

Artistic Research Does #1

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Caleidotrópico

artistic research does

Hey presto!, this is not another ant-ology neither aspires being part of one. And we are not tied to defining artistic research neither we intend to spend our and others' sweat to eventually provide an enlightened state of the art. We are nevertheless quite happy to present a friendly, fancy and laid-back ink and paper object to embody the inquiring thoughts of our guest contributors. *Artistic Research Does* is a series of individual takes published on the topic of artistic research, yet anti-ologically designed. It consists of a number of short authored submissions, conceived under invitation and for the occasion, published in individual booklets, once a month and bilingual-ly (PT/ENG). Since the editors are not native English speakers and thus are unable to provide professional translations, every and each of their efforts to adapt text will be signed at the end so that the interpretative contingency is kept in mind.

The idea for *Artistic Research Does* acquired shape in the aftermath of the international

seminar *Conversations on Artistic Research* organized in November 2014, at the Faculty of Fine Arts University of Porto, Portugal (org. NEA - Research Group in Arts Education). As such the first batch of writings will rescue edited contributions of guest participants of this seminar, and following the taking off of the first round so the network of references will expand to other interesting inputs to the conversation in motion. Through internationalization *Artistic Research Does* is aimed to introduce this debate in Portugal by hopefully filling up some perceived gaps and updating biased looks into research possibilities in art.

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Artistic Research and/as Interdisciplinarity¹

— Annette Arlander

¹ My talk at the colloquium in Porto, "On Doing Artistic Research", was based on a previously published bilingual article "On Methods in Artistic Research" (Arlander 2014) and parts of an older text (Arlander 2011). This text is a further development of some of those themes.

² At a seminar in Helsinki Dorita Hannah recently pointed out that the meanings of the term 'artistic' in English include artificial, gay and camp.

³ Frodeman 2014, 3.

Although the area of artistic research is still contested and many prefer to use other related terms in order to avoid the somehow controversial or paradoxical tone of the term in English², the debates around artistic research have continued long enough for us to acknowledge that something like that can be said to exist, if not as a proper discipline, at least as something resembling it. Instead of asking what artistic research is or means, many prefer to ask, what can it do? What can be done with or within artistic research? Today when interdisciplinarity is increasingly sought for to complement the ever-narrowing disciplinary expertise, the possibility of a meeting ground or a (relatively) free space for various disciplines to interact offered by artistic research is needed more than ever. Moreover, the aspect of experimentation and play with alternatives, artistic research as a speculative practice is more and more valued within Academia as well as in society at large. What seems to be the most obvious result of the debates and demonstrations so far is the diversity of the field today. There is not one form of artistic research but many types, partly since artistic research has evolved from different streams both culturally and institutionally. And various art forms have such differing approaches to artistic practice, tradition, the position of the artist, the status of the art work, and so on, that any unified understanding of what constitutes artistic research is hardly achievable. There are such a variety of disciplines already within scholarship related to art (history of art, history of music, film studies, aesthetics and so on); how could artistic research be a field less diverse? Add to that the variety of topics explored and investigated by artists, and we have a domain as large as life, or so it seems.

First a few clarifications of the terminology used here: Interdisciplinary usually means integration of knowledge across academic disciplines, while multidisciplinary refers to the juxtaposition of different types of knowledges and transdisciplinarity denotes the production of knowledge with parties beyond the academy.³ All three forms of diversity across and beyond disciplines are relevant in the context of artistic research. Although we could claim that we are moving towards a post-disciplinary condition of knowledge production, this article,

like many others, is engaging in discipline formation, by trying to contribute to the self-understanding of artistic research.

Interdisciplinarity seems to be linked with artistic research in at least three ways, besides artistic research being a discipline (or anti-discipline) in the making. On one hand artistic research provides the site for interdisciplinary (or perhaps multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary) encounters. On the other hand various types of artistic research have developed through interdisciplinary entwinements depending on institutional legacies, like art and critical theory, art and aesthetics, art and pedagogy, or art and academia more generally. A third dimension of interdisciplinarity or the lack of it becomes evident when creating multidisciplinary publications like the Journal for Artistic Research (JAR). This third aspect, the multidisciplinary amongst and between various art forms, I will return to later.

The first aspect – artistic research as a multi-and interdisciplinary meeting place – came to my mind at an examination of a doctoral dissertation in fine art where the opponent mentioned, how the work in question served as the meeting place for such a variety of approaches and phenomena, that these could probably never have been combined anywhere else.⁴ This exaggerated eclecticism, which used to be considered one of the weaknesses of artistic research – artists simply picking up a mixture of incongruent thoughts and concepts and then combining them at will – can be looked at as a major asset today. When disciplinary knowledge production remains within the bounds of each limited domain, digging deeper and deeper into predictable knowledge sources, artistic research can provide a site for unexpected clashes and combinations, thus creating new possibilities for understanding. This could be understood as the internal diversity of artistic research.

The second aspect – the various types of artistic research created by collaboration with neighbouring or supporting disciplines – struck me when a colleague tried to describe the work at a particular institution by distinguishing two approaches to artistic research: pedagogical artistic research and experimental artistic research. My initial reaction was exasperation: why such weird dichotomies? On second thought I realized we could

⁴ Hanna Johansson at Shoji Kato's doctoral examination at the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts in Helsinki, 7 March 2015, quoted from memory.

⁵ Mode 2 knowledge is a concept introduced by Michael Gibbons as a contrast to traditional scientific mode 1 knowledge. It refers to knowledge production that is context-driven and problem-focused, often in multidisciplinary teams working for short periods on real-world problems. (Gibbons et al. 1994)

⁶ Porkola 2014, 42-46.

⁷ Barrett 2014, 7-9.

⁸ Barad 2007.

⁹ Arlander 2014.

indeed speak of various forms of artistic research today, although perhaps not with exactly that typology. When looking around at doctoral dissertations or larger research projects we could probably distinguish strands like philosophically inclined artistic research, historically oriented artistic research, sociologically or socially based artistic research, as well as technologically focused research sometimes related to art-science collaborations. Other types besides those already mentioned could probably be found, depending on the collaborating parties, the interest and emphasis of individual artists and institutions and the related disciplines enlisted. Even combining theoretical and practical work, like art practice and art theory, could be thought of as a form of interdisciplinarity.

One source for this diversity is the variety of cultural influences on the development of artistic research. Some of the many streams contributing to a culture accepting artistic research include the increasing recognition of the value and importance of practical knowledge or tacit knowledge, of so called mode 2 knowledge⁵ and thus also of the artists' knowledge. Another stream is the performative, bodily and lately the material turn in social sciences, which followed the linguistic turn of structuralism and post-structuralism, and have emphasized embodied experience and knowledge embedded in oral and material practices. Not to forget the work undertaken within feminist and postcolonial thought in order to reveal the biased nature of so-called objective and universal knowledge production. Pilvi Porkola noted in her doctoral work⁶ how current debates around artistic research tend to overlook and forget the work done already in the seventies by feminist theorists like Sandra Harding, Donna Haraway and others, who developed so called standpoint epistemologies and the idea of situated knowledge. Estelle Barrett has recently taken up this legacy.⁷ The work by Karen Barad⁸ could have implications for artistic research, as I have suggested in another context.⁹ And as a main trend running alongside these changes is the critique of global capitalism and its instrumental approach to the resources of the planet, and to other beings sharing them with us. Thus emancipatory and political struggles on one hand and epistemological debates on the other have created a ground for

old dichotomies like art and science or theory and practice to crumble, at least momentarily and locally. Add to this perhaps the main requirement for the development of artistic research, that is, changes within the arts, with conceptual art as one important starting point together with various forms of socially engaged art practices that challenge the traditional role of the artist. The heavy emphasis on theory in art education since the 1990's and the development towards internationally synchronising the third cycle in higher arts education are main factors, of course. These developments have been discussed widely, and also criticized as the academisation of art, so there is no need to repeat that discussion here. A few words about some earlier conversations related to methodology are nevertheless worth revisiting, since they are not so well known within fine arts.

Methodology or ... ?

to Haseman
2006.

One of the puzzling issues related to artistic research involves the question whether artistic research should be understood as a methodology or as a field of knowledge production, a discipline. These topics are of course linked; each field has its own methods for producing knowledge, but the focus or emphasis has some relevance. When terms like practice-as research, practice-led research, performance as research, studio-based research or creative research are used, the emphasis is often on methodology. One example of a methodological approach to artistic research is the Performance as Research Working Group of IFTR (International Federation for Theatre Research), where the participants come from various disciplines within performing arts (theatre, dance, writing, Live Art, spatial practices, sound art). The common denominator is grounding in some type of artistic practice under the rubric of performance as research (or practice as research, which many in the UK prefer to call it), and an interest in exploring the methodological possibilities of collaborative participatory strategies.

If we understand artistic research first and foremost as a methodology then we could either see artistic research as an extension of the qualitative methodology or equate it with practice-based research in general. Brad Haseman, however, has defended performative research as a separate methodology, a whole new paradigm, on the basis of Austin's speech act theory. According to Haseman, in his *Manifesto for Performative Research*¹⁰ "performative research represents something larger

than the 'performance turn' (which for many is a form of emancipatory action through embodied and enacted storytelling)... [it] represents a move which holds that practice is the principal research activity".¹¹ Haseman distinguishes two characteristics typical for practice-led research;

- 1) the research is not so much problem-based but rather led by "an enthusiasm of practice" and
- 2) the research outputs and claims to knowing are made through the symbolic language of the practice.

According to him symbolic data work performatively, not only expressing the research, but in that expression becoming the research itself.¹² And most importantly: "The 'practice' in 'practice-led research' is primary – it is not an optional extra; it is the necessary precondition of engagement in performative research."¹³ He presents the following schema:

Quantitative Research

"the activity or operation of expressing something as a quantity or amount – for example in numbers, graphs, or formulas" (Schwandt, 2001:215).

— the scientific method

Qualitative Research

refers to "all forms of social inquiry that rely primarily on qualitative data... i.e., non-numeric data in the form of words" (Schwandt, 2001:213).

— multi-method

Performative Research

expressed in nonnumeric data, but in forms of symbolic data other than words in discursive text. These include material forms of practice, of still and moving images, of music and sound, of live action and digital code.

— multi-method led by practice

¹¹ Haseman 2006, 7.

¹² Haseman 2006, 6.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Leavy 2009, 256.

Haseman's schema could be summarized as follows: While quantitative research is based on the scientific method and qualitative research is based on multiple methods, performative research is practice-led and uses multiple methods. While quantitative research functions (and presents its results) with numbers, figures and charts, qualitative research uses data and presents results that are non-numerical or verbal. Performative research is expressed in a non-numerical way and often uses symbolic data, other than words in a discursive text. These include forms of material practices, moving and still images, sounds and music, live action and digital code.¹⁴

Patricia Leavy, who propagates arts-based methods for qualitative researchers in social sciences has presented a similar type of schema. She proposes arts-based research as the third mode and maintains that arts-based research is like an extension of conventional qualitative research, an expansion of the qualitative paradigm.¹⁵

Quantitative

Numbers
Measurement
Tabulating
Value-neutral
Reliability
Validity
Prove/convince
Disciplinary

Traditional Qualitative

Words
Meaning
Writing
Value-laden
Process
Interpretation
Persuade
Interdisciplinary

Arts-Based

Stories, images, sounds, scenes, sensory
Evocation
(Re)presenting
Political, consciousness-raising, emancipation
Authenticity
Truthfulness
Compel
Transdisciplinary

From Leavy's description we nevertheless understand that artistic methods are to be used mainly in the presentation and dissemination of the research results. From the point of view of artistic research the problem with such qualitatively inclined approaches is often that art becomes an addendum, something secondary in relation to or in service of the research.

Barbara Bolt, who is an artist herself, continues the work of Haseman in "A Performative Paradigm for the Creative Arts?"¹⁶ and asks us to consider the meaning of performativity; if a performative act does not describe anything but actually does something in the world, we should try to ascertain what such an action (or research) has accomplished. According to Bolt it is essential to distinguish between performativity and 'performative' in the sense of something 'resembling or related to performance'. We need to return to the conceptual distinction made by philosopher J.L. Austin between constatives, utterances that state or describe 'facts', and performatives, utterances that perform an action, like "I do" in the marriage ceremony.¹⁷ And to remember Judith Butler's distinction between 'performance', which requires a subject, and 'performativity', which challenges the whole notion of the subject. Whereas performance can be understood as the conscious (and intentional) act by a subject or subjects, performativity must be understood as an iterative and citational practice which produces that which it names.¹⁸ Bolt posits a contrast between 'science as research' and 'art as research' and presents the differences as a schema¹⁹:

Science-as-Research

Constative: describes/models the world

Methodology: repetition of the same

Interpretation: truth as correspondence

Art-as-Research

Performative: does things in the world

Methodology: repetition with difference

Interpretation: 'truth' as force and effect

Science as research could be compared with constatives, it is describing and modelling the world, whereas art as research is making things in the world. On a methodological level the first is repetition of the same, whereas the latter is repetition with a difference. And the first is based on truth as correspondence whereas the latter is based on "truth" as power and effect. For Bolt "the work of art is not just the artwork/performance or the event, but is also the effect of the work in the material, affective and discursive domains". Consequently the main task for the artist researcher is "recognizing and mapping the transformations that have occurred."²⁰

¹⁶ Bolt 2008.

¹⁷ Bolt 2008, 3-4.

¹⁸ Bolt 2008, 4.

¹⁹ Bolt 2008, 9.

²⁰ Ibid.

... Field?

²¹ Bolt 2008.

²² Verito 2009, 159.

Today we could claim that artistic research is a field or a discipline, (perhaps an anti-discipline?), an area for knowledge creation, rather than a specific methodology. Researching artists can adopt different methodologies, qualitative, quantitative or conceptual, as suggested by Smith & Dean in *Practice-led Research Research-led Practice in the Creative Arts*.²¹ Different disciplines, however, tend to define themselves either through their research object or through their specific methods. Shouldn't artistic research do the same? Every discipline produces knowledge via its own methods: "If we for instance apply the methods of cultural studies to art education research, we get cultural studies as an outcome... There is no such thing as a neutral research method."²² The same could be expected of the field of artistic research. But is it possible to talk about common methods for areas as diverse as visual art, music, theatre, literature, dance, film and architecture? Should not each art form develop its own methods, based on the working methods employed? Thus we should have various methods based on the specific traditions of each art form, supporting the development of those particular forms. Should we then limit our look to the various traditions of artistic exploration within each artistic discipline, as is often done within for instance music, architecture, or design, which are strong domains with traditions of their own, not necessarily actively engaged in the debates around artistic research? Or should we look for common denominators for all the arts? An artistic researcher within, say, choreographic practice, has

sometimes more in common with dance scholars than with artists in other fields. And sometimes not. There are interdisciplinary challenges already within artistic research.

What about the object of research? Art is not necessary the research object for artist researchers; most artists are exploring various phenomena in the world rather than art as such. This immediately invites multi-disciplinary or interdisciplinary collaboration with researchers dealing with the topics in question. Moreover, creative problems tend to be transdisciplinary, that is, involving “different academic disciplines working jointly with practitioners to solve real-world problems.”²³ Although many would disagree with the conflation of art and problem solving, the engagement with real-world issues and agents outside academia is evident in much artistic research. This concerns not only so-called applied arts, or collaborations with healthcare institutions or NGO’s. Many contemporary artists take pride in involving various communities in their work, although they might be showing the results mainly for art audiences. In some sense artistic research is transdisciplinary simply by involving both the university and the art world.

Thus we can ask what actually characterizes this strange field; is it the freedom of the arts and the independent critical position of art as an institution, the independence of which has been heavily criticized as an illusion, and which does not concern all art forms to a similar extent. Or is artistic research to be understood as an area of its own, an in-between area between art and academia, the art world and the university, as for instance Biggs & Karlsson have asserted. They suggest that there exist various degrees of overlap and merging between arts practice and academic research and propose a “shift of perspective that allows certain activities to become meaningful in the context of arts research, even though those activities may not have been meaningful in either the context of academic research *per se* or the context of professional arts practice *per se*.”²⁴ They understand arts research “as a distinct and separate field from the existing fields of arts practice and academic research,”²⁵ and maintain that art researchers should be professionals in art research, not in traditional academic research nor in professional arts practice,

²³ Håberli & al. 2001, 4. Quoted in Biggs & Karlsson 2011, 422.

²⁴ Biggs & Karlsson 2011, 409.

²⁵ Biggs & Karlsson 2011, 413.

²⁶ Biggs & Karlsson 2011, 423.

²⁷ Borgdorff 2012, 177.

²⁸ Borgdorff 2012, 179.

²⁹ Borgdorff 2012, 182.

³⁰ Borgdorff 2012, 183.

³¹ Ibid.

but in this “third professional category that is as yet undefined.”²⁶ Biggs & Karlsson thus claim that artistic research (or art research as they call it) is a distinct discipline in the making.

A slightly different way of looking at this hybridization of art practice and academic practice is to understand it as boundary work, as proposed by Henk Borgdorff in *The Conflict of the Faculties. Perspectives on Artistic Research and Academia*. Much advanced academic research today could be called post-disciplinary or transdisciplinary, he notes. “Artistic research is better understood as something that represents this border-violation rather than being a discipline alongside other art-related disciplines.”²⁷ Artistic research has two contexts, the academic disciplinary environment and the art world, and is thus a good example of contemporary academic research, which no longer takes place within the university alone. Moreover, in the blurring of art and other life domains, “artistic research is also transdisciplinary research, because it stretches out to the wider community, making it a good example of what people call Mode 2 knowledge production.”²⁸ Borgdorff distinguishes artistic research from other Mode 2 forms of knowledge production with the help of two features: the fact that “artistic research takes place in and through the making of art...[and] the outcome of artistic research, which, partly at least, is art.”²⁹ This does not mean succumbing to the definitions of the art market, however, since artistic research is “creating, a free space that is also in opposition to the demands of the market, to the creative industries, to the daily strains of production – a free space for ‘material thinking’, to use the term from Paul Carter.”³⁰ In performing artistic research we can, according to Borgdorff, influence what counts as art; “not only our understanding of what academia is might change in the future, but also our understanding of what art is.”³¹ The presumed boundaries are under debate.

In the introduction to *Material Inventions – Applying Creative Arts Research* (2014), Estelle Barrett refers to her previous claims concerning “the subjective and situated approach of artistic research that draws ... on... tacit and intuitive processes; the experiential and emergent nature of its methodologies that result in a degree of unpredictability in terms of outcomes...

[and] the intrinsically interdisciplinary dimension of this mode of research that is derived from its material and social *relationality*.”³²

She speaks of further extending the field of creative arts research and understanding it as a successor science following Haraway, which means that

...it articulates the notion of ethical or embodied forms of observation – ways of looking and being accountable for knowledge claims that do not deny the agency of the objects of research – in particular human participants; it is a mode that replaces traditional notions of objectivity with the idea of situated knowledge and partial objectivity; finally it asserts the potential of situated and partial knowledge for forging webs of connections – identifying for whom, how and where else knowledge can be put to use.³³

If we add with whom it is created, we are involved in transdisciplinarity, despite the obvious attempt at defining the characteristics of a discipline.

³²_Barrett and Bolt
2007, 7.

³³_Barrett
2014, 9.

Practice-led or product-oriented research?

Another way of understanding the diverse approaches within artistic research is to look at the research process in relation to ordinary artistic practice in various contexts. Is research taking place in the preparatory phase or during the actual work (as experimentation for instance) or after the fact as reflection and as a gathering of audience responses, and so on. This could be further simplified in temporal terms:

- 1) Is research undertaken mainly at the planning stage, before engaging in the actual production or as a form of gathering of knowledge and materials for the artwork or performance?
- 2) Does the actual creation of the work take the form of research in some type of experimentation, trial and error or testing of alternatives?
- 3) Does the main part of the research take place after the creation of an artwork or engagement in the practice, by reflecting on the experience or process afterwards?

Although many artist-researchers probably would say that all three temporalities apply to their work, that planning, experimentation and reflection are intertwined and happen in a cyclic manner, there can nevertheless be differences in emphasis.

Some art forms put much emphasis on the design process of a specific object, while others are inclined to reflect on an ongoing practice. For a conceptually oriented performance artist, the process might simply mean walking back and forth in agony for weeks until an idea for an action pops up, a process hard to document and describe. Whereas documenting a highly regulated material procedure of creating a sculpture, for instance, could generate important knowledge of the process. And somebody engaged in music- or dance improvisation could choose any slice of time from an ongoing practice to reflect upon and articulate. These differences become evident when discussing the role of writing in artistic research.

When does the writing take place? Is it a working tool, part of the thinking process in planning the work, or part of accounting for the process afterwards, or a more or less artificial addendum required by the institution. In projects with strong influence from qualitative research and social sciences the artistic process easily becomes a method for producing data and the art works or documented actions become data to be analyzed and reflected upon afterwards. From an art historian's perspective this seems problematic, how can you analyze your own work; but from an ethnographer's perspective there is no problem in using your field notes and experiences as material when "writing up" the research, provided the necessary self-reflexivity is included. From an artist's perspective, the problem can be that in many cases the main research result and the core output of the research project is the artwork itself, rather than the "writing up" of the experiences or effects. But if the artwork is the outcome, how do you then distinguish research from ordinary artistic practice? This has been further complicated by contemporary artistic practices that tend to emphasize research, process, collaboration, social engagement and so on. Therefore the role of writing, as reflection and contextualization, is often seen as the necessary complement providing an account of the question investigated, the methods or the process, the critical self reflection or the contextualization in relation to previous art and research, depending on the emphasis of the local tradition and the specific institutional requirements.

In order to create a common ground with other forms of research the four questions developed at the graduate school in Dublin can come in handy. They are not meant to be answered straight away but to be constantly discussed during the process:

- 1) what are you trying to find out?
- 2) why is it worth knowing?
- 3) how do you go about finding it out?
- 4) how will you know you are finished finding out this 'something'? ³⁴

³⁴ _Wilson 2012.

³⁵ _This was a comment by Peter Eversman at a seminar in Helsinki, years ago, quoted from memory.

³⁶ _An outline discussed at the ELIA Conference in 2006.

Although these questions are useful, the motivation for artistic research is, however, rarely "finding out" something or the production of knowledge as such. Most artists turn to research because they are dissatisfied with existing forms of practice, because they have a dream or vision, or because they want to experiment and play.³⁵ For the critically minded, artistic research provides a space for questioning and criticizing the ingrained conventions of the art world. For the more conservatively inclined, artistic research offers an opportunity to formulate and document tacit knowledge and tried and tested methods. One of the first tasks for an artistic researcher, regardless of the type of model being applied, is to be aware of and articulate the varied preconceptions and truisms that one has inherited or adopted with one's artistic field. Within contemporary art, critical questioning is the basis for art's self-understanding. Art can be understood as "a creative and intellectual endeavor that involves artists and other arts practitioners in a reflexive process where the nature and function of art is questioned and challenged through the production of new art."³⁶ This sounds very much like the traditional self-correcting or self-regulating scientific ideal. Not everyone in the performing arts would probably agree with this since, despite experimentation and questioning being valued, they are not integral to the general definition of the art form.

When talking about different art forms, terms formed around the notion of “practice” are often used, such as practice-based, practice-led and practice-as-research.³⁷ This can be criticized for creating a false practice-theory dichotomy, or for failing to distinguish artistic practice from other practices. However, research that entails an attempt to articulate and theorize an on-going practice based on acquired (and thus usually more or less unconscious) skills, has a different emphasis and uses different methods compared with research that attempts to develop a new type of art work or design product, and explain the route to that result. We could distinguish product-oriented or object-oriented artistic research focused on the creation of an artwork from practice-based or practice-led research, which often seems to have a practical, critical or emancipatory knowledge interest. We could perhaps simplify and say that artistic research can be practice-led, when the practice of art is more important than an individual artwork, or product-oriented, when the main goal for the research is the creation of an art work. Such a division, however, is contested by contemporary art today, which often focuses on processes and interaction rather than products and finished works. It is nevertheless useful to understand the difference in approach with regard to time. The research process can be forward-looking, striving to create something new. It can also be rooted in reflection, trying to understand and articulate what one has already done. Both approaches, and any mixture between them, can be found within artistic research. Moreover, much artistic research appears to find contact points with philosophical study, and to share its speculative freedom, although it inevitably also has an empirical dimension. In many cases we can understand artistic research as a speculative practice.

³⁷This view is exemplified, for example, in international anthologies such as *Practice as Research – Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry* (Barrett & Bolt 2007), *Mapping Landscapes for Performance as Research* (Riley & Hunter 2009), *Practice-as-Research in Performance and Screen* (Allegue et al. 2009) and *Practice as Research in the Arts – Principles, Protocols, Pedagogies, Resistances* (Nelson 2013).

Types of artistic research

³⁸One example of this is the University of the Arts Helsinki Theatre Academy.

Artistic research is differentiating not only according to various procedural approaches as discussed above, or following artistic disciplines with their traditions, but also according to affinities with various traditional forms of research. This diversification into various strands of artistic research, with nothing much more in common than the fact that the researcher is or has been an artist and the fact that artistic practice is involved in the research project at some point, can take many forms. Thus we could find examples of artistic research utilizing the tools and topics of art history, putting emphasis on contextualizing the actual artistic practice within a canon of previous discussions and works by artists, a form popular within fine art and visual art. Or we could find cases where ethnographic methods and sociological or anthropological approaches are used within artistic research thus flavoring the work in a specific way. And in places where artistic research has developed in parallel with the development of research in arts education we can find examples of a mixture between them³⁸, which could be called pedagogically inclined artistic research. A broad strand of artistic research devoted to questioning the conditions of the art form in question or the core concepts related to it could be called philosophical artistic research. The list could go on.

The interdisciplinary engagement with various forms of traditional research leads to various problems depending on the discipline. One interesting example is the contemporary development of performance philosophy, a new interdisciplinary

field distinct from performance studies and philosophy, which is nevertheless more linked to scholarly activities than artistic research as such. The debate between maintaining the distinction between performance and philosophy, rather than exploring performance as philosophy or philosophy as performance, and moving beyond application, or philosophy of performance, into something where philosophy is performed and performance contributes to philosophy³⁹, could be illuminating with regard to artistic research as well. In a more modest sense many artists use philosophical thought as inspiration or legitimation and this tendency to utilize philosophical concepts could also be criticized. On some level an artist researcher could nevertheless “test” and criticize philosophical concepts based on her practical experiences.⁴⁰ The ideal that an artist should contribute to the philosophical discussion on an equal basis, rather than use philosophical concepts or arguments as support, is quite a challenge. The same type of challenge exists in most truly interdisciplinary attempts.

What if we look at the relationship from the point of view of the artist? Some years ago, in another context, I asked: How does an artist encounter a philosopher’s text? What is the use or value of a philosopher’s text if the aim is to create an artwork that is of “high quality” as art? What do artists need philosophy for? Inspiration, material, understanding, support... And what about ethical concerns? How can the encounter with a philosopher’s text take place on the terms of art, according to the requirements of creating art? How can the encounter and the use of it be “ethical” with regard to the philosopher? Is it possible to respect and appreciate both the specificity of the philosophical text and the needs and particularity of the artist and the work of art? Do we have the right to use everything or anything?⁴¹

Regardless of these ethical concerns an artist can approach a philosopher’s text in various ways: A philosophical text can function as

- 1) an impulse or inspiration for creating an artwork,
- 2) as part of an artwork or as material for it, like poetry or
- 3) as an aid, support, challenge, or dialogue partner in reflecting upon artistic work.

³⁹_Cull
2014, 15-38.

⁴⁰_One example is Tero
Nauha, who has
experimented with the
metamodelization of Felix
Guattari in his artistic
practice. (Nauha 2013)

⁴¹_These questions I posed
in a presentation,
“Performing Landscape:
Reading Merleau-Ponty”, in
the opening plenary round
table: Chiasmatic
encounters in art and
philosophy, organized by
Kuisma Korhonen, at the
IAPL (International
Association for Philosophy
and Literature) Conference
Chiasmatic Encounters in
Helsinki 2-7.6.2005 and
published in Arlander 2008.

Expressed in terms of time and process, the encounter with a philosopher’s text can be fruitful before creating a work, as part of it during the actual work, and afterwards when discussing it or writing about it. One problem is that an artist is rarely interested in trying to understand a philosophical text as a whole or within its own context, but only uses parts of it for her own ends. Everything one encounters tends to be sucked into and consumed by the work being created. How to use such a working method of “eating texts” more consciously, subtly and perhaps respectfully?

The interest in philosophical issues is common among artists, after all many consider art making as a form of philosophical thought. Discussions of art works can be knowledge-oriented and philosophically sophisticated. In terms of research the question of the objective is relevant, however, because it is mostly taken as a given that the purpose of all research is to help the artist to create a better artwork. The research – be it conceptual research, archive research, fieldwork or experimentation – can be integrated into the creative process, but the outcome being sought is not primarily to increase our knowledge and understanding, but to produce a new work. If we think in interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary terms that is perhaps not enough.

RC as an example of multi- and interdisciplinarity

⁴²_de Freitas
2002.

The Research Catalogue (RC) is an international searchable online database and publishing platform for artistic research, which is free to use for individual artists and researchers, at the same time as it is the publishing platform for several online journals, first and foremost among them the Journal for Artistic Research (JAR). The RC can be used in at least three ways: as a publication platform and searchable database with possibility to comment, as a personal tool for organising, presenting and archiving work, and as a tool for sharing work in progress and collaborating with a specific group only.

As an educational tool the RC is useful via an active documentation⁴² of practice, which can then be arranged and conceived as an exposition, which becomes a tool for reflection, like mind mapping, a simultaneous presentation of material juxtaposed instead of or as a complement to the linear, story-line approach to reporting research. Other aspects, like easy referencing of previous artistic research or sharing research in progress are useful for the individual user, although the main purpose of the RC to begin with was to serve as a publication platform.

The attempt at creating a multidisciplinary and in some sense interdisciplinary journal for artistic research is the most interesting aspect to consider in this context, especially since it is not without problems. At the moment of writing this, the tenth issue of JAR is about to be published, and it is already possible to see some trends and developments in the contributions and the use of the platform. Some of the core problems with individual

contributions are the same or at least related to the ones concerning the whole field. These include balancing between artwork and writing; problems related to combining various forms of writing; emphasizing reporting and documenting of process versus discussion of general problems exemplified by the work; balancing between critical reflection and appraisal of successes (which easily reads like advertising); deciding on the amount of contextualization needed within developments in art, within current research on the topic discussed, and within artistic research? One of the most crucial issues is the use of other media than language to convey meaning and argument, since that is an opportunity afforded by the RC. That immediately brings in disciplinary concerns; who is supposed to be able to follow the argumentation with what tools, like reading musical notation, for example. All these questions become evident when working with a peer reviewed journal, since the reviewer reports clearly state what the reviewers find important or lacking.

Another dilemma is the recruitment of submissions. There is a clear over-emphasis on doctoral students and artists engaging in PhD work among the contributors to JAR, probably since artists funded to do more production-oriented artistic research have no benefit in publishing articles in an academic context. Although JAR originally set out to bridge the art world(s) and academia, from the perspective of an independent artist JAR is clearly academic. In this respect the RC is different, since it is an open platform for self-publishing. Some artistic disciplines are less represented than others; for instance design and architecture are rarely seen in JAR, while various forms of works within contemporary art are dominant. There have been some performances or rehearsals or interviews as part of the exposition, and also an increasing number of proposals from various forms of music, which can greatly benefit from the possibility of combining sound clips with images of notation and explanatory text. Contributions where structure and layout of the exposition would form an artistic statement or an artwork are unfortunately rare. There is a clear dominance of academic-scholarly contributions where the artwork remains secondary, as well as fairly traditional academic articles presented in a more or less

conventional form. Another dilemma is the lack of experimentation with the possibilities offered by the platform. These problems might hopefully resolve themselves over time. Michael Schwab, the editor in chief of JAR writes:

The RC is designed to support such expositions of practice as research. While the notion of 'exposition' may suggest a simple 'unveiling' of research, in the context of JAR, the term also indicates a creative act: an exposition is a form of making that turns an artistic idea into an epistemic claim. Consequently, speculations regarding the ontology of artistic research are less relevant; more important are the epistemologies that are proposed that suggest how a particular practice may be understood as research.⁴³

⁴³_Schwab
2015, 1.

⁴⁴_Schechner
2006, 39.

⁴⁵_Kershaw & Nicholson
2011, 4.

⁴⁶_Auslander
2006, 7.

The notion of exposition is an example of complications related to disciplinarity; for a photographer exposition associates to exposure, for a musical composer or writer to the introduction of a piece, for somebody familiar with Latin languages it could mean simply expo, an exhibition. Exposing something 'as' research could also be criticized for indicating that something is not research, but only presented as if it was research. Richard Schechner suggests that while we can study something that 'is' performance, we can also study almost anything 'as' performance, even a map can be analysed as (if it was) a performance, an active entity.⁴⁴ Thus we could consider any artistic process as (if it was) a research process; practically anything could be exposed as research. A clear distinction between a thing that 'is' something and a thing considered 'as' something is hard to maintain. This "is/as performance" distinction has been criticized as an ontology-epistemology binary and seen as "a form of modernist behavioural humanism".⁴⁵ Rather, we could understand an exposition as performative, as producing what it names (or exposes), with the support of Philip Auslander, who states that documentation is performative; it actually produces what it is supposed to document; documenting an action as performance art, constitutes it as performance art.⁴⁶ The same thing probably applies to research. Documenting an artistic project as a research project constitutes

the project as artistic research. Another way of looking at it accepts that sometimes an artistic practice is research (in whatever way we want to define research). Sometimes an artistic practice can be exposed (presented, staged, translated) as research. And sometimes artistic research could be exposed in a more artistic, sensuous or experiential way.

Regardless of the problems and possibilities related to the notion of exposition, the most relevant issue in this context is the problem of juxtaposing a diversity of artistic disciplines in one journal. How to present a project in such a manner that it is understandable to a wider range of artists and scholars than the ones in the immediate disciplinary vicinity, without giving up on the specificity and complexity of the work? Moreover, how to describe the context sufficiently well to a wider audience of artist-researchers? What can you expect people to know? Are artists from all over the world supposed to be familiar with the debates concerning artistic research taking place in some central European countries, for instance? Despite these limitations, the possibility of creating a multidisciplinary meeting place is alluring, with some of the benefits hinted at in the beginning with regard to an individual project. A multidisciplinary journal for artistic research can provide the site for interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary encounters and serve as the meeting place for a variety of approaches that could probably not be combined anywhere else. In the same way as an individual artistic research project, or a journal, albeit on another level, artistic research as a field in general could ideally provide a site for unexpected clashes and combinations, thus creating new possibilities for understanding and knowing.

Links related to RC and JAR

SAR Society for Artistic Research
<http://www.societyforartisticresearch.org>

RC Research Catalogue
<http://www.researchcatalogue.net/>

JAR Journal for Artistic Research
<http://www.jar-online.net/>

RUUKKU – Studies in Artistic Research
<http://ruukku-journal.fi/en>

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short bio

Annette Arlander is an artist, researcher and a pedagogue, one of the pioneers of Finnish performance art and a trailblazer of artistic research. At present she is visiting professor at Stockholm University of the Arts. Educated as theatre director (1981), MA Helsinki University and DA Theatre Academy, Helsinki (1999), she was professor of performance art and theory 2001-2013 creating the MA program in Live Art and performance studies, the first head of Performing Arts Research Centre (Tutke) 2007-2009, and professor of artistic research 2015-2016 at Theatre Academy Helsinki. Her research interests include artistic research, performance-as-research, site-specificity and the environment. Her artwork involves performing landscape by means of video or recorded voice, moving between performance art, video and environmental art.

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Annette Arlander é artista, investigadora e pedagoga, uma das figuras pioneiras da performance art finlandesa, e precursora da investigação em arte. Actualmente é professora visitante na Stockholm University of the Arts. Formada como encenadora (1981), *Master of Art* pela Helsinki University e *Doctor of Art* pela Theatre Academy, Helsinquia (1999), Arlander foi professora de teoria e performance art entre 2001 e 2013, criando o Mestrado em *Live Art* e estudos de performance, foi directora do Centro de Investigação em Artes Performativas (Tutke) de 2007 a 2009, e foi professora de *artistic research* em 2015-2016 na Theatre Academy Helsinki. Os seus interesses de investigação situam-se na *performing landscape* por meio de vídeo ou gravações de voz, movendo-se entre a performance art, vídeo e *environmental art*.

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