

# 3

## Doing Research

WRITINGS FROM THE FINNISH ACADEMY OF  
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## Editorial

IN DECEMBER 2011, the curatorial team of dOCUMENTA (13) and the team of EARN (*European Artistic Research Network*) started preparatory talks in Kassel about how a collaborative project could be developed. In addition to participation of graduate students in the various “activated projects” of the *Innovative Art Academies Network* project, the teams discussed possibilities of workshops for doctoral researchers and a symposium where the role of the concept of research and its significance for the topical visual art practice could be evaluated critically.

The preparatory talks made clear that the casualness of how the notion of research is used today also causes the usual confusion of concepts. Is research merely conducted within institutional environments or does it have a broader – connotative – range? What does it mean for the self-awareness of artists to understand and present their practice as research-based? And last but not least, does the concept of research lead to an expansion of artistic practices or does it merely limit them?

In order to arrive at an evaluation of the concept of research, the teams chose two institutional perspectives: the perspective of artists who organize “activated” research projects for dOCUMENTA (13) and the perspective of artists who are engaged in a PhD in Fine Art within the various academic environments of the art academy – specifically at institutions participating in the EARN network. As an introduction to the research workshops and the *Doing Research* symposium, an inquiry was

set up that thirteen "activated research" organizers and thirteen PhD artists responded to.

## Inquiry submitted

### **Understandings of artistic research**

1. What is your definition of doing (artistic) research? Does artistic research need an institutional framework or could it be legitimized differently? Does the institutionalization of research imply an instrumental control and a reduced conception of art? Or does it also create room for matters such as unexpected and independent artistic forms, and openness to conflict and difference?
2. Do current research-notations and protocols limit the domain of artistic imagination? Or could research-based art lead to novel forms of (critical) consciousness? What could be the implications of the research discourse for aesthetic qualities such as the non-discursive, the not-knowing, and the intuitive, and what does this mean for your practice?

### **Artist and researcher**

3. Do you see your own work as research-based? How does research affect your practice and your position as an artist? Or do you consider the topic of research obsolete in the realm of art? What, then, is a current topic or emergent theme in visual art that might be an alternative to the focus on research?
4. What does thinking in terms of research mean for your self-understanding as an artist? Can you, as an "artist", identify with the role and identity of a "researcher"? Or do you

expect that the practice of artistic research will contribute to re-thinking and re-assessing the established concept of researcher?

### **Related concepts and terminologies**

5. Do you consider your practice with reference to ideas of political economy? How could an artistic (research) practice relate to current conditions of “capital” and to what are seen as the ubiquitous forms of “cognitive capitalism”? Do you see possibilities for the production of alternative social and economic strategies in your work? How could artists currently demand attention for emancipatory forms of knowledge and experience that enable the world to be thought differently?
6. To what extent do you think and work in terms of “knowledge production”? Is the current “biopolitical” expansion of the notion of production a theme in your work? Are these terms familiar and/or relevant for you in thinking about your practice?

The edited reactions to the questions of the inquiry are collected in this publication. We trust that the various positions, insights, and statements will contribute to the meaning and role of the concept of research – in the DOCUMENTA (13) workshops and the *Doing Research* symposium as well as in the ongoing future debate, to be conducted inside and outside the (art) academy.

Jan Kaila, Henk Slager

## Ana Prvacki

MY PROPOSAL FOR DOCUMENTA (13) is a reexamination of notions of how we can live together, our daily manners, civility, and congeniality. The project examines the complex interrelations and power structures that are affected by our behavior toward others. The notion of civility has been studied and prescribed for centuries, from the frequently re-appropriated treatise on the fundamental principles of human relations by Adolph Freiherr von Knigge – whose last name in Germany has become synonymous with good manners – to Einstein’s thought that the most important question facing humanity should be “Is the universe a friendly place?” and Kurt Vonnegut’s call for “A little less love, and a little more common decency.” The latest scientific findings are also revealing. For instance, the gesture of opening a door for someone has been found to establish an important unspoken contract between humans, while etiquette and manners are beneficial for maintaining healthy blood pressure.

Etiquette is often considered frivolous and decorative, bringing up discomforts about class, gender and power. But I think we can rescue the term as it is ultimately a question of morals and ethics, and beyond assumptions of good and bad, right or wrong or changing anyone. It is about doing our best to treat one another with dignity. Even the worst *faux pas* can be an occasion to learn and bond.

The project is made up of three distinct but complementary parts. On the one hand, it trains the guides, ticket sellers, and

invisitors of DOCUMENTA (13) in welcoming visitors to the exhibition in order “to practice civility and congeniality” and to create a “contagious atmosphere of hospitality.” This part of the project is experienced by visitors simply through coming into contact with the trained staff. On the other hand, I will reflect on that process and experience by hosting two conversations. I invited Kwame Antony Appiah to give a keynote lecture about inter-personal conversations as a model for the relationships between societies. I will also host a discussion with representatives from the Deutsche Knigge-Rat (German Etiquette Council) on current forms of civility. The third part of the project is a series of three videos on working with an etiquette instructor and a comedy group.

My research into ideas of etiquette, manners and hospitality has been quite varied, ranging from Louis XIV, Watteau’s *Fête galante* and Derrida’s *On Hospitality* to Emily Post and Borat. And then I came across Professor Appiah’s *Cosmopolitanism*, ethics in the world of strangers. Appiah writes about the responsibility we have towards one another as Cosmopolitans, as citizens of the cosmos which resonates deeply in me. Specifically his statement, “What I mean doesn’t depend only on what is in my brain” summed up the goal of my project. How we relate to others is an intricate, playful, amusing and at times exasperating concoction of emotions, prejudices, projections, and trans-generational histories. And it is contagious.

## Ayreen Anastas – Rene Gabri

### *1. What is your definition of doing (artistic) research?*

RESEARCH CAN BE AN ATTEMPT to explore or formulate a relation to a question. It can be seen as an intensification of a field of questioning.

### *2. Does artistic research need an institutional framework or could it be legitimized differently?*

No, it does not need an institutional framework; it can be and is being legitimized differently. In fact, institutionalized research could often be the least interesting and most reactionary, because it has to potentially subsume itself within a system of norms, and if those norms are (as they are in many sciences today) dictated by corporate profit, military use, or institutional self-propagation then one has a very reduced sphere of research.

### *3. Does the institutionalization of research imply an instrumental control and a reduced conception of art?*

Yes, possibly. But so far, there is still room for different kinds of research in art which other fields have abandoned as unproductive, irrelevant, esoteric, counter to the academic, political or economic norms. This does not mean that all artists who do research make use of this openness. On the contrary, sometimes

the level of subjectivation to these norms is so great, that individuals can reproduce these norms without being forced to or even desiring to do so.

*Or does it also create room for matters such as unexpected and independent artistic forms, and openness to conflict and difference?*

Less likely, but that is possible.

*4. Do current research connotations and protocols limit the domain of artistic imagination?*

Yes.

*5. What does thinking in terms of research mean for your self-understanding as an artist?*

Self-understanding is a very difficult term to relate to, because the self is something one is putting into question, especially in the context of research. At least the kind of research we are interested in. Research which is not fixed on a specific objective to the exclusion of all else, but rather present in the indiscernibility between subject and object. The understanding which emerges in the context of this type of research is one which can help undo, unmake, or widen the notion of self, extending to or opening up to an always immanent outside, or impersonal dimension of life. This experience is also what some would call a poetic one.

Having said that, life is in some way a search, one is

searching how to live, how to organize a life, how to relate to others, with others. Research can be an intensification of that process and thus a potential process of leaving the confines of a self. One could say that the kind of research we are thinking of here is always taking place at the limits of the self, at the threshold of what is referred to as a self.

*6. Can you, as an “artist”, identify with the role and identity of a “researcher”?*

One is hopefully escaping identity, rather than finding new categories to subsume oneself under.

**Bryndis Snaebjörnsdóttir**

## Understandings of artistic research

MUCH HAS BEEN WRITTEN on artistic research and its place within the academic context. In an attempt to contribute to this debate and answer the questions proposed, I have chosen to write about it from my own experience as an artist working with a research-based art practice for over ten years and having completed a practice-based PhD at Gothenburg University in 2009. From my perspective, doing artistic research is similar to conducting any investigation in which one makes selected

decisions to reach a desired result. In the arts, the desired result is unlikely to be predicated on finding a solution to a predetermined query. Rather, it is to embrace an experimental approach in which the unexpected is to be encouraged.

In my considerations on artistic research I have chosen to give little credence to debates surrounding intrinsic differences and refer to research as a transferable activity equally applicable to all academic disciplines including the arts. For me personally, as someone already navigating a multicultural and multi-linguistic zone on a daily basis through my Icelandic native language, my adopted language English, and the Swedish of my professional environment, the debate concerning the inherent meaning of the word “research” is revealed as being too much about semiotics. As such, it all too often sidelines itself by this process and serves as a distraction from what is really important for us here, that is the research that happens to be conducted in the arts. In matters of definition it is always useful to remember that the starting point must be an acknowledgement that “research” is just a word, like most others an academic exercise in the place-marking of meaning (semiotic) and necessarily flawed in its acceptance as such of the inherent limitations that come with textual language and its gendered and colonial history.

Being part of an academic artistic research program and thus working within an institutional framework should not require us to limit or reduce anything of the artistic processes. One could consider it as yet another framework/structure that artists must or might choose to negotiate in the process of transition from studio to public exposition. Contemporary artists

are used to engaging with different contexts and the framework that each will require or allow. In many cases these are politically charged informing and impacting constructively upon the development and the final readings of the work. The same applies within an academic context, but it will be the choice of the artist concerned to situate his/her ideas within that framework. Further nuance is applied in the degree of visibility or concealment of such factors within the presented work. The idea that the academic context will lead to novel forms of perception or consciousness is an imponderable in general terms. It is dependent on the artwork and the form that such engagement with context takes. Following on from this, being part of a PhD program should not result in a method being applied on top of an art practice, the method should already be there inherent within/intrinsic to the artwork/practice. Participating in courses and discourse as part of the program may help to identify, locate and fine-tune an artistic method.

From my perspective there is no doubt that serious research goes on within the arts and that there is an immense value in artistic research to non-human and human alike. Perhaps the time has come to allow artists to get on with their research without their having constantly to account for it as a principle? Every new field or discipline needs space to be, in order for it to develop, in order for it to connect and find the position from which to speak. Although the arts have been awarded this space within academia, possibly for reasons more to do with institutional economics and politics than the desires for or belief in the possibility of providing alternative approaches to the production of knowledge, because of continuing, intrinsic,

perceptual tensions it has not been able to settle in its place. Perhaps this is not surprising, considering the critical nature of art and its need to challenge conventions and institutions, including those that may sometimes appear to host an art practice or activity. Debates on its place within academia have, for some, been unsettling as they have found themselves in a highly textual environment in which they are by default, rendered voiceless.

### **Artist and researcher**

I position my own work as collaborative, relational, and research-based. In the late 1990s, I made a conscious decision to change my practice and find ways of making the processes of development more part of the artwork itself. At the time I was looking for a way to make the artistic process a learning process, which would feed my own needs for making sense of things. I wanted to enter into or interfere in the process of art making so I took control over and responsibility for the production. I felt that in this way I was making a step to a more sustainable practice in that I was no longer treating my resource as indistinguishable from my own personal experience. Despite taking control in this way, I still rely heavily on intuition and I welcome unexpected discoveries during the process of researching and making, but as there is transparency in the concept of enquiry these (intuition and discovery) allow for an expansion in my own production of knowledge.

In the processes of exhibiting my artwork and/or research, the acquisition of knowledge/discovery is moved from the personal to the public in the context of a wider enquiry. I mentioned

before that I define my practice as "relational" and it is in these networks of relations that a space is created for a production of knowledge existing outside of the self. This I have seen happening when my art projects have instigated change and/or been a catalyst for new discoveries within the institutions that I have worked with. What happens to the production of knowledge when the artwork engages or is engaged with by a member of the audience is hard to measure. However, in acknowledgment of what I see as an unbroken line between development and effect, I involve different "audiences" at every stage of development and exposition. During exhibitions, for instance, I strive to make an instrument of the work in order to prompt public discourse during gallery seminars or mini conferences.

### **Related concepts and terminologies**

Through our art projects we (Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson) explore specific relations and unusual circumstances, be it "natural" or "cultural", and how these continually generate new hybrids and material conditions in turn leading to new hybrid assemblages and resonance. In this respect, by giving preferential treatment to the particular and even possibly what might be deemed deviant or aberrant, we fly in the face of the scientific imperative towards the generic, typical and reliable. The findings of such research-based art practice has been proven to further a new shift in perspectives beyond art and into other models of practice (in our case e.g. museology, animal studies, human geography) granted by the very methodologies and processes of artistic development specific to it. Such a practice as we maintain has the additional potential to contribute to an understanding

of how non-linguistic beings might navigate and construct their knowledge of the world and in turn bringing such sensibility in order to challenge and critique our unthinking dependency on words and our othntations.

## Chiara Fumai

### 1.

.ELBATS-DNA-DEXIF EMOCEB ot dewolla reven dna devreserp eb tsum erutan s'nem ni gnitagen-ro-evitagen si revethaw roF .el-poep a tcefní lliw ecaep lauteprep a ,esrow ro ,degnolorp a os ,mlac gnol a morf tluuser dluow hcihw noitangats eht morf ekal a fo sretaw eht sevreserp ndiw eht sa tsuJ .dexif si tahw ot ,ot demotsucca era yeht tahw ot ecnereffidni rieht ni ,elpoep a fo ht-laeh larom eht sevreserp raW

### 2.

No human can swim unless he or she enters deep water. No bird can fly unless its wings are grown, and it has space before it and courage to trust itself to the air. A person who will wield a two edged sword, must be a thorough master of the blunt weapon, if he would not injure himself – or what is worse – others, at the first attempt.

To give an approximate idea of the conditions under which alone the study of Divine Wisdom can be pursued with

safety, that is without danger, that Divine will give place to Black Magic, a page is given from the "private rules," with which every instructor in the East is furnished. The few passages which follow are chosen from a great number and explained in brackets.

### 3.

We're best at the long high throws. Like when you take four or five steps and rip it – It's almost like a shotput approach, the steps, four or five quick, one over the other, kind of sideways-like – and then you slash away with that fucker, it's such a violent act, throwing that white thing, you're first cradling it to your breast and then you whip that fucker as hard as you possibly can while keeping it level, keeping it straight, but otherwise with everything you can send with it you whip that fucker like it had blades on it and you wanted it to cut straight through that paperblue sky like a screen, rip through it and have it be blood and black space beyond.

### 4.

The split between structure and superstructure forms the foundation for a law according to which human change always means primarily structural change. Changes in the superstructure would always reflect changes in the structure. But this is the patriarchal viewpoint and as far as we are concerned the theory of reflection has been discredited. Our chosen mode of action is deculturalization. It is not a cultural revolution which follows and integrates a structural revolution, nor one based on the validation at all levels of an ideology; it affirms the lack of any need for ideology at all.

## 5.

SCUM (Society for Cutting Up Men) is too impatient to wait for the de-brainwashing of millions of assholes. Why should the swinging females continue to plod dimly along with the dull male ones? Why should the fates of the groovy and the creepy be intertwined? Why should the active and imaginative consult the passive and dull on social policy? Why should the independent be confined to the sewer along with the dependent who need Daddy to cling to? A small handful of SCUM can take over the country within a year by systematically fucking up the system, selectively destroying property, and murder.

SCUM will become members of the unwork force, the fuck-up force; they will get jobs of various kinds and unwork. For example, SCUM salesgirls will not charge for merchandise; SCUM telephone operators will not charge for calls; SCUM office and factory workers, in addition to fucking up their work, will secretly destroy equipment. SCUM will unwork at a job until fired, then get a new job to unwork at.

## 6.

Oh I'm not going to fix you, John, or any of you people. I tried about a million times to fix you, but it was so wrong for me to want to save you because I only wanted to eat you to make me stronger, I only wanted to devour all of you, I was a cancer.

## Claire Pentecost

### 1.

ARTISTIC RESEARCH OCCURS with and without institutional frameworks. One of the points of artistic research is to propose different systems of legitimization. This may mean working outside of institutions all together, or setting new terms within an institution. In other disciplines, such as life sciences or social sciences, the institutionalization of research has definitely meant increasingly narrow directions and parameters of evaluation, especially under a neoliberal agenda in which the market is isolated as the only force that determines meaning and ultimately legitimacy. For me the opportunity in research under the aegis of art is to reveal and circumvent such restrictions, while also suppressing the intense institutionalization of contemporary art that has been realized via the market. Otherwise, the nature of “institutionalization” of course depends on the institution!

### 2.

Current research connotations and protocols limit the imagination in most fields, and are often designed more to perpetuate the relevant profession and its exclusionary boundaries than to connect with the experience and needs of real people. I am interested in how art may work as an enzyme to break down some of these exclusionary and distancing structures and dissolve them into a field of diverse possibilities and vigorous debate.

The category of human activity that we call art allows for the engagement of a much wider range of the human sensorium, capacities that we actually rely on all the time, but which are suppressed in most fields pursuing an ideal of objectivity. Part of what an aesthetic orientation offers is a deeper understanding of these capacities and how they affect all of our experience, including that which is conducted under the conventions of objectivity.

In addition to excluding the sensory realms of non-discursive perception and expression, the conventions of objectivity which inform most activities recognized as research are designed to eliminate questions of value, desire and preference. By bringing research and knowledge about critical issues into the realm of experience we call art, we bring it into a realm of discourse where values are debated. This interests me: how can we connect the rational, the phenomenological, and the ethical? I think art is a field of potential in this direction.

### 3.

Research is basic to my work. Either explicitly or implicitly I consistently wish to address the conditions of knowledge itself

- what legitimizes it, who has access to it, how is it generated, managed, owned, etc. What does it mean to say that we live in a “knowledge society”?
- Knowledge and ignorance are used to organize and manage people; how does that work and who benefits?
- Knowledge is now a valuable entity in the form of intellectual property, proprietary information and one’s viability on a job market (cultural and cognitive capital). But

the question that remains to be clarified is what kinds of knowledge are actually valued in this system and what are neglected? What kind of world is made when we give preferential treatment to one kind of knowing over another?

- Knowledge is one of the primary factors that can affect a given person or group's position in the spectrum of risks that define our social and physical context. How useful is such knowledge to an individual? To an individual without material resources? How much does our understanding of risk demand that we respond collectively? These questions are basic to the situations we face today: climate change, pollution, speculative economics, eroding infrastructures, nuclear power, etc.

Whether it is in the realm of the economy, the environment, food, health, or education, the authorities charged to manage the risks of a technological society on our behalf have failed us. Our world requires of us a constant learning process in order to make wise and ethical decisions about what we do. Because any form of knowledge we absorb is incomplete and is conditioned by interests and ideology, we must develop an epistemological literacy to evaluate what passes as legitimate knowledge. Often we must do this by generating experience from which we ourselves can learn. This is done most effectively and powerfully when pursued collectively.

#### **4.**

One of the things the artist can do is to model various positions in society that are marginalized but actually available to

anyone. The position that I have thematized in my work and writing is something I call “the Public Amateur.” This is a position of learning in public, starting from a declaration of not knowing and proceeding to explore a set of questions or topics. Doing this in a public way proposes a shared process of building cognitive sovereignty, and brings the site of knowledge generation into the realm of the social, where it can be examined and vetted for its relevance to the people it concerns. I use the term amateur because the amateur is someone who does what she does out of love and not out of the mandates of a professionalization that has become increasingly corrupt under market-driven paths of careerism.

The kind of reassessment and rethinking of the concept of research that I am interested in is directed at the person who does not think of themselves in those terms but who actually has a lot to contribute to the social body of knowledge. People are doing creative research all the time. I believe that the desire to learn is a drive innate to humans that is as basic as any other. But our drive to learn things for ourselves is threatening to structures of authority, because it is the basis for many kinds of empowerment. Thus we have an educational system that quite effectively transforms the joy and vitality of human learning into boring and irrelevant drudgery. Rarely is the child asked, What do you want to learn? or, What matters to you? And this continues in the adult’s relation to the knowledge industry. Producing knowledge is emphasized but the question, For what? is rarely asked. It is not only that most forms of media in the U.S. promote ignorance. The problem is that there is no public discussion of how we want to direct mainstream research;

rather this decision is left up to mostly corporate funding sources which are fueled by motives that rarely serve the interest of anyone without power.

## 5.

Political economy is definitely one of the main contexts in which I strive to make my work relevant. The alternative social and economic strategy that I want to integrate in my presence as an artist is a kind of grassroots knowledge production, interpretation and evaluation, directed and conducted by the people most affected by the given topic. This includes legitimizing a diverse range of experience and knowing, not only those forms generally forced on us by mainstream (ruling class) interests.

## 6.

Although I find myself using the term “knowledge production,” I also think it can be problematic because it lends itself to an idea of knowledge as a reified or fetishized product. It reiterates the economy’s unexamined productivist injunction that burns resources and has no plan for waste. And this of course is part of what the discourse on biopolitics wants us to consider – the ways that our life energy is expropriated by the productivist mandate.

In some of my projects, such as *Continental Drift* (in collaboration with Brian Holmes and many other artists and writers), I postpone the moment of determining value. *Continental Drift* is a traveling seminar exploring the global and local forces that sustain us. Most of us are fairly ignorant of how our daily life is sustained. We begin with investigating our own region and

follow connecting threads to different parts of the world – physically if we have the resources, and via research if we do not. Anyone can form a group and do this kind of collective autonomous learning.

What does it produce? A knowledge built on intentional and unintentional experiences. But how is that communicated to others? The artist Francois Deck talks about the moment before value; I am interested in extending the moment before the nature of the ensuing production and value are determined. The *Continental Drift* project has been ongoing for several years. We communicate our experiences with photographs, essays, seminars and lectures, but these take place in a kind of suspension of a finalized product, so that new values can be generated.

## **Clodagh Emoe**

THERE HAS BEEN A STEADY INCREASE of interest in issues surrounding artistic research within the discursive space of contemporary art. Engaging with the debate related to the applicability of artistic research in the realm of contemporary art practice and its impact in the wider social domain, my focus is on two key issues – the question of the validity of artistic research and the idea of new forms of knowledge production.

Prior to embarking on a formal PhD trajectory, I viewed my practice as essentially research-based. Since 2003 my practice

has been centered on an endeavor to comprehend philosophical systems of thought through drawing. My definition of “doing (artistic) research” was, therefore, an amalgam of theoretical enquiry and practical experimentation. That process of research did not result in a pre-determined outcome. Rather, attempts to connect with philosophical theory were made manifest through a range of material including video, sound and installation and causing a series of unexpected elements (forms, ideas etc.) to unfold. In this way, my practice has been informed and formed through an activity of research. From my perspective and formed by personal experience, artistic research is validated as a model of practice.

There is undeniably a complexity with regard to specific aspects of such an artistic practice. My research deals specifically with the “intrap philosophical effect”, a quality particular to some configurations of art that the French philosopher Alain Badiou describes in *The Handbook of Inaesthetics*. Badiou argues that the intraphilosophical effect is a regime of thought specific to art and claims that inaesthetics is necessary for contemporary art. (1) He proposes a new schema of interaction between art and philosophy, one mobilizing an intraphilosophical effect as a revelation of “a thought inseparable from the sensible.” (2)

Inaesthetics has its foundations in Badiou’s larger philosophical enquiry into the event and his new schema challenges the privileged role of philosophy with respect to art promulgated within speculative aesthetics. Badiou problematizes traditional modalities of aesthetics by asserting philosophy as constructing a space of “compossibility” – a term borrowed from

the German mathematician and philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716). Leibniz coined the term *compossibility* to describe the possibility of two elements existing without undermining another. Badiou co-opts this term to describe a quality inherent to his reconfigured schema as a reciprocal engagement between the two disciplines. His metaphorical use of the term “knot” articulates an entwinement between artistic practice and philosophical enquiry. By re-orienting philosophy with respect to art, *inaesthetics* reconfigures the role of philosophy from one of interpretation to one conditioned to reveal the singular and immanent truth of art. The truth of art is revealed through the intraphilosophical effect as the sensory presentation of a regime of thought.

With respect to the issue of “knowledge production” (3), my research project aims to produce forms of enacting an intraphilosophical effect while exploring how a regime of thought be instantiated in contemporary art through a post-conceptual art practice. In fact, my research project investigates artistic encounters and seeks to contribute to the wider dialogue on aesthetics in relation to contemporary art. However, rather than an absolute departure from aesthetics as a genre of philosophical enquiry, my research project approaches Badiou’s *inaesthetics* as an alternate paradigm that opens up aesthetics for further development. My research has led me to the proposition that *inaesthetics* is contributing to (rather than closing down) an expansion of the contemporary aesthetic discourse by identifying points of analogy between Badiou’s *inaesthetic* and previous discourses that have opened up aesthetics in the domain of experimental art in the second half of the twentieth century

through the work of critics Arthur C. Danto and Hal Foster.

Although inaeesthetics defines an entwinement between artistic practice and philosophical enquiry, the correlation of those disciplines has previously primarily been investigated from the vantage point of the philosopher. My research project intends to redress this imbalance by exploring inaeesthetics as an expansion of contemporary aesthetic discourse from the perspective of the art practitioner. Rather than repeating the procedures associated with traditional modalities of aesthetics that give advantage to the critic/philosopher – who provides post-facto reflection on art works – my research project tries to open up new ways of considering knowledge production by exploring inaeesthetics through artistic practice.

By grounding the research project within the matrix of art practice, a paradigm alternative to one based in pure theory is provided. It is further proposed that the framework of the research project as a paradigm of artistic practice and philosophical enquiry is apposite to the exploration of inaeesthetics that advances a quality of compossibility. In mobilizing a quality of compossibility, the research project is presented as self-reflexively adhering to the structure of inaeesthetics. Rather than relying on theoretical conjectures, the research project seeks to instantiate a quality of compossibility within a post-conceptual art practice through the reciprocal engagement of art and philosophy to investigate what this engagement might yield.

Yet, do those forms of research need to be underpinned by an institutional framework? Although artistic practice does not necessarily require the academic institution, it could be argued that the framework the academy provides might prove to be

useful for specific cases. Although there are necessary requirements that one would rather ignore within the PhD process, undertaking a formal enquiry could enhance the level of research by necessitating a sustained focus and commitment to a specific area of enquiry. However, it is essential that the complexities of undertaking artistic research are genuinely attended to and not evaded by simply rehearsing the requirements of the PhD.

Thus, the institutional framework could have the potential to instantiate new forms of knowledge by providing the environment for the pursuit of artistic research. From my own experience, rather than an imposition, the institutional structure has enabled me to pursue and realize projects that would be difficult to undertake without the support of the institution (4). This support has ensured the realization of projects that would not usually be associated with the standard outcomes of the PhD model or of the academy. It could be claimed that the alternate processes and forms that come into play within the disclosure of artistic research permit a re-consideration of what the term research might suggest. Furthermore, it may be argued that the positioning of artistic research within the academy and its validation by the academy ensures that these new methods of knowledge production that may not have been previously recognized are attended to. Rather than reducing the concept of art, which is an anxiety amongst those who fear the academic institution as instrumentalizing control on independent artistic forms, artistic research could potentially reinforce the interrelation of contemporary art with the world that it inhabits.

<sup>1</sup> “In this situation of saturation and closure, it is necessary to propose a new schema, a fourth modality of the link between art and philosophy.” Alain Badiou, *Handbook of Inaesthetics*, ed. Werner Hamacher, trans. Alberto Toscano (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2005). p.8.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 19.

<sup>3</sup> Questions and issues raised by the *Doing Research* project.

<sup>4</sup> I have been fortunate to receive PLTRI funding for my PhD. However, the support from the institution is not just financial but is performed within the research environment – the research team including the supervisors, the associated researchers and the cohort of researchers I have been involved with. This support is also evidenced by the opportunities of presenting research nationally and internationally and further extending the network of practitioners within my area of enquiry.

## **Dora Garcia**

### Understandings of artistic research

TO ME RESEARCH IS A NATURAL PROCESS OF STUDY, similar to research done by writers before writing a novel or by film directors before writing a script. Institutionalization has a sense of being able to create an adequate situation for this study to take place: freedom from economic pressure, peace to concentrate, and opportunity to establish relations with other professionals. Also the possibility to do research abroad and to connect to other institutions – specifically with respect to archive material – might add to the study positively. An artistic form's independence only depends on itself. So, if research is independent by

nature, no institution can harm it.

There is no conflict between research, intuition, the verbal, and the non-verbal. They never exclude one another; they all live together. How could one even do research without intuition? Not any connotation of research could limit the artistic imagination – to think that would imply a very romantic, outdated notion of art. I do not know any artistic practice that is not based profoundly on research.

### **Artist and researcher**

I do see my work as research-based. I don't know how that affects my position, since it has always been that way. Of course research is not obsolete. How could it be? You could give research a different name such as documentation or study. But mechanically speaking, my work is based on research and experimentation – the latter is, to me, a part of research.

Scientific research is not the only model of research – there are also verbal, discursive, or sociological models of research, where certitude and efficiency is not a value, but rather the capacity to create new, challenging models of thought.

I am not sure of being an artist, but I am sure of being a researcher. I do research, perhaps I do not "do art." Better explained: I think every artist must determine what art is, and not once, but every time again and again. In that sense, I am researching what art is. Perhaps the idea of artistic research, which is not new, will change the views on what research means – right now cooks and tailors do research too, and this has also changed views on research.

## **Related concepts and terminologies**

I think an artist is very much a loner, even when he/she works in a group. In that sense, I doubt he/she will be able to develop alternative social and economic strategies – but I am not sure of that. An artist mainly works in the domain of the symbolic – art has no use, it is useless. But art is absolutely necessary, because it determines the symbolic and the representation of the world.

I am very much a formalist and I only think in terms of form – the beauty of ideas presented in the most precise form. I don't think I produce knowledge, but rather symbols and frameworks for knowledge. I am not familiar with and do not very much like post-marxism. I am a storyteller.

## **Elske Rosenfeld – Giulia Cilla – Ingrid Cogne**

### **Dream PhD – A manifesto of sorts**

THREE PHD-CANDIDATES ARE SITTING AROUND *for a collective dream, for themselves and their colleagues, of an institutional context, like that of a PhD, where everyone might develop their work in conditions that sustain us intellectually, socially, financially, physically in our work as artists and researchers. We are claiming a space for positive criticality, a dream space that lays claim to a landscape that lies beyond of the “No”, to the “it will not be possible” of the neo-liberal raison d’être. Instead we say:*

Yes to a context that is challenging itself politically and theoretically constantly

Yes to a place where the persons in attendance are there to create a dynamic

Yes to a place for working individually and exchanging with others about ones work

*For a PhD based on a shared ethical attitude*

Yes to autonomy

Yes to transparency: structural, financial and institutional in terms of access to resources

Yes to an institutional structure that mediates and facilitates (i) the individual work, (ii) the collaborative work of the group, and (iii) the group dynamic itself

Yes to conflict and to engaging with it positively via mutual trust and openness, to creating a space for constructive criticality

Yes to giving a central position of the existing competences and knowledge of the individuals constituting the group

Yes to difference, specificity, originality

Yes to the collective working on a “We”, to constructing a collective we within the group during the entire duration of the PhD

Yes to a multitude of we-s that serve the group

Yes to the absence of categorization

Yes to real collective decisions concerning the parameters of

common context and work

*For a positive articulation of collaboration within the program*

Yes to pro-activeness of the persons attending

Yes to mechanisms to make sure exclusions based on temperament, language, “knowledge”, favorite dessert, are dealt with and minimized

Yes to a dramaturgy of conversation

Yes to a PhD program that facilitates and supports innovative ideas that challenge the frame of the program and the roles of candidate / professor

Yes to making use of the existing human resources

Yes to the creation of positive contexts of working, thinking, meeting

*For appropriate support and acknowledgement*

Yes to a place where the material needs – of all the persons involved – for sustenance and producing work are met

Yes to the acknowledgement that the PhD candidates are (also) engaged artists, researchers, activists already in “precarious situations”

Yes to different backgrounds, to skills that invite the thinking of specific methodologies and works

Yes to the combination of existing methods and knowledge

Yes to search as well as research

Yes to abstraction as well as reality

Yes to theory as practice, yes to practice as theory. Yes to working on the distinction between the two

Yes to the thinking, the articulation of one's practice

Yes to the thinking, the articulation of collective practice

Yes to togetherness

Yes to equal financial support for all candidates

Yes to be supported by the institution – without discrimination (financial, internal and external to the institution) - in our supervisors' choice

Yes to careful attention from all parts towards the relationship between the ambitions of the PhD program and its concrete workings on the ground

Yes to a meeting place that physically serves different activities: from talking to trying things, from listening to moving around

Yes to a space of experimentation, exchange and fluidity

Yes to an open space with some more, some less defined areas

Yes to a temporal structure that likewise supports us as living, thinking, working bodies in space

Yes to a group size and application rotation that is conducive to an ongoing collective process a way of working and collaborating that does not wear us out

*For a dreaming dynamic*

Yes to more

Yes to constant movement, shift

Yes to chronopolitics

Yes to work, labor and exchange details

Yes to details, yes to depth

Yes to space, rhizome and organicity

Yes to making mistakes

Yes to inefficiency

*For thinking about our collective and individual positioning*

Yes to awareness and discussion of the economics of value attribution within what we do

Yes to insisting on continuing to try and create spaces that resist and challenge recuperation and neutralization of political art by national and international cultural industries

Yes to an awareness of the specific local and institutional context of the program and yes to engaging consciously and critically in these

Yes to a practice that reflects its own politics, yes to a practice that is political in what it does and how it does it at the same time

Yes to a way of working together that stakes a claim to an utopian space

Yes to challenging the languages that keep the economic,

political, social, sexual hierarchies of the present fixed into place

Yes to networking with other structures because we find them interesting and not because they are fashionable, famous or powerful

Yes to proposing a different economy of exchanging with other researchers and groups

Yes to traversing between the center and the margins of the art world, yes to upsetting the arrangement of things into these spatial and political categories

Yes to the challenging of neoliberal categories and flows of cultural capital

Yes to engaging with contexts outside the art world, yes to avoiding self-referentiality

Yes to products, yes to processes

Yes to producing a place where articulating a thinking space is possible

Yes to the dynamic of the group

Yes to permanently challenging ourselves

Yes to saying the wrong thing

Yes to the acknowledgement of existing research practices in the field of arts and sciences

Yes to a circulation in between arts and sciences, yes to the absence of confusion in between the two.

Yes to knowing what we are doing, why and how

Yes to statement and restatement

Yes to transparency and engagement

Yes to different definitions and concepts of the notion of researcher

Yes to being an artist

Yes to not justifying an existence via filters imposed by other institutional fields and requirements

Yes to being multiple

Yes to competences

*For the consideration of the potentialities and possibilities*

Yes to the absence of exploitation of talents

Yes to structures where participants can become co-authors/ teachers of different collective works  
Yes to dialogues in between institution and PhD candidates

Yes to the acknowledgement of competences by the institutions responsible for the program

Yes to creativity, to intelligent economic strategies and ways of using resources

*For a happy end*

Yes to a win-win situation

Yes to empowerment

Yes to the yes

**Glenn Loughran**

## Artistic research can/not be counted

WE DO NOT NEED FUNDAMENTALLY *a philosophy of the structure of things. We need a philosophy open to the irreducible singularity of what happens, a philosophy that can be fed and nourished by the surprise of the unexpected. Such a philosophy would then be a philosophy of the event.* (Badiou cited in Atkinson, p.33)<sup>1</sup>

*Designer capitalism infiltrates our schools under the guise of developing a performative self, where “creativity” has become a compulsive and sometimes obsessive occupation. Achievement and entrepreneurship remain the ideals of identity formation and dominate school life classically in both mind (academics) and body (sports). Under various signifiers that promise the exploration and “release” (lassen) of a creative self, or the transformation of the self, education in our “knowledge society” becomes a way of life, no longer simply a stage of development. The keywords are “learning to learn.” Flexible capitalism needs flexible, multi skilled, and mobile subjects willing to travel and move where the company says, especially when it comes to promotion. Security, survival, and creativity are all intimately related.* (Jagodzinski, 2011, p. 157)<sup>2</sup>

Given the short space available to engage with the complexities of artistic research, the above two quotes are the basis of an attempt to crystallize a fundamental tension in this emerging field of practice. Having wrestled with the question of artistic research over the past four years this tension has surfaced at various levels due in large part to the way that artistic research

is aligned with the creative economy. With differing notions of creativity and innovation competing in the struggle for funding and recognition, the question of artistic research is still an anxious one.

The first quote by Alain Badiou, reflects a conception of the *new* which might support a philosophy of artistic research that is sympathetic to the often uncountable nature of artistic praxis. At a time when the trajectory of human capital theory is producing a Tourette syndrome for counting the functionality of art and education, Badiou's philosophy is a significant theoretical apparatus in the war against encroaching instrumentalism. Engaging with a conception of praxis unhinged from its relation to "functional work" (Plato and Marx), Badiou's philosophy of the event utilizes set theory mathematics to engage with the unknown in a way that is as rigorous in its description of *what is not there*, as sociology is of *what is there*. This may sound somewhat mystical, however, Badiou's philosophy of the *new* is not that obscure, explicating the dialectical circulation between formalism and vitalism, *matheme* and the poem, being and event, it is fundamentally a philosophy of the relation between knowledge and truth. If we were to apply the praxis of Badiou's thinking to artistic research we would engage with a conception of research as an ontological shift in the meaning of situations and subjects. Such an evental education would support the necessary risks inherent to pedagogical and artistic processes whilst simultaneously inspiring analytical engagements with the "state of the situation," in which such processes emerge. At the centre of these evental processes would be a conception of the pedagogical subject as split by its relationship to knowledge

and truth, however as fundamental as this split subject may be it is a subject which is increasingly complicated when bracketed against the market subjectivities of human capital pedagogy.

The coupling of creativity with the theory of human capital in recent years represents the context in which artistic research has begun to mature, as suggested by jagodzinski, the state-led rise of “designer capitalism” has the potential to appropriate the “evental” core of artistic research through the privileging of “design” as a functional praxis. With the increasing loss of artistic autonomy, jagodzinski posits a series of questions which assert a conception of education and art through the lens of the “event”, such as “What does visual art do if not preserve the place of ‘freedom’ through creativity proper? Is there creativity in ‘learning to learn,’ which is so pervasive throughout public school? Certainly, but this is not the creativity of the Event that potentially transforms” (jagodzinski, 2011, p. 153).

Drawing out the tensions between the libidinal object of designer capitalism promoted by the innovation turn, and its implications for the pedagogical process, jagodzinski calls for a new affirmation of the relation between creativity and the ‘real’, in the face of its appropriation through educational policy,

*Creativity, which cannot be counted, is therefore continually squeezed out of schooling with its over-emphasis on accountability and evaluation. The gap between art and design is eroding as design begins to strangle creativity by appropriating the same rhetoric of creativity, freedom and self-determination to further the innovation of products for industry. (jagodzinski, 2010, p. 190).*

In a recent article on the politics of graduate school research in the U.S<sup>3</sup>, Thomas Benton draws out a similar relation

between pedagogical institutions and the flexible imperative of their subjects. Exploding the myths behind “the life of the mind” in cognitive capitalism, Benton’s article problematizes the idealism of split subjectivities promoted in the theoretical humanities by exposing them to the political economy. Where the eventual conception of education affirms the “life of the mind” against the bodily economic security of the flexible subject, the latter calls into question the naïveté of discourses which reject the pedagogical site as a space of economic exploitation. Questioning the enfolding crises in research communities Benton suggests that these tensions are often expressed in the word “love,” as in “love of wisdom” or “love of knowledge,” however in the knowledge economy ‘pedagogical love’ has an obscene side.

It’s hard to tell young people that universities recognize that their idealism and energy – and lack of information – are an exploitable resource. For universities, the impact of graduate programs on the lives of those students is an acceptable externality, like dumping toxins into a river. If you cannot find a tenure-track position, your university will no longer court you; it will pretend you do not exist and will act as if your unemployment is entirely your fault. It will make you feel ashamed, and you will probably just disappear, convinced it’s right rather than that the game was rigged from the beginning. (Benton, 2009)

Between these tensions is ethics, the ethics of supervision. A daunting and difficult task, artistic research supervision must negotiate between the split subjectivity of an eventual education and the flexible subjectivity of human capital formation. Standing in the selling position of one often negates the other, and

in most cases either position is supported by entrenched institutional histories. For this reason artistic research depends less on the risks and engagements taken by the researchers involved in research processes, than on the navigation provided through such conflicted spaces by supervisors. If artistic research is to continue to grow and foster new communities as everyone hopes, then it will fundamentally depend on the various ways that institutions support supervisors to affirm the eventual modes of research exchange against the instrumental modes of exchange that are becoming ever more predatory.

<sup>1</sup> Atkinson, D. (2011) *Art, Equality and Learning. Pedagogies against the State*. Sense Publishers. P.O Box. 21858, 3001 AW Rotterdam, the Netherlands.

<sup>2</sup> Jagodzinski, j. (2010) *Visual Art and Education in an Age of Designer Capitalism. Deconstructing the oral Eye*. Palgrave and MacMillan.

<sup>3</sup> Benton. H. Thomas. (2009, January 30<sup>th</sup>). *Graduate School in the Humanities: Just Don't Go. The Chronicle of Higher Education*.

## **Henna-Riikka Halonen**

### **1.**

IF WE ASSOCIATE RESEARCH with the idea of finding out and invention, do not most artistic practices imply some form of research? Artists increasingly research time-specific and

content-specific projects and very often, in these or other dematerialized and contextualized art practices, a notion of research is summoned. Extremely intelligent modes of artistic research have been invented by artists historically, long before the usual examples of the artists of the 1960s and 1970s, i.e. by Dadaists, Surrealists, Futurists and Constructivists. Many of these artists were involved in institutional critique and sought to integrate either scientific, archival, or system-based attitudes in their practices.

The steep rise of artistic PhDs has brought a degree of conventional attitudes into the artistic research domain, attempting to mould it into the traditional scientific research paradigms. Does artistic research function as a concept or dimension of artistic practice or as a merely different wording of a validation process that can place artistic work within academic university structures and within knowledge and creative industries? What kind of art practice and hence artistic research is suitable to be in institutional frameworks?

From my point of view it is essential that the research question grows from the practice not the other way around. I personally believe in a value of critique and self-assessment; in a value of conflict and difference not to be ignored, but rather further emphasized in institutions. The institutional framework ideally offers new kinds of critical forms of discourse on art and functions as a balancing factor for, say, the art market. But how does institutional, academic research locate itself within the large global discourse of contemporary art and what kind of art does it produce? There are many so-called “art worlds” and there are many discursive contexts. Artistic research always needs some

sort of discursive context into which it locates itself. Yet, I think we should be careful not to separate the artistic research and the work produced from the art world at large.

## 2.

How do we approach notions such as the non-discursive, the not knowing, and the intuitive in research? And the other way around, when do we reach the point when artistic research work becomes too conscious of itself, losing all those aesthetic qualities? I find myself constantly balancing in between. This often means that despite some pre-planned parameters, the work develops its own logic, also guiding me “the artist researcher.” I have recently been thinking of the issue of who is speaking. And to whom? Of language as a space or a situation. This space is one that sets up a tension between two different types of narratives: the narrative of content and the narrative of form or “intertextuality” – which we associate with certain literary forms such as the French New Roman. I hope that as a result the work that is also research can flirt with nonsense, poetry, and doubt. This raises another question, which is, how can artwork that is also research allow multiple readings – ranging from the social and the political to the poetic and intimate?

## 3.

Every situation provides its own protocols; the multiple ways we navigate them become research, research of the situation. Looking at it in this way, most of my works are research-based. In addition, they often try to reactivate historical archives in order to shed light onto something happening right now. My

pieces, similarly to spectators, live for an instant in the space where we encounter them. Our experience of them is different each time, just as the juxtaposition of images, information and space at that same moment. I aim to create layered spaces, where the work can be experienced at a multitude of levels, but the spectators always have an opportunity to enter another level if they wish so. This may seem like a very generalized statement, but it becomes slightly more complicated when articulated as academic research. By this articulation I do not only refer to ways an experience of space can be translated into language, but to how language can be approached as a space or a material. This kind of plasticity, together with the possibilities offered by fiction, may be something that only artistic research is capable of achieving.

#### 4.

I want to think about self-understanding as an artist in fragments. Being a researcher is a fragment of a certain moment of my so-called identity. I use the word "moment" deliberately as I want to tie this up to the notion of time. I hope the practice of artistic research will help in re-thinking the concept of both researcher and research process as something non-linear, away from the hypothesis, method, conclusion based model. So, if artistic research does act as an intermediary between different fields, modes of perception and thinking, it can then offer a possibility to study the very institutions it is itself involved in. Then artistic research is not only knowledge production or visual production, but also production of critique, which may provide a different set of properties for discussion and evaluation.

Lately I have been delving into the potentiality of collaboration in artistic research. By this I mean real collaboration, one that also allows space for conflict and resistance, one not merely masking inconsistencies and inequalities. I think the original and profound sense of collaboration may offer interesting possibilities for artistic research, yet admittedly complicates the validation and evaluation procedures. The potentiality of collaboration is paralleled in Liam Gillick's essay, *Maybe it would be better if we worked in groups of three* in which the artist talks about discursive art practices as a mode of generating ideas and placing structures into the culture that emerges from collaborative, collective, or negotiated positions rather than as varied forms of pure expression or super subjectivity.

I am currently participating in a research programme involving practitioners from many different fields such as theatre, music, and fine art. Although as academic disciplines they seem not so distant from each other, working together often involves extensive negotiations, which to me are extremely productive. In these negotiations and even conflicts evoked by a common discursive collaborative platform, the group becomes a productive machine with the possibility to change political institutions and the potentiality to challenge ways of doing and knowing.

## 5.

With the expansion of higher education, artists and researchers have become more and more integrated into conditions of "capital" and cannot quite escape it. The question is how do we identify with the existing economic system also causing massive intensification of insecurity, inequality, and cultural

impoverishment for the most vulnerable? I also find it interesting to think about this from a point of view of institutional critique. How can I as a researcher investigate those institutional structures hosting me? In particular since my research has explored for a while now the extent to which a socially and politically oriented art practice can make positive use of the practice's inevitable implication within the structures that it would critically address.

Artistic research offers new forms of visual languages to operate and subvert systems of cognitive capitalism and knowledge industry – of course both discourse and language based systems – under the apparent liberal democratic paradigm. Artistic research has the capacity to not only occupy many positions and languages at once, but to also acknowledge the problems concerning representation. Language as material carries possibilities for resistance and the possibility to avoid value being extracted. I am particularly interested in the usage of subversive potential of poetic, absurdist strategies such as counter-narratives, nonsense, repetition, muting etc. This kind of poetic output was apparent in the works of Dadaists, but also in the anti-war politics behind *Zaum*, an invented language that peaked during World War I as part of the Russian Futurist movement.

## 6.

Creativity and performativity have become bases for capitalist production, turning knowledge into a type of commodity. The notion of production has been given an entirely new meaning as art and labour have become dematerialised and expanded

while shifting towards a cultural industry and a knowledge economy. Even so-called social or immaterial practices have not been able to escape that, but are rapidly becoming mere marketing tools of the creative industries, which encourage associating art with measurable value. This has great relevance for me, since I have recently been delving into the production of critique in artwork and how value is extracted from artistic production. That obviously leads to changes in the critical and political role of the artist and in the issue of where critique is located and to whom or what it is directed.

## **Jeremiah Day**

### Digging

LEONARDO DREW THINGS *to explain them to himself...*

*I once told Barney [Newman] a story which he wanted to adopt as the motto for the abstract-expressionists:*

*A little girl is drawing and her mother asks her "what are you drawing?"*

*And she says, "I'm drawing god."*

*And the mother says, "How can you draw god when you don't know what he is?"*

*And she says, "That's why I draw him."*

– Hedda Sterne, *The Last Irascible*

When considering possible "new roles" to be played by "the artist as researcher," I'm reminded of a line by Clement Greenberg (1):

*[Jackson] Pollock's paintings live or die in the same context as Rembrandt's or Titian's ...or Manet's or Ruben's or Michelangelo's paintings.*

*There's no interruption, there's no mutation here.*

*Pollock asked to be tested by the same eye that could see how good Raphael was when he was good...*

Are works of "artistic research" (2) to be tested by a different eye?

...

The new field of "artistic research" hinges paradoxically on the question of *function*.

On the one hand, many find the emphasis on research and the critical discourse around it a possible defense of art practice against the widespread instrumentalization of culture. When terms of the market-place (production of spectacle, collectibles, the justifications of economics) and terms of the public sphere (justified through supposed contributions to the "greater good") threaten to overwhelm the cultural realm, the idea of "pure research" holds the appeal of a possible oasis. This earnest and well-intended motivation is what largely animates the present discussion.

On the other hand, given the public policy emphasis on "creative industries" in the "knowledge economy," and the recognition that art represents a high-value-added sector, the shift in the academy from departments of art to departments of

"artistic research" could in fact represent an integration of the demand for "direct applicability." In other words, a more radical instrumentalization of art than even that of city-branding and high society trophy-making.

At this point we have had much discussion but little demonstration, many good symposiums but few good exhibitions, thus risking that the whole issue could become another department of academia. More and more, discussions around "artistic research" have the humorless and ahistorical tone of the social sciences, with an implied and superficial benevolence.

But, as Claes Oldenburgh said *"Anyone who listens to an artist talk should have their eyes checked."* (3) Or Warhol: *"What it means? Oh, I think you should ask Mr. Castelli. He's in a much better position to say what it means – he has to sell it."* (4)

Put in another way, the temptation to establish a legitimating discourse can only lead to failure. First because the main evaluative criteria for artworks is still wordless apprehension, and second because the discourse of meaning around the visual arts is always prone to be nothing more than an elaborated sales pitch.

...

"Academicism," in the early period of modern art, came to mean an inward and self-justifying irrelevance, and was rejected by Courbet and others in favor of an outward engagement in public life and conditions.

This is the earlier and perhaps root paradox of *function*: the space within which to work for an engagement with the world was earned through a rejection of applied art. One need only

think of Joseph Beuys barking like a dog at the microphone during an academic ceremony to feel the virulent rejection of the role of the functionary. And Beuys and his peers articulated synthesized and thorough understandings of philosophy, history, politics *as artists and through artworks* – i.e., the exact space "artistic research" aspires to inhabit.

The emphasis on subject matter, experimental methods and the insistence on a dialogue between one's own art-making and the questions of art-in-general - all these are part of modern art. "Artistic research" then could be established as a formalization and concretization of what already exists, under-defined: the visual arts as a highly intellectual field with its own questions and claims.

"Artistic research" must be judged by the same terms as art in general. If we disconnect from the traditions and capacities established in the last hundred years, we will not only throw out the baby with the bathwater, but (at the risk of mixing metaphors) we will cut off the legs upon which we stand. The risk is not just instrumentalizing art, but abolishing it all together in favor of some new form of design. The new field would turn out not to be an oasis, but only a mirage.

What is required from these discussions is not an evaluation, justification or attack on the terms of a field which is so open and undefined that, as Mick Wilson once speculated, perhaps it will all turn out to be nothing, like the transcendentalists counting ghosts in the vapor. (5) They too after all had their own journals, gatherings, heated debates and even funding structures.

Instead, I think, the moment calls for elaboration and

exemplification of "research" that emerges from art-making. A bottom-up interrogation, not a top-down one.

For example, an illustration shows a text from the Rodin museum in Paris in which "artistic research" is used in a generous and general sense, an ongoing life of development in one's practice (although it is interesting to note that even this example likely emerged from a translation from French to English, furthering my suspicion of the term).

Or, Hito Steyerl's recent attempts to establish a non-bureaucratic footing for the word "research", drawing upon Peter Weiss and his "genealogy of aesthetic research, which is related to the history of emancipatory struggles throughout the 20th century." (6)

Or, Simone Forti who once distinguished herself from one of her peers who had gone on to form a large company, touring big venues, while Forti stayed small-scale, evolving different modes of improvisation with groups of four or five, and often solo. "Oh," Forti said, "*she [the friend with the big company] got into development. -- I stayed with research.*" (7)

After all, "artistic research" must refer to a method, not a subject. In ten years either all these art PhDs will be a laughing stock, or there will be some works of demonstrable and self-evident substance. Perhaps that would be a better starting point for a discussion.

...

*In the meantime* – yesterday I went to help a friend, Erik Smith, by shooting some Super 8 footage of him digging holes in Berlin. It's a piece of property that's in limbo – former dead zone

from the Wall, but in the last years a group of people have appropriated it as a site for art, calling it Skulpturenpark Berlin. The area they work in gets smaller and smaller as new apartment buildings fill in the gap; soon there will be no space at all. Erik Smith had proposed to the Berlin Senate that he could use sonar to measure the underground structures and gaps, the buried ruins of the site. Smith wanted to make sculptures out of them, to cast the negative space and make positives out of concrete.

But the city declined and so Smith is moving forward on a different scale – digging with a shovel. He has discovered a whole buried staircase and will soon discover where it leads, descending downwards. Along the way the dirt has turned to ash and chunks of burned wood now come up.

People pass by and mostly ignore him but one man asked what he was doing. When told it was an art project the man asked, “Does art have some relationship to archeology?” Smith replied, “I guess it can.”

Indeed – *there is some relation.*

But when I asked Smith if he knows what the structure he discovered was – was it a home, or an office? Was it bombed or just burned down? Who lived there, what happened to them? This is Berlin after all, where local history and world history meet frequently: did the owner die in the camps, or perhaps help organize them?

Smith replied he has plans to go to the state archive for that kind of information, but he keeps delaying the trip. He prefers to sustain the period of this kind of discovery, through digging, attending to the soil and ash, in which a different kind

of information is possible, one that is not axiomatic or verifiable. As the real estate developers build all around him, Smith produces an architecture as well, the emerging downward staircase.

I believe as Smith's staircase becomes visible, it will attract more passers-by, and it will become *his*, not just the staircase of some former owners. By not knowing the "truth," Smith's act can become a kind of "fiction" – back to the root of that word, a shaping of circumstance, the transformation that gives art its own status, claims, questions.

Perhaps Smith's decision not to go to the archive (yet) is what Nietzsche called the choice of a "limited horizon" in which not all questions have to be faced, in which one does not need to be responsible to all perspectives, to preserve the space for "becoming."

In any case, this "investigatory poetics" does not depend upon the academy or EARN or even "artistic research" – but it does *merit our support*. In this way, the efforts of the new field of research in art could shake off the dust of academism and the false sense of purpose of bureaucracy, and instead actively foster those who dig in the ash and the dirt, who insist on and demonstrate art's capacity to wrestle with broader questions and concerns, to have some stake and status (and not just a function).

<sup>1</sup> From an interview in the 1972 film *Painters Painting: The New York Art Scene 1940–1970*, directed by Emile de Antonio.

<sup>2</sup> The term is problematic inasmuch as it seems to qualify a kind of research as "artistic," as opposed to qualifying a kind of art that might be research-ic. To make matters

worse, "artistic" does not generally mean "of the arts" but rather embellishment or holding a decorative quality. Something like Ed Sander's phrase "investigatory poetics" would be more appropriate. (Thanks to Fred Dewey for pointing out this important precedent.)

<sup>3</sup> Paraphrased from a remark quoted in a talk by Robert Morris, published in "Earthworks: Land Reclamation as Sculpture," in Harriet F. Senie and Sally Webster, eds., *Critical Issues in Public Art* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1998), p. 250.

<sup>4</sup> Paraphrased from a scene *Painters Painting: The New York Art Scene 1940–1970*, op. cit.

<sup>5</sup> From a public lecture at "The Art Text – Writing in and through the arts," Gothenburg University, 2009.

<sup>6</sup> Hito Steyerl, "Aesthetics of Resistance? Artistic Research as Discipline and Conflict," *Mahkuzine # 8*, winter 2010.

<sup>7</sup> From a conversation with the artist.

## Julie Ault

### *What is your definition of doing (artistic) research?*

I DO NOT SUBSCRIBE TO ANY EXISTING DEFINITION that I am aware of, nor have I encountered the need to construct one. I would rather do artistic research than define it, as it seems that the shifting parameters and effectiveness of particular artistic research are best apprehended in practice. A definition of artistic research that would embody open-endedness would probably have to be so general that it becomes banal.

Intentions and means for artistic research are wide open and I hope they will remain so in principle and practice, regardless of the debates on the subject and the policies being established to demarcate a so-called academically validated field. These discussions are valuable to practitioners to engender further questions and signpost various dangers, including that of fixing definition. I elect for demystifying artistic research, but preserving its boundless character – which appears to be intrinsic to research that is art practice; and to artistic practices that encompass research pursuits.

Research can take as many directions and forms as the mind can conceive of. Whether or not a given research project is considered sound and regarded as “good” or effectively extending its significance beyond its maker, elicits another set of questions for a particular practice and its testing.

*Does artistic research need an institutional framework or could it be legitimized differently?*

Art always has to build a constituency for itself, which may or may not involve institutional engagement. Artistic research has to do so as well. An exciting dimension of artistic research is the open-endedness of where, what, who, and how it can derive and engage.

While artistic research does not require an institutional framework for its making, such structures can be valuable, particularly for the challenging intellectual dialogues and review processes built into a program, as well as for dissemination.

*Does the institutionalization of research imply an instrumental control and a reduced conception of art? Or is does it also create room for matters such as unexpected and independent artistic forms, and openness to conflict and difference?*

I do not see how some degree of control, whether explicit or tacit, could be left out of the institutionalization equation, but this does not necessarily lead to a reduced conception of art. Control and independence can cohabitate; neither one is an absolute and they do not cancel one another out. I suspect, in the case of artistic research, control is implemented more implicitly than overtly.

I favor instituting artistic research that insists on open definition and prompts a dynamic and inventive approach to mode and form, and conscientious and flexible critical awareness. These are common-sense principles to some extent, that are nonetheless potentially radical for researchers, program directors, and larger institutional frameworks fields of study are nested in. An educative setting can encourage and support such fundamental values. Such principles are imbedded in the visual art PhD at Malmö that Sarat Maharaj and Gertrud Sandqvist originated, where I did my doctoral work.

It would be a shame for artistic research to become a technique or a genre that implies technique, toward which research practices and projects are shaped according to explicit and “approved” methods and formats.

Potential gaps between what is desired and put forth by a particular institutional program and its directors, what is desired and implemented by researchers / participants, and

what is desired and taken up by other relevant sectors in a larger host institution diagram an interesting topic. How do such potentially harmonious, incongruent, complementary, and competing agendas cohabitate and what do they bring forth?

*Do current research connotations and protocols limit the domain of artistic imagination?*

Not in my experience. The field is wide open, despite prompts and protocols. If it gets too prescriptive it is up to individuals that disagree – collectively – to push against that and propose alternatives.

*What does thinking in terms of research mean for your self-understanding as an artist?*

It indicates being in a state of unending inquiry. Inquiry and growth are not temporally bounded, which means that formal manifestations of a particular investigation, such as exhibitions, writings, publications, and books are not endpoints. For me, research terrain is typically tangled in process as it expands and contracts, goes awry, spirals out of control, distills, opens up again, unravels, and so on. The communicative forms produced along the way are temporary materializations of long-term investigations. Unlike the shape shifting lead-up, they freeze the configuration of ideas and methods and material at a given time. Such productions are part of the inquiry process, perhaps even contrivances to punctuate or frame a period of

research. But my engagement does not stop there. This is why I sometimes remain involved with a subject matter for years or decades, manifesting findings in different forms and with shifting perspectives over time.

*Can you, as an “artist”, identify with the role and identity of a “researcher”?*

Yes, insofar as researcher suggests someone who is in a perpetual seek mode, continually questioning and evaluating information, knowledge, and experience —regardless of its source, and is vigilant about putting her own assumptions to the test.

## **Laura Malacart**

### **1. & 2.**

TO ME PERSONALLY, (artistic) research collates a whole set of preliminary and contextual operations that are integral to the (art) practice and its formulation. These operations coexist and overlap with the process of making work, to eventually become undistinguishable from it. This broad definition of research is meant to infer that my practice features a process of “re-negotiation” or “re-configuration.” The prefix “re” is crucial here and it also belongs to the term “re-search.” The emphasis on this prefix implies a direction that acknowledges the need to find

alternative connections and perspectives in relation to reality or a body of knowledge.

There is a danger in attempting generic speculations, as clearly each of us speaks of one's singular experience and of the perceived experience of others. There is also a danger in conveying views that revel in their singularity, in that they can become intrinsically incompatible in a collective debate. I say this because I do not think we can talk about an "institutional framework" by assuming it to have a univocal and static meaning. It is exactly the idea that, in spite of its appearances and pro-forma, this is a potentially rich and open model that artists need to exploit to create opportunities for cross-fertilization, and not conceive themselves in a passive situation subjected to rigid structures.

I do not think that artistic research per se requires an institutional framework. Possibly the institutional framework needs artists to drive it in exciting directions. On a separate note, it is interesting to notice how institutional research has affected artists' "identities" in that recently artists tend to present themselves more and more as groups, institutions, associations, collaborations, museums, rather than as individuals. When it comes to a scientific institutional framework, one does encounter a more rigid model, one that controls the research it generously funds, and one where outcomes are generously remunerated. Scientific research is eminently institutional, its interests are at the heart of the markets and the state, the pro-institution. The funding agenda for science disciplines can have a strong ethical component, but very often the agendas are driven less by humanitarian goals and more by market and

international politics.

I mention this model because there is a legacy that ties scientific institutional research to its counterpart in the humanities. This is particularly evident in the appraisal criteria of the outcomes of artistic research based on scientific outcomes. Artists must be well aware that their less remunerated contributions in comparison with their science counterparts warrant a freedom that is rather unique in many fields of institutional research.

Economic aspects drive science and humanities researchers (in very different ways) to seeking affiliations with institutions. Art researchers may reap various benefits from this affiliation, with an essential access to research facilities and with a conversation and exposure to cross-disciplinary methods. If occasionally protocols must be re-negotiated, this can have productive outcomes. In my case, the constraint of having to write a linear thesis featuring ephemeral artworks that emphasize the voice led me to the formulation of the thesis conceived as a three dimensional space in the guise of a fictional museum called MUVE (Museum of Ventriloquial Objects).

### **3. & 4.**

My practice is always going to be research-based, whether I work on a cross-disciplinary project or in a collaborative or a site-specific project. There are many different types of practices, even the more formal and less discursive ones rely on some form of research, more or less philosophical, more or less historical. Research is informed thinking, it is not a new invention for art practice.

Interestingly, when I work across disciplines or collaboratively, I often use the term researcher because it is better understood by the lay public than visual artist or even filmmaker. The former is confusing to many people, the latter can be misleading. A few months ago, when I asked to meet a group of language students in Buenos Aires, I do not recall whether I introduced myself as a researcher. But I do remember when showing my work consisting of video monologues to the lecturer, he then introduced me to the students as a researcher. Yet, it makes more sense to me to use that term at times when I am “doing research” with other people. In contrast to the term artist, the term researcher works clearly as an interface and it is precise in describing what is happening.

Some people will identify with the term researcher, some will not – depending on their practice. In the last decades, with the emergence of self-ethnographic films and a renewed interest in documentary practices and the archive, there is a clear sense of a blurring of fine art practices with traditional social sciences and research. In a recent experience, where I contributed to an exhibition in Canada organized by a research group of anthropologists, it became apparent to me that the initial framing of the enquiry was compatible across the two disciplines. Strikingly, though, it was in the appraisal of the works that the narratives diverged.

## **5. & 6.**

I am not in a position to propose emancipatory models for artists other than to persevere with a practice that has rigor and to find suitable contexts for that practice to germinate. It may

well be that that happens by continuing to infiltrate into non-art contexts, thus undermining official structures and operating at a micro-political level. A recent example for me is the idea of pursuing a line of research that is deemed “not important” by the scientist advising on a collaborative project. Having won the funding of this project, I am pursuing a number of enquiries and developing one in particular that is not deemed ‘useful’ by science. In my view, that overlooked subject could affect a group of people: the shift of agenda and resisting and reconfiguring knowledge feels emancipatory and impactful. Perhaps being able to drive the agendas increasingly when it comes to funded work is the emancipatory message to encourage.

I associate the term “knowledge production” with an institutional imperative designed to justify and validate research – at least at a PhD level. Politically – maybe not practically – I would rather “resist” the notion of “knowledge production” and use a term such as “reconfiguration of knowledge.” Many thinkers endorse the notion that an art practice is located in a unique place to open discursive possibilities about the world. The extent to which these discourses have a practical effect on the world is a separate issue.

I am not exactly sure what is meant by “biopolitical expansion of the notion of production.” My practice was heavily informed by feminist politics and performance centered on the politics of material bodies and against the notion of their commodification – currently I work cross-disciplinary and collaboratively. Since the global financial crisis (of developed countries), there is a level where politics have reappeared in the art practice agenda. Politics, aesthetics and philosophies of the 1960s are

being reappraised. We can look at that movement with cynical eyes or with a sense of relief. “New” metaphors to describe reality and the political interrelation of bodies and capital emerge constantly and are based on current technologies (like hackers and vectors). I am probably less interested in these “new” ways of describing and more focused on tangible practices.

## **Lisa Tan**

AFTER STARTING MY PHD PROGRAM, I actively avoided thinking about what doing artistic research is. A first step towards this was surrendering to the terminology; so after this sentence, the word “research” will not again appear in quotations, nor will the words “artistic research(er)”, or “practice-based PhD.” Although I have an aversion to forming a definition for what artistic research is – or, to analyze the thing that I am doing while I’m doing it – it doesn’t mean that I have been working within this setting without artistically acknowledging, in some reflexive way, my new surroundings. Proceeding without criticality towards this context is impossible. But most simply put, I think that the artworks and projects that emerge from artistic research will provide a shifting definition.

I would like to change the question “Does artistic research need an institutional framework or could it be legitimized differently?” into “When artists perform research do they need an

institutional framework for their work to be legitimized?” The first question separates artistic research from the research that most artists I know perform regularly – working through their acquired knowledge with artistic methods and arriving at different forms. For me, the institutional framework with its emphasis on research, reflection and rigor, is a space for a larger degree of artistic freedom and experimentation – something the market has not been able to give me.

To answer my altered question is ridiculous, as artists currently perform and have performed research without legitimizing institutional settings since the roots of Modernism. Think of Manet’s *Execution of Maximilian* (1868-9). His research included keeping intense track of Napoleon’s military intervention in Mexico – collecting news coverage and searching out photographs that found their way to France. He made several studies – test paintings and drawings – by piecing together what details he could find. Manet studied and referred to Goya’s depiction of the execution of Spanish nationals by the invading French military in his painting *The Third of May*, 1808, as well as Goya’s matador paintings – making a connection between the space of the bullfight and the space of the military execution. In a studied and critical response, by the second painting, Manet changed the clothes worn by the executioners from Mexican military uniforms with distinctive flared pants, to that of French uniforms. (1)

In Sweden, artistic PhDs are not required to write dissertations, and artistic research can be formalized as artworks, exhibitions, artistic publications, “unexpected and independent artistic forms”, etc. This said, self-authored and scholarly artist’s

books are prevalent if not the norm within my own particular institution. Standardized outputs may already have narrowed the conception of art within the higher academic setting; the commonly held notion being that self and/or institutionally-identified research-based practices are likely to have weighty textual formats that are often married to impoverished visual strategies. Yet, it is perhaps worth saying, that just as the market may support and provide a place for certain types of artistic outputs that satisfy galleries and their collectors, it would be narrow-minded if not arrogant to suggest that artists who make work that potentially satisfies the academy should be denied the ability to support their livelihood. This practical and pressing aspect – earning a living as an artist – is an undeniable part of the attraction of subjecting oneself to the threat of “instrumental control” (artistic researchers in Sweden earn a basic living salary). My own personal circumstances dictate making this concession without hesitation.

A demand that is particularly unique to being an artist working within an academic institution, and that conforms to a set of university research and research dissemination standards is the public defense. At my institution, a defense is required at regular, usually annual intervals. If I look at the defense as an artist’s talk, it becomes an activity that I, like most working artists, have experience with and see as a vital part of forming the discursive settings that art is contingent upon. But it is inherently not an artist talk – because the defense (in my institution) is a larger university demand, where an implied expert within the field evaluates academic research. This gives it an air of formality, saturated with the expectation that what is

presented must be knowledge, and this knowledge is in part owned by and will be disseminated by the university – hence, an artist must meet a certain level of academic professionalism and responsibility. For some artists, this pressure might not even exist depending on the nature of their practice. But for me, and for others like me, perhaps in some highly counter-intuitive way, we can arrive at states of invention in part by resisting academic expectations and protocols, and working in the reflexive ways that artists are usually quite good at.

I think that my research, whether it is passive or active research, runs parallel to my art and it quite simply makes my life less dull. Samuel Beckett and Maurice Blanchot were big mutual fans of each other, and their sympathies lie in an ethical passivity, sheer uselessness, and the writing that comes after this reckoning is the enabling possibility of paralysis. (2) I am bringing this up to point out a paradox in my own current art and research. At a moment when I'm supposed to be productive within this cognitive and highly discursive setting, I am attracted to the potential of unlearning and a suspension of participation in any logical formation of history. I would prefer this to be viewed as an intense ethical desire for some sort of ontological integrity amidst it all. Of course it has to do with what I am interested in – but, importantly, this paradox also arises from a reaction to the newfound institutional conditions I am operating in – so in some backwards sense, institutionalization has opened up unexpected forms for my work (relative to my practice) to discuss modes of productivity, to closely look at being “the athlete in bed” (Gilles Deleuze from *Essays Critical And Clinical*). It is from here that I think I can get anywhere.

If I were to address the fourth question adequately – or any of the questions for that matter – it would really be to answer with the video work that I completed this past spring. It is the culmination of my first year of making work within an artistic research setting, and to a large degree, it looks at values of productivity and passivity in relation to creation – a question that takes on specific dimensions in this context. Through experimental methods relative to my practice, the piece is tied to the material, ethical, and procedural elements of the institutional framework that I am a part of, and my newfound setting as an artist working and living in Stockholm. Pointing out the specificity from which the work of art emerges is the starting point for my own art's contingency on a discursive relation.

With my background, being an artist is inherently involved with political economy. My one living parent still does not necessarily value or understand my position as an artist within society, even with my participation in this socially legitimizing PhD program. But really, I become very overwhelmed when thinking about my practice in terms of cognitive capitalism, or opening up alternative social and economic strategies – even if I might benefit from having my day-to-day activities categorized as such.

If I went into making art thinking about producing knowledge, I would be paralyzed and would not make a single thing. That said, the notion of production or creative labor is a significant theme in my current work – I just prefer to arrive at it and in fact speak about it in a de-centered manner.

<sup>1</sup> I learned about this fascinating background to Manet's *Execution of Maximilian*, from seeing a stirring exhibition at the MoMA in 2006–2007, curated by John Elderfield. The exhibition brought together Manet's study paintings and documents around the events of Napoleon's failed military intervention and the execution of his installed emperor to Mexico, Maximilian, who was a Hapsburg from Austria. I referred to the MoMA website for the exhibition, and also a piece about the exhibition written by Elderfield that appeared in *The Guardian*, January 6, 2007.

<sup>2</sup> Critchley, Simon. *Very Little--Almost Nothing: Death, Philosophy, Literature*. London: Routledge, 1997.

## Lonnie Van Brummelen & Siebren De Haan

*What is your definition of doing (artistic) research? Do you see your own work as research-based? How does research affect your practice and your position as an artist?*

TRAINED IN A TIME that the ideas of Gramsci, Bourdieu, and Foucault determined the cultural climate, we learned to see impressionist paintings as status goods; art museums as prescribers of good taste; and classical Greek culture as the symbol of Eurocentrism, the ultimate representation of values imposed onto the subjugated classes by a dominant elite. Initially we tried to work within the boundaries of a regime of criticism, but gradually we came to resist both the isolated position it put us in and its assumption that meaning would originate from the unearthing of hidden assumptions and flaws. Is meaning not *produced* in the present rather than disclosed? And could

there be a way to be involved rather than merely deconstruct, to be a participant rather than a critic?

We developed an artistic practice in which aesthetics arose from research into social-political fabric. *Grossraum (Borders of Europe)*, for example, consists of a silent 35mm film and an accompanying logbook. In the film, a sovereign wandering cinema-eye explores divided landscapes along Europe's border similar to how a scrutinizing eye contemplates a painting. Instead of following the geopolitical boundaries, the cinema-eye chooses its own trajectory and lingers on settlements of temporary infrastructure, vegetation, traffic, or clouds projecting shades on a landmass. An accompanying publication – comprised of a travelogue and a selection of correspondence (1) – discloses that the cinema-eye's freedom was in fact conditioned as camera viewpoints had to be negotiated and soldiers, smugglers, and press-and-information officers were watching over our shoulder during the recordings.

Moving into a territory unknown to us, whether this is a borderland, global economics, a universal museum, or a fishing community, and exploring that territory from within has become our preferred approach. Instead of being autonomous, a disposition still frequently attributed to artists, working from within implies that you are inside the same field as your informants and you are always someone's accomplice. Immersed in the field, we observe and participate and simultaneously carry a workspace of history, ideas, and tools with us. Such a drifting studio practice requires a constant shuttling back-and-forth between the field where the fieldwork is conducted and the realm where the findings are contextualized and interpreted. (2)

*Do you consider the topic of research obsolete in the realm of art? What, then, is a current topic or emergent theme in visual art that might be an alternative to the focus on research?*

To answer these questions, we will make a detour. “What’s in those bags?” In every discussion about *Grossraum (Borders of Europe)* that question came up. The film contains a scene in which plastic bags of contraband are tossed over a border fence. The question embodies metonymically how art is increasingly discussed. Works of art are reduced to content and used to illustrate current theories, political positions and topics. Such discourse leaves the *artistic work* unquestioned.

In 2008 we participated in the *Flaherty Seminar* in Hamilton. Frances Flaherty, the wife of the filmmaker Robert Flaherty, founded the seminar in the 1950s with the purpose of bringing filmmakers together to view and discuss each other’s work. Meanwhile the seminar has become thematized and in the screening and discussion rooms, intellectuals and programmers outnumber filmmakers. Yet, participating was still a rewarding experience to us. We screened the above-mentioned *Grossraum (Borders of Europe)* and *Monument of Sugar – how to use artistic means to elude trade barriers*, a 67-minute 16mm film that reports our attempt to elude Europe’s trade barrier for sugar imports by molding European subsidized export sugar into a monument in Nigeria before shipping it back home. The Q&A session after the screening started off with general comments on borders and migration – the theme of that year’s edition – until artist Allan Sekula posed the question why we had included a shot of the modernist building of the National Arts

Theatre in the film. Sekula added that he noticed that many of our European colleagues seemed intrigued by modernist remnants when working in Africa. We explained that we had produced our monument of sugar in a garage of the National Arts Theatre with permanent view on the building and that we had come to realise that the modernist architecture, constructed in 1976 by the Bulgarian company Techno-Export, was an appropriate backdrop for the creation of our modular sugar export monument. It had reminded us that our practical solution to elude a trade barrier was perhaps also a very sweet but deteriorating memorial to imposed modernity.

Sekula's specific question about framing opened up a discussion on western artists focusing on traces of western presence in an attempt to deal with post-colonial guilt. Isn't such a self-conscious perspective still reducing countries to former colonies? How can we be self-reflective without being self-centred?

*Does artistic research need an institutional framework or could it be legitimized differently?*

The early Foucault taught us that we are always part of some kind of pre-existing, designed system or structure. There is no research outside institutional frameworks. Any research is built upon the work of others, tradition, rules, values, codes, etc. However, in the current discursive climate, there is a tendency among artists to train themselves in inscribing their works in current theoretical discourses. They label their work process as artistic research; define themselves as agents; and justify their

actions as opposing bio-politics. Why do artists let themselves be disciplined by the weak powers of a prevailing discourse? Couldn't we, as artists, come up with an alternative practice-based idiom that can extend the current discourse rather than submitting ourselves to what seems fashionable in theory?

*Do current research-connotations and protocols limit the domain of artistic imagination?*

Research seems to span a whole gamut of procedures – from positivist routine of observation and physical experiments to demonstrate refutability (3) to the linguistic methods of semiotics, hermeneutics, and deconstruction. The undisciplined work of artistic inquiry, in which experimentation and interpretation take turns, shifts back and forth between these opposite poles. However, our experience is that despite attempts of opening up classification, a rather strict demarcation of disciplines seems to be maintained in academic research, perhaps due to the regime of funding and increasing demand for competition. Artistic research – to temporarily commit ourselves to the jargon – seems to be a field on the outskirts inhabited by commuters, who follow self-chosen trajectories transgressing the borders of disciplines. From such perspective, artistic research differs from interdisciplinary research that oscillates between different disciplines, while still respecting their boundaries. In performing artistic research, frontier commuters may disclose unforeseen parallels between different fields of knowledge and find unexpected pathways to connect them. As concepts and images are transferred from one realm to another, clandestine

but tolerated, smuggling rather than commuting may become the recurrent practice.

*Could research-based art lead to novel forms of (critical) consciousness?*

Such practices may challenge existing models that are taken for granted. We have seen this in the work of many colleagues. Akram Zaatari's film *This Day* (2003), for example, nuances accepted ideas of colonial photography by tracing the personal motives of the Syrian historian Jibrail Jabbur, who, in the 1950s, took photographs of the Syrian Desert which at first sight seem to capture stereotypes of desert life.

We will give an example from our own practice, where we also tried to add layers to a story in the world of cultural heritage. Around 200 BC, Pergamon was a small short-lived city-state near Izmir in present-day Turkey. Despite its population being largely Anatolian, it adopted Greek cultural habits to gain prestige. An altar was built to celebrate a battle against Celts, which was represented on the altar's frieze as a struggle of Olympian gods against Giants: liminal beings on the threshold of human and animal embodying chaos and impurity.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Pergamon's altar was brought to Berlin, where it is now presented as one of the roots of western civilisation. During our visit to the museum we noticed that the repeated history of cultural appropriation and dissemination, that made the altar seem so contemporary and relevant to us, was absent. The collection was made placeless and ahistorical by presenting it as universal and by referring to places of origin

as mythical, lost empires with exotic names.

We suggested that the museum extend the story, but the director was not open to that. He feared this “would stir the debate about repatriation”; something the museum was “not interested in.” We then created a portable monument in several parts. We reconstructed the sculpted frieze surrounding the altar from reproductions we found in books that had been published throughout the years. In another part, young Turks who preparing for the obligatory “citizen exam” (4) at the Goethe Institute in Istanbul recite the sculpted Greek myth that travelled ahead of them in their fledgling German. A last part maps on film the looted acropolis taken over by nature and surrounded by contemporary Turkey. To us, the constellation of works in anachronous black-and-white transforms nostalgia for authenticity into a recognition that the originals may be gone but that there are still crossbreeds and epigones. And aren’t they dazzling too?

<sup>1</sup> *The Formal Trajectory*, 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Drifting studio practice is also the title of the last chapter in the film *Monument of Sugar – how to use artistic means to elude trade barriers*, 2007.

<sup>3</sup> The logical possibility that a theory can be contradicted by an observation or the outcome of a physical experiment.

<sup>4</sup> This obligated citizenship exam was introduced by many European countries in this period. Recently it turned out, that an obligated citizenship exam violates the 1963 treaty, which had made Turkey an associate member of the EU. Therefore Turks don’t have to pass such an exam any more.

## Matthew Buckingham

I FEEL STRONGLY THAT THIS MOMENT represents an opportunity to rethink and deepen art education while introducing a new critical level. Currently, from the perspective of an artist living in the U.S. and studying in Europe, one of the main issues seems to be the question of what general profile, character, or criteria the proliferation of PhD programs will take on. One model that has emerged, of course, is research, and there are several others as well. But some of these seem to want to borrow methodologies from other disciplines – and in the worst cases are really only being used to justify the visual art PhD and not to define it. In the end I think the most important question is even more general: "What should constitute doctoral-level work in visual art?" If we compare the MFA to the BFA, what logical extension, challenge, and enrichment should an art PhD represent? Surely a PhD cannot prescribe ways of making art to visual artists, but must instead challenge ways of thinking about art, asking each artist to examine their practice from within, as the MFA does in relation to the growth expected from an in-coming artist holding a bachelor's degree.

## Michael Portnoy

FOR ME, ARTISTIC RESEARCH IS a kind of deranged conceptual horticulture: choosing a field at night that smells right and digging, peeling, and piling; developing taxonomies and hopping between the branches big and small, and pruning and grafting with a variety of homemade tools or those poorly copied from other disciplines and eras. It needs no institutional framework nor legitimization, simply intensive force, good combinatorial thinking, and commitment. Institutionalization implies the not-so-subtle suggestion of a set of well-made and well-worn tools wholly unsuited to the task of creating higher forms of irrationality.

In lieu of critical theory, there needs to be a new science of artistic imagination and invention. Since most work these days is thought-work, instead of handwork, we need to understand the ways in which thoughts and methods work and can work to create new thoughts and methods. In engineering, there are well understood and systematized heuristics to solve problems. For example, you're dealing with the transformation of movements and forces and encounter a problem – why not try replacing rectilinear or reciprocal movement by rotation? In the realm of art, things like Eno's *Oblique Strategies* take an intuitive stab at this kind of problem solving, but let's make a rigorous and thorough catalog of these strategies. And in regards to the forms and methodologies involved in contemporary conceptual art practices, an exhaustive OpenCyc-like ontology of types, subtypes and instances should be developed. Only then

can we have a real understanding of the tools and thought-styles we are currently using, and we'll gain valuable insights into how these methods and styles can be applied to other entities and evolve.

My work is equally thought and limbic based and involves a good deal of preparatory digging. Who doesn't do some degree of research these days? I find all these bases (research, process, knowledge, etc.) self-evident and better done than admitted openly. A better topic, or rather pastime, would be ontology, heuristics or "improvement"/futurology.

I also feel that the "political" should be shot in the back for walking around in Politics' shoes.

With regard to knowledge production, I think of my work rather as a noological mudslide, generating an experiential knowledge (for the player/participants) that is destabilizing and fraught with impediments, irresolvable ambiguities and para-consistent logics. Some of my work also serves as inventional aids, world-building games, or improbability machines. Overall, I'd say I'm far more interested in imagination than knowledge.

## **Paul Ryan**

*What is your definition of doing (artistic) research?*

NEVER FOUND USE for a definition.

*Does artistic research need an institutional framework or could it be legitimized differently?*

Could be legitimized by artistic yield-free of institutions as much as possible.

*Does the institutionalization of research imply an instrumental control and a reduced conception of art?*

Often it does.

*Or is does it also create room for matters such as unexpected and independent artistic forms, and openness to conflict and difference?*

Depends on how it is done.

*Do current research-notations and protocols limit the domain of artistic imagination?*

Yes.

*What could be the implications of the research discourse for*

*aesthetic qualities such as the non-discursive, the not-knowing, and the intuitive, and what does this mean for your practice?*

I learned about the Cloud of Unknowing early on in a monastic context. Transposing that to the art world seems to have yielded creative form, The Relational Circuit. The monastic man is an artist. Wallace Stevens.

*Do you see your own work as research-based?*

No.

*How does research affect your practice and your position as an artist?*

N/a.

*Or do you consider the topic of research obsolete in the realm of art?*

No, depends on circumstance.

*What, then, is a current topic or emergent theme in visual art that might be an alternative to the focus on research?*

Radical interest in the survival of human species.

*What does thinking in terms of research mean for your self-understanding as an artist?*

N/a.

*Can you, as an "artist", identify with the role and identity of a "researcher"?*

Sometimes.

*Or do you expect that the practice of artistic research will contribute to re-thinking and re-assessing the established concept of researcher?*

I don't know.

*Do you consider your practice with reference to ideas of political economy? How could an artistic (research) practice relate to current conditions of "capital" and to what are seen as the ubiquitous forms of "cognitive capitalism"? Do you see possibilities for the production of alternative social and economic strategies in your work?*

Yes.

*How could artists currently demand attention for emancipatory forms of knowledge and experience that enable the world to be thought differently?*

Demonstrate the worth of the forms.

*To what extent do you think and work in terms of "knowledge production"?*

I do not use these terms.

*Is the current "biopolitical" expansion of the notion of production a theme in your work? Are these terms familiar and/or of relevance for you in thinking about your practice?*

Not really familiar, perhaps relevant. Why does the art world not engage bioregional politics?

**Pedro Reyes**

## Guidelines for Group Research

### 1.

GIVE EVERYONE A RESEARCHER STATUS. There has to be an official invitation for every member of the group to have the agency of presenting hypotheses, testing existing ones, proving or disproving existing assumptions.

### 2.

Remember the motto – FIRST DO, THEN THEORIZE. Let me explain. If you theorize first this may lead to "critical paralysis", which is to get stuck trying to collect all the necessary information before going into action. In order to make discoveries, it is paramount to train your spontaneity. All eureka and serendipitous discoveries occur in a field of action where there was room to play. As Friedrich Schiller wrote, "It hinders the creative work

of the mind if the intellect examines too closely the ideas as they pour in." So as you gain confidence, you will lose fear of failure. It is important to rely on exercises and diverse techniques for this creative warm-up.

### 3.

But THEN, THEORIZE. A highly effective way to do this may be to gather the group in a circle and ask the group "what did we do?" Observe that we are not asking "what did we learn?" or "what did we accomplish?", but just a simple recollection of what we did. Ask all members of the group to speak at least once, and make their commentaries short. Anyone should be able to speak for a second time, if there is still one person who has not participated.

## **Robin Kahn**

ARTISTIC RESEARCH IS A PART OF every artist's working process. Everything I do is the same work. Research is living.

My job as an artist is to garner an understanding of humanity, while accepting that peoples' circumstances are temporal constructs shaped by the prevailing will of a population's dominant powers.

For the most part, institutionalized research reinforces an accepted history of events. Artistic research entails jumping

from that springboard, diving into the murky depths and coming up for air somewhere completely surprising. Art is the ability to communicate that journey with informed delight and understanding.

It is in that spirit that I organized *The Art of Sahrawi Cooking* my collaborative project with Sahrawi women for DOCUMENTA(13). The installation and series of events is inspired by my publication *Dining in Refugee Camps: The Art of Sahrawi Cooking* (Autonomedia 2010). I made this cookbook-in-solidarity with the people of Western Sahara whose homeland was violently occupied by Morocco in 1974.

In 2009, I spent a month living and cooking with Sahrawi women in their homes inside the Tindouf Refugee Camps in Algeria. Preparing meals with them in their improvised kitchens and eating with their families, I was able to document both the traditions and rituals of the Sahrawi meal as well as their personal stories of survival. With photos, drawings and images, my book is a culinary journal that provides a view into the complex role that Sahrawi women play in providing sustenance, fortitude and hope inside a society compromised by the effects of war, occupation and exile.

Because Sahrawi men serve in the military, they are largely absent from daily life in the camps. Therefore Sahrawi women are in charge of organizing all aspects of civic, cultural and family life. In order to successfully fulfill these responsibilities, they have formed cooperatives where the elders pass on their skills to the upcoming generation. For the past 38 years, Sahrawi women have relied on this peaceful spirit of cooperation as a successful strategy for empowering their

community and providing a sense of “home” to a people who are “home-less.”

Our collaboration in Kassel invites the public inside a typical family tent from the Tindouf Camps to share a Sahrawi meal and a conversation with women from Western Sahara about their lives. This project is designed to engage all of its participants in an interchange of mutual discovery and understanding. It embodies the importance of artistic research because, as Wallace Stevens wrote in 1945, “if there is nothing except reality and art, the mere statement of that fact discloses the significance of art.” (*Materia Poetica*)

## **Sam Belinfante**

WHEN ASKED TO THINK ABOUT “artistic research,” the first thing that comes to mind is the simple fact that everything we do as artists is research. This is something that often gets forgotten within new academic paradigms. Whether it be daubing paint on a canvas or performing a lecture we are constantly experimenting, fact-finding, and above all examining the world around us. The dictionary describes research as a “systematic investigation” and I think that all artistic activities can be described in this way whether these be material investigations, inquiries through subject matter or other collateral processes such as lectures, writing and documentation. None of this

*is* new, but what is new is the institutionalization of this activity and the commodification of both its practice and outcomes. I do not state these facts as a polemic against modern notions of artistic research or the art PhD (quite the opposite in fact) instead I merely want to point out the dangers of identifying areas of research as discreet or separate from other forms of inquiry – this process will inevitably lead to the formation of hierarchies and agendas within creative practices.

I do not believe that any attempts to delineate modes of research are useless; in fact I think that turning our attention to the particularities of what we and other practitioners do is vital and the processes of taxonomy and even questions of the ontological in relationship to art and research can be extremely productive. University research programs (such as the PhD) allow artists the time and space to intensively question the varying processes that are implicated in their practice(s), in a context that offers a multitude of research methodologies and languages.

As an artist and curator who works between the musical and visual art worlds, it is extremely important for me to not only describe what I am doing but to deconstruct the different rhetorics at play. The problem is that as soon as we start to deploy the panoply of words connected to these practices we end up inevitably furthering the hierarchies, differences and ideologies at play within and around them.

One word that keeps cropping up, for example, is “practice.” The word practice is in a constant state of flux between ideas of skill/ineptitude, rehearsal/performance and repetition/singularity. As a “practicing” artist I am constantly negotiating

these ideas and increasingly these various processes are foregrounded in both the showing of the work and discussion around it. The main problem with the idea of practice is that it is caught up in the western paradigm of art-making in which the artist moves constantly towards a final, complete work. Even after fifty years (or more) of aesthetic writing that has endeavored to expose the art work as transient, permeable and above all incomplete, the idea of the final event is still of central importance in the ontology of the artwork. Objects made as a corollary result of “the performance” or “the show”, are therefore imbued with a secondary status. Things such as scores and documentation are seen as part of the process but peripheral to the art itself. The places in which we practice are also pinned to this teleological narrative – there are spaces in which we rehearse, where we try things out and there are places where we display and perform.

The problematics inherent in this kind of rhetoric are paralleled in “research” – practice based research suggests a kind of trajectory from the experimentation and planning stage to the final presentation or paper. Art from research can often be read as though it is one kind of thinking grown out of a different kind of thinking that is necessarily precursory. Though this is one possible route there is a danger that this kind of system overwrites other more organic methodologies. In my work, for example, “finished” objects and events are still part of the working process – these things are caught, however, within a nexus of objects of a more ambiguous nature. Films, drawings, sculptures, talks, writings and recordings that are made both *of* and *for* “works” are of primary importance. This practice can

therefore be seen as a living archive, it is neither sketch, nor work-in-progress, nor the “finished article.”

The issue at the heart of “research” trajectories and narratives is the relationship between art and writing. Debates around practice-based PhDs invariably lead to debates around the status of writing in relationship to “making” and the importance or relevance of these texts to “the object” or “event.” Writing can seem redundant when you are endeavouring to make your objects “speak” for themselves. I actually think that this is one of the most important functions of academic research though – it is incredibly useful to transcribe or translate one’s practice into another language – to read one’s work as though a text and to describe the often indescribable.

Furthermore, artists *need* to be able to write. Whether it is a press release or an application for funding artists cannot escape writing and we are in dire need for decent writing for and by artists. The problems occur, for me, when traditional academic writing and object making are treated in exactly the same way. It comes down to syntax, I think – writing is often about making sense, about legibility. What excites me about art, however, is often its ability to obfuscate – to compound many complex and often contradictory ideas in a single gesture or even to expunge sense and meaning all together.

Nonetheless, the context of academic research allows us to look outside or beyond accepted formulas for thinking and making art and introduce terms and references from other areas. As an artist interested in music, I am curious about what we can learn from musicological tropes. The idea of the score, for example, is one that keeps cropping up in my own research.

As an object that oscillates somewhere in the space between the visual and the auditory the score is fertile ground for the interdisciplinarian - it is also extremely ambiguous in both its status and position. Looking at the etymology of “score” reveals a gradual, though significant, change in emphasis. The word originally denoted “a crack” or “a crevice”, a meaning that was deepened later into a “cut”, a “notch” or a “scratch.” Similarly, the verb “to scratch” is extended from a delineation of path or boundary in the early 17th century to a “fixed groove” in the late 18th century. Though subtle, this etymology reveals a noteworthy change in emphasis, a change from something ephemeral to something longer-lasting. It is my belief that this evolution is paralleled in the development of art and research. In the 21st century, “academia” remains steadfast in both its situation and value. The importance of writing and scholarly investigation in and around making art is growing – but at the same time its position is cementing. I think we need to rescue both “research” and the score from a kind of cultural entrenchment: the position and status of things such as research, documentation, performances and artworks must be constantly negotiated and reconfigured.

## Terike Haapoja

### 1.

I THINK THAT, MOST OF THE TIME, art as such is research. This applies to the concrete process of art making as well as to the general curiosity and research orientation of artists. Art is driven by questions like "what if..." or "why..." or "why not..." rather than by any idea fixed beforehand. This openness is also characteristic for art in relation to ethical questions. I do not believe in a universal description of art but I do think that – in the tradition of western art at least – art has always been a sort of basic research accompanying the research done in the field of philosophy or academia.

One might look at the artwork itself as just a tip of the iceberg, a kind of materialization point of ongoing research. However, for a long time the cultural emphasis has been on the produced artwork, not on the entire process. Thus, expertise has been given to people who mainly witness the ready art object rather than the process, i.e. critics, writers, curators instead of artists themselves. I see artistic research programs as ways to give room to the research part of the artistic practice: that which is usually only known to and by the artist and not part of the publication of the work. Institutionalization creates a framework and legitimizes the research part of art that always has been there. So for me, artistic research as a discipline or institutionalized practice does not in any sense define a genre or even lead to new forms of art. It is about expanding the concept of art and that (of the process) included.

When looking back at the history of art it is clear how the thinking in art affects the thinking in philosophy and vice versa, and how they both take part in the development of culture. The realm of the theoretical has always been connected to art. I see that the established fora of art-as-research work as platforms for developing this connection further.

## 2.

I have found that many of the artists who decide to work in the institutional framework through PhD trajectories etc. already have some connections to other kinds of research traditions such as scientific methods or sociological approaches. Then it is perhaps easier to link artistic research to other kinds of research traditions and work on art in an apparently research-based fashion. That can lead to interesting juxtapositions of different research traditions or to critical investigations of scientific research. The danger, I think, is that the academic form might sustain the conventional research attitude already imbedded in the artwork instead of challenging it.

On a basic level, I do not see a contradiction in the issue of whether art is research or not. The problems come when one has to formulate a research question (as one does in PhD programs) and plan the artistic process in relation to that. There is always a research question in artistic work, but mostly it is not linguistics one starts with. Art is research in and on the borderlines of conventional languages. That is the whole point. There is always a clash between the conventional language we use in academic discourse and the language of art. Research in art is by definition open: the process can move to directions totally

opposite from where it has started. However, in practice situations of artists working on their research for several years, the academic structure of the research might start limiting the artistic process. It loses momentum. You can talk your way out of it and make things look like research even though there is no actual risk taken. The challenge is in keeping the radicality and physicality of art in play while still opening more room for linguistic discourse.

When it comes to the not-knowing, I do not think that artistic research, writing and talking should or even could cover everything. It is complimentary to visual, auditive, tactile forms. There is room for silence, too.

### 3.

I do a lot of research for artwork, but it is not necessarily central to the outcome. The academic PhD research is a parallel practice to my art making, a process of reflection and an important link to other fields of language-based research.

Recently the issue of the spectator in the field of artistic research has come to my mind. In many contemporary forms of art, the place of the spectator has become increasingly activated. However, in artistic research projects, the spectator is passive with respect to the research object; s/he has only access to the research through new levels of representation. This also demonstrates that artistic research is primarily targeted to the professional audience, thus, to other professionals of art. What could be the role of the spectator ("reader") in artistic research, now that activated spectatorship becomes more and more central in terms of art forms. If one needs the spectator

to participate and if one engages in a form of research where writing resonates with the artwork, how then could the spectator be involved in the research process?

#### 4.

I like to think of myself as an explorer – a colleague of Amundsen or Scott even – rather than as a researcher. That is the nearest I can come. As an explorer, you may find something never experienced before, though it is certainly not guaranteed that you end up where you thought you would. Perhaps the notion explorer is better than researcher, because it refers to your entire body and life, not just to your relationship to research.

The understanding of knowledge production is changing all over, if you look at the concepts of situated knowledge or auto-ethnography or how natural sciences are taking more subjective, relational approaches into account. Artistic research is not an oddity in this respect, but part of a wider development connected to a broader questioning of the methodology of objective research and a search for new ways of understanding the world.

#### 5.

Obviously, there is an emphasis on process and knowledge rather than on the world of objects. I see this as a natural move, since one could consider the developments in 20th-century art as trials to formulate counter-strategies to capitalist economy. Almost all new forms of art in that time have been celebrated as liberation from the world of objects and thus from being reduced to commercial goods. To draw the attention to the

immaterial aspects of the work – research, knowledge – seems to me another version of this counter-strategy.

Knowledge rooted in capitalist economy and its structures is yet another issue. Academic artistic research is definitely not an outsider, but neither is it art. Possibly the academic form of artistic research or practice-based research needs to be well-established in more or less conventional forms before starting to create alternative structures of knowledge production. I believe that art itself is an emancipatory form of knowledge that enables the world to be thought of differently, i.e. art is highly relevant for the development of a new artistic research discourse.

## 6.

I like the concept of "knowledge production" quite a lot, since it suggests an idea of knowledge situated and developed by different players and in constant flux rather than something static. In my own artistic work, I do not reflect so much on the cultural or economic production processes, but on how knowledge is produced in entirely different contexts, such as among other species. To me, the notion of knowledge production opens up the inquiry what for and by whom knowledge is produced. There is a communicative undercurrent in the concept and it also holds the idea that knowledge has a function, that it is rooted in the community's needs. So, it might be possible to also look at the function of art and knowledge produced by artistic practices in society.

## Theaser Gates

RESEARCH IS CONTENT – raw material to be mined and made sense of through form. I regard research similar to how I regard other parts of the artistic process which require time for processing, skill of looking and rejecting, and a good editor. When I am engaged in creating, whether I am challenging existing land policy or making a pot, to the extent that I am learning through practice and listening I am doing research.

Artistic research as such does not need an institutional framework. When I have set aside time for deep engagement with an idea (space for research) and when there is a facility (library, lab, quiet space) I find myself productive. That is, some framework, whether institutional or otherwise, is needed for me. Often it is the conversation between my collaborators, staff, fabricators, and friends that spurs new understanding, increases stimulation around a topic, and ultimately facilitates to assimilate the analysis of varying forms of deep engagement. An analysis that would be less acute if it were not for the space of rigorous friendship. Institutions often help facilitate such a rigor.

Fortunately, we live in a time where there are many forms of legitimization in addition to traditional institutions. That is, artists could have credibility or legitimacy in places where they are deeply engaged – among them communities immediately affected by the work being done. At the same time, artists could be based in an institution without any interest or assimilation for their form of knowledge or content production, and

that would yield the opposite effect of legitimization.

The issue of limitations has to do with artistic ambition. If research is seen as only another form of cultural production or intellectual inquiry, then one has the ability to manipulate form with an artist's hand. The limitations are then about the artist's ability to manipulate symbols and codes, reordering them or at least pushing them around. This kind of engagement is both athletic (allows me to get stronger at the tasks of resistance, reaction, coalition building, etc.) and cathartic in that I am able to lean on what has value to me, rest in bodies of knowing, reflect flamboyantly or quietly whatever seems most worth thinking through. Research becomes a capacity, not a position of privilege. It is the mechanism that allows me to talk with strangers, communicate with god, and speak deeply to myself.

I do not normally discuss my work in terms of the research generated or produced. Maybe in part because the research ultimately takes another form besides traditional research. If I spend two years learning and reflecting on the life of Dave Drake, a craftsman who was born into slavery and is one of the earliest skilled craftsman to have a signature on his work in the United States, the research output could possibly take the form of a set of objects or the creation of a gospel choir. A clay pot and a 250-voice gospel choir might both qualify as forms of artistic production to me. To say that cultural and sometimes artistic production is a form of research would be a bridge too far for some. But for me research is the work that enables a final artistic contribution. Research in this sense is part of both production and practice.

However, it is completely reasonable that some artists have

chosen to use the notion of research as a kind of guise that would allow access to the battalions of power and resource. Then research has become a way to justify the artists' right to take part in the established community. As a result, I have always been skeptical of being included in a group if the forms that I engaged in really needed a lab coat, big glasses, or tidy hair. What I have always valued is that the true researcher takes pride in the process of research – the research as such is the work. That is awesome. However, I am very conscious of my interest in output. For me, the artistic practice has an open end. It is a place to land the investigative, the collective knowledge sharing, the generative. I want those things to be in the world or get twisted into a project; I want them to be materialized. To the extent that I can mold research into a considered outcome, the time spent feels artistic.

My project for Documenta 13, *12 Ballads for Huguenot House*, is about forms of social and economic strategies that shift the value of museum engagement and possibilities inherent in these opportunities for international platforms. On the surface, *12 Ballads* seems to be interested in the restoration of a German building with the reclaimed elements (modular wood, lath, siding, roofing material, etc.) of another building. While this material exchange seems reasonable and is part of the narrative, it is the opportunity to create a temporary economy for a team of apprenticing and highly skilled artists and craftsmen in Chicago and Germany that gets me excited. The project has created ten almost full time jobs over the course of 1½ years. These temporary openings in culture, that allows me to insert my particular interests and values into the arena of the

art world, look and function differently in other fields. Labor becomes symbolic and absolutely necessary. The project is also made possible because there is a constituency of collectors who are sympathetic to cultural flows and artistic causes. I mold the social largesse and interest in social justice, humanitarian stewardship, and new artistic form. An ecology, to be sure. An expanded practice I hope, but nonetheless complicated and hard to put any real qualifiers on. Research is inside, indeed implicit to the notion of the artist.

## **Tue Greenfort**

*1. What is your definition of doing (artistic) research? Does artistic research need an institutional framework or could it be legitimized differently?*

I BELIEVE ALL ARTISTS ARE DOING artistic research at some level. To do research is not a matter of a specific, qualified academic methodology, but is deeply rooted within artistic knowledge production per se. Studying material qualities and significance is just as legitimate to be categorized as artistic research as the artist proclaiming to appropriate research tools from journalism or scientific empirical methods. Having said this, it is obvious that an institutional framework is not needed for any artist's research practice. However, an institutional

framework could nurse and shape artistic research in forms of collaboration, bringing different groups of people together, and creating a productive setting for artistic research to happen interdisciplinary. Institutionalization could act as a frame or a filter for certain forms of expression. At the same time, it could also be a constructive setting for purposeful and focused research studies.

*2. Do current research connotations and protocols limit the domain of artistic imagination?*

A limitation in terms of framing and focus does not automatically imply a limitation of artistic imagination. I believe that framing and defining the artistic production setting – which by no means can be said to be neutral and without a cultural, ideological regime – are important for the imagination and often help it to flourish. Whether current research connotations and protocols limit the domain of artistic imagination is up to the actors involved. Imagination is the first step to change and to envision possible scenarios for production or even to avoid production and break the code of productivity. Redefinition is an active catalysis, not a sudden one out of the blue. Research connotations and protocols have been determined, thus, can consciously be changed and questioned by artists involved. It is not the case that artists are rare, fragile, and intense subjects without any ability to change. Artists are not the victims of a mainstream, professional, cultural production setting.

*Or could research-based art lead to novel forms of (critical)*

*consciousness?*

Absolutely!

*What could be the implications of the research discourse for aesthetic qualities such as the non-discursive, the not-knowing, and the intuitive, and what does this mean for your practice?*

I believe such a research discourse could initiate great change and spark an eruption and mutation of tropes within regimes controlling normative and hegemonic settings. In answering these questions, I would like to react by quoting William S. Burroughs from his book *My Education* (p. 25): "The answer to any question will be revealed when you stop asking questions and wipe from your mind the concept of questions."

*3. Do you see your own work as research-based?*

Today I would not use the phrase research-based for my own practice. Research-based has become a catchy term and a smart academic-type wording. I would prefer to be in dialogue with a more associative, cultural, knowledge production deriving from a playful, non-linear, non-hierarchic, collaborative, and messy state of mind. But if the term research-based can be stripped from its "seriousness" and art-qualification properties, I do see some of my work as being research-based.

*How does research affect your practice and your position as an artist?*

First of all, research makes you communicate across disciplines with a wide range of professionals and experts. It feeds back the very momentum of catalyzing specific knowledge and experiences from an overload of information to an audience and to people you work with in the field.

*Or do you consider the topic of research obsolete in the realm of art?*

That topic would never be, I guess, obsolete as long as art exists as part of an institutionalized cultural production. Research-based artist's production has become formalized and is now taught at universities and academies. A tradition in its own right. The relevant question might be how to escape that framing and re-vitalize the potential of artists' production.

*What, then, is a current topic or emergent theme in visual art that might be an alternative to the focus on research?*

Could it be, once again, to reconsider art's function as being part of the normative setting and continuously raise the question of its function and role within societal structures?

*4. What does thinking in terms of research mean for your self-understanding as an artist?*

The self is a dubious idea and self-understanding is like a jealous follower. I love to despise this question.

*Can you, as an "artist", identify with the role and identity of a*

*“researcher”?*

Yes why not! But then, on the other hand, why should I disclaim being an artist just for the sake of the identity of a “researcher”? *Or do you expect that the practice of artistic research will contribute to re-thinking and re-assessing the established concept of researcher?*

That depends on what the established concept of the researcher might be. I am not familiar with the precise definition. I do think this question leads back to the legitimization of the artist as someone who actually creates valuable knowledge. It seems to me that the term artist has been mis-credited and now we need to be researchers to be taken serious. Where this flaw is rooted and how deep it goes would be interesting to know.

*5. Do you consider your practice with reference to ideas of political economy?*

I believe my practice to consist of references to ideas of political economy. By referring to and working with ideas of political economy and engaging with such ideas as an artist one is most likely to relate to and – even more ambitiously – be capable of shaping and re-assessing ideas of political economy.

*6. To what extent do you think and work in terms of “knowledge production”?*

Mostly “knowledge production” is an important part of what

I do, but it is not a rule and it can become so unbearably self-righteous to always think in terms of knowledge production. Art has become a rigorous signifier strictly pointing to the good and doing good deeds. Today, with the setting of progress and efficiency, anti-productivity can be so liberating! But maybe this is an answer to another question.

*Is the current “biopolitical” expansion of the notion of production a theme in your work?*

I couldn't tell.

*Are these terms familiar and/or of relevance for you in thinking about your practice?*

Not really.

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