

THE PROBLEM OF ARTISTIC RESEARCH

CATARINA ALMEIDA

acatarinafalmeida@gmail.com | Universidade do Porto, Portugal

ABSTRACT

Although almost every debate about artistic research highlights its novelty in references to «uncertainty», »indefinability», and to its lack of identity whilst «bound to a tradition external to itself», this novelty has lasted for a few decades already. Many of the problems raised today are to be found back when research and art education began to relate within the academic context in the 1980s. So where is the speculative discussion on its uncertainty taking artistic research to? Is a solution intended to be found? Is there a problem to be solved?

Through 'productivism' this text argues that the aprioristic idea that artistic research is problematic has been securing its state of pendency and increasing its fragility. The final part of the article suggests a creative potential and a challenging dimension in the process of institutionalization, and ends by pointing out possible topics of work for a shared agenda with contemporary art.

KEY WORDS

Novelty; Uncertainty; Pendency; Productivism; Artistic research.



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ARTISTS ARE BACK TO SCHOOL

The comeback of artists to art school is a phenomenon worth studying from a variety of perspectives, ranging from politics and art history to the inner developments of the art world. Some attempts and larger reviews have been done or are underway, taking one of these perspectives as a guiding line. We are not in a position to start one of that kind here and now, but only to share some possible directions. We certainly are in a position to say that art has dealt with inquiry at least since the 1980s, and thus to speak of a wholly novel field of activity is not only inaccurate and misleading, but also quite paralyzing. It is in the height of the sixties' conceptualism that the reflexive propensity in art more obviously finds its parentage; yet we can go back further and further and hunt up its roots in baroque art education and in the epoch's interest in publishing and treaties, and even more to the renaissance separation of craftwork and liberal arts.

Since the sixteenth century a slow and progressive intellectualization of art has been taking place, and not without its ups and downs. It is not a unidirectional pathway though, since there have been periods where the willingness of artists and of other relating agents was directed at the opposite side. Nevertheless, and in order to enlighten artists' comeback to school, an extensive historiography of that tendency can be weaved and made out, through the analysis of syllabi, of official decrees on arts and education and the attentive reading and interpretation of the discourses uttered by those in powerful



positions within academies and universities. They are the ones who always define what arts education is to be like and the role of artistic research in the production of knowledge in the arts. This is the frame from where I see artistic research: as an academic reality, ontologically located within the institution of higher arts education. Yet I am not defending a sacred place for artistic research; the way I see the academy nesting artistic research has nothing to do with preserving authenticity or a certain level of pureness in the practice. It is, on the other hand, a way of providing me with the necessary terms for the observation of a particular phenomenon, setting up ontological conditions for it to exist. I hope this makes clear that, for me, the academic condition of artistic research is not about supporting the educational institution, but about acknowledging that reality is shaped by forces and power relations that are responsible for giving us the perception of events, not as autonomous and essential things with inner significance, but as the result of the action of these power relations. Reality comes as a constructed reality, in opposition to a found reality. Artistic research, to this extent, is but the result of these forces and power relations put into play, which is an understanding that obliterates any essential or unveiled *sui generis* mechanism of the field.

I've spoken of a historiography of the intellectualization of art, which comprises the phenomenon of artists returning to art school; this would also be leading to a historiography of artistic research. This is, however, a way to look at past things from present times. Artistic research is not a denomination you will find documented very often before the 1990s. Indeed reflexive dimensions and inquiry propensities have been in pace with artistic practice since long before that. And surely research-minded artists have worked on the field using that particular feature of their subjectivity in past times. The idea of artistic research as a concept and territory finally gains structure as soon as artistic practice and academy cross their ways again in the twentieth century, after a long history of disagreement, suspicion and friction.

Modernism is largely characterized by this hate relationship between the two territories, something collateral to the securing of the autonomy of art, artists would say. For clearer insight, this must be placed in the broader understanding of what it meant to be an artist at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth. Regarded today as one of the most remarkable writers living in that time, Charles Baudelaire assembles the characteristics of 'the painter of the modern life', in which a subjectivity of a free spirit and a *flâneur* is portrayed. His text was not only describing the world he saw, but,

most importantly, it was suggesting the way artists should be, feel and act in the first half of the twentieth century. Although not recognized nor read by the masses of his time, Baudelaire was well connected with artistic circles in Paris and was read by his artist peers, who, in his writings, were being pictured as isolated, self-centred and sensitive people, in charge of a gift in artistry. This very easily falls into romanticism, yet it forcibly impacted the subjectivities of the artists on the rise. How could this kind of artist relate to arts education in an academic institution? How could they agree to exchange their beloved freedom for power-knowledge subjection? It was only around the 1950s that the friction entered an undermining process with repercussions to this day. Midway last century, after the Second World War, artists started to accumulate positions as teachers in universities, in order to accommodate the number of war veterans returning home and enrolling in further education. The consequences of the schism between artists from the academic world were crucial, and enabled their rapprochement. Fundamental to this turnaround was the fact that these abstract expressionist artists met with recognition and acclamation for their artistic careers in their lifetimes (something impressionists, surrealists, cubists, expressionists did not go through), making students interested in the work of their teachers. They could talk to and learn directly from successful artists in academies. This situation, lived more thoroughly in the United States although with European impingement, too, was elucidatory that the art world and academy did not have to walk separate paths. Despite the value of such evidence of circa fifty years, it is not rare even today to find strong disapproval regarding the merging of the two worlds.

Other events have contributed to the recent interest of academia in art and artists in academies. It is hard to tell which side led this approximation, for it seems more unanimous to consider that both sides have identified advantages and interests in the association of their territories. From the art world stand an increasing seduction has been visible, like an explorer's curiosity, in the riveting undertaking of entering the academy. Many contemporary artists have started seeing the academic environment as a territory of potential creativity¹ or, at least, as a place where certain endeavours can be

1 About the new role of the academy, see Jan Verwoert's article at *Metropolis M*, «Lessons in Modesty—the open academy as a model»: «Nowadays art academies are no longer simply institutes for art education, but places where art is received, produced, collected and distributed. The idea of the open academy has consequences for art, the practice of exhibition making, and art education itself». Retrieved from <http://metropolism.com/magazine/2006-no4/lessen-in-bescheidenheid/english>



ambitioned in contrast with the current state of the art world. In this respect the 2012 MaHKU – Utrecht Graduate School of Visual Art and Design’s project Temporary Autonomous Research (TAR)² for the Amsterdam Pavilion in the 9th Shanghai Biennale is very relevant. It was curated by Henk Slager, and at stake were concerns with the ontological conditions of artistic research as well as the possibilities it raised within the academic framework. About TAR, Slager has asked: «Is research perhaps a temporary thing that can only take place within the experimental sanctuary created by the institutional framework of art education? A space that generates a temporary autonomy where purely artistic research can take place free from instrumental and/or calculating preconditions».³ This temporality of research would then be the place for art to try out things in laboratory-style and speculation driven mode, removed from the profit-making art world in its exterior. I’ve verified this feeling among doctoral students in Helsinki during my brief passage as a visiting researcher in the University of Arts last January-February. In conversations we had, some have claimed to have enrolled in the programs because they needed time for themselves and their work far from the restraints of market and business. Simo Kellokumpu, choreographer, performance artist and doctoral student in the Theatre Academy, has interestingly suggested that the demand of artists for PhDs and artistic research could be regarded as a way found by contemporary artists to struggle against the power structures of the art world—ironically! Enrolled in a doctoral course in Aalto University, performer and environmental artist Saara Hannula talked about the temporality of artistic research, advocating the conditions offered by a doctoral program to the sustained development of artistic work.⁴ She said, on her personal level, that it is a «... natural continuation for me to engage and work within an institutional frame, and to have a framework for what I’m doing, and a shared structure for the research process that I would be doing anyway. Also the fact that I can engage in a particular research process which I have to formulate beforehand, like I have to formulate my research questions and then follow them and I have to be disciplined about it; I think it helps me. Then I can delve deeper into something for a longer time, and then I also have external perspectives, outside help, or have others who can comment or

2 Henk Slager writes more about TAR in his book *The Pleasure of Research* (2011).

3 Retrieved from MaHKU website and accessed here: <http://www.mahku.nl/news/998.html>

4 These interviews with Simo Kellokumpu and Saara Hannula, and one other with Leena Rouhiainen, are recorded, but not yet fully transcribed nor made public in any way.

support...». In line with Saara and Simo, Leena Rouhiainen stresses that the production of knowledge that distinguishes artistic practice from contemporary art, which she describes as «quite conceptual, quite explorative, quite investigative», is intimately related to the time spent with a research problem: «We think that this knowledge part is something that comes in and then, that you remain around one problem for four to six years makes a difference. They [artists doing art independently] might of course use their own methods but they have one project and they concentrate on this issue, and they have another project and they concentrate on a different issue. When you set out doing artistic research, you're setting out exploring a problem for quite a few years».⁵ The proposed temporality is the potentially creative territory of artistic research within academy. What some see as limited and conditioned, others spot as «temporary autonomy», and where some see threatened freedom, others find absence of «instrumental and/or calculating preconditions». The sceptical are those who, still speaking in terms of temporality, consider research in the arts to be happening ever since art first existed and every time an artist is working. Hence they refuse to see any interest or advantage to the arts in an emerging field called artistic research, advocating instead the liberating cognitive practices of artists against normalizing artistic research. This field asks for a more mindful approach and for the surveying and problematization of the conditions under which artistic research happens beyond an empirical perspective of a generalized reflexive practice in the arts.

What seems to be most urgent and still missing in the proposed historiography is one concise study looking at artistic research from the sphere of the art world. That is to put in the foreground the events, tensions and individual contributions that, from the art world and through artistic processes, have impacted the circumstances and features of our current understanding of artistic research. To this effect we must consider the deep change that has taken place in the way to be an artist and which is indeed manifest in artists' talks, practices, scopes, exhibitions, studios and productions. This is a yet unexplored and challenging territory. The roles of curating, producing, teaching and making have merged in many cases to the extent that the way to be an artist in the twenty-first century is something either shapeless or still

5 This is a transcribed extract of my interview with Leena Rouhiainen at the Theatre Academy Helsinki on 9 Feb 2015, during my stay as a visiting researcher of University of Arts. Leena Rouhiainen is a dancer-choreographer, dance scholar, DA in Dance (TeaK, 2003), vice-dean of TeaK and professor of Artistic Research there.



taking shape, experimenting in temporary subjectivities like artist-as-curator and artist-as-producer. Moreover, it is not by chance that some authors are aligned in suggesting that the outgrowth of a field eventually called artistic research is ontologically linked with concerns in the art world with regard to spectatorship, public presentation and discussion of works of art (Anton Vidokle; Henk Slager). This comes as the exacerbation of the already long lasting thinking on the changing roles of art audience in inter-relational aesthetics (Nicolas Bourriaud) and microtopian *ethos* (Claire Bishop), the expanding categories, the reconfiguration of art museums and exhibition halls, and their implied social functions, as political and pedagogical equipment. A great emphasis is placed on the pedagogical effects of art, considered here far more broadly than the life inside the academy building. The way pedagogy is being understood stresses its political dimension and, in turn, makes it more appreciable by artists. Such a pedagogical effect is more obviously related to two pressing interests of artistic research: in which conversation is my research engaging? What is the role I seek for art in contemporary society?

... AND SCHOOL'S INTERESTED IN THE ARTS?

From the academic perspective, the interest in artistic practice lies largely in economic aspects. In truth, it is not a purely academic interest, but more of a social and political concern whose framing covers the scopes of academia. This has ultimately been treated as the instrument at hand of corporations and governments, whose political program in post-industrialism has been particularly fond of communicative and social capacities, affectivity and different types of individual competencies no longer dependent on arms and legs only. Political programs are compelled to avoid financial loss and generate profit, investing in what they consider the highest paying areas of activity and knowledge. Not surprisingly, art is not among these areas, and so the strategy of governments is to turn the artistic field from an open-ended and speculative territory, into more of a discipline of applicable outcomes. One resulting effect is the stir of creative industries popping up in urban areas and being covered by the epithet of creativity and artistry. It is, furthermore, a paradoxical nomination: there is no such thing as creative industries. In these hubs and in the capitalist environment underlying all this creative turn in economics circulates the huge risk of turning art into entertainment.



According to governmental intentions, it should be more profitable this way and job opportunities are to be found, but art's political and social impact is irretrievably jeopardized.

This negativity has been outgrowing and contaminating other affected areas involved in the discussion. Partly the academy has been regarded by wary artists as a structure replicating such a relation with the art world, a relation mediated by interests anchored in profit-making, career investment and social status. This has been measurably carried out and become more and more patent with the commitments of the Bologna Agreement. Besides its apparently good intentions of mobility, networking, collaboration, interdisciplinarity and success, the Bologna reform ought to be read after uncovering the hidden interests behind such unanimously positive objectives. This is to say that it needs to be put against a neoliberal background, so that collaboration, success and the rest are re-read and re-understood as utilities for profit-making.

Henk Slager points to what sounds more like entrepreneurship skills: «Because of the deconstruction of the boundaries between art education, science, and the domain of art practice—boundaries that were clung to in the former model for the sake of the principle of autonomy, curricular space is claimed now for novel components in the program such as critical studies, contextual studies, collaborative and interdisciplinary projects, experimental productions, and above all for communicative and curatorial competencies. What becomes abundantly clear is that today artists should especially be able to present and contextualize their projects» (2011). The afore mentioned new subjectivities of the artist are to be regarded not only as developments from within the artistic field, but as effects of the social and political context as well. Besides cultivating particularly cherished competences in the current post-industrialist society, Bologna has opened universities' decision boards to the influence of private groups. According to Stephan Dillemoth, «the company Bertelsmann for instance initiated the establishment of the Centre for Higher Education Development (CHE), which is to influence study contents and university structures according to private interests under the pretence of a putative compatibility ensured by bachelor and master's programs» (2006).⁶

6 Stephan Dillemoth, artist and teacher at the Academy of Fine Arts of Munich, is being quoted from a summary on a symposium of the Internationale Gesellschaft der Bildenden Künste (IGBK) in cooperation with the Akademie für Bildende Künste of Johannes Gutenberg University, occurred in Mainz from July 13th to the 15th, 2006, under the name «Reality Check—who is afraid of master of arts?»



In a way, such permeability of universities may be turning them into applied knowledge institutions, similar to polytechnics, risking their research vocation. An approximation felt in the field, although not officially set.

The picture isn't very pleasant. Operated by corporate and private interests in the worst cases and by neoliberal governments as well, academies and universities in general do not hail anything good for the developments of art. But a «third space»⁷ is there too, a space for experimentation, waiting on artists to get through. The project «A Certain Ma-Ness» (2008-2010), curated by Jan Cools from Sint-Lukas Academy Brussels and Henk Slager from MaHKU – Utrecht Graduate School of Visual Art and Design, and a collaboration with EARN – European Artistic Research Network, has focused on the concerns of the institutionalization of arts education at higher level and the consequences of such a process for both the reception to art by academia, and the academic reframing of artistic practice. «A Certain Ma-Ness» ultimately developed into three different projects: besides itself, also «Becoming Bologna» (2009) and «The Academy Strikes Again» (2010). In «The Academy Strikes Again» workshops were organized and documentation exhibited regarding the work of three doctoral students in art, and at stake was «the specificity of the Academy as a research environment (...). How can artistic (doctoral) research contribute to the overall research environment at the Academy?» (readable in EARN's website).⁸ The second part of the project held a symposium on the institutionalization of artistic research where the questions being debated were «Can the academicized Art Academy still offer a viable space and platform for the experimental development of a critical art practice? Is there an affirmative relationship between institutionalized artistic research and the art scene? How transparent is 'peer reviewing' in the art world and what role can it play in academised art education? How can the outcomes of artistic research be disseminated?». In the end it is a matter of awareness and critical thinking. These days institutionalization is an unavoidable process for almost everything. In the case of art, it is not even a new one:

7 More of Tuomas Nevanlinna on the third space of artistic research: «The problem of the studio model of research is that, while boasting of its individuality and freedom, it in fact creates an entirely unbuffered state in relation to the international system of star hunting. Students are not learning as much as being constantly displayed for the benefit of interested curators or headhunters. In the British model, artistic research is actually perfectly traditional scientific academic research. The Finnish Academy of Fine Arts avoids both these extremes: it created an entirely new 'third' space for learning and creative work» (2008).

8 Retrieved from: <http://www.artresearch.eu/index.php/2010/05/09/the-academy-strikes-back-4-5610/>

it had already been institutionalized, in museums, galleries and the lot composing the institution of the art world—does anyone seriously believe that the art world is an unregulated territory?

To argue against the academy's claim for freedom and institutional critique does not help much and only recalls old phantoms of artistic *ethos*. Those artists standing against the damaging consequences of post-graduate studies to (their idea of) what art is, vaguely resemble the figures of guardians of sacred territories. They're right to the extent that art history has been written in the trail of marginal artists and their non-academic practices, but even then one should note that to be out of the academy was scarcely a first choice: even the impressionists fought heated battles to be accepted in the official *Salon*.

When I asked Leena Rouhiainen about why artists were interested in applying for the recent doctoral programs, she gave me the perspective of the Finnish Theatre Academy: «I think there is a pressure on artists to find ways of answering to the consumer culture, this liberal capitalism, and find new ways of dealing with being an artist. At least our institution is a place where you can truly experiment. You don't have the production demands or having to follow a schedule or certain kinds of formats in order to be able to produce your art, which affects the content of your art. That's one reason I think. But of course another reason is that this has become an interesting environment because there's starting to be programs like this, people start to acknowledge that something is being done here. What is it? Is it really something that can promote your career or arts in general?»⁹ *Touché*.

Nevertheless, this text is not intended to promote academy in the future of artistic practice, or to praise its institutional status. The effects of institutionalization are real and sometimes the whole process of becoming institutionalized—as an artist who (again) enters the academy—is a bit risky. Almost like walking on thin ice. One should be aware of that, of the power relations at stake and regulations manipulating the subjectivity of the artist. It is not only about getting a research position in a university, being given an office, a computer and a grant; for an artist it means at the same time to engage in an agenda of publishing, of seminars and conferences, of assessment of outcomes and public discussion of these outcomes. Sometimes it also becomes a

9 This is a transcribed extract of an interview I conducted with Leena Rouhiainen at the Theatre Academy Helsinki in 9 Feb 2015, during my stay as a visiting researcher of the University of Arts.

matter of changing the ways of writing, of talking, of thinking. Regulations, pressures and deadlines are all around. What's more, they are also in the art world. It would be enormously *naïf* to believe institutionalization is not leaving its marks or is going unnoticed. Tuomas Nevanlinna comments that «transplanting the terminology of a science policy rife with 'doctoral theses', 'dissertations' and 'research' is not and cannot be an innocent, value-free process» (quoted from Balkema & Slager, 2004, p. 81). Tensions exist. However, the situation does not need to be a bad thing as long as one is aware of it. It is exactly at the top of this attentive conscience that the territory of creative potential that the academy can be turned into emerges. Otherwise, and without opposing forces to struggle against, what are the chances for resistance to be performed? «Where there is power there is resistance», wrote Michel Foucault in the first volume of *History of Sexuality* (1978) and this pretty much meets the landscape where the potentiality of artistic research stands. Without institutionalization that would be like «falling without a parachute».¹⁰

With regard to institutionalization it matters to ask: how can my research start a conversation (isn't research about starting a conversation?)? How can art draw positive inputs from a broader communication of its concerns and aims rather than from the lack of it? In this sense, it matters to note that despite all its references to creativity, productive aims and art world relationships, artistic research is not a place for artists to make statements. It is not the hermetic space of self-evidence which the art world gets into at times. On the contrary, it is a dialoguing space of construction. Assuming both the advantages and the risks of institutionalization of art academy, artistic research is installed and in the only place it could be in order to pursue these intents.

RESEARCH IN HIGHER ARTS EDUCATION

The first doctoral courses were introduced in Finland in the beginning of the 1980s, and the beginning of the 90s saw the emergence of the first doctorates in art in the country. The first title of Doctor of Art was awarded in 1991 from Aalto University School of Art, Design and Architecture (ten years after the

¹⁰ These are words by Itay Ziv (Tel Aviv based visual artist and TAHTO researcher) reacting to Mika Elo's comments on narrowing effects of institutionalization of artistic practice, during TAHTO's seminar in January 2015, Finnish Academy of Fine Arts University of Arts, Helsinki.

program was introduced); the first title of Doctor of Art from the Theatre Academy (part of the University of Arts since 2013) was awarded in 1999 (the program started in 1988). The space of time separating the start of programs and the completion of studies of the first doctorates began to shorten in the late 90s. The Fine Arts Academy of the University of Arts introduced doctoral studies in 1997 and the first student defended his work in 2001. A curve is illustrated here: with more post-graduate courses arising in different art universities and academies, we go from an increasing number of applicants to a decreasing amount of time spent on the completion of their studies. Artists of the twentieth-first century are definitely engaged with post-graduate studies and are back at the academy. And artistic research is ultimately seen as the result of this meeting.

Finland is not alone in the journey. It was chosen as a model here for its pioneering spirit, but examples can also be given of other European contexts. The other scandinavian countries follow Finland's achievements attentively. Sweden is offering PhD programs in both Lund University and Gothenburg University. PhDs in art for students enrolled in the Malmö Art Academy have been possible since 2002 (the first doctors came out in 2006) and awarded by Lund University. Since 2010, Lund has also hosted a national research school in the arts, called *Konstnärliga forskarskolan*, aiming for a productive and stimulating environment for artistic research in Sweden. Gothenburg and Lund universities, together with other seven higher education institutions, form this national research school. In Gothenburg University, it is the Faculty of Fine, Applied and Performing Arts that houses the doctoral courses. This Faculty currently aggregates the Valand Academy (which merged four previous schools in 2012), HDK—School of Design and Crafts (resulting from two former schools) and the Academy of Music and Drama. Valand offers the options of Doctor of Philosophy and Doctor of the Arts.

Norway is more hesitant and did not officially introduce PhD awards in artistic practice. Instead, since 2003 the Norwegian government has offered a third cycle program—in the style of a graduate school—that leads to a diploma equivalent to PhD level.

In Portugal, where I come from, most PhDs in the arts were prompted by reforms carried out or accomplished after the Bologna declaration was signed in 1999. Despite the opposite being announced, the reorganization of the three levels of studies made the binary model of university and polytechnic education become more obvious, not only in Portugal but also



in most European countries. As graduate courses became shorter, Master degrees became the most common degree and were no longer regarded as a final stage (as used to be practiced in most English-speaking countries). A report from 2007 states that Bologna has not yet been implemented in Portugal because the adaptation to the BA+MA has not implemented the necessary structural changes, but only a shift in names. Accomplishing a second cycle today in Portugal takes the same amount of time as the pre-Bologna undergraduate course (five-six years). Third cycles emerged as differentiating value in one's education as well as a strategic measure for institutions to legitimate disciplines and areas of research. In Portugal, as in many other European countries (Finland, the Netherlands, Austria, Switzerland, Belgium, Germany, Norway), universities known for their research teaching are the only institutions entitled to award research degrees as third cycle studies, making the appearance of doctoral courses after Bologna a predictable occurrence. The most artistic research-related third cycle Portuguese studies in the arts appeared in the late first decade of the 2000s. The earliest courses are focused on digital media and technology, like the Catholic University program hosted by its School of the Arts since 2008, and the digital media program of the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Porto, launched in 2009. This same faculty established a third cycle studies in Art and Design in 2009, where a creative part in the final thesis is contemplated. In addition, the doctoral program in Arts Education, running since 2010, is open to individual proposals comprising relevant practical and creative components. The University of Lisbon has hosted the doctoral course in Fine Arts, in the Faculty of Fine Arts, since 2009, including a practical part, and since 2012 has also offered a doctoral study focused on performance and moving image, organized in association with the Polytechnic Institute of Lisbon. In 2010, doctoral studies appeared both in the University of Évora and the University of Coimbra.

In most European countries polytechnics are not awarding PhDs, although there are exceptions—and in some cases master degrees are being hosted in polytechnic institutions; however these are not considered as valid as those offered by universities, and if the plan is to follow up with a doctoral program, then the student from the polytechnic has to collect additional ECTS in order to match the requirements. In the Netherlands, the Technical University of Delft awards PhDs, although not in the arts; also the academies of art are keeping their autonomous status from universities, benefiting from

this separation concerning teaching requirements—it is not compulsory that teachers in academies are PhDs—, and taking advantage of the possibility of associated courses that allow for doctoral programs. Even though these programs are initially designed stressing technical features of possible applications of arts, after official acceptance they are free to pursue more speculative dynamics. So the differentiation between polytechnic education and scientific education is ‘technically’ being preserved in the Netherlands. Scientific education is thus for universities and statutory equivalent associated schools. The Royal Academy of Art and the Royal Conservatoire of The Hague form the University of the Arts and, in association with Leiden University, they are the Academy of Creative and Performing Arts. This Academy hosts two doctoral programs: docArtes (since 2004 and together with the Amsterdam Conservatoire) for practice-based research in music, and PhDArts, a doctoral program for visual arts and design, running since 2008.

The binary model is kept open and, across Europe and since the implementation of the Bologna Agreement, there have been shifts and changes in trying to adapt to an also changing reality. A report on higher art education of 2010 commissioned by the Dutch Ministry of Education¹¹ made some considerations on the binary model, suggesting not the extinction of such a system, but its reform. In the document, it was claimed that polytechnics should not try to look like universities, and instead should re-profile themselves in the open possibilities of research relevant to professional practice. This also leaves an interesting interstice for the higher art education institution to be placed upon: sometimes regarded as a ‘polytechnic-plus’, and widely known as not matching the scientific demands of pure research universities, post graduate arts education should also grab the chance given by the shifting environments prompted by Bologna, not to necessarily join university framings, but rather to claim a space for useful artistic research. In Portugal, the possibility of a university of the arts is something yet to be explored. And despite the Dutch report referring to the University of the Arts London as an example, no similar plans are mentioned for the Netherlands, although the Academy of Creative and Performing Arts is doing well exploring that role.

In the United Kingdom the tradition of PhDs in the arts goes as far back as the 1950s, with a dissertation on sculpture. After the 1970s the number

11 «Differentiëren in Drievoud», accessed in <https://eliaartschools.wordpress.com/2010/09/06/higher-arts-education-in-the-netherlands-two-reports/>



increased, and by 1985 a hundred doctoral studies had been accomplished in the areas of fine art, design, architecture and visual communication, as shown in the data provided in the essay «Researching Research in Art and Design», by Judith Mottram (2009). These numbers can be deceptive, though, as they put together studies of quite different scopes, such as anthropological, educational, historical or developmental outlooks. As for those more openly relating to processes of art-making and undertaken from the perspective of practitioners, examples are fewer and are first signalled in 1980-85. Not all degrees were awarded by universities, and in the case of polytechnics and colleges of art (which held studio courses in fine arts and where the kind of PhDs this text is interested in first emerged), the degrees were recognized by CNAA – Council for National Academic Awards (abolished in 1992, when polytechnics were designated as universities). According to Timothy Emlyn Jones, «The first UK PhDs to be examined without a substantial written thesis emerged only in the late 1990s, and a DFA that is substantially different in more than name from the PhD has only recently materialized in the UK at Goldsmiths College, London (...)» (2009, p. 38). In any case, and looking more in depth at the research modalities offered at PhD level at Goldsmiths, they are adamant about assuring a written part in the doctoral plan.¹² And so say the regulations for doctor of philosophy in the Glasgow School of Art, Slade School of Fine Art, University of the Arts London (comprising colleges such as Wimbledon, Chelsea and Central Saint Martins, among others), Royal College of Art, Edinburgh College of Art and Ruskin School of Art, which enables a generalized UK overview on the importance given to the writing part in this kind of PhD.

The differences between PhDs and DFAs, although discursively important, are therefore to be relativised in the UK examples, since a written part is emphasized in all events. In turn, what is most unique in the Finnish approach is the significance assigned to the creative and practical part of the dissertation. In Finland, PhDs and DFAs, as well as DAs, are regulated and prosecuted in distinctive forms. A report of the Academy of Finland (the

12 Consulted in Goldsmiths website on 23 Feb 2015 (<http://www.gold.ac.uk/pg/mphil-phd-art/>): «If you are registered for a practice-based research project you are expected to produce a series of artworks and/or documentation of a series of exhibitions or events developed whilst on the programme as well as a dissertation of 20,000 words (MPhil) or 40,000 words (PhD). If you are registered according to the normal provisions of the University your final text has a target of 40,000 words for an MPhil and 80,000 words for a PhD. All research students are registered first for an MPhil then may either transfer registration to PhD following the successful completion of an upgrade exam or finish their study at this stage by submitting their research for an MPhil exam.»

most important funding institution for research in the arts in the country) on research in art and design in their universities, dating from March 2009, stressed that «the doctoral degree at the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts differs from most other postgraduate degrees in art and artistic research in that the main element of the prepared demonstration of knowledge and skill is the production part, with 60-80 per cent of the demonstration's credits yielded by creative work».¹³ The Finnish pioneering spirit is definitely brought into play in the way practice was and is envisaged in these postgraduate degrees. Jan Kaila, who was among the first batch of DFAs of the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts (1997-2002), states that «the starting points of our education were radical, perhaps even Utopian; we had no practical experience of where it would lead... Subsequent events have shown, however, that had the Academy stopped to consider and wait instead of charging ahead with speed and taking risks, doctoral training in the Academy would not today be an internationally recognized institution and trailblazer for art universities setting up doctoral programmes of their own» (2008). The discussion on how to set up research work and dissertation in the confluence of academic restraints and contemporary art threads is a more influential discussion than it appears at first sight. I have approached it lightly before in the text and will definitely return to it more pointedly later.

IN THE TRAIL OF ARTISTIC RESEARCH

The previous report-like approach to the doctoral degrees existing in higher arts education is of course incomplete. Indeed, it does not intend to be exhaustive, but merely indicative. It is not even a satisfying European overview, given that only a few countries were taken into account: Finland, Sweden, Portugal, the Netherlands and the UK. The idea was to verify at which point doctoral degrees in the arts effectively start to appear, and how to contextualize this data. To some extent, Bologna seems to have been very influential in the boom these programs experienced, despite the concerns the ELIA board showed on the Agreement proposals.¹⁴

¹³ Accessed in: http://www.aka.fi/Tiedostot/Tiedostot/Julkaisut/04_09%20Research%20in%20Art%20and%20Design.pdf

¹⁴ They seemed concerned with the direction announced by Bologna: <https://eliaartschools.wordpress.com/2010/04/19/elia-board-critical-of-european-ranking-plans/>



The acknowledgment of Bologna's decisive impact on the trend of PhDs in the arts allows for a period in time to be identified when higher arts education began to expressively embrace research. This is the first decade of the twenty-first century, the period in which Bologna's proposals were in the process of implementation. Most of and the best-known bibliographic production on artistic research also originates from this time. A wide range of publications is to be named, and a key core set is certainly dating from the 2000s. Below are some titles that I consider in most of my bibliographic searches, in chronological order:

- SINGERMAN, H. (1999). *Art Subjects—Making Artists in the American University*. University of California Press.
- DERRIDA, J. (2001). *A Universidade sem Condição*. Coimbra: Angelus Novus.
- BALKEMA, A. & SLAGER, H. (Eds.) (2002) *Artistic Research*. Lier & Boog series. Amsterdam: Rodopi B.V.
- GALE, P. (Ed.) (2004). *Artists talk 1969-1977*. Halifax Nova Scotia: NSCAD The Press.
- MORAZA, J. (2004). *A + y: Arte y saber*. Sevilha: Arteleku.
- HANNULA, M., SUORANTA, J. & VADÉN, T. (2005). *Artistic Research*. Helsinki: Academy of Fine Arts and Gothenburg: University of Gothenburg.
- SULLIVAN, G. (2005). *Art practice as research: inquiry in the visual arts*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- BORGDORFF, H. (2006). *The Debate on Research in the Arts. Sensuous Knowledge 2*. Bergen: Bergen National Academy of the Arts.
- KAILA, J. & KANTONEN, P. (Eds.) (2006). *The artist's knowledge: Research at the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts*. Two volumes. Helsinki: Finnish Academy of Fine Arts.
- VERWOERT, J. (2006). *Lessons in Modesty: the Open Academy as a Model*. *Metropolis M*, 4, pp. 94-96.
- NOLLERT, A., ROGOFF, I., DA BAERE, B., ESCHE, C., DZIEWIOR, Y. et al. (Eds.) (2007). *A.C.A.D.E.M.Y.* Germany: Revolver.
- SCHMIDT-WULFFEN, S. (2008). *The Artist as the Public Intellectual*. Akademie der Bildenden Künste Wien. Vienna: Schlebrügge. Editor.
- BORGDORFF, H. (2009). *Artistic Research within the Fields of Science. Sensuous Knowledge 6*. Bergen: Bergen National Academy of the Arts.
- BUCKLEY, B. & CONOMOS, J. (Eds.) (2009). *Rethinking the Contemporary Art School. The Artist, the PhD, and the Academy*. Halifax: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design.



- ELKINS, J. (Ed.) (2009). *Artists with PhDs: on the new doctoral degree in studio art*. Washington: New Academia.
- MADOFF, S. H. (Ed.) (2009). *Art school: propositions for the 21st century*. Cambridge, MA: the MIT Press.
- NILSSON, P. (2009). *The Amphibian Stand: A Philosophical Essay Concerning Research Processes in Fine Art*. Umea: H:ström Text & Kultur.
- VIDOKLE, A. (2009). *Produce, Distribute, Discuss, Repeat*. New York: Lukas & Sternberg.
- artesnetEurope [Thematic Network for Higher Arts Education] (2010) *Peer Power! The Future of Higher Arts Education in Europe*. Amsterdam / Sofia: ELIA / NATFA.
- BIGGS, M. & KARLSSON, H. (Eds.) (2010). *The Routledge Companion to Research in the Arts*. London: Routledge.
- Board of Artistic Research of the Faculty of Fine, Applied and Performing Arts of the University of Gothenburg (2010). *The Art Text. Art Monitor—A Journal of Artistic Research*, 8.
- FRIBERG, C., PAREKH-GAIHEDE, R. & BARTON, B. (Eds.) (2010). *At the Intersection between Art and Research—Practice-based Research in the Performing Arts*. Malmö: NSU Press.
- QUARESMA, J., DIAS, F. R. & GUADIX, J. C. R. (Eds.) (2010). *Investigação em Arte. Uma Floresta, Muitos Caminhos (I)*. Lisboa: CIEBA.
- ROGOFF, I. (2010). *Free. E-flux Journal*, 14, I-II.

These are, of course, references useful for a particular research work in progress. It means that some items are arguably not so obviously related to artistic research; I decided to include them nonetheless, because they had or are having a pivotal role in my outlining of the field. For this same reason, I have added a few publications focusing also on the academy, given that I see the academic circumstance as a necessary condition for artistic research to exist. They are, for instance, A.C.A.D.E.M.Y, Verwoert's, Madoff's and Rogoff's entries. I have limited the twentyish-item list to the years 2000-2010 (except for Singerman's book which, dating from 1999, is very helpful in describing the changing artists' subjectivities). Many more publications are to be indicated as we turn to the following decade. Among them are Henk Slager's *The Pleasure of Research* (2011); the book by edited Janneke Wesseling called *See it Again, Say it Again—The Artist as Researcher* (2011); Ritterman, Bast and Mittelstra's edition of *Art and Research—Can Artists be Researchers?* (2011); again Henk Slager with Jan Kaila editing, in 2012, *Doing Research*; Henk



Borgdorff's *The Conflict of the Faculties: Perspectives on Artistic Research and Academia* (2012); the compilation of essays *Practice as Research in the Arts: Principles, Protocols, Pedagogies, Resistances* (2013), by Robin Nelson; and the handbook of SHARE published by ELIA (editors were Mick Wilson and Shelte van Ruiten) as recently as 2013.

For further quantified insight, I also add some numbers.

YEAR	QUANTITY
1988	1
1993	1
1995	1
1996	1
1998	2
1999	1
2000	1
2002	2
2003	1
2004	6
2005	4
2006	8
2007	7
2008	5
2009	17
2010	7
2011	5
2012	3
2013	5

TABLE I — A SAMPLE OF BIBLIOGRAPHIC PRODUCTION ON ARTISTIC RESEARCH

This is a rough quantification of outstanding published issues focused on artistic research. My criteria were not too strict, so basically I decided to include only those publications whose title pointed literally to «artistic research», either with the complete term or with equivalents (for instance «arts-based», «visual arts», «creative»), as well as very few examples with not so crystal clear titles but whose content I was familiar with beforehand. The points of departure from where I took most of these published references were the overview provided on the website of SHARE network,¹⁵ a compilation by Henk

¹⁵ You can go to <http://www.sharenetwork.eu/artistic-research-overview/bibliography> for a more extensive list.

Borgdorff in the Swedish yearbook of artistic research (2010), and my own bibliographic resources.

The list includes authored books, edited books, special issues of journals and conference proceedings published until 2013.

Please note that, once more, this is not comprehensive. The collection of SHARE is based on an ELIA's original overview whose winning post was 2010. Borgdorff's article was written in 2010 as well, so from then until 2013 it's me, myself and I. I could have also added a couple of publications from after 2013, but I concluded that it would not give a thorough image of 2014-2015. Also, note that although the first entry is from 1988, I cannot warrant that before that and until the year 2000 any other items were not published. My impression is that from the twenty-first century onwards the list is made more accurately.

The scopes of these publications, of course, vary. What is to be retained from this information is that the years 2000-2010 are the outset for establishing PhDs in most higher arts educational institutions in Europe, as well as the time when most texts on artistic research are published. It is especially in the second half of the decade that numbers increase, giving a very prosperous indication for the following years. Particularly publishing houses and universities should be watching the tendency in awe and excitement.

By 'research' in the aforementioned publications I mean artistic research. Going back to the report-like summary on academies and degrees, I am also thinking of artistic research when I use the term research in such contexts, and not so much the investigation undergone in applied arts, architecture, design, digital media and technology. I am seeking speculative and open-ended artistic research in the context of university. Otherwise, earlier doctors of philosophy in architecture, art history and related areas could also be retrieved and accounted for in the hypothetical historiography of artistic research. Musicians were also not considered as, in general, their procedures at PhD level and the tradition of music higher education are quite different from those in fine, visual and performance arts. Some of the most remote examples given are to be taken as isolated events. The remarkable fact that Annette Arlander was the first doctor of art of the Theatre Academy (TeaK), back in 1998, has nevertheless to be relativised, as only years later is it fair to speak of a doctoral culture at TeaK. Reporting to a conversation I had with Leena Rouhiainen, it was not until 2007 that the staff of TeaK became aware and attentive to the existing field of artistic research, and provided a pedagogical and research structure



to deal with it.¹⁶ Coincidence or not, Arlander has published intensively from 2008 to 2013. But, of course, before 2007 there was already a due notion of an emerging field in other Finnish institutions other than the Theatre Academy.¹⁷ A department of research development was then set up and professorship of artistic research established, so that the 1990s' prevailing dichotomy between a work done with a more scholarly or a more artistic propensity finally began to break: «Today all new doctoral works have a research emphasis, contain artistic or practical parts, and undergo conventional academic procedure. All research undertaken at TeaK is considered artistic research, as befits an arts university», states Arlander (2009, p. 78).

The shift in the discourse from the division of scientific/artistic work to the umbrella term of artistic research is the point I wanted to reach. It's

16 «LR: Since 1991 you were allowed to do a doctorate at the Theatre Academy. From 1989. Either. But about that. The first doctor was Annette Arlander in 1998. But then we had two different degrees: we had the scientific degree and the artistic degree. But since 2007 when we formed Tutke [the Performing Arts Research Centre settled in the Theatre Academy] to bring in all the doctoral students together in one unit all of our research has been artistic research. Previously our doctoral students were involved in the MA program departments and now the doctoral students no longer are with the MA program, they are in Tutke. So we have choreography, dance, pedagogy...

Me: So all the students in the PhD are also researchers at Tutke? Is there an overlapping of positions?

LR: Yes, they're all in Tutke. So there is a twenty year—more than twenty year—tradition, but the specific focus on artistic research started in 2007. You could do an artistic research from 1990s on as well, but then you also could do a scientific research. Now you can only do artistic research.

Me: And for any reason in 2007 to shift to artistic research?

LR: Artistic research became stronger and then the doctoral students were unhappy with the way scientific discourse was dominating the work, I think. So we heard them then and there was a shift, which I think is a really good shift. No scientific work here, it can be done elsewhere.» This is a transcribed extract of an interview I did to Leena Rouhiainen at the Theatre Academy Helsinki in 9 Feb 2015, during my stay as visiting researcher of the University of Arts.

17 It is what seems to be at stake with significant publications such as Paavolainen, Pentti and Anu Ala-Korpela (eds.) (1995). *Knowledge Is a Matter of Doing* (Acta Scenica 1). Helsinki: Theatre Academy; Strandman, Pia (Ed.) (1998) *No guru, no method*. Helsinki: University of Arts and Design Helsinki.; Ryyänen, Lea (1999) *Arts, research and doctoral studies in Finland*. Helsinki: Academy of Finland; Siukonen, Jyrki (2002) *Tutkiva taiteilija—Kysymyksiä kuvataiteen ja tutkimuksen avioliitosta* [The researching artist—Questions concerning the open marriage of visual arts and research]. Helsinki: Taide.; Kiljunen, S. and Mika Hannula (eds.) Tomi Snellman (trans.) (2004) *Artistic Research*. Helsinki: Fine Art Academy; Hannula, Mika, Juha Suoranta, and Tere Vadén (eds.) (2005). *Artistic research—Theories, methods and practices*. Helsinki and Gothenburg: Academy of Fine Arts, Finland and University of Gothenburg, Sweden; Kaila, Jan and Pekka Kantonen (eds.) (2006, 2008) *The artist's knowledge: Research at the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts*. Two volumes. Helsinki: Finnish Academy of Fine Arts; Mäkelä, Marit and Sara Routarinne (eds.) (2006) *The Art of Research*. Helsinki: University of Art and Design Helsinki; Mika, Elo (Ed.), Tomi Snellman (trans.) (2007) *Toisaalta tässä. Valokuva teoksena ja tutkimuksena / Here then. The photograph as work of art and as research*. Helsinki: University of Art and Design Helsinki and Finnish Academy of Fine Arts; Buchanan, R. et al. (eds.) (2007) *Research in Art and Design in Finnish Universities*. Helsinki: Publications of the Academy of Finland, all published until 2007.



hard to say whether in the field the outcomes of this discursive change are manifest in a new type of work. This discussion has been taking place for a long time and is tied to concerns of knowledge production, assessment criteria, methods applied and other epistemological absorptions. Not that I see the discussion on the *episteme* of artistic research as unnecessary; it certainly is important to look at it from within in order to acknowledge its mechanisms, features and potentialities and, primarily, to identify and affirm its emergence as a new discipline. Leena Rouhiainen explains it in the following way: «It was of course important to have the conversation on what artistic research is in order to implement it on academic levels. The different organizations needed understanding, reasoning as to why to start funding or opening programs around it, but I think that phase is sort of over. And what we are actually producing I think it's a new field. People who come out from here [from the doctoral program in the Theatre Academy] are artist researchers. They have a dual expertise. And I think that their skills of articulation are useful in the field. They are sort of multitasked. They are artists, but they can work as curators, they can work as commentating experts, they can produce reflection on what's going on.»¹⁸

Regardless of the importance of epistemological inputs for the implementation of the field of knowledge of artistic research, there is certainly a lot more to investigate beyond, I would say, such a technical and administrative approach. Too much of the domain's body of work has been dedicated to roaming on those concerns, and the results are quite disappointing to say the least. If it is to look inside, then it is with eyes put on the documentation, presentation, discussion and distribution of such outcomes: in the pursuing of what within the TAHTO group¹⁹ of Helsinki has been called «performative arrangements.»²⁰ This might be the missing link between disciplinary artistic

18 This is a transcribed extract of an interview I did to Leena Rouhiainen at the Theatre Academy Helsinki on 9 Feb 2015, during my stay as visiting researcher of the University of Arts.

19 TAHTO—doctoral programme in artistic research, an association between the University of Arts and Aalto University of Helsinki: <http://www.artisticresearch.fi/tahto/>

20 «LR: While TAHTO has been going on there's been I think a shift in artistic research here, then I noticed it also elsewhere. We're trying to promote students to explore what we call performative arrangements. So different formats of presenting your artistic research: performance lectures, video-documentary... And at the same time we managed to establish an internet based publishing system for our doctorates and the first one came out. So it has texts, video, sound, and it's on the internet. And this was quite a job to do because our PhD research needs to be archived, it needs to be locked—you can't change it afterwards—, so we created this kind of a system. And then another thing which was earlier and then it was lost a bit, and it has come back, I think,



research and contemporary art. And the relation between the two is something to be preserved and cherished.

It is clear that much of the published material referred to before is made up of compilations and edited books. Some purposeful titles in authored books are also mentioned, although not enough in number to compete with a bibliography that is generally teeming with anthological items. I thus regard anthologies as an interesting type of literature in the sense of my argument on the newness commonly associated with the domain of artistic research. By saying interesting I am also holding to its problematic dimension. The publishing of anthologies lies in the motivation of construction of discourse in a certain area. And they're also due to memory of events, acquiring a certain degree of monumentality. Anthologies can thus be regarded as monuments of knowledge of a given field; they are statutory. Besides updating the existing notions to the present times, anthologies also pursue the idea of solid knowledge. It's there, among those pages, that the most revealing things about a discipline are to be found. And it's there, among the same pages, that a memory is being set up in respect of a discipline. It pays homage and it further develops the field. For sure the academic excellence pressures cannot be disregarded when analyzing the increasing numbers of published anthologies about research in the arts. As outcomes need to be registered, consulted and assessed, more and more events are resulting in subsequent publications, especially within the academic context, where seminars, conferences, open classes, debates, exhibitions, all take a later renewed form in print or in digital. Proceedings and commentaries usually end up compiled in the next cutting edge anthology of artistic research. The problematic aspect of the apparent cogency of such anthologies in the particular case of artistic research is that it is not accompanied by verifiable developments. This ultimately means that artistic research is affirmed and legitimized as a disciplinary field, to which academic recognition also contributes, besides anthologies and other publications, but still it is lacking a productive and artistically valuable effect. It is about time we shift from academic goals to non-academic goals in artistic research: «Whereas pure

it is the performative arrangements in relation to articulating the reflective dimension, the discursive dimension. We are back into creative writing founding alternative means of articulating different perspectives on the practice. These sort of have emerged partly due to TAhTO and partly as a shared ongoing process of the past four years». This is a transcribed extract of an interview I did with Leena Rouhiainen at the Theatre Academy Helsinki on 9 Feb 2015, during my stay as visiting researcher of the University of Arts.



scientific research often seems to be characterized by academic goal... artistic research focuses on involvement, on social and non-academic goals» (Slager. 2009, p. 52). While conferences and seminars spread around and publishers rub their hands with glee at the perspective of a few more anthologies, reflexivity and inquiry on artistic research should go to the next phase of effectively exploring what is being done as artistic research. What are the PhD students doing? What have the doctorates done and are doing after completion?

Despite the lack of agreement on what art is, there is no longer what could be called a debate on the epistemology of art. Its identity, boundaries, fruition and contemplation, meaning and methods are no longer making the artistic agenda, even though contemporary art has become increasingly more conceptual and investigative. However, the focus of its inquiry is directed to its place in the world, rather than itself. Art has abandoned the quest for autonomy and accepted the inter-relational dimension brought by post-modernism. In doing so, art no longer stands for self-evidence, for 'being' equalling 'meaning'; on the contrary, it has become reflexive and this reflexivity appears in practice as well. And the discussion it undergoes has gracefully and necessarily slipped outwards. It is about time that artistic research follows the same path.

Abundance in doctoral programmes, dissemination events and a prolific publishing industry, all prove that artistic research as a field of knowledge is a reality. We are no longer in the process of accepting it—or of consenting it!—, but rather of exploring it. It is time that the literature and documentation on the field is expanded by contributions of practitioners and by accessing their work. I agree with Timothy Emlyn Jones who, back in 2003, was already claiming that «Philosophy and art theory have much to contribute to this field, but practitioners have an obligation to contribute to the debate of thinking through art, no matter how meager an offering such as this» (2009, p. 32). Turning away and pretending it is not happening, like many artists and even university teachers still do to this day, is not the solution for it to disappear or become understood; this attitude only gives room to more distortion, babbling and appropriation by aesthetics, philosophy and human sciences and other outlandish thinkers. On the other hand it is exactly what sceptics need for fabricating their own object of criticism.

It is the work done in disseminating events, in DAs, and DFAs that will set up the object of study of artistic research. It is thus in their agents' hands to change direction. The more published are hesitant anthologies on what artistic research is, could be or is not being, the more invigorated is



the external fragile perception of the field. It is no longer acceptable that discussions about the *episteme* of artistic research are regarded as the core study of artistic research.

PROBLEM: NOVELTY AS PENDENCY

In a text about «Art and Method» (2009), Henk Slager describes artistic research as «a form of idiosyncratic research» in terms that to me do not seem totally pacific. He says that «fundamental aspects such as indefinability, heterogeneity, contingency, and relativity color the trajectory of artistic research. Therefore, artistic research should explicitly request tolerance, an open attitude, and the deployment of multiple models of interpretation» (p. 53). Slager's report on a certain «indefinability» of artistic research is what I perceive as impersonating a certain ingrowing state in its potential developments. The first battle of artistic research was implementation and acceptance as a field of knowledge; that can certainly be considered a battle won, but since disciplinary legitimation was achieved that the outcomes resulting from institutionalization appear to be stuck in the same kind of discussion from the early days. And, to a large extent, these discussions are introduced with the idea of a 'new' and 'emergent' field, now and years ago.

In the preface of the proceedings of the pioneering symposium «Theatre and Dance Artist Doing Research in Practice», held at the Theatre Academy in Helsinki in 1994, Pentti Paavolainen writes that «it is time to open up a forum for the writings that will spring up from the rather new but stimulating research activity» (1995, p. 6). This is as old as twenty years. However, the situation today is that of also preparing a new kind of writing due to a renovated perspective on the way of perceiving what in 1995 was taken as a «new research activity». The author was careful in presenting the news: «The reader will meet devoted voices with a will to pursue a goal and readiness for the uncertainty and unexpected which are both the true signs of a person who is doing art as well as research.» (1995, p. 5) Moreover, then and now, «uncertainty» in this kind of research is a standing attribute, which makes Paavolainen's statement very timely even today.

In the revised version of his paper presentation in Los Angeles in 2003, Timothy Emlyn Jones also stresses the novelty and hesitancy at stake. He says that «the subject of where and how research thinking sits in art and design is



a large one on which, relatively speaking, we have only just begun; although even now it is possible to suggest that a new research paradigm for artistic production and art education is emerging. In this context any contribution to the debate has to be recognized as provisional and conditional since to date no comprehensive overview has yet been published». And he goes on: «... I tease out key issues emerging from my own experience and knowledge of the field—the only feasible terms of reference at such an early time in the development of the subject—which have taught me that, whatever else, there remains a great deal to be done.» (2009, p. 31)

A very assertive Mika Hannula starts his intervention in Balkema & Slager's anthology *Artistic Research* (2004). He states: «Artistic research is a new area. It is a field within university studies that deserves to be called social innovation. Due to its freshness and newness, artistic research is both a possibility and a risk. However, so far it has proven to have a fair chance of survival. Thus, artistic research must be articulated and formed according to its own particular needs and challenges... What exactly is artistic research?» (p. 70) The highly perceptive and purposeful reading Hannula produced eleven years ago is almost disturbing. This could have been said today: «Obviously, artistic research is an area which is yet to emerge as a full program. During the last 20 years, there have been different artistic research projects and experiments in various countries. However, there has not been enough internal scrutiny and definitely not enough fruitful comparison and constructive criticism among all the different approaches... Since artistic research has been accepted and established as credible research within art education and art institutions, we have to keep its possibilities open and move towards a vision of artistic research which is self-critical and self-reflexive. Put differently, we must have the courage to be anarchistic and experimental.» (p. 70) Awkwardly—or perhaps not—, already in 2013 the same Mika Hannula writes with the same spirit of discovery in *Artists as Researchers—A New Paradigm for Art Education in Europe*: «After going through all these seminars, all these meetings and all these late afternoons trying to stay awake, desperately searching to find the escaping energy to focus and make sense of what artistic research could be or even should be? Was it worth it? Or: what is it good for—this emerging field of artistic research?» (2013, p.87)

Examples and citations on the youth of the undefined field are many. The Nordic Summer University group has published an anthology of essays in 2010, under the name *At the Intersection Between Art and Research—Practice-Based*



Research in the Performing Arts. The introduction, written by Sidsel Pape, accounts that «Practice Based Research (PBR), as an academic discipline predominantly practiced in the English-speaking world, is still new in the Nordic world» (2010, p. 9).

In a revised paper presented in the SHARE conference in 2011, under the name «Artistic Research in Performing Arts/The Body as a Medium of Institution», Esa Kirkkopelto, while referring to the elaboration of criteria for assessment of research in universities, informs that «it seems to me at the present moment that it would not be difficult to agree on common criteria, to write down a list of principles. For sure, several lists of this kind already exist and they are also used for different purposes. Yet, at least here in Finland, we have also so far abstained from agreeing on such criteria, from hurrying with it—not only because of the fear of disagreement, but also because of the early stage of the development of the research field».²¹

Embryonic states will eventually evolve. Meanwhile, I understand the pendency depicted in the assembled citations as being promoted by a discourse replete with forms of incompleteness, novelty, uncertainty, which ask for a solid structure before opening up and flourishing. This may provide an explanation on the lethargy felt and why most of these texts (not necessarily the ones quoted, though) were found stuck and pendant in inconclusive epistemological, methodological and regulatory digressions. For their part, these discussions welcome the next discussion. As an attempt to solve the uncertainty, a new trial is in print. And then another one. And so on. And in order to contextualize and legitimize the following attempts, departments and programmes are set up within graduate schools and universities. A conservative and self-feeding structure is the other reason for the state of pendency. In the sense that it draws money either to publishing houses, conference organizers, universities through tuition fees and from public funding to research, the structure will be vigorously preserved by those most directly benefiting from it. Mick Wilson warns: «The institutional imperative—to reproduce and conserve the institution—must not be overlooked. Educators, especially educators in self-proclaimed creative practices, are attracted to a vision of themselves as agents of dynamic change and critical renewal, as bearers of cultural values which are variously above the exchange system of the market place or connected to some essential human and humanizing propensity. However,

21 Accessed here: http://circostrada.org/IMG/pdf/Kirkkopelto_Artistic_Research.pdf

it is important to register the essentially conservative force of institutionalized education: education is a key apparatus in social reproduction.» (2009, p. 64). But is this self-feeding system a problem? In the path of the European tendency to instrumentalise public education and arts education, research creative potential is, of course, endangered. Imaginative speculation is thus ingrown, and what follows is the caricaturized image so often appropriated by the sceptical voyeurs of a «disciplining, homogenizing, restrictive, conformist, naïve» (Borgdorff, 2012, p.5) environment. But this misrepresented portrayal of artistic research is nevertheless about to change, or so indicate the most up-to-date discursive changes. Nonetheless, and while it residually lasts, it cannot be accused of being unproductive. Sterile, perhaps, yet very productive in the neoliberal sense of «productivism—a compulsion to produce, to be sure, that not only pertains to the manufacture of objects, but also to the realm of discourse: ‘discursivity’ is easily exploited as a so-called alternative to ‘productivism’, when it is in fact anything but» (De Bare et al., 2006, p.7). So again one has to ask whether the state of pendency and subsequent self-feeding structure are, in fact, problems. From what I see, they are not to corporations, publishing houses, nor to some university departments and positions and a fragile, worn and failed conception of artistic research, while they definitely are to foundational groups of artist researchers and artists engaged in research.

Robin Nelson’s anthology *Practice as Research in the Arts—Principles, Protocols, Pedagogies, Resistances*, published as recently as 2013, is still not fully released from this ‘newness’ feeling on artistic research (or varying nomenclature, for instance ‘practice-as-research’). Some of its collected essays, such as Susanne Little’s and Veronica Baxter’s, still point out the novelty of research practices in the arts in their respective contexts. The introductory chapter starts by saying that «people engage in research for a variety of motives but, ultimately, the rigours of sustained academic research are driven by a desire to address a problem, find things out, establish new insights. This drive is apparent in the arts throughout history, but it is relatively recently that it has been necessary to posit the notion of arts ‘Practice as Research’». (p. 3). This may, however, signal a change in pace. Along with the emergence of doctoral programmes explicitly dedicated to artistic research, this may hopefully suggest we are ready to surpass the pendency which a raw and paralyzing novelty has pushed us into. After twenty years of generalized sterile literary ‘productivism’, a slight difference in discourse is thus regarded with eagerness.



In the aforementioned publication of Balkema & Slager, Jan Kaila wrote that «artistic research is also bound to a tradition external to itself because, so far, there are not many Doctors of Fine Arts around. This being the case, we are in the paradoxical situation that a large portion of the educators, supervisors and examiners involved do not have practical experience in the way artistic research functions, but are basing their thinking on traditional research or, in the best case, on a vision of what artistic research might ultimately be» (p. 66). It might have been the case in 2004. Now, in 2015, we have plenty of DAs and DFAs, PhDs in the arts and teachers of artistic research, so that an effective change is in the making. A change not conducted in the claim for «tolerance» (Slager, 2009, p. 53), but as the courageous step of becoming «anarchistic and experimental» (Hannula, 2004, p. 70)—«And I think we've passed this phase of determining what artistic research is... It is, it exists. It just simply is. And now we are more in the phase of exploring distinct ways people do and the effects that it has».²²

IF «IT JUST SIMPLY IS» THEN GO GRAB IT

In more recent times, some artists have enrolled in programmes that go under the name of «artistic research».²³ To my understanding, this signals a change of direction and is not to go unnoticed. There is an already long tradition of art and academy, and both meeting art and research. The first sporadic completions of doctoral degrees in the arts appeared, and historical and analytical research were the norm together with the adoption of methods of humanities, psychology, pedagogy and empirical research. Afterwards sparse

²² «LR: Exactly. These kinds of anthologies and books on artistic research are problematic exactly because of this vision. They don't go and explore what is done as artistic research. So we have fifteen, twenty doctorates in artistic research; what is actually done there? It's two pages that people reflect, comment upon their approach to artistic research, then they go on about the actual project or process that they've been involved in. And I think we've passed this phase of determining what artistic research is.

Me: Here in Helsinki?

LR: I think so. It is, it exists. It just simply is. And now we are more in the phase of exploring distinct ways people do and the effects that it has. This is a transcribed extract of an interview I did with Leena Rouhiainen at the Theatre Academy Helsinki on 9 Feb 2015, during my stay as visiting researcher of the University of Arts.

²³ For instance, the TahTO programme is called «Doctoral programme in artistic research»; the programme at the Finnish Theatre Academy is called «Doctoral studies in artistic research of performance arts».



and scattered Doctor of Arts titles were awarded. Only then, in the 2000s, was a culture of doctoral courses implemented in studio art. And it was only very recently that departments of research development, teachers of artistic research and programmes bearing the name 'artistic research' have appeared. To say that artistic research has a long tradition is not entirely true; research in the arts has a long tradition, but even though artistic research as a field of its own is something whose roots go far back in time, only by the end of the first decade of the 2000s did it effectively emerge.

In what will these students enrolled in artistic research programmes become experts? Will they be experts in artistic research? Albeit with the appearance of a minor objection, this distinction between programmes that are set up like doctoral courses in the arts and programmes that present themselves as doctoral courses in artistic research is spotting the light at a couple of critical topics. Does the different naming stress a difference in the aims of these programmes? Is artistic research dealing with expertise? If so, then to what extent? Hopefully an expertise not founded in methods, criteria, properties of the dissertation or knowledge physiognomy, but something else stepping from epistemology into ontology: the relevance, role and standing of artistic research, together with artistic processes and the documentation, presentation and discussion of outcomes. In his text «Four Theses Attempting to Revise the Terms of a Debate», published in James Elkins' *Artists with PhDs*, Mick Wilson insists on the contingent character of artistic research. He starts with a general idea: «... the PhD has been used as an instrument in constructing disciplinary legitimacy and distinction. Thus the accession of disciplines such as English literary studies or Area Studies to the status of discrete departments within university structures was bound up with the construction of a PhD process specific to these domains and the reciprocal construction of these disciplines as areas of appropriate application for the PhD award» (2009, p.61) only to end up discussing artistic research: «It is clear that the development of the PhD in visual arts practice may serve simply to consolidate disciplinary-territory construction» (p. 63). I agree with the contingency and legitimizing purpose of these PhDs. However, there's something else about them that should not be missed in order to promote the turning point we are expecting. The academic framing and resulting debates on how to set up the dissertation, and on what is at stake in the assessment and final defence, have met contemporary art subjectivities of artist-as-curator and artist-as-producer, eventually directing towards artist-as-researcher.



In his analysis of Research Degrees in Art and Design, Timothy Emlyn Jones mentions this concern with presentation when introducing a «third generation of practice-based PhDs emerged in 2000 at the Glasgow School of Art». Referring to those researchers, he writes that «a distinction was also made between the material submitted for examination and the documentation of it for the purposes of future reference to the research content. In this third generation it was possible to say that the difference between an art and design PhD and any other PhD is not in the type of doctorate, but in the ways in which the research outcomes are presented for examination» (2009, p.42). This statement is considered valuable for it gives hints of the concern with publicness that would become in the present time one of the key topics of artistic research. It already inhabits contemporary art. And it also is in line with what Leena Rouhiainen said about the «performative arrangements» explored at TAHTO, which are «different formats of presenting your artistic research». Henk Slager has also stressed the same point when speaking of his programme in Utrecht: «The research seminars also engage curatorial studies, because the experimental process of transmedial research has a direct impact on the reflection of models of presentation» (2009, p. 50). And in Conversations on Artistic Research, a seminar hosted by the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Porto in November 2014, the possibility of artistic research being concerned with, and so adopting as its object of study, forms of documentation of the research that allow for differentiation from artistic practice, was also discussed a few times. Back then, we were looking at Chris Burden's photography of his performance «Shoot» (1971), which is obviously embodying a separation of practice and research; the performance, which was the artistic work, has ended and is gone in time. Research about it will always regard the documenting image that is left. Back at TAHTO, in a research seminar of this group that I attended at the end of last January, Mika Elo referred to the need for students to be aware of the communicative dimension of research and suggested a line of escape: «Research is always about communication, about sharing ideas. One way of making research is designing an interface» (quoted from oral intervention during the seminar).

I would say that it is fairly acceptable to consider the topics of documentation, presentation and discussion of research work key studies in the present agenda and near future of artistic research. Once prompted as effects of institutionalization, these topics will remain interesting as long as contemporary art is also busy with them. As I've mentioned before, institutionalization isn't

to be regarded as the devil at all levels and in full time; it is most likely to be a process that potentially generates challenging situations. A series of pre-conceptions, abusive overlays, blurred synonymy, and categories previously taken for granted are in need of being revised and questioned as this process develops. Among them are the *cliché* images of artist, researcher and institution that have strongly impacted terms of criticism and outright rejection of the field of artistic research. A more accurate gaze is needed, as «the problem with this type of criticism is that it fabricates its own object of criticism. It begins by constructing a caricature of artistic research in academia... After that it is no longer difficult to field a whole line-up of post-Nitzschean witnesses to lambast those pernicious practices, which are inimical to art and which, under pressure from an equally maleficent education policy, are seen to have infected the art world under the label 'academisation' in order to subject art practices to their disciplining forces» (Borgdorff, 2012, p. 5).

Inadequate idealizations apart, the link between the two worlds is of vital importance for artistic research, for it prevents it from falling into purely academic goals and at the same time gives it a scope, or a wider range of scopes. But also the opposite: artistic research is having more and more of an impact on the art world. The growing number of projects merging between the two domains confirms this. From exhibitions in galleries and schools to participation in biennales, the dialogues are being set. After the Venice Biennale in 2009 and Shanghai in 2012, the Spring-Summer of 2015 is still in time to bring something new research-wise.

Artistic research is there, «it simply is». And it's better to try to understand something that is there rather than inveighing against it. As much as the target of artistic research is somewhere in artistic practice and according links, all along there should be an active part of tacit reflection and self-criticism to keep work on track. Every artistic research project is a kind of proposition presented in the context of artistic research and a commentary on it. However, this 'grabbing' of the field should also not take this too strictly, or all of a sudden the act of questioning in artistic research would turn into artistic research itself. And then there we would go again.

Today and onwards, replicating what also happens between art and philosophy of art, it is of utter importance to distinguish between artistic research and research about artistic research.



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