INTELLECTUAL BIRDHOUSE

Artistic Practice as Research

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BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE

Michael Schwab[1]

1) A future history

In May 2016, after a 27-hour marathon meeting, a joint declaration of the G15 heads of state was published, in which a 'Commission Regarding the Credibility of Artistic Research' was announced. Section 5 of the declaration reads as follows:

> After more than 25 years of subsidies and sponsorship of artistic research with little or no benefit to our cultures and societies, we, the signatories, install the *Commission regarding the Credibility of Artistic Research* in order finally to determine whether Artistic Research is: (1) possible and, if this is the case, (2) what kinds of results are to be expected from any investment in that sector.

The commission took up its work in early 2017 and consisted of a cross-section of experts from different nationalities and cultural backgrounds, as well as from different artistic disciplines and the sciences. It was, as one commentator said, 'an ambitious enterprise that truly wished to get to the bottom of the phenomenon', while another complained that the work of the commission was a 'total mystery to the general public, who could not see any benefit in throwing good money after bad'.

Although the commission's final report was expected in 2020, it was eventually published, four years late, in 2024. It was clear that the delay meant negotiations had gone badly, but no-one was prepared for what has since been called a 'bombshell'. Paragraph 1 of the report states:

> Artistic research has no essence, identity or purpose. It is a completely artificial construct that has its roots in a number of minor institutional reconfigurations that took place around the turn of the century in combination with a market-driven desire to further capitalise on art. The work that has been carried out since does not fit purposefully into any register that our knowledge-driven societies offer, and when evidence of artistic research within knowledge economies could be found, this consisted of by-products, residues, deformations and appropriations; in short,

1 Thank you to the Orpheus Research Centre in Music (ORCiM) and to the Institute Y of Bern University of the Arts for supporting my research on artistic experimentation.

> nothing that could not have been achieved through traditional, non-artistic research. The lack of evidence holds true even for traditional art-making, where artistic processes are at play, but where no difference exists between artists doing research and artists doing art, rendering the notion of "research" in this sector useless.

Paragraph 7 of the report answers the question as to whether or not artistic research is possible:

> Concerning the possibility of artistic research, the commission came to the conclusion that with regard to history, the phenomenon of "artistic research" must be considered possible in so far as "artistic research" has been operational for more than a quarter of a century. Despite this general, historical possibility the commission found no evidence that artistic research has any epistemological significance and concluded that, in the context of our present knowledge economies, "artistic research" is, in fact, an impossibility.

In stating this, the commission accepted a certain contradiction between historical and epistemological facts and, as a consequence, commissioned a sub-report that was attached to the commission's final report as Appendix A. This document is most interesting, since it attempts to answer the commission's second leading question, namely, 'What kinds of results are to be expected from any investment in that sector?' Appendix A to the *Report Regarding the Credibility of Artistic Research* states:

> Although artistic research does not add to or enhance knowledge, it is nevertheless not without relation to it. For example, in an analysis of 1,356 interviews conducted with so-called "artistic researchers" it was found that a large majority (namely 82%) were either "aware" or "very aware" of the impossibility of "artistic research" at the same time as believing this impossibility to be the driving factor of their work.

And later:

> Despite its epistemological impossibility, "artistic research" as it is carried out today radically challenges the concept of knowledge upon which our public order is based. It attempts to create pockets in which this order is suspended, and claims that in such suspension lies not only the future of artistic research but also the future of our society. Although far from being contagious, artistic research has to be considered virulent and revolutionary.

2) Counting as

Back in the year 2011, those questions that may be asked as part of a future report have of course already been raised. What may be different in the year 2014 is a certain urgency and conclusiveness, with which on a political level such questions might require answers, while today such urgency does not exist, allowing for a multitude of possible identifications of a practice 'into', 'through' or 'for' something to count as research.

While in 1993/4 Christopher Frayling focused on the 'into', 'through' and 'for' in his seminal paper 'Research in Art and Design' (Frayling 1993), his 2006 foreword to Katy MacLeod's and Lin Holdridge's reader 'Thinking Through Art: Reflections on Art as Research' makes clear that the 'as' has recently attained more prominence (MacLeod and Holdridge 2006). In fact, in the title, as well as in their own introduction, the 'as' and the grammatical construction around it are essential. In relation to the 'as', the introduction references Stephen Melville's catalogue essay for the exhibition *As Painting: Division and Displacement* (Melville 2001), which in discussing how something can count as painting, stresses that 'counting' is a historically situated activity that always has to be done anew, while 'painting' in itself has no 'essence outside of history' (Ibid.: 1). Thus, the identity of painting is achieved every time something counts as painting. Crucially, every modernist painting 'counts', since the painting in counting as painting constructs and re-constructs both the concept of 'painting' and itself as painting. Melville describes the painting's own counting itself as painting as an instance when 'matter thinks' and 'substance refigures itself as relation' (Ibid.: 8), which is both a relation of something to itself and to the world as the world in which this something counts, i.e. matters.

The idea that a painting can think is perhaps not unrelated to Jacques Rancière's notion of the 'pensive image', which he defines using the same grammatical construction of the 'as'. Here, a painting counts as art only if a thought can be provided in which the painting is at the same time subject and object of the thought. In what he calls the 'aesthetic regime of the art' a 'relation without mediation [is created] between the calculus of the work and the pure sensible affect' (Rancière 2009a: 7). Unlike Melville, who does not talk about the historical beginning of painting, for Rancière it is important that art has a beginning, because the intellectual conditions under which what before had counted as painting had to have changed for the same thing to be counted as art now. Before this point, what we today refer to as 'art' strictly speaking did not exist. '"Aesthetics"', says Rancière, 'is not the name of a discipline. It is the name of a specific regime for the identification of art' (Ibid.: 8).

Today, when something artistic proposes to be counted as research, it seems to be the case that a similar process of identification is in place that

may gain historic relevance if it is able to establish its own regime. A 'regime' is not a system within which something can be identified as research following an established external logic; a 'regime' is co-original with something insofar as it establishes that something only as that which it is through that which it is. In other words, the 'regime' is the set, ground or origin that the something provides for it to have a world. Naturally, this is not too far from Heidegger's attempt to relate a work to a world (cf. Heidegger 1978: 169) except that in Rancière's writings 'art' is approached in reference to Michel Foucault in archaeological (cf. Rancière and Hallward 2003: 209) and not ontological terms. This shift is important in the present context, because it signals the fact that 'artistic research' can appear *ex nihilo* without having existed before, whilst once it has appeared it expands its world not only over the future but also over the past.

Furthermore, if artistic activity counts as research, a fissure is indicated within the aesthetic regime of art through a questioning of 'art' as the end of such activity. That is, the future of artistic practice is no longer pre-determined through 'art', but open to the possibility of existing not as art but as research. This implies that aesthetics as the discourse that keeps art in place is not only necessarily and internally contradictory, as Rancière argues, but that it is also fundamentally finished once making art is not the only goal for an artist.

3) Artistic practice as research

In 2007, the Estonian artist Marko Mäetamm visited the Fine Art Research Group at the Royal College of Art in London and contributed a work to the group's exhibition *Productive Matter: Materialising Research*, held at Café Gallery Projects in London. The work he showed was a 15-minute, looped, text-based video that he had shown many times before. Called *No Title*, it tells the fictional story of how he had his family killed. However, on this occasion it was not the work's subject matter that caused dismay. For this particular exhibition, he chose to complement the video with a single A4 sheet of paper, which he hung next to the screen. Here, he described some of the questions that had triggered the work.

The criticism he faced was founded on the perception that the text weakened the artwork by taking away from the illusive space that was created by the narrative on the screen. In response, he agreed with this view, but said that it had been deliberate. The video without text 'worked' in the context of an ordinary exhibition, but for this particular show, announced as a 'research exhibition', he wanted to upset the work's economy. The refusal to integrate video and text into a coherent work would serve to open up a discursive space within which research could take place.

A number of voices in the audience remained unconvinced, and Mäetamm went up to the work and took down the sheet of paper, saying that without the text, the work would be a very different piece. This proved an extraordinary gesture. His removal of the text produced a shock, since without the text something of the work had gone. In creating this shock, Mäetamm made the point that, even if contested, once a work is identified as research, it cannot be returned to art if that return undoes the opening that was provided by the identification of the work as research. Shifting the identification of the work as research back to its identification as art results in a sense, not of artistic achievement, but of intellectual loss. The form that the identification of something as research requires may need to be more appropriate, but the identification of something as art is no answer to the problem of artistic research.

Incidentally, Mäetamm's presentation followed the officially accepted form in which research is to appear. In the UK, for a practice to be seen as research, the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), for example, 'expect[s] [...] this practice to be accompanied by some form of documentation of the research process, as well as some form of textual analysis or explanation to support its position and as a record of [one's] critical reflection' (AHRC 2011: 59), which is exactly what Mäetamm did.

The AHRC's 'expectation' and regulation has been criticised for the opposition it creates between so-called 'theory' and 'practice', but it should be stressed that in the challenge of practice through writing also lies a chance to question the authority of art. Here, one can not only say that art is not self-sufficient (i.e. autonomous) since it requires writing to count as research, but even question whether or not art is still the primary discourse. Although writing is there only to 'accompany', 'explain' and 'support', it is essential to research, while 'art' is there only to qualify this research as artistic.

Such reasoning appears to support the AHRC, if one assumes that it is clear what 'writing' actually means in this context. If writing only 'accompanies', 'explains' and 'supports', it stands apart from practice and is looked at as 'theory'. If writing were to engage, question or transform art, it would offer a different practice, or perhaps more precisely, a differential practice, in which artistic practice can find itself. Writing would have to matter, which it could only do if it were affected by art. Rather than applying writing to art, writing would have to be developed from a practice and installed in this practice as delay, suspension or critique of an art that increasingly appears as power structure and institution.

4) Artists' artists

Defining artistic research in conflict with art might not be as critical as it appears, since similar moves have been employed during much of the history

of modern art. Such challenges have successively helped to redefine art without fundamentally breaking with its operations. Moreover, a critical questioning of art has become part of any serious artistic endeavour, a fact that has been much debated in relation to the so-called 'neo-avantgarde' (cf. Bürger 1984; Buchloh 2000). To illustrate the importance of distancing procedures, Isabelle Graw includes in her book *High Price* (2009) the example of Gustave Courbet, who painted *The Meeting, or, Bonjour Monsieur Courbet* in 1854. Graw analyses this self-portrait of sorts in relation to the positioning gestures that it entails. Courbet, on the right, meets his patron, Alfred Bruyas, who is accompanied by his servant. Courbet takes up more space in the painting and appears, with his head tilted backwards, to be critically interrogating Bruyas. Bruyas, for his part, seems much more fragile, if not weak, and his greeting gesture looks unenthusiastic, in particular when compared to his servant's, who seems to understand and accept Courbet's dominant position. The representation of Courbet carrying his own tools on his back, showing him as independent, also underlines this, while Bruyas requires somebody else, his servant, to carry his coat.

Courbet, in this painting, puts into relationship two aspects of art. On the one hand, we have a definition of art through its market value for which Bruyas stands, while on the other, we have an independent art that commands respect. According to Graw, the meeting that unfolds on this canvas is a meeting between market and symbolic value, price and pricelessness (Graw 2009: 10). In her analysis, it is not, however, that pricelessness simply 'wins', but rather that the setting up of art as priceless is necessary for the high price demanded by art as exemplified by Courbet, who, was very occupied by the market value of his work. For Graw, such complex interrelation of market and symbolic value forms the basis for a definition of art that can neither be reduced to its market value nor to its symbolic value, despite the various players' different assertions. Rather, only by re-staging the difference between market and symbolic value can the value of art be created.

Art's symbolic value cannot just be assumed, but needs to be grounded. It is difficult to assess what Graw means precisely by 'epistemological gain' (Ibid.) as a basis for art's symbolic value, but it is clear that the gain she sees is first of all in the register of knowledge and not experience. To be sure, she does not use the term 'research' in this context, perhaps to keep her argument more general and focused on the question of art. At the same time, a link between knowledge and value is made on the basis of which I propose to look again at the relationship of art and artistic research. For if artistic research delivers symbolic value to art, claiming an aspiration towards this symbolic value does not make any difference to what we have come to know as art. If artistic research is part of art-making, both in the studio and in the marketplace, it cannot offer a critical distance from

which to question art. Rather, all artistic questions will, as Graw demonstrates, feed into the market, which is the reason why it is so difficult to assess at what point critical practice might turn into critique. On the artistic side, there is the suggestion in Graw's book that the figure of the 'artists' artist' (Ibid.: 81ff.) offers a way out of the problem: the artists' artist is too epistemologically demanding on the market, which fails to capitalize (often during the lifetime of the artist) on the symbolic value that is produced while he or she delivers epistemological gain to his or her peers, who appear to be the only ones able to perceive such value in advance of the market[2]. This is possible, because professional as they are, these peers know what to subtract from the work, i.e. the capitalised symbolic value, before engaging in an assessment of the symbolic remainder. The ability to operate on two symbolic levels and to maintain an inner distance rather than conflating both into a single practice seems to be the particular ability of such artists.

It is clear that we cannot simply claim that 'artists with PhDs', to use James Elkins' term (Elkins 2009), are 'artists' artists', since, although peer-groups may overlap, the status of an 'artists' artist' cannot be awarded by an academy. At the same time, if we think about a (better) future for artistic research, the image of the artists' artist may be useful, since it expresses both a limit and a quality to be sought. We have to imagine such practice at the border of art as just about appearing as art to some while for others it is either invisible or not art. Furthermore, if we do not look from the outset at such practice as art, we might also say that the practice may appear, for instance, as philosophy or as design, depending on which angle one is approaching from, and which destination one is inscribing. Placing research at the border of art means that art may be suspended as the natural site for artistic research. Describing such practice as art *avant la lettre* has the effect of closing the opening up of practice that may have been achieved and demonstrating that the peer who uttered such a description has missed the point. It is better to say that we necessarily cannot (yet) know what it is in the artists' artist's practice that can be credited with epistemological relevance, not even its status as art.

This ambiguity also affects the very notion of the 'artists' artist', which, according to a survey of a handful of artists carried out by *Texte zur Kunst*, reveals a strange set of operations that are employed. Cosima von Bonin speaks

2 It goes without saying that the construction of such delay may also be part of a marketing strategy as Ilya Kabakov points out when he reduces the 'epistemological gain' to this arguably cynical question: 'Where can one find absolutely non-commercial art, which could be sold for a lot of money in the future?' (Kabakov 1995: 253) In relation to research, the question is not how expensive such art may become, but rather what it delivers in the meantime.

of the 'consuming' of an artist when their status as 'artists' artist' is proposed; Tobias Rehberger struggles with the fact that such a classification would make the artist 'pitiable'; Lawrence Weiner suggests that 'perhaps artists are all artists' artists'; while Marc Camille Chaimowicz needs to keep his artists' artist a secret, since 'this person . . . stand[s] outside of practice and thus wishes to remain anonymous' (Texte zur Kunst 2008: 130ff., trans.).

5) Proto

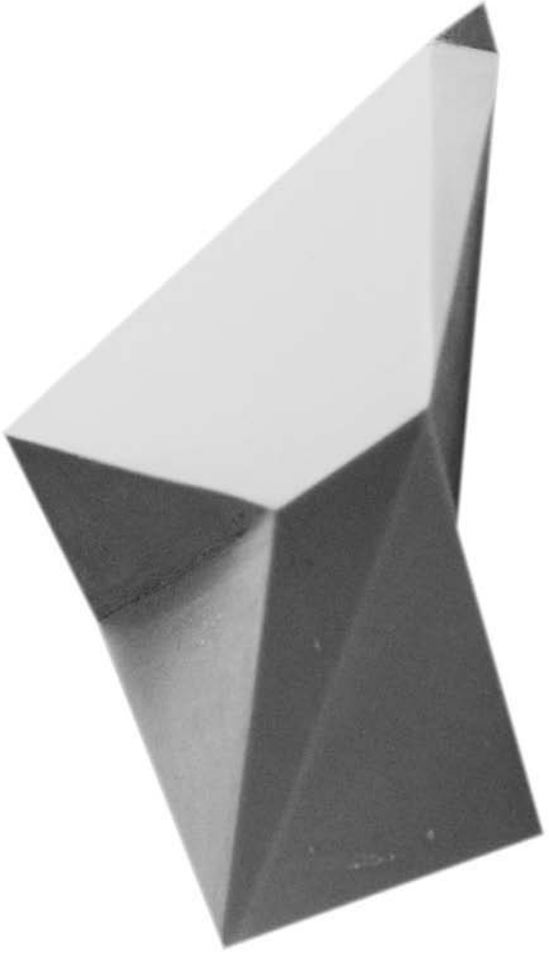
Leaving my own status aside (which I am, of course, inventing by writing these lines), the description of a practice at the border of art reflects a problem that is part of my artistic research, namely the question of how to show what I make, or rather, into what form I want to make what I make. My recent contribution to *Wissen im Selbstversuch/Knowledge in Self-Experimentation*, an interdisciplinary research project at the Bern University of the Arts (CH), can illustrate this problem. The research utilises a series of EEG measurements that were transformed, using triangulation algorithms developed in previous work, into three-dimensional computer drawings as the blueprint for a set of resin models. Strictly speaking, one could argue that each of these drawings represents my brain activity when exposed to particular stimuli—in this case, an image from the history of art. But there is no real way by which source image and drawing can be compared. Although we can imagine that a drawing represents a particular state of brain activity, this is more wishful thinking than scientific reality, given the artistic, selective process by which the source data was reduced and transformed and the lack of scientific analysis to support any representational claim. That a scientific analysis has not been carried out to date does not mean, however, that research such as mine might not have scientific implications, in particular since it is conceptual in nature. We may thus perhaps speak of a form of proto-science, which I plan to test in future collaborations with scientists.[3]

3 Such potential to add to science may have been the reason for investments into science/art collaborations, such as the Wellcome Trust's *Sciart* programme, which ran from 1996 to 2006. Without wanting to judge any contribution to such programmes, it should be pointed out that as long as both disciplines remain intact within such constructions, it is highly questionable what the 'epistemological gain' can be. Since the artist or scientist is chosen to fulfil the role *as* artist or scientist, such interdisciplinary projects may be limited from the outset and discourage rather than encourage the shared inhabitation of a border region *before* the respective roles have been distributed. All players need to understand that any shortcut that instrumentalises artistic research through lazy border definitions on both the side of art and of science will not ask epistemologically relevant questions, but will instead repeat and represent what is already known. For the Wellcome Trust's report see Glinkowski and Bamford (2009).

Equally, the artistic aspect that is part of both conceptual drawing and material making does not sufficiently determine how such models might be looked at as art. How will they be placed, hung or suspended? On their own or next to each other? How much of the making process will have to be accessible for an audience to understand the work? Unanswered questions like these indicate that the research lacks claim to a final form in art, making it not only proto-science but also proto-art and, again, something to be further developed. Nigel Rolfe once described a practice such as mine as producing results and not conclusions, implying that the drawing of conclusions was one of the skills required for art-making.

At this point, the distinction between art-making and artistic research matters. If an artistic practice is solely oriented towards art-making, anything that is not art will be seen as inadequate. The discipline of art will, as we know from art education, discipline the making process, so that the practitioner is sure to turn out art at the end. The anticipation of a future art-to-come is, paradoxically, a sign for the contemporaneity of a practice: contemporary art has its designation not in the current historical time but in the future, which is, moreover, the vantage point from which art's community as projected totality of art is constructed. For Peter Osborne it has not only a fictional but also a political and economic character (Osborne 2010). While Rancière might agree with Osborne in regard to the contradictory operations in art, their respective treatment of 'community' differs significantly. For Osborne, there is no community of practice outside its fictional projection, while for Rancière community arises when a relationship to knowledge is entered into, where 'ignorance is not a lesser form of knowledge, but the opposite of knowledge; [where] knowledge is not a collection of fragments of knowledge, but a position' (Rancière 2009b: 9). At the same time, along the lines that Osborne describes, art as identified through the aesthetic regime not only emerges from practice but is also a repetition of itself as knowledge and thus an institution. Being part of contemporary art is for the few in the know, while Rancière fails to offer a register for those who do not know, or rather, whose knowledge might undercut precisely the definition of knowledge that he criticises. As such, what the aesthetic regime identifies (art) is precisely the obstacle for an advanced knowledge within the aesthetic through which a community of practice (life) could be found. This in turn would require a notion of practice, to which Rancière refers but does not call 'research' and which he short-changes as long as art as the sole goal for practice in the aesthetic regime remains in place. Although being 'like' (Ibid.: 23) researchers, for Rancière artists are not researchers; that is, they are excluded from the community of practice that forms and develops knowledge.

Tobias Stimmer. Der große Schießstand bei Straßburg. 1576



Paul Cézanne. Nature morte au panier. 1888-90

Artistic research, as I try to illustrate with my models, brings research into practice and suspends not only the potential destination registers of art or science, but also those of architecture or visual thinking, i.e. philosophy, into which the models might equally be developed. Due to our ignorance of potential future formal determinations, the meaning of these models is left unclear, despite their appearance as intelligible. Only because a future form (or future forms) can be imagined, triggered by what is at hand, can a lack of meaning promise knowledge. In other words, I propose to define artistic research as an activity that produces intelligible material whose initial lack of explanation within given contexts (such as 'art', 'science' etc.) is transformed through linkage procedures into identities that count as knowledge. This requires deconstructive operations that open up space for moments of potential knowledge, as well as constructive operations that reconstruct knowledge around what has been made, giving it identity and meaning.

6) Boundary work

Henk Bordorff's notion of 'boundary work'[4] perhaps describes what I have in mind. Boundary work is much less an object than work carried out along the boundaries of disciplines and academia in general, remaining underdetermined by these contexts, or rather, different depending on the context through which the work is approached. Furthermore, Borgdorff links the 'boundary work' to Hans-Jörg Rheinberger's notion of the 'epistemic thing' that is produced through an experimental system. Experimental systems are precisely calibrated apparatuses for the production of knowledge. Crucially, an experimental system 'plays out its own intrinsic capacities' the more the experimenter 'learns to handle his or her experimental system' (Rheinberger 1997: 24) until it is able to surprise the experimenter with characteristics not anticipated by the system's creator (cf. Ibid.: 67). Importantly, for Rheinberger, despite being 'matter of fact' (cf. Shapin 1984: 482ff.; Shapin and Schaffer 1992: 22ff.), an epistemic thing is essentially vague. 'This vagueness is inevitable because, paradoxically, epistemic things embody what one does not yet know' (Rheinberger 1997: 28). Being conceptually underdetermined represents a strength rather than a weakness, because epistemic things create questions and a future of possible knowledge. The practice of experimentation thus also repositions theory: theory is to emerge from experimentation, which it cannot determine. Rheinberger calls the mode by which theory

4 See my interview with Henk Borgdorff in this book, pp. 117-123.

emerges 'thinking' (Ibid.: 31). The experimental space is a space that cannot be reduced to theory.

The moment epistemic things have become conceptually stable they move into the technological fabric of the experimental system—they become technical objects. As this happens, epistemic things do not change materially but functionally, which indicates that within an experimental system functionality is unevenly distributed. If an experimental system becomes too fixed, it stops being 'a machine for the creation of future' (Rheinberger quoting François Jacob in: Ibid.: 28). Applying this understanding to art, I propose that technologies are, in fact, artistic forms that have become identified (and, thus, have a history)[5] and not pieces of engineering that have leaked into art.

Experimental systems have the particular ability to create matters of fact, which we paradoxically believe to have been there all along. What is produced appears as discovery. In other words, it appears as if my knowledge of the world is a reflection of the world as it is and not an elaborate (co)production. This does not mean, however, that all knowledge is made up (and thus culturally determined); it only means that epistemic things lacking identity are strange natural/cultural hybrids, which once they 'decay' into knowledge (i.e. something identifiable) will be associated with either nature or culture. As a consequence, if we attend to the practice of experimentation we lose our bearings, but discover active, non-identified agents that nevertheless have a character (i.e. necessity).

The link between artistic research, proto-science/art/architecture/philosophy etc., boundary work and epistemic things requires further investigation in order to be consolidated, and thus remains, for the time being, a speculation. If the link is convincing, however, a relationship between practice and knowledge can be established outside human agency, as is often claimed in relation to 'tacit knowledge'. Moreover, to evaluate this knowledge in relationship to practice it is not beneficial to look at it as already identified through a discipline (such as art or science) but rather to suspend such identification for the benefit of future knowledge.

From what I have said so far stems some form of structural similarity between artistic and scientific research—from practice and experiment to stable

5 Rheinberger's model for the creation of a form follows Georg Kubler's book *The Shape of Time*. (1962) 'Not that Kubler believes that the differences between scientific objects and objects of art can be "reduced", especially not when they take the form of these disciplines' respective products; but he does think them quite comparable with respect to the processual nature of their generation' (Rheinberger 2009: 110).

forms contextualised in art or science respectively. It is research's relationship to stable contexts that seems to enable but also foreclose research—think about how much research funding is dependant on disciplines and 'research questions' anchored within them while enabling research. Outside of such limited expectations, we would have to find a register for knowledge-bearing creations that we cannot (yet) explain. This highlights a problem I have with the registers of knowledge within which we have to operate: the definition of knowledge is so limited and limiting that much research is required to lose its artistic (i.e. creative) character in servitude to an idea of knowledge on loan from a history in which what is produced is increasingly detached from reason. Conversely, it is not sufficient to place artistic research simply against art, but to use the space of research to challenge the very constitution of knowledge. If the project of artistic research is ever to be relevant, it will not only have added to art or 'knowledge and understanding', but will also have transformed how we know what we know.[6]

7) Knowledge

If artistic research is primarily transforming knowledge and not art, it could be seen as a form of philosophy, which may confirm a certain philosophical tendency within art in Modernity. At the same time, however, artistic research approaches knowledge through artistic practice, a register that is not at all central to traditional philosophy.

Ever since Plato's treatment of art in his *Republic* (cf. Plato 2003: 608a), being rejected from the field of knowledge is art's historic reality, which is echoed in the distinction between 'theory' and 'practice', in which 'truth' is associated with theory. When the AHRC defines research through the supplemental relationship between theory and practice, it admits that practice cannot easily be integrated into the traditional forms of knowledge development.

If, however, the supplemental relationship within knowledge is admitted and posed as a question of methodology to the artistic researcher, i.e. if supplementation becomes part of artistic practice, an opening is created for the possibility of an artistic understanding of knowledge. Although ultimately 'discourse' has to be entered into, making (1) the supplementation of practice

6 Karin Knorr Cetina (1999: 1) uses exactly the same formulation when she describes 'epistemic cultures'. However, it may be that 'artistic research' is not just another addition to the multiplicity of existing knowledge cultures; rather, 'artistic research' may require a shift in what is considered 'knowledge'.

by theory explicit through deconstructive means and (2) appropriating supplementation in and as practice, pushes forward artistic forms of knowledge. At the same time, since supplementation is still exercised, the way in which an artistic research practice supports itself is equally open, allowing for practice-cum-thinking to penetrate discursive forms in a variety of ways.

As a consequence, in artistic research, as much as in post-deconstructive philosophy, a way of thinking—that is, a practice—must be attempted that complements the deconstructive method.[7] In his book *The Honor of Thinking*, Rodolphe Gasché calls thinking 'the highest form of doing' (Gasché 2007: 9) that 'derives from conflicting demands of reason'. Crucially, he roots the practice of such thinking in 'the unconditional and the incalculable, a region absolutely distinct from a calculating rationality' (Ibid.: 4). The practice of such thinking emerges from deconstruction, although being practice it remains what it always has been—a practice of knowledge that produces its own theoretical limitation—that is, identity.

This not only indicates the limits of science, but also those of philosophy. Despite recent 'iconic turns' within and outside of philosophy, philosophy is fundamentally out of its depth when it applies itself to art, and when it does, it is most of the time complicit with the perpetuation of a discourse about art to which it delivers ever new terms while never changing the parameters within which these operate.

Different from any other forms of thinking, artistic research, due to its relationship to art, is challenged to radically include, that is, think knowledge[8] through the most nonsensical position brought into existence by art. It is not research that leads and art that follows, as modernist ideology might have it; if anything, it is the opposite. The qualifier 'artistic' does not so much stress a method that makes artistic research different from scientific research, but a commitment, on loan from art, to build knowledge on what the sciences and philosophy have intentionally or necessarily excluded and which might with Friedrich Nietzsche be called 'the end of the longest error' (Nietzsche 1977: 41). After all, it is in the name of art that a radical difference has been

7 In Schwab (2008: 217) I discuss a remark by Winfried Menninghaus, who claims that a postmodern focus on difference and deconstruction has obscured the equally important question of identity that early German Romanticism also addresses.

8 Simon Sheikh proposes a similar distinction between 'truth' and 'knowledge' in order to stipulate that '[w]e have to move beyond knowledge production into what we can term *spaces for thinking*' (Sheikh 2009). I, on the other hand, propose the transformation of knowledge production into a space for thinking.

sketched, which needs to be outside of the register of either knowledge or research. Thus, research that follows art requires art to push the boundaries so that it can transform knowledge in art's wake.

8) Suspense

Artistic research's seeming lack of definition continues to provoke speculation in regard to what it may be. More recently, and perhaps due to the developing international discourse, where national funding regulations matter less than the common ground to be established, the mode in which these speculations are presented has shifted slightly. A previous struggle for validity in the context of the wider landscape of academic research, in particular when compared with a real or imagined 'hard' science, appears to have relaxed, while a pragmatic and proactive reaching-out to other disciplines and to the 'art world' at large seems to have developed. This shift can possibly be illustrated by looking at the name that is given to the enterprise in which we are engaged: notions such as 'practice-based', 'practice-led' or 'studio-based' research are now of less importance, while the term 'artistic research' has gained currency. 'Artistic research' is transdisciplinary and not disciplinary in nature, where 'artistic' refers to a particular way of doing and thinking that is not exclusive to 'the arts' and includes not only other artistic fields such as music or design but any research where artistic considerations matter, even if such research has nothing to do with 'art' whatsoever. Such a move toward transdisciplinarity may indicate that the debate has made a virtue of necessity by claiming that the failure to deliver a definition still amounts to a definition of sorts. It also connects the project of artistic research to that of modernism, which similarly swings around an empty core, while, however, stopping short from sharing its productive assumptions.

Artistic research, just like an epistemic thing, has no identity, and worse, no possible identity, since a lack of identity in knowledge is what it requires if it wishes to express what happens at the heart of practice as it becomes knowledge. Suspense is the sentiment associated with the not-knowing and the quest is to remain in suspense beyond a desired reconciliation, which threatens to undo the exciting opening that is created when both art and knowledge are suspended.

The suspension of art and knowledge cannot be afforded by an identification of artistic research against which such suspension can take place, which would only replace a player and not the conditions of knowledge development; rather, it is not only the not-knowing that matters, but also the complete opening up to life of how not-to-know. As much as we seek to understand better what artistic research might be, it can only be in a register

of knowledge that is proposed by artistic research, through which we might come to know what it may be. The political struggle that we witness as artistic research is embraced by the academy is in relation to the academy's politics of knowledge. If artistic research, as it is invented, will be predetermined by sets of bureaucratic standards, it might come to exist, but it will exist as nothing and be an artistic failure that the academy will cease to support; if, on the other hand, the project that is artistic research is given space to project its own register of knowledge, the academy will be challenged to defend the knowledge that it delivers against the technocracy associated with 'knowledge societies'. Failing to take up this challenge, academies may be tempted to focus on their core business, art, potentially even celebrating its marginal status in the late-romantic tradition, which has rendered art defenceless against its capitalisation.

That artistic research's identity cannot be confirmed does not mean that nothing can be found. What will emerge from the effort invested in artistic research is the notion that from a place between things a type of knowledge may reveal itself in which the between ceases to be secondary and where the failure to constitute a stable identity actually becomes an achievement. How these worlds-in-suspense will become known to a community interested in listening is so radically different from today's positivistic approaches to research that no bridge can currently be built between them.

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