

8.4 Gutachten von Henk Borgdorff zur Forschung im Kunstbereich

«A brief survey of the current debates on the concepts and the practices of research in the arts»

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The concepts of research

A variety of expressions exist to denote research in the arts, and «artistic research» (künstlerische Forschung) is now widely used. In francophone Canada, the term *recherche-cr ation* is in frequent use. In the world of architecture and product design, the expression *research by design* is common. Brad Haseman (2006) in Australia has proposed using *performative research* to distinguish the new paradigm from other qualitative research paradigms. In the United Kingdom, the terms *practice-based* or *art-based research*, and increasingly *practice-led research*, are often used, in particular by funding agencies like the Arts and Humanities Research Council. Sometimes the term *practice as research* is used to indicate the central place that artistic practice occupies in the research.⁸⁹

Sir Christopher Frayling (1993) famously made a distinction between «research into art and design» (i.e. «traditional» academic research as performed in the humanities or social sciences), «research through art and design» (e.g. materials research or development work) and «research for art and design». He described the latter as «research where the end product is an artefact – where the thinking is, so to speak, *embodied in the artefact*, where the goal is not primarily communicable knowledge in the sense of verbal communication, but in the sense of visual or iconic or imagistic communication» (italics his). Others (cf. Borgdorff 2006) prefer to use the distinction between «research on the arts» (mainly humanities research), «research for the arts» (applied research in the service of art practice) and «research in the arts», the latter being more or less synonymous with «artistic research».

There are two characteristics of artistic research that make it distinctive within the whole of academic research. The first is its *methodology*: the research takes place in and through the creation of art. Artistic means and methods are employed in the research process. This is why some prefer the expression «research in and through art practice». The second characteristic is its *outcomes*. In part, the outcomes of artistic research are artworks, performances, installations and other artistic practi-

89 What all these expressions have in common is the word *research*. Yet that does not go without saying. Research in the emphatic sense is an activity traditionally associated with what people do in universities and industrial laboratories, and not with what people do as they practise or teach art. In The Netherlands, the Dutch Advisory Council for Science and Technology Policy once recommended using «design and development» (*ontwerp en ontwikkeling*) to denote those research-like activities that take place in professional schools, including the schools of the arts; within higher education, the term «research» (*onderzoek*) was to be restricted to traditional universities. Reality has since overtaken this recommendation, however, and «applied research» is now defined as one of the remits of higher professional education, or universities of applied sciences, in the Netherlands. This illustration of the reluctance to use the word *research* does not stand alone. In Norway, the Artistic Research Fellowships Programme has been operating since 2003. That is its English name, at least, but in their own language Norwegians avoid the term *forskning* and speak instead of *kunstnerisk utviklingsarbeid* («artistic development work»). And in Austria, the term *arts-based research* is used in English to denote the new funding programme, whereas the German name is *Entwicklung und Erschließung der K nste* («advancement and accessibility of the arts»). To be sure, differences also exist in what words such as *research*, *recherche*, *Forschung* or *onderzoek* normally denote and connote in English, French, German or Dutch. By analogy, there are also considerable differences between what is meant by the English *science* and the German *Wissenschaft*, which also includes the *humanities* (*Geisteswissenschaften*). In the foundational struggle that is raging over artistic research, the uses and the meanings of words are of cardinal importance. As paradigms shift, not only do changes occur in the way of looking at things, but also in the meanings of words.

ces. I say «in part» because most people agree that a form of discursive justification or contextualisation is needed (which needn't always be verbal).

The emergence of artistic research is in line with what has been called «the practice turn in contemporary theory» (Schatzky et al. 2001). Knowledge is constituted (not so much found) in and through practices, be they scientific or artistic. The renewed interest in the contexts of discovery (e.g. in science and technology studies) parallels a broader understanding of what academic research is, which can also be witnessed in the open definitions of «research» as used by research funding agencies and research councils (in their research assessments), and as employed in the Dublin Descriptors for the learning outcomes for first-, second- and third-cycle education.

Within the growing community of people engaged with artistic research, disagreement exists about which criteria (if any at all) apply to this new paradigm. Some even oppose what they call the «disciplination» of art (cf. Busch 2011), while others are less reluctant to relate to academic values and conventions (cf. Biggs & Karlsson 2011). This dispute on «art and academia» – which often partly turns on a limited understanding of what academic research is – is also reflected in the various takes on artistic research in Europe. Roughly speaking, one might discern three points of view here: (1) the academic perspective, (2) the *sui generis* perspective and (3) the critical perspective.

1. The academic perspective – associated by some with how the new research paradigm is institutionalised in the English-speaking world, notably in the UK – puts value on traditional academic criteria when it comes to differentiating art practice as research from art practice in itself.
2. The *sui generis* perspective – associated by some with how artistic research made its entry into academia in the Nordic countries – foregrounds artistic values when it comes to assessing research in the arts. In Sweden, a new «artistic doctorate» was therefore created in 2010, and in Norway an independent artistic research fellowship programme – equivalent to a PhD programme – has been operating since 2003.
3. The critical perspective – associated by some with how one is struggling with the Bologna imperatives in the German-speaking countries – emphasises the critical, or even subversive, force that research in the arts might exercise in opposition to the neo-liberal tendency in our post-Fordist knowledge economy to subsume everything deviant under a single umbrella (cf. Holert 2009). An example is the new PhD in Practice programme at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna.

When the conventional criteria for doing research – concerning research questions, references, methods and communication/dissemination – are transposed to the fields of artistic research, it is important to stress that the object of research, the context of the research, the method of research and the way the research results are presented and documented are inextricably bound up with the *practice of making and playing*. Art practice is the object, context, method and outcome of the research.

The standard subdivision between basic research, applied research and experimental development – as laid down in the Frascati Manual – is no longer considered appropriate in the light of the present diversity of academic fields, research strategies and knowledge forms. The emergence of Mode 2 knowledge production (Gibbons et al. 1994) can be seen as a corrective to the conventional model of

scientific research. Mode 2 production involves interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary research in the context of application. It also implies the substantive and organisational involvement not just of academics, but of other 'stakeholders' as well, who help plan and perform the research and evaluate its societal relevance.

Because of its close ties with art practice and the central role that that practice plays in the research, artistic research sometimes seems to be a type of Mode 2 knowledge production. But sometimes – for instance in research on historical performance practice in music or research in and through choreographic practices – artistic research might more readily be seen as *intradisciplinary* basic research intended to contribute both materially and cognitively to the development of the art form in question.

Much artistic research focuses simultaneously on enriching our world by developing new products (like compositions, images, performances, installations) and on broadening our understanding of the world and of ourselves – an understanding that is embodied in the products generated by the research. This dual research aim transcends the classic dichotomy of applied versus basic research. Stokes's quadrant model (Stokes 1997) provides a conceptual framework for understanding this type of research. In Stokes's analysis, much valuable research, today and in the past, embraces both these aims: achieving a fundamental understanding of what is being studied, as well as developing products and services that benefit society.

The artistic research community

Both the pressure of the art market and the strains of art production often leave artists little room to 'stop and contemplate' what they are doing. Many artists must operate as free enterprisers in the market of the 'creative industry', a market that is not oriented to reflection, but which expects its suppliers to deliver a constant stream of new products and projects. Although there is still some scepticism in the art world towards the phenomenon of artistic research, and some people steadfastly oppose the alleged 'disciplination' of the arts within and by academia, there is also a growing interest among artists, art institutes (such as museums and galleries) and art events (such as major exhibitions) to partake in what they perceive as a free space for 'material thinking'.

Several organisations and networks have recently been created to foster research in the arts, inside and outside higher arts education:

- The Society for Artistic Research (founded in March 2010) serves as the backbone for the *Journal for Artistic Research* (JAR). JAR is an international, online, open-access peer-reviewed journal for the identification, publication and dissemination of artistic research and its methodologies from all arts disciplines. In its aim of displaying research practice in a manner that respects artists' modes of presentation, JAR abandons the traditional journal article format and offers its contributors a dynamic online canvas where text can be woven together with image, audio and video. www.jar-online.net (accessed: 19 July 2011)
- SHARE: Step-change for Higher Arts Research and Education (founded in October 2010) is an international networking project comprising 36 partners from across Europe, working together on enhancing the 3rd cycle of arts research and education in Europe. SHARE is jointly coordinated by the Graduate School of Creative Arts and Media (GradCAM, Dublin) and the European League of Institutes of the Arts (ELIA). SHARE partly builds on the work done by the European Artistic Research Network (EARN, founded in 2004). <http://www.sharenetwork.eu/> (accessed: 19 July 2011)

- EPARM: European Platform for Artistic Research in Music (founded in April 2011) is a platform initiated by the Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen (AEC), serving the community of European conservatoires as they come to terms, each in ways most appropriate to their unique context, with the phenomenon of artistic research in music. <http://www.aecinfo.org/Content.aspx?id=2273> (accessed: 19 July 2011)

An overview of publications and conferences is provided (and continuously updated) by the SHARE network. See <http://www.sharenetwork.eu/artistic-research-overview/bibliography> (accessed: 19 July 2011)

The following publications may be added to that list:

- *Texte zur Kunst*. Issue 82 (June 2011) «Artistic Research».
- Florian Dombois, Claudia Mareis, Ute Meta Bauer and Michael Schwab (eds). *Intellectual Birdhouse: Art Practice as Research*. Amsterdam: Rodopi 2011 (forthcoming).
- Michael Schwab and Henk Borgdorff (eds). *The Exposition of Artistic Research: Publishing Art in Academia*. Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2012 (forthcoming).

Research in higher arts education

SHARE also provides an overview of institutions and programmes engaged in research in the arts as well as of the national situations per European country with regard to funding, regulations, degrees and integration in the academic infrastructure. This overview, which is still in the making, presently describes the situations in 14 countries. <http://www.sharenetwork.eu/artistic-research-overview> (accessed: 19 July 2011)

The following programmes from that overview could be highlighted here:

- The Norwegian **Artistic Research Fellowship Programme** is a national programme offering a three-year post as research fellow to candidates who have completed the highest level of art education in their subject area. The fellow is associated with one of the Norwegian institutions providing higher arts education. The programme enables high-level artistic research and results in expertise at the associate professor level. <http://www.kunststipendiat.no/en> (accessed: 19 July 2011)
- The Swedish **Konstnärliga Forskarskolan** is a national research school in the arts. Its overall aim is to create a nationwide structure in Sweden for postgraduate education in the arts. Konstnärliga Forskarskolan fosters a stimulating, productive environment for artistic research, characterised by a plurality of genres, disciplines and approaches. <http://www.konstnarligaforskarskolan.se/> (accessed: 19 July 2011)
- In Austria, the funding scheme known as the **Program for Arts-Based Research (Programm zur Entwicklung und Erschließung der Künste, PEEK)** supports high-quality, innovative arts-based research in which artistic practice is integral to the inquiry. <http://www.fwf.ac.at/de/projects/peek.html> (accessed: 19 July 2011)

Research and research training

A distinction needs to be made between research and research training. Within the arts academies, the schools of the arts, this translates into the difference between research by staff and research by students during their training.

Staff research in higher arts schools may take on various forms. In Europe one sees both «traditional» academic research (e.g. art history research, technological/material research, social science research in art education) as well as artistic research. The Berlin University of the Arts, for instance, puts a strong focus on applied research (some of it contracted) and traditional academic research. Artistic research is not acknowledged there as an independent form of research at the PhD or postdoc levels. At the Arts Faculty of the University of Gothenburg, the focus is on artistic research and development, and students there may obtain an «artistic doctorate».

Within research training it is important to distinguish between the bachelors, masters and doctoral levels. Clearly the bachelors curriculum will teach elementary research skills like argumentation, information, communication and presentation skills. The masters and doctoral programmes can then focus more directly on doing research.

Here, too, one encounters a wide variety of research practices, ranging from auto-ethnography to research by design. Increasingly, though, artistic research is acknowledged as typical for research within higher arts education.

In 2001, an informative report was published by the UK Council for Graduate Education (UKCGE) entitled *Research Training in the Creative and Performing Arts and Design*. It makes lucid recommendations for building research training programmes at arts schools. Proposals involve the research environment, research seminars, programme content, admission procedures, supervision of researchers and research projects, and assessment of the research. This report could provide support and inspiration to those who are currently working to introduce research into arts education.

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