THE
PLEASURE
OF
RESEARCH
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Our current artistic decade is filled with an excess of rhetoric dealing with crisis, precariousness, change, but most of all with challenge. One of the challenges in today’s art world pertains to the Bologna Agreement that came into effect fifteen years ago as a reconstructive trajectory for rethinking and reformulating higher education in Europe. The gradual implementation of the Bologna framework slowly but surely made it very clear that the introverted, romantic, pre-democratic and non-dialogic master-pupil model of masterclass education had definitively come to an end in most European countries. The master-pupil model had to make way for a course-based, modular program while leaving the dominant art-historical canon behind. 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.

The implementation of the Bologna Process in higher art education signifies a real paradigm shift in the reflection process upon art production as such. Thinking in terms of creation, creative capacity, studio, and talent is no longer accentuated. What is at the core of the current discourse are artistic constructions and interdisciplinary activities which, going “beyond the studio,” seem to be able to occur anywhere if they can adequately connect or respond to a given or required context. Topical visual art, then, should most of all be “research-based” and “context-responsive.” This renders art the freedom to deploy a range of contexts such as architecture, design, film, history, biology, sciences, technology, and philosophy.
Such a clear-cut focus on research-based and context-sensitive visual art has given rise to the concept of “artistic research.” Yet, the concept of artistic research in itself has raised many questions during the past decade, accompanied by intense and heated debates. What form of research could the domain of visual art produce? Does the rhetoric of research include novel practices or do they exclude and/or marginalize certain practices? Could the dual pair of art versus not-art be substituted by the opposition research-based art versus non-research-based, creating a novel mechanism of exclusion? Or does a research discourse and its vocabulary point to an already existing practice that could be accommodated in an academic architecture focused on knowledge production through a process of translation? And last but not least, what does the concept of artistic research mean in the set up of a Graduate School for Fine Art? How does an art education institution function while having to focus on artistic research skills and the capacity to issue academic MA and PhD degrees in accordance with the Bologna Agreement?

The role and signification of the academization of visual art served as an especially important starting point for the collaborative project “A Certain Ma-Ness” initiated by Sint-Lukas Academy Brussels and MaHKU (Utrecht Graduate School of Visual Art and Design) in 2008, which ultimately resulted in three projects. Besides “A Certain Ma-Ness,” the subsequent projects “Becoming Bologna” and “Agonistic Academies” came into being as successors in a series of collaborations. “A Certain Ma-Ness” had at its core the following three questions:

1. What does the current academization and thinking in terms of research competencies mean for the student in art education? Can these competencies be charted in a clear and distinct way? During the A Certain Ma-Ness conference and exhibition (VCH De Brakke Grond Amsterdam, 2008) the so-called “Dublin Descriptors” (being able to cope in a research environment, problem solving attitude, well-considered in dealing with complexities, communicative skills, and independent learning) established for dealing with such questions were critically evaluated. Those competencies are, as Mick Wilson rightly observed, not only applicable to MA education, but in a certain sense also to the BA and PhD level of education. That underscores, Wilson believes, that the MA degree in Fine Art is in fact the least defined academic degree precisely because of the lack of clear criteria of distinction.

2. What does the Bologna process mean for the didactic role of the lecturer? That was the leading question in the follow-up project “Becoming Bologna,” a collateral event of the Venice Biennale 2009 consisting of a series of research interventions (Tolentini Building) and a symposium. Central questions during “Becoming Bologna” were, “What is the specificity of the didactic strategies developed because of the academization of art education?” “How is a research-based curriculum designed?” and “How could the research competencies be judged adequately?” In his keynote lecture at the opening of the symposium, Daniel Birnbaum emphasized the agonistic components characterizing the situation around the current art academy curriculum: “an a-synchronic moment when the old academy, the modernist model, and their deconstructive after-images live side by side in a world increasingly driven by market interests.” It is precisely this situation that is most challenging for developing an—agonistic—research-oriented curriculum, a curriculum not taking artistic research as a fundamental point of departure, but considering the constructive and ultimately insoluble tension between the various perspectives on art education as a possibility to remediate different views. This is a development that could be compared to some extent with the earlier introduction of new media in art education: only a small group of artists started becoming actively specialized in new media, but the rise of new media did effect other visual art media, because of a certain remediation, and these began to be understood in different ways.

3. What do the novel forms of didactic interaction mean for the art academy itself? During the concluding conference, “Agonistic Academies” (Sint-Lukas Brussel, 2010) this question was tackled from the perspective of the Graduate School as research environment and sanctuary for artistic thinking. In that context, Renee Green presented her Spheres of Interest: Experiments in Thinking and Action, a graduate seminar and lecture series at the San Francisco Art Institute (SFAI) encountering issues dealing with meaning, engagement, and function in an adaptation of an invisible college. The goal of Green’s series was to provoke students to imagine unfamiliar forms of perception and creation through exposure to challenging ideas related to different forms of contemporary and historical creative production and conception. Spheres of Interest: Experiments in Thinking and Action makes clear that artistic research as an institution within an institution can have a catalyzing effect: it generates working bases, nodes and networks with others to be able to think and create beyond corporatized social networks.
The numerous responses emerging from these three projects emphasize challenging educational elements such as a clear connection between artistic production and critical studies, a curriculum with chiefly dialogic interactions, a focus on public space, and a laboratory-type curriculum experimenting with both novel forms of presentation—for example contextual studies and curatorial studies—and communication as “agonistic forms of address” (Chantal Mouffe). The latter points to forms of artistic communication being aware that the public sphere is no longer, as understood in Habermas’s Theory of Communicative Action, a single entity, but is rather viewed today in a pluralistic sense. In line with this, Chantal Mouffe speaks of “a fragmented diversity of public spheres that involves intersecting and conflicting elements.” Thus, a topical artistic communication continuously resists the political rhetoric of a striated public space by developing counter-hegemonic practices which, rooted in the awareness that each hegemony is contingent, urge the critically questioning of any dominant hegemony. At the same time, these counter-hegemonic practices substitute an awareness of consensus by an awareness of dissensus and, in so doing, contribute to the aesthetic imagination of multitudinous and pluralist forms of smooth, social spaces and public spheres.

Yet, when looking at the present situation of European art education, one also notices a dramatic devaluation, since the critical autonomous space of art as once put forward by Adorno seems to have evaporated in the practice of many art academies. No more than a zone of “Temporary Autonomy” now remains, i.e. a fleeting experience of freedom in a world drowning in an iconography of visual culture and the opportunistic rhetoric of the creative industries. One-dimensional strategies of signification seem to directly derive their implicit structure from the formatting effect of the late-capitalist ideology of a free market system: reputational strategies focusing on visibility, self-promotion and self-propaganda. The question arises what this novel situation, characterized by neoliberalism and biopolitics, in fact means for the indispensable and more or less natural connection that existed until recently between autonomy as a nearly ontological given of art (and art education) and the institutionally guaranteed possibility of criticism.

More than ever, that question seems to necessitate a further exploration of the preconditions (institutional or otherwise) of what could be designated as Temporary Autonomous Research. That urgency indeed served as the starting point for the Amsterdam Pavilion—part of the ninth edition of the Shanghai Biennale in 2012. For the first time, this edition of the Shanghai Biennale gave a chance to thirty city pavilions to develop a presentation connecting in a (metaphorical) sense to the overarching curatorial theme of “re-activation.”

The city of Amsterdam, one could argue, is characterized by an important historical connotation: it has always been a transparent synonym for a refuge for diversity, for thinking and being different-than-others. Amsterdam could, therefore, be understood as a temporary autonomous environment where non-conformist forms of research and knowledge production are offered shelter since the early days of the seventeenth century. This inextricable form of signification understood in a broad and metaphorical sense is the point of departure for the themes and questions the Amsterdam Pavilion intended to articulate.

What does thinking in terms of a temporary autonomy actually mean for topical art practices immersed in research-based forms and perspectives? Can we chart the “lines of flight” and the moments of resistance to administration and the moments of refusal of instrumentalisation and governance? Does the current spectacular society, the world of the commodity form, actually allow an outside or do we have to invent another cartography? Is there a direct connection between a temporary autonomous environment and doing critical artistic research?

Since time immemorial, the presence of a research environment exists indeed by the grace of a form of autonomous awareness as a “place of non-dogmatic knowledge, of the public sharing of knowledge,” says Bifo (Franco Berardi) in Cognitarian Subjectivation. “Research should not be subjected to any restraining criterion of functionality, because its very function is to explore solutions that, although dysfunctional in the present paradigm, may reveal new paradigmatic landscapes. That is the role of research, especially when we are facing conundrums that seem unsolvable within the capitalist paradigm.”

These are the questions and issues the Amsterdam Pavilion delved into further through its presentation TAR (Temporary Autonomous Research). TAR showed work of three Amsterdam-based artists—Falke Pisano, Jeremiah Day, and Nicoline van Harskamp—with a specific focus on how to rethink and research history in an artistic sense. From an idiosyncratic perspective, the three artists research historical paradigms, the construction of historical facts, and historical movements while demonstrating how artistic thinking—from a topical understanding of autonomy—adds novel dimensions to how we understand the world.

Moreover, in the accompanying publication, all three artists clearly hint at how an artistic research environment could provide a topical articulation of the concept of temporary autonomy. Falke Pisano’s project The Body in Crisis investigates what role representation can play in staging the experience of a continuous state of crisis the body winds up in as a consequence of political, social, and economic
transformations throughout history. What kind of forces affect the body? How do historical representations function in their original contexts? And most importantly, how could one activate historical turns and their relevance for the current conditions within topical visual art? In the formalization of the distance inherent in each representation, Pisano specifically notices possibilities to arrive at a temporary, permanently repeating obstruction and liberation of the semiotic triangle of object-representation-subject. From the perspective of art, that could be a temporary claim of space for actualization of the conditions of life.

Jeremiah Day’s work LA Homicide departs from the website of the same name of the Los Angeles Times. On that site, the newspaper gives an historical account of facts and a statistical survey of the daily victims of street violence in the “global slums” of Los Angeles. Day deploys these historical data as a starting point, as a map and as an epic urban poem. He visits the crime scenes, photographs them, and provides them with handwritten comments. In combination with cinematographic observation, these texts produce a certain connection between brutal, historical reality and the topical Hollywood paradigm, that, assigned in a certain fatal consciousness, no longer believes in the narrative of the problem-solving capacity of human beings. Against this anthropological condition, artists can only place their own body, Day claims: a performative act entirely in line with Hannah Arendt’s thought where action is understood as an autonomous activity in public space.18

Nicoline van Harskamp’s project, Yours in Solidarity, demands attention for anarchism as a historical movement. To that end, Van Harskamp analyses and archives correspondences of a late twentieth-century Amsterdam protagonist. Yours in Solidarity consists of an archiving, textual presentation of original quotations articulating various aspects of the once personally experienced and spent moments of micro-politics. In addition, interviews are conducted with actors playing the authors of the letters. From our time dominated by a post-Fordist concept of performance and a neo-liberal context of prioritizing the economic realm, the actors speculate how they would re-think and re-activate an awareness of Hakim Bey’s Temporary Autonomous Zone.

The convergence of these three different approaches to autonomy (a sanctuary with idiosyncratic laws, an engaged intervention, a disciplining school) enabled the Amsterdam Pavilion to link and match its questions and issues with the knowledge-economic and institutional conditions and constituents of art education. It is precisely these three perspectives in their inextricable connection that articulate the institutional preconditions of the academy as a temporary autonomous zone. That is, the academy as an institutional zone no longer comprehending autonomy as an inherent condition sine qua, but understanding it emphatically as a forced societally constructed possibility leaving space for rejecting the instrumentalizing dialect of efficiency. For example by presenting itself as an experimental, free space for critical research, artistic thinking, and non-conformist production of novel knowledge and alternative perspectives.19

NOTES

1. “Bologna” is used to summarize every kind of change in higher art education, from new degree structures to new bureaucracies of quality assurance; from colonization by managerialism to privatization; from neoliberalism to instrumentalism. These developments have been charted for the first time by Ute Meta Bauer in the publication Education, Information, Entertainment. New Approaches in Higher Artistic Education (Vienna, 2000).


4. In order to chart the various ways in which the concept of research is understood and deployed today in contemporary art practices, the project Daisy Research was organized at the invitation of DOCUMENTA 13. The results have been published by DOCUMENTA and the Finnish Academy of Fine Art, Jan Kaila and Henk Slager, eds., Doing Research (Kassel/Helsinki, 2012), http://www3.documenta.de/uploads/tx_calevents2/Doing_Research.pdf

5. This collaborative project consisted of three parts: an exhibition and a symposium in Amsterdam (A Certain Ma-Ness, VCC De Brakke Grond, March 2008); a series of research interventions and an expert meeting (Becoming Bologna, Collateral event, Venice Biennale, June 2009); and a concluding exhibition and symposium (Agonistic Academies, Sint-Lukas Brussels, June 2010). Reports on the projects are published in MaHKUzine, Journal of Artistic Research, issues 5, 8 and 9.

6. Mick Wilson, “Uncertain Ma-Ness,” MaHKUzine, Journal of Artistic Research 5 (Summer 2008), pp. 33–40. While the Bachelor (considered as foundational education in a discipline) and the PhD (understood as certification in research) seemed relatively well-established paradigms across the majority of university subject areas, the MA award was not the subject of this kind of broad consensus. The current lively culture of experimentation at the MA level is in part a reflection of the latitude of the MA level as neither a foundation nor a finalization of education—making it a space that allows invention rather than requiring respect for the established standardized criteria.

7. The Higher Education Academy published in 2005 the report Institutional Strategies to Link Teaching and Research (Alan Jenkins and Mick Healey). In the report, three clear strategies are distinguished: 1. Teaching can be research-led (learning about others’ research), 2. Teaching can be research-oriented (learning to do research: research methods), 3. Teaching can be research-based (learning in research-mode: inquiry-based).


9. In my curatorial essay “Research-based Practices,” Catalogue 7th Shanghai Biennale (Shanghai, 2008), I defend the hypothesis that the current interest in research-based art—similar to the role of media art in the 1990s—will remediate and redefine other artistic disciplines and domains.

10. Renee Green, “Hail the Invisible College/ Reason’s Sense of Humor,” MaHKUzine, Journal of Artistic Research 9 (Summer 2010), pp. 16-24. One stimulus for thinking about this series is provided by
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One could argue that the propensity to format for the sake of a cognitive capitalism is the drawback of the Bologna process. All that Adorno once seriously warned against, such as an instrumental reason and a quantification of quality, for example in the form of the so-called “ECTS” (internationally exchangeable study credits) seem to be intrinsically connected to some extent with the current rhetoric of artistic knowledge production in a terminology including standardization, efficiency, and quantifiability.

As both Pascal Gielen and Paul De Bruyne ironically observe in their recent study on Teaching Art in the Neoliberal Realm, it sometimes seems as if the pragmatic logic of the technical department and the attitude of the hired catering company—rarely focused on quality—are decisive in how the art academy is organized today. “Catering delivers food on demand, made-to-measure. Not just, hopefully, high-quality and tasty food, but—and this is the most important principle of catering—it delivers it on time, in the right quantity and in the right place.”

Not surprisingly, the current art academy is, with good reason, afraid that, in the development of this Bologna process, both unconformity and the belief in a process-based and reflective model of education will be erased. For example, Tom Holert argues, “The problem is, once you enter the academic power-knowledge system of accountability checks and evaluative supervision, you have either explicitly or implicitly accepted the parameters of this system. Though acceptance does not necessarily imply submission or surrender to these parameters, a fundamental acknowledgment of the ideological principles inscribed in them remains a prerequisite for any form of access, even if one copes with them, contests them, negotiates them, and revises them.”

But by no means is this all that is in play. Established curatorial practice has effected an unexpected stretching or shifting of the notion of the academy. Recently, more and more exhibitions have been organized that are characterized by a

the following sentence: “Only because art has left the sphere of interest to become merely interesting do we welcome it so warmly.” It is easily possible to feel indifference toward the “merely interesting.” In response to what can appear as a perpetual state of “interesting” spectacles, the invited speakers address these paradoxes of living. Their presentations and seminars will serve as opportunities to grapple with productions, conditions, and perspectives that can stimulate other kinds of responses. The speakers will not invite smooth or easy receptions of the aural, visual, or spatial operations with which they are engaged, but will, in contrast, raise questions from the perspective of producers and analysts about present and past forms of being and production.

11. For the Doctoral Program of the Finnish Academy of Fine Art in Helsinki I developed the program with heteronomy. Specifically where autonomy functions as an aesthetic action problematizing its incessant intertwining or implicitly accepted the parameters of this system. Though acceptance does not necessarily imply submission or surrender to these parameters, a fundamental acknowledgment of the ideological principles inscribed in them remains a prerequisite for any form of access, even if one copes with them, contests them, negotiates them, and revises them. 12. Chantal Mouffe, "Artistic Activism and Agnostic Spaces," Art & Research, A Journal of Ideas, Contexts and Methods, Volume 1, No.2 (Summer 2007).


14. The concept of the Temporary Autonomous Zone was introduced by Hakim Bey in 1985. In a conversation with Hans-Ulrich Obrist (e-flux Journal 12, 2010), Bey emphasized the necessity of the TAZ awareness for current topicality: the academy as an encampment of guerrilla ontologists who move ahead before the map can be adjusted.

15. The 9th Shanghai Biennale (2012) took place as the opening exhibition of the new Shanghai Contemporary Art Museum (The Power Station of Art), the former Nanshi Power Plant. Departure point for the 9th edition was Qiu Zhijie’s Map of Reactivation: a map that connects notions such as energy, intensity, renovation, resources, reforming, renewal, revival, revisiting, and reciprocal enlightenment.


18. The catalogue of the Amsterdam Pavilion was published by Metropolis M Books (Utrecht, 2012). In addition to contributions by participating artists, this issue contains two contextualizing essays by Oliver Marchant and Eef van Rijn respectively.

19. With Allan Kaprow and Hannah Arendt as examples and guides, Jeremiah Day’s PhD research project (A Kind of Imagination that has nothing to do with Fiction, Free University Amsterdam 2010-2014, Supervisors: Wouter Davids and Henk Slager) developed through concrete artistic and discursive projects in the public realm: speculative insights will lead to practical experiments that in turn will form the basis of a new way of artistic thinking.

20. During my presentation The Return of Aesthetics at the ICA Symposium “The Art School: The Future for Theory” (London, 2014), I introduced Rancière’s aesthetic project as a continuous dialectic of autonomy and heteronomy, where autonomy functions as the impetus for questioning art, or, more precisely, where autonomy functions as an aesthetic action problematizing its incessant intertwining with heteronomy.
It is here, with the aim of accessing this complex aspiration that we need to change our vocabulary. Rogoff suggests that the concept of “academy” should no longer be connected with “cognitive-capitalist” concepts such as knowledge transfer, knowledge assessment, professionalization, quantifiable outcomes and marketability. Instead an explicit space should be claimed for another set of terms and another set of aspirations; a space no longer characterized by regulative knowledge-protocols or predictable outcomes of investigative processes, but one rather giving room for another attitude welcoming both the impossibility of knowing in advance and the procrastination of the issue to where an enveloping thought-and-practice might ultimately lead. Thus, the academy is rehabilitated then as a field of possibilities, i.e. an environment for non-instrumental, indirect, experimental, speculative thought processes departing from the “contemporary moment” and focusing on enabling a certain number of crucial issues and urgencies in a performative sense. For the sake of resetting the academy, Rogoff introduces three novel concepts: Potentiality (the possible unlinking of a preconceived, instrumental plan), Criticality (a performative production of signification operating from an uncertain ground of actual embeddedness), and Contemporaneity (an awareness of shared issues and urgencies and the resulting repeated inhabiting of unknown territories).

During the “Agnostic Academies” symposium, Iríti Rogoff emphasized once more that “creative practices of knowledge”—a description she believes more adequate than “practice-based research”—do not cede to the endless pragmatic demands of knowledge protocols: outcomes, impact and constant monitoring. In the light of such discourse, the above-mentioned Bologna framework—or the introduction of the Bachelor-Master (Ba-Ma) system in art education—could ultimately have a positive and restraining effect. If a curricular, module-based model must be introduced in European art education, this also necessitates a reconsideration of the specificity of art education. Such a reconsideration relocating the discussion about the academy to where it belongs, i.e. within the institutional framework of art education, will no longer yield a thinking in terms of expanding, but conversely in terms of deepening the notion of the academy.

For the art academies this development implies that they should manifest themselves particularly as experimental laboratories, i.e. as speculative spaces where urgent discussions and cultural productions take place. We know by now—certainly since Walter Gropius—that art cannot be taught®—but nevertheless we could generate at least an experimental, laboratory-type situation where constructive impulses could then occur giving an indirect shift in the creative process. Here could establish situations for channeling and encouraging new energies and questions in a group of participants of whatever size and experience? Such an experimental situation could be brought about, Charles Esche says 10, if the academy environment could navigate the following three parameters:

- Anti-specialism: the academy resists specialization and disciplining.
- Anti-isolation: the academy maintains an open dialogue with both its artistic and non-artistic environment.
- Anti-hierarchical: the academy refrains from establishing hierarchic differences between its various media, disciplines, and discourses.
An academy characterized by these perspectives will have inherently the capacity to critically assess any adoption whatsoever of the curricular structure of the university model. But although it is true that the introduction of this new model ends the disciplinary and qualitative arbitrariness of the feudal monopoly position of the professor, the new danger is indeed that it will be entirely substituted by a quantifying control system—the bureaucratization of the ECTS bookkeeping. At the same time, the university education machine seems to be specifically focused on knowledge production, while, as mentioned above, the academy is directed towards the open freedom of the laboratory situation giving room to a productive artistic process of thought.

The creation of a space for freedom of thinking is the core task of the art academy, which, as Irit Rogoff rightly states, has been illustrated by the curatorial “academy” projects. Apparently, art academies were close to losing sight of that, because of neo-liberal enthusiasm and the homogenizing rhetoric of the creative industry. Due to the reconsideration and rethink of art educational practice enforced by the Bologna rules, art academies should now articulate their core task anew. In the “Academy Special” of Frieze, Okwui Enwesor argues that, “The task I see for art schools lies in reconciling the experimental, radical practices of the individual artist with the unruly, unpredictable, asymmetrical relations that constitute the world in which such art is fashioned and realized.” From this perspective, it seems likely that the art academy, on account of its curricular reformulation incorporating the “freedom of-thinking” space, is soon going to be the only location in the cultural field where innovative processes with regard to production, reflection, and presentation will be generated in the next decade.

One prospect for that development lies, I believe, in the PhD research—the so-called third cycle—connected with the Bologna process: that is to say in doctoral research as Temporary Autonomous Research without any need to be led by the formatted models of the established scientific order, but parallel to the day-to-day operation of the academy, research generating space able to enact an openness to radical alterity of the not-yet-known and the not-yet imagined. A space that, in line with Simon Sheikh’s observation, could be characterized as a “space for thinking” able to escape the control-mechanisms and connected to a form of knowledge for which “one should maintain such notions of a free space, of the laboratory, something that is not implied in strict course work and evaluation schemes.” In short, a free zone that will enable a form of research not swayed by issues dictated by the late-capitalist free market system and normative practices of knowledge commodification, but an authentic way of thinking that comes about through an artistic necessity entirely independent of the rhetoric of social-economic relevance.

In the development and realization of such a groundbreaking form of research, Scandinavia plays a prominent pioneering role. In that context, the doctoral programs offered for example by the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts and the Malmö Art Academy are constructive and inspiring models for many European art academies. These programs present artists with an intellectual sanctuary where they can reconsider their artistic motives and strategies for a number of years.

The net result of such a doctoral program appears to be a quality impulse with regard to art education and artistic practice, since the participating, mostly mid-career artists get the opportunity to concentrate for a number of years on questions and issues intrinsic to their artistic practice. The situation of the doctoral program was illustrated by the project As the Academy Turns, a collaborative project in the context of Manifesta 8 in Murcia. This multilayered project explored the potentials and tensions in the growth of artistic research and the current academization of art education. Ten doctoral researchers presented their research projects and delved into questions such as, “What do the PhD research challenges mean for the art academy as such?” “Will novel forms of academic elitism pop up or will research induce a novel form of intellectual conscience in the art academy?” “How will research and artistic practice be intertwined?” “Will they produce redefinitions in both domains or is research rather doomed to be a fringe phenomenon at the art academy?” And the ultimate question, “How will research be conducted within art academies?”

Most participants based their response to that last question on a presentation of their research projects. Frans Jacob (Malmö) discussed his performative project Aesthetics of Resistance—a series of performances, exhibitions and speculative texts—which is focused on the question of how visual art strategies (such as “creating another world,” and “becoming another”) play a role in (medially) constructing protests movements, but also how activist strategies are of importance for the way art currently organizes itself. Also Maija Timonen’s (Helsinki) research focused on the (institutional) preconditions of a critical artistic practice in an era mainly determined, as she claims, by a climate of “oppressive freedom”: a neoliberal rhetoric combining individual freedom deviously with self-administration. Some projects, however, are more directed towards dissemination strategies, such as Magnus Bärtäs (Gothenburg) You told me that questions forms, functions and possibilities
of the essay in the topical practice of artistic research. In Bärtäs’s view, a polyphonic, narrative mode that permits artists to wander off and touch upon subjects in passing but, paradoxically, give them at the same time a detailed attention and reproduce their neglected genealogy and destiny.\(^\text{16}\)

In the context of the project As the Academy Turns, Tiong Ang’s soap opera As the Academy Turns was presented at the Manifesta exhibition. The setting of the soap is the contemporary art academy where the characters—the art academy population of teaching staff and students—act within a situation of transformation where the current master-pupil oriented educational system moves towards a seminar-based form of education with artists as scholars and researchers in an academic community.

We encounter a number of international graduate students in a group crit situation composed by roughly anything that is currently decisive for academizing art education: powerpoint presentations, nebulous talks about research, stifled management structures, institutional intrigues, and reputational strategies. In a sober seminar space—and in adjacent corridors—a catastrophic struggle between two protagonists takes place in the course of the narrative: two young, ambitious artists both in the process of acquiring a prestigious PhD research grant offered by the school. One student fully meets the traditional image of an artist: an irrationalistic studio artist entirely focused on autonomous image production. Conversely, the latter student represents the post-fordist form of artistic appearance: a discourse-production-focused artist talking behind a laptop.

The narrative of As the Academy Turns brings together two diverging poles. First, it addresses contemporary artistic practice and the autonomous artistic research and production, as agonistic outcomes of current art education. As Daniel Birnbaum has articulated before, art education is nowadays in a situation where students are not only inculcated with disciplines and attitudes of modernism, they also are thrown into the deep end of contemporary circumstances by critical studies. Secondly, because of the rhetoric of the free market system connected with art education today, the soap presents the art academy “remodeled” as a product of the entertainment industry in the context of popular daytime television serving a mainstream, neo-liberal, consumerist ideology. Elements of critique and of hoax are brought together through the form of the soap opera, so that the genre’s exaggerated dramatic style subverts and deconstructs popular views on graduate art education and research. The above described field of force of visual culture and entertainment is exactly the field that today’s academy should oppose, reposition, and reconquer.

In offering a novel, experimental sanctuary for pure, temporary autonomous artistic research, the doctoral research environment also seems to be able to function anew as a maxim for the art academy in itself. That component, therefore, should be stressed specifically in all PhD-related discussions. During the “As the Academy Turns” symposium, it turned out that it is of utmost importance that artistic PhD research is not only able to navigate the persistent issues of the changing paradigms of art education but also to fulfill the role of the conscience of the art academy as an institution. Currently, PhD research seems to be the last autonomous environment within art education having time and space for—focusing on—the core of the original task of the art academy: careful reflection, patient investigation, and rigorous experimentation.\(^\text{17}\)

In addition to the institutional-based discussion on doctoral research as paragon of the capacity to generate a free, artistic space for thought, the conforming and homogenizing dangers of neo-liberal instrumentalization necessitate to be alert and to also engage in the dialogue on the specificity of art education with those academies and platforms that are outside the Bologna Process and its sphere of influence and rules. After all, in such a confrontation, the awareness of one’s own institutional identity is not only accentuated, but also expanded in a continuous process of rethinking and reassessment.

In order to underscore anew the potential of a free space for experimentation, the 1st Tbilisi Triennial\(^\text{18}\) concentrated on the signification of the figure of Offside Effect. How could educative platforms outside the influence of the Bologna Process articulate their “exterior” awareness as a surplus value? In a forum-like display system, a number of keynote artists (among others Anton Vidokle, Stephan Dillemuth, Marion von Osten) and lecturers in collaboration with their students from a dozen of experimental academies from all over the world presented their strategic way of working. A way of working inspired by the perspective of art academies reacting against the managerial turn and increasing bureaucratization while searching for informal and experimental room for education. All presentations show how, in unexpected and fascinating ways, forms of resistance emerge against the powers that discipline artistic knowledge while a deep desire to always escape fixed and fixing models of thought is prominently present.\(^\text{19}\)

Firstly, Marion von Osten commented unmistakably on the quantifying discourse surrounding a research-based curriculum in current art education. On the outside wall of the Center for Contemporary Art (CCA Tbilisi) she painted a series
of abstract diagrams requiring critical attention for the phenomenon of data-visualization: a scientific way of depiction suggesting that complex phenomena (in this case budgets available for education and the economic impact of mobility: the high fees overseas students have to pay) can be comprehended through a single, statistic, visual language. Next, the insights resulting from this could be translated into a clear, political policy. Von Osten’s exhibited scribblings present another form of translation: the scribblings are representations of visual notes the artist made while attending various conferences on how artistic research could be introduced in art academies through novel education programs. All scribblings seem to be focused on how to interconnect issues such as discourse, curricula, knowledge production, space for research, and management. Ultimately, however, they show the spectator a hermetic abstraction which is similarly typical for how the debate on research and art education is currently conducted.

Likewise, Stephan Dillemuth’s contribution to the Triennial (the video installation The Academy and the Corporate Public) focuses on problematizing the relationship between artistic research and the ubiquitous thinking in terms of a free market. In his view, the Bologna Process has cleared the way for an academy founded on neoliberal principles, where the concept of research is fully reduced to a predictable, quantifiable outcome. And this while, Dillemuth maintains, the concept of research should signify most of all a critical reflection and an escape from stifling parameters and protocols. Against a static, institutionally determined and controlled interpretation, Dillemuth pleads for a form of research he describes as bohemian research: an open-ended, improvised form of self-organized research focused on the not-yet-known.

However, the 1st Tbilisi Triennial showed in particular processional activities and presentations that, from the perspective of a collective agency, focused on unlearning personal preconceptions while including a performative dimension together with the generation of a counter public space. Rene Francisco showed documentary work related to his Pedagogia Pragmatica workshops taking place outside the art academy on unexpected locations in Havana’s urban landscape such as a deserted home or a posh swimming pool. The workshops deal with artistic group processes, the awareness of a community of action, reinterpreting the relations between doing, seeing and saying. “Although the professor was addressed by the individual student, the field of actions created as a group produced a multiple, educational effect in showing behaviors, forms of life, and symbolic production. The borders between author, artist, spectator and also those of professor-student diluted, because of similitudes to be acknowledged, novel forms of knowledge to come into being.”

The project Acting in the Library initiated by Inci Eviner showed a comparable dynamic. The issue here also involves a research methodology developed during a group process: a performative way of working together translating a clearly defined, institutional space (e.g. the library as a location providing room for a documented form of knowledge) in an experimental working-stage ignoring didactic and declarative parameters. Thus a collaborative practice emerged, hovering in the interstitial space of artistic research and artistic production, causing it to extract from the hierarchic and descriptive restrictions of a coercing, curricular structure.
1. Pascal Gielen and Paul De Bruyne, eds., Teaching Art in the Neoliberal Realm (Amsterdam, 2012), p. 3.
3. The project Modernity 3.0 (80 WSE Gallery, New York University, 2014. Curators: Zhang Qing and Henk Slager) searched for a novel connotation of the concept of modernity as an alternative for how today’s global and unbound capitalisms has rationalized its interpretation. Against the perspective of transgression, the perspective of novel forms of morality and solidarity was opened up. At the same time, the question emerged of how the new focus on “How to Live” could contribute to reassert the curriculum of art education—currently determined and assaulted by neoliberal modernity.
5. During the 1st Tbilisi Triennial (2012), Anton Vidokle presented the documentation of the project unitednaohospiza: In “Art without Education,” its related contribution to the symposium, and in Offside Effect, the publication of Tbilisi Triennial (Metropolis M Books, Henk Slager, ed., Utrecht 2013, pp. 63-68), Vidokle focused on forms of art education renouncing standardization for the sake of an open, undefined quality.
8. In Rogoff’s view, “creative practices” could be better described as processes by which knowledge becomes a-signifying knowledge. “For Deleuze and Guattari, an a-signifying rupture is a process by which the rhizome resists territorialization, or attempts to signify, or name it by an overriding power. It is the process by which the rhizome breaks out of its boundaries (determinatizations) and then reassembles or re-collects itself elsewhere and else-when (reterritorializes), often assuming a new or shifted identity. In the classroom, a-signifying ruptures are those processes students employ to avoid being just students, that classrooms use to avoid being just classrooms, that content uses to avoid being just subject matters, and that teachers use to avoid being just teachers.” (Irrit Rogoff, “Practicing Research/Singularising Knowledge,” MohKUzine, Journal of Artistic Research 9 (Summer 2010), p. 41).
11. During the Symposium of Agonic Academies (Brussels, 2010), Dieter Lesage rightly states, “If Karl Marx could say that capitalism was better than feudalism, if Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt in their worldwide communist bestseller published by Harvard University Press could say that Empire is better than the nation-state, then one can say that Bologna’s “academic capitalism” is better than Europe’s former academic feudalism.” (MohKUzine, Journal of Artistic Research 9 (Summer 2010), p. 26).
15. The project As the Academy T urns was as a collaborative project (Curator: Henk Slager) part of Manifesta 8, Cendead, Murcia (October 9, 2010 - January 9, 2011). It consisted of a series of research statements of ten doctoral researchers (Exhibition Project Space, Centro Parraga, Cendead, Tiom Ang’s soap opera (Exhibition Project Space and Screening) and a three-day symposium (Cendead) devoted to institutional strategies and their link to education and research.
16. The entire project (with contributions of Matts Leiderstam, Frans Jacob, Hito Steyerl, Sarat Maharaj, Juregen Bock, Marquard Smith, Jan Kaila, Denise Ziegler, Tuomas Nevalinna, Magnus Bärlid, Tom Holert, Irene Kopelman, Jan Svenungsson, Maja Timonen, Katja Takianen, Janis Rafailidou, Mika Elko) is published in MohKUzine, Journal of Artistic Research 10 (Summer 2011).
17. Conducting artistic research can never be a goal in itself. The researchers and their projects should relate in such a way to the structure of art education that a natural contribution can be made to the research environment mentioned above. The Dutch academic model of the “AIO” (researcher in training) where the researchers yearly teach advanced BA students/MA students could work as a catalyst in this context. Discussing advanced research projects (such as the MohKU research projects by Irene Kopelman, Lonnie van Brummeleen/Siebrden de Haan and Jeremiah Day) turns out to be constructive for the artistic process of thought and the contextualizing capacities of the students involved while a form of Research-based Education is implied. (Cf. Henk Slager, “Knowledge under Tutelage,” Metropolis M 3 (2000), pp. 17-18).
18. Offside Effect, 1st Tbilisi Triennial (October 19 - November 20, 2012). Curators: Henk Slager and Wato Tereteli. Locations: CCA Center for Contemporary Art (Activated Projects: Städelschule Frankfurt, Mildred’s Lane, F+T Zurich, Marion von Osten); Europe House (Documentation and workshops Anton Vidokle, ICA Yerevan, Visual Culture Research Center, Kiev, Nedko Solakov, Rainer Ganahl); Georgian National Museum (Context-responsive projects: Stephan Dillenmuth, Rene Franciso, Tiom Ang); Goethe Institute (Symposium and lectures); Literature Museum (Discursive and Counter-discursive projects: Inci Evine, Annette Krauss, Jan Kaila, Sami van Ingen, Kayeon College, Addis Contemporary); Shodi Field Academy (workshops); State Academy of the Arts (Hito Steyerl, unrealized project); and Vladimír Kotíshlí Memorial House (Workshops Maumaus, Lisbon).
19. In “Academy as Exhibition,” my contribution to the volume Curating Research, eds., Paul O’Neill and Mick Wilson (Landon, 2014). I evaluated the Tbilisi Triennial project in the context of the debate about “the curatorial” as follows: “In presenting the academy as exhibition, Offside Effect contributed in a radical and significant way to the promotion and understanding of ways in which “artistic research,” “the curatorial,” and “educational praxis” could be manifested as an entity relationship with three intersecting lines. In that framework, educational praxis is understood as an experimental space for the collective a speculative and performative mode of reflection and presentation, contextualizing connections between objects, images, processes, people, locations, histories, and discourses. In that framework, artistic research is considered a temporary, autonomous, intellectual awareness of the ways in which educational praxis is institutionalized and artistic activity is directed towards the occupation of territory indicated by the notion of curatorial. In that framework, the curatorial equates to dynamic, continuously traversing and interconnecting spaces of learning in which the presentation of rhizomatic processes and transformations, and lingering forms of thought are instigated time and again. (p. 86).
20. Dillenmuth published more information about Bohemian Research on the site: www.societyoutofcontrol.com
3. EXPERIMENTAL AESTHETICS

Until recently, the curricula of many art academies were clearly dominated by an art historical model of reflection. Consequently, there was a gratuitous clear-cut duality with on the one hand artists producing artistic work, and on the other hand external professionals (mostly art historians) supplying the frameworks for interpreting those works. During the last few decades, standard works such as Ernst Gombrich’s *Art and Illusion* and Hans-Georg Gadamer’s *Truth and Method* have provided methodological foundations for such nearly dogmatic art historical hermeneutics.\(^1\)

Gadamer describes an encounter with the visual arts as an experience similar to intently reading a letter, which also implies a certain expectation. Gadamer indeed realizes that every interpretation has a horizon, i.e. is rooted in a temporality, which also applies to human knowledge. However, in spite of such a sense of perspective, Gadamer still believes that, in encountering a work of art, it must be possible to determine a significant meaning.

Gombrich’s work shows a similar line of thought, in the sense that he devotes many words to the conventional character of representation and the important role of the spectator in arriving at the intended meaning of the image—“the eye of the beholder.” At the same time, Gombrich believes that it is indeed possible for adequate art historical research to arrive at an iconographically exact meaning of a certain image. In light of such art historical hermeneutics, the artistic image is, in fact, a mere substitute for one meaning.\(^2\)

Today’s practice of visual art indicates, though, that time has come to abandon monolithic thought framed in binary models of truth (the hermeneutic method) and illusion (the visual creative method) and declare them obsolete. Moreover, art practices show that “art” and “method” could link in various constructive ways, since a shift has emerged from art practices focusing on end products to art practices

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22. Preceding this presentation, I, with Inci Eviner, co-curated the research project *Staging Knowledge* for SALT Galata (Istanbul) in June 2012. Here the question was tackled how the specific contribution of art to the debate on knowledge production (a.o. un-knowledge, non-knowledge, not-yet knowledge, sensuous knowledge, singularizing knowledge, tacit knowledge) requires in its quality of “epistemic practice” idiosyncratic forms of dissemination, presentation, and display. With contributions from Jalal Toufic, Burak Deher, Vasif Kortun, Can Altay, Jan Svenungsson, Eija-Liisa Ahtila, Mika Taanila, Ahmet Öğüt, and others.
dealing with experimental, laboratory-style environments and researching novel forms of knowledge and experience.

This laboratory-based awareness, or more precisely, the awareness that the practice of art can be considered a laboratory without protocol, was expressed for the first time by the exhibition Laboratorium realized by Hans-Ulrich Obrist and Barbara Vanderlinden in 1999. Laboratorium presented itself as an interdisciplinary project where both the scientific laboratory and the artist’s studio were explored on the basis of the various concepts playing a role within the different disciplines. In that curatorial project, artists, writers, and scientists participated in “working places” acting as contact-zones. They all focused on the core question, “How can we attempt to bridge the gap between the specialized vocabulary of science, art and the general interest of the audience, between the expertise of skilled practitioners and the concerns and preconceptions of the interested audience?” In other words, what is the meaning and role of “the experiment” and to what extent is it of importance for knowledge production that the experiments taking place in the studio or the laboratory ultimately are made known demonstratively to the public?

The project Laboratorium turned out to be more or less a prelude to the renewed attention for the intellectual-conceptual processes and discursive practices that would take shape during the first decade of the twenty-first century; mainly colored, as it seemed, by a nominalist, Duchampian mode of thought. Indeed, it was Marcel Duchamp who formerly had resisted the reduction of art to perception related to retinalism; a reduction trying to fine-tune the intellectual-conceptual processes inherent to visual thinking by deploying disciplinary boundaries, prescribed methods, worn-out definitions, and clearly delimited objects of study. Against the scriptedness of an ontological anchorage, against the thought that one could define art beforehand, Duchamp proposes that we should approach each work of art as if it is the very first work of art. That implies that the definition—and thus also the method—of the work either remains determined again and again during the artistic process or, if it already exists, it is a slate clear of habit-encrusted assumptions about ‘Art’, we would have to cook it up fresh each time,” declares Duchamp.

Such a Duchampian nominalism strongly resembles a methodological pluralism based on a détournement of the academic corpus as introduced by Paul Feyerabend, philosopher of science. In Against Method, Feyerabend suggests that the world is characterized by diversity and chaos, a view that turns the absolute belief in a certain, monolithic scientific method into a mere self-deception. Based on the common ground of science, various, often crosshatched practices, congeries of quite divergent activities, disciplines, domains and incompatible models, objectives and criteria can be found. In spite of the methodological abundance, many scientists try, even still today, to anchor their activities through frozen methods and subsuming principles of knowledge. And this while one could rather observe a plurality of practices where, to quote Gaston Bachelard, “each secretes its own methodology.” This leads Feyerabend to argue that, “It is important to defend the idea that all methods and ways of perception are in their basic premise possible and nothing is excluded when aiming to understand the world.” His view is that the scientific fact, contrary to appearances, is not indestructibly solid because it remains open to overhaul depending on changes in context, coordinates and controls. Science has to throw up propositions, rules and shifting models that are subject to constant evaluation, restoration, and rejection. Thus, there should be space for “ironic, experimental strat-egies, ludic modes, reversible states, contradiction, non-binary, nonlinear associations, paradoxes.”

At the time of Laboratorium, the philosopher of science Bruno Latour—who realized the program component The Theatre of Proof for this project—argued that the modern myth of scientific, universally problem-solving reason has diminished considerably in our day and, therefore, increasingly more space will be demanded for “research.” He said, “Science is certain, Research is uncertainty. Science is supposed to be cold, straight and detached; Research is warm, involving and risky. Science puts an end to the vagaries of human disputes; Research fuels controversies by more controversies. Science produces objectivity by escaping as much as possible from the shackles of ideology, passions and emotions; Research feeds on all those as so many handles to render familiar new objects of enquiry.” Latour argues that with this shift of perspective what used to be impossible when the comparison between art and science was made by looking at the results of their respective works would now become possible when one connects them through their modus operandi. “The relationship between scientists and artists is no longer one where the second group takes up what is left once the first has swallowed reality in its entirety. Instead, they have to compete in demonstrating how much locality, particularity, multiplicity, how many realities can be elicited through practice.” During the reign of scientific mononaturalism, artists could only contest it. With the rise of the multinationals of research, artists can work on the same realities as other researchers do that is “making things public” as already has been stressed at the time of the Laboratory project mentioned above.

In the light of this development, it is hardly surprising that also the issue of the modus operandi of art as research has emerged during the last decade. How would Feyerabend’s “provisional constructs” relate to the open-ended ways in which art practices handle facts? Art seems to know a different form of research strikingly described during one of the first European conferences on artistic research by Sarat Maharaj as “spasmic, interdisciplinary probes, haphazard cognitive investigations, dissipating interaction, and imaginary archiving.” That form of research cannot be channeled through rigid academic-scientific guidelines dealing with generalization, duplication, and quantification, since it engages in the unique, the qualitative, the particular, and the local. It “amounts to a proliferation of self-shaping probes, stand-alone inquiries, motley see-think-know modes. Their sheer heterogeneous spill tends to stump and stonewall generalizable principles: they resist being wholly talked under by the conventions of systematic methodology.” Whereas in many traditional (academic) forms of research the objective seems to be collecting or noting identical characteristics between situations and contexts, often at the expense of the consideration of differences, artistic research seems critically inclined to seek out diversities more than similarities.

Artistic research does so, Magnus Fräktas previously observed, in deploying a non-disciplining, essayistic way of working, where aesthetic and epistemological regimes are frequently reshuffled in a conflicting manner. Such a way of working leads to the incessant collision of two elements: “One aspect of the research claims to participate in a general paradigm, within a discourse that can be shared and which is manufactured according to certain criteria. On the other hand, artistic research projects in many cases also lay claim to singularity. They create a certain artistic set-up, which claims to be relatively unique and produces its own field of reference and logic.”
A subsequent question inevitably arises: is it possible—in addition to the via negativa and in spite of all heterogeneity, multiplicity and dadaist diversity—to chart a number of well-described essences with respect to artistic research? For example, by making statements related in one way or another to the criteria for research in general, such as appointing the research object, the contribution to knowledge production, the description of the working methods and the development of an adequate and appropriate way of dissemination. In view of this purpose, Christopher Frayling (in probably one of the first texts on doctoral research in art) maintained regarding the state of the research object, “artistic research does not begin with a predetermined set of questions or assumptions, but arises from the particular situations or contexts being investigated.”

A similar context-responsive description was given some years later in Mika Hannula’s publication *Artistic Research*, where he describes this as “an area that is articulating its own criteria based on its individual characteristics and practices: the self-reflexive and self-critical process of an artist taking part in a process of meaning within contemporary art, in such a way that it communicates where it is coming from, where it stands at this precise moment, and where it wants to go.” However, Hannula adds a clear dimension in his characterization, i.e. communication of the research narrative should take place in a transparent and critical manner related to parameters given within the specific context while implying the subsequent methodological trajectory passed through. “Artistic research leads to a self-reflective, self-critical communication: it continuously refers back to its own activities and aims, and includes a diversity of research methods, presentation models, and means of communication.”

Viewed from that perspective, artistic research is a Duchampian endeavor *pur sang*. During each separate research project, one has to re-establish and clarify time and again what in fact “artistic research” entails.

Obviously, there is a significant difference between the many, often routine forms of investigation emerging today in the field of contemporary visual art and that which could ultimately be qualified as artistic research. In artistic research, there is a clear-cut intention, i.e. the research is meant as research by the researcher; by means of a distinct and comprehensible communication, it intends to contribute to the debate on artistic understanding and knowledge production in an innovative and boundary-transforming manner; it is open to giving account of itself and subject to peer review in a discursive and public way; and, therefore, artistic research mainly takes place in an institutional environment.

Yet, the artistic contribution to knowledge production is ultimately singular in nature. Because of this singular character, one could argue that artistic research is in fact an active way of doing aesthetic research. Aesthetics is indeed involved in a singular form of knowledge production, and has been from the time this paradoxical domain was introduced by the German philosopher Baumgarten as “a cognition of sensitive ideas” in 1750. Because of the obvious correspondence, I argued in 1998 at the time of Frayling’s essay, that the specificity of artistic research could be described most adequately as a novel, topical interpretation of the concept of experimental aesthetics. The topicality of the reintroduction of the concept of aesthetics and its connection with the current practice of art was at the time not only confirmed by Bourriaud’s “relational aesthetics,” but also by the debate both Badiou and Rancière had in the past decade on the aesthetic regime of art.
Jacques Rancière’s book *The Politics of Aesthetics* situated art anew in the domain of aesthetics. In his view, from the eighteenth century onwards, aesthetics as thinking about the sensuously perceivable is closely connected with the political. Aesthetics, Rancière argues, is by no means a domain in itself, but a collection of rules for the identification of art i.e. how art is defined as art within a historical constellation. According to him, in this process of defining, the issue at stake is a—political—field of tension determined by ethical and aesthetic regimes.

Conversely, in his publication *Handbook of Inaesthetics*, Alain Badiou demands a reassessment of the notion of aesthetics. In Badiou’s view, since Plato aesthetics is an instrumentalization of philosophy. That implies a form of hierarchic thinking on behalf of art or deploying art, but never a thinking along with art. Without assigning art a clearly defined role beforehand, inaesthetics breaks with this tradition by focusing on a form of thinking departing from art or on the condition of art. Thus, inaesthetics does not attempt to set rules for how to think art from a philosophical system. On the contrary, proceeding from the artistic configuration, it poses the question of how art could affect philosophy through its intraphilosophical attitude.21

Departing from those topical, philosophical reflections, the project *Aesthetic Jam* was organized in the context of the Taipei Biennial 2014.22 *Aesthetic Jam* was not a four-month, regular, static exhibition, but an experimental, relay-type series of production and display. Each separate period involved another group of five artists who composed a novel production in the exhibition space—collaborating with each other and starting from the found display-situation—for a period of three weeks. Furthermore, at the end of each production period, the artists were invited to engage in a discussion on the topical signification of the concept of research. Participating artist Clodagh Emoe, for example, argued that the correlation between artistic practice and philosophical enquiry has been investigated until now only from the perspective of philosophy. She stated that this imbalance should be re-addressed by exploring inaesthetics as an expansion of the contemporary aesthetic discourse from the perspective of experimental art practices. Thus, an alternative engagement with art and philosophy could emerge not characterized by external interpretation, but by an immanent process of thinking performed throughout the entire process of art making as intraphilosophical effect.

In continuation of the various points of view, the issue of topical potentialities of an alternative and more strategic manner of signification of the artistic domain led to the question whether the original connotation of the concept of artistic research could be transformed into the more engaging connotation of experimental aesthetics. The addition of the adjective “experimental” served a purpose similar to Badiou’s proposal to speak of “inaesthetics,” i.e. indicating a practice succeeding in withdrawing from the totalizing tendencies of an academic philosophy of art. Such an often cocooning, academic discipline 1 called a “theoretical aesthetics” analogous to the division in science. Similar to theoretical physics, theoretical aesthetics as a discipline focuses on the philosophical question of transcendental foundations. In line with experimental physics, experimental aesthetics, i.e. the practice of the artistic researcher, is characterized by the a-disciplinary, hodge podge methodology of the laboratory.23 And just like experimental physics relates in an oscillating way to theoretical physics, experimental aesthetics is as well continuously forced to mutually inspiring encounters with theoretical aesthetics. Therefore, at stake is not a hierarchical relationship between these two practices, neither is the relationship one of judgment and object. Rather, one should speak of a relationship of “resonances” and “interferences.”24 Because of these resonances and interferences, the situation of artistic research as experimental aesthetics is ultimately characterized by the continuous movement between fluidity and rigidity, laboratory and herbarium, smooth space and striated space, non-discipline and discipline, the particular and the universal.
The aesthetic domain’s emphasis on the singular and the unique does not mean that artistic re-
study or investigation based on a systematic understanding and critical awareness of knowledge.

The debate on artistic research seems to lead to a renewed attention for Gaston Bachelard’s knowl-


tion of Knowledge (London, 1994)) observation that two modes of knowledge-production exist in the current research practice. Mode 1 deals with traditional, disciplinary, academic research focused on a homogeneous, stable result. Mode 2 deals with a novel form of knowledge production resulting from transdisciplinary research directed towards heterogeneous, pluri-form configurations.


17. This statement is further substantiated in my contribution “The Institutional Conscience of Art” in: James Elkins’s compilation What do Artists Know? (Chicago, 2011). The institutional preconditions of artistic research are clearly described in the Bologna Process-based Dublin Descriptors: “a careful study or investigation based on a systematic understanding and critical awareness of knowledge.”

18. The aesthetic domain’s emphasis on the singular and the unique does not mean that artistic re-
search is impossible as, for example, philosopher of science Karl Popper tried to bring to the fore. After

all, artistic research completely satisfies the most fundamental research criteria with its focuses on
the importance of communication, critical attitude, and autonomy of research. In contrast to academ-
ic-scientific research and its stressing of generating “expert knowledge,” the domain of art deals with
a different form of knowledge called experience-based knowledge. Whereas pure scientific research
is often characterized by purposeful uselessness, the focus of artistic research is on involvement, on
social and non-academic goals. Still, artistic research as a form of idiosyncratic research should be
able to answer two well-defined questions: Firstly, how could the chosen methodology (as compared
with research projects of other artists) be described? Secondly, how does the domain of visual art necessitate the specific autonomous research?

19. Lecture Experimental Aesthetics, XVIth International Congress of Aesthetics, Ljubljana, Slovenia, September 1998. Published in: 168 (Lier en Boog), Series of Philosophy of Art and Art Theory 14 (1999), pp. 52-57. A topical edition of this text was the starting point for my presentation Doing Ant-

20. This debate will specifically be conducted in the publications: Alan Badiou, Handbook of Inaesthet-

21. During the dOCUMENTA 13 project Doing Research, Clodagh Emoe (GradCAM Dublin) presented


(Amsterdam, 2006), pp. 3-6.

4. METHODOLOGICAL MAPPING

The epistemological perspective of the unique, the qualitative, the particular, and the local, and the methodological questions concerning artistic research demand a further investigation. In that context, artist Herman Asselberghs’s research project *Where is Cinema* could serve as an example of an artistic research trajectory reverberating a variety of theoretical questions and perspectives. This research project engages with the ubiquitous character of film as a medium and its role in how we perceive and understand the world today. Against that background, Asselberghs’s research explores the nature and impact of media images, focusing on the ambiguous field of total exposure to the spectacular image and the virtual reality of the digital image. For the sake of this objective, he poses the following questions: What alternative forms of representation are not subjected to what Baudrillard has called “the violence of the image”? And how can new forms of media visuality arise that counteract the incessant stream of such images into our image-saturated society?

One of the outcomes of this investigation is the work *Black Box* that Asselberghs presented in the context of the project *Critique of Archival Reason*. *Black Box* delves into the question of what would happen with the archive of the first decade of the twenty-first century if the mass media would omit 9/11 as icon for that period. *Black Box shows* 2/15—the day when 30 million people demonstrated against the start of a preventive war in Iraq—as an iconic reassessment of 9/11. The work questions why we should embark on the new century with such a destructive and spectacular image and proposes to opt for a more redemptive and emancipatory moment with less spectacle value but certainly more political potential.

Consciously or not, Asselberghs also tackles the issue of the cinematographic perceptual regime and its methodological consequences for artistic research. The core of his project focuses on how the question of “What is Cinema?” is replaced by the question of “Where is Cinema?” In other words, ontology makes room for
cartography, since “Where is Cinema?” is the question regarding where we are temporarily situated and where we are going from there.

On further consideration, one could describe the methodological trajectory of artistic research in a similar cinematographic manner. In the previous chapter, it became apparent that unlike established forms of research, the methodological trajectory of artistic research cannot be defined in a strict and clear-cut manner. Method is less about given, handed-down procedures, than about approaches that have to be trashed out, forced again and again on the spot as impromptus in the course of the effort of practice-based research. Therefore, only at the end of an artistic research project is it possible to determine whether the trajectory of the operational process has indeed produced novel methodological insights. Yet, artistic research could be described as methodicy: a strong belief in a methodology founded on operational strategies which cannot be formulated and legitimized beforehand. Because of that, the frequently asked and therefore meanwhile rather tedious ontologically questioning of the essence of research—“What is artistic research?”—turns out to be entirely unfounded. In fact, as mentioned above, we can only pose the question of where artistic research is and where it is heading.

In line with that, Asselberghs argues with respect to the methodological trajectory, “Amidst momentary disorientation and provisional reorientation, a cartography of film might help to brush up worn paths, revisit overlooked locations, and open up new horizons.” There are quite a lot of things to map out in the proteiform world of film: economic shifts, financial transactions, historical turning points, technological innovations, social transformations, cultural movements, and political swings. How could these topics be mapped? According to Asselberghs, the medium of film is the pre-eminent medium to research these topics at a multi-level. “Similar to how map readers find their way through a jumble of geographic information (types), meanwhile projecting their presumptions, fantasies and recollections onto those data, the film audience also looks at the moving images on the screen, while implying various memories of other films, their own lives and those of others in both the perceptual and interpretative experience.”

Lonnie van Brummelen and Siebren de Haan’s research also refers to a filmic awareness. In 2008, in the context of the seventh Shanghai Biennale, they described their contribution Grossraum as follows: “In this film, a sovereign wandering cinema-eye explores divided landscapes along Europe’s border in the way a scrutinizing eye contemplates a painting. Instead of following the geopolitical boundaries, the cinema-eye chooses its own trajectory and lingers on settlements of temporary infrastructure, vegetation, traffic, or clouds projecting shades on a landmass.” In the following years, they would redefine this working method as a drifting studio practice: an artistic practice not guided by representations but moving along with the objects. A first experiment with this artistic interpretation of fieldwork took place in the isolated fisherman community on the former island of Urk from 2011 until 2013. The outcome was the ethno-fiction film Episode of the Sea, where fishermen tell their own story about the material world of fishing and the disruption of their existence by the recent geopolitical redefinition of the nautical chart. And this while, the fishermen state in the Episode of the Sea, the boundlessness of the sea should be associated with a non-static and non-anchored experience of moving into unknown territory.

According to Irit Rogoff’s Terra Infirmia, moving away from the terminology derived from geography is one of the important outcomes of post-structuralist thought.

“As the lessons of post-structuralism have taken hold, it seems imperative to shift from a moralizing discourse of geography and location, in which we are told what ought to be, who has the right to be where and how it ought to be so, to a contingent ethics of geographical placement in which we might jointly puzzle out the perils of the phantoms of belonging as well as of the tragedies of not belonging.”

Once the language of geography had been called into being, as Foucault’s Archaeology of Knowledge informs us, to mask differences through a logic of identity and create instead unity and homogeneity. By introducing questions of critical epistemology into the arena of geography, Foucault shifted the interrogation from the center to the margins, i.e. to the site where new and multi-dimensional knowledge and identities are constantly in the process of being formed. That process is one of the most important focal areas for a topical research-based art practice: a cartographic engagement with heterotopias and dislocation.

Ursula Biemann’s research, described by the artist as a “counter-geography,” could be situated very well in this context. According to Biemann, there is an obvious relationship between social transformations resulting from the recent globalization and how they are expressed in an expanded aesthetic field. However, what exactly is that connection? Can we speak of an inseparable link between a mobility transgressing boundaries, the awareness of border regimes and the transmedial character of the current artistic research practice?

The affirmation of these questions is the starting point for Biemann’s research. For example in Sahara Chronicle—a work presented in the context of Translocalmotion,
the seventh Shanghai Biennale in 2008—Biemann points to the modalities and orientations of migration. The work comprises a number of short videos documenting the current trans-Saharan exodus towards a fortified Europe. The work presents the Sahara desert landscape as a contested zone of mobility, a territory where a large-scale geographic reconfiguration is arising due to the increasing and flexible flows of migration. “The Sahara Chronicle mirrors the migration network itself. The project presents the system as an arrangement of pivotal sites—terminals, border check points, ports, logistic centers—which take on a particular importance both in the striving for migratory autonomy and in the attempts made by diverse authorities to contain and manage these movements. No authorial voice or other narrative device is used to tie these video documents together. There is no intent to construct a homogeneous, overarching, contemporary narrative of a phenomenon with deep roots in colonial Africa.”

This non-presence of a framing device is also expressed in the chosen display system characterized by fragmentation and disassembly. “My preferred way of showing them is in the form of an installation, whereby some videos are projected and others can be viewed on monitors, creating a multi-perspective, audio-visual environment that can be inhabited by viewers, in much the same way that migration space is inhabited by the authors depicted.” And with that, Biemann claims, one could speak of an artistic cartography: a visual form of spatializing territorial and human relations, but in an essayistic form: a non-linear narrative structure, a subjective logic that does not shy away from loops and discontinuities. The essay is not about documenting realities, but about organizing complexities. The essay practices dislocation, it sets across national boundaries and continents, and ties together disparate places through a particular logic, arranging material into a particular field of connections.

Obviously, a terminology filled with maps and a cartography of film points to a Deleuzian philosophy. In a Thousand Plateaus, Gilles Deleuze designed rhizomatic thought, a form of thought able to withdraw from Cartesian, hierarchic tree-thought dominating the Western world. Deleuze erased that form of thought through the continuous process of connectivity imagined in the ramified structure of the rhizome and its underground bulbs and tubers. Thus, a metaphysical form of thought focused since Plato on a binary logic, a transcendental foundation and the implementation of a totalizing unity is replaced by rhizomatic thought directed towards the movement of trajectories, mapping and interconnections. “The rhizome pertains to a specific map that must be produced, constructed, a map that is always connectable, reversible, modifiable, and has multiple entryways.”

In Negotiations, Deleuze claims, “What we call a ‘map’ or sometimes a ‘diagram’ is a set of various interacting lines (thus the lines in a hand are a map). There are of course many different kinds of lines, both in art and in a society or a person. Some lines represent something, others are abstract. Some lines have various segments, others do not. Some weave through a space, others go in a certain direction. Some lines, no matter whether or not they are abstract, trace an outline, others do not. The most beautiful ones do. We think lines are the basic components of things and events. So everything has its geography, its cartography, its diagram. [...] There are various zones correlated with different lines, and vice versa (here again, one might bring in scientific notions like Mandelbrot’s fractals). Different sorts of lines involve different configurations of space and volume.”

As one passes from one zone to another, one does not have a sense of a well-planned itinerary; on the contrary, one is taken on a sort of conceptual trip for which no map pre-exists—a voyage for which one must leave one’s usual discourse behind and where one is never quite sure where to land. This incessant passage from one zone to another, this roving about is in itself a kind of empiricism. It is a way of departing from the compartmentalization of knowledge, yet without recourse to any organic unity, and in some way at odds with the notion of the university as an internalization of a higher republic.

The Deleuzian multiline or multiplicity-based network, produces a specific mode of analysis “based on two components: a two-line streaming mode of analysis based on the thought of philosopher Henri Bergson and the form of motion produced by quantum mechanics and its emission of particles and exchange of packets of energy producing the concept of non-localizability. [...] Deleuze’s multiplicity mode of analysis creates a fascinating visualization of a figure of thought where a correlating, open system of two streams of interacting concepts [are] all based on the interplay of lines, dimensions, strata, planes, spaces, and plateaus.”

Artistic researchers seem to deploy such methodology of a streaming two-line mode of analysis dealing with the two interacting lines or domains of activation of artistic thinking and knowledge production. Therefore, artistic research—as a mode of doing aesthetics, i.e. as a non-philosophical understanding of aesthetics—creates the interaction, intermingling, and traversing of these two lines of analysis in an operational, process-based, and experimental way while producing a variety of unexplored perspectives. Thus, the streaming two-line mode of analysis, and its related multiplicity mode of analysis, yields two continuously interacting domains producing
a stream of novel concepts and insights. And while the perspective of knowledge production is especially directed towards a disciplining form of knowledge, it should be stressed that “the process of thinking in art is fundamentally extra-territorial. Or, to use Deleuze’s own idiom, thinking is always deterritorializing in an absolute way, one from which there is no way back.”

Such a productive tension between knowledge production and artistic thought explains how the topical debate on artistic research can be compared to the semiotics debate of the 1970s. At that time, it was Roland Barthes in The Pleasure of the Text who pointed at a form of textuality escaping a disciplining semiotics. Barthes sketched a continuous movement between a reterritorializing academic semiotics and a deterritorializing, dynamic process of boundless signification. “Two edges are created: an obedient, conformist, plagiarizing edge (the language is to be copied in its canonical state, as it has been established by schooling, good usage, literature, culture), and another edge, mobile, blank (ready to assume any contours), which is never anything but the site of its effect: the place where the death of language is glimpsed. These two edges, the compromise they bring about, are necessary.”

The continuous movement between homogeneity and heterogeneity, between what Barthes would introduce as feno-text and geno-text could be described visually as a semiotic ellipse: an ellipse resulting from the continuous oscillation occurring between the liquid, wordless syntax and the organizing, classifying spirit of grammar. That inevitably points to the current debate on artistic research. In other words, the question arises whether artistic research creates a similar, compromising movement, i.e. a continuous oscillation between artistic knowledge production and the pleasure of the process of thinking. Moreover, that question adds an important dimension to the description of artistic research as “experimental aesthetics” that was introduced in the previous chapter. This is an experimental aesthetics focusing on a specific form of thinking, i.e. artistic thinking.

The specificity of such a thinking has been rethought from a Kantian perspective by Hannah Arendt in her publication Thinking. Here Arendt evaluates the two ways of thinking distinguished by Kant. On the one hand, a thinking related to Verstand directed towards the application of laws and generating knowledge by means of indisputable criteria. On the other hand, and at odds with this, a speculative thinking related to Reason: a clear way of thinking aware of its own activity in its continuous search for signification whether philosophical or artistic of nature.

That dimension of artistic thinking that tends to be neglected in the current debate on research and knowledge production and this inevitably gives rise to dangers such as “method fever” or “academic routine.” Time and again, continuous—academic—attempts emerge to regulate artistic research and turn it into a “look alike” as Sarat Maharaj once put it. That points to a possible institutional capture of artistic research or a risk that artistic research will be appointed paradigmatically and be transformed into a recognizable, academic terrain within disciplinary borders as “a clear-cut, designated patch squeezed in between other well-thumbed epistemological territories and objects.”

In the experimental exhibition project Tables of Thought (Helsinki 2010), it is emphasized that the experimental artistic research practice can ultimately never be articulated as an indeterminate zone by normative practices and disciplinary protocols. As mentioned above in the characterization of experimental aesthetics, there is an interaction with established discursive academic circuits in the form of reso-
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1. The project Critique of Archival Reason (Royal Hibernian Academy, Dublin 2010) is central in Chapter 9.
10. A similar position with regard to the critical potential of the “essay film” is observed in Nervus Rerum by the Otolith Group commissioned by the Shanghai Biennale 2008. Nervus Rerum confronts the problem of the representability of a people confined to a geographical enclave (Jenin) by a longstanding military occupation by means of a distinctive mixture of documentary and dramatic imagery accompanied by poetic, historical, and often autobiographical narration. (cf. The Shanghai Papers, pp. 74-80). During the research conference Epistemic Encounters (Utrecht, 2009) Hito Steyerl, departing from Adorno’s Essay as a Form, also pointed to the topicality of the essayistic approach in developing a critical artistic research. (Cf. Hito Steyerl, “Aesthetics of Resistance? Artistic Research as Discipline and Conflict,” in: MahKUzine, Journal of Artistic Research 8 (Winter 2010), pp. 31-37).

16. In his Cinema Studies, Deleuze describes such an oscillation as “Any Space Whatever” in the sense of an unfolding flux between poles in all its phases and variability emphasizing that it embodies the concept of singularity cutting across the poles of the universal and particular by dissolving them. That singularity or a singularization of knowledge is the intrinsic condition of the experimental, the unpredictable but potential quest for the not-yet-known designated as artistic research.
19. The project Tables of Thought (Finnish Academy of Fine Arts, Kuvagalleria, Helsinki, 2010) has been curated by Jan Kaila and Henk Slager, and focuses on the paradoxical tension within current debates on artistic research between the urge for disciplinary knowledge and the constant subversion of this by artistic thinking. The exhibition and symposium programme of Tables of Thought (with Maria Finn, Susan Hiller, Ekaterina Degot, Michael Stevenson, Daniel Jewesbury, Susan Pui San Lok and others) plays both with the taxonomic impulse integral to disciplinary practices and the mercurial and destabilising flows of artistic thinking.
21. These very issues were at the core of the project Joyful Wisdom (Parallel Event Istanbul Biennale, Rezan Has Museum, 2013. Curator: Henk Slager). In line with Nietzsche’s Goya Sinfonias, essayistic presentations of eight artistic situation-based thinking processes continued the quest for an aesthetics that hovers on the border of judgment and affect in an attempt to be liberated from the freezing order of academic knowledge. The potential of a radical choice loomed up, foreboding the course of being adrift to the point of a blackout of the senses, an epistemic guerilla, and making an untimely plea for speculative and symbolic forms of understanding.
Based on considerations formulated above, one could indeed argue that artistic research directed towards singularity critically stands up against each mode of visual reduction and cultural disciplining. It does so in the methodological form of a dynamic mapping of a series of heterogeneous reflections on and open-ended articulations of knowledge production. What could be said, though, about the content of the artistic thought process? And how does the content of the research relate to the artistic medium by which it is articulated? The statement of Jan Verwoert is clear and distinct: “Today every medium represents only one possibility among many. The only thing that counts is the artist’s conceptual project. The choice of a particular medium only has meaning inasmuch as it relates to a strategic gain with the overall project. If a conceptual statement can be adequately formulated in terms of painting, then artists paint, but if a different medium proves to be more useful, they turn to video or build installations. In this context anybody who looks at the medium alone is missing the most important thing.”¹ And with that the tension observed twenty years earlier by Thierry de Duve between the then two dominant models, i.e. on the one hand the modernistic medium syntax (with its core concepts of creativity, discovery, and experimentation) and on the other hand the post-modern attitude awareness (with its core concepts of criticality, practicality, and deconstruction), seems to be outdated.²

Apparent one can speak of a transmedial situation to be characterized as “any-medium-whatever.” Obviously, in the notion of any-medium-whatever, a “whatever” is referred to that could be described in the positive Agambian sense of “being such that it always matters.”³ A “whatever” wanting to emphasize that artistic thinking as aesthetic project able to combine questions and subjects such as globalization, migration, identity, and gender with the broader spheres of life could in fact be
understood as “a non-philosophical understanding of philosophical matters”—a claim Gilles Deleuze makes in *What is Philosophy.*

Deleuze elucidates how art idiosyncratically generates a form of thought and knowledge able to contribute to an understanding of the human condition. Such a form of thought and knowledge is very different from the discursive modalities (academic) philosophy deploys. Because of that dynamic of being different, the visual production of ideas can never be comprised in static systems of signification or well-defined frameworks of interpretation. The visual production of ideas and its continuous concentration on the singular—going beyond notions such as the individual or the universal—ostentatiously strives against the reductive violence of any regime based on a logic of similarity.

Also the overarching issue dealing with the role and position of the artistic image in today’s visual culture has provoked research from various perspectives of mediation. For example Rosalind Krauss has argued that the current artistic image and image production are determined by a post-medium condition. She claims that the art object has been “reduced to a system of pure equivalency by the homogenizing principle of commodification, the operation of pure exchange value from which nothing can escape.” Thus, for Krauss, the liberation of art from the fetters of medium-specificity leads directly to a new form of dependency, its dependency on the market.

Krauss therefore argues that it is extremely urgent to introduce an entirely novel description of medium-specificity: one directed towards the internal plurality of any given medium. In that novel conception, self-referential and self-critical components of the medium address both its material qualities and the symbolic grammar of its own formal language. In relation to that immanent criticality, the strategic installment of a medium-specific art practice in a network of external references obtains the status of a meta-critical gesture. That implies that such a meta-critical gesture essentially derives its critical force from the structural self-inquiry of a medium-specific art practice. In other words, it simply takes an art practice to another level, the level of conceptual potentiality.

But would the above statement also imply that, for example, the photographic image could no longer be viewed as a mere aesthetic registration of a situation in the real world? It seems that the topical photographic image demands a hypermediated investigation of how the photograph as an iconographic medium produces various forms of realities still based on perspectival capacities. Artistic research in the form of a critical reevaluation—either through other media or through the history of the photographic medium—of the photographic image as such could clarify various theoretical positions as well as the factual input of the photographic paradigm in the field of topical visual art.

Other medium-specific practices evoke similar research questions—whether or not from a visual culture determined by a post-medial condition. Is reflection from the perspective of a painterly paradigm still relevant for understanding a topical artistic production? Does the visual language of cinema or a screen-based reality influence the iconography in current visual art? How could constructive forms of intermediality be envisioned? In the light of the exploration of the preconditions of the artistic communication process as such, the issue of contextualization of the artistic image should be investigated. What is the optimal context for a specific, artistic image? What communicative preconditions does such an image require? Under what circumstances should

These research questions will lead the discussion in the next chapters. First, the photographic medium will be at the core of attention. After all, from a historical perspective and articulated for the first time in Walter Benjamin’s work, the photographic medium was the specific medium to give a first impetus to a critical reflection and artistic investigation of the a-priori perceptual categories of space and time.
to cope with unprecedented experiences such as accelerated speed and mass movements? Benjamin tried to understand cultural change in terms of its material technological conditions and assigned a pioneering role to art in that process.

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6. A similar hypothesis was at the core of the project Artistic Anthropology realized in 2010 by the NJP Art Center (Seoul). Inspired by Walter Benjamin’s insight that “during long periods of history, the mode of human sense perception changes with humanity’s mode of existence,” (Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in: Illuminations (London, 1999), p. 222) the organizers posed some challenging questions that may be summarized as follows, “What could a concept such as Artistic Anthropology add to a topical research-based practice?” “How does such a practice develop diagnostic concepts and perceptual strategies in order to resist dominating regimes of instrumental and disciplining thought?” And they continue, “Could Artistic Anthropology contribute to an artistic discourse going beyond the framework of relational aesthetics? How could it relate to medium-specific qualities? Is it a form of topical artistic communication defined by a post-medium-condition? Or is it a research practice demanding the concept of medium-specificity to change?” The Artistic Anthropology project has the following elements. An inquiry where this question was posed to twenty theorists, artists, and curators (including Haege YANG, Hiroshi YOSHIOKA, Ricardo BASBAUM, Peter WIEBEL, Ranjit Hoskote, KissPal SZABOLCS, John RAUCHMAN); a publication (The NJP Reader 1, Young Chul Lee and Henk Slager, eds., Seoul 2010), and a concluding symposium (“Archeology of New Media,” NJP Art Center Seoul, 2010) where the outcome of the inquiry was critically evaluated.


8. These questions were the starting point for my exhibition project The Intermedial Zone, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen (Rotterdam, 2006). In the accompanying publication, Intermedial Reflections (Henk Owlsterling, Henk Slager and Renee van de VALL, eds., Rotterdam, 2007), the distinction between intermedial and transmedial and its significance for a topical curatorial practice was investigated further. See also MaHKUzine, Journal of Artistic Research 1, Is the Medium still the Message? (Utrecht, 2006).

9. Rather than focusing on what is lost, Benjamin begins by asking what new opportunities are opened up by the new technologies of his day such as photography and film. How do new images help people
Since its acceptance as a form of art around the 1930s, photography has been forced as no other artistic medium to justify its medium-specific qualities. Particularly the Greenbergian heydays of Modernism produced such a pressing urge for justification. At that moment around the end of the 1930s, painting had far surpassed its interest in the area of perspectivist illusion. As a consequence, twentieth-century painting entirely concentrated on the qualities of the two-dimensional surface implying a passion for painterly components such as planes, colors, and lines.

From that time onwards, the artistic working field of perspectivist painting would not only be remediated by photography as an artistic medium but also start being considered a pre-eminent, transparent medium. Photography could claim to be better, more realistic, and more complete, but how was it possible that the medium of photography could be experienced as more transparent than painting? The answer to that question was given by Bolter and Grusin in *Remediation*. Remediation implies imaging one medium in another medium. In fact, because of imaging, around the year 1850 people could understand daguerreotypes, since the daguerreotypes mechanically reproduced reality in a painterly mode, i.e. with a central perspective and a flat plane. Indeed, that moment of painting being remediated through photography also produced the possibility of understanding the medium-specific conditions of painting.

Yet, what are the specific characteristics of the medium of photography? Until now, Roland Barthes’s impressive essay *Camera Lucida* is still the utmost authoritative study on the medium-specific qualities of photography. In a compelling way, Barthes tells us about the “ontological desire” he has experienced through the medium of photography, i.e. the overwhelming need to know what photography really is and what its essential difference is compared to other types of image. Barthes argues...
that there are thousands of photographs for which we could feel a certain interest, some might even touch us, but such a sensation is always mediated through the rational in-between stage of a moral and cultural development. The type of photograph characterized by a tolerant effect and a cultural interest, Barthes claims, could best be described by the notion of studium. Studium refers to embedding a specific cultural order in the sense of a combination of knowledge and civilization enabling the spectator to enter into the perspectives and infra-knowledge that constitute and impassion a particular work. The photographic studium signifies what Barthes calls unary photography. “The photograph is unary when it emphatically transforms reality without doubling it, without making it vacillate (emphasis is a power of cohesion): no duality, no indirectness, no disturbance.”

Some photographs, however, do make our perception vacillate since they undermine the uniformity—of the protocol-based, disciplinary knowledge production—of the studium. These photographs dominate perception entirely since they give rise to a mutation of interest. Barthes calls that second photographic effect the punctum. The punctum is a deconstructive detail, since it creates a sense of immense consideration in the spectator. No matter how instantaneous and nondisciplinary the punctum acts, it will always be accompanied by a vast and expansive power that often appears to be metonymic. In Barthes’s view, that salient detail cannot be deliberate, since it functions as a supplement in the field of the photographed object, both in-...
moment, though, the projects shown in *Flash Cube* were captured in four—continuing and transgressing—zones.

The exhibition opens with the zone of methodological reflection, with works such as David Claerbout’s *Reflecting Sunset* pushing the borders between photography and film; Gerard Byrne’s *Darkroom Series* representing a space that is integral to the construction of photography and mass media; and Koo Jeong A’s *U Become Snow* focusing on a poetic imagination of the unfinished.

Then a zone of installative interaction follows where Aglaia Konrad’s sculpture-like assemblage photo work with images of ambivalent urban environments where a city transgressing into the periphery (*Plattenbild*) relates to the site-specific and physical conditions of the exhibition space; and Haegue Yang’s projected photographic images of real-estate projects (*Dehors*) enter into dialogue with the classical examples (Thomas Ruff, *H.U.P. 01; Andreas Gursky, *Montparnasse*) of the Düsseldorf artistic approach of the post-urban landscape.

The heart of the exhibition is the zone of dysfunctionalizing space. Here the core issue is investigative photography and its possible deconstruction of the framework of observation dictated by the symbolic order. That is demonstrated by dismantling the 3D geometric syntax of perspectivistic perception (Kim Sang-gil’s *University Series*, see also below), by presenting the intrinsic connection of Cartesianism, Calvinism and Capitalism (Noritoshi Hirakawa’s *The Layers of Capital*), and by showing how the discursive rhetoric of press photographs construct our current worldview (Jan Kaila’s *What, When, Where*).

Finally, in the zone of the artistic archive, the focus is on alternative models and strategies of organization—addressed extensively in chapter 9—and presentation. For example, in Jonas Dahlberg’s slide projection *Invisible Cities*, showing the intrinsic structure of large but anonymous cities through an urban archive and in Armin Linke’s *Assemblage*, deploying a continuously growing archive of hundreds of thousands of images. Linke reshuffles the images for every exhibition, recatalogues them in specific series, and next presents them in large books on a reading table. Thomas Demand’s *Landing* presents another, dissimilar form of temporality, 5 where mass media images have been modeled and reconstructed entirely in card and then photographed anew.

In the symposium “Mapping Photographic Space,” organized in the context of the exhibition *Flash Cube*, these four different perspectives as departure points for the exhibition’s display system were again critically discussed and evaluated in order to further characterize the newly introduced construct of the *flash cube punctum*. In conclusion one could observe that the operational *flash cube punctum* specifically emerges in elastic, reflective images, claiming an investigation of how the photograph as an iconographic medium produces various forms of realities and worlds still based on perspectivist capacities. This research in the photographic realm is connected with interesting, topical forms of photographic criticism on functionalist ways of thought paralleling perspectivist-based photography where a three-dimensional world subdivides into transparent, comprehensible, and instrumental entities. With this research, the decentralizing perspective of artistic thinking has cleared the way for fragmentary entities, where functionality makes room for marginal forms of dysfunctionality.

The work of South-Korean artist Kim Sang-gil, already mentioned above, is a fine example of such an approach. What is the artistic strategy the artist adopts for fragmenting the programmed character of our knowledge of the world? Or put more concretely, how does Kim Sang-gil adequately select images in the context of the desire to demonstrate the logic conditioning of our consciousness? For Kim Sang-gil only one criterion constitutes each of his artistic decisions and that is the exposure of the functional presence of solidity. His photographic images tell us again and again about the solid way in which the societal order succeeds in displaying its organizing capacities by means of distinct and fixed functions. Kim Sang-gil emphatically underscores that form of exposure through the viewer’s confrontation with real-size prints.

In his dealing with images, Kim Sang-gil seems to be inspired by the conceptual and aesthetic-autonomous approach of the Düsseldorf School, i.e. Bernd and Hilla Becher and their students Andreas Gursky, Axel Hutte, and Candida Hofer. Yet, there is an important difference between the photographic images of the Düsseldorf School and the South Korean artist. The ultramodern images of the Germans are rooted firmly in a historic tradition. Their images clearly demonstrate a historic, or if you will, archetypic consciousness. Such a consciousness is characterized by historic accumulation and a process of signification produced by a continuous series of references. As a starting point for his artistic production, Kim Sang-gil adopts a form of consciousness focusing on the functionality of the here-and-now while erasing any historic accumulation. More than that, his conception of consciousness does not even permit any form of historic signification. Kim Sang-gil’s view seems to incorporate a Deleuzian process of deterritorialization where notions such as

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*Flash Cube: Kim Sang-gil, University Series, Leeum, 2007*
accumulation and forms of resonance are replaced by the mutations and accelerations of the here-and-now while producing a multiplicity of streams of thought. The Deleuzian movement of deterritorialization connects with the exposure of a conditional functionality that, as appeared above, is a theme in Kim Sang-gil’s work.

However, in a Deleuzian sense, the movement of deterritorialization implicates the attack of a counter force called reterritorialization. In this combat, the flowing, decoding movement of deterritorialization is resegmented by the power of reterritorialization as a continuous process. Kim Sang-gil’s Remodel Series seem to portray such a process. The Remodel photographs show the empty interiors of vacant offices and other working spaces. Obviously, we have arrived in the twilight zone of functionality where the traditional, clear-cut situation of functionality has stopped. No longer is the space a lobby, a station hall, or an office space. Rather, the vacant spaces demonstrate a potentiality of novel forms of functionality and actuality, of novel forms of reterritorialization. Moreover, those temporary vacancies without any function necessitate the investigation of the traditional link of form and function. After all, if it is valid to argue that architectonic form follows function, isn’t it also true that these photographs portraying the lack of function demonstrate at the same time a lack of architectonic form, i.e. a zero degree of both function and architectonic form?

The investigation of the connectivity between function and architectonic form reemerges in Kim Sang-gil’s University Series. The photographs in these series show facades of various university departments such as astronomy, natural science, and the humanities. The buildings are characterized by various forms of architectonic solidity, which, no doubt, correlates with the solidity of the specialized knowledge their inhabitants believe to construct. Strikingly, though, the photographs show the facades of university architecture in a mere two-dimensional fashion. Any three-dimensional perspective on the academic environment has been erased from the photographs. That is a conscious artistic decision that Kim Sang-gil has made. The absence of a perspectivist vanishing point produces a mode of representation escaping a centristic model of control and domination. A similar perspective once constituted a classifying reason which, inspired by Cartesian subject-object thought, divided knowledge production into functional departments and faculties accommodating specialized forms of sciences. The need of functional control created a form of thought focused on a transparent system of classification and with that, a fluid and flexible concept of knowledge was doomed to disappear.

The two-dimensional images of the University Series create dysfunctionality in yet another way. They erase photographic depth, i.e. the medium-specific quality of photography. Whereas the Remodel Series dealt with the confrontation of a perspective filled with emptiness, the University Series demonstrates the disappearance of any centristic perspective. The two-dimensional images no longer show a perception focused on a controllable way of representation. Parallel to this intrinsic way of criticizing the framing activities of the photographic image, the facade images also question how a classifying reason once divided knowledge into specialized departments. Kim Sang-gil’s images seem to stress that time has come for a movement of decoding creating a renovation, an extreme makeover of knowledge production. Such an epistemic makeover invites systems of knowledge to renounce their frame of functionality and welcome instead fluid, dynamic connections. An extreme makeover could erase familiar fields of knowledge and at the same time metamorphose relat-
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2. Still, the issue of painterly mediality returns again and again. Also today artists pose questions such as: Is there such a thing as a painterly paradigm in current iconography? What is the role of painting within today’s media culture? What are the present conditions for a painting to be defined as a painting? How are the boundaries of the painterly domain being established? Painting as a practice can take strength from that. By way of an immanent dialogue with its own history and conditions as a medium it arrives at a—situative strategic—self-justification within a more widely-spread conceptual horizon. (Cf. Art & Research: A Journal of Ideas, Context and Methods, 2007, Volume 1, no. 1, Theme: Painting as a New Medium).
3. Barthes’s Camera Lucida could be viewed as a good example of an artistic research project avant la lettre because of its mathesis singularis methodology.
5. In an interview by Hubertus von Amelunxen, Derrida says “What the photo mourns is both death and survival, disappearance and living-on, erasure from and inscription in the archive of its technically mediated memory.” Jacques Derrida, Copy, Archive, Signature. A Conversation on Photography (Stanford, 2010), p. 32.
6. The exhibition Flash Cube (Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art, 5 July – 30 September 2007, curated by Henk Stagem) charts a series of spatial research strategies implicating a diversity of artistic points of departure. The various photographic strategies were mutually confronted in a transformative way in the exhibition’s methodology of mounting (floorplan)—underscored by Rem Koolhaas’s unique non-perspectivist display system of Leeum’s exhibition space—so that both spatial reflection and spatial experience could occur in dynamic and invigorating ways.
7. During the symposium Nameless Science (Cooper Union, 12 December 2008), in order to situate this work further, Jan Kaila posed the question, “What is photographic presentation?” In answering that question, Kaila introduced the concept of photoparadigmaticity: “Photoparadigmaticity is not a quality limited only to photography. Rather, it is an artistic tenet and attitude, a way of using different media with the aim of creating pictures that would awaken the same kind of perceptions, associations or other meanings as photographic images.” (MohKUJune, Journal of Artistic Research 7 (Summer 2009), p. 22).
8. In an interview by Hans-Ulrich Obrist, Thomas Demand claims, “Time is a concept that plays a central role in my work, because the time that is depicted in my pieces is not time that has passed. Temporalities of the circumstances and objects reproduced in my pictures have nothing to do with the temporality of that which is being portrayed, but rather with the transitory nature of the sculptures themselves. They are so fragile that they are only perfect for one brief moment, and then begin to come apart.” (Hans-Ulrich Obrist & Thomas Demand, The Conversation Series, Volume 10 (Cologne, 2006), p. 81).
9. Derrida’s deconstruction captures the double movement of building (bauen) that also is a form of un-building (ab-bauen). The gesture involves taking something apart that heeds the logic of its own architectural plan and thereby exposes the internal tensions that both enable and vex it. Always an undoing of itself.

7. CONTEXT Responsive RESEARCH

In a great number of topical art practices, a clear tendency can be noticed to work in the realm of public space and to create art dealing with urban and social issues. Of course, there is a long tradition of art in public space, but during the last decade a strikingly different artistic attitude emerged in that respect. Most artists working today in public space no longer view this—as was the case in the 1970s—as a strategic action to confront the white cube of the institutionalized visual art museum. Today artists engage in researching the medial conditions of public space.

In his publication Politics, Identity and Public Space, Mika Hannula describes such a topical form of artistic research as an investigation of narrative power and potentiality of stories. “These are stories, told and shared stories, that might be able to bridge the gap between particularities and generalizations, between individuals and collectives, between singular acts and the structures where they are seeking to evolve—to emerge, to become a place.”

Art historian Miwon Kwon was the first theorist to observe the initial signs of this paradigmatic shift. In her now classic study One Place after Another, she argues that public art no longer focuses on physical, spatial, or institutional relationships, but is rather interested in a discursive bond. “The distinguishing characteristic of today’s site-oriented art is the way in which both the art work’s relationship to the actuality of a location (as site) and the social conditions of the institutional frame (as site) are subordinate to a discursively determined site.” Subsequently, Kwon concludes that site-specific art has lost its site and because of this, it has in fact been dematerialized. In short, the once inseparable connection with the material surrounding—the surrounding characterized by physical and architectonic elements taking the viewer into the mode of a “phenomenological vector” as Merleau-Ponty puts it—seems to no longer exist. The three stable components of this vector—grounded, fixed, and
actual—seem to have been definitively replaced by the three completely different basic concepts of ungrounded, fluid and virtual.

Partly inspired by the institutional critique of the 1970s—realised through informational, textual, expositional and didactic strategies—the practice of current public art seems to come forth as an aesthetics defining the notion of space anew. In this aesthetics, the notion of space is understood as a discursive construct: space as a platform for knowledge, intellectual exchange, and cultural debate. Today, artists engage in societal, social, historical, and political themes as fields of artistic research. This development means that recent site-specific art has resulted in art approaching the site as “predominantly an inter-textually coordinated, multiply-located, discursive field of operations.”

Thus, the literal relationship between the work of art and its immediate surroundings is no longer central. At stake now is a reflection on the cultural-political conditions within which public art is presented and produced. Miwon Kwon links such a reflection to Henri Lefebvre’s concept of “Spatial Practices.” Lefebvre’s spatial practices point to strategies that challenge and alter existing configurations of space, based on the assumption that space is a (discursive) product. Lefebvre says, “Inasmuch as abstract (capitalist) space tends toward homogeneity, towards the elimination of existing differences or peculiarities, a new space cannot be produced unless it accentuates differences.”

Although this artistic strategy also leads to a form of site-specificity, such a manifestation of art is ultimately disconnected from its concrete topographical space. An indexical relation between discursive space and artistic interventions is no longer relevant. Consequently, a mobile, multi-faceted space comes into being as an ambulant field where aspects such as openness, mobility, and ambiguity express the involvement of today’s artistic practice. In line with this, qualities such as consistency, continuity, and certainty are considered obsolete resulting in a public art drowning in a ubiquitous visual culture. Thus, the danger is lurking that such public art—specifically in our day of globalizing biennales and omnipresent city branding—will become an illustration of late-capitalist leveling out because of its loss of specificity.

Commenting on this tendency in A Voyage on the North Sea, Rosalind Krauss claims that art should be aware of its medium-specificity. Particularly now when the post-medial condition brought about by media art seems to cause a loss of perspective on the medium itself. Consequently, “the definition of the medium as mere physical object, in all its reductiveness and drive towards reification, has become common currency in the art world.” Only the medium has a critical potential anchored in its inherent aesthetic domain, Krauss argues. That aesthetic domain is connected with a layer of conventions which, in Krauss’s view, is characteristic of artistic mediation. The artistic medium as a complex structure of perceptual and conceptual conventions cannot be reduced to a form of communicative one-dimensionality. According to Krauss, medium-specificity exists thanks to a multilayeredness which can never coincide with the physical conditions of the signifier. “The specificity of mediums, even modernist ones, must be understood as differential, self-differing, and thus as a layering of conventions never collapsed into the physicality of their support.”

With this description, Rosalind Krauss also gives a clear and workable guideline for significant art as a form of art embracing the idea of differential specificity reinventing and/or rearticulating the medium anew. Then the question arises whether the site could also be understood from such a medium-specific...
perspective? For example, in the form of a public art disconnected from the mate-
rial parameters of locations, but employing instead the history—photographs,
books, historical objects—of a certain place as building blocks for an archive-type
documentation. But how could site-specific interventions and differential speci-
ficity be connected? The methodology of a spatial practice mentioned above seems
to offer a constructive point of departure for answering this question. However, in
deploying that artistic methodology, one should be aware that a discursive para-
digm is dominant indeed and at the same time acknowledge that phenomenological
thought in terms of a material signifier and the strategies of institutional critique
are still relevant as well. Then that methodological perspective could suit a topical,
research-based practice that operationally connects in each project the material conditions of location, the discursive network, and the prevailing modes of criticality while articulating the site as a differential place and medium.

These issues were starting points for two research projects: Shelter 07, The Free-
dom of Public Art in the Cover of Urban Space and Translocalmotion, the seventh Shang-
hai Bienale. Of course, the two events cannot be compared in terms of scale and
significance. Still, on the level of curatorial issues and research there is a clear simi-
larity, since both events focus on the articulation of various modes of connection be-
tween the mediated character of a historical location (the inner city of a medieval city
in the Netherlands and a politically and economically significant square in the heart
of metropolitan Shanghai) and on how the practice of topical, site-oriented artistic
research has the capacity to portray a form of differential thinking. In both Shelter 07 and Translocalmotion, artists Tiong Ang and Jeanne van Heeswijk produced site-
oriented works researching both locations from diverse perspectives.

The objective of Shelter 07 was to draw attention to the history of the Dutch city
of Harderwijk. To achieve this goal, the genealogical significance of the name Har-
derwijk, “an elevated place offering a safe shelter to refugees in troublesome times,”
served as the starting point for this exhibition in public space. The genealogical sig-
nificance makes notions such as safety and freedom inextricably bound to Harder-
wijk’s history. But how did that connection arise? To investigate that question fur-
ther, eight artists were invited to produce research projects related to a number of
locations significant for the history of Harderwijk. The artists were asked to develop
specific proposals, underscoring the above problematics in an artistic form. Inter-
estingly, in their research projects, a number of related issues and topics emerged.11

Tiong Ang chose the former lodge of the duty officer of the colonial yard depot,
the building where volunteers for the Dutch East Indies were recruited, as a location
for his intervention. The lodge is located next to a monumental gate that, thanks to
the building where volunteers for the Dutch East Indies were recruited, as a location
for his intervention. The lodge is located next to a monumental gate that, thanks to
the house of ill repute once situated just outside, seamlessly connects two former
literary worlds of bourgeois escapist: the reality of Keetje Tippel, a famous woman
of easy virtue, recorded by Neel Doff; and the contours of colonial reality, sketched by
Multatuli in Max Havelaar. Tiong Ang’s intervention shows that connection by pre-
senting two works in a parallel mode at that location: a painted portrait of cultural
critic Multatuli (the first Dutchman who, already in the nineteenth century, openly
denounced the hypocrisy of bourgeois morality and colonialism) and a video work
where film footage of Keetje Tippel and Max Havelaar smoothly alternate.

Jeanne van Heeswijk extensively investigated the historical archive of the city of
Harderwijk. Based on that investigation, Van Heeswijk developed a series of posters
placed on the bricked-up windows of old houses around the church square, retelling
last century’s lingering tales: about the symbolic poet Rimbaud, who lost his identity
as a poet during his stay in Harderwijk and vanished in the grand myth of the foreign
legion; about the first big stream of (Belgian) refugees who found temporary shelter
during World War I in camp Harderwijk; and about the circulating rumours of miss-
ing passports popping up during the transformation of the AZC (Refugee Center) Jan
van Nassau Barracks into luxury condominiums, as proof of the search for shelter in
a new, safe identity for its former inhabitants. Thus, three different tales show how
viewing the location “Harderwijk” as shelter contributes to a more fluent awareness
of the usually locally mediated concept of identity.

In order to understand site-specificity as a medium, Lara Almarcegui employed
an archaeological method eliciting that which precedes space, i.e. the granting of
room. On the Blokhuisplein, a historical location renowned for its straightness
and power—specifically because of the bordering rampart and the impregnable
fortress (the Blokhuis) of the Duke—she created a fallow field presenting a tempo-
rary autonomous zone as a dysfunctional, undefined, and unfounded space escap-
ing the grid of geography. The compelling frame of abstract space was literally bro-
ken open while Almarcegui’s spatial practice replaced it by an abandoned piece of
ground, a place “without certainty or determinacy, but with flux and changeability,
existing outside the city’s effective circuits and productive structures.”12 At the same
time, this differential place was able to shelter the experience of a total freedom of
interpretation.

Translocalmotion: Jeanne van Heeswijk, Shanghai Dreaming. Holding an Urban Gold Card, 2008
At the location where till the late 1970s the strictly religious Protestant school (Vismarktschool) had been situated, the city of Harderwijk recently constructed a natural water reservoir. As the location had functioned as a concentration point for religious and educational activities since time immemorial, Job Koelewijn considered it an ideal place for his intervention. His project intended to emphasize that by now one could speak of a differential place: a place no longer defined by the law of the Book, by the one-dimensional law of fundamental Christianity, but rather by the awareness that reality surrounding us always entails many points of view. In order to underscore such an awareness, Koelewijn placed the stream of rising water and all its connotations of Flood, chastening, and eternal return into the liberating vista of some hundreds of great books: philosophical books whose plasticized covers he subtly arranged against the wall behind the waterfall.

**Translocalmotion** also intended to examine the conditions of human life in dynamic urban environments, including socioeconomic conditions, and the logics of mobility and its subsequent cultural implications. Could these conditions, related to the current form of human movement and urbanization, and their cultural implications, as reflected by and from topical visual art, perhaps be described as a “migratory aesthetics”? An aesthetics which provides support for visibility of marginalized groups and issues. An aesthetics which, contrary to the “relational aesthetics” of the 1990s, no longer concentrates on the actual creation of social environments for intersubjective meetings, but rather adopts the form of a “documentary aesthetics” revealing all components related to mobility such as arrival, change, combination, departure, deterritorialization, displacement, encounter, interface, location, loss, memory, movement, passage, reconnection, relocation, reterritorialization, revisiting, separation, and transformation. Yet, it is also an aesthetics of mapping other phenomena connected with today’s culture of mobility, such as the effect of newcomers on public space; it is an aesthetics stressing that indeed the artistic reflection of the multifaceted culture of mobility gives way to a more fluid form of perception, i.e. a plurality of sensory experiences that both transform and modify the way we perceive the world.

To research these topical issues, the curatorial team decided to deploy the immediate surroundings of the Shanghai Art Museum as a starting point for their endeavours. The People’s Square actually functions as a microcosm of the complex dynamics affecting the current issue of mobility. If you take a closer look at The People’s Square, you will find issues of migration and transition, traces of ultra-modernist urban planning and manifestations of the power of the topical rhetoric of capitalism. In short, The People’s Square, as a microcosm, seems to hold great potential for artistic inquiries and artistic research projects. Thus, the curators of the Shanghai Biennale treated The People’s Square as a location of knowledge transfer, connection, meeting, and exchange. It is exactly from this perspective of knowledge transfer that the artists invited for the Seventh Shanghai Biennale were commissioned.

For example, Tiong Ang’s project *Models for (the) People* employed an historical map of The People’s Square, the 1930s map where the building of the Shanghai Art Museum still functions as the clubhouse for the equestrian sporting club. In those days, the building was a specific location where entertainment created a clear awareness of a collective identity. That form of constructed identity, as Tiong Ang’s dialectic exploration shows, seems to have been replaced in The People’s Square by today’s logic of mobility and the more fragmented experience of the sort of collective that a karaoke bar creates. In the *Shanghai Papers* Tiong Ang states: “Models for (the) People is a range of disparate images juxtaposed in both sequential and spatial environments. Video images, paintings, objects, songs and words in three languages are united in a display that generates a ‘contradictory space,’ where differentiation and mutual contestation rule. All these images carry with them both the moment of desire and that of opportunity. The work alludes to cinematic estrangement, the collision of cultures and trades, the alienating impact of exoticism, and it parallels with our multifaceted society as a succession of displacements.” Such an experience is characterized by repetition and difference based on an ongoing confrontation with various stereotypical systems of classification, for example, the English colony in 1930s Shanghai versus the current colonization of Africa by China.

A different approach is demonstrated by the artistic strategy of re-charting the unmapped, where static, geographic registers and representational systems equalizing location and identity suddenly appear to be able to articulate unexpected perspectives. For example Jeanne van Heeswijk developed her individual topography *Shanghai Dreaming, Holding an Urban Gold Card* by randomly selecting a number of locations on Shanghai’s city map. At these locations, she recorded talks with people working there about their ideals and dreams. “This collection of migrant workers’ stories will form a map of Shanghai based on a web of mobility by which the fulfillment of your dream generates change in the city. Personal symbols of progress are extracted from these stories to demonstrate the power of the productive individual.

**Translocalmotion:** Hito Steyerl, DeriVeD, 2008
Symbols of dreams of fortune arising out of migrant workers’s personal initiatives form a new shared language.” These identity-based stories are dissociated from their location through diverse media ranging from daily papers to T-shirt texts, and then connected with other locations and persons.

The installation DeriVeD by Hito Steyerl could also be described as an artistic project of remapping (cf. chapter 4). The method of this work is formed by a psycho-graphical mapping process of The People’s Square as an unofficial but comprehensive film archive. On the one hand, The People’s Square has been the setting for many films made by classic film directors such as Antonioni; on the other hand, The People’s Square has a number of locations where immigrants sell DVD bootleg copies of (these) films. This micro-economic activity gives the square an additional connotation as a location for distributing its own imaginary narratives. “The DVDs move on a stage of globalization which is characterized by moving images and sounds, by errant desires, structural misunderstandings and meandering meanings.”

By mapping these hidden flows of desire and moving images, DeriVeD offers—entirely in line with Translocalmotion’s documentary aesthetics—a deterritorializing experience characterized by open-endedness, new connections, pluriform categories of perception, and a contingent understanding of the public domain.

The complex of relationships within these installations or interventions, reinterprets the specific history of a certain location in a dynamic way. The material found during research appears to function indeed as a medium, i.e. as a mediator or vector between a specific location and viewer. Both Shelter 07 and Translocalmotion show that themes or subjects such as today’s migratory aesthetics appear to be able to be deployed as places of artistic research turning them into the medium of a topical art practice searching for the most adequate spaces, locations, and places, posing issues such as mobility and migration. In Translocalmotion, the curators expected the artistic research projects to provoke a series of redefinitions of topical urban conditions in non-disciplinary modes. In varied ways and different media, the participating artists were expected to “explore and document the aesthetic dimension of mobility by means of their own singular artistic strategy. In forms such as mapping the traces of micro-economic activities, documenting the new faces of the urban landscape, and depicting personal narratives,” the seventh Shanghai Biennale sought to “produce new ways of understanding modern-day mobility” and to “propose a chance to review and remap our world from different viewpoints within expanded geographies.”

Describing the project in these terms, the curators clearly connoted the concept of context-responsive research. As stated above, that concept entails a form of research as spatial practice focusing on generating differential places. That is to say research by artists taking the context as impetus in order to mobilize all medial aspects of the site—such as the set of circumstances, geographical location, historical facts, and groups of people—through interconnections and ultimately to articulate a discursive narrative. That form of research is clearly seen in Tiong Ang’s and Jeanne van Heeswijk’s projects. These projects meticulously trace and mediate the continuous tension between power and desire through micro-political strategies. These projects begin with structured, abstract spaces such as a colonial barracks, an ultra-Calvinist church square, or a party-ideological People’s Square, and then re-contextualize these as multitudinous places through different discursive detours of cinematic reflections, placing of billboards, or distribution of T-shirts. Instead of dreaming about a constructed purity or harmony, as common in classic site-specific art, art in context-responsive projects aspires to achieve a particular and non-essentialist locality at the given site both acknowledging and cherishing internal conflicts and inherent plurality of views.


6. DARE (Dutch Artistic Research Event) 3, Centraal Museum, Utrecht, September 10, 2008 focused on the topicality of the concept of Spatial Practice. Two artistic PhD researchers (Apolonia Sustersic, Malmö and Staffan Schmidt, Gothenburg) and three architects (Andreas Müller, Philipp Missewitz and Doina Petrescu) discussed in this sense their research-based interventionist strategies as e.g. Artistic Knowledge Production and Participatory Action Research. Cf. MaHKUzine, Journal of Artistic Research 6 (Winter 2008), pp. 5-8.


10. A Voyage on the Northsea, p. 53.

11. Shelter 07 took place from June 1 through August 31, 2007 on various locations in the city of Harderwijk. Besides work by Tiong Ang, Jeanne van Heeswijk and Lara Almarcegui, artists such as Gijs Frieling, Job Koelwij, Miek Van der Voort, Ginette Blom and Irene Kopelman also participated. Parallel to the Shelter 07 presentations in the public space, the Catharinakapel (former aula University of Harderwijk) served as the source of Shelter 07 information during the summer of 2007: supplying information about the participating artists, their artistic research projects, the work processes and the historicity of the chosen locations. Cf. http://catharinakapel.nl/shelter07/


13. The concept of “Migratory Aesthetics” pointing to visual thinking of the “the experience of being out of place,” was introduced by Sam Durrant and Catharine Lord, eds., in: Cultural Practices between Migrating and Art Making (Amsterdam/New York, 2007).

14. Nicolas Bourriaud has redefined certain site-specific practices as “relational,” or having a “relational aesthetic,” where the emphasis is on “a parallel engineering, on open forms based on the affirmation of the trans-individual.” (Relational Aesthetics, Berlin/New York 2002, p. 49). Relational practices aim at the formal construction of space-time entities that may be able to elude alienation, the division of labour, the commodification of space and the reification of life.

15. Translocalmotion took place from September 8 through November 16, 2008 in and around the Shanghai Art Museum (Curators: Julian Heynen, Zhang Qing and Henk Slager). More context-responsive contributions by Kim Sang-gil, Ricardo Basbaum, Lonneke van Brummelen & Siebren de Haan, Suchan Kinoshita, and Mariana Castilla Deball. The closing event of this biennale consisted of a presentation of The Shanghai Papers (eds. Annette W. Balkema and Xiang Liping, Ostfildern, 2008): a publication where all participating artists contextualize their research further. See also: www.e-flux.com/shows/view/5789


17. The Shanghai Papers, p. 102.

18. The Shanghai Papers, p. 85. An additional contextualization of such an image circulation is given by Hito Steyerl in two essays: “In Defense of the Poor Image” and “The Spam of the World,” both published in Hito Steyerl, The Wretched of the Screen (Berlin/New York, 2012). “Poor images are the contemporary Wretched of the Screen, the debris of audiovisual production, the trash that washes up on the digital economies’s shores. The testify to the violent dislocation, transfers, and displacement of images—their acceleration and circulation within the vicious cycles of audiovisual capitalism.” (p. 32).


20. Negri and Hardt connect the notion of people on the move with the demand for a new democracy. “The multitude must be able to decide if, when, and where it moves. It must have the right also to stay still and enjoy one place rather than being forced constantly to be on the move. The general right to control its own movement is the multitude’s ultimate demand for global citizenship.” Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, Empire (London, 2000), p. 400.
When Baumgarten introduced the concept of aesthetics in the year of 1750 he did not aspire after developing a science of beauty or a philosophy of taste. Departing from the subject of art, he rather intended to draw attention to a kind of logic or epistemology, a specific type of knowledge, a "cognitio sensitiva," a singular kind of knowledge or that which we may designate paradoxically as "sensuous knowledge." That implies that not only the sciences, but also the arts could be considered cognitive phenomena. But what then is the specific feature of artistic knowledge?

Knowledge can manifest itself in various ways as Aristotle already claimed. In addition to Plato's episteme of universal, general, non-contextualized forms of knowledge, techné presents practical, production-based knowledge whereas phronēsis deals with prudence, an experience-based practical wisdom dealing with how to act in particular situations. These three domains of knowledge distinguished by Aristotle seem to have been institutionalized twenty-five hundred years later more or less as alpha-sciences (Humanities), beta-sciences (Sciences), and gamma-sciences (Social Sciences).

What is the location attributed to artistic knowledge in such a three-stream landscape? Or better put, how does such an understanding of knowledge manifest itself today? As Kim Sang-gil's deconstructive work previously suggested, could it be the form of knowledge that has been marginalized, since it is considered mundane, illusory, irrelevant, and useless in the context of academic instrumentality? Through the concept of "plurality of intelligences" Deleuze and Guattari appointed a multitude of forms of knowledge as relevant and opposed them to Cartesian dualism in thought and action. Such an approach is based on the view that knowledge is produced, represented, and conveyed in both a specific and a general way in affective, symbolic, societal, and action-oriented forms rather than merely in scientific systems.
Unarguably, the academic institutions appear to simply refuse to accept anything of value outside their own credentialized metrics.

Yet, one cannot deny that also a scientific way of representation is a clear and distinct form of mediation, where scientific metaphors and perceptual narratives frame our faculty of imagination to quite a large extent. That is demonstrated specifically in Jonathan Crary’s now classic study *The Techniques of the Observer*. Crary argues that modes of perception in the context of modernity in the early twentieth century partly originate from the nineteenth century, since they are based on the development of vision machines, such as the stereoscope. The practice of using vision machines affected the act of perception to such an extent that the spectators not only adjusted their gaze but also their manner of perception, which resulted in a turn to and an adoption of novel ways of seeing. Thus, Crary states, a new kind of spectator has been born; a spectator with a subjective way of looking, someone who is prepared to accept “a new model of visual representation and perception” one that “constitutes a break with several centuries of other models of vision loosely definable as Renaissance, perspectival, or normative.” In short, perception is never immediate, it is always negotiated. Crary’s research shows that the same counts for vision in the beta-sciences—which does not come as a surprise.

Interestingly, the process of scientific mediation is at the core of attention in many topical artistic research projects. In the form of an artistic methodology, specifically projects are at stake that rearticulate the medial processes of the sciences, the visual boundaries of art history, the narrative logic of history, and the iconography of the social sciences. In these confrontations, artists become necessarily aware of a more transparent contextualization of the research process. At the same time, a more fluid form of contextualization will also cause scientists to reconsider the framework of their own paradigms. In these confrontations between artists and scientists, another form of catalyzation emerges, where dynamic exchanges between as yet distinct forms of knowledge could come into being. Ultimately, existing boundaries will be shattered giving rise to novel constellations of knowledge production. Those forms of knowledge production are generated by unexpected connections between the standardized mediation of scientific knowledge production and the aspiration of artistic knowledge production for different models and modes.

As indicated briefly in chapter three in the context of the oscillation between artistic thinking and knowledge production, the question arises whether the latter form of knowledge production could eventually be defined in specific models and methodologies. Yet, a definition of artistic knowledge seems to implicitly or explicitly involve the acceptance of and thus participation in the established academic power-knowledge system of accountability checks and evaluative supervision. As Foucault once claimed, “though acceptance does not necessarily imply submission or surrender to these parameters, a fundamental acknowledgment of the ideological principles inscribed in them remains a prerequisite for any form of access, even if one copes with them, contests them, negotiates them, and revives them.”

Not only defining artistic knowledge production, but even merely speaking about it seems to include positioning it in academic frames of thought. In that respect, two positions could be taken. In line with James Elkins, one could choose to present artistic knowledge in such a way that it will be recognized as a position in the debate about knowledge production by a more extended academic conglomeration. Or one could follow Irit Rogoff in a more deconstructive point of view and argue that alternative practices of communality and knowledge generation might provide an empowering capacity.

Both positions assume, however, that a form of knowledge production can only be the sole outcome of a researching practice to be characterized at all times by an absolutely open, non-disciplinary attitude while deploying multiple models of interpretation. In spite of the considerable academic skepticism present today, there is indeed a form of artistic research practice that complies with the requirements of widely accepted research methodologies. Particularly artistic research projects that critically scrutinize the process of scientific mediation seem to underscore that claim. Much research conducted by artists—similar to research in the traditional sciences such as humanities, social sciences and natural sciences—is guided by the awareness of the necessity of a transparency, the since time immemorial most important maxim of any scientific activity. Thus, the artist as researcher needs to explain clearly and distinctly why the domain of visual art necessitates the research questions and, the other way around, why those questions should necessarily be articulated in the fine art domain. In addition, the researcher should be able to justify both the process and the chosen operational method and trajectory. In that context, one characteristic turns out to be specifically remarkable. A striking method in the topical practice of artistic research appears to be the formulation of a certain hypothesis from a specific situation-based artistic process and, furthermore, to interconnect that hypothesis in an open constellation with various knowledge systems and disciplines.
Many artistic research projects seem to thwart the well-defined disciplines. They know the hermeneutic questions of the humanities (the alpha-sciences); they are engaged in empirically scientific methods (the beta-sciences); and they are aware of commitment (the gamma-sciences). Because of the capacity and willingness to continuously engage in novel, unexpected epistemological relations in a methodological process of interconnectivity, artistic research seems to point to a delta research. A modus operandi characteristic, on the one hand, by the literalness of the notion of delta, i.e., creating novel, significant connections. Yet, on the other hand, referring to a fourth “discipline” (next to the alpha, beta, and gamma disciplines) by a research method not determined a priori by any established scientific paradigm or model of representation; an undefined discipline as “nameless science,” directed towards generating flexible constructions, multiplicities, and new reflexive zones.

Nameless science as an undefined, non-paradigmatic delta discipline was the curatorial point of departure for the project Nameless Science. The project taking place in Apexart in New York in 2009 wanted to stress that the only way one can talk in a sensible way about artistic research and artistic knowledge production is by starting from the practice of concrete research projects. Therefore, seven best practices participated in the exhibition and were under discussion during a parallel symposium in Cooper Union. All presented artistic research projects dealt with an artistic reinterpretation of representation(al) models, existing disciplines, comprehension strategies, and academic classification systems. Consequently, these research projects produced fluent forms of interconnectivity and methodology accompanied by different forms of knowledge production. But they also lead to novel artistic strategies and intensities of perception. Two of the best practices, Mats Leiderstam’s and Irene Kopelman’s, will be delved into below.

In his project See and Seen, Mats Leiderstam investigated the art historical conventions for the ideal landscape developed as techniques of perception in eighteenth-century painting (e.g., artistic vision instruments like the Claude Lorrain Mirror). His research trajectory consisted of the investigation of historical reports and contexts and a production of various artistic strategies. Implying the painterly copy, making use of objects such as books and binoculars as ready-mades, experimenting with different ways of display systems such as tables, walls, easels, and interpreting visual material against the different methods from the academic world all lead to the issue of present spectatorship and how that becomes increasingly determined by surveillance cameras, the World Wide Web, the travel industry, and novel—queer, feminist, postcolonial—forms of perception theory. How to deploy and understand those phenomena in artistic work? “My method for See and Seen was to research the different historical accounts and the contexts of the representation of landscape. I was not so much interested in the accumulation of knowledge but in how I could put it to work in general to reproduce the landscapes through various artistic techniques and strategies. I adopted different roles when I approached the landscapes through mimicry—the copyist, the tourist, and the art historian—used in both projects as routines for seeing. What are the implications for what is becoming a new kind of viewer of landscape today, and how could this be addressed in my work? These are two of the issues my research aims to open up. My way of working is a hybrid form that embraces both academic methods and art practice. I have approached my research through art practice and my art practice through research, with the understanding that in this process the material will undergo further changes.”

Do natural sciences allow an artistic intervention and reverification of visual representation? That question was the starting point for Irene Kopelman’s research project The Molynex Problem. Kopelman investigated how various Natural Science collections used to base their display system on nineteenth-century forms of categorization and logics of identity, a classifying logos excluding differences and singularities. “During the nineteenth century, a scientific project needed to force things into categories (of sameness) in order to visualize the rules they followed and which organized the world in a logical system. This was a fundamental process to schematize how we look at things and simplify it to the extreme, thus overlooking any singularities. My research project concentrates on reopening some of these categories, and to look upon differences and singularities. The project uses elements from the history of science as resources and attempts to generate, from both art practice and artistic thought, a type of knowledge extrinsic to the field of philosophy or history of science, but still touching upon issues they all share.”

In the form of a concentrated series of artistic interventions and deconstructions of device systems, Kopelman developed alternative forms of archiving and display for a number of Natural Science collections. As Kopelman notices two years later during her presentation for As the Academy Turns, that form of artistic archiving appears to play a more prominent role in artistic research than thinking about the (medium) specificity of the artistic drawing process as a thinking tool (her original research question). “There is a constant building up of an archive, much of it remains unused or just waits for a moment to be taken into the work. Knowledge on parasite...
behavior, pollination, pattern formations, evolution, all of it contains information and stories I definitely like to use on one level or another. Their impact on the work might not be direct or obvious, but there is translation in a variety of ways emerging from a constructed mental space that allows projects to develop into display systems. An archive is like a backstage to the work; it remains hidden while it keeps growing.\textsuperscript{12}

\textbf{NOTES}


5. That mode of research has been strikingly described in the 1970s by the philosopher of science Feyerabend in a then utopian fashion as “anarchist methodology” and “Dadaist epistemology.” (Paul Feyerabend, Against Method. Outline of an anarchistic theory of knowledge, New York, 1975).

6. With this characterization, also artistic research falls within the frame of the description given by the Dublin Descriptors. “The word research is used in an inclusive way to accommodate the range of activities that support original and innovative work in the whole range of academic, professional, and technological fields including the humanities, and traditional, performing, and other creative arts. It is not used in any limited or restricted sense, or relating solely to a ‘scientific method.’” (Dublin Descriptors, 2004)

7. Cf. Giorgio Agamben’s Potentialities (Stanford, 1999). Here Aby Warburg’s research is sketched as “unnamed discipline”: a mode of being freed from a formalizing, academic disciplining.


9. In her project Test Pieces/Authority and Ambivalence, Sarah Pierce links the status of artistic research to the implications of a research attitude for the development of an art education curriculum. Therefore, a video registration of (and a critical reflection on) the Nameless Science symposium and contributions of students of various New York art academies are included in Pierce’s installation. Sarah Pierce concludes: “How we state our research, how we declare its meaning at the site of knowledge, is how research becomes practice, and now the other way around. While “artistic research” PhDs might gain some kind of authority, this does not mean we need to fall into the traps of assurances where research comes to an end.” Sarah Pierce, “Ambivalence and Authority,” MaHKUzine, Journal of Artistic Research 7 (Summer 2009), p. 54.


The concept of archive often evokes an image of control, survey, and organization. For example, in *The Order of Things*, Foucault has described the archive as a system introducing order, meaning, boundaries, coherence, and reason into that which is disparate, confused, contingent, and without contours. Thus, Foucault’s “critique of power” observes that the archive is not just a passive collection of records from the past, it is an active and controlling system of enunciation giving ever-changing form to the “great confused murmur” that emanates from the discursive formation. In other words, the archive has a set of meanings—a ‘form’—that changes with the mental frame that was brought to it.

In Derrida’s *Archive Fever*, another distinct connection is made between archival reason and the rhetoric of power. According to Derrida, this connection is genealogically underscored by the fact that the word “archive” is derived from the Greek *Arkheion*, the residence of the superior magistrates. It is on this location where the rulers reside that the documents are stored. Not surprisingly, such archives preserve the narrative of the victors, while presenting it as historical reality or scientific truth. This genealogy confirms, in Derrida’s view, that the archive is a realist machine, a body of power and knowledge that sustains itself by technologies of inscription and repetition. More precisely, the authority of traditional archives controls and regulates the reproduction of their items. Obviously, this implies that there are criteria for how to reproduce those objects “faithfully,” according to specific, hermeneutic protocols. “Technologies of inscription and the undoing of certain protocols of reading, writing, and thinking that they occasion must be thought together, so that, in addition to the affirmative, gathering, preserving dimension of the archive, there is the violence of the archive itself, as archive, as archival violence.”

With such features of archival reason, both Foucault and Derrida seem to refer to Nietzschean thought. From a philosophy of power, the archive could be understood as a product of the will to represent, the desire to surveyability and transparency.
emerging in modernity as a rigid scopic regime where multiformality and diversity have been reduced to levels of equivalence. In line with Nietzsche, the scopic regime is related to Cartesian thought by both philosophers: the perspectivist philosophy of the gaze, the disembodied eternal point of view, directed since the seventeenth century towards generating clear, linear, solid, fixed and planimetric forms of perception. An ocular-centric, retinal form of thought, that, as both Derrida and Foucault observe, finally found its ultimate and visual coherent form of appearance in an archiving mediality in the course of the twentieth century.

However, that does not mean that Cartesian thought could have commanded a full hegemony at all times. There is also a continuous oscillation with a different form of movement: the ocular desire for divergence, the glance, the multiple, and the blank. Such a movement demanding attention for the visual potentialities concealed by the retinal repression of the Cartesian regime acts as a transgressive impulse not only meaningful during a certain historical period of time, but one continuously presenting itself as an alternative precondition for a limitless form of artistic thinking.

Starting with Duchamp, twentieth-century visual artists have been engaged in attempting to transgress the archival order. Artists do not comply with disciplining rules of ordering, boundaries, and coherent categories; they present physical aspects and qualities of an archival transformation previously unacknowledged or repressed. Because of that, they appropriate, interpret, reconfigure, and interrogate aspects and qualities of an archival transformation previously unacknowledged or repressed. Because of that, they appropriate, interpret, reconfigure, and interrogate aspects and qualities of an archival transformation previously unacknowledged or repressed. Because of that, they appropriate, interpret, reconfigure, and interrogate aspects and qualities of an archival transformation previously unacknowledged or repressed. Because of that, they appropriate, interpret, reconfigure, and interrogate aspects and qualities of an archival transformation previously unacknowledged or repressed. Such a movement demanding attention for the visual potentialities concealed by the retinal repression of the Cartesian regime acts as a transgressive impulse not only meaningful during a certain historical period of time, but one continuously presenting itself as an alternative precondition for a limitless form of artistic thinking.

Therefore, artists developed para-archives as a demonstration of the impossibility to categorize the contingent for the sake of representation and to demand attention for a non-hierarchic heterogeneity and an anomie form of knowledge production. These artistic archives juxtapose the archive and its ambition to register the contingent with a set of objects for which there seems no assigned place in it and create a series of supplements that question the transcendental foundations of archival hermeneutics. Thus, by focusing on unacknowledged and repressed qualities, artistic archives show the essence of the archive as “found yet constructed, factual yet fictive, public yet private,” as Hal Foster argues in An Archival Impulse.

In the same article, Foster lists three well-described characteristics of how topica1ral archival thought plays a role in visual art of the twenty-first century implying an emphasis on connectivity, an introduction of novel affective orders, and also a continuous attention for what Deleuze has indicated as “becoming.” These three characteristics—specifically from the topical perspective of research-based practices—could be situated as follows.

1. The methodological trajectory of artistic archiving seems to be characterized by another type of will; not a will colored by thinking in terms of hegemonic power and a meticulous control, but a frivolous will, the will of a *gaya scienza* concentrated on artistic probing, establishing connections, associating, creating rhizomatic mutations, producing assemblages, and bringing together; including that which cannot be joined. Herewith, the methodology of artistic archiving connects with a topical tendency designated by Nicolas Bourriaud as “postproduction.” These practices have in common the recourse to already produced forms. They testify to a willingness to inscribe the work of art within a network of signs and significations, instead of considering it an autonomous or original form.

2. Against the Foucaultian perspective where a clear connection is made between an archiving rhetoric and the dispositif of power, artistic archiving adds the perspective of desirology: a thinking in terms of new orders of affective associations, of fluid taxonomies, and above all a thinking in terms of intellectual and artistic pleasure linked to derange the symbolic order. Barthes describes such as pleasure—and he emphatically speaks in terms of pleasure, since after an era of scientific positivism, it is extremely urgent for him to ascribe anew epistemological dignity to the concept of pleasure—as an intellectual pleasure that can be found in a temporary suspension of the repetitive machines of knowledge production, a pleasure resulting from hovering in the in-between, a brief balancing in the chasm or the fault of the feno- and geno-text, producing, as Barthes states, a “staging of an appearance-as-disappearance.”

We have seen before that the practice of artistic research also continuously takes place in an in-between, the space between archiving knowledge production and active artistic thought ceaselessly able to adopt different contours. With that, artistic research characterizes itself similar to Barthes’s “textuality” as a *gaya scienza*: a disputing and transmuting science able to withdraw from canonical structures since it is situated on the blind spot of the systems.

Critique of Archival Reason: Jeremiah Day, Fred Hampton’s Apartment, 2010; Irene Kopelman, Drawing Archive, 2010
3. In addition, Barthes points out that in the book *Gaya Scienza*, Nietzsche has elucidated that the current meta-linguistic character of every institutional research prevents conceiving a science of becoming. “We are not subtle enough to perceive that probably absolute flow of becoming: the ‘permanent’ exists only thanks to our coarse organs which reduce and lead things to shared premises of vulgarity, whereas nothing exists ‘in this form’. A tree is a new thing at every instant: we affirm the ‘form’ because we do not seize the subtlety of an absolute moment.” According to Barthes, an artistic answer could be to invert nouns into verbs because of which a textuality emerges where opposing powers no longer exist in a state of repression but in a state of becoming: “nothing is really antagonistic, everything is plural.” A similar dynamism could be observed in the current practice of visual art: analogous to how Barthes’s textuality opposes writing against text; this practice opposes recording against record, identifying against identity, and archiving against archive.

Obviously, the above developments have considerable consequences for how the results of the artistic practice are disseminated and presented today. In this context, we should raise the question of how display systems or curatorial models could be developed able to present the dynamic of connectivity and becoming through a non-hierarchical spatiality. Above, in discussing various exhibitions, we have already seen that research-based projects such as Armin Linke’s *Hierarchical Spatiality*. Above, in discussing various exhibitions, we have already seen that these projects could be described as quasi-archival presentations characterized by a matrix of citation and juxtaposition, a complex of texts and objects, fragmentation, and disassembly. Moreover, the presentations of these projects seem to consciously withdraw from a clear, singular, overarching narrative.

But how does the current strategy of artistic archiving relate to thinking in terms of a research-based practice? Precisely this more specific question was the reason for the exhibition project *Critique of Archival Reason* taking place in the Royal Hibernian Academy in Dublin in 2010. The hypothesis that a topical research-based practice gives rise to new forms of archival display was the departing point of this presentation. Clearly, with such a practice, an archiving consciousness can no longer be placed in the supportive narrative of a contextualizing info lab developed parallel to the exhibition. Ultimately, the problem of such as a contextualizing narrative is that it still offers room for a taxonomic and thematic manipulation of reality, i.e. a rhetoric of translation and deconstructing the iconography and medium-specific traits of mass media. Another question is: how should an artist relate to the role ubiquitous digitization plays in producing a documentary practice? Sean Snyder’s *Index* in the exhibition *Critique of Archival Reason* offer good examples of such integrative practices.

Mass media develop forms of narrativity and fiction sometimes even based on an absolutely empty archive as Jeremiah Day’s work *Fred Hampton’s Apartment* shows. It is the image of the apartment of the Black Panther leader that played such an important role in the 1960s in police statements around his liquidation. In the same turbulent 1960s, Hannah Arendt published a crucial text on *The Crisis in Culture*; a text where she, in the presence of the mass medial image, requires attention for the cultural-critical capacity of visual art and the role of the artist as active and committed participant in the public debate. It is exactly this statement Jeremiah Day intends to actualize in his researching practice, i.e. to develop novel forms of storytelling and critical imagination in the light of the current issue of the role and status of art in public life as opposed to the fiction of mass media. Because of that, Jeremiah Day chooses for example photographic images of history-laden locations, such as *Fred Hampton’s Apartment*, as departure point for narrative performances taking place in the exhibition space. Next, for example in the space of the Royal Hibernian Academy, they ultimately are also presented in the form of a documenting but not instrumentalizing video.

Another question is: how should an artist relate to the role ubiquitous digitization plays in producing a documentary practice? Sean Snyder’s *Index* addresses and
displays that question through various formats of storage of media images from his physical archive. In a quasi-rigid grid, non-descript photographic representations are exhibited showing how his documentary archive has been recorded. On another wall is a monitor with a typical 1960s Soviet-documentary on a Mexican art exhibition in the Ukraine. To that a subtle commentary is added—only audible through a headphone—contemplating the rituals and conventions of the contemporary art practice. The interaction between mass medial propaganda, the photographic presentations of the archival devices, and the art critical commentary ultimately present the situation and condition of systems that make, produce, manufacture, articulate and exchange images; allowing them to exist in the world as images of the world, and show how history, politics and ideology intersect with those systems.

The situation of mass media image production and circulation presented and de-constructed by both artists makes clear that the practice of current fine art research should particularly concentrate on the issue of specificity of the artistic image. In the last resort, the issue remains how—temporary autonomous—artistic research could produce images that interpret the imagination of the world in different ways—just because of its being different.
The artistic research projects discussed above—with all their related characteristics and aspects such as mapping as an experimental method, the institutional situation of temporary autonomous research, the oscillating movement between experimental artistic thinking and formatting knowledge production, the medium-specific affect of the photographic punctum, the understanding of public space as an agonistic artistic medium, the relationship of artistic knowledge production with other, more established, forms of knowledge production, and the relationship between a research-based practice and a counter-archival display strategy—clearly demonstrate that the contemporary artistic image should critically encompass at least three perspectives: a reductivist visual culture, retinal consumptive models, and universalist, scopic iconographies favoring certain forms of identity and subjectivity through (a localized) hypostatizing and reification.

Against these static, one-dimensional visualizations, the practice of artistic research—and how such a practice implicitly or explicitly contemplates the question of how the artistic image could and should relate (as medium-specific given) to other forms of image production—posits open-ended statements characterized by fundamental aspects such as indefinability, heterogeneity, contingency, and relativity. Therefore, entirely in line with Nietzsche’s *Gaya Scienza*, a non-paradigmatic artistic research explicitly requests an open, non-disciplinary, delta attitude, and the insertion of multiple models of visualization and interpretation. Artistic research practices seem to be able to make new connections with existing disciplines or comprehension strategies, while producing novel epistemological models such as knowledge-in-action, nominalist knowledge systems, non-knowledge production, and perceptual systems able to disclose a pluralist experience of the world. All these models are forms of a nominalist production of knowledge unable and unwilling to serve a retinal, instrumental, one-dimensional worldview characterized by a transparent hermeneutics, but rather creating—and if necessary demanding—room for the undefined, the heterogeneous, the plural, the contingent, the dysfunctional and
the relative. It is exactly this subversive and sometimes also perverse form of research that Roland Barthes would connect with the intellectual awareness of pleasure in his renowned textual investigations.

Furthermore, in the discussed artistic research projects, novel perceptual systems appeared to deploy media in such a way that a topical iconography became apparent; an iconography able to open up new registers of perception related to novel potentialities and directions. The latter specifically was at the center of the curatorial project *The Judgment is the Mirror*. In that project attention was drawn to today’s artistic research discourse and its profound focus on methodology and knowledge production. However, isn’t there an implicated danger lurking of losing sight of the role of the critical judgment? Couldn’t aesthetic judgment and its unique character of offering a critical mirror, reflecting both the judgment and how it comes into being, clarify how it represents a dimension preceding a transparent methodology and an epistemological result? Above all *The Judgment is the Mirror* embarked on the critical question of how these themes could affect the current position of the artistic image.

With respect to the issue of the specificity of the artistic image, one could claim that because of the current research-based practice, a novel, differential iconography is emerging: an iconography whose contours could already be observed in practices labeled as “documentary aesthetics” and “post-production”; practices able to bring phenomena without precedent—such as ubiquitous mobility and connectiv-ity—within the reach of experience. But that iconography is also demanding novel forms of presentation and display, since the realm of presentation has to find modes of dealing with the various modalities of artistic thinking and artistic knowledge production. Then questions arise such as, How to pose otherness without imposing an epistemic frame? How to circumvent known forms that reduce difference to same-ness? How could one present and represent in a terminology going beyond the standardizing concept of identity? Is it possible for a topical research-based artistic practice to generate a dynamic situation where the process of translation, negotiation, and identification is incessant and the deficiency of this process, also in the light of the currently conducted debate on the search for novel models for a human society characterized by a “singular plural” (Jean-Luc Nancy), is continuously emphasized?

In the search for artistic answers to such fundamental questions, the most important categorical imperative of a topical artistic research practice seems to be an awareness of the urgency to draw attention to novel models for imagining otherness or to generate other forms of imagination through the potentiality of the artistic image in a time more than ever characterized by globalizing models of interpretation leaving hardly any room for difference and multiplicity. Through their research projects, artists have created representations and methods for intellectual labor on and off display. They founded migrating and flexible archives aiming at transforming the rooms of knowledge in exhibition spaces. They made models emerge criticizing the suggestion of perfect communication as imposed on us by diagrams and plans. Models demonstrating the shortcomings, the white spots on the map of the information society and its knowledge economy. Models starting from the apparent incompatibility of non-knowledge with values and maxims of knowledge-based economies (efficiency, innovation, and transferability) focusing on providing strategies for escaping such dominant regimes. Models inventing dynamic notions of mapping (or counter mapping) able to communicate that the world is in the process of becoming fluid with open models for a “coming community.”

NOTES

1. The Judgment is the Mirror (Living Art Museum, Reykjavik, January 20 - March 24, 2013, Curator: Henk Slager) demonstrated that the—experimental—aesthetic process requires a manner of judgment capable of prolonging the gap between aesthetic apprehension and methodological deduction causing any claim to knowledge to be delayed as a “not yet.”

2. I elaborate further on this concept in the article “Differential Iconography,” in: Michael Biggs and Henrik Karlsson, eds., *The Routledge Companion to Research in the Arts* (London/New York, 2011), pp. 333-352. The concept of differential iconography was presented here as an awareness that art—in spite of today’s world united in globalization, ubiquitous liberal democracy, and free market capitalism—should conquer the fatal image of dystopia by refocusing on latent potentialities and thinking the world anew.
Research and visual art have colored the context of many activities developed by Henk Slager over the last eight years. Significant contributions to the debate on the situation of research in visual art resulted from his professorships Artistic Research (HKU University of the Arts, Utrecht and Finnish Academy of Fine Arts, Helsinki) and his position of Dean of the Utrecht Graduate School of Visual Art and Design (MaH-KU) leading to productions such as the yearly Dutch Artistic Research Event (DARE) and the publication of the biannual MaHKUzine, Journal of Artistic Research.

In 2006, Henk Slager initiated—together with Jan Kaila and Gertrud Sandqvist—the European Artistic Research Network (EARN), a network investigating the consequences of artistic research for current art education in symposia, expert meetings, and presentations such as A Certain Man-ness (Amsterdam, 2008), Epistemic Encounters (Utrecht, 2009), Arts Research: Publics and Purposes (Dublin, 2010), Tables of Thought (Helsinki, 2010), Agonistic Academies (Brussels, 2010), Art as a Thinking Process (Venice, 2011), Staging Knowledge (Istanbul, 2012), Doing Research (Documenta 13, 2012), A Counter-Order of Things (Venice, 2013) and What is Monumental Today (St. Petersburg, 2014).

Departing from a similar focus on artistic research, Henk Slager produced various curatorial projects such as Flash Cube (Leeum Seoul, 2007), Shelter 07 (The Freedom of Public Art in the Cover of Urban Space City of Harderwijk, 2007), Translocalmotion (co-curator 7th Shanghai Biennale, 2008), Nameless Science (Apexart New York, 2009), Becoming Bologna (Collateral Event Venice Biennale, 2009), Critique of Archival Reason (Royal Hibernian Academy Dublin, 2010), Artistic Anthropology (NJP Art Center Seoul, 2010), As the Academy Turns (Collaborative project Manifesta 8, Murcia 2010), Any-Medium-Whatever (Georgian Pavilion Venice Biennale, 2011), Temporary Autonomous Research (Amsterdam Pavilion 9th Shanghai Biennale, 2012), Offside Effect (co-curator 1st Tbilisi Triennial, 2012), The Judgment is the Mirror (Living Art

In The Pleasure of Research, Henk Slager treats the above-mentioned activities and projects as points of inspiration and shows how the discussion on artistic research delving into issues such as knowledge production, artistic thinking, medium-specificity, context-responsiveness, and counter-archival display, has affected the current state of art and education. He concludes that today’s debate on art education and artistic research echoes the semiotics debate in the 1970s, in which a formatting, academic order tried to discipline semiotics into a traditional, academic domain. Therefore, a reconsideration of artistic research is currently required; a reconsideration in line with Roland Barthes’s former response to a semiotics in the process of becoming static. In Henk Slager’s view that requires a stance where artistic research is considered a “gaya scienza”: a temporary autonomous activity focusing on the intellectual pleasure of an experimental method and an implicated form of artistic thought.

Henk Slager’s current positions are Dean MaHKU Fine Art, Utrecht; Professor of Artistic Research at HKU University of the Arts Utrecht; Professor of Theory and Artistic Research at the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts/University of the Arts Helsinki; Visiting Professor Art Research at Nottingham Trent University; Tutor Curatorial Program at De Appel Foundation, Amsterdam; Founding Member European Artististic Research Network (EARN) and Member of the Advisory Board of PARSE (Platform for Artistic Research Sweden).
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