

Editorial

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We are proud to present the first issue of *InFormation – Nordic Journal of Art and Research*. The journal is situated within a scholarly field that is continuously *in formation*, involving artistic practice, arts theory and arts education. The journal aims at disseminating discussion and information from, and for, these fields of practice, development and research. The objective of the journal is formulated in the following way:

InFormation is an interdisciplinary, online, open-access journal aimed at disseminating knowledge and experience from research and development projects based on artistic practice and reflection, art education, art theory, cultural theory and related areas. The journal is related to the disciplines and practices of the arts, such as music, visual arts, dance, drama and theatre, and also welcomes contributions across and beyond traditional boundaries. Contexts can range from education to other institutional and social framings of art.

In our opinion, there are two basic circumstances that call for the establishment of this new scientific journal. On the one hand, it concerns developments within the field of art itself. As the contributions to this first issue give numerous examples of, the very character of much artistic work in our times involves significant aspects of research. Artists and art educators from various fields employ a way of thinking, a practice and a vocabulary reminiscent of what we commonly find in the more traditional realms of research. They engage with social, political and ecological issues; they investigate, analyse and publish results.

On the other hand, launching this journal addresses demands from outside the field. As the position of the arts within the academic community has gradually become more established and consolidated, scholars in the Nordic countries are increasingly being confronted with expectations regarding publication of research results accompanied by more or less strict requirements and guidelines. In many cases, scholars in the arts and art education feel that these requirements are of minor relevance to their fields of study and their scholarly approach, while at the same time they find it necessary to struggle for the official recognition of their research efforts. There is clearly a need for a reconceptualization of research and development work in order to stake out pathways and define criteria that correspond in better ways to current approaches to research and development work in the arts.

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It is our intention to provide a space for discussions and dialogues with reference to both of these developments. *InFormation* seeks to become a significant arena for discussions concerning the conditions, aims, and outcomes of research and development in the arts in the Nordic countries – discussions led by the scholars and artists themselves, on their own conditions.

One important intention of our journal is to equally welcome both traditional research articles and contributions with reference to projects in artistic development work. *InFormation* will make use of the varied opportunities online publication offers by opening for contributions that include text, audio, images and video material. This focus is based on the assumption that knowledge and experience within the arts requires alternative modes of mediation, and can benefit from combining different procedures of documentation. In this matter we join the international search for interesting, relevant and adequate contributions to the arts, art education and art theory. However, *InFormation* is not focusing exclusively on artistic research, but is rather acknowledging the benefit of including developmental and artistic research within a wide range of methodological possibilities.

InFormation is interdisciplinary in several ways. The journal welcomes contributions from various art disciplines, from different methodological stances, and from both artistic practice and art theory. An important goal is to initiate *dialogues* between these multiple perspectives. On the one hand, we assume that a range of topics, tendencies and challenges are common to many of these disciplines. On the other hand, we feel certain that bringing different perspectives together will result in new questions being asked and new knowledge being produced.

This first issue contains five contributions which all, more or less explicitly, address the relationship between research and the arts. Our peer-reviewed section starts out with a view from outside the art world. Ethnologist **Billy Ehn** points to the research aspects of art, exemplifying with various conceptual artworks and performance pieces how artists refer to their own works as both as investigations and as knowledge production. He demonstrates how certain contemporary artists employ methods that are quite similar to those used by cultural researchers; they ask questions, choose methods, read theories, make observations and carry out interviews. These artworks may also have a socially or politically defined goal that approximates them to cultural research: investigating consumerism, uncovering racism or discrimination etc. As Ehn's article demonstrates, we are dealing with forms of knowledge that are not easily placed within the realms of traditional academic knowledge. This can, of course, be quite confusing; it is not always clear precisely what is investigated and what the knowledge produced consists of. The results of the investigation do not always lie in the artwork itself, but, especially in performance pieces, research results can be understood as the effect or reaction it produces, or the relationship between the artist, the artwork and the audience.

Boel Christensen-Scheel explores the intersection between ecological philosophy or “ecosophy” and aesthetics. Based on the thinking of Arne Næss, Gregory Bateson and Felix Guattari she outlines the ethics of ecosophy and relates this to several recent artistic approaches to art and ecology. For Christensen-Scheel there is obviously a research aspect in artistic work inspired by ecosophy. Art becomes a “tool for rethinking and developing an ecological awareness”, while at the same time, ecosophy provides direction and inspiration for action-oriented artistic projects. Christensen-Scheel points out that art projects inspired by ecosophical thinking may result in “a more experiential and experimental form of knowledge production and processing, because it allows for a practical-theoretical synthesis, creative suspense as well as sensuous knowledge”.

Another interdisciplinary contribution comes from **Christian Montarou**, who explores the act of free-hand drawing from various vantage points. His investigation of the experiential aspects of the

drawing process are inspired by developmental psychology and key concepts such as “flow”, “tacit knowledge” and “the embodied mind”. Montarou suggests a thought-provoking parallel between the pattern of mental development in infancy and the creative process an artist goes through. The article calls to our attention the artist’s gaze in the drawing process: how the eye works and how the mind normally creates structure and order, separating what we see into objects and ground and assigning meaning to the separate parts of an artwork. Using examples from his own, and his student’s artworks, Montarou challenges this order by arguing that artists can benefit from releasing their work from the analytical control of the brain, which allows them to engage in processes of fragmentation, dissociation and deconstruction; processes that may open up for interesting drawing methods and result in meaningful artworks .

In our “Perspectives” section we have invited two authors to contribute with their ideas on art and research. **Nina Malterud** discusses issues concerning artistic development work, which has become an established concept in higher art education in Norway. Malterud gives an overview of recent developments and initiatives focusing particularly on a national PhD program, which has brought up important differences between the aims and methods of research “through the arts” and more traditional knowledge production. Malterud gives her overall support to the recent institutional consolidation of development and research within the frames of art institutions, maintaining that this development has contributed to a new vitality, higher quality and a potential for exciting future developments.

Efva Lilja expresses her views on the role of quality and “the good” in the arts and artistic research. She points out that when engaging with research, artists are venturing into areas with strong academic traditions rooted in particular conceptions of research and quality. What is valued in these arenas is often based on established conventions embedded in a social and political context. Lilja argues that research in the arts must be “field-specific”, implying that artists must struggle to establish respect and recognition in society according to criteria for quality particular to artistic development and research.

In the establishment of *InFormation* we have been met with a number of trials and challenges, many of them unforeseen. We would like to express our deepest gratitude to all those who have supported our efforts and contributed to making this publication a reality: Åse Marit Hammersbøen for invaluable help in developing our web layout, Trude Eikebrokk for giving us basic training in the complexities of online publication, Caroline Glicksman for excellent proof reading, Oslo and Akershus University College for economic and logistical support, and not least, the authors and referees who have contributed to this exciting first issue.

The quality and impact of any journal depends largely on the scientific community that supports it. We sincerely hope that readers and colleagues in the Nordic countries will spread the word by making our journal known to a larger audience, and that many of you will consider submitting contributions for the coming issues.

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