

RESEARCH CATALOGUE

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The Research Catalogue (RC) is an online research management and publishing environment dedicated to artistic research. The Society for Artistic Research (SAR) provides the RC free of charge to artists and researchers worldwide, enabling them to collaborate on research projects and making materials, processes, and outcomes available to others by offering sustainable hosting and stable referencing. A non-profit association of individual and institutional members from around the globe, SAR was founded in 2010; the RC has been operational since 2011. With the RC, SAR responds to the desire of artistic researchers to have their work displayed and documented in a manner that cares about modes of presentation while highlighting the importance of this work as research.

The RC combines a media archive with an intuitive what-you-see-is-what-you-get workspace for the creation of rich-media web pages. It harnesses social media technologies to foster collaboration and to promote artistic research. SAR members may integrate the RC into their publishing or teaching activities by operating so-called portals with which research can be associated and through which dedicated coaching, reviewing, and publishing workflows can be organised.

The academic, peer-reviewed open access Journal for Artistic Research (JAR) is the RC's flagship portal, since it is conceived to demonstrate new modes of textuality, mediality, and quality assessment in support of the specifically artistic concerns that are under threat as art moves into academia. JAR champions the possibility that artistic researchers may use non-linear and non-textual modes of writing where a particular assemblage of textual and/or medial elements on a page can expose artistic practice as research in ways that may otherwise not be possible, giving artists and authors ownership not only of the content but also of the form of a research communication. In doing so, JAR challenges traditional modes of academic publishing, radicalising ongoing developments in the field of enhanced or e-publishing in the sciences and digital humanities.

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

While both the RC and JAR have supported many individual artists and researchers and also contributed to the development of the field, a number of challenges remain to be solved. The most important issues concern the role of technology and the ongoing transformation of academia.

Regarding the role of technology, by virtue of being an online platform rather than, for example, a physical archive, the RC makes certain materials more difficult to present than others, at times requiring specific documentations and transpositions of material or performative processes into digital formats that are supported by current browser technologies. This suggests that studio settings for contemporary artistic research may need to embrace digital technologies, a view not shared by all research-active artists. The role of internet technology may explain a certain mismatch between the type of research that is available through the RC and the type of research that is actually carried out on the ground. Should the RC continue to thrive, critics point out that it may introduce a media bias into the very practice of artistic researchers detrimental to what it was set up to protect. At the same time, if the choice is between a media bias and the lack of collaborative publishing facilities for artistic research, the RC may represent the smaller evil. As SAR has demonstrated in events such as 'Mind the Gap' (Graz, 2013) and 'Loitering with Intent' (Stockholm, 2014), where researchers were invited to present both in the physical setting of a conference and online on the RC, it is important to remain aware of this bias and to support a multiplicity of contexts for the exposition of artistic practice as research.

Likewise, the current, ongoing transformations of academia, such as the Bologna process in Europe, render the field of artistic research contested and with it initiatives such as the RC and JAR. Critics argue that art has always engaged with research and that, when compared with the rest of higher education, the integration of art institutes into academia has taken away from art schools the option to operate differently. This increased control over art education also coincides with an accelerated privatisation of academia that makes research much more output- and impact-driven at the same time as art – or the creative sector at large – is seen as a motor for innovation. It may be argued that the RC is complicit with such developments since it makes artistic research accessible to precisely those forces and gives an increasingly privatised academia a handle on otherwise elusive artistic research. However, it may also be argued that, by offering a bottom-up infrastructure, the RC creates a site for resistance and alterity and that it is down to the community to suggest ways of intersecting with these developments. JAR's peer-review process is particularly relevant in this context, since it asks reviewers to assess a submission not with regard to external, disciplinary criteria but with regard to its internal workings – that is, with the way a submission exposes artistic practice as research. This may allow for a more fundamental critique of the impact of the present knowledge economy on academia.

While the debate regarding the role and status of artistic research continues, both the RC and JAR can help improve understanding of what artistic researchers do. The

research that is put online allows the tracing of research topics, methodologies, and outcomes, making it possible to engage better with existing research and to identify researchers with shared interests. The work carried out by JAR, in particular through its peer-review system, may help reassure policy makers in different countries and contexts that criticality and epistemic interest built into artistic research practice can be communicated in a variety of ways, and that approaches to artistic research that put artistic practice first are possible.

Links:

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

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

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

Mind the Gap: <http://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/33841/37723/1022/567>

Loitering with Intent: <http://www.societyforartisticresearch.org/activities/loitering-with-intent-a-feast-of-research/>

Further reading:

Concept of ‘expositions’:

Schwab, Michael. “Editorial JAR o,” 2011. <http://www.jar-online.net/index.php/issues/editorial/480>.

Schwab, Michael. “Exposition Writing.” In *Yearbook for Artistic Research & Development*, 16–26. Stockholm: Swedish Research Council, 2012.

Schwab, Michael, and Henk Borgdorff, eds. *The Exposition of Artistic Research: Publishing Art in Academia*. Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2014.

RC:

Schwab, Michael. “The Research Catalogue: A Model for Dissertations and Theses in Art and Design.” In *The Sage Handbook of Digital Dissertations and Theses*, edited by Richard Andrews, Erik Borg, Stephen Boyd Davis, Myrrh Domingo, and Jude England, 339–54. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage, 2012.

Schwab, Michael. “Expositions in the Research Catalogue.” In *The Exposition of Artistic Research: Publishing Art in Academia*, edited by Michael Schwab and Henk Borgdorff, 92–104. Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2014.

JAR and peer-review:

Schwab, Michael. "Peer-Reviewing in the Journal for Artistic Research." In *Evaluating Research in the Arts*, edited by Binke Van Kerckhoven and Walter Ysebaert. Brussels: ASP, forthcoming.