

After an omnipresent Research Decade, the concept of artistic research currently seems to be in need of a recharge. Pressing questions are: Should we talk about a postresearch situation or a post-research condition? Could this be compared with how poststructuralism relates to structuralism as its philosophical comprehension and the elaboration of its consequences? And how could a postresearch condition address contemporary art practices?

To answer these questions, an intensive program of workshops, presentations, propositions, and screenings took place as EARN/Smart Culture Conference in Utrecht in the spring of 2021.

This publication reflects further on discussions and debates, while providing programmatic elements for a future artistic research agenda.

Metropolis M Books, PO Box 19263,
NL 3501 DG Utrecht, www.metropolism.com

ISBN 9789081830270

Metropolis M Books

The Postresearch Condition

With

Amanda Beech

Denise Ferreira da Silva

EARN Working Groups

Florian Cramer

Henk Slager

Hito Steyerl

Irit Rogoff

Peter Osborne

Rachel Armstrong

Rolf Hughes

Terike Haapoja

and Vytautas Michelkevičius

The Postresearch Condition

2 Editorial

Henk Slager

5 No Going Back – But Not Forward to There Either Once More on Art and/as Research

Peter Osborne

Response: Hito Steyerl

15 Post-research Publishing and Writing: Atlas of Diagrammatic Imagination

Vytautas Michelkevičius

19 Artistic Research – dead on arrival?

Florian Cramer

26 Vulnerability, Animality, Community

Terike Haapoja

27 The Postresearch Condition.

EARN Working Groups: Methodologies,
Sustainability, On Value, Politics of
Aesthetics, and Curatorial Studies

43 Embodying Knowledge: On Trust, Recognition, Preferences

Rachel Armstrong and Rolf Hughes

51 Art's Intolerable Knowledge

Amanda Beech

59 Corpus Infinitum – a thought experiment

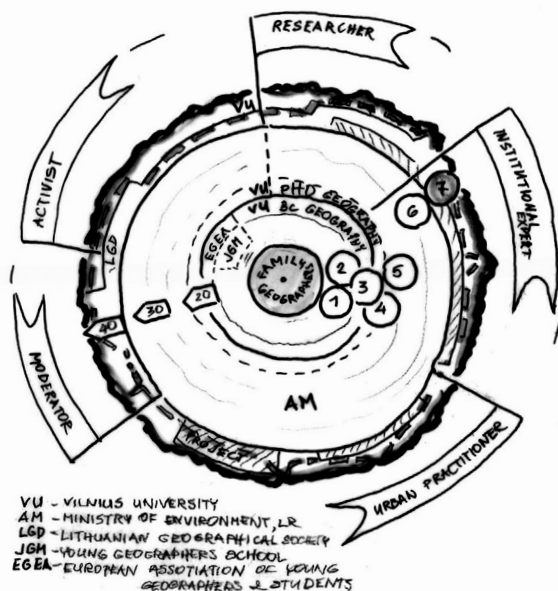
Denise Ferreira da Silva

67 Not Yet

Irit Rogoff

RINGS OF PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

Graphic Visualization



- 1 THE MOST BEAUTIFUL CONTOUR MAPS AT SCHOOL
1985
- 2 THE FASTEST & CLEANEST REGISTERS OF FIELD WORK
1987
- 3 THE CLEARST HAND-MADE CONSPICUOUS OF LECTURES
1990-1995
- 4 PHD: 320 PAGES WITH 172 PAGES OF SCHEMES
2001
- 5 HOBI PHOTOGRAPHY DRAWING PAINTING, EXHIBITIONS
2003-2009
- 6 BOOK EDITORING & IDEAS OF LAYOUTS
2012-2014
- 7 ART OF HOSTING* TRAININGS, THE SYSTEM OF METHODS OF GROUP WORK, GRAPHIC FACILITATION
2014...

* Giedrė Godienė, Rings of Professional Growth, 2018. In: Atlas of Diagrammatic Imagination: Maps in Research, Art and Education, Eds. Vytautas Michelkevičius, Lina Michelkevič, Vilnius Academy of Arts Press, 2019

Editorial

Henk Slager

EARN, the European Artistic Research Network, has played a significant role in the international debate on the emancipation of research carried out by artists. However, after an omnipresent Research Decade, the concept of artistic research seems to be in urgent need now of a process of recharging. In looking back on this debate of the last ten years, we gradually found out that there may have been an overemphasis on disciplining artistic research – particularly caused by frequently raising the ontological question ‘What is Artistic Research?’. That unintentionally bureaucratic and organizational focus ultimately seems to have restricted room for designating and situating the specific areas of attention that can be thought and imagined in a different way during artistic research.

Therefore, EARN recently decided to shift its working method and ambition and started reorganizing itself as a strategic apparatus that identifies the structural and programmatic elements for a future artistic research agenda. In so doing, five working groups were developed with a focus on a transversal approach to the following areas of attention: Sustainability, Methodology, Value, Politics of Aesthetics, and Curatorial Studies. These groups presented and discussed their findings during this year’s EARN conference taking place in Utrecht – and online.¹ Their reports and ingredients for topical artistic research narratives are included in this publication.

Besides, at the beginning of a new decade it is also time to take stock and ask how to rethink or reclaim various elements of the previous debate. Despite the hegemonic pressure of formatting re-

gimes and academic routines, how could we keep the research paradigm open and experimental? To this end, it seems necessary – as is clearly evident in the reports of the five working groups – to move away from disciplinary curricula and to demand space for other, more engaged, epistemological possibilities that are related to the current conditions we are living out. Subsequently, artistic research is understood performatively: as a transformative potential, as a space for negotiation, as an articulation of unfinished thinking, as a mode of world constituting. And thus the inevitable question arises: does this shift mean that we now have a situation that calls for a post-qualitative interpretation?

Peter Osborne has recently published about the topical situation of the concept of “post”. This prefix became popular in the twentieth century, when it was critically related to modernist ideas: philosopher Lyotard spoke of a postmodern condition in the 1970s, and art historian Rosalind Krauss introduced the postmedial condition in the 1980s.

In the meantime, Osborne argues, because of the dominant globalization paradigm, the accompanying knowledge economy, and the ubiquitous awareness of contemporaneity, a different temporality has emerged that no longer calls for a thinking in historical periodization, but for a thinking in terms of a transdisciplinary ontology. As an extension of these reflections, we invited Peter Osborne for the EARN conference and asked him to give, in dialogue with Hito Steyerl, an opening keynote contribution on thinking in terms of postresearch.

The following pressing Artistic Research questions were formulated as a point of departure for the conference: ‘should we talk about a postresearch situation or a postresearch condition? Could this be compared with how poststructuralism relates to structuralism as its phil-

¹ The EARN/NWO Smart Culture Conference *The Postresearch Condition* took place January 26-30, 2021. It was organized in collaboration with HKU University of the Arts Utrecht, NWO (Dutch Research Council), and BAK, basis voor actuele kunst, Utrecht. More information: www.hku.nl/postresearchcondition

osophical comprehension and the elaboration of its consequences? And how could a postresearch condition address contemporary art practices?’

At the same time, an impetus was given for formulating the conditions for current research practices. ‘To answer these questions, it is important to start from the three conceptual spaces that fundamentally determine what we mean by artistic research: creative practice (experimentality, art making, potential of the sensible); artistic thinking (open-ended, speculative, associative, non-linear, haunting, thinking differently); and curatorial strategies (topical modes of political imagination, transformational spaces for encounters, reflection and dissemination) and to comprehend these spaces in their mutual, dynamic coherence as a series of indirect triangular relationships.

From whatever conceptual space one departs, an artistic research practice could signify a transversal constellation – as a creative proposition for thought in action. Yet, that mode of research could never be reduced to a method of one of the three constituents. Thus, artistic research cannot be exactly equated with creative innovation, or disciplinary knowledge production, or political activism. Consequently, it seems urgent now to profoundly challenge and question the issue of how to articulate and present the condition of the intersection between the three conceptual spaces.’

A first answer to this problem statement was given by Vytautas Michelkevičius, who elaborates on his project *Atlas of Diagrammatic Imagination*. The aforementioned transversal constellation, he argues, calls for a diagrammatic map: on the one hand as a tool for conducting artistic research, on the other as a dissemination opportunity to make research public. In contrast to the traditional, linear script, such a map could offer a

choreographic structure with the potential to present multi-layered reasoning and many-sided arguments.

The dynamic map of the three conceptual spaces also seems to be found in collective forms of research practice that manifest themselves mainly outside the Western art world. Florian Cramer argues that it is precisely there that we can find transdisciplinary, self-organized, and open-ended forms of artistic thinking that are not guided by managerial visions (such as the *Vienna Declaration* with its strict academic ideas about peer-review and validation), thereby showing exactly what can exist outside forms of disciplining that must be reclaimed by artists as artistic research.

Another way of transgressing the disciplinary framework can be found in the research of Terike Haapoja. In her project *Vulnerability, Animality, Community* she shows how artistic research can contribute to forms of subjecthood and citizenship that are no longer filled in by anthropocentric frameworks that use the rhetoric of exclusivity. In other words: a world is being built where care and attention form the basis of coexistence and communality.

A similar perspective on a more-than-human world can be found in the contribution of Rachel Armstrong and Rolf Hughes. According to them, the current, uncertain, planetary situation forces artistic research to develop expositional strategies that can address fundamental questions such as what do we value. This calls for new knowledge instruments for developing fundamentally ecological approaches that enable escape from the gravitational pull of industrially-centred knowledge frameworks. New Materialism could be such an epistemological strategy. In her contribution *Art’s Intolerable Knowledge*, Amanda Beech argues that both artistic research and materialist phi-

losophy share an interest in how forces that are external to the mind produce and shape reality. Artistic research as well as materialist philosophy leaned on the discoveries of science as the premises for an apprehension of a world that is inhuman, nonhuman, and posthuman.

Such an approach also calls for a different, more unsettling understanding of the foundations laid by Kant (objective rationality, universal morality, autonomous art) of the philosophical architecture of western modernity. In her thought experiment *Corpus Infinitum*, Denise Ferreira da Silva therefore departs from Kant's description of "judgment" (which ultimately formed the basis of a triangle comparable to artistic research: science, ethics, and aesthetics), in order to arrive finally at a non-binary image of existence: a body without limits.

This image provides a striking example of what Irit Rogoff, in her concluding remarks *Not Yet*, describes as epistemic invention. Not a struggle against, but a struggle for: engendering that which does not yet exist. And it is precisely here where the task of topical artistic research should be situated: finding new frameworks for rehearsing the urgencies of the day.

No Going Back – But Not Forward to There Either: Once More on Art and/as Research

Peter Osborne

What is the place of art practices within the university in Europe today? In particular, what is the place of art practices within university “research”? And what is the place of such research within art practices themselves? More particularly, what *should be* the place of art practices within university research and of such research within art practices, broadly speaking?

These questions appear straightforward, but are in many ways peculiar. They arise from a quite particular – and residually disputed – set of institutional conditions: namely, the transposition of a model of research from the humanities to art practices, as a way of unifying certain governmental funding mechanisms within higher education institutions, as part of a more general attempt to render all academic research more immediately instrumentally economically beneficial to capital. We are not primarily talking about education here, then, or even the production of “knowledge” in an epistemologically justifiable or scientifically meaningful sense; let alone anything as eccentric to dominant discursive norms in this area as “experience” or “truth”. We are talking primarily about value, in its economic sense as money, and the state of its relations to the production of those distinctive forms of social experience historically associat-

ed with the word “art”, understood here as the product of a set of institutionally validated “research-based” practices.

The governmentally institutionalized version of research in the humanities on which “artistic practice as research” is modelled itself derives from the sciences, of course, and the organizational extension to the humanities of models of funding scientific research in an earlier period. That transposition was arguably already problematic, although it fitted well with the ‘theoretical anti-humanism’ of the French structuralist project of the 1960s, for example. The dispute then was a philosophical dispute internal to the history and philosophy of “science” itself.¹ This model of ‘science as research/research as science’ finds its antonym in the early Adorno’s (anti-Horkheimerian) Benjamin-inspired slogan: ‘the idea of science is research; the idea of philosophy is interpretation.’² Interpretation as a relation to truth rather than to knowledge, that is; and interpretation as a relation to the truth of art, in particular, insofar as it is philosophical Romanticism that provides the main elements of the constructive, non-hermeneutical practice of interpretation that is at stake here. The idea of science is research, the idea of philosophy is interpretation, but what, we might ask, is the idea of art itself?³

Let us leave this question unanswered for the time being. But let us *not leave it unasked*. For it renders ironical much of what falls into the category of “artistic research” or artistic “practice as research” today.

Our questions, then, are in the first instance institutional questions, relevant to a relatively diverse set of institutional forms, within a broadly unifying art-organizational project in Europe, which is part

1 In this respect, Althusser and Foucault continued the interlocking legacies of Bachelard and Canguilhem, respectively. For a comparative presentation, see Cristina Chimisso, ‘Narrative and Epistemology: Georges Canguilhem’s Concept of Scientific Ideology’, *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 54 (2015), pp. 64–73

2 Theodor W. Adorno, ‘The Actuality of Philosophy’ (1931), *Telos* 51 (1977), pp. 120–133; p. 126

3 For all the sharpness of Adorno’s science-philosophy opposition, the sense in which research is constitutively ‘scientific’ is nonetheless a broad one associated with the idea of the organization of knowledge (as in the German *Wissenschaft*), rather than the more narrowly empirical (inductive) and later primarily experimental sense that the word acquired, especially in the Anglophone world. It is this more practical, narrow experimental sense, associated with the idea of the ‘laboratory’, that was the basis for early 20-th century imaginings of artistic practices as themselves scientific, from Soviet Constructivism onwards

of a general restructuring of the model of the university in European capitalist societies. I shall not address them at the empirical level of their institutional diversity, however, but rather in broad strokes, the applicability of which to particular institutional situations I leave you to judge for yourselves. Certain descriptive elements in what follows are, however, inevitably marked by some of the particular institutional pathologies of the UK (as the reader will no doubt recognize), which represents something of a limit case in this scenario. This is justified by the methodological principle that one best understands a phenomenon as it manifests itself at – and moves between – its extremes, not at its means.

This is an institutional situation then, descriptively, but these are questions that must also engage the *extra*-institutional significance of the practices at stake if these institutions are to retain more than a splintering veneer of intellectual legitimacy and are to perform some *social*, *cultural* and *existential* functions beyond their role in allocating positions in the job market and distributing commodities within the culture industry. The ideas of the university (however attenuated) and the art school (even within the university) demand it.

So let us take a step back and very briefly remind ourselves of the fundamental *double-coding* that structures and to a certain extent *energizes*, and to another extent *kills*, the field of “artistic research” in Europe, whereby the phrase “artistic research” has two main and unhappily related fields of reference. The first is broad, deriving from the historical and conceptual relations between the concepts of “art” and “research” in Europe (and its colonial extensions) since the Renaissance. The second is narrow, deriving from the education-institutional conditions which currently over-determine that relation-

ship, squeezing it up inside a very small administrative box, within which “art” is transformed – and, some would say, largely *negated* – by those practices through which it legitimates itself as “research”, as the condition of its institutional existence. Be this as part of “practice as research” PhD projects or as research-funded and research-funds-generating academic staff practices.

The problem is “how to live inside the box?” – or at least, to make a living inside the box – while retaining and developing an art practice that does more than reproduce the conditions of its own negation as art. This is a thoroughly dialectical – which is to say, deeply contradictory – structure of experience.

1 The double-coding of “artistic research” and its contradictions

The first, broad field of reference here is that of the historical exchanges between “artistic” and “scientific” practices, whereby new art practices developed via reflections on artistic uses of scientific ideas and techniques. These art practices thereby came to embody “research” (it is said today), not in the manner now conventionally embraced by the term “applied research” (i.e. not merely relative to the deployment of the scientific knowledge in a particular instrumental context), but rather in a different way, more difficult to explain, associated with the appropriation of such knowledges into the specifically artistic logic of a work. Artistic research in this broad sense is as old as the modern European concept of art; that is to say, it dates back to the Renaissance. Its emblematic figure is Leonardi da Vinci. Its primary fields from da Vinci to Duchamp were studies in geometry and optics, on the one hand, what we would now call “materials” research, on the other: research into the physical properties of artistic materials. Initially it was quite

narrowly and conventionally defined; later expanding into the industrial materials of laboratory Constructivism in the early 1920s and more widely still thereafter, up to the principled abolition of material limits on artistic materials that was the outcome of the avant-garde practices of the 1960s: AKA contemporary art. What is artistic about “artistic research” here is not the research itself but its appropriation to an artistic context and its specifically artistic deployment or its artistic mediation: the *transformation of knowledges and technologies into artistic techniques*, we might say. This is still the material historical basis of all art practices. The formalist-modernist conception of medium that was briefly critically hegemonic in the USA for the two decades following the second World War, reduced and “purified” the fields of such research, prior to its explosive expansion. But the first decisive break in this tradition within modern Western art appears, retrospectively, in the transition away from cubism (with its combination of geometrical and optical concerns) that took place in Duchamp’s work around 1912-13 as the condition of the production of the *Large Glass* (1915–1923); along with the invention of the readymade as a kind of parallel process, or limit-point, reiterating the artistically negated status of the merely aesthetic dimension of material means.

Here it is the *idea of art itself* that was subject to various transformations as a result of an intellectually re-orientated practice that drew upon a range of “researches”, including Riemann’s 4-dimensional geometry and mathematics, poetics and linguistics, in its restoration of an allegorical model of art’s ideality. Such was Duchamp’s eccentric scientific neo-Platonism. This intellectual, and to a certain extent “research-driven” process, flirted with that *false dignity* provided to art by the idea of science that so appalled

Dada, with its demand for absolute negations and new immediacies. (The status of photography within this process is interestingly ambiguous.) As we can see, for example, in Duchamp’s friend Francis Picabia’s description of his late Paris-Dada ballet of 1924, *Relâche* (with Eric Satie & Jean Borlin). The work, he declared, with a critical nod towards Duchamp, is: “perpetual movement, life, it is the minute of happiness we all seek; it is light, richness, luxury, love, far from prudish conventions; without morality for fools, *without artistic research for the snobs*.”⁴ By 1924, the educational-class-coding of the idea of artistic research was already established, in imaginary opposition to the downwardly mobile, class-dissenting activism of the avant-gardes.

The disjunctive conjunction between an ideational content (derived from “research” – though more prosaically we might better just call it “reading and thinking”) on the one hand, and the contingencies of active engagement with material processes on the other (Picabia’s ‘perpetual movement, life’), is at the dialectical core of Duchamp’s works. And it determines the distinctive temporalities associated with their strategic anticipations of reception – their various lives, deaths and rebirths – as a central component of Duchamp’s famous “affirmative irony”. The idea of art is transformed here – note – not by research into or on the “idea of art”, but by the accompaniment of the *negation* of art’s then-dominant characteristic (“the retinal”) with research into alternative means to express ideas: not the idea of art (contra Kosuth), but *ideas per se* – in Duchamp’s case, largely erotic ideas mediated by a fixation on a particular traditional gender narrative (*The Bride Stripped Bare...* etc). It is not the ideational aspect alone that is the philosophical aspect of Duchamp’s practice here, but the reconceptualization of its relations to

4 Picabia, quoted in Calvin Tomkins, *Duchamp: A Biography*, Chatto & Windus, London, 1997, p. 264; emphasis added

5 See Peter Osborne, *Anywhere or Not At All: Philosophy of Contemporary Art*, Verso, London and New York, 2013; and *The Postconceptual Condition: Critical Essays*, Verso, London and New York, 2018. Duchamp was famously himself an early player in this institutionalization, of course, by virtue of his roles in the curation

its material means and modes of expression and, crucially, their anticipated negation of aesthetic reception. This extraordinary model of the structure of artistic practice endures into the postconceptual character of contemporary art.

Historically, Duchamp (along with Futurism, Soviet Constructivism and Productivism) is a transitional precursor to the more generalized ontological transformation of Western art into a generic postconceptual art that occurred *art-institutionally* from the mid-1950s through to the 1970s, to produce “post-formalist” modes of practice that were belatedly recognized in their unity as what we now call “contemporary art”.⁵ This art caused something of a still-unresolved crisis in the craft-based pedagogical practices of the art school, leading to a deeply unhappy relation to the necessity of ‘theory’/thinking, the broad history of which (often a history of ferocious disavowal) there is no space here to reprise. Conceptual Art in its restricted sense of an initially anglophone (but swiftly global) art movement, the canonical works of which run from the early 1960s through to the late 1970s, was in various ways a response to the changing cognitive conditions of the visual cultures of capitalist societies – however (often comically) philosophically restricted its canonical modes of self-understanding may have been.⁶ As a result, it established the artistic conditions for the reimagining of art practice as itself ‘research’ within universities in the 1990s.

Enter, stage right, the dead hand of academization and certification: the anti-intellectual incorporation of the intellectual aspects of art practices into art-educational institutions via the *administrative* paradigm of “research” in university systems reorientating themselves to the changing

capital-function of education. This is the narrow field of reference of the phrase “artistic research” today, or “practice as research” for short. In its narrow field of reference, the phrase “artistic research” denotes a model of research based on the structure of the *funding-application* which, at its least worst, is applied retrospectively to art practices, for purely instrumental reasons, to raise funds. However, at its rapidly expanding worst, it comes to determine the productive logic of art practices themselves, thereby negating what we might still think of as their “art character”: their capacity at once to produce and to withhold meaning through the articulation of a totality of components in a manner that engages yet remains irreducible to discourse, let alone to being “read” as the answer to a set of “research questions”.

This model of research is structured by a presentational sequence common to most research-funding applications, which runs something like this:

- * research context
- * research questions
- * research approach and methods
- * research process
- * research outcomes/outputs
- * dissemination/exhibition
- * impact/exhibition (media and audience statistics).

The question is: is this a structure of production – rather than of opportunistic re-presentation – likely to produce a critically significant work of contemporary art? Other than as a kind of meta-work self-consciously based on the parodic repetition of the art-educational institutional idea of ‘practice as research’? A kind of hyper-academic variant of the mimetic neo-conceptualism of an artist like Jon-

of the collection of Katherine Drier's Société Anonyme (the first museum of modern art in the USA), in the staging of the International Exhibitions of Surrealism, and in managing the acquisition and display of his own work by the Philadelphia Museum of Modern Art, in the mid-1950s

6 See Peter Osborne, ‘Conceptual Art and/as Philosophy’, in Jon Bird & Michael Newman (eds), *Rewriting Conceptual Art: Critical and Historical Approaches*, Reaktion Books, London, 1999, pp. 47–65; and *Conceptual Art*, Phaidon Press, London and New York, 2002

athan Monk, stripped of the melancholy produced by his objects' historical homelessness: mimetic academic neo-institutionalism, we might call it.

The question answers itself, I think. No, it is not likely: it is a set of rules for producing a new kind of academic art, in which the idealized 18th-century European model of ancient Greek classicism is replaced by an idealized organizational model of the production of art as research.

It is disturbing to see the work of serious artists re-imagined and re-presented in this sad corporate-academic form, as the embodiment of a denuded "research", as a means to generate funding. It is equally disturbing to see the weaknesses of other practices rendered transparent as the product of the formal academic exercise in terms of which they have been conceived.

The question of the art character of a work of contemporary art is, of course, contentious – and constitutively so – since it cannot, in principle, be settled by any kind of definition, or even retrospective totalization, since it is radically historically *motile*. (Hence the futility of much of the analytical philosophy of art.) As a historically particular form of modern art, contemporary art, in the critical sense of the term, continues to aspire to exceed its own previous manifestations and conditions. But as a very bare minimal (and insufficient) condition, since we were talking of Duchamp, let us take Duchamp's idea of the personal art coefficient: the personal art coefficient is like an arithmetical relation between the unexpressed but intended and the unintentionally expressed.⁷

That is to say, art is a relation between an art idea (which, as an idea, is in a certain sense infinite) and the contingent materiality of its means of actualization – mediated, we might add, by its conditions of reception.

Nothing in the administrative idea of art "practice as research" can get close to the ontological structure of such a thing. The reflected combination of *construction and mimesis* (or to use a more subjective language: intentionality, intuition and the unconscious) is irreducible to the administrative model of practice as research. We are thus drawn to conclude that in its administrative mode, *art "practice as research" negates art practice as art*. Not because art is "aesthetic" and research is not (contemporary art is not 'aesthetic art'); nor because art is not conceptual (contemporary art is a conceptual art); but because the *logic of the practice* of the administrative idea of research and the logic of artistic production are significantly different.⁸ Even if we leave aside the question, so important to Duchamp himself, of the spectator's constitutive role in the art character of the work, and the artist's strategic anticipations and *deferrals*, of those conditions of reception. "Deferral" (along with "delay") being the key word here, from a Duchampian point of view – a temporal suspension that *ruins* the "turnover time" of the process of valorization. This is part of the point of "art" in capitalist societies: the temporality of the artwork and the temporality of the commodity are quite different, even though the artwork is a commodity – a commodity with a socially contradictory structure.

So, to summarize: there is a contradiction between the broad and the narrow fields of the art-research relation. This is a contradiction that is "lived" – more or less destructively – by artists subjected to the administrative paradigm of art practice as research. How might we theorize the character of this contradiction a little more precisely – give it a more definite conceptual shape – in order to explore a little more the range of its mediating conditions?

7 Marcel Duchamp, 'The Creative Act' (1957), in Michel Sanouillet and Elmer Peterson, eds, *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp* (1973), de Capo, New, nd, pp. 138–40; p. 139

8 For the general idea of a logic of practice, see Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (1980), trans. Richard Nice, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1990

My suggestion is that we construct an analogy with Marx's theorization of the development of the capitalist labour process, by applying his concept of subsumption – specifically, the four-fold form of *formal, real, hybrid and ideal* subsumption – to the relationship between art practices and the institutionalized structures of art “practice as research”, to which they are subsumed within art schools in universities.

2 Negotiating the contradiction: formal, real, hybrid and ideal subsumptions of art practice by the administrative structures of ‘practice as research’

Marx uses the concept of subsumption to grasp the ways in which the production of use values in a labour process are subjected to the social form of the capitalist production of exchange-values via the wage relation (the sale of labour-power).⁹ His account is centred on a distinction between two main versions of this process, which, for our purposes here, may be simplified as follows:

I *Formal subsumption* in which the subsumption of labour to capital (labour-power taking the social form of variable capital), via the wage, leaves the structure of the labour process itself (what Marx calls ‘concrete labour’) unchanged from previously, for the production of a particular kind of commodity. The worker is now paid a wage but the production process carries on as before.

II *Real subsumption* in which capital's control over the labour-power it has purchased (by virtue of this contractual relation) is used to transform the labour process, both organizationally and technologically, in order to produce more value within a standard unit of time: i.e. to increase the rate of surplus value and hence also of “exploitation”, in Marx's technical political-economic sense of the term.

Marx associated these two forms of

subsumption with absolute and relative surplus value, respectively, and associated the development of capitalism with the movement from formal to real subsumption.

Now, to use this distinction in the context of the administration of artistic “practice as research” is to use it analogously. I do not intend a direct application of Marx's concepts to “academic labour” (as some have attempted),¹⁰ since research outputs – PhDs and the products of other artistic “practices as research” – are not commodities sold in the market by the universities that purchased the artistic labour-power of their producers. Research in the arts and humanities in Europe is generally not literally commodity production. Rather, the subsumption to capital happens here via the *mediation of the state* (research councils) that supports wages on behalf of “capital in general” and rewards universities for their research productivity via various distributive mechanisms of grant-giving, involving assessments of both research proposals and outputs.

Nonetheless, the university takes on the capital-function of responsibility for the labour process itself – here, the research process – and attempts to control it via its imposition of an administrative model of research. The presumption being that the more tightly research is controlled by this model, the more efficacious its outputs will be to “capital in general”. Hence the increased emphasis within the UK, for example, on the planning of the production of so-called “impact”. Initially, a retrospective measure of social value, quickly turned into a prospective target, thereby transforming the production process itself, which is the main measure of capital's control. Hence also the emphasis on so-called “open access” (for which institutions are charged by academic publishers: open access is an expensive commodity),¹¹ so that the *general* capital-function of the state may be legitimated, supposedly over and above

9 For a summary of Marx's four forms, see Patrick Murray, ‘The Social and Material Transformation of Production by Capital: Formal and Real Subsumption in Capital, Volume 1’, in Richardo Bellofiore and Nicola Taylor, eds, *The Constitution of Capital: Essays on Volume 1 of Marx's Capital*, Palgrave, Basingstoke, 2004, pp. 243–253; section 3, pp. 250–66.

10 See Krystian Szadkowski, ‘Towards an Orthodox Marxian Reading of Subsumption(s) of Academic Labour Under Capital’, *Workplace: A Journal of Academic Labor*, no. 28, 2018, pp. 9–29

the interests of particular competing capitals using the research-based knowledge as a means of production.

So, while all academic research is formally subsumed to the model of academic research labour at the level of the wage-relation, it only becomes “really” subsumed to the extent to which the research itself is overdetermined by the new administrative forms and requirements of the research system. Just as there are struggles within the labour process over its transformation in the move from formal to real subsumption, so researchers struggle with the contradiction between their own artistic/research practices and those of the institution’s administration of research, as research is ever more decisively “really” subsumed to its capital function.

The irony specific to the art school context is that real subsumption *destroys the ontological form of the product that legitimates the process as a production of “art practices”* and hence as a kind of social practice with a distinctive use-value, associated historically with a certain instrumental “uselessness”. The use-value of art is grounded in its “uselessness”. This is a threat to the new imaginary of the university-based art school. Hence the need for universities to counter it by industrializing “creativity” as research-and-development for the so-called “creative industries”.

Under current social and political conditions in Europe, we are more likely to get “art schools without art” than we are to get any kind of “postresearch” condition.

To survive as an artist-researcher within this context, there is thus a need to cultivate a kind of dual-consciousness by which the immanent logic and artistic significance of a practice can be translated into the administrative language of “practice as research”, hopefully without thereby destroying it in the process. Structurally, however, this dual-consciousness and

double-coding of a practice can only be a temporary solution, if the capital logic of the transformation of the university – real subsumption by proxy – continues in the manner in which it is currently proceeding.

But what of “hybrid” and “ideal” forms of subsumption? Given the merely analogical character of the formal and real subsumption of academic labour to capital in the university, these are in some respects more applicable categories.

III *Hybrid (Zwitter) subsumption* (a term Marx uses only once in *Capital, Volume 1*) is not, as its name might suggest, a situation in which there is a mixture of “formal” and “real” subsumption to capital within a labour process – that is true of any actual labour process – elements of which are transformed by capital’s control and elements of which remain as historically inherited from a previous mode of production, though nonetheless subjected to the wage-form. Rather, hybrid subsumption is a form of subsumption of the production of value to capital that takes places without or “outside” of the wage-form. In “hybrid” subsumption labour is subsumed to (put under the power of) capital via social relations other than the wage-form. Marx’s examples are usury, putting-out, and the so-called “domestic system”. In this respect, hybrid subsumption is a “transitional” form.¹²

This is perhaps closer to the economic form of various types of artistic production within which, e.g., a gallery will provide regular finance for an artist’s subsistence in return for a percentage of their future sales. Something not dissimilar is happening when a university employs someone, in part, in order to obtain the right to enter their future research outputs into a money-generating research assessment process. This is a capitalist process, but *not at the level of production*. Hybrid subsumption can compensate capital for its lack of direct control over production. Finally, there is:

11 In 2019 the largest English-language academic journal publisher, Elsevier, had an operating profit of 37% (£2.63bn)

12 This is the term that Marx uses in his economics manuscripts of 1861–63, where these concepts are first introduced

IV *Ideal subsumption*. This is a more obscure category within Marx's writings to which attention has been drawn attention by Patrick Murray whereby, alongside capitalist production, a labour process is treated as if it were "for-profit" commodity production based on wage-labour, even though it is not. It is thus 'subjugated by capitalism... in thought', though not in the 'reality' of its social relations.¹³ Marx's example is:

The self-employing worker [who] is his own wage-labourer; his own means of production appears to him in his own mind as capital. As his own capitalist he puts himself to work as wage-labourer.¹⁴

Today, this kind of self-disciplining of the self-employing increasingly applies across the so-called "gig economy", in which self-employing workers are reimagined as "entrepreneurial" subjects, as well as to a variety of economic relationships that artists enter into.

Applied to universities, and the labour of academic and artistic research, the idea of ideal subsumption has been used to describe the way in which administrative mechanisms function as part of a public management/human resources strategy of control; and also as preparation for further commodification (real subsumption) of academic labour.¹⁵ This corresponds to Marx's account of ideal subsumption within capitalist firms, in which accounting mechanisms treat the relations between different parts of the firm as if they were market relations.¹⁶ This idea of "internal markets" has been used widely in the National Health Service (NHS) in the UK as preparation for privatization, as well as to impose a more severe labour discipline. Many UK universities have taken this internal transformation of the NHS as a corporate model for "financializing" their internal relations.¹⁷

Artists (and others) working in universities are subject to complicated mixtures of all four of these forms of subsumption; each of which represents a particular moment in the disciplining of their practices – and each of which comes into conflict with the idea of an *immanently artistic logic of production or art practice*, which legitimates the existence of "fine art" in art schools, in its difference from other kinds of practice; along with the cultural authority of the whole range of other art institutions.

3 Conclusion

Let me close with a direct response to the three "emerging questions" formulated as a framework for this event, on the basis of the above analysis:

I Are we facing today a post-research situation or a post-research condition?

II Could this be compared with how post-structuralism relates to structuralism as the philosophical understanding and elaboration of its consequences?

III And how could a possible post-research condition encounter contemporary art practices?

I No, we are facing an intensification of the integration of art practices in art schools and universities into a purely administrative research condition.

II No, again. That is too institutionally optimistic a vision, since self-consciousness of the contradictory structure of the "research condition" in its administrative sense does not in itself lead to a change in the situation. It demands a rejection and transformation of the current research condition in its institutional over-determination by its capital functions. This would not be "post-research". It would be otherly research-related. It would involve the exploration of new sets of relations between

13 Murray, "The Social and Material Transformation of Production by Capital", p. 265

14 Karl Marx, 'Appendix: Results of the Immediate Process of Production' (1863–66), in *Capital*, Volume One, trans. Ben Fowkes, Penguin Books/New Left Review, London, 1976, p. 1042

15 See Szadkowski, 'Towards an Orthodox Marxian Reading', pp. 22–3

16 See Murray, 'The Social and Material Transformation of Production by Capital', p. 266

17 For an account of the way in which this process was applied to rationalize the ending of the teaching of philosophy (another supposedly 'useless' practice) at Middlesex University, see Peter Osborne and Éric Alliez, "Purely Financial": Une question de philosophie, in Barbara Cassin, ed., *Derrière les grilles (sortons du tout-évaluation)*, Fayard, Paris, 2014, pp. 43–64

the different elements of contemporary art practices unimpeded by the imposition of the administrative form of the research process.

III Critically significant contemporary art practices are not likely to be generated within, and certainly not out of, the current higher-educational art-institutional situation. They are likely to have their sources elsewhere; as indeed, increasingly, is critical work in the humanities as well.

This is the final irony: educational capital and its administrative mimesis in universities cannot sustain the critically significant artistic practices that, historically, art institutions use for their legitimization. Driven out of the system, the true costs of production of such practices will thus be borne elsewhere.

Response

Hito Steyerl



The debate about Artistic Research lost me a couple of years ago, when it became clear that that debate tended to be much more about creating an academic/bureaucratic discipline, then attempting to figure out something for an artistic discipline. I am not really sure how a transition to post-research will modify this state of affairs.

In this context, there is something else I would like to bring forward – which has nothing to do whatsoever with what the current discussion is about. While people were still trying to understand what artistic research could be, or how it could be defined more appropriately, or how it could be tamed or classified into bureaucratic categories, many of my colleagues actually started working. They began to develop methodologies, not necessarily related to art, but perhaps to some kind of new version of applied art. Methodologies of design, of data-visualization, of computer programming, of all different sort of things

to a point where I suddenly felt there has been a potential generated of a wealth of resources and competences people accumulated. Somehow they seemed more or less on their own without a lot of guidance from institutions, that theoretically could enable them to really engage with the world at large and with reality.

Now the point I want to make is that it does not really matter what kind of definition Artistic Research has, or how it is related to science, or how else one might like to think about it. Because the bottom line in the real world is that as soon as these practices see the daylight, they are immediately put into a market-like competition with one another. They are thrown into a marketplace of ideas, where they actually become more or less seen or valued as if they were conceptual art works. So they will be categorized by the newness or the snappiness of the idea they present and then they will be ranked. Needless to say, none of these ideas will ever be realized, because the main thing is the idea value. And as long as the arena of the real world is structured like a kind of post-conceptual market, it really doesn't matter what kind of category one uses to produce, or evaluate, or categorize these works, since the level on which they engage with the world is zero.

Therefore, I started to completely reorient, and to think in an entirely different way. So all these practices exist. In the last decade, people have accumulated all of these competences, and all of these resources. There should be a lot of potential now to really start engaging in using those competences and resources. However, this has been made nearly impossible by the market structure of the so-called public space or art world in which they are competing. By that I do not only mean the commercial art world, but also the public art world of art institutions and so on.

If I see any value in any sort of academic structure to go along with artistic research as practices which exist and will continue to exist regardless of how they are being defined, and even regardless of whether they get funded or not unfortunately, then it would be to completely redefine those academic structures into bodies of coordination of these artistic attempts. In the sense of research projects, if you like, but also in the way of coordinating the attempts – which are basically competing against one another now – into a direction where they could effectually engage with reality.

This would imply that art research projects would not be designed in order to show better ideas than those of colleagues. Conversely, the projects could effectually be coordinated into the direction of a research topic or a more useful sort of outcome, at the end of which they could collaborate in a coordinated effort. And honestly this is the only reason I see why there should be any sort of academic structure to even deal with these kind of attempts, because, as I can tell you from the point of view of a practitioner, there is no other reason to have them.

Post-research publishing and writing: Atlas of Diagrammatic Imagination

Vytautas Michelkevičius

Artistic Research has irreversibly changed not only how we see art but also how we do research in humanities, social sciences and probably STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) too. Both research methodologies and rhetoric of the outcomes have changed over the last several decades by opening up new possibilities. The publication *Atlas of Diagrammatic Imagination: Maps in Art, Research and Education* (eds. Lina Michelkevičė & Vytautas Michelkevičius, Vilnius Academy of Arts Press, 2019) witnesses our attempt to re-approach a map as a tool both to do research and to make it public, i.e. publish and disseminate.

Diagrammatic maps as visual writing (and reasoning)

Diagrammatic maps are understood as expanded maps or maps in an expanded field. Because of their immersiveness and their close links with practice and reality, maps provide us with a set of possibilities in the choreography of reading very different from those of conventional linear reading. Therefore, maps are the non-linear compositions of texts and images transmitting embodied, uttered, and tacit knowledge. A map materializes in the new spaces of experiences, and it helps us to express the knowledge and experience that are yet to be articulated. It allows us to see, but at the same time its focus on one particular thing can obscure another.

By conveying information via elements that are striking in terms of aesthetics and proportion, a map induces visual experiences and distracts our attention from the linear constructs of language; it lures us into the hidden crevices of its labyrinth and makes our heads spin. In addition to revealing, a map can also conceal, mislead, and often smuggle in something we were not looking for. The only way of protecting ourselves from that is by enhancing our map's literacy; however, if you really want to indulge in the intoxicating pleasures of mapping and map reading, the only way forward is through courage and open minds.

The "map" in the Atlas is used as a common concept that refers to diagrammatic drawing that either has a specific function (e.g. scientific, educational, communicational, etc.), or is created as part of an artistic practice. Maps enable us to quickly reveal multi-layered links and many-sided arguments, connect seemingly distant ideas, discover unanticipated links, use different means of expression (textual, visual, graphical, networked) – all of which is achievable from within a single plain. This form of communication can act as an efficient substitute to shuffling through dozens of pages. The way it communicates the content is often much more suggestive and aesthetic and is highly attractive to the audience. The concept of "map" cannot avoid its geographic connotations, nor does it definitely strive to do so; it rather considers both geography and cartography as its fertile ancestors that supply it with metaphors, while it is involved in demarcating the territories that are often conceptual rather than earthly.

The "diagram" – a parallel concept that some of the contributors either prioritized or used along with "map" – is used here in the expanded sense of the word as well. The common root that the "diagram" shares with cartography, geography, and

many other scientific and technological areas, their tools and action products, expresses one of the key human desires: to represent the whole variety of activities through graphic inscriptions (old Gr. *grapho* – ‘I write’, *-gramma* – ‘that which is written’). A diagram implies the kind of inscription that puts both visual and textual elements in a single space, and produces a concentrated field that exposes the links between these elements, their interrelations, and alterations.

As a result of the collaboration between scientists (from the areas as diverse as sociology, philosophy, art history, and communication sciences), artists, curators and educators, this atlas can also be associated with a few other publication genres – namely, scientific monographs and artwork catalogues. In a way this brings us back to the very roots of the term. The first use of “atlas” that took precedence over the generic use of this proper noun was Gerardus Mercator’s book *Atlas, or Cosmographic Meditations on the Fabric of the World and the Figure of the Fabrick’d* (*Atlas Sive Cosmographicae Meditationes de Fabrica Mundi et Fabricati Figura*). The first edition of this book from 1595 was more than merely a compendium of maps, but rather a comprehensive collection of texts on the state of the world at that time (after the term came into wide use, its meaning changed and narrowed). This was truly an interdisciplinary scientific work carried out by the pioneer of geography and cartography who, as it was common at that time, had a wide range of interests, from mathematics and geomagnetism to philosophy and theology. Furthermore, you will probably agree that, back then, the maps were truly works of art, and their creation required not only scientific knowledge but also excellent drawing skills.

This atlas of imagination is also comprised of both texts and maps that not

only shed light on the territory in question, but also reflect on its state and offer new tools of thinking and seeing. And yet it also differs from Mercator’s atlas, as it leaves the geography proper and enters the realms of thinking and imagination so as to deal with the diagrammatic forms they produce.



Structure of the atlas

The Atlas is comprised of three chapters. The reader will find that the second chapter is in fact overlapping – both physically and conceptually – with the other two that it is supposed to separate.

The first chapter introduces the research on various aspects of imagination, ideas and diagrammatic maps in the contexts of history, literature, art theory, communication science, and visual studies. Here the reader will find the discussions on the meanings, connotations, and linguistic inconsistencies beyond the terms “diagram” and “map”, as well as the expositions of various other concepts. The first chapter also delineates the fundamentals of diagrammatics and presents various examples of maps and diagrams together with the overviews of their types, forms, and contextual uses.

The second chapter unfolds the practices of diagramming and mapping. Here the reader will find maps created by artists and other creatives in response to an invitation to use the very same tools of mapping and diagramming in order to reflect on the *diagrammatic* aspects of their own work. This constitutes an attempt at

using an experimental format to introduce research through diagrams and maps rather than through text (e.g., an essay). All the authors presented in this chapter are both creatives and researchers: PhDs or doctoral students in art and physical sciences, or independent researchers, all of whom are carrying out their individual or collaborative projects.

The third chapter is dedicated to education. Mapping of images or ideas can be a creative form of education that liberates thinking from its constraints. Younger children who are not yet ready to linguistically conceptualize the laws and connections at work in the world, feel closer to various methods of visualization and material thinking, which they find easier to master. Because of being akin to the “networked” thinking, mapping can help older pupils and students to control huge amounts of information: mapping allows them to quickly reveal the links between radically different types of information, jump from one train of thought to another, and combine multiple media.

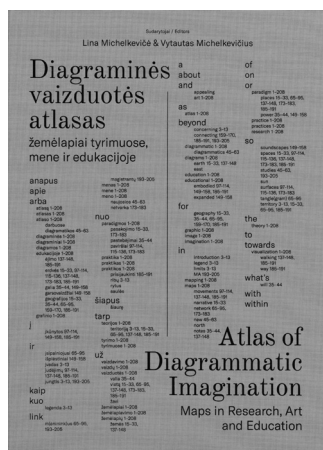
In what sense is Atlas a post-research publication?

Research in our scholarly tradition is usually communicated by writing and it is a condition to present knowledge – cf. Jacques Derrida's often quoted phrase 'writing is the condition of the epistémè' (*Of Grammatology*, 1997, 27). However, intensive discussions in various doctoral programmes in the arts have been questioning for decades whether writing is the only way to present what kind of (new) knowledge or knowing was produced in their research trajectories. It seems that still most of the programmes include writing as a condition to defend an artistic project as a doctoral thesis (Michelkevičius 2018). In this context, we would like to treat the Atlas as a proposal for post-research publication which could help to

move further and search for other acceptable ways of presenting research.

One more argument why we locate ourselves in the post-research condition is the constant rethinking of the concept of writing. If we still agree that writing is essential in the communication of research results, we can expand the notion of writing and include diagrammatic reasoning and thinking in it. Therefore, a map can act as one of the new opportunities to present research outcomes and the knowledge inherent in them. The visual or expanded writing concept encompasses the variety of communication rhetoric that might be closer to the language artists feel more comfortable with.

The third argument is based on the evaluation of the Atlas. Usually, artistic research has to confine and convince two different cultures: research in academia and in the art world. The same criteria might be applied to multidisciplinary research output where artists-researchers and humanities scholars meet. This publication has successfully challenged both of the contexts and was recognized by both of them. Two important institutions in Lithuania, the Ministry of Culture and the Research Council have acknowledged two essential qualities of Atlas. The Committee



of the Most Beautiful Book (Ministry of Culture) decided that Atlas is the Most Beautiful Book of the Year 2020 in all categories (Research, Art, Poetry, Children books, etc.) in Lithuania and it received the main award. So, it was recognized as an Art Work. Moreover, the Lithuanian Research Council has recognized – during an institutional research output evaluation – that the entire book (including diagrammatic writing (maps)) meets academic scholarly criteria and it was acknowledged as a collective research monograph.

In conclusion, we could argue that in locating ourselves in a post-research condition, we can learn three things. Research could be beautiful as aesthetics of rhetoric is an important tool to lay out research arguments. The arguments might at the same time be laid out in a non-logocentric or semi-logocentric way (see Atlas for more examples with argumentation). The way the physical printed Atlas is designed and structured (like several meters long spreads, more at www.mapping.lt) has also expanded the publishing opportunities of research and, in this case, the form supports the content and its apprehension. Moreover, our testing hypothesis that maps are suitable forms of research output going beyond Natural Sciences was also validated. A map can be treated as a paper (visual writing) not only because it is mostly laid out on paper, but also because it is an appropriate and rich medium to communicate research outcomes.

Sources

Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, John Hopkins University Press, 1997 (1967)

Lina Michelkevičė & Vytautas Michelkevičius (eds.), *Atlas of Diagrammatic Imagination: Maps in Art, Research and Education*, Vilnius Academy of Arts Press, 2019.

Vytautas Michelkevičius, *Mapping Artistic Research: Towards Diagrammatic Knowing*, Vilnius Academy of Arts Press, 2018

Artistic Research – dead on arrival?

Research practices of self-organized collectives vs. managerial visions of artistic research

Florian Cramer

Artist-run research

Since at least the early 20th century, artist groups have called their work “research”. Canonized examples include the “Bureau des recherches surréalistes” (“Bureau of Surrealist Research”) founded in Paris by André Breton and fellow Surrealists in 1925 and the Situationist International which, from 1957 to 1972, operated under the moniker of a research group and whose periodical had the form of a research journal. Since then, artist-run research groups and projects have only grown in number and increasingly involve non-art practitioners next to professional artists. The Free International University founded by Joseph Beuys is another such art history textbook example, as is the research-based “Institutional Critique” from the Art Workers Coalition in the 1970s to contemporary feminist, queer and PoC artist-activist collectives.

Today, transdisciplinary art/research collectives seem to be a more common contemporary art practice in non-Western regions than in Western countries where art systems are more institutionalized.¹ At the time of this writing, self-organized artist-research collectives are still mostly known to people working in or in close neighborhood to art practice, not to wider audiences.² This may change with the forthcoming documenta 15 in 2022 that will, for the first time, be curated by an art/

research group, the Indonesian ruangrupa collective. Documenta 15’s preliminary participant list, published in summer 2020, almost exclusively lists transdisciplinary collectives that work at the boundaries of art, research and community organizing: “Fondation Festival Sur Le Niger (Ségou, Mali), Gudskul (Jakarta, Indonesia), INLAND (various locations, Spain), Jatiwangi art Factory (Jatiwangi, Indonesia), Question of Funding (Jerusalem, Palestine), Más Arte Más Acción (MAMA) (Nuquí, Choco, Columbia), OFF-Biennale (Budapest, Hungary), Trampoline House (Copenhagen, Denmark), and ZK/U – Zentrum für Kunst und Urbanistik (Berlin, Germany)”. Is the practice of these artist-run collectives and projects identical to what has been discussed, since the 1990s and mostly in a Western European higher art education discourse, as artistic research?³

While this question might have been purely academic ten years ago, it has become political and epistemological in a time where, on the one hand, artistic research is being more firmly institutionalized – among others, through PhD programs – and where on the other hand even art theory has narrowed down Western contemporary art to curatorial white cube art.⁴

For the sake of simplicity, I would like to focus on the work of two contemporary artistic research collectives – the aforementioned Jatiwangi art Factory (Indonesia) and 展銷場 Display Distribute (Hong Kong) – by contrasting their research practices with artistic research as it is institutionally defined in the “Vienna Declaration on Artistic Research” from 2020. To clarify my own position, I need to mention that I worked with those two collectives in the research project “Bridging Art, Design and Technology through Material Practices” and its public conference “Making Matters II” that took place in November 2020 at Het Nieuwe Instituut in Rotterdam, The Netherlands. The Vienna Declaration on Artistic

1 For an overview of the former, see (vanhoe)

2 Exceptions include electronic music and architecture with their long, well-documented history of artistic research in collectives. For contemporary art in the more narrow sense, there is practically no overview literature, with perhaps the exception of (Vis)

3 With (Frayling) being one of its earliest documents

4 A prominent example of the latter is (Osborne)

Research has been authored by, among others, the European art school umbrella organization ELIA of which my art school is an active member and in whose research conferences I have participated. Therefore, any incompatibility between artists' and institutional concepts of artistic research creates a dilemma for my own work as a researcher working at an art school.

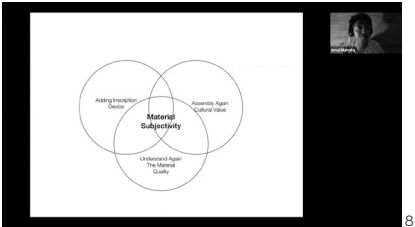
Jatiwangi art Factory and 展銷場 Display Distribute are part of a larger global phenomenon of self-organized, commons- and community-oriented collectives whose respective practices are highly specific to their own local environment while, at the same time, being internationally networked. These collectives consist of people with mixed or overlapping backgrounds as artists, researchers, theorists, activists, journalists and community organizers. They often focus on one specific material practice – “tanah”/ clay in the case of Jatiwangi art Factory, publishing and logistics in the case of 展銷場 Display Distribute – that is being turned into a social experiment and artistic-philosophical inquiry.



Jatiwangi art Factory (JaF) calls itself a “community-based organization focused on examin[ing] how contemporary art and cultural practices can be contextualized with the local life in [a] rural area, both [in] form [and] ideas”.⁵ JaF combines local community activities,

including festivals, with an international artist residency program. Ismal Muntaha, a founding member of the collective, explains how JaF’s activities tie into the history of Jatiwangi, a village 200 kilometers East of Jakarta, as Indonesia’s post-colonial industrial production site for roof tiles. The area’s major natural resource is clay or “tanah”, the Indonesian word for soil, ground and clay. JaF’s work investigates the history and culture of tanah and reactivates it in new forms: “digging again the memories, spiritual value, ritual, proudness, cultivating attitude from our tanah as local material as a tool of subjectivity”.⁶

Collective activities organized in the village community include a “Zero Point Ritual” whose participants “choose the zero point of Terracotta City as the beginning of a new clay culture, a city based on the people’s desire and their collective agreement”.⁷ It involves the creation of a terracotta structure on a piece of land in order to prevent its privatization and keep it as a public community space. JaF also organizes a music festival with community-built clay instruments. Altogether, JaF’s projects amount to a post-colonial poetics and discourse analysis of tanah and the Jatiwangi region. This research is not published in scholarly papers or textbooks, but through JaF’s public performances and presentations. The research outcomes are not only practical, but also theoretical as shown in this diagram of ‘Material Subjectivity’ that JaF presents as one of the insights of its research:



5 (Jatiwangi art Factory)
6 (Muntaha), conference abstract
7 (Muntaha), conference video recording, 28:55

8 (Muntaha), conference video, 22:05
9 <https://displaydistribute.com>, Accessed 3/1/2021

Subjectivity and politics of materials and their communal exchange also characterize the work of the 展銷場 Display Distribute collective in Hong Kong. Its English name is a literal translation of the Chinese “展銷場” (Zhǎnxiāo chǎng), a type of small pop-up store common in Hong Kong whose spaces can be from retail estate owners on very short notice, without much paperwork, and for a short period of time. Accordingly, 展銷場 Display Distribute calls itself a “now and again exhibition space, distribution service, thematic inquiry, and sometimes shop in Kowloon, Hong Kong”.⁹ Its web homepage lays out the typical stock of such a store (“手袋及襪子 Bags and Socks / 條紋襯衫 Striped Shirts / 中國人壽保險 [海外] China Life Insurance (Overseas) / 出版物 Publications / 日本設計師手錶 Japanese Designer Watches”) and links it to actual pop-up shop manifestations, projects and appearances of the collective.¹⁰



展銷場 Display Distribute, homepage

Never mind the diversity of trades, activities of the collective are focused on artists’ and activist DIY publishing and its communal distribution. 展銷場 Display Distribute’s members conduct many practical, and often performative, experiments with publishing, retail, distribution and cross-border transport that reflect the political situation of Hong Kong as a simultaneous capitalist experiment and part of the communist People’s Republic of China. The collective experimentally participated in the semi-legal commercial cross-border transportation of retail goods into the PRC,

and runs as its most elaborate project a self-organized worldwide courier system “LIGHT LOGISTICS” for DIY publications and other merchandise. It runs on the basis of private travels of volunteer collaborators and is coordinated through 展銷場 Display Distribute’s own tracking-and-tracing bureaucracy that assigns an alphanumeric ID to each shipment and documents its way on its website.



展銷場 Display Distribute, screenshot from ‘Making Matters’ presentation

The above screenshot is part of a live video performance “Packaging as Propaganda: On circulation, new psychogeographies, and the discursiveness of boxes” from November 2020.¹¹ Referencing psychogeography, 展銷場 Display Distribute continues an artistic research discipline that was invented in the Lettrist and Situationist International (with forerunners in surrealism and symbolism). When interviewed for a Chinese multi-disciplinary arts magazine and asked about her working definitions of “open platform”, “architectures of commerce” and “documentary gesture”, 展銷場 Display Distribute member Elaine W. Ho replied: “Together, these questions refer to a socio-politics of syntax informing various paths of artistic research. For example, the LIGHT LOGISTICS project with 展銷場 Display Distribute instigates a series of encounters based around the act of reading. We want to support independent publishers whose work contributes to the discourse on grassroots, radical, and critical practices in East and Southeast Asia. Considering the power of reading as a 1:1 form of exchange, there is still something to be said for kindling these small mo-

ments of encounter between individuals with similar interests or that can support by way of coincidental mobility. Setting up this albeit crude infrastructure of a logistical operation makes use of slow couriers' movement to physically and immaterially transport art, ideas, and practices in ways that may be difficult for independent practitioners otherwise. By playfully highlighting the banal details of this circulation, we want to lay bare the systems of production as they are embedded within the everyday and trace new possibilities for a distributed but self-organized community."¹²

This fully meets the proposition text for this publication and its characterization of "artistic thinking" as "open-ended, speculative, associative, non-linear, haunting, thinking differently".¹³ Elaine W. Ho's statement also clarifies and underlines that artistic research does not merely exist as an institutional or higher education discourse, but being claimed by artists as their own practice.

What was research again?

So far, I have dodged the question of how to define research, in the literal sense of drawing boundaries between research and non-research, and between artistic research and art practice. "Research", like "art", strikes me as a word whose semantics relies on a superficial social consensus that evaporates upon closer inspection. Even in Western languages and cultures, "research" is not the same thing. To take only the three (geographically and linguistically) neighboring languages and cultures of my daily use, English, Dutch and German, not even the words are similar: "research" in English, "Forschung" in German and "onderzoek" in Dutch. Their meanings differ as well.

In German, "Forschung" includes the humanities and effectively everything that a scholar publishes. Not only the interpre-

tation of Shakespeare poems by a literary scholar counts as "Forschung", but also the publishing of those poems in a critical-philological edition. This humanistic concept of research, which dates back to Wilhelm von Humboldt, has the least incompatibilities with artistic research. One might even argue that some forms of German humanities "Forschung" such as Aby Warburg's Mnemosyne Atlas and Walter Benjamin's Arcades Project, were already hybrids of humanities and artistic research.

Unlike German academia and even the German language, Anglophone academia differentiates "research" and "scholarship". Warburg's and Benjamin's projects would likely fall under the latter rather than the former category. This begs the question whether higher-education "artistic research" isn't a mistranslation, or continental European pidgin English, for a discipline that should rather be called artistic (or creative) scholarship.¹⁴

In the Netherlands, the word "onderzoek" has a strong semantic bias towards empirical research. Linguistically, it is not differentiated from "investigation" and can also refer to investigative journalism and police work. The empirical bias of "onderzoek" often manifests itself in daily life, from acceptance problems of non-quantitative research as research in Dutch academia to the requirement of specifying data management in every Dutch research funding application.

In other words: Even before questioning "research" as a Western concept and epistemology, one needs to be aware of the fact that "research" is not even a consistent or unified concept in Western countries. Discussions of the institutional legitimacy of artistic research are part of that disagreement.

In linguistic terminology, "research" could thus be called a floating signifier; and even more precisely in film terminol-

12 (Huang 80)

13 <https://www.hku.nl/en/study-at-hku/hku-college/pre-phd-programme/the-postresearch-condition>, Accessed March 1st 2021

14 The term "artistic research" still is much less common in Anglophone countries than in continental Europe. I have been told by colleagues from the UK that the word "artistic", as an equivalent of "artistiek"/"artistique" in Dutch and French or "künstlerisch"/"kunstnerisk" in German and Danish, is much less commonly used in English and even avoided by many artists

ogy a MacGuffin: a package that is passed along and shared between different parties who may not even have the same idea of what it contains. A MacGuffin is an ultimately empty device with the only function of tying together a plot. While “research” in its diverse meanings may have MacGuffin tendencies (as a device that ties together academia with its extremely diverse disciplines and epistemologies), artistic research in particular is a word on which two or more parties can reach conversational consensus while having something radically different in mind. It is therefore prone to becoming transactional rather than epistemological, or – to use linguistic terminology again – defined by pragmatics rather than semantics.

Leonardo di Leo’s 1972 semi-famous gangster b-movie *Milano Calibro 9* opens with a long MacGuffin sequence in which a suitcase is handed from person to person. The suitcase initially contains money but, at the end of the chain, turns out to be a bomb that kills its final receivers. Similarly, artistic research is understood among others as a project-oriented contemporary art practice, as lab science done in collaboration with artists and designers, as art school PhD trajectories or as academic research whose outcomes are audiovisual and performative rather than research papers. But the question is whether, with its institutional establishment, some or most of these understandings will be marginalized or in the worst case killed off.



Timelapse of the opening sequence of *Milano Calibro 9*

Perhaps the first literal mention of “artistic research” is in Asger Jorn’s 1957 *Notes on the Formation of an Imaginist Bauhaus*, the founding manifesto of a project that eventually became part of the Situationist International. This text was written in Switzerland, first published in French and later translated into English so that it remains unclear whether Jorn departed from the word “forskning” in his native Danish (which is derived from the German word “Forschung”) or from French “recherches”, and to which extent his text reflected the prior use of the word “recherche” in, among others, French Surrealism and post-war experimental music groups such as Pierre Schaeffer’s *Groupe de Recherches de Musique Concrète* (founded in 1951).

Even in this early, geographically and culturally limited stage, “artistic research” was a speculative and semi-dubious affair, rooted simultaneously in poetic-absurdist science and laboratory experimentation, and manifesting itself in such artistic research disciplines as pataphysics and psychogeography. (Jorn actively engaged with both; in the psychogeographic “atlases” he jointly made with Guy Debord, and in a critical essay on pataphysics as “a religion in the making” for the journal of the Situationist International.¹⁵



Head of the Vienna Declaration on Artistic Research

“A.R.”

Today, however, this type of thinking is no longer what is being expected from artistic research as it has been defined for European higher education. In June 2020, the “Vienna Declaration on Artistic Research” was published by seven European umbrella organizations for higher art education (representing art schools, conser-

15 See (Jorn and Debord), (Jorn, 1961)

vatoires, architecture and film schools), two art school accreditation bodies, the public arts sector organization Culture Action Europe and the Society for Artistic Research (SAR). According to its authors, the Vienna Declaration addresses “political decision makers, funding bodies, higher education and research institutions as well as other organizations and individuals catering for and undertaking AR [artistic research]”.¹⁶ In a critique of the Vienna Declaration I wrote with Nienke Terpsma from the artistic research collective *Fucking Good Art*,¹⁷ we quoted parts of its text as absurd capitalist-realist poetry:

“Artistic Research (AR) [...] has developed rapidly in the last twenty years globally and is a key knowledge base for art education in Higher Arts Education Institutions (HAEIs).” “AR is well suited to inspire creative and innovative developments in sectors such as health and wellbeing, the environment and technology, thus contributing to fulfilling the HAEIs’ ‘third mission’. AR must be seen as having a unique potential in the development of the ‘knowledge triangle.’” “Within this frame, AR is aligned in all aspects with the five main criteria that constitute Research & Development in the Frascati Manual.” “HAEIs operate predominantly within a research context and have a responsibility to conduct AR. It is also common for HAEIs to interact with related enterprise Research & Development, and to contribute directly to the creation of intellectual property in arts, entertainment and media through research practice.” “This environment requires funding for: educating the next generation of researchers through doctoral programmes; [...] building links with business and enterprise in order to stimulate the impact of research.” “AR is validated through peer review covering the range of disciplinary competences addressed by the work. Quality assurance is

undertaken by recognized independent, international QA bodies and assures the standards described in the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG 2015) for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area.” “[T]he establishment of AR as an independent category within the Frascati Manual, establishing the opportunity for harvesting research data and statistics from the AR field.”

These quotes may be self-explanatory for my initial diagnosis of artistic research being dead on its institutional arrival. To summarize the core points of our critique: by becoming “AR”, artistic research turns from a speculative and poetic endeavor into a “peer-reviewed” and “validated” affair: “data and statistics” can be “harvested” from it, which feeds into “enterprise Research & Development”. The “Vienna Declaration” thus mainstreams artistic research, respectively “AR”, into an almost comically exaggerated neoliberal technocratic agenda, in a way that reminded us of Soviet-era conceptualist poetry – by Vladimir Sorokin, Dmitri Prigov and others – that mimicked and hyperbolized Soviet bureaucratic language.

Most remarkably, the Vienna Declaration does not contain a single mention of “artist” or “artists”. Nienke Terpsma and I therefore read the document as a “land-grabbing” attempt of art schools “to own and define artistic research”.¹⁸ The idea of artistic research as an artist-run, self-organized, non-institutional practice seems to be completely alien to the “A.R.” described in the Vienna Declaration. Instead, the European art school system constructs its own, parallel art world through “A.R.” where artistic research projects are no longer created by artists, but defined by institutions.

Therefore, “A.R.” perfectly fits the New European Bauhaus project that has been announced by the European Commission

16 (AEC et al.)

17 (Cramer and Terpsma)

18 Ibid

19 (Huang, 80)

20 This would be a riff on the plot of Johann Peter Hebel’s 1808 short story *Kannitverstan*

21 (Lütticken, 59): “Autonomy has also gotten a bad name in the field of art. In the United States in particular, the association of the concept of autonomy with Clement Greenberg’s restrictive understanding of modernism has made term seem toxic and beyond reappropriation.”

in 2020/21 and whose logo is the following:



"New European Bauhaus" logo

The verbal and visual languages of "A.R." and the New European Bauhaus create a stark if not grotesque contrast to the practices like those of JaF and 展銷場 Display Distribute. Peer-reviewed and validated "A.R." seems to have nothing in common any more with artistic research as defined by Elaine W. Ho and its "crude infrastructure [...] playfully highlighting [...] banal details of [...] circulation" in order to "trace new possibilities for a distributed but self-organized community".¹⁹ Comparing these two strands of artistic research, the issue is even greater than that of the semantic shifts between "research", "Forschung" and "onderzoek": the question is no longer only about different research cultures, but whether people still mean the same thing at all with "artistic research".

I am mentally picturing a sitcom where representatives of an Indonesian DIY collective meet art school managers and, throughout the show, perfectly misunderstand each other while believing that they are talking about the same subject.²⁰ If "artistic research" becomes

even more a MacGuffin than "research" in general, it will ultimately become an object for, instead of a characterization of, such poetic transactions as 展銷場 Display Distribute's "LIGHT LOGISTICS".

But it may be time for a more fundamental critique. "Research" – which from Jarry's 'pataphysics to JaF's tanah research was an emancipatory project for artists and non-artists – may need to be revisited in the same way as other enlightenment and modernist tropes: as concepts that are broken, and in the worst case even "toxic and beyond reappropriation", to quote Sven Lütticken's critical revision of the term "autonomy".²¹ Then, the "post-research condition" would become a very literal and practical matter.

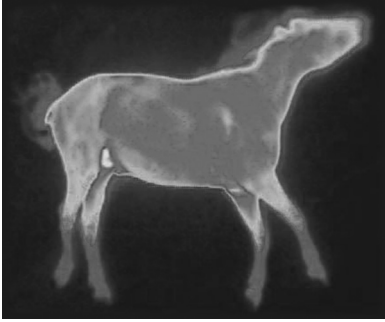
From pataphysics to LIGHT LOGISTICS, artistic research has, on the other hand, always amounted to a "post-research condition". When institutions retrofit it into a mainstream academic research epistemology, they may think that they are emancipating the arts. In reality, however, they rather seem to emancipate themselves from them, in times where art institutions have outgrown the arts.

Bibliography

- AEC, et al. The Vienna Declaration on Artistic Research. 2020, https://cultureactioneurope.org/files/2020/06/Vienna-Declaration-on-AR_corrected-version_24-June-20-1.pdf. Accessed March 1st, 2021.
- Cramer, Florian, and Nienke Terpsma. "Quality Assurance [...] Assures the Standards Described in the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG 2015)" – and What Else Is Wrong with the Vienna Declaration on Artistic Research." *OPEN!*, 2020, <https://www.onlineopen.org/what-is-wrong-with-the-vienna-declaration-on-artistic-research>. Accessed March 1st, 2021.
- Display Distribute. *Packaging as Propaganda: On Circulation, New Psychogeographies, and the Discursiveness of Boxes*. Het Nieuwe Instituut, 2020, <https://research-development.hetnieuweinstituut.nl/en/activities/collective-material-practices-critical-times>. Accessed March 1st, 2021.
- Frayling, Christopher. *Research in Art and Design*. Royal College of Art, 1993.
- Huang, Jingyuan. "An Invitation to Describe: Elaine W. Ho." *Bajia*, no. 2, July 2018, pp. 79–86.
- Jatiwangi art Factory. "+ WE ARE." Tumblr, 2021, <https://jatiwangiartfactory.tumblr.com/are>. Accessed March 1st, 2021.
- Jorn, Asger. "Notes on the Formation of an Imaginist Bauhaus." *Bureau of Public Secrets*, 1957, <http://www.bopsecrets.org/SI/bauhaus.htm>. Accessed March 1st, 2021.
- Jorn, Asger, and Guy Debord. *Fin de Copenhague. Bauhaus Imaginiste*, https://monoskop.org/images/7/75/Jorn_Asger_Fin_de_Copenhague.pdf. Accessed 3 Jan. 2021.
- Jorn, Asger. "Pataphysics: A Religion in the Making." *Internationale Situationniste*, vol. 6, 1961, <https://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/pataphysics.html>.
- Leo, Fernando di. *Milano calibro 9*. Cineproduzioni Daunia 70, 1972.
- Lütticken, Sven. "Neither Autocracy nor Automatism: Notes on Autonomy and the Aesthetic." *Cultural Revolution: Aesthetic Practice after Autonomy*, Sternberg Press, 2017, pp. 59–86.
- Muntaha, Ismal. *Jatiwangi art Factory*. Het Nieuwe Instituut, 2020, <https://research-development.hetnieuweinstituut.nl/en/activities/collective-material-practices-critical-times>. Accessed March 1st, 2021.
- Osborne, Peter. *Anywhere or Not at All: Philosophy of Contemporary Art*. Verso, 2013.
- vanhoe, reinaart. *Also-Space: From Hot to Something Else: How Indonesian Art Initiatives Have Reinvented Networking*. Onomatopoe, 2017.
- Vis, Dirk. *Research for People Who Think They Would Rather Create*. Onomatopoe, 2021.

Vulnerability, Animality, Community

Terike Haapoja



Terike Haapoja, *Entropy* (2004–), still, video installation.

The second law of thermodynamics describes the increase of entropy in the universe. This process is irreversible, and so entropy also acts as an arrow of time. Perhaps, then, loss is how we experience entropy. But even though I am starting my talk with loss, it's good to also remember that what precedes the grief of losing something is attachment: the love, care and attention forming the basis of coexistence and communality.

The figure of the animal entered my work indirectly. This early 1-channel video installation wasn't a conscious exploration into questions regarding animality or ecology, but rather an attempt to grasp something that deeply concerned my own lived reality. Two years earlier I had witnessed my mother pass away, and was shaken by the experience of what felt like her sinking into nothingness during the gradual cooling down of her body. This encounter with entropy, this grief, forcefully pushed me to use any means I had available for trying to understand the ethics of living and dying together,

and later, how our institutions and social organizations and systems of knowledge structure our living and dying together.

What's important to note is that the image of the animal here is not a metaphor for human passing. Rather, the euthanized horse is a being with whom I share a fundamental relationship with the world: we both are bodies, we both are selves, and because of these things, we both are vulnerable. The 25-minute video is edited from 9 hours of recording of what's best described as a kind of wake. What's left out of the picture, however, is the site of this wake: the grim, noisy facility where slaughterhouse leftovers and carcasses of domestic animals are brought and ground into protein powder that's fed back to farm animals. Thus the animal doesn't enter my thinking as a radical alterity, though it does also pose a question about otherness. What's radical in the question of the animal, for me, is the way it forces us to think about vulnerability and ways in which beings are made into things and things into beings, and how what is projected onto animality is entangled with the ways in which some deaths are made grievable while the deaths of some sustain the life of others.

View full presentation at:
www.hku.nl/postresearchcondition
Or: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4dk7ay-Q9zmc&t=63s>

The Postresearch Condition: Five Earn Working Groups

Methodologies, Sustainability, On Value, Politics or Aesthetics, and Curatorial Studies.

More than ten years ago, the European Artistic Research Network (EARN) was founded: a collaboration of ten European art academies that drew attention to reflecting on the significance of artistic research for contemporary visual art, as well as for a related form of art education. The discussion often focused on the development and evaluation of PhD programs in Fine Art. Not only were thematically organized conferences held annually, but there was also regular collaboration with leading platforms for the dissemination of contemporary art (such as Manifesta, Documenta, and Venice Biennale).

In 2018 we determined that a significant part of the previously formulated ambitions and goals had been achieved. After all, artistic research has now acquired a natural role in the institutional environment of the academy; being able to follow a PhD Fine Art course has become a common trajectory at many European academies; and in the (exhibition) practice of contemporary art speaking in terms of research is no longer exceptional.

Therefore, it was time to rethink the network. To this end, a series of think-tank meetings took place in 2019. This led to the following structural reorganization: EARN would no longer stand for an exclusive organization of ten European academies, but would regroup in the coming years as an Expanded Artistic Research

Network. In concrete terms, this means a beginning with a more dynamic organizational form based on the (relatively autonomous) activities of five working groups.

These working groups (whose fields of attention were established during the afore-mentioned think tank meetings) focus on themes and issues that reflect more substantively (instead of institutionally) on artistic research and are urgent and meaningful, such as sustainability, methodologies, value, politics or aesthetics, and curatorial issues. At the EARN conference in Utrecht these working groups presented their strategic and future-oriented agendas for the first time in the form of workshops and seminars. In the following text, the various working groups report on these activities and give further substance to the discussion they envisage.

The *Methodology* working group introduced the "Continuous Prototype" – a metaphor, a construction – through which it is possible to examine both artistic work and research practice. The continuous prototype demonstrates the current state of a work (or text) in progress and/or indicates the development the work might take. As this prototype has non-chronological and/or non-stable features, it aims at continuously disassembling itself and constructing new prototypes instead of elaborating on existing ones.

The *Sustainability* working group presented a set of workshops addressing issues of ecological sustainability. These include: a workshop revealing historical connections between medieval trade routes and ballad translations; an interrogation of the concept of Europe through mapping; propositions for a sustainable art practice; proposals for the sustainability of public space; a reconfiguration of the relation between 'nature' and 'human' as a new form of 'we'; sustainability of art materials; and a choral voicing of our differences as mutual ones.

The *On Value* working group asked fundamental questions around what we value, at a time when the prosperity of life on this planet is questioned daily. What is the role of artistic research in this? Art and research create new forms of insight, experience, communities of learning, and non-disciplinary forms of knowledge. Recognizing that requires – and this is what the workshop outlines – different forms of attention, valuing, and articulating of what we value.

The *Politics of Aesthetics* working group claims that meaning-production can be a violent tool of categorizing and othering and that the concept of “re-search” has long been built on the condition of “extractivism.” During the workshop a set of concepts was examined that try to challenge, undermine, and transcend these processes. Refusal, opacity, and abjection were discussed as three possible political-aesthetic ways of working in the field of art, while establishing singularities, and refining our ways of attending to others.

The *Curatorial Studies* working group focused on the role of algorithms in current exhibition practice. In what seems like a global institutional convergence, there has been a widespread adoption of the exhibition-online as the immediate solution to the demands of physical distancing, lockdown and travel restriction in the context of the global pandemic. The workshop therefore asks the following questions: What are the operative presumptions about exhibition that inform this imperative? How do we think through the protocols of exhibition as enquiry in the era of the algorithmic?

Henk Slager

Working Group 1.

Methodology: Continuous Prototype

Our workshop entitled Rethinking the Concept of Prototype – Demonstrating Artistic

Research was held on January 20, 2021 as an event of the methodology working group of the European Artistic Research Network (EARN). We – DA Tero Heikkinen, DFA Petri Kaverma and DFA Denise Ziegler – have been collaborating as an independent research group on the theme of the continuous prototype since 2017. We begun by having meetings for talking, but more recently, we have also been drawing and engaging in other activities.

A Workshop with Responses

For the EARN conference, our group hosted a session in a video conference environment with – for us – an unusually large audience. We started our workshop with a hands-on part where we demonstrated with three exercises how an experimental artistic practice, in this case experimental engaging in drawing and sculpting, can bring us back to the conditions where a fleeting situation might have started. The audience was encouraged to participate in the exercises, and the drawings and bricolages were shared by participants in their own video screening windows.





Continuous Prototype workshop screen shots: three exercises on experimental artistic practice.

After our session, PhD candidate Kasia Depta-Garapich (Slade London) and Falk Hübner (HKU Utrecht) responded to our experiential exercises through demonstrating their own artistic research practices. Depta-Garapich reflected on the archetype aspect of the continuous prototype introducing the performative project *The Mothers* (2020, with Małgorzata Markiewicz) during which the two artists made a male human form from wool.¹ Kasia Depta-Garapich states: "The concept of Continuous Prototype is a metaphor. It relates to an art object and the relationship between thinking and doing. As my response to Continuous Prototype I presented the project: *The Mothers*. It is a sculptural/performative/continuous work I am doing in collaboration with artist Małgorzata Markiewicz. In its formal aspect, the project consists of a durational performative work relaying on a never-ending repetitive process. The main object, a lifesize figure, is being made and remade, corrected and reshaped. There is an ideal we are trying to achieve but we always fail, urging to start again.

The figure is being made by an application of the felting process to wool, including stabbing it with felting needles, stitching the pieces of fabric, cutting, knitting, weaving. The method was chosen to accentuate the metaphor of weaving and its relationship with motherhood. By confronting the material, raw physicality of working with wool, needles on occasions piercing our skin and drawing blood, threads making deep indentations in our fingers we are confronting pain, separation and abject; we are also confronting

the maternal. This aggressive, almost visually cruel method of making was chosen specifically to achieve the effect of uneasiness and a reflection on what it means to be the Mother."

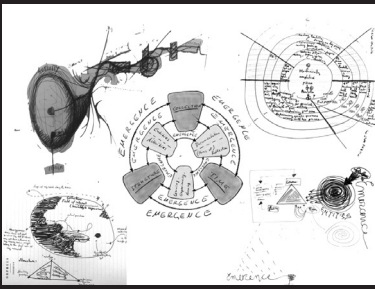


The Mothers, 2020, video still, Katarzyna Depta-Garapich and Małgorzata Markiewicz, Art Agenda Nova, Krakow, Poland.

Falk Hübner again applied the Continuous Prototype research method on his Research Design model²: "During our collaborative session at the EARN conference, I challenged myself to think in the Common Ground model, a model I developed for designing artistic research strategies during a two-year postdoctoral research period, through the idea of the continuous prototype – in fact, to diffractively see my model as a continuous prototype. In some way this made perfect sense, as I don't think my model as something fixed, but actually as an ephemeral and flexible network of perspectives on research design. The notion, or metaphor of the continuous prototype seems very fitting for this, as researchers should handle the model as a blueprint, a range of ideas – a prototype – in order to shape and form towards what is necessary in one's own project. And only through this process, the ever-unfinished Common Ground model finds its actual form: unique to the research project at hand. Or, in short: the common ground of this process of designing research can associatively be understood as a continuous iteration of prototypes."

1 <https://katarzyna-depta-garapich.com/projects/>

2 www.academia.edu/40802766/Against_Method_Common_Ground_Carpa_6_Kiasma_Theatre_Helsinki



Falk Hübner's Common Ground model (in the middle), surrounded by a number of graphical representations researchers made from it, in order to think their own research project through this model.

Our two guests gave us the opportunity to test our thinking in relation to other practices than our own. It was fruitful to discuss and demonstrate ideas in connection with other artist researchers, especially in the current online situations we are forced in.

During and after the presentations the audience responded with more than hundred comments and questions through the video conference chat box. Many more comments were available than would have been possible in a conventional presentation. This online activity and response, in this peculiar time of Covid-lockdown, helped us to open up the prototype thinking for new potential directions, and also offered a way to revisit and reflect on themes and questions we had ourselves already left behind.

During our session we were able to answer only a few of the questions and thoughts of the audience. We noticed that the feedback activities towards our workshop got a life of its own. Instead of using the chat box to deposit questions, the audience started to comment also to previous questions and used the chat box as a parallel medium for discussion.

Formulating Possible Conditions

For our collaborative work, we have coined

the term Continuous Prototype. It is a metaphor, a construction through which we examine our work and our thoughts. For us, a continuous prototype is not only a concrete object but also a combination of thinking and doing. It both demonstrates the current state of our work and also the direction it might take.

We started from the observation that in artistic work practice, the discussion about prototypes points to material, technical or spatial experiments. In addition to this, it also points to experimenting with time or addresses imaginary issues. Conventionally, a prototype is directed towards the future, but we also use it to examine the past and bring cohesion to our current thoughts. We suggest that artistic work mostly takes place in this state of being a *continuous* prototype.³ In Continuous Prototype thinking, an artwork can function like a "frottage" of something that does not yet exist. In frottage, the hidden textured surface is made visible by rubbing a pencil over a paper. Like a frottage, the prototype reveals itself in the action of making visible that which is covered or hidden. The origin of artwork is in this action of the making-visible.

In our collaboration we have engaged in various exercises and activities relating to the theme. The Continuous Prototype is a conceptual method that enables to formulate the way artistic research practices work in the fields of fine art and critical design. It does not tell how to do artistic research methodologically but it points to possible conditions for fertilizing it.

At the moment the Continuous Prototype research group represents the EARN workgroup concentrating on activities around artistic research methodologies located at the Academy of Fine Arts, University of the Arts Helsinki. For our next project called *Walking as Prototype*, taking place

³ See co-written article Taiteellinen tutkimus – jatkuvaa prototyyppiä (in Finnish) for the journal Tiede & Edistys (4/2017) <http://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi-fe202002246347>

Project Blog: https://blogit.uniarts.fi/en/blogs/kuva-research-activities/?thumbnail_id=18046#about

More examples on the concept of the Continuous Prototype: A Prototype of a Wall, Denise Ziegler, 2018: video, text, material samples: <http://denise-ziegler.squarespace.com/portotype-of-a-wall>

during the Research Pavilion #4 Helsinki 2021, we physically approach monuments in public space in Helsinki. We also plan our next co-written article under the working title of: *Missing the Point – Meeting the Line*.

*Petri Kaverma, Tero Heikkinen,
Denise Ziegler (Helsinki)*

Working Group 2. Sustainability

The Slade School of Fine Art, University College London, is prioritising issues of Sustainability as key to our current research strategy across the School, including staff and doctoral research. We are concerned with ecological, social and political questions including: what is a twenty-first century Sustainable art school; how can carbon-intensive international travel be justified; what is the future of the academic conference?

The impact of the pandemic highlights major global inequalities and raises issues as to how these are reflected and addressed within the framework of international and national biennales, the capitalist art market and community arts. These workshops exposed the rift between academia and the wider social context, raising questions of the ethical imperative.

Our six contributors to the EARN conference have addressed a range of specific issues and questions within the framework of Sustainability, utilizing different methods and methodologies.

In the beginning there was no Europe

'In the beginning there was no Europe. All there was, for five million years, was a long, sinuous peninsula with no name, set like the figurehead of a ship on the prow of the world's largest land mass.'

Viewed from the orbit of space Europe is a mosaic of landscapes that has long been shaped by human activities. Our audio-visual presentation questions forms of representation that claim to

be totalizing and far reaching, including climate change, capitalism, colonialism, uranium mining, and the territory of the European Brown Bear.

Satellites trace sun-synchronous orbits to prevent shadows cast across the terrain and provide an uninterrupted stream of information for forecasting. Earth imaging and sensing technology is as much a tool of conservation as it is one of extraction – assessing both risk and potential value, providing speculative future services to yet unknown clients.

Charismatic predators like the Brown Bear are mobilised to provide another kind of 'cultural service' for tourism, in addition to naturalised ecosystem management. Successful conservation of these important species depends on strategies that allow for population expansion and exchange of individuals among subpopulations, to enable them to fulfil their vital role in the ecosystem while minimizing conflict with humans. This requires coherent systems of ecological networks that consider protected areas and reserves together with other non-protected components of the landscape matrix.

The discovery that Uranium could be converted into plutonium using a nuclear reactor in 1938, led to a race to control the world market of uranium ore. The US-led Combined Development Trust was set up with the goal to both safeguard a supply of raw material for the development of nuclear weapons and to prevent nuclear proliferation overseas. Supported by both the UK and Canada, the CDT ensured unequal distribution and development that enabled capital to move, but only in the direction that the US and their allies wanted, keeping open the peripheries and frontiers for extraction.

All Brown Bears in Poland are trans-boundary. Therefore, the bears fall under various protection measures depending on which side of the border they stay,

ranging from complete protection in Poland and Ukraine to only partial protection in Slovakia.

How do we locate ourselves when borders are hardening?

*Katarzyna Depta-Garapich and
Nastassja Simensky*

A ballad translation

Cwcwl

We stumble upon the unexpected joy of singing together as coo of cuckoos, through 'zoom'...

koekoek

kuku

...each of us singing in our mother tongue, as cuckoos, in an act of translation that is embodied, more-than-human, digital.

cucu

Our patterns of call and response flicker across our screens: names twittering to each other.

We are playing with our voices, with technology, across borders...

*we are hollow boned together
no one wants to stop.*

'A ballad translation' is a participatory performance that tells and sings a C19th Welsh broadsheet ballad, *'Ymddiddan rhwng y Bardd a'r Gwcu'* (Conversation between the Bard and the Cuckoo). Together, we sing with, into, and out from this ballad as it travels across borders of space and time, following ancient trade routes between east and west that came before Europe. Singing in embodied patterns of call and response, we summon the departure and precarious return of the cuckoo across borders, conversations between species, relations of migration between the global south and the global north, between singing, silence and solastalgia, extinction: we address entanglements of cultural, material and environmental loss.

Recognizing that an archived ballad still holds currency, we ask: can we think singing, and translation, other than a matter of trading loss for gain?

Zoe Quick

Six Bells Burnt Ochre

The Greek word for iron is σίδηρο / sidero which in Latin translates as sideris meaning constellation; this word appears in the first geological period of the Proterozoic, the Siderian. Words sounding a way back to the Earth's first billion years when it was still green, before bacteria learned to use the sun's energy, absorb carbon dioxide and release oxygen life turning the green earth red.

The relationship between iron and blood signified in the Greek word haema as in *haematite*, which means bloodstone, is materialised in the oldest known human ochre burial in Europe found on the Gower peninsular, south Wales: a body painted with red ochre buried in a cave 33,000 years ago. Burning ochre enacts a chemical transformation from yellow to red: used across distant cultures, and for thousands of years, red ochre has been used to symbolise life.

Six Bells sit in the shadow of a mountain in south Wales, a leftover lump of tectonic movement. Underneath, in the ruptured coal sediments, iron minerals of the earth's early formation, dislodged from their Carboniferous beds, pour into the rivers, suffocating the waters. This displaced iron signals the abandoned mines under the surface, so recently worked for millions of tons of coal, fuelling furnaces that accelerated the expansion and exploitation of the colonized world.

My grandfathers' bodies bore the physical scars of life underground.... as a child I was fascinated by their hands and arms, where coal had literally got under their skin... and stayed there after an injury had healed... (Hywel Clatworthy, Six

Bells resident and co-director of Turning Landscape).

This pollution is now global as well as local. Iron that once triggered life on earth and symbolized the passage from death back to life has begun, in this context, to signify its opposite.

Six Bells Burnt Ochre paint is made by locally recycling the waste iron pollution and recirculating benefits into the local economy.*

Onya McCausland

Hydrogen

Joanna Zylińska argues for a radical ethics of precarity as the condition of being vulnerable to others: she acknowledges connectedness within encounters and relationships as moving towards a notion of contamination arguing that *'staying alive – for every species – requires liveable collaborations. [Anna] Tsing says 'Collaboration means working across difference, which leads to contamination. Without collaborations, we all die'.*

Can there be liveable collaborations also with entities, substances, elements – a collaboration with hydrogen? Odourless, colourless, tasteless and invisible, on earth it is bound to compounds: coal, oil, wood and also to water. Beyond earth most stars are mostly hydrogen.

Bolt together steel plates partially separated by rubber seals and "zirfon" gas membranes, add purified water, connect to solar panels, trial and error and experiment: electrical impulses temporarily split hydrogen from its molecular kinship with oxygen and it rises as the lightest gas at 70 km per hour.

If collected, ignited, it burns as a fuel; almost invisible blueish flames cook eggs, pancakes. Watch and the water drops gather and drip underneath the pan as flames recombine elements, bound again as H₂O.

Nicholas Laessing



Hydrogen Kitchen, cooking pancakes with Slade PhD colleagues, Delfina Foundation London, 2019

you are variations

you are variations (2012–2021) is a long-term transdisciplinary research project that explores more-than-human encounters with trees as political ecology, understanding the sonic as a relational medium.

For the past ten years the research studies the water-cycle of trees. It addresses a vital, urgent and intricate concern: Can we learn to listen to a tree? And if yes, and our listening becomes relational, can we learn to perceive the tree listening, too?

you are variations processes environmental data on sap-flow from scientific research on climate change, transposing it into a musical score and enacting it collaboratively. By turning climate data into musical performances, it draws attention to the complex water-cycling and sophisticated energy-balance of trees under changing environmental conditions. Its queries are relevant for contemporary scientific research concerned with climate futures, as well as questions regarding art's stance and the contemporary locus of its transformative power.

The project proposes that we face these challenges together.

It sits across life sciences, music and contemporary performance in art, creating lines of communication, questioning and proposing exchanges between different ways of knowing.

Its results reveal that listening as "active-tuning-in" can lead to a new we: the research proposes the phonetic /wi:/, as an inclusive "tree ecology".

Christina della Giustina

Concluding Chorale of the Nameless Choir

listening to self and other
witnessing self and other

Chorale of The Nameless Choir takes as its premise that location, language, culture, history and climate are as specific and different as the participants attending the conference. Each participant is invited to sing, hum, whistle or chant music that is important to them; a tune that touches upon memories, affects and embodied associations.

This improvised, sonic getting-together asks the self to voice ourselves, to sing a song that wakes up the ear, to focus on the relation between the ear and the mouth, to emphasize the *aural* and the *oral*, rather than our (own) intellectual discourses.

Chorale of The Nameless Choir is an invitation to break the relation between speaker and attendee at the conference, and invite “you” and “your voice” to take on the microphone. The sound of a gong opens and closes the Chorale:

*voices of memory and childhood
voices, lost and in-between
voices of specific vulnerabilities
voices measuring loss
voices out of mind, from the mind,
through the mind
voices loud and soft
voices of survival*

Chorale of The Nameless Choir invites all participants to send a recording of the chosen song, to be edited and available on the Slade Doctoral Blog, which will be made public, as a way to create sustainable relations with each other following the conference. With the participants’ permission the recordings will be collected, edited and overlain to construct a *Chorale of differences* allowing each voice to be heard, alone and together.

We welcome your songs from all over our world and look forward to listening to your many voices and languages.

*Christina della Giustina and
Sharon Morris*

Working Group 3. On Value

Modernity brought a sense of Order and Progress to our existence through a supposed divine right to control and dominate nature as we please. With such narrow values framing Western industrial society, the relentless pursuit of economic growth and technological advancement have come at a price of rampant inequalities, irreparable exploitation of the living realm and the exaltation of humanity over all other creatures. This malignant “Age of Man,” or Anthropocene – a Frankensteinian beast built from grand ambitions via naive design – has unleashed a monster of boundless consumption. But this same monster has now turned on us, leaving an unmitigated toxic scar on the world through our wastes, poisons, industrial fossils (plastics, concrete) – turning everything in its wake into a toxic soup, the antithesis of Charles Darwin’s life-giving “warm little pond.” We pay lip service to ethics, to greening, to decarbonization, to a rhetoric that endorses all the things that we know and value – in the hope that this *somehow makes something better*. Our values, meanwhile, stay the same since alternative perspectives have no place in the reality we have constructed for ourselves.

During the Value workshop at the *Postresearch Condition* conference, three roundtables each discussed the topic of Value from a different angle, namely Trust, Recognition and Preferences¹.

*Trust*²

Doing artistic research requires creating collaborative environments in which experiment and risk-taking are valued. Collabo-

Project Blog
<https://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/slade-doctoral-research/sustainability/>

1 The roundtables were preceded by a keynote dialogue between Rolf Hughes and Rachel Armstrong who opened the topic on value

2 The Trust roundtable was moderated by Peter Peters and included pitches by Jenny Picket-Ottavi (École nationale Supérieure d’Architecture, Nantes, Cyprus University of Technology), Paula Crutchlow (University of Exeter), Luca Vanello (LUCA School of Art) and Claire Rebecca Waffel (Bauhaus-Universität Weimar)

ration across disciplinary boundaries, both within the arts as well as between arts institutions, higher arts educational institutes, universities, and other research institutes raises the issue of value in a specific way. How to work in a way that focuses on mutual understanding and respect, while also allowing constructive dissent and debate? How to thoughtfully navigate the going together of different criteria and traditions? Questions such as these revolve around trust and during this roundtable, four conference delegates reflected on their collaborative projects from this angle. We discussed Do It With Others (DIWO) methodologies for artistic production and education and “commoning in dynamic environments” as a way of establishing non-hierarchical spaces; researching and writing on a social art project as a collaborative form of ethnographic research; collaboration as the reciprocal actions of maintaining affectual, material and behavioural support; and finally how trust is about agency and control as well as self-trust, e.g. in one’s own artistic strategy. In the general discussion, one participant pointed out that, in collaborative projects, the division of labour often is asymmetrical: artists are doing the lion’s share of the work. Funding schemes often build on asymmetries in trust, where the applicant has to go through highly regimented forms of establishing their trustworthiness. This is problematic when the outcome of artistic processes is difficult to predict, and estimating the promise of success is often a matter of trust. Trust is a practice.



Luca Vanello, *Laying on a pillow, two black eyes*, 2021

Recognition³

Addressing the dual contributions of artistic research as art *and* research, this roundtable explored how these should be recognized. Typically recognized by fellow practitioners, the research contribution of artistic research is frequently assessed by those from outside an established community of practice. This means that different hermeneutic models are at work in “drawing forth” and articulating artistic research contributions so they can be engaged by different knowledge constituencies. What recognition, then, is involved in simultaneously appreciating the specificity of the artistic contribution and its wider application of the research contribution. The question arises – who can appropriately evaluate artistic research output? This was explored through the work of contemporary practitioners whose work embodied a diverse range of artistic research approaches.

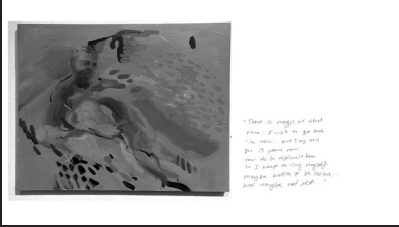
Each of these practitioners from different backgrounds reflecting on the concept of recognition invoked multiplicities of value with the possibility to create new economics of exchange and new ways of being. The nature of artistic research through the provocation of recognition is, in itself, very hard to recognize as it’s something that exists as a whole. Fundamentally ecological, protean, contextual, practices resist the very categories that institutions seek to understand them by. The powerful perspectives presented provided critiques for transformation, generating the possibilities of new values operating through different kinds of “economies” of exchange. Cross boundaries beyond the realms traditionally associated with the arts and becoming entangled with other disciplines, artistic research practices create new tensions and boundaries that complicate the general and fundamental principles for artistic research practices.

Needing to inhabit its contradictions and multiplicities, the question of recog-

³ The Recognition roundtable was moderated by Rolf Hughes and included pitches by Anne Julie Arnfred (Roskilde University and Goldsmiths, University of London), Jennifer Clarke (Gray’s School of Art, Ab-

erdeen), Liv Kristin Holmberg (Norwegian Academy of Music, Arne Nordheim Centre for Artistic Research), Ida Falck Øien (National Academy of the Arts Oslo) and Alexandra Crouwers (LUCA School of Arts)

nition was both potent locally through the reception by targeted audiences, while also contributing to global issues through a new “category” of research – which is both a transformer, and also part of “us”.



Yana Dimitrova, *Painting of Encounter*, 2021

Preferences⁴

The Preferences roundtable focused on the individual relation to “value” in arts and artistic research. The partaking artistic researchers were invited to reflect on what is ideally their strongest personal – as opposed to “cultural” (Value) or “institutional” (Recognition) – relation to the (art)work – viz. the research – in progress. What kind of energies are we to take on (or are we invested in)? The following (softly) provocative questions were offered to the participants as ‘mental nudges’:

- * *Artistic preferences are not about the future, they are about the past.*
- * *Artistic preferences are not about contingent choices, they are about ultimate beauty.*
- * *Artistic preferences are not about cultural values, they are about human existence.*
- * *Artistic preferences are not about matter, they are about spirit.*
- * *Artistic preferences are not about individuals, they are about the community.*

Important for the individual link with value is the idea of “open design”. The value of openness can and should be integrated in an artist’s manipulation of

matter, facilitating the “spirit” to emerge from the work as an aesthetic statement on the fundamentally “unfinished” state of affairs in the world.

Personal “preferences” about artistic value include classical ideas: “love”, “caring”, “solidarity”, “offering”. These ancient values should be considered and handled as an art-to-be-practiced: embodied love, harvesting communities, human stories as modern offering. The aim of the artist – as Yana sees it – is to create and/or help others create a “hyperlocal ecosystem”.

As one of the participants pointed out, the actual research is mostly experienced as an interesting personal struggle with this very concept of value. The focus is then on the precarity of the process in (and also of) this world we live in. Self-fragilization seems to be an accurate translation of both values and preferences (cf. Bracha Ettinger).

Conclusion

The only way we can escape the trap of our own making is to re-think our value systems from first principles – from what we pay attention to, exchange and reward, to the practices of our communities, the very nature of our kith and kin. To discover alternative values we must learn a practice of *care and attention*, make ourselves “leakier” to “others” and be bolder in working with change by engaging with infiltrations and searching for more equitable relations with the world – even at the expense of our assumed sense of identity, authority, security. Artistic research, and its transdisciplinary offspring, is likely our best guide for undertaking such a process and renegotiating such values.

Rolf Hughes (KU Leuven), Rachel Armstrong (KU Leuven), Peter Peters (University of Maastricht), Peter De Graeve (LUCA School of Arts) and Veerle Van der Sluys (LUCA School of Arts).

⁴ The Preferences roundtable was moderated by Peter De Graeve and included pitches by Sandy Claes (LUCA School of Arts), Yana Dimitrova (Parsons School of Design, LUCA School of Arts) and Jana Franziska Unmüßig (University of the Arts, Helsinki)

Project Blog
<https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1221683/1221684/46>

Working Group 4. The Politics of Aesthetics

F

Form (and its politics)

Artistic research dismisses the fantasy of creating transparent messages in order to transmit its findings. As art practice it deals with and reflects on aesthetic forms. I understand aesthetic form to describe all ways of appearing, including the specific spatial arrangement and temporal movement in works of art and other cultural products, and there is no aesthetic form without aesthetic politics.¹

We (Harney/Moten). We are yearning for a practice that goes in circles instead in straight lines, working along desire (Tuck). We yearn for those rare moments, sites and occasions, where we feel connected despite or because of political despair. People, places, feelings, sounds, animals, minerals, flora, and other objects (what José Esteban Muñoz calls “the brown commons”), wanting connection. We redirect attention from critique to educated hope as a critical methodology, searching for traces of utopia, finding guidance in the realm of the aesthetic, in fiction or art that makes us get lost, in the ephemeral brown and queer commons of performances (Muñoz), in between the breaks of music (Moten).



RUTHIA JENRBEKOVA:2 PROLOGUE. RUTHIA IS SITTING AT HER DESK IN FRONT OF A COMPUTER. THE DESK IS CLUTTERED WITH SMALL ITEMS. SHE STARTS SPEAKING, SEEMINGLY NOT ADDRESSING ANYONE.

I am a researcher. I'm going to conduct an auto-research now. My method is called auto-ethnography, which means that I put myself at the center of a cultural analysis. My research will take a form of a micro-exhibition. I'll use artifacts that I can find right here, at my desk, without standing up from the chair. This desk is a deposit of ethnographic material. My subjectivity is materialized in these little objects which constitute my everyday life. Archeologists call it “material culture.” Let me pick up a few artifacts – strictly arbitrary, by random. As in any collection, what interests me the most is a provenance – a particular history, a trajectory that every object has had through time and space up until here and now.

We exchange the violence of (Western) extractivism for our intra-action (Baldauf, Tuck, Barad), we move from impertinent understanding to strange encounters that bring about surprise and conflict, not only changing us but instituting us in the first place, shifting the boundaries of the familiar (Ahmed). We state impossibilities. It would be impossible for me to describe the politics of aesthetics in my mother tongue. We emphasize the distances, the ungraspable. We remain as an outsider to this transmissional belt.

Coffee. It's convenient to start with coffee – many begin their day this way. I can drink it due to tropical trees and shrubs of Rubiaceae family living in Africa and Asia. Unlike many other psychoactive substances, it is legal in

nearly all parts of the world. Originated from Ethiopia where it was used by Oromo people, coffee was first introduced to Europe on the island of Malta in the 16th century – in the context of slavery. Turkish Muslims had been imprisoned by the Knights of Malta (the Order of St. John) in 1565 during the Great Siege of Malta. In captivity Muslim slaves used to make their traditional beverage, which then became popular among Maltese nobility. Today 20 –25 million families around the world make a living from growing coffee, which means that roughly more than 100 million people are dependent on coffee growing. As a researcher, I am addicted to coffee as it stimulates my brain and enables me to draw connections between different things.²

We are here. Systemic violence, excessive unevenness, poverty. In the weather, anti-blackness is a pervasive climate, demanding changeability and improvisation (Sharpe). Witnessing, being with, being alongside, adjacency (Palacios, Haraway, Munoz, Camp) instead of bargaining on pain-narratives, interclass contact in the dark corners at Times Square New York instead of networking (Delaney); community life instead of gentrification. We follow a flow of movements beyond the singular and individualized subjectivity (Munoz, Harney/Moten), building queer collectivity (Munoz), queer sociality (Povinelli), a chorus that propels transformation (Hartman, Okpokwasili).

Cigarette. Why does coffee evoke cigarettes so naturally? These smoking sticks are made of a plant of Solanaceae family – a family that tomatoes and potatoes belong to as well. Unlike its vegetable relatives, the tobacco plant, Nicotiana, is psychoactive,

being indigenous to the Americas, Australia, south-west Africa and the south Pacific. A cigarette can be seen as a device for administering a psychoactive substance right into user's blood through inhaling. Tobacco had long been used in the Americas by the time Columbus arrived and took the practice to Europe, where it became popular throughout the 16th century. Indigenous tribes have carried tobacco as a trade item. They smoked it during rituals such as sacred ceremonies or gatherings for making an agreement. Since I am a researcher, the meaning of smoking for me is different, being reduced mostly to procrastination and post-coital pastime.

The bodies are in motion (Hartman). On the move, we notice the strings that hold us back: the curriculum, the grades, the habit of competing and comparing, the culture of peer reviews and annual evaluations, the urge to know and understand, heteronormativity and whiteness as powerful fantasies/performativities/structures of upholding privilege (Butler, Wekker). Focusing on bodily presence or perhaps considering your geographical locations (mapped on a premade digital online platform). Where exactly are you? – now? Today? Not your imagination though but yourself. You feel less *here*, and more *there*. Where 'here'? Where 'there'? In dozens of "here's," in dozens of "there's," that you didn't know, that you didn't recognize (Michaux).

Chocolate. Sweet and candy can help any research. This brown sweet is made of seeds of Theobroma trees that are native to Mesoamerica. This is another plant whose fate is inseparable from the history of colonization and slavery. It is enough

to say that, according to a legend, a notorious conquistador Hernán Cortés was the first European who adopted the chocolate drinking custom from the Aztec Emperor Montezuma. It is hard to believe, but slavery, child abuse and destruction of rainforests still can be a part of today's global chocolate production. But can chocolate facilitate research? That's for sure.

Cruising utopia (Munoz). Reorganizing our desires (Spivak). We refuse. Refusing to accept words or speech as either adequate or commensurate to the gravity of loss (Camp). Refusing to render transparent, particularly as a response to colonial theft, but also as a response to othering, victimization, and making pain a spectacle (Hartman, Tuck/Wayne, Baldauf). We refuse to capitalize on knowledge. The irony appears that we refuse that while we actually operate within pure capitalism in one way or another. We consider the politics of aesthetics as one of the common languages in artist research, yet we realize day after day that the politics of aesthetic seems to be the basis of exclusions, it may awaken us to the history that we refuse to embrace (Fatehrad). It seems while we attempt to portray a clear image of our recognitions, we instead face a foggy image of clashing colours and political ideology which perhaps reflects on itself and refuses to include others within the forum. (Fatehrad)

Pencil. Needless to say that it is made of wood. In the core of it there is graphite – a crystallized form of an element called carbon. The mentioned above extractivist economy is an economy based on this very element. From a chemical perspective, life itself – all life on Earth – is based on carbon. Can it be just a

mere coincidence? Unlikely. There is a notion of “carbon footprint” – the total carbon dioxide emissions (“greenhouse gas”) caused by a particular human activity or service. In a more literal sense, “carbon footprints” can be seen as dark traces on a white paper sheet: traces that pencil's graphite leaves on surface. In Science and Technology Studies, this paper-pencil assemblage would be called “inscription device” – an absolutely necessary research component that allows to extend one's mind to paper, and further, to electronic inscription devices (like a computer I'm using now). These electronic devices are built on another extremely important element, silicon. Interestingly enough, carbon and silicon have a lot in common. Both elements have a valence of four, both are able to form long chains called polymers.

We refuse to capitalize on knowledge. But we refuse with a set of aesthetic practices, while we note that “our” objects become objects: independent, unsettling, desirable, other, indeterminate, opaque. (Lorenz)

Becoming opaque, accepting and conceiving that the other is opaque to us, while allowing to approach the other's density, thickness, or fluidity. (Glissant) The opaque might be obscure, or it redirects attention from the components of the weave to its texture, practicing relation. We make our objects into abjects, or we are abjected. The abject appears, whenever distinctions break down and cause a breakdown of meaning, crushing the subject as well as the object; it deeply unsettles identity, system and order, disrespecting borders, positions, rules but cherishing the in-between, the ambiguous, the composite (Kristeva).

EPILOGUE. RUTHIA SITS FOR A MOMENT IN SILENCE, AS IF LOST IN HER THOUGHTS, DRAWING LINES THAT CONNECT TINY ARTIFACTS LAYING ON A WHITE PAPER SHEET. SLOWLY SHE STARTS TO SPEAK AGAIN.

Isn't it remarkable that chain-like polymers are the basis for both the mining and the IT industries? And even more to that – our own bodies are made of polymers just as well. Take polynucleotides – it's our DNA, or polypeptides – it's our proteins, or polysaccharides – it's our starch or glycogen. Everywhere we see these long molecular chains. And as I'm drawing lines connecting these little nothings of life on a paper sheet, I realize that my thoughts are made of such chains, too. Drawing these lines and trajectories, constructing them link by link can make visible how my own everyday life is interwoven into entire colonial history of the Modern humanity, and how my own species is bound to many other species, and to the planet itself. And the evidence of this interweaving was collected right here on my desk, without standing up from a chair.

We are not finished. We try again, going a bit more, to return again, this time with more complexity. (Tuck)

Renate Lorenz and Anette Baldauf
(Academy of Fine Arts Vienna),
Azadeh Fatehrad
(The Warburg Institute London)

Working Group 5.

Curatorial Studies: Expo-facto: into the algorithm of exhibition

Reacting to the Covid-19 pandemic shut-downs, many arts institutions have transferred existing programmes or created new programmes online. This has given rise to a vast digital publishing drive in the contemporary art field. Indeed, the realisation of *The Postresearch Condition* conference online via zoom and webinar streaming may be seen to be an instance in itself of this process. There has also been a widespread adoption of the exhibition-online as the immediate solution to the demands of physical distancing, lockdown and travel restriction in the context of the global pandemic. However, this recent intensification of online presence orchestration by exhibiting institutions in the contemporary art field would seem at first blush to be just that: an intensification of an already pervasive drive to

Bibliography Working Group 4

- Ahmed, Sara. *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-coloniality*. New York and London: Routledge, 2000
- Baldauf, Anette et. al. (eds.). *Spaces of Commoning. Artistic Research and the Utopia of the Everyday*. Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2016
- Barad, Karen. *Natures Queer Performativity in: Qui parle*, Spring/Summer 2011, vol.19, no.2.
- Butler, Judith. *The Force of Non-Violence: An An Ethico-Political Bind*, Verso: 2020, London/ New York
- Delaney, Samuel R., *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue*, New York University Press: 1999., New York
- Fatehrad, Azadeh. (2017). Peer Reviewed Journal Article Secularity. GIBCA, Göteborg International Biennial for Contemporary Art. (GIBCA) PARSE Journal. Göteborg, Sweden.
- Fatehrad, A., 2019. Between the Visible and the Invisible. *MaHKUscript. Journal of Fine Art Research*, 3(1), p.5. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.5334/mjfar.53>
- Glissant, Édouard. *Poetics of Relation*. Translated by Betsy Wing. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1997
- Haraway, Donna. *Staying with the Trouble*, Duke University Press, 2016
- Harvey Stefano and Moten, Fred. *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study*, Wivenhoe / New York / Port Watson: Minor Compositions, 2013
- Hartman, Saidiya, *Wayward Lives: Beautiful Experiments*. W. W. Norton & Company, 2019, New York

- Kristeva, Julia: *Powers of Horror, An Essay on Abjection*, Columbia University Press, 1982, New York
- Lorenz, Renate, *Queer Art, A Freak Theory*, Bielefeld 2012
- Michaux, Henri (2001) *Ecuador: A Travel Journal*. Northwestern University Press
- Moten, Fred: *In the Break: The Aesthetics Of The Black Radical Tradition*, University Of Minnesota Press, 2005
- Muñoz, José. *Cruising Utopia. The Then and There of Queer Futurity*. New York: New York University Press, 2009
- Okpokwasili, Workshop, PhD-in-Practice Focus Week, March 23 2021
- Palacios, Margareta, *Radical sociality: on disobedience, violence and belonging. Studies in the Psychosocial*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan. 2013
- Sharpe, Christina, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*, Duke University Press, 2016
- Tuck, Eve and Yang, K.Wayne. *R-Words: Refusing research*, in: D. Paris and M. T. Winn (eds.), *Humanizing Research: Decolonizing qualitative inquiry with youth and communities*, Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore, Washington: Sage Publications, 2014: 225-248.
- Wekker, Gloria, *White Innocence, Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race*, Duke University Press, 2016
- Tuck Eve, Letter to the visitor, in: Pauline Boudry/ Renate Lorenz, *Moving Backwards*, Exhibition Catalogue on the occasion of the 58th Venice Biennale 2019, p. 56ff, Skira, 2019

manifest institutional programmes via digital distribution platforms such as e-flux announcements, social media posting, art-blogging, website mediation of exhibition and jpeg-enabled art sales.¹ Indeed, the production of new digital property instruments as contemporary art investment vehicles seems to be a logical extension of the digitization of the contemporary art field's infrastructures.

The curatorial studies workshop convened a panel discussion – under the heading “expo-facto: into the algorithm of exhibition?” – on the question of the relays between exhibition protocols and the culture of digital networks, and the specific question of online exhibition mediations, extensions, alternates and substitutions as part of the January 2021 EARN online conference *The Postresearch Condition*. The panel was proposed as a forum through which to formulate the preliminary terms for an enquiry into the conditions, affordances and horizons of artistic operations and labour that are emergent in the transfer and relay of exhibitionary protocols online. This was conceived as a very tentative and modest first step in response to what seems to be (again at first blush and not something to be necessarily taken at face value) a global institutional convergence – similar in ways to the pervasive distribution of the white cube as a primary exhibition paradigm, though seeming to occur at a much more accelerated rate.

The panel comprised contributions from Prof. Noel Fitzpatrick (TU Dublin), The Aesthetics Group, and Prof. Carolina Rito (Coventry University). Under the heading “Attention|Screen|Attention” Prof. Fitzpatrick outlined some of the ways in which the sociotechnical paradigms of digital networks and screen attention economies could be framed drawing on a diverse range of philosophical, STS and social theory sources that included Jacques Derri-

da, Bernard Stiegler, Catherine Hayles, and Naomi Klein. Rather than address head-on the specific question of exhibiting online, he provided an important groundwork for constructing this question by proposing some of the frameworks within which the questions of screen attention, both phenomenologically and politically, might be articulated. Among the ideas brought into play, Stiegler's negentropy was key. Prof. Fitzpatrick articulated Stiegler's critique of cultures of the algorithmic and of automation, without dismissing new technologies, but rather by augmenting the question of care and the stewardship of technics with respect to questions of the techniques of living and the development of collective intelligence or what might be termed the “general intellect” in the Marxian formula.

The Aesthetic Group (comprising Jeanette Doyle, Cathy O'Carroll, Mick O'Hara, and Dr. Connell Vaughan, researchers who are each connected with the Graduate School of Creative Arts and Media, GradCAM Ireland) presented a co-authored paper on “The Aesthetics of [dis]play” which they voiced differently in several parts.² The paper focussed on the poetics of interruption, the relationship between the archive and its delivery in terms of digitally mediated performance, using the historical precedent of digital display in the museum context. The group proposed that at stake in the recent drive to online exhibition are the aesthetics of display and the politics of the presentable. In the course of their presentation, it was asserted that: “A sensitivity to interruption can challenge the inheritance of multi-layered narratives present in museological display as it highlights the sticky tape poetics that connect the ruptures. In the age of Made-for-Instagram exhibitions this means asking why is this object here? Why is it presented in this way? And how is it rendered online?” This leads them,

1 For a brief introduction to these themes see the blog associated with the June 2020 workshop ‘Handfuls thrown into air and scattered over earth’ realized as part of the Bucharest Biennale: <https://exhibition.school/exhibitions-online-what-for/>

2 See https://exhibitionschool.files.wordpress.com/2021/01/the-aesthetics-of-display_earn2021.pdf

citing Ariella Azoulay, to argue, that "The value of interruption is to allow us to unlock potentials and disrupt the way that archives and museums have 'segmented populations into differentially governed groups.'"

Prof. Carolina Rito provided the third contribution to the panel, and opened up the question of the exhibition as a non-transparent or self-disclosing category. By challenging the presumption that the nature of exhibition in general is already known and that it is only the question of the mobilisation of exhibitionary protocols online that requires careful scrutiny and consideration, Prof. Rito provided a valuable counter-point to the positivist tendency to construe exhibition as a matter of self-evidence. Prof. Rito's contribution also rebounded upon the terms of the conference itself, and sought to problematize what were seen as the predominantly modernist ways in which artistic research was been framed in terms of artistic autonomy and artistic intention.

In response to the three presentations, seven break-out groups were formed that developed responses to the following questions: (I) What are the questions and themes that might frame an initial consideration of 'the exhibition' and "the online"? What might be at stake here? Why might any of this warrant consideration? (II) What are the resources and reference points that might facilitate the framing of the enquiry into these changing practices of the exhibitionary and digital networks? What work has already been accomplished or initiated in this space? What are the terms that might help elaborate study and enquiry in this space? (III) What are the potential pitfalls or mis-steps that might be generated in approaching these themes and questions? The volunteer rapporteurs from each break out group, Victoria Jones, Claire Booth-Kurpnieks, Connell Vaughan, Marloeke Vandervlugt, Catalin Gheorghe, Lorena Marciuc and

Naomi Siderfin, generously provided short summaries of the break out discussions which are available online.³

Among the ideas discussed in the break-out groups, Prof. Catalin Gheorghe (George Enescu University, Iasi) proposed a consideration of the dynamics of mobility and stasis in a way that, among other things, implied an important caution about the universalizing tendency of the discussion and a tendency to erase the geopolitical specificities of location that are not reduced but further complicated and intensified by digitally networked screen economies. He also pointed to the possibility of a post-pandemic moment when the question of the materiality and co-location of cultural actions might be re-imagined and reconstructed with renewed meaningfulness but not through nostalgia.

Mick Wilson (Gothenburg)

3 See <https://exhibition.school/expo-facto/>

Embodying Knowledge: On Trust, Recognition, Preferences

Rachel Armstrong and Rolf Hughes

Research invites us to “look again” – that is, to have a value-based system that directs our observations towards an end. Such ends include understanding, recognition, the introduction of difference, change. One concern with the conference’s concept of *post-research* is that it foregrounds an essentially modern temporality. A second is that, at a time when we would seem to need it more than ever, the principle of checking – verifying, qualifying, evaluating – is being put into question. In the shadowlands of “post-truth,” “fake news,” and shifting conspiracies, anti-truthers raise and fire their rifles in celebration. It is timely, therefore, to address fundamental questions such as *what do we value?* Or, perhaps, *what SHOULD we value* – as this clarifies *what is at stake*.

This conference takes place in the midst of planetary-scale disequilibrium, provoked by the Anthropocene – the Age of Man – where human activity has become a geological-scale force (Crutzen and Stoermer, 2000). Arguably, the Covid-19 pandemic is the most prominent symptom of ongoing anthropogenic disorder, because it has entered our homes, relationships, lungs. At the time of writing, the pandemic has claimed the lives of over three million people globally (Worldometer, 2021). A monster itself borne of animal welfare abuses, human expansion, urban density, and global travel, it embodies tipping points in the order of our relationship to the planet.

While research has known for decades about anthropogenic change – that associated with the climate emergency such as flooding, unpredictable weather, melting ice-caps, famine, biodiversity collapse and soaring levels of carbon, and now, the ongoing coronavirus pandemic fuelled by our relentless intrusion into wildernesses and animal welfare abuses – we have disregarded these signs through nationalist isolationism, or strategic issue-based denial, so that an ultra-rich minority can hope to protect themselves from impending catastrophe, or fly off to settle elsewhere, leaving behind a despoiled planet. In addition to the growing inequality that Western cultures previously assumed only happened “elsewhere,” we now face roadblocks in the kinds of responses that we can actually muster in response to undeniable change.

We are spectators to decisions made by distant (and often uncaring) others that shape our lives. Coronavirus each day continues to be “viral” – the news cycle and our smart phone apps are filled daily with statistics of infection, hospitalization, and death. We become casual experts, while surreptitiously crossing our fingers, at the efficiency of lockdowns or the prospect of vaccinations bringing about a “return to normality.” All the while we watch others when we venture out for our daily walk, applying ethical yardsticks for mask-wearing, distance-keeping, the choreography of sharing public space, constantly wondering from which panting jogger, nonchalant teenager, or worried pensioner might infection arrive (and are there other ways to co-exist with non-human agencies on this planet?).

So let us be clear that the question of knowledge we are considering today differs from modernist debates where either a) there are only universals, or b) there is no fact/truth. The knowledge we use every day, is, in practice, contextualised by coherent, identifying principles and validated by entrusted communities. This

means that practical knowledge is more plastic than modernist tropes, since the knowledge produced enters an environment of both critical and ethical receptivity, which imposes limits on a claim. Its circumstantiality does not equate with *heaven knows, anything goes!*

Situatedness, context and application, is why we should resist *post-anything*, as this deflated *post-ness* returns us to another version of (post)modernism, erasing the past and finding fault with the present, while coming up with no new frameworks for thinking, or implementable proposals.

The State of Our Knowledge

The first spoke of invocation and tried to conjure forth a presence through chanting spells, reaching out to intelligences from other dimensions.

Then came the particle rain, the lifeblood of a recycling universe.

Initially, it was obvious that the metabolic furnaces of matter and energy were each ingesting the other. But when they compacted themselves to the highest density possible, embracing strange energy but neither information nor entropy, this pure form of matter-energy was exposed as a weakness at the event horizon of life, where it proceeded to spew forth powerful electron jets.

There were no witnesses to this frenzy, nobody to record the magic of the occasion. Being unobserved, *the very thing that they would later call on could never be named.*

So they took a doll made of clay and lay on it, supposedly to infuse it with some kind of life.

Scratched out from the slow chemical weathering of silicate bearing matter – granite, feldspar and other igneous rock – the impression made in that ancient flesh communed with minerals, plant life, and animals,

all the soils where rivers once flowed. Slipping and sliding, molecular sheets of clay wetly dry-humped each other, until depression was transformed into a crucible that hinted at rebirth and immortality.

In a laboratory high in the mountains, electricity was applied to the legs of freshly dead frogs, making them leap in surprise from the pine tabletops. And so the first unwitting cyborgs hopped out with their jittery battery casings to eventually Robo-cop the world.

Along came an expert crying, *A book of life have I writ in rock! Let us call it the Great Stone Book of Nature. With it you have the keys to the mountains and beyond!*

I opened this book of life on a volcano erupting. It had a burning footnote instructing me to make a new world.

You can read the molecular past through a fossil. 5 to 7 million years ago, a hominid species split through time into one line of descent that became the chimpanzee, while the other walked upright as the genus homo – homo erectus, homo habilis, homo sapiens, neanderthal, homo sapiens denisova, and homo sapiens sapiens.

Recognising a picture of themselves in the evidence, the police celebrated DNA and believed they had cracked the code. Now it was possible to identify who did what to whom, when – and put an end once and for all to mystery and suspense.

Yet when they now summon me to give an account of myself, I am filled with doubt and uncertainty.

There is a version of me, which comprises all the impacts I have made.

There is another living as an endangered species, dangerous when provoked.

Yet another is a melancholy history of my failures, ground into silica paste, sliding along the bottom of a riverbed, looking for a suicidal crucible.

There can be no self without a context, so another might describe all that surrounds and encases.

Each theory of everything is merely a compendium of apologies, a manifesto for all that remains undone – a love letter, written in flight, from the damned to those that persist in persisting.

One of the key catalysts for ongoing relativist debates is Bruno Latour, who upset the classical conventions of what is real, by positioning truth as a *product* of scientific inquiry. Claiming its validity was established by “networks,” rather than its inherent integrity, a politics of recognition and legitimisation became enabled through the power of the institutions and practices that produced and disseminated such claims (Latour, 2011). If this networked authority broke down, then so did the facts, weakening claims on the production of all knowledge, and thus, reality itself. Such *social constructionism* gave succour to a pernicious *anything-goes relativism*, where politically motivated anti-social lobbies ranging from creationists, to anti-vaxxers, flat-earthers and the like, laid claim to alternative facts, effectively refusing to participate in a shared culture by setting up parallel realities. The Humanities, cornerstone of the Enlightenment, was now under siege.

Faced with the charge of heralding the post-truth era, Latour argues that the authority of science and other forms of knowledge, only exist because of a common world and this mutual understanding no longer holds true. Parallel “truths” are springing up everywhere, which implies the traditional conception of facts was never sustainable to begin with, and that these concepts remain robust only when they are supported by a common culture, “by institutions that

can be trusted, by a more or less decent public life, by more or less reliable media” (Kofman, 2018).

In finding a happy medium, where the production of knowledge and truth is possible without falling prey to totalitarian, or Machiavellian extremes, Latour has observed that, even within a shared culture, agreed categories are never tidy and that discrepancies produce new “monsters” which fall outside established modes of recognition and evaluation (Latour, 1993). This constant generation of *exceptions to rules* is useful here, as it holds open the possibility of change and makes it acceptable for what we seek to be unconventionally produced (or monstered) *but only if* there are a) shared values, b) a desire to negotiate and c) a fundamental condition of trust.

In this way, we remain critical (not cynical) about what we seek, actively appraising its relevance both individually and collectively. This re-negotiation of the terms of active truth-making and knowledge-sharing in such uncertain times is *ongoing work* and involves principles of *trust, recognition, and preferences*. To form a coherent research environment and culture together may in itself appear to be a parallel reality, but we might equally decide that it deeply connects to and extends an established culture.

Our current ways of knowing once made sense of a somewhat piecemeal understanding of reality that dates back to classical times. Initially proposing to improve conditions for humankind by understanding how God’s household, or Nature, worked, applications of this knowledge were forged within laboratories that were highly ritualised, exclusive, reductive, object-oriented, human-centred, and hierarchical. The world that sprang from this tightly controlled canon of Enlightenment knowledge and values, gave rise to the Industrial Revolution, advanced machines, and modernity. The learning we have sub-

sequently acquired is a potent resource that reinforces this worldview and is divided up into specific territories. Separated by disciplinary walls and defended by institutions like universities and Royal Societies, scientific knowledge is subject to professional consensus, which decides through 'gate-keepers' which participants are "fit" to practice, acquire new knowledge, or hold authority over specific canons of understanding. These are the power games of legitimisation and accreditation. But we can no longer ignore the weaponization of Western knowledge through the colonization of populations and exploitation of nature.

Bruno Latour notes "... if we do not put the question of climate change and its denial front and centre. Without the idea that we have entered into a New Climatic Regime, we cannot understand the explosion of inequalities, the scope of deregulation, the critique of globalization, or, most importantly, the panicky desire to return to the old protections of the nation-state – a desire that is identified, quite inaccurately, with the 'rise of populism.'" Bruno Latour, *Down to Earth* (2018).

Characterised by "wicked" problems, Latour's New Climactic Regime embodies the transition from an industrial to an ecological era. It presents challenges that are qualitatively different than those of the Anthropocene, embodying a new domain of problem type (Rittel and Weber, 1973).¹ These are not synonymous with complex problems, since the problems themselves possess an agency, will and force of their own; they are *more-than-human*, composed of many actors that we lack the ability to negotiate with. In this sense, the coronavirus pandemic is not just a scourge; it is, like the biblical plagues, an *epiphany in our relationship with the world*.

The current crisis reveals how far our ideas have been *colonised*, enforcing a dominant consensus. This has kept us in established knowledge silos, generating

narrow perspectives with repeated blind spots and oversights in our understanding of the world. These very blind spots tend to be applauded and awarded positions and prizes that motivate us to keep praising the very myopia we have created. Even when we are encouraged to talk to each other and cross-fertilise our perspectives, the resultant hybrid practices have *no formal recognition in themselves* but are designated *disciplinary hybrids* in cross-, multi-, inter-, trans-, and even post- disciplinary practices (what some regard as forms of *institutional exoticism* or *managerial wishful thinking*). Having served their purpose, these unconventional conceptions are subsumed again into familiar knowledge traditions that, critically, lack an ethics and mature tool-set, e.g. for making a transition from the Anthropocene and towards the emerging ecological era. Anyone whose research occupies an inter- or trans- disciplinary locus has encountered the *gap between funding bodies' desire for such research and their inability to recognise, assess and support it*, a gap replicated at the level of departmental siloes because such monsters appear to be not *shining examples of transgressive, border-crossing thinking*, but rather *neither surf nor turf*. In other words, the categories that were originally created for the convenience of classification now constrain any research that overflows their rigid epistemic geometries. And so, fuzzy concepts like *artistic research* and *innovation* are created to provide a space where such monsters can breathe and recharge.

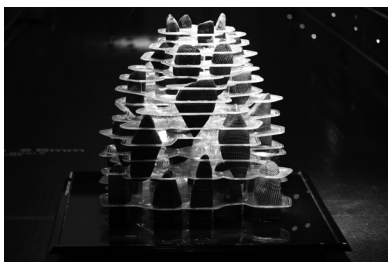
It is time to act, to organise transversal constellations that is capable of effecting concerted, meaningful change.

In recognising this phase of transition, a new set of approaches is needed that equips us to deal with the irreducible challenges we face – so that we may forge, from the bottom up, the conception of a new

1 The New Climactic Regime represents a "wicked" problem which cannot be described as a linear set of cause and effects but are fundamentally nonlinear and therefore resist meaningful solution by reducing them into a set of parts to be solved. As they cannot be addressed through established approaches means

they comprise a qualitatively new type of challenge that necessitates different approaches (Conklin and Weil, 2007)

way of living, complete with new toolsets, new values, new expectations, and new relations with the *more-than-human* world.



SEEM(N)EST, installation and collaboration between the Experimental Architecture Group and Studio UnSeen. Tallinn Architecture Biennale, 2017.

How might artistic research address complex, or ‘wicked’ problems?

The pandemic itself reveals a new kind of *embodied knowledge about what keeps us safe*, how we might *act, move, interact*; how we can find a new kind of *liveability* amidst all the turmoil. Western epistemology has tended to subordinate the body, experience, the senses, and emotion to intellectual reason, analysis, and explanation. What we value in epistemology – the theory of knowledge, and the theory of its justification – has troubled philosophers ever since the schism between theory and practice presented in Plato’s *Theaetetus*, a schism which, at its most extreme, defines practice as an “inability to contemplate.” In artistic research, we typically frame the terms of the debate in human terms: What is ‘knowing’ for artists and designers? How do we *know what we know*? Can we communicate this knowledge to a third party, one outside our *community of practitioners*? And, if so, what might be the most *apt expository form, performance, curated artefact* or ‘*structure of attention*’ for doing so?

Artistic researchers are expected to use artistic practice to create new knowledge through generating concepts, processes, artefacts, and performances; they present these to artistic and research peers via *expositional strategies*, whereby

the *encounter* with the work makes the specific qualities of the contribution explicit, as well as the social, formal, ethical, and political challenges engaged by, or implied in, the specifics of their practice. Research driven by *practice-led* methods brings into focus our chosen mode(s) of expression, its material, linguistic and/or technological specificity, its political, ethical, philosophical, and epistemological assumptions and implications – and, not least, its *appropriateness*. The work is activated upon being encountered; how we discuss the research becomes an extension of the research itself, since a configuring of experience must occur after each encounter to make sense of the range, variety, and complexity of our responses to the work.

Artistic practice within research can *strengthen* artistic practice *per se*, while *extending* its reach and audiences, and thus its ability to connect to other areas of knowledge. In the first case, this type of artistic research pursues not abstract, generalised knowledge, but the specific knowledge required to support and strengthen artistic practice, i.e. increased specialization, reflection, and expertise. In the second case, artistic research can develop methods that link and integrate formerly discrete knowledge areas – provoking hybridization of thought and monsterring of practices – catalysing a wider shift in research towards *transdisciplinary method development*.

Far from a “post-research” agenda, this is to make the case (again) that artistic and design-led research, together with unconventional modes of engagement with people, place, nature etc., opens the possibility of a productive interplay between differing ways of thinking, interacting and experiencing, thereby creating new modes of argumentation, relationships, alliances, research methods, rituals, and artefacts. These proposals are provocations that stand “for” something new, and as yet

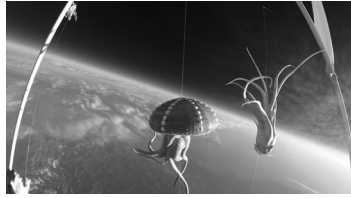
unestablished – not solely as a counterpoint against the present, or the “old.” This suggests they engage the play of multiple “rationalities,” or sensibilities, abandoning established knowledge hierarchies to generate a space for horizontal exchange of epistemic energies, even reserving the option of provoking cognitive dissonance in their audiences as an appropriate framing of unresolved questions.

Experimentation and crossing of boundaries are central to such research, which also contributes to increased understanding of the complexities of human and more-than-human interaction. Artistic and design-led research, as well as interdisciplinary research with a core artistic or design component, thus contributes to the development of hermeneutic practices by *strengthening and extending* our capacity to identify *value and articulate quality* (“what do we value?”) to a broad range of audiences, not only those identifying as artists. It helps to develop those practices’ interactions with other areas of research and to strengthen their role as critical voices in the public debate. This dual demand on artistic research – to strengthen practice, while also extending the role of methods, artefacts, performances, and outcomes to interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary interactions – will become an indication of the field’s strength and widening relevance as the field matures.

The question of *what do we value?* is therefore one that artistic research, like art, poses repeatedly –and does not seek to resolve.

Given the ongoing environmental crisis, and the depletion of our natural resources, it will become increasingly important to achieve *more with less* (think of the migration of the performing arts to the narrow window of Zoom). How we achieve this depends not only on the balance we strike between learning and performative cultures – between reflection and action – but also on

how we position artistic research in relation to, on the one hand, *material needs* and, on the other, *change value* as we transition from the Anthropocene towards an ecological era of human development.



Hanging Gardens of Medusa, Experimental Architecture Group and Nebula Sciences, 2016.

Examples

How to evaluate such monstrous hybrids of thinking, being and making, is exemplified in the *Living Architecture* project (Armstrong et al., 2017).² This freestanding, next-generation, selectively programmable bioreactor is composed of integrated building blocks (microbial fuel cell, algae bioreactor, and a genetically modified processor), which also function as standardized building segments – or bricks.

Each “brick” type provides an *ideal home* for different kinds of microorganisms that are fed liquid domestic waste, namely urine and grey water. It was designed to eliminate the possibility of household waste by forming a materialisable system for a regenerative society, by starting a *conversation with microbes* within the different brick types, where specific “words” take the form of chemical products and bioprocesses. The quality of “inner life” of the apparatus is expressed through various forms of *housework*, which mitigate the negative environmental impacts of human occupancy by removing pollutants, providing electricity, making biomolecules, and recovering water. Home and occupants engage in an active, daily dialogue, one that foregrounds care and attentiveness over control and domination.

Tended within an enabling environment, reciprocal exchanges take place

² The Living Architecture project (2016-2019) was a collaboration between 6 different organisations including – Newcastle University, the University of the West of England, University of Trento, The Spanish National Research Council, Liquefier Systems Group and Explora Biotech. It was funded by the EU’s

Future Emerging Technologies Open Horizon 2020 programme to the sum of 3.2M-euro under grant agreement no. 686585

across electrical, physical, and chemical interfaces to become a kind of human/microbial metabolic trading system (“*Let us exchange household waste for domestic resources*”). Established feedback loops generate a quality of interdependent living, where the apparatus itself takes on a particular quality of “metabolic life.” Implicit in these entangled relationships, the microbiota of human inhabitants is inevitably incorporated into the nutrient waste streams and persistent exchanges enfold humans within a holistically operating, “living” system. Rendering obsolete instrumental practices, microbes housed in the apparatus are not enslaved but are already part of “us”, establishing themselves within preferred bioreactor types to make kin and community as microbial consortia and biofilms. When, through habituation, the overall performance and well-being of the constituents – the human microbiome excreted in our wastes mingling with omnipresent environmental microbes taking up residence in a shared space – cannot be meaningfully separated out from each other, then *Living Architecture* acquires the status of *holobiont*.

A version of this technology was developed for and installed at the Whitechapel Gallery’s group exhibition *Is this Tomorrow?* entitled *999 years 13sqm (the future belongs to ghosts)* as a collaboration between Rachel Armstrong and Cecile B. Evans in 2019, that explored the possibility of a posthuman apartment, powered by microbes and having long-forgotten homo sapiens, it was haunted by digital figures, or “ghosts.”

Creating a context where human and microbe can symbiotically work together through design, desire and the arts, these forms of “togetherness” or sym-practices inform a range of toolsets, values, and approaches for not only establishing relational exchanges through the develop-

ment of a system, but also tests the limits of “resource circularity” and in particular, explore modes of communication and forms of “knowledge” appropriate to the more than human realm (Hughes and Armstrong, 2021).

To extend this relating with “others” further and flirt with interspecies nuance, the ALICE project establishes the first human/microbial interface that looks at real-time data from microbes produced as electrons to generate a signal that is then brought into a relatable digital context.³ In this respect, data artist Julie Freeman interpreted signals from the data microbes, or “mobes,” to generate animations that aim to entertain people in the presence of the living battery and reinforce human actions that promote microbial vibrancy such as feeding or warming, the microbial biofilm, which produces a new signal and generates a different animation based on the signal strength generated and its relevant data set.

ALICE therefore aims to provoke the possibility of empathy and care for our materials and technologies, rather than being unconsciously complicit in their exploitation.

What next?

More than human knowledge?

New agents are re-writing the story of life and we can’t ignore them. Infiltrated, contaminated, changed, and implicated, humans have fallen from their self-appointed position at the apex of the pyramid of life – and don’t like where they’ve landed.

This crisis in self-identification is not limited to individuals but is species-wide. The words do not yet exist that adequately convey the sense of confusion and loss that our mutated relationship with the planet in the throes of ecocide has brought. *A different quality of human development* is critical if we are to better haunt our living spaces and stand a

chance of an ongoing future. The kinds of changes we need to make however, are still emerging and new knowledge



The End of Me. Zoom performance by Rachel Armstrong and Rolf Hughes for Gothic Nature, 2019.

instruments are needed for developing fundamentally ecological approaches that can help us reach escape velocity from the gravitational pull of our industrially-centred knowledge frameworks.

In search of a new toolset that enables people to make the world liveable again through negotiated partnerships with non-human agents, we consider that many approaches play a foundational role in this transition - including, but not limited to, creative practice, artistic thinking, curatorial strategies, and the traversal constellations of these, which typify artistic research. Its compulsion to “monster” possibilities by throwing up new hybrids, underpins its propensity to catalyse unconventional methods, which are needed to invoke and acknowledge the true potency of human and nonhuman agencies working in tandem with each other (Armstrong, Ferracina and Hughes, 2020). As Einstein observed, we cannot solve our problems with the same

thinking we used when we created them. The implications for an expanded realm of knowledge decentres the human figure around which the Anthropocene has been organised and offers new terrains for discovery. While this crisis has been caused by humans, we cannot address the situation alone but must work in equal partnership with communities of other lively bodies. Ways of existing and toiling together require new values, actions, exchanges, politics, economics, modes of inhabitation and ethics, so that we can re-make our world in a manner that both enriches our own understanding and is beneficial to many nonhuman others – and collectively generate the necessary work for investing in, and maintaining, our living world.

Slow, sustained, messy and difficult, the ensuing change will not solve all our challenges at once and is likely to create new ones, but by staying with the difficulties of this Herculean endeavour, collectively, we stand a chance of planetary (re)enlivening. Thinking beyond our own relevance in preparing the way for our successors, we must understand that a radical phase-shift in the way we live that is capable of re-ordering of the world’s systems and hierarchies, is one that also proposes a life beyond our present understanding of “human” – in which our descendants are also profoundly changed.

This change will be an evolutionary journey. Today we stand in the doorway, checking our pockets, plucking up the courage to leave home.

References

- Armstrong, R., Ferracina, S., Caldwell, G., Ieropoulos I., Rimbau, G., Adamatzky, A., Phillips, H., De Lucrezia, D., Imhof, B., Hanczyc, M.M., Nogales, J. and Garcia, J. (2017). Living Architecture (LIAR): Metabolically engineered building units. In: Heisel, F; Hebel, D, ed. Cultivated Building Materials: Industrialized Natural Resources for Architecture and Construction. Berlin, Germany: Birkhauser, pp.170-177.
- Armstrong, R., Ferracina, R. and Hughes, R. 2020. *Monstrosity: A mutable toolset in an unstable world*. In: S. Erle, P. Beckley and H. Hendry (eds). *Monsters: Interdisciplinary explorations of monstrosity*, Palgrave Macmillan. Full-text access to the paper: <https://rdcu.be/b3s29>.
- Conklin, J. and Weil, W. 2007. *Wicked Problems: Naming the Pain in Organizations*, Touchstone. [online]. <http://www.accelinnova.com/docs/wickedproblems.pdf>
- Crutzen PJ, Stoermer EF. 2000. *The Anthropocene*. *IGBP Newsletter*, 41, pp. 17-18.
- Hughes, R. and Armstrong, R. 2021. *The Art of Experiment: Post-pandemic Knowledge Practices for 21st Century Architecture and Design*. London: Routledge.
- Kofman, A. 2018. *Bruno Latour, the post-truth philosopher, mounts a defense of science*. New York Times, 25 October. [online]. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/25/magazine/bruno-latour-post-truth-philosopher-science.html>.
- Latour, B. 2018. *Down to Earth: Politics in the New Climatic Regime*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Latour, B. 2011. Networks, societies, spheres: Reflections of an actor-network theorist. *International Journal of Communication*, 5, 796–810.
- Latour, B. 1993. *We Have Never Been Modern*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Rittel, H.W. and Weber, M.W. 1973. Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning. *Policy Sciences*, 4(2), pp. 155-169.
- Worldometer. 2021. COVID-19 CORONAVIRUS/ DEATH TOLL. [online]. <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/coronavirus-death-toll/>

Art's Intolerable Knowledge

Amanda Beech

Actually existing research

The fact that we are at a conference debating practice-based research tells us that we are working within an actually existing paradigm for art and that there are certain distinctive conditions that define what practice-based research for art is and is not. It posits the idea that there is a shared language, or at least some common set of problems and questions that define artistic research – the idea that art is a discipline but that it is also a part of a set of discourses, and that there are rules by which we obtain shared expectations and adopt common conventions that mediate art in natural, everyday language.

When we think of “research” we are drawn to the question of “ends,” the legitimization of knowledge and the use of scientific reason. And these terms are not only characteristic of the means and the measures of research, such as the quantification of social and economic “impact” for the arts and humanities in dreaded neoliberal scoring systems, but they also are synonymous with Enlightenment rationalism and emancipatory politics. In the context of Modernity as we know, these different versions of ends and measures require a conceptualization of something that is beyond knowledge as well as a hierarchy of values to order what knowing is in the world.

Theorists including Adorno, Foucault, and Lyotard are well known for reminding us of the danger that a commitment to reason slides into dogmatism. Reason not only brings the problem of dominance from external forces, but in the context of capital, power is legitimized internal-

ly, through the subject's *self-oppression*, where myths of freedom eliminate the possibility of getting behind the power to put it into question. Capital obfuscates the reason that propels it, whilst being indebted to systems of measure and order. Both critical theory and postmodern critiques have pressed home the connection between reason, emancipation and mastery, with inequality, violence, and a brutal human exceptionalism that is synonymous with Colonial and Imperial capitalism. Such critiques thoroughly underscore the pitfalls of knowledge as a social project.

We can see how this view influences the terms that locate art as research for our purpose today where the abstract for the conference determines a view of contemporary research with a distinctly postmodern character. Here we see an aim to describe research or knowledge *from the inside* as opposed to offering any external means to measure art as a value, or idealist proposition that would give art a cause.

This careful description of artistic research endows critical art with a structure, but at the same time withdraws from allocating any cohesion, cause, determination or function that standard forms of research might entail. For example: a) art is an autonomous mode of self-invention (an intuitive form of consciousness and a form of creativity for itself); b) art self-reflexively explicates itself in terms that are exploratory, open and non-teleological; and c) both natural consciousness and self-reflection as facets of art affect the political in modes of the encounter. In this description we not only see how research avoids the problematic condition of legitimacy from external measures but that it also highlights the inoperability of any internal forms of verification and knowing that can be manifest at the level of consciousness. These two forms of uncertainty – of proof and logic – validate a defense of artistic re-

search as a deterritorialized, non-programmatic, anti-formal, anti-foundationalist, and non-instrumentalized landscape of inquiry. However, this non-project has cause, because written through this is the grand idea of art as "resistance". Having cause, it also has a reason, but what is this?

In response we can say first off, that it is unclear as to how the description of art's ontology as a non-causal force in the world offers any viable alternative to or is capable of resisting the narrative of "ends" or "measures" that it seeks to avoid. Therefore, we can ask if its critique of reason is simply incorrect especially when this critique is forced to obfuscate the reason that underwrites its claim, which in itself indicates a bottom-line theism or dogmatism.

On reflection, critical art practice has been for and against critical reason, often with disastrous consequences on both sides; for instance, art's critique of Modernity has failed to critique capital, and art's critique of capital via Modernity has failed to articulate dominance. Both have struggled to account for the work of art as a critical possibility. We will see how critiques enforce and legitimize ontological claims to both art and knowledge, and how this approach establishes deep and various problems for art and politics. Most crucially, these failures and problems are hinged upon an inability to deal with representation; that is, how we might account for art as a field of representation, a space of knowing, that goes beyond traditional metaphysics or the ontology of art as a mirror of what is – art as nature.

It is important to note that these questions of knowledge and representation all turn upon the political: When art's critique serves to enlighten itself as to how it is fated to employ and reinforce the same logics upon which capitalism subsists, it may either narrate this story of its own ends/death, which is also the ex-

plication of the limits of reason, or it might seek to escape this fate altogether by rejecting critique in itself. We can see how this story plays out as a kind of genealogy of critique when we compare institutional critique of the 1960's to ironic forms of critique most common to the 1990's for example, or even the Dada of the Caberet Voltaire to the Neo-Dada of Jasper Johns. Today, critique has worked itself out of time, but these practices continue, and they get re-read and re-constructed back to a world of pseudo-critical irrationalism, boxed in wholly moral and predominantly identitarian terms.

Dressed in our own sense of propriety, the act of complying with this incredibly dangerous injunction to refuse a political project of humanity is in fact an alibi for the preservation of the status quo. In this, art enjoins itself to the destitution of epistemology and continues to emplace art's claim to the political as a form of private titillation and personal expression. Facing these limits of critique and anti-critique, we may find that we will determine certain differences between an idea of art in general and a form of art that we will call research – a specialized idea of disciplinarity.

Postmodern critiques of reason

A view of art's non-causal relation to the political is synonymous with many avant-gardist practices, but particularly it is underscored in Lyotard's postmodern critique of modernist epistemology in the context of the sublime.¹ As Lyotard would define it, unlike the modern Kantian sublime, the real sublime holds the Modern inside it, but 'denies itself the solace of good forms, the consensus of taste that would make it possible to share collectively the nostalgia for the unattainable.'² This is a species of critical self-reflection that goes before sense-making or concept-mongering. It is clear how this aporia has common-

1 Following Kant, art manifests the idea that the concept is incommensurable to reality in itself, but at the same time, it is in the phenomenal experience offered by art, that brings the sublime sensation, that is the impasse of resolving the problem of knowledge in form

2 Jean Francois Lyotard, "Answering the Question: What is Postmodernism?" in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p.81

alities with Adornian negative dialectics, where art is neither and both phenomenal and noumenal, and where this estrangement establishes art's avant-gardist resistance to both everyday causal reason and transcendental reason. Lyotard's post-structuralist critique gets behind the back of Enlightenment reason retrieving a pre-political ideation that is anterior to the cold world violence of technology, the apocalyptic promise of the atom bomb and the dominance of suffering associated with Enlightenment capitalist reason. Ultimately, these forces prove the redundancy of theories of progress as well as critical reason per se, and prosecute the subject's drive to self-realisation as an impossibility. Here, art is enjoined to the differend. It brings thought to its limit and extols the permanence of dissolution in a non-metaphysical and non-representational state of being a heterogeneous presence in time: 'It is the limit itself that understanding cannot conceive of as its object. The limit is not an object for understanding. It is its method.'³ It is in this way that art can speak to that what cannot be mapped or perceived and what is therefore inaccessible to any form of subjective or objective knowing, thus exceeding the totality of constraints set by theories of becoming as well as the material forces of capital,⁴ since both projects of emancipation and the drive of capital only serve to limit what the human is and can be, curtailing freedom to pre-existing norms. There is no external measure or standard by which to organize critique, and instead the work of art is to manifest the possibilities inside negativity in proliferate forms of invention that go beyond standard forms of the intelligible. As such, because form cannot be adequate to reality

in itself – there is no expression of reality in itself – anti-representationalism and anti-realism are naturalized as the aesthetic identification and attitude of the critical artwork. In this, art becomes the vector of the possible; for making "new rules of the game".⁵

In this context we can see how various forms of poststructuralist critique reject idealism, the causal relation of a Hegelian concept of becoming (that relies upon a correspondence of the I to the "we" of community, via subjective self-consciousness), Marxian historical determinism,⁶ and also the "ends of science" as a project of knowledge, where knowing would be resolved with doing and appearance and reality. Art's post-avant gardist anti-project acknowledges that conceptualizing the Absolute results in a terraforming of what Althusser refers to as the "aleatory" into pseudo-religious modes of dominant idealism, or that such a thinking of "ends" indulges what Lyotard sees as the construction of problematic "reconciliations of the concept and the sensible" that would merely contemplate the unknowable as a sentimental nostalgia for the unattainable, and which can only result in "a return of terror, for realization of the fantasy to seize reality."⁷

Therefore, materialist philosophy and art practice's self-definition of critique has for a large part, provided a searing critique of subject-centred philosophy, enlightenment rationality and humanism, since these factors are associated with inveterate political problems of mastery, violence, suffering, inequity and dominance.

Materialist philosophy and art practice have shared an interest in how forces that are external to the mind produce and

3 Lyotard, "Answering the Question: What is Postmodernism?" p. 59. This approach is reminiscent of Adorno's negative dialectics because it also presents critical art as an apriori mode of self-reflection. Both Lyotard and Adorno in different ways speak to the possibility that Modernism proper is a project yet to begin and for Lyotard, this does not need to take place

4 On this account, art does not produce facts, nail down forms of knowing as certainties, appeal to any concrete forms of external measure, nor does it represent a future to come, or establish itself as part of any plan that identifies means to ends

5 Lyotard, *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*, trans. Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), p.24

6 The perspective this description provides presses us to see how unity, stability and ideals are suspicious, since any transcendental claim to truth and consensus would always be false, compromised with first person bias, ideological influence and determined by socio-historical conditions. From a political perspective we can see that any claim to knowledge ill conceals forms of dominance over others

7 Lyotard, *What is Postmodernism?*, p.82

shape reality, and both have leaned on the discoveries of science as the premises for an apprehension of a world that is inhuman, nonhuman and post-human since ironically, the knowledge born from the Enlightenment underscores our alienation from mastery and our dispossession from myths of human exceptionalism. Extending from this, a critical epistemology turns to counter the empirical realism of the scientific method therefore, releasing itself not only from the kind of Kantian transcendental realism that would connect *reality in itself* to a referent, but also scientific methods that connect substantive evidence to facts.

In this, critique ascertains its own theory, unhinging itself from empiricism and reason. This autonomy is most evident in the turn to language and poststructural antirealist immanent critique where the epistemology of immanent critique goes to work fully understanding that any appeal to an objective standard is always already affected and constrained by unknown determining forces, be they social, historical or natural, and importantly, this includes taking into account its own implicit ideological biases.⁸ Both science and critique share an investment in how environmental and social empirical factors establish the

premises for knowledge, but in distinction, science says something about something, and this form of critique says something about this act of saying something. For example, Althusser's critique of science's "spontaneous philosophy" argues how science harbors dogmatism and smuggles in idealisms that it cannot acknowledge or defend, and that philosophy can intervene in a form of vigilance,⁹ and Badiou describes the sceptical condition of critique where everything consensual is suspicious, where if philosophy abides with the democratic principle, it is 'meant to examine everything that is spontaneously considered as normal'.¹⁰ Whilst both Althusser and Badiou are talking about philosophy, we can easily see how the same attitudes inform artistic critique¹¹ in the sense that art can perform the truth that it, like science, is utterly compromised by the lifeworld in which it takes place, but unlike science, art can explicate this corruption within the site of the artwork itself.¹² Art demonstrates its own fallibility. Because art can recognize that it is caught in this trap and that science cannot, it exceeds empiricism and transcends the local objectivity of science towards a greater truth. It also holds the claim that this truth exerts consistent pressure on the given. As such,

8 We can see this in various forms of metaphysical, mechanical, phenomenological, cultural, speculative, cosmological or empirical, biological and new materialist theories and practices. However, quite rightly Althusser's *Philosophy of the Materialism of the Encounter*, proposes a subterranean current of the aleatory that is dismissed or ignored but present in materialist philosophy, from Hobbes through to Spinoza and Marx. This is the idea of the encounter that takes hold and acts as the formation of the political. See, Althusser, *Later Writings*, 1978-1987 Ed. Olier Corpet and Francois Matheron, Trans. G. M. Goshgarian, Verso, 2007

9 Althusser, *Philosophy and the Spontaneous Philosophy of the Scientists*, Verso, 2012

10 As we know, this genealogy of this process is Hegelian. Hegel noted the problem of designating any objective external measure: "What we asserted to be its essence would be not so much its truth but rather just our knowledge of it. The essence or criterion would lie within ourselves, and that which was to be compared with it and about which a decision would be reached through this comparison would not necessarily have to recognize the validity of such a standard." Georg Hegel. *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Trans. by A. V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977, p.53.

11 Badiou, *A Speculative Reasoning on the Concept of Democracy*, Metpolitics, Seoul: Paris, 1998, p.78

12 Althusser speaks to this form of vigilance as solely the labor of the philosopher. Art in this case is not more than a service for bourgeoisie decoration alike the other humanities. "To know how to 'read' - that is, 'taste', 'appreciate' - a classical text, to know how 'to apply the lessons' of history, to know how to apply the right method to think 'well' (logic), to know how to look to correct ideas (philosophy) in order to know where we stand in relation to the great questions of human existence, science, ethics, religion, etc. Through their particular relations, the arts or humanities thus impart a certain knowledge [savoir]: not a scientific knowledge of their object, and not a scientific knowledge of the mechanism of their object, but - in addition to the particular erudition needed for familiarity - a savoir-faire or, to be more accurate, a know-how-to-do to appreciate-judge, and enjoy-consume-utilize this object which is properly 'culture': a knowledge invested in a knowing how to do in order to... For in this couple, what is secondary (and, although not negligible, superficial, formal) is knowledge; what matters is the knowing how to do in order to... Basically, the arts were therefore the pedagogical site par excellence, or, in other words, a site for cultural training: learning to think properly, to judge properly, to enjoy properly, and to behave properly towards all the cultural objects involved in human existence. Their goal? The well-bred gentleman, the man of culture." *Spontaneous Philosophy of the Scientists*. P. 9-10 But here we apply this mode of vigilance to the work of Conceptual Art in particular, that also claimed its affiliation with philosophy. See Kossuth's text *Art After Philosophy and After*, *Collected Writings* 1996-90, MIT Press, 1991

rather than merely explicate the hidden normativities lodged in objective claims (in a Hegelian sense or even in the way of Brechtian Modernist realism), the immanent critique of contemporary art practice interfaces with unknowability in a profound sense. As Brassier notes, following Brandom, whereas the Enlightenment realized the disenchantment of critique through reason, critique in this genealogical form realizes a deeper suspicion of its own residual rationalism marking the shift from the act of demarcating of the limits of reason to the underwriting of its ultimate destitution. Emerging via the route of self-reflexivity this critique is now naive – caught between a postmodern scepticism where nothing is as it seems, and a cultural relativism where everything means something. It is naive because it has no constructive theory of self-reflexivity which could be put to work to explicate difference.¹³

Postmodernism and Unity

Richard Rorty's text "Habermas and Lyotard on Post-Modernity" permits the old adversaries Lyotard and Habermas to easily exemplify some of the arguments we have already introduced so far. Here Rorty asks how it is possible to conceive of unity, reason and knowledge without metaphysics, as well as address the complex relation between culture and science in the context of pluralism. Rorty describes their core political differences as: 'we find French critics of Habermas ready to abandon liberal politics in order to avoid universalistic philosophy, and Habermas trying to hang on to universalistic philosophy, with all its problems, in order to support liberal politics.'¹⁴ Lyotard seeks to destroy reason in the name of the elimination of all metanarratives, universals and truth, and Habermas seeks to hold to the ideals that he sees to be necessary for the production of community and a political future, an aim to redeem "a philosophy of subjectivity", whose reputation

was damaged in the work of Nietzsche, in order to reconstitute a social rationality – an epistemological community – and to continue the task of a philosophy of the Enlightenment against those who would claim its ends (Deleuze, Lyotard, Foucault).

Rorty explains the thrust of Habermas' project as 'the need to be in touch with a reality obscured by "ideology" and disclosed by "theory"'¹⁵ and to see the necessity for an external standard to deescalate the "totalizing self-referentiality of critique" (the likes of which we have just described in contemporary art).¹⁶ Without a critique of ideological repression the world is left unaffected by the discourses that proliferate around it and a critique without an external form of legitimizing reason can only get trapped in the vicious circle of negativity. Rorty seeks to reengage a social project and subjectivism. He complains that, "It is as if thinkers like Foucault and Lyotard were so afraid of being caught up in one more metanarrative about the fortunes of "the subject" that they cannot bring themselves to say "we" long enough to identify with the culture of the generation to which they belong."¹⁷ Here the cost of denying a philosophy of subjectivity is emancipation. But even if culture evacuated those dangerous metanarratives, what replaces them is just as dubious. According to Rorty; 'Detailed historical narratives of the sort Foucault offers us would take the place of philosophical metanarratives', and 'Such narratives would not unmask something created by power called "ideology" in the name of something not created by power called "validity" or "emancipation," they would just explain who was currently getting and using power for what purposes.'¹⁸ Under these circumstances, poststructural critique risks solely providing an alibi for the status quo. Because knowing contingency cannot transcend it, and transcendence ends in politics, Rorty presses home the problem of how we might think beyond

13 Ray Brassier, "Dialectics Between Suspicion and Trust", *Stasis*, Vol 4, No.2, 2016, p.1

14 Richard Rorty, "Habermas and Lyotard on Post-Modernity" *Praxis International*, 4, No. 1, April 1984, pp 32-44

15 *Ibid*, p.40

16 *Ibid*, p.32

17 *Ibid*, p.41

18 *Ibid*, p.41

the condition of the given; how we might think what could be, the otherwise, and how things ought to be. But for Rorty this cannot be a narrative of escape. He says, "Lyotard unfortunately retains one of the left's silliest ideas – that escaping from such institutions is automatically a good thing, because it ensures that one will not be "used" by the evil forces which have "co-opted" these institutions."¹⁹

On the other hand, and in defense of Lyotard, Rorty explores how pleas to external standards and rational measures that Habermas sees as necessary for the construction of freedom produce problematic hierarchies that not only operate from an incorrect view of social reality but also get played out as social dominance. On this side, Rorty sees the limits of Habermasian idealism, recognizing the errors of demanding a wholesale social communicative project since this would register categorical divisions in the scene of the political and advance the hegemony of science over the pluralism of an expressive cultural sphere. In this sense, Rorty sees that Habermas cannot accept that the narratives that culture produces have scientific validity. This view of science as the necessary regulative force in the world cannot accommodate the idea of what Lyotard means by "narrative knowledge" and that science like art, conducts itself with a set of rules that are essentially groundless: Lyotard writes on the self-positing nature of scientific research: "scientific statement is subject to the rule that a statement must fulfill a given set of conditions in order to be accepted as scientific."²⁰ Since science and culture are seen to share these common

conditions, and are self-validating, any appeal to science to legitimize the aesthetic or the political field even if this science is asked to undergo its own form of criticism, thus demarcates wrong and strict Kantian categories between politics, scientific and non-scientific narratives that Lyotard claims as simply not being the case.

We could say a lot more about Rorty's own view of the social but for now, we can see that Rorty's critique of Habermas and Lyotard is instructive in applying these problems to the poststructural artistic critiques we have discussed so far. Whilst Rorty critiques Lyotard's elimination of unity, he is deeply concerned with Habermas' characterization of science as well as how it is employed as the means by which to fulfill this social project. Lyotard's description of the sublime situates the role of art's politics as a form of resistance to its place in the world of cause, that makes art a powerful act of symbolization but leaves the political to take care of itself, while for Habermas art is the blank space of the beautiful ideal, the fiction of a speechless unity to come that holds art within the categories of the social but leaves it to be managed by other already existing administrative powers. Rorty's critique reminds us of how themes of resistance or passivity generate art as an ontology of negativity that acts as an empty mirror of the community to come.²¹ Problematically, these ideas of the open show that both theories of resistance and regulation hover between conservative and cultic neo-conservative forms of power, which today continue to define the potential of art's politics.

19 Ibid, p.42

20 Lyotard: *Postmodern Condition*, p.8

21 We can see how this text sets up Rorty's departure from Habermas and Lyotard, where Rorty's work on private irony speaks to his advocacy for a postmodern form of social life that refuses to take categories of knowledge as discreet territories. Rorty's liberal ironist might believe with all the conviction she has, that what she says is true, but being an ironist, she holds open the possibility that this may be contested in the future, by herself. Subjects hold disunity in this private practice of self consciousness, where we relativise our beliefs in the present with the concept of what we do not yet know. Here, what is possible for a future might have no causal relation to the commitment that it differs from, it

may, or may not be extensions from it, or may or may not be a modification; it could also be revolutions in consciousness – a re-writing of the self. All of this is held within the space of subjective self assessment that manifests the "not I" as the private conscious invention of the liberal subject; the I that is, and is not identical to itself. This non-identity however does not automate some form of public self-conception; the kind of which, to borrow a term from Brandom can manifest its cohesion in gestures of magnanimity. This self-consciousness is not correlated to agency in the social because our "final vocabularies" are forms of belief that we commit to in public without doubt. These are relativized in the social as competing beliefs. Rorty's work holds apart the self-conscious subject and the concept of a community and instead ties them together with deeper liberal humanitarian ethics

Intolerability of Knowledge

Wilfred Sellars in *Autobiographical Reflections*²² poses a question about knowledge: 'How is it possible that knowledge has this structure? The tension between dogmatic realism, and its appeal to self-evident truth and transcendental idealism, in which conceptual structures hover over a non-cognitive manifold of sense, become almost intolerable.'

Sellars' description of knowledge as a form of intolerable negativity is a structure that vexes but requires reason. It is the Kantian premise that knowing facts about immediate experience does not translate to knowing facts about physical objects, but that, granting 'knowledge of even the simplest fact about an event occurring in Time is, in effect, granting knowledge of the existence of nature as a whole.'²³ *Subjective experience and objective knowledge are frustratingly divorced at the level of experience, but transcendental idealism presents the unity of abstractions.* We have seen how this Kantian description of knowledge has acted as the infrastructure of arts ontology as well as having provided the political grease that makes art intolerable for power. This is the idea of art as an aggravation to dominance and normativity. But if art is non-knowledge, if art is endowed as the true negative structure of knowledge and representation, then problematically, art rests upon the Romantic premise that reconciling our knowledge of what art is, will decode the problem of knowledge in itself; whilst at the same time, this idea of art resides in a Platonic fantasy which ultimately trivializes art because an external power grants this status to art releasing it from all self-determination.

Whether art eviscerates reason via critique's assertion of its own finitude, or disposes of both critique and reason in the hubris of a non-metaphysical materialism,²⁴ art now becomes intolerable to those who might invest in the labor of an avant-gardist politics. It has given up on a labor of epistemology, social unity and the problem of how a generality of life for humanity persists as a problem for thought, image and politics. This last question of the labor of the generic demands that art truly engage a complex relation to thinking knowledge that exceeds and emancipates itself from institutionalized myths of knowledge which continue to naturalize the uncommonality of variously encultured brains.

But this is the intolerable structure of knowledge that Sellars sought to resolve and Sellars set to work on this complex by locating the conceptual order in the causal order, finding a means to cut across these two dimensions of doing and thought. Taking this possibility and imperative as a cue, we can redress how art ought to think. Critical thinking is something that must be constructed and to do so it must have an imperative, a direction, a project. This is to engage the question of negativity and ends once more.²⁵ Asking how art ought to think then opens up the question of art as engaging its work with correctness, and it draws forth the potential to intervene with its own principles and the imperative to redefine the rules of its game through the operations of reason. Primarily then, we can say that this is not just a question of how art ought to think, but that first art must think itself again.²⁶

22 Action, Knowledge, and Reality: *Critical Studies in Honor of Wilfred Sellars*, ed. Hector-Neri Castañeda, Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1975. <http://www.ditext.com/sellars/ar.html>

23 <http://www.ditext.com/sellars/ar.html>

24 Whilst this text has referred to the critique of metaphysics from Lyotard, my complaint against poststructuralism extends to new materialism today, in as much as new materialism leverages natural science to reject the subjectivist pluralism of cultural materialism but in doing so, it advances the proliferation of difference as both natural and political, ultimately jettisoning reason in a new

theology of objects. In this case, new materialism offers what Rorty sees as the worst of both worlds – a space where Lyotardian fantasies of difference meet Habermasian "givens" of order

25 If art as research engages any "research like" activity, that it embeds the asking of and also gives reasons for what art is, then the question of ends do not go away – this is the metaphysical question of a unity to come and the role of human ideation that trepasses against Nietzschean conceptions of agency. In this sense self-reflexive knowledge has a role in the process of emancipation for self-reflexivity begins with the thought of the radically negative, not the relational

Concluding Remarks

The term research invites an extrinsic movement, a motivation to think difference beyond what is given to hand and to mind. In the context of reason, this is not so much a question of thinking “anything” differently, or to attack all givens in general in some free form paranoia. This is also not to relocate art to the empirical sciences, nor to claim that there is a way to rationalize and decode the experiences of sense-perception to wholistic interpretative frameworks that could somehow successfully relativize truth, but rather, this is to release reason and subjectivity from its negative typecasting, and to endow art with much needed and stronger epistemic credentials. To begin this, we start from the assertion that there are conventions, structures, causes and rules that inhabit sense-perception because these experiences are named and that this makes up just a part of artistic assemblages.²⁷

We began with referring to how a set of conventions of critique allows us to share the space of research as a common language, but we have done some work in detecting what reasons these conventions require and situate. In finding them wanting, we can now ask if artworks, in their representational work can propose discriminations between opinion, belief, populism and truth; to act as models of and for knowledge? To do this would mean that we can cut across these conventions, the ones that come to us from government assessments, as well as the ones

that art has founded and naturalized for itself; and whilst they enable us to share a common space for now, we are not dependant upon them in any strict sense.

Here we find ourselves back in the question of ends for art, not just what art ought to do, but how art defines itself through its manifestation of practice. A proposition does not just speak to an external object but also the terms in which it speaks. This is why we ought to re-think the question of metaphysics, reason and the human again, appreciating the complex relation between practice and project.²⁸ Could we say that the term “art’s post-research condition” acts as an opportunity for art to reclaim itself past the identifications of itself and power that have seriously damaged it?

26 If reason can measure that what is given, but also conceive of the infinite then we must confront the problem of negativity correctly, rather than assume that we can manage and maintain negativity in its pure form, that is, to invest in escaping the problem of representation by appealing to process or method. Only then can we confront the implications of the relation and incohesion between everything that is not and what is yet to be. In this, we hold the injunction that practice invents methods that are made up of mediations to explore and vindicate reason as the vector of art’s critique

27 As we have seen, in these circumstances, the best we could hope for is that art might offer some escapist entertainment in the form of distraction and kitsch, or that it may present some sense of the spontaneity of speculation, but we know that this bears out the threat of other mannerist contrivances. At worst escapism to the sublime or deference to empiricism renders the space of mediation meaningless in the semantics of a punk like version of vitalist kitsch nihilism masquerading as epistemological

anarchy. Against this we ask that this idea of thinking differently persists with the imperative that art can be adequate to reality to the extent that art can inscribe truth

28 The dominant model of the subject as a form of knowing is to declare humility in the face of larger truths. In that sense the critique of ends has disenfranchised us from imperatives as well as censored talk of community for the worry always comes back to a question of identity when we hear the question: Who is, or who gets to organize our freedoms? (see Badiou, *Who Comes After the Subject?*) “Critical” art practice has come to a tacit agreement that the rational subject gets in the way of these endeavors because the idea of the rational subject and capital have been written onto each other to the extent that one cannot tell the difference. In this, critical practice responds by taking another form of privilege: assuming that it can retreat from the world as if to rearrange it from behind its back

Corpus Infinitum – a thought experiment

Denise Ferreira da Silva

Need is a social category; nature as “drive” is contained within it. But the social and natural moments of need cannot be split up into secondary and primary in order to set up some sort of ranking of satisfactions. Hunger, when understood as a natural category, can be sated by the grasshoppers and mosquito-cakes eaten by many uncivilized peoples. To satisfy the concrete hunger of civilized peoples, however, implies that what they have to eat does not disgust them; in this disgust and its opposite is reflected the whole of history. So it goes with each need. Each drive is so socially mediated that its natural side never appears immediately, but always only as socially produced. The appeal to nature in relation to this or that need is always merely the mask of denial and domination. - Adorno¹

With respect to this “political will,” however, there are also two questions that concern me even more deeply. One bears on Iran and its peculiar destiny. At the dawn of history, Persia invented the state and conferred its models on Islam. Its administrators staffed the caliphate. But from this same Islam, it derived a religion that gave to its people infinite resources to resist state power. In this will for an “Islamic government,” should one see a reconciliation, a contradiction, or the threshold of something new? The other question concerns this lit-

tle corner of the earth whose land, both above and below the surface, has strategic importance at a global level. For the people who inhabit this land, what is the point of searching, even at the cost of their own lives, for this thing whose possibility we have forgotten since the Renaissance and the great crisis of Christianity, a political spirituality. I can already hear the French laughing, but I know that they are wrong. - Foucault²

Introduction

Recently I was reminded once again of the depth of the hold the *transparent I* has on thinking, including, and perhaps more dramatically, on intellectual maneuvers designed or intended as critical interventions. That such a grip becomes all the more obvious when one turns to explicit considerations of coloniality and raciality, that is, when the intervention aims at combating and correcting their effects of power, is not surprising. The context for this recollection was an unintended confrontation between an effort to explore art criticism’s (considered as a practice) capacity to avoid the pitfalls critique/criticality has inherited from its epistemological enclosure and two texts – Adorno’s “Theses of Need” and Foucault’s piece on the Iranian Revolution, both quoted above – that were offered as background for the effort. I will not comment on the effort, but just express my sympathy and to say that I do think it is worthwhile in spite of what I will write next. Of interest to my exercise here is not so much the content or intent of the effort but the fact that it is assembled against a background that threatens to undermine its purpose.

With that backdrop, which is composed by the dialectic (the historical materialist critical tool) and cultural difference (critical racial theorizing tool), the effort inherits something which one of the participants in the conversation

1 T Adorno, “Theses on Need” (*Adorno Studies*, Vol 1, Issue, 1, January 2017), 102

2 Michel Foucault, “What Are the Iranians Dreaming [Rêvent] About” in Afary, Janet, and Kevin B. Anderson *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution: Gender and the Seductions of Islamism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 208-209

called *the cut*, but for which here I give the name circumscription. Focusing on its sense of *limitation*,³ circumscription is not about the movement of establishing what something *is* or *signifies*, that is on the determination or interpretation of being or meaning. Instead, it is the gesture, or rather the image, that renders both determination (scientific) and interpretation (hermeneutic) possible while setting up the stage for the *transparent I* to function as the *I think*, which is how it figures in the Kantian program, that is, in his account of the scientific (analytic and theoretic), ethic, and juridic as well as in his presentation of Subjectivity in the register of the aesthetic, which is what interested me most here. More precisely, it is not so much *limitation* (as a category) but *delimitation* as the enabling gesture, that is, *the cut* (such as I find at the opening of Adorno's text and throughout Foucault's), that allows for the circumscription of the proper "object" under examination, under analysis or interpretation. Not only does this gesture precede *determination*, it is its condition of possibility. Without it, Adorno could not have proceeded with this dialectical account of superficial and basic needs, and Foucault would not have been able to capture what is unique, what is "different," about the Iranian Revolution, as a political event.

What am I talking about? Let me comment on the effort a bit more. Each text, as a matter of fact, indicates how well the paper and the effort it expounds draws from both historical materialism and critical racial theorizing. In the case of Adorno's piece, the opening paragraph cites how the difference between "uncivilized peoples" and "civilized peoples" eating habits displace nature from the consideration of need and clears the ground for his dialectical account of need, as a social category, and with that to his critique of the "distinction between super-

ficial and basic needs." That does so in a way similar to how Marx cites the slave in order to bring home the point that capital lives off wage labor exploitation – legally authorized extortion of surplus value – and through that he delimits the moment of capital and renders it impossible to consider how colonial subjugation also enters in the creation of capital. In the case of Foucault's text, critical racial theorizing is obviously not the theoretical basis for his analysis; it is actually common sense that supports his claim that the Spanish model is not adaptable to Iran and what was happening in Iran was not a revolution but the emergence (or re-emergence) of a religious (Islamic) authority which demonstrates, he says, "this thing whose possibility we have forgotten since the Renaissance and the great crisis of Christianity, a political spirituality."⁴ From the first to the last paragraph, Foucault's analysis of the events in Iran was informed by a pre-supposed cultural difference which he could celebrate because, as Spivak has noted, he did not consider his own intervention an element of that cultural distinction. There are, certainly, many reasons why gestures such as Adorno's and Foucault's in these and other texts go unnoticed.

None of them interest me here, though I am sure they are all relevant to what I will do in this text. For what interests me here is precisely the operations that occur in these opening paragraphs, the moves that precede the text precisely because they are not being seen as deserving analysis, they are the pre-conditions for the analysis. *En passant*, this distinction – called the cut by someone during the conversation I am recalling here – used precisely because believed to be common sense, does its work for meaning as a pre-condition, because it rests on one of the components of the intra-structure of the *transparent I*, which

3 Here I am referring to Kant's third type of the Quality category, namely, Limitation. In his brief discussion of these categories, Kant states that "limitation is nothing other than reality combined with negation" (307). I will return to this at the end of the essay.

4 Foucault, "What Iranians are Dreaming About", 209

is the notion of unity. A notion, which is the point of departure for the onto-epistemological pillars of post-Enlightenment thinking, namely separability, determinacy, and sequentiality.⁵

The very possibility of separability rests on the presumption of unity. For instance, one of the simplest and most intuitive images of two things that are separate is that of two parallel lines extending to infinity. Now this image assumes that the universal is a flat surface. Since Einstein's equivalence principle showed otherwise, the image of the cosmos, now conceived as spacetime, is that of a curved *composition* (the components of which constitute spacetime) instead of a flat context (on which things move in space, in time). This has several consequences. Many of them are relevant here, but I am primarily interested in this shift. That is, I am interested in what happens when attending the cosmos and even the parallel lines, instead of focusing on points, lines, or planes (and their relations, such as whether or not they meet); i.e. my focus is on the composition, such as the several dimensions of chunks (rock, molecules, atoms, protons, mesons, photons) of spacetime.

As a contribution to the collective effort to dissolve the transparent I and its intra- and infra-structures, in this piece I will present and discuss a procedure that does not only expose how unity operates as an intra-structure but also experiments with another image i.e. an assemblage of obsessions and casual borrowings, that I will cluster under the phrase *corpus infinitum*. Corpus infinitum is not a concept or a notion. Rather it is an image of the world, one which substitutes something like a mind (as I think) and its separation from something like a body (what exists) for descriptors that presume that every and any existent (human and more than human) and event is a body (corpus) without limits (infinitum). With *corpus infinitum* I

propose an image of existence that does not need the I think, which elsewhere I call the *transparent I*, also known as the Subject and Subjectivity but also as the Human and Humanity.

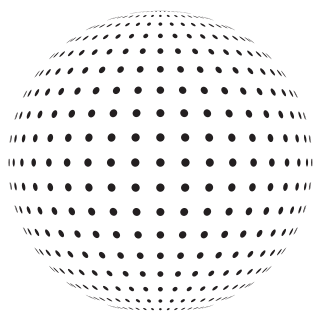
The Procedure

I

How is it that abstraction generates the sense of unity? A term that gives it away very quickly is circumscription. Try and image: a figure with a well-marked center; a circle, a square, a triangle. (Image) Try again, now sprinkle some dots; take a particular dot, which is not at its center (Image) and try and relate it to another dot on the other side of the center by taking into account everything else around it. How do you do it? Do you draw a straight line, a curve, one line, two lines? A straight line through the center and a semi-circle around it? How else can you do it? Can you tell when, at which point the line that goes around the center becomes circular, when it stops being a straight line? Have you noticed that it depends on how far the next dot is, but also on the dimensions of the context itself? And, how about the fact that it does not matter whether the figure is a circle, a triangle, or a square: if you are trying to connect dots on opposite sides without passing through the center, you will always draw a semi-circle. No matter the shape of the context, drawing a semi-circle is necessary if you want to connect two points on opposite sides, without cutting through the center. Now this can be shown in at least three ways: a mental image, as we just did; an actual drawing, or an equation (image) for a semi-circle. Through this numeric representation, it is possible to find any position in the context without having to know whether there is a dot or not. Or, put simply, the equation tells me where the opposite side is, regardless of whether there is a dot there. Once I am

5 Cf. Denise Ferreira da Silva, "On Difference Without Separability." 32nd Bienal de São Paulo – Incerteza Viva. Catalogue. Edited by Jochen Volz and Júlia Rebouças. São Paulo: Fundação Bienal de São Paulo

able to determine that, I no longer need to draw a line to connect two points. All I need to know is the center and the radius (r) of the circle.



II

Now we have the same dots; however, instead of flat (a circle, a square, or a triangle), imagine something with volume (a sphere, a cube, a tetrahedron). Furthermore, figure the dots are vibrating in the same location. What happens to the gaps between them? Do the vibrations have any impact upon these? Of course, they do. How do I know? I know because when I wave my hand I feel the air touching and moving around it. The air moves like the waves in the lake move when you throw a pebble in it (kinetic energy of the pebble transfer to the water and moves as waves). What happens is that my moving hand transfers energy (potential energy) to the surrounding air, thus dislocating the particles. The moving pebble transfers kinetic energy to the water that takes the form of a wave. In addition to the transfers that involve movement work (potential or kinetic energy), there is heat (the transfers of internal kinetic energy), which happens all the time. To be sure, because every existing thing, with a temperature above absolute zero (0 Kelvin or -273.15 degrees Celsius) releases phonons (quasi particles for quantum or classic measure of vibration) and/or photons (infra-red band of the electromagnetic spectrum)

– even when neither my hand nor the air is moving heat (transfer of internal kinetic energy) – different forms of energy are taking place. Transfer of energy, it should be noted, may also involve conversion of energy from one kind to another, or transduction – such as a microphone that converts sound to electricity and the speaker that converts electrical signals back into sound. This image can also be formalized in different ways. Classically, it can be described using equations that present thermodynamics, which measure the amount of kinetic energy being transferred between the dots or your fingers; quantum field theory would translate it into mathematical objects and equations, which would be used to determine different properties, such as momentum, energy, of the elementary particles.

Discussion

For everything is a plenum, which makes all matter interconnected. In a plenum, every motion has some effect on distant bodies, in proportion to their distance. For each body is affected, not only by those in contact with it, and in some way feels the effects of everything that happens to them, but also, through them, it feels the effects of those in contact with the bodies with which it is itself immediately in contact. From this it follows that this communication extends to any distance whatsoever. As a result, every body is affected by everything that happens in the universe, to such an extent that he who sees all can read in each thing what happens everywhere, and even what has happened or what will happen, by observing in the present what is remote in time as well as in space. – Leibniz⁶

If it is thus conceded that one must go beyond a given concept in order

6 G. W. Leibniz, *Philosophical Essays* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1989), p. 221

7 Immanuel Kant. *Critique of Pure Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 402

8 True quantum field theory uses a mathematical tool called harmonic oscillators to describe what happens in the gaps and the dots themselves but that

to compare it synthetically with another, then a third thing is necessary in which alone the synthesis of two concepts can originate. But now what is this third thing, as the medium of all synthetic judgments? There is only one totality in which all of our representations are contained, namely inner sense and its a priori form, time. The synthesis of representations rests on the imagination, but their synthetic unity (which is a requisite for judgment) on the unity of apperception. Herein therefore is to be sought the possibility of synthetic judgments, and, since all three contain the sources of a priori representations, also the possibility of pure synthetic judgments, indeed on these grounds they will even be necessary if a cognition of objects is to come about which rests solely on the synthesis of the representations.

– Kant⁷

What is involved in the experiment? I imaged dots twice. First with a line connecting them. In the second case they were vibrating. In both cases I assume that there are things about the dots and their environs you could know without reference to anything else, without adding any further information. In the first experiment for sure. In the second that is not the case.⁸ Be that as it may, the entire experiment appeals to Imagination, however, the first part relies on intuition, the second recalls existence. I did that because something happens with dots when they stop being fixed points in a plane, when they become bits of dust inside of a sphere. When they come into existence, what happens to the dots cannot solely be described formally. For this reason, Kant would say, knowing the moving dots (in spacetime) is not merely a matter for intuition, it concerns understanding, which is the faculty that

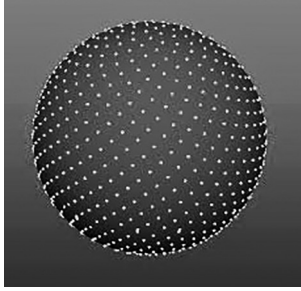
subsumes what exists in general concepts, that is, the faculty of abstraction. Even before it comes into action in the discursive moment, in determination or judging, the *I think* is presupposed in the impressions gathered by intuition and synthesized by imagination. It does so by means of two transcendental principles guiding its decisions, a mathematical (the first part) and a dynamical or physical principle, as the second part of my experiment. The *I think* in the first part differs from the *I think* in the second part, only because, according to Kant, in the first part of the exercise it is not only the Cartesian formal residue of his doubting exercise, it also includes the Lockean self who is known for its existence in/through/with time. For Kant, it is the a priori unity and the ground for the understanding of doing its thing, which is to generate concepts, or functions, which he defines as “the unity of the action of ordering different representations under a common one. Concepts are therefore grounded on the spontaneity of thinking, as sensible intuitions are grounded on the receptivity of impressions.”⁹

The *I think* is not so quickly recalled in the second part of the experiment. My intention there is to suggest an image of the world, *corpus infinitum*, which is as abstract as the geometrical figures that, since Galileo, have supported the claims of modern philosophers, especially when they are translated into mathematical demonstrations, proofs, but which does not picture an abstract, delimited space, which always presumes a center. What distinguishes *corpus infinitum* from the Cartesian plane is how it pictures an unlimited but full context, without a center (presumed or marked), and one in which that which exists in there is connected to everything else. Not through a line but through its mode of existing, such as the vibrating dots which release their internal

does not come immediately to everyone's mind when asked to image what happens to the surroundings of a vibrating dot

10 Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, 298

kinetic (as heat) or potential energy (as work) into the gaps, where this energy is then absorbed, refracted, or diffracted by other dots but not going anywhere – as such, these are no longer dots, but atoms or molecules or even electrons or phonons.



Proposition

Now by means of the proposition “The soul is nonmortal” I have certainly made an actual affirmation as far as logical form is concerned, for I have placed the soul within the unlimited domain of undying beings. Now since that which is mortal contains one part of the whole domain of possible beings, but that which is undying the other, my proposition states that the soul is one of the infinite multitude of things that remain if I take away everything that is mortal. But the infinite sphere of the possible is thereby limited only to the extent that that which is mortal is separated from it, and the soul is placed in the remaining space of its domain. – Kant ¹⁰

With this experiment I highlight two different ways through which to obtain abstraction, one that requests and delivers necessity and determinacy and one that does not necessarily and/or in the same way. In the first part, I highlight the immediacy of necessitation and, in the second

part, its belatedness; the possibility of determination in both and its delay in the second part. The first part figures Kant’s postulate that Mathematical (geometry) statements yield synthetical judgements a priori, that is, that they allow the addition to the knowledge of something without recourse to what happens and exists in the world. That is, intuitively. Now the second part of the exercise adds something which Kant would call a posteriori, that is, something that requires experience: the vibrating dots can be imaged, but it is impossible to describe what happens in the surrounding gaps without recalling what happens when energy release takes place, when something dislocates or vibrates. Still, the second part of the experiment refers to and yields abstraction as the first one. But it presumes a different image of the world – which I am calling corpus infinitum – one which recalls Leibniz’s plenum slightly modified by thermodynamics and the weirdness that is quantum physics (both particle physics and quantum field theory) and condensed matter physics.

Why this experiment? I have reasons, of course, many, many reasons. Among the most important, as I mention in the introduction, is a desire to release the Kantian hold over our Imagination. In particular, I target what he calls the a priori principle that underlies his whole enterprise – that is, his framework for scientific knowledge, his rendering of the aesthetic, and his ethic program. Unfortunately, I do not have time to make a case for how the Kantian program has come to constitute post-enlightenment thinking nor to spell out how it still has a hold of our thinking. All I can do is to recall how Husserl’s formulation of phenomenology rests on a description of what he calls “natural attitude” and pure I or pure consciousness that presume and redeploy the Kantian figuring of the Subject, the “I think”; in the same way

that, before him, Marx deployed the Kantian framework for scientific knowledge in the assembling of the tools that show how wage labor determines (explains) and creates (produces) capital both in terms of its historical (social) conditions and the production of value.

What is this principle? The law of specification of nature, which is the principle a priori (that is, transcendental) principle that guides the power of judgement – the mental capacity involved in determination (the subsumption of a particular under a universal, a concept or category) and reflection (which is a consideration of something that does not, at least, immediately, relates it to a universal). Let me quote from the Critique of Judgement: this principle, according to Kant, “assumes in behalf of an *order of nature* cognizable for our understanding in the division that it makes of its universal laws when it would subordinate a manifold of particular laws to these.” That is, individual human beings go about existence under this principle; everything – the events and existents – we encounter is assumed to be part of an order, of a context informed by the universal laws through which our understanding knows. That is, before scientific tools and procedures are deployed, we presume that all that exists constitutes a unified and ordered whole according to universal laws; another way of saying that existence is the site of necessity. However, because necessity (in the form of law) is something that belongs to understanding, and accounts for its capacity to determine (to subsume particulars under universals), which is basically the task of scientific knowledge for Kant, the subject of knowledge (the I think) is not submitted to it.

Expectedly, Kant assumes that it is almost a matter of course that the categories of understanding correspond to the logical function of judgement. As it should be if the one doing the judging me-

diates – that is, makes available – is that to which these concepts will be applied. Furthermore, it makes sense of how the subject of judgment corresponds to what it knows. For if on the one hand, the synthesis referred to by the categories is the work of the unity of apperception, which is itself defined by its self-recognition under/in the flow of representations, on the other hand, time (or time-determination) which is given by the flow of representation corresponds to subsumption (conceptual-determination). As you know, Kant calls the categories of understanding not descriptors of the things in the world, but as already apprehended by the “I think” through the pure intuition of space and time, and also gathered (synthesized) by imagination. It is only when understanding brings them under its concepts, these representations acquire the unity that distinguish knowledge from the musing and confusions of imagination.

Conclusion

Let me conclude by returning to *the cut*, to the gesture of *delimitation*, that is, the circumscription approached as act and not as an image of unity, as I did in the first part of my experiment. *Limitation* is the category that corresponds to the third “Quality of Judgements,” namely Infinite – the other two being Universal and Particular. What interests me in this kind of judgements, in the predicating gestures, is precisely how that which is submitted to it does not fall under the grips of necessity, which is what the gesture of circumscription allows. For as Kant explains, all such judgements do is to place it in a sphere of the unlimited, while “the infinite sphere of the possible is thereby limited only to the extent that that which is mortal is separated from it.” Thus, Infinite Judgements do not follow the principle of identity or of non-contradiction, that is, they do not state what a thing *is* but only attach to it a negative particle that sig-

nals difference and it does so without determination. For if the nonmortal remains unnamed, non-circumscribed, that which falls in the delimited domain is likewise not necessarily determined. Why? Because to say that something falls in, for instance, the domain of the mortal – belongs to the set of mortals – fails to define (establish, explain, etc.) what the *mortal* is or *signifies*. The second gesture, *determination*, which follows separation, happens within the enclosure – that space to which, Kant says, mortal things belong, and from which the soul is “separated out.” Or, as in the case of my example, determination refers to the very movement of locating dots, positioning them in relation to the center, connecting dots, and so on.

Regarding the effort commented on earlier, the task inspired by the second part of my procedure, is a double one. On the one hand, one needs to be attentive to whether or not what is searched for or proposed is not already undermined by the very delimitations furnished by the available (and thought useful) tools or procedures; on the other hand, repeating the movement forward and performing further delimitations will allow for determining gestures and reproducing the same external (delimiting) and internal (determining) lines, which compose the onto-epistemological intra-structure of the *I think* that constitutes the post-Enlightenment episteme and plays such a crucial role. It has supported the post-Enlightenment political architecture whether analytically, in deployments of a critical tool (the dialectic) which only works after delimitation of coloniality; or descriptively, in deployments of the tool of raciality, which immediately obtains the proper domain of operation of the modern ethical and juridical apparatus. *How* to engage in the first part of the task while avoiding the second is a collective effort to which I hope this thought experiment will contribute as a source of inspiration.

Not Yet

Irit Rogoff

We live under the categorical imperative of "NOW". Whereas my primary reference for the 'not yet' has been Ernst Bloch who stated that 'Hope Lies in the Not Yet', in this instance the concerns are more to do with getting away from the imperative of accelerated responses to comment on the "Now". What I am proposing here is the possibility for our work, the work we are discussing today as 'Practice Driven Research', to recast the *Not Yet* from future to present without making it subservient to the urgencies claimed for the present. It is here, in the mashed-up temporalities of address, that opportunity lies. Perhaps at stake is the potential range of the imagined responses, direct responses, of creative practices to an ever greater sense of emergency – and for the need for a critical distance from such emergencies. How do we get to the point that we can mark emergency without responding directly to it? The demand for a response limits the very parameters by which the emergency can be thought, in a sense this demand domesticates the emergency so it can fit in with what we imagine an adequate response is.

In this time of catastrophes, man aided catastrophes to the last, the imperative is to overcome and to document – to immune, to protect, to rescue, to bury the dead, to batten the hatches of underfunded systems, to document injustices, to survive with a modicum of integrity. That the times are catastrophic is hardly a matter of speculation – it is a profound truth both factually and theoretically. Isabel Stengers' 2015 book *In Catastrophic Times* joined the grand narratives of Capitalism and Climate Change into urgencies born of one another:

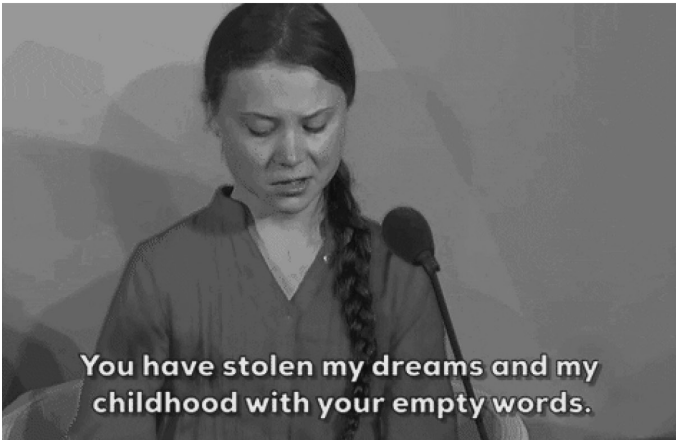
- * Neo Liberal Capital,
- * environmental collapse,
- * extreme climate change,
- * ever rising racism, and the struggles against racial injustice,
- * fear of migrants and consequent brutal immigration regimes,
- * failing health care systems,
- * constant, shifting global warfare,
- * the exposure of sexual harassment and the rise of paedophilia,
- * an epidemic of mental health issues emanating from precarity and from the decimation of benefits,
- * and the rise of nationalism across the world.

Such are the hallmarks of such catastrophe, the makings of what Stengers calls 'a radical uncertainty', another mashed-up temporality which is a breeding ground for morbidity, anxiety, paranoia, narratives of 'return to order' and self-interest.²

The imperative of the "now" has relied on visual and testimonial documentation of these numerous moments of catastrophe and serves the purpose of distinguishing between them, branding them as it were as recognisable issues to be addressed in the cultural sphere, if we are to be regarded as responsible members of a society. But not actually allowing for them to relate to the systemic structures from which all these catastrophes emerge. Stengers, in differentiating between notions of time, between temporal zones, characterises them as: one in which evidence is privileged over consequences, the other confused over the response it requires, or how little one might be able to get away with. Both of these make up the Categorical Imperative of the NOW.

¹ Isabel Stengers. Introduction, *In Catastrophic Times*, (English edition) 2015

² Stengers, *ibid*, p.28



You have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words.



DEPORT
ALL
ILLEGALS!

BUILD THE
WALL, NICE
AND TALL!

ASSIMILATE
ASSIMILATE
ASSIMILATE



I Greta Thunberg, UN climate summit speech, 2019

II Supporters of President Donald Trump rally before his visit to tour border wall prototypes in San Diego, Calif., on March 13, 2018

III Rescued migrants in the Mediterranean Sea, 2016, REUTERS

IV Extinction Rebellion Protest, London, 2019



V



VI



VII



VIII

V Bristol, UK. 24/02/17 Street art warning about the death of the NHS depicting Prime Minister May + President Trump kissing is pictured in Stokes Croft

VI Unite the Right Rally, Charlottesville, 2018

VII An anti-Brexit protester waves an EU flag outside the Houses of Parliament in London on Oct. 25. (Henry Nicholls/Reuters) 2019

VIII Handout photo issued by 10 Downing Street of Prime Minister Boris Johnson during a media briefing in Downing Street, London, on coronavirus (Covid-19). PA Photo. Picture date: Thursday April 30, 2020

And then came Covid-19 – the global pandemic, and the predicted financial catastrophe, the abandonment of every social and political issue, the endless modelling of data for certitude, the sacrifice of culture to a greater urgency, the complete rewriting of research and knowledge imperatives.

We are currently told repeatedly that developments within the field of arts and Humanities, of art as knowledge production, are simply trivial in comparison with the agenda dictated by the pandemic – that the spaces of gathering and assembly are sites of dangerous contagion and that the extra temporal dimension of reflection and attention are diminished in the face of applied research that has the necessary pragmatic outcomes.

How do we, committed to producing knowledge out of subjectivity rather than exclusively for its useful and pragmatic application, conduct ourselves and further our thoughts under such categorical imperatives?

If we embed present conditions within longer lines of concern, we recognise that contagion and collapse have been the subject matter of so called ‘science fiction’ for decades. First in relation to alien other worlds of the Galaxy and then to viral infections and climate change. Always cautionary, always dystopian, always researched and moored IN EPISTEMIC INVENTION, science fiction whether inter-galactic, epidemic-based or born out of racial oppression – is an account. And the principle of ‘account’, in many varied forms that elude being labelled as such, is what all of practice-based research has in common. It does not come and go with the wind of change, it is not subject to categorical imperatives and, most importantly for our times, it cannot be hierarchised as gradations of what is the worst and what is a lesser catastrophe.

But ‘giving account’ is framed as a discourse: legal account, medical account, philosophical account, fiduciary account to corporate share holders and the ways that our world of the arts thinks of giving account, as the recasting of stake holding.

Epistemic Invention, on which accounts grounded in practices depend, is the corner stone of practice driven research – it derives from new forms of permission whose ability to resist dominant paradigms does not result in negation but in invention. Permission is an interesting concept because we assume it is granted by an authority, any authority. But it is neither a benevolent gift nor an authorisation – it is a struggle. Permission is a struggle we engage in in order to shift paradigms. And in its own way it is not a struggle “against” but a struggle “for”. For finding oblique points of entry into problematics and uneasy metaphors that do not comfort, for estranging the familiar and in the words of O’Sullivan and Burrows ‘*engendering that which does not yet exist*’.³

Practice driven research recasts stake-holding away from ‘beneficiaries’ and from necessarily material stakes, and towards an understanding that we must find new frameworks for rehearsing the multiple urgencies of the day. Not one urgency but many, not one way but many, not one vaccine but a recognition that contagion is linked to weakened immune systems, born of failing ecologies, profit driven food chains and brutally maintained poverty.

I am wedded these days to the concept of “Advanced Practices” – the grounds that advance practice. Here we understand that research emanates from the conditions of our lives and that every hardship evolves into a knowledge formation. In the categorical imperative of the NOW, urgency is hierarchised, the emphasis always on the greatest hardship or the most recent emergency. In the realm of

3 David Burrows and Simon O’Sullivan, *Fictioning – The Myth Functions of Contemporary Art and Philosophy*, Edinburgh, 2019, p.4

Advanced Practice, practice is what reaches out and connects dots that disciplines could not connect. Advanced Practices allow for a muddling of time: to revisit, to rethink what had come before us and to contemporise it, not necessarily through what was said or through what was shown then – not that old chestnut of the avant garde ‘that something was before its time’ – but rather that it is in its time because we, now, are its audience, its public.

If the “Not Yet” is not a future projection, how does it operate in the present? Here I am thinking of Andre Lepecki’s attachment to the notion of witness: *“The witness must be given back its performative forces: juridical and political, but also aesthetic. It seems to me that we can find indications of such affirmation of the performative-narrative-aesthetic force of witnessing in some recent artistic propositions, particularly in live performance, and, not surprisingly, in theater and in choreography”*.⁴

The audience then becomes itself, not at the moment it witnesses the event, but when it relays or communicates it to another as its testimony of the event. The argument here is for ‘bodies saturated with affect-experience’. The audience ‘becomes one only as long as it opts to become an actor-storyteller in the future (near or far). This option is the initiative that defines a political act. In this sense, the audience also fulfills its true aesthetic function. The fundamentally affective-political task of storytelling, its relation to both historicity and futurity, is crucial in the age of “selfies.”’⁵

It is here that I find encouragement for the “permission” of our many practices, in their dedication to give an account, to reflect, to drag around temporal categories, to rearrange social and historical relations.

And it is permission “for” – in the ways that it might demand for subjects

the possibility of having an archive for their specific, silenced world – of having their subjectivity recognised – of allowing an entry point into a problematic so overwhelming that one is defeated by its scale. And mostly of recognising scales – miniature affects, atmospheres and sensibilities barely marked and yet hinting at rich pools of potential responses, enchantments and rages. It is here that my understanding of the “Not Yet” lies.

4 Andre Lepecki, *Singularities - Dance in the Age of Performance*, Routledge, 2016, p.171

5 Lepecki, *Ibid*, p.173

Participants

- Rachel Armstrong** Professor of Experimental Architecture at the School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape, Newcastle University, UK.
- Amanda Beech** Dean of Critical Studies at CalArts, Los Angeles, USA.
- Florian Cramer** Reader in 21st Century Visual Culture/Autonomous Practices at Willem de Kooning Academy, Rotterdam, Netherlands.
- Denise Ferreira da Silva** Professor and Director of the Institute for Gender, Race, Sexuality, and Social Justice at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, USA.
- Terike Haapoja** Visual Artist, Adjunct Professor Parsons Fine Arts and NYU, New York, USA.
- Rolf Hughes** Professor of the Epistemology of Design-Driven Research at KU Leuven, Belgium.
- Vytautas Michelkevičius** Curator, Researcher, and Associate Professor at Vilnius Academy of Arts, Lithuania.
- Peter Osborne** Director of the Centre for Research in Modern European Philosophy, Kingston University, London, UK.
- Irit Rogoff** Professor of Visual Cultures at Goldsmiths, University of London, UK.
- Hito Steyerl** Professor for Experimental Film and Video, Berlin University of the Arts, Germany.

Colophon

The Postresearch Condition

Publisher	Metropolis M Books
Editor	Henk Slager
Final Editor	Annette W. Balkema
Design	Joris Kritis with Terry Kritis
Printing	Die Keure, Brugge
Cover	Amanda Beech, Covenant Transport, Move or Die, 2015

The Postresearch Condition Conference (January 26-30, 2021) was organized in collaboration with EARN (European Artistic Research Network), HKU University of the Arts Utrecht, NWO (Smart Culture/Dutch Research Council. Advisory Board: Odile Heynders, Janneke van Kersen, Iris van der Tuin, and Kitty Zijlmans), and BAK, basis voor actuele kunst, Utrecht.

© 2021 Metropolis M, MaHKUscript Series, and the authors

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, or the facilitation thereof, including information storage retrieval systems, without permission in writing from the publisher.

ISBN 9789081830270

