleau-Ponty, Maurice	170, 172, 177–183
Mersch, Dieter	102, 105, 108, 121, 128, 173
Meskimmon, Marsha	151
Metsola, Satu	37
Milgram, Paul	93
Mitchell, Ritva	141–142
Moisala, Pirkko	140
Monni, Kirsi	137, 148, 175
Moran, Dermot	178
Munslow, Alun	47

N

Nancy, Jean-Luc	171
Näre, Sari	49
Nathan, Tobie	119
Negri, Antonio	74

Nikkilä, Pyry	52, 58, 60
Nobus, Dany	201
Nochlin, Linda	27
Noland, Cady	34
Nurmio, Heikki	57

O

Onninen, Oskari	47, 60–61
-----------------	-----------

P

Park, Junhui	223
Parker-Starbuck, Jennifer	83
Pärnänen, Anna	145
Parviainen, Jaana	152
Pasanen-Willberg, Riitta	147
Pensola, Tiina	155
Pérez Royo, Victoria	173
Petitjean, Anne-Marie	199, 205
Pfeil, Heinrich	58
Picasso, Pablo	215
Piispa, Mikk	137, 140, 144–145, 148, 159
Pirnes, Esa	142
Pluta, Izabelle	199
Pollock, Sheldon	220
Polvinen, Anu	155
Popper, Frank	83
Posenenske, Charlotte	34
Pratt, Andy	140, 144
Prince, Kathryn	49
Pujol, Ernesto	30–32
Puukka, Päivi	136
Pyykkönen, Miikka	136, 140, 142–148, 159

Q

Quinn, Malcolm 201

R

Ra, Sun 79–80
Rabelais, François 219
Rampanen, Saara 50, 56, 60
Rancière, Jacques 110, 120
Rannikko, Anna 197
Rauhaniemi, Johanna 10
Rautainen, Pauli 141
Rensujeff, Kaija 141
Rheinberger, Hans-Jörg 112
Rist, Pipilotti 34
Roberts, John 35–36
Roiha, Taija 141
Rokem, Freddie 48, 56–57, 60, 64
Rosenbröijer, John 50, 60
Rossi, Leena-Maija 28
Rothberg, Isabella 60–61
Rouhiainen, Leena 7, 16, 169, 171–172, 174, 179–180, 182
Ruiten, Schellte van 72
Ryynänen, Max 7, 10, 17, 25, 32, 213, 215, 221, 224
Ryynänen, Sanna 19 7

S

Saarelainen, Maarit 60–61
Saito, Yuriko 28, 36
Sakabe, Megumi 218–219
Sakari, Marja 37
Salonlahti, Outi 145
Sarkola, Milja 14, 45–49, 51–57, 61–63, 65

Sartwell, Crispin	216
Sawchuck, Kim	200
Schäfer, Elisabeth	173
Schelling, Friedrich	
Wilhelm Joseph von	26
Schiller, Friedrich	26
Schnitzer, Ignaz	58
Schwab, Michael	126–127, 173
Serre, Michel	120
Shakira	
(Isabel Mebarak Ripoli)	216
Shankuka, Sri	220
Shiner, Larry	24–28, 215
Shusterman, Richard	27
Simondon, Gilbert	118–119
Simons, Massimiliano	113
Siukonen, Jyrki	29
Sloterdijk, Peeter	219, 221, 224
Smedjebacka, Helge	55
Söderholm, Roosa	52, 59–60
Sokka, Sakarias	136, 140, 142–148, 159
Sörbom, Göran	214
Spalding, Julian	78
Spinoza, Baruch	74, 150
Stalker, Nancy	217
Standing, Guy	141, 144–145
Staten, Henry	24
Stengers, Isabelle	101, 103–105, 109–124, 129
Stevan, Vucović	141
Suosalo, Martti	136
Sutela, Hanna	145
Suuronen, Minna	58

Svartström, Robin 52, 58
Szreder, Kuba 32-33

T

Talon-Hugon, Carole 215
Tanke, Joseph 105
Tavinor, Grant 83
Taylor, Charles 179
Taylor, Diana 47-48
Tenhula, Ari 148
Terpsma, Nienke 71, 109, 195
Thesleff, Dagmar 56
Thesleff (b. Dippel),
Harriet 45, 47, 50, 52-54, 56, 58, 61-63
Thesleff, Wilhelm 50
Throsby, David 140, 142
Tiainen, Milla 7, 16, 135, 140, 142, 149-150, 152
Tikkanen, Päivi 101
Tompkins, Silvia 82
Törmi, Kirsi 137, 148
Truman, Sarah E. 200

U

Ukules, Mierle Laderman 152
Unmüßig, Jana 170

V

Vadén, Tere 194
Välimäki, Susanna 7, 9-10
Valo, Vesa-Tapio 54
Vanhanen, Janne 87-88
Varela, Francisco J. 87

Varto, Juha	107-108, 194-195
Venäläinen, Juhana	140
Vidaillet, Bénédicte	154
Vidal, Matt	144
Viljo, Eeva Maija	153
Virno, Paolo	72-73
Voss, Daniela	118-119

W

Wälchli, Tan	173
Weitz, Morris	222
Wennes, Grete	142
White, Hayden	47
Whitehead, Alfred N.	118
Wilkins-Yel, Kerrie G.	154
Wilkman (General)	51-52
Williams, Hank	216
Wilson, Mick	72
Winnicott, Donald Woods	88
Wrathall, Mark	178
Wy, Hantian	223

Z

Zha, Qiang	223
Zoran, Eric	141
Zorn, John	224

This volume examines the intersections of art and research in multiple dimensions. Thirteen authors from different backgrounds in arts, humanities and social sciences engage with themes such as artistic research, research-creation, historiography, art as labour, the politics of inclusion and diversification of art systems.

What conceptual discussions characterise the different research approaches in and around the arts? What connects and distinguishes them? How can we advance the dialogue beyond the institutionally established binary of artistic research versus humanities or scientific study of the arts?

The texts emanate predominantly from the Finnish academic context, contributing to the polyphony of the international scholarly landscape.

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